



SUSTAIN SOUTHERN MAINE

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Scarborough technical workshop opening session

Evan Richert of Sustain southern Maine opens the workshop. He gave a brief review of what the pilot centers are and what SSM hopes to achieve with them. He points out that the pilots are learning laboratories and that nothing that will be done at the workshop is binding for the town in anyway. Introductions are done.

Carol Morris takes the floor to do a quick introduction the larger SSM grant and gives the time line of the pilot communities project.

Evan returns to give some comments on the Dunstan Corner Pilot area. It is in fact two areas, one large area around and to the North of Route 1 including the intersections with Broadturn and Payne Roads, and a second smaller area where the Dunstan Crossing development will meet Route 1. He reviews some of the constraints of the area including topography, the busy nature of Route 1, and the loss of residential properties in favor of commercial development along Route 1.

Dan Bacon, the town planner of Scarborough, took the floor to give some of the greater context for the area. The town is trying to create a series of different centers across the town. Historically the zoning of Route one was standard strip zoning but since 2000 the town has been working on changing this, piece by piece. Scarborough does not have a single compact downtown to identify it but rather has a number of smaller centers and they are trying to capitalize on that and are working to zone each center differently based on their character. In Dunstan the town established a town village center zone in 2008 that covers the two areas of the pilot. It allows for mixed use and smaller commercial and multifamily units, including housing above or next to commercial in the same building. The zoning expects buildings to interact with the street with parking next to or behind the buildings. This allows buildings to be closer to the road, though with Route 1 being as big and busy a road as it is they are not expected to front directly on the road. New development is now expected to put in sidewalks, building on the ones the town put in to the south of Broadturn Road. The new zoning encourages multi story buildings along Route 1. With the TVC zoning the town is hoping to encourage a center at Dunstan Corner. Finally the town and Maine DOT were at the tiem relocating and rebuilding the intersection of Payne Road and Route 1 to improve traffic flow and that was s seen as a great potential improvement that would benefit local business, residents and property owners.

A question was asked about the vestigial part of Payne Rd.

Dan answered that the piece of road would not connect to Route 1 but would be maintained as access to the properties on either side.

A question was asked if the improvements would lessen summer backups that are a problem in the area.

Dan replied that there would always be some backups in the area but that the new configuration would have more capacity and therefore should help to some degree.

Questions were asked about the new orientation of Payne road and if it would have parking and how the old section would end.

Dan responded that on street parking was not currently envisioned for any part of Payne Road but that it could be added to the old portion. The old portion would be separated from Route 1 by a green strip of landscaped land.

At this point Evan opened the floor to the participants to voice their thoughts on the area.

Elliot Chamberlain one of the owners and developers of the Dunstan Crossing development talked about their envisioned plans for the portion of the development intersecting with Route 1. He saw a mixed use (office, retail, and restaurant/café) development at that location that would create a village feel and act as a gateway to the larger development.

A participant said that they would like to see the area develop as more of convenience center and destination. At the time they saw it as a pass through area. They wanted to see more small shops that would allow the locals to stay in the area for some trips. They also noted that there was a lot of open land in the surrounding area that could be developed as residential to support such a center.

Another participant agreed and noted that they should keep in mind tourists and try and give the area a specialty feel. Right now there is no reason for even locals to come to the area and a specialty/main street feel would both attract people and give locals a reason to be there.

There was some discussion about the possibility for a grocery store and it was felt that while there wasn't one now if one was proposed a chain that already has stores nearby might buy up property to stop new competition. Evan noted that the area would be good for a small, specialty grocer that would be an amenity for the residents and also not be seen as direct competition for larger chain grocers.

A participant said that they felt there was not enough population right now to support a center just on locals and so the center would need to have a draw that brought people in from outside. They also felt that a village center should be located off of Route 1 as the road was too busy to be amenable to a village.

Evan acknowledged the skepticism on a Route 1 centered village and asked the owner of the old school property what thoughts they had for the property.

The owner of the property said there had been lots of talk about using it for food/grocery uses but that mostly centered on building a new building. The school building is broken into many small rooms and the walls are mostly loadbearing so they cannot be knocked down to combine rooms.

A participant commented that they had been a resident for many years and had seen the area lose its center and lose its grocery store. They liked the idea of filling in new development around historic buildings to try and regain that village center. In particular they liked the idea of buildings with residential above and commercial on the first floor. They also felt that the historical society should be involved to make sure that the historical buildings that remain in the area are preserved.

Evan talked some about how Dunstan has elements of both a village and a “highway”. From his experience he felt that Dunstan had some ability to go either way. He cautioned that it would never be the dense, intensive downtown like those in Farmington or Camden but that while having the through road it could still have village elements.

There was some discussion about whether there were any other villages centered on a 4 lane road. Brunswick was mentioned though it was acknowledged that it does not have quite the same level of through traffic. A stretch of road between the highway and downtown Bangor was mentioned as a place where strip development has been made more road focused and more walkable.

A participant mentioned that in the long term, year round sense most of the traffic was not tourists it was commuters. They felt that if you could make the area attractive to them, get them to stop on the way home or go there instead of traveling all the way to Portland, you would have a successful business model.

There was some discussion about season residents and season traffic and what that could mean for the area. There is a very large amount of traffic coming through Dunstan going to Old Orchard Beach.

A participant commented that they had worked on Route 1 in the heart of Dunstan for ten years and only walked somewhere once. They felt that a huge first step would be to increase the walkability of the area; put in more sidewalks and make more mixed use properties to make things closer together. They felt the very nature of this type of development might help encourage future similar development and greatly improve the area. A residential population in the center of the area would be huge for increasing activity and supporting local businesses.

There was some discussion if the current population could support a small market. The Bow St. Market in Freeport was referenced as a successful market drawing on a similar if not smaller immediate population, though it was noted that the Bow St. Market grew to its current size organically. This was seen as an important aspect. Growth needed to happen as the area could support it and trying to grow too fast could hurt the whole area. Taking time to build a customer base should be worked into the phasing of the project.

At this point Evan reviewed the design charge and the group broke up into two smaller groups to work on their vision of the area. The results of this group work is reflected in the lessons learned and the posters presented at the public meeting.