Case Studies on Route 1: How the Perceived Identity of Local Commercial Strips Affects Zoning

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Case Studies on Route 1: 
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Abstract:
Designers, planners, and new urbanists have often argued that highway strips, replete with big box retail and countless strip malls, are essentially placeless. It has also been argued that generic local zoning is largely to blame for existence and persistence of strips. While there may be some truth to these claims, every strip exists within a city, or town, or municipality, and has a unique relationship with that place. This thesis explores Route 1 through Dedham, Saugus and Peabody, MA to highlight that far from being interchangeable landscapes, the Route 1 strip varies from town to town, bearing distinctive marks of each town’s approach to controlling it. These cases illustrate that a key variable in how heavily towns will rely on zoning to shape and control strip development is whether or not they view their strip as part of the town rather than as an outside entity. This thesis argues that, while it is true that variation between strip landscapes stems from zoning, the strip formula is not that simple: the way in which the towns write and implement their code derives from the perceived identity of each Route 1 strip, ultimately affecting the appearance of that strip.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Some sentimentalists will claim that Route 1 is America, that our great country would be nowhere if not for strip zoning. – Bella English, Boston Globe Staff Writer

The model of the human habitat dictated by zoning is a formless, soulless, centerless, demoralizing mess. It bankrupts families and townships. It causes mental illness. It disables whole classes of decent, normal citizens. It ruins the air we breathe. It corrupts and deadens our spirits. – James Howard Kunstler, Home from Nowhere

My interest in Route 1 stems from childhood car trips from Boston to Essex through Saugus, Lynnefield, Peabody and all the way up to Topsfield where Route 1 becomes a rural, two-lane New England road. As a child, I was thrilled by the kitschy signage and absurd sculpture. The roadside, filled with fiberglass cacti, castles, and building facades that look like ships, is so rich with narrative and imagery that it seemed to me that someone had built this world entirely for my amusement.

Now, as a student of the built environment, I understand that this strip and others like it across the country are the subject of much contention and debate. As I have become aware of increasing dialogue about the nature of strip development, the remnants of this childhood fascination have transformed into a broader interest in these roadside environments, and their relationships to the towns in which they reside.

The quotes above introduce some of the recent discussion of contemporary strip development. Both authors point to zoning as the source of the form of commercial strip development. Much of the recent literature treats strip zoning as a single, simple phenomenon. Curious about whether this was really the case, I planned to investigate the degree to which dimensional requirements in commercial strip developments were predictors for the actual appearance of the existing strip. I expected that each town’s strip would be similar to the next town’s, and that the codes in the three towns I had selected would be comparable.

However, as I progressed in my research, I found that the formula was not as simple as I had imagined. Not only are the roadsides different in appearance from town to town, but I also found significant variation in how much each town’s zoning code attempts to regulate. Mounting evidence that strip development is in fact quite different from town to town led me to wonder about the different kinds of relationships that individual towns had with their strips. Does the way that communities feel about Route 1 play a role in the way each town elects...
to use zoning, ultimately affecting the amount of influence each town's zoning code has over its built strip? More specifically, does the way in which town officials and regulators perceive the identity of Route 1 in their town affect the way towns write and implement their zoning code, ultimately affecting the appearance of their strips?

Simply, yes. Each of the three towns studied here has a unique relationship with the regional highway that passes through it, and the attitudes of town representatives are unmistakable variables contributing to how much each town uses zoning to control its strip. The case studies presented in Chapters 3 and 4 will illustrate that while the stories unfold differently, there is a pattern: towns that view Route 1 as a part of the town use zoning more aggressively to try and bring the image of the Route 1 strip into congruence with the image of the town; towns that see Route 1 as something separate from the town do not rely on zoning heavily, since they primarily view zoning as being appropriate only for development within more central parts of town.

I. Definitions

Before moving on I will provide some clarifying definitions for the terms in the question and thesis statement above.

Firstly, I would like to define strip districts and strip development. Dolores Hayden defines the strip as “an arterial road lined with automobile oriented uses.” The term originated in the 1920s, and has been called many things including the hot dog trail and ribbon development.¹ I use these terms to broadly encompass the modern iteration of this typology of development including both “strip malls” and large scale commercial and retail development, or big box, designed to be both experienced and accessed from a car. Strip districts generally refer to the clusters of strip development that occur within zoning districts designated at edges of regional highways for this kind of development.

By perceived identity, I am referring to how regulators, town officials, and town planners view the identity of the Route 1 strip. Even more specifically, I am using perceived identity as a phrase to express how closely these regulators, officials, and planners link the image of Route 1 to the identity of the town as a whole – i.e. do they see the Route 1 strip and the town as the same; do they see Route 1 and the town as completely separate entities, sharing nothing but a tax base?

In terms of Zoning, for the purposes of this paper I have focused on the dimensional requirements and implementation mechanisms that pertain to the districts surrounding Route 1. By implementation of the zoning regulation, I am referring to the mechanisms through which the codes are enforced by town bodies, for example the strength of a site plan review or the ease by which special permit granting authorities dole out special permits. In general, when I discuss “how towns use zoning” I
mean how specific their dimensional requirements are; how many individual measurements they attempt to regulate; the degree to which the town has discretionary control over development approvals; in other words, how much overall control over the physical environment the town assumes through their zoning code.

II. Case Studies

This thesis will be based on the in depth study of the zoning code in three Route 1 cities and towns in Massachusetts: Dedham, Peabody, and Saugus. All three towns share a bisecting regional highway and complimentary strips of highway development. Route 1 has cut through all of these towns since they were unincorporated settlements, meaning that none of the towns suffered traumatic changes due to the creation of the road. In addition to the their locational and historical similarities, these towns proved ideal case studies, because they are all very different places, with different planning resources, and notably different demographics (see Appendix A for a comparative table of basic town demographics). The different demographics, size and socio-economic composition of the towns serves to emphasize that the importance of the role of perceived identity is consistent across different kinds of cities and town. Also, the differences between the towns help to highlight each strip’s uniqueness, and the similarities provide a strong basis by which to compare each town’s relationship with its Route 1.

Route 1, once known as the Boston Post Road, was first trod by a horseman sent out of New York City to deliver the first official monthly post to Boston. It took him two weeks to make the journey. About 100 years later, Benjamin Franklin set out in a horse and carriage with an odometer strapped to its wheel, and drove a stake into the ground every mile between Boston to New York, in order to convince users of the postal service that the per mile charge was fair. As time wore on, Route 1 stretched its
sinews both northward and southward following a course laid by local roads along its path, ultimately running the entire length of the eastern seaboard, Maine to Florida. While each of the following towns grew around this road, they have dealt very differently with its presence.

**Dedham:** Dedham was first settled by colonists in the late seventeenth century. It remained a predominantly agricultural community for the next two hundred years. During the nineteenth century, a full-fledged manufacturing industry began to grow on Dedham's two major rivers, and the town began exporting spun cotton, wool, wire, paper, carriages, and other goods. The town was first built out as modest housing for mill workers' families. Even though much of the town remained agricultural, Dedham's basic form and character was established during this period. By the early twentieth century, most of Dedham's agricultural land had been converted to residential uses, and as an increasing number of Dedham residents commuted to Boston via the Post Road, Dedham began to see the early build out of its highway strip.

The stretch of Route 1 running south of Boston, through Dedham, is now formally known as the Boston-Providence Highway. The building pattern was firmly established during the 1950's when the first large scale retail located there, but as early as 1935, the roadside showed signs of the form it would later take. The skeleton of large parcels, large buildings, and large parking lots, officially codified in Dedham's 1963 master plan, persists today. In the early 1990s, however, a coalition of interests including the town planning board and community members began to push the Route 1 landscape as a central issue when the process of revising the town's master plan began.

Dedham currently has a town meeting structure of government. The town meeting consists of 170 elected members, and this body is predominantly responsible for adopting zoning changes and making overall planning decisions. The town's

![Figure 2](image-url): This Howard Johnson's on Route 1 in Dedham shows the style of build-out prior to the 1950s. (Source: Dedham Historical Society).
five-member Board of Selectmen, which are elected by the town meeting, draft and approve policy and legislative changes in the town. The town also has a strong and active four-member planning board, selected through open elections. The planning board is responsible for maintaining and updating the town master plan and for approving all site plan and subdivision plans. Dedham also has a zoning board of appeals, and a design review board whose members are selected by the Board of Selectmen. Dedham employs one part-time planner, who has been on the job in Dedham since the early 1990s. Before he was hired, the town relied solely on town meeting and the planning board to make most important planning decisions.

**Saugus:** The town of Saugus, much like Dedham, was established early as an agricultural settlement. It remained sparsely populated until the Industrial Revolution when industries such as the famous Saugus Iron Works, stone quarries, and other relatively heavy industries opened up shop. Also similar to Dedham, Saugus began to evolve into a commuter suburb in the early twentieth century. Until this time, Route 1 was little more than a dirt path. But, by the beginning of the 20th century, development around the road had grown substantially enough that the State Highway Department recommended turning the road into a state highway.\(^5\) The road was paved in 1922, designated as Route 1 in 1925, and widened to its current dimensions in 1953.

Because Route 1 was the primary north-south route between Boston and Maine, it was well traveled, even in its early days. By the time of the road widening, the roadside was already built out with highway oriented businesses such as motels, convenience stores, and diners. Most of Route 1 Saugus' most famous landmarks were built in the 1960s and 70s, including the Hilltop Steakhouse's fifty foot cactus.\(^6\)

Saugus, like Dedham, is run with a town meeting structure. The Saugus five-member Board of Selectmen, for approving all permits and special permits, for selecting the town manager, and for appointing members to town boards and committees

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\(^5\) The road was paved in 1922, designated as Route 1 in 1925, and widened to its current dimensions in 1953.

\(^6\) Most of Route 1 Saugus' most famous landmarks were built in the 1960s and 70s, including the Hilltop Steakhouse's fifty foot cactus.
including the planning board and zoning board of appeals. The board members are elected for two-year terms in general town-wide elections. The Saugus town meeting is comprised of fifty elected members, and is responsible for approving all town budgets, and drafting and adopting policy and legislative changes, including changes to the zoning by-law. The town has periodically hired a director of community development, but does not currently keep a planner on staff.

**Peabody:** Peabody’s early settlement history parallels that of Saugus. It was officially incorporated as a town in 1866, under the name of South Danvers. In 1868, South Danvers changed its name to Peabody, and became a city. Due to its prime location along three prominent rivers, Peabody soon became a regional manufacturing center, producing glassworks, pottery, cotton, wool and glue; the main industry was leather, endowing Peabody with the nickname, leather city.  

While Route 1 Peabody shares its history with Route 1 Saugus, one primary difference distinguishes the two to this day. Several mobile home parks in Peabody located along Route 1 during the mid-twentieth century. By the time the city wrote its first zoning code in the 1950s, the parks were well-established uses, and have been both permitted uses and vocal constituencies ever since.

Because Peabody is a city, rather than a town, its governmental structure is different than in Dedham and Saugus. The city is run by an elected eleven-member City Council that has legislative decision-making power, including adopting any changes to the zoning by-law. Peabody City Council also selects the nine-member planning board and the five-member zoning board of appeals; the planning board oversees the subdivision of land, and the zoning board oversees applications for variances and special permits, but ultimately both serve only advisory positions to the city council. The City also has a community development department with a full-time staff including four full-time planners. The Department oversees the maintenance of the master plan, drafts zoning changes, and oversees housing development.

While the path of Route 1 has been etched through all of the case study towns for almost as long as the towns have been incorporated, their strips were developed long after the towns’ centers. For the most part the zoning along the strips was written, if not to actively attract the kind of development that exists there now, then as a suitable envelope for modern auto-oriented development that the towns hoped would provide stable economic growth. In the late 1950s, many towns in the Boston metropolitan were experiencing such unprecedented residential growth that fiscal and infrastructure strains resulted; these towns often adopted pro-development policies, including converting land from residential to strip commercial zones along major arterials such as Route 1. These towns all share this common history and common road, making them
good samples of similar places that have evolved remarkably different strips.

III. Research Scope and Limitations

This thesis ties perceived identities of strip districts to how those strips are governed by zoning code. The first thing to note is that I only conducted interviews with planners and city officials. There are number of other groups whose interests and perceptions are equally relevant to how towns make decision, including citizens, business owners, and non-profit groups, that I did not incorporate into the research for this thesis. Therefore, the argument presented here is restricted to how public sector officials perceive the identity of strip districts, and how their perceptions influence the use of zoning code.

This research uncovers a number of correlated questions that are not within the scope of this argument. Most prominently, as mentioned above, this thesis will not examine the possible roots of the different identities assigned to Route 1 by each town. While there are qualitative differences between the composition of the towns’ planning boards, overall population demographics, planning budgets, and development history, this thesis will focus on the results of the identifications, rather than these potential causes.

Additionally, this thesis is not intended to argue about the quality of the resulting developments in the study towns, and therefore, I will spend little time assessing the developments by any criteria other than how well they respond to the criteria set out in their respective zoning codes and master plans. Furthermore, because the research is focused only on the parts of the zoning codes that relate to Route 1, I cannot make assertions about zoning as a whole, or about any of the towns’ approach to zoning as a whole.

IV. Importance of this Research

This research contributes to an ongoing discussion about suburban sprawl and suburban strips in particular. This paper uncovers a subtlety about strips and their regulation that is not present in the current scholarship about strip development. Ideally, this revelation of complexity within strip environments and the towns in which they reside will prompt further research into better ways of approaching the reform of existing strip developments.

V. Chapter Summary

Chapter 2: Methodology. Before delving into the content of the literature review and case study chapters, this chapter describes how I conducted my research and analysis. The chapter explains the choices I made in terms of how to conduct interviews and who to talk to; how I located additional sources; how I analyzed those sources; and ultimately, the caveats associated with each of my choices.
Chapter 3: Background and Literature Review. This chapter will briefly outline the most important literature regarding suburban strips, zoning, and the perceived identity of place. The review focuses on New Urbanist literature that typically argues that suburban strips are essentially built out representations of bad zoning. This chapter sets up the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4, that seek to find a subtlety in the relationship between zoning, town and strip that is not addressed within the New Urbanist dialogue.

Chapter 4: Existing Conditions and Zoning. Chapter 4 lays the foundation for Chapter 4 by illustrating that, contrary to the New Urbanist position, there is significant variation in physical and regulatory environments between the studied strips. I take the reader on a tour of the existing conditions of Route 1 in Dedham, Saugus and Peabody and then outline the relevant zoning by-law in each of the towns. I then compare how well the code predicts the build out in each town. I conclude the chapter by exploring some of the reasons for the variation that stem from the dimensional requirements and the manners in which the towns enforce those requirements.

Chapter 5: The Role of Perceived Identity. The preceding discussion leads to the final step in answering the question of this thesis. Is the variation revealed in Chapter 4 related to the way that these communities perceive their strip? Chapter 5 probes the relationship between the perceptions of public officials and how the towns use zoning in their strip districts. The chapter argues that in each of the case study towns, the ways in which public officials view their strip influences the decisions they make about how to use zoning to regulate their strip.
I. Introduction

In order to answer the question of whether and how perceived identity of strip districts effects how strips are regulated, I broke my research into two distinct sections of questioning and analysis. The first phase, encapsulated in Chapter 4, establishes that these three strips differ from one another both in built landscape and in how they are regulated by their respective towns. I use photographs to illustrate the current conditions of the three commercial strips. In order to understand how the strips are regulated, I relied primarily on the most recent version of each town’s zoning code; I focused on the dimensional and use requirements that govern highway development areas, and the implementation measures that the code provides for those districts. I gathered information from interviews with local officials, planning board members, and planners in each town.

The second phase is a deeper analysis of the way Route 1 and its accompanying development is perceived by the towns it passes through, and how that perception has influenced each town’s decisions about regulating the roadside. This portion of the investigation involved establishing a connection between how town officials view their strips and the variation in zoning approaches explored in Phase 2.

Because the nature of my thesis question is complex and qualitative, I relied primarily on three sources of information in order to bolster my findings from any given source. The three sources are interviews, published planning documents, and local and regional press coverage. Each source provided its own benefits and challenges. Below, I will discuss in depth how I selected and analyzed my sources for the first and second phases of my research.

II. Phase 1

In order to make a compelling case for real variation between strip districts for Phase 1, I relied primarily
on an examination of actual zoning by-law and on my own observation of the physical strip environments in each town.

Zoning By-Law: I relied on the most recent version of each town’s zoning by law in order to illustrate the regulatory differences from town to town. In order to make the most effective and concise case, I decided to only do detailed comparisons of dimensional requirements in the zoning districts abutting Route 1. A table illustrating the comparison is included in Chapter 4. Not only was it important to illustrate the differences in how much each town's zoning attempts to regulate, it was also important to illustrate that they way each town's enforcement differs. Therefore I relied on the text of the by-law, and the expertise of my interview subjects (discussed further below) to gather an understanding of each town’s site plan and design review processes.

Observation: After establishing that each town has a very different regulatory framework for its stretch of strip, I wanted to illustrate that these approaches lead to very different outcomes in physical build out. To do this, I drove up and down Route 1 through each town, photographing various site conditions, building orientation, landscaping, and parking features. A selection of these photographs accompanies the description of each town’s strip in Chapter 4.

III. Phase 2

Developing a sense for each town's officials' perceptions of Route 1 and connecting those perceptions to how each town uses strip zoning was a more complicated task than researching for Phase 1. I relied on three basic sources for information: personal interviews, planning documents, local press.

A. Interviews

Identifying and contacting interviewees: The most informative and important source for this research were the interviews I conducted. Due to time constraints and the scale of this project, I elected to focus my research on the perceptions of local planners and officials, rather than on a wider cross-section of individuals involved in decision-making along Route 1. My initial goal was to interview several individuals from each town, and to try and interview people in the same position in each town. I identified twenty people over the three case-study cities and towns; this list included planning board and zoning board of appeals members, town-meeting members, city councilmen, selectmen, staff and planners. I contacted all twenty individuals, and ultimately interviewed eleven town planners, representatives, and officials, during a total of fourteen interviews. Although the response rate was not ideal, supporting information from my other sources (discussed below) helped to reinforce the trends I identified from the interviews. This
triangulation was most important in Peabody, where I was only able to interview two city planners.

**Interview method and structure:** I elected to use a free-form interview technique for several reasons. I wanted to develop an understanding of how the interview subjects perceived Route 1 in their own language, to understand their individual priorities, and to get a sense of their individual relationship to the road. Therefore it was important that the interviewees responded to open-ended questions. Because many of the individuals I interviewed are part-time employees, volunteers, or elected officials, I felt that I would achieve better response rate through direct contact and conversation, rather than a written survey with open ended questions that could be more time consuming than an oral interview.

Initially, I developed a central set of questions that I intended to ask each interview subject. However, after conducting the first two interviews, it was clear that once I had described my topic and question, many subjects would talk about what they felt comfortable talking about, regardless of the questions I asked. As most subjects felt more comfortable in a conversational setting rather than a structured setting, I shifted to a more free-form interview structure. Therefore, while I still attempted to cover my central questions in each interview, there was a large degree of variation in the material and topics covered interview to interview.

Because of the informal structure of my interview method, I elected to take notes from each interview, rather than recording or transcribing them. This allowed me to engage more openly in conversation with my interview subjects. I took notes during the interviews, documenting the questions I asked that were not initially part of my central set of questions, and taking notes on all of their answers. When a subject made a comment that was particularly salient, I transcribed it directly.

**Analyzing findings:** I conducted interviews both over the phone and in person. I took notes by hand, in order to maximize the conversational nature of the interaction. After each interview, I typed my notes from the interview, and began to catalogue the responses of each subject according to the central themes I discuss in the body of this thesis. I probed the results of each interview to determine each individual’s priorities for Route 1, and then each individual’s perception of: the role of Route 1 in the community; the role of zoning in shaping Route 1 development; the role of zoning implementation in shaping Route 1 development; and the connection between the perceived role/identity of Route 1 and the town’s approach to strip zoning. In some cases these questions were explicitly answered by the interview subjects, and in other cases, the subject discussed these questions in the context of specific developments, or in response to other questions. (For a summary matrix of all interviews, please see Appendix B.)
Strengths/weaknesses of method: This free-form, open-ended question interview method allowed me to derive the vocabulary for my thesis from what I learned in the interviews, rather than imposing my own framework on each interview subject. However, this process also heightened the degree of subjectivity necessary in analyzing and comparing the content of the interviews.

B. Planning Documents

Gathering sources: In terms of planning documents, I relied on published plans and analysis documents from each of the three cities and towns. All three case study municipalities had recent planning documents that I was able to analyze.

Analyzing findings: I used a similar method for analyzing planning documents as I used for the interviews. I read the documents in the interest of determining: the overall focus of each document on the Route 1 area; the expressed or implied attitude or perception about the identity of Route 1 in the town; and how the documents address (or did not address) zoning on Route 1. (A summary matrix of these documents can be viewed in Appendix B).

Strengths/limitations of source: The primary limitation of the documents is that they tell a very specific story about the values of its authors, but not necessarily about the values of town as whole. However, because this research is primarily focused on the perceptions and views of town officials and planners, planning documents are a good, stable source for information about the attitudes of this group.

C. Local and Regional Press

Gathering sources: In order to gather a sample of articles, I first conducted broad searches through periodical archives. These searches returned a broad spectrum of articles pertaining to Route 1 in each case study town, but ultimately did not provide a bulk of relevant articles.

After these initial searches, I conducted searches through press clippings files in local libraries and planning office archives and I also received a number of clippings from my interview subjects. My access to press sources was limited by the resources of the town. Dedham and Saugus Libraries both maintain extensive clippings files, and planners and officials in both towns maintain their own archives which they generously shared. In Peabody, however, neither the library nor the planning office maintains a clippings file, thus limiting my access to local press resources in Peabody.

Analyzing findings: The press sources tended to provide supporting and background information rather than central evidence for my arguments. Nevertheless, I used a similar method for analyzing the press sources as I used for the planning documents and interviews. I categorized the articles in terms of whether they were news articles...
or editorial articles, and then in both cases assessed what the expressed or implied attitude about Route 1 was; whether or not the articles shed light on the relationship between the presented attitudes and zoning; and ultimately whose attitudes, opinions, or perceptions were being expressed. (Please see Appendix B for a summary of my findings from press sources).

**Strength/limitations of sources:** Exploring local and regional press coverage of Route 1 in Dedham, Saugus and Peabody provided me with some background insights into both how Route 1 is perceived within each town, and how it is perceived by outsiders. In addition, many of the articles that I came across contained quotes and stories about officials and planners who I was not able to interview directly. While these sources could not provide the same level of certainty about content as a direct interview, they did provide additional insight, and access to stories that did not surface in other sources. However, because I did not locate an exhaustive group of all articles on Route 1 for each town, I cannot say the articles I found are representative of all articles. Also, it is possible that the articles I gathered from individuals’ collections were biased in support of the view of the individual. Nevertheless, the articles were an important resource for understanding context and background. In most cases they served to bolster my analysis from interviews and planning documents, and therefore served to deepen both my understanding of the range of issues at hand, and my research overall.

**IV. Conclusion**

Once I had catalogued the content of the interviews, documents, and articles, distinct trends emerged within each town. These trends comprise the thematic content of the case studies presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and form the basis of my thesis argument. In drafting the case study stories, I selected representative quotes from each of my source bodies to illustrate these trends.
Chapter 3: Background and Literature Review

U.S. Highway 1 is in fact one of the most sensationally ugly roads in America... JB Jackson, Landscape in Sight

I. Introduction

Early fascination with the strip was evidenced in the writings of critics, architects, and designers. As stated by JB Jackson, the strip’s

“potentialities for trouble - esthetic, social, economic - are as great as its potentialities for good, and indeed it is this ambidexterity which gives the highway and its margins so much significance and fascination. But how are we to tame this force unless we understand it and even develop a kind of love for it? And I do not believe that we have really tried to understand it as yet. For one thing, we know little or nothing about how the roadside development, the strip, came into being, nor about how it grows.”

These questions that Jackson poses in 1958 have rarely been addressed head on by other writers in the half century since. In fact, much of what puzzled Jackson about the contradictions and mystery of the strip still eludes even the brightest planners.

While there is little literature specifically about zoning in commercial strip districts and none about perceived identity and zoning, there are significant bodies of work devoted to understanding the physical and formal effects of various kinds of regulation in suburban areas, the design of commercial strips, and how issues like perception can influence policymaking. The following chapter will survey the three significant strains of literature that contribute to an ongoing discussion, started by authors like Jackson to carve a niche for the central argument of this thesis.

II. The Suburban Strip

Recent books by Grady Clay and Dolores Hayden, following in the exploratory tradition of JB Jackson, have sought to find the right language and context for the American suburbs. Clay’s Real
and how important it is to develop better ways keep up with it.

Thirty years ago, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and JB Jackson first began to critically examine the nature of the highway strip. Learning From Las Vegas is the first real attempt to understand the strip on its own terms. Venturi and Brown distill from the Las Vegas strip a vocabulary of commerce, attraction, competition, and a unique logic. Within this "architecture of persuasion" a co-dependent relationship between the highway and the strip development is conceived and cemented.  

JB Jackson picks up on the questions that Venturi and Brown raise. In an attempt to explain the growing incoherence and questionable taste of much highway development, Jackson proposes the following:

"At present the average highway resort - motel, drive-in movie, restaurant, or nightclub - has been put up by the owner with no sort of guidance but his own limited experience and taste, or at best by a building contractor. The display signs are usually the product of an industrial firm knowing nothing of the location of the public... The landscaping is done by the local nurseryman, and the planning, the location, the relationship to the neighbors and to the highway is little more than an adjustment to local zoning restrictions or to the edicts of the highway
department. We need not be astonished at the results."¹²

In this early critique, Jackson makes the first stab at strip zoning. The attitude encompassed in this passing comment by one of the first true observers of the strip is echoed again and again in more recent criticism. Many authors argue that the landscapes photographed in Hayden's book are literally built out versions of bad zoning, and that to stop the proliferation of such unfortunate design, we must abandon zoning as a regulatory tool. This suggestion, as previously noted, is based on the assumption that strip development and regulation is a singular, uncomplicated phenomenon. The following section examines the literature about strip zoning in order to highlight these trends.

III. Strip Zoning

By the late 1960s, planning textbooks had identified the shortfalls of zoning as a comprehensive planning tool, noting for example that zoning was not suited towards creating aesthetically pleasing environments. An interesting source for professional attitudes about zoning as a tool is planning text book chapters written at a time when the urban renewal movements of the 1950s had shed some doubt on the efficacy of centralized planning efforts.

One central 1968 book, *Principals and Practice of Urban Planning*, provides good insight into the critical thinking about zoning during the 1960s. As a starting point in his “Zoning” chapter, Robert M. Leary begins by recognizing the confusion between “planning” and “zoning.” In the early days of comprehensive planning efforts, many towns simply created zoning maps and expected that to be enough to ensure healthy future growth. Leary identifies three main concerns about how this tendency to replace planning with zoning would influence development patterns in the future: “1. There will be a tendency for development to be frozen in the existing pattern; 2. Wholly unexpected results may be produced, frequently of a very undesirable nature; 3. The ordinance may require amendment to such an extent, on behalf of individual property owners, that no comprehensive pattern of development in the city can result.”¹³ This prescient argument provides a useful grounding for understanding what has happened to some degree in all three case studies examined later.

In large part, the use of zoning in lieu of planning has been attributed to the federal Standard City Planning Enabling Act of 1928 which led to most state enabling acts. The “Act left many planners and public officials confused about the difference between a master plan and a zoning ordinance, so that hundreds of communities adopted ‘zoning plans’ without having created comprehensive plans as the basis for zoning.”¹⁴ It was not until 1954, with the passage of the Housing Act that the federal government began to require local governments to develop comprehensive plans.

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in order to be eligible for various pots of federal money. This lag between enabling zoning and encouraging comprehensive planning is at least in part responsible for the lack of vision and direction in many early zoning codes.

More interesting than Leary's assessment about the dangers of replacing planning with zoning, is his evaluation of the "deficiencies" found in many municipalities' original zoning codes. While Leary notes that the initial ranking of uses as higher and lower (single family being the highest use, to be protected from all lower uses) was no longer predominant at the time he wrote the article, his deficiency-list shows a distinct bias toward completely segregated use areas. For instance: "7. Non-conforming uses [in residential areas] are regulated in a manner that tends to perpetuate them rather than lead to their eventual elimination;" or "9. Some commercial uses such as gas stations or funeral homes are allowed in residential districts;" and finally, "15. Neighborhood business district regulations are not designed to minimize any adverse effects of business use upon abutting residential areas."16

At the same time as demonstrating a concern for the purity of the residential enclave, Leary does suggest that some mixed uses make sense given the proper circumstances. For instance, if enough parking is provided, then there is no reason that neighborhood shops and residences cannot exist side by side, or one on top of the other.17 Leary's article was written in 1968, around the same time that the zoning codes for the three case study towns addressed in this paper were either written or revised. The slight inconsistencies, such as mixed messages about segregating uses, visible within his discussion were largely accepted by planners in his day - explaining much of the peculiarity we will see later in examining this old code.

Although much of his thinking appears a bit dated, Leary is one of the few authors, of his time or ours, who deals comprehensively with zoning in both residential and commercial areas. According to Leary, the biggest problem regarding commercial zoning at the time of his article was the allotment of too much space for commercial zones. He argues that this phenomenon tended to cause slums and abandoned properties when property owners converted residences to commercial spaces expecting higher returns only to find no market for their new spaces. Leary argues that this practice led to undervalued properties that attracted little or no attention, since once converted to commercial, they couldn't be converted back into residential.18 While Leary indicates significant concern about the placement and concentration of commercial facilities, however, he shows no concern about the physical layout of such centers.19 At this point in the larger conversation about the efficacy or applicability of zoning, there was no discussion
of how zoning could be used as a tool to control
the appearance, organization, or function of a
commercial area.

In "Zoning," a similar article to Leary's but published
in 1978, Frank S. So reiterates many of the same
concerns and trends. He too makes a half-hearted
argument that the hierarchy of zoned uses has
broken down, suggesting that “zones are now
mutually exclusive - residences can generally no
longer be built in commercial or industrial areas
because they can potentially cause (economic) harm
to factories or warehouses.” 20 Despite the lapse of
time, however, So reiterates Leary's concern about
underused commercial spaces to note that “No one,
by the way, has solved the bugaboo of many cities –
the old linear or strip commercial area, that remnant
of the age of the streetcar, which is deteriorating
and is packed with vacancies.” 21 In his article, So
discusses strips in more urban locations than the
strips discussed in this thesis, but nevertheless
his suggestion that no one has yet developed a
zoning strategy to help reform commercial strip
development is still relevant.

This concern about the adaptability or reformability
of strip development has been picked up by
contemporary critics of the suburban environment
and channeled into a more precise attack on the
underlying concept of use-segregation. Alex
Krieger argues in his “Since (and Before) Seaside”
in Duany and Plater-Zyberk's Towns and Town-
Making Principals, that in addition to a cultural
tendency to spread outward and a deep love of the
automobile, planning regulation - namely zoning
and legislation like the 1960s Federal New Town
Program - promotes suburban sprawl. He states
quite directly that “our planning tools - notably
our zoning ordinances - facilitate segmented,
decentralized suburban growth while actually
making it impossible to incorporate qualities that we
associate with” picturesque New England towns. 22
This argument, while quite accurate in many ways,
establishes a trend of discussing suburban zoning
as a uniform force in shaping development from
place to place.

In the past decade, several other well-known
authors and planners have sharpened and
expanded Krieger’s criticism of suburban land
use regulation and growth policies to create a
conceptual basis for new urbanism. Much has been
written about suburban residential development
and suburban office development to draw attention
to specific design consequences of standard land
use regulations. Michael Southworth and Eran
Ben-Joseph’s 1995 article “Street Standards and
the Shaping of Suburbia” draws a clear, empirical
connection between the typical street standards
promulgated by federal mortgage insurance
policy and by industry publications. The article
highlights street standards created for developers
taking advantage of FHA mortgage insurance. The
standards included a standard eighty-foot right of
way that provided room for the street to expand
as the neighborhood grew. These standards
were adopted by nearly all subdivision developers sought to comply in order to be assured mortgage insurance. The FHA standards became the model for most local subdivision control regulation resulting in practically whole sale buy-in to the federally developed standards. Southworth and Ben-Joseph argue that “the rigid framework of current street standards has resulted in uniform, unresponsive suburban environments.”

In a similar article, Richard Willson uses a series of case studies to argue that “parking policy is a key element of the context for travel choices and urban form.” The typical parking ratio is four spaces per thousand square feet of office space – this ratio is derived from industry publications like the ULI Office Development Handbook. However, a series of studies conducted through the mid- to late-1980s indicated that most office developments show peak demand levels of between two and three spaces per thousand square feet. The result is: “there is a lot of unused parking in the suburbs.”

The case studies surveyed in Willson’s article all showed peak parking usage well below the amount of parking supplied. Willson’s main point is an economic argument that because “...parking typically was oversupplied and provided at no direct cost to tenants or their employees” there is no incentive to seek alternate means of transportation. However, his study clearly establishes that “when a jurisdiction adopts high parking requirements, it is enacting a form of growth control,” that encourages low density development, but is not clearly addressed in policy debates about growth control or urban design. This article comes closer than any of the preceding to establishing an empirical connection between written zoning code, and its physical outcome.

Much of this literature, while focusing on suburban residential and office development, has ignored the commercial strip. James Howard Kunstler, author of the much-publicized and oft-quoted Geography of Nowhere, wrote a subsequent book called Home from Nowhere – a more technical analysis of the roots and consequences of American suburban form – including the strip. The basic thrust of Home from Nowhere is that zoning is responsible for all bad suburbs:

“If you want to make your community better, begin at once by throwing out your zoning laws...the place that results from zoning is suburban sprawl. It must be understood as the product of a particular set of instructions. Its chief characteristics are the strict separation of human activities (or uses), mandatory driving to get from one use to another, and huge supplies of free parking.”

In fact, not only does zoning result in un-sensibly segregated uses,

“the model of the human habitat dictated by
zoning is a formless, soulless, centerless, demoralizing mess. It bankrupts families and townships. It causes mental illness. It disables whole classes of decent, normal citizens. It ruins the air we breathe. It corrupts and deadens our spirits.”

Kunstler takes the discussion of the ills of zoning regulation, the empirical exploration by Southworth, Ben Joseph, and Willson and brings it to bear on commercial strip areas. But the argument is essentially the same - requirements for setbacks and scale render the strip into an “anti-place.” He suggests that most strip-mall locations are simply built out expressions of code requirements, and he notes that strip use segregation magnifies their design quandaries, because no other typology is allowed to co-exist there.

While he is one of the few authors to take on both residential and commercial districts, as well as both use and dimensional requirements, Kunstler says little about what should be done with our existing environments. He has latched on the new urbanism cannon, without providing ideas for how small towns with few resources for planning can adapt their existing physical and regulatory landscape to be something better than what it is. His position is almost so hopeless, that it is hard to imagine that anything short of leveling much of the American landscape and starting from scratch would be enough to make it better. Nevertheless, Kunstler has become a central figure in the emerging consensus that zoning is largely responsible for the physical form of contemporary suburban development. And, like Krieger, Kunstler presents the strip and strip zoning without the subtlety encapsulated in actual places and zoning codes.

Despite the call to abandon zoning, much of the New Urbanist system is still dependent on very stringent regulation. The next step, “transect planning,” is a model devoted to eliminating traditional Euclidean zoning altogether. Andrés Duany and Emily Talen’s 2002 article, “Transect Planning,” outlines their new concept. Building on the work of Ian McHarg in Design with Nature, transect planning applies the framework of ecozones to the town plan. Instead of creating districts based on uses, the transect plan makes use of “form-based codes” that create zones based on dimensional requirements that facilitate certain uses and activities, and plans for a continuum of densities that can accommodate all uses. The transect town begins with an urban core at its center that is characterized by the highest densities and radiates outwards with decreasing densities until it reaches rural preserves and reserves.

Transect planning is based on the omnipresent presumption in this literature that the cause of sprawl is Euclidean zoning, and that by moving away from uniform use district zoning, the problem of sprawl can be solved. While transect planning presents an interesting alternative for new greenfield development, it does not address
the existing variation and zoning subtleties within existing suburban areas, and does not present a viable way to make existing places greener or more efficient.34

Not everyone buys the Duany model however. Tony Nelessen’s work with visual preference surveys has provided alternative model to complete zoning code overhauls. Nelessen uses visual preference surveys to identify community preferences for the style and form of new developments. Nelessen begins to tap into the place identities that individuals perceive in places they like and dislike. He uses the preferences that derive from those perceptions, to help communities convert their existing zoning into code that encourages more favorable development. Nelessen’s work begins to forge a connection between an understanding of zoning and an understanding of the way that people perceive and identify real places. The final section of this chapter will explore this connection between perceived identity and place regulation in the work of Nelessen and others.

IV. The Perceived Identity of Place

In his book, Visions for a New American Dream, Nelessen critiques suburban sprawl and proposes a new way to plan for denser, pedestrian-oriented, more traditional suburban towns. While Nelessen, like most other authors on suburbia, treats suburban sprawl, particularly suburban strip development as a uniform environment, his trademarked approached to planning begins to unveil the importance of local communities perceptions about place, and makes the link between how those perceptions can be captured to change zoning strategies (see Figure 3). Nelessen uses a survey in which respondents rate images of a variety of places based on what they like best. Visions reports that typically the images showing traditional neighborhoods and town centers receive the highest ratings, and arterial road bordered by strip malls typically receive the lowest rating. Nelessen then argues that by comparing what a community’s zoning code actually would allow to the images that people found most appealing can help catalyze zoning changes that favor denser more traditional development.35

Nelessen makes a link between preference and
perception and regulation that, unlike Duany's transect planning, can be tailored to individual places and circumstances. However, he is in the business of shaping preferences and actively working to use them to manipulate local zoning codes. Other strains of literature have worked to highlight more closely the concepts of place identity and perceived identity and how these perceptions shape policy. The social science literature about place identity defines the term similarly to the way I have defined perceived identity for this thesis: the connection between the image of physical setting and an individual's identity. While this thesis looks at the connection between the image of physical setting and a town's identity, looking at place identity provides informative background, as ultimately even when looking at a town's identity, it is individuals perceiving that identity and making decision about how to shape it.

Dolores Hayden's *Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, a work that explores this question of place identity, advocates for intensified scholarship to uncover socially inclusive landscape histories because unless people feel that a place is linked with their personal or cultural identity, it will be difficult to motivate them to preserve historic development. Rather than working to figure out how to harness people's perceptions of place as Nelessen does, *Power of Place* highlights the historic connection between perceived place identity and action.

Like Hayden's work, several environmental psychologists have picked up on the connection between place identity and policy action. Misse Webster-Herber’s “Underlying Concerns in Land-Use Conflicts – The Role of Place-Identity in Risk Perception,” links place identity to risk perception to illustrate that the level of an individual's aversion to certain land uses will be strongly rooted in how closely they identify with the place that they live. The work of Hayden, Nelessen, and Webster-Herber makes concrete steps towards connecting the way people perceive place to the decisions people make about regulating place.

V. Conclusion

Not all authors and practitioners have taken the approach that all of suburban development is homogenous. In *Building Suburbia*, yet another groundbreaking book about the American suburbs, Dolores Hayden

"highlights the complex relationships between real estate entrepreneurs and a wide range of suburban residents and workers... [and] explores the interplay of the natural and built environments, considers women's and children's lives as well as men's, discusses working-class houses and yards as well as affluent ones..."  

Hayden convinces her readers that there are many suburbias. While championing this rare notion
of diversity of suburbia, Hayden focuses almost exclusively on residential developments. Even the early work of Venturi and Brown, JB Jackson, and others treats suburbia, and the strip in particular as a singular landscape that is replicated throughout North America. Hayden's vision of multiple histories and subtlety where others see only endless “seas of parking” has not yet filtered into the common understanding of strip commercial development.

New Urbanist literature has come closest to developing an understanding of the forces that shape the commercial strip. The New Urbanist writers, however, have concluded – based on an assumption that suburban strip development is simple and homogeneous – that zoning is ultimately and uniformly to blame for the physical form of most suburban development. Even while they channel early warnings from planners like Leary, they treat zoning like an independent force that has the power to form landscapes on its own. Because of this, the New Urbanist writers have suggested that until municipalities hang their zoning out to dry and adopt a new method of regulation, either form-based codes, or transect planning, or something not yet thought of, then our cities and suburbs are at the mercy of long-outdated zoning codes, written by misguided planners twenty, thirty, even fifty years ago.

Nelessen, Hayden, and Webster-Herber, though writing in many different fields, argue that the way people feel and think about places ultimately has an impact in how they make decisions about regulating those places. The following chapters represent an attempt to illustrate that each suburban strip is unique; while zoning can have predictable results in given situations, each town's strip zoning is a product of many considerations, including the community’s perception of what its strip is and what it could be. Ultimately, these perceived identities represent a driving force that has a measurable impact on how towns use zoning as a regulatory tool to shape development in their strip districts.
Chapter 4: Existing Conditions and Zoning

Where else would a day-glo tyrannosaur look so...so...perfectly at home? - Nathan Cobb, Boston Globe Staff Writer on Route 1

I. Introduction

The starting point to approaching the central question of this thesis – does the way in which town officials perceive the identity of Route 1 affect each town’s approach to zoning their strip – relies on first understanding each town’s approach to zoning their strip. How much are they attempting to regulate? How much is each town relying on zoning to control development? Therefore, in the following chapter, I will answer these questions in order to support the claim that these strips are in fact quite different from each other – not only in appearance, but also in how tightly their appearances are controlled by zoning.

The following chapter will explore the dimensional requirements applicable to each to each town’s strip, and then compare what one might expect to see as a result of that code to the actual existing conditions of Route 1 development in Dedham, Saugus and Peabody. A subsequent cross-town comparison will show that there is significant variation in how closely the built environment resembles what its code predicts, in large part due to the variety of means that each town employs to implement its code, which will be the discussion of the fourth section of this chapter. The comparison will illustrate that each town has a unique strip, both in how it looks overall and how it is regulated by the town it is in.

II. Zoning Regulations

The following table sets up a quick comparison between various dimensional requirements for Route 1. The table shows that in terms of raw dimensional requirements, Dedham and Peabody’s Highway Business districts (HB) are relatively similar, particularly in terms of the regulations that have an effect on the appearance of each development from the road, while Saugus’ requirements are quite different from both other towns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Dedham HB</th>
<th>Saugus HB</th>
<th>Peabody HB</th>
<th>Peabody DDD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Lot Size</td>
<td>1 acre</td>
<td>10,000 square feet</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. Building Height</td>
<td>40' or 5 occupiable floors</td>
<td>20' or 1 story</td>
<td>50'</td>
<td>72', or 6 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. Setback from Route 1</td>
<td>30'</td>
<td>10'</td>
<td>50'</td>
<td>100'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. Side Setback</td>
<td>25'</td>
<td>None, unless bordering residential</td>
<td>40'</td>
<td>100' for residential, 30' other uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Lot Coverage</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>35% (Building Coverage)</td>
<td>60% (Impervious surface)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Parking Ratio</td>
<td>1 space/200 sf retail floor area</td>
<td>1 space / 300 sf</td>
<td>4.5 spaces/1000sf</td>
<td>5 spaces/1000sf of gross floor area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. Frontage</td>
<td>200'</td>
<td>50'</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Landscaping</td>
<td>20-foot strip from property line</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15-foot strip from property line</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side/Rear Landscaping</td>
<td>5-foot buffer</td>
<td>None, unless bordering residential</td>
<td>Half of Side Yard</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Landscaping</td>
<td>15% of paved parking area; 40% of total lot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Dimensional Requirements Comparison (Source: Dedham, Saugus, and Peabody zoning codes). HB stands for Highway Business District; DDD stands for Designed Dimensional District.

Based on the measurements displayed in this table, it is possible to imagine what the various landscapes might look like as you drive by them on Route 1. At first glance, the Dedham requirements appear to be the most comprehensive and restrictive. The acre lot minimum suggests that the properties will be fairly large, but the forty percent lot coverage ratio suggests that there will be a fair amount of open space on each lot. The additional requirement that forty percent of the lot be landscaped indicates that even if there are large paved parking lots, most properties will still feel softer and more vegetated than a run-of-the-mill strip mall. The thirty foot minimum setback suggests that there will be no structures very close to the road, and the accompanying front yard landscaping requirement
indicates that every property will have a strip of vegetation buffering the front of the lot from the road. While there might be variation in how far back buildings sit from the road, the thirty foot minimum setback and the front landscape buffer indicate that from the road, the strip will feel organized, not terribly dense, and highly regular.

Peabody’s regulations predict a similar landscape. The front setback is even larger, fifty feet, assuring that almost all properties will have parking lots in front of the structures. This large set back minimizes the appearance of discontinuity between properties; the difference between fifty and sixty feet is less noticeable from the roadway than a difference between a ten and a twenty foot setback. Peabody also requires a vegetated buffer between properties and Route 1, again suggesting a highly regular roadside. The building coverage ratio of thirty-five percent suggests that structures will be on large open lots, but because there are no impermeable surface maximums, or interior landscaping requirements, probably each structure will be surrounding by large parking lots. Even though Peabody does not have a minimum lot size like Dedham does, the setback and front landscaping requirements suggest a similarly ordered landscape. In addition, both Peabody and Dedham have very generous parking requirements - four and half or five spaces per thousand square feet of retail space, suggesting a similar ratio between the sizes of parking lots and buildings in both places.

But Route 1 in Peabody is comprised of two significant zoning districts. While the west side of the road is governed by the highway business district, the east side is comprised of Peabody’s Design Development District (DDD). The minimum lot size is two acres, immediately suggesting large scale development, probably office parks. The larger building scale suggested by the 0.4 floor area ratio (FAR) and the six-story limit and the higher parking ratio support the office or industrial park image. In addition the vast, one hundred-foot set backs, and sixty percent maximum impervious surface coverage indicate a vegetated park-like landscape.

Figure 1: Peabody Zoning Map, 2002 Peabody Master Plan Update. A: Design Development District; B: Highway Business District (Source: Peabody Existing Conditions and Analysis, 2002)
The Saugus code is harder to make assumptions about. By some standards, the relative leniency, or intrinsic flexibility, of this code makes it more urban than either Peabody or Dedham. The front set back is ten feet, a measurement that would be equally appropriate on Newbury Street. The small front setback, the relatively small minimum lot size, the lack of side setbacks, the high lot coverage ratio—seventy percent—and the relatively low parking ratio of three spots per thousand square feet of retail space could be almost construed as a New Urbanist downtown plan. These requirements indicate a comparative density not possible under either Peabody or Dedham’s zoning. However, the lack of any landscaping requirements, the relatively flexible setback, and the lack of any FAR or other bulk regulations suggest that this landscape could just as easily be highly varied landscape with some properties looking completely different from others while still easily falling within the regulatory envelope. With this brief overview of how the dimensional requirements vary from town to town, the following section will explore how the actual conditions compare to what the various codes suggest.

II. Existing Conditions

Dedham: If you approach Dedham from the North, you might drive down the VFW Parkway, a lovely shady, tree-lined road. The VFW ends somewhere around West Roxbury, and drops the unsuspecting driver onto Route 1. The change in landscape is
almost breathtaking. Suddenly, the trees give way to parking lots and vast strip malls positioned perpendicularly to the road, so that the only way a passing driver knows what is inside the mall is by the thirty foot signs that punctuate each curb cut.

Before long, however, the starkness of the roadside softens, and this is how the driver knows that she has entered Dedham. Perhaps if the same driver had passed through this part of town ten years ago, she never would have known that she had crossed a municipal boundary, but today there is an unmistakable change in appearance across the Dedham border (see Figures 1 and 2).

Almost every property is fronted by a well-manicured fifteen to twenty foot strip, planted with deciduous trees (evenly spaced, of course) and evergreen shrubbery. Parking lot interiors, even in the most unlikely locations, are landscaped with positively celebratory trees and bushes. Even the most kitschy strip features are snuggled into neatly landscaped islands (see the Dedham Moose in Figure 5).

Dedham's strip has not always been this way. Even the remnants of Route 1 Dedham's past, however, show signs of conversion. Figure 4 shows the previous location of Pep Boys. While the structure is still unoccupied, there is evidence that the site is being transformed to match the surrounding properties. Transitional properties like this one do not diminish the overall sense of order and regularity that Dedham's strip development
Saugus: Saugus, while still unmistakably a strip, is of a completely different world. At the southern edge of Route 1, the roadside is sparsely populated with truck lots, parking lots, empty parcels, and small buildings housing a variety of uses. When entering Saugus from the south, the first famously eye catching building is an enormous Chinese pavilion set atop a perfectly oriented hillside, to give the driver an unblocked view, both of the building itself, and its sign, made of white stones on the approaching hillside (see Figure 6). As you get deeper into Saugus, the roadside grows denser and livelier. Motels, Dunkin’ Donuts, and some full-fledged strip malls crop up on both sides of the road. More notable than the structures is the garish, colorful signage, visible in Figure 7, that adorns presents to passersby. Not only do almost all properties share common landscaping features, but there are no terribly irregular structures, no buildings encroaching on the road, no outrageous signage or building design, no vast, bleak parking lots. In short, it is the picture of manicured strip perfection.
Continuing northward up the road, a driver might not even notice another building after the East Manor until the Square 1 Mall.

The mall, shown in Figure 9, is inwardly oriented. Shielded from the street by a vast two-story parking structure, it is recognizable as a shopping mall only by the giant geometric sign announcing its identity to the street. This section of the road not only captures the range of design and density encapsulated on Route 1 Saugus, but also the range of uses. The white roof across the street from the mall, in Figure 8, is the gymnasium of a public high school. To the right of the school is a garage, and beyond that, a strip mall anchored by a DSW Shoe Warehouse. As you drive further down the road, the variety of uses, building types, building orientation and placement on the lot becomes increasingly chaotic.

Once you pass the Square 1 Mall, drive over a hill and through some woods, Saugus' most famous landmark pops up, brightly and cheerfully, on the west side of the road (see Figure 10). While this iconic business is perhaps the most recognizable feature of Saugus' Route 1 landscape, it also provides some very interesting clues about the dimensional regulations along the roadway. The three buildings shown in Figure 11 highlight one area of flexibility in the Saugus code. The hilltop steakhouse sits back only ten feet from Route 1; all of the parking for the restaurant is on the side and in the back of the lot. The neighboring Meinecke is

Figure 10: The Hilltop Steakhouse; Figure 11: The Hilltop Steakhouse and neighboring properties -- Note the inconsistent setbacks (Source: photographed by the author, April 2005).
set back about forty feet from the roadway, with the entire front of the lot devoted to a paved parking lot. The third building, a restaurant called The Border Café, is set back even further, perhaps sixty feet from the property line. Though not entirely visible in this photograph, the area in front of the Border Café building is almost entirely paved, with a narrow strip of bushes at the façade of the building. The irregularity of setbacks, building size, and orientation shown here continues throughout Saugus. The regulations are so minimal that most of the properties, even with all of their variation, fit comfortably within the written standards.

**Peabody:** Despite the comparative stringency of Peabody’s zoning code its Route 1 environment is similar in character to Saugus’. The most notable difference is the wide variety of uses in Peabody that outdoes even Saugus’ cluttered roadside. In addition to the uses pictured in Figures 12 and 13, Peabody is perhaps most famous for its Route 1 mobile home parks. These parks, while not permitted in the zoning districts surrounding Route 1, have been grandfathered as they have been a part of Peabody’s landscape for longer than the code. For the most part, the parks extend directly up to the roadside (see Figure 14). However, as in Saugus, the edge of the road is not neatly defined by development everywhere. Buildings built almost to the road’s edge are neighbored by properties with large parking lots or other large setbacks in front of them (see Figure 15).
Whereas in Saugus, the dimensional requirements are so minimal the irregularity of development might be expected, Peabody’s dimensional requirements are significantly stricter, stipulating clear setback and landscaping requirements not found in the Saugus code. Development on both sides of the road looks alike even though they are located in two different districts (HB and DDD) with different dimensional requirements. The overall prevalence of nonconforming properties in Peabody differentiates it significantly from Dedham and Saugus, even though it shares some features with both towns.

This relatively simple comparison between the written code and the built landscape already highlights significant differences from town to town. It also shows that the relationship between zoning and strip is not as simple as Kunstler’s writings from the previous chapter might suggest. The following section examines the way each town implements its zoning code both to explain some of the variation in how well build outs match the zoning and to illustrate another layer of complexity that serves to differentiate one town’s strip from another’s.

IV. Zoning Implementation

While the preceding sections illustrate that there is variation in how precisely each town’s built out strip resembles the image promulgated by its dimensional requirements, a third key feature that

Figure 15: Peabody Costco parking lot photographed from Route 1 differentiates the strips from each other is zoning implementation. The relationship between zoning and the built environment is largely determined by how specific requirements are enforced.

Not surprisingly, given the regularity of its landscape, Dedham has the most stringent approvals process for developments in their highway business district. The town requires that all site plans for development and redevelopment projects are submitted to the both the planning board and a design review board for approval. The design review process is advisory.
for the planning board, but it is explicitly stated in Dedham’s code that

“the fact that a proposed project complies with all specific requirements and purposes set forth herein shall not create a presumption that the project is in fact compatible with surrounding land uses, and in itself shall not be sufficient to justify the granting of any application.”

In other words, mere compliance with the letter of the law in Dedham will not necessarily guarantee approval.

Through this highly discretionary approvals process, anchored to the planning and design review board, the town of Dedham is able to not only ensure compliance with its regulations, but also to vet projects that do not match with their vision for their highway district. Because the boards have the liberty to consider ancillary design issues such as character, scale, site layout, and vegetation, they have more room to negotiate with developers in order to bring proposed projects into harmony with the town’s vision and with the surrounding properties. Even without the stringent requirements in Dedham’s code, the review process has the power to create Dedham’s consistent, manicured landscape.

Neither Saugus nor Peabody has as strong a site review process as Dedham. In Saugus, the code states that “a Zoning Enforcement Officer, who may be the Building Inspector...shall administer and enforce the provisions of this By-Law.” Within this model, there is no leeway for a planning board, city council, or other town representative to assert a vision beyond what is encapsulated in the requirements of the by-law. Mary Carfagna, Chair of the Saugus Planning Board stated that any site review by the planning board is “really very cursory—it’s about whether they’ve got sign posts in the right place,” and it is done in conjunction with the town Zoning Enforcement Officer, Fred Berroni. Carfagna also noted that the Planning Board is much more involved with site plan review for subdivision plans, and that they really do not have any control over areas like Route 1 that are already “substantially built out.”

It is important to keep in mind that the Dedham strip was also built out when the current zoning requirements were adopted, but they have been able to capture the zoning changes as the properties have been redeveloped. The comparative lack of discretionary control in Saugus is evident in the Saugus strip. As previously noted, the Saugus code provides developers with a lot of room to maneuver, by providing for a full range of possible sizes, shapes, placement, and designs that might fit within the prescribed envelope. Whereas the Dedham review process might ultimately produce Dedham’s landscape in Saugus’ code, Saugus’ review process is unlikely to be able to proactively shape development in any direction.
Peabody similarly relies on its building inspector to do the site plan review in its Highway Business District. This leaves both Peabody planners and the Peabody Planning Board with very little control beyond what is written in the zoning. Peabody has, however, established a site plan review process in its Designed Development District (DDD). The DDD actually established a new authority, the Community Development Authority, who will be advised by the staff of the Community Development Department, to administer site plan review for projects in the District. Even though the DDD was established over a decade ago, there have not been many developments in the district. The developments that have occurred, however, have incorporated much of the new landscaping criteria and exhibit the influence of the Authority. The Peabody strip is in transition with its zoning like Dedham and landscape like Saugus. This transitional nature will be explored further in Chapter 4.

VI. Conclusion

These three case study strips provide evidence that not all strips are alike. Each town has a very different approach to zoning: Dedham regulates extensively and has a discretionary review process to ensure that the town has control over the image of the road; Saugus regulates very little, and has no discretionary control over by-right developments in their strip; Peabody’s strip is visibly in transition as it hangs between grandfathered properties and updated zoning in the DDD. Each town has a different regulatory strategy for its strip that only begins to unearth why Dedham was able to mobilize sweeping code changes that have actually been effective, why Peabody was not, and why Saugus hasn’t even tried. The next chapter will begin to explain this variation by examining the role that perceived identity of the strip has played in determining how each town uses zoning.
Chapter 5: The Role of Perceived Identity

The one thing people immediately react to is the visual environment. If you said to people what do you think about Saugus, and all they would think of was Route 1 – they wouldn’t know that it is actually a lovely community. This road is people’s number one perception of the town. ~ Dan Shapiro, Former Planning Board Chair, Town of Dedham.18

I. Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, the built environments along Route 1 in Dedham, Saugus, and Peabody vary significantly in appearance and in how they are regulated. This chapter compares how town officials and regulators in each town perceive Route 1 and explores how these attitudes contribute to the variations discussed in Chapter 3. As one element within the complicated relationship of road and town, the way that towns view their existing strips has a large impact on how they choose to regulate future strip development and redevelopment. The following three case studies were developed out of conversations with town officials and planners, examination of municipal planning documents, and local press coverage about development along Route 1.

The summary table in Figure 1 highlights the connection between the overall perceptions about Route 1 illustrated throughout the primary sources that I investigated and each town’s current approach to regulating Route 1 through zoning. The table illustrates a clear correlation between the content of the perception and the method of the zoning approach. A comprehensive summary of my findings from my primary source can be found in Appendix B. The remainder of this chapter will develop more thorough narratives about the way that town officials and regulators perceive the identity of Route 1 through their town, how pervasive their attitudes are in the town, and how those attitudes have informed decisions about how the towns use zoning to regulate strip development.

At the time that Dedham overhauled their zoning code, several key planning board members and public officials viewed Route 1 as central part of Dedham that reflected badly on the quality of the town. As a result, this group of planners created a new zoning code that proactively took control over Route 1 roadside development through both the dimensional regulations and implementation tools...
Development physically unattractive, representing a negative impression of the quality of the town.

Intensified dimensional requirements and design review to improve appearance of development and gain more municipal control over site design.

Road is not part of the town; it may give an inaccurate representation of town development, but it is not a central part of the town’s identity.

Created new use district that allows office park development and higher end uses with more intensive site review process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dedham</th>
<th>Development physically unattractive, representing a negative impression of the quality of the town.</th>
<th>Intensified dimensional requirements and design review to improve appearance of development and gain more municipal control over site design.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saugus</td>
<td>Road is not part of the town; it may give an inaccurate representation of town development, but it is not a central part of the town’s identity.</td>
<td>No comprehensive strategy for using zoning to control Route 1 development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peabody</td>
<td>Development is comprised by many marginal uses which do not reflect the quality of the town, and do not reflect the image Peabody envisions for Route 1.</td>
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Table 1: Summary table illustrating overall perceptions of public officials in each town, and the corresponding zoning approaches on Route 1.

discussed in the previous chapter.

In Saugus, a distinct air of helplessness about the state of Route 1 permeates town regulatory bodies. Most sources indicate that, other than being a significant tax generator, Route 1 is not an important part of the town’s identity. Instead, it is a place to be avoided in favor of the town’s more picturesque center and natural resources. Because Route 1 is viewed as a separate place, zoning is not viewed as an appropriate tool for intervention. Town planners and officials focus their regulatory energy on areas that more centrally represent the town’s identity, resulting in strip zoning that does not have strong teeth, and that does not push roadside environment towards anything other than it already is.

Peabody sits between the two extremes represented by Dedham and Saugus. Town planners and town documents indicate that Route 1 is viewed as part of the town that needs to be dealt with, and the zoning regulations are reflective of this recognition. But, unlike Dedham, Peabody has focused on upgrading uses rather than making physical improvements to existing development. In a way, Peabody’s approach is to un-strip their strip by converting it to a different typology of development. This strategy, while wholly different, is nevertheless deeply rooted in the way that town officials and regulators perceive the identity of what Route 1 is and what it could be.

II. Dedham

Like various towns of its scale and resources, Dedham did not keep a planner on staff for many years and was therefore predominantly governed by an outmoded plan and zoning code. Before an updated plan was adopted by the Town of Dedham in 1996, all new development was subject to a vision laid out 30 years earlier in the 1966 master plan. As part of the planning process that shaped the
new master plan and accompanying regulations, a distinct trend emerged which enabled Dedham to build an effective regulatory system for the Route 1 commercial zone. A group of committed regulators worked very hard to convince the town that Route 1 was a negative reflection of the town as a whole, and that it needed to be considered as part of the town, rather than a peripheral zone. This movement to incorporate Route 1 into Dedham represents a shift in how town planners and officials perceived the identity of Route 1, and led to the development of a new set of zoning regulations that was designed to make Route 1 Dedham a better reflection of the town. The connection between the perceptions of town regulators and the subsequent zoning changes is evidenced by the statements of the planners and regulators themselves and the language of town planning documents. (Summary analysis of Dedham sources, including interview content, can be viewed in Appendix B).

Much of the Route 1 landscape in Dedham was directly shaped by an attempt to control the scale of development by demanding an extremely high parking ratio. According to Dedham's town planner, Arthur Noonan, the original code stipulated an unusually high ratio of five parking spots per thousand feet of retail. The drafters of this code thought that this ratio would limit building size by requiring that a high percentage of each individual lot would need to be devoted to parking. The actual result of using this “blunt instrument” was big buildings with vast, over-sized parking lots that far exceeded the needs of the retailers.47

A number of factors, including the availability of state funding for planning, led the town to initiate an effort to revise their ancient plan. The process of updating the zoning code and the master plan began in 1991. The first public meeting for visioning was held in November of 1992. A survey distributed at this meeting asked citizens, among other things, to identify major areas of concern. The participating residents identified the Route 1 corridor as “the most important item to deal with in the Master Plan.”48 Even at the very beginning of the planning process, there was a consensus among participants that Route 1 needed to be dealt with.

In addition to the citizens’ commitment apparent from the beginning, there was a clear push from the municipal side to prioritize Route 1. Peter Zahka has served on the planning board and the Board of Selectmen. In 1992, Zahka founded the Dedham Civic Pride Committee whose primary concern was advocating for aesthetic improvement throughout the town. “Let’s face it,” Zahka says, Route 1 “is many people’s view of Dedham.” Zahka’s perception that Route 1 negatively reflected the character of the town to passersby on the road led him to push the town to consider Route 1 as a legitimate part of Dedham, the Committee’s early initiatives were focused on making sure the new master plan responded to their aesthetic concerns.49

The stated priorities of the community members and
the attitudes of public officials like Zahka indicate that there was a core of individuals participating in the planning process who felt strongly that Route 1 Dedham was a part of the town that reflected badly on the rest of the town, and needed to be addressed through the new master plan. As a result of the pressures from Zahka and participating community members, a community vision coalesced around the idea of improving Route 1. A document distributed at a public meeting held before the plan was adopted informed the town at large about the proposed zoning changes. This document highlighted five primary “Community Goals as developed in the Master Plan:”

- “Make the character of Route 1 commercial uses more compatible with the overall character of the town rather than have the Route 1 corridor define the town.
- Locate and design development in such a way as to encourage pedestrian movement and transit use and thereby minimize vehicular traffic impacts.
- Maintain the economic and job diversity and revitalize Route 1 by attracting desirable businesses to an upgraded environment.
- Improve conditions along Route 1 corridor to achieve a smoother traffic flow, creating a positive effect on the town’s circulation, economic base, and appearance.
- Reduce the paved areas dedicated to movement and storage (parking) of cars.”

Most of these goals are directed specifically at dealing with development on Route 1, and the more generic goals have very strong ramifications for the Route 1 environment. The clear interest in improving Route 1 is summarized in the master plan itself. The vision statement in the plan’s introduction states the goal of “improved conditions along the Route 1 corridor so that traffic is handled more effectively and the Corridor more positively contributes to both the town’s economic base and the aesthetics of the community” (bold text is original).50 In addition to an interest in improving the road generically, the plan shows explicit evidence that the town had begun to internalize Route 1 as part of its central identity:

“People who only know Dedham from their trip along Route 1 have a very negative impression of the town. The objective of the Master Plan is to make the character of Route 1 more compatible with the overall character of the town rather than have the Route 1 corridor define the character of the town.”51

Furthermore, the plan suggests that once the town implements the proposed changes, “people traveling Route 1 will know they have entered Dedham and that the Town takes pride in its appearance.”52

The proposed changes in the plan, which stem from directly from the desire to convert Route 1 into a landscape that better reflects the quality of
the town, include a virtual overhaul of the town’s zoning code. The recommended zoning changes, including the stringent landscaping requirements, new setback minimums, new lot coverage percentages, and new parking ratios, were adopted unanimously by town meeting in 1995. The ease with which the zoning changes were adopted is due in part to the significant amount of work the master plan committee put into developing consensus around the vision behind the zoning changes.

Further evidence that the zoning changes were driven by this change in the perceived identity of Route 1 from a back yard to an entry point to Dedham is divulged by former planning board member Dan Shapiro. Shapiro, who shared Zahka’s perceptions about the identity of Route 1, wrote the first version of the zoning amendments in response to his biggest concern about the road, “the visual environment.” The amendments he proposed included most of the dimensional requirements discussed in Chapter 3. In a letter to the Town meeting in 1993, the Planning Board encouraged the governing body to adopt some of the more urgent zoning changes as expediently as possible so as maintain momentum and prevent new development that did not comply with the goals of the new plan. Shapiro, the author of the original version of the zoning amendments notes that the other planning board members agreed that Route 1 needed to be a better reflection of the identity of the town, and they supported his effort to use zoning as a means of better controlling the appearance of development along the road.

Shapiro’s new dimensional requirements were not the only updates to the code that resulted from this change in attitude about Route 1. As a result of the confidence in the strength and validity of the Master Plan vision the town also instituted new implementation channels which strengthened the site plan review process as introduced in Chapter 3. The 1995 zoning amendments included new Minor and Major Site Plan Review processes. As would be expected, in order for approval to be granted both review tracks require material compliance with use and dimensional requirements presented earlier in the code. However, both review tracks also provide for a degree of subjective judgment on the part of the Planning Board by suggesting that, as stated in the case of Major Site Plan Review,

“the Planning Board shall...make a written finding whether the site plan as a whole substantially conform to the intent of the by-law and proposes an appropriate and beneficial development of the site.”

By explicitly stating that the Planning Board may deny an application solely on the basis of not complying with the “intent” of the regulation, the code implies that a subjective assessment of the project under review is an appropriate, and in fact required, part of the approval or denial process.

The 1995 Annual Town Meeting also authorized
the creation of a new Design Review Advisory Board (DRAB) to establish design guidelines “for areas of Town having different visual and functional character and to review specific categories of development and signage,” and to serve as “a community resource providing information, recommendations and professional design review for individual projects.” While the review Board does not have the legislative authority to approve or deny projects, it prepared a Community Design Handbook which among other things “provides design objectives to applicants” preparing to apply for approval from several boards and agencies including the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals. The DRAB, therefore, provides a unified set of standard that the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals may use as guidelines in there decision-making process. According to some officials, the DRAB has “really taken control of the visual environment.”

Ultimately, the overarching perception that the image of Route 1 Dedham was not representative of the town as whole, but that it should be, drove many of the zoning changes that have resulted in the new Dedham strip. Whether or not drivers on the road view these changes as “improvements,” the Dedham case illustrates a clear link between the perceived identity of the strip and the zoning that controls it. The actual zoning code was written and supported by individuals whose priorities and perceptions about Route 1 are clearly evident in the nature and language of the new requirements.

The next two towns share Dedham’s awareness that the image of Route 1 is not representative of the quality of their town, but in neither case do the town representatives indicate that they view Route 1 as a central part of their town's identity. While Saugus and Peabody perceive Route 1 differently, their perceptions have had profound impacts on how each town uses zoning to regulate their roadsides.

III. Saugus

The strength of vision and clarity of purpose found amongst the policy-makers and enforcers in Dedham is not visible in Saugus. While there have been some attempts to gain better control over Route 1 development, there has never been a coordinated effort of zoning, or other municipal tools, to gain that control. The following section will illustrate that the prevalence of piecemeal, ad-hoc planning, and the resultant minimal zoning along Route 1 stems from a prevailing attitude among town officials and regulators that Route is not really a part of Saugus. Not only is this attitude and its connection to zoning decisions evidenced by the officials themselves, but also in the planning documents they produce, and in local press coverage about Route 1 in Dedham. (For summary analysis, including interview content, please see Appendix B).

One attempt to develop a strategy for Route 1 was initiated by then Selectmen Michael Kelleher (also the Manager of the Square 1 Mall) in 2003. He
proposed creating an economic development plan for Saugus Route 1, the goal which would be to identify potential better uses for Route 1 and then actively work to attract the identified businesses to the Route 1 area. A *Boston Globe* article about the committee quotes Kelleher as suggesting that Route 1 Saugus is

"'great neighborhood community...A lot of things that happen on Route 1 have an effect on those neighborhoods and the community.' Neighbors on the committee could offer some valuable insights into what businesses are needed on Route 1."  

Following Kelleher's proposal, Selectmen Chairwoman Janette Fasano supported the committee because she felt it "could help attract businesses that 'could improve the town's image.'"  
Kelleher succeeded in capturing the imagination of several key public servants in Saugus and garnered significant support for his effort to make Route 1 development of central importance to the town. However, about a year before this article was written, Kelleher had been arrested for driving while intoxicated (on Route 1), causing a minor scandal in Saugus. One month after proposing the Route 1 Economic Development Committee, he lost his bid for reelection to the Board of Selectmen, and the idea died with the next administration.

A second champion of the cause of Route 1 improvement is Fred Moore, Saugus Town Meeting member and Chairman of the Route 1 Traffic and Safety Study Committee. Moore provides another example of an off-course attempt to steer Route 1 development in a new direction. In his introduction to the final study report Moore notes that "in the absence of any initiative on the community's part, highway projects to the North and South of Saugus would shape our destiny by default." In addition to sensing a lack of coherent action surrounding the roadway, Moore expresses his feeling that, at least from a transportation perspective, Route 1 is part of a "whole picture of local access, mobility, [that] relates to the larger quality of life issues" with in the town.

Moore's 2004 Traffic and Safety report presents a handful of suggestions for improving the roadway appearance and development through emphasis on alternative transit options that would lighten the traffic flow by diverting drivers onto other forms of transportation. In addition, the report suggests overhauling land use regulations to encourage mixed-use pedestrian scale development along the corridor, and better enforcement of subdivision by-laws that prohibit dead-end streets off Route 1.  

While most of Moore's suggestions are reasonable as part of a comprehensive plan for improving the area, the report lacks the specificity to actually promote implementation of the ideas presented, and makes no links to current zoning, or to the existing planning board or town meeting decision-makers.

Additionally, the report ends with a proposal to
build a second-story deck over the current roadway which would extend to the surrounding buildings, essentially creating a second-story street that would be for the exclusive use of pedestrians and local traffic. The ground-floor roadway would service through traffic, in what will have essentially become a tunnel. The plan, expressed in the three-paragraph “Summary” at the end of the report, is either brilliant or absurd. Either way, the brevity and generality of the description serve only to undermine the utility of the other potentially achievable ideas presented in the body of the report. 65

Both the attempts of Michael Kelleher and Fred Moore illustrate the fringe nature of local attempts to improve the Route 1 environment. While each took a very different approach to designing an improvement strategy, Kelleher and Moore both feel that improvements to the road will serve to improve the image and the identity of the town as a whole. Their visions, however, did not successfully capture the Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen, or the Planning Board. Moore and Kelleher both opted to create new committees, rather than operating through existing channels for controlling land use and land development—namely the town’s zoning by-law. Their desire to create new channels for action illustrates a lack of faith both in municipal planning and in zoning as an adequate means of controlling the Route 1 environment.

Not all attempts to implement changes on Route 1 have been failures, but they all share Moore and Kelleher’s approach of creating new organizations and operating outside of existing municipal decision-making channels. For instance, the Square 1 mall, discussed in chapter 3, was not originally planned to look the way it does today. The original site plan contained acres and acres of surface parking rather than the existing structured lot. However, in order to create flat enough land for the surface lot, the mall developers, New England Realty Trust, would have had to blast through the substantial hill at the back of the lot (shown in Figure 1). Mall neighbors, in a movement spear-headed by Town-Meeting Member, Janet Leuci, formed a group called NO BLAST, and filed suit against the developers to prevent months of noisy blasting. The current site plan and structured lot were the result of negotiations between NO BLAST and New England Realty Trust. 66 Because the selectmen typically “would give a special permit to allow anything” on Route 1, New England Realty Trust had no trouble getting a permit for the new, unusual, development. 67

NO BLAST’s efforts with the Square 1 Mall, together with the work of Moore and Kelleher, exemplify the piecemeal, decentralized nature of efforts to improve Route 1. This pattern of activism and decentralization stems from an attitude, evidenced by all of the officials interviewed for this thesis, that Route 1 is not in fact a part of Saugus, but rather a detached area that happens to pass through the town (see Appendix B for interview summaries). Ellen Burns, former planning board chair and
foundating member of NO BLAST, explains this consistent failure to use zoning to make overarching changes along Route 1 in place of these singular efforts. She says that no one, even those trying hardest to improve Route 1, ever thought to use zoning because

"we think [Route 1 is] something outside the town. It splits us in half, it runs through, but we don’t really think of it as part of the town of Saugus. It has been there for so long, and it’s always been a highway with some businesses.”

All of the Saugus planning officials interviewed for this thesis expressed a similar sense of disconnection between the image of the road and the identity of the town. Mary Carfagna, current chair of the Planning Board “tries to avoid [Route 1]—especially on the weekends” and along with most other Saugus residents she knows, does not frequent the businesses along Route 1 unless there is no alternative. Carfagna’s behavior highlights a sense that while Route 1 development is not ideal, it is an ignorable part of Saugus. Additionally, Jean Delios, the former Director of Community Development in Saugus, noted that zoning had not been used as tool to alter the appearance of development along Route 1 because “the community [has been] content with the development happening along [there]. They are much more concerned with the development happening in the town” (italics added). Delios' comments indicate that not only

![Figure 1: This photo of the Square 1 Mall shows the hill behind the front entrance of the Mall (Source: photographed by author, April 2005).](image)

is altering the course of development along Route 1 not a priority, but the community does not even consider the roadside environment to be a part of the town.

The comments of Burns, Carfagna and Delios, (summarized more fully in Appendix B) not only highlight the perceived identity separation between the town and the road, but also illustrate that these perceptions directly contribute to the lack of interest in using zoning as a tool to control Route 1 development. This attitude is similarly visible in Saugus’ municipal planning documents. The town recently took advantage of the Executive Order 418 which provides state funding for local community development plan creation. The State provided Saugus with $30,000 to create visions, goals and
strategies in four topic areas including Economic Development and Transportation. The resulting Community Development Plan was informed by a substantial public process, and was directed by the Saugus Community Development Plan Committee, comprised of Saugus officials and residents.

A close examination of the document reflects the disconnect between the identity of Route 1 and the identity of the rest of the town, expressed by Burns. In language that closely mirrors the sentiment that propelled Dedham to reinvent its zoning code, the opening of the economic development chapter states:

“Saugus residents expressed appreciation for such assets as the woodlands of the Breakheart Reservation and the community’s “small town” feel. Yet for most residents of neighboring communities, Saugus’ image is much more likely to be the town’s intensely developed Route 1 retail corridor. The continuous string of commercial properties along the highway is a retail and entertainment center for communities north of Boston, and dominates the Saugus economy.” 71

Although the acknowledgement that Route 1 does not accurately represent the character of the town to the outside world is expressly stated in the opening passage of the economic development chapter, interest in altering the character of Route 1 barely registers within the stated economic development goals. The two points selected by more than half of the participants as their top priorities were to make neighborhood areas more pedestrian friendly and to diversify the economic base overall. Updating zoning by-laws to encourage more “appropriate” businesses received only three votes of seventy-nine; Encouraging diverse mobility options (biking, walking, transit) via infrastructure development and concentrated mixed use land development received only one vote, even though this goal is ostensibly a more proactive way of stating the first two goals. Finally, the creation of an economic development committee, which might actually be able to oversee the creation of a vision plan for the Route 1 commercial area, also received only one vote as a top priority for town resources.

While the town has invested in zoning changes to control development in other areas for purposes such as wetland and flood plain, the overall lack of interest in using zoning to control Route 1 development falls as a low priority in the town because, as the community plan shows, the road is not seen as a central town priority for residents.

The sense that Route 1 Saugus is not really part of Saugus has been evident in planning decisions for decades. Almost ten years ago, then Planning Board Chair Ellen Burns discussed a new zoning provision that relegated adult book stores to Route 1. “We can’t fight it,” Burns told the Boston Globe in 1997, “so we might as well be prepared for it.” 72 Burn’s comments, and the Saugus Planning Board’s
unanimous decision to adopt the new zoning restriction illustrates a prevailing attitude that, not only is Route 1 a separate part of the town, but it is also a convenient dump site for all undesirable and unattractive uses. This attitude, present in the Community Development Plan and highlighted by Carfagna and Delios permeates the planning decision-makers, and has inhibited any movement to make changes along Route 1. As a result, the proposals to upgrade Route 1 that have surfaced have not proceeded through existing decision-making channels that might lead to zoning changes, but have surfaced through independent committees or individuals.

As a result of the attitude so clearly presented by Ellen Burns that Route 1 is really not a part of Saugus, the town has never been able to translate the layers of local distaste for the visual environment of Route 1 into comprehensive zoning strategy. Perhaps the chaotic, yet memorable roadside that has resulted from the limited zoning control has, in a Kevin Lynchian way, augmented the dissociation of Route 1 development from the more orderly suburban development that characterizes the rest of Saugus. That notwithstanding, the perception on the part of town planners and regulators that Route 1 is separate from the Town of Saugus, has resulted in no attempts to use zoning to implement physical changes in Route 1 development.

IV. Peabody

Lying somewhere between the aggressive stance of Dedham and the piecemeal approach in Saugus, Peabody’s strip is neither intensely regulated nor municipally ignored. As evidenced in Chapter 3, there is inconsistency between the zoning requirements governing development along the road and the form of development that actually exists there. The evidence both from town planners and planning documents shows that Route 1 Peabody is viewed as an integral part of the City landscape, though not necessarily a nice part because of the marginal uses located on the road. This attitude has resulted in zoning changes, but the resulting regulation has focused on use changes rather than dimensional changes, and therefore has not been as visible, or as large scale as the changes in Dedham. (Summary analysis of interviews, planning documents and local press can be found in Appendix B.)

In 2002, Peabody published a new Master Plan, accompanied by a thorough Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis Report. The pair of documents provides considerable insight into how at least the authors of the report, if not the larger community, viewed Route 1 at the time the documents were written. The Existing Conditions Report notes that “the character of Route 1 in part reflects the highway’s previous use as the region’s primary north-south route linking Boston to coastal New Hampshire and Maine. This is
seen in the gas stations, restaurants and the remaining motels.”

However, the report notes that since Route 95 captured much of that north-south traffic, “older uses declined,” and that “over time, some less desirable uses were relegated to this stretch of highway.” Finally, the report goes on to suggest that “there are indications that the next phase of land reuse along Route 1 has begun. Among these are the new business-oriented hotels located at the south end of Route 1 near the 128 interchange.”

This passage highlights two important features of Peabody’s relationship with Route 1: firstly, town regulators are aware that the road has captured some of the town’s “less desirable” development; and secondly, the passage illustrates a sense that Route 1 development is slowly migrating towards an image that Peabody wants for the road.

Despite the vaguely passive optimism expressed in the recent report, Joe Viola, staff liaison to the Planning Board in Peabody Community Development Department, noted that most members of the planning board would not “say that Route 1 is fine the way it is.” While the same vague sentiment of dissatisfaction with Route 1 development was evident in Saugus, Viola also noted that the Community Development Department “think[s] there is lots of room for improvement in many areas with a more consistent push toward land use planning as a driving force.” This comment suggests that the planning department in Peabody, unlike in Saugus, views Route 1 as a place that can ultimately be controlled by planning efforts. Additionally, Mike Parquette, Assistant Director for Community and Economic Development in Peabody, noted that priority in the Community Development Department is to “upgrade some of the marginal uses” along Route 1. Like Viola’s comments, Parquette’s identification of marginal uses suggests a clear perception among regulators and planner that the Route 1 area is not fulfilling its potential for the City. In 1990, Peabody established a new zoning district, the Design Development District (DDD) along Route 1 to address some of these concerns.

In 1990, Peabody updated its master plan, and as part of that process the city council voted to adopt a new Designed Development District (DDD) to address some of these concerns. This district converted what had been a highway business district into a new district targeted at attracting high end office park uses. According to the 1991 Master Plan update, “the purpose of the City’s regulations in [the DDD] will be to set the stage for the most productive use of” Route 1. Not only would this involve prioritizing higher end uses, but also creating a more attractive edge to the strip and a better interface with surrounding developments. In addition the Master Plan notes that the “City will consider providing incentives to developments that incorporate elements that meet needs not being met elsewhere in the city, for example, apartments designed along with retail space.” This particular
feature highlights that the authors of the DDD saw Route 1 as a place that needed to become an integral part of the City of Peabody.

Like the highway business district in Dedham, the DDD is an example of a zoning change designed to improve the highway strip because of a prevailing attitude among town officials and planners that the road needed to be a better reflection of the character and values of the town in which it is located. Unlike Dedham, however, the master plan clearly emphasizes an overriding attitude that the Route 1 landscape needs to be improved through better zoned use designations in order to better reflect the values and the character of the City of Peabody, rather than dimensional regulations to make more attractive properties. The choice to adopt a new use district rather than to focus exclusively on physical changes was born out of a city-wide perception that it is the uses not the appearance of Route 1 that are the problem. However, relying on use changes has not produced much visible change in the district since the DDD was adopted.

Partly, Parquette attributes this failure to the way the zoning was written. He notes that

“Business owners looking to relocate to Peabody complain that the [DDD] regulations are too strict – businesses that want to be on Route 1 don’t want those standards, and industrial parks that might not mind the standards don’t want to be on Route 1.”

In other words, the fact that Route 1 looks the way it does, and has the reputation that it does, prevents industrial or office park developers from locating there; other kinds of businesses, however, cannot build within the envelope of large lots and extensive open space designated by the DDD. Despite this conflict, Peabody officials have maintained their insistence that permits for new development in the DDD be reserved for higher and better uses.

Several years ago, a developer looking to locate a gas station in the DDD approached the City Council with a site plan that Parquette described as “very well planned, well landscaped,” but the plan was turned down because it did not fit into the use designations for the district. According Joe Viola, the special permit was denied because it

“...did not meet a local desirable need.’ In short, the council felt that there are numerous service stations located on Rt. 1, and that by granting a [special permit] for a low-end use such as a gas station they would be perpetuating the kind of low-end use that traditionally locate on Rt. 1, especially since the use was in the Designated Development District, which is supposed to be for higher-end uses that meet the city’s stated goal of creating a high quality employment center.”

The gas station story highlights a conflict between the desire to locate higher end uses along the...
roadway and the lack of a market for such high
end uses along a roadway currently crammed with
relatively unattractive development. Parquette
pointed to this conflict as being largely responsible
for the fact that very few developments have
occurred within the DDD – so few “since the zoning
designation changed [that] the City is considering
changing it.”

Even while the concern for higher and better uses
has dominated, and perhaps stymied development
with the DDD, Peabody has channeled some of
the desire for Route 1 improvement into the new
dimensional requirements in the highway business
district described in Chapter 3. The changes, also
part of the zoning changes associated with the 1990
master plan significantly increased the regulations
in the highway business district, but during this
time, there have been few massive redevelopments
in the area that would require properties to
come into compliance with the new regulations.
However, as properties slowly redevelop over time,
it is likely that these new regulations will become
more and more evident in the Route 1 landscape.
Also, Parquette and Viola both noted that the City
is currently considering a stronger review process
for the highway business district to assure that as
existing properties redevelop, they will come into
compliance with the City’s vision for an improved
Route 1.

As it is, however, the conflicting attitudes about
Route 1, and the conflicting priorities for better
uses and better appearances are compounded by
the fact that there are “not a lot of teeth [within the
current code].” The towns’ emphasis on finding
“higher and better uses,” that resulted in the DDD,
has limited the use of zoning as a tool for changing
the appearance of the existing development along
the roadway. However, the attitudes about Route 1
expressed to some degree in both master plans,
and Viola’s assertion that there is will to improve
the image of Route 1 for the sake of the City, it is
likely the existing zoning will eventually have its
intended effects.

Even though, in Peabody, the mandate to include
Route 1 as a central part of Peabody is not as
crystalline as it is was in Dedham, there is a clear
sense the City does view Route 1 as a place that
should be better integrated with the city. Unlike
in Dedham, however, the central driving force for
changing the landscape has been through use
designations rather than dimensional requirements.
The comments of both Parquette and Viola, and the
actions of the City Council indicate that higher and
better uses will help to align Route 1 development
with the image of Peabody rather than simply better
looking facilities.

The DDD was a direct outcome of this perception that
it was the uses that make Route 1 unattractive rather
than the layout of specific properties. However, the
reliance on use designation rather than dimensional
requirements for inspiring change in the area pins
success onto the viability of the desired uses—in
this case office development—which is subject to the ups and downs of the real estate market, and the market impact of the location. Nevertheless, despite the complications that arose from relying on use changes rather than dimensional changes, there is a clear link in Peabody between the perception on the part of city planners and officials that Route 1 is a part of Peabody and should be a better reflection of the image Peabody wants to project and the decisions the town has made about how to use zoning.

V. Conclusion

In summary, the way that these cities and towns view their strips is an indicator for how they will use zoning to regulate it. In Dedham, Route 1 is viewed as being a part of the town. When the town initiated a master planning process, the image of the road emerged as being of central importance, and the resulting zoning reflected those priorities by strictly regulating the design of future developments and redevelopments. Saugus has yet to make a strong identity link between town and road. Because most of the town bodies that are involved in planning view Route 1 as an external feature, they have not even considered using zoning as a tool to change the way development on the road looks or functions. And finally Peabody, like Dedham, sees Route 1 as a part of the town. But it is the uses on the road rather than the appearance of the road that has emerged as the driving priority for improving Route 1 development. The zoning that has been born out of these attitudes has prioritized higher and better uses for the road over better-looking developments.
The strip, by its very nature, is not a local phenomenon: strip development is designed to be familiar everywhere; it is designed to attract a regional market; it is designed to be seen from an automobile moving quickly from one place to another. In claiming that all strips are the same due to these characteristics, however, critics miss the subtlety of each municipality’s unique regulatory relationship with its strip development. The three case studies presented here highlight the differences between three strips on the same highway: each town perceives the identity of its strip differently, and these perceptions have lead directly to very different regulatory environments.

Dedham was able to claim ownership over their strip by tying the image of that strip to the central identity of the town. Town planners and officials who were responsible for writing and maintaining the code bought into the notion that the image of Route 1 should be reflective of the quality of the town. Consequently, they rebuilt their zoning code around the enforcement of this vision. The result is a strip district that has been uniformly improved according to the standards set forth in the code.

Saugus has not made the same link between image and identity. While it has experienced a series of attempts to improve Route 1, both planning officials and planning documents illustrate that Route 1 is still primarily viewed as a peripheral issue – not a central planning concern that each town has control over. Saugus zoning code reflect this lack of concern; a very lax code and an easy appeals process that consistently grants variances for physical non-conformance is the result of this conceptual separation between town and road. The result is a chaotic, but memorable, strip with much of its historic strip heritage still intact.

Peabody, like Dedham, sees its strip as a central part of the identity of the City. Unlike Dedham, however, Peabody officials and planning documents indicate that the uses rather than the appearance are what need to be improved to bring the road up to Peabody’s standards. Thus, the city has focused on
altering use requirements rather than dimensional requirements to attain the kind of environment that city officials feel would be reflective of the image Peabody wants to present. All three cases illustrate a clear connection between the specific nature of each town’s relationship with Route 1 and how strip development is regulated in the town.

Even given the differences between the three municipalities studied there, the importance of how towns perceive and relate to their strips is universal among these cases. While deeply intuitive, the acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of how strip development is perceived and defined locally could potentially be captured in order to begin to build new ways of planning for and controlling strip development. Regardless of whether a passerby of the Dedham strip feels that the new landscaping is better or more attractive than the development that came before, the effectiveness of the process that Dedham underwent to achieve those changes is obvious. Even though Dedham operates with limited planning resources, especially compared to a city like Peabody, they have maximized municipal control over development by endowing the elected planning and design review board to have wide discretionary control over development decisions.

Given the research conducted here, it is impossible to say whether Dedham’s success was partially due to the fact that the town had really reached a consensus about priorities for Route 1 before the design review board was established, but this question is worthy of further research. What is clear from this research, however, is that the implementation strategies Dedham developed were appropriate and effective means of bringing the vision behind their zoning code to life on their strip. All of the strips indicate that by actively working to claim strip development areas as worthy of attention, and by defining them as places that municipalities can control if they choose to, planners could potentially make steps towards redefining strips as local, unique, and even personal places expressive of the identity of the towns where they are located.

Not only can this research contribute to the redefinition of the strip, perhaps it can encourage the expansion of the vocabulary of tools that municipalities use to govern their strips. Given the differences between town-road relationships shown here, and the different zoning approaches adopted by Dedham and Peabody with such varying results, it is quite possible that using zoning to control strip development will not be the most effective option for every municipality. Some towns, like Saugus, might ultimately decide that the recognizability and memorability of their strip is important to them, and rather than using zoning to create a more uniform environment, they could develop incentive strategies to encourage creative architecture and signage. Or, for towns with strips similar to Saugus’, with a wide variety of architectural styles, and a rich legacy of highway strip design, perhaps updating design guidelines to embrace that style of development rather than supress or gloss over it with arborvitae
would be a more appropriate strategy.

Ultimately, this question of perceived identity plays a role not only in how individual localities write and implement zoning, but in the way that critics and planners think about and regulate strip development. The assumption that strips are singular, uniform environments across the country has hampered the ability of planners to create viable programs for improving existing strips, much the way Saugus has never considered using zoning to comprehensively regulate the image of its Route 1 strip. The critics that attack strip development, and the planners and designers that work towards reforming strip development have typically tried to develop universal solutions, such as new urbanism, or traditional neighborhood development, that could be applied to any place with the same result. But, the research in the thesis illustrates that nuances of any code and its implementation will be laden with the values of the community and affect physical form regardless of how non-specific the solution seems. There will be no one size fits all zoning solution that will solve the woes of the strip.

A prevailing attitude that strips can just be planned away by building new, better development without them, has left the strip intellectually abandoned and proliferating according to its own logic. If this thesis tells us nothing else, it shows that effective changes can be made in strips once they are identified as what they really are: the gateways and faces of their town. Until planners, both on local and national scales, accept this reality of the modern strip, it is unlikely that we will come up with better alternatives.
Endnotes

9 Ibid., 187.
12 Jackson 1958, 195.
15 Ibid., 368.
16 Leary 1968, 420.
17 Ibid., 423.
18 Ibid., 426.
19 Ibid., 426.
21 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 65.
26 Ibid, 30.
27 Ibid, 29.
Ibid, 39.
29 Kunstler 1998. 110.
30 Ibid, 112.
31 Ibid, 93-94.
32 Ibid, 94.
34 Ibid.
40 In other words, the regulations here could produce attached structures with 10’ setbacks that might appear on an urban downtown street.
41 Dedham Zoning By-Law, “Character and Purpose of Districts; Highway Business District,” Section I-1.b
42 Timing is an additional factor that contributes to the ability of zoning to change landscapes. Zoning, by nature, produces incremental changes – changes won’t show up on the ground just because changes were made in the code. For instance, when Dedham passed its comprehensive zoning changes in 1995, there was a string of properties along Route 1 that were ready for redevelopment. Almost immediately after the code was updated, a series of five properties along the road underwent major renovations that required them to come into compliance with the new requirements. Some of these properties were fairly sizable, and within a period of a couple of years, the roadside had changed quite a bit.
44 Mary Carfagna, Saugus Planning Board Chair, personal interview, March 22, 2005.
45 Ibid.
46 Peabody Zoning Code.
48 *Dedham Master Plan; 2001 and Beyond*.... Town of Dedham, 1996: Chapter IV Land Use, p. 6.
49 Peter Zacha, Property Lawyer, Former Planning Board Member, and former member of the Dedham Board of Selectmen, personal interview, March 2, 2005.
50 *Dedham Master Plan*, Chapter I, Introduction, 3.
51 *Dedham Master Plan*, Chapter VII, Environment, 3.
52 Ibid, 5.
53 1995 *Dedham Town Report*.
54 Shapiro, 2005.
57 *Town of Dedham, Zoning By-Law for the Town of Dedham, Massachusetts*, Chapter VIII-4, Section G.
58 1995 Dedham Town Report, 132
59 Shapiro, 2005.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
64 Ibid, 3-5.
65 Ibid, 6-7.
66 Janet Leuci, Town-Meeting Member and founding member of NO BLAST, Personal Interview, April 20, 2005.
67 Ellen Burns, Former Saugus Planning Board Chair, and founding member of NO BLAST, Personal Interview, April 20, 2005.
68 Ibid.
69 Carfagna, 2005.
70 Jean Delios, Current Director of Community Development in Peabody; Former Director of Community Development in Saugus, Personal Interview, February 2, 2005.
71 Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Central Planning Transportation Staff for the Saugus Community Development Committee, Saugus Community Development Plan, Saugus, MA: June 2004.
73 City of Peabody with the assistance of The Cecil Group, Inc. City of Peabody, Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis, Peabody, Ma: September 2002, 16.
74 Ibid.
75 Joe Viola, Peabody Planning Staff Liaison to the Planning Board, Personal Interview, April 20, 2005.
76 Mike Parquette, Assistant Director for Community and Economic Development, City of Peabody. Personal Interview, February 16, 2005.
78 Ibid.
79 Parquette, 2005.
80 Ibid.
81 Viola, 2005.
82 Parquette, 2005.
83 Ibid.
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Jacobs, Harvey M. “Fighting Over Land; Americas Legacy...America’s Future?” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65 (Spring, 1999): 141-149


**Newspapers, Periodicals**


Boyle, Doug. “N.E. Shopping Center blast pact reached; NO-BLAST, FAM find common ground,” *The Saugus Advertiser*, October 27, 1987, 1.


Sessler, Amy. “Saugus looks beyond the boom; Fast pace of development of Route 1 brings questions about the quality of life,” The Boston Globe, Article found in Route 1 press clippings file at the Saugus Public Library, date unknown.

Tynan, Trudy. “Milestones of history; For every marker there’s a story as you travel the famed Boston Post Road,” The Associated Press, September 22, 2004 (as posted on www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5931638).

Municipal Documents


Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Central Planning Transportation Staff for the Saugus Community Development Committee, Saugus Community Development Plan, Saugus, MA: June 2004.

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City of Peabody, Zoning By-Law

City of Peabody with the assistance of The Cecil Group, Inc. City of Peabody, Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis, Peabody, Ma: September 2002.


Saugus Zoning By-Law

Interviews

Berroni, Fred: Saugus Zoning Enforcement Officer. Feb 9 2005

Burns, Ellen: Former Saugus Planning Board Chair, and founding member of NO BLAST. April 20, 2005.

Carfagna, Mary: Saugus Planning Board Chair. March 22, 2005.

Jean Delios: Current Director of Community Development in Peabody; Former Director of Community Development in Saugus. February 2, 2005

Galinas, Katy: Chair of the Saugus Zoning Board of Appeals. April 15, 2005.

Leuci, Janet: Saugus Town-Meeting Member and founding member of NO BLAST. April 20, 2005.


Parquette, Mike: Assistant Director for Community and Economic Development, City of Peabody. February 16, 2005.
Shapiro, Dan: Former Dedham Planning Board Member, Zoning, Planning, and Construction Committee Member, Ad-Hoc Zoning Committee Member, and Special Town Council. April 4, 2005.

Joe Viola: Peabody Planning Staff Liaison to the Planning Board. April 20, 2005

Zahka, Peter: Property Lawyer, Former Planning Board Member, and former member of the Dedham Board of Selectmen. March 2, 2005.
Appendix A:
Comparative Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dedham</th>
<th>Peabody</th>
<th>Saugus</th>
<th>Boston–Worcester–Lawrence CMSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>23,782</td>
<td>47,039</td>
<td>25,549</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>23,464</td>
<td>48,129</td>
<td>26,078</td>
<td>5,819,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change 1990-2000</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 and under</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 34</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 64</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>61,699</td>
<td>54,829</td>
<td>55,301</td>
<td>52,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduates (share)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td>5,411</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>721,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B:
Research
Summaries

DEDHAM:
Interview Summary Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Priorities for Route 1</th>
<th>Role of Route 1 in Community</th>
<th>Role of zoning in shaping development</th>
<th>Role of zoning implementation</th>
<th>Connection between role of Route 1 and zoning approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Noonan</td>
<td>Town Planner</td>
<td>12/3/04 2/23/05</td>
<td></td>
<td>Before zoning changes, the road was not reflective of overall character of town.</td>
<td>Original zoning code very effective at creating large lots.</td>
<td>Updated code has incrementally improved the roadside.</td>
<td>New requirements directly stemmed from a movement to beautify the road. Because zoning was seen as the cause of the form of the build out, it was seen as the right tool to improve the build out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Shapiro</td>
<td>Planning Board Member</td>
<td>4/4/05</td>
<td>Improving &quot;visual environment&quot;</td>
<td>The face of the town to commuters along the road.</td>
<td>1990 zoning changes have been extremely effective at improving the visual environment along Route 1.</td>
<td>Design Review Board has played a key role in taking control of the visual environment, and improving the overall quality of development.</td>
<td>Because visual environment was the primary problem, zoning was the most appropriate tool for changing development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Zahka</td>
<td>Former Planning Board member; Former Selectman Founder of Dedham Civic Pride Committee</td>
<td>2/25/05 3/2/05</td>
<td>Aesthetic quality of roadside development</td>
<td>Many people's only view of Dedham; before changes it was not reflective of the quality of the town.</td>
<td>Zoning changes lent weight to the vision expressed in the 1995 master plan.</td>
<td>Zoning changes embraced by business owners who saw improvements as a way in increase property values.</td>
<td>Flexibility/discretionary nature of the site plan review process has allowed the town to negotiate with developers to achieve the most aesthetically pleasing outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Planning Document Summary

### Press Coverage Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Overall focus on Route 1</th>
<th>Attitude towards Route 1</th>
<th>Discussion of zoning on Route 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedham Master Plan</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Significant - A vision for the Route 1 corridor is outlined in the introduction. Every subsequent section contains a subsection about Route 1 improvements.</td>
<td>Repeatedly noted that Route 1 corridor projects negative image of Dedham to commuters on the road.</td>
<td>Zoning changes proposed as a means of upgrading the image of the Route 1 corridor to match the aesthetic quality of the rest of the town.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route 1 Press</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Nature of articles</th>
<th>Importance of articles</th>
<th>Attitude towards Route 1 expressed in articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample of articles from regional papers</td>
<td>January 1998, September 6, 2001, October 24, 2002, April 20, 2003, January 8, 2004, April 29, 2004</td>
<td>News articles regarding property redevelopments along Route, all after the 1995 zoning changes.</td>
<td>All of the officials I interviewed are quoted in the sample of articles that I looked at. Quotes featured in the article reinforce the attitudes I gathered from my interviews.</td>
<td>Quotes from the individuals I interviewed reinforce the idea that changes in the Route 1 landscape due to the 1995 zoning changes have helped to upgrade the image of Dedham Route 1 to be more congruous with the quality of the rest of the town. In addition, four of the articles explicitly lauded the 1995 zoning changes, and the new site review processes as contributing to the revitalization, and new competitiveness of the Dedham strip compared to neighboring towns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SAUGUS:**
**Interview Summary Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Priorities for Route 1</th>
<th>Role of Route 1 in Community</th>
<th>Role of zoning in shaping development</th>
<th>Role of zoning implementation</th>
<th>Connection between role of Route 1 and zoning approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fred Berroni</td>
<td>Zoning Enforcement Officer</td>
<td>2/3/05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No problems with zoning compliance along the road.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Burns</td>
<td>Town Meeting Member; Former Planning Board Chair; Founding Member NO BLAST</td>
<td>4/15/05 4/20/05</td>
<td>Convenient supplement to the town tax base, but not really a part of the town.</td>
<td>The town hasn't tried to use zoning to shape development: changes in existing and proposed developments have been the result of piecemeal efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td>The town has not tried to use zoning to shape development on Route 1 because they don't see the road as part of the town.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Carfagna</td>
<td>Current Planning Board Chair</td>
<td>3/22/05</td>
<td>New landuses, grocery store, traffic improvement</td>
<td>Tax generator, but otherwise it's a strip like any other. Most residents avoid it, if they have a choice.</td>
<td>Because it is already built out, zoning does not play that big a role in shaping development - development is already there.</td>
<td>Only very cursory site plan review so the planning board, and other town agencies, have little discretionary control over development.</td>
<td>The planning board has so little control over zoning and site plan approval, that zoning does not register as an option for creating change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Delios</td>
<td>Former</td>
<td>2/2/05</td>
<td>Route 1 not an essential part of town, or a priority for residents</td>
<td>Variances frequently doled out by the Board of Selectmen, so zoning ultimately is not that binding on Route 1.</td>
<td>Variances given for just about anything - shape of development on Route 1 more attributable to individual piecemeal fights of residents.</td>
<td>Most requests the ZBA sees have to do with signage. There is not consensus on the board about upgrading signage on the road, therefore, not much has changed.</td>
<td>Zoning is a better tool for development in the town, not on Route 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katy Galinas</td>
<td>Zoning Board of Appeals Chair</td>
<td>4/15/05</td>
<td>Improving signage</td>
<td>What's there is there.</td>
<td>Board typically doesn't allow variances for new construction, but because Route 1 is already built out, Board doesn't get many requests for that part of the road.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Leuci</td>
<td>Town Meeting Member; Founding Member NO BLAST</td>
<td>4/20/05</td>
<td>Residents neighboring the Road feel vulnerable to the lack of control over development there, but otherwise it is not seen as a central area of town.</td>
<td>Variances given for just about anything - shape of development on Route 1 more attributable to individual piecemeal fights of residents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoning by-law never really changed on Route 1 - because people are focused on other areas of town, interfacing directly with developers seemed like more effective route to seeing immediate change in specific developments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Saugus Planning Documents Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Documents</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Overall focus on Route 1</th>
<th>Attitude towards Route 1</th>
<th>Discussion of zoning on Route 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saugus Community Development Plan</td>
<td>June 2004</td>
<td>Minimal - several references to Route 1 throughout document, but no overall focus. Community participation sections show minimal community interest in addressing Route 1.</td>
<td>Recognized as an inaccurate representation of the town of Saugus, but consistently referred to in the context of regional issues such as traffic.</td>
<td>No discussion of existing or proposed zoning on Route 1 corridor. Aside from suggesting a regional transportation study, the document makes no explicit suggestions for changing Route 1 through zoning or other means.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Saugus Press Coverage Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route 1 Press</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Nature of articles</th>
<th>Relevance of articles</th>
<th>Attitude towards Route 1 expressed in articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample of regional press articles</td>
<td>December 28, 1997, December 28, 1997, May 17, 1998, August 22, 2004</td>
<td>News articles predominantly about proposed developments and development trends on Route 1.</td>
<td>Quotes from Ellen Burns, as well as quotes from Michael Kelleher, Town Manager Richard Cardillo expand and reinforce attitudes noted during interviews for this thesis. Even these news articles use a consistent vocabulary for describing and discussing Route 1.</td>
<td>Quotes from officials consistently frame Route 1 as a place that requires regional attention; the serves a convenient tax generator for town; and that is a chaotic back yard, not coincident with the character of the rest of the town. The text of the articles reinforces this image by frequently referring to the difficult traffic, chaotic roadside, mix of businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 1980, May 20, 1992, October 12, 1999, August 10, 2003</td>
<td>Opinions and Editorials about Route 1 through Saugus</td>
<td>The descriptions within these articles provide a counterpoint to the perceptions expressed by Saugus town officials.</td>
<td>The articles consistently describe Route 1 Saugus as chaotic, disorganized, jumbled, in both design and mix of uses. Only one of four the articles I found in this category mentions any part of Saugus other than Route 1. While the descriptions of Route 1 are overtly negative, the presence of four separate editorials within the sample of articles I found points to the road’s ability to capture the imagination of passersby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample of local papers</td>
<td>October 22, 1987, April 22, 1990, February 15, 1996</td>
<td>News articles, mainly about the piecemeal efforts of local residents and officials to alter the course of single projects.</td>
<td>Articles chronicle the efforts of NO-BLAST and other local non-profit, activist groups that act as the informal regulators of Route 1 development. None of the articles I found in this category discuss zoning explicitly - at least in these samples of press coverage, zoning is not promoted as an option for altering the course of development on Route 1. By covering what they do, the articles set up an oppositional relationship between the road and the town, echoing the attitudes of Burns and Leuci. The road is not portrayed as a part of town, but as a disrupter of town.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PEABODY:
Interview Summary Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Priorities for Route 1</th>
<th>Role of Route 1 in Community</th>
<th>Role of zoning in shaping development</th>
<th>Role of zoning implementation</th>
<th>Connection between role of Route 1 and zoning approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean Delios</td>
<td>Director of Community and Economic Development</td>
<td>2/2/05</td>
<td>Getting better control over the uses locating along the road.</td>
<td>People see Route 1 as a receptacle for uses they don’t want elsewhere.</td>
<td>Original code set to mimic industry standards for the kind of development the city wanted to attract - large scale retail, highway oriented businesses, etc.</td>
<td>Lack of site plan review outside of DDD limits the ability of the city to regulate the form and layout of developments.</td>
<td>City is considering developing site plan review for all zoning districts in order to get better control over the appearance of new developments along Route 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Parquette</td>
<td>Assistant Director for Community and Economic Development</td>
<td>2/16/05</td>
<td>Currently muddled and disorganized, not realizing the city’s vision</td>
<td>Problems on Route 1 are more about uses than physical appearance; the DDD has started to have a real impact on Route 1 in the new business oriented hotels that are locating there.</td>
<td>Lack of site plan review outside of the DDD hampers the ability of the city to control development directly.</td>
<td>Board of Selectmen grant variances with advice of the planning staff.</td>
<td>The sense that uses on Route 1 were really not what the City wanted led directly to the DDD, since zoning is the best way to control land uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Viola</td>
<td>City Planner, Staff Liaison to the Planning Board</td>
<td>4/20/05</td>
<td>Getting better control over the uses locating along the road.</td>
<td>People see Route 1 as a receptacle for uses they don’t want elsewhere.</td>
<td>Original code set to mimic industry standards for the kind of development the city wanted to attract - large scale retail, highway oriented businesses, etc.</td>
<td>Lack of site plan review outside of DDD limits the ability of the city to regulate the form and layout of developments.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Delios provided little information about Route in Peabody - she referred me to Mike Parquette on all questions.**
### Peabody Planning Documents Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Overall focus on Route 1</th>
<th>Attitude towards Route 1</th>
<th>Discussion of zoning on Route 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Peabody Existing Conditions and Trend Analysis Report</td>
<td>September, 2002</td>
<td>Minimal - references to Route 1 appear briefly in Land Use and Management, Economic Development, and Transportation and Circulation sections.</td>
<td>Route 1 consistently described as chaotic, unplanned, and containing marginal uses.</td>
<td>Documents highlights Route 1 as an area that the City should focus on for redevelopment; perhaps consider further rezoning to better control uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Peabody Master Plan</td>
<td>September, 2002</td>
<td>Minimal - scattered references and brief suggestions for Route 1 appear in Land Use and Management, Economic Development, and Transportation and Circulation sections.</td>
<td>The document does not contain significant description or analysis.</td>
<td>Several suggestions about updating Route 1 zoning appear. All suggestions focus on upgrading uses in new developments to promote Peabody as a &quot;business friendly&quot; city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Peabody Master Plan Update</td>
<td>March, 1991</td>
<td>I only had access to the section of the Master Plan devoted to the creation of the DDD; this entire section addressed issues of both the DDD and Route 1 in general.</td>
<td>Route 1 described as a classic car-oriented strip. Route 1 currently underutilized – could support higher and better uses that could benefit from location on highway.</td>
<td>Zoning changes designed to attract higher quality developments through higher and better uses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Peabody Press Coverage Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route 1 Press</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Nature of articles</th>
<th>Relevance of articles</th>
<th>Attitude towards Route 1 expressed in articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sample of regional press articles | January 3, 1999  
January 31, 1999  
February 21, 1999  
July 15, 2001 | News articles focus on 1999 fight over a proposed Hooters on Route 1.  
One article discusses status of Peabody mobile home parks under Mass. Gen. Law Chapter 40B. | These articles explicitly discuss the role of zoning in shaping development along Route 1 and the degree of control the City has over the uses that locate there.  
Articles also contain quotes from several city officials I was not able to interview myself. | Quotes from city officials I was not able to interview consistently reinforce the priority of locating higher quality uses along Route 1 in Peabody. |