

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.

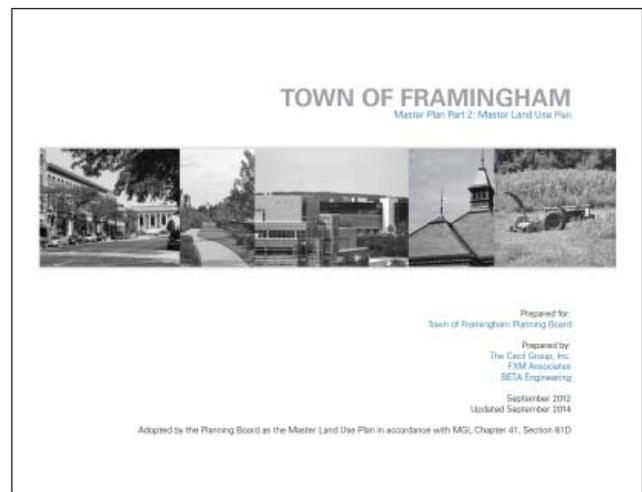
The Saxonville and Nobscot Corridor was also identified in the Master Plan as a target area for rezoning. Deliverables for this implementation effort were described in the Master Plan as:

- 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**

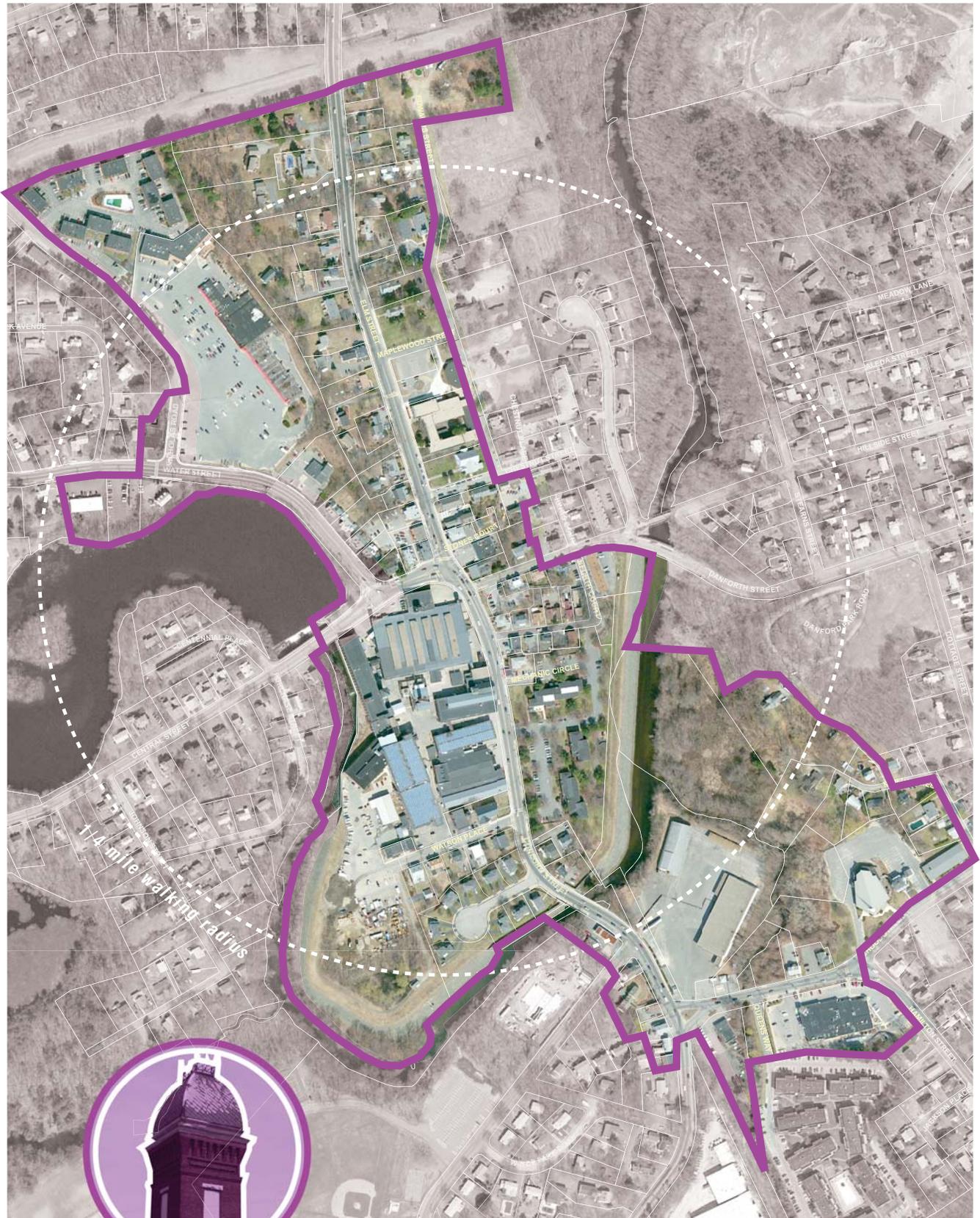
## Saxonville Study Area

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

