



Meeting Minutes
April 6th, 2021

Presenters & Moderators
Amber Logue, Committee Chair
Will Cohen, Utile
Tim Love, Utile
Taskina Tareen, Utile

Breakout Room Facilitators
Elizabeth van der Els
Will Cohen
Taskina Tareen
Tim Love
Matthew Sullivan
Sarah Marchant

Imagine Nashua Citywide Master Plan Scenarios and Recommendations Workshop

Meeting Agenda

- Where are we in the Process?
 - Review timeline and planning process
- Land Use and Design Strategies
 - Redevelopment areas and Scenario Planning
- Breakout Session 1
 - Case Study: Amherst Corridor
- Breakout Session 2
 - Case Study: Daniel Webster College
- Debrief and Next Steps

Meeting Date, Time, and Location

- April 06, 2021
- Convened: 6:00 pm
- Adjourned: 7:45 pm
- Zoom web conference

Attendance

- 80-85 participants throughout session

Where are we in the Process?

Utile, the lead consultant gave an overview of where the Master Plan process is in the timeline:

- Noting that the process is in the plan development phase - an important part of the plan where we dive deep into thinking about how future growth and redevelopment looks for Nashua, and brainstorm actions for how to get there
- This is an iterative process, and one that will necessitate critical conversation to reach consensus and tonight's meeting is about collaborating on this process through scenario planning options
- The plan development phase will continue on well into May, as the planning team gathers feedback and refine strategies and recommendations that will be incorporated into a draft plan early in the summer.

Land Use and Design Strategies

There are six different areas in the city that the planning team have been focusing on as potential redevelopment and future growth sites.

- These include two major corridors - Amherst St and Daniel Webster Hwy, the abandoned Daniel Webster College site, Northeastern boulevard, Broad St, and the East Hollis St area.
- Each area has thematic approaches and central goals to future redevelopment, accompanied by more specific strategies and recommendations.
- Amherst St and Daniel Webster Hwy: Retrofitting corridors for future mixed-use development and improved mobility
- Daniel Webster College site: Creating consensus over the best possible redevelopment use for the site
- Northeastern Boulevard and Broad St: Creating identity, and improving urban design for economic and public benefit
- East Hollis St area: Creating a cohesive and vibrant mixed use neighborhood with a focus on placemaking and good urban design

For the purposes of both keeping time, and having a more focused robust discussion, the planning team did not cover strategies for all areas in detail but instead focused on sites as case studies for scenario development discussion: the Amherst St corridor and the Daniel Webster College site as case studies for scenario planning discussion.

The strategies and recommendations for all six of these areas will be posted on the website after the meeting.

Amherst St

Amherst St conditions:

- Heavy traffic road and auto-oriented character

- As the area along it continue to turnover, there's no clear organization or identity for the corridor
- There are also a number of industrial parcels along the corridor - which brings up questions for the corridor that we may want to discuss in terms of industrial vs commercial uses, and overall identity and public realm character of the corridor.

Main goals for the corridor include:

- Thinking through a wider range of commercial uses, taking into account future of retail and industry and what kind of jobs we want to have in the city
- Repositioning the corridor as a mobility-oriented corridor. This includes creating safe and friendly environments for pedestrians, bikes, public transit such as buses and future transit services, but also ways to improve access management and traffic calming where needed.
- Create destinations and sense of place where people want to go, part of which includes integrating landscape features as well as active commercial fronts, or attractive facades and signage that transform the corridor to more than just a thruway and into a place

Daniel Webster College

DWC College conditions:

- Several conditions and constraints to think about as we discuss the opportunity for redeveloping this site
- Right next to the airport, so there are issues of noise, and use compatibility with neighboring airport functions
- Surrounded by existing residential - current street network doesn't lend for great accessibility for other uses
- The existing college buildings are of various ages and types, some newer than others but all in all they were intended for a small college and their sizes and footprints don't lend to ideal retrofitting conditions, and will likely incur high financial costs.
- The existing field spaces could be a great to preserve as a community assets as well critical wetlands and vegetation
- However, the site is a privately owned site - so have to critically think about what will be the drivers to see change on this site.

Main goals for the DWC site:

- The first major goal for the Daniel Webster college site, and what tonight will be a step towards is finding consensus for the best possible use taking into account all the conditions and constraints
- Through our study of the area, we find that a moderate residential development may be the most suitable - which we will be going through tonight
- Consider other uses complementary to the airport such as industrial uses
- Finding ways to activate the current field spaces for community use

Scenario Planning

Utile presented scenario options for the future of Amherst Corridor and Daniel Webster College, noting that scenario planning is a process that will support decision-making and navigate the future of redevelopment in the city in the short term and long term, but not a decision in itself.

Scenario Case Study - Amherst St:

- Typical condition on Amherst St corridor presented
- Strategy to beautify the corridor
 - Series of streets with slower traffic as carriageways
 - Treat Amherst St like a boulevard
 - Bring buildings closer to street and create placemaking
 - Immediate locations for parking along proposed carriageways
 - larger parking lots proposed behind buildings
 - Berm and verge as green buffer between thru lanes and carriageways
 - Two-way bike lanes
 - plaza's between building where space allows
 - create neighborhood destinations/village centers from people who live near the corridor to walk and bike to
 - Transform the corridor over time to be memorable like other parts of the city
 - Example" recent downtown renovation in Concord

[breakout sessions 1 convene] - please see below for notes from all sessions

Scenario Case Study - Daniel Webster College:

Three scenarios were considered:

- Small industrial district associated with Airport
 - Does not retain existing recreational fields
 - Create efficient industrial districts with smaller buildings - likely for smaller companies like mechanical contractor or small manufacturing
 - Access off University drive
 - Street network about getting truck traffic into the site and away from the conservation lands and nearby residential
 - Buffer of trees that separates industrial functions from residential
- Small industrial district that retains recreational fields
 - Push industrial area back
 - Trucks come-in through airport road
 - Green buffer to separate industrial area from recreational area
 - University drive exclusively used for people accessing the recreational area
- Moderate density residential development
 - Townhomes or two-family houses
 - Create a close-knit community
 - organized around green fingers that connect habitat with woodlands/wetlands
 - Ecological strategy and also create community amenities
 - Enough density to make cost of redevelopment to work

[breakout sessions 2 convene] - please see below for notes from all sessions

Breakout Session Highlights and Takeaways

Session - Sarah Marchant (Facilitator), Scribe: Angela Wesson

Attendees:

- Tina Ruonala – Nashua resident
- Julie Glosner – NH Small Business Development Center
- Renae Lias Claffey – Nashua resident
- Lori Wilshire – Board of Alderman
- Tom Woodward – Nashua resident
- Josh Neily – Nashua resident
- Larry Hirsch – Commercial Real Estate Broker
- Rep. Tom Lanzara – State Representative and Fireman for the Nashua Fire Department

- Patti Casciano – Nashua resident
- Jenn Morton – Nashua resident

Overall Takeaways:

- Amherst St
 - Overall group liked Amherst St recommendations
 - Bike and Pedestrian Access, smaller trips on side corridor
 - Reality of how get things done is a concern
 - How to connect Amherst street to other streets
- For Daniel Webster College
 - Resounding less support for industrial option
 - Interest in residential and affordable housing
 - Ways to preserve the existing theatre, arts and culture

Session - Tim Love (Facilitator), Scribe: Kate Poirier

Overall Takeaways:

Similar comments as above and:

- Amherst St
 - How do you connect two sides of Amherst St
 - Access from surrounding areas
 - General appreciation that the vision was sorting about traffic and creating a place where people would want to go
 - Housing affordability - how do those policy objectives weave into these physical visions?
- For Daniel Webster College
 - Liked idea of the residential community
 - Appreciation of the environmental agenda driving the site layout
 - Like previous group, would like to see more mixed-use component but not arts and culture, more like a cafe or shop

Session - Taskina Tareen (Facilitator), Scribe: Carter Falk, Deputy Planning Manager/Zoning

Overall Takeaways:

Similar comments as above and:

- Amherst St
 - Long term vs short term strategies
 - What portions could we start with

- How do involve local business owners for their input
- For Daniel Webster College
 - Big no to industrial option but questions asked about how important is industrial land to Nashua and do we have available land if we lose it on Amherst
 - Possibility of retrofitting the existing college buildings
 - Senior living community
 - Could it be a nursing campus/medical workforce campus

- How do we implement this/how do we get there
- How do we start to think about this with incoming development
- Public spaces, taller buildings and uses behind them
- Existing development and access management
- Broad level of support for this concept
- For Daniel Webster College
 - Indoor recreation demand
 - We want to preserve existing recreational fields but opportunity for new recreation development
 - Being sensitive to traits of airport - high noise volume, and wetlands
 - Complementary uses for residential and recreational area and accessing the airport

Session - Will Cohen(Facilitator), Scribe: Deb Chisholm

Overall Takeaways:

Similar comments as above and:

- Amherst St
 - Healthy discussion about what actually goes into the buildings - residential vs commercial vs office vs industrial
- For Daniel Webster College
 - The site didn't feel like somewhere you want to be
 - A cafe or other center would make it feel like more a place
 - varied when it came to industry vs housing
 - more people in favor for residential

Session - Elizabeth Van der Els (Facilitator), Scribe: Linda McGhee

Overall Takeaways:

Similar comments as above and:

- Amherst St
 - Architecture should be considered, should be timeless
 - Thinking about community spaces to gather and incentivize people to visit the corridor
- For Daniel Webster College
 - Auditorium into an arts space
 - live-work spaces, where people can live and have a studio downstairs
 - Grocery so people can stay in the area

Session - Matthew Sullivan (Facilitator), Scribe: Scott McPhie

Overall Takeaways:

Similar comments as above and:

- Amherst St
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Next Steps:

- Place-based Strategies available for online comment
 - Draft Topic Area Recommendations available for online comment
 - Draft Topic Area Recommendations Focus Group Sessions
 - Draft Plan for Comment
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This memorandum represents our understanding of the events which transpired and the actions which were taken. If they do not conform to a recipient's understanding, prompt written notice must be communicated to the writer. If no corrections or objections are made, this memorandum will be relied upon as a factual interpretation of this meeting.