

Introduction

The first Master Plan Update Public Forum was held on May 22, 2019 at the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School Cafeteria. The intent of the workshop was to understand what the community values and how people would like to see the town in the next 10 to 20 years. This summary documents what participants discussed and the ideas and issues they felt were important for the Town to consider as it updates the Master Plan.

The evening was organized around small group discussions. After a brief introductory presentation about the Master Plan update, its purpose, and process, groups focused on three questions:

- 1. Provide examples of Sudbury's assets, something important to the community. Are they at risk? If so, how or why?
- 2. What is the biggest change (good and not so good) you've seen in Sudbury in the last 10 years? How is this change impacting the community?
- 3. What is Sudbury's biggest challenge in the next 10 to 20 years? What are strategies to meet this challenge in the future?

Approximately 50 people attended and were divided into six small groups. Participants were given broad direction for their responses and encouraged to include organizations, projects, areas of town, or local policies. Group discussions were recorded on flip charts. Large maps of the Town were provided at each table for participants to circle locations related to their ideas or simply to use as a reference tool for the people at the table.

For Question 3, prioritization techniques (dot voting) helped to highlight the most important challenges for each group. Participants were given three dots to vote on the top challenges generated during their discussion that they felt should be a priority. For the challenge that received the most votes, the biggest challenge for Sudbury in the next 10 to 20 years, the groups brainstormed strategies to meet this challenge and who should be involved in implementation. Attachment A contains photographs of all flipcharts.

Because it was anticipated that an individual would not be able to talk about all their ideas that night, attendees were encouraged to write as many comments and suggestions on Participant Worksheets that were provided. Worksheets were collected at the end of the evening and all ideas were taken into account when developing this summary. Attachment B lists all responses received on the Participant Worksheets.

In addition to the group discussions, the workshop included a gallery with informational posters and maps as well as "ice breaker" activities intended to get attendees to thinking about ideas for Sudbury's future and what they love about the town. A summary of the ice breaker responses is included as Attachment C.

Forum Outcomes

Themes

A wide range of topics and ideas were covered by participants during the forum. For the purposes of this summary, they are organized under the following themes (presented in no particular order):

Development: Responses that focused on balancing development with preservation, development pressure, and specific areas including Route 20 and Meadow Walk.

Natural Resources and Open Space: Discussions about natural resources and open space such as trees and open space conservation and protection.

Town Services: Responses that focused on services provided by the Town, such as the library, schools, and recreational programming, as well as municipal staff.

People: Responses that focused on demographic shifts, including the growing senior residents as well as the increase in overall population and diversity.

Mobility: Discussions that focused on traffic, walking, and biking as well as access to public transportation and the ability to get to important destinations without a car.

Town Character: Responses that focused on the town's historic and rural character.

Town Finances: Responses that focused on municipal revenue and expenditures, including the Town's budget, local taxes, and spending on capital improvements.

Housing and Housing Development: Discussion that focused on housing policy, needs in the community, and available options.

Sense of Community and Civic Engagement: Responses that focused on social aspects of life in Sudbury and civic engagement, including resident participation, town meetings, voting, communication, and attendance.

It should be noted that these themes are not mutually exclusive, and ideas often crossed topics and encompassed many issues.

The summary below incorporates all comments from the Participant Worksheets and notes recorded on the flip charts from the group discussion sessions.

What We Heard

Question1: What are Sudbury's assets, something important to the community. Are they at risk? If so, how or why?

Most answers focused on the themes Natural Resources, Town Services, Town Character, Sense of Community, and People.

Town Services: Participants identified many town services as assets, such as the Goodnow Library, Senior Center, and schools. Recreational opportunities were available for everyone with the pool,

playing fields, and parks. Dedication of town staff was also mentioned by participants, and the accessibility of Selectmen was noted.

Participants noted lack of maintenance and budget cuts pose risks to town facilities, including open spaces that are used for recreation. Schools may also be risk due to declining enrollment, increasing cost, lack of maintenance, and budget cuts.

Natural Resources: Participants discussed the trees, open space, wetlands, and conservation lands as assets to the community. They provide opportunities for walking, biking, and wildlife habitat. Examples included King Phillip Conservation Land, Great Meadow (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and land owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Development, tree cutting, and budget cuts pose risks to natural resources and open spaces. The growing population with development pressure and climate change were also noted.

Town Character: Historical features, scenic roads, natural beauty, and the rural town feel were mentioned as an asset to Sudbury. Participants specifically mentioned the Wayside Inn and the historical houses in town.

Participants noted the character and historical value of buildings might be at risk from non-adherence to historic standards/techniques and poor maintenance. Many are not accessible for those with disabilities.

People: Participants view the people who live in Sudbury as assets, including the growing senior population.

No risks were noted.

Some responses on Question 1 on Participant Worksheets

Assets....

- The beauty of our town: safe, interesting residents, education is important
- Bucolic open space/rural atmosphere, strong schools, historic locations that has character that are well preserved.
- Schools, conservation land and sidewalks, good access to shopping and services, safety
- Good school system, great town social worker, the hiking trails
- Excellent schools, open space, somewhat rural character, historic (background) building, plans and narratives, age diversity
- Many people are very involved in town business and activities. Good intentions to make things better. Intergenerational programs

Risks to those assets...

- Global warming adverse effects flooding (storms), droughts, fire hazards.
- All at risk, due to development pressure and tight budgets
- Lack of maintenance of historic buildings
- Rising costs to educate

Question 2: What is the biggest change (good and not so good) you've seen in Sudbury in the last 10 years? How is this change impacting the community?

Most answers focused on Mobility, Development, Housing and Housing Development, People, and Town Budget and Finances.

Mobility: Participants noted an increase in traffic congestion especially during rush hour. As a result, walking along roads has become unsafe. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is moving forward.

Housing and Housing Development: Participants noted housing development in the last 10 years has been more diverse, such as condominiums, apartments, and age-restricted or senior housing. Many noted this is good, but there needs to be more focus on more affordable options for young families. Single family homes being built are very large and expensive.

Development: Participants identified the increased overall development as being the biggest change in the last 10 years, good and bad. Route 20 and Meadow Walk were cited specifically, and the resulting traffic has impacted the community. Others noted an increase in places to eat and shop locally at Meadow Walk. The decrease in commercial and industrial businesses, specifically the leaving of Raytheon, has resulted in a tax base more reliant on residential property.

People: Participants have noticed an increase in the Town's overall population in the last 10 years. Some noted there has been an increase in its diversity, particularity with the growing Chinese community; however, others commented that the town is not diverse. Participants also noted that there are more seniors, or "mature" adults.

Town Finances: Participants noted changes in the Town's budget and finances over the past 10 years. The loss of Raytheon and the increase of residential development has impacted town revenue. The tax rate has changed and property taxes have increased in an attempt to make up for the loss of revenue. This increase in taxes impacts whether voters will support the increased need for future town investments, such as a new fire truck, senior center upgrades, office space for school administration, roadway improvements, etc. It also increases cost of living. With property taxes rising, affordability for some members of the community is at risk.

Some responses on Question 2 on Participant Worksheets

- Not so good: development and development pressures, budgets, unfunded state mandates and traffic. Good: Town working to "get ahead" of curve through better planning and budgeting but still a long way to go; more professional, objective town staff.
- ...Biggest change increase in rental units not bad but will be a new thing for Sudbury to manage...
- Rte. 20 business expansion (positive), Meadow Walk development, people (staying to shop locally) more choices, more business tax base dollars; requires more infrastructure services to grow; sidewall addition in neighborhood since we moved here and huge increase in property tax affordability at risk.
- In my 5 years here, I've seen traffic increase (negative); The bike path project is inching forward (positive); Schools are keeping more children with special learning needs within town and keeping cost of those services lower.

Question 3: What is Sudbury's biggest challenge in the next 10 to 20 years? Why?

Most answers focused on Mobility, development, housing, school, and town budget and finance.

Mobility: Participants noted traffic will be one of Sudbury's biggest challenges in the immediate futures. The Town will have to find ways to manage traffic and mitigate its impacts on the community's quality of life. The Town will need to become more walkable and bikeable, equally addressing improvements to pedestrian and cycling amenities that connect destinations with residential areas that are safe. Increasing access to public transportation will also be a challenge.

Mobility issues for more vulnerable members of the community were also discussed. These groups include seniors or low-income households where access to cars may be limited or non-existent. These groups have significant needs for increased access to transportation options and availability of those options at important times of the day.

Town Services: A big challenge for the Town will be the ability to meet overall demand for services of a growing population by balancing the needs of diverse groups, such as seniors, young families, and those with different income levels. The Town must also maintain and upgrade recreation facilities, buildings, roads, and other municipal facilities and infrastructure.

Participants also highlighted that all residents need to continue their commitment to the school system and ensure it is properly funded when student enrollment is no longer declining.

Housing and Housing Development: Challenges focused on maintaining and creating diverse housing options for low- and middle-income levels, and to address housing needs for all income levels and all age groups. Solutions might include smaller housing types on smaller lots. The Town also needs to maintain its 10% affordable housing percentage.¹

Town Finances: Participants identified challenges that focused on effective use of tax revenues, increasing the commercial tax base, and protecting capital investments made by the Town. Doing so will help manage property taxes and costs to residents.

Development: Participants identified pressure from developers and maintaining control of development in town as a challenge in the future. The Town will have to address septic and sewer system in the business area to protect natural resources and create opportunities to increase the commercial tax base. Stormwater will also be a challenge with new development, particularly along Route 20. Some participants noted that overall development is a challenge and should be limited.

¹ Mass General Law Chapter 40B sets a standard where 10% of a community's housing stock should be deed restricted as "affordable" to households at a certain income level. Communities that have not met or maintained the 10% number are more susceptible to Comprehensive Permit applications. These applications, where accepted by the state, can circumvent local zoning regulations and develop housing at a much denser levels so long as a fixed portion is affordable, subsidized, deed restricted housing. Communities that have reached the 10% threshold and maintain that percentage are in a much stronger position to deny Comprehensive Permit applications.

Some responses on Question 3 on Participant Worksheets

- Maintain affordable housing minimum keep control over development. Improve
 pedestrian/cycling/public transit healthier/greener/ alternatives to cars mitigate traffic without
 expanding roads allow kids to be more self-sufficient; expand commercial tax base in acceptable
 way.
- ...Maintaining a range of housing from low income thru middle to upper, non-age restricted condos, workforce housing...
- Accommodating the needs and wants of all citizens, across all ages and economic situations. We are
 no longer the #1 town in the state for families with children under 18. Housing/land costs have
 gone up so much that only the wealthy can afford to buy here and increased taxes are driving out
 the rest of us. We are 2 wage earners, commuting and adding to traffic, needing affordable day
 care.
- Traffic and transportation; Route 20 development absent stormwater; Balance between resources for seniors and younger families; Water management /storm resilience

Top Challenges

Each group used dot voting to prioritize what they felt was the priority of challenges listed from their group during Question 3. For the challenge that received the most votes, the group brainstormed potential strategies the town should consider to meet that challenge. Below are notes from the groups' flip charts.

Managing Town Services and Taxes

Suggested Strategies		Who should be involved?	
•	On-going communication and attendance at meetings	•	Boards and Committees
•	Hold town meetings on weekends	•	Board of Selectmen
•	Town meeting forum to discuss upcoming topics	•	Town staff
	Debate on one day, voting on another		
•	Better articulation		
•	Bottom up designing and budgeting		
•	Cost control		
•	Strengthen project management and accountability		
•	Accepting that things cost more		
•	Prioritizing improvement and maintenance		

Affordable Housing

Suggested Strategies	Who should be involved?	
 Reform zoning law w/ regard to buildable lots size 	Housing Trust	
 Change Town by-law to change 50% requirement – state 	Planning Board	
law – advance at the local level	Housing Authority	
 Increase requirements on inclusionary zoning – increase 		
from 25%? – state law		
 Look at Airbnb and VRBO- out of curiosity and how to 		
regulate		

Lack of Transportation

Lack of Transportation					
Suggested Strategies	Who should be involved?				
Transportation	Capital investments/				
 Single mom going to school 	infrastructure: DPW, Facilities				
 Local continuing ed 	for maintenance and roads				
 Connect and other community/ opportunities 					
Traffic					
 Commuter rail 					
 Lack of good urban planning on Route 20 					
 Open space preservation – continuing to make it a 					
priority, hold onto open space assets, vote for future					
 Balancing development with rural character, plan 					
proactively for development in the right place					
 Protecting capital investments/ infrastructure, fiscal 					
challenge					
 No town-wide preservation plan 					
 Water management/resilience 					
o Sewer/water					

Transportation and Traffic

Staff capacity

Satisfying competing needsAttractive package for staff

Suggested Strategies	Who should be involved?	
Rail Trail	■ Town	
Defining the needs of people	Eversource	
Buses in and out of Boston	MBTA	
 Shuttle to public stations (Lincoln and Framingham) 	■ ISO NE	
 Continuing local education 		
 Connect to other communities/opportunities 		
Ride share		
 Plan proactively for development 		

Development

Suggested Strategies	Who should be involved?	
 Balance development with town character 	Planning Board	
 Plan proactively for development in right places/ manage development 		
 Use smart development to address town issues 		
 Business incubators to keep jobs in town 		
 More commercial development for revenue 		

Preservation of Character (Historic, Conservation/Natural Areas)

Suggested Strategies	Who should be involved?	
Emphasis on maintenance	None listed	
 Management/ Protection/ enforcing of zoning 		
 Support historic preservation efforts 		
 Support for large lots subject to change in use 		
 create town-wide preservation plan 		
 Balance development with rural character 		
Fund for historic preservation		

ATTACHMENT A

Small Group Flip Charts

Please note that table numbers were assigned randomly. They are not consecutive.

Table 2

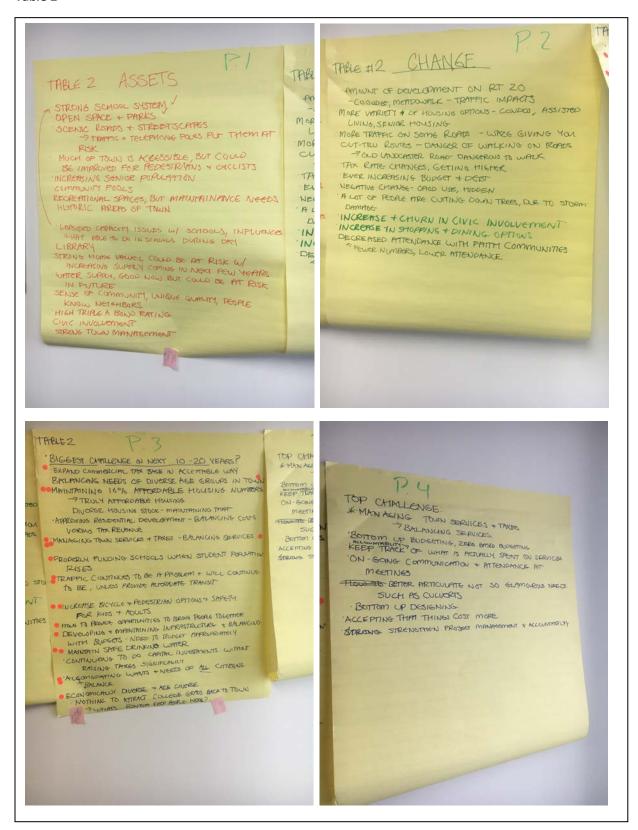
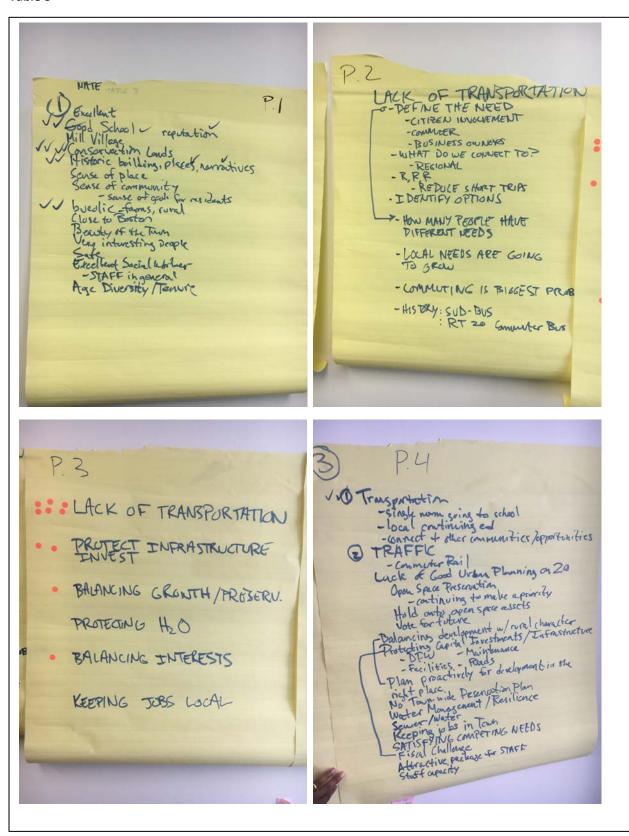


Table 3



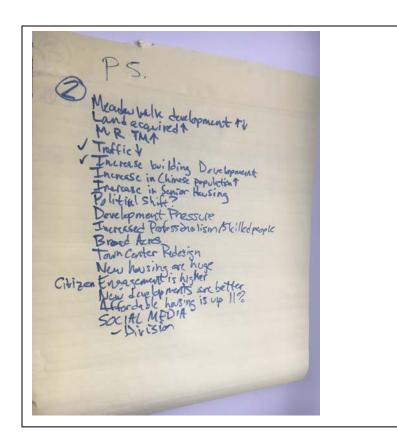
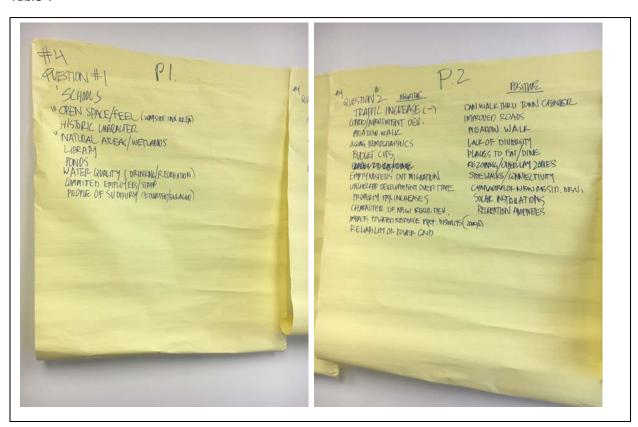


Table 4



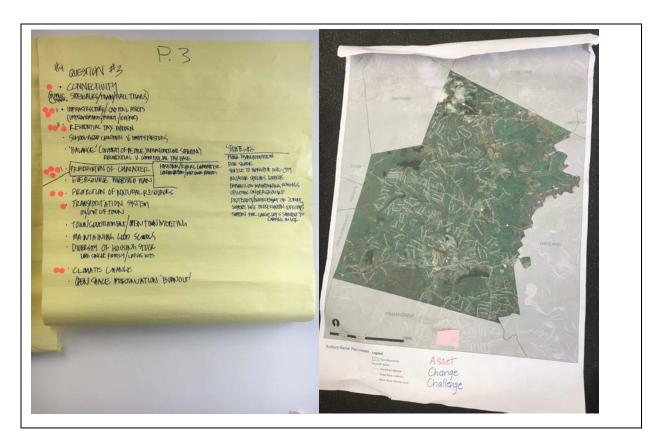
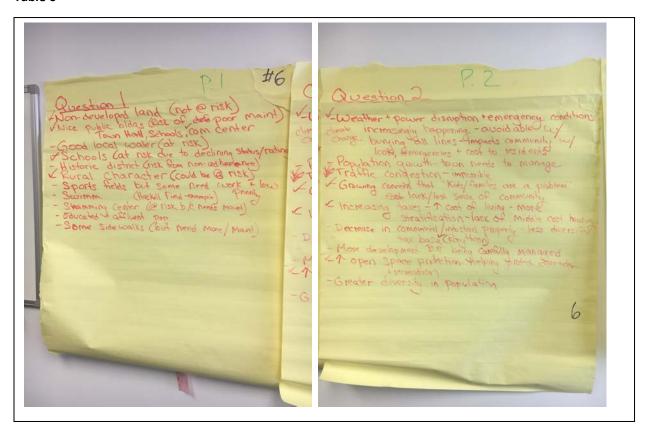
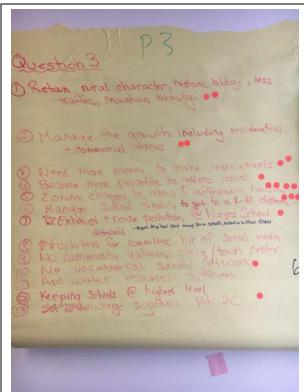
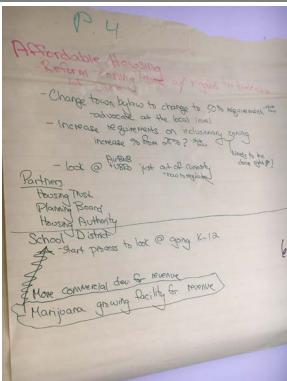


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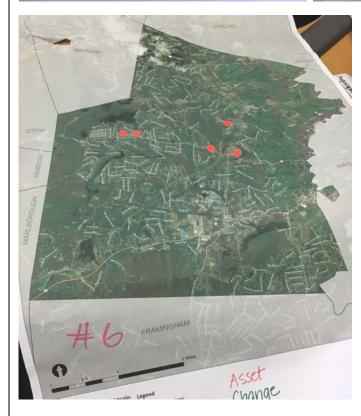
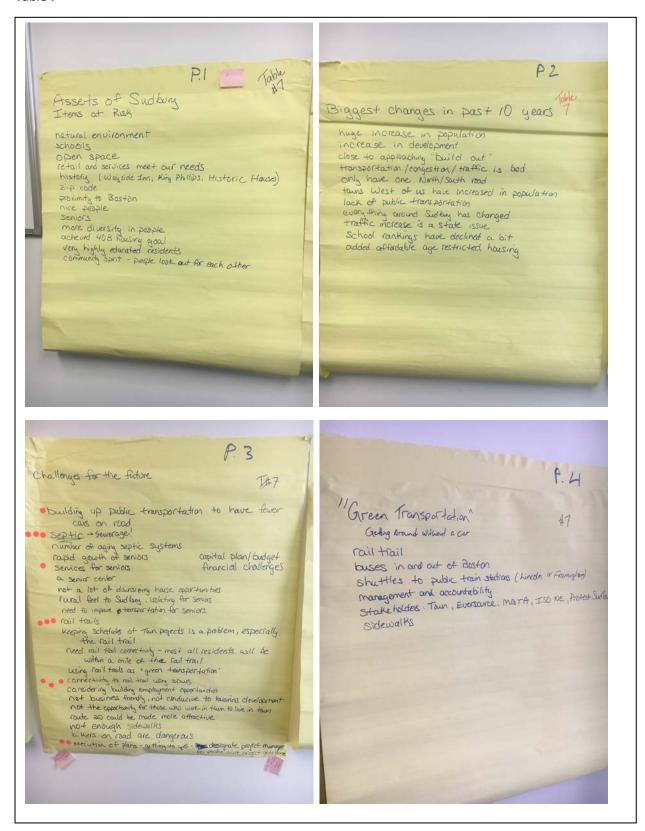


Table 7



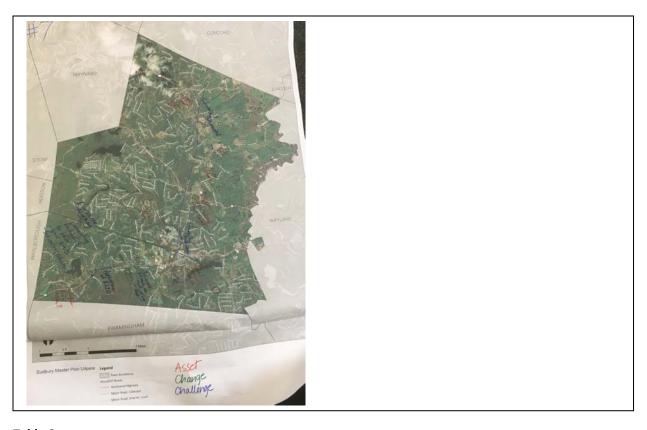
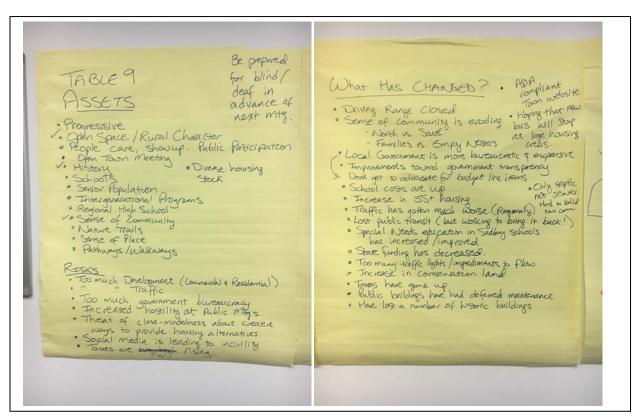
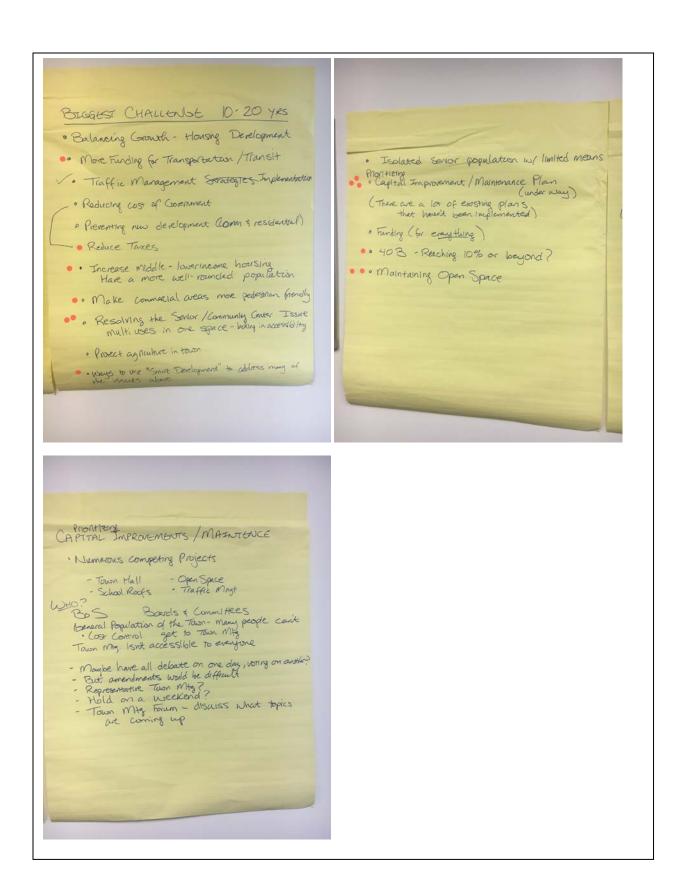


Table 9





ATTACHMENT B Participant Worksheets

ATTACHMENT C

Ice Breakers

At the beginning of the forum, attendees had an opportunity to answer some ice-breaker questions before the program began. The results are recorded below.

I wish Sudbury had ... because...

- Green transportation
- 2 rail trails (4 dot)
- Walkways and bike paths (1 dot)
- Commuting options, maybe park N ride to Cambridge & Boston
- Public transportation to colleges
- More people willing to get involved for diversity of opinions
- · Accessible traffic lights for crossing streets
- More ADA public transportation

My Favorite Place in Sudbury to...

Enjoy the outdoor:

- Hop Brook
- Open space land-trail, ponds, wayside Inn
- Tippling Rock-Nobscot

Have dinner:

- Soul of India
- Chili Basil

Take the kids:

• National Wildlife Preserve to bike

Show an out-of-towner:

- Wayside Inn area (1 dot)
- Grist Mill

Grab a snack:

Sudbury Coffee Works (1 dot)