

Background for the Roadway Project – The Conway Report

From Norman Khumalo, Hopkinton Town Manager

For more information, contact Dave Daltorio, Town Engineer

By the mid 2000s, the state had recognized Downtown Hopkinton as an area with a traffic problem, and understanding that traffic would only get worse, expressed an interest in improving conditions. At the same time, a charrette (Voices of Vision) comprised of 108 Hopkinton residents, met and identified revitalization of the downtown as a key goal. The Downtown Revitalization Committee (DRC) was established to help address this concern.

In 2009, shared funding provided by the business community and the town was used to hire a team of students to evaluate the potential for revitalization of Hopkinton's downtown. The students were from the Conway School of Landscape Design, a graduate school in Conway, Massachusetts, that requires its graduate students to conduct a substantial design project during a semester. These students met with the DRC and held multiple meetings to elicit input from the town before producing a public presentation of their findings and a report. That report, entitled Visions of Hopkinton: Steps towards Downtown Revitalization, was completed in early 2010 and is available on the DRC's space on the town website.

The Conway Report

The Conway report opens by noting that "Hopkinton is a town with a strong community, a rich history, and an appealing character." It then identifies opportunities and challenges, with roadway issues including:

"Frequent traffic accidents, especially at intersections, and anecdotal evidence point to problems in Hopkinton's town center for both pedestrians and drivers. The perceived danger to pedestrians from cars when they cross Main Street is so great that it seriously deters people from walking in the downtown. Cars move fast along Main Street. Due to I-495, Routes 135 and 85, and several other major roads that intersect Main Street, downtown traffic is heavy throughout the day and dominates the downtown experience. There are no separate travel lanes for bicyclists. The pedestrian experience also leaves much to be desired, with long waits to cross the street, street crossings that are too long and not visible enough, deteriorating sidewalks, walkways completely exposed to the sights and sounds of traffic, and parking often inconvenient for downtown destinations"

Visions of Hopkinton 2010

The report concludes:

In other communities where revitalization efforts have been limited to streetscape changes, results have also been limited. A downtown thrives through the diverse combination of factors that this report explores, and

Hopkinton should give attention to each factor. The town can begin to implement some measures immediately at little cost. A multifaceted approach to revitalization that considers physical, social, and economic aspects of the downtown over time and in relation to the region will lay the groundwork for a vibrant town center.

Visions of Hopkinton 2010

In May 2010, the town voted to fund the design of a roadway improvement project as a significant physical step in the downtown revitalization process and established the Downtown Initiative Steering Committee (DISC) to help facilitate this design process, keeping in mind the principles of the Conway Report. As noted in the Conway Report, this physical improvement will only be successful in combination with consideration of social and economic aspects of the downtown in a multi-faceted approach. For this reason, DISC continues to seek input on the project from businesses and residents, as this input is critical to fully developing a successful project.