

****Working Draft****

Town of Somerset: *Slade's Ferry Crossing: Vision for Redevelopment*

Introduction: *Building the Framework*

This document evaluates potential future mixed-use redevelopment opportunities, zoning considerations and infrastructure improvements which will be necessary for the Town of Somerset to transform *Slade's Ferry Crossing Priority Development Area* into a viable mixed use, pedestrian friendly area including the development of a riverfront park that will provide pedestrian access, open space, walking trails and bike paths. These opportunities have emerged as a result of the relocation of the Brightman Street Bridge and realignment of Route 6.

The review and analysis was conducted as part of the technical assistance component of the *South Coast Rail Land Use and Economic Development Corridor Study, 2009*. The project area assessment and recommendations included in this document are based on a preliminary site, the Brightman Street Bridge Replacement project, discussion with Mass DOT, local officials and boards, mapping, previous studies and reports. No market analysis was conducted for this study, and recommendations should be considered as long-term goals.

Historically, the Slade's Ferry Crossing area has been the focus of commercial development due to its location along the regional transportation corridor of Route 6 (Grand Army Highway). The corridor offers access and visibility to attract business development including retail, service and other related industries which serves local residents and surrounding communities providing employment opportunities and generating local tax revenues for Somerset. Nearly 40 years ago the Brightman Street Bridge Replacement Project was identified, discussed and studied for reconstruction as a major transportation improvement project. In 1999 construction of this new \$300 million bridge commenced; the project has had several delays and currently the project is ongoing and is expected to be completed by autumn 2012.

The new Brightman Street Bridge will cross the Taunton River north of the existing bridge traveling through the former Slade's Ferry Park and extend into a realigned Route 6 (Grand Army Highway) west of the intersection at Route 6 and Brayton Avenue. This new route discontinues a 1,612 linear foot portion of the old Route 6 from Brayton Avenue east to the waterfront creating both challenges and opportunities for Somerset. The traffic volume on the segment of Route 6 that will be discontinued as well as Slades's Ferry Avenue is expected to decline dramatically resulting in negative effects on the businesses which depended on the Route 6 access and visibility for their customer base. This area is already showing signs of disinvestment, vacancies and deterioration; particularly the businesses on the north side of Slade's Ferry Avenue and without some strategy to address the situation, blight will worsen and spread.

This challenge also provides Somerset with a potential opportunity to redevelop this area into a vibrant, new mixed-use district including shops, restaurants, retail, service and office businesses disbursed with some variety for housing options including providing public access along the waterfront to the Taunton River creating a riverfront park with walking trails and bike paths. Some redesign of the street network would be necessary providing sidewalks, street scaping, way-finding signage and green spaces intergraded with pedestrian and bicycle linkages to and from this area to waterfront destinations and adjacent residential areas. In addition, there is underutilized municipal property located within the area that could be developed offering increased financial benefits to the town.

Realizing the impact the Brightman Street Bridge Project will have on this area and the potential future redevelopment opportunities the Town of Somerset proactively moved forward over several years with preparing a series of local documents consistent with identifying and targeting the area as a priority for redevelopment citing economic development, recreational and open space priorities. These documents include: Town of Somerset: *Priority Development and Priority Protection Areas, 2008*; Somerset Master Plan, 2007; Somerset Conservation, Recreation and Open Space Plan, 2004 and Somerset Community Action Statement, 1995. This underlying framework forms the basis for establishing a shared Vision for addressing future economic development and open space initiatives for the area.

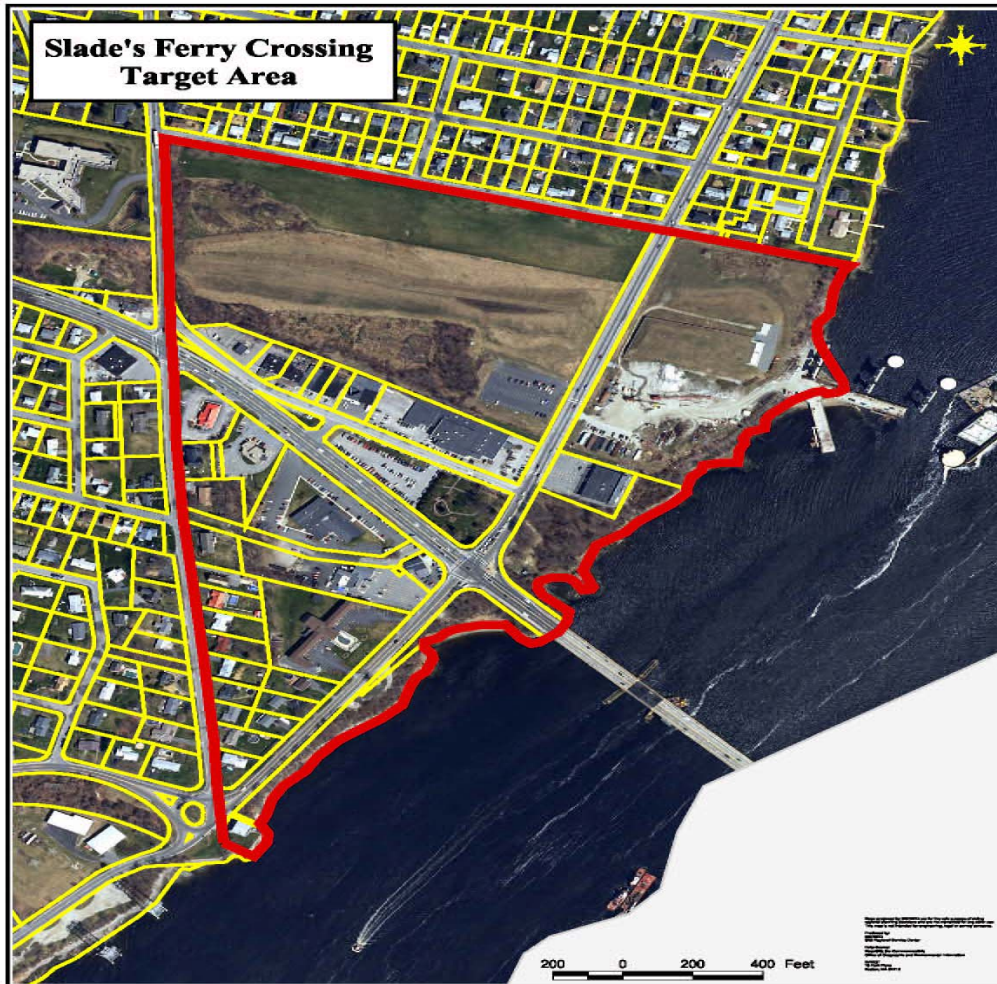
Vision Statement:

Transform the existing Slade's Ferry Crossing into a vibrant, attractive, livable, pedestrian friendly, mixed-use neighborhood that creates a "sense of place". The new village center should advocate compact design combining elements of retail, office, residential, entertainment, recreation, open space and other functions that provides walkable and bicycle friendly linkages to and from the adjacent residential neighborhood and destinations in the mixed-use area and waterfront park including open space, appropriate parking, streetscape and way-finding signage. A central component of this new concentrated redevelopment area is the creation of a riverfront park including walking trails, bike paths, a playground, viewing areas, fishing pier, possible public boat launch and dock. Other elements include the relocation and renovation of the Cordeiro's Barn as a tourist information center/ museum as a centerpiece of this newly created open space. The Center would provide information and offer tours on history of Slade's Ferry Crossing and noteworthy points of interest with other information and destinations along Taunton River Wild & Scenic corridor.



Target Area:

Slade's Ferry Crossing lies in the southeastern section of Somerset and is defined by Brayton Avenue in the west, Newhill Avenue in the north, the Taunton River to the east and the intersection of Riverside Avenue (Route 138)/ Wilbur Avenue (Route 103) and Brayton Avenue in the south. The entire area zoned business, encompasses approximately 68 acres, containing predominately undeveloped open space along the riverfront, a commercial area along the existing Route 6 (Grand Army Highway) corridor and an adjacent residential neighborhood south of Route 6 and west of Brayton Avenue.



The commercial area extending along a portion of Route 6 between the riverfront and the intersection of Route 6 and Brayton Avenue including Slade's Ferry Avenue that represents approximately 19 acres is the focus of a proposed, new mixed-used zoning district. This area currently has a number of existing businesses, some vacancies, under developed parcels, underutilized parking areas and is experiencing deterioration. The areas major anchors include: Rockland Trust Bank, Grace Bible Church, Webster Bank, Prima Care Medical Center, Magonis Restaurant and Super 8 Motel. There are two other properties located at the intersection of Route 6 and Brayton Avenue both of which are vacant.

Insert series of pictometry images here →

Key Components for Redevelopment:

- A. Create and establish a Mixed-use Zoning Overlay District: Mixed-use zoning is a tool used to encourage smart growth whereby development (retail,

service, shops, restaurants, office and housing) is concentrated in areas with transportation access, infrastructure, walkable pedestrian friendly linkages, open space and recreational space designed to create a sense of place. SRPEDD developed a mixed-use overlay district bylaw for the Town of Somerset, which was subsequently adopted at the May 2009 Town Meeting. This bylaw can be applied to Slade's Ferry Crossing or any other business district in town, allowing for development projects that include commercial businesses on the ground floor with residential above. The bylaw is written to allow the planning board considerable input into project design, ensuring that any new mixed use project proposed for the Slade's Ferry Crossing area conforms to the Town's vision.

Recommended Objectives:

- Review and revise (if necessary) existing mixed-use overlay district bylaw. Particular attention should be given to development density and building scale
- Review Site Plan Review process for consistency with vision for Slade's Ferry Crossing
- Consider adopting or utilizing the *Town Center Design Guidelines* prepared by Taintor & Associates, Inc. as applicable in the Slade's Ferry Crossing area
- Facilitate and engage area property owners, residents, businesses and others to build consensus for Slade's Ferry Crossing Vision and purpose of mixed-use overlay district bylaw.

B. Infrastructure Improvements: Roadway redesign, reconstruction and street elimination (*streets and sidewalks, parking, streetlighting, traffic lights, landscaping, pedestrian access and signage*): The relocation of the Brightman Street discontinues a portion of the Route 6 corridor at the eastern end from the intersection of Brayton Avenue to the riverfront. Traffic on this old segment of Route 6 will be drastically reduced and opportunities will emerge to capture underutilized land in the right-of-way through redesign of the layout or elimination of the roadway entirely based on access, infill and redevelopment alternatives. Currently Mass DOT is planning to narrow the Old Route 6 segment into a 2 lane roadway, reducing traffic capacity.

In addition to the Old Route 6 reconstruction as part of the Brightman Street project Route 138 (Riverside Avenue) will be improved along with the redesign of the intersection at Route 6 and 138. The improvements should consist of traffic calming measures including tree lined sidewalks, pedestrian friendly linkages, streetlights, way finding signs etc. These improvements should extend along Route 138 (Riverside Avenue) from NewHill Avenue south thru the Route 6 and 138 intersection to the roundabout or rotary at Route 103 and Brayton Avenue.

Other considerations may include the elimination of Slade's Ferry Avenue with similar opportunities to development underutilized ROW land as well pending access and configuration of infill and redevelopment. The existing park and ride lot, which is owned

by the Town of Somerset could be relocated to the Mass DOT parcel on Brayton Avenue between Newhill Avenue and the new Route 6 realignment or to Mass DOT property on the west side of Route 138 (Riverside Ave.) before NewHill Avenue, in any event this parcel, combined with the Slade's Ferry Park and Cemetery would provide the centerpiece for any redevelopment initiative. Also, throughout this concentrated mixed-use area of approximately 19 acres walkable, pedestrian-friendly linkages (i.e. tree or landscaped sidewalks) including "way finding" signage and green spaces should be created between parking areas, establishments and waterfront destinations.

Recommended Objectives:

Below SRPEDD has identified four (4) options for consideration relative to infrastructure improvements including roadway closures, limited access, redesign and reconstruction. Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) has control of two (2) very important components that will have a direct impact in transforming this area into an attractive mixed-use location. In order to achieve Somerset's mixed-use vision for this area it is critical that the Town of Somerset facilitate meetings with Mass DOT on the redesign to address smart growth principles and mixed-use objectives (higher density commercial and residential development, pedestrian friendly linkages and open space).

First, Mass DOT owns and maintains control of the primary infrastructure serving the Slade's Ferry Area including the Old Route 6 (GAR Highway) segment and Route 138 (Riverside Avenue). Any redesign, reconstruction and improvement to these roadways needs to integrate traffic calming (sidewalks, trees and landscaping, streetlights, traffic lights and crosswalks) measures to encourage walkable, pedestrian friendly linkages and other access.

Secondly, in addition to the bike path being constructed along the easement of the new Route 6 realignment both Old Route 6 and Route 138 should also provide shared bike routes and offer pedestrian friendly linkages at various locations. South of the exit on Route 138 a set of traffic lights has already been installed for pedestrian, bicycling enthusiast and other recreationist wishing access to the riverfront. Additional linkages should be located at the intersection of Route 6 and 138 and at Route 103 and Brayton Avenue. A shared bike route looping the waterfront area along Routes 138 and 103 (Riverside Avenue) up Old Route 6 to Brayton Avenue will allow for Somerset to connect with the Swansea system.

- **Option 1: Maintain MHD Proposal to Redesign and Reconstruct Old Route 6**
Maintain the Mass Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) proposal to limit access on Old Route 6 through redesigning the roadway and reducing the capacity by reconstructing it into a two lane roadway (one lane east-west) from the intersection of Brayton Avenue and Route 6 to the intersection of Route 6 and Route 138 (Riverside Avenue). The redesign of Old Route 6 should reflect a boulevard or Main Street environment providing a tree-lined median with aesthetically pleasing pavement (i.e. brick pavers or similar treatment). This redesign would integrate other traffic calming measures including landscaped sidewalks that would provide a series of pedestrian linkages or crosswalks to

mixed-use development destinations on the north and south sides of the redevelopment area, benches, trash receptacles, street lights, speed posting, wayfinding signage, etc. Both intersections at Brayton Avenue and Route 138 (Riverside Avenue) will need to be redesigned with traffic calming and pedestrian friendly measures. Under this option the amount of reclaimed land for redevelopment may be less. In addition, any redesign should include an option for a bike route off of Brayton Avenue long the Old Route 6 to the proposed riverfront park area (See Concept Plan).

- **Option 2: Elimination of Old Route 6** – Consider initiating discussions with Mass DOT for the elimination of the Old Route 6 for redevelopment as a Main Street shopping boulevard redesigned with brick pavers, plantings, streetlights, signage, receptacles, benches etc. This boulevard would have pedestrian linkages to the north and south sides of the redevelopment area in addition to direct access to the riverfront at the intersection of Routes 6 and 138, which would be redesigned with traffic calming measures, way-finding signage, pedestrian crossings and streetscaping etc. The linkages would extend across Route 138 into the newly created riverfront park with associated open spaces, walking trails, bike paths, information center for historic and other recreational option along the Taunton River. In addition, a bike route off Brayton Avenue should be considered as part of the redesign of the roadway with connections to the proposed riverfront park (See Concept Plan).
- **Option 3: Eliminate Slade’s Ferry Avenue** - In an effort to capture and maximize buildable land area for infill and redevelopment opportunities consideration should be given to eliminate Slade’s Ferry Avenue, which already has limited access and reduced capacity. Elimination of Slade’s Ferry could allow for the assembly of the existing properties (3.8 acres) into a single 5 + acre site for redevelopment provided that the existing business and property owners reach agreement with a private development entity. The newly assembled parcel would be redeveloped into a high density, mixed-use project including restaurants, shops, business, small office and residential including access and on-site parking. The design of this mixed use redevelopment project would integrate pedestrian friendly linkages, open spaces to destination within the development as well as those outside. The scale (building height and size), location and mix of use within this area is important to encourage foot traffic by visitors and patrons. It is crucial that existing owners work with private developers on redevelopment if this concept is to be successful. Additionally the Town of Somerset owns a 2.2 acre parcel adjacent to Slade’s Ferry Avenue a portion of which is currently being utilized as a park and pride lot and could also be included into a larger lot assembly of over 6 acres for redevelopment (See Concept Plan).
- **Option 4: Maintain Access on Slade’s Ferry Avenue** – If access is maintained on Slade’s Ferry Avenue it may be necessary to reconstruct the roadway providing sidewalks, trees, landscaping, streetlights, signage and other traffic calming measures. A primary focus of any redevelopment attempt is providing

pedestrian friendly linkages around the Slade's Ferry Park and Cemetery and the existing, municipally owned park and ride lot, and area destinations including the riverfront park. Additional consideration should be given to making Slade's Ferry Avenue into a one-way street with diagonal parking in front of the existing businesses, current access off Route 6 to be reviewed pending the type of redevelopment scenario. Under this scenario less land area is available for redevelopment and infill opportunities but Somerset will still need to gain consensus and support for the mixed-use redevelopment vision for this area (See Concept Plan).

C. Open Space Preservation, Rehabilitation and Riverfront Park

Development: An integral component of the redevelopment strategy for Slade's Ferry Crossing is the creation of a waterfront/riverfront park that would extend from NewHill Avenue south along the Taunton River to the south side of the Old Brightman Street Bridge abutment. Eventually the park, including walking trails and bike paths are anticipated to extend to the rotary (roundabout) at the intersection of Route 103 (Riverside Avenue) and Brayton Avenue and beyond. This area contains approximately 16 acres with most of it controlled by the Mass Highway Department in addition to the Town of Somerset and portions in private ownership.

The centerpiece of this riverfront park would be located on current Mass DOT property where the project site office is located (formerly used by the Somerset for firework and other holiday events) and an adjacent property owned by the Town of Somerset to the south of the Grace Bible Church diagonally across Route 138 (Riverside Avenue) from the Slade's Ferry Park and Cemetery. A key component of this waterfront park would be the relocation of the Cordeiro Barn as a tourist information center providing information and other activities.

Access to this new waterfront park land would initiate from the bike route on the north side of the new Route 6 realignment crossing Route 138 to the riverfront park. The park and its proposed trails, pathways and amenities would extend along the Taunton River to the old Brightman Street Bridge abutment where access could be provided from Route 138 through a PT staircase down to the water. The intersection here at Routes 6 and 138 will be redesign with traffic calming measures sidewalks, street lighting, crosswalks, landscaping and way finding signage. Again the new Riverfront Park is being developed under the Brightman Street Bridge project and is under the control of Mass DOT. The Town of Somerset should initiate discussions on the design of the park, amenities, bike paths, public access and ownership.

An additional open space or waterfront park element is the old Brightman Street Bridge abutment that could be utilized as a public fishing area and Taunton River view area. Diagonal parking could be private on the bridge itself access from the bridge to the water is limited and maybe provided through the installation of a PT

staircase beyond the bridge abutment is greater in the vicinity across from Super 8 Motel and Magonis Restaurant (See Concept Plan).

- D. **Pedestrian linkages to and from mixed-use district, existing residential neighborhood and waterfront park destinations:** A principle component of any mixed-use redevelopment project is creating a walkable, pedestrian friendly environment (“a sense of place”) that provides linkages to and from area destinations and adjacent neighborhoods. Pedestrian access or sidewalks are traffic calming measures that should be installed on Route 138 on the riverside from the exit ramp south to intersection of Route 6 and 138, and continue to the roundabout at the Route 103 and Brayton Avenue intersection. Sidewalks should contain tree plantings and streetlights to encourage pedestrian use. Where possible a bike route should be integrated adjacent to sidewalk or a share route in the roadway. Along the Route 103 segment after the bridge abutment and intersection benches for waterfront viewing could be included as an additional amenity to sidewalks, streetlights and biking and walking paths. There may also be space for limited off street parking. Additional linkages should be installed at the intersection of Route 6 and Brayton Avenue during the redesign and reconstruction of Old Route 6 to allow for pedestrian access from this residential neighborhood as well as linkages at NewHill Avenue and Route 138 north and at Newhill and Brayton Avenues.

In addition to pedestrian access on Routes 138 and 6 NewHill Avenue should be considered for the installation of a sidewalk abutting the Mass DOT parcel from Brayton Avenue to Route 138 (Riverside Avenue). See Concept Plan.

Additional Components:

A final component of this preliminary strategy includes a review of potential mixed-use redevelop areas located within the 19 acre Slade’s Ferry Crossing neighborhood. Major properties have been consolidated into four (4) areas as follows:

1. Slade’s Ferry Avenue North – This area is situated north of Slade’s Ferry Avenue and contains several retail and service establishments including the Town of Somerset property.
2. Slade’s Ferry Avenue South – This area is situated on the eastbound lane of the Old Route 6 segment
3. MR Properties – This area is located off Route 138 and 103 (Riverside Avenue) in the rear of the Prima Care facility
4. S8M Parcel -
5. Route 6/Brayton Avenue Intersection – This area contains vacant properties located on the north and south sides of Route 6 at Brayton Avenue.

Conceptual Plan:

See Attached Conceptual Plan for *Slade’s Ferry Crossing Priority Development Area*

Actions Steps:

Short term actions to move Vision for redevelopment of Slade’s Ferry

Crossing forward includes the following:

- Initiate and engage Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) and Division of Conservation Resources (DCR), Bristol County Convention and Tourism Center, municipal officials, Somerset Historically Commission and others with the Vision and principle components under infrastructure improvements, riverfront park development, tourism center, bike routes and pedestrian linkages;
- Board of Selectmen appoint a Slade’s Ferry Redevelopment Committee (SFRC) tasked with initiating the preliminary strategy and other component leading to redevelopment;
- Facilitate and conduct neighborhood meetings to provide outreach and build consensus for residents, property owner and business on Vision for redevelopment (buy-in);
- Review, revise (if necessary) and adopt at the fall, Special Town Meeting the mixed-use overlay district bylaw for *Slade’s Ferry Crossing Priority Development Area*;
- Conduct a economic development feasibility study on town owned parcel currently be use as a park and ride lot to determine most appropriate us. Process would be similar to study on Route 6 town-owned properties;
- Initiate discussions with existing business and property owners to assess future plans, interest and participation in proposed redevelopment efforts. Initially, discussion should focus on area north of Slade’s Ferry Avenue.
- Facilitate meeting between business and property owner and private development participation and/or opportunities for site acquisition and assembly leading to redevelopment;
- Consider filling the vacant Town Planner position to utilize the position as one role of managing the daily activities associated with this important planning and development initiative.

Funding Options:

Below is a list of suggested state funding program and incentives to assist the Town of Somerset that can be utilized in the implementation of Slade’s Ferry Crossing Redevelopment: Programs are categorized by element as follows:

Table of Potential Funding Sources				
Category/ Program	Agency	Funding Cycles	Funding Amount (max.)	Contact Person /Telephone #
Planning				
<i>Economic Development Fund (EDF)</i>	Depart of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)	Ongoing	\$50K	Mark Nardone 617-573-1400
<i>Mass Development</i>	Mass Development	Ongoing	\$50k	Jim Walsh or Larry Cameron 508-678-0533
<i>Community</i>	DHCD	Annual	\$800k	617-573-1400

<i>Development Fund II (CDF II)</i>		Feb 2011		
<i>South Coast Rail (SCR)</i>	Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT)	-	\$15K	Kristina Egan 617-973-7000
<i>Mass Downtown Initiative (MDI)</i>	DHCD	Annual	\$5K	Emmy Hahn 617-573-1400
<i>Priority Development Fund (PDF)</i>	DHCD	Rolling	\$25-\$50K	Miryam Bodadilla 617-573-1400
Infrastructure				
<i>Public Works Economic Development Fund (PWED)</i>	Mass DOT	Jan & June	\$1.0 - \$1.5ML	William Palmer 973-8070
<i>Community Development Action Grant (CDAG)</i>	DHCD	Rolling Basis	\$800K	Cyrus Field 617-573-1400
<i>Mass Opportunity Relocation & Expansion (MORE)</i>	Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development (EOHED)	Annual	\$1.0 - 5.0ML	Nayenday Thurman 617-788-3636
<i>Off Street Parking Program (OSPP)</i>	Office of Administration & Finance (A & F)	Ongoing	\$1.0ML	State House, Secretary A&F
<i>CDF II</i>	DHCD	Annual	\$800K	617-573-1400
Mixed-use Development				
<i>PDF</i>	DHCD	Rolling	\$25-\$50K	Miryam Bodadilla 617-573-1400
<i>Chapter 40R</i>	DHCD	Ongoing	Project Dependant	617-573-1400
<i>Housing Development Support Program (HDSP)</i>	DHCD	Ongoing	\$750K	617-573-1400
<i>MassDevelopment</i>	MassDevelopment	Ongoing	Project Dependant	Jim Walsh or Larry Cameron 508-678-05533
<i>CDF II</i>	DHCD	Annual	800K	617-573-1400
<i>CDAG</i>	DHCD	Rolling Basis	\$1.0 – 1.5ML	Cyrus Field 617-573-1400
<i>Urban Center Housing, Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF)</i>	DHCD	Ongoing	Project Dependant	617-573-1400
Recreation and Open Space				
<i>Enhancement Projects</i>	Mass DOT	Ongoing	Varied	Jim Cope 617-973-7043 Adam Reccia 508-824-1367
<i>Land & Water Conservation Funds(L&WCF)</i>	Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA)	Annual	70% of project costs	Melissa Cryan 617-626-1171
<i>Mass Parkland Acquisition & Renovations for Communities</i>	Division of Conservation Services	Annual	\$500K	Celia Riechel 617-626-1187
<i>Preservation Massachusetts</i>	Preservation Mass	Ongoing	Project Dependant	Dorr Fox 508-245-6824
Development Incentive Programs				
<i>Economic</i>	Mass Office of Business	Ongoing	Project	Buddy Rocha

<i>Development Incentive Program (EDIP)</i>	Development MOBD)		Dependant	508-730-1438
<i>UCH-TIF</i>	DHCD	Ongoing	Project Dependant	617-573-1400
<i>Preservation Massachusetts Historic Barns</i>	Preservation Mass	Ongoing	Project Dependant	Dorr Fox 508-245-6824

Appendix

Additional photos

Mixed-use Overlay District Bylaw

Conceptual Plan

Susan Moses Land Use Analysis and Recommendations