

# TOWN OF ADAMS

## STRATEGIC PLAN SESSION 3

OCTOBER 24, 2015

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**The third Strategic Planning Session was held at the Hoosac Valley High School Cafeteria. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. Collins Center staff was present, as were Chairman Blanchard and Board Members Nowak, Duval, Snoonian and Town Administrator Mazzucco.**

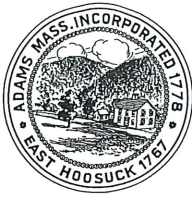
*Participants introduced themselves, and explained where in Adams they live or work and how long they have been here. There were three topics, Small Town Feel, Downtown, and Arts, Culture, and History that were covered at this meeting. Questions were narrowed down into five different categories, and participant input is shown below.*

### **SMALL TOWN**

**Strengths:** The strengths of being a small town were noted as being a smaller community in a natural setting with no hustle and bustle, affordability, and community shared traditions, activities and experiences. Volunteer organizations were touted as bringing in a neighborly sense of community where people support, know, trust and help each other. Rapid communication in the community and rallies around successes were shared. Town unity and pride around youth programming and sports was noted. The historic downtown connection and "Norman Rockwell-ish" architecture and churches were pointed out as being attractive. Town Meeting type of government was explained as promoting a sense of community, and the infrastructure is in place for a successful downtown.

**Challenges:** Empty storefronts and a threat of big box stores moving into town, online sales and drone deliveries were noted as a concern and a cause of there being few jobs in the area. Under-utilized Prominent Buildings and the competition with other businesses for regional draws were expressed as being difficult to address and requiring continued local support to eliminate deteriorating structures and blight. Absentee landlords with no tenant screening was noted. Other challenges were pointed out as being a lack of community connection with Town Meeting Members, and no official channel of good communication of the Town to connect with the community to disseminate information. Spotlighting youth programs and creating a youth learning area in town were listed. The state of the current infrastructure, roads and transportation in conjunction with a need for signage and maps, plus marked walking trails were noted. The final challenge brought up was the question of how to honor ethnicity.

**Hopes and Ambitions:** It was expressed that Adams needs more engagement of progressive thinking and proactive community members to empower residents to act and participate. The desire to make Adams a destination with an attractive, vibrant downtown with variety of businesses was mentioned. Ideas about having historically themed immersive history events were floated, and themed suggestions were given such as a Susan B. Anthony Women's Center called



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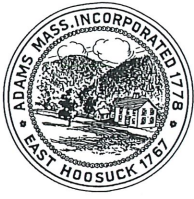
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“Susan B. Powerful”. Sub-themes on this were given as “Susie B. Classy” indicating how to dress, “Susie B. Healthy” on how to eat, and “Susie B.” interpreted events celebrating her historical value. It was also explained that stores could share the theme by doing “Susie B.” things like hiking, camping, skiing, or biking, with a “Susie B.” t-shirt for the type of activity. Other ideas were to create events that celebrate Mount Greylock and the Downtown Adams. Bridging art and history was suggested with more public art displays and art walks, including developing the mills to become shops, galleries, and a children’s museum. Creating more greenways to connect space and including trees to create easy sitting areas and tourist spots for photo taking was suggested. Having an “About Adams” television or radio show and a public bulletin board which is regularly updated and business/user friendly were suggested to bridge the communication gap. Other suggestions were to utilize current spaces like Adams Free Library building, for public events and modernize without sacrificing the historic architecture. Creating housing for young professionals located downtown was noted as helping Adams to be seen as a warm and friendly town, but would need broadband internet. Another thought was to have a Farmers’ Co-op in Adams.

**Possible Actions:** Actions that were suggested were to create branding and a community identity, and to become a tourist destination for the Arts. Having a police presence, foot patrol and coordinated block watches were options to create a safer environment. There creation of a one-stop museum at spaces like 7 Hoosac Street, such as housing the Children’s Museum, the Holocaust Museum, Art exhibits, the Mill Children Exhibit, and various shops and galleries was listed. Hosting Historical, Ethnic, and Garden Tramway, Buggy and Bus Tours was brought up. Creating more communication by a marquee-type sign, a public bulletin board, Town Crier and programming on NBCTV or Local TV were recommended. The creation of a *Susan B. Anthony Women’s Business Center* as an incubator for new business development and providing small cash incentives for businesses to open in Adams was suggested. The creation of a proactive, informational “Welcome Wagon” including how the Town Hall works was brought up. Completing the Greylock Glen project was noted, as well as putting out RFPs for available spaces and using empty storefronts strategically. Adopting QR codes was recommended as an action to take. It was suggested to determine the attraction to the Town of Adams then create multiple pop-up neighborhood shops with a simultaneous opening plan. Having diverse educational options and the creation of signage and maps, for the markets and walking trails were also offered.

**Who Can Help?:** Those able to help with these action items were listed as volunteers and local citizens, local organizations like the Economic Development Commission, Arts Advisory Board, ProAdams; the local news and Cable TV Stations; Real Estate Agents; the Planning Board; Arts





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Programs, Schools and Colleges; local representatives to lobby for state and federal funding, and an outside consultant to look at the downtown differently.

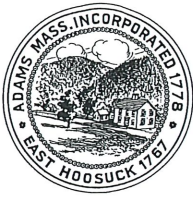
#### **DOWNTOWN**

**Strengths:** The strengths were noted as it being a well-defined downtown of Park, Hoosac, Summer, and Center Streets, having great access with ample parking on the newly redone streetscape and being open and walkable. The Mills, Churches, Library, Town Hall, Fire, Police, Theater and Train were noted as being assets, and it was noted that the Train is a perfect public and private partnership. Existing historic 19<sup>th</sup> Century architecture and beautiful facades were described as both beautiful and iconic. The major Route going through town was identified as presenting an opportunity to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the walking trails, the natural surroundings and the Greylock Glen by proximity.

**Challenges:** Empty storefronts, Walmart and the online business competition were noted as challenges. It was explained that the core of the downtown needs work to make it more inviting because it is not lively enough. Traffic is going through, but not stopping. The zoning and permitting process was listed as a detriment. The declining population, the youth leaving Adams and there not being enough jobs were listed as issues. Another challenge noted was that buildings have been sold to private developers that no longer have the money to develop the properties. Inquiries were made about how to fully integrate the “Polish Mile”, how to make Adams a destination, and how to draw people in and change attitudes of the citizens. It was noted that there is not enough parking, that the criminal element in town needs to be addressed and that the Town’s website is inadequate to give information to residents.

**Hopes and Ambitions:** Several items were given regarding having a more vibrant and active downtown, including outdoor restaurant seating, having the Topia Theater open, the development of 7 Hoosac Street, and having more businesses in the downtown area. The development of a central theme to tie in Hoosac, Summer, Park, and Center Streets, such as an Art Walk, was suggested. A recommendation was made to create an Economic Development Commission to help to make Adams a destination. Preserving the integrity of the architecture, reinstating trees, and increasing to high speed internet to support live/work spaces in town were brought up. Other hopes were to have a town with pride in what they stand for, having a focus on young professionals and the arts, and also building a Tramway system to get to the Top of Mt. Greylock from Adams.

**Possible Actions:** Bringing the train service to the downtown area and connecting Susan B. Anthony into the downtown were suggested. Creating a plan to bring women-owned businesses to town was recommended. Trees could be planted on Park Street, and a Police foot patrol and Block Watch program could be instituted. A suggestion was made to make local government



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more interactive and give access to precinct members. Additional items were to amend zoning to reject high-density housing, to implement more aggressive town action on developers with incomplete projects and to create an initiative for store owners. A recommendation was to establish a design review board. A final action item was to create Economic Development Commission activity to support museums, galleries, the Train and the Greylock Glen.

**Who can help:** Those who could help were noted as being visionaries, community members, voters, Town Meeting Members, state and local government employees, investors, corporate sponsors and real estate agents. A recommendation was made to have regular meetings between the Town Meeting Members and the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen, and to give Town Meeting Members either an email or a mailbox for people in their precinct to communicate with them. A final recommendation was made to change the zoning and permitting processes to help.

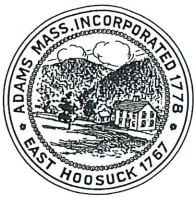
### ARTS, CULTURE & HISTORY

**Strengths:** This region is noted for having a reputation for the arts, and there are a number of artists, writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, craftsmen already here and moving into the area. This location is noted as being close to other world class art destinations, and two schools in the area are devoted to art and technology. It was noted that the space available, such as the Mills, other buildings with historic architecture and alternative types of buildings are excellent for creating a new movement to develop them as desired. There is affordable housing right in the middle of natural beauty and an area rich with history and ethnic religions. The Greylock Glen may be used as a venue for outdoor concerts and performances, and there are other museums and areas such as the Topia Arts, Susan B. Anthony Museum, and Memorial Hall at the Adams Free Library that could be utilized.

**Challenges:** Current challenges were listed as being zoning and building code issues that don't meet today's needs, a need to streamline these processes, and the cost of fulfilling those codes being too expensive. It was explained that there is no process to communicate to owners of vacant buildings as to their intent and ability to responsibly care for their buildings. It was noted that the local attitude is negative and a 'blue collar' mentality from an under-educated populous who are naysayers and people with self-serving agendas. A long-term lack of development, funding, and economic stability as well as a local criminal element were listed as challenges. Also noted was the competition with other communities with established performing arts requiring Adams to do more promotion of art. Enrollment of the local schools and the creation of an educational program for art were included as well.

**Hopes and Ambitions:** Hopes for the future are to have multiple galleries, more public art, sculptures that celebrate history and mural projects at the Train Station and around the





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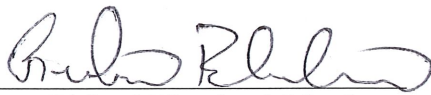
downtown. A collaboration of nature, the Arts, culture and history would offer more musical, performing arts and outdoor displays of art in the area. A suggestion was made to have ZZ-Top and other popular musical artists at the Greylock Glen. An ambition of having a community that embraces and promotes the arts, culture and history was expressed. Having an identity that honors Susan B. Anthony, the ethnic history of the area and its neighborhoods was aspired. It was hoped that local businesses would step up to support the local arts, and that there would be an expansion of the arts in the schools to get the youth involved. A suggestion was given to use the mills for a Children's Museum, and to get more connected with Williamstown and North Adams to maximize the vacant mills. Other aspirations given were to create a Town Slogan, to create a self-funding program, and to open the Topia Theater to keep downtown attractive.

**Possible Actions:** Creation of a liaison between the Arts Advisory Board, the Schools, and the Town was suggested. Marketing Susan B. Anthony was noted as something that could be done, and reaching out to Fortune 500 and other Women-Owned Businesses to groom a woman-focus on studies and college courses was recommended. Doing specific work on work/live spaces for artists and to develop 7 Hoosac Street and other indoor and outdoor spaces for art displays was listed. Connecting one-on-one with neighbors and getting corporate sponsorships was suggested. Exploiting local churches and the Topia Arts location to make Adams a destination was offered. The final thought given was to complete the Greylock Glen.

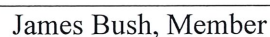
**Who can help:** Those listed as being able to help with this are the local schools and colleges, the local artists, the Historical Society, the Arts Advisory Board, and 1Berkshire. General Dynamics and Specialty Minerals were specifically noted as local businesses that could help. The Board of Selectmen was requested to create a Charter Commission to reassess the Town Charter, and to apply for federal and state grants to help.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Tony Mazzucco,  
Deborah J. Dunlap, Recording Secretary

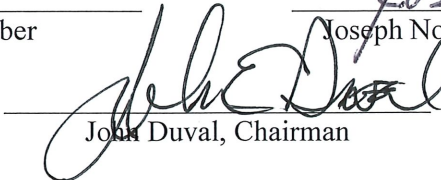
APPROVED FOR RELEASE AT THE AUGUST 1, 2018 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

  
Richard Blanchard, Member

  
Christine Hoyt, Member

  
James Bush, Member

  
Joseph Nowak, Vice Chairman

  
John Duval, Chairman