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Town of Westport: *The Narrows Redevelopment Area*

Introduction: *Building the Framework*

The document evaluates future potential economic development opportunities and considerations for zoning revisions and /or additions, and infrastructure improvements that will be necessary in order to encourage revitalization of the *Narrows*, which includes the western end of Route 6. This 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 analysis, discussion with 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.

The Town of Westport has historically identified the Route 6 corridor as a priority for economic development. As part of this study, only the Narrows portion (the western end historically referred to as the *Narrows*) of the Route 6 corridor which has been targeted for revitalization as a priority development area is being analyzed.

Route 6 represents a major transportation corridor serving local and regional businesses from Wareham to Seekonk and locations in Rhode Island. Along the Westport segment of Route 6 alone there are over 100 businesses providing employment opportunities and generating local tax revenues.



*Westport: Narrows Study Area including proximity to ATMC*

The Narrows area is anchored by Whites Restaurant and Hampton Inn and contains a low-density residential area with neighborhood commercial uses such as banks, gas/convenience stores, realty offices, beauty salons, doctor offices, and empty office space. The business uses are mixed with light industrial, commercial and distribution and re-used residential properties for small office and other business service activity. Lot sizes vary and are 1.5 acres or more. Any new development, redevelopment and/or in-fill will need to be appropriately sited to minimize impacts to abutters.

This area has resource protection issues from both the Aquifer Protection District and wetlands that run north to south through the northern stretch of this section of Route 6.

Although the primary anchors, Whites of Westport and the Hampton Inn offer potential to attract ancillary uses and other supporting activities more recent developments including the construction of the new Medical Information Technology (Meditec) facility and the development of the Advance Technology Manufacturing Center (ATMC) has prompted Westport to move forward with several planning and economic development initiatives that articulate a common goal to capture economic development opportunities and work towards revitalization of the Narrows Priority Development Area including: Westport Priority Development and Priority Protection Area Designations, 2008; Route 6 Corridor Study, 2005; Town of Westport Master Plan, 2004; Westport Economic Target Area Designation, 2002 and the Westport Strategic Economic Development Plan, 1996.

#### Vision Statement:

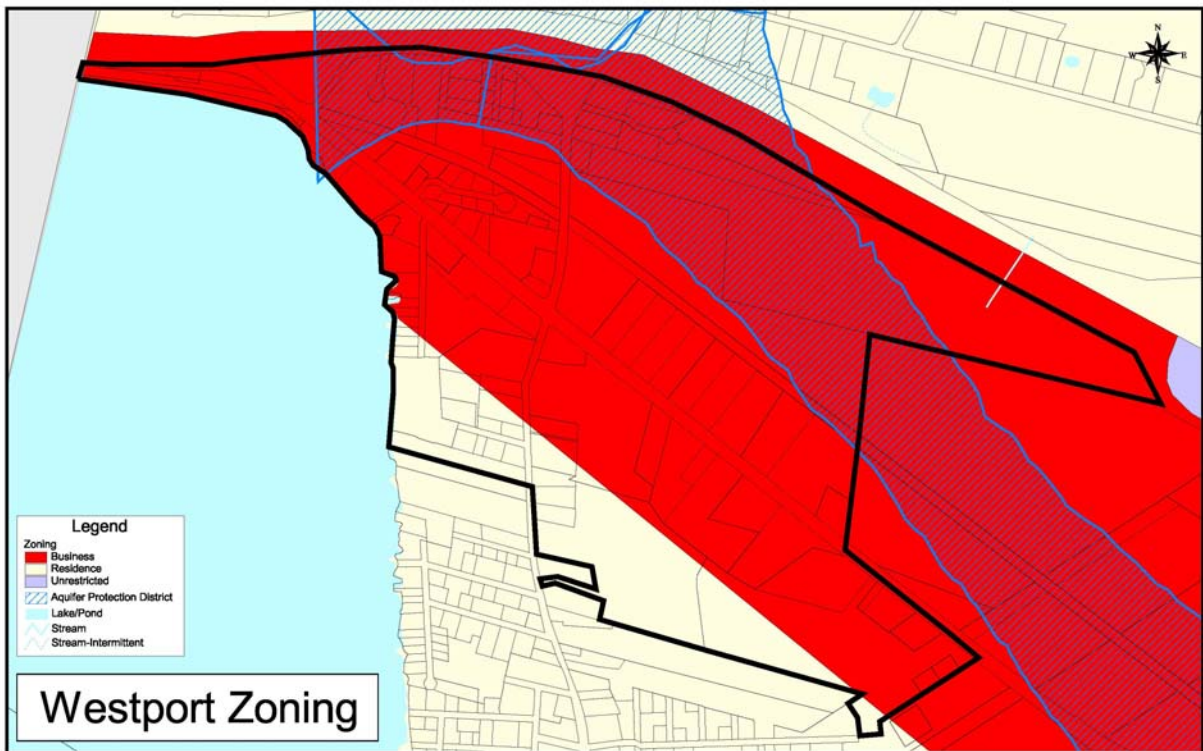
The Town of Westport would like to build on the synergies developing just over the town line, within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a miles at the ATMC complex and Meditec facility in Fall River and capture the emerging opportunities attracting them to the Narrows Redevelopment Area. The redevelopment area could offer small businesses, start-ups and other entrepreneurs growing out of the incubator at ATMC with commercial space and underutilized properties leading to new development opportunities. In addition, the area offers several locations that could be appropriate for mixed use redevelopment providing potential worker housing and other residential options that could potentially support any new business or commercial development. It is anticipated that this new private investment will create long term, higher wage employment, generate much needed local tax revenues, encourage ancillary business activity and leverage public sector assistance to facilitate revitalization.

#### Project Study Area:

The study area covers approximately 247 acres starting in the northwest corner at the Westport and Fall River corporate line extending southeast along I-195 to Town of Westport conservation land, then head south along a line crossing the Old Colony Railroad freight line right of way (ROW) continuing south crossing Route 6 (State Road) to a point, then head in a northwesterly direction to a point along the South Watuppa Pond, head north along the shoreline crossing Route 6 and I-195 to the northwest corner of Westport and Fall River corporate line (See Study Area aerial).

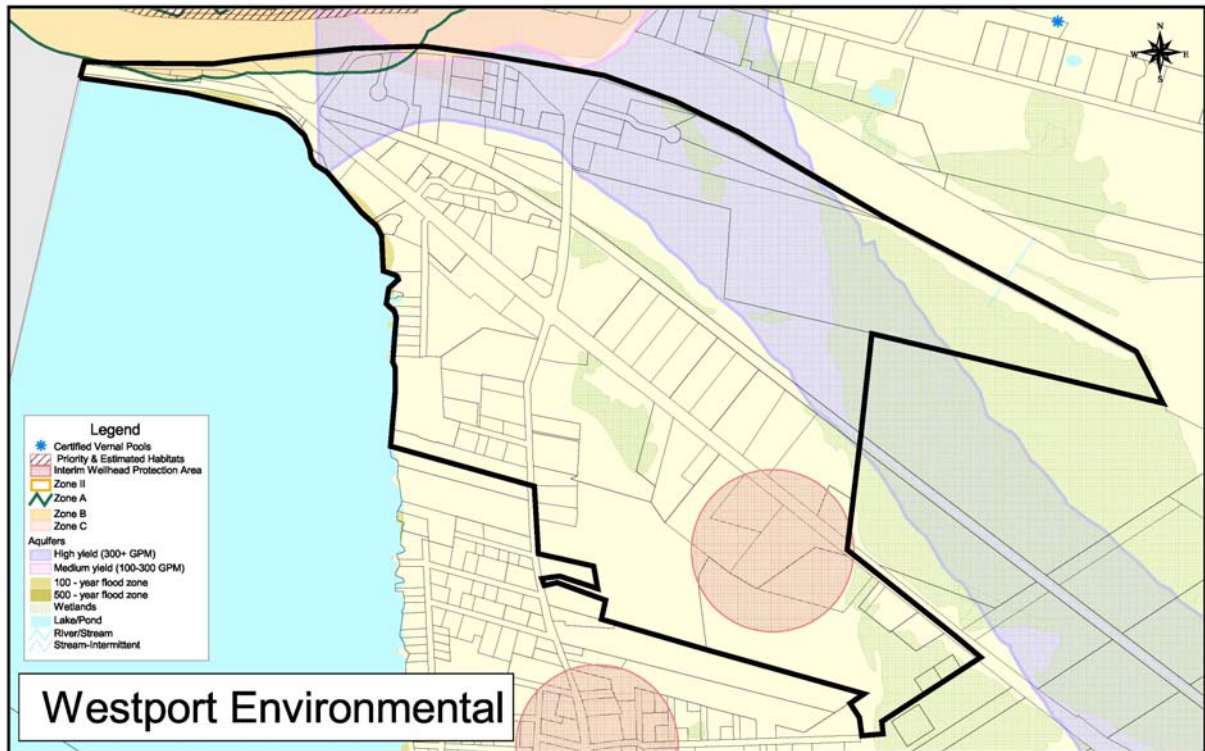
### Current Zoning:

The West End of Route 6 study area is primarily two separate zones and an overlay district: Business and Residential and an Aquifer Protection District. The Aquifer Protection District mainly covers north of Route 6 to I-195. There are a number of uses that are prohibited within the Aquifer Protection District such as: toxic or hazardous waste, landfills, solid waste, fertilizers, road salt or deicing chemicals and others. A special permit would be required for commercial and industrial uses within this district.



### Environmental Constraints:

Environmental constraints in the West End of Route 6 study area include a high yield aquifer, wetlands and an Interim Wellhead Protection Area. The high yield aquifer is sandwiched between Route 6 and I-195 and runs northwest to southeast through two-thirds of the area. (See Aquifer Protection District) This also includes a significant area of wetlands. The Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA) is located along the southeast portion of Route 6. In the absence of an approved Zone II, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has adopted IWPA's as a protected recharge area for a Public Water Supply (PWS) groundwater source. The minimum IWPA radius is 400 feet; the maximum radius reached is 2,640 feet (1/2 mile).



### Redevelopment Opportunities:

For purposes of this analysis SRPEDD has identified three (3) redevelopment areas including seven (7) sites which are located in the Narrows area of the Route 6 corridor (State Road). Two of the areas (Areas 1 and 2) have the potential for mixed use redevelopment while the other, Area 3 could be targeted for new commercial development associated with business opportunities generated through the ATMC in Fall River and other companies seeking new development or expansion opportunities (See: *Narrows Concept Map* identifying redevelopment areas).

#### **Area 1: Whites Area (Commercial and Mixed-Use Redevelopment):**

This area is zoned business and is comprised of two (2) sites under single ownership located diagonally across from each other at the intersection of Route 6 State Road and Old Bedford Road. The smaller site is adjacent to the Old Colony Railroad (Watuppa Branch) ROW between Route 6 and South Watuppa Pond directly across from Whites of Westport. The other site lies in front of the Hampton Inn between the Old Colony RR ROW and Route 6 (State Road).

The first site (*Site 1*) located at 35 State Road is a small .6 acre property containing a 2 story, 7,000 square foot building offering several retail shops, restaurant, service and office uses; on-site parking is available. Opportunities for commercial redevelopment could be encouraged through the extension of the Fall River bike path along the Old Colony Railroad ROW into Westport which directly abuts this property on the South Watuppa Pond. Potential redevelopment would include an expanded restaurant and patio area for dining and/or leisure activity attracting bicyclists or other individuals utilizing the bike route /walking trail offering a scenic waterfront view of South Watuppa Pond.



Plaza: 35 State Road (Route 6)



Fall River bike path looking north to the ATMC

Site 2, located at 98 and 104 State Road consists of two parcels totaling about 2.0 acres and contains 2 partially vacant, underutilized buildings totaling approximately 5,500 square feet. This site offers potential mixed-use redevelopment opportunities, which would include a residential component. A mixed-use redevelopment project would provide for a more harmonious or complimentary use to the abutting residential neighborhood.

In addition, the Old Colony Railroad easement emerges again on the north side of Route 6 at the intersection of Old Bedford Road extending between the Hampton Inn and the rear of this property to Sanford Road. This segment of a proposed bike route (1,800 linear feet) could be linked with the initial one (1,300 linear feet) in the rear of 35 State Road by a citizen actuated signal and crosswalk allowing for a pedestrian friendly linkage between the Whites, Hampton Inn and Old Bedford residential neighborhood and the South Watuppa Pond, Fall River's bike path and the ATMC facility. Other improvements would include traffic signals, sidewalks, appropriate street lights and sewer line extension (500 linear feet). It should be noted that the owners of the Hampton Inn may have an interest in acquiring the Old Colony Railroad easement.

Redevelopment of these two properties served by municipal water and within close proximity to sewer combined with the extension and establishment of a Westport bike path/ route could initiate some private sector investment and area improvements as the Town moves forward with larger revitalization efforts.

**Area 2: Route 6 / Borden Street Neighborhood (Mixed-Use Redevelopment):**

This area is situated at the corner of Route 6 (State Road) and Borden Street adjacent to the Watuppa Plaza. At this location there are two (2) properties identified which could be



Plaza, 133 State Road (Route 6)

combined and assembled as one 6 acre site for commercial or mixed-use redevelopment potential including housing. *Site 3*, located at 133 A-D State Road (Rte 6) at the corner of Borden Street is a small commercial plaza with a single 5,740 square foot building providing retail and service activities.

The fourth site (*Site 4*: Roadway Freight Trucking Corp property) is located in the rear of parcel 1 at 30 Borden Street and contains a blighted, 5 acre property with a vacant, 5,700 square foot deteriorated building. The site may have possible petroleum contamination. The mixed-use redevelopment option may be a more appropriate development due to the adjacent residential neighborhood on Borden Street and Sanford Road.



30 Borden Street

Other considerations for this area may include the addition of the property located at 151-155 State Road (Watuppa Plaza) to a potential land assembly that would increase the combined redevelopment site from 6 acres to nearly 8 acres increasing commercial redevelopment potential. Components of the redevelopment would include extension of the sewer line (1,075 linear feet), area street and sidewalk improvements on State Road (Rte 6) and Borden Street and, appropriate street lighting which will provide walkable, pedestrian friendly linkages to area destinations.

**Area 3: Route 6 Business Entrepreneurial Zoning District:**

Located on both sides of State Road (Route 6) just south east of the Sanford Road intersection this are is predominately vacant and underutilized and may provide the Town

of Westport with opportunities to attract new emerging industries and other companies seeking expansion opportunities including research and development, office, educational, light manufacturing, fabrication, assembly, packaging and warehousing.

Again for the purposes of the study this area has been divided into 2 sub-areas as follows:

**Sub-Area A:** This area consists of several properties situated in the Business Zone between the north side of State Road (Rte 6) and the Old Colony Railroad ROW, which represents about 21 acres (*Sites 5 and 6*), most of which is vacant and underutilized including: outside construction debris and other stock piled material, trailers, autos, trucks and parts storage. The area also consists of three (3) commercial businesses including a bowling alley, vacant retail building and a used car dealership in addition to a single family residential property (See Table Parcel Data).



Mid City Steel, State Road (Route 6)

This area does not appear to be located in the Aquifer Protection District and has limited wetland constraints. The majority of the undeveloped land has limited ownership which may enable easier land acquisition and parcel assembly. It should be noted that a portion of this area was identified for possible commercial development in the *Route 6 Corridor Study* conducted by SRPEDD in June 2005.

Westport may want to consider this location for possible redevelopment as an initial Phase I Entrepreneurial Park or Research and Development Center. The area is serviced with municipal water and has excellent transportation access on Route 6 and I-195 as well as high visibility. However, a sewer line extension would be required, estimated at about 2,500 linear feet. Other potential improvements would include tree lined sidewalks

installed from the intersection at Sanford Road and Route 6 and street lighting that would enhance the visual appearance of this portion of the corridor. The proposed bike route could also be extended from Sanford Road along the Old Colony Railroad ROW abutting the rear of the identified properties. Additional improvements would follow based on any actual redevelopment project.

**Sub-Area B:**

This area extends along the south side of State Road (Route 6) and is predominately located in the Business Zone with two back or rear parcels located in the Residential Zone. The area comprises 10 parcels totaling approximately 45 acres (*Site 7*); only 15 acres of the area's total is identified as developed containing xxxx square feet. All but one property with frontage on State Road is developed and those that are provide only marginal valued uses such as: warehousing, storage, used car dealers and, limited retail and service activities.



Auto sales 237 State Road (Route 6)



Truck storage, State Road (Route 6)

The majority of the vacant parcels are located in rear back lots located behind and adjacent to the frontage parcels on State Road. The only exception is a vacant 2.6 acre parcel owned by Whaling Bus Lines situated on Route 6, immediately southeast, after the gas station at the intersection of Sanford Road and State Road (Rte 6). To the rear of this parcel is a vacant 7.7 acre parcel. In the rear adjacent to this parcel is a vacant 13.5 property that has access from Sanford Road and abuts two (2) central parcel located on Route 6. Abutting this 13.5 acre parcel is a vacant 18 acre parcel with access points on Route 6 however, a significant portion of the property has wetland constraints.

The properties identified, if assembled could represent a 30 acre site that may be targeted for economic development. Additionally, the developed properties along Route 6 could be combined with the vacant parcels to increase acreage attracting potential economic development opportunities including: private investment, new business development and expansion, employment and tax revenue benefits. These back-lot, vacant parcels were also identified and recommend for inclusion into an expanded Business Zone for potential development in the *Route 6 Corridor Study* (See Table for Zone 3 Parcel Data and Concept Map).

The area reviewed in Area 3 has limited environmental constraints. It is not located in the Aquifer Protect District, however, there are some wetlands and an Interim Wellhead Protection Area is located at the southeast end of the Zone.

This portion of Area 3 may be considered as a possible Phase II expansion location for a proposed Entrepreneurial Park, a commerce center or business park that would allow appropriate, limited commercial uses. Area infrastructure improvements are the same as Sub-Area A with sewer line extension and walkable, pedestrian friendly linkages and, depending on actual redevelopment additional improvement may emerge i.e. traffic signals and crosswalks. (See Appendix: Table - Study Area Parcel Data)

### **Zoning Considerations:**

Following discussions with local officials' two (2) zoning options have been identified for consideration and would only be applied to the area designated as Zone 3. Route 6 Business Entrepreneurial Zoning District. The zoning options are as follows:

Option I: Establish a new zoning district for the identified area. The purpose of this new zoning district would be to allow for new, targeted uses associated with the development of a Research and Development Park e.g. office, educational, light manufacturing, assembly, packaging, R&D, bio-technology, processing, fabrication and warehousing. removing the existing by-right uses and replacing them with new targeted uses.

#### Advantages

- Eliminates big box retail
- Reduces strip commercial development, and
- Enables town to target desired uses
- Encourages higher valued development providing increased local tax revenues
- Development of new industries is anticipated to create long-term higher wage employment opportunities

#### Disadvantages

- Remove allowed by-right uses identified in existing business zone
- Remove existing potentially viable business from by-right to non-conforming
- Business and property owner resistance

Option II: Create a Research and Development Overlay District.(RDOD) The purpose of the overlay district is the same as identified under Option I for the establishment of a new zoning district. However, the major difference is that the overlay district is subject to those uses identified in the underlying business zone whereby by the uses in the underlying zone supersede the uses in the overlay. Potential conflicts may occur when inappropriate uses are not consistent with the intent of the zoning overlay district (See Appendix for example of RDOD zoning bylaw).

#### Advantages

- Allows for an expansion of uses
- Provides greater flexibility

#### Disadvantages

- Potential big box retail by-right
- Conflicting or non-desirable uses inconsistent with intent of the overlay

### **Recommended Action Steps:**

SRPEDD recommends considering a select set of actions that pertain to the three (3) zones identified. These actions should be pursued simultaneously for the main purpose of positioning the area for private and public investment and eventual redevelopment.

1. Organize and appoint a Narrows (Route 6 West) Redevelopment Committee (Example: Area property owners (RL and others), State Rep, appropriate local officials, area property owner, businesses, and, other interested persons and/or parties);
2. Initiate discussions with property and business owners to determine future development plans, interest and participation;
3. Engage the Westport Board of Selectmen and other necessary boards, committees or group etc in discussions to gain support and build consensus on extending the sewer line or developing other options (on-site systems);
4. Work with the Westport Water and Sewer Committee to explore options for sewerage including the following:
  - Option 1: Sewer extension:
    - A. Establish a preliminary cost figure for design, engineering and construction of sewer line extension;
    - B. Explore sewer extension restrictions including limits on length and distance, flow rates and capacity (gpd). Restrictions would be based on type of uses and size of development area, and
    - C. Investigate funding options.
  - Option 2: On-site sewer treatment systems:
    - A. Investigate alternative onsite sewer treatment systems, and investigate possible funding options.
5. Work with the Planning Board to create and establish the appropriate zoning enabling area redevelopment.

#### Strategies:

- Initiate meetings and engage area residents, business, property owner and others to build support and gain consensus;
- Develop and establish a commercial/business overlay zoning district (proposed as a “Business Entrepreneurial District”);
- Compile an inventory of vacant and underutilized properties including residential, commercial and business for redevelopment, infill or conversion potential;
- Encourage and support existing business expansions consistent with the areas redevelopment vision;
- Develop and improve infrastructure system e.g. water & sewer extensions, street & sidewalk reconstruction, develop walkable, pedestrian friendly linkages (incl. bike routes) and open spaces between destinations in residential, mixed-use and commercial areas;
- Obtain technical assistance funding through Rails-to-Trails, the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and Greenways and Trails Program for planning and potential marketing material;
- Initiate a dialogue with Fall River officials and obtain process, information and support to extend bike path into Westport;
- Monitor and leverage new private investment and job creation occurring in redevelopment area;

- Obtain information on incubator start-ups from ATMC;
- Target appropriate uses (i.e. office, educational, assembly, fabrication, R&D, packaging and processing etc);
- Participate in Chapter 43D Expedited Streamlined Permitting Program and designate Route 6 West Redevelopment Area as a priority development site (PDS);
- Market transportation access, visibility and land availability, development incentives and other;
- Proactively pursue grant and loan funding resources to attract and leverage private investment, and
- Utilize Fall River Chamber of Commerce for networking and marketing initiatives.

#### Concept Plan:

Preliminary redevelopment strategy highlights include identification of three (3) areas containing seven (7) sites for potential commercial and/or mixed use redevelopment. In addition, a 65 acre area is recommended for redevelopment as R&D and other associated uses.

Primary components include zoning revisions, infrastructure improvements, pedestrian access and bike path extension (See Appendix *Westport Concept Map* for more details).

#### Additional Action Steps:

- Appoint a Narrows Redevelopment Committee;
- Conduct meetings and engage area residents, property owners, businesses and other interested parties in discussions on the area redevelopment vision and strategy;
- Consider partnering or collaborating with officials at ATMC;
- Obtain support of the redevelopment vision/strategy from Westport Business to Business Association;
- Initiate discussions with key property owners and businesses on future development interest and/or participation;
- Facilitate meetings and discussions between private developers and businesses and properties owners for potential site acquisition and land assembly.

## Funding Options:

| Table of Potential Funding Sources                             |  |                    |                             |   |
|--|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Category/<br>Program   | Agency   | Funding<br>Cycles  | Funding<br>Amount<br>(max.) | Contact Person<br>/Telephone #              |
| <b>Planning</b>  |  |                    |                             |   |
| <i>Economic Development Fund (EDF)</i>                         | Depart of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)           | Ongoing            | \$50K                       | Mark Nardone<br>617-573-1400                |
| <i>Mass Development</i>  | Mass Development   | Ongoing            | \$50k                       | Jim Walsh or Larry Cameron<br>508-678-0533  |
| <i>Community Development Fund II (CDF II)</i>                  | DHCD   | Annual<br>Feb 2011 | \$800k                      | 617-573-1400                                |
| <i>South Coast Rail (SCR)</i>                                  | Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT)      | -                  | \$15K                       | Kristina Egan<br>617-973-7000               |
| <i>Mass Downtown Initiative (MDI)</i>                          | DHCD   | Annual             | \$5K                        | Emmy Hahn<br>617-573-1400                   |
| <i>Priority Development Fund (PDF)</i>                         | DHCD   | Rolling            | \$25-\$50K                  | Miryam Bodadilla<br>617-573-1400            |
| <b>Infrastructure</b>  |  |                    |                             |   |
| <i>Public Works Economic Development Fund (PWED)</i>           | Mass DOT   | Jan & June         | \$1.0 - \$1.5ML             | William Palmer<br>973-8070                  |
| <i>Community Development Action Grant (CDAG)</i>               | DHCD   | Rolling<br>Basis   | \$800K                      | Cyrus Field<br>617-573-1400                 |
| <i>Mass Opportunity Relocation &amp; Expansion (MORE)</i>      | Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development (EOHED) | Annual             | \$1.0 - 5.0ML               | Nayenday Thurman<br>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                                |
| <b>Mixed-use Development</b>                                   |  |                    |                             |   |
| <i>PDF</i>   | DHCD   | Rolling            | \$25-\$50K                  | Miryam Bodadilla<br>617-573-1400            |
| <i>Chapter 40R</i>   | DHCD   | Ongoing            | Project<br>Dependant        | 617-573-1400                                |
| <i>Housing Development Support Program (HDSP)</i>              | DHCD   | Ongoing            | \$750K                      | 617-573-1400                                |
| <i>MassDevelopment</i>   | MassDevelopment  | Ongoing            | Project<br>Dependant        | Jim Walsh or Larry Cameron<br>508-678-05533 |
| <i>CDF II</i>  | DHCD   | Annual             | 800K                        | 617-573-1400                                |
| <i>CDAG</i>  | DHCD   | Rolling<br>Basis   | \$1.0 – 1.5ML               | Cyrus Field<br>617-573-1400                 |
| <i>Urban Center Housing, Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF)</i> | DHCD   | Ongoing            | Project<br>Dependant        | 617-573-1400                                |
| <b>Recreation and</b>  |  |                    |                             |   |

|  |   |         |                      |   |
|--|---|---------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Open Space</b>  |   |         |                      |   |
| <i>Enhancement Projects</i>  | Mass DOT  | Ongoing | Varied               | Jim Cope 617-973-7043<br>Adam Reccia 508-824-1367 |
| <i>Land &amp; Water Conservation Funds(L&amp;WCF)</i>              | Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA)      | Annual  | 70% of project costs | Melissa Cryan 617-626-1171                        |
| <i>Mass Parkland Acquisition &amp; Renovations for Communities</i> | Division of Conservation Services (DCR)               | Annual  | \$500K               | Celia Riechel 617-626-1187                        |
| <i>Preservation Massachusetts</i>                                  | Preservation Mass                                     | Ongoing | Project Dependant    | Dorr Fox 508-245-6824                             |
| <i>Rails toTrails Conservancy</i>                                  | Washington D.C. non-profit                            | Ongoing | Project Dependant    | 1-202-331-9696                                    |
| <i>Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program(RTCA)</i>    | National Parks Service, US Department of the Interior | Annual  | Project Dependant    | 1-202-354-6900                                    |
| <i>Greenways and Trails Grant Program</i>                          | DCR   | Annual  | Project Dependant    | Paul Jahnige 413-586-8706                         |
| <b>Development Incentive Programs</b>                              |   |         |                      |   |
| <i>Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)</i>               | Mass Office of Business Development (MOBD)            | Ongoing | Project Dependant    | Buddy Rocha 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                             |
| <b>Sustainable Development /Green Development</b>                  |   |         |                      |   |
| <i>Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC)</i>                | Green Buildings and Technologies                      | Varied  | Project Dependant    | Mitchell Adams 508-870-0312                       |

Appendix  
Draft Overlay Zoning Bylaw/ Model  
Land Use Inventory and Map  
Concept Plan