



# Sudbury Master Plan Update Community Conversation *Public Health, Housing, and Equity*

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As part of its Master Plan update process, the Town of Sudbury hosted a series of **community conversations** throughout October 2019. These individual meetings allowed participants to dig deeper into issues that shape the quality of life in the town. A total of five meetings were held at the Lower Meeting Room of Town Hall and focused on the following topics:

- Transportation, Mobility, and Connectivity (Including Complete Streets Projects): October 10
- Economic Resilience, Town Services, and Infrastructure: October 15
- Public Health, Housing, and Equity: October 24
- Historic and Cultural Assets: October 28
- Natural Environment, Open Space, and Recreation: October 29

The conversations were organized around small group discussions. After a brief presentation on the Master Plan update, an overview of the topic, and what issues in Sudbury were heard to date from prior public input opportunities, participants dove into their conversations. The objectives of these discussions were to understand the full spectrum of issues and needs in Sudbury, gain a better understanding of what direction residents felt the town should be headed, and what types of projects, policies, or initiatives they supported moving forward.

At the tables were topic “primers,” highlighting facts and stats in Sudbury, maps, and other information to inform participants about the issues. Discussions were recorded on flipcharts and personal worksheets if participants chose to use them.

## Public Health, Housing, and Equity

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Approximately 16 people attended the Public Health, Housing, and Equity meeting. **The purpose of this summary is to document what was discussed at the Community Conversations meetings. Below are comments and discussion from those that attended the meetings and should not be taken as the opinions of the Town or new town policies or actions.**

### 1. What current and future issues around Public Health, Housing, and Equity were missing from the opening presentation?

**Access to Services:** There are limited access to needed services in town, including childcare, medical offices, and resources for veterans. There are growing needs by residents of all ages for mental health resources. Holistic resources for low-income residents are also not available locally.

**Town Services:** Overall there is a lack of knowledge by residents of the services available to them through the Town. Looking ahead, the Town needs to ensure that the capacity of services, particularly the Fire and Police departments, will support population growth and the increasing proportion of older residents.

**Housing:** Housing affordability is decreasing, particularly for older residents. Additionally, many of the homes in Town are older and can lead to public health concerns, like asthma and childhood lead poisoning, if not maintained.

**Public Health:** Tickborne diseases are a growing public health concern.

## 2. Based on these issues, where should we be headed?

**Housing Affordability:** Policies should encourage more opportunities and support for residents to age in place without being priced out of the community. Smaller homes with smaller lots and lowering the 80% Area Median Income since the average income in the Town is high.

**Access to Services:** The Town's Social Worker has been very proactive in building a website of resources to address public health issues. It can be a starting point for more outreach and education to residents about what is available in Sudbury and the region. A continuing assessment of mental health of at-risk populations, including seniors, students, and veterans, can help prioritize limited resources.

**Equity:** Participants discussed the importance of ensuring all aspects of Sudbury are accessible, including housing, open space areas, municipal facilities, and transportation. There is also the need for the Town to be aware that seniors and low-income families need not only housing but social services and transportation.

## 3. How do we get there? What's working now, or what could be better? What are some new strategies, programs, or initiatives?

**Housing and Housing Affordability:** The Town needs to look for ways to create more affordable housing options for residents at all stages of life: single households, families, and older residents. Changes to the zoning bylaw can allow for smaller homes on smaller lots, accessory dwellings units, or conversion of large homes to multi-family. The Town should determine if the state-mandated 10% goal of affordable units is meeting local needs or if it should be higher.

**Public Health:** More support for the Town social worker, including additional staff, will help the Health Department to address growing mental health issues in Sudbury. Partnerships with Council on Aging, Sudbury Public Schools, Fire and Police departments, and other should continue.

Increasing access to open space and natural resources can also have public health benefits.

**Partnerships:** Partnerships with non-profits can help identify and assist in meeting needs around housing and public health. This can include strengthening relationships with religious institutions and social service organizations to strengthen communication to residents, enhancing knowledge about services available, and identifying gaps in services.

**Mobility:** Connectivity improvements will help residents who do not have a vehicle or have disabilities access services and basic needs via biking, walking, or public transportation. These connections need to be considered and incorporated into existing and future housing development.

## Follow-up Survey

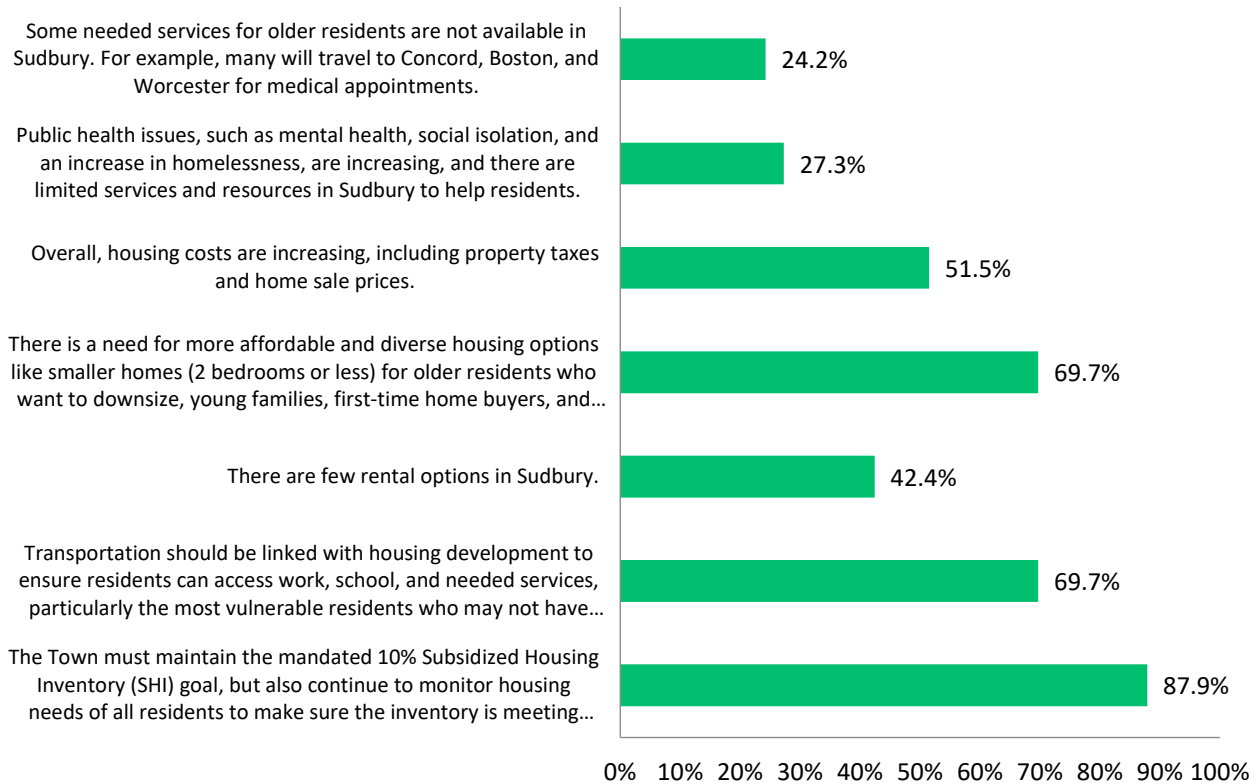
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Following the Public Health, Housing, and Equity community conversation on October 24, 2019, the Town administered an online survey to provide an opportunity for those who could not attend the meeting to give input on the questions asked during small group discussions. Similar to the community conversation, the goal

of the survey is to understand issues that are important to residents, what is working to address the issues, and ideas on how the Town should move forward. The survey was available from November 4-12, 2019, and 34 people responded.

**The purpose of this summary is to document comments and feedback through the survey. Below are comments and discussion from those that took the survey and should not be taken as the opinions of the Town and new town policies or actions.**

1.) The following issues were identified at the public meeting on October 24th. Please select issues with which you agree. (Answered: 33, Skipped: 1)



Other issues are we missing? (Answered: 9, Skipped: 25)

Increase funding for the Board of Health to help address mental health, domestic abuse, and homelessness.

Residents on fixed incomes are being taxed out of Sudbury.

Increase cultural offerings in a town like theater, art and gallery space, a movie theater, etc.

The Town should be part of the solution to the housing crisis. There should be housing for all people of all income types, but development has to be consistent with the character of the town.

Improve mobility in town by connecting people to other major public systems, and developing trails for biking and walking

The town should maintain 10%, but examine the impact on traffic before adding more housing in town.

2.) What is the Town doing that is working and/or what could be better? (Answered: 19, Skipped: 15)

|                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Continue support for Housing Authority and Housing Trust to maintaining the 10% housing stock.                              | Need rail trail and better walkway access.                                                                                                                       |
| Continue to improve the local schools to keep high ratings.                                                                 | The Town needs to focus on building a community. The town seems to be divided on many issues.                                                                    |
| As social and health needs increases in Town, more support should be provided for the Health Department and Social Workers. | Prevent sprawling along Route 20 and reduce development.                                                                                                         |
| Town meetings are well run and happy with the Sudbury Water District.                                                       | Address needs for seniors by increasing opportunities at Senior Center, ensuring there's equity in the treatment of social ills, and ADA transportation options. |
| The town need creative ideas for increasing moderate housing that is not subsidized                                         |                                                                                                                                                                  |

3.) What are some new ideas the Town should be thinking about? (include specific locations, if applicable.) (Answered: 16, Skipped: 18)

|                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The town should review zoning to allow for strategic development like smaller-units, multifamily, and townhouses that align with the town character. | Bring people together by offering more community events like outdoor plays and concerts. |
| Increase art in town by creating a Community Arts Center.                                                                                            | Provide resources for low-income families and students in town.                          |
| The town needs to solve traffic congestion, increase public transportation, more ADA accessibility, walkways.                                        | Renovate or rebuild the Senior Center                                                    |
| Ensure students do not fall through the cracks — more thoughtful education for all students.                                                         | The Town needs ice cream and beverage shops.                                             |

Respondents' Profile

Comparing the demographics of survey respondents to the overall town population can help understand if responses are representative of the community and if we are reaching all residents.

How long have you lived in Sudbury? (Answered: 32, Skipped: 2)

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Less than 2 years  | 3.1%  |
| 2-5 years          | 3.1%  |
| 6-10 years         | 0.0%  |
| More than 10 years | 90.6% |
| Not a resident     | 3.1%  |

### Which geographic area in Sudbury most closely represents the area you reside?

(Answered: 32, Skipped: 2)

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| North Sudbury          | 25.0% |
| Central Sudbury        | 37.5% |
| South Sudbury          | 37.5% |
| Other (please specify) | 0.0%  |

### What is your race/ethnicity? (Answered: 32, Skipped: 2)

|                                           |       |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| American Indian or Alaska Native          | 0.0%  |
| Asian                                     | 0.0%  |
| Black or African American                 | 0.0%  |
| Hispanic or Latino                        | 0.0%  |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 0.0%  |
| White                                     | 78.1% |
| I prefer not to answer.                   | 21.9% |
| Other (please specify)                    | 0.0%  |

### How old are you? (Answered: 33, Skipped: 1)

|          |      |         |       |
|----------|------|---------|-------|
| Under 18 | 0.0% | 36-45   | 9.1%  |
| 18-25    | 3.0% | 46-65   | 60.6% |
| 26-35    | 0.0% | Over 65 | 27.3% |

# ATTACHMENT

## Participant Worksheets from Community Conversation Meeting

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During the Community Conversation meeting, participants were encouraged to answer the questions on the Participant Worksheets. **The following are transcribed from the worksheets and should not be taken as the opinions of the Town or new town policies or actions.**

1. What current and future issues around Public Health, Housing, and Equity were missing from the opening presentation?

- Fire station meet
- Services that support public housing authority
  - o Example: Childcare- accepts vouchers
  - o Lean on social works structure. Families vary and have different time and structure to get services lined up.
- Old homes and septic
- Focus on having a variety

2. Based on these issues, where should we be headed?

- Does the town want to set its own SHI goal?
- Social isolation- focus on multi-generational activities and structures
- Know what's available and how to access them.
- Awareness of mental health, social isolation, homeless, growing age population
- All residents in Sudbury should be progressing

3. How do we get there? What's working now, or what could be better? What are some new strategies, programs, or initiatives?

- Making people comfortable
- Find the cause of high turnover
- Staff to the town manager
- Maximize grants
- Meeting between departments and committees. Strengthen connections. Partnering and relationship building.
- Review to allow certain areas of town to have smaller housing units on smaller lots, accessory units.
- Use local faith groups/ organization for childcare
- Improve accessibility, transportation, affordable housing, and access to services.