

Hamilton Development Corporation
June 22, 2015

The Hamilton Development Corporation met at the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, June 22, 2015 with Brian Stein, Bill Gisness, and Dave Carey present. Consultant Rachel Meketon, three staff from the Urban Land Institute (ULI), nine members of the ULI Technical Assistance Panel, and two local business people, Stephen and Emily Boudreault, were also present.

The meeting began at 8:30 AM. Bill presented the tour route on a map and gave an overview of town landmarks – the business district, schools, government buildings, and parks.

The group embarked on the tour, walking from the Library down Linden Street to Willow Street. At 59-63 Willow Street, Bill showed the group the 1-acre property that the HDC had strategically purchased, so that it could be developed to meet community needs. He also pointed to the Acord Food Pantry and affordable housing, a Chapter 40B project developed by Harborlight Community Partners, which is adjacent to a municipal parking lot.

Then the group paused at Railroad Avenue, which is a one-way street with retail shops that struggles with visibility from the main street, Route 1A. The zoning does not allow for mixed-use, so the second floors cannot be used for residential housing.

The group continued down Willow Street and paused at the Willowdale office complex, which is the beginning of the Willow Street Overlay District. The WSOD allows for taller buildings and mixed uses. Continuing down Willow Street, Bill pointed out the property that had been granted a permit under WSOD, but had not used it yet; and the Dodge tree company and Welch & Lamson oil distributors. The business district is the only part of Hamilton where they can operate by-right, but given the dense residential area and the nearby park and schools, there may be more appropriate uses of the properties.

The group reached Asbury Street, the end of the business district, where Bill pointed out Patton Park, the school and government buildings, the Community House, and professional offices next door. Dave added that the railroad tracks are only utilized by very infrequent passenger trains and so the space around them could be better utilized.

At the corner of Route 1A and Walnut Road, Brian described the approval process for the new Cumberland Farms, in which they adjusted their design to better suit the character of the town. Bill described the land swap between the MBTA and the Town that allowed the MBTA station to be moved off of Route 1A, so that the train would no longer block the road when it stopped. The Town sold the land by the road to the current occupants, a package store, which has one residential unit above it, but could have two with mixed use zoning. Peter pointed to his business, which also has one residential unit, but could have two.

Bill showed the group the Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing and the MBTA station and their adjoining parking lots. He also pointed out the nearby shops on Route 1A, including Connolly's Pharmacy, Jolie Tea, the Black Cow, and the new construction on Route 1A, which will be a landscaping business.

The group returned to the Library by walking up Railroad Avenue and then Linden Street. Brian described how quiet Railroad Avenue is on the weekends when many of the professional offices are closed.