

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# FRAMINGHAM VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CENTERS



# SAXONVILLE

AND



# NOBSCOT

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN FINAL REPORT

TOWN OF FRAMINGHAM EDIC  
SEPTEMBER 2015

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STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# FRAMINGHAM VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CENTERS

## AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN FOR SAXONVILLE AND NOBSCOT FINAL REPORT

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TOWN OF FRAMINGHAM EDIC  
SEPTEMBER 2015

FINAL REPORT



FRAMINGHAM VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CENTERS  
STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1 Executive Summary

The North Framingham commercial centers of Nobscot and Saxonville have essential characteristics that provide differentiation relative to surrounding residential communities and provide a competitive advantage in terms of both livability and economic development. While the future of both neighborhood commercial centers is not dramatically different from the present, it has high potential to be better and to leverage the essential characteristics that make Nobscot and Saxonville special.

Leveraging the assets of the commercial centers falls into several important categories of actions: transformation of underperforming properties, aggressive expansion of walkability, connection of recreational resources, and alignment of uses and services with the surrounding residential market. These focused actions coupled with a district-wide approach to improvements and reinvestment strengthen the future potential of the commercial centers to serve the surrounding neighborhoods well into the future. The specific categories of actions and district-wide approaches are described in more detail below.

### Key Actions

#### *Transformation of Underperforming Properties*

Given the small geographic areas of Saxonville and Nobscot, a single underperforming property can have a very large impact on the perception and economic performance of the entire district. The impact of a single property is amplified if it is large and at a prominent gateway location. Saxonville has two underperforming properties that are large and at prominent district gateway locations – the State Lumber site and the

Pinefield Plaza. Alternative scenarios for new mixed-use development have been explored that would enable the properties to better contribute to the district. These studies are both a tool to provide the property owners with a potential new direction and are used to inform zoning recommendations for the district. Nobscot has one very prominent property, the Nobscot Shopping Plaza that has been underperforming for many years and is the community’s highest priority. Similarly, a redevelopment scenario that explores the potential for mixed-use development with housing provides an opportunity for a new direction for property ownership, appears to be an acceptable outcome for the community, and identifies zoning modifications that would enable this reinvestment.

#### *Aggressive Expansion of Walkability*

Nobscot and Saxonville are commercial centers that provide a center point for the surrounding residential communities. Access to the centers by pedestrians should be a primary focus of public realm investments and improvements. Enabling and attracting pedestrian activity has many benefits for the commercial centers, business and retail activity and the surrounding residential districts. Relatively simple improvements to the pedestrian network – completing missing segments of sidewalk, adding marked mid-block crossings where appropriate, reducing curb cuts, adding street trees and landscape features – all expand the walkability of the districts and leverage the fundamental value of the mixed-use neighborhood center. Historically, both centers were “walking villages” and it is a major economic advantage

for North Framingham to reinforce walkable nodes where they already exist.

Expansion of walkability can be combined with other improvements to improve circulation and convenience for all types of transportation. Intersection improvements that optimize signal timing, turning lanes and intersection geometry, at Edmands, Edgell and Water streets may help to alleviate congestion there. Increasing the supply of centrally located parking in Saxonville will help to improve the convenience and attractiveness of the district and can be combined with roadway improvements to enhance vehicular safety and circulation.

#### *Connection of Recreational Resources*

A viable secondary network for pedestrian and bicycle recreation trails exists and is expanding in North Framingham connecting the commercial centers and surrounding communities. The number of trails and potential connections is a distinction of the commercial centers that many other suburban communities do not have. Leveraging the many opportunities for recreational activity is a major advantage for the districts and differentiates them from other places around New England. In Nobscot, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and Bay Circuit Trail provide regional recreation connections. In Saxonville, the Cochituate Rail Trail and Carol Getchell Trail provide similar opportunities. The Hultman Aqueduct (long term potential) connects the two districts' trail networks and should be reinforced as a viable recreational link that connects across North Framingham.

#### *Alignment of Uses and Services*

The Nobscot and Saxonville communities and the market analysis have indicated a gap between the types of goods and services provided and the needs of the surrounding residents. The commercial centers are local-serving centers that must be supported by the surrounding residents and regular commuters and visitors in the area. The retail gap analysis and community have both indicated that new full service restaurants are needed to better align district uses with the community needs. The identification of existing or potential for new spaces along with the identification of interested restaurant groups would advance this opportunity to align current district businesses with resident needs. Over time the calibration of businesses, services and resident needs should be assessed to further enhance this alignment to encourage local spending.



## District-wide Approaches - Nobscot

The Strategic Economic Development Plan is broken into four topics with strategies and actions categorized within each topic. The four topics include Redevelopment and Urban Design, Marketing and Reinvestment, Public Realm Improvement, Regulatory Strategy. The collection of District-wide Approaches for Nobscot are briefly summarized below.



### *Redevelopment and Urban Design*

Nobscot is a four-corner intersection commercial district and as-such includes a limited number of parcels with frontage at the center of the district. The character of the district is directly impacted by the quality and maintenance of the limited amount of properties that define the district. In this context, a district-wide maintenance and improvement program for building facades, signage and landscaping would have a dramatic impact on the overall character of district.

Several prominent properties at the southeast corner of the main intersection have the potential to transform the character of Nobscot. The Nobscot Shopping Plaza is the most prominent feature of the district and has had a negative impact on the impression of the district and the sense of well-being in the community for decades. Strategies for unlocking this critical site are fundamental to the future of Nobscot. The Town-owned Chapel at this corner of the intersection is a historic building that the community values and it should play an important role in unlocking a new future for the district.



### *Marketing and Reinvestment*

In a small commercial district, any vacant space is a burden on the overall perception and sense of vitality within the area. Nobscot currently has several vacant retail spaces that should be the focus of positive activity. In the short term, vacant spaces and properties should be maintained and considered for temporary uses that would have a positive community benefit – a meeting space, a local business incubator or some other use that

would benefit from low or no cost space and that has the ability to end use of the space flexibly. In the long term, active matching between the retail gap identified in the market analysis and the needs identified by the community should be pursued to actively fill vacant spaces.



### *Public Realm Improvement*

In Nobscot, the focus of public realm improvements should be on the principal intersection of the district at Water, Edmands and Edgell. Intersection improvements to optimize vehicular circulation through signal timing and intersection and turn-lane configurations should be combined with pedestrian safety improvements. Missing links in the sidewalk network should be added, along with new marked mid-block pedestrian crossings to enhance walkability. Landscape features could contribute to an overall sense of place at the principal district intersection. Secondary circulation routes and internal vehicular connections between properties should be enhanced wherever possible to add connectivity that can bypass the main intersection. Open space improvements at the Nobscot Park and the McAuliffe Library should be used to anchor these community assets and connect them to the broader network of recreational paths.



### *Regulatory Strategy*

The center of Nobscot is within a single zoning district (B-2). A new zoning district to modify the B-2 characteristics for Nobscot would be appropriate. Specifically, modifying the allowable uses to encourage mixed-use with residential and increasing the maximum building height and density would open new investment opportunities in the district. A simple set of design guidelines for the district would also encourage new investment to be arranged to enhance walkability, a sense of place and connectivity. A district-wide approach to parking that shares parking across properties and provides a framework for shared parking agreements would enhance site efficiencies and maximize active uses.



## District-wide Approaches - Saxonville

The Strategic Economic Development Plan is broken into four topics with strategies and actions categorized within each topic. The four topics include Redevelopment and Urban Design, Marketing and Reinvestment, Public Realm Improvement, Regulatory Strategy. The collection of District-wide Approaches for Saxonville are briefly summarized below.



### *Redevelopment and Urban Design*

Saxonville is rich with iconic and historic buildings and natural features. Simple district-wide signage and wayfinding can be employed to reinforce the historic assets, natural resources, hidden views and recreational trails. A district-wide maintenance and improvement program for building facades, signage and landscaping should be used to incrementally improve existing assets to keep pace with other new investments. A grant program or revolving loan fund to encourage this type of renewal can have a dramatic impact on the level of stewardship and reinvestment that occurs while building community and a positive perception of the district.

Where opportunities for positive change exist, close attention and stewardship should be applied to leverage new investments to further enhance the overall character and quality of the district. Such opportunities for positive investment exist at the Pinefield Shopping Plaza, the State Lumber Site, the Saxonville Mill, the Athenaeum, and the old McAuliffe Library. Of those opportunities, the Athenaeum and old McAuliffe Library, which will soon be vacated, are Town-owned and potential assets to the community.



### *Marketing and Reinvestment*

The historic center of Saxonville is the Saxonville Mill complex. It is both geographically and visually the most prominent feature of the district and is home to many small businesses, entrepreneurs and innovative activities. Opening the door for new opportunities at the Mill through zoning and public realm improvements allows

for continued reinvestment and marketing of the Mill as an asset of the district. The wayfinding for the Mill and improved street frontages can reinforce the connections between the district and this asset.



### *Public Realm Improvement*

A district-wide focus on walkability should be used to strengthen connections to surrounding neighborhoods and the new Planned Unit Development northeast of the center. Reducing travel lane widths in the district center will both calm traffic and provide space for expanded sidewalks, streetscape amenities and strategically placed on-street parking. Public realm improvements to reinforce connections to district trails and trailheads are equally important to reinforce a strong secondary network of bicycle and pedestrian trails. Connecting the head of the Cochituate Rail Trail north to the Carol Getchell Trail or the Hultman Aqueduct provides new links in the network. The Hultman Aqueduct can provide a long term secondary route west to Nobscot.



### *Regulatory Strategy*

Several important regulatory modifications will enable new opportunities and long-term investment in Saxonville. A district-wide Village Zoning District would provide a more cohesive and tailored approach to zoning in the village center. Currently, five zoning districts (M, B-1, B-2, R-1 and G) exist at the center of Saxonville. The creation of a single Village Zoning District would create a more consistent application of allowable and desirable uses, potential for mixed-uses, tailoring of dimensional requirements and design guidelines regarding building placement and other aspects to reinforce the village center and examination of parking requirements. In regard to parking, other regulatory options to encourage the shared use of parking and to develop an overall district parking strategy would greatly enhance the efficiency and active use of all district properties.



FRAMINGHAM VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CENTERS  
STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# INTRODUCTION AND STUDY AREAS

## 2 Introduction and Study Areas

The Framingham Village Commercial Centers Study is an implementation effort of the Town of Framingham Master Plan (September 2014). The study and its recommendations are consistent with several key findings of the Town-wide Master Plan. The following goals and policies were outlined in the Framingham Master Plan and provided the context for the planning process documented in this report.

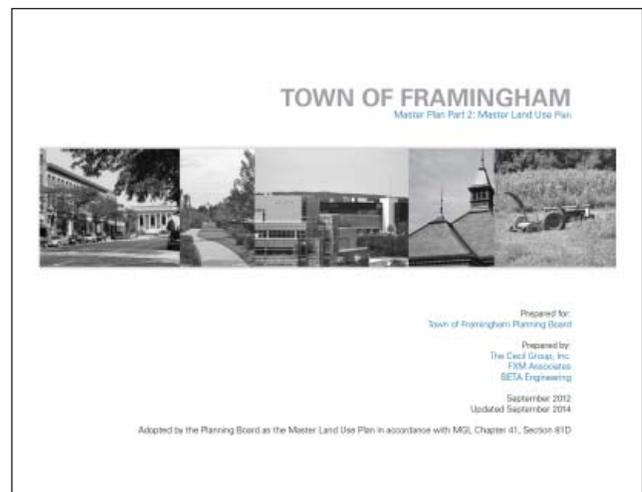
The Saxonville and Nobscot Corridor was also identified in the Master Plan as a target area for rezoning. Deliverables for this implementation effort were described in the Master Plan as:

- Publish a strategic plan for the reuse of the mill buildings and underutilized shopping plazas;
- Establish a corridor connection plan between Saxonville and Nobscot, utilizing the Pinefield Shopping Plaza.
- Produce a corridor transportation plan to provide multi-modal options for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians to co-exist;
- Produce an economic development plan to increase the use of the existing shopping plazas and mills within the corridor; and
- Prepare and produce zoning to be consistent with the market demands and potential land uses as described in the zoning analysis, build-out analysis, and corridor study. Follow the appropriate channels for zoning amendments, such as Town Meeting approval and final approval from the Attorney General.

### Nobscot Master Plan Recommendations

The following land use policies, civic and cultural improvement policies and transportation policies were outlined for Nobscot and are either directly or indirectly addressed by this study:

- Define the types and character of development most similar to the New England tradition that is most successful for revitalizing the center, and determine the zoning amendments and public incentives needed to effectuate that change.
- Offer a new mix of land uses that will bring new investment to the commercial parcels on Water Street, Edmands Road and Edgell Road District. Support smaller-scale retail and offices on these parcels.
- Conduct an economic market analysis to determine the business needs of the area to specifically meet the potential demand of the residents and community members within this area.
- Encourage pedestrian and bicycle friendly environments and road designs.
- Discourage large paved parking fields on frontages through zoning standards and incentives.
- Establish a neighborhood plan that encourages civic space and cultural attractions in and around the commercial center. Determine locations for pocket parks that add relief to the business center.



- Provide links to public and private open space such as MWRA lands, the Boy Scout Reservation, Garden in the Woods and Callahan State Park.
- Identify the need for bus stops and public transit links to the MWRTA, commuter rail station, and Logan Express, along with the expansion of sidewalks to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Improve street signage and way finding to identify Nobscot.
- Encourage a pedestrian oriented shopping and gathering place.

### **Nobscot Master Plan Implementation Actions**

The following implementation actions were outlined for Nobscot and are either directly or indirectly addressed by this study:

- Consider establishing a Village Center or Traditional Neighborhood Design overlay district.
- Utilize the market-based analysis to determine businesses and amenities that best fit the neighborhood's needs;
- Improve the infrastructure by implementing a streetscape improvement program that includes adding hardscape improvements and landscape elements;
- Create a list of approved streetscape elements, and implement a program of improvements through grant programs, the capital program and private investment; and
- Define the types of character development from other neighborhoods that have similar characteristics as Nobscot neighborhood that have proven to be most successful in their revitalizations efforts.

### **Saxonville Master Plan Recommendations**

The following land use policies, civic and cultural improvement policies and transportation policies were outlined for Saxonville and are either directly or indirectly addressed by this study:

- Revitalize Saxonville as a mixed-use village center composed of stores, shops, small businesses, rehabilitated existing housing, and new infill housing. Promote multifamily mixed-use projects at a scale appropriate to the village center. Ensure that any new development, investment, redevelopment, reclamation or reuse in Saxonville respects the existing building patterns, and that parking is located behind buildings.
- Develop on-site and on-street parking plans.
- Create links between new and old Saxonville neighborhoods, specifically Pinefield, the Saxonville Mill neighborhood, and the Danforth Bridge neighborhoods.
- Promote the historic character of primary corridors such as Water Street, Central Street, Elm Street, and Danforth Street.
- Develop a streetscape improvement program.
- Ensure zoning by-laws preserve historic character.
- Promote the historic neighborhood scale of secondary roads such as Potter, Old Connecticut Path, School Street, and Hamilton Street.
- Encourage mixed use in the Roxbury Mill complex to provide increased economic vitality.
- Consider public parking to support reuse of older structures, preserve historic structures, and land use patterns.
- Provide civic spaces and pedestrian links in the village center.
- Preserve the historic mill houses that surround the center, within and outside the historic district.
- Provide outdoor civic spaces to enhance the natural resources and community spaces within this area.
- Ensure a connection between Saxonville and the Planned Unit Development (PUD).

### **Saxonville Master Plan Implementation Actions**

The following implementation actions were outlined for Saxonville and are either directly or indirectly addressed by this study:

- Support small business development by providing public parking, public transportations, pedestrian, and bicycle accommodations;
- Zone public land for new parking, and make the parking available to meet zoning requirements to support small business development in the commercial center;
- Amend the Community Business Zoning District (B-2) zoning to specifically allow mixed uses, particularly for live-work units;
- Continue to encourage the reclamation and redevelopment of the Plan Unit Development (PUD) site. Review the PUD regulations, and negotiate permit revisions to encourage development of the approved site;
- Establish a Saxonville recreational walking trail (such as the Gloucester Maritime Trail). Review underlying zoning to maximize open space dedication along the Sudbury River;
- Establish a registered, commercial and/or residential historic district to highlight the quality and character of the center. Also improve protections for historic buildings in the project reviews specified in the By-Laws. Related actions include improving the infrastructure by:
  - Creating a list of approved streetscape elements that fit the historic character, and implementing a program of improvements through grant programs, the capital program and private investment; and
  - Encouraging and identifying public access to and along the rivers and aqueducts.

## Study Description

The Town of Framingham EDIC has undertaken a planning and market analysis study focused on developing a strategic economic development plan for the village commercial centers of Saxonville and Nobscot in North Framingham. The strategic economic development plan is focused on identifying actions that will lead to investment in both Saxonville and Nobscot. The study focuses on an area approximately one quarter mile from the main intersection of each village commercial center.

As detailed in the previous section, this work is an implementation effort that was recommended in the Master Plan that was adopted by the Town in 2012. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of market forces and opportunities within each village commercial center and creates an urban design vision to guide public sector decisions including zoning revisions, public investment and engagement with private sector owners and developers. The strategic plan looks to answer three basic questions for Saxonville and Nobscot:

- What should the village commercial center be?
- How should it look?
- How do we get there?

The Town of Framingham solicited requests for proposals for professional assistance by a land use planning, economic development and urban design consultant to lead this effort. The Cecil Group, a planning and design firm located in Boston, was selected with their economic development subconsultant FXM Associates.

The consultant team engaged the community throughout the planning process through stakeholder interviews, study area visits, and three community meetings in each village center. The process integrated community input from Saxonville and Nobscot to better understand the issues and opportunities of the study areas and to identify a shared community vision for the village centers to help shape economic development strategies. This planning process also included presentations at EDIC regular meetings and a redevelopment strategy session with area developers to explore market considerations in the two commercial centers.

The planning study was completed by the end of June 2015. The following key milestones reflect the overall planning process:

- Initial Public Meetings- February 2015
- Alternative Approaches Public Meetings- April 2015
- Final Public Meetings- June 2015

## North Framingham Context

The area of the Town of Framingham north of the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) to the abutting town lines of Marlborough, Sudbury and Wayland is the general context of this study. The context of North Framingham is mostly residential with a few larger commercial properties. The village commercial centers of Nobscot and Saxonville form the community identity of much of this area and provide a concentration of commercial space, convenience goods and service providers. The Study boundaries for each are highlighted in the broader context. Nobscot is highlighted in orange. Saxonville is highlighted in purple.

### NOBSCOT

### SAXONVILLE



## Nobscot Study Area

The Nobscot Study Area is centered on the main intersection of Edmands Road, Edgell Road and Water Street. The Study Area encompasses the collection of properties that form the center of this village commercial center and include the areas roughly within one quarter mile of this central intersection. The Study Area includes several larger scale commercial properties, most notably the Nobscot Shopping Plaza. The overall Study Area outlined includes a total land area of 116.2 acres.

As described in the Framingham Master Plan, Nobscot Village, originally the home of many farms within Framingham is still one of the most rural areas within the Town. Nobscot Center includes the Hemenway School, Framingham Fire Station, an underutilized shopping plaza, and many other small businesses. At the center of Nobscot is a historic chapel, the Nobscot Union Chapel, a long-standing community icon built in 1885. A new community icon with a soaring roofline is currently under construction on Water Street, the Christa McAuliffe Branch Library. Nobscot is approximately two miles to the west of Saxonville connected via Water Street.

### NOBSCOT





**NOBSCOT**

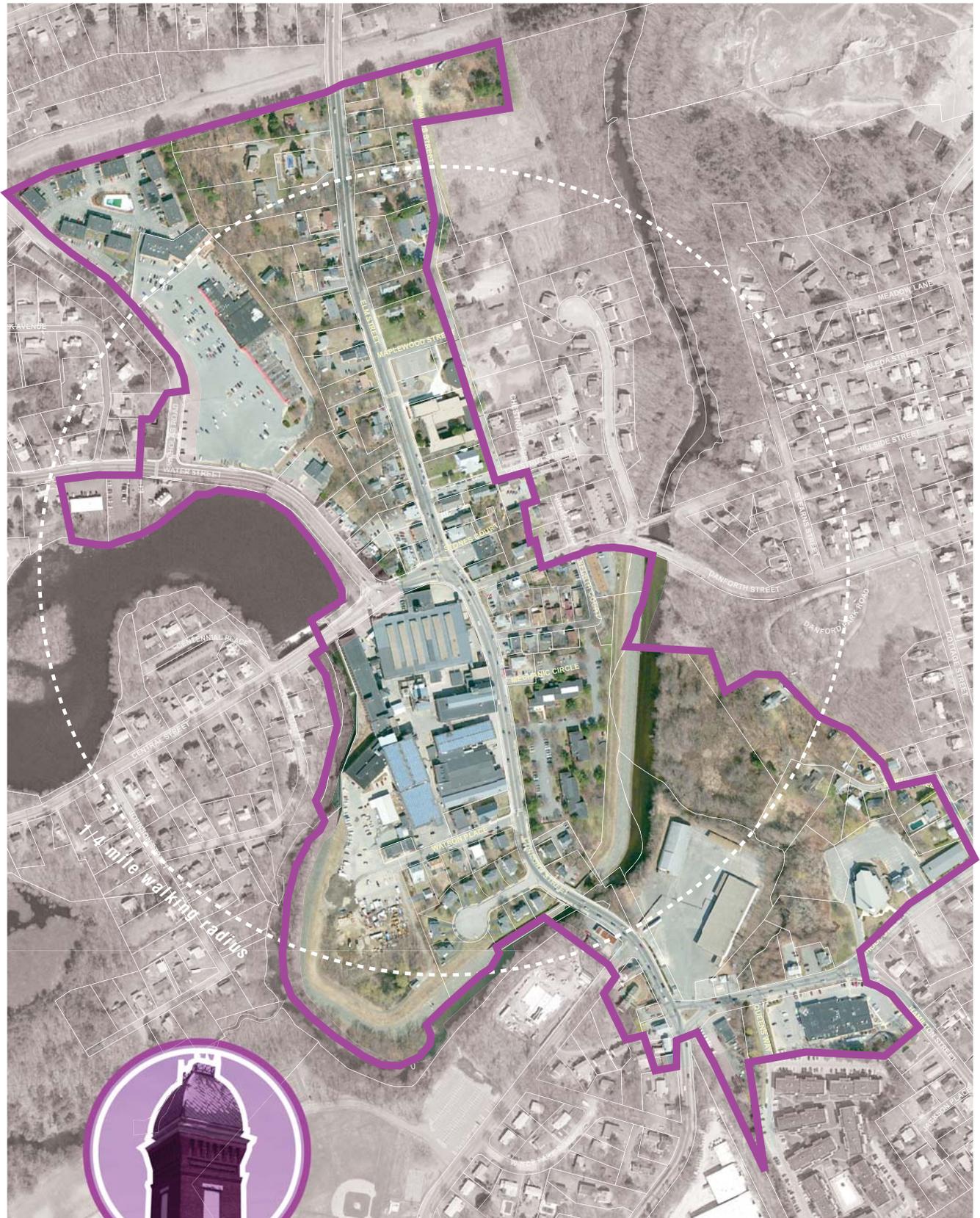
## Saxonville Study Area

The Saxonville Study Area is centered on the main intersection of Concord Street, Central Street and Elm Street. The Study Area encompasses the collection of properties that form the center of this village commercial center and include the areas roughly within one quarter mile of this central intersection. The Study Area includes a portion of the Sudbury River. It also includes several larger scale commercial properties, such as the Saxonville Mill complex, Pinefield Shopping Plaza and State Lumber site. The overall Study Area outlined includes a total land area of 89.7 acres.

As described in the Framingham Master Plan, Saxonville is one of the oldest neighborhoods within Framingham. With Saxonville's deep roots in the cotton and wool industries in the 1800's, to its production of uniforms and blankets during the Civil War, the Mills are on the National Register of Historic Places. The five Mills are now home to small businesses, like Boston Heart Diagnostics, and a strong residential community. Several commercial properties and the old McAuliffe Branch Library are key assets and provide new opportunities to consider Saxonville's future. Saxonville is approximately two miles to the east of Nobscot connected via Water Street.

## SAXONVILLE





# SAXONVILLE



NOBSCOT  
STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# NOBSCOT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN



# NOBSCOT CENTER

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN





### 3 Nobscot

The geographic area investigated in this study is most commonly referred to as Nobscot. The study is focused on the center of Nobscot, the commercial core that anchors a broader residential geography in North Framingham that identifies with Nobscot.

The center of Nobscot is shown in the three-dimensional aerial imagery (source: Bing.com). New development has occurred on several parcels that is not reflected in this image. Nobscot Center is characterized by commercial and retail properties that are surrounded by higher density residential uses. The Nobscot Shopping Plaza is a major feature of the district. The visual impact several prominent vacant retail spaces and large surface parking lots has a negative impact on the overall character of the district.

The center sits within a wooded single-family residential area that is rich with open and recreational space.





## Goals

***Transformation of Underperforming Properties*** - Given the small geographic area of Nobscot, a single underperforming property can have a very large impact on the perception and economic performance of the entire district. The impact of a single property is amplified if it is large and at a prominent gateway location. Nobscot has one very prominent property, the Nobscot Shopping Plaza that has been underperforming for many years and is the community's highest priority. A redevelopment scenario that explores the potential for mixed-use development with housing provides an opportunity for a new direction for property ownership, appears to be an acceptable outcome for the community, and helps to identify zoning modifications that would enable this type of reinvestment.

***Alignment of Uses and Services*** - The Nobscot community and the market analysis have indicated a gap between the types of goods and services provided and the needs of the surrounding residents. The commercial center is a local-serving center that must be supported by the surrounding residents and regular commuters and visitors in the area. The retail gap analysis and community have both indicated that new full service restaurants are needed to better align district uses with the community needs. The identification of existing or potential for new spaces along with the identification of interested restaurant groups would advance this opportunity to align current district businesses with resident needs. Over time the calibration of businesses, services and resident needs should be reassessed to further enhance this alignment to encourage local spending.

***Connection to Recreational Resources*** - A viable secondary network for pedestrian and bicycle recreation trails exists and is expanding in North Framingham connecting Nobscot and the surrounding communities. The number of trails and potential connections is a distinction that many other suburban communities do not have. Leveraging the many opportunities for recreational activity is a major advantage that differentiates Nobscot from other places around New England. In Nobscot, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and Bay Circuit Trail provide regional recreation connections. The Hultman Aqueduct (potential long term) connection across to Saxonville's trail networks and should be reinforced as a viable recreational link that connects across North Framingham.

***Aggressive Expansion of Walkability*** - Nobscot is a commercial center that provides a center point for the surrounding residential communities. Access to the center by pedestrians should be a primary focus of public realm investments and improvements. Enabling and attracting pedestrian activity has many benefits for the commercial center, business and retail activity and the surrounding residential districts. Relatively simple improvements to the pedestrian network – completing missing segments of sidewalk, adding marked mid-block crossings where appropriate, reducing curb cuts, adding street trees and landscape features – all expand the walkability of the district and leverage the fundamental value of the mixed-use neighborhood center. Historically, Nobscot was a “walking village” and it is a major economic advantage for North Framingham to reinforce walkable nodes where they already exist.

# NOBSCOT CENTER

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# STRATEGIES

### Illustrative Vision Plan

The diagram to the right is an overall illustration depicting potential short and long term investments in Nobscot by private and public entities showing the location of strategic improvements.



## Redevelopment and Urban Design

- 1 Focus on primary street frontages
- 2 Reduce visual impact of parking
- 3 Create consistent district features
- 4 Redevelop key parcels



## Marketing and Reinvestment

- 5 Focus on vacant spaces
- 6 Promote community assets
- 7 Encourage reinvestment



## Public Realm Improvement

- 8 Improve vehicular circulation
- 9 Enhance walkability/bikeability
- 10 Strengthen open spaces/links



## Regulatory Strategy

- 11 Align zoning with opportunities
- 12 Develop district design guidelines
- 13 Enhance efficiency of parking

*Recommendations illustrated within the Study Area for Nobscot include hypothetical scenarios that will require public and private approvals, actions and investments.*





## **NOBSCOT CENTER**

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# REDEVELOPMENT AND URBAN DESIGN

## **Key Recommendations**

Nobscot is a four-corner intersection commercial district and as-such includes a limited number of parcels with frontage at the center of the district. The character of the district is directly impacted by the quality and maintenance of the limited amount of frontage. In this context, a district-wide maintenance and improvement program for building facades, signage and landscaping would have a dramatic impact on the overall character of district. Such a program should be used to incrementally improve existing properties and bring each up to a consistent standard of building façade, landscaped frontage and signage that reinforce the quality of district. A grant program or revolving loan fund to encourage this type of renewal can have a dramatic impact on the level of stewardship and reinvestment that occurs while building community and a positive perception of the district.

## **Unlock Shopping Plaza**

The highest priority in every community conversation was unlocking the Nobscot Shopping Plaza and renewing activity, economy and a sense of community at this property. While the property leasehold dynamics are complicated, it would appear that redevelopment of the property is a solvable problem in terms of tenants, agreements and property ownership. However, the redevelopment opportunity that would unlock this property is not possible under the current zoning characteristics of the property. The redevelopment opportunity that appears to be most feasible and logical from a market and leasehold consideration perspective is a mixed-use project with retail, commercial and residential components.

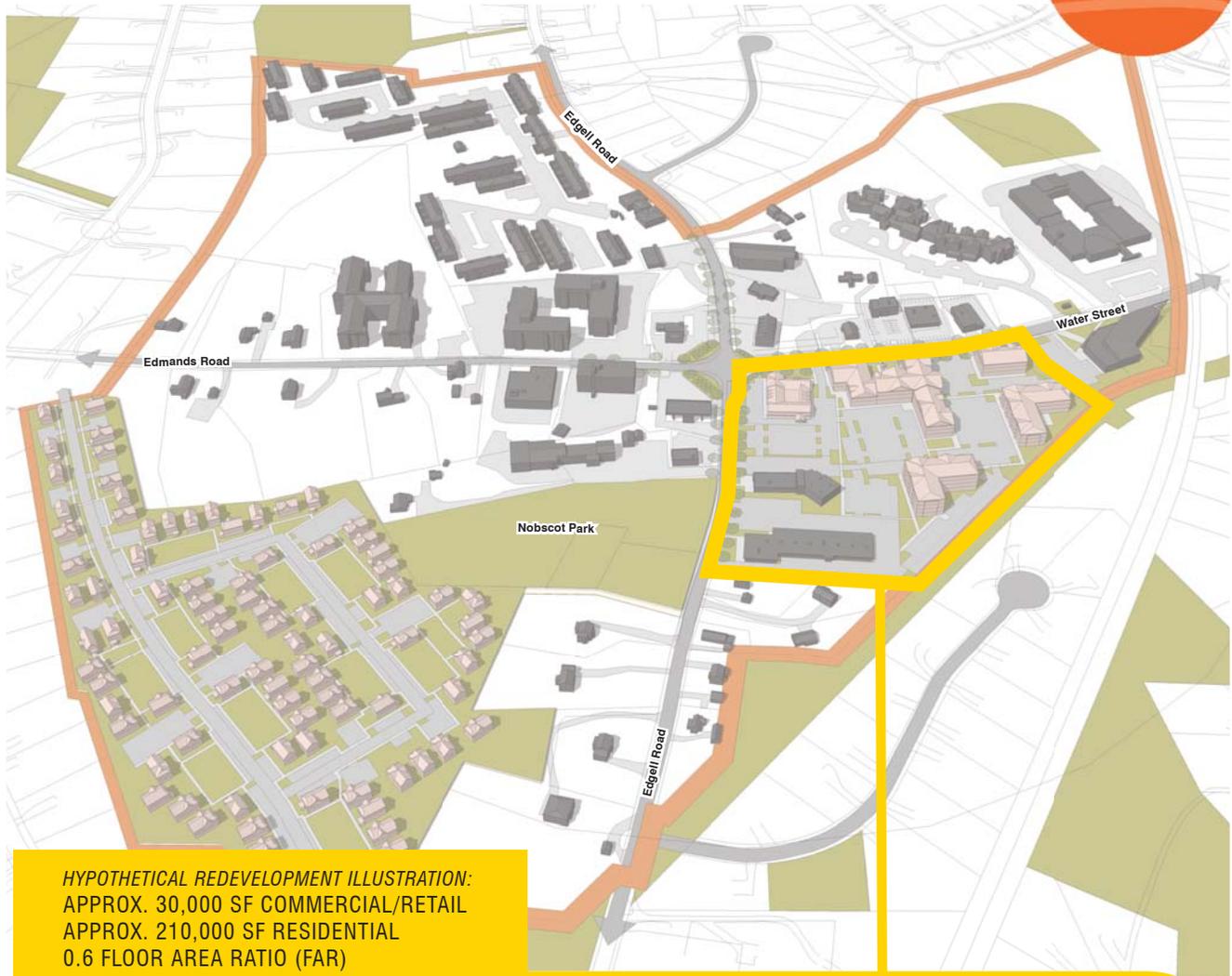
It should be noted that the community did not resoundingly support this approach, but nonetheless it remains one of the only viable alternatives to the current use and condition of the property. A redevelopment of this type is consistent with many of the overarching community goals and needs that have been articulated and would complement a walkable and attractive commercial center. A project of this scale would also have the potential to encourage positive investments in other nearby properties and could result in an overall transformation of the district.

The hypothetical illustration to the right shows one possible approach to this type of redevelopment. It includes a corner pharmacy site with a mixed-use retail and residential building frontage along Water Street with several small community open spaces. Additional residential uses are oriented to the rear of the site near the Aqueduct. Parking and site circulation are generally to the rear of the buildings and provide internal site connections that reinforce circulation around Nobscot Center.

This type of redevelopment approach would require the relocation of the historic Nobscot Chapel. Not having the iconic chapel building at this prominent corner will be viewed negatively by some members of the community. However, the Chapel is currently vacant and town-owned and the prominent corner is one of the most desirable aspects of a reconfiguration of the Shopping Plaza and surrounding properties. Controlling the corner is one of the most powerful leveraging tools and incentives as the Town's disposal.

This type of redevelopment would require a sequence of implementation activities including a continued

Recommendations illustrated within the Study Area for Nobscot include hypothetical scenarios that will require public and private approvals, actions and investments.



HYPOTHETICAL REDEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATION:  
APPROX. 30,000 SF COMMERCIAL/RETAIL  
APPROX. 210,000 SF RESIDENTIAL  
0.6 FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)



**UNLOCK SHOPPING PLAZA WITH REDEVELOPMENT**  
9.3 TOTAL ACRES  
APPROXIMATELY 180 UNITS  
MIXED-USE WITH OPEN SPACES

conversation with the community to refine potential zoning characteristics, adoption by the Town of new zoning, proposal of a redevelopment project by owners/developers, approval of a redevelopment plan, other project approvals and ultimately construction of the project. This sequence of activities could take at least 5 years of consistent effort to advance redevelopment.

### **Reinforce District Identity**

The center of Nobscot is a single intersection. At that centerpoint of the district it is critical to reinforce a more distinct sense of place and community through building improvements, landscape, lighting and signage. The segments of roadway frontage that lead immediately to the intersection on Water, Edgell and Edmands are also critical components of the sense of place.

A more purposeful approach to creating a district identity must be promoted and implemented by the Town and property owners. For this purpose, the most effective approach is to build up a consistent vocabulary of streetscape features including street trees, plantings, crosswalks, sidewalk treatments, signage and lighting.

The ability to accommodate these improvements in the public right-of-way will be limited requiring improvements on private frontages. Each corner of the main intersection should be the location of a substantial planting bed that provides a consistent and unified approach to the most central and heavily traffic heart of the district.

### **Eliminate Vacancies**

The perception of the district is negatively impacted by vacant space. The high visibility of vacancies in Nobscot presents particular difficulty for the district. It is important for the overall health and character of the community to find short-term solutions and long-term tenants for activating vacant space. In a small district, no space should be underused or empty.

In the short term, at minimum vacant spaces should be maintained and not left to degradation and disrepair. Storefront treatments, signage, art displays or other temporary decorative features may also reduce the negative effect of vacant spaces. A short term use that may benefit from lower rents and be able to work with a flexible lease may benefit both the property and the

community. Non-profit, community or arts uses may be a good match. In the longer term, district-wide improvements and redevelopment of key properties will enhance the ability to convert other vacancies to productive use. The redevelopment of the Shopping Plaza particularly could transform the context for other storefront vacancies in the district.

### **Enable Long-Term Investment**

While the other redevelopment strategies are near term endeavors, one longer term approach has been explored. A sizeable amount of undeveloped wooded land exists at the southwest quadrant of the Nobscot four corners. The community does not currently see an urgent need for the current condition of this area to change. However, in the long-term future, this area of undeveloped property is likely to experience growing redevelopment pressure for residential uses.

The area could be developed as residential uses under current zoning resulting in about eighteen one-family or two-family detached dwellings. This may be fine and would be consistent with surrounding residential uses. However, one long-term opportunity to explore would be to increase the allowable residential density while adding requirements of community open space and recreation connections. Given the properties adjacency to Nobscot Park this could be very useful and leverage existing assets of the district. A higher density residential development would also enhance activity and stability of the retail and commercial uses in Nobscot Center adding more residents to support local businesses.

If this type of opportunity were to be considered favorably by the community in the future. This type of development would require a sequence of implementation activities including a continued conversation with the community to refine potential zoning characteristics, adoption by the Town of new zoning, proposal of a redevelopment project by owners/developers, approval of a redevelopment plan, other project approvals and ultimately construction of the project. This sequence of activity is not anticipated to occur in the near future.

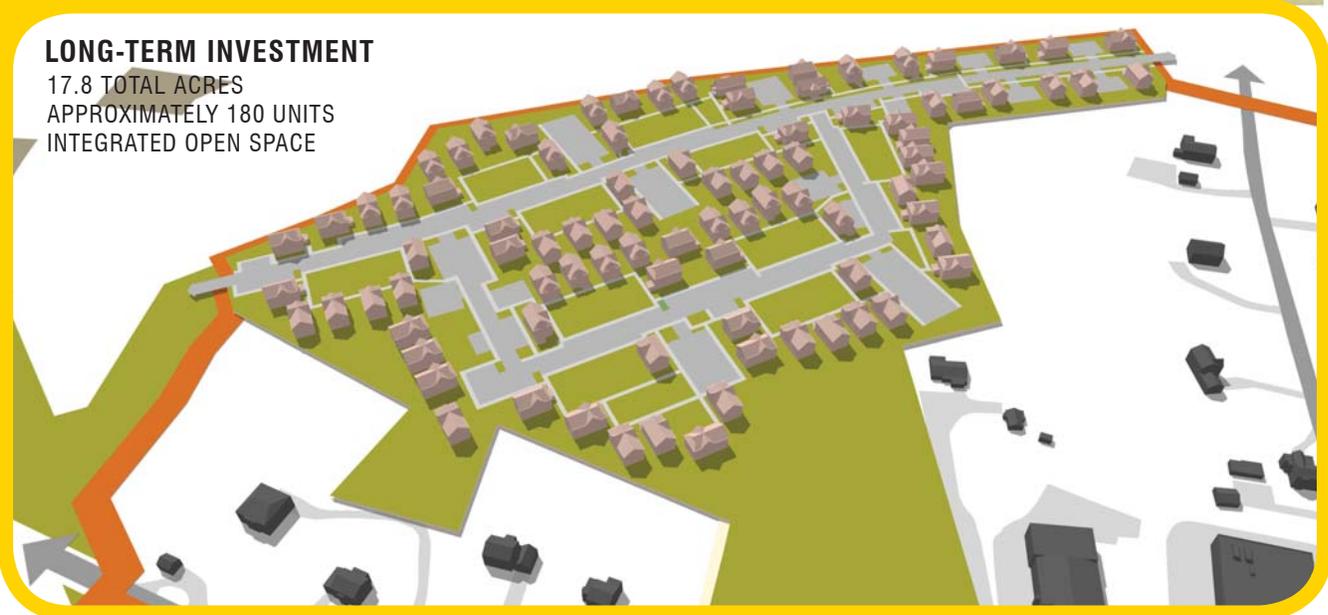
Recommendations illustrated within the Study Area for Nobscot include hypothetical scenarios that will require public and private approvals, actions and investments.



**HYPOTHETICAL REDEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATION:**  
APPROX. 0 SF COMMERCIAL/RETAIL  
APPROX. 200,000 SF RESIDENTIAL  
0.3 FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

**LONG-TERM INVESTMENT**

17.8 TOTAL ACRES  
APPROXIMATELY 180 UNITS  
INTEGRATED OPEN SPACE



## **NOBSCOT CENTER**

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# MARKETING AND REINVESTMENT

### **Key Recommendations**

In a small commercial district, any vacant space is burden on the overall perception and sense of vitality within the area. Nobscot currently has several vacant retail spaces that should be the focus of positive activity. In the short term, vacant spaces and properties should be maintained and considered for temporary uses that would have a positive community benefit – a meeting space, a local business incubator or some other use that would benefit from low or no cost space and that has the ability to end use of the space flexibly. In the long term, active matching between the retail gap identified in the market analysis and the needs identified by the community should be pursued to actively fill vacant spaces.

### **Reinforce Local Services**

Calibrate uses, businesses and services to match local needs and align with the retail gap analysis. The table to the right shows selected potential retail development opportunities for Nobscot. The type of uses that are currently not fully capturing local spending and that should be able to be supported by the resident population. A purposeful calibration of the type of retail and services provided in the district to reflect both community desire and market opportunities strengthens the potential for business success. Vacant properties or building spaces are highlighted in yellow to the right.

One use that is the focus of community discussion is a supermarket or grocery store. Clearly, the most prominent vacancy is a previous grocery store at the Nobscot Shopping Plaza. The community strongly desires a grocery store and the market potential indicates support for one. However, other requirements for the successful

location of a supermarket which include site availability, are not satisfied. As the leases are currently structured, the Nobscot Shopping Plaza site will unequivocally not be a supermarket in the future. Other potential sites in the district have not been deemed suitable for supermarket use. This use is one example where a calibration of uses, between local needs and retail gap, may not be possible.

### **Invite Private Investment**

Establish a facade, signage and landscape improvement program that either provides small grants to promote reinvestment or a revolving loan fund to facilitate district reinvestment. The limited number of buildings in the district presents an opportunity to fix up and beautify what exists. Modest facade, signage and landscape improvements can have a dramatic impact on the perception of the district and sense of place. Businesses within the Study Area could qualify for a Town-funded matching grant that contributes to design and construction costs for qualifying exterior improvements. Improvements would include any investment that would positively impact the appearance of a property from the public right-of-way.

Grants could have a maximum amount, up to \$10,000 grant for a minimum of \$20,000 of improvements for example. Alternatively, a revolving loan fund could be set up for the district in which a low- or no-interest loan is provided to a business for improvements with a short payback period. The district grant pool would be dispersed and returned on a rolling basis as qualified improvements were identified and proposed within the district.



**Promote Cultural/Arts Events**

Begin with one Nobscot event that brings the community together and leverages existing organizations like the Nobscot Neighbors. A community building event that is hosted in Nobscot Center would reinforce the resident connection to the center and reinforce a sense of community and pride of place. Nobscot Park or the Nobscot Shopping Plaza parking lot would be highly visible locations that could support a community-wide event.



Christa McAuliffe Branch Library  
(source: Finegold Alexander Architects)

**Leverage Community Assets**

Use community assets, such as the new McAuliffe Library to expand awareness of Nobscot and to draw the community together. Reinvestment at adjacent properties and streetscape improvements should integrate with and support existing community assets. Leverage the history, heritage and narrative of Nobscot as a civic and communal gathering place as represented in the old Post Office/Library/Railroad Ticket Office structure located on the Water Street frontage of the Heritage House across the street from the new library. Also, connect directly to the surrounding open space and agricultural assets with high potential for local farmer and food connections.

**Selected Potential Retail Development Opportunities For Nobscot**

Store Type	Opportunity/Gap	Supportable Square Feet	Number of Stores
full service restaurants	\$10,000,000	28,500	2-3
limited svce eating places	\$8,300,000	24,000	3-4
supermarkets, grocery stores	\$15,000,000	40,000	1
beer, wine, liquor stores	\$5,000,000	17,000	1-2
jewelry stores	\$4,800,000	8,000	1-2
office supplies & stationery	\$3,000,000	9,800	1
gift, novelty, souvenirs	\$2,800,000	9,300	1-2
nursery & garden centers	\$1,500,000	7,500	1-2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$50,400,000</b>	<b>144,100</b>	<b>11-17</b>

A.C. Nielsen SiteReports, January 2015, and FXM Associates

# **NOBSCOT CENTER**

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# **PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT**

### **Key Recommendations**

In Nobscot, the focus of public realm improvements should be on the principal intersection of the district at Water, Edmands and Edgell. Intersection improvements to optimize vehicular circulation through signal timing and intersection and turn-lane configurations should be combined with pedestrian safety improvements. Missing links in the sidewalk network should be added, along with new marked mid-block pedestrian crossings to enhance walkability. Landscape features could contribute to an overall sense of place at the principal district intersection. Secondary circulation routes and internal vehicular connections between properties should be enhanced wherever possible to add connectivity that can bypass the main intersection. Open space improvements at the Nobscot Park and the McAuliffe Library should be used to anchor these community assets and connect them to the broader network of recreational paths.

### **Enhance Walkability/Bikeability**

Safe and enjoyable bicycle and walking must be a first priority if the commercial center is to be enhanced as a community gathering, recreational, and amenity center. Promoting multiple travel modes of access to and from the center reduces traffic congestion and lowers demand for parking. The sidewalk network today has missing segments that should be filled.

Edmands Road should have a sidewalk on one side of the street, likely the north side, that would connect to Genardy Way and Livoli Road. A sidewalk from Nobscot Center south on the west side of Edgell Road should be added to connect to Nobscot Park. A defined sidewalk should be added to frontage parking areas north on Edgell Road from the center on the east side of the road and on the west side of the road north to Windsor Green. Additional marked pedestrian crossings as shown in the diagram on the right would further enhance a safe and continuous pedestrian network.

Improvements to the street character and increased landscape plantings would enhance the pedestrian environment and buffer vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Potential street tree locations and spacing are indicated in the diagram at the right.

Identifying and marking the most direct and widely used bicycle routes would enhance bicycle safety and encourage multi-modal road use. Particularly, adding sharrows and share-the-road signs on Water Street would enhance a key bike connection to the east and strengthen the connection to Saxonville.



### Optimize Main Intersection

Nobscot is a major intersection point for travel in all directions across North Framingham and to connecting towns to the north and west. The traffic volumes during the morning and evening peak hours creates backups resulting in vehicles queuing through multiple light cycles before getting through the light. With only one primary intersection at Water Street, Edmands and Edgell Road, it is critical that the intersection be functioning in its most efficient and effective configuration and design.

The central intersection of the district would benefit from an intersection redesign that examines optimal turning radii, the addition of turn lanes where warranted, and optimization of the configuration and timing of the traffic signal. Prohibitions on convenient and free vehicular movement at the intersection, such as a “no turn on red”, should be eliminated to reduce congestion and vehicle queuing. Efficiency of vehicular flow should not occur to the detriment of pedestrian priority or safety at the center of the district.

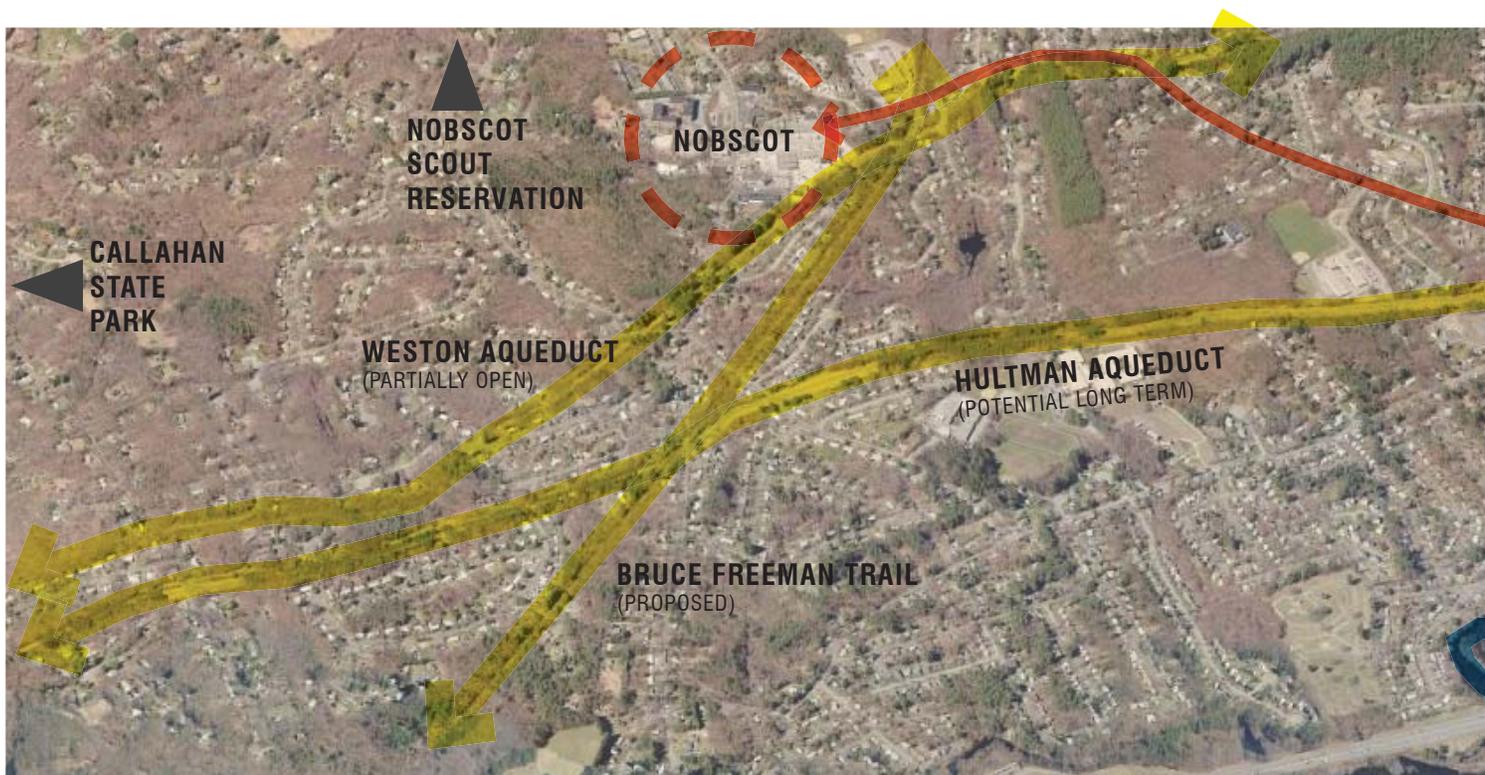
# NOBSCOT CENTER

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT

### Strengthen Open Space Links

The vast array of open space and recreational resources in and around Nobscot Center are a unit collection of assets. Even more unique is that a strong potential to link many of these open space resources into an interconnected network of resources exists. In Nobscot Center, Nobscot Park should be enhanced as a central open space feature with new amenities such as a seating area, walking trails or exercise area. The potential for regional recreational and open space connections exist through expansion and connection of the Hultman Aqueduct (potential long term access), Weston Aqueduct, Bruce Freeman Trail and other connections and open space links to Saxonville like multi-modal street connections on Water Street.

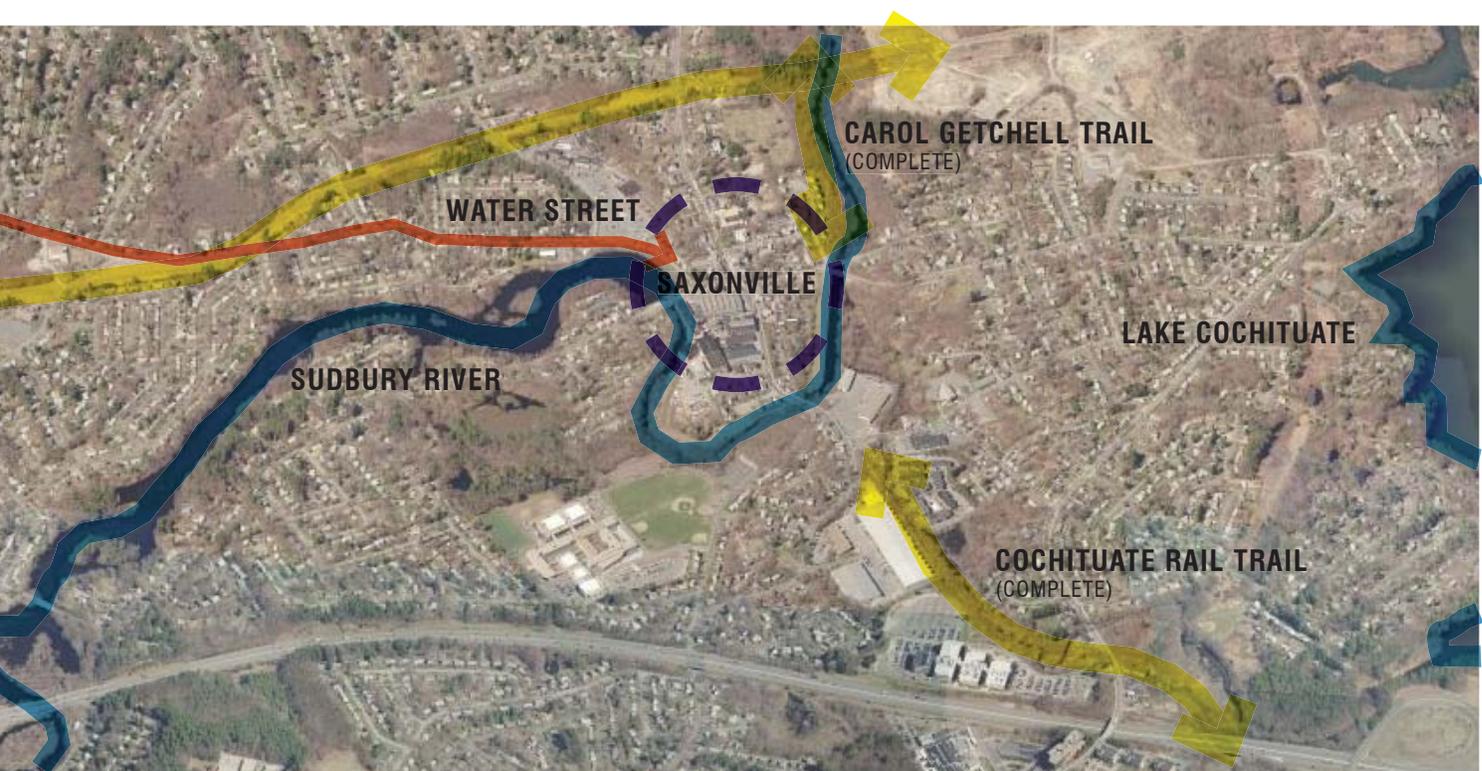




### Expand Secondary Connections

Improvements to the main intersection will alleviate traffic congestion to a certain extent, but cannot eliminate a large geography relying on a single point to distribute large volumes of traffic. In Nobscot Center, new development could be purposefully designed to offer alternative routes and connections that help vehicles to avoid this critical intersection. Drivers familiar with the area have discovered short-cuts and cut-throughs on side streets, through parking lots, and with other secondary or tertiary traffic routes to avoid a congested intersection. The idea of this strategy, is to recognize that fact and to integrate connecting routes that avoid the

main intersection into larger scale redevelopment that may occur in Nobscot center. For example, if a large scale redevelopment of the Nobscot Shopping Plaza were to occur as previously illustrated. The connecting internal circulation of that site plan would allow vehicular connections between Water Street and Edgell Road to occur with traveling through the intersection of Edmands, Edgell and Water Streets. This redundancy of local routes could further reduce congestion at the main intersection of the district.



# **NOBSCOT CENTER**

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# REGULATORY STRATEGY

### **Key Recommendations**

The center of Nobscot is within a single zoning district (B-2). A new zoning district to modify the B-2 characteristics for Nobscot would be appropriate. Specifically, modifying the allowable uses to encourage mixed-use with residential and increasing the maximum building height and density would open new investment opportunities in the district. A simple set of design guidelines for the district would also encourage new investment to be arranged to enhance walkability, a sense of place and connectivity. A district-wide approach to parking that shares parking across properties and provides a framework for shared parking agreements would enhance site efficiencies and maximize active uses.

### **Develop New Zoning**

The existing Community Business (B-2) zoning that includes the center of Nobscot prohibits the type of redevelopment opportunity that was described to unlock the Nobscot Shopping Plaza. The primary issue is that mixed-use development is not allowed. Additionally, multi-family development is not allowed.

It is recommended that a new zoning district should be created to enhance reinvestment opportunities in Nobscot Center. This new zone, perhaps called a Village District Zone could replace the existing B-2 zone and retain its current boundary. No other zoning change would be required and the areas outside of the area in red (B-2) on the diagram to the right would remain unchanged.

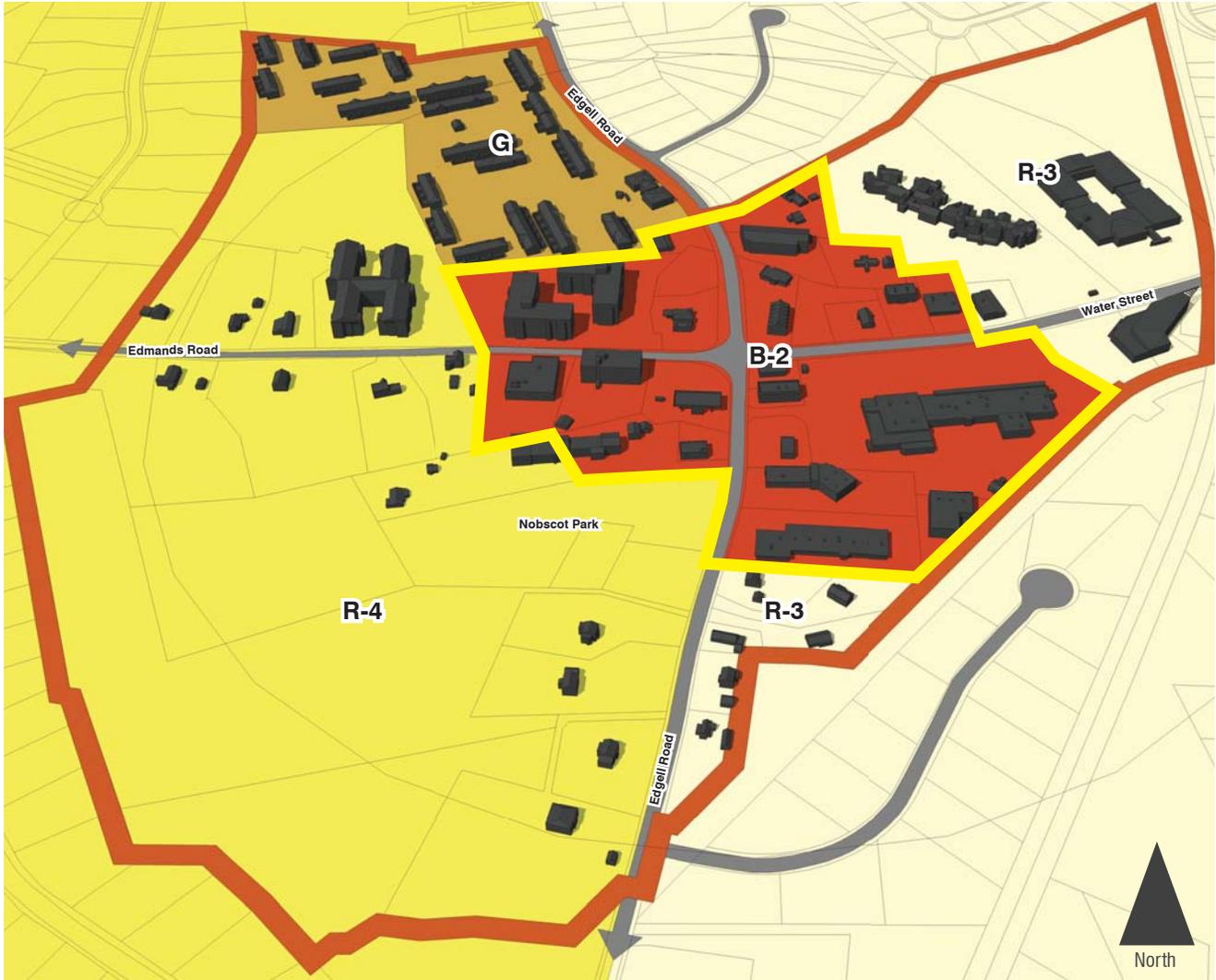
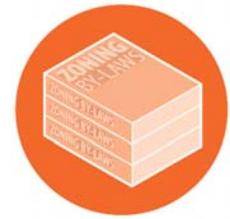
The intention of the new Village District Zone would be to expand the mix of allowable uses and potentially

to expand the allowable building height and density to reinforce a walkable mixed-use commercial center and to further improve the likelihood of reinvestment. Defining allowable uses that would permit as-of-right mixed-use and multi-family development would be the first change. Multi-family only development could be restricted from occurring on major street frontages, which is where mixed-use development would be encouraged.

Another aspect of revised zoning that will require further discussion and exploration with community, potential developers and the Town more generally is the allowable height and density of the new zoning district. Simply stated, to enhance the chance that positive change will occur and be economically viable, the new zoning should maximize the amount of development that is allowable while retaining the character of the district. Through analysis of the site and potential development programs, the consultant team recommends up to a 4-story height limit. The community has strongly voiced that the height limit should not be more than 3-stories. Through the urban design and feasibility studies undertaken through this process, the consultant believes a 4-story height may be necessary from an economic and redevelopment perspective and that a 4-story height could be designed to be appropriate with the Nobscot Center context.

### **Define District Design Guidelines**

As part of the new Village District Zone, district design guidelines should be integrated within new regulations to direct future investment to complement and contribute to the overall district character, add new circulation connections, reinforce a pedestrian-friendly environment and screen parking.



<i>Existing Zones</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Lot Area Min.</i>	<i>Frontage Min.</i>	<i>Front Setback Min.</i>	<i>Side Setback Min.</i>	<i>Landscaped Open Space Ratio Min.</i>	<i>Building Height Max.</i>	<i>Lot Coverage Max.</i>	<i>Floor Area Ratio Max.</i>
Community Business (B-2)	Mixed-use prohibited	8,000 SF	65 FT	25-30 FT	15 FT	20% (30% residential)	3-stories 40 FT	35%	0.32
R-4	One-family or two-family dwellings	43,560	100-150 FT	30 FT	30 FT	50%	3-stories 35 FT	15%	-
Open Space Residential Development (OSRD)	Clustered residential	20,000 (in R-4)	40 FT	30 FT	50 FT	40% (Common Open Space)	3-stories 35 FT	12%	-

<i>Proposed Zones</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Lot Area Min.</i>	<i>Frontage Min.</i>	<i>Front Setback Min.</i>	<i>Side Setback Min.</i>	<i>Landscaped Open Space Ratio Min.</i>	<i>Building Height Max.</i>	<i>Lot Coverage Max.</i>	<i>Floor Area Ratio Max.</i>
Village Center	<b>Mixed-use allowed, multi-family allowed (not as primary frontage)</b>	8,000 SF	65 FT	<b>20 FT</b>	15 FT	<b>15%</b>	<b>4-stories 45 FT</b>	35%	<b>0.75 (.72 depicted)</b>
Village Center Residential	Clustered residential	<b>3,000 SF</b>	40 FT	<b>0 FT</b>	<b>5 FT</b>	40% (55% depicted)	3-stories 35 FT	<b>15% (14% depicted)</b>	<b>0.32 (.29 depicted)</b>

# NOBSCOT CENTER

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# REGULATORY STRATEGY

The new Nobscot District Design Guidelines should address the following framework of how buildings and sites are contributing to the sense of place in Nobscot:

*Principles of Design* should include reinforcing an attractive, safe and active pedestrian environment and strengthening the character of a New England village center.

*Site Improvement Guidelines* should include orienting new buildings to frame street frontage and open space (See Note A on diagram below), locating parking to the side and rear of buildings (Note B below), reinforcing a consistent street character and streetscape with landscape components, providing community amenities and small open spaces integrated with the site plan (Note C below) and concealing loading, service and parking areas from adjacent properties.

*Building and Architectural Guidelines* should include a simple articulation of building massing to articulate a base, middle and top, reduce the scale of large buildings through the use of stepbacks, respect the context of scale and architectural style, respond to corner sites with the architecture, use facade and roof features to break-down large blank wall and roof surfaces (Note D below), and generally create an architecture that is compatible with a New England village character.

*Signage Guidelines* should include site and building signage that is integrated into the overall design and configuration of site circulation, landscape and building design, signage that is coordinated and managed across multiple tenants and uses to reinforce a community feel and avoid unnecessary sign competition and distraction.

### Enhance Parking Efficiency

In the review and approval of redevelopment projects in Nobscot, consideration should be given to how parking supply, vehicular and pedestrian circulation in the district work together across property lines. A single property should not be required to provide more parking than the proponent feels is necessary to support the project and its viability in the market. Overall parking on the site, may be reduced if parking in a shared lot or nearby adjacent lot has a surplus of parking spaces (Note E below).

The review and approval process and language within the proposed Village zoning district should encourage shared parking, more efficient parking layouts across property lines, shared access and entries, and interior site circulation to relieve congestion on the street network. Connection and access in the rear of properties between parking lots should be encouraged to enhance access and circulation for the district overall.





# ACTION PLAN

## Implementation

Critical next steps to advance the plan:

**1. Develop and adopt new Village District zoning promoting mixed-uses at a moderate density** - a special committee or steering group should be formed with members of the Town Community & Economic Development department, Planning Board, EDIC, Nobscot residents, businesses and stakeholders or others to further define and build consensus around a new Nobscot Village District Zone. The process to refine and craft the zoning should include additional community meetings similar to the workshops held during this study process to advance the zoning concepts and build consensus based on the framework established through this process. Once appropriate levels of agreement have been reached the new proposed zoning should be advanced for adoption through the Town Meeting process.

**Timeframe:** Immediate with a completion goal of 1 year  
**Responsibility:** Community & Economic Development, Planning Board, EDIC, Nobscot Steering Committee (to be established)

**2. Facilitate agreement for redevelopment of Shopping Plaza and advance next steps** - the Town should continue open communication with the property owners and potential developers to receive feedback on potential zoning changes and encourage property redevelopment and investment. As has been occurring, this communication is most appropriate between owners and the Community & Economic Development Department and the Town Manager's Office. If mutually agreeable outcomes for the site can be determined, the Town due to its ownership of property in the redevelopment area, could enter into a Development

Agreement with the owner and potential developer. The Development Agreement would set a clear path for redevelopment of the property, conditions placed on that redevelopment and the actions and outcomes that are anticipated to give all sides a clear understanding and expectation for a critical and complicated redevelopment project.

**Timeframe:** Conversations over the next 6 months to 1 year with a potential Developer's Agreement drafted to coincide with the completion of new Village District Zoning

**Responsibility:** Community & Economic Development, Town Manager's Office

**3. Invest in streetscape improvements to improve walkability and enhance sense of place** - As part of Capital Improvements budgeting and planning the Town should prioritize a sequence of walkability, bikeability and streetscape improvements that focus on filling the gaps in the infrastructure that have been identified. This effort should be coordinated through Public Works and integrated with their ongoing improvement and implementation efforts. A predictable and known sequence of improvements would help the community to understand discreet projects as part of a larger and holistic plan to improve multi-modal travel and Complete Street policies.

**Timeframe:** Completion of a first collection of improvements within 2 years, follow-up improvements at 2 year increments until completed

**Responsibility:** Department of Public Works



# ACTION PLAN

**4. Develop and promote a Nobscot community or arts event to bring together residents/businesses** - Bringing the community together and advancing the sense of a neighborhood center and common interests is a part of all of the implementation actions. The community must support a common vision for Nobscot's future and continue discussing, articulating and communicating that future within the community and with the Town.

A consistent annual community event that draws people together to interact in a social environment, but also to build common connections is important for this effort. It cannot be a forced event, but must grow naturally from the type of community organization that already occurs. An existing community group, like the Nobscot Neighbors is well positioned to champion this effort, among the many other events and activities they organize and promote.

**Timeframe:** Pilot-test a community event within a year and adjust based on feedback for subsequent years until it becomes a fixture in the community calendar

**Responsibility:** Nobscot Neighbors or other community group interested in putting in the effort

**5. Connect recreational assets linking trails, parks, sidewalks and bicycle routes** - The Town, residents and other regional trail advocates should continue the conversion of rail beds, Aqueducts and other regional networks into bicycle and recreational routes. Town efforts with MWRA, MAPC and others to open access to the Weston Aqueduct (partially open), Hultman Aqueduct (potential long term), Sudbury Aqueduct and Cochituate Aqueduct should continue to close missing links of public access. Over time paths, amenities and marked street crossings should be added to enhance these

unique recreational links across the Town.

**Timeframe:** Ongoing effort

**Responsibility:** Town Manager's Office coordinating with other Town's and utilities, Department of Public Works for roadway intersection improvements at trails

**6. Share and manage parking across property lines to increase efficiency and add landscape areas** - As also highlighted in the Framingham Parking Report (June 2014), parking should be optimized as a resource so that it can be most efficiently used. Sharing and managing parking through property owner agreements will allow for more convenient parking, availability of parking, and more efficient parking in Nobscot Center.

Model Shared Parking Agreements could be provided to owner's to work with abutting property owners to join, share and reconfigure parking areas over time. The sharing of parking between uses and across property lines can provide all owner's better parking access and resources and provide space for redevelopment opportunities. Each property and parking agreement must begin with an open discussion, be planned negotiated, agreed to and managed and can be assisted through efforts by the Town to get the process started.

**Timeframe:** Ongoing effort, a pilot program for an easy shared-parking conversion and agreement would show other property owners that it is a worthwhile effort

**Responsibility:** Facilitation of process by Community & Economic Development, Agreements and actions

performed by property owners

**7. Create a district-based facade, landscape and signage improvement program** - As described in the strategies, a Nobscot district-based facade, landscape and signage improvement program would help to beautify and invite positive private investment into the district. The establishment of a matching grant or revolving loan fund program would directly translate the planning strategies into on the ground actions to improve properties. The program and its funding could be established through the EDIC. The amount of the funding would be determined as part of annual budgeting processes, but could range anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000. The funding would be available to local property owners or businesses wishing to improve their property.

The program could be set up in any number of ways - it could be dedicated only to construction costs or provide assistance for design and construction costs. The type of project and improvements would be required meet certain criteria to prove that they will have a positive impact on the visual environment of the district. Funding could be provided as a matching grant to leverage an equal or greater amount of private investment or could be provided as a low or no interest loan that is returned to a pool of funds dedicated to the district upon repayment by the property owner.

***Timeframe:*** Establishing the program and approving a single pilot project as part of the program would be a great accomplishment within 1 year. The program could be refined and expanded based on the feedback from the pilot program.

***Responsibility:*** Framingham Economic Development and Industrial Co. (EDIC), a property owner interested in improvement investments



SAXONVILLE

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# SAXONVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN



# SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN





#### 4 Saxonville

The geographic and historic center of Saxonville is focused on the Saxonville Mills and the Sudbury River. The area investigated in this study is most accurately referred to as the Village Center of Saxonville. It is the walkable mixed-use center that anchors a larger residential area that identifies with Saxonville.

The center of Saxonville is shown in the three-dimensional aerial imagery (source: Bing.com). Saxonville is characterized by its historic mill complex and surrounding historic mill housing as well as the nearby Pinefield Shopping plaza. The Mill, Athenaeum, historic homes, historic churches and the Old Danforth bridge anchor a district that is full of character and heritage.

The village center sits within a larger single-family residential area which includes the residential development of Danforth Green to the northeast of the center.

# SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

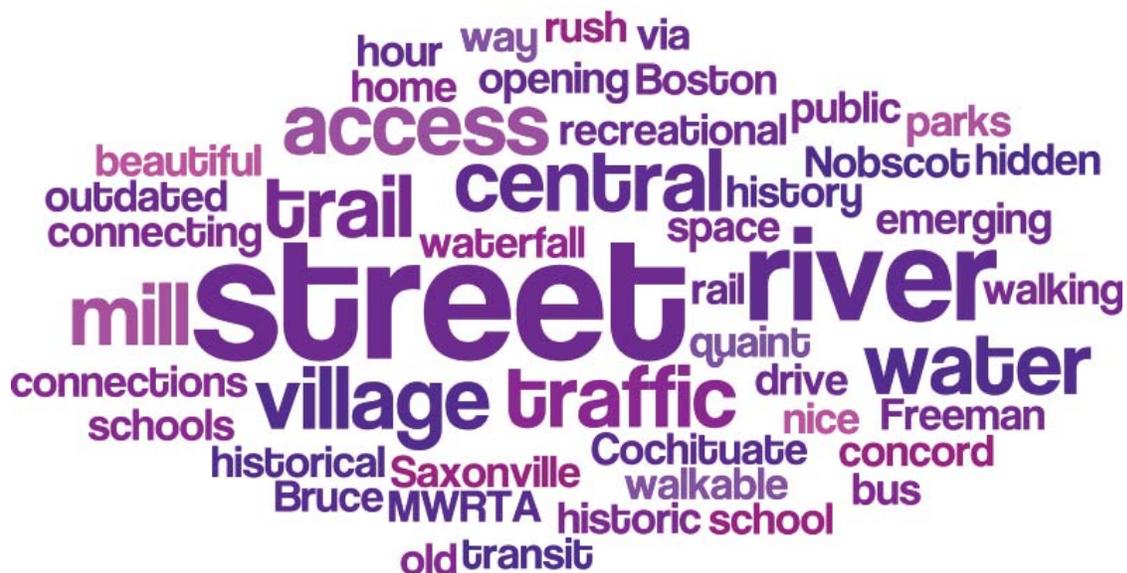
# COMMUNITY VISION

### Vision Statement

Saxonville is a vital and historic walking village that is a small business center and serves the surrounding residential neighborhoods with community, service and recreational amenities that reinforce livability and quality of life.

### Community Word Association

The word cloud below is a reflection of the Saxonville community's association with this area, it represents responses to a simple question - *Saxonville makes you think of...* ? The more frequent a word was given as a response, the larger that word is in the diagram.





## Goals

### *Transformation of Underperforming Properties*

Given the small geographic area of Saxonville, a single underperforming property can have a very large impact on the perception and economic performance of the entire district. The impact of a single property is amplified if it is large and at a prominent gateway location. Saxonville has two underperforming properties that are large and at prominent district gateway locations – the State Lumber site and the Pinefield Plaza. Alternative scenarios for new mixed-use development have been explored that would enable the properties to better contribute to the district. These studies are both a tool to provide the property owners with a potential new direction and are used to inform zoning recommendations for the district.

### *Alignment of Uses and Services*

The Saxonville community and the market analysis have indicated a gap between the types of goods and services provided and the needs of the surrounding residents. The commercial center is a local-serving center that must be supported by the surrounding residents and regular commuters and visitors in the area. The retail gap analysis and community have both indicated that new full service restaurants are needed to better align district uses with the community needs. The identification of existing or potential for new spaces along with the identification of interested restaurant groups would advance this opportunity to align current district businesses with resident needs. Over time the calibration of businesses, services and resident needs should be reassessed to further enhance this alignment to encourage local spending.

### *Aggressive Expansion of Walkability*

Saxonville is a commercial center that provides a center point for the surrounding residential communities. Access to the center by pedestrians should be a primary focus of public realm investments and improvements. Enabling and attracting pedestrian activity has many benefits for the commercial center, business and retail activity and the surrounding residential districts. Relatively simple improvements to the pedestrian network – completing missing segments of sidewalk, adding marked mid-block crossings where appropriate, reducing curb cuts, adding street trees and landscape features – all expand the walkability of the district and leverage the fundamental value of the mixed-use neighborhood center. Historically, Saxonville was a “walking village” and it is a major economic advantage for North Framingham to reinforce walkable nodes where they already exist.

### *Connection of Recreational Resources*

A viable secondary network for pedestrian and bicycle recreation trails exists and is expanding in North Framingham connecting Saxonville and the surrounding communities. The number of trails and potential connections is unique and leveraging the many opportunities for recreational activity is a major advantage for the district. In Saxonville, the Cochituate Rail Trail and Carol Getchell Trail provide opportunities for recreation and secondary systems of bike and pedestrian circulation. The Hultman Aqueduct offers (long term potential) connection between Saxonville and Nobscot and its trail networks and should be reinforced as a viable recreational link that connects across North Framingham.

# SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# STRATEGIES

### Illustrative Vision Plan

The diagram to the right is an overall illustration depicting potential short and long term investments in Saxonville by private and public entities showing the location of strategic improvements.



## Redevelopment and Urban Design

- 1 Focus on primary street frontages
- 2 Reduce visual impact of parking
- 3 Create consistent district features
- 4 Redevelop key parcels



## Marketing and Reinvestment

- 5 Focus on vacant spaces
- 6 Promote community assets
- 7 Encourage reinvestment



## Public Realm Improvement

- 8 Identify new central parking resources
- 9 Enhance walkability/bikeability
- 10 Strengthen open spaces/links



## Regulatory Strategy

- 11 Align zoning with opportunities
- 12 Develop district design guidelines
- 13 Enhance efficiency of parking

*Recommendations illustrated within the Study Area for Saxonville include hypothetical scenarios that will require public and private approvals, actions and investments.*



### Legend

- Existing Buildings
- Potential Development
- Existing Open Space
- Study Boundary
- Parking Area
- Street
- Improved Streetscape
- New Sidewalk



## SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# REDEVELOPMENT AND URBAN DESIGN

#### **Key Recommendations**

Saxonville is rich with iconic and historic buildings and natural features. Simple district-wide signage and wayfinding can be employed to reinforce the historic assets, natural resources, hidden views and recreational trails. A district-wide maintenance and improvement program for building facades, signage and landscaping should be used to incrementally improve existing assets to keep pace with other new investments. A grant program or revolving loan fund to encourage this type of renewal can have a dramatic impact on the level of stewardship and reinvestment that occurs while building community and a positive perception of the district.

#### **Enable Long-Term Investment**

Open new opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment that would enable improvements at key properties like the Saxonville Mill. Over the long term allowing a wider range of uses to occur at historic properties, such as the Saxonville Mill, reinforces economic viability of the complex. Conversions of portions of the mill to higher revenue producing uses, such as residential or restaurant use, could provide additional resources for investment in the maintenance and upkeep of the property. Currently, the zoning would prohibit such a long-term conversion and investment in the property. The proposed Village District Zoning would enable this type of opportunity.

#### **Reinforce Unique District**

All district improvements, landscape improvements, redevelopment and new building investments should serve to highlight the historic assets of the district including the Saxonville Mill, McGrath Square historic

buildings, Athenaeum and other historic structures. This highlighting should occur through the design and configuration of landscape, lighting, street frontage and signage improvements. A simple and restrained approach to improvements should place the focus back on the unique historic qualities of the district.

#### **Invest in a Civic Center**

An active village center would benefit from a community gathering place and improvements to the Athenaeum, Fire Station and Watson Place provide additional district anchors. The reuse and reinvestment in the Athenaeum as a civic center and community gathering place fills a community need and provides another reason for area residents to visit the center of the district. As part of the investment in the Athenaeum, Watson Place becomes an important district center point with access to the community center and the majority of the mill complexes parking. Reinforcing the wayfinding, parking and pedestrian amenities associated with Watson Place would be an effective way to integrate the Athenaeum investment with the surrounding district.



Recommendations illustrated within the Study Area for Saxonville include hypothetical scenarios that will require public and private approvals, actions and investments.



**REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**

7.8 TOTAL ACRES  
 APPROXIMATELY 50 UNITS  
 GROUND FLOOR RETAIL  
 IMPROVED STREETScape AND BUILDING FRONTAGE

*HYPOTHETICAL REDEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATION:*  
 APPROX. 12,000 SF COMMERCIAL/RETAIL  
 APPROX. 55,000 SF RESIDENTIAL  
 0.3 FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR) (WITH EXISTING)

*HYPOTHETICAL REDEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATION:*  
 APPROX. 15,000 SF COMMERCIAL/RETAIL  
 APPROX. 57,000 SF RESIDENTIAL  
 0.3 FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

**REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**

6.5 TOTAL ACRES  
 APPROXIMATELY 50 UNITS,  
 GROUND FLOOR RETAIL  
 INTEGRATED OPEN SPACE

## SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# REDEVELOPMENT AND URBAN DESIGN

#### Leverage Potential Development

As has been described, Saxonville has many unique assets and is a logical location for continued investment and redevelopment as supported by FXM's Market Analysis. Future investments should be purposefully directed to leverage those improvements to strengthen the overall district characteristics of a walkable, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use center. A new project should not be approved that detracts from the overall character and quality of this historic walking village.

Two district gateway properties in particular possess the ability to leverage investment in the property for the betterment of the district. The Pinefield Shopping Plaza and the State Lumber property. Today, both properties share a common characteristic - a very large surface parking area that dominates a long street frontage in a very visible location.

The Pinefield Shopping Plaza is a functioning strip shopping mall with active retail and local service tenants. The shopping plaza building is set back toward the rear property line with a large surface parking area set in front of the building at the street frontage, as was a best practice at the time of its construction. The surface parking area is grossly oversized for the retail uses it is supporting and presents an opportunity for infill redevelopment at the Water Street frontage.

Through conceptual design investigations it would appear that a mixed-use infill development project could respect the wetland and riverfront setbacks from the Sudbury River and provide a revived Water Street frontage with a building that would address the street and improve the pedestrian environment at a district

gateway location. The concept design explored a new mixed-use building of up to 3-stories in height with residential and retail uses that would complement the surrounding context and offer views of the Sudbury River. Even when accounting for the parking lost to the new building's footprint and the parking that would be required to support the new building, the area of parking that would remain on the Pinefield Plaza site would be more than generous to support all existing and proposed uses. The redevelopment could be accompanied by a facade improvement investment on the existing shopping plaza building. A new Village District Zone with design guidelines would open the opportunity for this type of investment.

The State Lumber site is an equally important gateway site into the district, located at the corner of School Street and Concord Street. The property has recently been improved by the property owner with new streetscape plantings along its frontage to integrate it with the recent intersection and streetscape improvements at the intersection of School and Concord Street. The existing State Lumber property is bordered by rivers on nearly three sides resulting in a substantial portion of the property falling within the Riverfront and Wetland Setback buffers. However, the property as it was previously developed is largely impervious paving surfaces, providing flexibility as to how the property could be redeveloped in the future under this regulatory constraint.

The State Lumber site has an approved site plan for 75,000 square feet of commercial space. The project was stalled in the Great Recession along with many other redevelopment proposals, but has been granted extensions



and opportunities for redevelopment within the context of this approved plan are actively being pursued by the owner. The approved plan places the buildings away from the street and locates parking between the buildings and the street.

If a new redevelopment concept were to emerge or the previously approved plan should need to be reconsidered, the consultant team explored a variation on the configuration of development on the site that placed buildings near the street frontage and parking in the rear of the buildings. This type of site configuration has several advantages. The buildings would strongly anchor the district gateway and street frontages at this important location. The parking area and buildings could likely be configured in such a way as to reduce the amount of impervious surfaces in the Riverfront and Wetland setbacks providing an environmental improvement.

The site layout would encourage natural landscape edges and provide the potential for an integrated community open space or landscape amenity at the Sudbury River and the ability to reinforce the connection with the Cochituate Trail. The conceptual design investigations explored a mixed-use redevelopment program that resulted in ground floor retail space and approximately fifty residential units in 3-story buildings.

### Refocus District Center

In addition to the importance of district gateways, the center of the district is also critically important to the overall perception and impression of the character of the district. Public realm and intersection improvements at McGrath Square could be better used to enhance the overall character of the district and to reinforce district

walkability. It is also one of the most critical intersections for vehicular circulation in North Framingham. A combination of intersection improvements with a pedestrian plaza that refocuses pedestrian activity and amenity at the center of Saxonville would combine several objectives into one intersection improvement plan. By tightening the curb radius between Concord and Central streets and removing the center island on Central Street a sizeable area could be recaptured from the street. This area could be given back to the corner in front of the Saxonville Mill and designed as a pedestrian plaza that would include new sidewalks, sitting areas, and landscape areas, while retaining the front parking area of mill complex.



## SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# MARKETING AND REINVESTMENT

#### **Key Recommendations**

The historic center of Saxonville is the Saxonville Mill complex. It is both geographically and visually the most prominent feature of the district and is home to many small businesses, entrepreneurs and innovative activities. Opening the door for new opportunities at the Mill through zoning and public realm improvements allows for continued reinvestment and marketing of the Mill as an asset of the district. The wayfinding for the Mill and improved street frontages can reinforce the connections between the district and this asset.

#### **Enhance Resident Connections**

Reinforce walking, biking and community connections to new residential areas including the Planned Unit Development at Danforth Green to reinforce area resident use of the village center. Several key pedestrian routes could be improved to enhance walkability from the eastern neighborhoods particularly. Sidewalks should be added on Meadow Street and Hillside Street with marked crossings at intersections to connect to the Old Danforth Bridge. Sidewalks already exist on Derby Street and Danforth Street and should be enhanced with marked pedestrian crossings at intersections. Other approaches to the district have existing sidewalks.

#### **Leverage Community Assets**

Continue efforts to reuse Athenaeum Hall for community gathering space, reinforce community connection to the Mill, expand recognition of natural and historic district assets to leverage the fundamental aspects of the district that differentiate it from other places. Build on and expand efforts such as the Friends of Saxonville Historic

Walking Tour to enhance an appreciation of the history and heritage of the district. Keep a focus on the Mill Complex as the historic and literal center of the district and help that asset to continue to adapt and evolve.

#### **Reinforce Local Services**

Calibrate uses, businesses and services to match local needs and align with the retail gap analysis. The table to the right shows selected potential retail development opportunities for Saxonville. The type of uses that are currently not fully capturing local spending and that should be able to be supported by the resident population. A purposeful calibration of the type of retail and services provided in the district to reflect both community desire and market opportunities strengthens the potential for business success.

#### **Invite Private Investment**

Establish a facade, signage and landscape improvement program that either provides small grants to promote reinvestment or a revolving loan fund to facilitate district reinvestment. The limited number of buildings in the district presents an opportunity to fix up and beautify what exists. Modest facade, signage and landscape improvements can have a dramatic impact on the perception of the district and sense of place. Businesses within the Study Area could qualify for a Town-funded matching grant that contributes to design and construction costs for qualifying exterior improvements. Improvements would include any investment that would positively impact the appearance of a property from the public right-of-way.



### Enhance District Wayfinding

Highlight the historic assets, recreational trails and Mill businesses with legible and consistent signage. For example, Mill wayfinding signage should present a clear and consistent hierarchy of signage that includes and clearly communicates - building numbers, business tenants, tenant directories, parking, loading and deliveries, pedestrian access and building entries. Signage should have a distinct, simple and uniform approach.

### Selected Potential Retail Development Opportunities For Saxonville

Store Type	Opportunity/Gap	Supportable Square Feet	Number of Stores
full service restaurants	\$7,500,000	10,000	1-2
limited svce eating places	\$5,700,000	8,500	2-3
beer, wine, liquor stores	\$4,000,000	15,000	1-2
jewelry stores	\$5,000,000	8,000	2-3
nursery & garden centers	\$4,000,000	20,000	1-2
office supplies & stationery	\$4,600,000	15,000	1
gifts, novelty, and souvenirs	\$3,000,000	10,000	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$33,800,000</b>	<b>86,500</b>	<b>7-10</b>

A.C. Nielsen SiteReports, January 2015, and FXM Associates

## SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT

#### Key Recommendations

A district-wide focus on walkability should be used to strengthen connections to surrounding neighborhoods and the new Planned Unit Development northeast of the center. Reducing travel lane widths in the district center will both calm traffic and provide space for expanded sidewalks, streetscape amenities and strategically placed on-street parking. Public realm improvements to reinforce connections to district trails and trailheads are equally important to reinforce a strong secondary network of bicycle and pedestrian trails. Connecting the head of the Cochituate Rail Trail north to the Carol Getchell Trail or the Hultman Aqueduct provides new links in the network. The Hultman Aqueduct could provide a secondary route west to Nobscot over time working with the MWRA.

#### Enhance Walkability/Bikeability

Saxonville is a compact and walkable village center. Historically, it began as a walking village with worker housing closely located to the textile mill operations. Safe and enjoyable bicycle and walking must be a first priority if the commercial center of Saxonville is to be enhanced as a community gathering, recreational, and amenity center. Promoting multiple travel modes of access to and from the center reduces traffic congestion and lowers demand for parking. The sidewalk network today has missing segments that should be filled or that could be made into more enjoyable walking environments.

Fill gaps in pedestrian network with sidewalks and marked crossings, widen sidewalks in key locations, improve public streetscape, add sharrows and share-the-road signs on key bike connections. The biggest missing

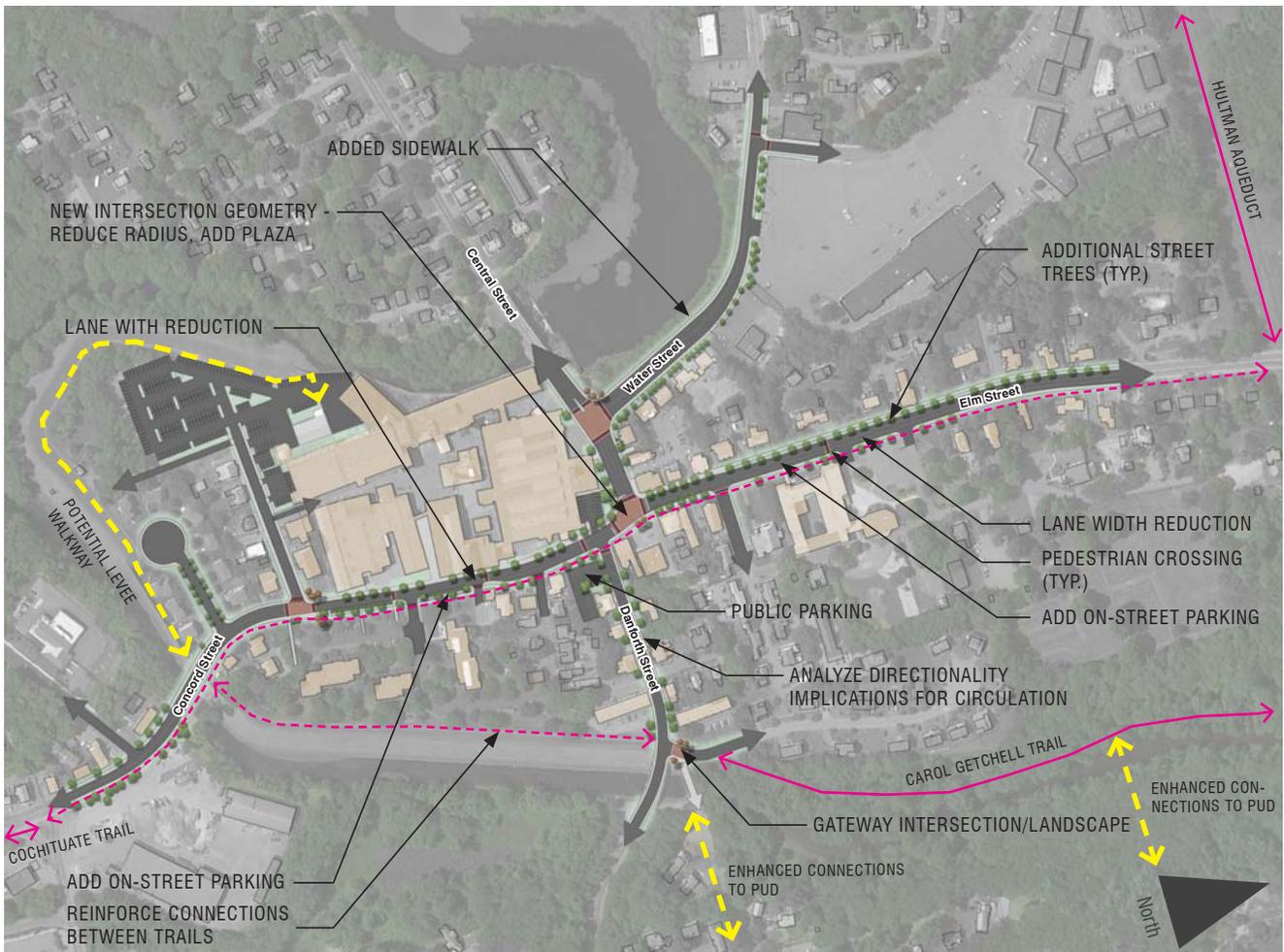
sidewalk is on the Sudbury River side of Water Street and Public Works has plans to add a sidewalk at that location. Marked mid-block pedestrian crossings on Concord Street and Elm Street would greatly enhance pedestrian safety and convenience. Pedestrian crossings are too dispersed today to offer a convenient pedestrian crossing pattern.

Identifying and marking the most direct and widely used bicycle routes would enhance bicycle safety and encourage multi-modal road use. Particularly, adding sharrows and share-the-road signs on Water Street would enhance a key bike connection to the east and strengthen the connection to Nobscot. Promoting bicycle use on Concord Street and Elm Street would provide connectivity to other recreational bicycle trails and routes.

#### Strengthen Open Space Links

Although major recreational assets exist in and around Saxonville, they are not directly connected. A full and expansive recreational network could be leveraged by reinforcing connections between Cochituate Rail Trail, Carol Getchell Trail, Sudbury Pond and the Aqueducts providing connections and open space links to Nobscot and surrounding communities. The long term potential for regional recreational and open space connections exist through expansion and connection of the Hultman Aqueduct (potential long term), MWRA Aqueduct, Bruce Freeman Trail and other connections and open space links to Saxonville, in addition to multi-modal street connections on Water Street.

In Saxonville, the most important and viable connection is to reinforce pedestrian and bicycle access between



the trailhead of the Cochituate Rail Trail, the Hultman Aqueduct (potential long term access) and the Carol Getchell Trail. It appears two potential routes may be best suited for this purpose. The first would simply provide on-street bicycle amenity in the form of bike lanes or sharrows on Concord Street and Elm Street connecting the Cochituate Trail and Aqueduct crossing. The second would be to provide enhanced access north on Concord Street over the Sudbury River and then east following the River up to Danforth Street to connect to the Carol Getchell Trail near the Old Danforth Bridge. The Carol Getchell Trail could be further improved to enhance bicycle access and provide a direct connection up to the Aqueduct Trail.

### Continue Streetscape Improvements

Public Works has recently completed or is in the process of constructing improvements at the intersection of School Street and Concord Street and Central Street and Water Street. This effort of intersection and street reconstruction should continue to add a consistent character and quality of improvements between the current School Street and Central/Water Street improvements to unify the district.

Improvements to the street character and increased landscape plantings would enhance the pedestrian environment and buffer vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Potential street tree locations and spacing are indicated in the diagram above. Reconstruction of

## SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

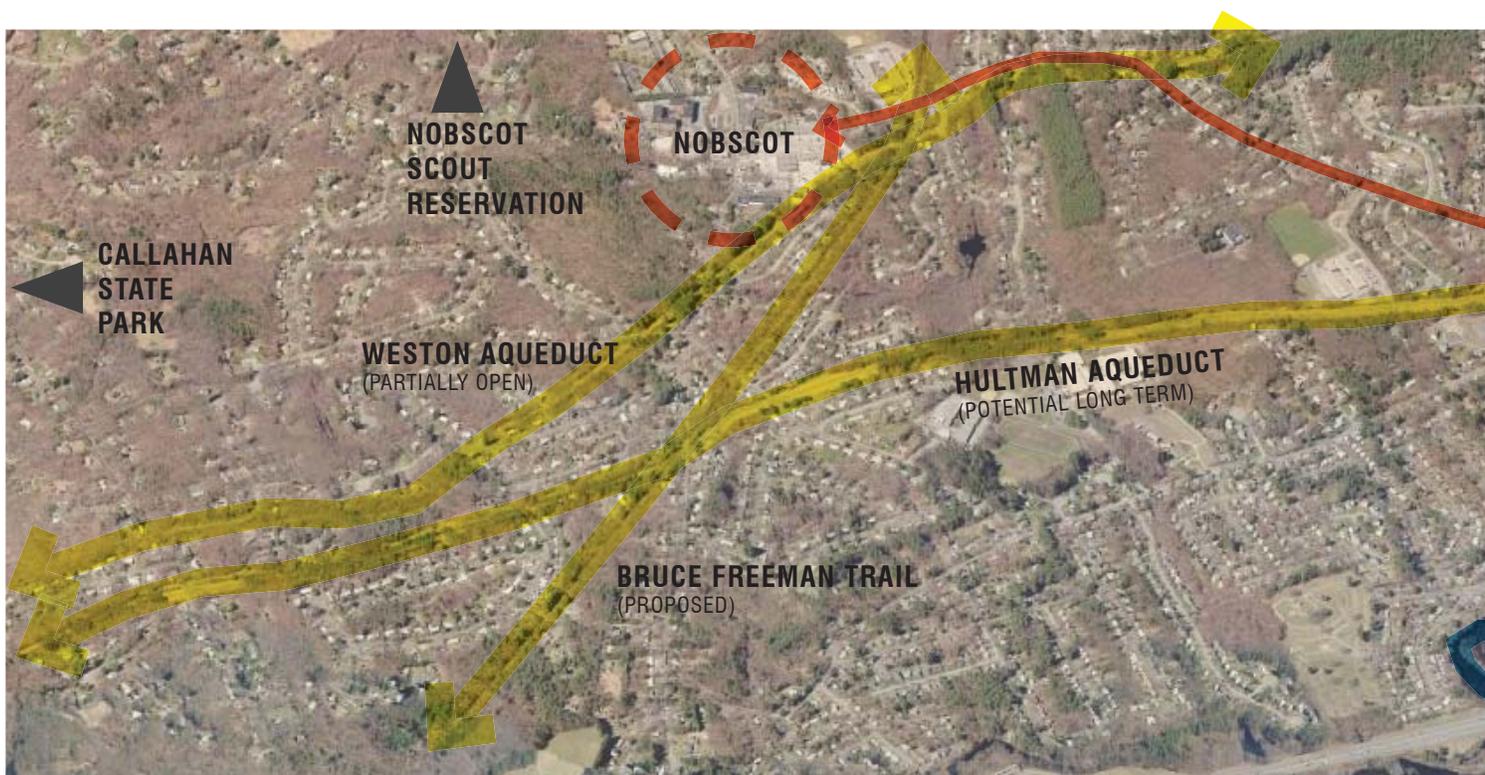
# PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT

Concord Street and Elm Street in the study area would allow for an improvement of the pedestrian environment through the use of a road diet to reduce the travel lane widths. The space gained from this lane reduction could be given back to sidewalk and landscape areas to enhance the pedestrian environment. A reconfiguration of the roadway in these segments may also add the ability to create pockets of on-street parking that would provide additional convenient parking spaces in the district. The addition of on-street parking would likely require an expansion of the public right-of-way into private property in some locations, but in most locations this area is currently being used as a landscape buffer and

appears to be physically possible to accommodate. This could result in approximately 40 new on-street parking spaces near the center of the district.

#### Reinforce Gateway Intersections

Provide gateway landscape and intersection improvements at key intersections at Central/Water Streets, Central/Concord Streets and Watson Place/Concord Street. By providing a consistent and recognizable intersection treatment at district gateways, the sense of arrival and district boundaries are reinforced. This gateway intersection treatment could consist of a special streetprint texture in the crosswalks, stamped asphalt,





stamped concrete, or other colored or textured additives to typical paving materials.

### Identify New Parking Resources

Reduce travel lane widths and add on-street parking in central locations. In addition to new on-street parking potential, there appears to be potential for additional parking areas on other public and private property that could support the district-wide parking approach. Particularly, parking resources on and near Watson Place could be expanded by exploring adding parking capacity at underused locations like the old Pump House on Watson Place and the continuation of the Mill's surface

parking area back by the river. These two locations could potentially create an additional 60 parking spaces. When combined with the potential on-street parking spaces, this includes about 100 potential new parking spaces in the district.



## SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# REGULATORY STRATEGY

#### Key Recommendations

Several important regulatory modifications will enable new opportunities and long-term investment in Saxonville. A district-wide Village Zoning District would provide a more cohesive and tailored approach to zoning in the village center. Currently, five zoning districts (M, B-1, B-2, R-1 and G) exist at the center of Saxonville. The creation of a single Village Zoning District would create a more consistent application of allowable and desirable uses, potential for mixed-uses, tailoring of dimensional requirements and design guidelines regarding building placement and other aspects to reinforce the village center and examination of parking requirements. In regard to parking, other regulatory options to encourage the shared use of parking and to develop an overall district parking strategy would greatly enhance the efficiency and active use of all district properties.

#### Preserve Historic Assets

Reinforce the preservation of historic assets through both the proposed Village District zoning and design guidelines. The Saxonville Historic District has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1992. Further protection of the historic district would be provided if the National Register District was established as a local historic district. The creation of a local historic district would provide one of the strongest forms of protection to historic structures and oversight by the Framingham Historic District Commission (HDC). The creation of a local historic district would require approval at the Annual Town Meeting.

#### Provide Guidance for Investments

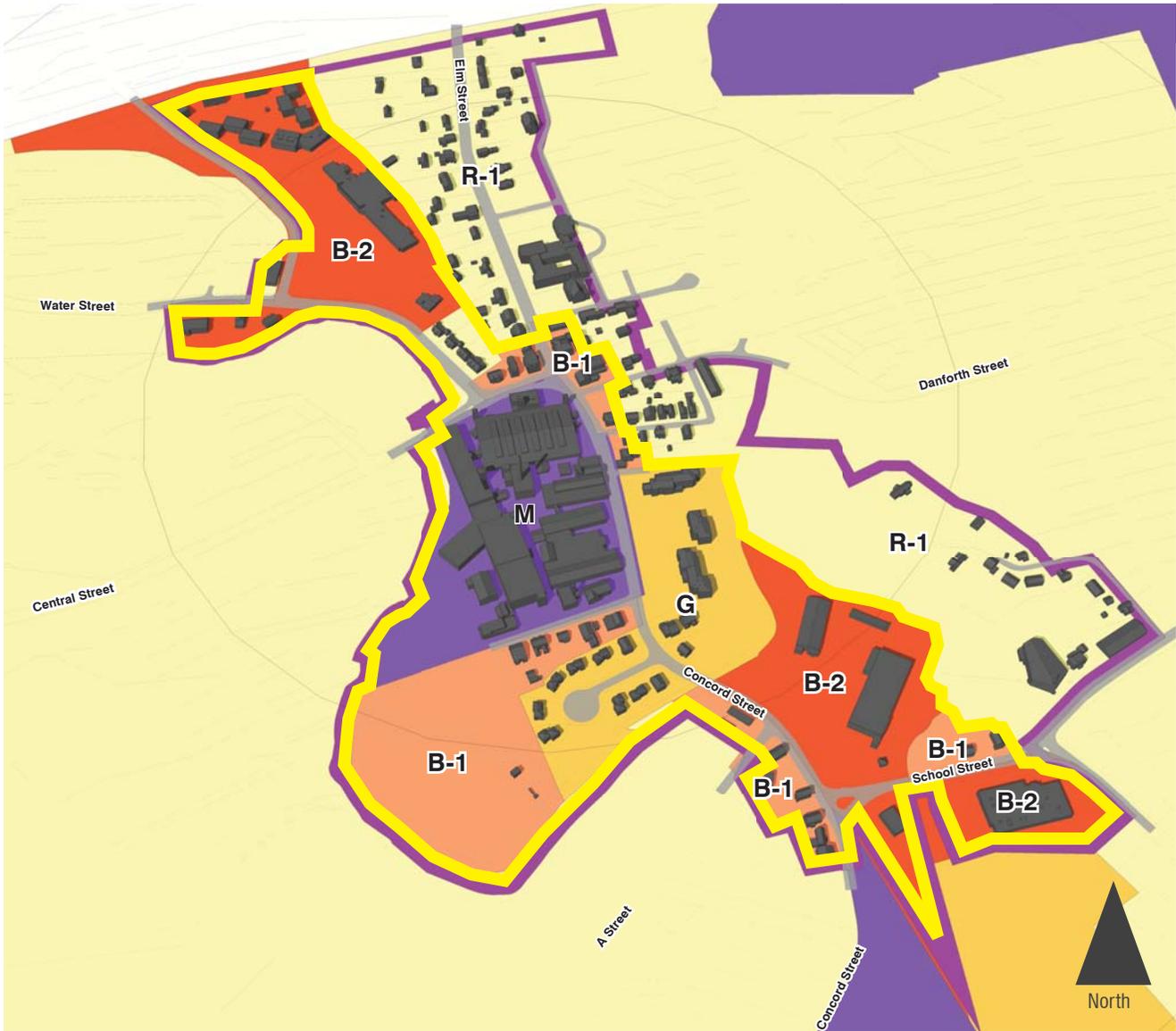
Employ design guidelines to direct future investment to complement and contribute to the overall village character, reinforce a pedestrian friendly environment and screen parking. As part of the new Village District Zone, district design guidelines should be integrated within new regulations to direct future investment to complement and contribute to the overall district character, reinforce a pedestrian-friendly environment and screen parking.

The new Saxonville District Design Guidelines should address the following framework of how buildings and sites are contributing to the sense of place in Saxonville:

*Principles of Design* should include reinforcing an attractive, safe and active pedestrian environment and strengthening the character of a New England village center.

*Historic Preservation* should be a fundamental aspect of the district design guidelines encouraging rehabilitation of existing historic assets and integration of the structures with future uses, investment and redevelopment plans. Preservation of historic structures should be consistent with the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

*Site Improvement Guidelines* should include orienting new buildings to frame street frontage and open space, locating parking to the side and rear of buildings, reinforcing a consistent street character and streetscape with landscape components, providing community amenities and small open spaces integrated with the site



<b>Existing Zones</b>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Lot Area Min.</i>	<i>Frontage Min.</i>	<i>Front Set-back Min.</i>	<i>Side Setback Min.</i>	<i>Landscaped Open Space Ratio Min.</i>	<i>Building Height Max.</i>	<i>Lot Coverage Max.</i>	<i>Floor Area Ratio Max.</i>
Neighborhood Business (B-1)	Mixed-use prohibited	8,000 SF 4,000 SF	65 FT	30 FT	10 FT	30% or 5%	3-stories 40 FT	35% or 33%	-
Community Business (B-2)	Mixed-use prohibited	8,000 SF	65 FT	25-30 FT	15 FT	20% (30% residential)	3-stories 40 FT	35%	0.32
General Residence (G)	Mixed-use prohibited	8,000 SF 43,560 SF	65-150 FT	30 FT	10-30 FT	30-50%	3-stories 40 FT	15% or 35%	-
General Manufacturing (M)	Mixed-use prohibited	6,000 SF 8,000 SF	50 FT 65 FT	50 FT 30 FT	15 FT 10 FT	20% 30%	6/80 FT 3/40 FT	- 35%	0.32 -

<b>Proposed Zones</b>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Lot Area Min.</i>	<i>Frontage Min.</i>	<i>Front Set-back Min.</i>	<i>Side Setback Min.</i>	<i>Landscaped Open Space Ratio Min.</i>	<i>Building Height Max.</i>	<i>Lot Coverage Max.</i>	<i>Floor Area Ratio Max.</i>
Village Center	<b>Mixed-use allowed, multi-family allowed (not as primary frontage)</b>	8,000 SF	65 FT	<b>20 FT</b>	15 FT	<b>15%</b>	<b>4-stories 45 FT</b>	35%	<b>0.75</b>

plan and concealing loading, service and parking areas from adjacent properties.

*Building and Architectural Guidelines* should include a simple articulation of building massing to articulate a base, middle and top, reduce the scale of large buildings through the use of stepbacks, respect the context of scale and architectural style, respond to corner sites with the architecture, use facade and roof features to break-down large blank wall and roof surfaces, and generally create an architecture that is compatible with a New England village character.

*Signage Guidelines* should include site and building signage that is integrated into the overall design and configuration of site circulation, landscape and building design, signage that is coordinated and managed across multiple tenants and uses to reinforce a community feel and avoid unnecessary sign competition and distraction.

### **Reinforce Mixed-use Village Center**

The existing zoning districts prohibit mixed-uses. Additionally, some of the existing zones, such as Manufacturing (M) are prohibiting uses at the Mill Complex that are desired by the community and potentially economically viable. It is a strong recommendation of the study to create a new Village District Zone to integrate many separate existing zones into a single zone with the intent to expand the mix of allowable uses that would reinforce a walkable mixed-use commercial center.

This new zone could replace the existing M, B-1, B-2, R-1 and G zones as shown on the diagram to the right outlined in yellow. No other zoning change would be required and the areas outside of this boundary would remain unchanged.

The intention of the new Village District Zone would be to expand the mix of allowable uses and potentially to expand the allowable building height and density to reinforce a walkable mixed-use commercial center. Defining allowable uses that would permit as-of-right mixed-use and multi-family development would be the

first change. Multi-family only development could be restricted from occurring on major street frontages, which is where mixed-use development would be encouraged.

Another aspect of revised zoning that will require further discussion and exploration with community, potential developers and the Town more generally is the allowable height and density of the new zoning district. Through analysis of the site and potential development programs, the consultant team recommends that a 4-story height limit may offer more flexibility and encourage future reinvestment in the district.

### **Pursue District-wide Parking Strategy**

The Town of Framingham should encourage property owners within the Village District Zone to consider all parking resources as shared parking supply. This type of approach should be promoted within the district through signage and a community outreach campaign. Encourage shared parking, more efficient parking layouts across property lines, shared access and entries, and new locations of on-street parking to provide a district-wide approach to parking encouraging a “park-once” district. Reinforcing walkability within the district is a major component of a park-once district as you are asking people to walk between multiple destinations.

If a district-wide parking approach becomes widely accepted and applied, a more fine grained approach to parking management and regulation within the overall district can begin to occur. Generally, in compact mixed-use districts this type of management encourages parking in less convenient locations by providing those parking areas free of restrictions. Parking locations that are more convenient may have limitations applied, such as a 2 hour limit. Parking locations that are the most convenient should be encouraged to have quick turn-over to provide very convenient parking for quick visits to shops or businesses. This may be managed through a 15 minute parking limit or parking meters. In this type of management of parking, locations of district employee parking are also identified to ensure employees are not occupying the most convenient parking locations, but leaving them for customers.



## SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

### STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# ACTION PLAN

## Implementation

Critical next steps to advance the plan:

**1. Invest in streetscape improvements to improve walkability and enhance sense of place** - As part of Capital Improvements budgeting and planning the Town should prioritize a sequence of walkability, bikeability and streetscape improvements that focus on filling the gaps in the infrastructure that have been identified. This effort should be coordinated through Public Works and integrated with their ongoing improvement and implementation efforts. A predictable and known sequence of improvements would help the community to understand discreet projects as part of a larger and holistic plan to improve multi-modal travel and Complete Street policies.

Streetscape improvement should also include the addition of on-street parking spaces wherever possible. This may necessitate expansion of the public right-of-way in several locations, but would be physically possible to accomplish, particularly on Concord Street and Elm Street. A short break following the current construction on Central Street and recently completed improvements at School Street would allow the community to recover from construction activities while new improvements are finalized and allocated in the budget.

**Timeframe:** Completion of a first collection of improvements within 2 years, follow-up improvements at 2 year increments until completed

**Responsibility:** Department of Public Works

**2. Advance civic reuse of the Athenaeum Hall** - The conceptual plans for the rehabilitation of the Athenaeum and current Fire Station as a civic and community center should be used to establish the potential capital and operational costs to establish a budget and explore opportunities for funding. The Town can continue to

support pre-development costs for the investment and may consider the option of performing this work as a capital project. However, this may not be a prioritized project and alternative sources of funding may be necessary. Fundraising for the project through private donations, or the use of Massachusetts Rehabilitation Tax Credits from the Massachusetts Historical Commission may be viable alternative funding sources. Another possible alternative would be to partner with a nonprofit organization to redevelop and operate the property when completed.

**Timeframe:** Ongoing with more detailed redevelopment plan within 1 year

**Responsibility:** Town Manager's Office, Community & Economic Development, Saxonville Stewardship Group (to be established, see below)

**3. Develop and adopt new Village District zoning promoting mixed-uses at a moderate density** - A special committee or steering group should be formed with members of the Town Community & Economic Development department, Planning Board, EDIC, Saxonville residents, businesses and stakeholders or others to further define and build consensus around a new Saxonville Village District Zone. The process to refine and craft the zoning should include additional community meetings similar to the workshops held during this study process to advance the zoning concepts and build consensus based on the framework established through this process. Once appropriate levels of agreement have been reached the new proposed zoning should be advanced for adoption through the Town Meeting process.

**Timeframe:** Immediate with a completion goal of 1 year

**Responsibility:** Community & Economic Development, Planning Board, EDIC, Saxonville Stewardship Group (to be established, see below)

# SAXONVILLE VILLAGE

## STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# ACTION PLAN

#### **4. Connect recreational assets linking Cochituate Rail Trail to Carol Getchell Trail and Aqueduct -**

The Town, residents and other regional trail advocates should continue the conversion of rail beds, aqueducts and other regional networks into bicycle and recreational routes. Town efforts with MWRA, MAPC and others to open access to the Weston Aqueduct, Sudbury Aqueduct and Cochituate Aqueduct should continue to close missing links of public access. Direct routes and connections between the trailhead of the Cochituate Trail north along Concord and Elm Street to the Aqueduct crossing or connecting along the Sudbury River to the Carol Getchell Trail would enhance connectivity in an impressive recreational network. Over time paths, amenities and marked street crossings should be added to enhance these unique recreational links across the Town.

*Timeframe:* Ongoing effort

*Responsibility:* Town Manager's Office coordinating with other Town's and utilities, Department of Public Works for roadway intersection improvements at trails

#### **5. Create a district-based facade, landscape and signage improvement program -**

As described in the strategies, a Saxonville district-based facade, landscape and signage improvement program would help to beautify and invite positive private investment into the district. The establishment of a matching grant or revolving loan fund program would directly translate the planning strategies into on the ground actions to improve properties. The program and its funding could be established through the EDIC. The amount of the funding would be determined as part of annual budgeting processes, but could range anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000. The funding would be available to local property owners or businesses wishing to improve their property.

The program could be set up in any number of ways - it

could be dedicated only to construction costs or provide assistance for design and construction costs. The type of project and improvements would be required meet certain criteria to prove that they will have a positive impact on the visual environment of the district. Funding could be provided as a matching grant to leverage an equal or greater amount of private investment or could be provided as a low or no interest loan that is returned to a pool of funds dedicated to the district upon repayment by the property owner.

*Timeframe:* Establishing the program and approving a single pilot project as part of the program would be a great accomplishment within 1 year. The program could be refined and expanded based on the feedback from the pilot program experience.

*Responsibility:* Framingham Economic Development and Industrial Co. (EDIC), a property owner interested in improvement investments

#### **6. Invest in placemaking and intersection improvements at McGrath Square with new plaza -**

The center of the historic Saxonville district is important to have a sense of place which includes more of a cohesive character and pedestrian-friendly environment than exists today. A full redesign, reconfiguration and reconstruction of the main intersection of Concord Street, Elm Street, Central Street and Danforth Street provides the opportunity to make a dramatic improvement on the functionality, safety and visual impact of the center of the district.

These improvements have potentially broad implications including resolving accessibility issues on the public sidewalks at the northwest corner of this intersection, the creation of a new public plaza, landscape and seating area in conjunction with a reconfigured private parking area at the southwest corner of the intersection

and consideration for the directionality and circulation implications for Danforth Street and how it should best provide access to the center of the district.

**Timeframe:** Design and documentation within 5 years, discussion with community as to appropriate construction timing

**Responsibility:** Department of Public Works with input from Community & Economic Development and Saxonville Stewardship Group (to be established, see below)

**7. Share and manage parking district-wide with parking agreements and on-street parking** - Due to the configuration of certain properties and the historic layout of the district, parking supply cannot be adequately provided in Saxonville on an individual property basis. A district-wide approach to parking will create new opportunities in the district, add convenience and enhance business viability. As also highlighted in the Framingham Parking Report (June 2014), parking should be optimized as a resource so that can be most efficiently used. Sharing and managing parking through property owner agreements will allow for more convenient parking, combined with on-street and other public parking resources to provide a district-wide approach to parking.

Model Shared Parking Agreements should be provided to owners to work with abutting property owners to join, share and reconfigure parking areas over time. The sharing of parking between uses and across property lines can provide all owners better parking access and resources and provide space for redevelopment opportunities. Each property and parking agreement must begin with an open discussion, be planned negotiated, agreed to and managed and can be assisted through efforts by the Town to get the process started.

**Timeframe:** Ongoing effort, a pilot program for an easy shared-parking conversion and agreement would show other property owners that it is a worthwhile effort

**Responsibility:** Facilitation of process by Community & Economic Development, Agreements and actions performed by property owners

**8. Formalize stewardship with a district advisory committee to guide next steps** - Many of the strategies and actions recommended for Saxonville require some level of district-wide coordination and guidance. The creation of a Town-recognized stewardship group would provide an additional level of community engagement and advisory capacity that is likely to be necessary to leverage each of the efforts into significant progress for Saxonville. The procedure by which the stewardship group is formed should be consistent with the Town advisory committee's that have been formed and should provide the ability for member transitions. The group should include local representation from a diverse collection of residents, business owners, property owners, or other stakeholders. This group could use existing organizations, such as the Friends of Saxonville to report back to and communicate with the broader community.

**Timeframe:** Seek nominations and establish Stewardship Group within 6 months

**Responsibility:** Group may be best connected and engaged through the Community & Economic Development department

**9. Strategically use McAuliffe Library for betterment of district** - When the new McAuliffe Library is completed on Water Street, the old library building on Nichols across from the Pinefield Shopping Plaza will need to be considered for reuse. While a direct need has not been identified, the Town-owned facility should be used strategically to enhance the Saxonville district and community. Its location and potential reuse will have implications for the Pinefield Plaza, where most of the library parking has been located. The Town-owned property could be considered as part of a larger redevelopment of the Pinefield Shopping Plaza frontage on Water Street.

**Timeframe:** Options for reuse should be considered immediately, building to be vacant in 2016.

**Responsibility:** Town of Framingham Capital Projects & Facilities Management, and Community & Economic Development



FRAMINGHAM VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CENTERS  
STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# APPENDICES



FRAMINGHAM VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CENTERS  
STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# MARKET ANALYSIS

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# MARKET ANALYSIS

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The market analysis of Nobscot and Saxonville assesses the market support for economic development opportunities in the village commercial centers of North Framingham. The analysis includes a demographic profile, business profiles, employment projections, commercial real estate projections, retail gap analysis and housing demand analysis prepared by FXM Associates.

## 5 Market Analysis - Introduction

The Framingham Master Plan completed in 2010 identified key economic development opportunities for the town and in target planning areas, which included the Villages of Saxonville and Nobscot. These areas have small-scale business districts oriented to their neighborhoods. FXM Associates' task is to assess potential market support for development within the villages' commercial centers. The following sections update the demographic and business characteristics of Saxonville and Nobscot, comparing them, where feasible, to the data in the 2010 Master Plan. Then FXM analyzes employment trends and projections for the Town of Framingham, identifying those sectors with potential to support future growth. Further analysis focuses in on commercial real estate trends and projections for the Framingham market area. A retail gap analysis for the specific market areas of Nobscot and Saxonville identifies and quantifies the opportunities for increased retail activity in the villages. Finally, FXM uses its proprietary Housing Demand Model to estimate potential demand for rental housing development in the Saxonville-Nobscot housing market area.

### Summary Market Findings

- For both Nobscot and Saxonville village areas there are opportunities to selectively expand the number and type of retail stores and restaurants. Based on current (1st quarter, 2015) retail gaps Nobscot could capture up to an additional 144,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, while Saxonville could capture up to an additional 86,000 square feet. [see Table 5, page 18, and Table 6, page 19]
- Either village area (or both combined) could capture 90-140 rental housing units each year through 2019

at current median market prices for rental housing in Framingham (\$1,200 to \$2,200). [see Table 7, page 24]

- There may be additional opportunities for developers to include modest amounts of medical office space and possibly other office space oriented to small professional firms.

### Demographic Profile, 2014 Update

#### *2009-2014 Comparison: Demographic Profiles*

Table 1 summarizes the demographic information obtained for the 2010 Master Plan, updated with 2014 estimates and 2019 projections for the same geographic areas. For each neighborhood, the area of interest was defined by half-mile and one-mile radii from the centers of Nobscot and Saxonville. Data for Framingham overall provides a picture of how the neighborhoods compare to the town as a whole. The data show the following highlights:

- Within the half-mile and mile radii of each neighborhood center, population losses projected by the Claritas data source in 2009 were instead population increases.
- Over the next five years, populations in all geographic areas, including Framingham overall, are expected to increase by modest amounts.
- Of some note is the increase in the median age in the Nobscot areas: in the last 5 years it increased almost 5 years to 46.1 within the half-mile area, in contrast with Saxonville and Framingham overall, where increases were negligible.
- Also in regard to the potential of an aging population, Figure 14 (page 97) forecasts a dramatic increase in the number of older households, compared to projected losses in other age groups. This trend

further reinforces the notion that rental housing in Nobscot and Saxonville, with walking proximity to shops, will be especially desirable and grow in demand.

- Households speaking only English at home declined considerably in the Saxonville neighborhood between 2009 and 2014, bringing it closer to the statistic for Framingham overall.
- Median household incomes increased modestly in all areas over the last 5 years.
- The proportion of blue collar workers increased in Nobscot, most notably in the one-half mile radius area, where it increased from 8% in 2009 to 13% in 2014.

- The proportion of service and farm workers increased in Saxonville, reaching 17%, compared to 11% in Nobscot and 19% in Framingham overall.
- There was a slight decline in home-ownership in Nobscot, though the rates in both neighborhoods are considerably higher than the 56% for Framingham overall.
- Home values increased somewhat for all three areas over the last 5 years.

Table 1 below presents the data.

**Table 1**

**Demographic and Business Characteristics, 2009 and 2014**

POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS	2009		2014		2009		2014		2009	2014
	Nobscot		Nobscot		Saxonville		Saxonville		Framingham Overall	Framingham Overall
	1/2 mile	1 mile	1/2 mile	1 mile	1/2 mile	1 mile	1/2 mile	1 mile		
<b>Population</b>										
<i>estimated</i>	1,868	6,253	2,742	6,800	2,353	8,062	3,404	8,699	64,476	70,773
<i>projected</i>	1,819	6,111	2,930	7,107	2,252	7,753	3,501	8,968	63,336	73,545
<i>Projected Change Next 5 Years</i>	-49	-142	188	307	-101	-309	97	269	-1140	2,772
<i>Per capita Income</i>	\$ 43,790	\$ 43,113	\$43,262	\$44,230	\$ 33,684	\$ 34,649	\$38,970	\$39,179	\$ 32,506	\$35,432
<i>Median Age</i>	41.0	41.6	46.1	45.4	41.0	41.6	41.6	42.4	39.2	39.0
<b>Households</b>										
<i>estimated</i>	762	2,405	1,139	2,672	876	3,281	1,372	3,483	25,163	27,173
<i>projected</i>	748	2,366	1,237	2,816	940	3,178	1,409	3,593	24,654	28,388
<i>Projected Change Next 5 Years</i>	-14	-39	98	144	64	-103	37	110	-509	1,215
<i>Est. Median Household Income</i>	\$ 78,846	\$ 90,326	\$79,807	\$93,544	\$ 67,511	\$ 72,182	\$78,860	\$80,891	\$ 63,600	\$70,212
<i>Average Household Size</i>	2.45	2.60	2.41	2.53	2.69	2.46	2.48	2.49	2.56	2.46
<i>Speak Only English at Home</i>	85%	87%	82%	82%	82%	86%	71%	71%	70%	63%
<i>Speak Other language at Home</i>	15%	13%	18%	18%	18%	17%	29%	29%	30%	37%
<i>NO vehicles</i>	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	2%	3.57%	3.22%	8%	9.89%
<b>Employment Type</b>										
% Blue Collar	8%	10%	13%	11%	16%	15%	13%	13%	15%	15%
% White Collar	84%	80%	76%	77%	71%	74%	70%	70%	69%	66%
% Service and Farm	8%	10%	11%	11%	13%	11%	17%	17%	16%	19%
<b>Housing</b>										
<i>Total Units</i>	777	2,446	1,177	2,746	1,000	3,345	1,421	3,597	25,963	28,572
<i>1 Unit Detached</i>	72%	86%	67%	82%	66%	75%	62%	72%	50%	49%
<i>3-19 Unit Structures</i>	6%	2%	7.3%	3.7%	21%	14%	20%	16%	20%	19%
<i>50-plus unit Structures</i>	12%	6%	13%	8%	2%	2%	4%	2%	14%	14%
<i>Owner Occupied</i>	80%	88%	79%	85%	71%	78%	71%	77%	55%	56%
<i>Renter Occupied</i>	20%	12%	21%	15%	29%	22%	29%	23%	45%	44%
<i>2009 Median Value of Owner Occupied</i>	\$ 338,859	\$ 355,769	\$368,835	\$365,960	\$ 314,982	\$ 315,697	\$351,006	\$350,032	\$ 328,128	\$355,911

Source: The Nielsen Company, Claritas Site Reports, 2009 and 2014 estimates; FXM Associates

## Business Profiles, 2014

### 2009-2014 Comparison: Business Characteristics

FXM used the same data source in updating business statistics; however there are anomalies in the data that make some results in the area of business and economic characteristics questionable.

- The changes in the estimated numbers of establishments and numbers of employees in the one-half and one-mile radius areas between 2009 and 2014 are generally reasonable:
  - Within a half-mile radius, Nobscot lost a small number of establishments between 2009 and 2014, and employment declined as well.
  - The area within one mile, meanwhile, had a small (10) gain in the number of establishments but a huge decline (almost 3,000) in the number of employees, calling into question the accuracy of the data for 2009 within this geographic area.
- Saxonville data on these items appear more consistent and therefore likely more reliable: the

number of establishments stayed the same within the half-mile area, and there was a modest decrease in employment.

- In the one-mile area for Saxonville, both the number of establishments and employment grew slightly.

The following Table 2 shows employment by sector for 2014 only, estimated for both Nobscot and Saxonville and the half-mile and one-mile radii.

Comparing employment by major industrial sector has proved to be impossible, as the 2009 study used sector classification by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, and the 2014 data source used the more recent North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. Translating 2-digit sector data between the two systems using available crosswalk tools is beyond the resources of this study.

The following two tables (Table 3 and 4) show the business profiles of Nobscot and Saxonville, within the half-mile and one-mile areas, in 2014 using the 2014 NAICS codes.

## Table 2

### ESTABLISHMENTS AND EMPLOYMENT

Subarea Radii	2014 Nobscot		2014 Saxonville		2014 Framingham Overall
	1/2 mile	1 mile	1/2 mile	1 mile	
	Total Establishments	81	199	148	
Total Employees	504	1427	1015	2,704	56,394
Average Employees per Establishment	6	7	7	12	16
Total Business Sales (millions)	\$88	\$222	\$189	\$430	\$9,644
Average Sales per Establishment (millions)	\$1.09	\$1.12	\$1.28	\$1.85	\$2.73

Table 3

Business Profile Nobscot 2014

NAICS	Sector	Establishments	Employees	Annual Sales (\$ mil)
<b>Half Mile</b>				
23	Construction	10	59	418.6
42	Wholesale Trade	4	16	30.2
44-45	Retail Trade	8	45	13.6
51	Information	1	2	0.7
52	Finance & Insurance	12	29	3.1
53	Real Est/Rental&Leasing	7	15	4.5
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical	9	33	5.8
56	Admin, Support, Waste Mgmt and Remedial Svcs	5	17	2.3
61	Educational Services	1	100	0
62	Healthcare & Social Assistance	4	75	1.4
71	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1	1	0.3
72	Accommodation & Food Service	8	62	3.6
81	Other Services (except Public Admin)	11	50	3.8
<b>Totals</b>		<b>81</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>487.9</b>
<b>One Mile</b>				
23	Construction	37	185	61.1
31-33	Manufacturing	3	7	1.3
42	Wholesale Trade	11	31	62.7
44-45	Retail Trade	24	115	27.9
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	3	20	2.2
51	Information	9	57	18.9
52	Finance and Insurance	15	37	6.7
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13	38	9.7
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	28	117	25.9
56	Admin and Support and Waste Mgmt and Reme S	32	154	25.1
61	Educational Services	8	349	0
62	Healthcare and Social Assistance	15	273	28.2
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5	13	1.2
72	Accommodation and Food Services	10	69	4.1
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	23	147	7.9
<b>Totals</b>		<b>236</b>	<b>1,612</b>	<b>282.86</b>

Source: A.C. Nielsen, *SiteReports*, 2014 and FXM Associates

## Table 4

### Business Profile Saxonville 2014

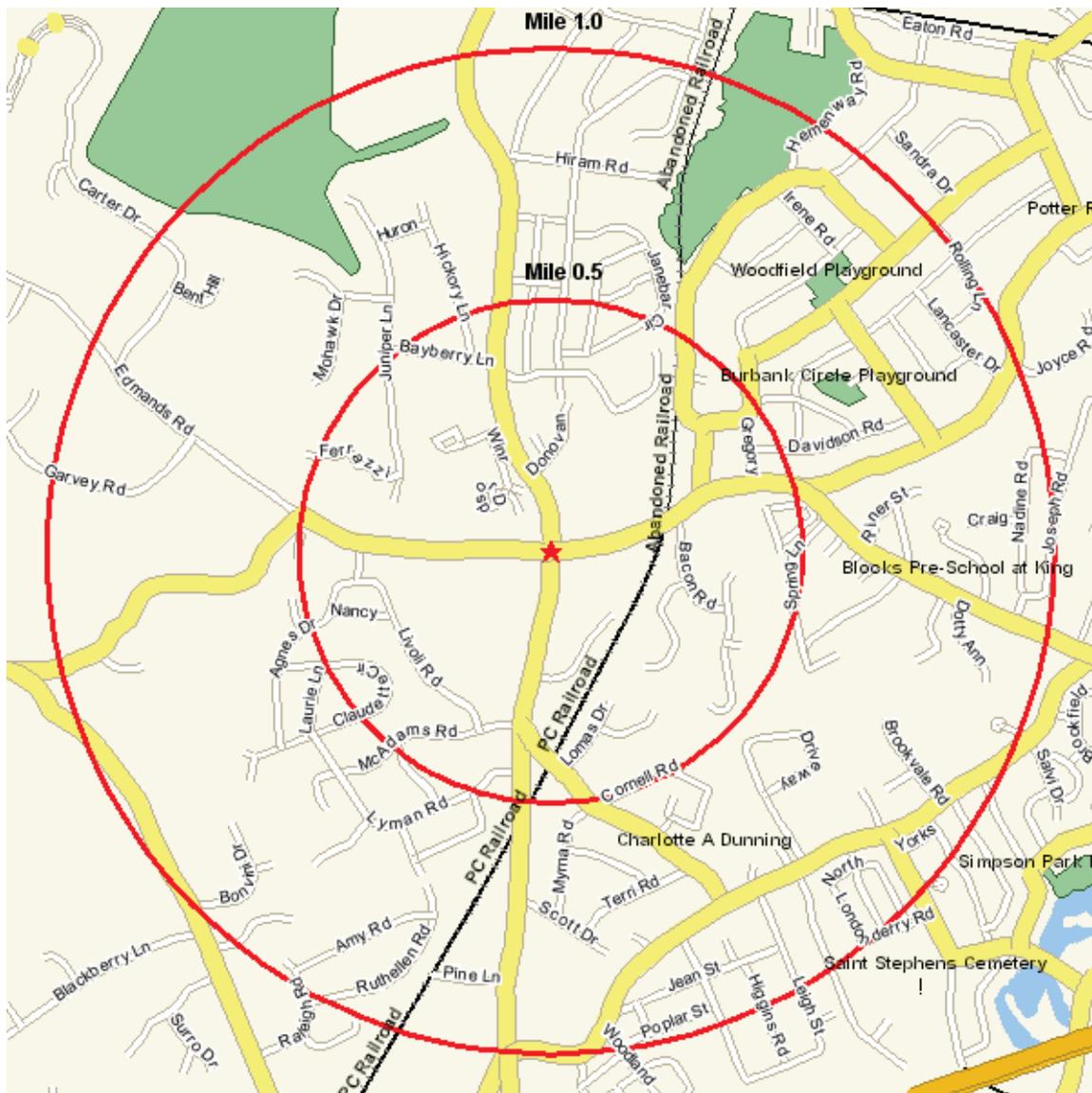
NAICS	Sector	Establishments	Employees	Annual Sales (\$ mil)
<b>Half Mile</b>				
23	Construction	14	58	19.8
31-33	Manufacturing	6	43	6.5
42	Wholesale Trade	5	25	50.5
44-45	Retail Trade	21	182	43.0
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	2	8	.8
51	Information	4	18	3.9
52	Finance and Insurance	9	17	3.2
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	15	56	18.4
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Svcs	19	74	23.9
56	Admin, Support, Waste Mgmt and Remedial Svcs	12	43	6.5
61	Educational Services	7	293	.2
62	Healthcare and Social Assistance	6	68	5.3
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3	19	1.0
72	Accommodation and Food Services	8	48	2.8
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	17	63	3.5
<b>Totals</b>		<b>148</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>189.0</b>
<b>One Mile</b>				
23	Construction	27	106	35.7
31-33	Manufacturing	13	620	113.5
42	Wholesale Trade	7	35	72.5
44-45	Retail Trade	28	202	47.8
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	3	12	1.0
51	Information	9	463	26.1
52	Finance and Insurance	11	22	4.5
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	16	63	19.8
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	35	329	72.2
56	Admin and Support and Waste Mgmt and Reme S	23	85	13.2
61	Educational Services	12	402	.4
62	Healthcare and Social Assistance	12	97	6.5
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4	20	1.3
72	Accommodation and Food Services	9	59	4.0
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	23	189	11.7
<b>Totals</b>		<b>232</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>430.1</b>

Source: A.C. Nielsen, *SiteReports, 2014* and FXM Associates

The tables show quite different business profiles. Within both a half-mile and a mile of the village centers, Saxonville has considerably more total economic activity. The largest employers in its half-mile area are retail and education, while within the one-mile area, manufacturing, information, and education dominate

employment. With regard to annual sales, however, Nobscot's construction sector with \$418.6 million contributes more than all the sectors in the Saxonville's half-mile area. Note that the businesses within the half-mile and one-mile areas are not additive, as shown in the following two maps (Figures 1, 2) for the two villages:

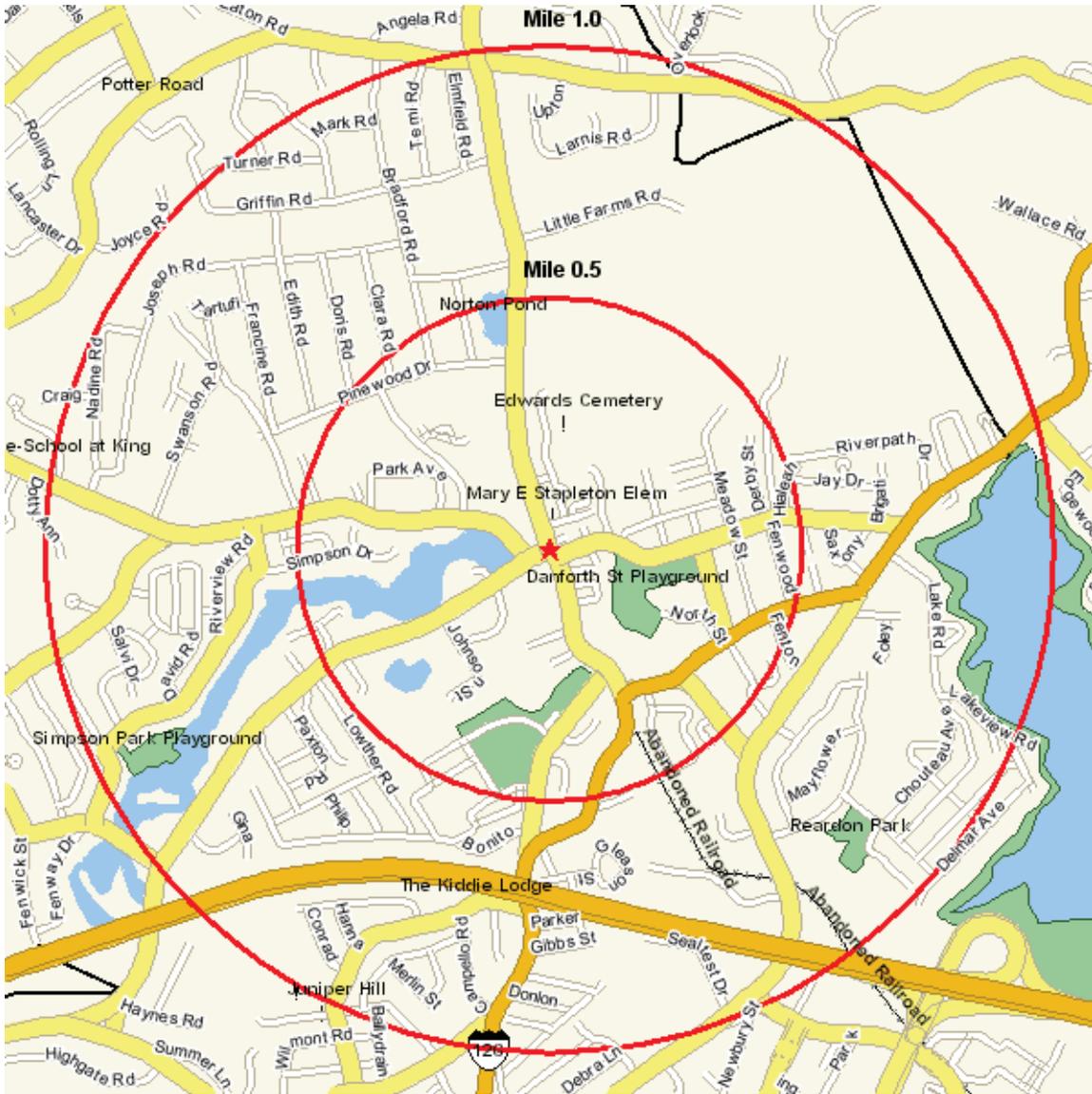
**Figure 1**  
**Nobscot, Half-mile and One-mile**



Source: A.C. Nielsen, *SiteReports*, 2014.

**FXM** Associates

**Figure 2**  
**Saxonville, Half-mile and One-mile**



Source: A.C. Nielsen, *SiteReports*, 2014

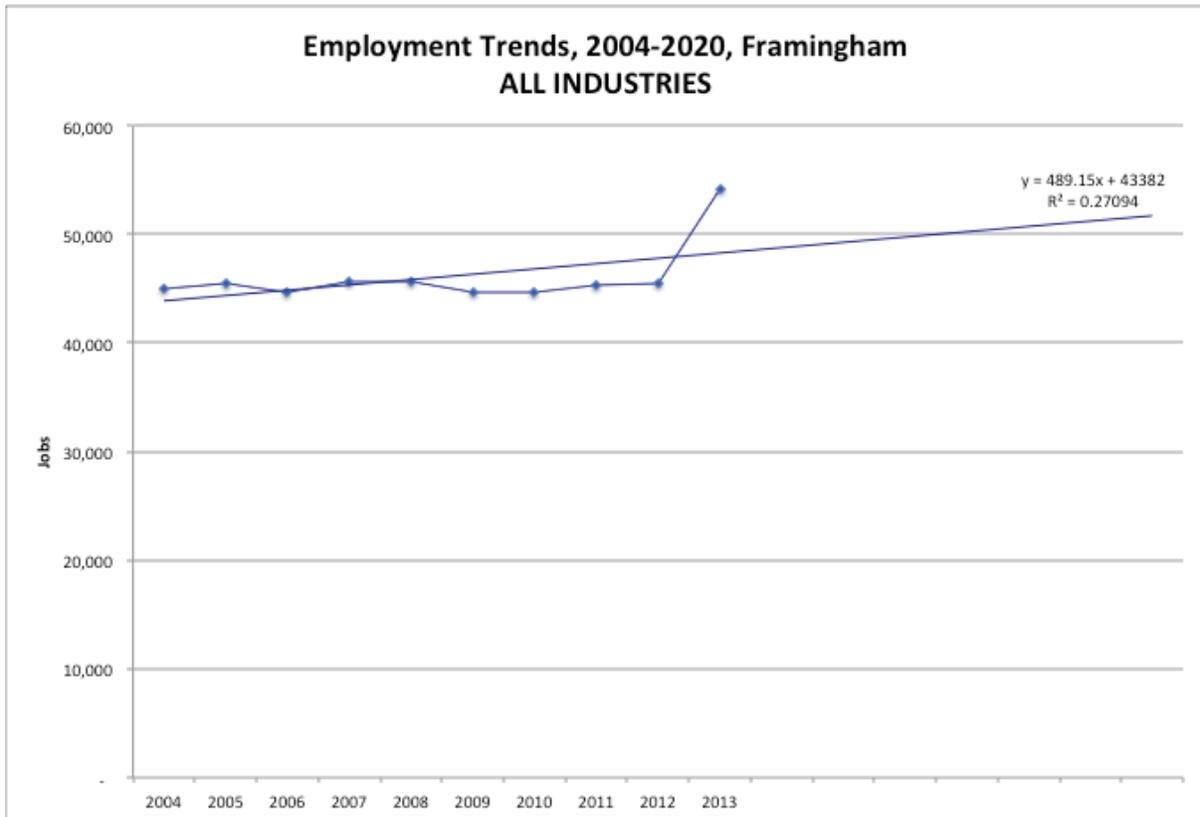
### Employment Trends and Projections for Framingham

The following sections look at trends in employment and projected growth or shrinkage of various industrial sectors in Framingham as a whole. They provide the background for Town decisions on future growth and development in Nobscot and Saxonville.

Figure 3 summarizes the trends in total employment for Framingham for the period 2004-2013. FXM then uses a linear projection to estimate employment in 2020. The Town of Framingham is projected to experience modest growth overall between now and 2020.

Based on past performance, employment in Framingham is trending upwards, but the measure of reliability of the projection is not particularly strong, due probably to the sharp uptick reported in the 2013 data. Whether Framingham will sustain this overall improvement is not yet clear. The total average monthly employment in 2013 was approximately 54,000 jobs, and the average for the second quarter of 2014 was approximately 48,000 jobs, lower than in 2013 but substantially higher than any of the years before 2013, suggesting that increases over 2012 may continue.

Figure 3



Source: ES202 Reports, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2003-2013, and FXM Associates

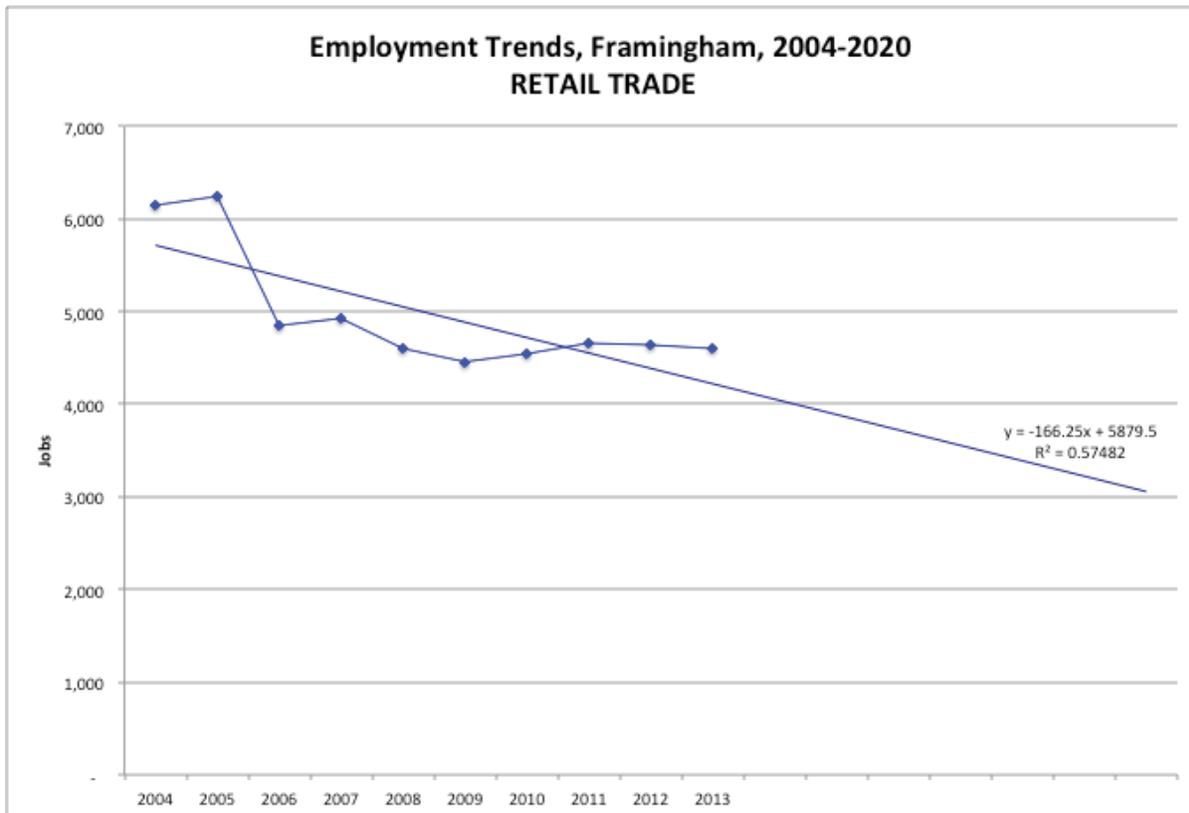
The retail sector, however, which is a major component of Saxonville’s business profile, as shown above, is projected to decline in the Town overall over the next five years as shown in Figure 4.

Sectors that are projected to grow in Framingham overall, based on past trends, include:

- Wholesale
- Management of companies and enterprises
- Healthcare and social assistance

Of possible interest for development in Nobscot and Saxonville is the potential demand for office space suggested by projected employment growth in “management of companies and enterprises” (the types of firms in this sector include investment and holding companies and management services for corporations.) As shown by the data in Figure 5, the trend line is statistically significant and suggests a 33% increase in employment, from about 6,800 jobs in 2013 to about 9,000 jobs in 2020. On an average annual basis this magnitude of employment growth could generate

**Figure 4**

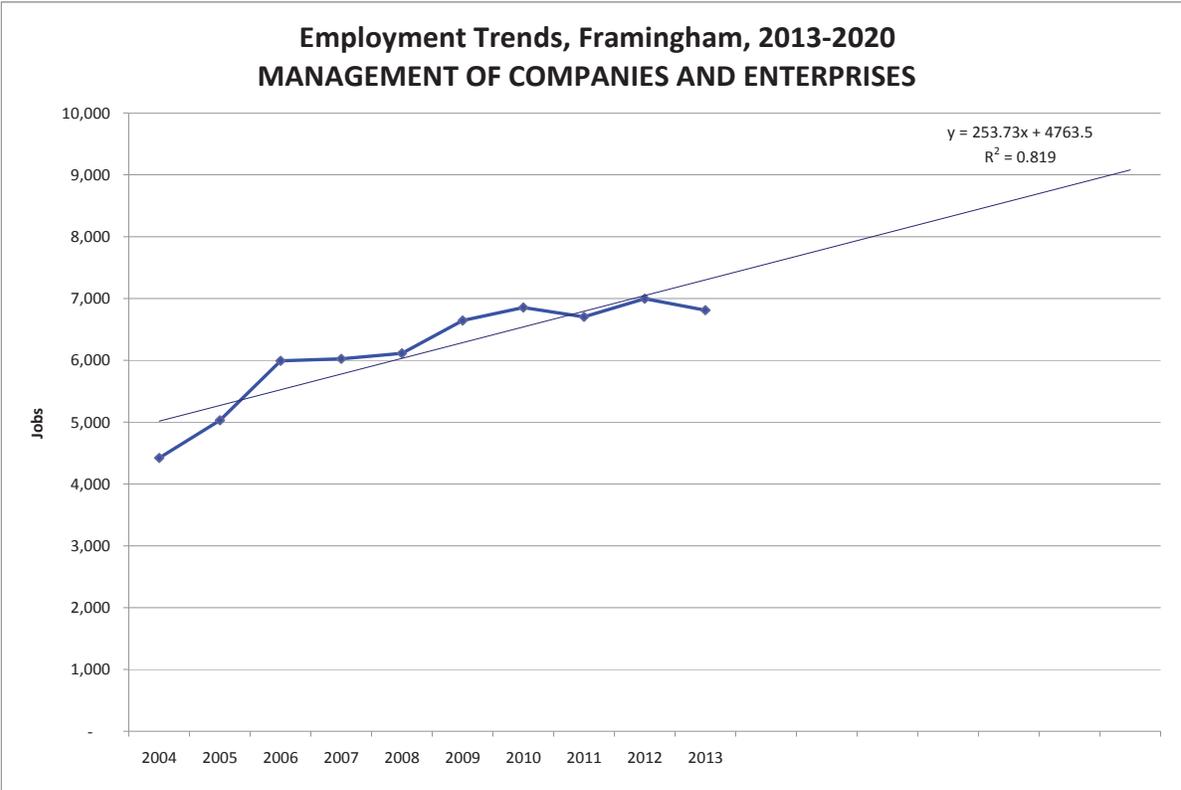


Source: ES202 Reports, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2003-2013, and FXM Associates

demand for about 100,000 square feet of office space each year in Framingham with the potential for some of this space to be newly developed while much would be expected to be absorbed within currently vacant space (see subsequent discussion of supply trends reported by Co Star).

Another potential source of demand for space in Nobscot and Saxonville is in the “health care” sector, and specifically medical offices. The health care sector in Framingham is projected to increase employment in Framingham by about 15% by 2020, from 7,500 to 8,700. Assuming half of this growth is related to medical offices, then average annual demand of about 25,000 square feet would be indicated (townwide).

**Figure 5**



Source: ES202 Reports, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2003-2013, and FXM Associates

## Commercial Real Estate Supply Trends and Projections

A widely used source of real estate market and property data to which FXM subscribes is Co Star Property Information Systems. Co Star tracks changes in the inventory, vacancies, leasing activity, lease rates, and absorption of commercial space by community, subregion, and region and also maintains an individual property data base.

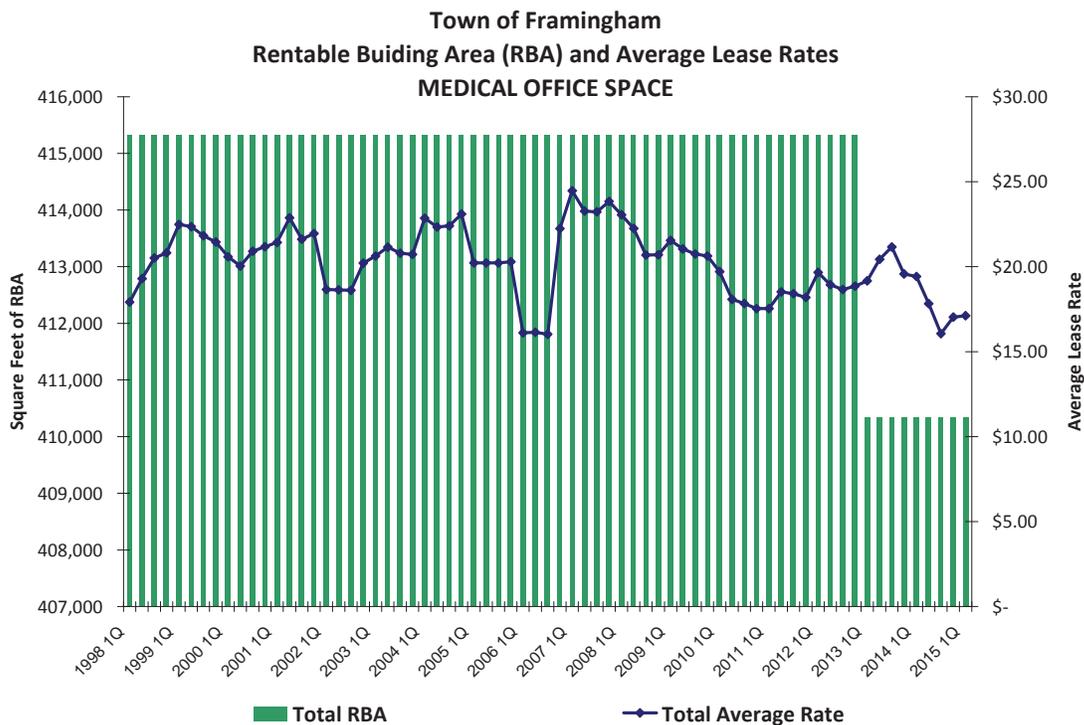
For the office market overall, of which “management of companies” is a subset but cannot be tracked separately with Co Star data, vacancies currently stand at 10.8% townwide and are projected over the next 8 quarters to increase to 11.3%. Average annual net absorption (newly occupied spaced less vacated space) is projected

by Co Star to average a net loss of (18,000) square feet per year.

Within the subset of “medical office space” -- that is separately tracked by Co Star -- Figure 6 shows the historical inventory of medical office space and average annual per square foot lease rates.

As data in Figure 6 show, since 1998 the inventory of medical office space had been constant until a 5,000 square foot (1%) net loss of rentable building area in 2013. Average annual lease rates per square foot for medical office space peaked at \$24 per square foot in 2007 and have since declined to about \$17 per square foot. There is no new medical office space in the pipeline according to Co Star.

Figure 6

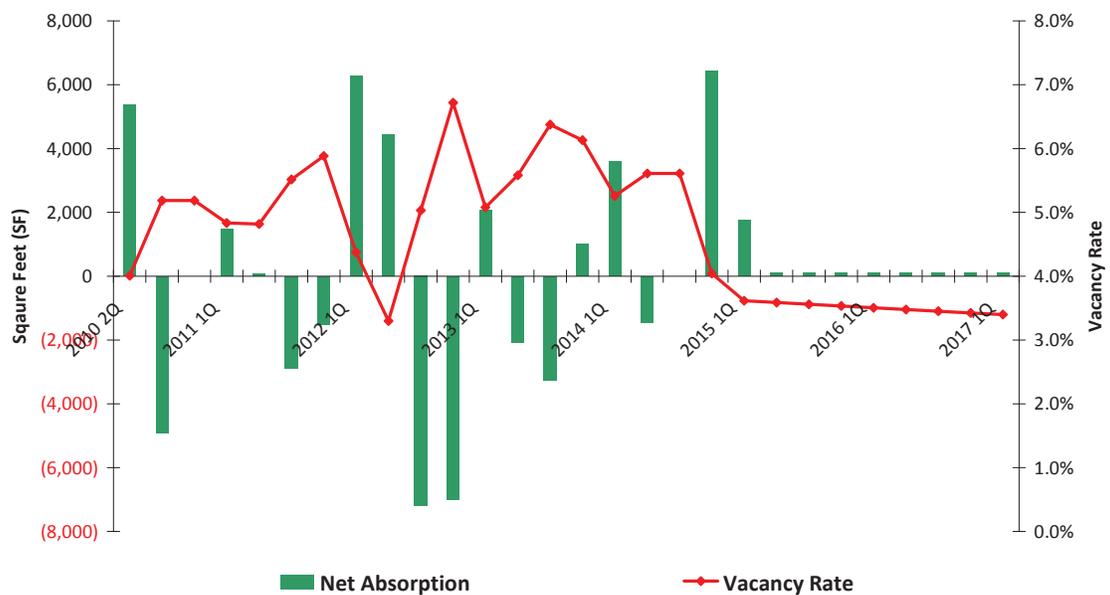


Source: Co Star *Property Information Systems*, March 2015, and FXM Associates

Data in Figure 7 show historical and projected net absorption and vacancy rates for medical office space in Framingham. According to Co Star, a small net absorption of 500 square feet per year is forecast with vacancy rates from 5.5% currently to about 3.5% over the next two years.

**Figure 7**

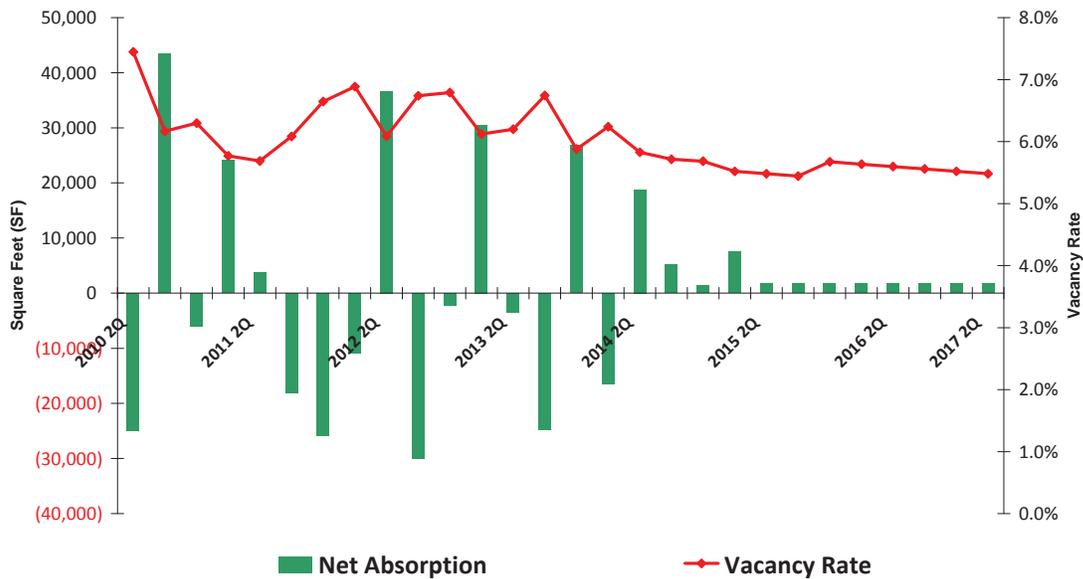
**Town of Framingham  
Historical and Projected Net Absorption and Vacancy Rates  
MEDICAL OFFICE SPACE**



Source: Co Star Property Information Systems, March 2015, and FXM Associates

Data in Figure 8 show historical and projected net absorption and vacancy rates for retail space throughout Framingham. A modest net absorption of 7,000 square feet per year is projected by Co Star over the next 8 quarters with vacancy rates remaining about the same at 5.5% townwide. There are currently 13,000 square feet of new retail space under construction.

**Figure 8**  
**Town of Framingham**  
**Historical and Forecast Net Absorption and Vacancy Rate**  
**RETAIL SPACE**



Data in Figure 9 show the retail leasing activity in square feet each quarter since 2006 as well as the average lease rate per square foot per year. Leasing activity has varied considerably while the average lease rate has increased to \$18.65 per square foot since bottoming at \$14.73 per square foot in 2009.

**Figure 9**  
**Town of Framingham**  
**Total Square Feet Leased and Average Lease Rate**  
**RETAIL SPACE**



Source: Co Star Property Information Systems, March 2015, and FXM Associates

## Retail Opportunity/Gap Analysis

### *Retail gap*

A Retail Opportunity/Gap analysis is a tool used by virtually all major retailers and chain restaurants to gauge market demand and competition within a specified geographic area. It represents a snapshot of the current expenditures of consumers within a geographic area and actual retail store sales matching those expenditures within the same geographic area.

The retail opportunity, or gap, analysis shows the potential demand for various types of retail development within a defined market area by comparing estimated household expenditures in a range of retail store categories with actual sales by stores in those categories. Where expenditures by households in the market area exceed sales, a gap or opportunity exists for stores within the market area to “capture” more of those household expenditures. Conversely, where market area household expenditures are less than actual sales in particular retail categories, stores in the market area already attract consumer dollars from outside the market area and opportunities for additional retail development would be more limited. The retail gap analysis is a snapshot of current opportunities for retailers to newly locate or expand facilities based on a well-established empirical fact that people will purchase goods within the shortest available walking or drive time from where they live.

Retailers typically define market areas in terms of drive times, with a 15-minute drive time considered the maximum outside market area definition for all but the largest stores and store types. Market support within a 5-minute drive time is considered the outside drive-time reach of smaller retailers, and support within a 10-minute drive time is considered essential for most medium sized stores and restaurants. If a specific category of retail sales opportunity were shown for a 5-minute drive-

time market area and also held up at the 10-minute and 15-minute market areas then most retailers will consider market conditions favorable – from a demand standpoint – to locating a store within that market area.

In the case of Nobscot and Saxonville, FXM Associates also used the half- and one-mile areas within which to estimate potential demand. Because the most likely retail stores to locate in these villages would be small to medium in size, FXM looked at potential demand in the 5- and 10-minute drive times in addition to the half- and one-mile areas. The retail categories shown in the following two tables are those that held up at both these drive time and distance-defined areas. Figures 1 and 2 above show the areas defined by distance. The Figures below shows the areas within market areas defined by 5-and 10-minute drive times:

Figure 10  
Nobscot, 5- and 10-minute Drive Times



Source: A.C. Nielsen, *SiteReports*, 2014

Figure 11  
Saxonville, 5- and 10-minute Drive Times



Source: A.C. Nielsen, *SiteReports*, 2014

The opportunities shown in Tables 5 and 6 are hypothetical and represent FXM’s judgment of how much of the gap by store type shown in the SiteReports data within each of the drive time and distance defined market areas might be capturable within the villages of Saxonville and Nobscot. As noted above, the retail gap is a snapshot of current (2014) market conditions and the types of stores and magnitude of these opportunities can and will change over time. The retail gap analysis is most useful as a recruiting tool for prospective developers or particular store types. In FXM’s analysis the identified dollar sales volume opportunity, supportable square footage (based on median sales per square foot for the selected store types), and number of stores (based on median store sizes for the selected store types) are in all instances conservative. However, whether the Saxonville and Nobscot villages see this level of development will depend on ready access to stores, such as that found in a centralized mall with concentrated foot traffic, the preference of most retailers.

**Table 5**

**Selected Potential Retail Development Opportunities for Nobscot**

<b>NAICS</b>	<b>Store Type</b>	<b>Opportunity/Gap</b>	<b>Supportable Square Feet</b>	<b>Number of Stores</b>
7221	full service restaurants	\$10,000,000	28,500	2-3
7222	limited svce eating places	\$8,300,000	24,000	3-4
44511	supermarkets, grocery stores	\$15,000,000	40,000	1
4453	beer, wine, liquor stores	\$5,000,000	17,000	1-2
44831	jewelry stores	\$4,800,000	8,000	1-2
45321	office supplies & stationery	\$3,000,000	9,800	1
45322	gift, novelty, souvenirs	\$2,800,000	9,300	1-2
44422	nursery & garden centers	\$1,500,000	7,500	1-2
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>\$50,400,000</b>	<b>144,100</b>	<b>11-17</b>

Source: A.C. Nielsen *SiteReports*, January 2015, and FXM Associates

Table 6

**Selected Potential Retail Development Opportunities for Saxonville**

<b>NAICS</b>	<b>Store Type</b>	<b>Opportunity/Gap</b>	<b>Supportable Square Feet</b>	<b>Number of Stores</b>
7221	full service restaurants	\$7,500,000	10,000	1-2
7222	limited svce eating places	\$5,700,000	8,500	2-3
4453	beer, wine, liquor stores	\$4,000,000	15,000	1-2
44831	jewelry stores	\$5,000,000	8,000	2-3
44422	nursery & garden centers	\$4,000,000	20,000	1-2
45321	office supplies & stationery	\$4,600,000	15,000	1
45322	gifts, novelty, and souvenirs	\$3,000,000	10,000	1
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>\$33,800,000</b>	<b>86,500</b>	<b>7-10</b>

Source: A.C. Nielsen *SiteReports*, January 2015, and FXM Associates

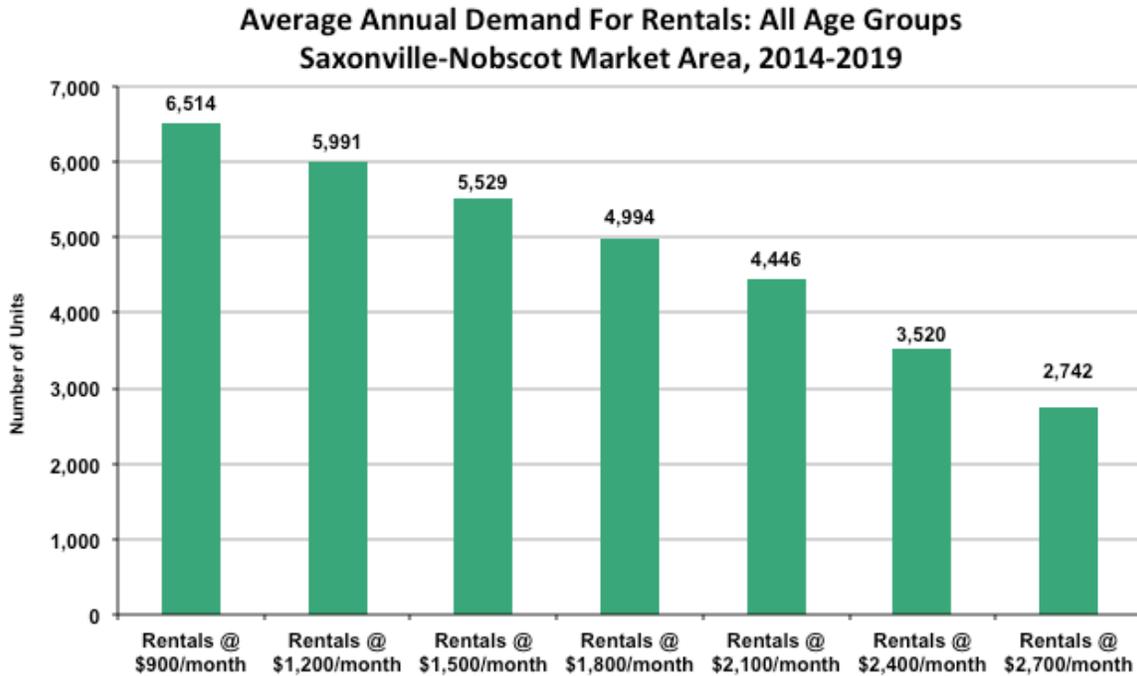
## Rental Housing Demand

### *Housing Demand Model Results*

The market for rental housing in the Saxonville-Nobscot market area (defined as the area within a 20-minute drive time of the villages) presents another potential growth sector for consideration. FXM's Housing Demand Model projects over the next five years the average annual demand for rental housing by age, income group, and affordable rental rates. The Housing Demand Model enables planners and developers to target types of rental units, in terms of cost and size and amenities, to various age groups of potential renters. For example, younger age groups tend to be more likely to rent than older householders, but they also tend to have lower incomes, increasing demand for lower priced units.

Figure 12 below shows the average annual demand for all rentals by all age groups in the Saxonville-Nobscot market area, taking into consideration affordability, propensity to move in any given year, and propensity to rent. For example, according to the figure, of the total number of households expected to move to rental housing each year within the 20-minute market area, approximately 5,000 of these households would be able to afford monthly rents up to \$2,000.

**Figure 12**



Based on the two villages' current shares of rental housing in the market area, an estimated 106 households able to afford up to \$2,000 a month rent might be absorbed by additional rental development in Saxonville and Nobscot (defined here as the areas within one mile of the village centers) each year. Table 7 presents these estimates for each of the rental points shown in Figure 12 above.

The information in Figure 12 can be further broken down into age groups, since rental housing developments often seek to attract households such as retirees and young singles, both of whom are less likely to have school age children. Figure 13 presents these data.

The graph reflects the greater propensity of younger households to rent compared to older households, as well as the sensitivity of levels of demand to varying rental prices.

**Table 7**

	<b>Total Average Annual Demand in Market Area</b>	<b>Total Average Annual Demand in Saxonville and Nobscot</b>
<b>Rentals @ \$900</b>	6,514	154
<b>Rentals @ \$1,200</b>	5,991	141
<b>Rentals @ \$1,500</b>	5,529	130
<b>Rentals @ \$1,800</b>	4,994	118
<b>Rentals @ \$2,100</b>	4,446	105
<b>Rentals @ \$2,400</b>	3,520	83
<b>Rentals @ \$2,700</b>	2,742	65

**Figure 13**

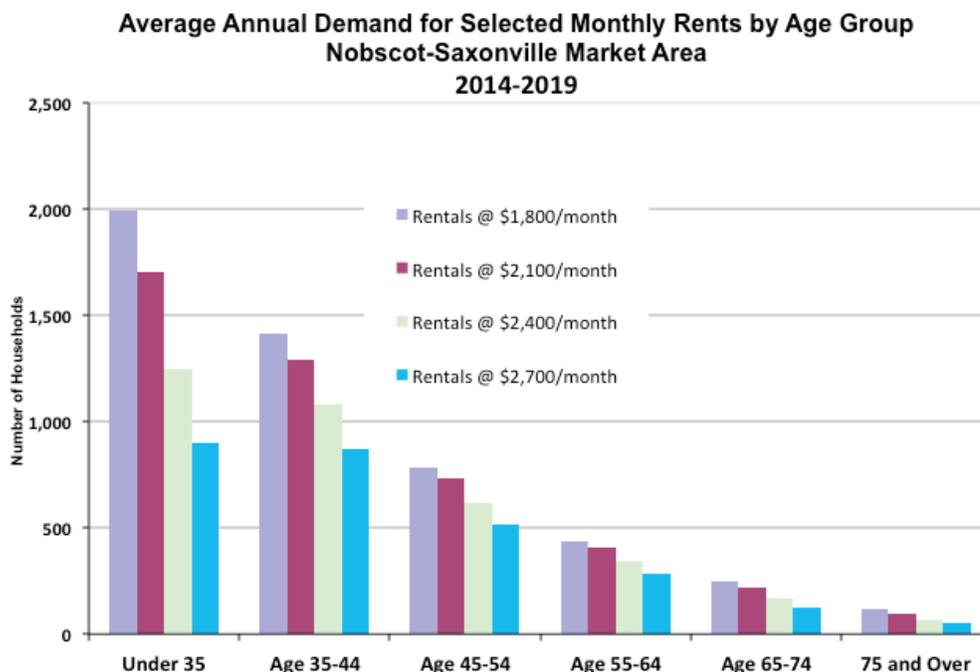


Figure 14 shows a key dimension to the estimation of future rental demand: the changes projected over the next five years in numbers of households by age and income.

Particularly striking is the projection of changes in age and incomes for the households in the Saxonville-Nobscot area over the next five years: the greatest growth in all income categories is estimated to be in the age 55 to 74 cohort. Two other age/income categories (25 to 34 and 45 to 54) would actually lose households:

### Prices of Currently Available Rentals

A review of prices for available rental units in Framingham shows prices well within the range of the rents estimated to be affordable by the Housing Demand Model. For

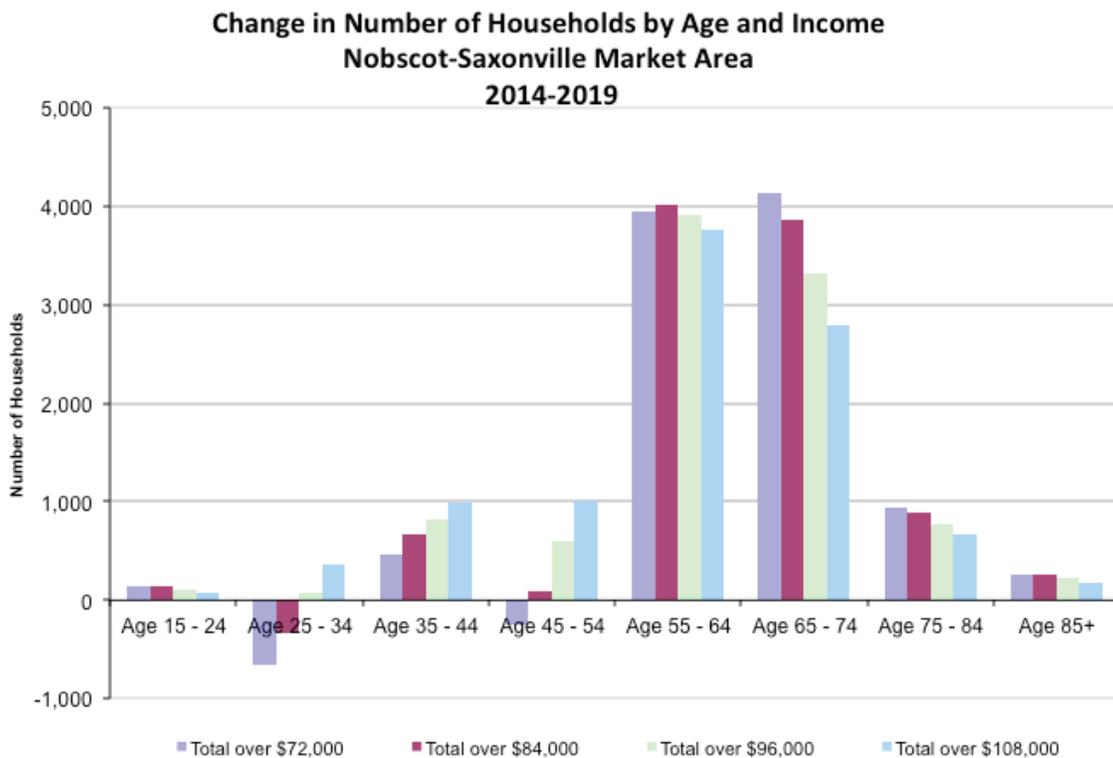
listings undifferentiated by size, the average low is \$1,300 and the average high is \$2,600 (source: rent.com).

For those listings categorized by number of bedrooms, the following average rents appear (source: Zillow.com):

1-bedroom:	\$1,200
2-bedroom:	\$1,500
3-bedroom:	\$2,000
4-bedroom:	\$2,200

The great majority of currently available units are 1- and 2-bedroom; larger units tend to be houses for rent or units in smaller structures, rather than units in large developments or apartment complexes.

**Figure 14**



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# EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

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The Cecil Group prepared an analysis of the existing conditions of the Nobscot and Saxonville village commercial centers to highlight the underlying context for economic development and potential opportunities for improvement to the built environment of the commercial center. This analysis formed the basis on which the overall recommendations for improvements and redevelopment strategies were considered.



NOBSCOT

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# EXISTING CONDITIONS



## 6 Nobscot Existing Conditions

### Sense of Place

Nobscot is a traditional four corners crossroads between two of the major circulation routes in North Framingham. The intersection of Edmands and Edgell Roads form the center point of this area. The surrounding residential community that identifies with Nobscot is much larger and extends north and west to the Framingham town lines. For the purposes of this effort, the Study Area is an area much closer to the central intersection and examining the potential for increased economic activity and support for a walkable environment.

Given the straightforward nature of the district, the primary placemaking components are the property frontages along the main access roads and the properties of the four corners that comprise the center of Nobscot. Today, the arrival sequence and character at the center of the district is less memorable than may be desired from the perspective of creating strong community connections and a sense of place. One great strength of the Study Area that is apparent from the visual cues given is the many open spaces, wooded and agricultural areas. The natural landscape then opens up to the center of Nobscot and surface parking lots become the predominant feature.

### Historic and Significant Landmarks

Nobscot refers to “the place where the rocks open out” and has been a historic point of gathering and settlement. Only a few built artifacts of that history remain intact in the Study Area today. The first historic feature is the most prominent. It is the chapel that sits at the corner of Water Street and Edgell Road. It is owned by the Town of Framingham and provides the most visible and connection to Nobscot’s past. The other historic structure in the Study Area is quite small, but also provides a fascinating view into the area’s heritage. It is the Old Post Office/Library building on Water Street near the frontage of the Heritage House community.



**Legend:**

**A** Chapel

**B** Old Post Office/Library Building



### Amenities and Municipal Assets

The Study Area includes several community amenities and municipal assets including the historic chapel that has been mentioned at the corner of Edgell and Water streets, the fire station on Water Street, the Hemenway Elementary School on Water Street, and the new McAuliffe Branch Library which is relocating from Saxonville.

### Key Sites

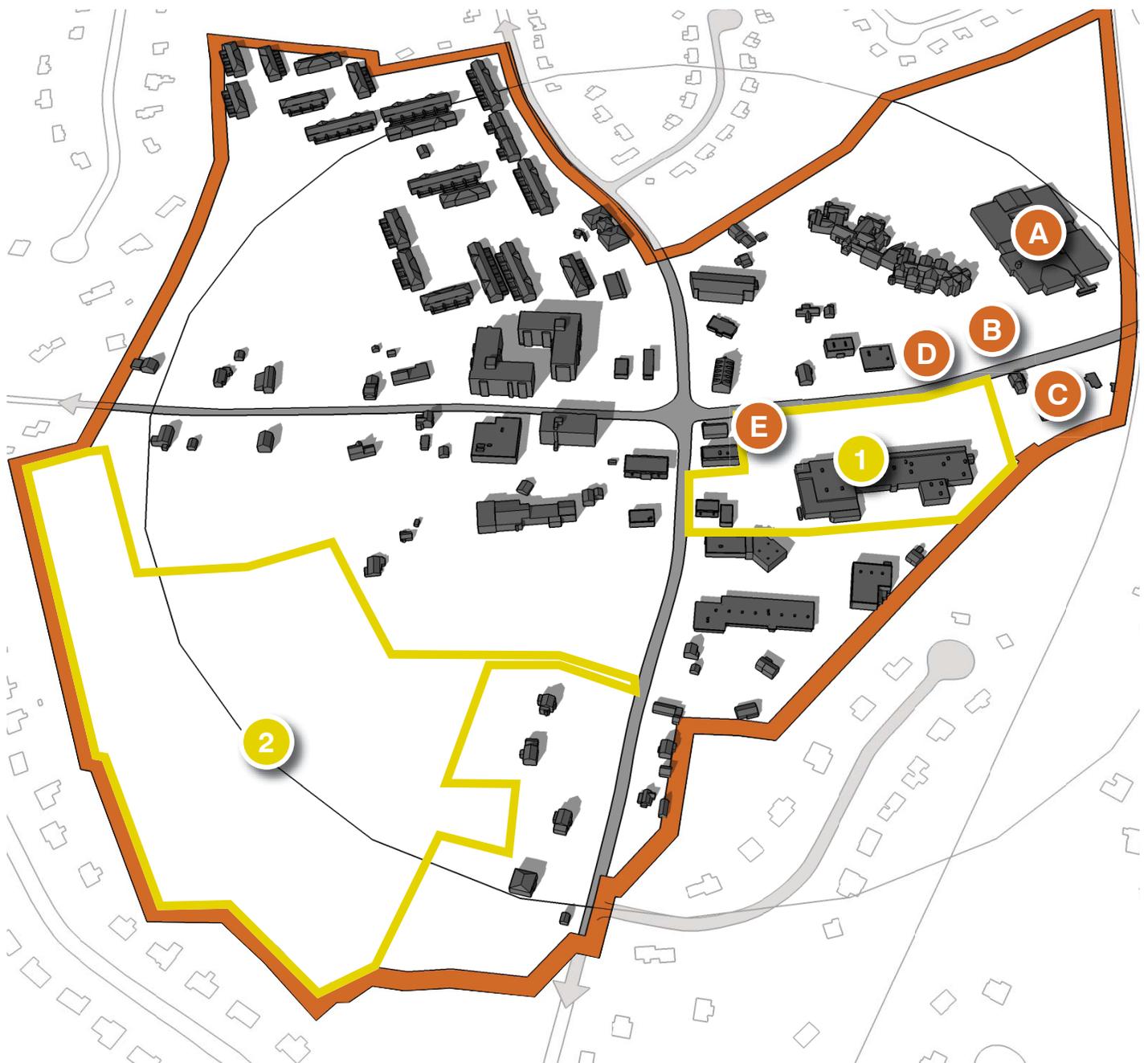
The most visible and critical site for revitalization of Nobscot is the Nobscot Shopping Plaza. The Nobscot Shopping Plaza has been vacant for decades and provides a relatively unwelcoming front door and poor first impression for Nobscot. The site includes a good portion of the frontage on Water Street and an important piece of the frontage on Edgell Road at a central location that is key to the sense of place in Nobscot.

Another very large key site which may provide future investment opportunities is the vacant and undeveloped wooded site to the west of Edgell Road and to the south of Edmands Road. This large area could support a number of new uses that could add to a critical mass of activity at the center of Nobscot.



Legend:

- A** Hemenway Elementary School
- B** Old Post Office/Library Building
- C** New McAuliffe Branch Library
- D** Fire Station
- E** Chapel
- 1** Key Site - Nobscot Shopping Plaza
- 2** Key Site - Undeveloped Land



## Land Use

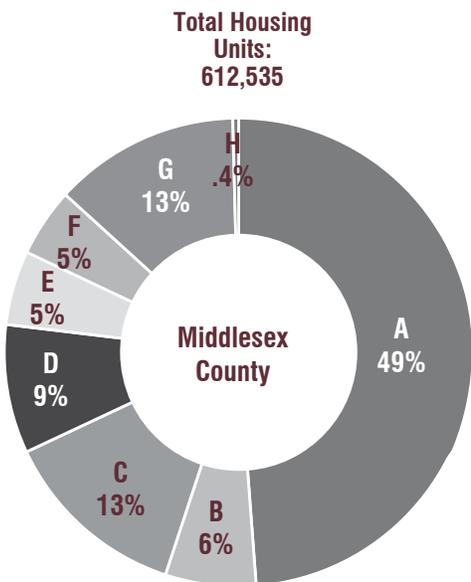
Land use within the Nobscot Study Area reinforces the notion of a four corners commercial center. The surrounding areas are almost exclusively single family residential uses on small neighborhood streets. Residential density increases approaching the four corners and the Study Area includes a sizable proportion of multi-family housing. Commercial and retail uses are located clustered at the main intersection of the district. Relative to other uses in the Study Area and the surrounding area, it is a small and concentrated cluster of commercial use. Municipal land and vacant land complete the range of uses in the Study Area with a substantial proportion identified as vacant. The majority of the land area (27%) is devoted to multi-family housing, single family residential (26%) is the next largest use, followed by vacant land or buildings (19%), commercial and retail use (15%) and municipal uses (14%).

## Housing

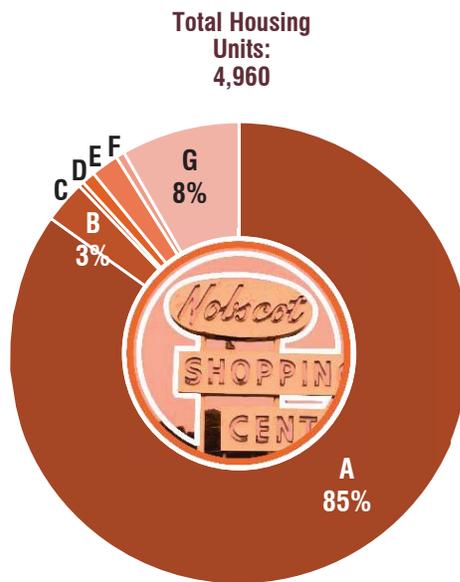
When combined, the two categories of housing, single family residential and multi-family residential, form a majority of the Study Area land uses at 53%. The number of housing units within a convenient and safe walk of the commercial village center is critical to the viability of commercial uses and creating a sense of a walking village. A number of three to six story multi-family residential buildings are located in the Study Area and include senior housing communities.

In the two census tracts that comprise the Nobscot area, the total number of housing units is 4,960. This geographical area is larger than the Study Area, but reflects some interesting patterns. The proportion of housing that is single family is much greater for Nobscot than for surrounding county. The most prevalent scale of multifamily in the Study Area is 20 or more units as indicated by the larger multi-family buildings.

## Housing Unit Type



- A: 1-unit, detached
- B: 1-unit, attached
- C: 2 units
- D: 3 or 4 units

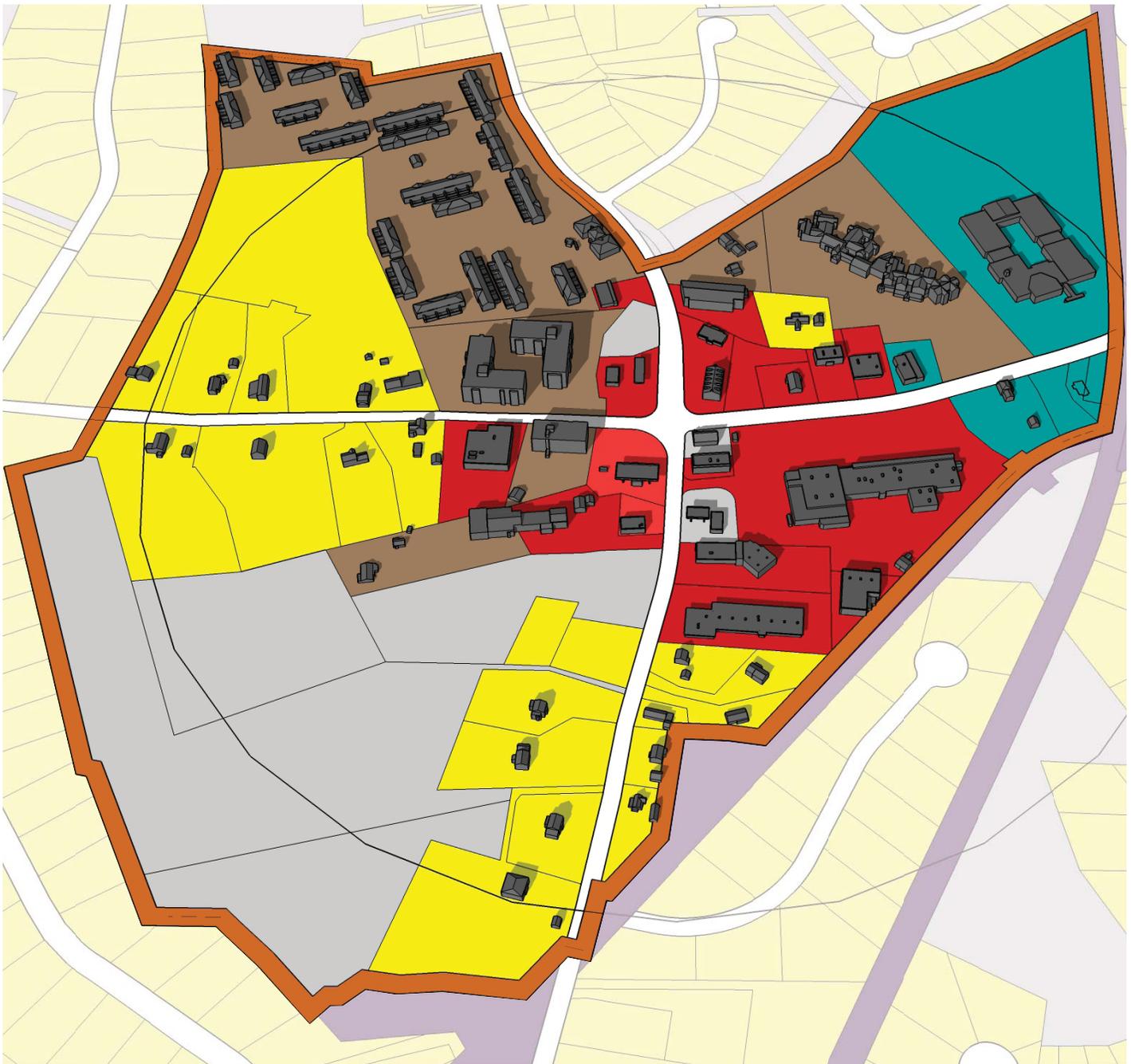


- E: 5 to 9 units
- F: 10 to 19 units
- G: 20 or more units
- H: Other (mobile, home, van, RV)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

**Legend:**

- Single Family Residential (26%)
- Multi-family Housing (27%)
- Commercial and Retail (15%)
- Municipal (14%)
- Vacant (Land or building) (19%)



### Primary Street Network

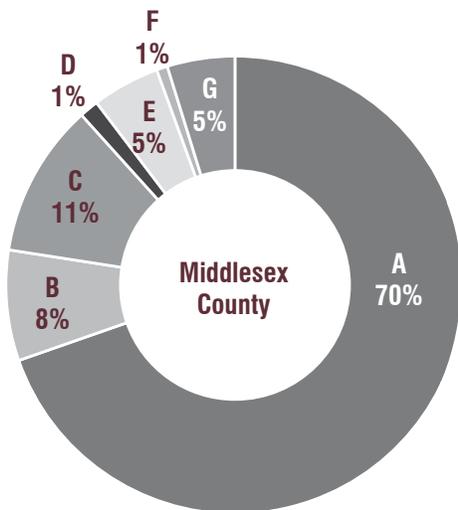
The primary street network in Nobscot is very straightforward, it is composed one important north-south connection and one important east-west connection for North Framingham and nearby towns. The north-south circulation occurs on Edgell Road. The east-west circulation occurs on Water Street and Edmands Road. Water Street provides a direct connection to Saxonville. Other streets in the Study Area are secondary residential streets that provide local access to surrounding neighborhood blocks.

### Parking Areas

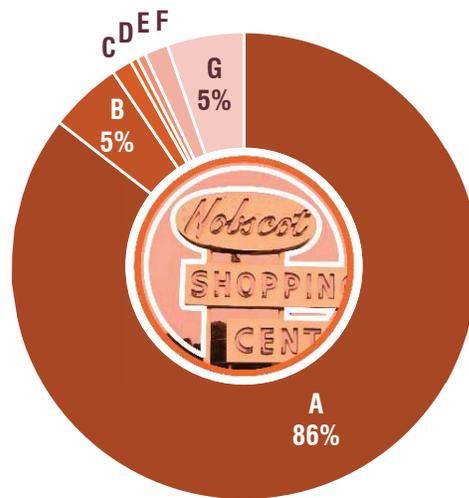
Nobscot has a sufficient supply of parking to serve business and residential needs. Each commercial property provides convenient surface parking that is accessed directly from the primary street network. Parking is visible, easy to access and convenient. Overall, about 19% of the land area of the Study Area is devoted to surface parking lots. The Study Area includes no on-street parking on the primary street network. Parking is provided individually on each property with no connection between individual parking lots and no sharing of parking between uses or across properties.

### Means of Transportation to Work

The Census Tracts that include the Study Area indicate a stronger bias toward driving alone as compared to the county. Working from home is relatively strong and provides an opportunity to serve home office needs with services or other functions in the commercial center. Less than 1% are walking as a mode of transportation to work.



A: Car, truck, van - alone  
 B: Car, truck, van - carpool  
 C: Public transportation  
 D: Bicycling



E: Walking  
 F: Other means (motorcycles, taxis)  
 G: Worked from home

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

**Legend:**

■ Surface Parking Area



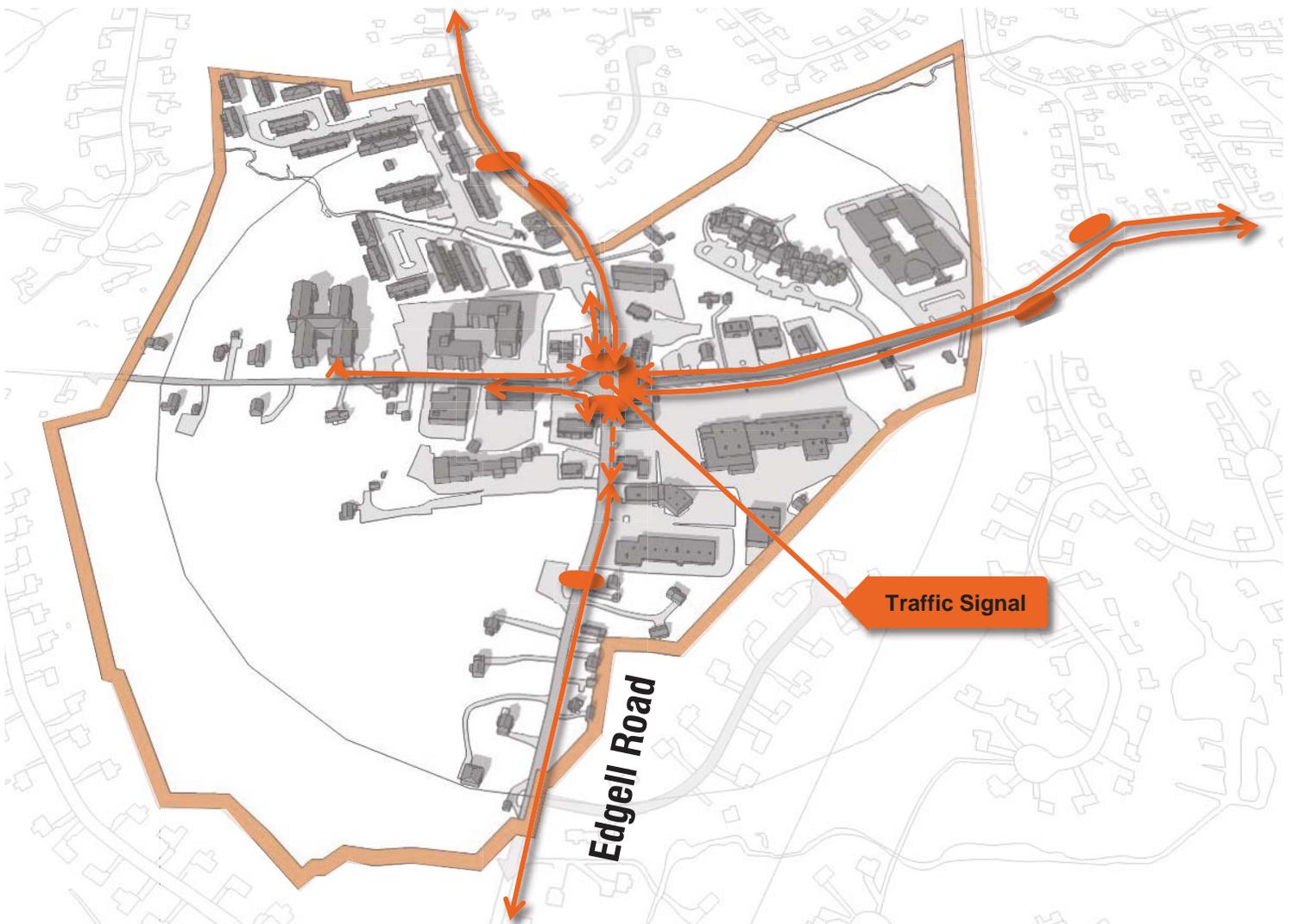
## **Walkability and Circulation**

In order to reinforce access and pedestrian safety and walkability in the Nobscot Study Area, the pedestrian amenities are an important consideration. Of the main access roads in the Study Area, Water Street has the most complete pedestrian facilities with sidewalks on both sides of the street and marked crossings at intersections and the signal with Edgell Road. A marked mid-block crossing near the Heritage House and Hemenway School would further enhance pedestrian connectivity in this area. Edgell Road has sidewalks only on the east side of the street with crossing as major intersections and a mid-block crossing that is marked near the public park south of Edmands Road. The sidewalk is not continuous near the Nobscot Shopping Plaza frontage on Edgell Road. Edmands Road has the most limited pedestrian facilities with sidewalks on both sides of the street for only a short distance west of the main intersection. Once the sidewalks end, the only option for pedestrians is to walk on the shoulder of the road.

**Legend:**

↔ Sidewalk

● Marked Pedestrian Crossing



## Open Spaces

One of the advantages of the Nobscot area of North Framingham is the frequency, diversity and scale of open space resources that are easily accessible. In the Study Area, one public park, Nobscot Park, is located off of Edgell Road. The park is relatively underused today and could be a great asset to the area. Surrounding the Study Area is a great network of open spaces, reservations, and trails. Nearby parks and playgrounds include the Woodfield Playground and Oakvale Park/Burbank Circle Playground and the Water Park. A sizeable amount of reservation acreage is nearby with the Nobscot Boy Scout Reservation, Wittenborg Woods, Raymond Reservation, and Callahan State Park. Several trails, biking and hiking routes connect many of the area's open space resources including the Bay Circuit Trail, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and Hultman Aqueduct (potential long term access). Millwood Farms Golf Course and active agricultural areas further promote the perception of an abundance of open space resources and natural heritage.

## Legend:

- A** Nobscot Park
- B** Raymond Reservation
- C** Woodfield Playground
- D** Oakvale Park/Burbank Circle Playground
- E** Water Park
- F** Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
- G** Cider Mill Road
- H** Hultman Aqueduct
- I** Millwood Farms Golf Course
- J** Callahan State Park
- K** Bay Circuit Trail
- L** Wittenborg Woods
- M** Nobscot Scout Reservation



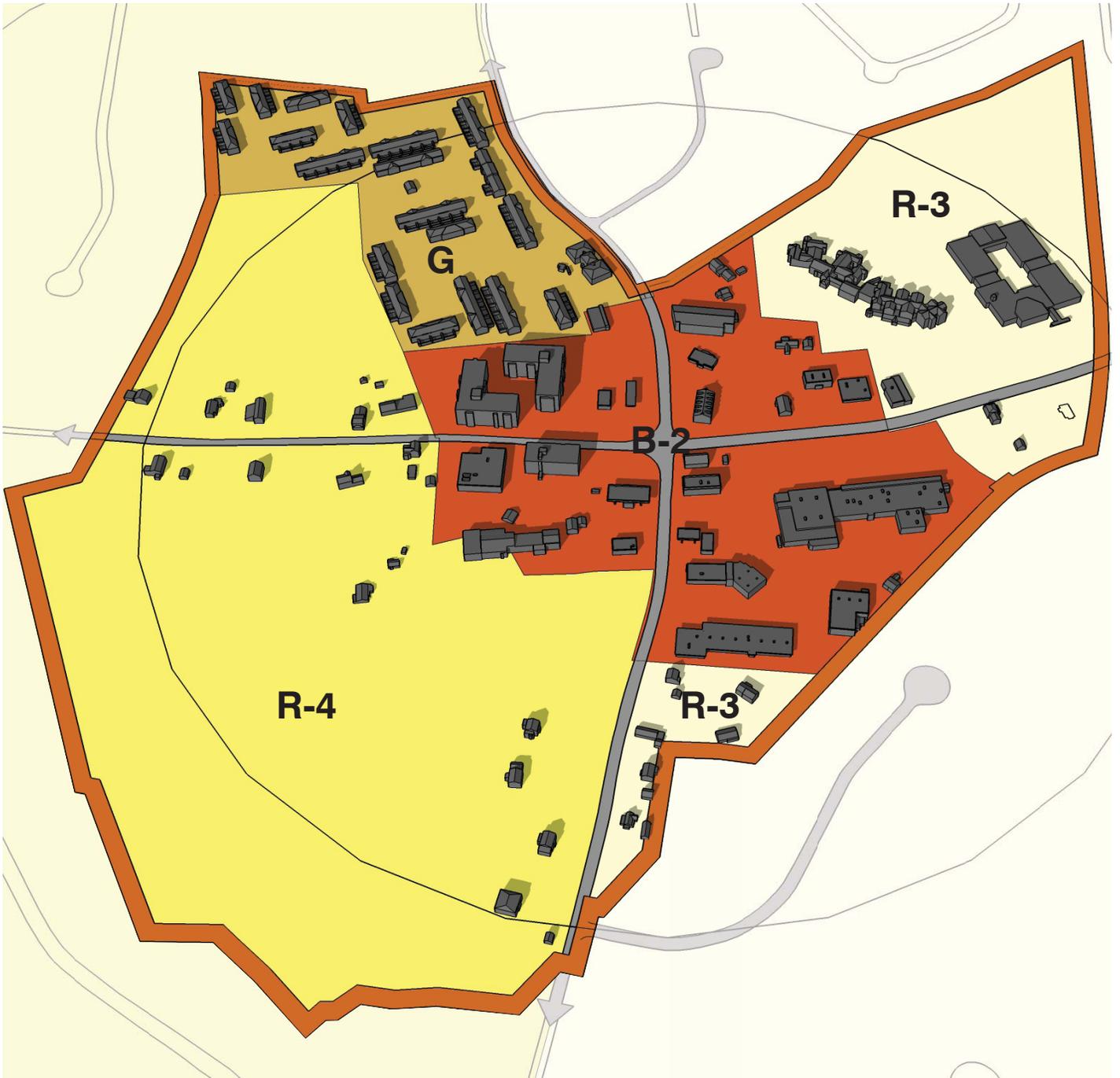


Source: Town of Framingham GIS Data

### **Zoning and Regulatory Context**

The zoning in the Nobscot Study Area reflects the land use in the area, but may require some adjustment to better align the long term vision with what is allowed within the zoning requirements. The Study area includes four zoning districts: (G) General Residence, (B-2) Community Business, (R-3) Single Family Residence (20,000 SF Lots), (R-4) Single Family Residence (43,560 SF Lots).

The characteristics of these zones will be compared to the potential economic development opportunities explored to better align zoning with future investment.



Source: Town of Framingham GIS Data



SAXONVILLE

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# EXISTING CONDITIONS



## 7 Saxonville Existing Conditions

### Sense of Place

Saxonville is a traditional New England mill village that developed historically with a mill on the river and the supporting uses and structures that were a part of that operation, including general stores, worker's housing and the mill buildings. This heritage provides many of the underlying strengths of the commercial center today and is a large part of its unique character. Saxonville developed as a walking village and could leverage this foundation as a strong attraction in the current market.

The sense of place and community character in Saxonville is very strong. This strength of character and memorable nature of the village is created by several aspects of the built environment. First, the commercial center includes many high quality and intact historic structures that provide recognizable features to the district. This includes the historic Saxonville Mill buildings with towers that visually anchor the center of the village area. Many of the historic buildings are setback a minimal distance from the street and frame the street and public realm spaces in a way that adds comfort and character to the pedestrian environment.

Natural features, such as views of the Sudbury River, Sudbury Pond and Saxonville Falls add to the sense of character and the unique quality of the commercial center. Properties such as the Pinefield Shopping Center and the vacant State Lumber Site are not contributing to a positive sense of place and the overall positive character of the commercial center.



### Historic and Significant Landmarks

McGrath Square is the historic center of Saxonville and includes frontage with many of the historic structures in the district. The Saxonville Mills are the most prominent historic structures and a central focus of the area. The Mill Store Block across Central Street and several historic 19th century homes add to the concentration of historic structures that remain on McGrath Square. The Old Danforth Street Bridge is a historic part of the street network and infrastructure of Saxonville. The Town owns two significant historic assets immediately south of the mill complex on Watson Place - the Athenaeum Hall and Saxonville Fire Station.



**Legend:**

- A** McGrath Square
- B** Saxonville Mills
- C** Mill Store Block and historic 19th century homes
- D** Athenaeum Hall and Saxonville Fire Station
- E** Old Danforth Street Bridge



### **Amenities and Municipal Assets**

Inside of the Study Area are many community and municipal assets that serve Saxonville and North Framingham. This includes three schools, inside of or adjacent to the Study Area, the Mary E. Stapleton School, Cameron Middle School, and Framingham High School. The community anchors also include several churches, such as the historic Edwards Church and Cemetery, the historic Boston Taiwanese Christian Church/Old Methodist Church, St. George Catholic Church. Other municipal assets include the Athenaeum, Saxonville Fire Station and former location of the McAuliffe Branch Library (which is relocating to Nobscot).

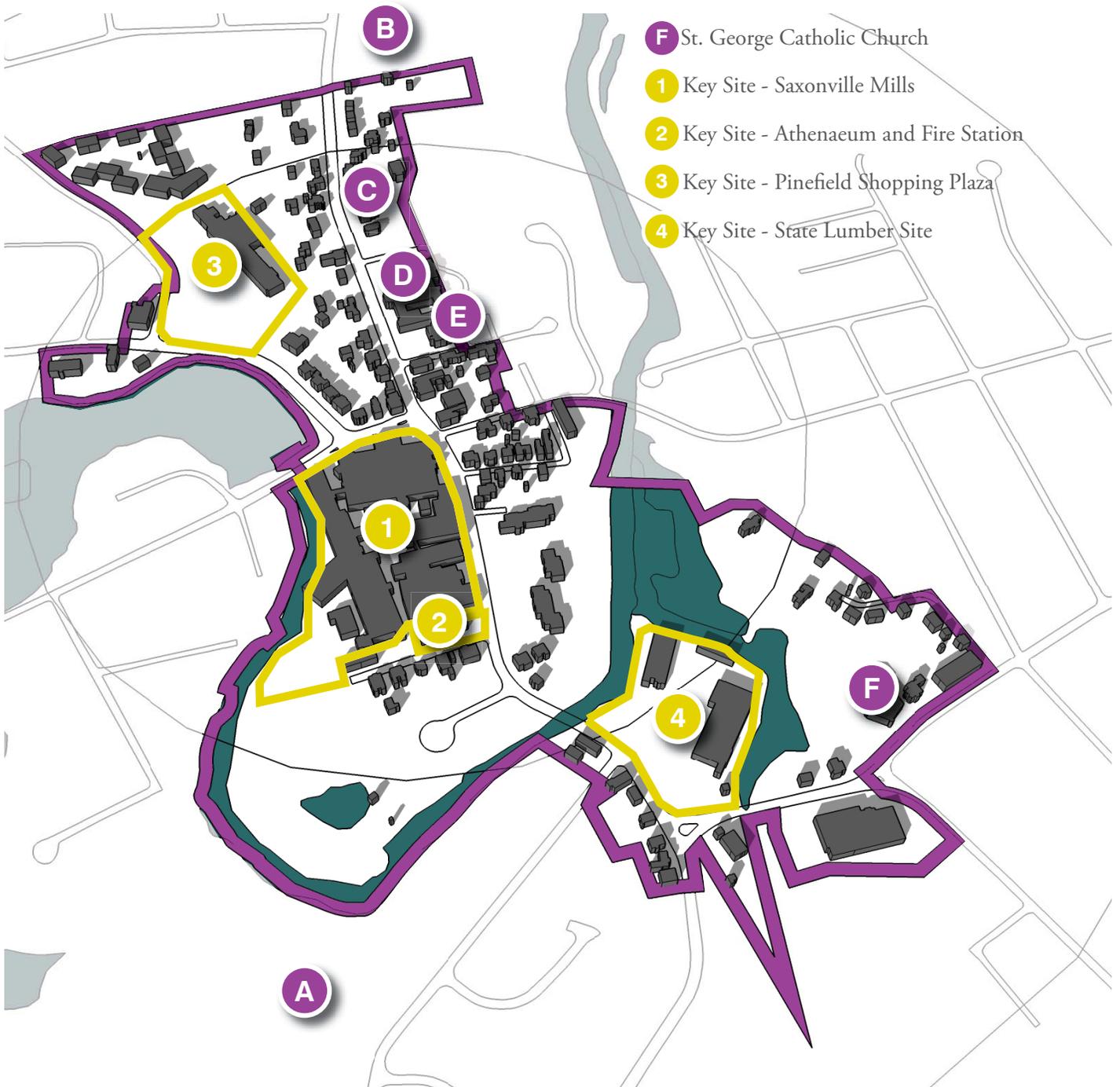
### **Key Sites**

Several key properties have been highlighted in conversations with the community reflecting the critical locations of these sites and the potential to greatly impact the economic and visual characteristics of the commercial center. These sites include the Saxonville Mill, the State Lumber Site, Pinefield Shopping Plaza and the Fire Station/Athenaeum.



**Legend:**

- A** Framingham High School
- B** Cameron Middle School
- C** Edwards Church and cemetery
- D** Mary E. Stapleton School
- E** Boston Taiwanese Christian Church/  
Old Methodist Church
- F** St. George Catholic Church
- 1** Key Site - Saxonville Mills
- 2** Key Site - Athenaeum and Fire Station
- 3** Key Site - Pinefield Shopping Plaza
- 4** Key Site - State Lumber Site

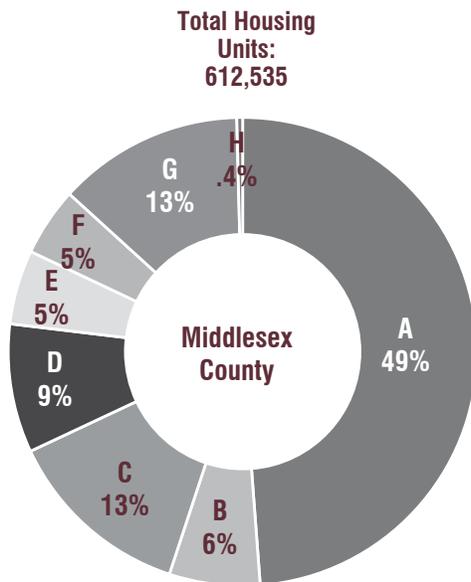


## Land Use

Land use within the Saxonville Study Area reinforces the notion of a viable commercial center. The surrounding areas are almost exclusively single family residential uses in neighborhoods. Commercial and retail uses are located along the main streets in the Study Area (Concord Street, Central Street, Water Street and Elm Street). Housing is also a part of land uses in the Study Area with a higher concentration of multi-family housing near the center. Municipal land and vacant land complete the range of uses in the Study Area.

The majority of the land area (36%) is devoted to commercial and retail uses, single family residential (30%) is the next largest use, followed by municipal uses (13%), multi-family housing (12%) and vacant land or buildings (9%). The largest vacant property, the State Lumber Site, is also one of the most prominently located.

## Housing Unit Type

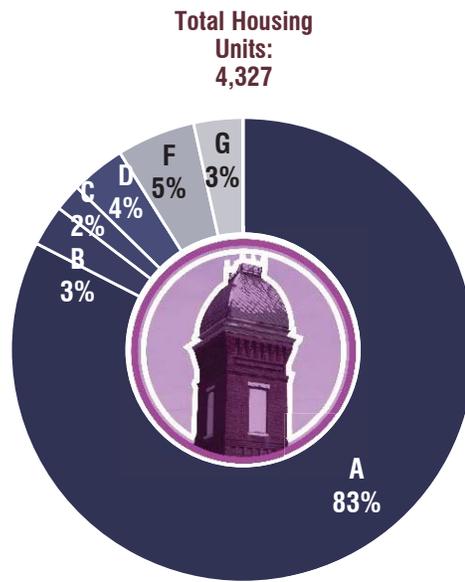


- A:** 1-unit, detached
- B:** 1-unit, attached
- C:** 2 units
- D:** 3 or 4 units

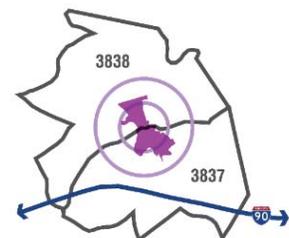
## Housing

When combined, the two categories of housing, single family residential and multi-family residential, form a majority of the Study Area land uses at 42%. The number of housing units within a convenient and safe walk of the commercial village center is critical to the viability of commercial uses and creating a sense of a walking village. The area housing supply will increase dramatically with the completion of the Danforth Green Planned Unit Development (PUD) bringing approximately 380 more units of housing northeast of the center, but within walking distance.

In the two census tracts that comprise the Saxonville area, the total number of housing units is 4,327. This geographical area is larger than the Study Area, but reflects some interesting patterns. The proportion of housing that is single family is much greater for Saxonville than for surrounding county. The most prevalent scale of multifamily in the Study Area is 10 to 19 units.



- E:** 5 to 9 units
- F:** 10 to 19 units
- G:** 20 or more units
- H:** Other (mobile, home, van, RV)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

**Legend:**

- Single Family Residential (30%)
- Multi-family Housing (12%)
- Commercial and Retail (36%)
- Municipal (13%)
- Vacant (Land or building) (9%)

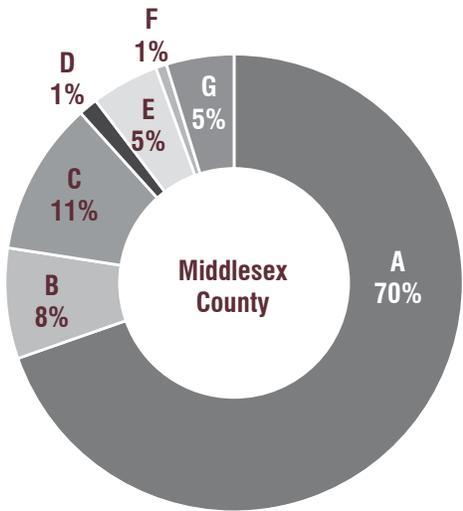


## Primary Street Network

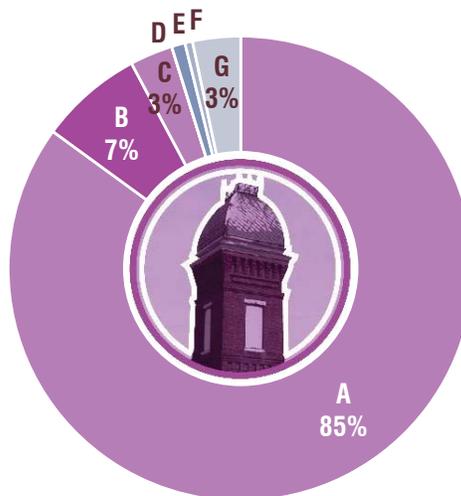
The primary street network in Saxonville is composed of several important north-south and east-west arterials that connect North Framingham and nearby towns. The north-south circulation occurs on Concord Street and Elm Street. These two streets form the main intersection of Saxonville with Central Street and Danforth Street. Central and Danforth are not aligned at the intersection. Central Street is the main east-west circulation route south of the Sudbury River. Water Street is the major east-west circulation route north of the Sudbury River and provides a direct connection to Nobscot. School Street is also a part of this primary circulation network near the south end of the Study Area. Other streets in the Study Area are secondary residential streets that provide local access to surrounding neighborhood blocks.

## Means of Transportation to Work

The Census Tracts that include the Study Area indicate a stronger bias toward driving alone as compared to the county. Saxonville provides an opportunity to expand walking as a mode of transportation, now less than 1% of all trips to work.



- A: Car, truck, van - alone
- B: Car, truck, van - carpool
- C: Public transportation
- D: Bicycling



- E: Walking
- F: Other means (motorcycles, taxis)
- G: Worked from home



## Parking Areas

As described by the community, Saxonville has a parking problem. Parking is inconvenient, difficult to access and not in the right locations. This assessment is generally true with little parking supply provided at the center of the district. Overall, about 27% of the land area of the Study Area is devoted to surface parking lots. The issue is that these lots are away from the central intersection of Concord, Elm and Central Streets. The Mill has a parking lot in the rear near the River. Other sizeable parking lots are serving single properties and located away from the center, such as the Pinefield Shopping Center and the State Lumber Site. The Study Area includes no on-street parking on the primary street network.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

**Legend:**

■ Surface Parking Area



## **Walkability and Circulation**

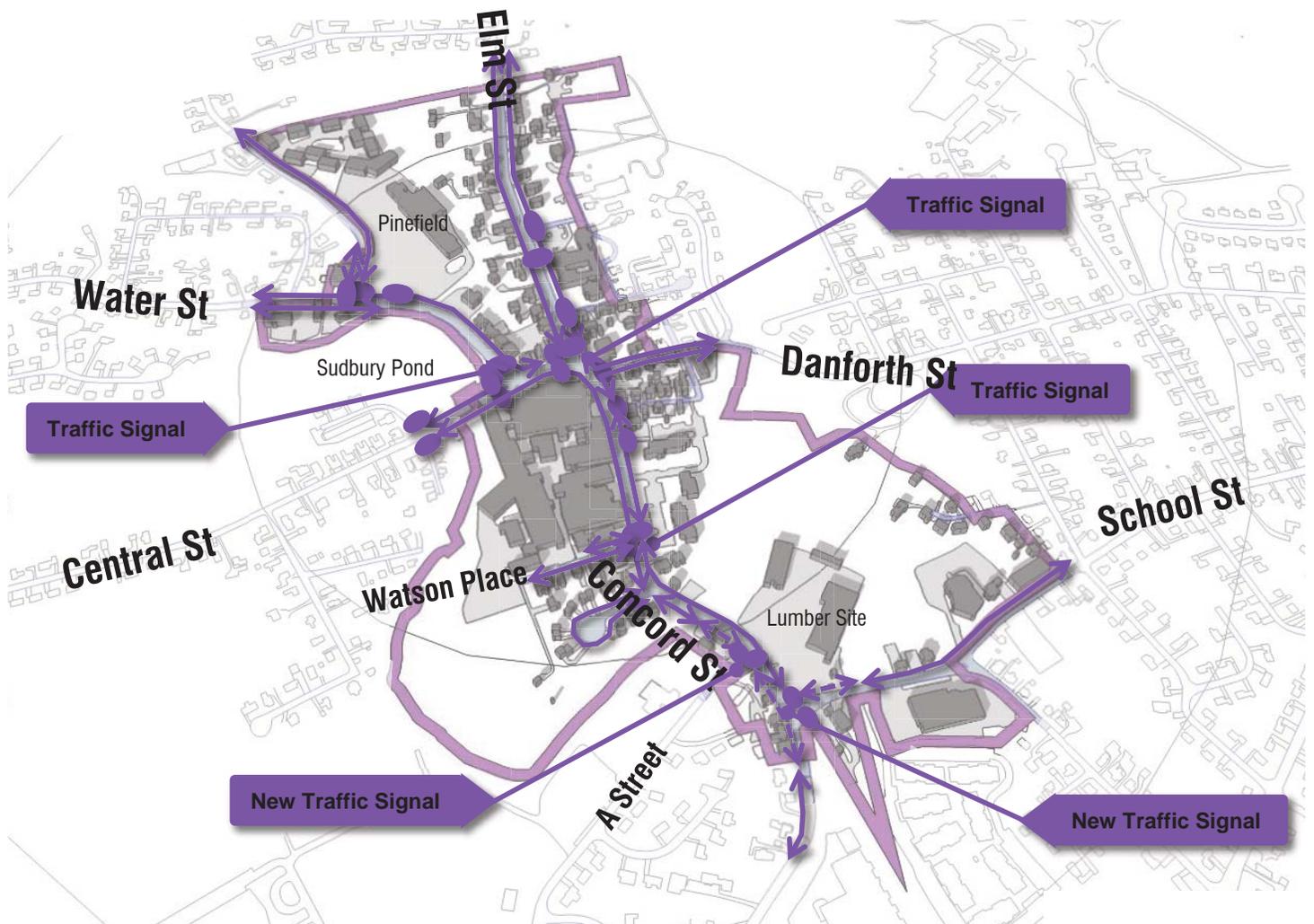
Walkability and pedestrian circulation in the Study Area is a great strength of the underlying scale and character of the Saxonville village center. Walkability and pedestrian safety could be improved in several locations, but generally is provided relatively consistently throughout the Study Area. The Study Area includes traffic signals at five locations that enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety for crossing movements. These signals are at Elm/Concord/Central, Water/Central, Concord/Watson, Concord/A and School/Concord. Marked pedestrian crossing are provided at most intersections in the Study Area and connect to sidewalks on both sides of most of the primary street network. Sidewalks are missing on the Sudbury Pond side of Water Street and in the vicinity of the State Lumber Site on Concord and School streets.

**Legend:**

↔ Sidewalk

● Marked Pedestrian Crossing

↔ Missing Sidewalk Connection



## Open Spaces

Saxonville has enjoyed a close relationship with natural features of the area since its settling and use as a mill site. The Sudbury River and Saxonville Falls have been a part of the industrious and productive past of the district. As such, these natural features are centrally located and prominent features of the district today. The Sudbury River, Sudbury Pond and Saxonville Falls are all visible features of the district. The Carol Getchell Trail takes advantage of the river's scenic environment. Costanza Park also takes advantage of the river as a natural amenity in the Study Area. A great wealth of open and recreational spaces surround the Study Area including Lake Cochituate and the Saxonville Beach. Several parks and playgrounds including the Danforth Square Playground, Simpson Park, Winch Park and Reardon Park. Several bike and walking trails including the Cochituate Rail Trail and Hultman Aqueduct (potential long term access) with connections to Nobscot.

Legend:

- A Hultman Aqueduct
- B Carol Getchell Trail
- C Danforth Square Playground
- D Saxonville Beach
- E Lake Cochituate
- F Cochituate Rail Trail
- G Reardon Park
- H Winch Park
- I Simpson Park
- J Sudbury River
- K Saxonville Falls
- L Costanza Park

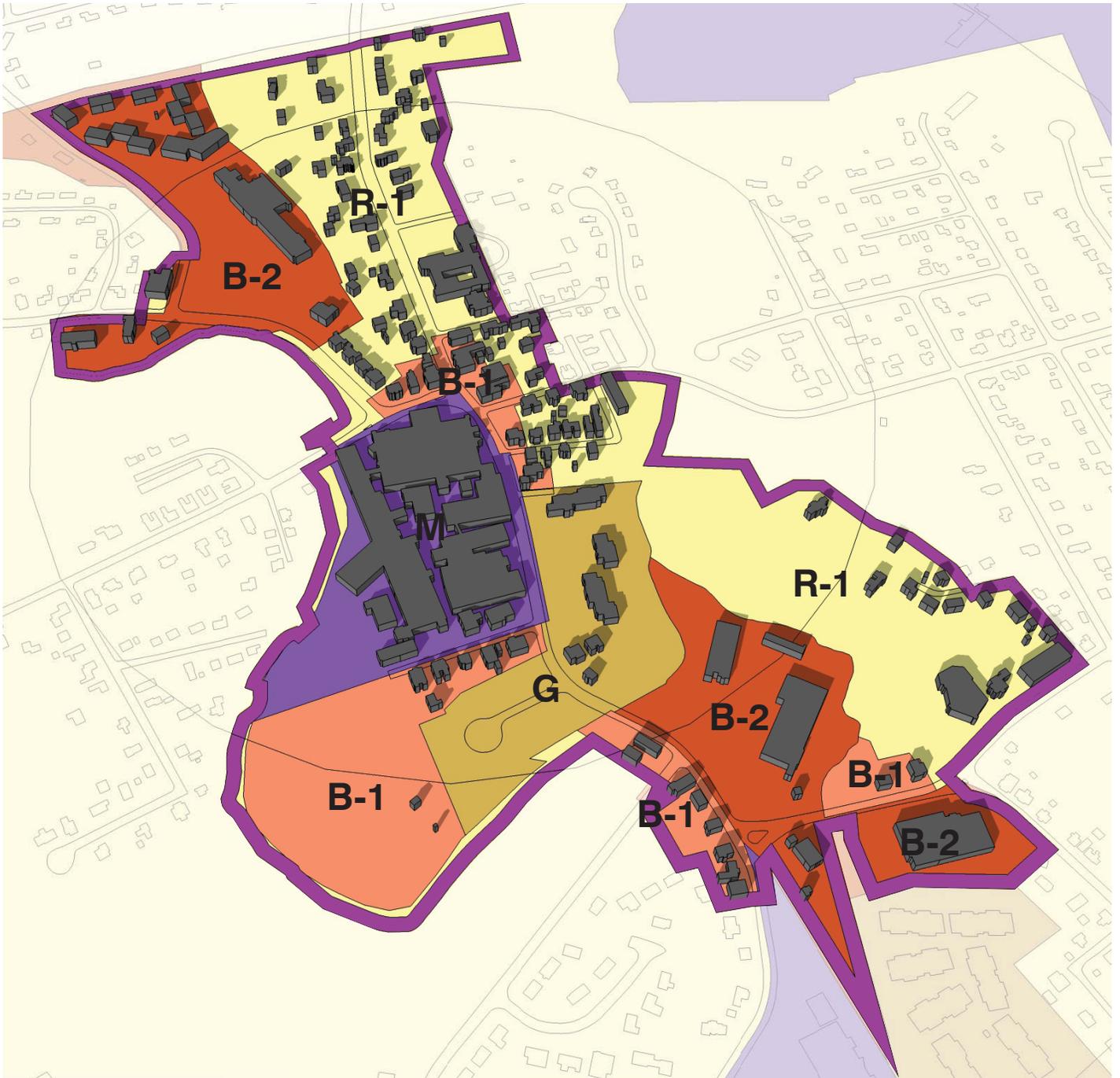


Source: Town of Framingham GIS Data

### **Zoning and Regulatory Context**

The zoning in the Saxonville Study Area is reflects the land use in the area, but may require some adjustment to better align the long term vision with what is allowed within the zoning requirements. The Study area includes five zoning districts: (G) General Residence, (B-1) Neighborhood Business, (B-2) Community Business, (M) General Manufacturing, (R-1) Single Family Residence (8,000 SF Lots).

The characteristics of these zones will be compared to the potential economic development opportunities explored to better align zoning with future investment.



Source: Town of Framingham GIS Data

