



BOXBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STUDY

Phase 1 Technical Memo

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Graphics Table of Contents.....	vi
Figures.....	vi
Tables.....	vii
Maps	vii
Abbreviations.....	viii
Executive Summary.....	1
Project Introduction & Timeline.....	3
Project Timeline	4
Part A: Existing Conditions.....	5
Community Profile	6
Regional Context.....	6
Demographics & Character	7
Land Use Patterns.....	7
Housing Trends.....	8
Local Housing.....	8
Regional Housing.....	9
Business Trends, Employment, & Taxes	11
Business & Employment Trends.....	11
Resident Occupation Profile.....	14
Taxes.....	15
Natural Resources, Utilities, Land Use & Zoning.....	19
Natural Resources and Utilities.....	20
Sewer & Septic.....	20
Surface & Drinking Water.....	20
Land Uses & Zoning.....	21
Agriculture, Open Space & Recreation.....	21
Historic Resources.....	21
Zoning Districts.....	22

Buildout & Development Constraints	22
Economic Development Planning & Zoning Analysis.....	23
SWOT Analysis	23
Zoning Analysis of Specific Economic Environments.....	24
Summary of Findings.....	32
Regional Case Studies	34
Harvard	35
Groton.....	35
Littleton.....	35
Bolton.....	35
Marlborough	36
Public Engagement Strategy	37
Trash Talk	38
Economic Development Survey	38
Summary of Survey Results	39
Business Breakfast	41
Economic Development Committee Meeting	42
Merrie Christmas Fair	43
Special Town Meeting.....	43
Existing Conditions Process Outcome	44
Part B: Preliminary Scenario Development.....	45
Indicators	46
Scenario I – Baseline & Current Course.....	47
Assumptions & Future Trends.....	48
Focus Areas	49
Business Constraints.....	49
Existing Assets.....	49
Municipal Services.....	49
Implementation Process	49
Indicators	51
Scenario II – Rural/Agricultural Heritage	52

Master Plan Goals.....	53
Focus Areas	54
Heritage.....	54
Connect.....	55
Protect	56
Revitalize	57
Implementation Process	57
Challenges to Implementation.....	58
Indicators	59
Scenario III – Village Style.....	61
Master Plan Goals.....	62
Focus Areas	62
Town Center District.....	63
Village Green	63
Implementation Process	63
Challenges to Implementation.....	64
Indicators	65
Scenario IV – Comprehensive Approach.....	66
Master Plan Goals.....	67
Focus Areas	67
Route 111 Mixed-Use Corridor.....	67
Corporate Mixed-Use Campus	68
Flex-Industrial Districts.....	68
Implementation Process	69
District-Specific Implementation Strategies.....	70
Rt. 111 Mixed-Use Corridor	70
Corporate Mixed-Use Campus	71
Flex-Industrial Districts.....	72
Indicators	72
Scenario Development Survey.....	74
Survey Format.....	74

Scenario Development Survey: Key Themes and Findings	74
Conclusion.....	76
Appendix	77
Appendix A: Maps	77
Appendix B: Zoning SWOT Analysis	77
Appendix C: Land Use Tools & Innovative Strategies.....	77
Appendix D: Regional Context & Case Studies	77
Appendix E: References.....	77
Appendix A: Maps	78
Appendix B: Zoning SWOT Analysis.....	83
Appendix C: Land Use Tools & Innovative Strategies	94
Zoning.....	94
Village Design, Rural Placemaking & Smart Growth Resources.....	94
Financial Tools	96
Potential Grant Funding Sources	98
Transportation Programs.....	98
Appendix D: Regional Context & Case Studies	100
Regional Organizations.....	100
Transportation Master Plans.....	100
Regional Commuting Patterns	102
Complete Case Study Analysis	102
Appendix E: Works Cited	106

Graphics Table of Contents

Figures

Figure 1. Project Timeline.....	4
Figure 2. Boxborough Annual Population Estimates 2010 – 2018.....	8
Figure 3. Age Distribution: Boxborough and Peer Communities.....	8
Figure 4. Number of Establishments by Industry .Sector within Boxborough in 2018.....	11
Figure 5. Number of Establishments by Industry Sector within Boxborough since 2001.....	12
Figure 6. Number of Employees by Industry Sector within Boxborough since 2001.....	13
Figure 7. CIP Percent of Tax Levy in I-495 Region.....	16
Figure 8. Commercial Tax Rates in the I-495 Region.....	16
Figure 9. Boxborough Property Values by Class.....	17
Figure 10. Rural Land Uses.....	25
Figure 11. Town Center Land Uses.....	26
Figure 12. Comparison of Town Center Dimensional Requirements.....	28
Figure 13. Business Corridor Land Uses.....	29
Figure 14. Comparison of Business Corridor Dimensional Requirements.....	30
Figure 15. Office Park Land Uses.....	31
Figure 16. Comparison of Office Park Dimensional Requirements.....	32
Figure 17. Survey Result 1: Preferred Types of New Businesses in Boxborough.....	39
Figure 18. Survey Result 2: Heatmap of Locations where Full-Service Restaurants are Accessed.....	40
Figure 19. Survey Result 3: Heatmap of Locations where Cafes/Bakeries are Accessed.....	40
Figure 20. Survey Result 4: Heatmap of Preferred Locations for Village Style Development.....	41
Figure 21. Comparison of Indicators.....	46
Figure 22. District Synergies Diagram.....	69
Figure 23. Preliminary Survey Result: Scenario Preference Questions.....	75
Figure 24. Input Costs as Share of Total Costs for Manufacturing.....	96

Tables

Table 1. Selected Housing Statistics Comparison: Boxborough, Peer Area, and Massachusetts.....	10
Table 2. Indicator Measurements.....	46
Table 3. Comparison of TIF and DIF Implementation.....	97
Table 4. Regional Commuting Patterns.....	102

Maps

Map 1. Regional Context: Employment Clusters.....	78
Map 2. Regional Context: Population Density.....	78
Map 3. Land Use Patterns.....	79
Map 4. Zoning Districts.....	79
Map 5. Water Constraints & Stormwater Catchment Drains.....	79
Map 6. Open Space, Recreation & Historic Resources.....	80
Map 7. Development Constraints.....	81
Map 8. Prime Farmlands.....	81
Map 9. Baseline/Current Course Scenario.....	48
Map 10. Agricultural/Rural Scenario.....	54
Map 11. Village Style Scenario.....	62
Map 12. Comprehensive Approach Scenario.....	67
Map 13. Boxborough Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.....	82

Abbreviations

ACS - American Community Survey
ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act
BAU - Business as Usual
CIP - Commercial, Industrial, and Personal Property
CPA - Community Preservation Act
DIF - District Improvement Financing
EDC - Economic Development Committee
EOLWD - Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
FAR - Floor Area Ratio
GIS - Geographic Information System
I-495 - Interstate 495
IWPA - Interim Wellhead Protection Areas
LEED - Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
MAGIC - Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination
MAPC - Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MassDEP - Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Protection
MassDOT - Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation
MBTA - Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MGL - Massachusetts General Laws
MHC - Massachusetts Historical Commission
NAICS - North American Industry Classification System
NECTA - New England City and Town Area
SVT - Sudbury Valley Trustees
SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TIF - Tax Increment Financing

Executive Summary

The Town of Boxborough's Economic Development Committee (EDC) contracted with the Center for Economic Development at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to produce an economic development study. Phase 1 of the study, conducted from September through December 2019 by Regional Planning Studio master's students, began with an investigation of existing conditions and public opinion on economic development and concluded with four plausible future economic development scenarios designed to support the eventual creation of the Town's long-term economic development plan.

This document summarizes the work done in Phase 1.

Part A: Existing Conditions details the documentation and analysis of existing conditions, public engagement strategy, and survey results from the 2019 Economic Development Survey.

This investigation demonstrated:

1. Residents have enthusiasm for small-scale commercial amenities, with a preference for the revitalization of existing properties over new development, and that village-style commercial development is something that these new amenities should emulate.
2. Boxborough's tax base is vulnerable due to loss of commercial tax revenue and limited land diversity, putting increasing pressure on the residential tax base
3. Current zoning is incompatible with the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan vision for village style development, office park revitalization, and preservation of rural heritage
4. Physical constraints (hydrological, geographic, and utility) limit new development, but existing capacity (Cisco and Regency) may provide an opportunity to develop the kinds of amenities outlined in the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan

Part B: Preliminary Scenario Development presents the four preliminary economic development scenarios. These scenarios were developed using the key findings from the existing conditions investigation and were developed across a spectrum of increasing intensity. The scenarios respond to the economic needs of the community (reversing declining commercial tax revenue and diversity) and to the desires outlined through *Boxborough2030* master planning process and feedback received from community engagement activities in fall of 2019. These scenarios are designed to be exploratory and educational in nature. The four scenarios are as follows: 1) Baseline and Current Course, 2) Rural/Agricultural Heritage, 3) Village Style, and 4) Comprehensive Approach.

A common set of indicators was used to assess the relative potential impact of each scenario. The five indicators were developed to reflect critical development constraints or community concerns impacts to the community. The scenario evaluation indicators are (1) Traffic, 2) Connectivity, 3) New construction, 4) Municipal water, and 5) Fiscal health.

The preliminary scenarios were released to the public through an informational resource (ESRI Story Map) and an online survey to solicit feedback. Initial feedback indicated that residents generally feel that the baseline or current course of action is not working and is not the preferred future course for Boxborough, however the feedback presented no general consensus on which of the remaining three scenarios is preferred.

Project Introduction & Timeline

Boxborough is a small community proud of its rural heritage. Like many of its neighbors along I-495 corridor, the town is characterized by low housing density with no clear town center or other compact neighborhoods. A variety of natural and cultural resources, including extensive conservation lands and historically significant buildings such as schoolhouses, mills, and homes, contribute to an overall rural character that is highly valued by residents.

Although, like much of New England, Boxborough once relied on subsistence farming, Boxborough shifted toward attracting technology and professional services companies and built large, auto-oriented office and industrial parks in the last decades of the twentieth century. These developments are anchored by Cisco Systems, Inc. campus along I-495 near the Harvard town line, although there are similar office parks in other corners of Boxborough as well. Following the economic downturn of 2008 and recent trends of technology and professional services firms moving back into urban centers, many of the office parks in town have been left vacant. While some have proven more resilient than others, the town-wide vacancy rate of these office parks is approaching 50%. This has led to recent upticks in abatements requested by property owners which threatens to undermine the commercial tax base of Boxborough and shifts a greater portion of the tax burden onto residences.

A master plan completed by the Town of Boxborough and the Metropolitan Area Planning Committee (MAPC) in 2015 (*Boxborough2030*) identified other important priorities to tackle in the near future. This includes addressing increasing vulnerabilities for septic contamination and saltwater intrusion on residential and commercial wellheads, the creation of a town center development near the Town Hall, and a lack of political consensus amongst residents and policy makers around the exact meaning of Boxborough's "rural character." The Master Plan also noted that Boxborough residents must travel to neighboring communities (Acton or Littleton) to conduct basic shopping or eat-out at a restaurant.

To begin formulating an economic development strategy which addresses pressing issues and establishes a clear framework for a robust local economy in the future, the Boxborough Economic Development Committee (EDC) contracted with the UMass Center for Economic Development and Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning to create a detailed existing conditions analysis and four preliminary economic development scenarios.

Project Timeline

This document presents the findings of Phase 1 of the 2019 Boxborough Economic Development Study. Phase 1 of the study was conducted in two parts: the first (Part A) investigated and documented the existing conditions of Boxborough, and the second (Part B) used the findings of Part A to develop four preliminary economic development scenarios. The existing conditions analysis examined how present demographic trends, municipal finances, employment characteristics, and physical and land use constraints currently impact Boxborough's economic development environment. Both the existing conditions analysis and scenario development responded to the community goals outlined in the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan and ongoing feedback from Boxborough residents and business owners.

Phase 2 of this study will begin in January 2020. The existing conditions analysis and preliminary scenarios provided in this document will inform a community visioning process to identify priority economic development goals. Phase 2 facilitators will then conduct a regional market analysis to assess the viability of the community's priority goals. Figure 1 below presents the principal stages and public events that comprised Phase 1.

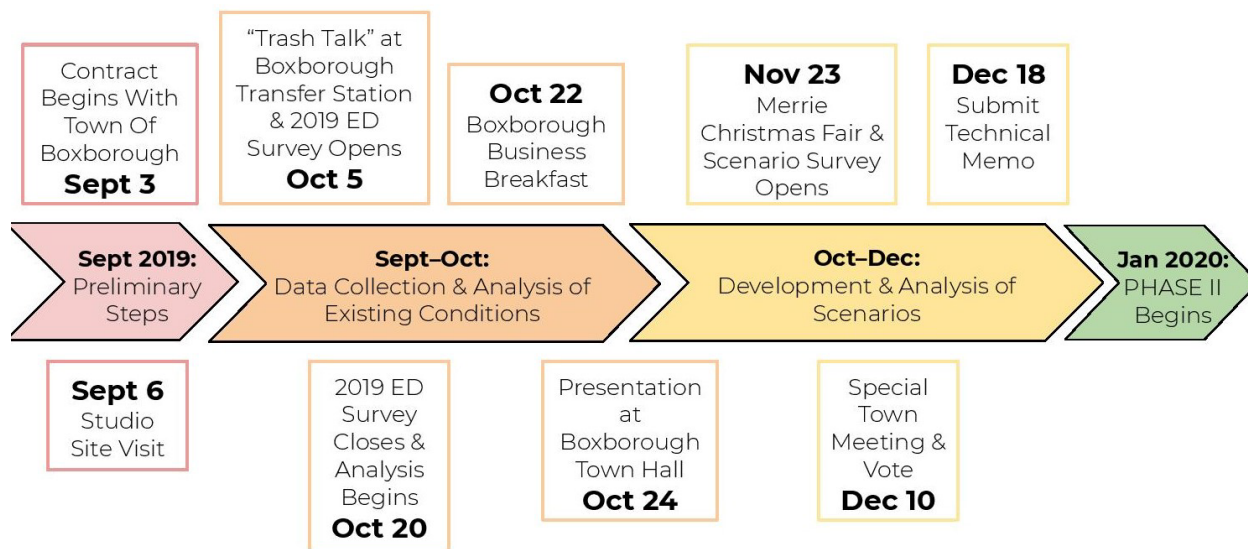


Figure 1. Project Timeline

Part A: Existing Conditions



Part A documents the existing conditions of Boxborough as they relate to the economic development and comprehensive vision for Boxborough. The analysis expands on the work previously done by the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan by gauging the community's current preferences for economic development through numerous public engagement events.

Additionally, it examines the current land use policies and development constraints, identifies regional and local business, housing, and employment trends, and explores case studies of peer and comparison communities that share similar conditions to Boxborough for innovative approaches to economic development. Peer communities consist of towns identified as peer communities in the *Boxborough Housing Production Plan* (Boxborough Housing Board, 2015) (Acton, Ayer, Groton, Littleton, Maynard, and Stow) or as comparison communities in a list provided by the Town. The extensive analysis outlined below created the framework for the scenario development outlined in Part B of the study.

Community Profile



Regional Context

The Town of Boxborough is situated approximately 30 miles northwest of Boston and 25 miles northeast of Worcester. Located along I-495 and Rt. 2 and bisected by Rt. 111, Boxborough is easily accessible to both regional and local traffic. Though not directly serviced by public transit, the town is equidistant between Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail stations in Littleton and South Acton, both only a few miles away from Boxborough's north and east boundary lines respectively.

Boxborough's regional connectedness provides residents with easy access to employment centers and smaller clusters throughout Greater Boston, particularly to the north and south along I-495 as well as Boston proper (see Map 1. Regional Context: Employment Clusters in Appendix A). Boxborough has seen less commercial and residential development than many neighboring communities, and therefore remains more sparsely populated and less densely settled (see Map 2. Regional Context: Population Density in Appendix A). This lower rate of development has caused fewer amenities to locate within Boxborough, though regional amenities are easily accessible via commercial districts of adjacent towns.

There are several state and regional planning and transportation agencies developing master plans for the Greater Boston Metro Region that will impact Boxborough. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the planning agency for the region and develops regional as well as local plans for each of the region's 101 municipalities. The Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) is a subgroup of the MAPC that encompasses Boxborough and 13 neighboring communities. The state transportation agency is the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) which governs all Massachusetts transportation authorities. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) works under the MassDOT umbrella and operates the public transportation services of Greater Boston. Together with MassDOT, the MBTA develops regional transportation plans for all modes of transit. For summaries of each agency's master plans, please refer to Appendix D: Regional Context and Case Studies.

Demographics & Character

The town of Boxborough is rural and suburban in character with a population of approximately 6,300 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). The landscape is defined by rolling hills, historic properties, farmland and stone walls, and low-density single-family housing. Similar to neighboring towns in the 495 corridor, Boxborough has no significant mixed-use town center and development is automobile oriented.

The residents of Boxborough are highly educated and the town is a member of the acclaimed Acton-Boxborough Regional School District that serves many families in the town. These educational assets are highly valued by those who live in Boxborough, making the town a desired residential location within the region. The median residential property value is 14% higher than the region's average, at \$506,700, and the median income is higher than the state's median income, but 16% lower than regional comparison communities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Boxborough's attractive landscapes and proximity to major roadways creates a strategic hub for modern business practices, regional connectivity, and economic growth. However, even with many rich community assets, there are office park campuses within Boxborough that have struggled to maintain occupancy and are facing a degree of obsolescence, contributing to stifled economic growth in the town. This trend poses a threat to the overall quality of life and must be thoroughly addressed to promote economic and community vitality.

Land Use Patterns

Land Use Patterns are defined by the primary use or purpose of the land, which are influenced by historic zoning, population growth, and economic development. Boxborough's zoning districts have been relatively consistent for the last few decades, meaning the land

use patterns are generally reflective of the Town's zoning (see Map 3. Land Use Patterns and Map 4. Zoning Districts in Appendix A). Most commercial activity remains concentrated along the Rt. 111 corridor, the I-495 interchange in western Boxborough, and the Rt. 2 exit in the northeastern corner of town. The Town Center district is home to most of the town's civic and public services, such as the Town Hall and the United Church of Christ Congregational, and has been identified as an area of interest for development in the *Boxborough2030* plan. One of the most notable differences between the zoning map and the land use map is that many areas that are zoned as office park and commercial districts are currently used as rural open space.

Housing Trends

Local Housing

Boxborough's housing stock has historically been comprised of single-family homes but has become more diverse in recent years. In 2017, housing options were more proportionately divided between single-family detached housing (54%) and small 'apartment' buildings (40%). Boxborough has experienced a growth in multifamily and senior housing development since 2015, which greatly exceeded projections for housing production (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The growth in population between 2015 and 2017 reflects this shift towards more multi-family and senior housing (see Figure 2. Boxborough Annual Population Estimates 2010 – 2018). The provision of more expansive housing options may have attracted new residents to

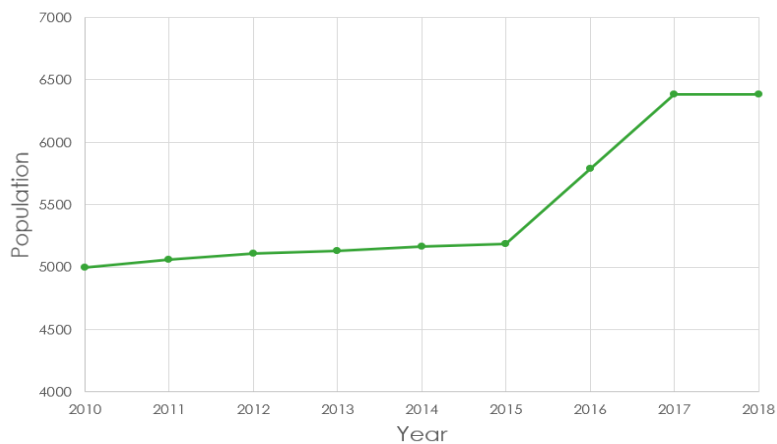


Figure 2. Boxborough Annual Population Estimates 2010 – 2018
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Population Estimates)

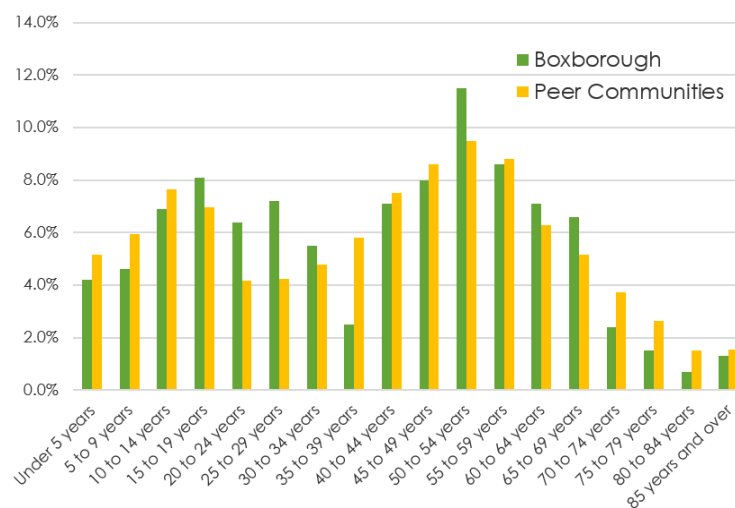


Figure 3. Age Distribution: Boxborough and Peer Communities
(Source: American Community Survey 2013 -2017)

the town and could stimulate future economic growth in Boxborough.

The Acton-Boxborough School District is ranked among the best in the state and has encouraged many residents to move to Boxborough and raise their children. Similarly, from 2000-2010, migration in Metro Boston showed suburban municipalities receiving school aged populations (greater than 9 years old) and younger professionals (23 to 40 years old), while the urban core has been losing these populations (see Figure 3. Age Distribution: Boxborough and Peer Communities) (MAPC, 2014d). Access to quality education has been a strong draw for regional migrants to the suburban communities in Metro Boston and these trends are evident in Boxborough as families with school-aged children and young professionals move into the town.

Regional Housing

By 2040, the region is projected to experience changes to its housing market and demographics which will have implications for Boxborough. The Metro Boston region is expected to experience a dramatic rise in older, single-person households (60-85+yrs) over the next couple decades. This could be part of the larger national shift toward smaller households (≤ 3 people) seen between 1970 and 2014 (MAPC, 2014d). Boxborough is representative of this trend within both rental (1.9 people) and single-family homes (2.6 people) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017); (see Table 1. Selected Housing Statistics Comparison: Boxborough, Peer Area, and Massachusetts). The tendency of older homeowners to be cost-burdened, combined with the trend towards smaller household sizes and high housing costs in Boxborough, are likely to present affordability challenges in Boxborough.

There has been a shift away from single-family housing in the Greater Boston Area. MAPC finds that all age cohorts are shifting away from single-family occupancy, especially the 25 to 34 (6.9% rate decrease from 2000 to 2010) and 65 to 69 (4%, decrease) cohorts (2014d). The increased drive for multifamily occupancy reflects multifarious trends, but the cost of single-family homeownership in the Greater Boston Area is a major contributing factor. Despite this, in 2017 there was an estimated 3.6% vacancy rate for non-rental units in Boxborough and 1.1% rate in the peer communities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

	Boxborough		Peer Area		Massachusetts	
	2012 Estimate	2017 Estimate	2012 Estimate	2017 Estimate	2012 Estimate	2017 Estimate
Total housing units	2,088	2,351	34,763	35,897	2,804,206	2,864,989

Median rooms	6.8	6.6	6.653	6.611	5.6	5.5
Average household size of owner-occupied units	2.620	2.6	2.755	2.768	2.680	2.690
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	1.820	1.940	1.953	2.046	2.190	2.260
Median house value	\$ 504,800	\$ 506,700	\$ 412,855	\$ 432,600	\$ 335,500	\$ 352,600
Note: Peer area corresponds to a row standardized average of Acton, Stow, Acton, Ayer, Bolton, Groton, Harvard, Hudson, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, and Westford weighted by number of housing units.						

Table 1. Selected Housing Statistics Comparison: Boxborough, Peer Area, and Massachusetts
(Source: American Community Survey 5 - Year Estimates 2008 - 12; 2013 - 17)

Business Trends, Employment, & Taxes



Business & Employment Trends

Boxborough had 189 business establishments across a variety of industries in 2018 according to Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD, 2018). Industry types are classified according to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) sector codes.

The most prevalent industry type is Professional and Technical Services, with 59 establishments, followed by Administrative and Waste Services (18) and Construction (16) (see Figure 4. Number of Establishments by Industry Sector within Boxborough in 2018; Figure 5. Number of Establishments by Industry Sector within Boxborough since 2001).

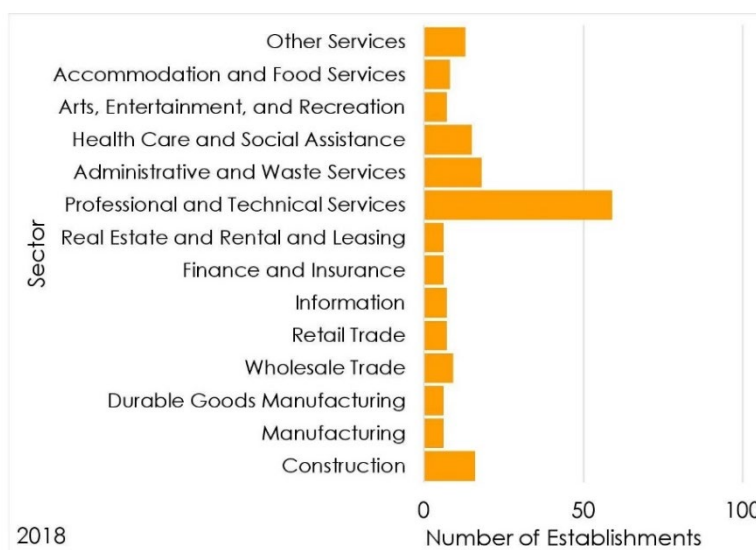


Figure 4. Number of Establishments by Sector within Boxborough in 2018 (Source: *Employment and Wages Report (ES-202)*, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD))

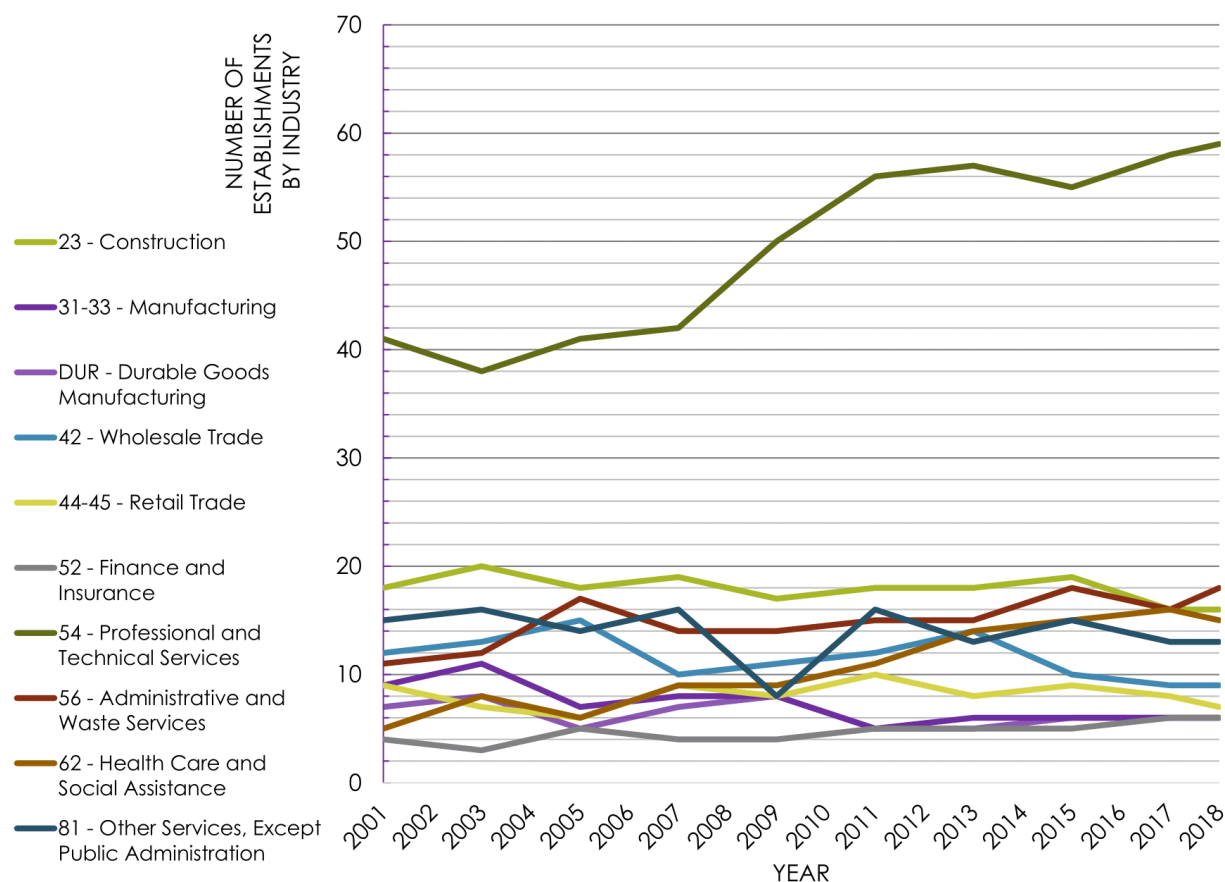


Figure 5. Number of Establishments by Industry Sector within Boxborough Since 2001
(Source: Employment and Wages Report (ES-202), Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development)

The Boxborough2030 master planning process indicated a desire by residents for more amenities (arts, entertainment and dining) in town. Currently only 15 (8%) establishments fit this category. Despite a comparable percentage of arts, entertainment and dining amenities to the Boston-Cambridge-Nashua New England City and Town Area (NECTA) as a whole (EOLWD, 2018), Boxborough lacks many of the specific establishments desired by residents identified in the master planning process and corroborated through survey work within this study: cafes, full-service restaurants, and farm stands (MAPC, 2016). The lack of leisure and hospitality amenities impacts residents and businesses in town. Large employers would benefit from surrounding businesses to accommodate their employees, while those businesses could benefit from the patronage of the thousands of workers entering Boxborough each workday.

Many establishments in Boxborough are small businesses. Around 60% of businesses in Boxborough employ fewer than 10 people and about 80% had a payroll less than half a million dollars in 2018 (RefUSA, 2018). Boxborough's commercial tax base is dominated by a few large employers that each employ between 100 and 249 employees (see Figure 6. Number of Employees by Industry Sector within Boxborough since 2001). The largest employer in town in the first quarter of 2019 was the Boxboro Regency Hotel. In previous years the Cisco Systems campus was the largest employer (hosting $\approx 1,400$ workers), but beginning in 2014, Cisco began moving employees to other campuses (MAPC, 2016). In its period of peak employment Cisco was an anchor for the community that brought in revenue and had far reaching economic benefits to surrounding businesses. Cisco's significant reduction in its workforce is reflected in the town's greater-than-500-person decline in professional and technical services jobs since 2014 (EOLWD, 2018). While the number of small businesses in Boxborough that rely on leisure and hospitality spending is limited, the reduced workforce in town limits this spending and reduces the likelihood of growth in these industries. Cisco's retreat from Boxborough and the decline of other office park tenant presents a risk to Boxborough's fiscal health, the remaining workforce, and the social and economic benefits that residents may receive.

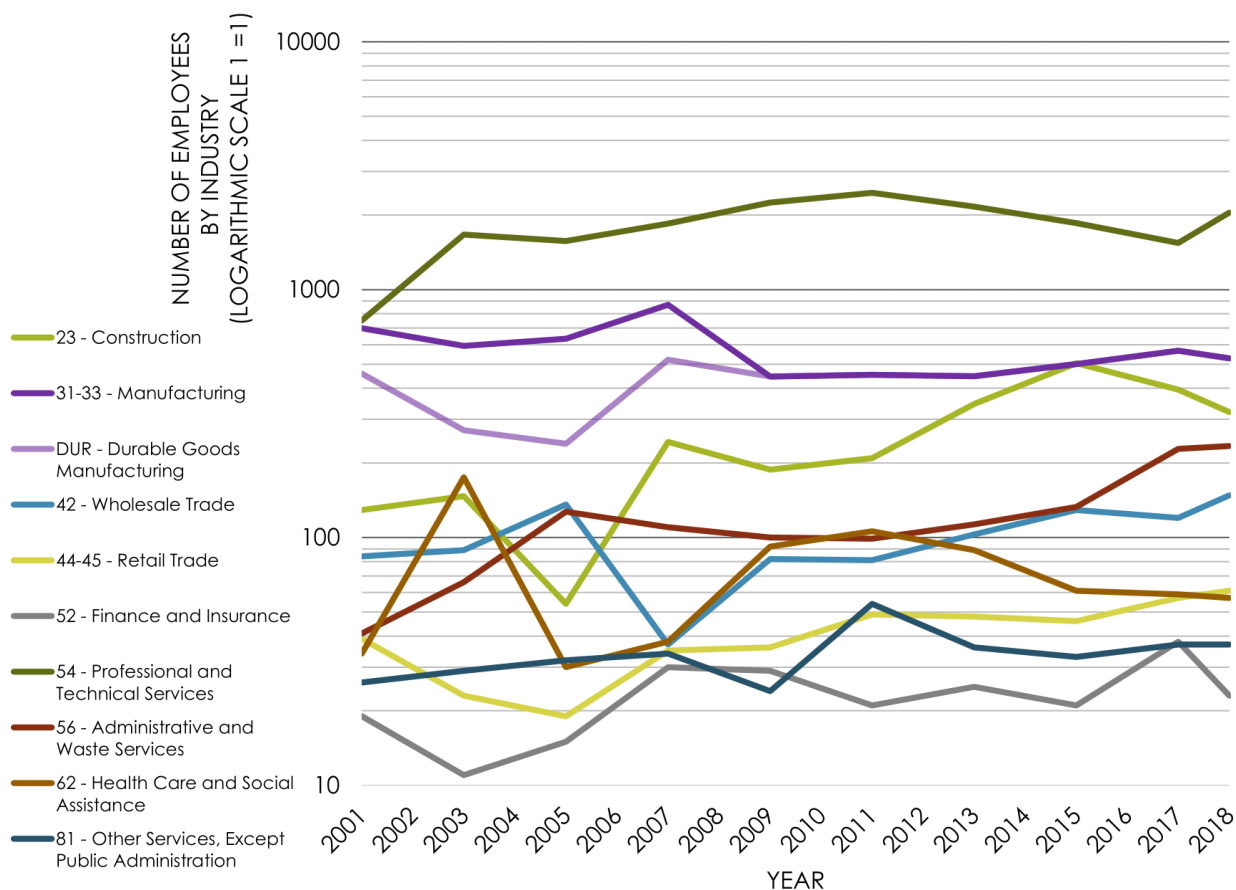


Figure 6. Number of Employees by Industry Sector within Boxborough since 2001
(Source: *Employment and Wages Report (ES-202)*, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development)

In 2018, Boxborough had a monthly average of 3,709 jobs primarily represented by the major sectors professional and technical services (42%), manufacturing (15%), and construction (10%). Over the preceding two decades employment in Boxborough's key sector (professional and technical services) has mirrored broader economic trends and reached an apex in 2011 where nearly 60% of the town's 4,159 jobs were in professional and technical services. Since 2011, the sector has seen a decline, following a broader trend towards more urban campuses. The loss of office park occupancy has contributed to the declining commercial tax revenues (EOLWD, 2018).

According to the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages* (2nd Quarter 2019), suburban counties in America's largest metros have outperformed their urban counterparts in job and population growth (Kolko, 2019). According to EOLWD data, Boxborough has doubled its local employment since 2001, whereas neighboring Littleton lost employment over the same period. This occurred despite recent decline in total jobs and commercial property values, demonstrating that suburbs like Boxborough have continued strong economic potential.

The appeal for establishments to locate in suburbs of large metropolitan areas like Boxborough is the access to nearby cities and labor markets (such as Boston, Cambridge, Worcester, and Lowell) while benefiting from more affordable commercial space. Boxborough's existing office park infrastructure, commercially zoned developable land, and good regional access makes it well-positioned to attract large business, but the lack of urban amenities or urban infrastructure, such as municipal water and sewer, pose challenges for Boxborough. The lack of amenities and high cost of housing are major obstacles for talent attraction and retention in suburban areas, resulting in some business leaving Boxborough for urban Boston.

Resident Occupation Profile

In 2017 an estimated 3,127 residents of Boxborough were employed, largely in management, business and financial occupations (24%); education, legal, community service, arts, and media (11%); and computer, engineering and science occupations (28%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). According to U.S. Census data, more residents of Boxborough work in Boston or Cambridge than in Boxborough (OnTheMap, 2018). Boxborough had 140 active business certificates at the beginning of 2019, many of which list residential property addresses. This suggests that in addition to those who telecommute, many Boxborough residents are running businesses directly from their homes.

Residents who work from home constitute, along with the retired community and non-working population, the daytime population of Boxborough. Recognizing this daytime population is critical to economic development strategies and the development of alternative

working environments or third spaces, which are locations that people spend time besides work or home. Hosting a significant daytime population indicates potential feasibility for third space environments (desired amenities in *Boxborough2030* and survey responses).

Having an active business environment is crucial to the Town's fiscal health, as a large portion of its tax base comes from commercial and industrial property. Large employers in Boxborough have struggled to attract younger workers to the town, anecdotally as a result of the lack of amenities and housing costs. The lack of diversity of the employing industries in town creates vulnerability in the Town's fiscal health, as shifts in those industries can deeply impact the municipality's tax revenue. As Boxborough has experienced and continues to see revenue impacts from office park vacancies and tax abatements, which are requests for reduction in property taxes based on reductions in value, the way the municipality manages its finances will be a critical element in planning for long-term sustainability.

Taxes

Boxborough has a flat tax rate, which means that the tax rate is the same for residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property. Twenty-three (or 65%) of the 35 towns in the I-495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership (a collaborative organization of governments in the I-495 region) also tax at a flat rate. The remaining towns in the region have a split-rate tax structure, where commercial, industrial, and personal properties are taxed at a higher rate than residential properties. This typically occurs when commercial and industrial properties have a larger presence in the municipality. In Fiscal Year 2019, 79% of Boxborough's tax levy was for residential property and 21% was for commercial, industrial, and personal property (CIP), which is high for the region, especially for a town of Boxborough's size. The CIP portion of the tax base has decreased from 25% to 21% between Fiscal Year 2014 and 2019 (see Figure 7. CIP Percent of Tax Levy in I-495 Region).

The median CIP percent of the tax base in the I-495 region is 16%. Of towns with over 20% CIP, approximately 64% have a split tax rate (Division of Local Services, 2019). While this could reflect an opportunity for Boxborough to create a split rate and generate more tax revenue, the decreasing size of the CIP portion of the tax base and existing issues with attracting businesses may make this option difficult under current conditions. Boxborough's tax rate is relatively low for the region at \$16 per \$1,000 for Fiscal Year 2019 (see Figure 8. Commercial Tax Rates in the I-495 Region) (Boxborough Town Assessor, 2018). The low tax rate can largely be attributed to high residential property values and large commercial and industrial taxpayers, which allow for sufficient revenue to be raised from a lower charge per each \$1,000 in value. As commercial and industrial property values have not been substantially increasing in recent years, tax bills for these properties should also be experiencing little change. Despite these low costs to commercial and industrial properties,

which conventional economic development knowledge would suggest are an attraction to businesses, Boxborough has struggled to retain and attract businesses.

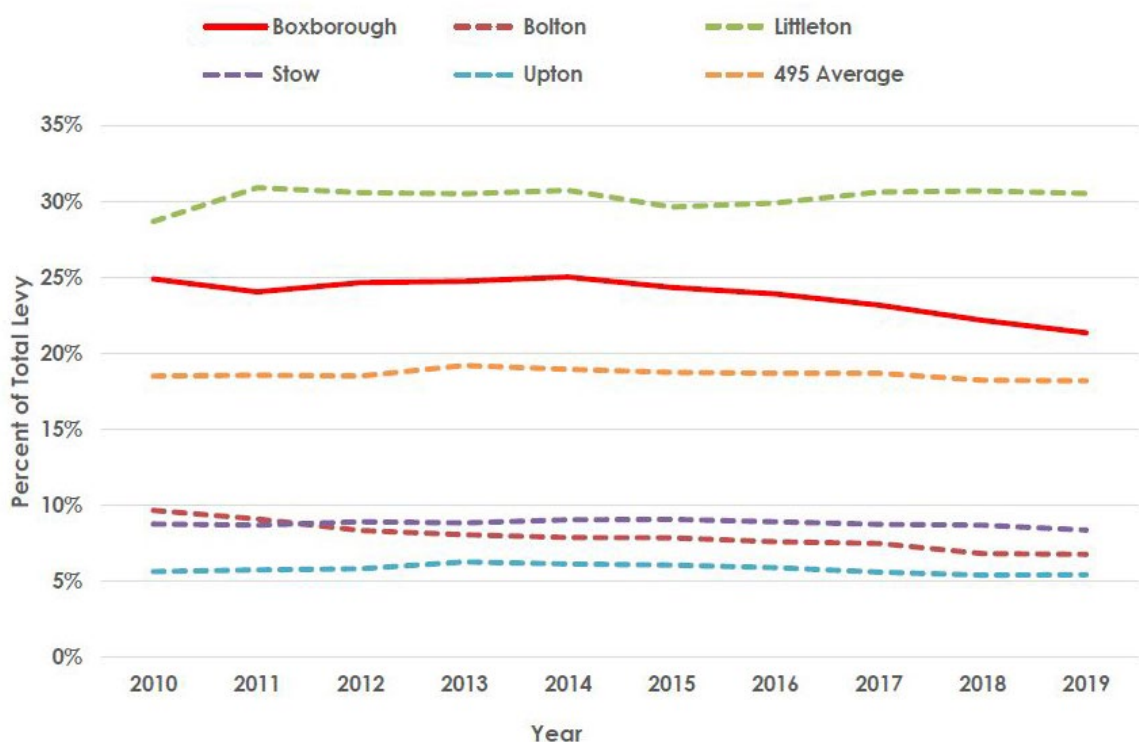


Figure 7. CIP Percent of Tax Levy in I-495 Region
(Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services, "Municipal Databank")

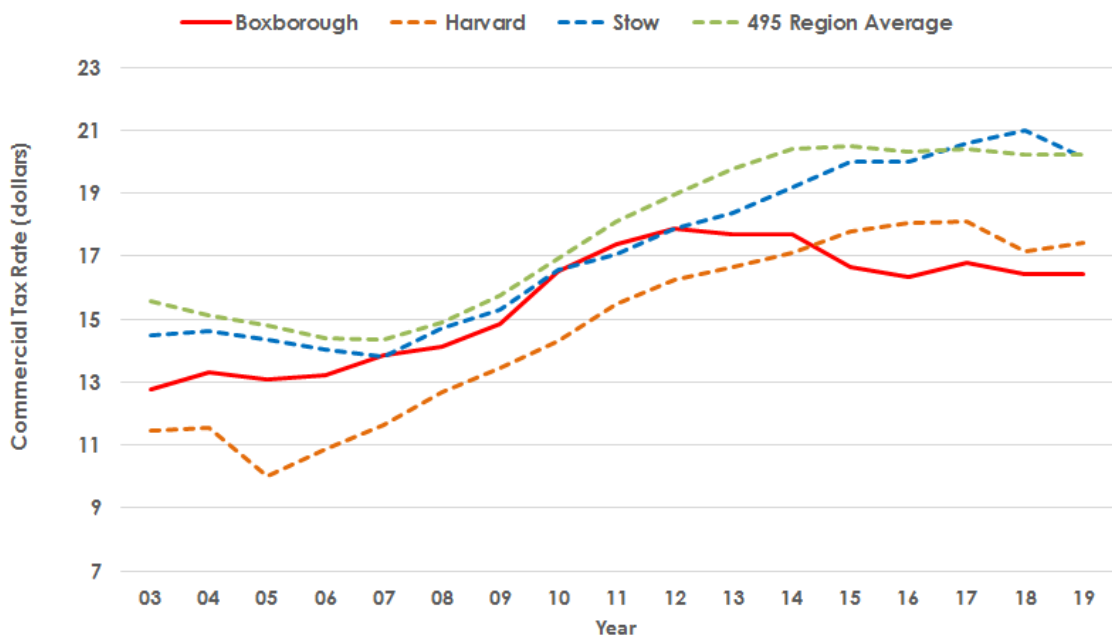


Figure 8. Commercial Tax Rates in the I-495 Region
(Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services, "Municipal Databank")

Boxborough has multiple large office park properties that have recently approached a nearly 50% vacancy rate, as Cisco Systems gradually left their three properties in Boxborough and other properties have seen similar losses. The struggle of property owners to fill vacancies at the office park properties has led to declining value of these properties. Declining values and other economic stressors on businesses in town have led property owners to file abatements for their property. Persisting vacancies and stagnant CIP values pose a vulnerability to the tax base, as it shifts the tax burden to residential properties. Current abatements pose a risk of an annual loss of \$353,000 in tax revenue (Boxborough Town Assessor, 2019).

Residential property values in Boxborough have been increasing rapidly, with approximately 80% of the total value added between 2014 and 2019 coming from value increases on existing properties, not newly constructed ones. The average single-family tax bill increased \$1,056 over this time period demonstrating the shifting tax burden to residents. CIP values were virtually stagnant during this period compared to residential values. CIP values grew a net \$10 million since 2010 (4% of current total CIP value). However, approximately \$64 million (26% of current total CIP value) was added in new construction or renovations since 2010 and lost by 2019 due to decreasing property values (see Figure 9. Boxborough Property Values by Class).

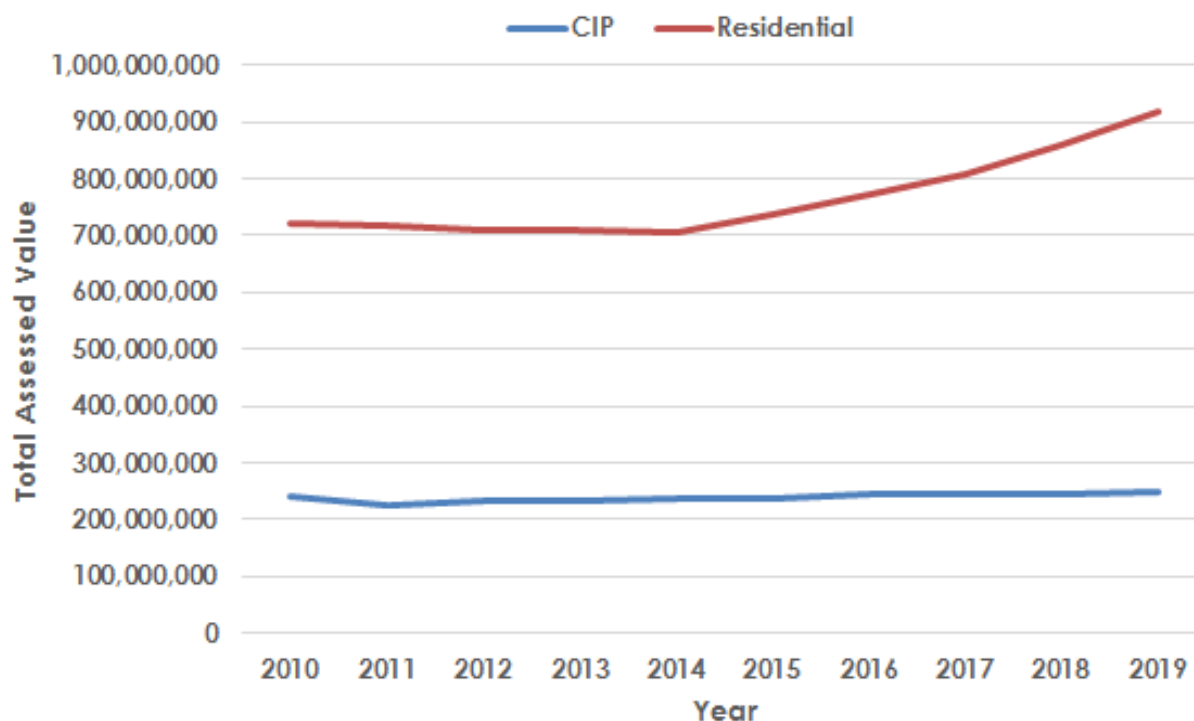


Figure 9. Boxborough Property Values by Class
(Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services)

Reliance on growing residential property values for new revenue is unsustainable in the long-term, similar to the issue of much of the town's employment being in a few large sectors. The issues of Boxborough's fiscal health demonstrate the vulnerabilities presented by relying on a small number of support structures. The lack of diversity in the tax base is directly linked to restriction of land use, which may reflect community values, but can also hinder goals that align with these values. Property values and the tax base in Boxborough are directly related to its land use policies and the characteristics of its natural resources. Boxborough's desire for economic development and value of its natural resources may present some conflicts. However, Boxborough could use its zoning and other policies to inventory and leverage its existing natural assets, in order to strengthen its tax base. Identifying where natural resources, zoning, and utilities present limitations and opportunities is a key contribution of this existing conditions review.

Natural Resources, Utilities, Land Use & Zoning



Physical characteristics of Boxborough such as natural resources, protected land, land use, zoning, utilities, and infrastructure impact the economic environment. Analysis shows that availability of water and sewer is restricted by wellhead protection zones, aquifer protection zoning, and limited public utility infrastructure on developable land. These factors dramatically limit the potential location and intensity of new construction.

Some developed areas have the potential to be transitioned to new or additional uses that could meet the economic needs and quality-of-life desires of Boxborough, but achieving this vision may require changes to policy and development strategy. Existing assets and the opportunities they present are strongly associated with land use type.

An analysis into zoning bylaws explored the strengths and weaknesses of Boxborough's current zoning and permitting requirements in the context of economic development and the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan. Land uses were broken out into the following categories: Rural Residential, Town Center, Commercial/ Business Corridor, and Office Park.

Natural Resources and Utilities

Sewer & Septic

Boxborough has no municipal sewerage, a concern addressed in the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan through Strategy 1.1.4 and frequently mentioned in the 2019 Economic Development Survey. All residences rely on septic systems for wastewater treatment and only a small handful of commercial properties (Cisco, Holiday Inn, 80/90 Central, and condominiums) utilize small sewage treatment package plants permitted by MassDEP (MAPC, 2015b). Their capacity was unknown at the time of writing, but there is anecdotal evidence that some existing package plants have additional capacity that could absorb more commercial activity on those sites they do currently. The lack of sewerage severely limits high-density residential development and many types of commercial development.

Surface & Drinking Water

Boxborough contains a few small ponds and streams and a large amount of protected wetland—17% of the total land area in Boxborough—distributed evenly throughout town (MAPC, 2015b). Wetlands are protected in Boxborough’s Zoning Bylaws by the Wetlands Bylaw, which grants the Conservation Commission the authority to regulate activities in or within 100 ft. of the wetland.

A number of properties in Boxborough source their drinking water from the town’s sand and gravel aquifers. However, most Boxborough households draw their water from private bedrock wells. The only public water system is a small system serving public buildings in the town center.

Some of the largest barriers to economic development in Boxborough are the permitting constraints required for the protection of water wells from septic contamination (see Map 5. Water Constraints & Stormwater Catchment Drains in Appendix A). Wellhead protection “Zone I” areas are prohibited for development, “Zone II” areas and Interim Wellhead Protection Areas (IWPA) significantly limit the size of septic systems permitted, limiting the intensity of land use and the types of material discharged in those septic systems (MA. Dept. of Environmental Protection [MassDEP] 310 CMR 22.21, 2016 citation).

An additional dimension to limited availability of water and sewerage in Boxborough is the abundance of sodium chloride (salt) in well water along I-495 (see Map 5. Water Constraints & Locations of Stormwater Catchment Drains in Appendix A) resulting from Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) winter salting activities (Wisniewski, Vasconcelos, McGoff, & Vinson, 2019). This contamination forces businesses to treat their drinking water for salt contamination with expensive technologies like reverse osmosis; the

financial costs associated with these systems are considerable barriers for existing and future businesses.

Establishing some form of public water supply and sewer would alleviate the salinity and capacity issues currently deterring additional commercial and residential development. A study of options for improving water quality in western Boxborough conducted by students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute recommended supplying businesses in the Office Park area with municipal water sourced from Harvard and shared with the Town of Littleton (Wisniewski, Vasconcelos, McGoff, & Vinson, 2019). This recommendation is preliminary and would require a robust feasibility study.

Land Uses & Zoning

Agriculture, Open Space & Recreation

Boxborough is a relatively small (6,656 acre) community that values its rural character and aims to preserve its scenic landscapes through conservation restrictions on private property and town acquisition of open space. Roughly 23% of Boxborough's total land area consists of protected open space. The Town is the primary open space landowner, owning and managing 973 acres, followed by land trusts, private landowners, and the state (see Map 6. Open Space, Recreation & Historic Resources).

As of 2015, nearly 747 acres of land was enrolled in MGL Chapter 60, 61a, and 61b and taxed at a rate below the standard municipal tax rate (MAPC, 2015b). A total of 419 acres fall within the agricultural MGL Chapter 61a. A majority of the goods produced on this land are hay and animals, while some smaller production of Christmas trees, vegetables, and similar products are produced (MAGIC, 2014).

Boxborough has over 30 miles of trails. Residents and non-residents use these trails for dog walking, horseback riding, mountain biking, running, hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Although a majority of the trails remain noncompliant with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements, the trails on the Cisco Beaver Brook campus include an ADA compliant trail (see Map 6. Open Space, Recreation & Historic Resources). Town-owned trails are managed by volunteer Trail Stewards.

Historic Resources

The Town of Boxborough has worked hard to preserve its many physical historic assets through inventory and dedicated bylaws. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has inventoried 167 sites within Boxborough considered to be historic (MHC, 2019). In 2006, two sites in Boxborough were designated as Historic Places on the National Register: Old

Town Center encompassing over 1,000 acres and 32 buildings, and Levi Wetherbee Farm (Steele Farm), containing 36 acres and 3 buildings (see Map 6. Open Space, Recreation, and Historic Resources). Boxborough has also adopted a Historic Building Demolition Delay Bylaw, Stone Walls Bylaw, Historic Roads Bylaw, and participates in Community Preservation Act (CPA) taxes to fund preservation projects.

Zoning Districts

Boxborough is divided into seven zoning districts (see Map 4. Zoning Districts); however, no formal definitions are provided in the Zoning Bylaws. The majority of Boxborough is classified as Agricultural/Residential, which allows for single-family housing, agriculture, and conservation land. A significant portion of the west side of town adjacent to I-495 is zoned as office park, allowing for professional office building and light manufacturing uses. An Industrial/Commercial zone fills the southwest corner of town and small sections along Rt. 111. The Rt. 111 corridor is dominated by Agricultural/Residential zoning designation, but also includes two Businesses Districts that are primarily zoned for personal service-related businesses, athletic facilities, and light manufacturing. The Town Center district at the intersection of Rt. 111 and Stow Rd. permits professional offices and small-scale retail by right and single and two-family housing by special permit.

Buildout & Development Constraints

Boxborough has environmental and zoning restrictions that limit the development of new properties. In addition to the over 23% of town area protected as open space, analysis indicates that an additional 43% of the town's land area is composed of water resources that either prohibit or significantly constrain development (see Map 7. Development Constraints). The majority of remaining land has already been developed, primarily for residential use.

The MAPC *Boxborough Buildout and Alternative Futures Technical Report* found capacity for an additional 2.3 million sq. ft. of commercial space located south of Adam's place, and along Beaver Brook Rd., Codman Hill Rd., and Rt. 111. However, many of the areas of Boxborough most attractive for commercial development are heavily regulated by water protection requirements. This includes the existing town center, which is constrained by the wellhead protection zones.

The build-out analysis identified the potential for the town to add 110 new housing units by right under the zoning (MAPC, 2014). However, the addition of Paddock Estates, through special permit, more than doubled Boxborough's estimated capacity with an added 244 units (MAPC, 2016) and also became the second highest property taxpayer in town (Boxborough Town Assessor, 2019). Zoning is one of the most powerful tools a municipality has for

protection natural resources and safe drinking water, and for controlling the nature and form of economic development. The below analysis demonstrates the pros and cons of how Boxborough's zoning permits and constrains development and suggests opportunities for change. The zoning audit approved at the December 10th 2019 Special Town Meeting will continue this work.

Economic Development Planning & Zoning Analysis

To understand the town's economic development environment and planning strategies, we began by conducting a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. We reviewed the nearly 50 documents that guide and regulate the conditions of Boxborough's economic environment to inform this analysis, including bylaws, policies, and permitting applications. The *Boxborough2030* Master Plan and zoning bylaws received special attention.

The results of the SWOT analysis informed our decision to conduct a further in-depth analysis comparing Boxborough's zoning bylaws to a selection of six peer communities identified in the *Boxborough Housing Production Plan* (Boxborough, 2015): Acton, Ayer, Groton, Littleton, Maynard and Stow. For each community, we analyzed the permitted land uses and dimensional requirements, both of which are essential tools used to regulate the built form and influence the feel of a community.

We structured these analyses around four spatial regions that were identified in mapping Boxborough's land use patterns (see Map 3. Land Use Patterns): rural residential, Town Center, commercial/business corridor, and office park.

SWOT Analysis

Boxborough's land use tools and zoning include major factors shaping the town's economic climate, character, and sense of place. The most significant tools are authorized land uses, lot size requirements, building setbacks, and design guidelines. A thorough review of the zoning bylaws shows that some regulations conflict with community goals stated in the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan, and recent community surveys.

The Town Center, business corridor, and office park areas all have similar regulatory constraints. Authorized uses in zoning do not support businesses identified through public engagement strategies as desirable. Development constraints imposed by regulatory requirements for wells and septic systems significantly impair development opportunities in all three areas. Regulations affecting the form, size, and siting of structures on a lot also restrict opportunities for new development or businesses as well as redevelopment of some

existing properties. Visual screening of businesses from the public, excessive parking requirements, and large lot sizes create automobile-scaled environments contrary to the town center or village style development desired by many residents.

Strengths and opportunities identified include the newly adopted policy for complete streets throughout town, especially in the Town Center district. This approach will help to create a more pedestrian-scaled environment and encourage residents to spend more time in districts with business activity. The availability of robust fiber and communication infrastructure in the office park area is also a strength. This asset should be communicated broadly as an opportunity for potential investors. The complete SWOT analysis can be found in Appendix B: Zoning SWOT Analysis.

The permitting processes is also exceptionally important to the health of a town's economic growth. In addition to analysis of the economic environment, we identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for processes identified in zoning and bylaws related to permitting (see Appendix B: SWOT Analysis).

Zoning Analysis of Specific Economic Environments

The uses listed in Boxborough's zoning were compared to other peer communities with comparable town or village center zoning districts. In the following tables comparing zoning, common uses are listed along the left side of the table and the different colors represent whether the use is permitted by right (green), allowed with a special permit (yellow), permitted per specifications (blue), or not permitted (red). The transparent circles indicate that a specific use is not addressed in the Town's zoning bylaws and the gray circles indicate that the definition and goals of the specific districts are explained.

Rural Residential

We identified three rural land uses that serve as a useful comparison of Boxborough and other communities' active rural economic environment: open space and recreation, agricultural use, and agricultural tourism. The community currently has 1,451 acres of total open space (MAPC, 2015b). We found this acreage amount to be comparable with a number of peer communities, however, the Town owns more open space than a majority of its peers at 15% of the town's total land area.

Although Flerra Meadows, Liberty Fields, and Fifer's Field are opportunities for outdoor active recreation with a playground and various ball fields, this is approximately half of the amount Ayer, a community of similar land size and has and significantly less than the 35 facilities in Acton (Town of Acton, 2015; Town of Ayer, 2019). Additionally, the MAPC has developed a landline plan to connect the metropolitan area with bike facilities and

greenways, but it bypasses Boxborough and goes through its peer communities to tap into their existing networks (MAPC, 2018).

Permitted Uses

A significant portion of prime farmlands (determined by soil composition and grade) lies within the Agricultural/Residential and Office Park zoning districts (see Map 8. Prime Farmlands). Although Boxborough is recognized as having pro-farmer permitting requirements for signs on farms (MAGIC Comprehensive Agricultural Planning Project Report, 2014), the zoning bylaws are highly restrictive of accessory uses often associated with farming (see Figure 10. Rural Land Uses). The Right to Farm Bylaw (2012) permits “conducting agriculture-related educational and farm-based recreational activities, including agri-tourism, provided that the activities are related to marketing the agricultural output or services of the farm” (p. 2); however, uses such as craft shops, art studios, and farm stands are not permitted outside of the Business districts and Town Center. The A/R district specifically restricts the in-home display of goods, vehicle trips, and employees. Similarly, special permitting presents obstacles to establishing riding schools and bed and breakfasts, which are accessory businesses that can provide working farms with much-needed supplemental income.

Use	Farming	Riding School, Less than 20 horses	Bed and Breakfast	Craft Shop or Art Studio	Retail Stores < 25,000 GFA	Retail Stores > 25,000 GFA	Restaurant	Labor Housing
Agricultural-Residential	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Residential-1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Business	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Business-1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Office Park	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Town Center	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Industrial	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○

● Permitted	● Permitted, per specifications
● Special Permit Required	● Addressed in Zoning
● Not Permitted	○ Not Addressed in Zoning

Figure 10. Rural Land Uses (Source: Boxborough Zoning Bylaws)

Boxborough mentions adding agricultural business as a key action in its master plan, but has not moved forward with this strategy. Peer communities that have strong agriculture and agritourism businesses have less restrictive zoning, such as permitting labor housing, transitional zoning districts, and set regulations for permitting associated business uses. Bolton is an excellent example of a community that has used its rural character to enhance economic development. Bolton’s Accessory Use Agricultural/Business Bylaw allows accessory agricultural or business uses to supplement income from agricultural, horticultural, floricultural, or viticultural lands where the external character of the building remains residential and has limited impacts to neighboring areas. The accessory use bylaw allows retail sales of farm products, crafts, and newspapers, the serving and consumption of baked and prepared foods, veterinary clinics, and hosting events. Bolton’s bylaw applies to

active, development-restricted farms over 20 acres, but could be adapted to smaller-scale contexts. The highly successful Nashoba Valley Winery takes advantage of the accessory use bylaw with a variety of accessory uses on separate parcels, taxed at market rate, surrounding an orchard enrolled in the Chapter 61A current use tax program (Erica Uriarte, personal communication, December 11, 2019). For more information on the Town of Bolton, see Appendix D: Regional Case Studies.

Town Center

The Town Center zoning district features large lot properties with large setbacks that serve mixed residential, municipal, and commercial uses. Large distances between buildings creates an unfriendly environment for pedestrians which lacks the engaging streetscape and character found in more walkable village centers. There are few sidewalks and no bike lanes. Road and traffic features like wide-radius turns and speed limits over 30 miles per hour create an automobile-scaled environment, which can make pedestrians and cyclists feel vulnerable or unwelcome. Wellhead protection areas are present throughout the majority of this area, prohibiting or severely limiting additional development. Shared sewer and water systems which support the school and police station are nearby, though their capacity for additional demand is unknown.

Permitted Uses

The uses allowed in Boxborough's Town Center district are limited compared to Town Center districts in peer communities. While Boxborough is not the most restrictive, these examples illustrate the ways in which zoning can either restrict or attract the desired mixed-use downtown district experience.

Town	Boxborough	Action	Ayer	Groton	Littleton	Maynard	Stow
Name of District	Town Center	West Acton Village	Downtown Business	Village Center Business	Village Common	Central Business	Compact Business
District Description	○	●	○	●	○	○	●
Single Family	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Two-Family	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Multifamily	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Home Occupation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mixed Use	○	○	○	○	●	●	○
Hotel, motel, inn	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bed and Breakfast	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
Restaurant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Professional Office / Bank	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Personal Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Apartments / Commercial	●	○	●	●	○	○	○

●	Permitted	●	Permitted, per specifications
●	Special Permit Required	○	Addressed in Zoning
●	Not Permitted	○	Not Addressed in Zoning

Figure 11. Town Center Land Uses (Source: Boxborough and Peer Community Zoning Bylaws)

Special permits are required for all forms of housing in the Town Center. Special permits require more time and paperwork for the applicant, which can disproportionately impact small business-owners or developers who have fewer resources. In addition, the planning authority can impose additional requirements in exchange for granting the special permit, creating barriers to development, especially small-scale development. This may hinder those who actually apply for permits, but may deter applicants altogether, especially as restrictive dimensional and use requirements present riskier returns on investment.

In mixed-use zoning districts, the integration of residential, commercial, and office uses allows residents to access resources and amenities more easily. Although the Town Center zoning regulations encourage mixed-use, Boxborough specifically prohibits apartments above the ground floor of a building. Another benefit of mixed land uses is their flexibility and ability to adapt to the needs of the community. Limiting affordable and accessible housing options in the form of apartments above commercial uses limits the economic viability of mixed-use development by restricting additional revenue streams for property owners and businesses. Restricting these uses is contradictory to the interests of the 80% of surveyed residents that expressed an interest in a village style mixed-use downtown district.

Boxborough's zoning limits the development of eating establishments to such a degree as to be nearly prohibitive. Coffee shops, bakeries, and restaurants are among the most desired businesses expressed by residents in both the *Boxborough2030* and 2019 Economic Development surveys. In the 2019 survey, about 60% of residents stated that they would like a coffee shop or bakery in town, and about 50% would like to see a full-service restaurant. However, Boxborough's zoning defines restaurants as establishments where food is consumed within the building and expressly prohibits the use of disposable utensils or take-out counters of any kind. Fast food establishments are defined by the bylaws as the sale of food or beverages that are intended for immediate consumption, available upon a short waiting time, and packaged or presented in a manner than can be readily eaten outside of the premises where it is sold. Fast food restaurants are not permitted in any district, yet bakeries, coffee shops, and restaurants all commonly practice bagging or boxing food for take away. Massachusetts general law considers bakeries to be "Moderate Hazard (light) Manufacturing," which is permitted in Boxborough in the Business, Business 1, Office Park and Industrial/Commercial zoning districts. However, limitations on take-away dining throughout the town would limit a bakery to baking and prohibit the sale of products. Towns have varying requirements for specific restaurants, such as takeout/fast food establishments and town bylaw should be reviewed for specifics regulations and permitting specifications.

Dimensional Requirements

The dimensional requirements in Boxborough's Town Center zoning bylaws restrict the formation of buildings that would reflect the character of a town center or village district. Three dimensional requirements from Boxborough's zoning bylaw were used as points of

comparison between the peer communities: minimum lot area, maximum lot coverage, and minimum setback. These three were selected as it was determined that they clearly illustrated potential limitations to town/village center development based on existing zoning regulations (see Figure 12. Comparison of Town Center Dimensional Requirements).

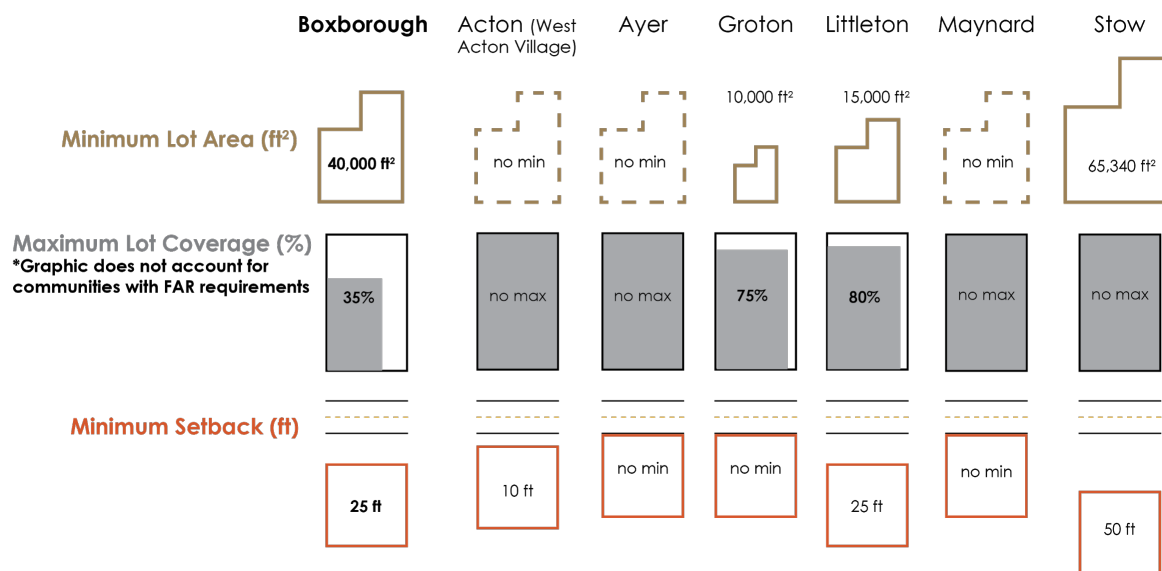


Figure 12: Comparison of Town Center Dimensional Requirements
(Source: Boxborough and peer community Zoning Bylaws)

Boxborough requires close to an acre (40,000 sq. ft.) for its minimum lot area, while many of the peer communities have significantly smaller lot size requirements. Three of the six peer communities have no minimum requirement at all. While other comparison communities may have other lot use restrictions, such as floor area ratios, Boxborough's combination of large lot size and low lot coverage requirements makes it inherently difficult to establish a compact and walkable village center.

Boxborough's maximum lot coverage allows only 35% of the lot to be covered by any building or paved surface. Of the six peer communities, Boxborough had the smallest maximum lot coverage restriction, while several peer communities had no maximum lot coverage. While several peer communities did not have a maximum lot coverage requirement in their zoning bylaw, they did have Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirements which act in much the same way as maximum lot coverage restrictions. When coupled with large lot size requirement, Boxborough's maximum lot coverage prevents businesses from taking advantage of the space within this district. This prevents the more accessible and efficient land uses associated with town or village center development, desired by over 80% of residents according to the most recent survey.

The Town Center district's minimum setbacks are not conducive to walkable development with engaging streetscapes. Boxborough requires any building on a lot to be at least 25 ft. back from the road, which creates a disconnect between people using the street and buildings. Many peer communities required much less or no minimum setback, standards that allow pedestrians to walk quickly from building to building and close enough to see into windows—pedestrian-friendly features that are an important aspect of any town center.

Commercial/Business Corridor

The economic environment of the Business zoning district is limited by what uses are authorized. Required setbacks from the road and visual screening requirements serve as a detriment to businesses by reducing visibility of advertising geared towards automobile traffic. Mandatory parking requirements also create a barrier by forcing businesses to increase lot coverage with parking lots, complicating site selection for well, septic, set backs, and accommodation for wetlands and bedrock. Approximately half of the business corridor region is restricted or limited for development due to wellhead protection areas. The automobile scale of the environment and access by vehicle is a strength for local businesses.

Permitted Uses

Overall, allowed uses in Boxborough's zoning are similar to those of peer communities. Restaurants require special permits, which is consistent with two and more restrictive than four of the peer communities.

Town	Boxborough	Acton	Ayer	Groton	Littleton	Maynard	Stow
Name of District	Business	Office Park 2	General Business	General Business	Business	Business	Business
District Description	○	●	○	●	○	○	●
Single Family	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Two-Family	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Multifamily	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Home Occupation	○	●	○	○	●	○	○
Mixed Use	●	●	○	○	●	○	○
Hotel, motel, inn	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bed and Breakfast	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
Restaurant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
Professional Office	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Personal Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Athletic Facility	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Public Park / Conservation	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Craft Shop / Artist Studio	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Printing / Copy Shop	●	○	○	○	○	○	○

●

 Permitted

●

 Special Permit Required

●

 Not Permitted

●

 Permitted, per specifications

○

 Addressed in Zoning

○

 Not Addressed in Zoning

Figure 13. Business Corridor Land Uses (Source: Boxborough and Peer Community Zoning Bylaws)

Dimensional Requirements

While Boxborough's dimensional requirements in the Town Center zoning district were more restrictive relative to peer communities, dimensional requirements for the business

district aligns more closely with the peer communities. While still not the least restrictive among peer communities, the zoning bylaws for Boxborough's Business zoning district should not become a hindrance to future development in the same way the zoning bylaws appear to be for the Town Center zoning district.

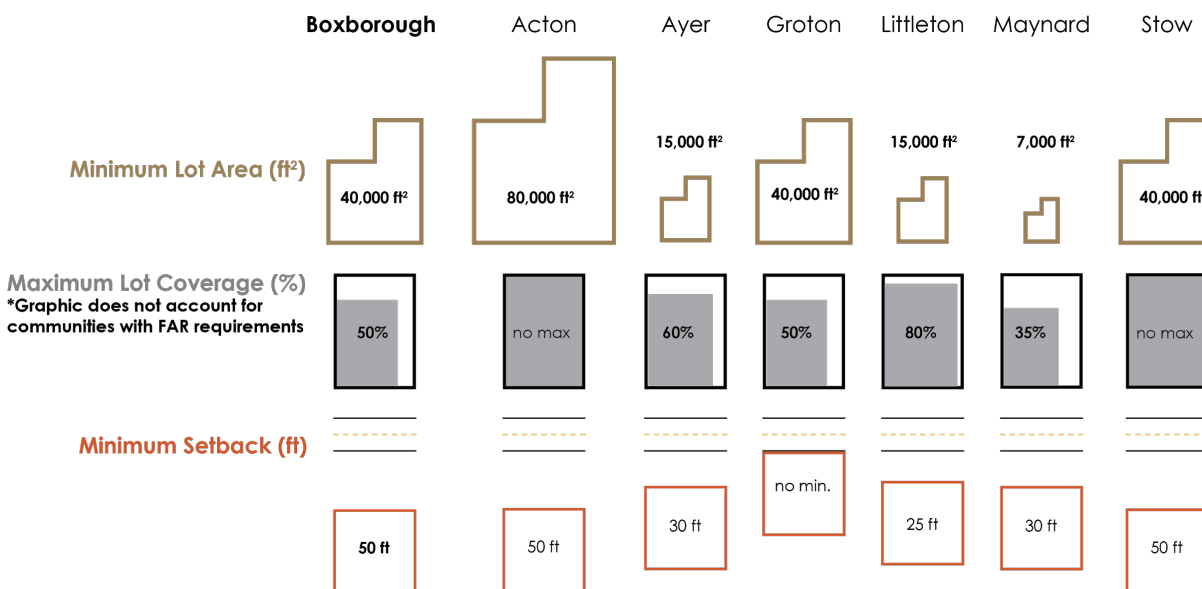


Figure 14. Comparison of Business Corridor Dimensional Requirements
(Source: Boxborough and peer community Zoning Bylaws)

Office Park

The Office Park's proximity to I-495 and Rt. 111 is a major asset, as they allow efficient commuter and distribution access without significant impacts to residential areas. However, the Office Park zoning district reflects zoning codes that were popular decades ago. The district's authorized uses are highly specific to office functions and restrict 21st century development trends supporting mixed-use community featuring opportunities to live, work and play in a convenient setting. The Office Park district is severely restricted by wellhead protection areas, aquifer protection areas, and heavily impacted by saltwater intrusion from Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation (MassDOT) road-salt sheds into the groundwater which is present in drinking water (Wisniewski, Vasconcelos, McGoff, & Vinson, 2019).

Permitted Uses

Boxborough and Acton are the only towns among the peer communities that have a designated Office Park district. As a result, comparing this district required a deeper analysis of where peer communities permit certain uses and the character of the built environment

in these districts, in order to identify comparable zoning districts. This district was compared against the peer communities' commercial, business, and industrial districts to find the ones most compatible for comparison.

Town	Boxborough	Acton	Ayer	Groton	Littleton	Maynard	Stow
Name of District	Office Park	Office Park 2	Light Industrial	Industrial	Industrial A	Industrial	Industrial
District Description	○	●	○	●	○	○	●
Single Family	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Two-Family	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Multifamily	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Home Occupation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mixed Use	○	●	○	○	●	○	○
Hotel, motel, inn	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bed and Breakfast	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
Restaurant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
Professional Office	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Personal Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Athletic Facility	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Conference Center	●	●	○	●	●	○	○
Research and Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Wholesale Distribution Center	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Light Manufacturing	●	○	○	○	○	●	○
Manufacturing	●	●	○	●	●	●	●

●	Permitted	○	Permitted, per specifications
●	Special Permit Required	○	Addressed in Zoning
○	Not Permitted	○	Not Addressed in Zoning

Figure 15. Office Park Land Uses (Source: Boxborough and Peer Community Zoning Bylaws)

Based on this analysis, the uses allowed by right and by special permit are similar to peer communities' industrial districts. Overall, Boxborough permits the uses traditionally associated with office parks. However, these uses do not allow for a creative reuse of the space that could support office park revitalization or refilling vacancies. Therefore, there may be opportunities to revise the authorized uses to allow for more flexibility in these spaces as vacancy rates hover around 50%.

Dimensional Requirements

Boxborough has much stricter dimensional requirements in their Office Park district compared to other communities' office park, commercial, business, and industrial districts. For example, Boxborough requires approximately 3.5 acres minimum lot area, while all peer communities only require an acre or less and Littleton has no minimum lot size. Large lot requirements preclude the establishment of smaller businesses and limit the efficient use of space. Combined with large setbacks from property lines, large lot requirements also discourage walkability and access to office park areas for residents or workers.

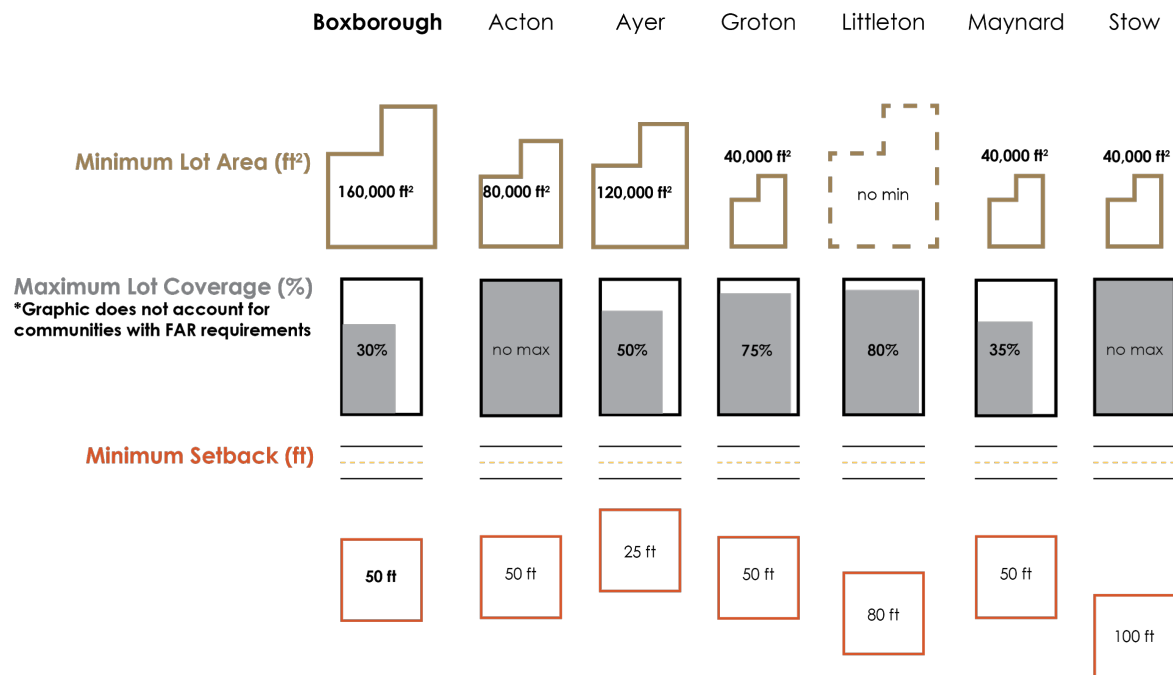


Figure 16: Comparison of Office Park Dimensional Requirements
(Source: Boxborough and peer community Zoning Bylaws)

Boxborough's 30% maximum lot coverage for office parks is a significant restriction, as office parks often require a large amount of space for the building and parking. Aside from Maynard which has a similar requirement, every other peer community allows for significantly larger maximum lot coverage. The potential of Boxborough's Office Park district is limited compared to peer communities that are more accommodating to different types of uses. While Boxborough's zoning works to protect water resources, the Office Park zoning districts also have high parking lot requirements that increase surface runoff and pollution of water resources. Large lot sizes combined with small maximum lot coverage also create the effect of spreading development out over a larger area, further fragmenting open space resources.

Summary of Findings

Overall, limitations and zoning ambiguities in Boxborough's zoning bylaws make it challenging for businesses to start in Boxborough or even apply for permitting. In some cases, the appear counterproductive in guiding development in accordance with the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan. Where the master plan is the vision, zoning bylaws are the steps to make the vision a reality. The zoning audit recently adopted should address several things with Boxborough's zoning: make the document logical in its organization, simplify confusing bylaws, define zoning districts, define clearly all terms, remove duplicate items and procedures, and allow space for new zoning amendments. A second phase to be

considered will be moving the permitting process online, which will create a more efficient review process for citizens and Town personnel. This will also make the storage and retrieval of permitting documents much faster and take up much less space.

To better understand the impact of zoning and dimensional requirements on Boxborough's current economic environment, case studies of several peer communities were conducted to further explore how those communities addressed challenges similar to those facing Boxborough. The examples from in the region serve as informative points of comparison and suggest strategies that might help Boxborough's challenges.

Regional Case Studies



There are many towns and cities throughout the Metro Boston region and along the I-495 corridor that share Boxborough's challenges and priorities for economic development. The following case studies investigate communities in the region that have pursued development that are either in line with the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan goals or address issues similar to those facing Boxborough. These communities are either peer communities (towns adjacent to Boxborough) or comparison communities (towns provided by Boxborough staff considered similar in character).

Sources for these case studies include local news publications, municipal zoning bylaws, board and department meeting minutes, planning documents, and phone interviews with town planners and economic development committee members. The following section summarizes the highlights from these findings and may serve as a learning tool when considering Boxborough's future development. An unabridged version of these case studies is located in Appendix D: Regional Case Studies.

Harvard

Neighboring Boxborough to the west, Harvard experiences similar economic leakage, wherein residents are spending money outside of town. They are looking to start an Economic Development Corporation to address this issue, as well as develop their town center district to increase commercial activity and encourage more diverse uses. Like Boxborough, it is important to Harvard to maintain their rural character, so they are implementing a form-based code, which is a zoning regulation that uses physical form as the guiding principle rather than land use, to preserve the historic qualities of their town center district. The Town also recently proposed a Rural Life Permit to further explore economic development possibilities in line with their rural and agricultural heritage. This would have allowed for limited commercial activity in their agricultural/residential land, though it was eventually voted down.

Groton

Groton is north of Boxborough and has seen some success in the development of their town center through the designation of a Town Center Overlay District, which promotes retail, pedestrian circulation, and the public realm. This district encourages Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification of new buildings, requires contributions to public space enhancements, and the use of low-impact development techniques, which utilize land conservation and green infrastructure to reduce hydrological impacts of development and manage storm-water runoff.

Littleton

Bordering Boxborough to the north, Littleton also strongly identifies with its rural character. Like Boxborough, Littleton's lack of a municipal water system has impeded commercial development. The Town is in the process of developing a smart sewer system, which uses a network of sensors to control sewer flow, that would service around 180 properties within the Littleton Common Village District. This infrastructure investment will encourage new development in this district, discourage sprawl, and allow for uses such as food services that require high water usage.

Bolton

Located to the southwest of Boxborough, Bolton also considers itself rural in character. Since Bolton has a large percentage of agricultural lands and working family farms, they decided to capitalize on these resources with the creation of an Accessory Use Agricultural/Business Bylaw. This bylaw allows accessory uses on agricultural lands, uses such as retail of farm

products and crafts, agritourism businesses, event hosting, and food services. They also have a high number of long-term office park vacancies and are now, after ten years, in lease negotiations with a cannabis-growing corporation as a result of a new Marijuana Establishments bylaw which allows this use by special permit.

Marlborough

Having faced high vacancy rates in several of their office parks just like Boxborough, Marlborough has become regionally known for their success in revitalizing many of them. The City applied a mixed-use overlay to their industrial districts to encourage small businesses and amenities in office parks. They designated these districts as Local Expedited Permitting and Development sites as well as TIF zones to streamline the permitting process and guarantee TIFs to businesses willing to relocate to these districts. Marlborough also just launched a year-long free shuttle bus pilot from Marlborough's office parks to the Southborough MBTA station, financed by the city and state, to make themselves more accessible to the regional workforce.

Public Engagement Strategy



Phase 1 robustly engaged with the public through direct events and distribution of targeted surveys. The strategy sought to solicit feedback, build understanding, and educate the public about economic development. Public participation was a critical step in validating existing conditions findings and soliciting feedback on the preliminary scenarios. It is for this reason that the public was engaged early and throughout the entire process.

Phase 1 included the following events or activities:

- Trash Talk (October 5, 2019)
- Economic Development Survey (October 5, 2019 to October 20, 2019)
- Business Breakfast (October 22, 2019)
- Economic Development Community Meeting (October 24, 2019)
- Merrie Christmas Fair (November 23, 2019)
- Economic Development Scenario Survey (November 23, 2019 to January 2020)
- Special Town Meeting (December 10, 2019)

Trash Talk

Trash Talk was a community engagement event held at the Boxborough Transfer Station on Saturday, October 5th, 2019. The study team tabled and canvassed at the Transfer Station to introduce the Boxborough Economic Development Study to residents. This provided space to engage community members in conversations about economic development and the rural character of Boxborough. These conversations served as informal settings for residential feedback on what economic development could look like in the town, specifically highlighting community interests and desires for the future vision of Boxborough. Trash Talk also marked the beginning of the 2019 Economic Development Survey for Boxborough residents, which launched online the same weekend. Residents were encouraged to participate in the survey and to stay involved with the study.

Trash Talk received over 100 participants. The major takeaways from the feedback of this event are summarized below:

- Residential interest in more local, small-scale community amenities
- Preservation of Boxborough's 'rural character' should be prioritized
- Preference for limited/controlled development, encouraging reuse of existing properties



UMass students mingled with Boxborough residents at the Transfer station to collect public opinion

Economic Development Survey

To better understand the aspirations and concerns of the residents of Boxborough for the future of economic development, an Economic Development Survey was distributed online. The main purpose of this survey was to educate residents about the project and to gather public opinion to inform later scenario development. This survey included questions to assess residential, employment, and commuting patterns of community members, as well as preferences for commercial amenities and future economic development.

Portions of the survey mirrored questions about commercial amenities in the survey that was conducted as part of *Boxborough2030* Master Plan process, allowing for a comparison of public opinion across time.

The Economic Development Survey received 342 responses. Results from the survey are summarized below. Three primary themes arose from analysis of survey results:

1. Desire for more small-scale commercial amenities
2. Preference for prioritizing existing properties over extensive new development
3. Enthusiasm for village-style development within the existing Town Center district

Summary of Survey Results

Commercial Amenity Preference: Residents were presented with an extensive list of commercial amenities and asked to select all which they would like to see opened in Boxborough. Over half of all respondents expressed desire to see a coffee shop, bakery, farm stand, or full-service restaurant within town. The top 12 responses for commercial amenities are presented (see Figure 17. Survey Result 1). Generally, residents expressed preferences for the same type of commercial amenities as in the 2015 survey. Pub/Tavern had not been included in the prior survey, but was supported by over 40% of respondents in the 2019 survey.

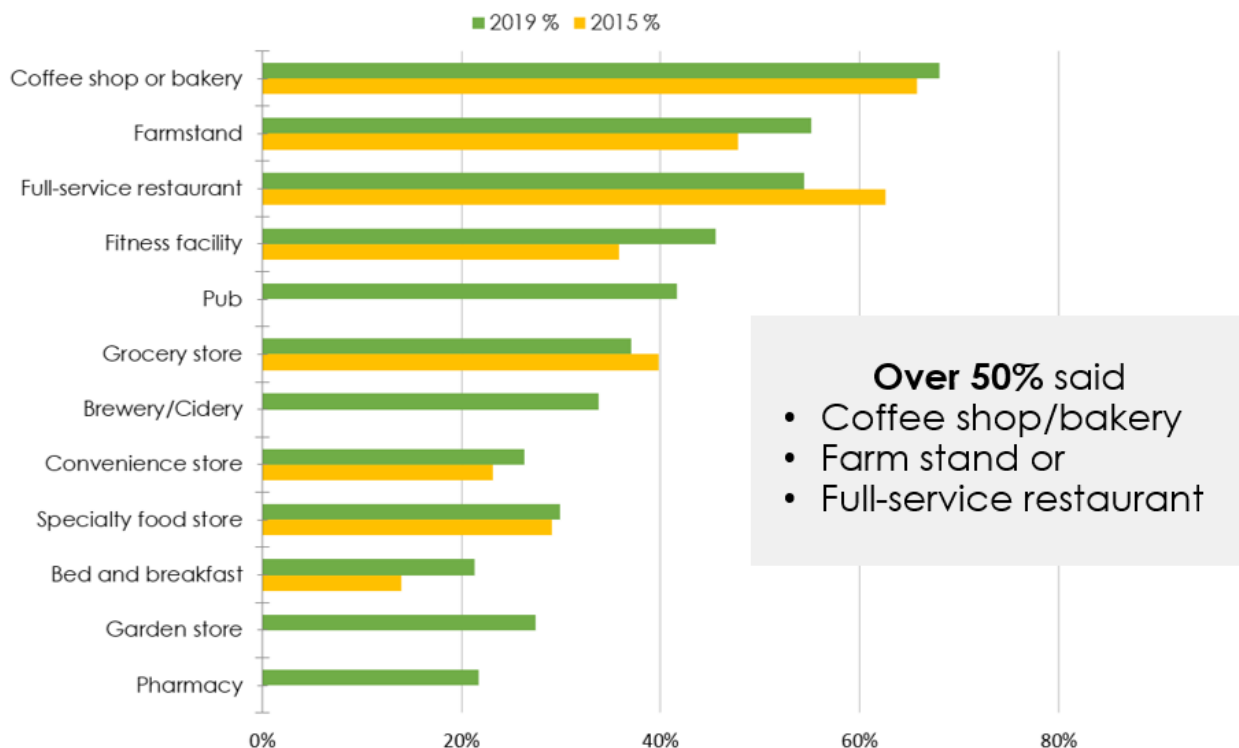


Figure 17. Survey Result 1: Preferred Types of New Businesses in Boxborough
(Source: Economic Development Survey Responses)

Common Destinations for Commercial Amenities: Respondents were asked to identify locations in the region around Boxborough where they most frequently accessed a given type of amenity. For every such category we presented, heat-mapped results of respondent's clicks clearly showed that residents need to leave town to access these businesses. This trend is most clearly exhibited by the restaurant and cafe categories (see Figure 18. Survey Result 2 and Figure 19. Survey Result 3). Over 60% of respondents also expressed desire to see these types of businesses within Boxborough in the future.

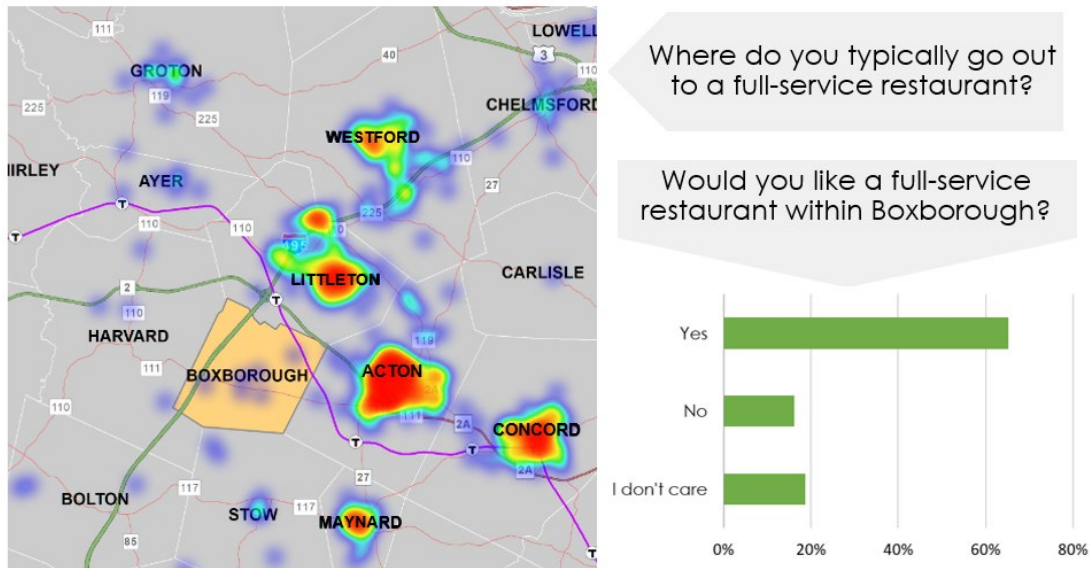


Figure 18. Survey Result 2: Heatmap of Locations where Full-service Restaurants are Accessed
(Source: Economic Development Survey Responses)

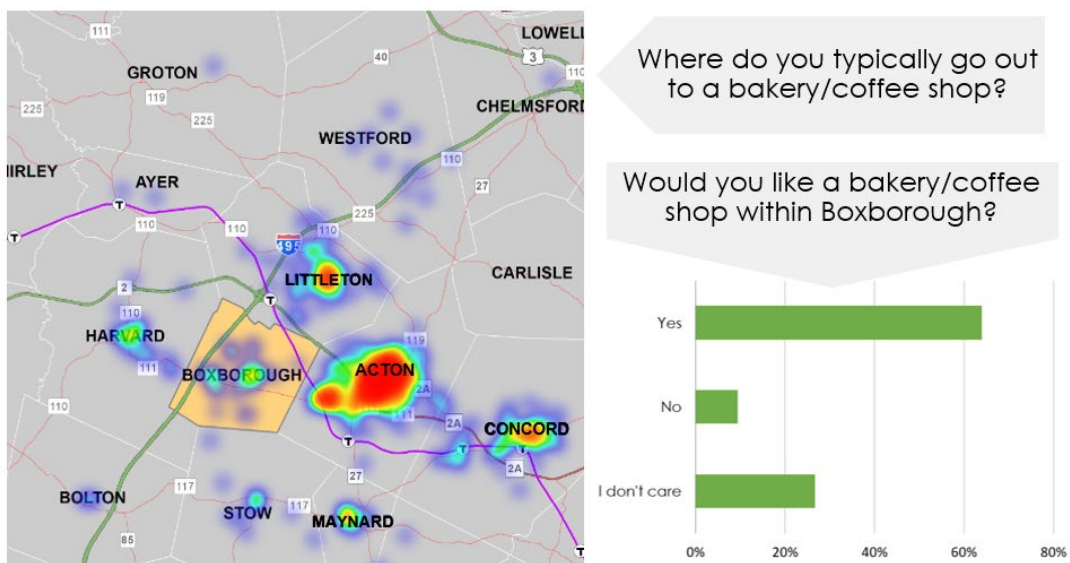


Figure 19. Survey Result 3: Heatmap of Locations where Cafes/Bakeries are Accessed
(Source: 2019 Economic Development Survey Responses)

Village Style Development Preference: A final component asked residents where, if anywhere, respondents would like to see a future “village style development” (see Figure 18. Survey Result 2 and Figure 19. Survey Result 3). The definition of such a district was taken from the *Boxborough2030* master planning process, which defined such development as a “small-scale, compact, and walkable area with wide sidewalks and a mix of uses, including residential, office, and commercial amenities.” The Town Center district, which was originally partially districted for this purpose, was the first choice of survey respondents with 36% of the vote share. A site at the intersection of Adams Place and Rt. 111 ranked a close second with 32% of the vote share (see Figure 20. Survey Result 4). This relative popularity of the Adams Place site would inform our later shift of village-style development to this site in the scenarios.

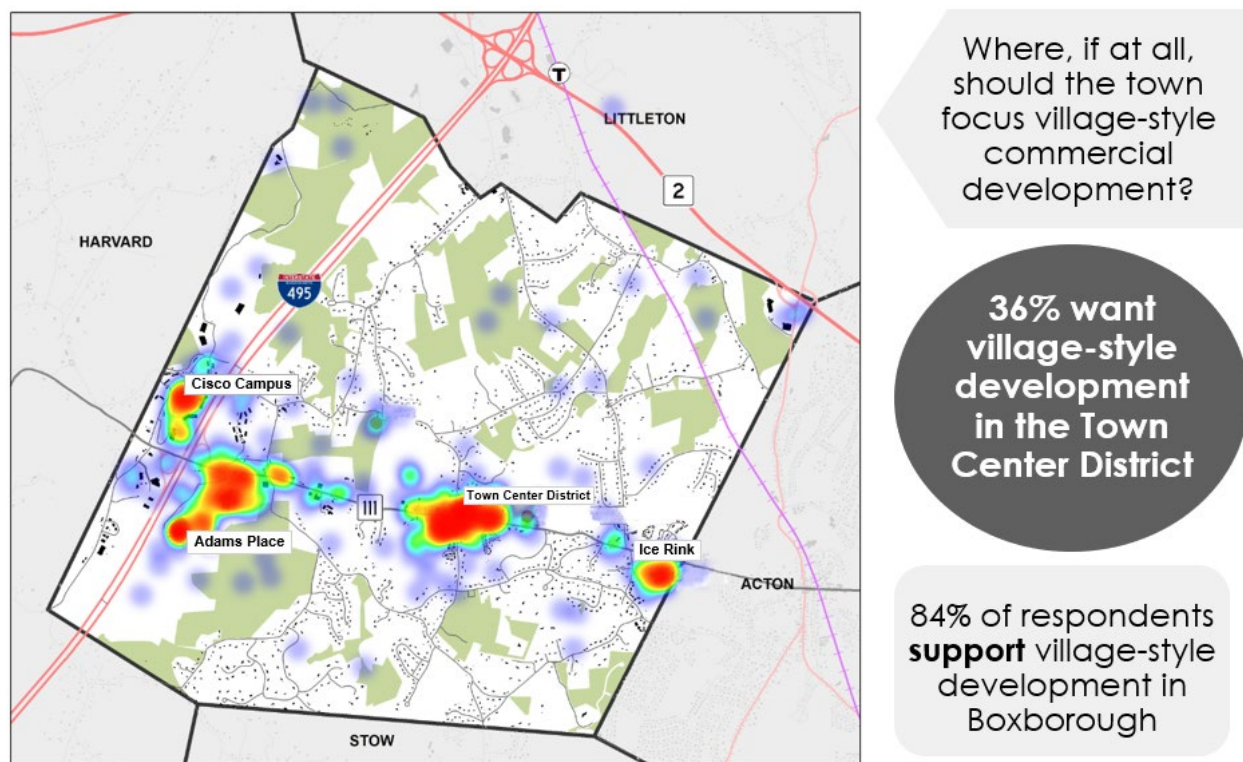


Figure 20. Survey Result 4, Heatmap of Preferred Locations for Village Style Development
(Source: Economic Development Survey Responses)

Business Breakfast

The Business Breakfast, held on October 22nd 2019, was the first-ever forum for Boxborough business owners to interact with one another and with the Town. The purpose of this breakfast was to engage local business owners, foster a network of business and property owners, determine what they view as the strengths and weaknesses of the business environment, and solicit input on what the Town of Boxborough can do to support business and property owners. After an informational briefing, business owners were guided through

a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. The unique mix of participants included farmers, small residence-based businesses, stores in town, and regionally focused real estate developers.

Major takeaways from the event include:

- Largest strength is proximity to I-495
- Largest weaknesses are water infrastructure, zoning, business formation, and expansion opportunities
- Opportunity for town or regional business networking



*Rich Guzzardi delivering the introduction presentation to local business owners and representatives at the October 2nd 2019 Business Breakfast
(Source: UMass)*

Economic Development Committee Meeting

On October 24, 2019, prior to the development of scenarios, the study team presented the findings from the existing conditions to the EDC, representatives of other town committees, and local residents. An informational session on key issues preceded the presentation. Feedback from residents was incorporated into further research and development of the four scenarios to better serve the interests of the community.

Merrie Christmas Fair

The Merrie Christmas Fair is an annual event put on by the United Church of Christ Congregational. The November 23, 2019 event was used to present the economic development scenarios and solicit feedback in person as well as direct residents to the online survey and Story Map. Survey access information was also distributed at local businesses and community spaces, including Boxborough Liquors & Convenience, Bravo Pizza, VERC Gulf gas station, Oscars Burritos Mexican Grill, Pony Shack Cidery, Boxborough Public Library, and Boxborough Fire Station.



The UMass team postered with preliminary scenario ideas at the Merrie Christmas Fair (Source: UMass)

Special Town Meeting

On Tuesday, December 10th 2019, a Special Town Meeting was held to vote on various articles, including the EDC's warrant article to appropriate \$25,000 of free cash to fund Phase II of the Economic Development Study with the University of Massachusetts. The chair of the EDC, Rich Guzzardi, presented on the current work done in Phase I and the need for Phase II funding. At the special town meeting were two members of the Studio group who set up informational posters containing details about the four scenarios as well as other visuals representing survey results. As members of the public entered the building for the meeting, the studio members provided handouts containing links to our story map as well as the link to our second survey. This event allowed us to engage with the community about our

scenarios as well as the overall process one more time before the official vote took place to proceed with Phase II of this project. The article passed unanimously and funding will go forward to support the Center for Economic Development in conducting an in-depth market feasibility of the phase I scenarios and hosting a community visioning charrette.

Existing Conditions Process Outcome

Collecting regional and local data, peer comparison, public sentiment, and other information allowed for a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints Boxborough faces to thoughtful economic development. This process identified specific actions and changes necessary to implement the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan goals. Understanding existing conditions creates the foundation to propose viable recommendations and scenarios for Boxborough's future, aligned with the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan and the needs and desires of the town.

Part B: Preliminary Scenario Development



A strong foundational knowledge of Boxborough's existing conditions revealed viable options for thoughtful economic development. Through the analysis of public participation, existing conditions, peer comparisons, and an external assessment of Boxborough's opportunities & constraints, these options were arranged into four scenarios. The four scenarios are presented in order of increasing impact and intensity, from the least possible intensity (following current trends), to a comprehensive approach that imagines innovations throughout the economy. The scenarios are not mutually exclusive and should be viewed as a menu of compatible options, allowing the town to explore attractive aspects of each while considering the most viable path toward economic development.

The four scenarios are:

(I) Baseline and Current Course
(III) Village Style Development

(II) Rural/Agricultural Heritage
(IV) Comprehensive Approach

Indicators

Indicators are metrics of key concerns and elements that contribute to Boxborough's existing conditions. We developed five indicators measured across each scenario: **traffic, connectivity, new construction, municipal water, and fiscal health** (see Table 2. Indicator Measurements). These indicators were developed based on the findings from our existing conditions research and identified as predominant concerns for residents. The indicators are used to represent relative change proposed under each scenario for quick reference and comparison across scenarios. Each indicator was measured on a scale of one to five, with one representing minimal change and five reflecting a significant increase.

Indicator	Framework for Estimates
Traffic	Added vehicle trips, using generalizations based on Institute of Transportation Engineers trip generation estimates
Connectivity	Added distance of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations Added number of connections to other connectivity infrastructure or important economic locations
New Construction	Percent change in commercial and industrial square footage compared to current condition
Municipal Water	Added linear feet of municipal water infrastructure
Fiscal Health	Added tax revenue from new residential, commercial, or industrial property; Added tax revenue; Diversity of tax base

Table 2. Indicator Measurements

Each of the four Scenarios (I, II, III, IV), were they to be fully realized, would have varying degrees of impact as measured by these indicators. Generally, the impact becomes more intense with each successive Scenario (see Figure 21. Comparison of Indicators).

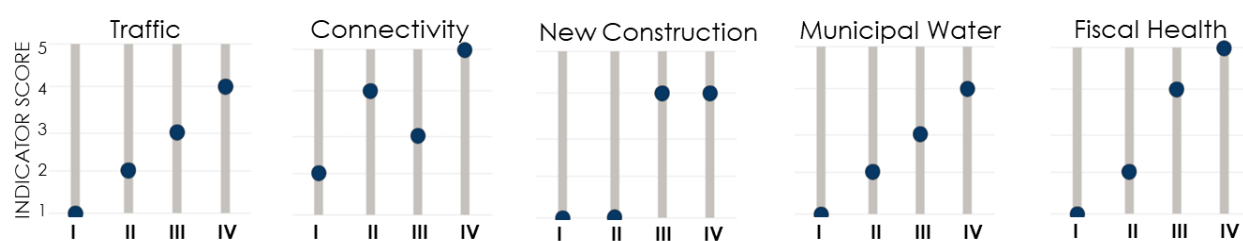


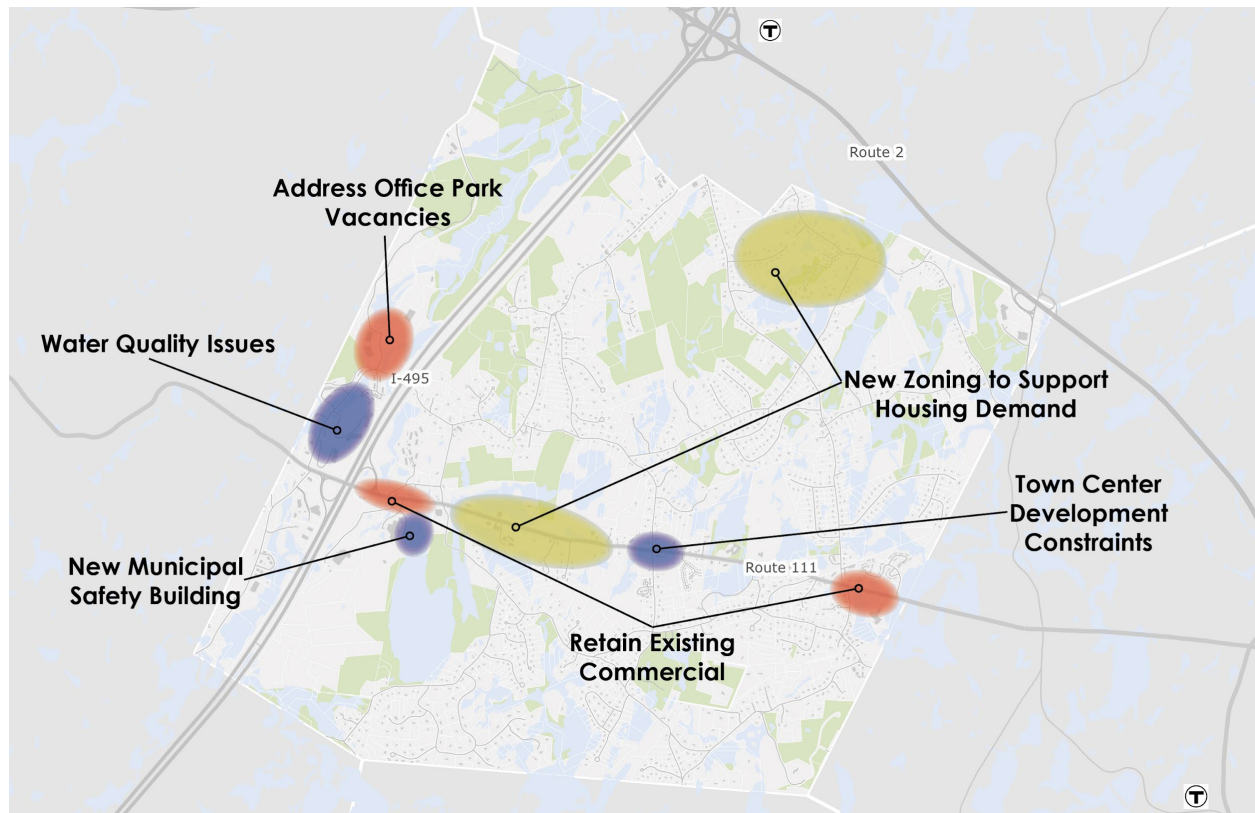
Figure 21. Comparison of Indicators

Scenario I – Baseline & Current Course



The baseline and current course scenario establishes a business as usual (BAU) course of action for the future planning horizon of Boxborough. This scenario operates under the assumption that the Town will do little to proactively address its current economic development concerns and will only act in a limited and reactive capacity to market changes. Some *Boxborough2030* goals are attainable under this scenario, but their impacts will be restricted by the lack of economic activity in town, and the shrinking commercial and industrial property tax revenue. Beyond establishing what this course of action could look like, this scenario also acts as a means to benchmark the successive scenarios discussed below (Rural/Agricultural Heritage, Village Style, and Comprehensive Approach).

Assumptions & Future Trends



Map 9. Baseline/Current Course Scenario

The Town underwent a master planning process in 2015 that outlined the community's vision for the future. The Baseline and Current Course scenario uses this vision and the goals established in *Boxborough2030* to frame the scenario within the context of current and future trends, addressing which visions are attainable and which visions will face challenges without proactive change.

It is anticipated that regional trends will continue to influence the constraints currently affecting Boxborough over the longer-term planning horizon (2040 and beyond). The community is outpacing projected population growth and housing production, and is similar to trends in the Boston Metro Area. Revenue generated through commercial and industrial properties will continue to remain flat or in decline, increasing the tax burden of residents. While current growth in housing values facilitates this shift and prevents net revenue losses from CIP value stagnation, this will likely not continue indefinitely and may lead to limitations in the ability to fund capital projects or other larger-scale investments.

Focus Areas

Business Constraints

The office park districts in Boxborough are experiencing high vacancy rates. Without the Town's intervention, commercial property values will remain stagnant or decline and threaten the fiscal health of the Town. From a planning perspective, the current permitting process and zoning restrictions make it difficult to establish or expand business in Town. Water is another significant constraint to attracting new businesses or development, as well as limiting the expansion of existing businesses.

Existing Assets

The Town enjoys abundant natural resources. For the residents, maintaining the country suburban character and quality of life is appealing. With increasing programming in open space and historic sites, residents and visitors can experience the Town's existing assets without significant changes to community character. High residential property values are a significant asset to the community, as they support the Town's fiscal health, while commercial and industrial properties have struggled. Home values and housing demand will allow for continued fiscal health until the market changes. While the housing market is a boon for the Town currently, this cannot be relied on indefinitely.

Municipal Services

Currently, the Town is considering options for the relocation of its Fire Station and Police Station. Funding capital projects and high-quality municipal services may be hindered by the lack of new commercial or industrial tax revenue and the lack of funding resources. Our scenario suggests adjusting the tax rate to reflect changes in property values and revenue will be needed to sustain municipal services, since the changing revenue streams may offset capital project deficits. Zoning adjustment for high housing demand may provide increased support to the tax base. Adjusting tax rates as needed is a way to continue to provide services that residents value most.

Implementation Process

While a major focus of this scenario is outlining how existing trends will affect Boxborough, we approached the baseline and current course scenario through the lens of the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan. Challenges may emerge as a result of the current and projected trends identified above. However, some quality of life amenities and services can

be sustained with limited economic development. We will define short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals and implementation strategies below:

Short-Term (0-5 years)

Short-term goals for this scenario are broadly aligned with the goals established through the *Boxborough2030* master planning process. Therefore, the short-term goals could continue the existing planning efforts made by Boxborough. The short-term planning goals support the Town creating a business association and developing marketing strategies to attract businesses and leverage existing assets. Business associations serve to advocate for the needs of the business community within a given jurisdiction and allow for collaboration across industries. The participants from Business Breakfast addressed their desires for this type of local organization.

- Develop a business association to improve collaboration between business owners and the Town
- Create a marketing strategy to attract new commercial interest in the town and leverage existing town assets
- Continue to support the goals outlined through the *Boxborough2030* master planning process (such as this Economic Development Study)

Medium-Term (5-10 years)

Medium-term planning goals highlight that the Town should investigate the development of new municipal facilities to support emergency services. However, these new development options are limited by changing funding streams, a lack of infrastructure, and no municipal water.

- Investigate possible zoning changes to accommodate shifts in housing demand
- Assess demands on water and possible implementation of a municipal water system

Long-Term (10-15 years)

Long-term actions may include exploring zoning options for accommodating future housing demand and drawing new revenue from added residential values. Without new commercial or industrial growth, Boxborough will become more reliant on residential property values, which may require more residential development than the Town currently wants. Adding new residential properties would avoid increasing tax rates to sustain the same level of municipal services. Therefore, this scenario recommends ongoing review of housing trends and how housing costs and demand will impact Town services and revenue streams. Near the end of this timeline, Boxborough should revisit its economic development planning

strategy to review the Town's vision and develop new plans that can accommodate this vision into the future.

- Revisit economic development and determine future strategies
- Investigate the possible benefits of increasing public transit access could have for the community

Indicators

Traffic

- Additional traffic may come from a growing population, regional economic growth trends, or filling business vacancies.

Connectivity

- May be future demand to improve Boxborough's internal connectivity, requiring the installation of trails, the extension of sidewalks for safe routes around town
- May be future demand to improve regional connectivity through the development of transit modes in the long-term for access to train stations and other out of town amenities.

New Construction

- New construction demands will be determined by available, buildable land, zoning processes and market demand.

Municipal Water/Utilities

- No proposed municipal water, development constraints that currently exist will continue.
- Water quality issues are currently being reviewed and a municipal water feasibility study is proposed.

Fiscal Health

- Although commercial and industrial property values remain stagnant or decrease due to abatements, the residential tax base has increased. Home values and total residential property values in town grew significantly in recent years which will support fiscal health, yet increase the financial burden on homeowners. This strategy is not likely sustainable as there are limited spaces for future residential development.

Scenario II – Rural/Agricultural Heritage



This scenario proposes that Boxborough become a regionally unique destination that approaches economic development by leveraging its natural, recreational, agricultural, and historic assets. In this scenario, family activities, agricultural tourism, small-scale food production, historic tourism, and specialty artisan crafts support modest economic development. This approach to economic development provides quality-of-life amenities and builds on the country suburban character desired by residents.

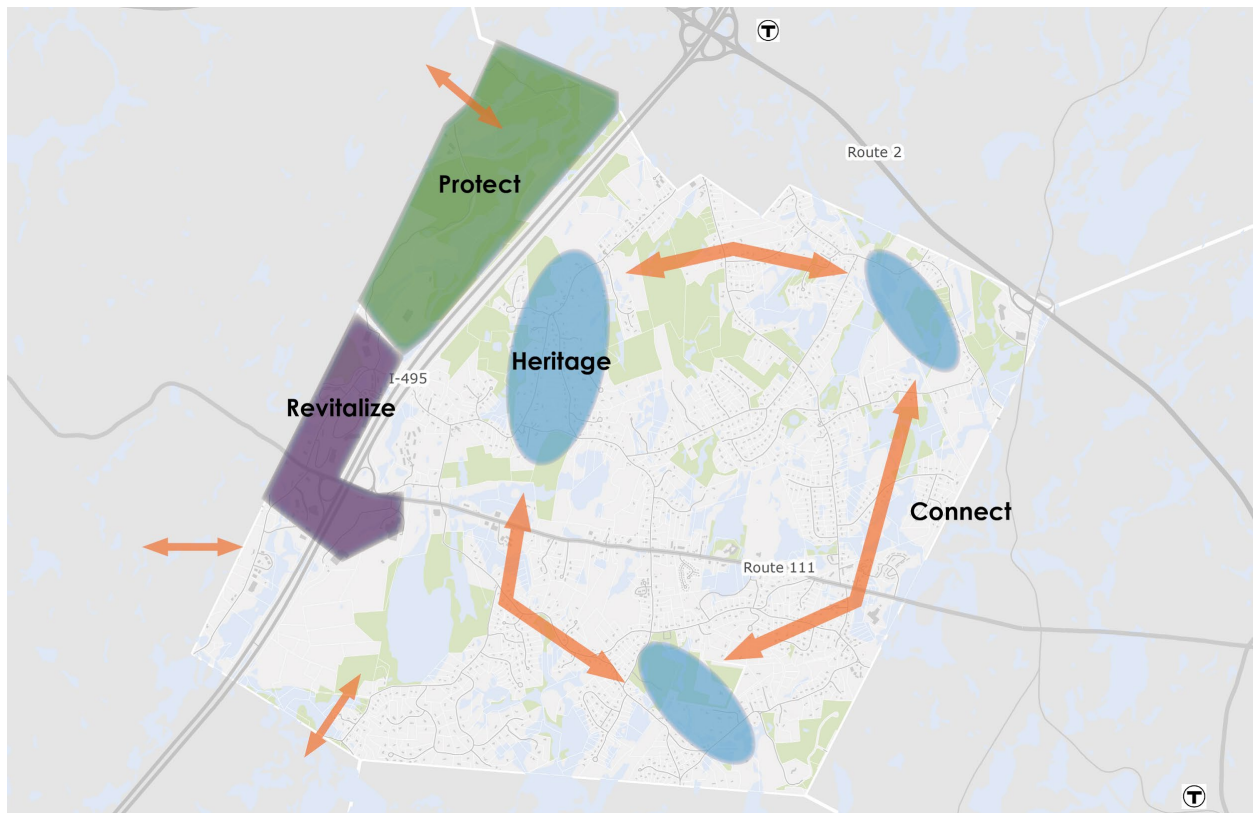
Agriculture, open space-related businesses, and community spaces emerges through zoning overlays in select locations around town, creating attractive destinations on an improved, connected, regional trail network. Land protection focused in the northwest corner of town preserves the high ecological value, limits the need for municipal services, and offers opportunities for education and recreation. Improving utility capacity and amending zoning where office park infrastructure already exists creates opportunities for new kinds of businesses, including facilities that support the regional food system. Using existing industrial capacity for agricultural food processing, storage/warehousing, and distribution facilitates a specialized, regional approach to economic development. New and improved quality-of-life amenities spread throughout Boxborough draw and retain a workforce for the revitalized office park.

This approach responds to themes in the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan that improve the quality of life and support environmental protection in Boxborough. This scenario diversifies, but does not maximize, commercial redevelopment. It does not focus economic activity in only one or two areas, but spreads economic opportunities more evenly throughout town. This scenario addresses qualities identified by seven goals stated in the master plan which have continued to garner support as evidenced in the 2019 Economic Development survey conducted in September. These desired goals are highlighted below:

Master Plan Goals

- Protect heritage, character, land, water, habitat, agriculture, recreation, trails & wildlife (1.1 + 1.2 + 1.3)
- Concentrate growth in Business park and foster participation in regional agricultural economy (3.1 + 3.2)
- Enhance quality of life services and pursue regional approach to open space and recreation (3.3 + 7.3)

Focus Areas



Map 10. Agricultural/Rural Scenario

Heritage

The three heritage focus areas are the central elements of this scenario. Their locations were selected because they contain viewsheds identified in the *Boxborough Open Space and Recreation Plan*, a high ratio of open space, land enrolled in the Chapter 61 (Agricultural) Current Use Tax Program, prime agricultural soils, and are close to historic assets (MAPC, 2015b). These areas are less constricted by water regulations, allowing more freedom to introduce businesses that require low-to-moderate water usage. Small natural heritage and agricultural lands are opportunities to grow community gardens or foster new small-scale agricultural, agritourism, and complementary small business opportunities. A small, but thriving, agricultural community can contribute to a regional local food system and take advantage of potential new storage and processing facilities in the existing Office Park zoning district.

Reducing restrictions on allowed uses and other requirements in the form of zoning accessory-use overlays allow the quality-of-life amenities Boxborough residents desire to establish themselves in the scenic parts of town. Accessory and small agribusiness uses that

align with Boxborough residents' interests may include farm stands, a country-store with a bakery, an event venue, or a cafe with local food products. More liberal permitted uses, achieved through a tool similar to Bolton's accessory-use bylaws may be needed to make this idea work.

Preservation of historical assets and promotion of new cultural assets also plays an integral role in the development of a unique local character in the Agricultural/Rural Heritage scenario. Increased support for historic building inventory, preservation, and historic tours would help preserve Boxborough's historic character. Meanwhile, greater support for arts could enliven the cultural amenities in town. While cultural events, funded in part by the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Commission, take place year-round, there are limited venues for events and affordable spaces for artists, performers, and makers (Sharon Garde, email communication, November 21, 2019). A community arts center or makerspace in a unique, rural Boxborough setting could support the town's existing artists and creative culture. Increasing support for the arts would further highlight the community as a unique destination in the region.

Development under the Agricultural/Rural Heritage scenario remains low-impact because it prioritizes adaptive reuse of existing buildings and design standards that reflect the historic character of the town. Permitting and zoning tools can incentivize restoration of existing unused buildings and adaptive reuse. Design guidelines, which currently exist only for the Town Center district, are a tool that can reinforce context-sensitive appearance of buildings.

Connect

This scenario proposes the creation of a more comprehensive network of trails by creating connections between existing trail systems, improving trailheads, and adding more ADA compliant trails. An improved network linking populated neighborhoods to economic destinations and other recreational opportunities both within and beyond Boxborough would improve quality of life for Boxborough residents and draw in others from the region.

Areas symbolized by the orange arrows illustrate opportunities for new or improved trails and trail connections. These opportunities include pedestrian-friendly road infrastructure and improved wayfinding that could cater to a variety of users, including equestrians, bikers, cross-country skiers, and users with limited mobility. Increased conservation spending would help to improve parks, trailheads amenities, and trail map resources, which would contribute to an improved experience for local residents and out-of-towners.

Out-of-town trail users could be attracted to Boxborough for the recreation-to-destination experiences throughout town. The *Boxborough2030* Master Plan survey found a desire within the community for places to stop while recreating in Boxborough: "There are so many people who bike, walk, & run on the roads of Boxborough it would be nice to have places to

stop and gather with other people or get a drink of water, or sit down for a moment” (MAPC, 2015a). An enhanced, regionally connected trail network linking unique destinations will improve upon existing recreational opportunities and complement a budding local rural- and agricultural-destinations economy supported by heritage focus areas.

Protect

This scenario proposes land protection focus area in the northwest corner of Boxborough to protect drinking water, preserve ecologically valuable areas, create recreational and educational amenities with regional draw, and limit the need to extend municipal services to outlying parts of town. The transition of the northwest corner of town west of I-495 to entirely open space aligns with the Sudbury Valley Trustees’ (SVT) regional High Ridge Initiative, which identifies the value and need for land protection in the area where Boxborough, Harvard, and Littleton meet:

The nearly 2,000 acres of land with high conservation value include important wildlife habitat, drinking water protection areas, miles of public trails, and working farms and orchards, which currently maintain a balance of ecological and economic functions. Development trends and climate change threaten this balance if we don’t act to protect it. (High Ridge Initiative, 2019).

Boxborough currently lacks large contiguous plots of conservation area making this an opportunity to provide an ecologically significant habitat for species migration and the State-recognized threatened species that live there. It is also the site of one of Boxborough’s largest water aquifers, making conservation a priority for the health of residents.

In a similar way to the focus areas for connectivity, the protected areas (shown in green) provides opportunity for recreation and nature-based education. There is currently a popular network of trails in and around the Beaver Brook Cisco Campus that can be expanded for passive recreation. Passive recreation opportunities have minimal impact on the surrounding environment and can come in the form of walking, hiking, biking, and even horse-back riding trails and can be implemented on the short-term timeframe. Active recreation sites such as sports fields, mountain/dirt bike “pump” tracks, a driving range, or an ice-skating track, and are developed more along the medium-term timeframe. The area could draw grant-funding and regional attention for education and recreation under the banner of the High Ridge Initiative and with trail connections to other towns participating in the Initiative.

If comprehensive protection was pursued, any utility expansion through this area would require an environmental impact study component as part of the feasibility study. These studies would allow for a more informed decision on how to best utilize this particular

section of town as open space including opportunities for passive recreation and specific conservation efforts.

Revitalize

This scenario identifies a two-step approach to economic development in the revitalization area (marked in purple). The first step of this approach involves the easing regulatory restrictions which limit potentially beneficial uses and lot size requirements. The second step would involve attracting businesses that support the agricultural and local food businesses in other parts of town and the region. These approaches would require the Town to consider municipal water solutions to reduce limitations introduced by well and septic systems.

The revitalization area focuses on adapting industrial and office park spaces to support a local and regional food economy. A shared commercial kitchen could support Boxborough and regional entrepreneurs interested in creating value-added products in business growth and commercial outreach. There are opportunities to take advantage of the office park for growing agricultural products. An emerging approach to specialty farming called aeroponics leverages low rent indoor facilities for year-round agricultural production. This technology could help reduce vacancies and encourage year-round agriculture economies with farmers' markets and produce for restaurants.

Proximity to I-495 and Rt. 2 opens distribution channels to niche markets in eastern Massachusetts and Boston. The MAGIC Agricultural Report (2014) states that the region does not have sufficient processing facilities for the over 200 farms within a 30-mile radius of Boxborough generating edible products such as dairy, fruit, honey, meat, and vegetables (Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, 2019). This scenario works to engage a larger community of specialty growers and farmers and fill the regional gap in food processing, warehousing, cold storage, and distribution services.



Opportunity for improving office park occupancy rates through indoor farming technologies like Aeroponics (Source: Towerfarms.com)

Implementation Process

The Rural/Agricultural Heritage scenario requires an improved water supply, especially to the Office Park districts, increased spending on open space and recreation amenities, a

market feasibility analysis for agribusiness, and changes to the zoning—especially in the Agricultural/Residential zoning district. Boxborough may struggle to make farming and agricultural tourism viable given the current lack of agricultural activity, and may struggle to distinguish itself from neighboring towns taking similar approaches. However, Boxborough has the potential to carve out its own unique place in the region by studying the market demand and thinking creatively about how to tackle the following implementation steps.

Short-Term (0-5 years)

- Conduct a municipal water supply study, as implementation of municipal water infrastructure is a long-term project and relevant issues should be understood early
- Conduct a market feasibility study for agricultural food processing, cold storage, and distribution
- Increase the Town's conservation spending to improve trails systems and road crossing infrastructure

Medium-Term (5-10 years)

- Establish overlay zoning districts for accessory uses in residential and agricultural properties that allow for on-site sales, more vehicle trips, and more liberal signage permitting
- Continue to protect viewsheds and incentivize adaptive reuse of historic structures
- Change Office Park zoning to support mixed-uses and accessory uses, such as restaurants, light manufacturing, indoor recreation, retail, and potentially apartment-style housing units
- Engage community organizations that support agriculture and conservation to foster a stronger sense of rural community identity and facilitate opportunities for collaboration on marketing and investment

Long-Term (10-15 years)

- Establish a Parks and Recreation Department to support strategic management of natural resources
- Formalize community spaces to promote social events, family recreational uses, and other programming

Challenges to Implementation

As with all scenarios, the shortage of clean water in the Office Park and Agricultural/Residential zoning districts for commercial and agricultural activity poses a

significant limitation. Understanding the agricultural economy also poses a set of challenges. First, market demand and viability of agricultural employment in the region is uncertain. An initial review of Bureau of Economic Analysis employment trends since 2001 shows the metropolitan statistical area that Boxborough is in as having lower levels of farm employment compared to the nation and to Massachusetts. However, the metro area has had more consistent periods of farm employment growth. The existing supply of agriculture supporting facilities for storage and processing is also unknown. Secondly, there is limited available contiguous land in Boxborough for establishing agriculture and agricultural-related businesses. This scenario emphasizes the accessory uses that celebrate rural heritage more than farming enterprises, but a lack of working farms does present a challenge to the development of agritourism. Finally, Boxborough is surrounded by towns with similar natural heritage and historical assets. Shaping Boxborough into a truly unique destination with regional draw would require a good understanding of regional trends and a strong investment in consistent branding and placemaking strategy. Overall, this scenario provides a means to improve quality of life amenities while building new industries at the local and regional level. The opportunity for success will require patience and persistence to reach its full potential.

Indicators

Traffic (2 out of 5)

This scenario would likely result in a mild increase in traffic as a result of increased weekend trips. The optional industrial growth would generate truck traffic; however, this would largely be limited to the west of I-495.

- Connecting the trail network would draw recreational users to the town's trail heads and any supporting small businesses, likely on the weekends
- Connecting residential areas to recreational opportunities would allow pedestrian access to recreational spaces and reduce the reliance on automobiles
- Potentially reusing the office park district for regional agriculture-related business would generate trips west of I-495

Connectivity (4 out of 5)

Greater focus on the internal connection of local trails and sidewalks, as well as the external regional connections to neighboring towns, would greatly improve connectivity.

- Expanding pedestrian and recreational opportunities by linking existing trails throughout the conservation and residential areas east of I-495 and to improve accessibility for all trail users

- An improved trail network would connect Boxborough residents and visitors from neighboring communities to recreation-to-destination experiences across town

New Construction (1 out of 5)

There would be little new construction because this scenario emphasizes the reuse of existing buildings. The creation of heritage sites may entail additional accessory uses.

- Encouraging adaptive reuse and prioritizing the filling of existing spaces would enable the growth of small businesses
- Allowing more accessory uses in strategic locations would encourage the types of businesses that Boxborough residents desire

Municipal Water Utilities (2 out of 5)

Although beneficial for robust agricultural-related industry development, municipal water investment is not necessary for the majority of concepts presented in this scenario.

- Municipal water is recommended to serve high intensity agricultural processing, but existing capacity at Cisco may be enough for low-intensity uses of the office park
- Utilizing the office park spaces which have existing water capacity would not require municipal water investment, unless there is substantial expansion

Fiscal Health (2 out of 5)

This scenario proposes a new leg of the local economy, consisting of small businesses, quality of life amenities, and agricultural food processing to diversify the tax base. This scenario may create a positive outlook for small business and creative reuse, but a study of the viability of an agricultural economy is required. Initial studies by MAPC (2014) identified a regional shortage for agricultural storage and processing. Employment trends in the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy Metropolitan Statistical Area show lower levels of farm employment compared to the nation and to Massachusetts; however, the area has had more consistent periods of farm employment growth (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019). These additions to the economy would encourage growth of the existing tax base by improving home values in heritage areas, drawing a larger workforce, and addressing office park vacancy rates.

- Adding recreational options, small businesses, and heritage areas would increase home values by enhancing the town's quality of life amenities
- Encouraging tourism through agriculture-related businesses would help to diversify the tax base
- Developing cold storage, community kitchen, and agriculture-related industrial facilities have the potential to support the region's existing agricultural network

Scenario III – Village Style



The third scenario explored for economic development in Boxborough focuses on village style development in two locations in town: the existing Town Center District, and a Village Green at Adams Place. In the 2019 Economic Development Survey, village style development is defined as “...small-scale, compact and walkable areas with wide sidewalks and a mix of uses, including residential, office, and commercial amenities, such as restaurants and retail”. Support for village style development was established in the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan, and echoed in the results of the 2019 Economic Development Survey.

The goals of village-style development in Boxborough are to primarily serve the needs of Boxborough residents, by providing dining and grocery amenities, community gathering spaces, and the preservation of historic assets. By locating the proposed village-style development at Adam’s Place, close to I-495, it is also expected that this development would receive visitation from commuters and workers at the nearby office parks. In this way,

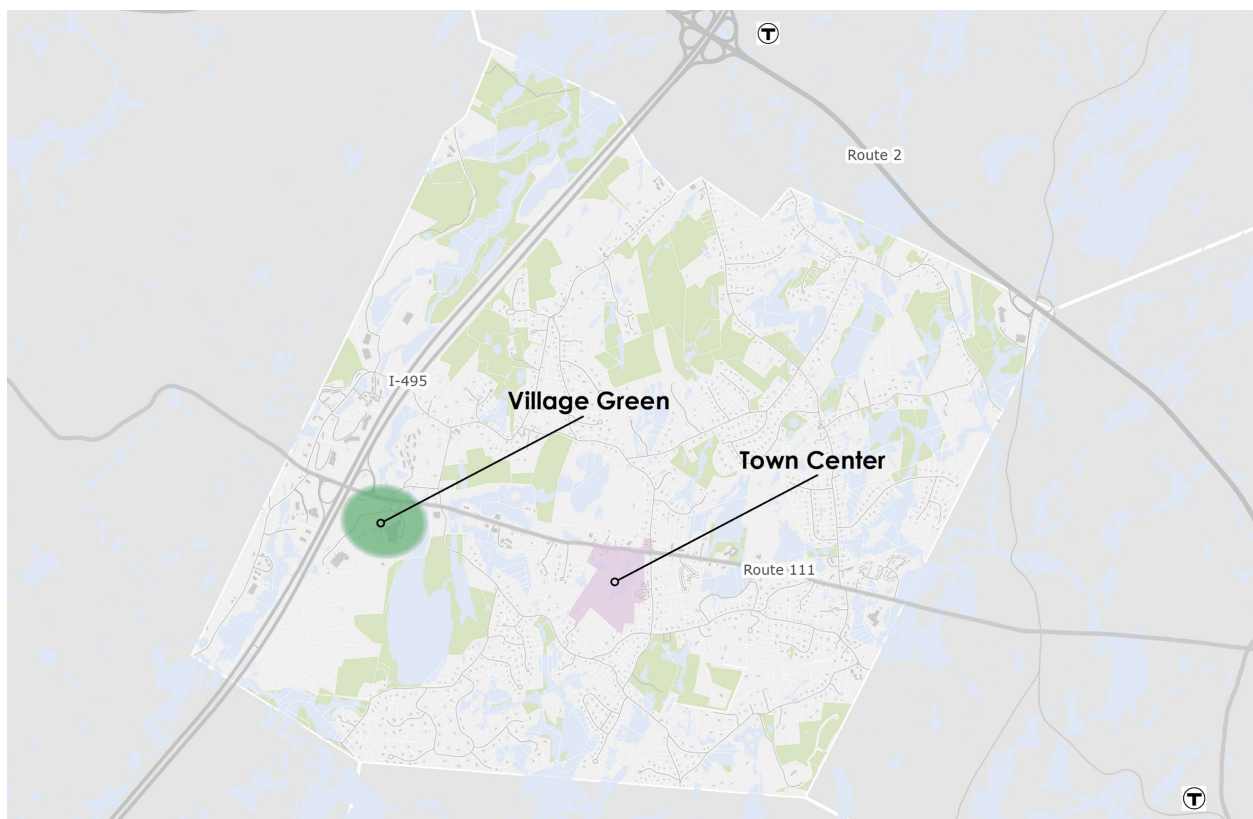
Boxborough can both reduce economic leakage and induce economic activity from the region. A current pattern of economic leakage is evident by the heat mapping activity in the 2019 Economic Development Survey.

The community gathering spaces were another identified need for the community - a place to come together that is not a home or a workplace, but a “third” place, where chance encounters occur and there is an opportunity to meet your neighbors.

Master Plan Goals

- Increase participation in town events and governance to reach greater consensus on the meaning of rural heritage and character, while creating social investment in its protection (1.1 + 1.2 + 2.2)
- Guide future commercial growth into the Business and Town Center Districts, attract amenities which enhance the quality of life for Boxborough residents (3.1 + 3.3)
- Maintain the existing quality of and allow for future expansion of municipal facilities and services (4.2)

Focus Areas



Map 11. Village Style Scenario

The locations for the Town Center and Village Green were selected based on environmental constraints, traffic considerations, and available land for development. The Village Green and Town Center are both located along Rt. 111, the main east-west corridor in Boxborough and the area with the most existing commercial and civic functions. Analysis demonstrated that the existing Town Center District likely could not support village-style development, due to wetland and wellhead buffers, the incoming Enclave housing development, and the historic nature of the buildings in this area. Therefore, this scenario outlines limiting new development in Town Center and focusing on the reuse of buildings to more civic and community functions. The Village Green is proposed for Adam's Place as a location to establish a more robust version of village style development.

Town Center District

Since the construction of the Church (1832) and Town Hall (1901), the 'Town Center (District)' has acted as the civic and cultural hub of Boxborough, connecting residents to police, the fire department, the library, and the elementary school. Given the existing business climate of Boxborough, the economic development of the 'Town Center' proves to be a critical point of interest; however, the constraints on development limit the viability of a large-scale economic development intervention there. To remain aligned with *Boxborough2030*, the results from the 2019 Survey, and the current uses of the area, this scenario proposes the 'Town Center' remain located in the current zoning district and allow for limited, controlled development and reuse of buildings toward civic and cultural purposes (e.g. cultural center, post office, historic preservation, etc.).

Village Green

The new Village Green will be located in the vicinity of the Adams Place property on Rt. 111. This proposal was modeled after the Lincoln Property Company's site plan for a village Green, including a municipal public safety building for Police and Fire. In addition, this development would feature small-scale commercial and dining amenities like a cafe, restaurant, and retail establishments. The intent for this development is that it would be self-sustaining, without the need for a large anchor tenant as found in the office parks and would instead be filled with small businesses. Due to the proposed location, there is an opportunity to tie into existing trail networks to the south and provide parking for hikers looking to access these trails.

Implementation Process

Achieving the proposals outlined in this scenario, the Village Green and Town Center, will require community engagement, updated zoning, outside investment, and possibly

increasing municipal water utility supplies. The challenges, approaches, and outcomes for each development proposal vary slightly based on their context, intensity, and intended use, however, there are common themes similar to both proposals.

Short-Term (0-5 years)

- Inventory vacant and/or historic buildings in Town Center
- Investigate utility expansion from Littleton and/or existing capacity at Adam's Place

Medium-Term (5-10 years)

- Implement form-based code in Town Center, restrict high-utility demanding uses
- Implement Village-Style overlay district along Rt. 111, allowing development of small-scale commercial
- Utility connections with Littleton or Adam's Place

Long-Term (10-15 years)

- Move public safety complex to Village Green development
- Develop a Community Cultural Building in Town Center

Challenges to Implementation

The challenges for village-style development include utility capacity and available land. Analysis of the available land in the Town Center District highlighted that wetland and wellhead buffers significantly reduce the amount of buildable land. Land availability is further hampered by the incoming Enclave development which occupies one of the last remaining undeveloped parcels in the Town Center district.

Water utilities are a major concern in Boxborough given that there is no municipal water and sewer serving the town. Any proposed development must factor in a plan for providing water and sewage, especially one that includes dining options which are water intensive. Regionally there are models of shared municipal services, where Boxborough could partner with a neighboring community or depending on demand look to utilize existing capacity at the office parks. Either option would likely require significant investment. Water utilities for Village Green present less of a challenge given there is likely additional capacity for water and sewer at the Adam's Place office park and this area is located closer to Littleton, providing the opportunity for utility expansion from this town.

Additional challenges for village-style development in Boxborough include the need to maintain the historical character of the town, which is a major asset. Boxborough residents are proud of the rural and historic character of the town, which is evident from the 2019

Economic Development survey and the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan. Village-style development would need to be designed in a way that maintains and enhances the vernacular architecture of historic New England and incorporates common green space, communal areas, and civic functions which were inherent to historic town and village centers. The challenge is to introduce new, modern amenities while harkening back to historic architecture and traditional village design.

Indicators

Traffic (3 out of 5)

- While the Village Green proposal will likely generate a modest increase in traffic, the location of the Village Green close to Interstate 495 means that fewer visitors will need to drive through Boxborough to reach their destination
- Proposed community and culture center in the center will slightly increase traffic

Connectivity (3 out of 5)

- The Village Green proposal ties into existing trail networks, providing a new destination and parking area for trail visitors
- Sidewalks are proposed within each of the new districts providing connectivity within the Town Center and Village Green
- Long term goal is for sidewalks along Rt. 111, providing connectivity
- A long-term goal is to provide shuttle service between the Town Center, Village Green, and MBTA stations, with a focus on serving seniors and the disabled

New Construction (3 out of 5)

- Village Green proposal constitutes a significant construction project and will require new construction of roughly 30,000 sq. ft. of commercial space

Municipal Water Utilities (3 out of 5)

- The Village Green development proposal will require investment in water and sewer utilities

Fiscal Health (4 out of 5)

- Significant improvement to fiscal health
- Adds a variety of small businesses, diversifying the tax base away from strictly residential

Scenario IV – Comprehensive Approach



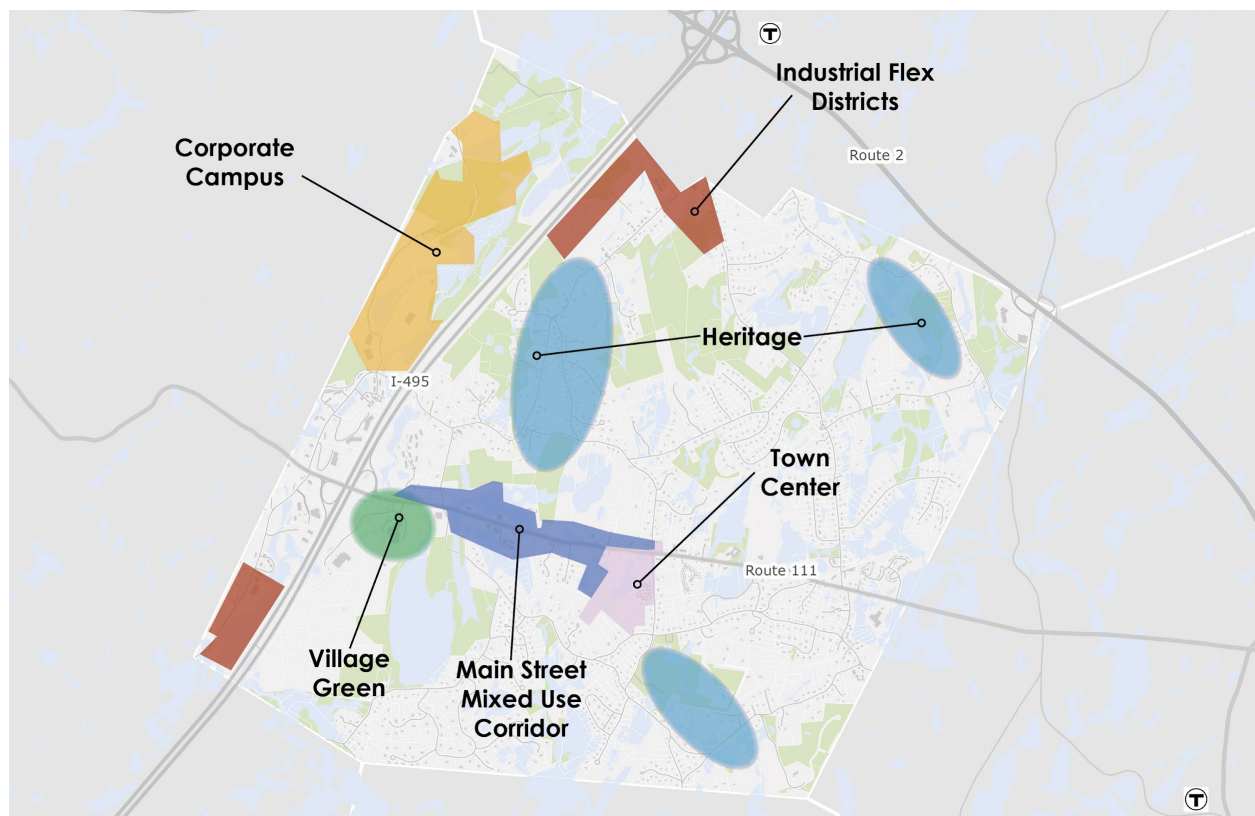
The fourth and final scenario explored for economic development in Boxborough expands on the previous two (Rural/Agricultural Heritage and Village Style) with the aim of reinvigorating existing commercial districts and diversifying the economy in order to attract and retain a 21st century workforce.

This scenario takes advantage of all of Boxborough's assets: the existing corporate campus infrastructure, proximity to I-495 and Rt. 2, and agricultural landscapes, while mediating between residents' desire for both economic development and protection of their rural heritage. This approach amplifies synergies between all districts to maximize efficiencies between them (see Figure 22. District Synergies Diagram).

Master Plan Goals

- Foster the business environment within Boxborough and seek to attract key existing and emerging industries to desired districts that support and diversify the Town's tax base and improve resident quality of life (3.1, 3.2 + 3.3)
- Improve accessibility of transportation options for all age and income groups, focused on regional partnerships and interconnection (7.1 + 7.2)
- Preserve the town's natural and historic scenic areas, regional open space and recreation areas, and the character of Boxborough's rural landscape (1.1, 1.2 + 7.3)

Focus Areas



Map 12. Comprehensive Approach Scenario

Route 111 Mixed-Use Corridor

The district aims to connect Adam's Place (Village Green) with the Town Center proposed by the Village Style scenario through the development of Rt. 111 into a vibrant commercial corridor. It encourages appropriately scaled business development, commercial amenities, and housing, which were identified as desirable by citizens through our surveys and the master planning process. The district invests in pedestrian and bike infrastructure aligned

with the MassDOT Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, and makes connections with other trail networks (see Map 13. Boxborough Complete Streets in Appendix A).

The Corridor will serve Boxborough residents by providing both workspaces, for the many home business owners in town, and third-spaces, like cafes and community gathering spaces for all residents. It will also serve agricultural businesses within town by providing small commercial spaces to sell local produce and goods. The location of the district, connecting to the Town Center from the west, maintains geographic disparity from West Acton Village, and will draw Boxborough residents that might otherwise look elsewhere for goods and services.

Corporate Mixed-Use Campus

The Scenario aims to fulfill the potential of the former Cisco campus by capitalizing on developable land and underutilized water capacity. In order to fill these office spaces for the long term, this Scenario envisions new buildings and renovations to existing ones in order to modernize work spaces and provide amenities that appeal to the 21st century workforce. The updated Corporate Campus will provide a mix of uses to residences as well as employees, such as restaurants, cafes and fitness options, as well as urban design decisions that appeal to young professionals. Multiple tenants should be pursued to fill campus vacancies rather than one anchor institution, that will make the district more resilient to economic uncertainty and prevent future large-scale vacancies.

If fully realized, the Corporate Campus will be well-positioned to serve both the town and the wider economic region. It also provides a strategy to eliminate existing tax abatements and provide steady tax revenue from more highly-valued commercial real estate. The Corporate Campus is well positioned in the region to attract employment sectors that have clustered along I-495, and provide quality jobs that will draw people to the Village Green residences (see Village Style Scenario) as well as Greater Boxborough.

Flex-Industrial Districts

The Flex-Industrial Districts address the existing Commercial/Industrial zones which keeps negative impacts from industrial uses to a minimum, allows for re-use of existing spaces, and capitalizes on warehouse infrastructure and proximity to the I-495 interchanges in Boxborough and Littleton. The current zoning will be updated to increase flexibility of uses, while heavily regulating nuisance, which will position these districts to accommodate industries of the future and remain productive and viable sources of tax revenues through market unpredictability.

Industrial uses will be encouraged that will serve the Town's other commercial districts. Research and Development, technology, and other innovation sectors that are well-served

by light industrial spaces will be encouraged in these districts, complementing industries that may locate in the Corporate Campus. Uses supporting the Rural/Agricultural districts will also be encouraged, such as vertical farming, agribusiness, cold storage, and distribution.

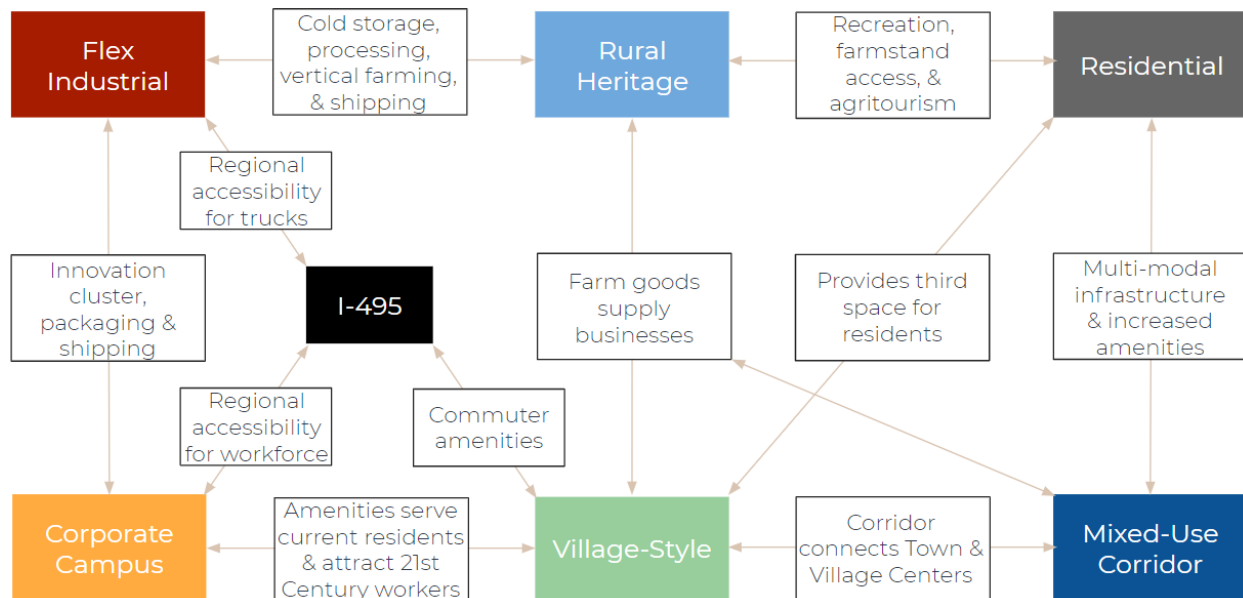


Figure 22. District Synergies Diagram (Source: UMass)

Implementation Process

Bringing this Scenario to life will require town-wide implementation strategies, carried out over the short, medium, and long-term.

Short-Term (0-5 years)

- All districts within the Scenario will require zoning changes to minimize dimensional and parking requirements to accommodate new development and make the Rt. 111 corridor walkable
- Mixed-use overlays in office park districts and along Rt. 111 specifically will encourage a mix of new, desired uses
- More streamlined permitting process to encourage new business development, which is currently a barrier for businesses that was highlighted by the Business Breakfast

Medium-Term (5-10 years)

- Develop a marketing strategy for the Corporate Campus and other commercial real-estate to generate interest in Boxborough's economic potential
- Explore municipal water partnerships with adjacent towns, particularly Littleton, which has considered a shared water district in the past
- Keep an eye towards emerging regional industries in the medium-term, ensuring that new businesses are part of sustainable trend

Long-Term (10-15 years)

- Maintain a balanced, appropriately-scaled economic base resilient to changing market forces.

District-Specific Implementation Strategies

The Scenario recommends the following measures to help realize the specific districts proposed in its comprehensive vision for the town.

Rt. 111 Mixed-Use Corridor

The first step in implementing the Mixed-Use Corridor is to revamp the zoning bylaws for Boxborough. The Town has already made progress by approving a zoning bylaw audit at the December 10th Special Town Meeting. The zoning audit will identify where the zoning bylaws are confusing, incomplete, or incongruent with implementing a Mixed-Use Corridor and moreover the vision of the Master Plan. Based on the zoning audit, the Town should rewrite the zoning to allow for a mixed-uses e.g. commercial first floor and residential on any additional floors. These changes can be done through an overlay district, or form-based code, whereby the aesthetics and physical form dictate the bylaws. In the zoning update, the Town should also consider loosening dimensional requirements, which will allow infill development and structures to be placed closer together and closer to the street to improve walkability. The Town should consider conducting an additional water feasibility study on the possibility of having municipal water/sewer along the Rt. 111 corridor.

The short to medium term goals for the Town will include implementing the MassDOT Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, which includes Rt. 111 and other pedestrian improvements (see Map 13. Boxborough Complete Streets Prioritization Plan in Appendix A). The Town should further invest in infrastructure that calms traffic, and consider the Complete Streets interventions to encourage cycling. Over time the Corridor will serve as a transit link between the developing Village Green and Town Center.

Corporate Mixed-Use Campus

In the short-term, the Town may consider exploring marketing strategies to catalyze private investments in the office park. The Town should take steps to improve consistency in permitting to streamline private developer negotiations and partnerships with the Town. The ongoing effort by the Economic Development Committee "[i]ndex commercial development opportunity sites for potential private acquisition, assembly, or development" (*Boxborough2030* Master Plan) is another critical step towards catalyzing investment in Beaver Brook and other sites.

The Scenario supports applying an overlay over office parks to allow mixed-use redevelopment including residential and specific commercial uses which support the main purpose of the zone (e.g., childcare, dry-cleaning, food and fitness). The overlay will improve the ability of the campus to attract and retain talent with an offering of urban amenities and transportation.

In the long term, the Town should continue ongoing resident engagement and explore how local businesses might be interested in sponsoring various municipal initiatives. Among these may be developing a shuttle service to serve the Corporate Campus through the CrossTown Connect Transportation Management Program (see Appendix C: Transportation Programs), which Boxborough could consider rejoining.

Beaver Brook Site

The on-site amenities available at Beaver Brook, an area of the Corporate Campus District, can currently support the development of the site. The area has 500,000 sq. ft. of potential commercial space between two sites. When reviewing development plans for the site, the Town can advocate for mixed-use development and represent resident preferences. Traffic impact studies can inform if a private-public partnership on transportation improvements relevant to Beaver Brook is necessary.

Continued public access to the open space on the site, including parking, should be incorporated into plans and permits for site improvement at Beaver Brook. Finding a developer who embraces the use of green infrastructure and progressive design standards is beneficial to modern corporate campuses, such as Toyota's HQ in Plano, TX., Recent research suggests a link between financial resiliency and green infrastructure for office parks.

This site was previously improved to become the Cisco Beaver Brook Campus by Société Générale Financial Corporation and Cisco Systems Sales and Services, Inc. after the Town of Boxborough agreed to reduce the sites' property tax bills by 15% over 20 years. If the office space market does not support filling the vacancy of Beaver Brook without financial incentives, then the Town may choose to again consider reduced tax rates, abatements, tax-

increment financing or district-improvement financing (see Appendix C: Financial Tools). Comparable tax break negotiations have been seen recently in Foxborough with Schneider Electric, in Maynard, with an abandoned mill site development, and in Canton with Spear Street Capital.

Depending on the financial tool, various steps and timeframes will be required to implement reduced taxes, TIF or DIF (see Table 3. Comparison of TIF and DIF Implementation). A discussion on the benefits and tradeoffs of these tools are discussed in the Existing Conditions and Financial Tools sections of this report.

Flex-Industrial Districts

The first step towards realizing the Flex-Industrial Districts is conducting an inventory of existing warehouse space and industrial properties to determine whether additional or upgraded space is required for desired uses. Subsequently, the Town should update the zoning bylaws of the Industrial/Commercial zones, or create special zoning districts within these zones, to further geographically delineate these areas. Given the similarity of these districts to existing zoning, these changes will be minor, but will allow for both light industrial uses with commerce-related activities.

Other necessary steps may include the installation of water infrastructure and constructing new highway on-ramps for industrial traffic, both of which may involve collaboration with adjacent towns. The northern Flex-Industrial District is adjacent to Littleton while the southern District is adjacent to Harvard. Either of these towns may benefit from the shipping capacity of these zones, and thus may be willing to participate in a joint investment. The on-ramps would further allow traffic generated by the Districts to remain isolated from Foxborough residential life.

An example of the possibilities for the Industrial Flex District is found in North Andover, located north of Foxborough along I-495. The Town voted to approve zoning amendments and extend a sewer line in June 2019, allowing for the development of an Amazon distribution warehouse that will employ up to 1,500 workers.

Indicators

The Comprehensive Approach Scenario is a culmination of all the previous scenarios and therefore has higher indicators than all the other scenarios. The following section discusses the reasons for these higher scores.

Traffic (4 out of 5)

- Traffic impacts from the Agricultural and Village Style scenarios' interventions, with the addition of traffic from warehouses and the Mixed-Use Corridor along Rt. 111
- Impacts of Commercial/Industrial traffic from the warehouses will be mitigated by their proximity to I-495 and Rt. 2
- Traffic impacts of the Mixed-Use Corridor will depend on the land uses chosen as the district develops, with certain uses generate more vehicle trips than others

Municipal Finance (5 out of 5)

- Additional obligations to maintain physical infrastructure for the municipality
- Tax abatements will terminate as vacancies are filled
- Tax revenue will increase as home values in Boxborough will be influenced by the quality of life improvements and job accessibility
- Town's municipal budget will rely less on residential taxes
- Local property values may be more resilient to changing taste and behavior due to increased diversity in land uses and amenities
- Jobs will increase, become more varied, and be more resilient to changes in markets

New Construction (4 out of 5)

- Envisions construction required for Village Green and Town Center districts along with infill development along Rt. 111 and build-out of the corporate campus
- New construction along the Mixed-Use Corridor will include accessory buildings that make better use of developable land within existing commercially-used parcels
- Additions may also take advantage of loosened dimensional requirements and less restrictive setbacks
- Warehouse space will utilize existing industrial building and may be expanded to accommodate increasing demand for industrial space

Municipal Water (4 out of 5)

- Expanding municipal water to allow for a diversity of businesses along Rt. 111
- Utilizes untapped water capacity at Cisco

Connectivity (5 out of 5)

- Number of connections made, transit options, and the linear feet of infrastructure
- Maximizes the level of connectivity, through linking trail networks, improving pedestrian and bike infrastructure, regional transit options, and wayfinding

Scenario Development Survey

Following the creation of the four scenarios discussed above, a survey was created to solicit feedback from the community on their perceptions about the scenarios in the context of their vision and economic development goals.

Survey Format

The Scenario Development Survey was conducted in two sections, the first section directly collected feedback on the individual scenarios and the second collected general demographic information. The demographic section was intended to provide context to responses and allow for comparison against the economic development survey conducted earlier.

The scenario portion of the survey was premised on three key issues: (1) whether or not the described scenario fits the character of Boxborough, (2) whether or not the respondent feels that the described scenario supports economic development, and (3) whether or not the described scenario aligns with the respondents' personal vision for Boxborough. Respondents scored each of the four scenarios for these key issues. Each of these three key issues was scored on scale, 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree, and 5 being strongly agree. Additionally, respondents were asked two open-ended questions per scenario: (1) what excites the respondent about the given scenario, and (2) what concerns the respondent about the given scenario.

Scenario Development Survey: Key Themes and Findings

The town has asked that this survey remains open through the end of 2019 when final results will be collected and disseminated to the town. At the time of analysis (December 2019) the preliminary survey results reveal that residents largely agree that the current course is not working, but there is little agreement on the scenario that most appropriately balances Boxborough's character, economic development, and individual visions (see Figure 23. Preliminary Survey Result: Scenario Preference Questions). Water, sewer, traffic, and environmental impact are identified as major concerns for all of the scenarios, excluding the baseline scenario.

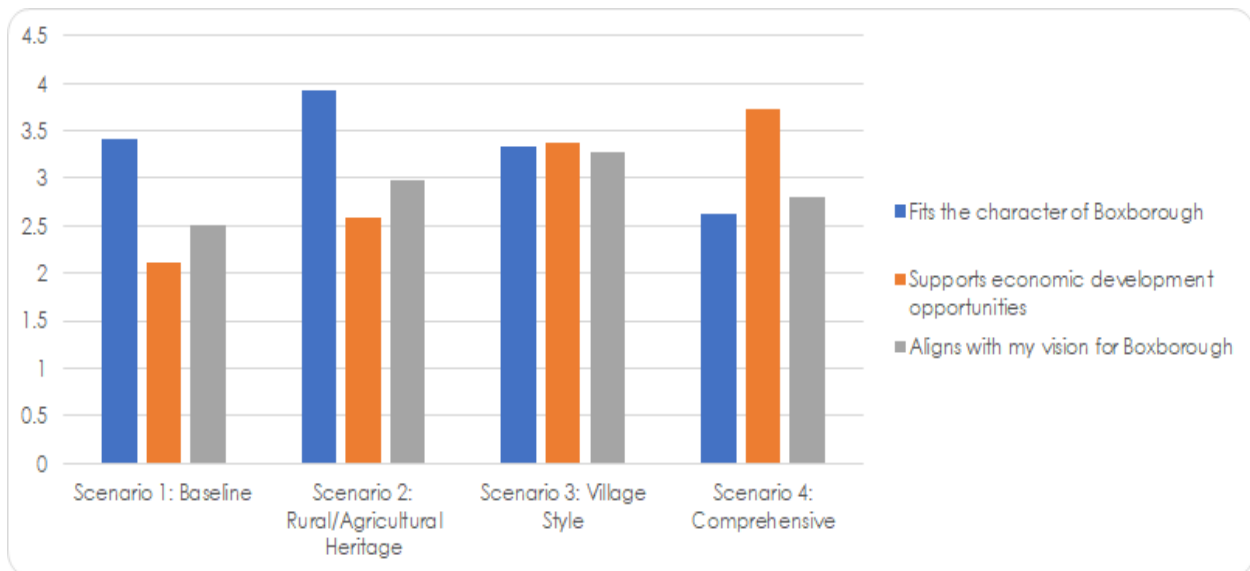


Figure 23. Preliminary Survey Result: Scenario Preference Questions
(Source: 2019 Scenario Development Survey Responses)

Residents also have ambiguous and conflicting views of Boxborough’s character, community vision, and town-appropriate economic development. The relationship between property taxes, municipal services, and long-term economic development is not well understood and should be further clarified to ensure informed decision making.

Conclusion

Boxborough is an engaged community pursuing thoughtful and sustainable economic development from a variety of perspectives. This approach is needed to address increasing office park vacancies, a shifting and vulnerable tax burden, and the lack of resident-desired amenities while balancing preservation of the community's rural heritage and character. The *Boxborough2030* Master Plan provides important direction and for balancing competing concerns and needs as the town furthers economic development. The research and technical assistance provided in this report support ongoing economic development planning efforts.

This study has identified enthusiasm for small-scale commercial amenities, revitalization of existing properties over new development, and village-style commercial development. However, some commercial amenities do not currently exist because their development has not been compatible with current zoning and physical constraints. Additional sewer capacity (Cisco and Regency) and possible municipal water infrastructure in western Boxborough may provide the opportunity to develop the kinds of amenities outlined in the *Boxborough2030* Master Plan. Ongoing zoning analysis, combined with the results of Phase 2 of this study, will inform which zoning changes, marketing and incentive strategies, and physical investments could be made to make the community's vision more possible.

The scenarios presented respond to the economic development needs of the community and the desires of the public as stated in the master plan and community engagement activities. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive and are designed to be exploratory and educational in nature. Preliminary responses to the scenarios indicate that residents largely agree that the current economic course is not working, but there is little agreement on which scenario most appropriately balances Boxborough's character, economic development, and individual visions. Residents feel that water, sewer, traffic, and environmental are a major barrier for all of the scenarios, excluding the baseline or current course scenario.

Conflicting opinions on where Boxborough should be and what the character of the community will continue to pose a challenge for future development planning. However, the existing conditions and the preliminary scenarios presented in this document should act as the new starting point for thoughtful economic development. These scenarios produce a spectrum of options to help define what economic development means for Boxborough. Phase 2 of this study will provide an opportunity for further engagement through a planning charrette and more detailed economic impact analysis.

Appendix



[Appendix A: Maps](#)

[Appendix B: Zoning SWOT Analysis](#)

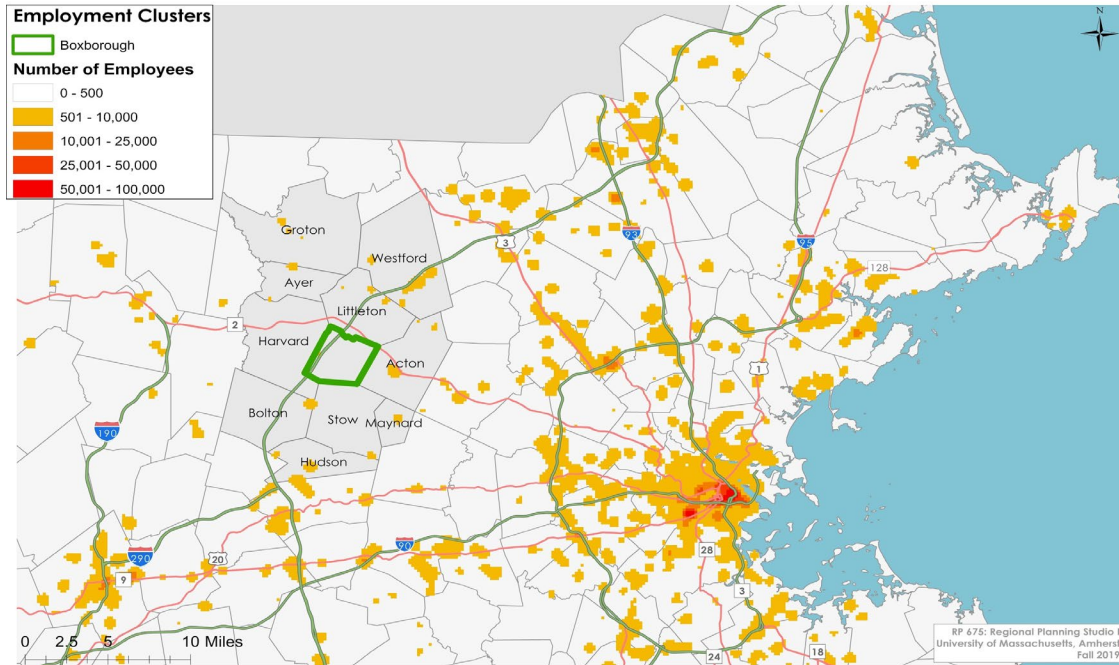
[Appendix C: Land Use Tools & Innovative Strategies](#)

[Appendix D: Regional Context & Case Studies](#)

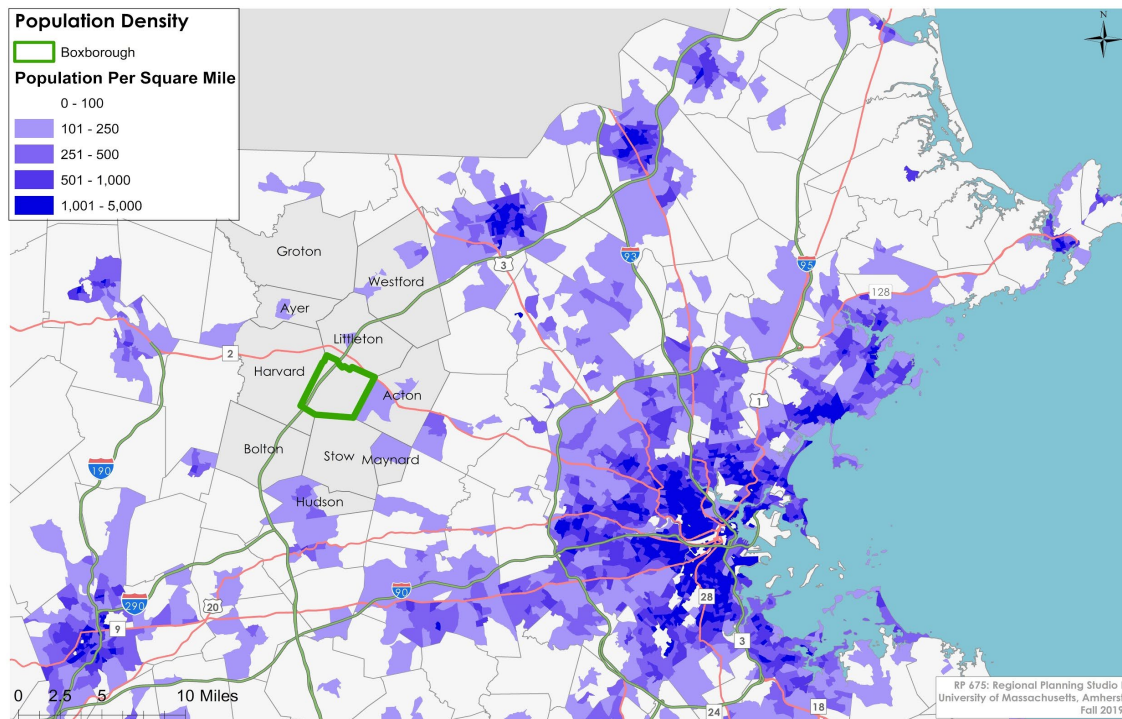
[Appendix E: References](#)

Appendix A: Maps

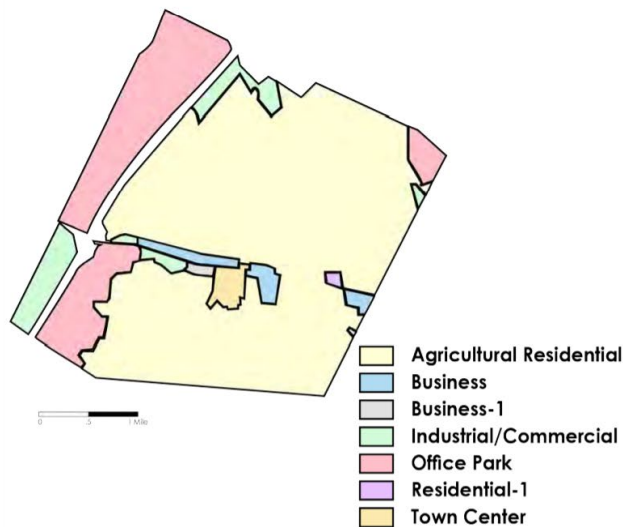
Map 1. Regional Context: Employment Clusters (Source: MA GIS and EOEEA)



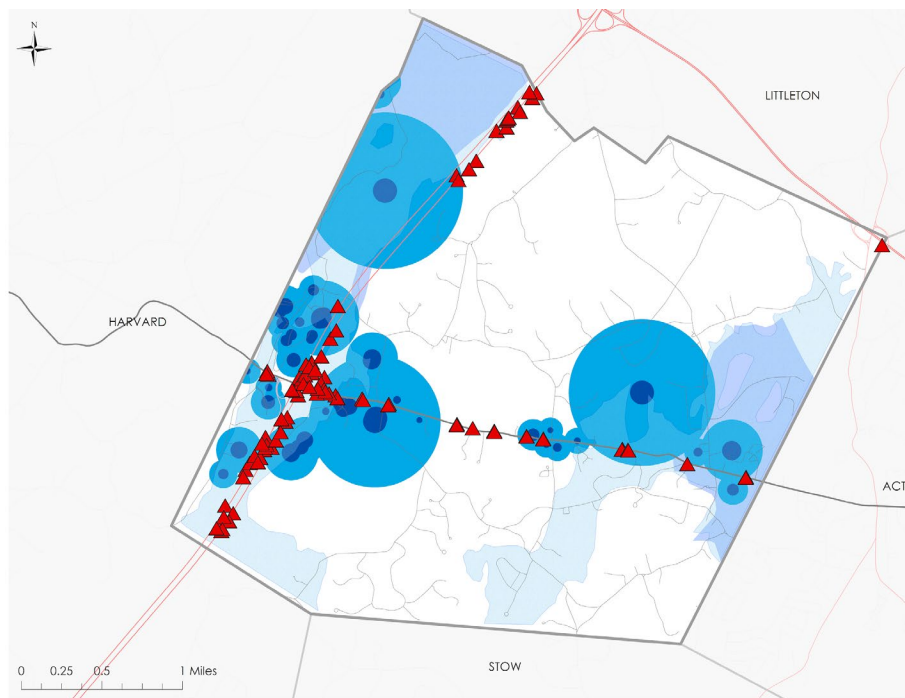
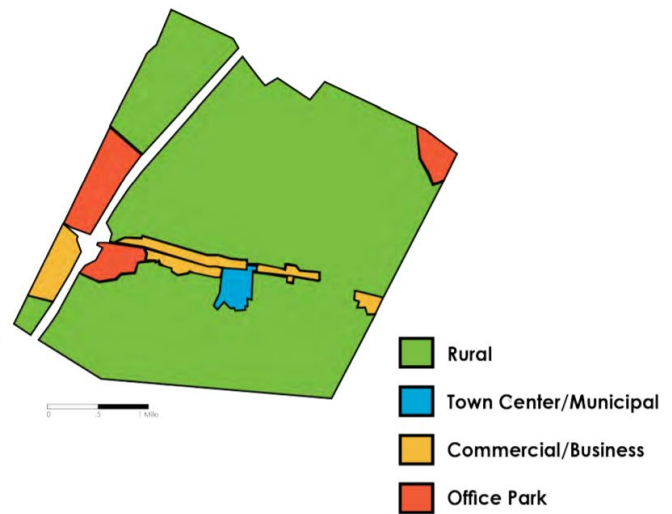
Map 2. Regional Context: Population Density (Source: MA GIS and EOEEA)



Map 3. Zoning Districts
(Source: Town of Boxborough)



Map 4. Land Use Patterns
(Source: visual analysis)

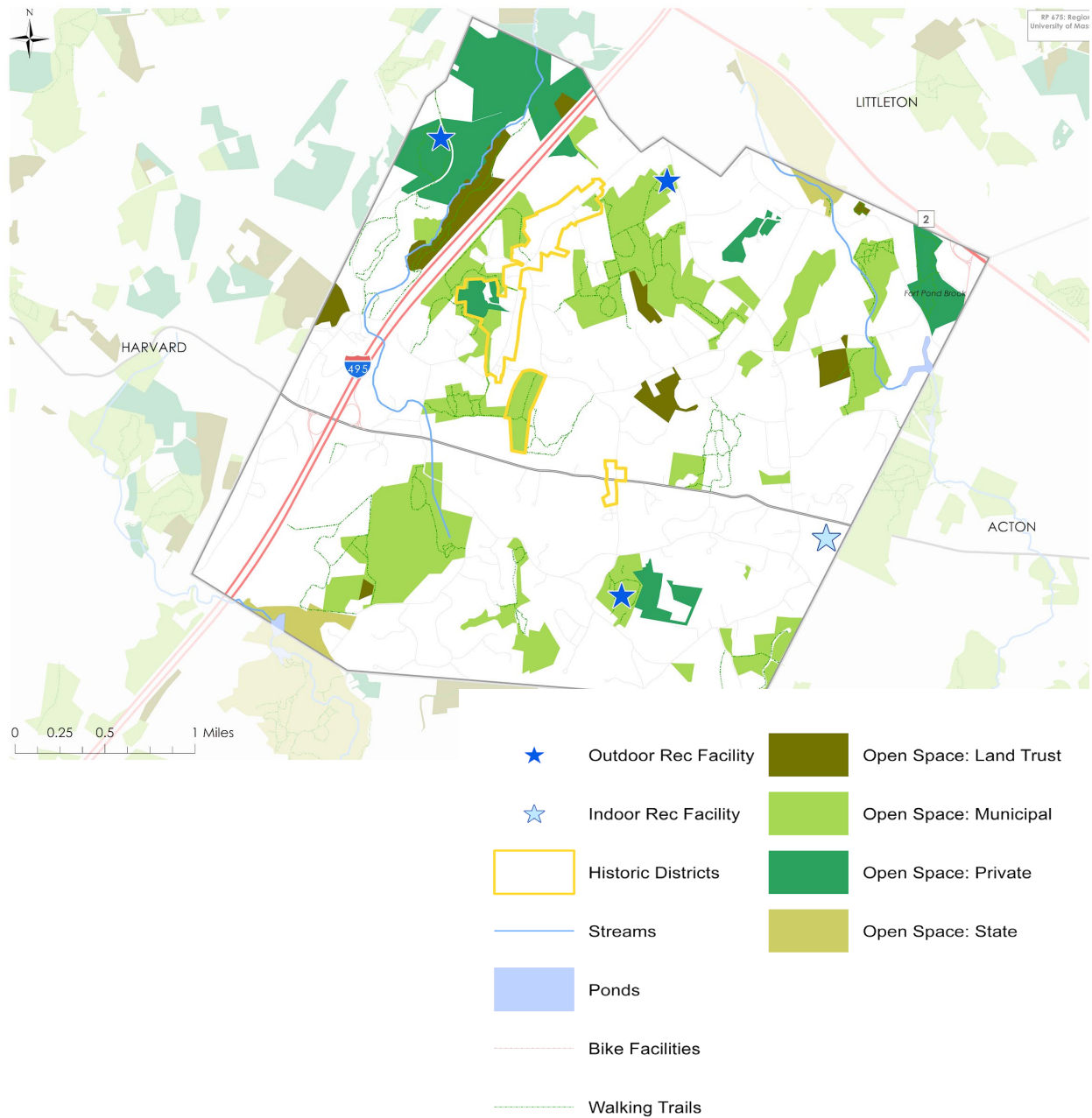


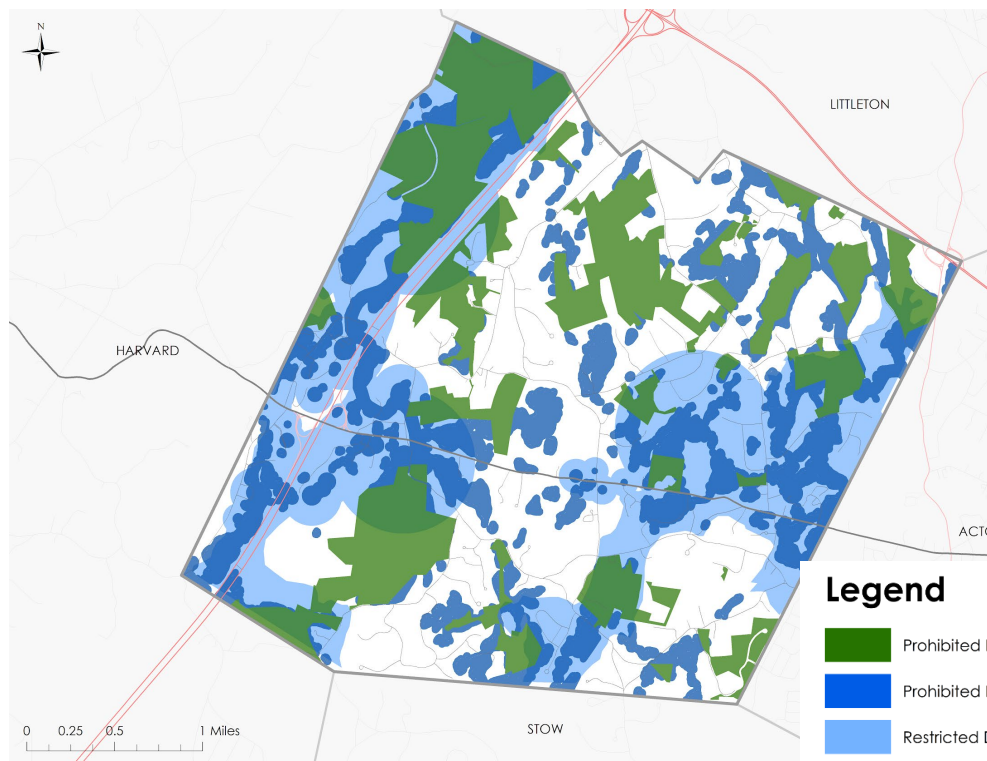
Map 5. Water Constraints & Stormwater Catchment Drain
(Source: MassGIS & Mass DEP)

Legend

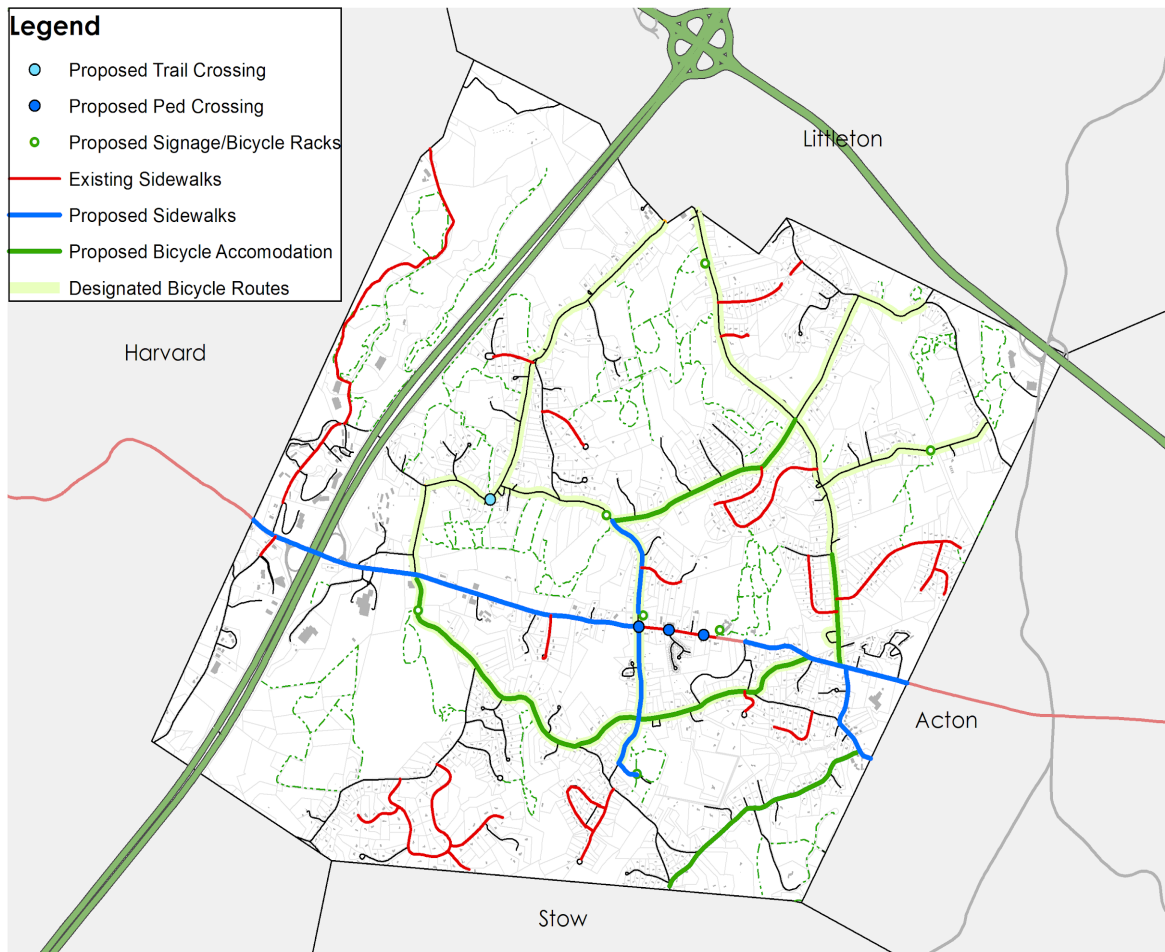
- ▲ MA DOT Storm Water Drain
- BoxboroughAquifers1980sMap
- Wellhead Protection Zone I
- Wellhead Protection Zone II
- Interim Wellhead Protection Areas

Map 6. Open Space, Recreation & Historic Resources
 (Source: Mass GIS, Town of Boxborough)





Map 13. Boxborough Complete Streets Prioritization Plan
(Source: MassDOT [digitized by UMass])



Appendix B: Zoning SWOT Analysis

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Appendix C: Land Use Tools & Innovative Strategies

Zoning

An overlay zone is a tool that can be used by municipalities to preserve the character of the town, keep historic buildings, or maintain natural resources. Overlay zones are placed over existing zoning, have additional requirements, and can be used in conjunction with other incentive strategies to encourage mixed-use and low-impact development, water conservation districts or incentive other desired land-use outcomes. Overlay zoning is used to encourage flexible parking requirements. Overlay zoning can be used on all four scenarios that we propose.

Incentive zoning is a reward-based procedure where developers are offered additional rights for meeting municipal development goals. This tool can be used to get public benefits like parks, sidewalks, municipal buildings, or housing units. It is a great tool for municipalities looking to change specific sites that can be used with other zoning tools, but can be difficult to get public support if they do not understand the process. Additionally, it is usually used for towns seeing significant development pressure and can be difficult to implement. No peer communities identified used incentive zoning.

Design guidelines can determine the character of a place as much as zoning requirements. Boxborough has design guidelines applicable to the Town Center area only, which controls facades, building openings, structure massing and spacing, placement and orientation of buildings within a lot, architectural details, materials and colors, roof slopes and shapes, signage, lighting, and landscaping. Master Plan Action 1.2.1.1 suggests review of these guidelines to ensure alignment with current community desires.

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Financial Tools

Tax abatements are a strategy to make a municipality a more attractive area to invest in, by increasing the returns for investors (Dalehite, Mikesell, & Zorn, 2005). They are a financial incentive tools used by municipalities where the property owner gets a temporary reduction or elimination in the taxes on eligible properties. The municipality creates and set the terms of the agreement. While a town may see development on a property or a zone that uses tax abatements, they are forgoing taxes on a property that may have been developed anyway. Property taxes are usually the lowest cost for businesses (see Figure 24. Input Costs as Share of Total Costs for Manufacturing). Tax abatements are generally not favored by tax-payers and Boxborough has had experience where a company was given an abatement, but because of the economy was unable to develop the property to the extent that they proposed. Giving out tax abatements should be cautioned that municipalities get into an incentive war, offering more and more tax abatements to businesses and further artificially decreasing tax rates (Kenyon, Langley, & Paquin, 2013). Furthermore, an analysis should be conducted to see if the loss in tax revenue is more than the cost of municipal services used by the business.

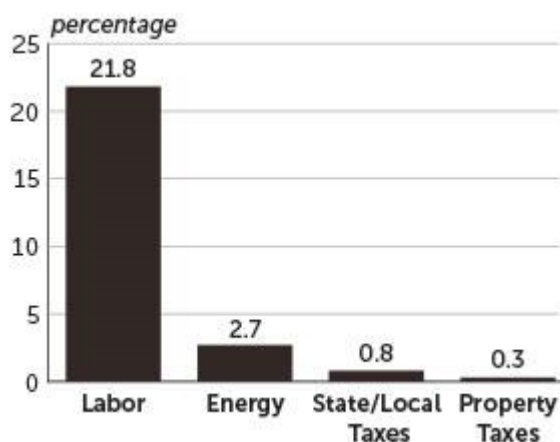


Figure 24. Input Costs as Share of Total Costs for the Manufacturing Sector, 2004-2009
(Source: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy)

Tax increment financing (TIF) is another financial tool that municipalities use to encourage development in a defined area, or tax increment district. It funnels any increase in tax revenues from a base rate in the TID into a fund to further develop the district through streetscape improvements, rehabilitating or demolishing structures, cleaning up brownfield sites, or investing in other job creating programs (Flint, 2019). The funding to pay for improvement is often paid for with the sale of bonds, and any gap in the revenue brought in by the TIF and the bond must be paid for by the city.

District improvement financing (DIF) is a tool that municipalities use to pledge a portion of their taxes to surrounding amenities within a district of their town. A development district can range from one parcel to 25% of a town's land. In Massachusetts, a "DIF is authorized by M.G.L.c. 40Q and its implementing regulations 402 CMR 3.00"(Mass.gov, 2019). To implement a TIF or DIF in Massachusetts requires a different implementation process (See

Table 3: DIF and TIF Comparison *(Source: Mass.gov)*

District Improvement Financing	Tax-Increment Financing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First designate a development district and a corresponding development program; the district must then be certified by the State Economic Assistance Coordinating Council. • District may be as small as one parcel or may comprise up to 25% of town land. • A district can be in effect for a maximum of 30 years. • Each district must have a unique development program; the program will identify the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Existing use & current zoning, ○ Proposed uses and any needed zoning change ○ Current and planned infrastructure ○ Any planned construction ○ A financial plan ○ Once a district and program have been certified, the city or town has the ability to use various tools to implement the program, among them: ○ (Re)constructing improvements (e.g. buildings, roads, schools) ○ Pledging tax increments and other project revenues for repayment of these debts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A municipality may enter into a TIF Agreement with a landowner for a max term of 20 years. • A TIF Zone must be in an area approved by the EACC as an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA) or found to be an area "presenting exceptional opportunities for economic development" by the Director of Economic Development. • A city or town must initiate a TIF by a vote of its governing body approving the TIF Plan, which must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of all construction activity • Projection of public and private costs and a betterment schedule for the defrayal of public costs ○ Authorization of a tax increment exemption from property taxes ○ Establishment of a maximum percentage of costs of public construction that can be recovered through betterments or special assessments against any parcel in the TIF zone eligible for exemptions ○ Identification of property owners in the TIF Zone ○ Executed Agreements between the city or town and each owner of property within the TIF zone ○ Delegation of authority to enter into development agreements

Potential Grant Funding Sources

There are a number of resources available annually through both the state of Massachusetts as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). These available resources are intended to support the rural and agricultural heritage of the community while providing needed investment into the conservation, recreational, and agricultural goals of Boxborough.

The following is a list of possible grants that Boxborough should be able to qualify for:

- Rural Community Development Initiative Grants (USDA)
- Conservation Assistance for Small Communities Grant Program (Mass)
- Housing Choice Capital Grant (Mass)
- Housing Choice Small Town Grant (Mass)
- Farm Viability Enhancement Program (Mass)
- Farmers Market Promotion Program (USDA)
- MassTrails Grants (Mass)
- Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity Grant Program (Mass)
- Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations Grant Program (Mass)
- Partnerships Matching Funds Program (Mass)

Other funding opportunities include the microloan program offered by the USDA. These specific loans are intended to support small and beginning farming endeavors as well as more non-traditional forms of agriculture such as aeroponic/hydroponic farming (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d). This model of aeroponic/hydroponic farming has been shown to be successful in nearby communities to Boxborough such as LittleLeaf Farms in Devens MA.

Another potential funding program offered by the USDA that could suit the needs of Boxborough and the surrounding region well is the “Farm to School” grant program. The purpose of this program is to improve access of local foods to schools (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d). Given the high regard given to the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, this program could further add to the strong reputation of the district while continuing to support the agricultural heritage of the community.

Transportation Programs

The Complete Streets program provides technical assistance and funding to support interventions aimed at planning, designing, operating, and maintaining streets to be safe for multi-modal forms of transit. MassDOT completed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan for Boxborough in September 2018.

MassDOT Workforce Transportation Program seeks to award up to \$4,580,000 of federal and state funds to new and/or existing projects that will provide workforce transportation service. Funding will be provided for targeted operating assistance, capital investment and/or the implementation of technology improvements that will benefit the transportation of workers. Priority will be given to projects that will result in new services and/or provide an innovative and sustainable approach to providing workforce transportation. MassDOT expects the average project award to be between \$100,000 and \$250,000.

The MassDOT Community Transit Grant Program is an annual competitive grant program to meet the mobility needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. Provides funds for the purchase of vehicles, mobility management activities, and operating costs. This includes the federal 5310 Program and the state Mobility Assistance Program (MAP).

The MassWorks Infrastructure Program is a competitive grant program that provides the largest and most flexible source of capital funds to municipalities and other eligible public entities for public infrastructure projects that support and accelerate housing production, spur private development, and create jobs throughout the Commonwealth.

The CrossTown Connect Transportation Management Association serves the residents and business sector of Acton, Boxborough, Concord, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury, and Westford. The programs and services are designed to reduce traffic, maximize local mobility options, coordinate transportation resources, and improve economic vitality while minimizing the impact of development. These include shuttle services for seniors and persons with disabilities, as well as commuter shuttles including the Cross Acton Transit Rail Shuttle, Maynard-Acton Commuter Shuttle, and Littleton-Westford Commuter Shuttle.

Appendix D: Regional Context & Case Studies

Regional Organizations

In 2008 the MAPC released *MetroFuture*, a 30-year regional master plan for Metro Boston. The plan outlines and expands on six key areas of focus: sustainable growth patterns, housing choices, community vitality, prosperity, transportation, and the environment. Along with these key elements, *MetroFuture* defines future priority areas for development and conservation throughout the region that builds on existing infrastructure and density. Included in this plan is a proposed transit corridor, which runs southeast to northwest through Boxborough, prioritizing multi-modal investments to improve circulation between Boxborough and neighboring towns. A large percentage of land in Boxborough is also identified as priority conservation areas due to significant environmental value, with a small portion of industrial commercial land west of I-495 identified as a priority development site (MAPC, 2008).

In 2014, the MAPC published a *Strategic Plan 2015-2020* which builds on *MetroFuture*, and defines the agency's priorities for 2015-2020 to further the comprehensive mission of "smart growth and regional collaboration." Priorities include transit-oriented development, funding and promoting regional collaborations, achieving greater equity through the inclusion of vulnerable populations in planning processes and improving access to services, and an aggressive approach to reducing GHG emissions and climate change preparedness (MAPC, 2014).

More locally, MAGIC released a *Fiscal Year 2020 Work Plan* with a mission statement of identifying and addressing common issues throughout the subregion through multi-town collaboration as well as to promote the MAPC's mission. Areas of focus include: age-friendly planning for housing and transportation, implementing microtransit pilots, developing climate response strategies, expanding energy-efficient transit service and alternative transportation infrastructure, water resource planning, increasing affordable housing, and economic development.

Transportation Master Plans

The MBTA's *Strategic Plan*, completed in 2017, details ten objectives and corresponding strategies to improve the current state of the MBTA and plan for the future. Priorities include expedited capital spending to bring the MBTA system to a state of good repair, increase affordability through implementation of the Automated Fare Collection system, reduce operating costs, redesign the bus network, and increase rider capacity for the core MBTA system.

Rail Vision is an MBTA planning initiative carried out from 2018-2019. Six alternatives to improve the commuter rail system were explored, from a lower-impact option of fleet expansion to a “full transformation” that would electrify the entire system with trips running every 15 minutes. Several alternatives propose express train routes, and identify “key stations” where these trains would stop. These scenarios identify Littleton/495 Station as a key station, where Littleton would be either the second or third stop on the Fitchburg Line from Boston’s North Station, and trains would run every 15 minutes all day long.

MassDOT, together with the MBTA, released *Focus40* in March of 2019, which is a capital investment plan for the MBTA through 2040 that will respond to future markets, climate change, technological innovations, and demographic shifts in the region. The *MBTA Strategic Plan* and *Go Boston 2030* provide the framework for *Focus40*, and guides all initiatives such as *Rail Vision*. The three pillars of the plan are reliability, robust service, and resiliency into the future. MassDOT is working to identify “Priority Places” to focus investments, developing connections to other forms of transit, and considering infill stations between existing stations as well as relocating station connections to maximize and increase regional system connectivity.

Regional Commuting Patterns

The following table shows the origins of Boxborough employees and the employment destinations for Boxborough resident.

Commuting Origins	Count	Share	Commuting Destinations	Count	Share
Acton	227	5.3%	Boston	317	11.2%
Lowell	190	4.5%	Acton	245	8.6%
Boxborough	141	3.3%	Cambridge	193	6.8%
Boston	130	3.1%	Boxborough	141	5.0%
Nashua	117	2.8%	Concord	125	4.4%
Westford	90	2.1%	Burlington	120	4.2%
Worcester	88	2.1%	Waltham	92	3.2%
Waltham	84	2.0%	Littleton	67	2.4%
Chelmsford	81	1.9%	Marlborough	67	2.4%
Hudson	81	1.9%	Westford	64	2.3%
All Other Locations	3,023	71.1%	All Other Locations	1,408	49.6%
Total	4,252		Total	2,839	

Table 4: Commuting Pattern (Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap 2019)

Complete Case Study Analysis

Harvard

Type of Development: Town Center/Downtown

Points of Comparison:

- Identifies with rural character
- Suffers from “economic leakage” with dollars spent outside of the community

Harvard is Boxborough’s neighbor to the west and has a comparable population and size of economic base. Similar to Boxborough, Harvard suffers from “economic leakage,” whereby dollars are spent outside the community and has identified economic development as a

solution to this issue. Currently, its economic activity is mainly concentrated in Devens, an economic enterprise zone shared by Harvard and adjacent towns. Harvard is otherwise rural in character. They are considering forming an Economic Development Corporation which would raise funds for grants for small business development.

Harvard intends to develop their town center with a town center overlay, included in their 2016 Master Plan, which suggested utilizing a Mixed-Use Commercial Overlay District which would encourage appropriate uses by special permit such as restaurants, small markets, bookstores, cafes, and apartments above shops (Town of Harvard, 2016). They are also considering a form-based code for the district which would preserve their center's rural character, historic charm, and important viewsheds. In order to preserve the rural character throughout town, they proposed a Rural Life Permit which would have allowed for limited commercial activity on residential-agricultural land. It was voted down by the public.

Groton

Type of Development: Town Center/downtown

Points of Comparison:

- Identifies with rural character

Groton is located to the north of Boxborough and Littleton. It has twice the population but approximately the same size employment. Groton has seen some success in the development of their town center through the designation of a Town Center Overlay District in 2008. Aside from the Town Center district, Groton has a more rural settlement pattern.

Groton favors LEED certified developments in the overlay district, requires contributions to public space enhancements, and the use of low-impact development techniques. The overlay promotes a variety of uses, particularly retail, and pedestrian circulation. Emphasizing the public realm is a main focus of the district, which they hope to accomplish through creation of additional civic spaces, small building setback requirements, bike lanes, street furniture, and tree lined streets.

Since the adoption of the overlay, two significant developments have occurred in the town center. First, a mixed-use, village style housing development, which the Town planner Takashi Tada says has complemented the rural character of the town center. The second is an example of adaptive reuse, which is encouraged by the Town Center Overlay District, where a historic, unused fire house was converted into a restaurant.

Littleton

Type of Development: Business Corridor

Points of Comparison:

- Identifies with rural character
- No public water and sewer

Littleton borders Boxborough to the north and has similarly rural development patterns in much of the town. A major asset is Littleton's commuter rail station, which makes Littleton more accessible to Boston and the surrounding region by public transportation. They are currently working to expand commercial districts, particularly addressing the Beaver Brook area and Littleton Common.

Littleton created the Littleton Common Village District in 2010 which allows mixed-use development by special permit. This encourages the re-use of existing structures, design guidelines to maintain village character, and promotes residential development. Littleton has also funded a feasibility study and design for the Littleton Common Smart Sewer Project to address the lack of public sewer and water which has been an impediment to development. The study and design will be funded by Littleton, which voted to borrow \$2.2-million, and a MassWorks grant of \$1.5-million. The system is localized and will serve around 180 properties in the area. The sewer will allow for new uses such as restaurants, discourage sprawl, address water contamination issues, and greatly reduce environmental impacts. The system will cost \$27 million and will be paid for through user connection fees (Littleton, Massachusetts, n.d).

Bolton

Type of Development: Agricultural/Rural

Points of Comparison:

- Identifies with rural character
- No public water and sewer
- Office park vacancies

Like Boxborough, Bolton is a small town along the I-495 corridor with a population of less than 6,000 and has primarily single-family housing stock. The town identifies strongly with its rural heritage, and has a large percentage of agricultural lands and many working family farms. Bolton has guided economic development to enhance rural character through the Accessory Use Agricultural/Business Bylaw, which allows accessory uses on agricultural lands, such as retail of farm products and crafts, agritourism businesses, hosting and staging events, and food services. Bolton is best known for Nashoba Winery, which has a distillery, brewery, restaurant, vineyard, and orchard on site and has become a statewide tourist attraction. Like Boxborough, Bolton lacks public sewer and water which has challenged development, though a tactic used by the Town has been to offer cheaper land and lower

taxes to incoming food service businesses in an attempt to offset some of the higher cost associated with a septic system.

Bolton currently has vacant office buildings that have sat empty for the last 10 years. According to their Town planner, Erica Uriarte, the Town is currently in negotiations with a marijuana manufacturing company who wishes to purchase this land. The Town has encouraged this through bylaw that allows this use by special permit, and are looking past traditional office spaces and tenants to fill other vacancies (Erica Uriarte, personal communication, October 9, 2019).

Marlborough

Type of Development: Office park revitalization

Points of Comparison:

- Office park vacancies

Like Boxborough, Marlborough recently faced high vacancy rates in several of their office parks and has become regionally known for their success in revitalizing many of them. After Fidelity and HP both left the city in 2007, Marlborough decided to take a more active approach to redevelopment. The city applied a Mixed Use Overlay to the Industrial and Limited Industrial Districts to encourage small businesses and amenities in office parks. They also designated these districts as Local Expedited Permitting and Development sites and TIF zones to streamline the permitting process and guarantee TIFs to businesses willing to relocate in these districts, which is a financial incentive commonly used by Marlborough.

Marlborough Hills Corporate Campus is one example of the city's revitalized, mixed-use office parks, now home to GE Life Sciences, Quest Diagnostic, Whole Foods Headquarters, Wegmans, TJX, and Boston Scientific. Both GE and TJX took advantage of TIFs. Office buildings were either renovated or rebuilt in order to provide modern workspaces for incoming corporations. The campus features a residential component, childcare facilities, and other modern amenities. In September 2019, the city launched a year-long free shuttle bus pilot from Marlborough's office parks to the Southborough MBTA station, financed by the city and state, to make themselves more accessible to the regional workforce.

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BOXBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STUDY

Phase 2 Technical Memo

December 2020

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
A. Background.....	3
Phase I: Existing Conditions and Development Scenarios	3
Phase II: Scenario Evaluation	5
B. Scenario Evaluation Survey.....	7
Background and Summary.....	7
Survey Design.....	8
Results	8
Summary, caveats, and conclusions	17
C. Market Analysis	19
Purpose and Scope.....	19
Methods and Data.....	23
Supply / Demand Analysis.....	25
Summary and conclusions	44
D. Community Discussion Forums.....	46
E. Recommended Actions.....	52
F. Appendices.....	53
Appendix A. Scenario Infographics (from survey)	53
Appendix B. Survey Response Distributions.....	55
Appendix C: Location Maps for Existing Businesses.....	57
Appendix D: Supply/Demand Analysis, Data Tables.....	60
Appendix E: Breakout Room (BR) Summaries, Community Discussion Forum #1.....	62
Appendix F: References	69

Figures

Figure 1: Phase I, Project Timeline.....	3
Figure 2: Phase II, Project Timeline.....	6
Figure 3: Age Profile of Survey Respondents compared to U.S. Census Bureau Estimates	9
Figure 4: Live and/or work in Boxborough.....	9
Figure 5: Length of residency, in years.....	10
Figure 6: Intentions to move from or stay in Boxborough.....	10
Figure 7: Average Scenario Evaluation Scores.....	11
Figure 8: Average scenario preferences by respondent age	16
Figure 9: Average scenario preferences by length of residence	16
Figure 10: Average scenario preferences by future moving plans	17
Figure 11: Boxborough Village Market Areas, Local and Regional.....	24
Figure 12: 21 st Century Office Park Market Areas, Local and Regional.....	24
Figure 13: Household expenditures in the regional market area (2019)	27
Figure 14: Household expenditures in the local market area (2019)	27
Figure 15: Market potential, Commodity Basis.....	29
Figure 16: Market Potential, Industry Basis	31
Figure 17: Potential Room for New Businesses	32
Figure 18: Artists' Visualization of Hub RTP	35
Figure 19: Inventory of Office Space, 1998 to 2020.....	36
Figure 20: Vacancy Rates, 1 st Quarter 2008 to 2 nd Quarter 2020.....	37
Figure 21: Net Absorption, 2008 to 2020 (2 nd Qtr).....	38
Figure 22: Gross Leasing Rates (Rent) in Office Space, per sq ft.....	39
Figure 23: Age Profile of the Resident Population, Current and Future	41
Figure 24: Location of Senior Living Facilities in the Region.....	43
Figure 25: Promotional Flyer for the Community Discussion Forums.....	46

Executive Summary

The Town of Boxborough's Economic Development Committee (EDC) contracted with the Center for Economic Development at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to produce an economic development study. Phase II began in January of 2020 and provides a deeper evaluation of the development scenarios proposed at the completion of Phase I, involving four key components:

1. Summarize the results from a survey of citizen preferences on the Phase I scenarios.
2. Produce a series of "vignettes" to explain the key elements of the different scenarios to the public.
3. Assess the potential market demand for specific office, retail, and other commercial activities discussed in the Phase I scenarios.
4. Convene two 'virtual' community discussion sessions to identify town-wide development priorities and possible short-term actions.

The citizen preference survey identified an overall preference for village-style commercial development and for supporting agricultural-focused businesses that align with Boxborough's rural character. However, the inherently unrepresentative nature of internet surveys and relatively low response rates should warn against reading too deeply into the findings.

The market/demand supply analysis finds sufficient untapped demand for a variety of small-scale commerce. There seems to be sufficient demand for a full-service/family-style restaurant or a brewery that might potentially anchor a village-style retail center—assume some return to a pre-COVID normality. The suburban office market remains highly uncertain, caught between offsetting post-pandemic trends of urban office exodus and remote work reducing the overall demand for office space. Regardless, it is likely that successful office parks of the future will be those that can flexibly adapt to meet the varied demands of different businesses requiring a smaller footprint and a variety of needs, while attracting workers and employers with on-site food and entertainment options, and other recreational amenities.

The two virtual discussion forums were very successful, together attracting more than 130 community participants. The attendees outlined four town-wide priorities:

1. Protect and build-upon rural character
2. Encourage a village-style retail center and commons
3. Support re-use of vacant office parks
4. Update zoning bylaws

The overall tone was to proceed deliberately and with due caution, so that the community can maintain its rural character while recognizing a need to adapt the current by-laws as to not dissuade desired forms of commercial activity. Whenever possible the community should favor reuse of already developed sites and small-scale development.

Reflecting on the entirety of the study, the three principal investigators (Barchers, Mullins and Renski) concluded by offering a list of near-term suggestions and actions. These recommendations include:

- Form a task force to revise Boxborough's zoning bylaws, particularly those pertaining to Office Parks and Town Center districts. Revisions should also allow for village zoning, special permit granting authority, and design controls.
- Invite representatives (such as zoning board members) from other communities to review Boxborough's zoning and make recommendations.
- Consider offering density bonuses and/or other incentives to entice development consistent with the community's vision.
- Ease parking and set-back requirements for the office parks to accommodate mixed-uses.
- Create ad-hoc focus-groups comprised of representative to from the EDC, Planning board, and other community governance boards to develop recommendations for office park redevelopment and agricultural business support, to name a few.
- Continue outreach efforts and encourage community involvement with more a periodic series of events.

A. Background

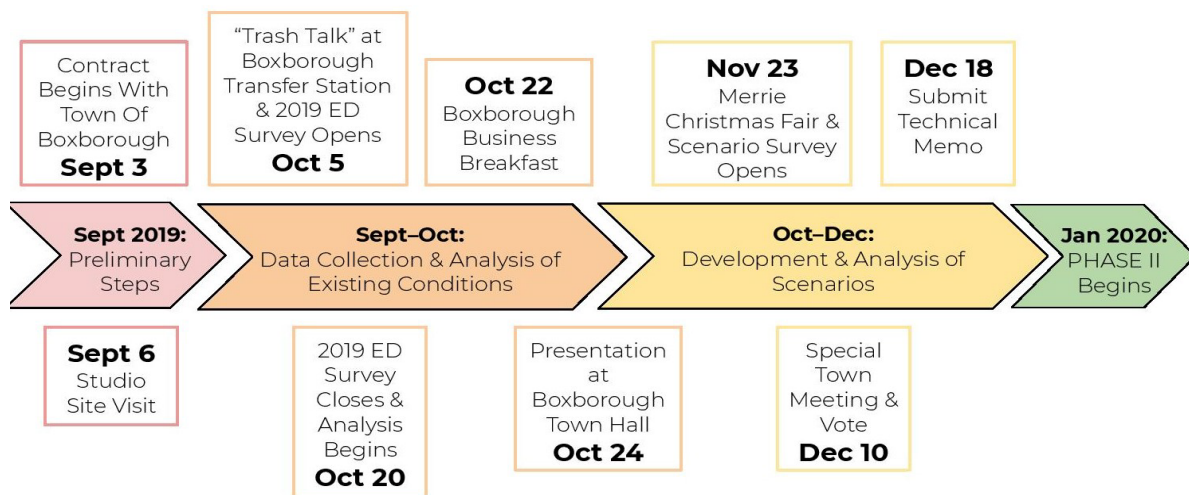
The Town of Boxborough faces many challenges as it attempts to adapt to a quickly changing and uncertain economy. The Town saw significant growth in high-tech companies from the 1990s through 2012, most notable as the home of Cisco’s East Coast Headquarters. However, like many communities on the urban fringe, a long-term trend of locating industry and tech sectors in urban areas has strained the community and left many of its office park areas underutilized and a tax base increasingly supported by residents. Coupled with rising costs, infrastructure constraints, a growing residential population, and concerns that the Town lacks in local shopping options and common space, Boxborough set about developing an economic development strategy in conjunction with the priorities set in its *Boxborough2030* master plan.

In the summer of 2019, members of Boxborough Economic Development committee approached the University of Massachusetts Amherst Center for Economic Development to assist with much of the analytical work necessary for advancing a long-term Economic Development plan. The project consists of two distinct phases, beginning at the start of September of 2019 and ending in August of 2020.

Phase I: Existing Conditions and Development Scenarios

The first phase began in September 2019 and was completed in December of 2019 (Figure 1). It was carried out by the students of the Fall 2019 LARP graduate planning studio under the supervision of Dr. Camille Barchers.

Figure 1: Phase I, Project Timeline



The existing conditions study was designed to supplement and complement the work begun in the Vision 2030 process by focusing specifically on economic development conditions and needs that were not adequately addressed. In particular, the work of the studio included:

1. A review of recent town and regional plans, reports, and related documents including data and notes from past meetings and charrettes to better understand community goals within the context of regional priorities, and to identify existing information gaps and data needs.
2. Online surveys, multiple site visits, and in-person interviews with key town personnel and stakeholders to establish development priorities and determine their thoughts and perspectives on the alternate development scenarios.
3. A business breakfast co-hosted with the EDC to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats among the local business community in Boxborough. This included a follow-up survey for business owners in Boxborough.
4. Preparing and summarizing several case studies profiling revitalized suburban office parks and town center/commons-style mixed-use developments in similar communities.
5. A preliminary review of zoning codes and other regulations as they pertain to economic development.
6. An assessment of current town regulations to determine if they are consistent with the preferred scenarios and identify other potential impediments to growth.

The final deliverables of the Fall 2019 studio included a report, a public presentation, and a series of informative 'story maps' walking viewers through the findings. The final report includes a summary of how each scenario capitalizes on the community's existing strengths, possible liabilities and caveats, their relative feasibility, and an initial assessment of the steps necessary to advance each option. The some of the primary conclusions from Phase I are:

1. Residents have enthusiasm for small-scale commercial amenities that prioritizes the revitalization of existing properties over new development and emulates "village-style" forms of commercial development.
2. Boxborough's tax base is vulnerable due to loss of commercial tax revenue and limited land diversity, putting increasing pressure on the residential tax base
3. Current zoning is incompatible with the Boxborough2030 Master Plan vision for village style development, office park revitalization, and preservation of rural heritage
4. Physical constraints (hydrological, geographic, and utility) limit new development, but existing capacity (Cisco and Adams Place / 1414 Mass Ave.) may provide an opportunity to develop the kinds of amenities outlined in the Boxborough2030 Master Plan.

The studio then proposed four alternate development scenarios for Boxborough residents to consider, including those calling for a re-imagined office park and town center/commons

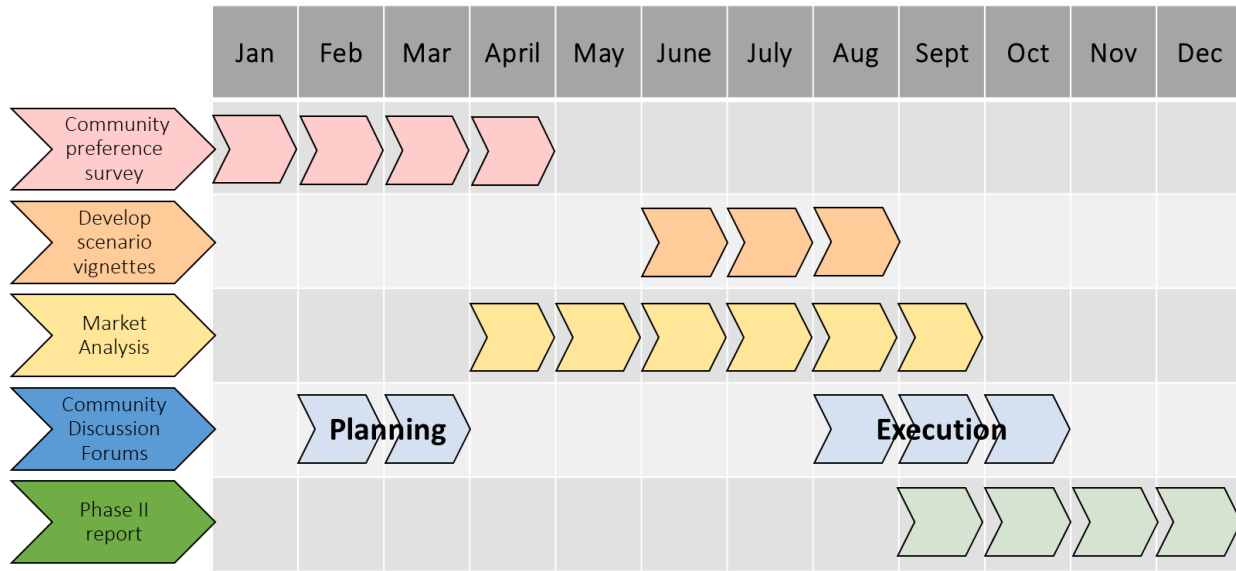
Phase II: Scenario Feasibility and Evaluation

Phase II builds upon existing conditions report by providing a deeper evaluation of the feasibility of key elements of the development scenarios proposed at the completion of Phase I. This involves four key components:

5. Analyze the results from the survey of citizen preferences in favor or against the different scenarios.
6. Produce a series of brief "vignettes" to be posted on the Town's website that explains the key elements of the different scenarios.
7. Collect and analyze relevant demographic and economic data for understanding the existing and potential market demand for specified office, retail, and other commercial activities in the region.
8. Convene two community discussion sessions focused on determining the relative support for each scenario, identify town wide development priorities, and recommend a list of short-term actions to help the town move toward its development goals.

While initially scheduled for the Spring and Summer of 2020, the onset of the Covid19 pandemic required a change in the original timetable for Phase II, in addition to other adjustments to respect physical distancing requirements necessary to protect the public health (Figure 2). Most notably, the 'virtual' community feedback sessions held in the Fall of 2020 were originally envisioned as in-person community gatherings for the Spring of 2020. The market feasibility analysis was also initially envisioned as following the listening sessions and providing an in-depth detailed analysis on a specific development scenario favored by the town. Instead, the town agreed with UMASS to perform a broader market feasibility study in advance of the listening sessions, covering a more extensive list of possible activities. This allowed for the study to continue, leveraging the assigned UMASS resources. This approach also favored Boxborough as coming out of Phase I, it was clear that it would be difficult for the Town to coalesce around a specific scenario.

Figure 2: Phase II, Project Timeline



Phase II was overseen by CED director Dr. Henry Renski who is the lead analyst and primary author of this report. He had help from graduate research assistant Christian Neilson who helped plan for the original (in-person) discussion meetings, assembled some of the secondary data required for the market study, and scripted and recorded the web vignettes. UMASS Professor Emeritus John Mullin moderated and helped plan the community discussion sessions. Dr. Camille Barchers provided guidance and advice to inform the entire Phase II study process, while ensuring continuity from Phase I. In addition, a team of twelve graduate students affiliated with the Planning Student Organization (PSO) volunteered their time to help staff and moderate the breakout sessions during the community charrettes. We especially appreciate the assistance of graduate student, Nathan Chung who worked behind the scenes with Dr. Renski on the technical aspects of coordinating and hosting the community forums through remote video conferencing technology.

B. Scenario Evaluation Survey

Background and Summary

In the fall of 2019, second year students from the University of Massachusetts Amherst Master's in Regional Planning program worked with the Town of Boxborough to begin development for a community economic development strategy. Phase I of this project involved collecting and analyzing data on demographic, economic and fiscal trends, a survey of potential development sites documenting assets and capacity constraints, as well as extensive outreach to solicit community opinions and preferences.

Phase I cumulated with the creation of four possible "scenarios" or visions for economic development in Boxborough.

Scenario I - Baseline or Current Course

The "Baseline or Current Course" scenario assumes that development in the town remain mostly unchanged. However, it does allow for some actions identified in the Master Plan that do not result in major zoning changes, sizable development, or alteration of town character in response to local and regional trends.

Scenario II - Rural/Agricultural Heritage

This scenario proposes that Boxborough's agricultural and historic heritage and its open space amenities be leveraged for small-scale economic development. It encourages more agriculture and landscape-related businesses through zoning overlays and permitting regulations to promote the emergence of destinations and community spaces, while also supporting the regional food system via agricultural storage and processing facilities.

Scenario III - Village Style Development

This scenario seeks to implement Village-Style Development in two areas of Boxborough. It emphasizes restricting development to civic and cultural amenities in the Town Center District. It also proposes a new Village Green with small-scale commercial and dining amenities like a cafe, restaurant, and retail establishments at Adams Place on Route 111.

Scenario IV - Comprehensive Approach

This scenario focuses on adapting and re-imagining current office parks for the 21st century workforce. This scenario includes supportive town-wide amenities to attract and retain new residents to support employment in a variety of businesses.

Near the end of Phase 1, the study team issued a scenario evaluation survey to better understand community preferences and perceptions about each of the scenarios.

Survey Design

The scenario evaluation survey had two sections. The first asked respondents to evaluate each of the four development scenarios according to a common set of criteria. They were asked to review a ‘one slide’ infographic for each of the four development scenarios (see Appendix A), while also providing links to an online “Story Map” that describes each scenario in much more detail.¹ The infographics were designed to strike a balance between adequately characterizing the key elements of each scenario while keeping the survey brief and easily understood. After reviewing each infographic, respondents were asked five questions. On a one to five scale, the first three questions asked citizens to rank the scenario on whether it: 1) Fits the character of Boxborough, 2) Supports economic development, and 3) Aligns with my vision for Boxborough. The final two questions of this section were open responses. They asked 4) What aspects of the above scenario excite you, and 5) What aspects of the above scenario concern you?

The second section includes questions to understand the respondent’s relationship to Boxborough (i.e. live in, work in, etc.), how long they have lived in the community and what their intentions for staying in the community are. These were followed by an opportunity for respondents to include any additional comments.

The survey was designed by students in the second year Master’s Planning Studio using the Qualtrics survey design software. It was pretested and vetted by Town officials, and posted online from November to the end of December, 2019. A total of 66 people responded, although not all answered every question.

Results

This section presents the findings from both parts of the survey, including some select cross tabulations and a brief discussion of its implications moving forward.

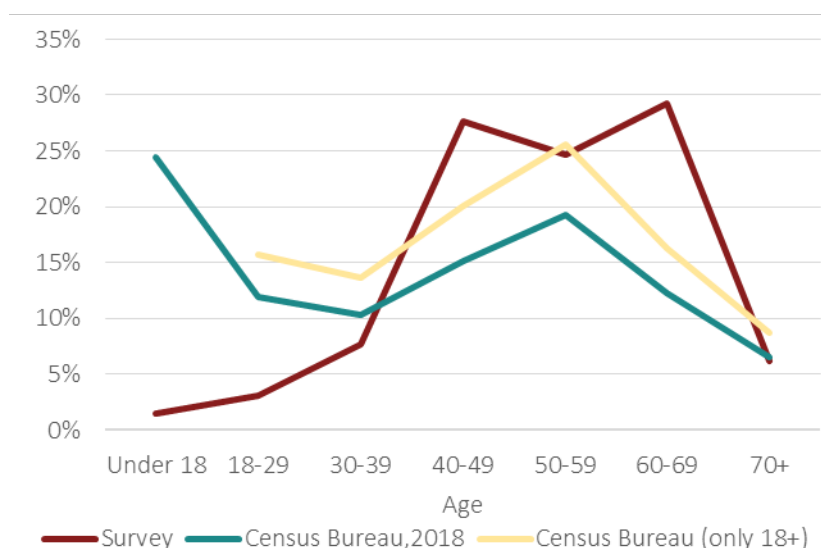
¹ The story map can be found at <https://umass-amherst.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=4c69360a898742a88a0a914bb7747b34>

Demographic profile

We will first review results from second part (demographics) of the survey, as knowing a little about the type of people who responded may help us better understand the results.

The typical survey respondent tended to be older than the typical Boxborough resident, but not altogether unrepresentative of the adult population. Figure 3 compares the age distribution of survey respondents to the official 2018 counts from the U.S. Census Bureau. According to the Census Bureau, nearly 25 percent of Boxborough's population is under 20 years old. Not surprisingly, few minors answered the survey (only 1 reported being under 18). Eliminating the youngsters from the census counts (yellow line), the survey respondent profile comes a bit closer to the official counts, although still noticeably underrepresented by young adults (roughly 18 to 39) and over represented by people in their 40s and 60s.

Figure 3: Age Profile of Survey Respondents compared to U.S. Census Bureau Estimates



Nearly all respondents were Boxborough residents, although a small number indicated that they either worked or owned a business in Boxborough (Figure 4). Consistent with the age profile, a large majority of respondents had been residents for more than ten years, with many exceeding 20 years (Figure 5). Additionally, Figure 6 shows that very few respondents (< 15) indicated an interest in moving in the near future (< 2 years) or medium term (< 10 years). In short, the vast majority of residents plan on staying in Boxborough over the long haul and are deeply invested in its future.

Figure 4: Live and/or work in Boxborough

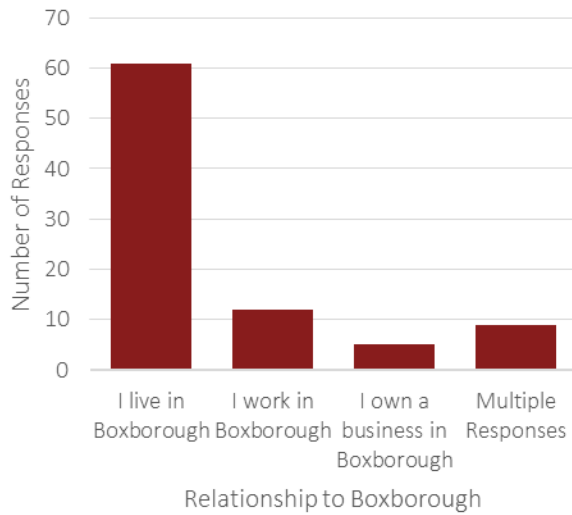


Figure 5: Length of residency, in years

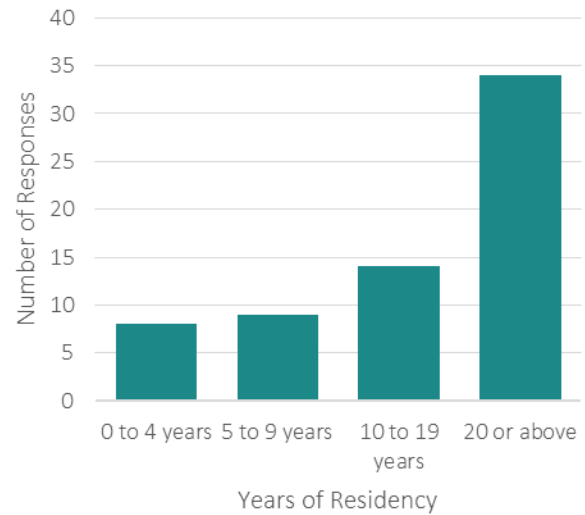
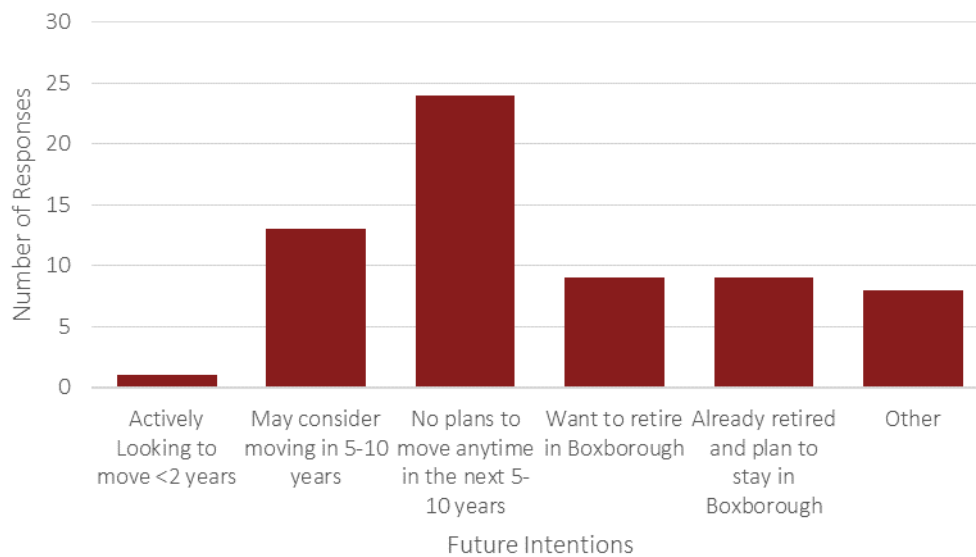


Figure 6: Intentions to move from or stay in Boxborough



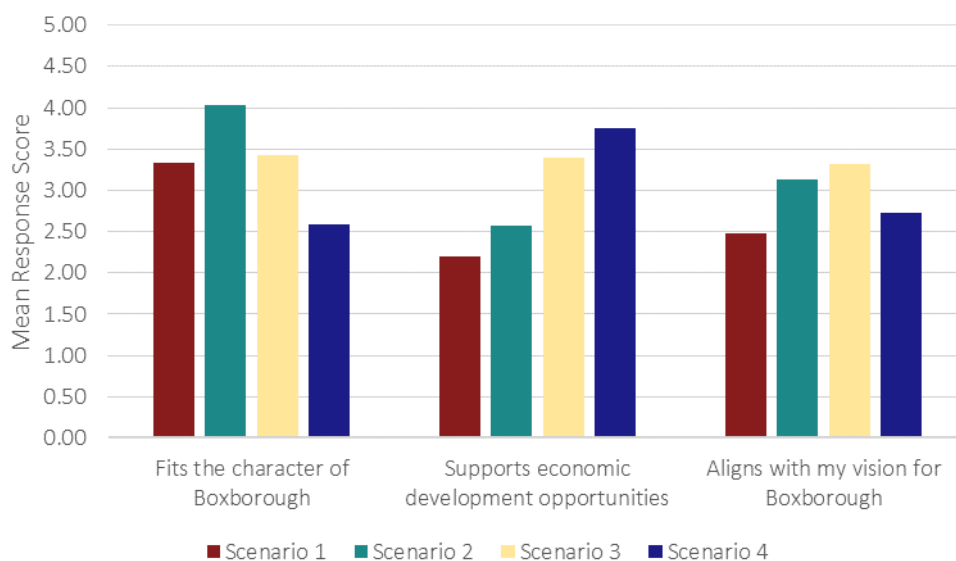
It is important to emphasize that as non-random “convenience” sample, our online survey is not necessarily representative of the overall town sentiment. We should recognize possible biases in the responses to the survey evaluation questions. First, with only 66 responses, the survey represents a tiny fraction of Boxborough’s nearly 6,000 residents, and likely those people that are already more engaged in civic affairs. It also likely underrepresents the opinions of younger residents and more recent arrivals. This is important because the results likely reflect the subjective lifestyle preferences of current and older residents over persons the community may like to attract or target – such as younger adults and families. The survey also predominantly

represents the preferences of those currently living in Boxborough, with very few responses from non-resident workers or business owners. In other words, it favors the preferences of residents over existing or prospective businesses, which may sometimes be at odds. Despite its small size, the high overall quality of responses and comments indicate an active and invested respondent base who are deeply committed to the Boxborough community, even if they sometimes disagree.

Scenario evaluations (Questions 1 through 3)

This first part of the survey asks the community to score on each scenario by how well it: fits the character of Boxborough, supports the goal of economic development, and aligns with their vision for the community. Each option was scored on a scale of one to five (five being highest). We summarize the findings by taking the simple average of the rank scores and then comparing across the different scenarios within each question (Figure 7). Keep in mind that, as averages, our summary figures may distort the actual spread of the responses, especially when the results are highly polarized. Therefore, we show the actual distribution of responses in Appendix B.

Figure 7: Average Scenario Evaluation Scores



The ranked preferences clearly reveal both a widespread perception of Boxborough as a rural community, as well as the apparent contradictions between that vision and more intensive forms of commercial development. Respondents believe that Scenario Two (Rural/Agricultural Heritage) is most in keeping with the current character of Boxborough. This was followed by a near tie between Scenarios Three (Village Style) and One (Current Course). Scenario Four, which proposed a comprehensive scenario focus on redevelopment of existing office parks, was interpreted by residents as being the least in keeping with the current character. By contrast, Scenario Four was viewed as being the most supportive of economic development opportunities

in the communities, while the business as usual approach embodied by Scenario One was the described as the least supportive of economic development.

The third question offers some insight into the development preferences of the townsfolk. When asked which scenario best aligns with their vision for Boxborough, Scenario Three (Village-style) was the most heavily favored. However, only slightly more so than the Scenario Two, which advocates for more agriculture-focused development that aligns with Boxborough's rural character. Scenarios One (current course) and Four (comprehensive) were the least favored.

Open ended responses (Questions 4 and 5)

Following each scenario, respondents were asked to comment on what about the scenario most excited them and what aspects of the scenario most concerned them. A summary of these responses are presented as follows.

Scenario One, Current Course: Respondents to this category were split between those who felt that the current course of action and direction of the town was sufficient and those who felt it didn't go nearly far enough. Many like the notion of simply working to support existing business in Boxborough and using marketing to fill existing vacancies without encouraging new development. These opinions are reflected in sentiments like:

[I am excited about...] *"Short term focus on maintaining/attracting businesses to stay or move to Boxborough to fill existing spaces."*

"I like developing a marketing plan and creating a business association to support businesses."

However, others commented that Scenario One didn't go far enough to address the town's economic concerns and the business-as-usual approach is what has been previously tried and failed.

[I am concerned...] *"The proposed development will not provide the necessary tax revenue to meet even basic development or public services."*

"Status quo is reactionary and does not support our town character. Recent development along Rt. 111 does not fit our character or provide amenities. This is scenario is high risk for erosion of our community's character and [is] financially unsustainable. I will likely leave town if this scenario is our long-term approach."

The responses to this scenario seem to broadly summarize the divide in the community—between those who feel the community is just about perfect the way it is and feel that any more

development will ruin it, and those who feel without development and without investment that the community will 'decline'.

Scenario Two, Rural/Agricultural Heritage: Supporters of this approach are excited about the way the scenario adheres to the Town's rural character and how it may generate additional recreation opportunities and agricultural amenities.

[I am excited about...] *"Leveraging our current assets to actually bring our heritage and character together and invest in it. Also, a move toward some level of measured, focused development."* or *"Protecting all that we cherish as a community - rural, agricultural, natural setting - and delicately utilizing these assets to improve economy."*

However, some respondents were concerned that this scenario will not generate the type of revenue needed to address the community's fiscal concerns. The sentiments of excitement can be characterized. Respondents' concerns are characterized by sentiments like:

"It won't make any money so it probably couldn't happen."

"Too focused on agricultural economy, which is not a 21st century economy.... Despite our words, we are not a highly agricultural town - we have a couple of community gardens, which are nice, a horse farm, and a small farm or two, but we do not appear to have a critical mass of agricultural assets that we can leverage for this scenario."

Scenario Three, Village Style Development: The excitement and concerns presented by respondents for this scenario are diverse. Excitement is centered around the belief that village style development will lead to economic growth, provide desired amenities and stop community 'stagnation'. This excitement is reflected in statements like:

"The village green suggestions is what is needed in this community, town has been stagnant for a long time and has been limiting growth."

"I like creating centers for social interaction and economic activity, I also like creating ways for me to spend my money in town, we go out to dinner 1x a week, rarely in Boxborough, last Saturday shopping for the holidays I spent \$100 in Littleton, \$150 in Maynard, \$400 in Acton and \$0 in Boxborough."

However, some are concerned that there simply isn't a market for this type of development anymore.

"Seriously unlikely. We have a restaurant. No one goes. We had a "Tea Room", it failed. I question whether we really would support a cafe, a restaurant, when there are so many VERY nearby."

Others believe that commercial development in Boxborough is a bad idea (in general) or due to natural resource concerns.

[I am concerned with].. *“Everything. Water. Traffic. Destruction of open space. Increased cost of infrastructure.”*

Others think that the village style scenarios simply isn’t thinking big enough. For example, one respondent indicated that they felt the village style amenities were missing the mark and the town should be looking to include a large box store since many residents have to drive 35+ minutes to reach these amenities.

Scenario Four, Comprehensive Approach: Along with ‘current course’ the responses and reactions to this scenario were the most polarized. Respondents excited by this scenario and generally highlight its potential to provide the economic boost needed to expand/diversify the tax base and address anticipated vacancies of office park tenants. Others favor this option as offering more local professional work opportunities while limiting development to near the interstate and revitalizing existing commercial structures.

[I am excited about].. *“TAX REVENUE! and draw for the town. It also keeps development close to 495 (primarily) and 111 which can help keep the outskirts the rural and historic community we love.”*

“...It appears to balance commercial and community growth with least impact on municipal services and thus, TAXES.”

Concerns range from feelings that the scenario doesn’t align with their vision of Boxborough, to concerns over its economic, ecological and social implications for the community, to doubts as to whether this scenario could actually attract a 21st century workforce. Many appear to be under the impression that the comprehensive scenario inevitably implies opening the floodgates of the community to the type of low-density commercial sprawl that characterizes other out-ring communities, although the actual scenario instead favors more mixed-use approaches for the adaptive re-use of existing structures over green field development.

“This is not the town I want to live in. I left Northern California 15 years ago to get away from exactly this kind of soulless town.”

“Demands on water resources, increased traffic, air pollution, noise pollution, light pollution, low-paying jobs for workers who couldn't afford to live here--supporting our tax structure through income inequality... It would wreck Boxborough, but those who brought such development here would use it as a resume-builder as they moved on to other jobs.”

So while there is general agreement that this scenario has the greatest potential to boost the commercial tax base, it is also clear that this scenario solicited the most vocal opposition among our respondents. However, given the unrepresentative and voluntary nature of our survey, one should not interpret strength of sentiment as necessarily indicative a majority opinion.

Synthesis: Preferences by selected demographics

Do younger residents favor scenarios that offer more recreational or commercial amenities? Do retirees favor options more likely to diversify the tax base? In this section, we examine these and related questions by cross-referencing the scenario preference questions from Part One with selected demographic characteristics covered in Part Two. More specifically, we examine which scenario best fits with each respondent's preferred vision for the community according to age, length of residence, or whether the respondent intends of moving or staying in Boxborough for the foreseeable future.

The limited number of responses stymie our ability to finely slice the data to identify preferences for detailed sub-populations. However, we can get insight into general preference patterns by first grouping respondents into broad demographic classes. For each characteristic, we define two classes with each including roughly half of the completed responses. For age, we divided the population into those under or over 50 years of age. For length of residency, we distinguished 'relative newcomers' as those living in Boxborough for less than twenty years and 'long-time residents' for anyone living there longer. Lastly, we identify 'possible movers' as respondents who indicated that they were either actively looking to move within two years, were considering moving in the next five to ten years, or indicated 'other' but wrote about an intention to move in the comments section. Those with no discernable plans to move (whether retired or not) were labeled 'likely stayers.'

In general, we see only relatively modest differences in the response profiles whether distinguished by age, length of residence, or future moving plans. Older respondents are more likely prefer Scenario Three (Village Style), whereas the under 50 cohort is split between Scenarios Two and Three (Figure 8). Relative newcomers (Figure 9) also tend to prefer the Village-Style commercial amenities and mixed housing options implied in Scenario Three. However, those with no plans to move favor Scenario Two, which seeks development that compliments the rural character of Boxborough (Figure 10). While not their most preferred option, older and more long-term residents favor the comprehensive approach more than do younger and newer residents. It may be that given their limited incomes, older / longer-term residents are more concerned with diversifying the tax base and see the comprehensive approach as the best path to achieving this end.

Figure 8: Average scenario preferences by respondent age

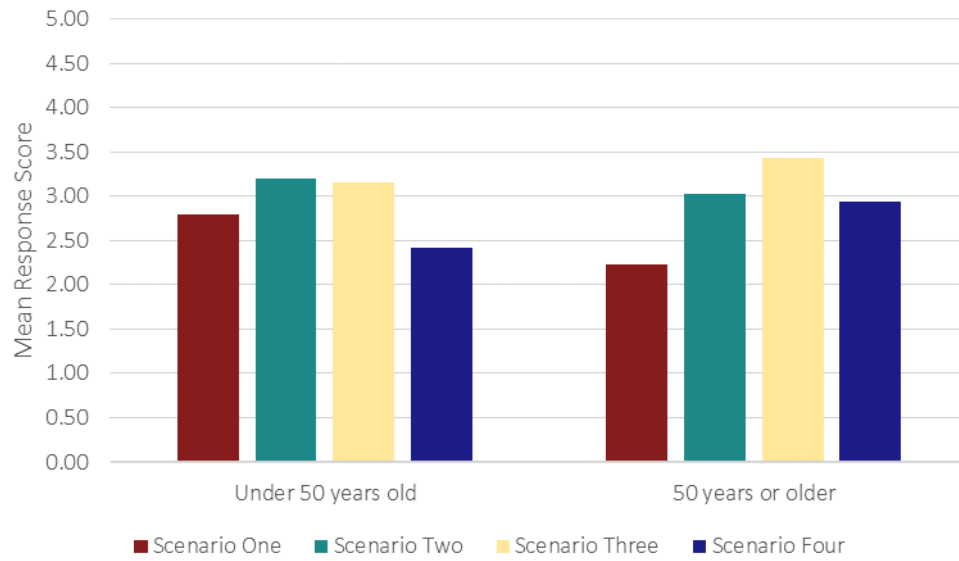


Figure 9: Average scenario preferences by length of residence

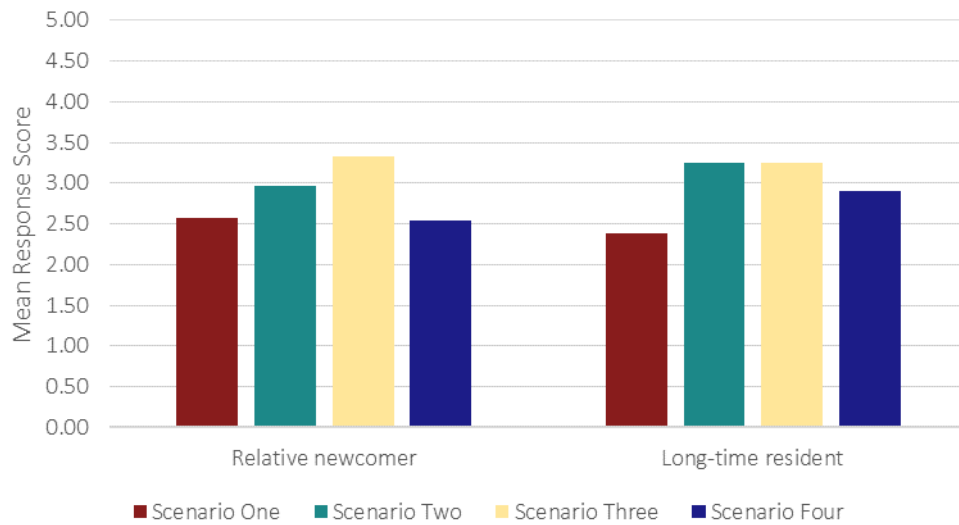
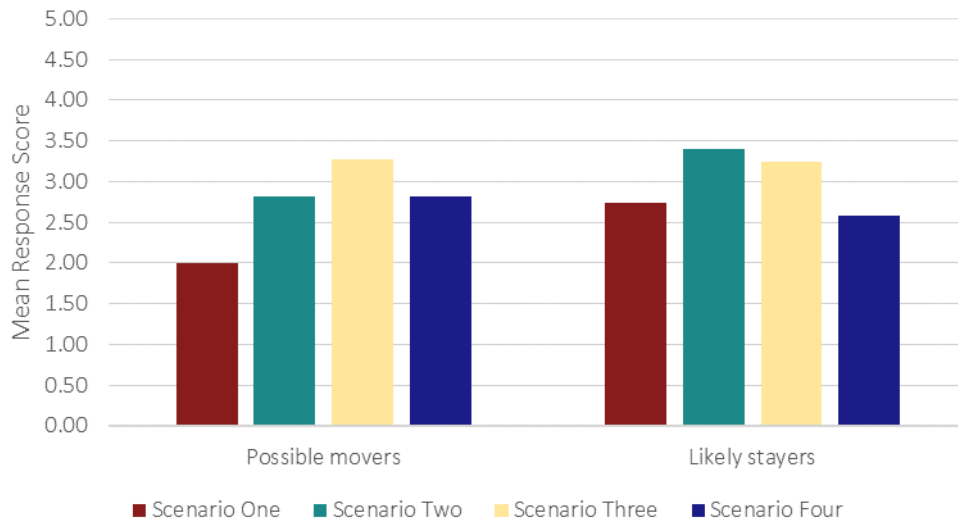


Figure 10: Average scenario preferences by future moving plans



Summary, caveats, and conclusions

The survey responses indicate a preference for either Scenario Two (Rural/Agricultural Heritage) or Scenario Three (Village-Style development). Both scenarios address community requests, such as farmers market and mixed-use retail, that were presented in the Phase I engagement process and the preceding master planning process. Scenario One (Current Course) had the least support, suggesting that residents by and large realize that some change is necessary. However, there is also considerable ‘spread’ within the data, with no clear consensus outcome. It would be erroneous for any group to look at these results and claim a clear victory for their perspective.

Keeping in mind the low sample sizes and skewed respondent profile means that our results are likely biased. It is most likely going to favor the preferences of older and long-term residents, and not necessarily the preferences of the business owners and managers, nor the young professionals the community seeks to attract. Nevertheless, we find that it is generally the older and most-established residents who favor more comprehensive approaches to courting new tenants to the town’s increasingly vacant office parks and expanding local options for amenities and services. Younger and newer residents are more likely to view commercial development less favorably.

In many ways the survey results echo well-known divisions within the community. Many imagine Boxborough as a rural oasis, and fear additional commercial development will erode the town’s character. Then there are those who worry about the continued loss of existing tenants in the town’s remaining stores and office parks, and the hit to the tax base that will follow. They also

worry about the future of a town that provides few work opportunities and fewer amenities that appeal to younger professionals.

This divide is most evident in the polarized and somewhat perplexing reaction to Scenario Four (the Comprehensive Approach). As imaged by the planning studio, Scenario Four calls for the adaptive modernization of the town's existing office parks, with no additional green field development to speak of. While scenario four had many vocal supporters, this scenario also ranked lowest in keeping with "community character" with many fearing this to be an open invitation to sprawling office campuses and commercial development run amuck. It may be that the "comprehensive" label fails to adequately emphasize the added amenities or the re-use of existing sites. Or it may truly be a mixed-use complex just off the highway just does not align with how residents perceive the future of Boxborough.

Nevertheless, it should probably be of little surprise that the Village-Style development embodied by Scenario Three was the most widely favored, as it best represents a middle ground scenario of adding desired commercial amenities that retains the overall community character.

C. Market Analysis

Purpose and Scope

In this section we report on the possible success for different types of commercial activities, such as niche shopping, restaurants, and office space. This is known as a market analysis or a market feasibility study.

What is a Market Analysis?

A market analysis attempts to determine the potential for a successful business venture by forecasting the anticipated demand for a product or service and comparing this to anticipated supply. *Demand* for most in-person shopping, restaurants, and personal services, like beauty salons, comes from the spending of local households. Local businesses *supply* these desired goods and services.

Places where demand exceeds supply are more favorable for new business activity. Likewise, areas that export a considerable amount of their purchases, either by buying online or from further away, might benefit from having a business provide those goods and services closer to home. This expansion of business activity, in turn, will generate new jobs and tax revenues through a process known as import replacement. An excess of supply, by contrast, suggests market saturation. It is more difficult to attract development to a saturated market.

Furthermore, any new activity that did come would be more likely to draw business away from existing enterprises, producing net little benefit to the community in terms of employment or tax revenue.

There is no one size fits all approach to a market analysis. In fact, the analysis of the market for housing, retail and office space requires different data sources and methodologies. Market studies also vary depending upon the specific desires of the client and the available. Some studies take a narrow and deep approach, examining one type of business or a single site in considerable depth and pulling together information gleaned from a variety of sources. This may include a thorough review of plans and documents, site visits, analysis of publicly available secondary data, and in-depth interviews with experts and stakeholders. If the budget allows, they may even purchase data from private vendors that specializing in market information. These kinds of in-depth studies are common when a developer or prospective tenant is nearing the final stages of their site selection process or is courting potential investors. Other circumstances call for more of a broad and shallow approach. This is fitting given with the more prospective nature of their long-term planning efforts. A broad and shallow study typically

examines a longer list of potential activities and/or multiple sites. As such, it tends to be more reliant on readily available secondary data as opposed to more time- and resource-intensive primary data gathering such as interviews and site-level assessments.

Scope

There are four typical steps to a market study (see sidebar “Steps in a Market Analysis.”)

This report focuses on steps three and four: Analysis of Regional Supply and Demand Conditions and Recommendations and Conclusions. Steps one (site assessment) and two (study area profile) were already conducted by the students of UMASS Masters in Regional Planning studio class. The resulting Phase I Technical Memo report covers population composition and growth, housing, and business trends in the Town of Boxborough as compared to other communities in the immediate region.² It also provides an extensive analysis of Boxborough's municipal finances, including a detailed analysis of how recent office vacancies have impacted the tax base. It also assesses whether the Town's zoning aligns with different development scenarios and discusses constraints and opportunities at a variety of different sites around the town.

The scope for the Phase II Market Analysis was developed through an ongoing dialog with municipal officials and the Boxborough Economic Development Committee (BEDC), with additional suggestions from the Town Planning Board and municipal officials. In keeping with the exploratory and prospective nature of Boxborough's long-term planning efforts, the advisory board was interested in having us evaluate an extensive list of possible commercial activities at

Steps in a Market Analysis

Market studies come in many different flavors, although most have several common elements.

1. *Site assessment and inventory*

A market studies typically begin with an assessment or inventory of known conditions to help identify any major infrastructure, zoning or other features that may hinder or favor certain types of development. If the site an entire community or neighborhood, the focus is on identifying area-wide constraints and opportunities, such as school quality, zoning, and municipal revenue.

2. *Profile of the study area*

The site assessment is followed by statistical profile of the target community and market area. The purpose of this profile is to characterize general context for development, while highlighting specific opportunities and challenges, such as key demographic or economic trends that may affect future demand and supply.

(continued next page)

² A copy of the Phase I report is available at: https://www.boxborough-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/999/UMass_Economic-Development-Study_Phase-1-Technical-Memo_12-19-2019

Steps in a Market Analysis (continued)

3. Analysis of regional supply and demand conditions

Information gathered as part of the study area profile feeds directly into an analysis of demand and supply conditions. This is the heart of a market study, where much of the detailed data reporting and analysis takes place. It typically cumulates with an assessment of the balance between supply and demand factors - which is used to assess whether there is a potential market.

4. Recommendations and conclusions

The study typically concludes with specific recommendations on which activities would be the most well suited to the site given prevailing market conditions. It also may suggest possible actions that community should take if it wishes to pursue these activities.

several prospective locations. Hence our market analysis, follows a broader approach where we are more reliant on secondary data analysis, while building upon the extensive set of interviews and site work conducted during Phase I. In addition to secondary data, we also reviewed numerous recent studies and reports from trade associations, leading scholars, and others discussing recent trends and the future of the suburban office market, brick-and-mortar retail, entertainment, and personal services.

Potential Sites and Commercial Activities

The BEDC asked the Center for Economic Development to evaluate prospective commercial activities at two potential sites. The first site is named "Boxborough Village" tentatively located on Adams Place and/or adjacent parcels near the Boxborough Regency Hotel just off the 495 interchange. The second is "21st Century Office Park" located on the Beaver Brook Rd. This would potentially include the campus currently owned by Cisco Systems along with adjacent parcels.

Focusing on these two sites, the UMASS Center for Economic Development set about collecting the information necessary to evaluate a variety of uses at each site, as well as the possible synergies that might exist among them. Working with the Planning Board to pursue a "site specific approach", the BEDC put together a list of attractions and activities that town residents might find appealing.

Boxborough Village

Boxborough Village is envisioned as an upscale retail outlet featuring a variety of personal services, a café, casual sit-down dining, small-scale and boutique retail and possibly a medical clinic or urgent health care

facility on the backside of the site, all centered on a grassy common area. The Boxborough Village concept features prominently in the "Village Style" development scenario. The Phase I team evaluated two possible locations for a Village Center style retail complex, one at Adams Place, the other at the historic town Center. The ultimately concluded that, while more centrally located, infrastructure constraints (namely water) and development restrictions at the historic town center made the development of a village-style retail complex unrealistic at this location. The Adams Place site has underutilized capacity and would require less new development in environmentally sensitive areas. The site's proximity to the Interstate 495 is likely to make it additionally appealing to developers and business owners, while minimizing traffic impacts through the town. Redevelopment, however, would require a change in the current zoning to accommodate a greater variety of uses.

The BEDCs proposed commercial activity list for Boxborough Village includes:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Mass Ave frontage | 2. Rear of property |
| a. Pharmacy / Health Clinic | i. Health facility |
| b. Restaurant/Tavern | ii. Sports / Entertainment Center
(e.g. APEX in Marlboro) |
| c. Fast Casual dining | iii. Brewery / Distillery |
| d. Café | iv. Medical clinic / facility (General
health, day surgery, radiology,
MRI...) |
| e. Hardware | v. Innovation center / startup
businesses / micro businesses |
| f. Dry Cleaners | |
| g. Personal Services | |
| h. Pet store / Pet services | |
| i. Small/medium grocery | |
| j. General retail | |

Early on we determined that "general retail" was far too broad to realistically evaluate. Most of the activities for "general retail" is either traditional department stores (e.g. Wal Mart) or discount stores (think Dollar General), and thus would not reflect the actual usage of the space. There is also no industry or commodity code that reports data specifically for innovation centers or start-up businesses. Analysis of this type of activity would require an entirely different type of study far beyond the initially agreed-upon scope of work. Several other activity categories were combined or split due to data limitations. For example, we were unable to distinguish fast casual dining from other types of restaurants, although we were able to eliminate take-out and most fast-food chains. The available data also distinguishes taverns, breweries, and other drinking places for other types of restaurants.

21st Century Office Park

Following years of organizational consolidation, Cisco Systems Inc. announced its intention to sell its East Coast headquarters at Beaver Brook, with plans to lease back one of the three existing buildings for three years from the new owners for its downsized operations. Recognizing waning demand for space in traditional suburban office parks, the Boxborough 2030 Master Plan recommends exploring opportunities to rethink underutilized office parks, such as mixed-use “live-work-play” style developments that are favored by more youthful tech businesses. This would include a refurbished office complex with a scaled down and more flexible office space, space for an entertainment center, dining, shops, and possibly an adjacent retirement community.

More specifically, the list of recommended uses for the 21st Century Office Park includes:

1. Office Space: Labs, offices, data center
 - a. Industries: computing, software, robotics
 - b. Corporate/university training centers
2. Commercial Amenities
 - a. Sports/Entertainment Center
3. Housing
 - a. Restaurant/Tavern
 - c. Café
 - d. Health food store
 - e. Outdoor store
 - a. Progressive, Continuing Care Retirement Community

In our analysis, we make no distinction between type of industry (computers, robotics, what have you) or whether the space would be utilized for a lab, training, data center or other use. We lack the time and other resources to conduct extensive first-hand data collection, and most of the available research and data focuses on the overall market for commercial office space, regardless of the specific use or type of tenants.

Methods and Data

Defining Market Areas

With the scope defined, our first analytical step is to define market areas for each site and activity type. Market areas represent a reasonable area wherein the business will draw most of its customers. They are also used to identify the location of existing businesses / potential competitors. We use approximate driving times from each site to define its potential market area.

Different types of activities—specialty retail and services, commercial office space, and senior housing—typically draw from different sized markets. Retail and services are usually more local, while commercial and housing complexes tend to be larger. Figures 11 and 12 show the respective drive times for Boxborough Village (showing 10- and 20-minute drive times) and the 21st Century Office park (10, 20 and 40 minute drives). The drive times for both sites are very similar -- not surprising considering that the sites are barely a mile from one another. To keep things simple, we use a common set of local and regional market areas. We center all retail and service-related activities on Adams Place. Office and senior housing are centered on the Beaver Brook.

Figure 12: Boxborough Village Market Areas, Local and Regional

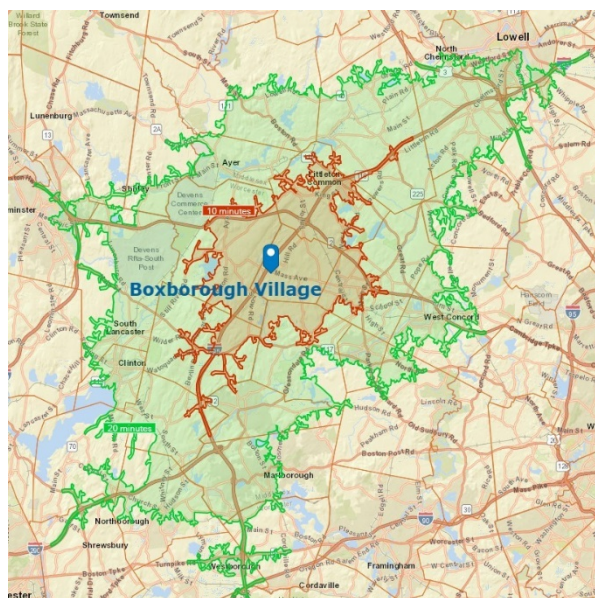
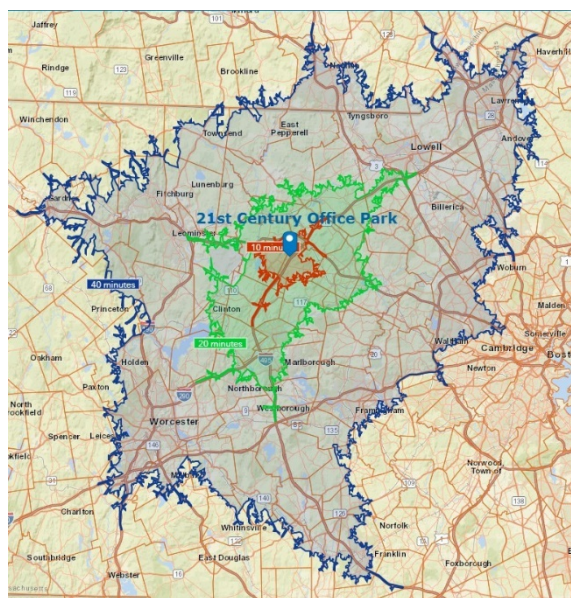


Figure 11: 21st Century Office Park Market Areas, Local and Regional



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online and author's calculations

Retail, Entertainment, Personal Services

We measure the primary (i.e. local) market area for retail, entertainment, and services activities within a ten-minute drive from each site. We also define a secondary (regional) market area based on a twenty-minute drive time. While we expect most regular patrons to come from the local area, the secondary market is useful for identifying competing businesses that falls just outside of the primary market. There may also be some customers that are willing to drive from further away, although less frequently. The primary market covers all of Boxborough, much of the adjacent communities of Harvard and Littleton, as well as significant portions of Acton, Stow, and Bolton (Figure 11). Twenty minutes along the Interstate allows the secondary market area to draw as far as Lowell to the Northeast and through Marlborough to the south.

It is worth noting that the proximity of the both sites to Interstate I-495 puts them on the route of hundreds of thousands of travelers each day. However, the types activity favored by the community caters more toward the tastes of area residents than typical highway travelers. Therefore, we focus on area residents as the main patrons, but note that pass-through traffic might strengthen the client base.

Office Space

The market area for office space is larger. Corporations and other businesses seeking Class A office space usually engage in a multi-stage decision process when considering a move or an expansion (Salvesen & Renski, 2002). They first consider broad regions, such as states or metropolitan areas, that suits their most fundamental operational and profitability needs. These typically include things like access to critical markets, raw materials, or specialized labor. Only after settling on a region do they start comparing specific sites. So for Boxborough, we assume prospective businesses have already settled on locating somewhere along the outer loop of the Greater Boston region. Thus, the primary competition for Boxborough will be among similar sites within a twenty-minute drive from the 21st Century Office park site (Figure 12). At this range the primary market area spans along 495 from Lowell (to the North) to Westborough. We also define a secondary (regional) study area that is within 40 minutes of the site. This covers the near entirety of the 495 loop from New Hampshire to Rhode Island. The secondary area is mainly used for comparison and identify broader trends in the market.

Senior Housing

We also assume that the market for the proposed senior housing complex will potentially draw from a larger area than does the typical store or restaurant. Similar to office space, we assume a primary market area within a 20-minute drive of the 21st Century Office park. This area follows I-495 from roughly Chelmsford to Marlborough. This area coincides with work showing that many seniors tend to move into progressive housing relatively close to their previous residence in order maintain ties to friends and relatives.

Supply / Demand Analysis

The core of our analysis is estimating the demand for different types of businesses and comparing that to the prospective supply of existing businesses serving those needs. The allows us to identify potential market opportunities as areas where there is underserved demand. Each type of activity requires a distinct analytical approach to measuring local demand and supply. Because of this, it makes more sense to group activities by type than by site.

Retail, Dining, Entertainment and Personal Services

Demand Analysis: Household Expenditures

We measure the demand for retail, entertainment, and personal services by local household expenditures. This covers most of the activities proposed for Boxborough Village, plus several of the non-office supporting components proposed for the 21st Century Office Park.

While we lack information on specific purchases made by area residents, we can approximate demand by matching national household spending patterns to local data on the number of households within the study area. First, we gather information on how much different households spend on different commodities like groceries and pet supplies each year.³ We then match different commodities to specific business activities of interest. For example, the BEDC asked us to examine whether there is enough local demand to support a pharmacy at the hypothetical Boxborough Village site. There is no specific commodity class for pharmacy (a pharmacy is not a commodity, but rather a type of store), so we represent the prospective demand for pharmacies with spending on (legal) drugs, vitamins, dressings, and general medical equipment and supplies. This is an imperfect proxy, as some of these items are purchases from businesses other than pharmacies, and pharmacies sell much more than medical-related good (like chocolate). Yet, this is still adequate as a proxy for area demand.

The final step is to calculate total area spending for the different business activities. This is done by multiplying average household spending on relevant commodities by the number of households in the market area.⁴ The analysis also considers local differences in household characteristics, such as number of people in each household and annual income. The information that we present is based upon 2019 household spending patterns (pre-Covid).

Figure 13 summarizes total household expenditures by type of business activity for the local market (10-minute drive). Figure 14 does the same for the regional market (20-minute drive). Keep in mind that these numbers are not meant to be interpreted with precision – they are based on averages and do not include all relevant goods or services that may be offered by a particular business. Just those that are most often associated with a particular type of business.

³ This information originates in the Consumer Expenditure Survey produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and only reflects national spending habits for households of differing size and income levels. The data is provided through the proprietary ESRI business analysts database.

⁴ The original source of households is from the American Community Survey produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, as reported in the proprietary ESRI business analyst database.

Figure 14: Household expenditures in the local market area (2019)

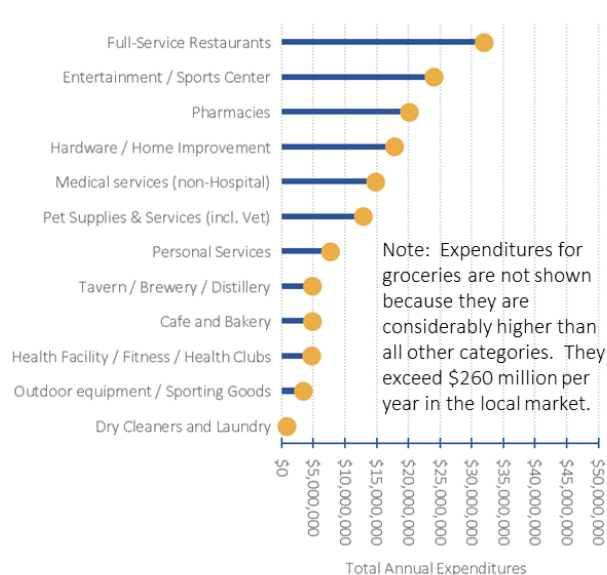
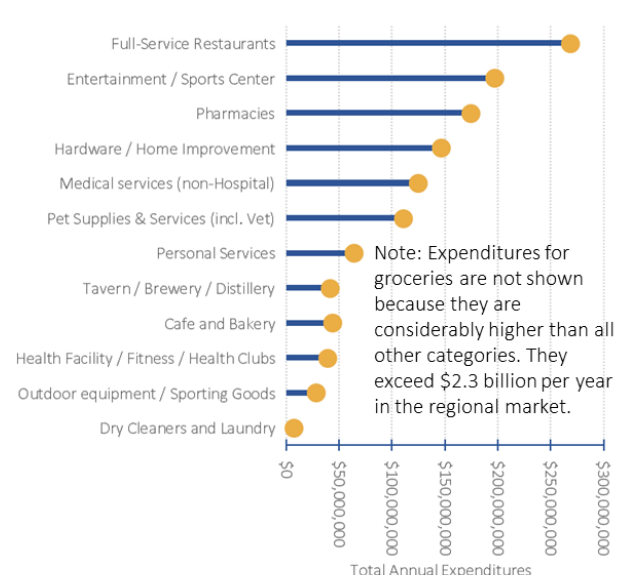


Figure 13: Household expenditures in the regional market area (2019)



At over \$260 million per year, local spending at grocery stores far outstrips all the other listed expenditures groups -- so much so that groceries could not be presented on the same graph as the other groups. This is followed by spending on full-service restaurants and entertainment, at roughly. At the bottom of the expenditure scale are specialized and rather infrequently purchased goods and services—dry cleaning and outdoor equipment.

Supply Analysis: Business Activity

We measure supply by first identifying businesses in the market area that provide a similar good or service to our desired activity groups. Ideally, one would like to have information on the location, product/service market, and sales of specific businesses. Unfortunately, this kind of detailed data on specific businesses is not available through public sources. Therefore, we conduct our analysis using a proprietary business listing database called InfoGroup, which we were able to access through UMASS's site license to the ESRI Business Analyst data engine.

Through a painstaking process of iterative searching, screening, and mapping we identified businesses located in the primary and secondary markets most closely related to the twelve requested activity categories - eliminating those that were less relevant.⁵ We used considerable

⁵ Because our identification is based purely on a variety of online searches and secondary business listings, we cannot guarantee that all of our information is completely up-to-date, particularly given the traumatic impact that the Covid19 pandemic has had on many small businesses but is not yet reflected in the available data. Even so, our analysis is meant more to reflect typical market conditions and not the atypical economic impact from the pandemic.

judgement in matching available industry categories to the desired activities specified by the BEDC. For example, prevailing industry categories do not distinguish full-service or family-style restaurants from other types of “eating places”. Therefore, we filter our searches to only include businesses with more than 10 employees, to eliminate most smaller take-out establishments, and then manually removed all listings of known fast-food chains. Similar procedures and decisions were applied to the other activity groups. The mapped results of our business inventories are included in Appendix C.

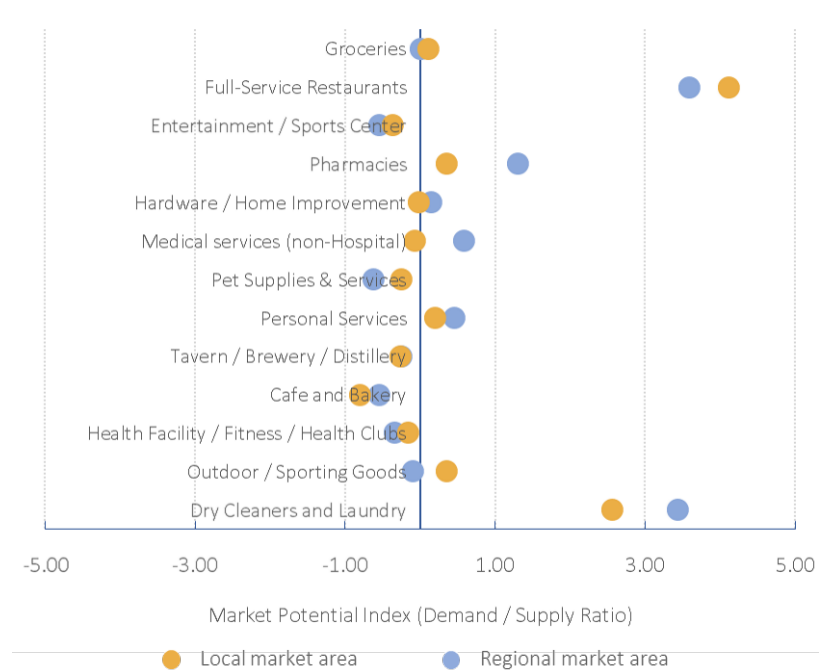
The final step in determining supply is to estimate the approximate sales of existing businesses in the local and regional Boxborough market areas. There is no reliable data source that reports sales for specific businesses. Instead, we estimated sales by calculating the average amount of household spending per business for a larger “reference area” that has similar household consumption patterns as the Boxborough market. The average household spending per business reflects the expected level of household spending needed to support a typical business in each commodity market. We designate the region spanning from twenty to forty miles beyond the site as our reference area. This covers most of the remaining Massachusetts portion of the I495 corridor.⁶ We then multiply the reference area spending average by the number of businesses in the Boxborough market area to approximate the amount of sales we would expect given the number of existing businesses in the region.

Results: Supply/Demand Matching, Commodity Basis

We compute a market potential index to help identify potential opportunities for local businesses. The index is calculated as the ratio of household demand to expected sales given the number of local businesses. We then subtract one from this ratio so that positive numbers reflect market opportunities, while negative number suggests potential market saturation whereby the success of any new business would likely be at the detrimental expense of another. The results from our supply/demand analysis is visualized in Figure 15 with tabular results provided in Appendix D.

⁶This approximation assumes that household consumption behavior and patterns in the larger reference area are similar to those in the market area. As a secondary check, we also conducted the analysis using the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as the reference area. While the results were generally similar, we feel that the remainder of the 495 corridor provides a better baseline.

Figure 15: Market potential, Commodity Basis



Sources: Author's calculations based on data from ESRI Business Analyst, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey, U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

The largest gaps in the local market area are for full-service restaurants, dry cleaning services, pharmacies, medical services, and other personal services. The maps in Appendix C support this conclusion, as there appear to be relatively few local businesses supplying these services. The regional market shows a broadly similar pattern, although there appears to be less room for additional medical and personal services. It may be more difficult for a local business to draw clients from outside the immediate area. However, we should also keep in mind that personal and medical services are very broad categories, there may still be room for specific niches. For example, while they may not be enough room for another hair salon, there may be room for a day spa. The data is not sufficiently detailed to differentiate between these two types of personal services. The most saturated markets appear to be those for pet supplies and services, as well as cafes and bakeries. However, given the relatively low operational costs and differences with other type so coffee shop, we feel there may be more room for a sit-down coffee shop than our results suggest, which is likely dominated by the existence of chains.⁷

⁷ For example, Starbucks is included in the list of café competitors although we did remove all the Dunkin Donuts because we couldn't distinguish sit-down shops from grab and go or drive through only.

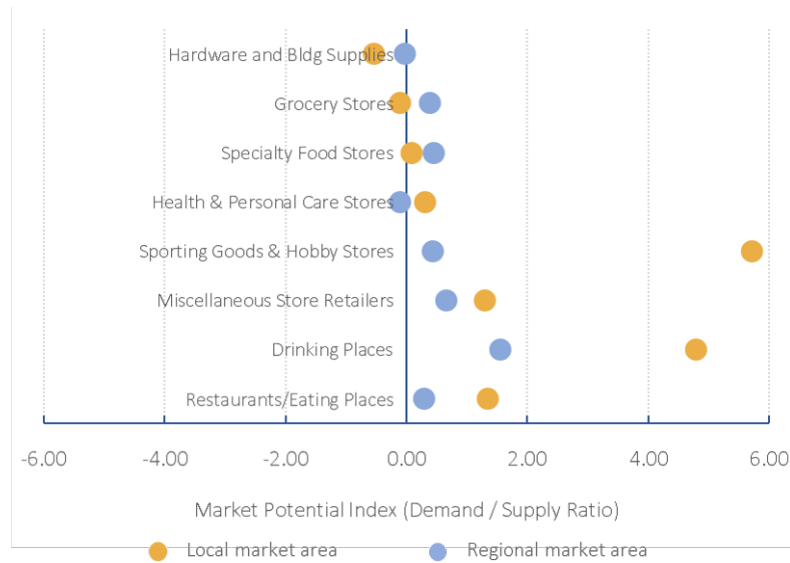
Results: Supply/Demand Matching, Industry Basis

This section presents the results for a slightly different approach to estimating market demand and supply. The previous section was based upon an analysis of commodities – actual items and/or services that are purchased. While it afforded considerable detail describing household consumption patterns, it was limited by assuming that demand for a specific type of business could be adequately represented by purchases of a relatively discrete number of commodities. For example, we proxied demand for a pharmacy by estimating spending on drugs, medical supplies – but not groceries, school supplies or greeting cards. There is also a secondary assumption that households will prefer to purchase a good from the closest vendor. Truth is most stores sell multiple types of goods, and that households will continue to purchase some good from further away (or online) even if there were a more local option.

To account for these limitations, we offer a second analysis based on *industry* purchases and sales. Industries account for multi-commodity purchases and thus may better reflect actual household spending patterns at particular types of stores. The major downsides are that the available industry data does not cover as much detail as that for commodities. For example, we cannot distinguish expenditures at full-service restaurants from limited service or major fast-food operations and things like pet stores get lumped in with a variety of other retailers in the “Miscellaneous Store Retailers” category. A second major limitation is that data on industry purchases and sales is only available for the retail sector. Things like medical and personal services are not covered.

On an industry basis, the largest opportunities in the local market are for sporting goods and hobby stores (the sector also containing outdoor equipment stores), drinking places (includes taverns and breweries), restaurants, and miscellaneous retailers (which includes many things, most notably pet supply stores (Figure 16). There may also be some space for health and personal care stores, which include pharmacies. The general patterns hold for the regional market, although the market potential is dampened because of higher competition.

Figure 16: Market Potential, Industry Basis



Sources: Author's calculations based on data from ESRI Business Analyst

One final issue with the results presented in Figures 15 and 16 is that they do not factor in that different types of business have a different efficient scale of operations. A coffee shop typically has relatively low overhead and therefore can survive in a smaller market. A grocery store, by contrast, needs a much larger number of customers to remain profitable. To account for this, we developed a “new business potential index” that divides the dollar gap between demand and supply by the average sales per business in the reference (40-minute radius) region. To make the numbers more comparable between the local and regional markets, we then divide both by the approximate area of their market areas.⁸ The result is presented in Figure 17.

⁸ It was not possible to do this for the commodity-based data because it does not contain an independent estimate of local sales, as does the industry data.

Figure 17: Potential Room for New Businesses



Sources: Author's calculations based on data from ESRI Business Analyst

The results are similar to our market potential index, except they indicate stronger local opportunities for restaurants and taverns. Miscellaneous retailers (which includes pet stores) also scores high in the potential for a new business, but the inherent diversity of stores falling into this group makes it difficult to truly determine opportunities. There may also be some room for a sporting goods or outdoor supply store as well as pharmacy (included in the Health and Personal Care industry).

Commercial Office Space

Directly quantifying the demand for office space is more difficult. The prospective buyers for Class A office space in the Greater Boston area could be regional, national or even international in scope. As such, one cannot easily put down a geographic boundary to delineate the number of qualifying businesses that might be searching for space. Business relocations and expansions are also as rare as they are idiosyncratic, and therefore inherently difficult to predict.

Instead, we gauge demand for office space by stitching together disparate pieces of evidence from a variety of qualitative and quantitative sources. We reviewed a variety of industry trade reports and recent studies of the commercial real estate market to get a sense of the general state of the market as well as where the experts think the market is going in the near future. We pay particular attention to studies of the market for suburban office space, especially case studies of recently redeveloped mixed-use business parks in New England. We also use proprietary data from Co-Star to get a local perspective on both demand and supply in the commercial office real estate market. Co-star compiles from a variety of online listing and other sources and includes information on vacancy rates, lease rates, changes in rentable building area, and other measures of regional real estate market.

Pre-Covid trends in Commercial Real Estate

Even before the COVID-19 global pandemic, the market for Class A suburban office space was coming off several lean years. By the 2010's many suburban complexes were now decades old and beginning to show their age (Read, 2019). They were developed at a time when white collar businesses were streaming out of central cities and fueling metropolitan expansion. In part, businesses moved to the urban-rural frontier to move closer to its professional talent while favoring sites with ample space, parking, and serenity and security of a greenfield campus.

But by the early 2000s the pendulum had begun to swing back toward cities, coinciding with a broader renaissance of the city and urban life (Malizia & Song, 2016). Crime rates were going down in many big cities and the rising millennial generation found itself increasingly drawn to the diversity and excitement of urban life and culture (Florida, 2005). In the innovation age, access to technical talent and knowledge workers became even more critical factor driving profitability, and businesses soon began re-establishing their presence in downtowns and newly founded "innovation districts", such as the South Boston Seaport (Drucker et al., 2019; Katz & Wagner, 2014). Planners and municipal officials tried to capitalize on this trend by promoting millennial-centric amenities – cafes, pocket-parks, micro-breweries, bike share kiosks and the like.

Cities themselves became relatively more productive and profitable after the turn of the century (Moretti, 2012). The continuing transition of the economy toward innovation favored dense areas where novel ideas spawn from the free and often informal exchange of ideas among people with different backgrounds and perspectives (Glaeser, 2011). This contrast with the suburban research park model, which favors a model of more specialized and incremental modes of technological change and knowledge exchange -- put a bunch of similarly-minded experts together where better protect trade secrets and proprietary knowledge (Saxenian, 1994).

The cost calculus that initially favored (cheaper) greenfield sites had also shifted, due primarily to the proliferation of information technologies and related shifts in corporate structure. Remote communications made it feasible to decouple front and back office operations. Back office and production and other less-knowledge intensive functions moved further into the periphery or were offshored. Needing less space, meant many headquarter operations, which still thrive on in-person interaction, could afford to move back downtown while R&D centers were drawn to increasingly to knowledge hubs near Universities or other sources of ideas and talent (Salvesen & Renski, 2002).

There were, however, signs that the corporate move back to cities was already beginning to slow, even before Covid19. There are several reasons for this. First, is cost. Lease rates in downtown commercial real estate had already begun to priced-out all but the major players in the nation's hottest markets, like Boston. Perhaps even more importantly, the overheated residential real estate market in big cities was beginning to force out talent - the key factor

driving business location decisions. Rents have just gotten too high for most young people and young families. There were also signs that many of the Millennial generation, now moving into its 30s, were beginning to settle down, build families, and seek more personal space. However, many younger families, by and large, still favor many of the trappings of urban life and are recreating dense activities centers in their new suburban environs (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2008). They crave walkable and bikeable communities with nearby entertainment opportunities -- while also wanting some personal space, access good schools and open public spaces.

In response, many began rethinking the suburban office park campus model by developing mixed-use facilities that combined office space with more flexible configurations that included on-site restaurants, shopping and entertainment experiences, while also proximate to (relatively) affordable housing of the kind promoted by new-urbanists and favored by younger knowledge workers (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2008). “Live-work-play” had become a common mantra for these emergent places where the lines between personal and professional spheres were increasingly blurred (Jansen & Ryan, 2019).

Among the most infamous case examples of the modern mixed-use office park, are the ongoing plans to add a village center to the Research Triangle Park (RTP) in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill region of North Carolina.⁹ The RTP was originally developed in the 1950s as the quintessential suburban research park, with long winding driveways leading to isolated and self-contained corporate campuses (Luger & Goldstein, 1991). Not part of a formal incorporated municipality, the RTP barred residential development and with them the need to provide costly household amenities, like schools and parks. By the 1990s the park had become a driving force behind the ascension of Raleigh-Durham as an emerging tech hub claiming home, claiming home to many marque tenants such as GlaxoSmithKline, Nvidia, and IBM. But by the 2000’s even the infamous RTP was feeling the pressure from tenants who were finding it difficult to attract young talent. HubRTP is their response, literally creating a downtown at the heart the RTP with over 1 million sq ft of Class A office space, 75,000 of restaurant and retail, a 150 room hotel and conference center, 13 acres of conserved green space, and 800 apartment units – all designed to acter to the sensibilities and interests of educated 20 and 30 somethings.

⁹ <https://hub.rtp.org/>

Figure 18: Artists' Visualization of Hub RTP



There are several examples of converted mixed-use office parks closer to home. The Phase I study profiles the nearby community of Marlborough as a comparison, especially relevant in its efforts to revitalize its office parks, such as the former HP campus that is undergoing transformation into a mixed-use community named Marlborough Mills.¹⁰ A recent paper by Jansen and Ryan (2019) that examines retrofitted suburban office space among communities along Boston's original tech beltway, the Route 128 / I-95 corridor. Along with interviews with area developers and municipal officials, Jansen and Ryan provide two detailed case studies: Burlington's North West Park and Needham Crossing in Needham. The two examples differ in that the

redevelopment of North West Park was initiated by the developer, while the master plan for Needham Crossing was orchestrated by the municipality itself. But beyond that, the two cases have many similarities that are relevant to Boxborough. Both were redeveloped amidst concerns over growing obsolescence, business needs for attracting talent and concerns over the erosion of the municipal tax base. Both are designed as "live-work-play" communities with a combination of retrofitted buildings and new construction which required revisions to the town's existing zoning and set-back standards. Both also faced challenges from area residents, who were mainly concerned that the multi-family housing components would potentially lead to overcrowded schools, increased traffic, and other threats to property values and community character. By the same token, affordable (not necessarily low-income) housing is key to the success of a mixed-use development, as it is a primary factor drawing office tenants as is necessary to support on-site commercial venues. Nevertheless, community leaders see both projects as successes that they attribute to dedicated leadership, ongoing and open dialog with the community, and a tight regional housing market.

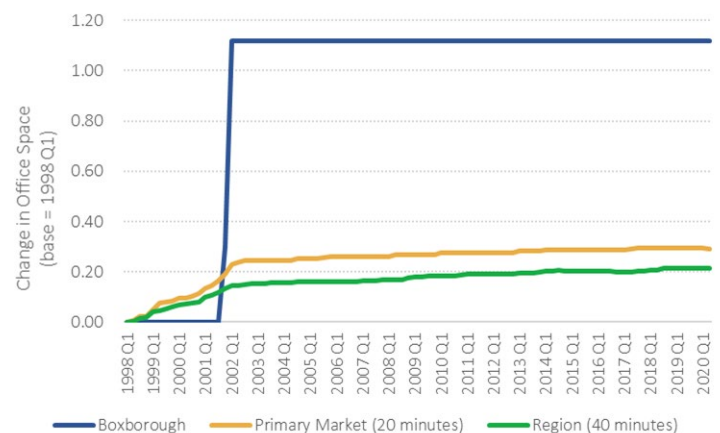
¹⁰ See Boxborough Economic Development Study: Phase 1, Technical Memo (Dec. 2019). Appendix D: Regional Context & Case Studies.

Regional Market Trends

Inventory

Our data on the local real estate market for office space largely mirror these national trends. There has been almost no growth in office space in the area since the early 2000s (Figure 19).^{11,12} The last time Boxborough added to its office inventory was 2002, when space nearly doubled with the addition of nearly 600,000 sq. ft. You do not see such dramatic swings in either the primary market (20-minute drive) or the region (40-minute drive), because their larger size tends to smooth over idiosyncratic events. Regardless, the basic story is the same, little new office capacity was added in the region since the turn of century. In fact, there was even a slight decline in the region's office inventory since 2018, which may be due to some older buildings being taken off the market or other being reconditioned or repurposed for non-office activities.

Figure 19: Inventory of Office Space, 1998 to 2020
Measured relative to inventory in the 1st quarter, 1998



Source: The CoStar Group, Inc.

Vacancy Rates

The next set of metrics considers how available office space is being utilized. First, we consider vacancy rates. CoStar defines a vacancy rate as the percentage of building area that while potentially usable, is not currently in use.¹³

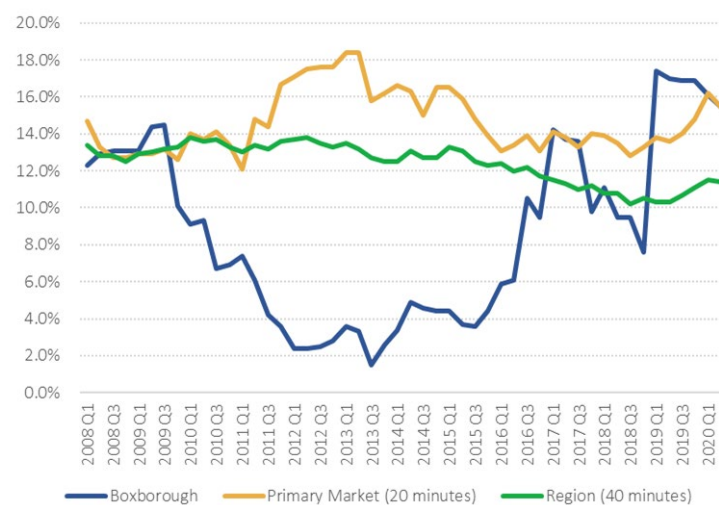
¹¹ The section makes extensive use of data from CoStar to provide information on conditions in the commercial real estate market in and around Boxborough. CoStar is a leading provider of real estate information, and data are available for most of Massachusetts on a quarterly basis from 2008 until the second quarter of 2020, with some limited data available from the late 1990s. For more information about CoStar Group Inc. and the CoStar database, please visit <http://www.costar.com/>.

¹² Office commercial real estate typically includes the offices of professional service firms, including lawyers, doctors, and government buildings, etc.

¹³ CoStar vacancy rates do not take into account abandoned buildings that are not on the market and thus may underestimate true vacancy rates in communities with considerable blight.

Vacancy rates in Boxborough were steadily rising even before Covid19 turned the real estate market on its head (Figure 20). Office vacancies in Boxborough bottomed out in 2013 at just below 2 percent. Just five short years later, nearly 200,000 square feet of Boxborough office space lie dormant -- over 17 percent of the town's total capacity. The vacancy rate has actually declined slightly since the start of 2020, both for Boxborough as well as for the primary market area and broader region. However, our data only covers up to the second quarter of 2020, and likely does not register the full impact of the Covid19 pandemic or its ensuing recession.

Figure 20: Vacancy Rates, 1st Quarter 2008 to 2nd Quarter 2020
(percent of total square footage)



Source: The CoStar Group, Inc.

Net Absorption

Net absorption measures the net change in occupied space in available building area from one quarter to the next. Net absorption is measured quarterly, so each point measures the net change in occupied building area during that quarter. Zero net absorption indicates no change from the previous quarter. Several consecutive quarters of positive net absorption indicate a shrinking supply of available space. This sends a signal to developers that the market may be ripe for investment.

Figure 21 report net absorption from 2008 (near the start of the Great Recession) until the second quarter of 2020.¹⁴ By late 2019, Boxborough was just beginning to emerge from several years of negative net absorption - implying excess supply. However, the emerging trend since has fluctuated around zero, indicating relative stability rather than a seriously tightening supply.

¹⁴ Although typically measured in square feet, Figure 21 measures net absorption in standardized units (i.e., each divided by its standard deviation) to allow for comparison across areas of fundamentally different sizes

But because Boxborough is such a small market, its trends are susceptible to idiosyncratic events. Better to consider regional trends as indicative of the overall health of the market, as investors and mobile businesses tend look at market areas as opposed to specific towns when making investment decisions.

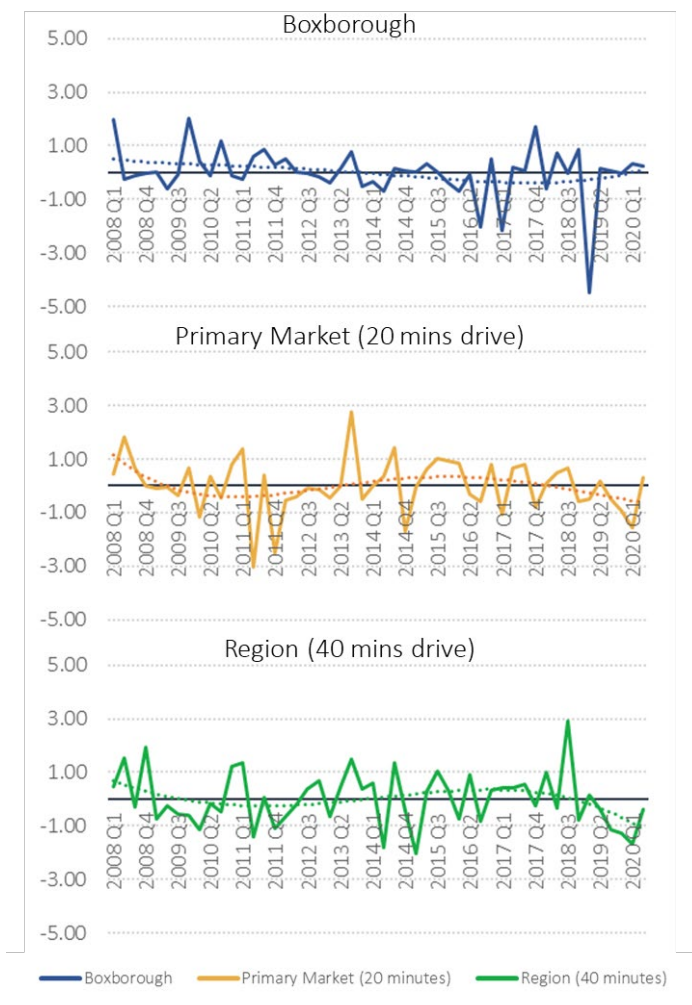
The primary and secondary market areas share a similar pattern to one another, but differ from Boxborough. The regional market was generally tightening in the wake of the Great Recession, with several notable quarters of positive net absorption. Since 2019, however, net absorption began to swing negative. This largely precedes the onset of Covid19 and may be indicator of a wave of office construction in the Boston core, which, while not included in our study area does exert competitive pressure on the outer beltway market. We expect the regional market to remain soft for the next several months and possibly years, as expansion and relocations are unlikely given the weak economy and general uncertainty.

Lease Rates

Price is another important factor in an area's real estate market. While there are many factors that determine what price property owners can charge, it stands to reason that those areas with higher lease rates are seen as more desirable by businesses and organizations seeking rental space.

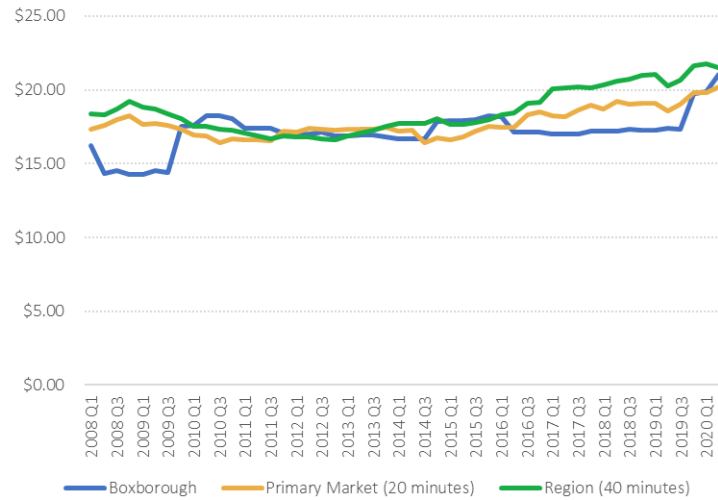
Office lease rates in Boxborough are generally on par with the broader region, although more erratic as is typical for small markets (Figure 22). Since the Great Recession, lease rates in the market and region have been rising, albeit at a gradual pace just slightly above the rate of inflation. Lease rates rarely go down, and thus a relatively flat trend is more indicative of lackluster demand.

Figure 21: Net Absorption, 2008 to 2020 (2nd Qtr) in standardized units, dashed lines = 4 qtr. moving



Source: The CoStar Group, Inc.

Figure 22: Gross Leasing Rates (Rent) in Office Space, per sq ft.



Source: The CoStar Group, Inc.

The Impact of Covid19

All forecasts rely, in one way or another, on examination of past events and using this understanding to make some prediction of the future. But there is no precedent for the truly monumental shift in human behavior and attitudes that followed the COVID19 pandemic and the ensuing global economic recession.

Covid19 has completely unrooted the real estate market, although nobody is quite sure how we will come out on the other end. A recent report from the NAIOP Research Foundation (the leading national association of commercial real estate developers), forecasts negative demand for office commercial until at least the 3rd or 4th quarter of 2021 based largely upon its experience with past recessions (Guirguis & Savage, 2020). Although they also warn that the fate of the recovery depends greatly on progress toward abating the virus, of which we have since seen very little.

There is also much speculation on how Covid19 may alter the type and location of office space demanded. Some predict a reversal of pre-Covid trends of increased urbanization, as the biggest and densest cities were among the worst-hit early in the pandemic. While these fears are likely to affect location choices for some, they should not be overstated. Fear itself does not change the economic logic of agglomeration that initially fueled re-urbanization, although it may cause some businesses to rethink which activities truly require density and face-to-face and which do not.

The more pertinent question to ask is how the pandemic may have influenced changes in how we work and whether these changes will be temporary or enduring? Some suggest that, at least

in the short-term, workers returning to the office will insist upon increased separation and more personal space, in contrast from the more open and communal office concepts that dominated design considerations pre-Covid. If true, this could increase the demand for larger office spaces. However, this also assumes that workers will indeed want to return to a physical office.

We believe the more enduring legacy of Covid19 will be its acceleration of remote and off-site work. Even before Covid, there was a steady increase in flexible work arrangements such as contract (i.e. gig) and remote workers (Wallace, 2019). Although many workers and companies remained skeptical, so adoption was slow. Almost overnight, remote work became the norm for white-collar workers and within a few months many have gotten used to it. Some hate it, with the distractions of home, children, pets and the troublesome bleeding of work into personal space. Others appreciate the convenience, flexibility, and autonomy. Businesses have also gotten more comfortable with remote work arrangements. Many have recognized that it can help their bottom line, by eliminating the costs of maintaining a large physical office and spreading these costs out over their workers. On the other hand, many of the advantages of face-to-face work remain, such as knowledge spillover and building interpersonal connections among workers and with clients.

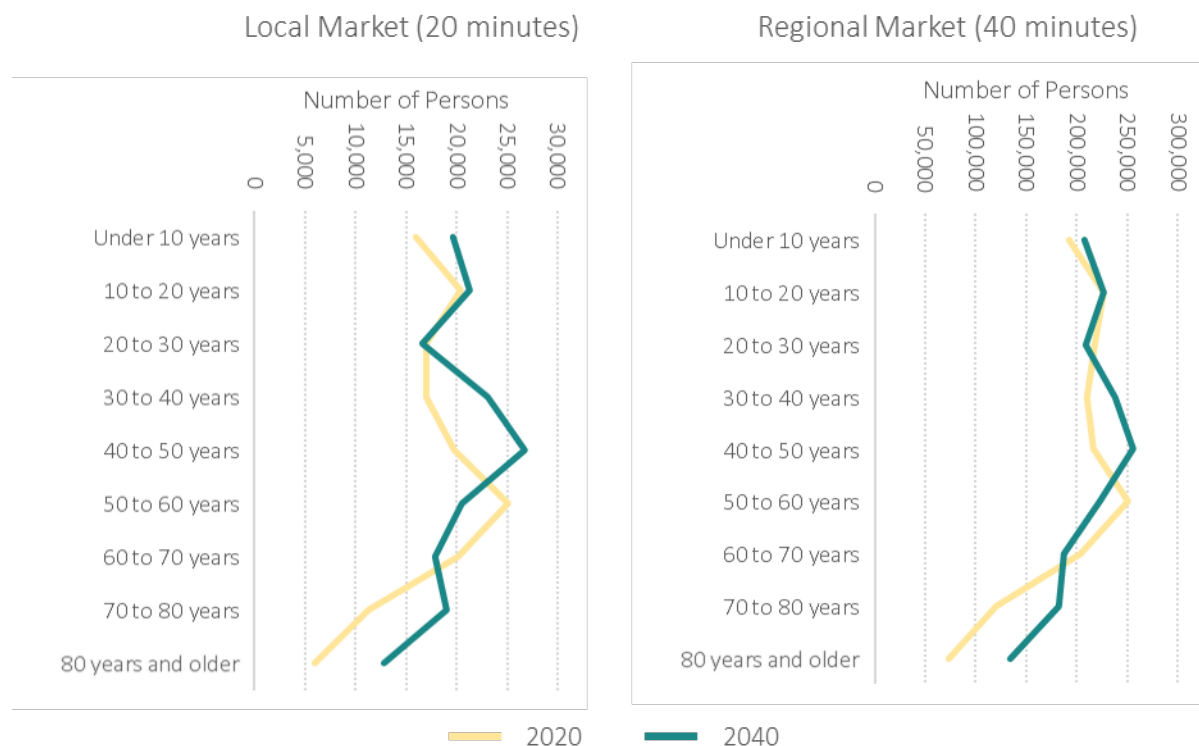
In the end, we do not think that remote work will entirely replace the need for in-person work. After the virus subsides, some people will return to the central office, while others will decide to remain working from home at least part-time. The need for physical space will not go away entirely. Businesses will still need space for their most innovative workers to brainstorm and collectively solve problems, while also having a separate office to retreat to when needed. Some businesses will still need facilities for work involving specialized equipment, such as lab work, as well as other forms of highly sensitive work where security and secrecy is paramount. Executives will still want to get together for in-person meetings with key clients and contacts, although perhaps with less frequency than before.

Even with a mass exodus from the cities, which is doubtful, there is unlikely to be much renewed interest in large box, single-use, vintage suburban office parks of the style built in the 80's and early 90's. While there may be willing buyers and tenants in isolated instances, the general trends are not favorable. Overall, companies will likely demand less office space than before, and the space they want will have a much smaller physical footprint than in the past. There are already signs that some larger businesses are exploring various hub-and-spoke models, with a string of small suburban satellites linked to the downtown HQ. Another trend may be the (re)emergence of co-working spaces or tele-commuting hubs. The communal model of the co-working space did not fare well under the Coronavirus, but after the virus subsides it is imaginable that remote workers might find these spaces a welcome respite from working from home, while still forgoing the dreaded hour-long commute to the office.

Senior Housing

Housing demand is typically estimated by examining forecasts of the resident population, with a keen eye towards specific demographic groups. For a senior housing complex, we are mainly interested in people that are now, or will be, over the age of 70 within the next several decades. We use a technique known as Cohort-Survival modeling to develop a short-term of population from the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau. Cohort-survival models use past and current trends on the age progression of the resident population to predict the future age profile of an area (Klosterman et al., 2018). This method is particularly valuable when there are strict data and other resources limitations that prohibit a more rigorous analysis of population trends. Figure 23 illustrates the current and anticipated age profile of the resident population, for both a local and regional market. We assume that the demand for a new senior housing complex in Boxborough will primarily come from area residents, and not from people currently living further away.

Figure 23: Age Profile of the Resident Population, Current and Future



Sources: Author's forecasts based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey and ESRI.

Two immediate trends stand out for the local market area. First, the resident population is expected to continue to age forward into the eldest age groups, namely those 70 and above. In 2020, there are just over 17,000 local area residents age 70 years and older. By 2040, this number will be above 31,000—a substantial increase of 84%. This is entirely consistent with what we have been seeing for the past several decades with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation dominating most regional and national demographic trends. We see a generally similar trend at the regional scale.

The second trend is perhaps even more revealing, if not as immediately apparent. We expect the fastest growing cohort in the next twenty years will not be the elderly, but rather middle-aged residents, those who will be between 40 and 60 years old within the next twenty years. This is the millennial generation who is currently the focus of much interest and focus of employers in their quest for talent and human capital. In the recent past, Boxborough has been relatively successful at attracting young families, in no small part because of the stellar reputation of its schools. But Gen X'ers (now in their late 30's through 50's) with families are a relatively small cohort, and thus their influence on population dynamics has been eclipsed by Boomers. Not so with millennials, who make up a sizable portion of the population and are only just now starting families and thinking about issues like schools and personal space that has generally attracted people to Boxborough in the past.

What this says for the anticipated demand for elderly housing is not entirely clear. There will be growth in the target demographic of elderly persons in the coming decades, with more and more baby boomers seeking to downsize and be in an environment with better access to medical care, focused activities, and paratransit services. However, the rate of growth of the elderly population will begin to slow over the next two decades, and there is a mild risk of over-building senior housing looking twenty to thirty years out. This of course depends upon the current and anticipated supply, of which we turn next.

We measure the supply of existing senior housing in the area via an inventory of senior living communities in the area. We developed this inventory by searching several web-based business directories using a variety of key terms such as senior, assisted, progressive care, and retirement in combination with secondary search terms such as housing, living and facilities. We then culled the list by removing other activities, such as senior centers, adult day care services, elderly companion services, geriatric care medical clinics, and the like. We caution that our analysis of the supply of senior housing is limited in several key respects. First, despite our comprehensive search efforts, we cannot guarantee that we identify every senior housing facility in the region and that all of those found are still in operation. We also could not find information on the age, capacity or quality of the senior housing stock. As such, we cannot tell how long different facilities may remain in use over the next twenty years, nor do we know the number of residents that they can serve. Our analysis also does not include unbuilt or planned facilities, such as the

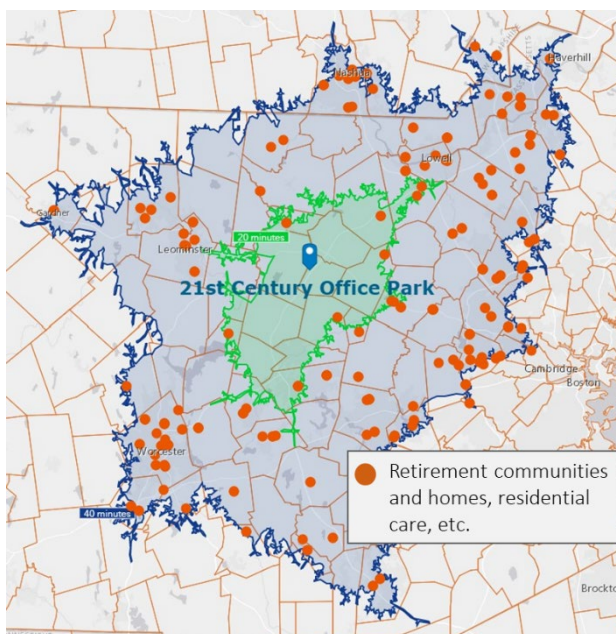
anticipated 50-unit development recently approved for the Town Center on Massachusetts Avenue. It also does not include residential developments and other active adult communities such as the 55+ Tisbury Meadow development on Stow Road, that, while catering to older residents, are not explicitly coded as such on available databases.

Given these limitations, we were able to identify 160 retirement communities, residential care homes, apartments, and similar residential developments focused on senior (Figure 24). Very few (nine) are within the local market area, and those are mostly on the outer fringe.

Although the 50 senior housing units planned for Mass Ave. will clearly cut into this, as do other known active adult communities such as Tisbury Meadow, Sheriff's Meadow, Summerfields and the Hill Road condominiums. So while there is still a market for some additional senior housing in Boxborough, at least in the near future, the long-term prospects for such targeted units is far less certain.

The more relevant question is not whether there is enough demand for more senior housing in Boxborough but whether senior housing is the right fit for the envisioned mixed-use office park. It is our professional opinion that a senior housing complex would do little to compliment either the office park or onsite restaurants, cafe, or other entertainment options. The live-work-play aspects of modern business districts are meant to be mutually reinforcing. The lure for many businesses in the knowledge and tech space is to have onsite housing options to help it attract the highly prized millennial and Gen Z workforce, who are, in-turn, drawn in by the prospects of living near both work and entertainment options. We understand that for many communities, it is typically the housing component that kills mixed-used development proposals, with concerns over impacts on schools, traffic and community character. However, for the developer, it is the inclusion of modestly-priced housing targeting toward younger workers and their families that completes the circle. And with many suburban properties on the market right now, it is hard to see why a developer would need to settle.

Figure 24: Location of Senior Living Facilities in the Region



Summary and conclusions

In this section we conduct a high-level analysis of potential market opportunities in a variety of retail, office, and residential activities. Because of Boxborough's unique quality as an affluent community with few commercial enterprises, there are many viable market opportunities for local goods and services. We conclude that there is sufficient room for a full-service or family-style restaurant and or breweries/taverns. This is critical, because good food and drink is at the heart of any successful commercial commons. They are the modern-day anchor tenants, which can draw people in, help establish a location as a community gathering spot and destination, while also supporting complementary businesses like specialty retail, small-form entertainment, and specialized personal services such as day spas and salons.

The suburban office market is not as favorable. Even before Covid, interest in traditional suburban office campuses was waning, with major tech and innovation-dependent companies shifting their focus back to the city to attract talent and benefit from knowledge spillover between people. The increased vacancies in Boxborough's office parks are a testament to this. In response, some developers began to successfully reimagine the suburban office complex as mixed-use "live-work-play" communities, with on-site housing, entertainment and more flexible office configurations to handle a larger number of smaller tenants with a greater variety of needs.

Covid19 has put the entire commercial real estate market on pause. Office tenants have, thus far, kept paying their rent. But few are moving and any pre-pandemic expansion plans are on indefinitely hold for most. No one is quite sure what the market will be like as we slowly begin to emerge from the pandemic and ensuing recession. Our prediction is that the lasting impact of the pandemic will be how it has accelerated and amplified remote work as a viable competitor to the traditional physical office. Workers may very well remain wary of closeness for some time and yearn for the less-dense settings and enough workspace to allow one to have an actual office again. However, the bigger trend will be less demand for office space overall and the spaces that will be favored are likely to be those that are flexible and can replicate some of the most desired traits of the urban locale, but without the urban locale.

Our housing analysis suggests that there will be sufficient demand for additional senior housing in the region, even with the prospect of 50 added units in Boxborough near the historic Town Center. However, the demographic trends of aging boomers that have fueled skyrocketing demand for senior housing are beginning to wane. There will still be a scores of seniors in the years to come, but they will soon be eclipsed by Millennials looking to start families and seeking areas with more space and good schools. We also question whether senior housing is the right fit for a mixed-use 21st Century Office park. Senior housing might seem like an acceptable alternative for Boxborough, which understandably worries about developmental impacts and the

loss of its unique character. However, senior housing has very little “synergy” with the entertainment and office functions that provide the other two pillars of a mixed-use office park. Businesses want on-site and nearby housing to help them attract workers. In the R&D and tech world the most desired workers are highly educated Millennials and Generation Zs.

D. Community Discussion Forums

UMASS Amherst's partnership with Boxborough cumulated with two "virtual" community discussion forums. The first was held on a Thursday evening on September 24th, with nearly 80 community members in attendance. The second was held on the morning of Saturday, October 3rd, with nearly 50 participants.

The overall goal of the two forums was to have a wide swath of the Boxborough community (residents and businesses) discuss the economic challenges faced by Boxborough and chart a course forward to achieving a shared vision of the future.

The first session began with a summary presentation of the Phase I study and a review of the four development scenarios by Dr. Camille Barchers. This was

followed by presentation of the preliminary results of the market feasibility study by Dr. Henry Renski. Dr. John Mullin then set the ground rules and provided the instructions for dividing the audience into five breakout groups, one for each of the four phase 1 scenarios, plus a fifth to discuss the Cisco Beaver Brook campus. Graduate student volunteers from the UMass Masters in Regional Planning program staffed each breakout room, taking notes and helping to keep the discussion on track, if needed. Community participants were tasked with identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with each scenario. They were also asked to identify potential actions that the community could take within the next year to advance the desired outcomes from each scenario. A summary of the discussion topics from each of the topical breakout rooms is included in Appendix E.

Figure 25: Promotional Flyer for the Community Discussion Forums



Town-wide priorities

The Town should...

1. Protect and build-upon rural character
2. Encourage a village-style retail center and commons
3. Support re-use of vacant office parks
4. Update zoning bylaws

The second session convened a little over a week later, beginning where the first session left off. It began with a brief recap of the previous forum and an update from the Boxborough Economic Development Committee on the state of the Cisco Campus sale at Beaver Brook. Drs. Renski and Mullin then presented their assessment of town-wide priorities, based largely on their analysis of the discussions from the first community forum. Community members were asked to discuss these priorities in small group breakout rooms, with instructions to identify additional priorities that may have been left out from the preliminary list or identify others that did not belong.

The town wide priorities were organized into four general areas.

1. Protect and build-upon rural character

Boxborough residents love their community's natural places, farmlands, historic structures, and overall rural character and small-town feel. Many fear that allowing for further development will necessarily detract from their prized quality of life and may threaten their property values.

However, there is also a recognition that the town needs to adapt to the changing times. With big box stores filing for bankruptcy, shopping malls closing down, and suburban office parks emptying, communities like Boxborough face a different suite of development challenges that they did in the 1990s and 2000s when suburbanization along the I495 loop was rampant. Many wonder whether it possible to promote favored types of development in order to diversify the tax base, without the losing Boxborough's unique character? As one respondent put it, "can we have office parks and still be rural?"

In search of this balance, the townsfolk favor a suite of actions that protect and preserve existing open spaces, build upon existing natural resources and amenities, funnel development into existing sites closer to the highway where traffic impacts will be minimal. Some of the specific recommended actions include:

- Prepare an agricultural/local food systems marketing plan
- Favor re-use over new development
- Protect from further farm loss

- Look for ways to expand farmers markets, events and festivals, and support locally produced goods
- Develop and improve connections on the rail/trail system
- Maintain protections for, and expand, current recreational / cultural / natural systems – include recreational trails and historical features as assets in future economic development plans

2. Encourage a village-style retail center and commons

Preserving rural character does not, however, mean isolation. While they pride their pastoral quality of life, many Boxborough residents also yearn for more public and common spaces where they can gather with friends and neighbors and help build a sense of community and kinship among residents. Many would also like the convenience of having some commercial activities closer to home, so long as they are tasteful and in keeping with the community character. Survey results from Phase I indicate that residents regularly drive upwards of 20 minutes just to go out to eat. The lack of local services not only leads to more traffic on area roads, but also represents a lost opportunity to broaden the tax base and create a scale-appropriate commercial commons that would naturally serve as a hub for civic life. The lack of local amenities also makes it more difficult to attract new businesses to fill vacant office parks, as employees have few local options for lunch, filling errands, or unwinding after work.

The breakout room discussions of forming a Village Style center range from the aspirational to the highly practical. Concerns over traffic, the environment, and other development impacts are front and center, as limits to the town's water and sewer capacity. Participants discussed possible locations, with many imagining the historic town center as the natural candidate for a Commons – despite noted infrastructure and environmental constraints. Others favor the prospects of re-developing parcels in the village-style, such as Adams Place, which has infrastructure in place, avoids the development of natural spaces, and has superior access to the Interstate that would reduce through-town traffic impacts. Of course, redevelopment is costly. Office parks are not designed to easily morph into modern retail centers and there are still unanswered questions regarding what uses could actually be supported by existing water and sewer systems? And while our analysis shows a sufficient local market to support a restaurant, cafe and other services, it is unclear whether a specific developer would see enough potential profit in developing a village-style commons in keeping with the Town's rural character. One participant discussed the “chicken-egg” challenge of retail development – you need for a stable commercial base in place before launching retail but office parks will want to see retail in place before signing a lease.

Despite these potential challenges, there was ample support for the idea to warrant further consideration. Some specific recommendations include:

- Focus on small scale and local businesses (no big box)
- Look into the possibility of a ground floor restaurant at 1414?
- Study water/sewer capacity for specific sites.
- Minimize traffic and capitalize on existing infrastructure by favoring re-use of sites near highway
- Have the historic center redesigned as a space for ad-hoc events (such as festivals or farmers markets) that would not require major infrastructure upgrades. Pursue a commercial common elsewhere in town.

3. Re-use of Office Parks

As mentioned previously, the community generally favors the re-use of parcels over greenfield development. On the one hand, recently vacated office parks, such as Cisco's sites at 1414 Mass Ave. and Beaver Brook, both have onsite water, sewer and other critical infrastructure systems already in place – although no one we spoke to was quite sure of existing capacity at either site. On the other hand, many recognize that the demand for the traditional suburban office parks was waning, even before Covid19. Office park tenants are demanding less space than before, but more flexibility and a greater variety of on-site amenities. Many businesses also expect moderately affordable housing either onsite or nearby to satisfy the demands of the workers.

There does seem to be some support among residents to allow for mixed-use development options at existing office parks. Nevertheless, the overall tone is to proceed carefully and with caution. Any proposed re-use would need to be evaluated in terms of capacity limits, traffic impacts, and more general impacts on community character. To paraphrase one resident, "better to wait for the right buyer—one who shares and is willing to commit to the community vision." However, Boxborough would be wise to articulate a clear vision of what it would like for its office parks sooner rather than later, as the current owner is looking for a rather quick sale and the window for the community to influence the process may close quickly. Some of the specific recommended actions include:

- Improve mass- or para-transit connections with commuter line station, be cognizant that parking at the station is a major constraint
- Preserve on-site recreational trails
- Clarify the town's responsibilities and rights vis-a-vie any new owner/developer
- Check the feasibility of the town purchasing some of the (Beaver Brook) parcel, presumably to preserve some of the valued recreational features

- Study the revenue impacts from lost taxes from vacant office parcels
- Consider post-COVID opportunities resulting from changing nature of work, such as co-working spaces and housing options to attract younger workers, not just seniors
- Need to get the citizen's involved early and ramp up an educational campaign, as there will be Push-back from neighboring residents
- Find out why are CISCO employees choosing Waltham instead of Boxborough?

4. Update zoning by-laws

Zoning was another recurring theme that transcended the multiple breakout group discussions in both the first and session forums. Boxborough managed to largely avoid the rapid suburbanization experienced by other communities along the I495 ring by limiting development and codifying tight development restrictions into its zoning bylaws. The worry is that softening these zoning rules or other restrictions will necessarily lead to an influx of big box stores, fast food chains, traffic, noise, put excessive pressure on the schools, and the like. Nevertheless, others recognize that the current zoning by-laws are overly rigid and will need to be revised if the town desires to attract new commercial activities. Some of the specific comments and suggestions include:

- Re-examine zoning to make sure it protects rural character while allowing flexibility to encourage mixed-used and/or commercial activities in select locations, such as the village and office districts.
- Explore the possibility of instituting overlay districts, form-based zoning codes, and special permit granting authority.
- Compare Boxborough's zoning bylaws and set-back requirements to other communities that have successfully (and unsuccessfully) attracted the type of businesses that are appropriate for Boxborough.
- Does current zoning allow for maker spaces, co-working, or other changing needs of the market?

5. Additional priorities

In addition to the previous, forum participants offered a wide variety of other items as possible economic development priorities. These include:

- Sustainability and resilience of undeveloped lands - Boxborough strength
- Reduce tax burden – balance revenue and expenses
- Promote greater population diversity to support economy
- Improve walkability and pedestrian/bike safety, including sidewalks, bike paths / trails, and safety infrastructure

- Historic preservation as an economic asset
- Foster neighborliness and promote resident involvement in civic life
- Promote existing local businesses by conducting an inventory of existing businesses and making list available to residents and visitors

E. Recommended Actions

We conclude with a short list of recommendations for how Boxborough should proceed in the months ahead. These recommendations are a mix of actions recommended by residents at the conclusion of the second community discussion forum as well as several proposed during a recent from a brainstorming session involving the three principal investigators (Barchers, Mullin and Renski) who worked on both phases of this project.

- 1) The Town should be pro-active in articulating its preferred vision for the redevelopment of the office parks that are currently on the market. Waiting until after a sale may be too late.
- 2) Consider revising its zoning bylaws. However, from a practical standpoint, they could focus on the Office Parks and Town Center districts as opposed to a comprehensive overhaul. This might be the focus of a specific task force.
- 3) Any changes to the Town's zoning bylaws should allow for village zoning, special permit granting authority, and design controls.
- 4) The town should consider offering density bonuses and/or other strategic incentives to entice developers to redevelop parcels in ways consistent with the community's vision.
- 5) The town should consider easing parking and set-back requirements for the office parks slated for possible mixed-use.
- 6) It may be difficult to attract a successful coffee shop under the current drive-through ban, in a post-Covid world. Likewise, the prohibition on disposable flatware likely dissuades restaurants as take-out is likely to remain a vital lifeline for some time.
- 7) Consider inviting representatives (such as zoning board members) from other communities to review Boxborough's zoning and make recommendations.
- 8) The EDC, Planning, and possibly other community boards need to find common areas and speak with one voice. One possibility is to create ad-hoc focus-groups involving representatives from each of the relevant governance boards to develop recommendations in the following areas:
 - a. Office park redevelopment / Beaver Brook
 - b. Agricultural support and marketing
 - c. Recreational trails

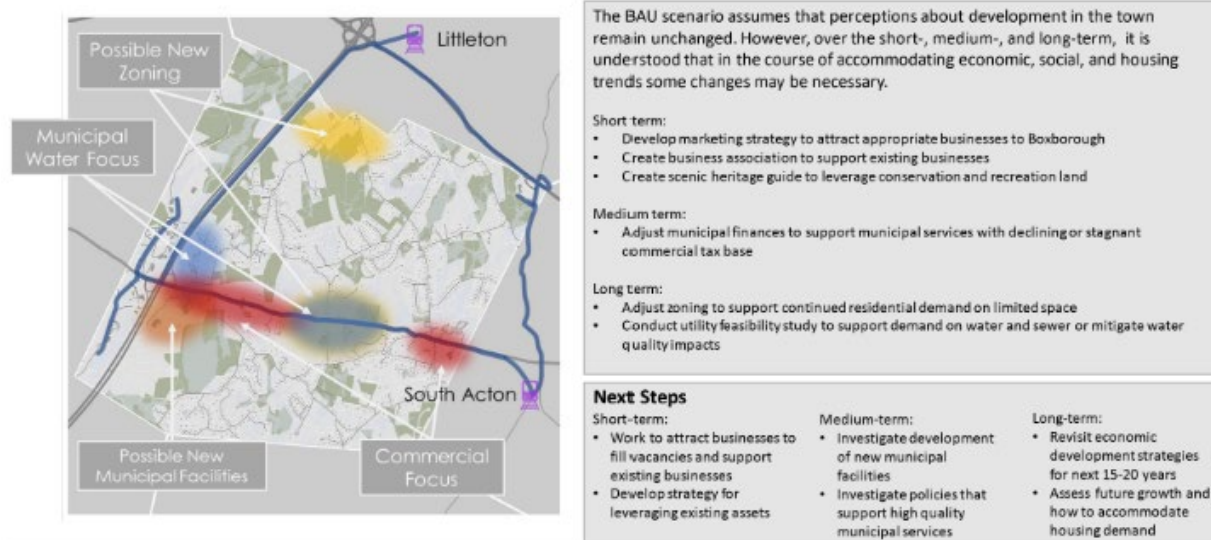
The Town Planner can serve as the common technical resource and primary administrative contact for these committees and help them identify potential grant opportunities from supporting agencies such as CDBG, EDA, MassDevelopment and USDA Rural Development. A preliminary list is included in the Phase I technical report.

- 9) Continue outreach efforts and encourage community involvement with more a periodic series of outreach / planning events.

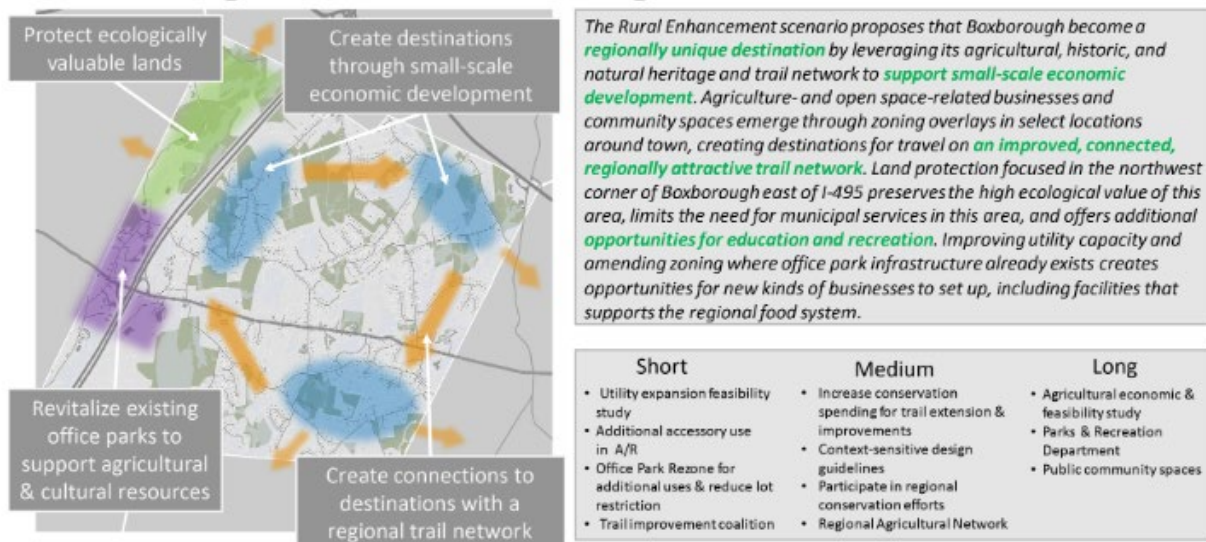
F. Appendices

Appendix A. Scenario Infographics (from survey)

Baseline or Current Course



Rural/Agricultural Heritage



Village Style: Community, Connection, Culture...



VISION

Our vision is to implement Village-Style Development in two areas of Boxborough—the existing Town Center District ("Town Center") and Adams Place ("Village Green")—that align with community interests, provide services to residents, and support the overall economic development of Boxborough.

The "Town Center" was identified as the most popular location for 'village-style development' in the 2019 Economic Development Survey; however, after considering the constraints on utility capacity and developable land, this location would be unable to support much of the commercial and dining amenities desired by Boxborough residents. Although, limited and controlled uses could be considered and supported in this location with minimal utility expansion (perhaps in the form of a cultural center or community gathering space), a second location would be needed to fully realize the town's vision.

The "Village Green" was identified as the second most popular location for 'village-style development' in the 2019 Survey; and given the available utility capacity, developable land, and connection to the 2030 Master Plan this location proposes an attractive option for a more expansive, village-style commercial development. Adams Place could support a variety of uses, including a cafe, small-scale restaurant & retail establishments, a new public safety building, and a village greenspace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

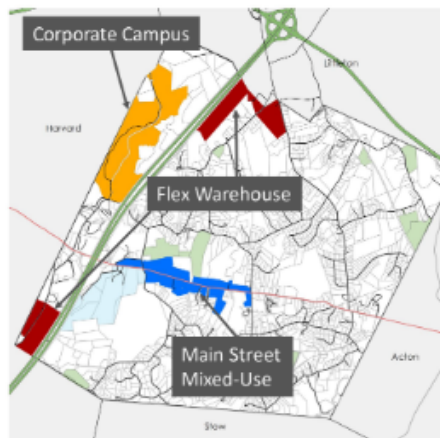
Town Center

- Consider Development of Indoor Community Gathering Space
- Restrict High-Utility Demand Uses
- Implement Form Based Code to Maintain Historic Character

Village Green

- Consider Commercial Overlay Zone Allowing Greater Variety of Uses
- Utilize Adams Place Available Water/Sewer Capacity
- Encourage Connectivity to Existing Office Park

Comprehensive Approach



Summary

This scenario aims to diversify land uses, tax base, and business activity through comprehensive zoning reforms, streamlined permitting, and new incentive strategies. Encouraging synergies between districts will create an economic development strategy that will attract new talent to Boxborough, by amplifying the efficiency and successful development of all districts. By encouraging appropriately scaled development, this strategy will preserve the character of Boxborough while creating amenities for town residents and the 21st century workforce.

Regulatory Changes

Corporate Campus

- **Mixed-use overlay in office park** to encourage diverse uses and revitalization of CISCO campus
- **Promote vitality, sustainability, and sense of place** to attract and retain 21st century workforce talent

Flex Warehouse

- Minimize impacts on Boxborough while allowing for adaptability that will accommodate flexible use for emerging industries through **performance zoning**
- Allow and incentivize **R&D and cold storage by right**, as well as **vertical farming uses by expedited permit**

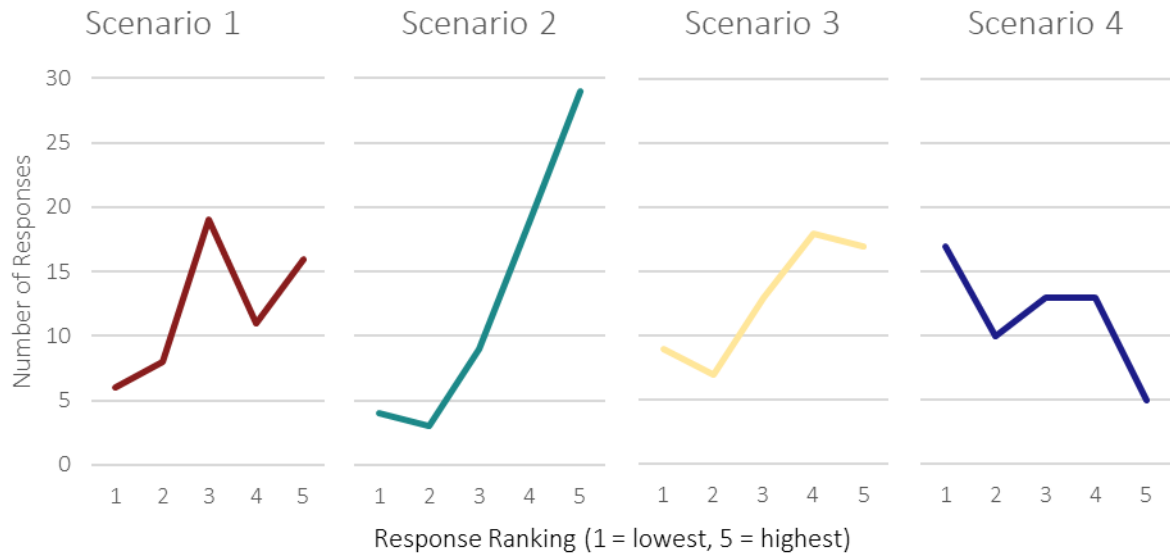
Main Street Mixed-Use

- Implement **Form-based code** that links Town & Village Center through infrastructure & design standards
- Allow and incentivize desirable uses identified by **Boxborough2030** to create a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood
- Allow for **micro-mixing and infill development** due to limited buildable land

Appendix B. Survey Response Distributions

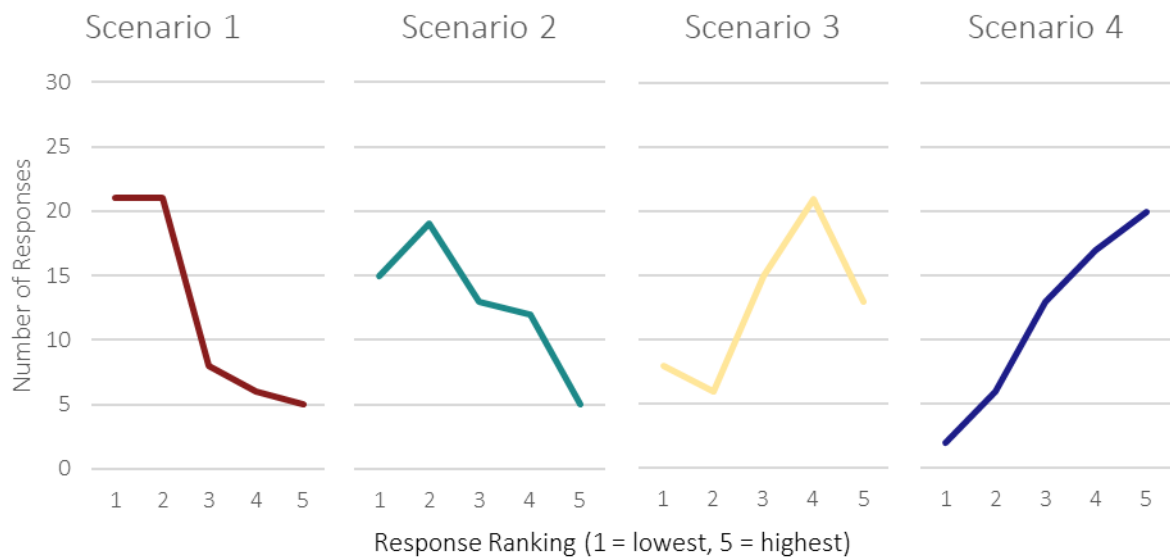
Question 1:

[To what extent do you think this scenario].. Fits the character of Boxborough?



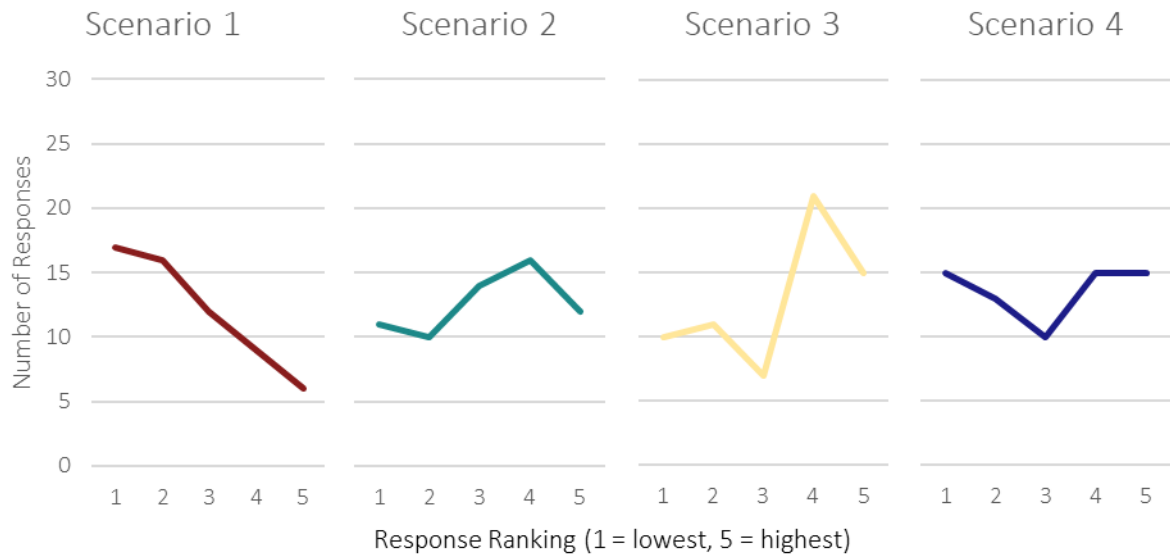
Question 2:

[To what extent do you think this scenario].. Supports Economic Development?



Question 3:

[To what extent do you think this scenario].. Aligns with my vision for Boxborough?



Appendix C: Location Maps for Existing Businesses

Figure C-1:
Location of Bars, Pubs, Taverns and
Breweries

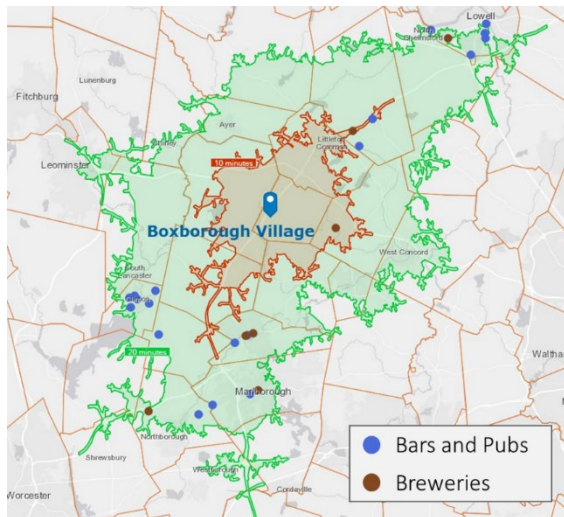


Figure C-2:
Location of Cafés, Coffee Shops and
Bakeries

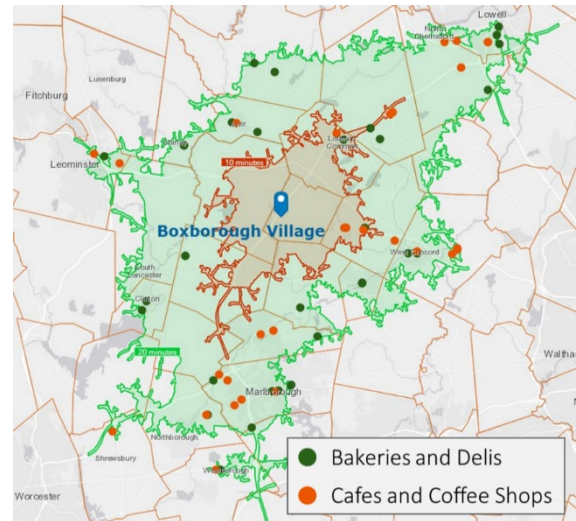


Figure C-3
Location of Dry Cleaners and Laundry

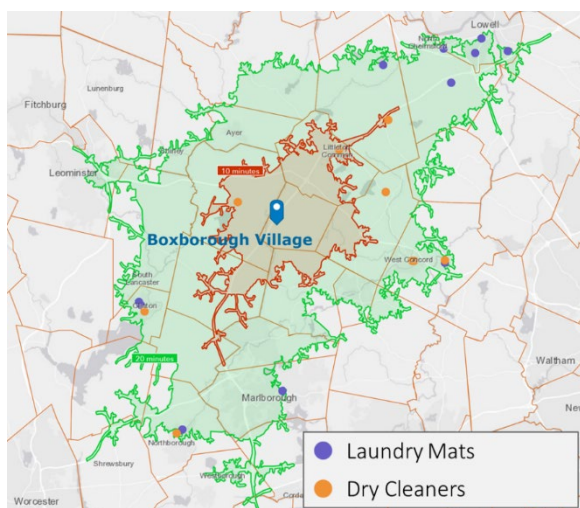


Figure C-4
Location of Entertainment, Arcades,
Skating Rinks

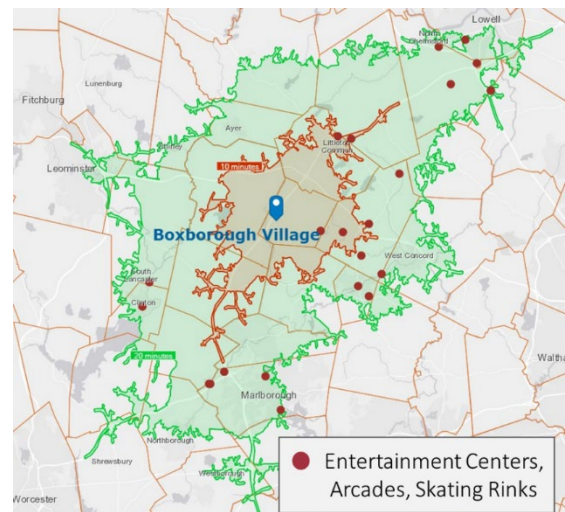


Figure C-5
Location of Grocery Stores and Food Markets

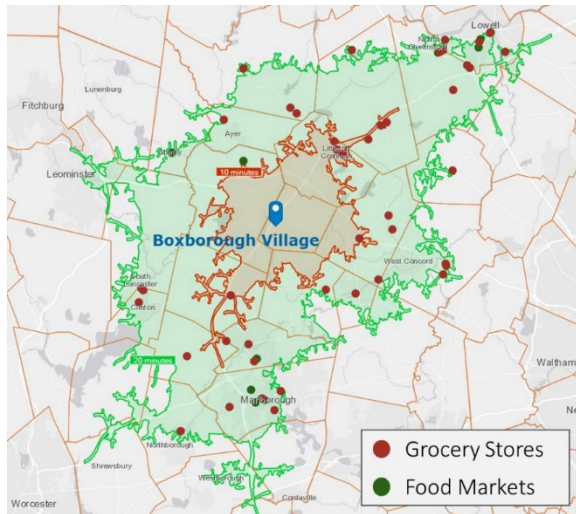


Figure C-6
Location of Hardware and Home Improvement Centers

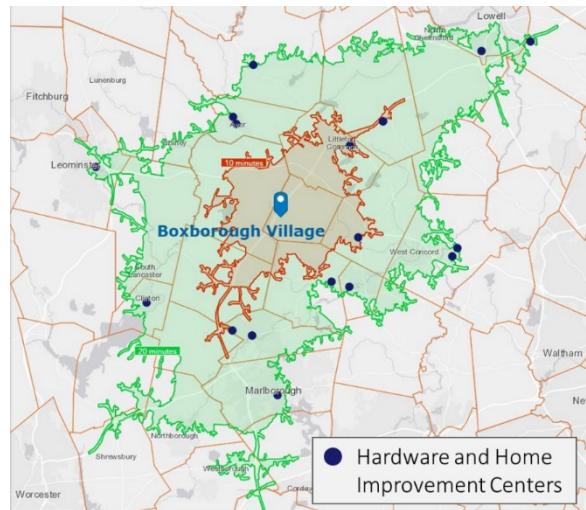


Figure C-7
Location of Health Clubs and Fitness Centers

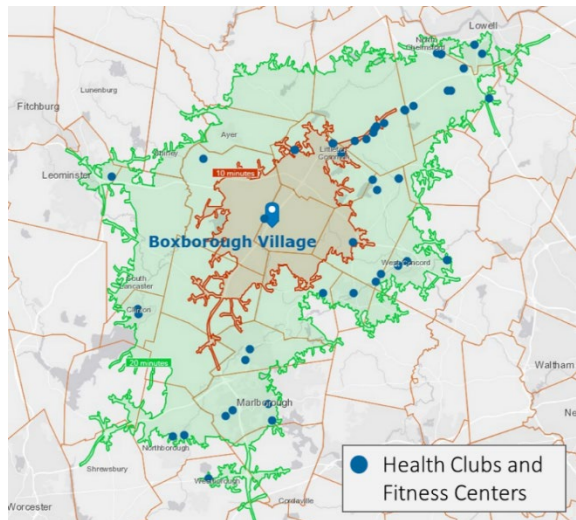


Figure C-8
Location of Personal Care Services

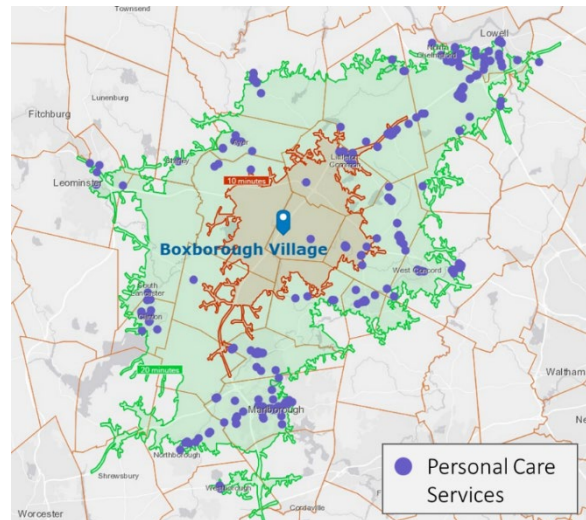


Figure C-9
Pet Services and Supplies

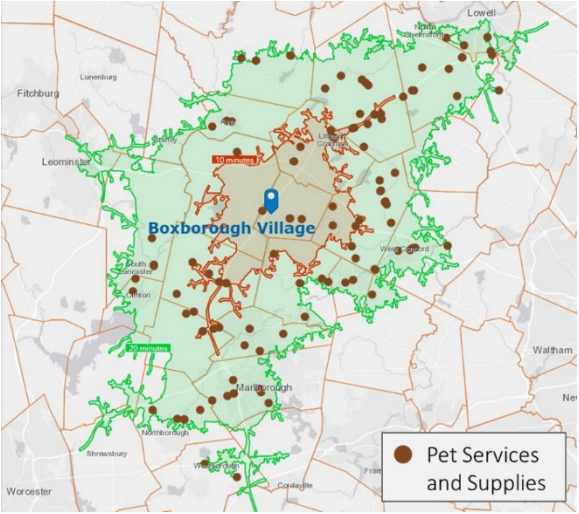


Figure C-10
Location of Pharmacies and Medical Clinics

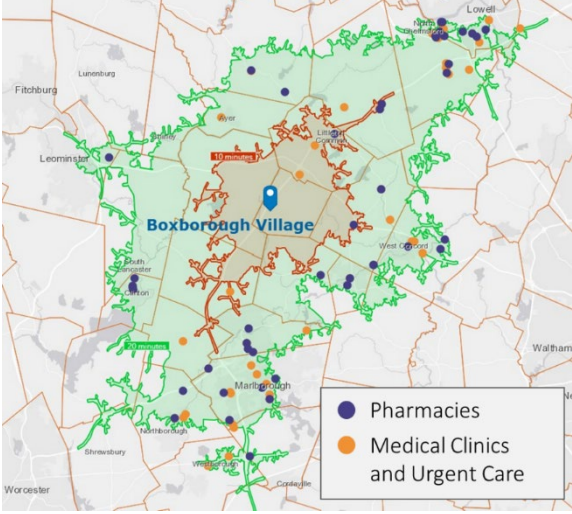


Figure C-11
Location of Full-Service Restaurants

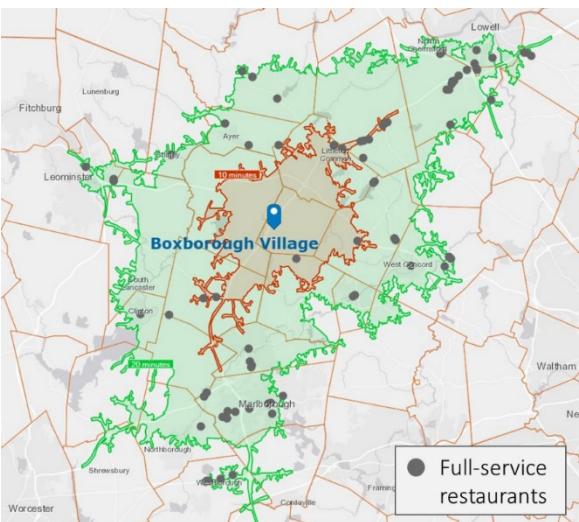
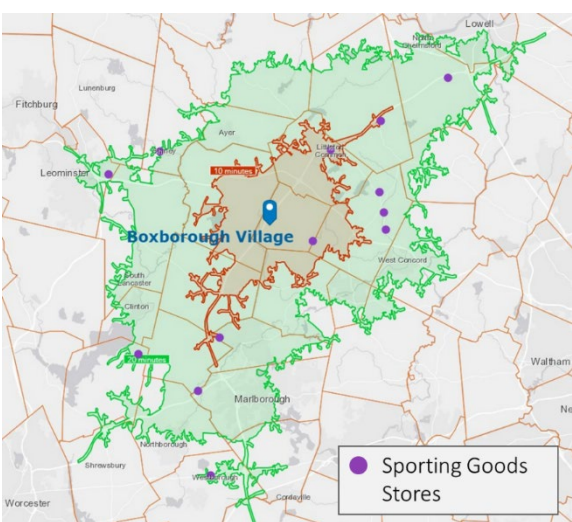


Figure C-12
Location of Sporting Goods Stores



Appendix D: Supply/Demand Analysis, Data Tables

Table D1: Supply/Demand Analysis, Local (Primary) Market Area, Commodity Basis

	Demand / Household Expenditures (millions)	Number of Businesses	Supply / Expected Sales (millions)	Retail Gap (millions)	Market Potential Index
Groceries	\$265.70	7	\$261.47	\$4.23	0.02
Full-Service Restaurants	\$32.01	11	\$6.96	\$25.05	3.60
Entertainment / Sports Center	\$24.12	4	\$51.48	-\$27.36	-0.53
Pharmacies	\$20.27	3	\$8.77	\$11.50	1.31
Hardware / Home Improvement	\$17.90	2	\$15.55	\$2.35	0.15
Medical services (non-Hospital)	\$14.93	4	\$9.38	\$5.56	0.59
Pet Supplies & Services	\$12.93	26	\$33.80	-\$20.87	-0.62
Personal Services	\$7.84	34	\$5.33	\$2.51	0.47
Tavern / Brewery / Distillery	\$4.95	3	\$6.55	-\$1.60	-0.24
Cafe and Bakery	\$4.94	8	\$10.55	-\$5.61	-0.53
Health Facility / Fitness / Health Clubs	\$4.86	8	\$7.33	-\$2.47	-0.34
Outdoor / Sporting Goods	\$3.47	2	\$3.80	-\$0.33	-0.09
Dry Cleaners and Laundry	\$0.89	2	\$0.20	\$0.69	3.44

Table D2: Supply/Demand Analysis, Regional (Secondary) Market Area, Commodity Basis

	Demand / Household Expenditures (millions)	Number of Businesses	Supply / Expected Sales (millions)	Retail Gap (millions)	Market Potential Index
Groceries	\$2,330.01	56	\$2,091.77	\$238.24	0.11
Full-Service Restaurants	\$269.15	83	\$52.52	\$216.63	4.13
Entertainment / Sports Center	\$197.52	24	\$308.87	-\$111.35	-0.36
Pharmacies	\$174.99	44	\$128.60	\$46.39	0.36
Hardware / Home Improvement	\$147.17	19	\$147.76	-\$0.59	0.00
Medical services (non-Hospital)	\$125.56	57	\$133.61	-\$8.05	-0.06
Pet Supplies & Services	\$111.64	113	\$146.90	-\$35.27	-0.24
Personal Services	\$64.30	338	\$53.00	\$11.30	0.21
Tavern / Brewery / Distillery	\$42.15	26	\$56.77	-\$14.62	-0.26
Cafe and Bakery	\$44.01	158	\$208.36	-\$164.35	-0.79
Health Facility / Fitness / Health Clubs	\$39.81	51	\$46.73	-\$6.93	-0.15
Outdoor equipment / Sporting Goods	\$28.46	11	\$20.92	\$7.54	0.36
Dry Cleaners and Laundry	\$7.52	21	\$2.11	\$5.41	2.57

Table D3: Supply/Demand Analysis, Local (Primary) Market Area, Industry Basis

	Demand (millions)	Supply (millions)	Retail Gap (millions)	Number of businesses	Market Potential Index	New Business Potential
Hardware and Bldg. Supplies	\$35.71	\$74.46	-\$38.75	12	-0.52	-4.28
Grocery Stores	\$88.92	\$99.20	-\$10.27	6	-0.10	-0.61
Specialty Food Stores	\$3.91	\$3.55	\$0.35	7	0.10	0.18
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$35.05	\$26.60	\$8.45	8	0.32	0.90
Sporting Goods & Hobby Stores	\$19.28	\$2.87	\$16.42	7	5.73	3.64
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$22.14	\$9.56	\$12.58	17	1.32	6.44
Drinking Places	\$3.54	\$0.61	\$3.54	1	4.80	2.60
Restaurants/Eating Places	\$57.31	\$24.33	\$32.98	34	1.36	14.82

Table D4: Supply/Demand Analysis, Regional (Secondary) Market Area, Industry Basis

	Demand (millions)	Supply (millions)	Retail Gap (millions)	Number of businesses	Market Potential Index	New Business Potential
Hardware and Bldg. Supplies	\$297.08	\$302.89	-\$5.81	103	-0.02	-0.16
Grocery Stores	\$787.00	\$560.77	\$226.23	110	0.40	3.35
Specialty Food Stores	\$34.59	\$23.53	\$11.06	41	0.47	1.41
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$305.93	\$340.05	-\$34.12	124	-0.10	-0.90
Sporting Goods & Hobby Stores	\$166.49	\$114.90	\$51.59	87	0.45	2.86
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$190.56	\$114.23	\$76.33	216	0.67	9.78
Drinking Places	\$29.69	\$11.59	\$18.11	19	1.56	3.33
Restaurants/Eating Places	\$494.85	\$377.88	\$116.97	501	0.31	13.14

Appendix E: Breakout Room (BR) Summaries, Community Discussion Forum #1

Breakout Room #1:

BR#1: Current Course

Strengths

- Cautious approach to development
- Preserve loved aspects, focus on weak spots
- Focus on filling vacancies first
- Works within infrastructure limits
- Multi-use places

Weaknesses

- Housing is too expensive
- Cannot afford the taxes
- Water and sewage limits
- Other restrictions (e.g. Board of Health)
- Strategy is reactive

BR#1: Current Course

Opportunities

- Housing and mixed use might compliment
- COVID19 – influx of new residents trying to escape the city and able to work from home?
- Office parks may accommodate new flex-work arrangements
- Land for local agriculture, hydroponics, etc.
- COVID19 – more focus on outdoor recreation and nature

Threats

- Vacant office parks – feels desolate
- Taxes / affordability
- Big boxes
- Financially sustainable?
- Feelings of uncertainty & stress
- Loss of sense of community
- Loss of community character and inconsistent “theme”
- Reactivity hurts our ability to pursue a vision
- Pandemic and recession
- Developers unwilling to make a move or take a chance, may need to wait

BR#1: Current Course

Comments

1. Feel there are a lot of great things about this town, how it feels to live here, and there are lots of great amenities 10-20 minutes away. Do they really need to bring those types of things here?
2. There is a need to create more income in town and grow long-term, but there needs to be some consensus on what that's going to feel like.
3. Need to move forward thoughtfully, give it time, have patience so they don't make terrible mistakes AND are able to find the kind of developer who is willing to put time into working with the town.
4. Want to keep that balance of urban setting and rural access, don't need to make any hasty decisions that will change that
5. What are the ways available to position the empty buildings that already exist in this town while still remaining a family setting? Over the next year focus primarily on finding uses for empty buildings.

Breakout Room #2:

BR#2: Rural and Agricultural Heritage

Strengths

- Conservation land / trails
- Space for animals
- Quality of life
- Less traffic and noise
- Relatively low water use
- Respects historic character and features
- Local and home-based food production
- Access to highways
- Great schools, kids can access nature
- Cheap electricity from Littleton

Weaknesses

- (Tax) burden on property owners
- No convenience of nearby stores
- Predators to livestock
- Not enough sidewalks, biking or other recreation options without driving
- Uncertainty about pandemic impact on real estate
- Commute times (pre-Covid)
- Small town communication issues - diverse competing priorities, few discussion opportunities
- Parking for commuting (train) is awful

BR#2: Rural and Agricultural Heritage

Opportunities

- Marketing plan for local travel connections
- Farm to table, orchards, other local ag.
- Made in Boxborough cooperative location - not just a once a week farmers market
- Country-themed recreation opportunities and special events
- Harness rural expertise to help the community, to maintain trails etc.
- Knowledge sharing events
- Redevelop CISCO w/ co-working space

Threats

- Loss of character & rural knowledge
- Water table/quality issues
- Lack of a town-center/gathering place
- Poor parking and difficult to locate local events
- Competition from Acton, other Farmers Markets and rural activities
- Senior housing will increase traffic on 111
- Lacking diversity of economic activity
- Lacking low income housing

BR#2: Rural and Agricultural Heritage

Actions

1. Promote locally sourced foods and products, identify and market, and make accessible
2. Welcome package/information about the area
3. Increase promotion and availability of recreation

Breakout Room #3:

BR#3: Village Style

Strengths

- Local restaurants / amenities
- Place to meet/mingle & build community
- Keeps \$\$\$ local
- Small scale good fit with current identity
- Good location re: minimal traffic & outside \$\$
- Small scale of the amenities is a good fit for town
- Proximity to schools

Weaknesses

- Zoning; too many hoops to accommodate desired outcomes (i.e. Restaurants)
- Water/sewer situation
- Town Center: Traffic issues.
- Need for parking balanced with sidewalks/foot traffic

BR#3: Village Style

Opportunities

- Connectivity & walkability & Bike paths
- Community building; meeting spaces
- Helps fill office vacancies by providing attractive nearby amenities
- Contain sprawl by focusing development
- Promotes a thriving atmosphere, desirability as a place to live; maintain/increase property values

Threats

- West Acton Village; could be a threat, but also potentially makes decision-making easier as far as what businesses should go in
- Is it enough? What do we do about the huge office parks?
- Existing, vacant buildings aren't addressed by this plan
- If a developer wanted to develop the back part of the Village Green, it has to be zoned accordingly
- Loss of creative enterprise due to zoning issues

Breakout Room #4:

BR#4: Comprehensive Approach

Strengths

- Mixed use - population support amenities, amenities attracts business, etc.
- Increases affordable housing and diversity
- Increases tax base & supports infrastructure
- Focus on filling unused office/commercial
- Balances commercial/tax interests while maintaining character
- Amenities (restaurants, cultural activity, gathering places) would be good for residents and workforce

Weaknesses

- Uncertainty in design & development process could deter developers or disappoint residents
- Stress on water - How to improve water quality before increasing development?
- Current lack of public transportation, concerns with increase in traffic

BR#4: Comprehensive Approach

Opportunities

- To attract businesses, adding amenities is important (more possible in corporate scenario?)
- Vacant office spaces that are currently restricted from redevelopment by zoning - freed up by this scenario
- Number of highways, entrances/exits that can be better used

Threats

- Losing special character may decrease attractiveness vis-a-vie neighboring towns
- Form-based code may lead to unpredictable results
- Stress on water and **traffic**

BR#4: Comprehensive Approach

Actions

1. Update zoning bylaws
2. Create use expectations through comprehensive planning

Breakout Room #5:

BR#5: Cisco / Beaver Brook

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing onsite infrastructure – waste & water• Accessibility to conservation land & natural rec opportunities• High quality buildings that are already flexible and adaptable• Foundations are in place and utilities have been extended• location to major roadways• Great school district• Beauty• Roadway accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult to subdivide into housing• Lowered sewage capacity• Vacant since COVID 19• Systems need to be used frequently to stay fully functional for the future• No demand for more offices• Daylight for apt would be non-existent (in current buildings??)• May not be large enough for manufacturing• Traffic volume – depending on use

BR#5: Cisco / Beaver Brook

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possibly apartments/condos• Multi-purpose (gyms, restaurants) or multi use (artist studio, daycare, offices)• Warehouse, lab, office, R&D• Senior living, continued rec use and trails• Capacity to haggle with developer because site is 'ready-to-go'• Village style	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoning• Unwillingness to change (zoning)• Price of land, homes, housing market (Post-Covid)

BR#5: Cisco / Beaver Brook

Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. continued recreational use2. sell the property

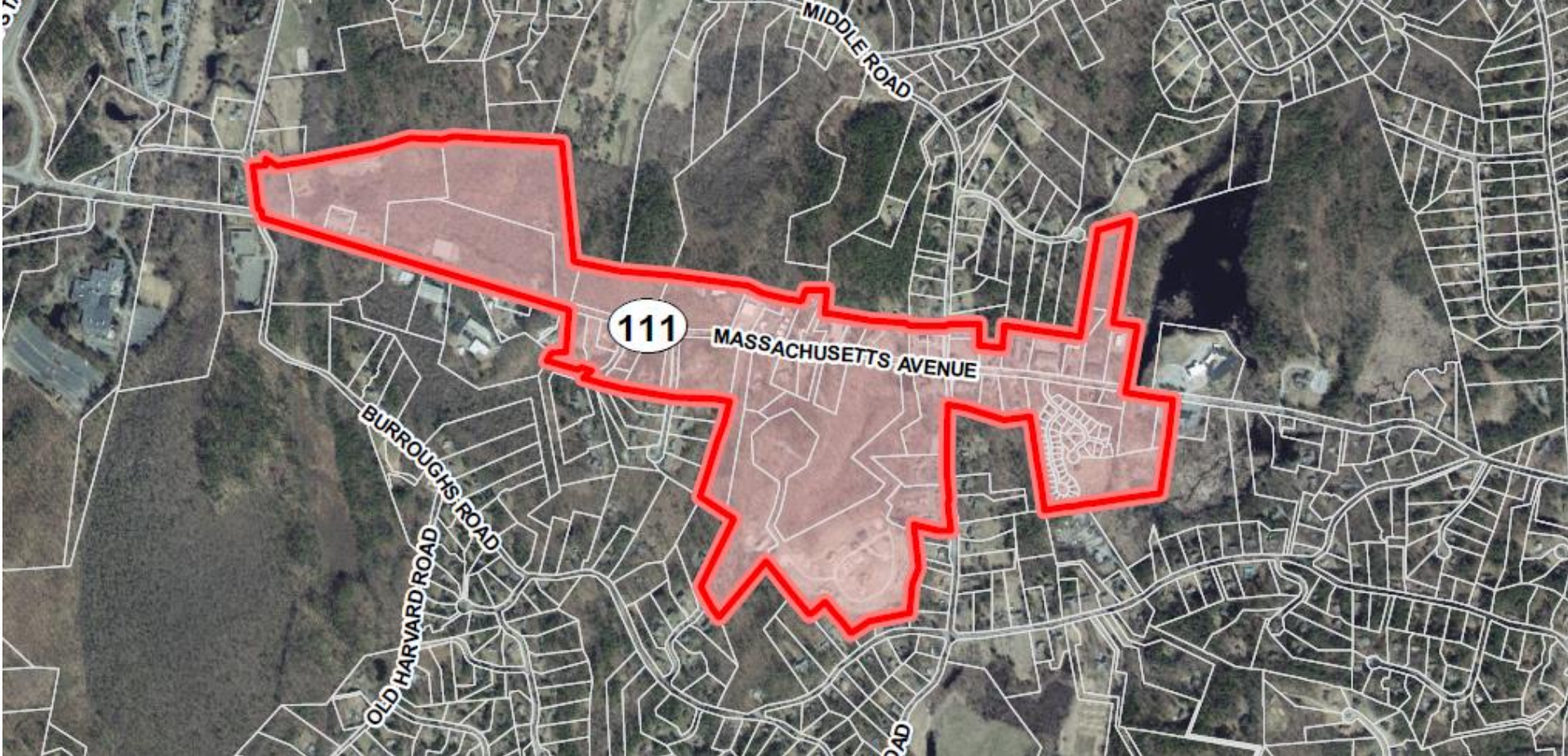
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BOXBOROUGH VILLAGE CENTER PLANNING AND CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

Focus Group Meeting #1 - March 28, 2024

TOWN'S LONG-TERM GOAL

Create a new village center in Boxborough's Business and Town Center zoning district



WHERE WE ARE NOW

Task 1

- Analyze existing zoning, infrastructure, and environmental constraints
- Prepare concept diagrams based on UMASS alternatives

Task 2

- Conduct one-day charette
- Kickoff meeting, site walk, stakeholder interviews, team design charette

Task 3

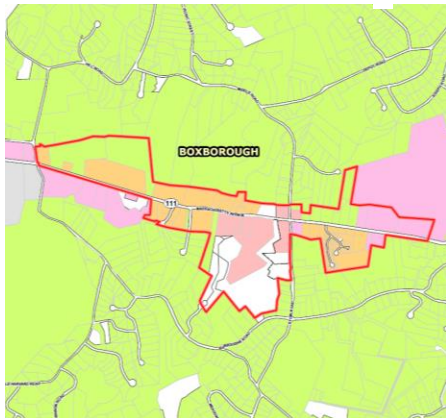
- Prepare/refine conceptual plans with public input
- Interview Town staff on potential zoning/admin changes

Task 4

- Conduct case study research for village center revitalization

Task 5

- Attend public meeting to receive input
- Prepare final conceptual plans and report with recommendations



COMMUNITY CHARETTE FINDINGS

"My preferred streetscape would look like..."



Tally
Miro

37

0

23

1

1

3

Comments: Occupy sites/buildings on Stow Rd., mixed use, preserve trees, reuse current buildings, provide more areas to sit, upgrade strip malls, not enough room for biking on Rt. 111

"My preferred town center would look like..."



Tally
Miro

27

8

16

10

5

5

3

3

Comments: Gathering areas needed to socialize, grab a coffee, drink, nosh, get together as a community; create park-like setting

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT CENTRAL AREA?



- Historic buildings
- Pockets of natural beauty
- Path between library and school
- Pond, wetlands
- Small-town character
- Easy access to highway
- School near conservation
- Community facilities (school, library, church, etc.)

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED IN THE CENTRAL AREA?

- Walkability/bike access – lack of connected sidewalks/crosswalks
- More consistent architectural styles
- Design to better reflect village look
- Town sewer/water infrastructure
- More small-scale businesses
- Improve green space
- **Issues raised:**
- Land ownership/lack of public lands
- Lack of public gathering space
- Need to drive to activities/lack of sidewalks
- Underutilized/vacant buildings

Q&A/COMMENTS

Q&A Comments				
Accessibility	Visuals	Natural Landscape	Retail/Services	Development
Only can drive to businesses, want their kids to be able to access	West Acton looks nice	Add wetlands to other areas and then develop on original area	Add lots of retail in one building	Consider what the town can offer to incentive development
Can get places through woods	Current buildings are all shapes and sizes, not attractive	Are wetlands a hinderance? interesting ways to tie humans to wetlands	Closest restaurant is W. Acton	How are we going to attract developers, not going to build for Boxborough they'll build for the region
Too many bikers on rte. 111	Don't want sidewalks everywhere	Too much restriction on preserving nature is bad	Want more activities	
Rte. 11 is fast and congested all day, how would the town center development affect this and safety	Recycle abandoned buildings		Pharmacy in W. Acton that everyone goes to	

OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Open space with historic houses at SW corner	Pond at SW corner	Open space with farmhouse and adjacent town hall at NE corner	Parcel to the east of farmhouse	Other potential opportunity areas
Real town green mixed use	Great place to sit and relax, maybe under a solar shade	Municipal town hall expansion		Create green buffer along rte. 111 as placeholder to whatever happens behind
Maintain historic like buildings and add on incremental in characters for desired mixed use	Lovely spot for a small meeting place	Maintain historic like buildings and add on incremented		Focus down Stow Rd
		Keep it open		Yellow building on Stow Rd
		Secure/zone key land areas for desired uses		Library? Many people go there
		Farmhouse to Middle Rd, retail area all inclusive		Demographics changing rapidly and change of climate, anticipate

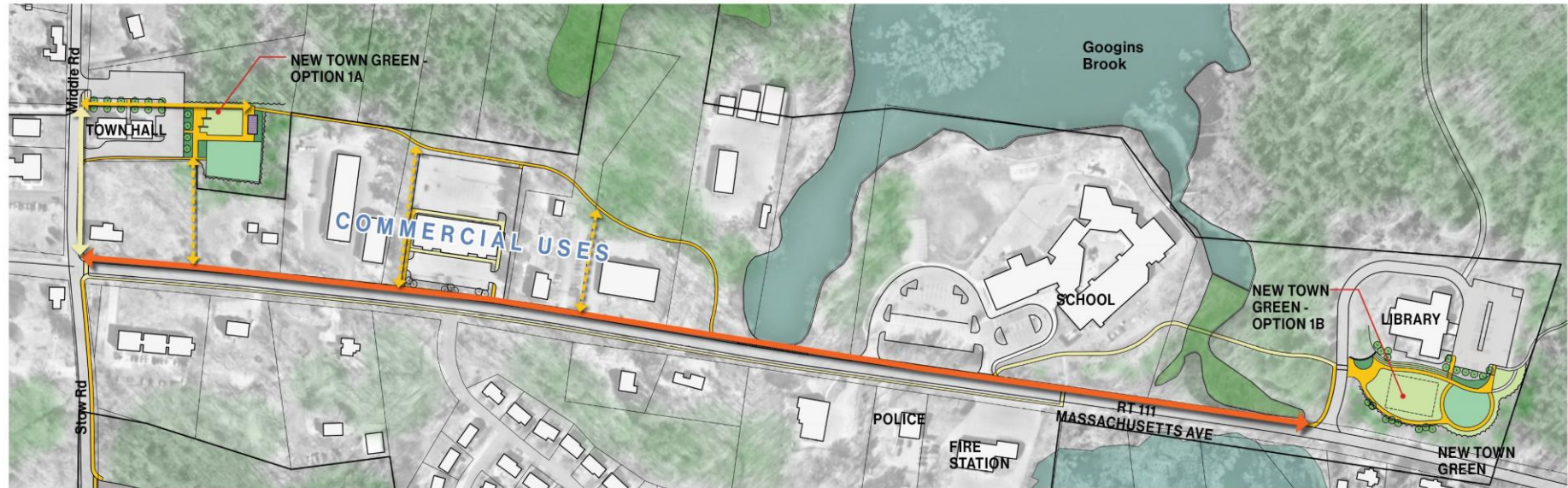
ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

Police Dept should stay where it is to provide protection for children and staff at Blanchard

Fire station needs to stay where it is. It should not be in the "town center area" focused on this map.

Wooden walkway into wet lands

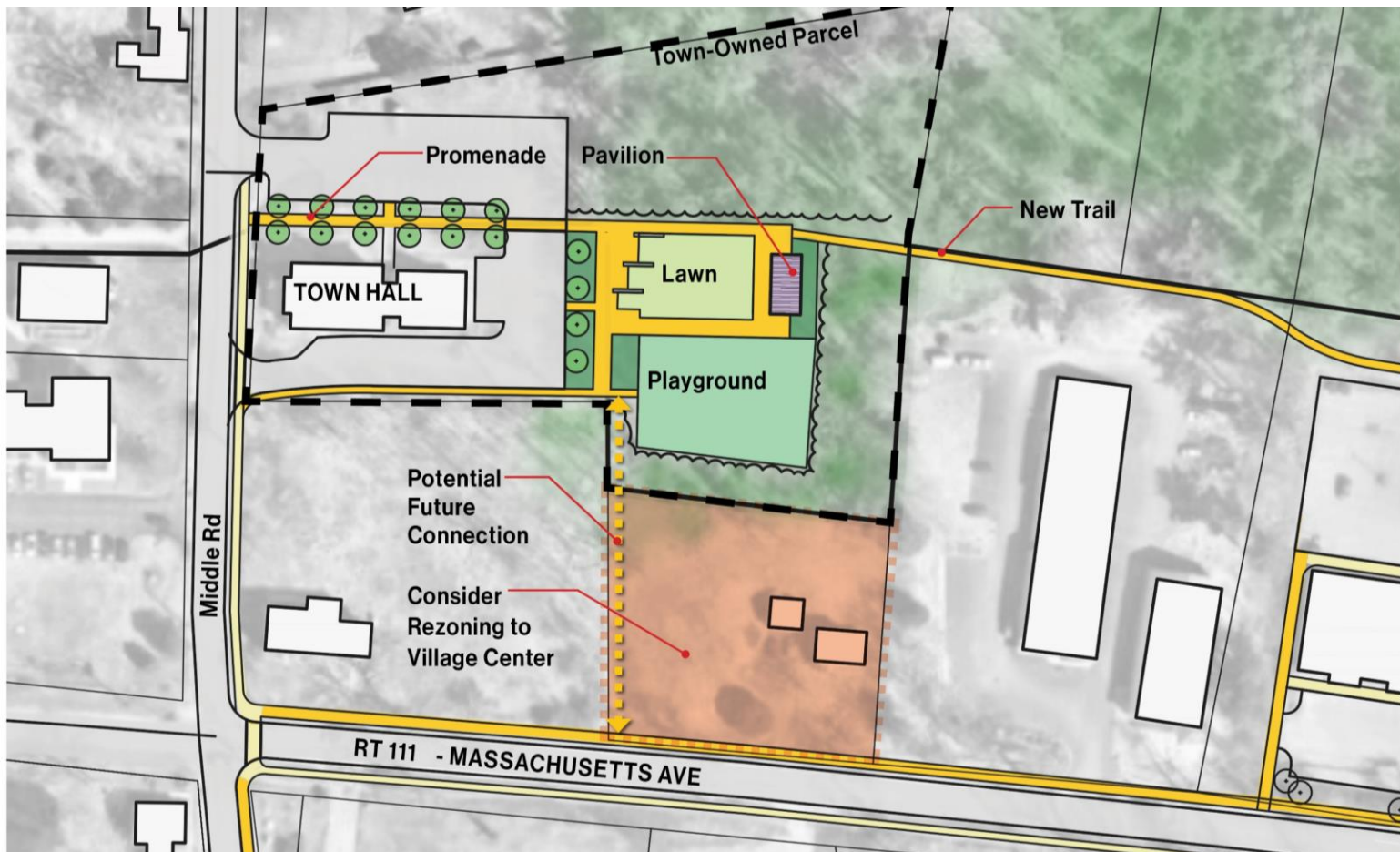
TOWN CENTER IMPROVEMENTS - OPTION A



Circulation

- New Sidewalk
- New Secondary Pedestrian Paths
- Existing Sidewalks and Paths

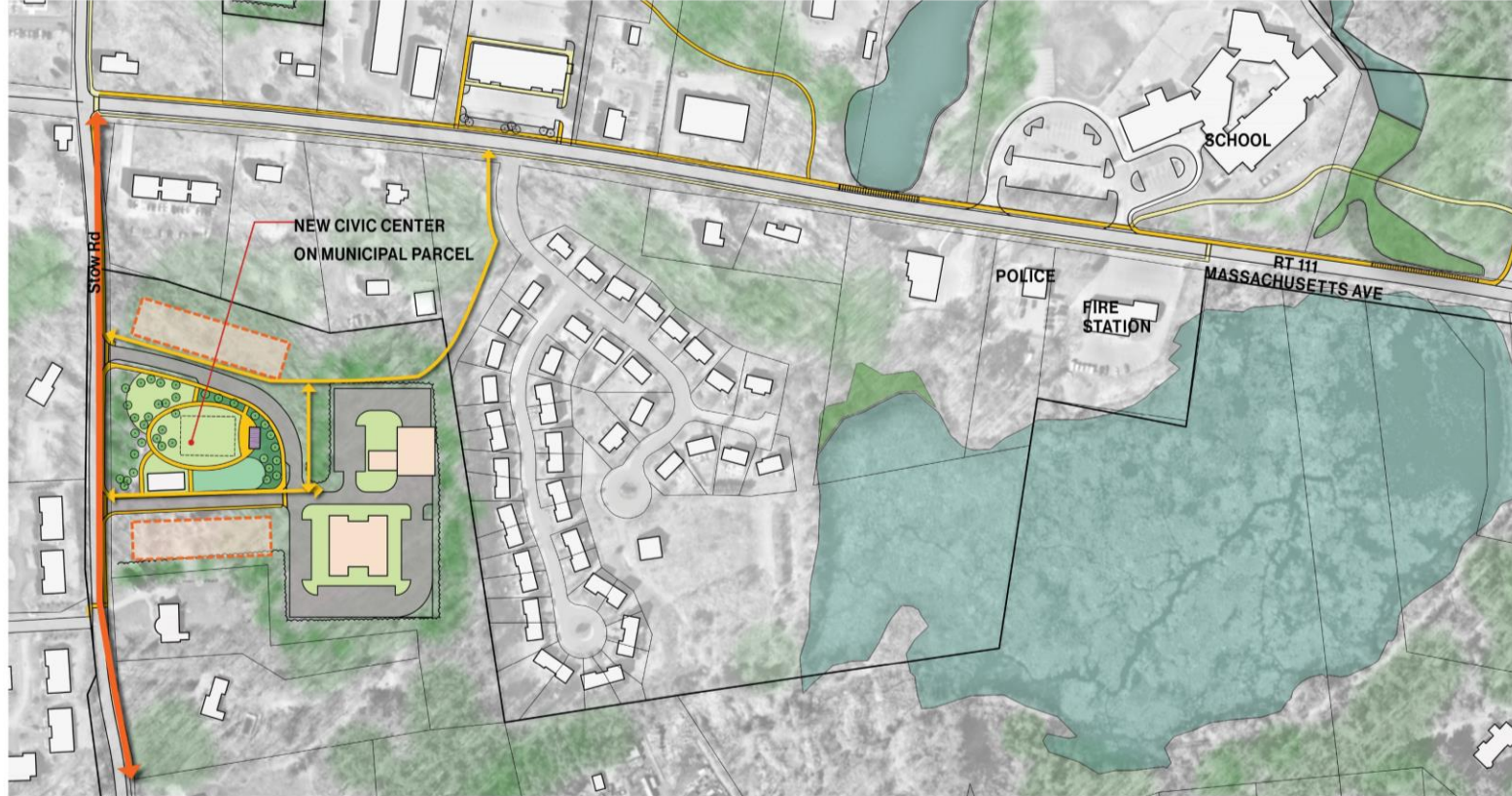
OPTION A





OPTION 1A



OPTION 1B



Circulation

-  New Sidewalk
-  New Secondary Pedestrian Paths
-  Existing Sidewalks and Trails

OPTION B



OPTION B

Boxborough Zoning

Business District

Town Center District



Boxborough Zoning: Applicable* Uses As-of-right

Both Districts

- ▶ Conversion of existing dwelling to two-family dwelling
- ▶ Conservation area, public park
- ▶ Philanthropic use
- ▶ Convalescent, nursing, or rest home
- ▶ Professional or business office
- ▶ Veterinary
- ▶ Bank (TC: Footnote 4)
- ▶ Health Care Facility (Footnote 3)
- ▶ Hotel, motel, inn
- ▶ Service shops (TC: Footnote 6)
- ▶ Craft shop or art studio (TC: Footnote 7)
- ▶ Retail stores of less than 25,000 SF GFA (TC: Footnote 8)
- ▶ Specialty food shop with less than or equal to 3,000 SF GFA (B: Footnote 20 and TC: Footnote 21)

* Exempt uses are not included.

Boxborough Zoning: Applicable* Uses As-of-right

Both Districts

- ▶ Conversion of existing dwelling to two-family dwelling
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- ▶ Veterinary
- ▶ Bank (TC: Footnote 4)
- ▶ Health Care Facility (Footnote 3)
- ▶ Hotel, motel, inn
- ▶ Art studio (TC: Footnote 6)
- ▶ Restaurant with less than 25,000 SF (B: Footnote 8)
- ▶ Specialty food shop with less than or equal to 3,000 SF GFA (B: Footnote 20 and TC: Footnote 21)

Restaurants require a special permit from the ZBA; Cafés are not listed.

* Exempt uses are not included.

Boxborough Zoning: Applicable* Uses As-of-right

Business District only

- ▶ Ski tow and accessory structures
- ▶ Riding school with less than 20 horses
- ▶ Private golf course (restrictions)
- ▶ Public or private facility providing tennis, swimming, or skating
- ▶ Assisted living facility
- ▶ Hospital, Medical Center, sanatorium, funeral home (Footnote 3)
- ▶ Sports or athletic facility or full-sized public golf course
- ▶ Club
- ▶ Research & Development (Footnote 3)
- ▶ Laboratory (Footnote 3)
- ▶ Printing shop/ Copy shop/ Word processing center (Footnote 3)
- ▶ Repair shop
- ▶ Wholesale operations (Footnote 9)
- ▶ Light Manufacturing (footnotes 3 and 11)
- ▶ Landscaping services (Footnote 21)

* Exempt uses are not included.

Boxborough Zoning: Applicable* Uses As-of-right

Business District only

- ▶ Ski tow and accessory structures
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- ▶ Light Manufacturing (footnotes 3 and 11)
- ▶ Landscaping services (Footnote 21)

Many of these uses are not suitable for the lot sizes or the desired mixed-use environment in the study area.

* Exempt uses are not included.

Boxborough Zoning: Dimensional Standards

	B	TC
Minimum lot area (sq. ft. x 1000)	40	40
Minimum upland lot area sq. ft. x 1000	20	20
Minimum upland lot area, % of total lot area	--	--
Minimum lot frontage (ft.) ⁹	100	100
Minimum lot width (ft.) ⁷	100	100
Minimum front setback (ft.)	50	25 ²
Minimum side setback (ft.)	30	20 ²
Minimum rear setback (ft.)	40	20 ²
Maximum stories	3	3
Maximum building height (ft.)	45	45
Maximum lot coverage (%) by buildings, structures, and impervious surfaces	50	35 ³
Floor area ratio	--	.5
Minimum Open Space (%)	--	65 ⁴

Boxborough Zoning: Dimensional Standards

	B	TC
Minimum lot area (sq. ft. x 1000)	10	10
Minimum upland lot area sq. ft. x 1000	10	10
Minimum upland lot area, % of total lot area	10	10
Minimum lot frontage (ft.) ⁹	100	100
Minimum lot width (ft.) ⁷	100	100
Minimum front setback (ft.)	50	25²
Minimum side setback (ft.)	30	20 ²
Minimum rear setback (ft.)	30	20 ²
Maximum stories	3	3
Maximum building height (ft.)	35	35
Maximum lot coverage (%) by buildings, structures, and impervious surface	40	40
Floor area ratio	--	--
Minimum Open Space (%)	--	65⁴

Front setbacks are too deep for a walkable environment.

Minimum open space may be too much for a town-center.

Other Requirements

What else has an impact on the visual characteristics of the area and on the use of the land?

- **Parking minimums/maximums**

- By use – includes spaces by number of employees and vehicles used in the operation; by gross floor area; by numbers of seats

Some communities have refined their parking requirements to gross or net floor area to allow for changing business needs.

The Town could also allow for shared parking across multiple uses.

Other Requirements

What else has an impact on the visual characteristics of the area and on the use of the land?

■ **Landscape requirements (Section 6.3)**

- Maintenance of front yards
- Prohibition of parking within the front setback in the Business district. (No closer than 10 feet to the lot line in the side and rear setbacks.
- The Business and Town Center districts allow for shared common driveways and parking areas.
- Parking and some other uses must also be screened.



DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS

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