

TOWN OF FRAMINGHAM

Framingham Planning Board

2014 Annual Report



The Planning Board strives to work with both project proponents and the public to shape projects that minimize impacts to the community while accommodating new growth. Such growth provides excellent employment opportunities and a growing tax base to the Town. This Report provides the 2014 year in summary.

Framingham Planning Board Annual Report

Introduction

The 2014 calendar year was a remarkably busy and productive year for the Framingham Planning Board (FPB) and the Town of Framingham. The FPB has taken on very important issues that faced the Town, especially as the economy continues to recover. As development within the Town has increased over the past year, the FPB has expanded its role as one of the Town's permit granting authorities. This Planning Board Annual Report summarizes and provides a snapshot of the FPB's long term planning efforts, project review, policy development, and other tasks undertaken during the 2014 calendar year.

History of the Planning Board

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, authorized cities and towns, except for the City of Boston to establish a Planning Board under the Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 41, Section 81A. The Planning Board is legally authorized to adopt a master plan, maintain the official zoning map, serve as the local authority for the Subdivision Control Act, adopt rules & regulations, draft and submit zoning, serve as a local permit granting authority, act as the reviewing body for site plans under site plan review, and review scenic roadway modifications (under M.G.L, Chapter 40, Section 15C).¹

The FPB was established during Town Meeting in 1914, under Article 10. "To see what action shall be taken to create a Planning Board in conformity with the requirements of Chapter 949, of the Acts of 1913; to choose the members thereof, and to act in any manner in relation thereto." The Planning Board became an officially elected Board in the Town of Framingham in 1924.²

Composition of the Framingham Planning Board

The FPB is comprised of five members who reside in the Town of Framingham. Each member of the FPB is elected for a three year term, where a minimum of one member's term expires annually. From April 11, 2013 to April 10, 2014 the FPB included: Christine A. Long, Chair, Stephanie A. Mercandetti, Vice-Chair, Lewis Colten, Clerk, Thomas F. Mahoney, and Victor A. Ortiz. On April 1, 2014 during Annual Town Election, Christine A. Long was reelected to another three year term. On April 10, 2014 the FPB reorganized as follows: Stephanie A. Mercandetti, Chair, Christine A. Long, Vice-Chair, Lewis Colten, Clerk, Thomas F. Mahoney, and Victor A. Ortiz.

Framingham Planning Board Staff

The FPB Office consists of three employees who work under the direction of the FPB, and in collaboration with Town of Framingham and its respected departments and staff. During 2014, the FPB hired two new staff members to fill vacant positions. The three FPB Office positions include the Planning Board Administrator, Associate Program Planner, and an Administrative Assistant.

Planning Board Quick Facts

Below is a brief overview of the FPB during the 2014 calendar year.

Decisions: In 2014, the Planning Board granted 32 Project Decisions³. Project Decisions ranged from Site Plan Review, Special Permits, Public Way Access Permits, Scenic Roadway Modifications, Extensions of Time on Permits, and Subdivision applications. The Projects reviewed and permitted during 2014 was a record over the past four years. The Projects reviewed during 2013 and 2014 ranged in both size,

¹ The Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, Section 81A.

² Herring, Stephen W. Framingham, An American Town. Published by the Framingham Historical Society and The Framingham Tercentennial Commission. 2000.

³ The 32 Decisions granted by the FPB only include projects that were permitted during 2014; this number does not include projects that were applied for by Applicants during 2014, which did not receive permits. Projects received during 2014 that will be permitted in 2015 will be counted in the 2015 numbers.

intensity, and were distributed throughout Framingham. Figure 1 provides a snapshot of the permits granted by the FPB during 2009-2014. In 2014, the FPB granted the following permits:

- 21 Site Plan Reviews;
- 34 Special Permits;
- 1 Extension to a previously approved Decision;
- 8 Public Way Access Permits;
- 2 Scenic Roadway Modifications; and
- 2 Subdivisions/Modification to a Subdivision.

The Planning Board is further responsible for the review of Approval Not Required (ANR) Projects. ANR Projects are an endorsement rather than an approval, based on projects meeting the required lot frontage and access over the legal frontage. During the 2014, calendar year the FPB reviewed and endorsed a total of 13 ANR Projects.

Figure 1: Number of Permits Granted by the Planning Board 2009-2014

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Site Plan Review	11	12	15	11	11	21
Special Permit	11	7	10	8	28	34
Subdivision	1	1	0	2	2	2
Approval Not Required	7	11	13	10	7	13
Planned Unit Development (PUD)	0	0	0	0	1	0
Public Way Access Permit	7	6	4	1	4	8
Modification to a Scenic Way	2	2	3	2	0	2

Noteworthy timelines related to FPB Projects include:

- The average permitting time from the date an Application was stamped in with the Town Clerk to the Planning Board’s Decision: 86.91 days (median: 73/77 days);
- The average permitting time from the date of the first public hearing to the Planning Board’s Decision: 65.47 days (median: 56.5 days);
- Average/median number of public hearings held for approved projects: 4.375 public hearings (median: 3.5 public hearings); and
- Average/median number of public hearings held for approved projects not including public hearings continued without testimony: 3.625 public hearings (median: 3 public hearings).

Associated with the increase in Project development throughout Framingham, is the creation of jobs (construction/full time/part time), project development cost, and increase in tax revenue:

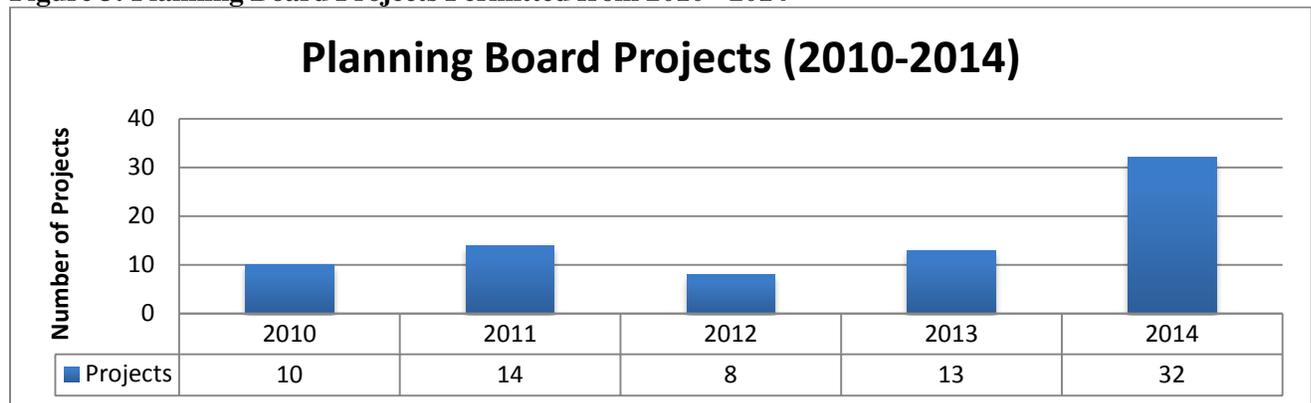
- Total number of jobs created by approved projects:
 - Construction Jobs: 703-723
 - Full Time Jobs: 709-1109
 - Part Time Jobs: 296-696
- Project Development Cost: \$127,835,431.00
- Increase in tax revenue (see Figure 2)

Figure 2: Tax Revenue Associated with FPB Projects (pre-project vs. post project difference)

Project Name	Current Tax	Est. Post Development Tax	Increase of (\$):
444 Franklin St.	\$120,000	\$368,000	\$248,000
490 Old Conn. Path	\$169,423	\$1,011,486	\$842,063
1350 Worcester Rd.	\$1,214,710	\$1,250,000	\$35,290
1626 Worcester Rd.	\$177,531	\$263,463	\$85,932
498 Concord St.	\$56,024	\$73,500	\$17,476
15 Pleasant St. Conn.	\$250,978	\$591,794	\$340,816
2-8 NY Avenue	\$195,150	\$361,313	\$166,163
740 Cochituate Rd	\$1,851,202	TIF	
222 Cochituate Rd.	\$30,448	\$51,369	\$20,921
125 Penn. Avenue	\$247,076	\$555,245	\$308,169
24 Blandin Avenue	\$23,500	\$70,000	\$46,500
1 Clarks Hill	\$2,842	\$230,000	\$227,158
39 Howard St.	\$16,140	\$150,000	\$133,860
120 Waverly St.		\$4,976,170	
188 Lawrence St	\$40,204	\$53,000	\$12,796
517 Concord St.			
TOTAL	\$4,392,228	\$10,005,340	\$2,484,144

In the 2014 calendar year, the FPB reported a record number of projects reviewed and permitted. Figure 3 shows the number of projects reviewed and permitted between 2010 and 2014.

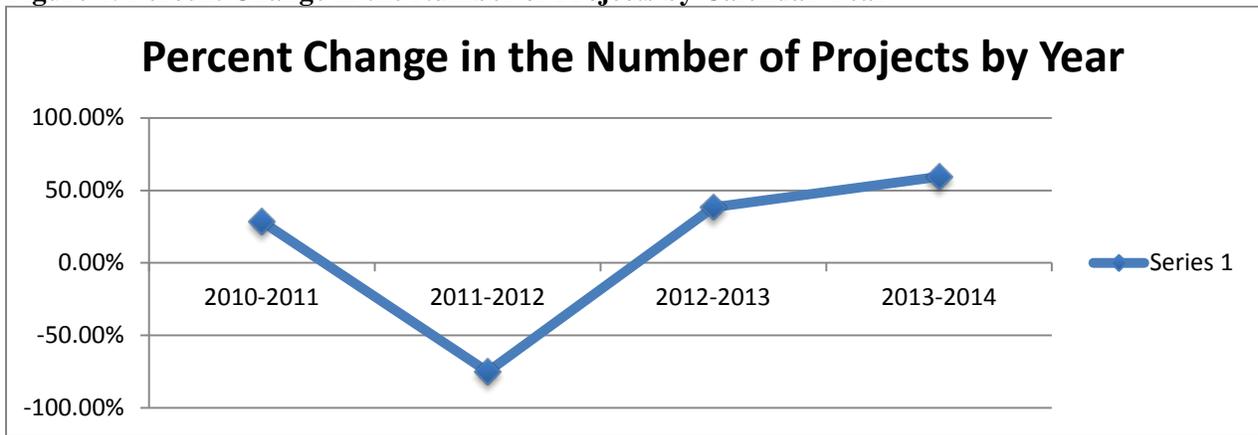
Figure 3: Planning Board Projects Permitted from 2010 - 2014



Number of Planning Board Projects (2010-2014)

Over the past four years, the Planning Board has seen a fluctuation in the number of projects. Between 2010 to 2011, there was a 28.57 percent increase in the number of projects; while between 2011 and 2012 there was a 75 percent reduction in the number of projects. During 2012-2013, the Planning Board started to see the number of projects increase by 38.46 percent; which contributed to a 59.4 percent increase in the number of projects between 2013-2014. Figure 4: Percent Change in the Number of Projects by Calendar Year represents this fluctuation in the number of projects between 2010 and 2014.

Figure 4: Percent Change in the Number of Projects by Calendar Year



Average Planning Board Review Time (2010-2014)

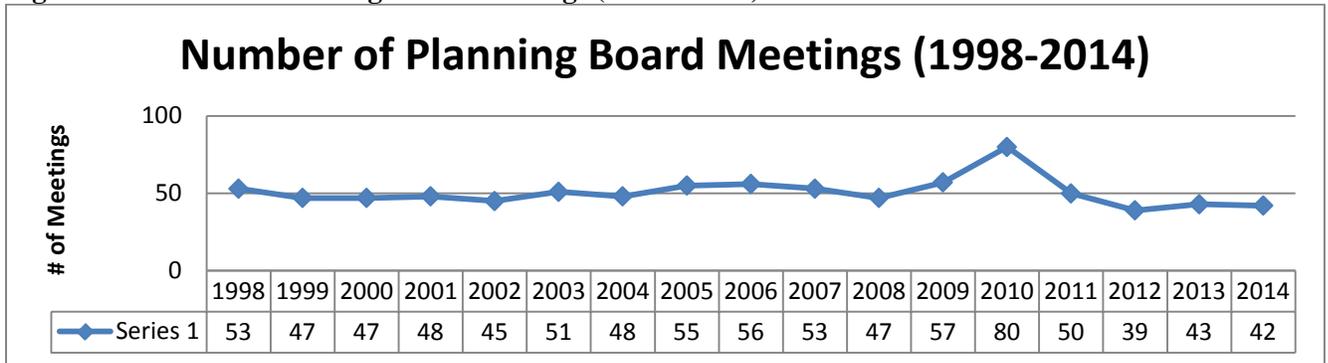
Between 2010 and 2014, the FPB and Town Departments successfully decreased the length of time needed to review projects. As denoted below there has been a significant decrease in the average permit review time from the 1st Public Hearing in 2010 to 2014. Furthermore the longest review time from the 1st Public Hearing in 2010 was 454 days and was again significantly decreased in 2014 to 202 days. It should be noted that the size and intensity of the projects significantly increased in 2013 and 2014. Projects during 2013 and 2014 included: Genzyme, The TJX Companies, The Congress Group, Galaxy Development, and CVS Pharmacy Project. Therefore, it can be said that the size and the number of projects were greater in 2013 and 2014 than in previous years.

- 2010: Average permit review time from 1st Public Hearing to a Decision 149.4 days
 - Shortest review time (1st public hearing to decision) - 1 day
 - Longest review time (1st public hearing to decision) - 454 days
- 2011: Average permit review time from 1st Public Hearing to a Decision 78.4 days
 - Shortest review time (1st public hearing to decision) – 14 days
 - Longest review time (1st public hearing to decision) – 277 days
- 2012: Average permit review time from 1st Public Hearing to a Decision 64.4 days
 - Shortest review time (1st public hearing to decision) – 7 days
 - Longest review time (1st public hearing to decision) – 161 days
- 2013: Average permit review time from 1st Public Hearing to a Decision 83.0 days
 - Shortest review time (1st public hearing to decision) - 1 day
 - Longest review time (1st public hearing to decision) - 202 days
- 2014: Average permit review time from 1st Public Hearing to a Decision 65.47 days
 - Shortest review time (1st public hearing to decision) - 1 day
 - Longest review time (1st public hearing to decision) - 202 days

Planning Board Meetings

The FPB regularly met on Thursday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in the Memorial Building. In calendar year 2014, the FPB held 42 meetings to consider applications for site plan review, amendments to previously approved decisions, special permits, subdivisions, modifications to scenic ways, public way access permits, as well as public hearings for zoning amendments. Since 1998, the number of meetings has seen little deviation, the average number of meetings is 50.65 (median 48 meetings). Figure 5 shows the number of meetings since 1998.

Figure 5: Number of Planning Board Meetings (1998 – 2014)

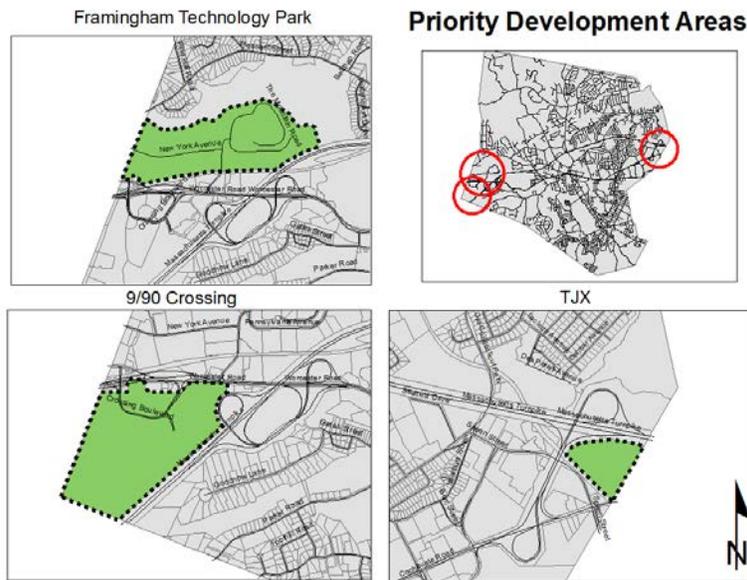


Chapter 43D: Expedited Permitting

In 2014, the FPB reviewed a total of four Chapter 43D: Expedited Permitting Projects on designated Priority Development Sites⁴. Project Numbers PB-005-13, PB-012-13, and PB-013-13 were submitted to the FPB for review during 2013, and were granted decisions in January 2014. The fourth Chapter 43D: Expedited Permitting Project, PB-001-14, was reviewed entirely during 2014. Chapter 43: Expedited Permitting Priority Development Sites can be referenced in Figure 6: Chapter 43D: Expedited Permitting Priority Development Sites.

- Total number of 43D: Expedited Permitting Projects approved in 2014: 4 projects.
 - **PB-005-13:** Genzyme (2-8 New York Ave)
 - **PB-012-13:** The TJX Companies, Inc. (740/770 Cochituate Road)
 - **PB-013-14:** Normandy Real Estate (15& 16 Pleasant Street Connector)
 - **PB-001-14:** The Congress Group (125/125/137 Pennsylvania Avenue)

Figure 6: Chapter 43D: Expedited Permitting Priority Development Sites



⁴ Annual Town Meet (May 1, 2013) voted to support the Priority Development Sites as Chapter 43 43D: Expedited Permitting. Chapter 43D provides a transparent and efficient process for municipal permitting; guaranteeing local permitting decisions on priority development sites within 180 days from the time a completed application is submitted. If the town fails to act within 180-day timeframe, the plans are deemed approved under state statute. The key steps in the adoption of Ch.43D are that the property owners agree to the designation and that town meeting vote to opt into the state program.

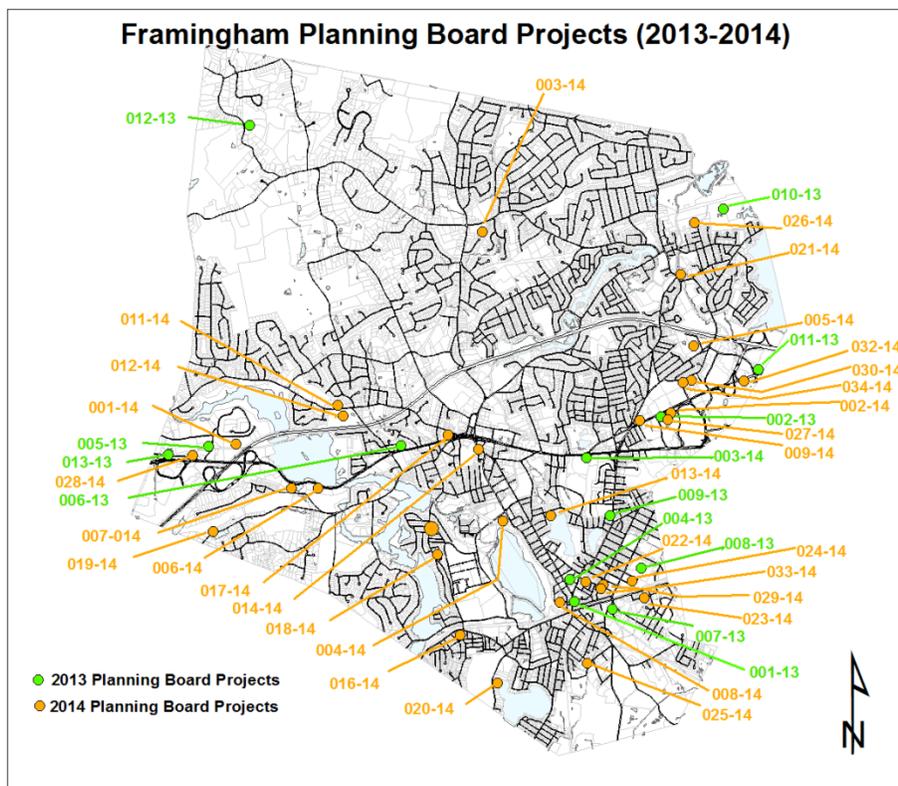
Development Projects

In 2014, the FPB and Town Departments took project review and permitting to a new level for the Town of Framingham. The Planning Board successfully decreased the time it took to obtain a permit, worked in collaboration with other Boards of neighboring towns to permit several major projects, and increased the level of project review to ensure the Town was protected and continued to prosper.

Development Project Descriptions

Appendix A: Projects under Review and Projects Approved provides a detailed analysis of the 32 Planning Board Projects reviewed and permitted during 2014. Each Project has been assigned a Project Number which can be seen throughout this document and within Figure 7: Planning Board Project Map. Figure 7: Planning Board Project Map shows the locations of each project permitted during 2013 and 2014 calendar years.

Figure 7: Planning Board Project Map



Long Range Planning

In 2014, the FPB undertook four major long range planning efforts which ranged from zoning, land use, master planning, and specific area planning. These planning efforts will help shape in the future planning and development in Framingham. These long range planning efforts included:

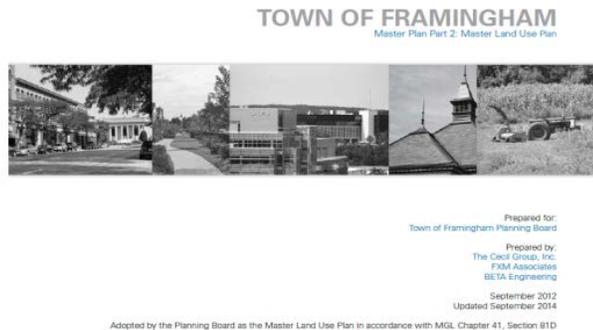
Framingham Zoning By-law Recodification – Phase I changes were voted by Special Fall Town Meeting, 2014 (Consultant: Attorney Barbara Saint Andre, Petrini & Associates).

The purpose of the Framingham Zoning By-law is to establish regulations for the uses of premises, protection and promotion of life, health, safety, morals, convenience, and general welfare to the Framingham community. In 2013, at Annual Spring Town Meeting, the Town voted to start a recodification process for the Zoning By-law. During Phase I of this project, the

entire Zoning By-law was reorganized and brought up-to-date with current case law and M.G.L. No substantial changes were made during this Phase of the recodification process. Major revisions during Phase I include: relocation of Definitions, the creation of a Table of Uses, reorganization of sections, and general housekeeping.

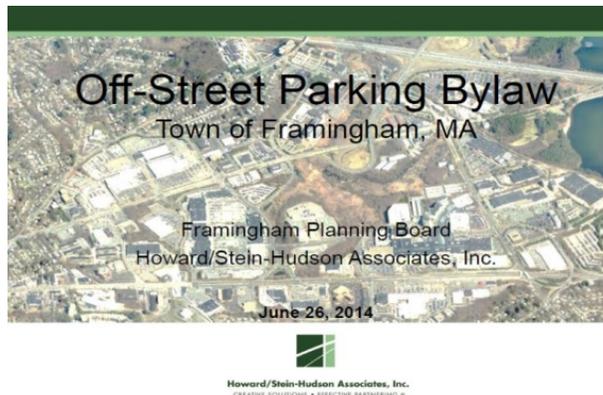
Framingham Master Land Use Plan – Technical Rewrite – adopted in September 2014(Consultant: Wayne Feiden, FAICP)

The Framingham Master Land Use Plan is a living, working document that is continuously being amended to remain current and continue to guide the Town of Framingham in its land use efforts. The Master Land Use Plan influences and guides all governmental policy decisions that impact land use decisions. The Master Land Use Plan harnesses the energies, insights, and lessons learned by the community. Through the Master Land Use Plan, Framingham can approach the next decade with a commitment to enhancing the Town’s unique character, cultural assets, and natural resources. The Master Land Use Plan is comprised of 5 Sections: Introduction, Vision for Framingham, Master Land Use Plan, Land Use Goals and Policies, and Implementation of Land Use Actions.



Framingham Parking Analysis, 2014 (Consultant: Howard-Stein-Hudson)

In the spring of 2014, the FPB engaged Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates to prepare a new Off-Street Parking Zoning Bylaw for the Town of Framingham. This study provided an analysis of the existing parking zoning provisions, provided education on the current off-street parking best practices and municipal case studies, assessed applicable innovative zoning techniques related to current developable land constraints and business growth, and produced an off-street parking zoning language and implementation strategies.



Southeast Framingham Land Use Analysis, September 2014 (Consultant: Planning Board Staff - In house)

The Southeast Framingham Land Use Analysis (SEFSA) is an analysis and review of the southeast area of Framingham. This study was undertaken in response to the untapped development potential that exists within the southeastern portion of Framingham. Therefore, the FPB in conjunction with the Town Manager, Department of Community & Economic Development, the Conservation Commission, the Department of Public Works, the Building Department, the Police Department, and the Parks & Recreation Department identified the need for a land use analysis of the Route 135/Waverly Street, Southeast Framingham area. Furthermore, the Town has undertaken a Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) initiative within the Central Business (CB) Zoning District which directly abuts the study area.

The SEFSA contains 3 Sections: Zoning and Land Use Analysis (history, land use, demographics, existing regulations, transportation, services, and environmental justice), Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats, and a Conclusion (which sets goals and recommendations for the SEFSA).



Framingham Town Meeting

The Planning Board is responsible for the upkeep of the Framingham Zoning By-law. The 2014 calendar year was extremely busy for the FPB in regards to zoning. In 2014, the FPB proposed four zoning articles which were adopted by Town Meeting, which include:

- Agriculture Preservation Development By-law (Annual Town Meeting, April 29, 2014);
 - Applies to all parcels of land within Framingham that meets the definition of an Active Farm. The Agriculture Preservation Development By-law provides landowners with an opportunity to sell up to 30% of their land for a residential cluster development while protecting a minimum of 70% of the property as an Active Farm Parcel.
- Open Space Cluster Development By-law (Annual Town Meeting, April 29, 2014); and
 - Applies to all parcels of land within Framingham that meet the definition Open Space Parcel. The Open Space Cluster Development provides landowners with an alternative to conventional residential subdivision while protecting a large portion of the property in its current open space state.
- Amendment to Floodplain District – Section III.H. (Annual Town Meeting, April 29, 2014)
 - Amendment to the existing Floodplain District By-law, based on the recent FEMA floodplain map updates.
- Phase I: Recodification of the Zoning By-law (Special Fall Town Meeting, October 21, 2014);
 - The FPB worked with Attorney Barbara Saint Andre, the Standing Committee on Planning and Zoning, Eugene Kennedy of the Community & Economic Development Department, and the Board of Selectmen to present the reorganization of the Framingham

Zoning By-law. During Phase I of the Zoning By-law Recodification process, the working group successfully reorganized the entire by-law without making major changes to the content, created a Table of Uses, and reviewed for compliance with case law and MGL.

- Moderate Slope By-law Modification (Special Fall Town Meeting, October 21, 2014).
 - This amendment to the existing Moderate Slope By-law further ensures protection of slopes greater than 15 percent from development. Furthermore, ensuring that all plans submitted are reviewed for accuracy as presented by the Town Engineer or Town Peer Review Consultant.

Collaboration

The Planning Board has worked in collaboration with a number of Departments and Organizations to help implement the Master Plan Use Plan, Framingham studies and plans, and on grant opportunities. Below is a list of working collaboration items that the Planning Board has participated in:

- MetroWest Moves Through the Mass in Motion/ Community Transformation Grant, the Town of Framingham will be working in collaboration with the communities of Hudson, Marlborough, and Northborough to create incorporate healthy communities initiative town or city.
- Open Space & Recreation Plan, update
- Transit Oriented Development, Central Business District Zoning
- Framingham Development Handbook

Workshops & Education Opportunities

The FPB continued its efforts ensure public outreach and community engagement in the planning process was obtained. The FPB co-hosted two workshops during the 2014 calendar year, which included:

- Locally Grown: Preserving Agricultural Lands in the Suburbs – January 9, 2014, Planning Board worked with Massachusetts Audubon Society, Sudbury Valley Trustees to present on alternative options of development and preservation of open space and agricultural properties. The goal of the workshop was to present programs and strategies to help farmers keep working lands in use.
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): Complete Streets Workshop – In September 2014, the FPB co-hosted a Complete Streets Workshop to assist in the collection of information for the proposed 2015 Framingham Bicycle Plan.

The FPB continued its efforts in furthering their education to help ensure, all members of the Board were up-to-date on the latest trends and planning practices. During March 2014, all five FPB members attended the Citizens Planning Training Collaborative Workshop hosted in Worcester.

Grant and Funding Opportunities

To aid in the Town's ability to provide complete streets and access to open space throughout Framingham, the FPB submitted two grant applications in 2014. These grant applications included:

- The FPB in collaboration with MetroWest Moves was successful in receiving a Community Innovation Challenge Grant, 2014. The money from this grant will assist MetroWest Moves in the development of a Complete Streets Analysis Tool – to determine the best streets within Framingham to implement bicycle lanes on.
- The FPB partnered on an application for the Nyanza Grant to assist the Town in obtaining a Conservation Restriction along the Sudbury River near the Town Centre (January of 2015: notification was received that the Town of Framingham has passed on to the next phase of the application review process – this was a two phase review)

Technology & Process Improvements

One of the major divisions between the public and private sector is access to technology and information. As the private sector continues to advance its use of technology, the public sector often falls behind due to the lack of resources or knowledge about new technology. Prior to 2014, anyone wanting to see materials in the FPB Office had to visit the Memorial Building or call in to request materials. This often left a large percent of the population out of the public participation process.

During 2014, the FPB was able to redesign itself, through staff that are fluent in advance technology. Below are the technological improvements made by the FPB during the year. These technology improvements decreased the amount of paper used, while an increase in access to FPB materials to the general public were made. Furthermore, advances in FPB technology provided the Framingham Community with remote access to information related to FPB Projects/studies/reports being undertaken in the Memorial Building.

- Planning Board Packets – The Planning Board successfully switched from paper packets (average weight 5lbs) to Windows Tablets. This switchover allowed the Town to save paper and time printing.
- Project Files – All achieved FPB files have been taken from the FPB Office/vault/storage areas to be scanned into Laser Fiche. Once this project is complete in 2015, all achieved FPB files will be accessible on the internet.
- Project Applications – All FPB Applications are accessible online for download. During this endeavor all applications were revised to meet the needs of the FPB and the various Town Departments. Additionally, all applications can be downloaded and filled in electronically. In 2015, the FPB will be launching ACCELA to allow for online application review throughout the Town – streamlining the review process even more.
- FPB Website – The FPB Website has been updated to meet the needs of the Town. All projects/documents/planning studies/Town Meeting Zoning Articles, etc. are viewable online. The revisions to the FPB’s webpage allow the community to access information from home or mobile device.
- Facebook – The FPB joined the social media world. The FPB’s Facebook page has been utilized to inform the public about events, meetings, and other useful information. As of December 2014, the FPB Facebook page has 139 likes.
- In June 2014, the FPB changed the way we send abutter notification to the residents within a radius of 300-500 feet of a project being reviewed. Before June 2014, the FPB sent 8.5”x11” pieces of paper folded in three, with the entire legal notice printed on it; now we send 4”x6” post cards with a modified version of the legal notice. From when the FBP started to send post cards, until the end of 2014, the FPB have saved tax payers \$284.78 in postage fees on 2046 pieces of mail.
- FPB Office - The FPB Office received a complete overhaul. All the old/broken filing cabinets and furniture were removed and replaced with new consolidated file cabinets and office furniture. Furthermore, the old carpet was replaced and the walls were repainted. To ensure the FPB Office met the professional needs of the community and to assist in the Project Review a SMART Board and 55” LCD screen was installed. The SMART Board has assisted the Office in project and document review, land use analysis, and during meetings.

Framingham Planning Board Goals for 2015

The FPB hopes to achieve the following goals set for the 2015 calendar year. These goals have been developed by the FPB through the Master Land Use Plan, 2014 project efforts, and the FPB members.

2015 Planning Board Goals in Accordance with the Master Land Use Plan

Goals from the Master Land Use Plan:

- 5.1.1 Comprehensive Revision to Town Land Use Regulations
 - Recodification of the Framingham Zoning By-law
 - Revised and update Section VI. A. and B. Parking Regulations
 - Revised and update Section V.B. Historic Re-Use
 - Revised and update Section V.H. Affordable Housing
 - Revised and update Section V.L. Land Disturbance
 - Revised and update Section VI.F. Site Plan Review
 - Transfer of Development Rights
- 5.1.2.3 Target Areas on Corridors Identified for Rezoning
 - 5.1.2.3.1 Golden Triangle
 - 5.1.2.3.2 South Framingham
 - 5.1.2.3.4 9/90 Corridor Corporate Center and Technology Park
- 5.1.4 Transportation
 - 5.1.4.2 Complete Streets
 - Adopt Complete Streets Policy
 - Complete Street Designation, Chapter 90I
 - Apply for Complete Street Grant Funding
- 5.1.7 Other Infrastructure
 - 5.1.7.1 Alternative and Solar Energy By-law
 - Review and revise Solar Overlay District as necessary
- 5.2.4 Housing Strategies
 - Define Affordable Housing Process for Special Permit Projects
- 5.2.9 Specific Area Strategies
 - 5.2.9.9 9/90 Corporate Center and Technology Park
 - Develop a cohesive plan for these two districts that allows for future expansion of the Framingham economic development base

Other Planning Board Goals

- Publish and implement Development Handbook
- Revise Shoppers World Sign Package
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

2015 Planning Board Office Goals

- Continue to work in collaboration with Community & Economic Development and other Town Departments to enhance the Town's planning efforts;
- Carry on and enhance the collaboration between the FPB and the Standing Committee on Planning and Zoning;
- Expand and enhance outreach to various stakeholder groups (property owners, developers, attorneys, landscape architects, association groups, state agencies, etc.) to garner input on proposed zoning by-law amendments or concepts;
- Continue to improve the application process and requirements, and work with prospective applicants and interested parties to provide clarity to the permitting process;
- Improve Applicants knowledge about the required permit package submittal requirements;
- Increase the FPB number of likes and feeds on Facebook;
- Provide increased project tracking and visibility on the Town Website;
- Enhance the project tracking from start to finish;
- Continue to improve electronic submittal and tracking through ACCELA; and
- Reduce the FPB carbon footprint through a decrease in paper submittals.