
EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

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

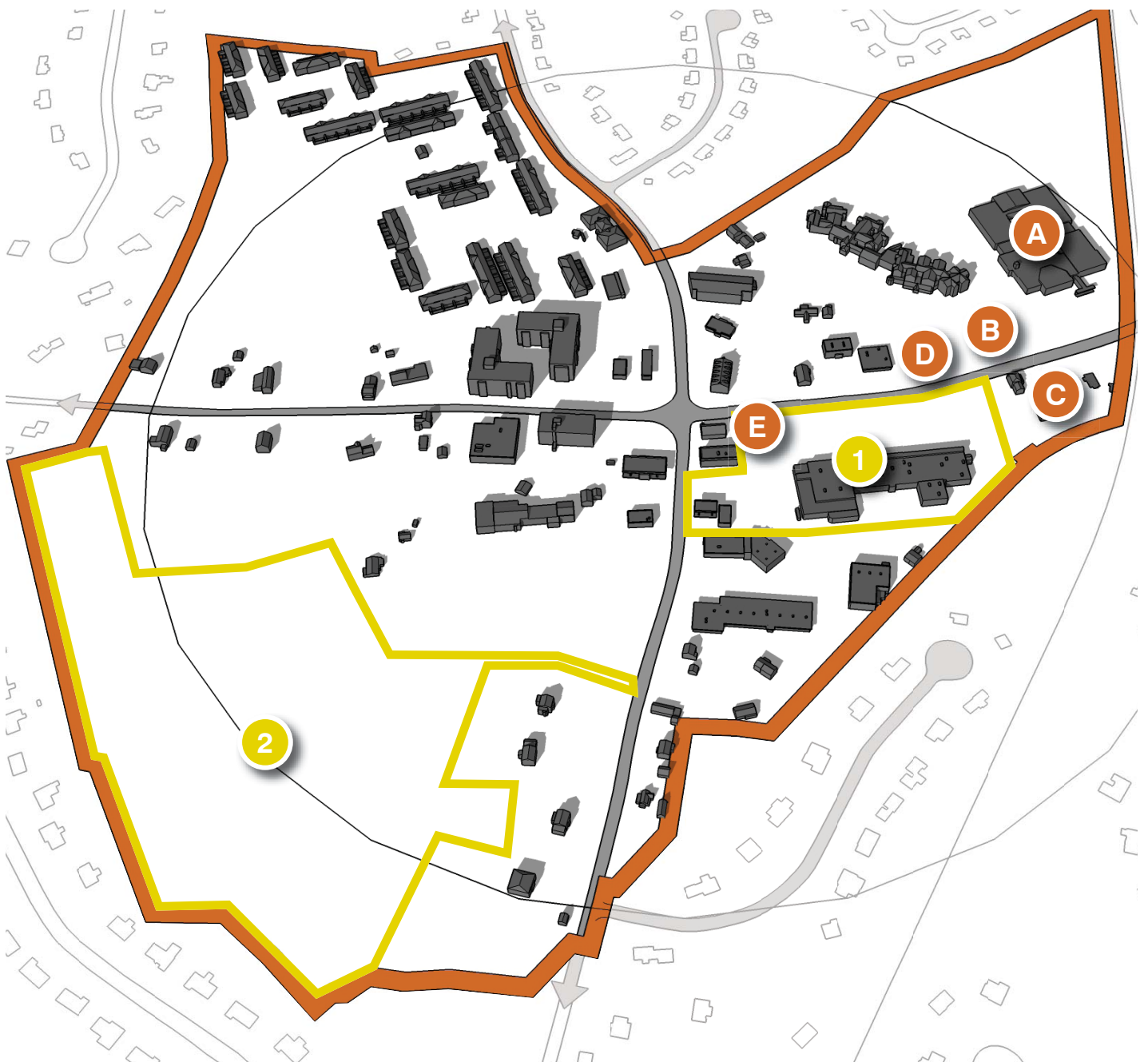
The most visible and critical site for revitalization of Nobscot is the Nobscot Shopping Plaza. The Nobscot Shopping Plaza has been vacant for decades and provides a relatively unwelcoming front door and poor first impression for Nobscot. The site includes a good portion of the frontage on Water Street 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

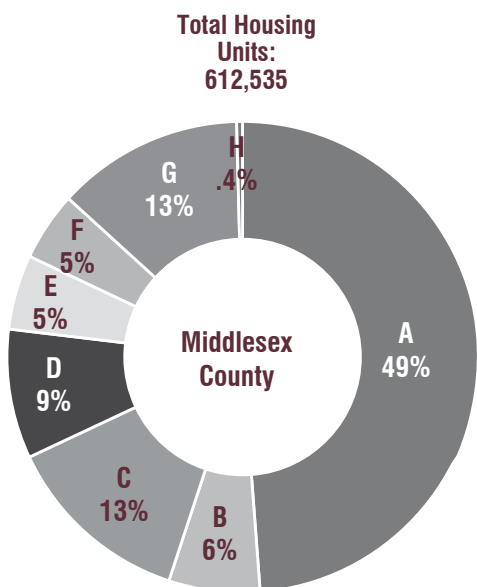
Land use within the Nobscot Study Area reinforces the notion of a four corners commercial center. The surrounding areas are almost exclusively single family residential uses on small neighborhood streets. Residential density increases approaching the four corners and the Study Area includes a sizable 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

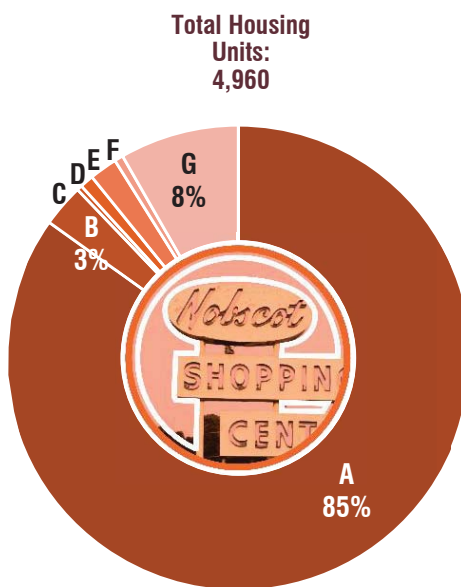
When combined, the two categories of housing, single family residential and multi-family residential, form a majority of the Study Area land uses at 53%. The number of housing units within a convenient and safe walk of the commercial village center is critical to the viability of commercial uses and 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

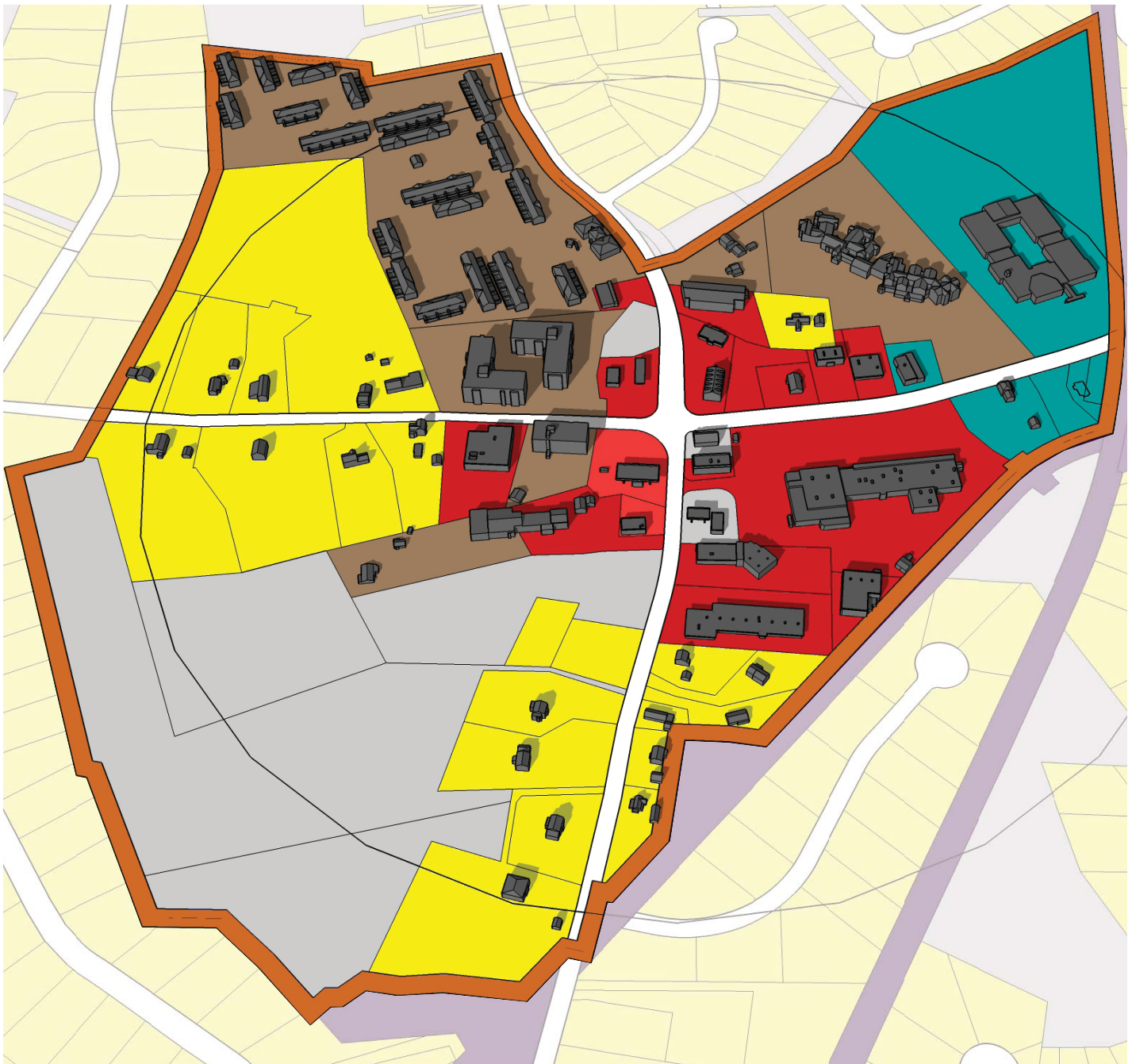


E: 5 to 9 units
F: 10 to 19 units
G: 20 or more units
H: Other (mobile, home, van, RV)

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

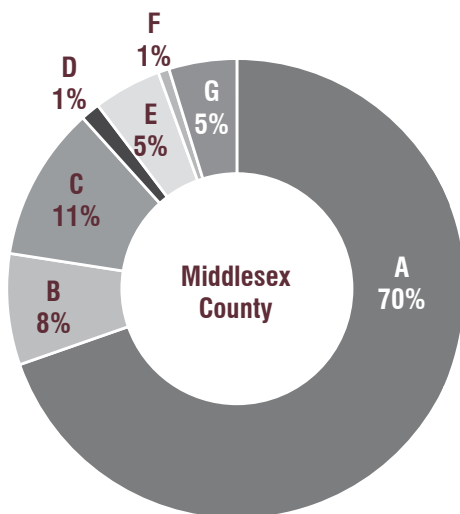
The primary street network in Nobscot is very straightforward, it is composed one important north-south connection and one important east-west connection for North Framingham and nearby towns. The north-south circulation occurs on Edgell Road. The east-west circulation occurs on Water Street and Edmands 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

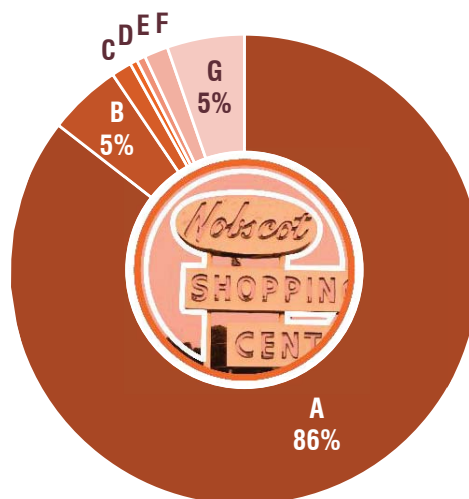
Nobscot has a sufficient supply of parking to serve business and residential needs. Each commercial property provides convenient surface parking that is accessed directly from the primary street network. Parking is visible, easy to access and convenient. Overall, about 19% of the land area of the Study 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



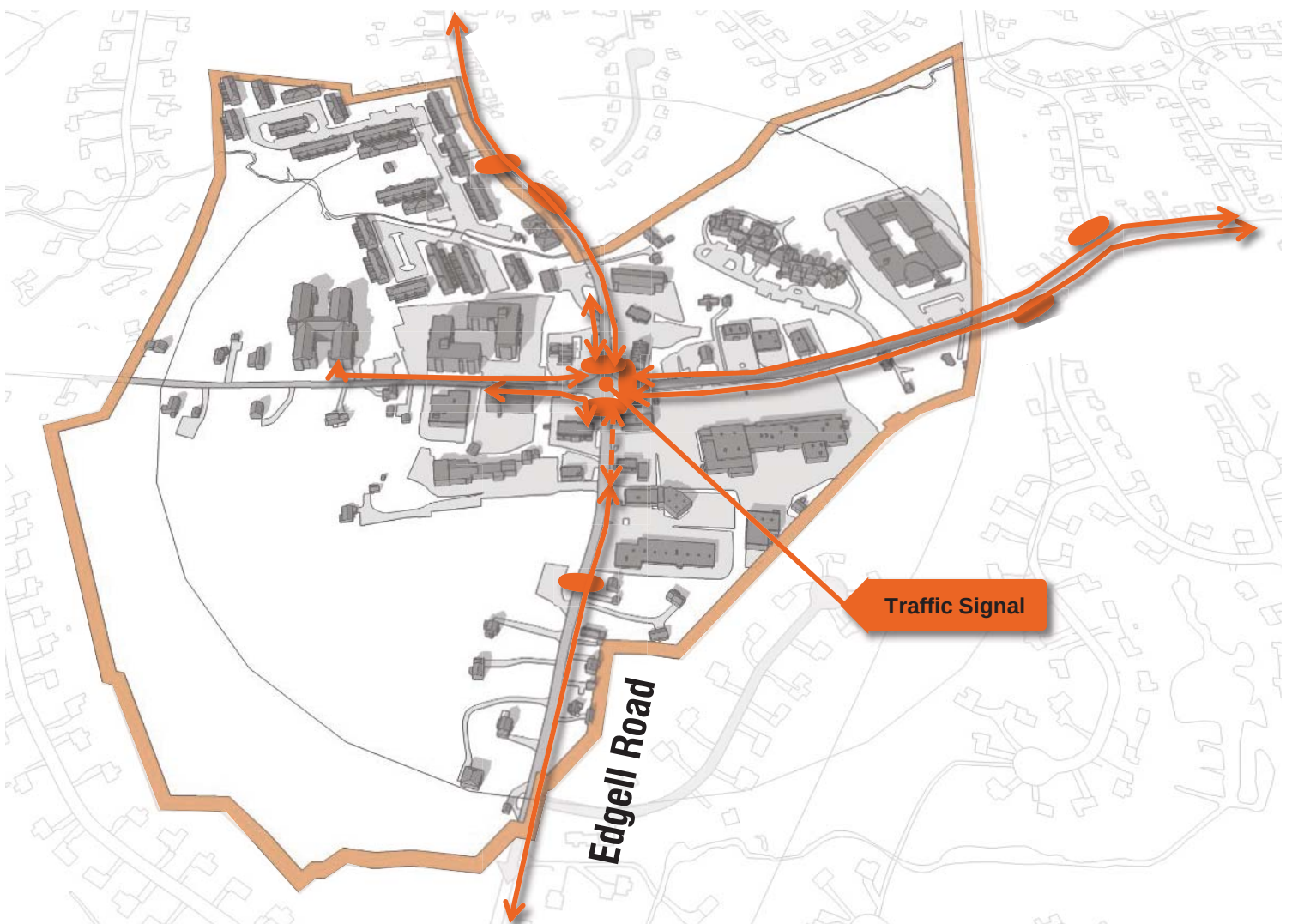
Walkability and Circulation

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



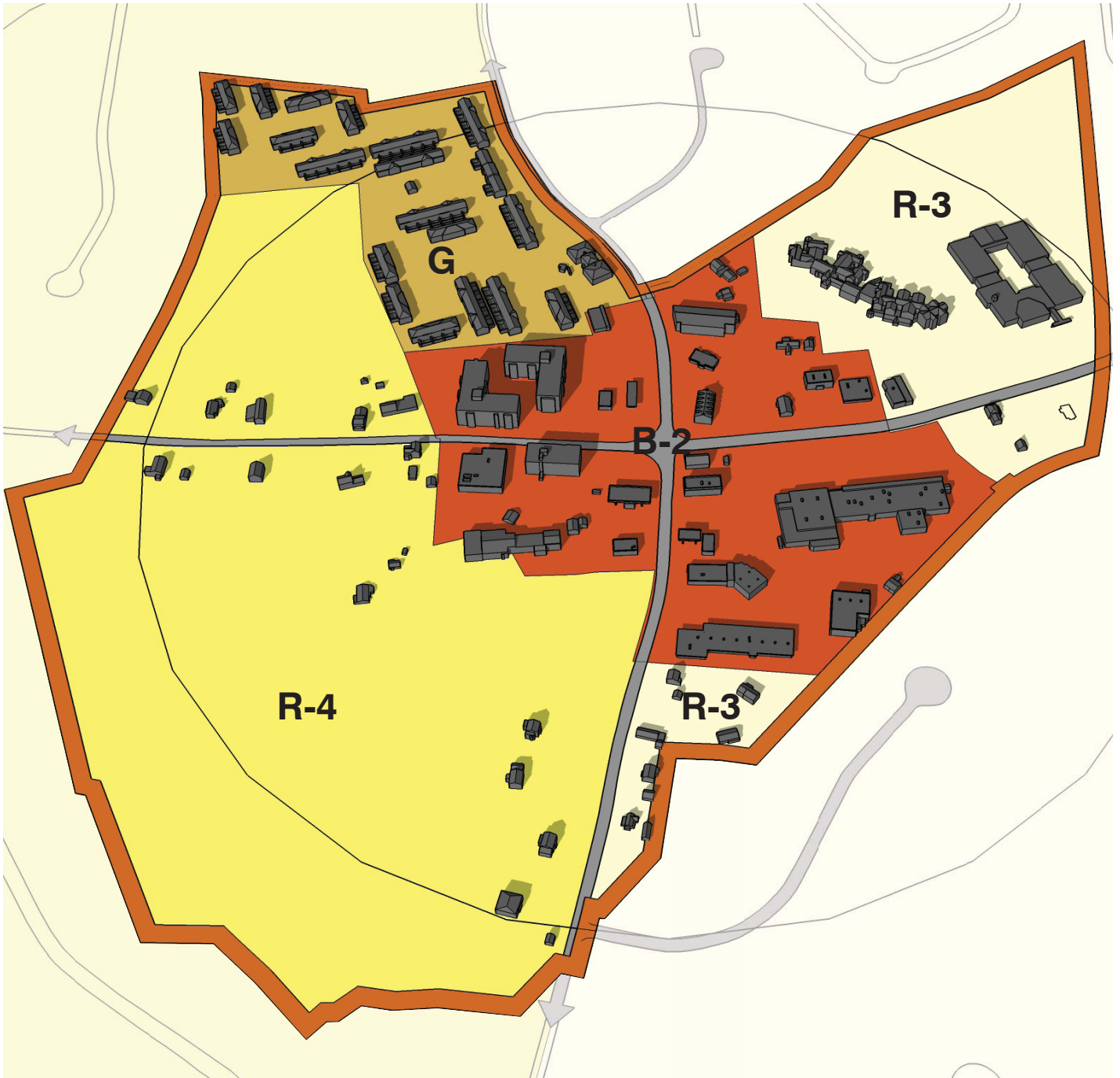


Source: Town of Framingham GIS Data

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).

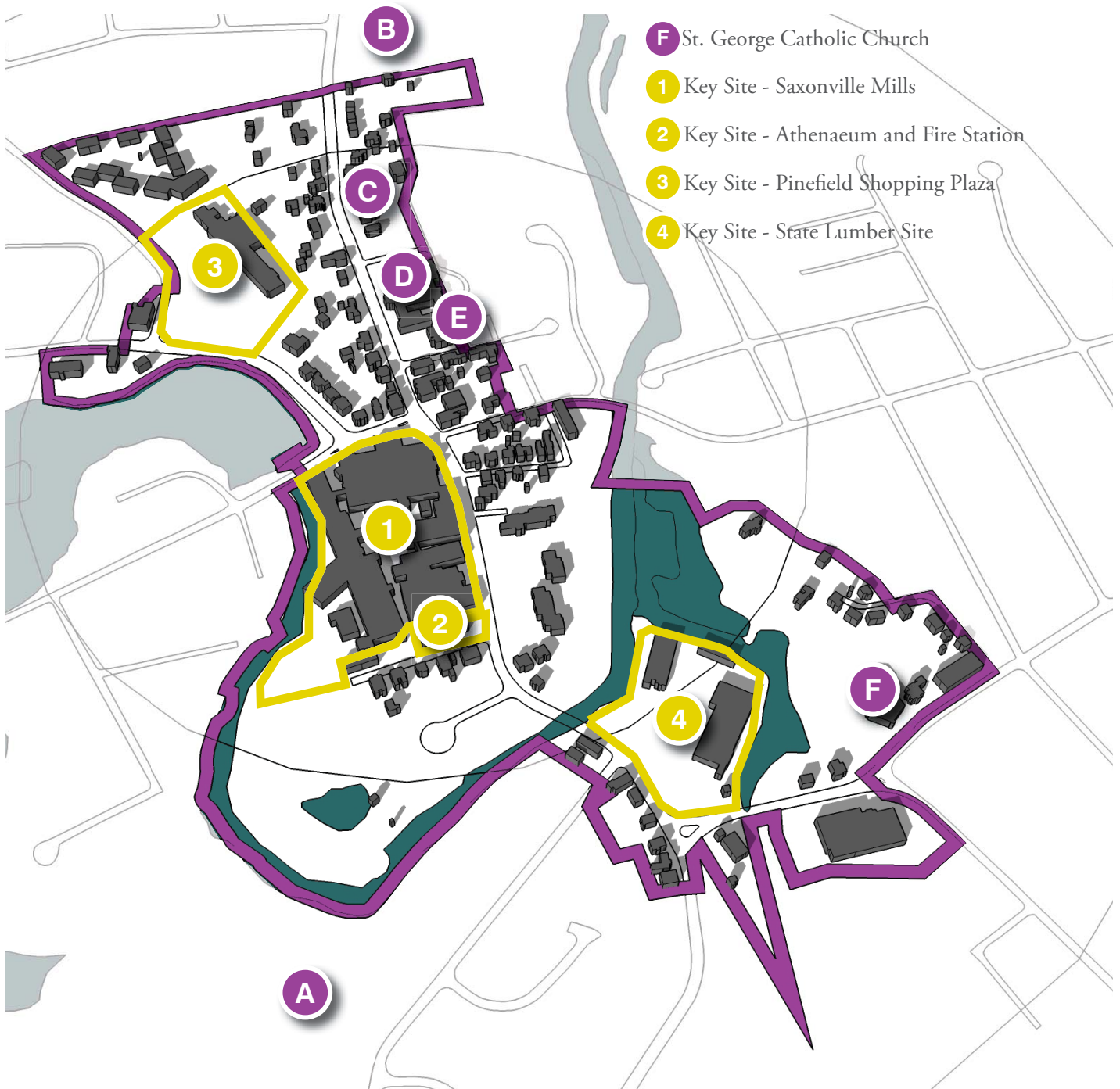
Key Sites

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

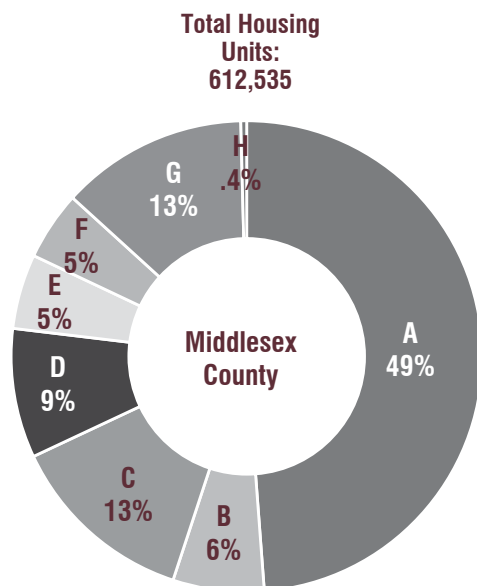


Land Use

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

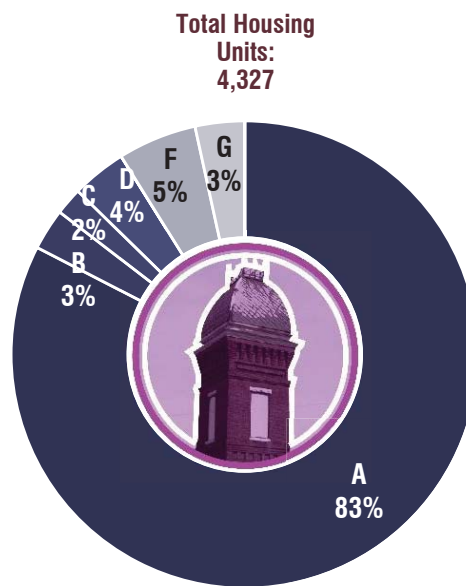


A: 1-unit, detached
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C: 2 units
D: 3 or 4 units

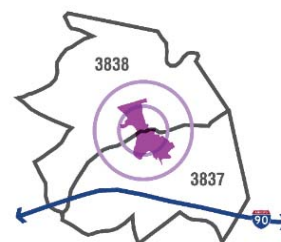
Housing

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%)

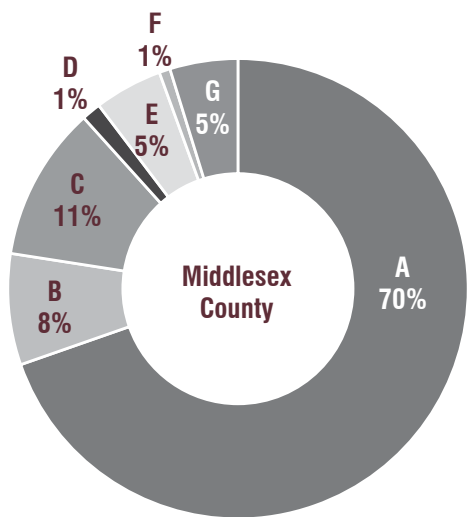


Primary Street Network

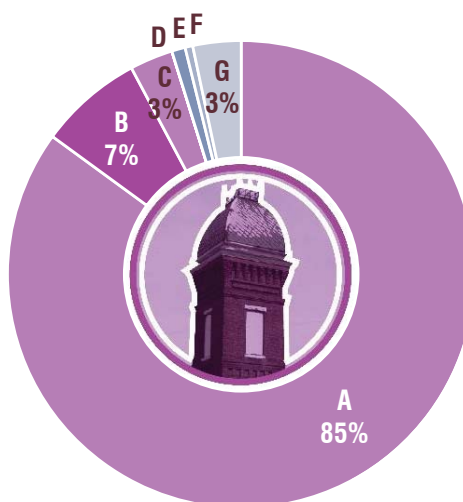
The primary street network in Saxonville is composed of several important north-south and east-west arterials that connect North Framingham and nearby towns. The north-south circulation occurs on Concord Street and Elm Street. These two streets form the main intersection of Saxonville with Central Street 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

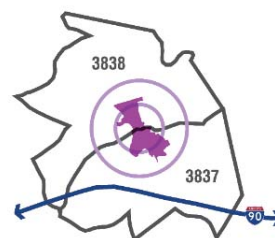
The Census Tracts that include the Study Area indicate a stronger bias toward driving alone as compared to the county. Saxonville provides an opportunity to expand walking as a mode of transportation, now less than 1% of all trips to work.



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

FRAMINGHAM VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CENTERS STUDY

Legend:

 Surface Parking Area

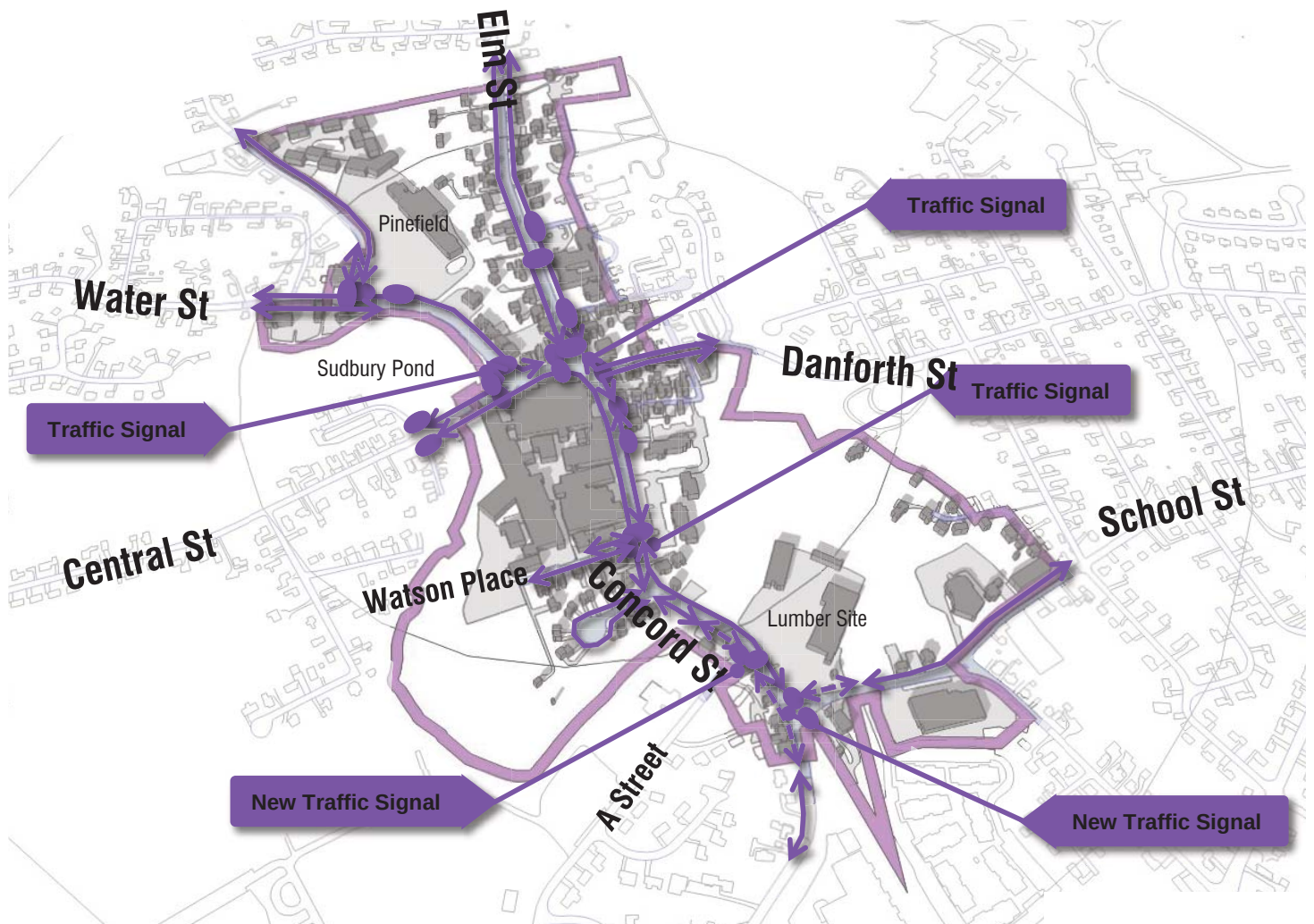


Walkability and Circulation

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

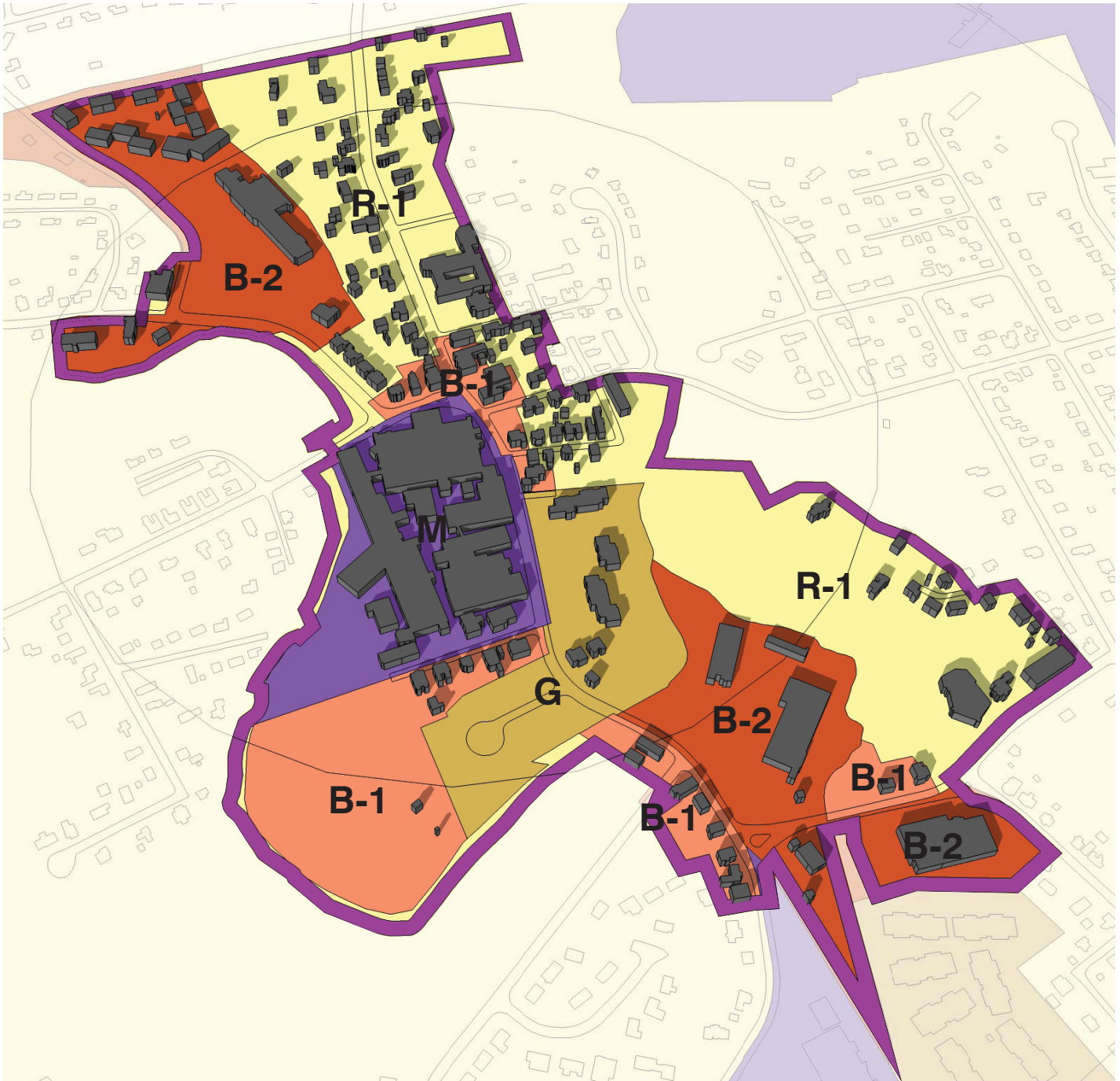


Source: Town of Framingham GIS Data

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