

# TOWN OF STURBRIDGE ROUTE 15 CORRIDOR STUDY

Report prepared by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission with the support of the Town of Sturbridge Economic Development Coordinator, Planning Office and Town Administrator.

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## Request from the Town:

- Market Analysis: review market conditions for three recommended uses from 2013-14 study: recreation, warehouse or medical businesses
- Focus on challenges noted in prior PDA report and address
- Further define the vision and identify and clarify best uses for the area compared to market analysis
- Recommend zoning changes as necessary



# PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE





## Prior Reports

- **Route 15 Corridor Study (1992)** – Recommended contract re-zonings based on specific development proposals. Also validated the large setbacks currently in place.
- **Route 15 Study Committee Report (1997)** – Recommended the Special Use District and Planned Unit Business Development zoning currently in place. Sought to discourage high traffic generating uses, uses detrimental to historic town center and rural character of corridor, and those that would tax town services.
- **Sturbridge Heritage & Preservation Partnership Report (2008)** – Contained a number of recommended strategic actions such as Protecting the Fabric of the Community, Enhancing the Visitor Experience, and leveraging current events. Suggested design standards and zoning to manage sprawl.
- **Route 15 PDA Analysis (2013-14)** – CMRPC determined that both the Special Use District and the PUBD contained restrictive zoning criteria, unclear objectives, and lack of utilities, creating...“a significant deterrent to potential development”

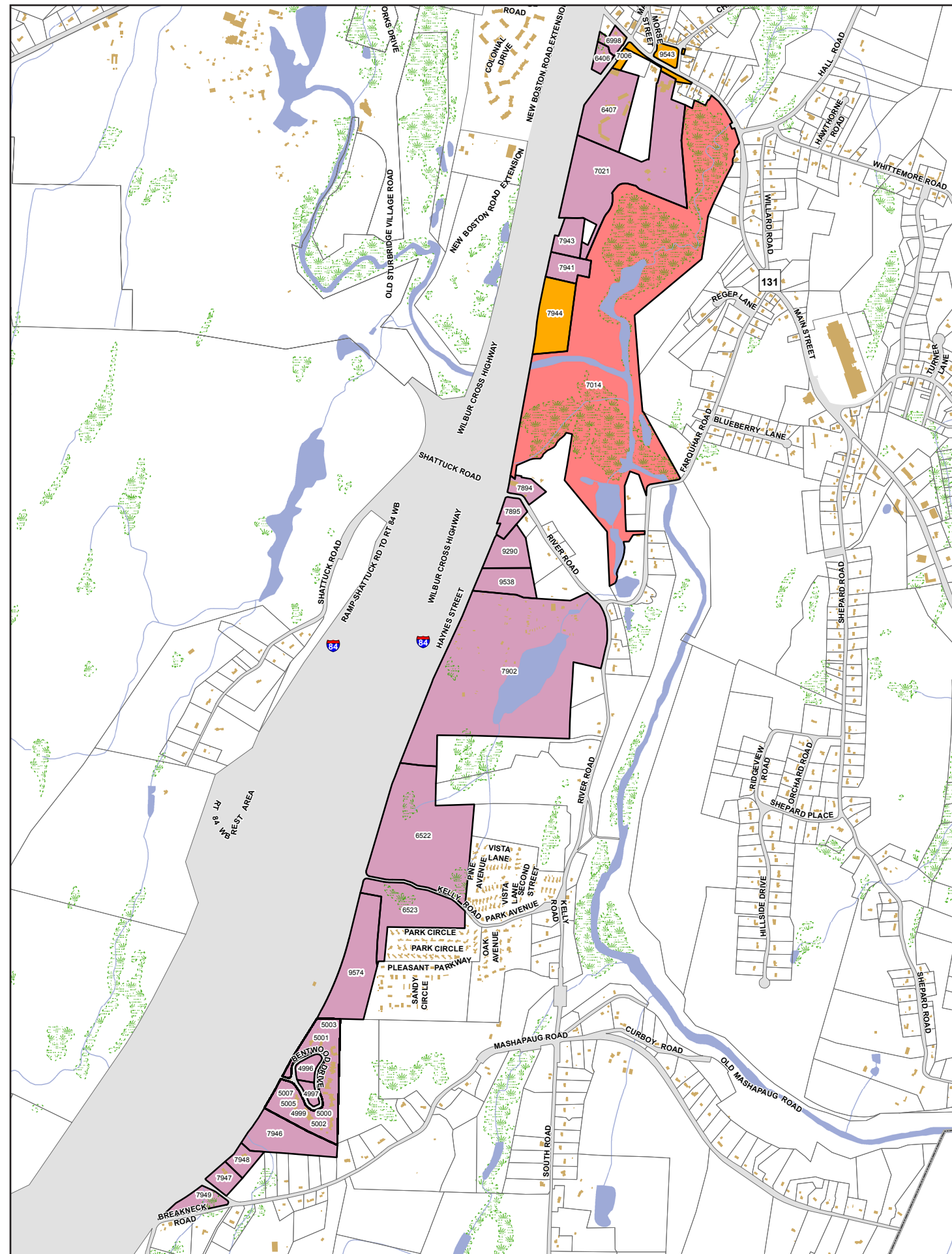


# PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

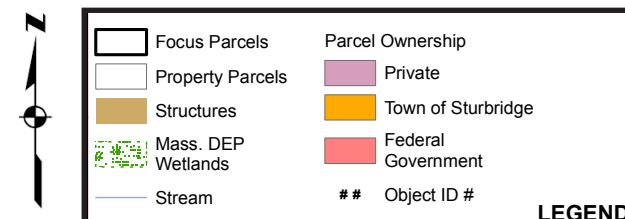


# PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

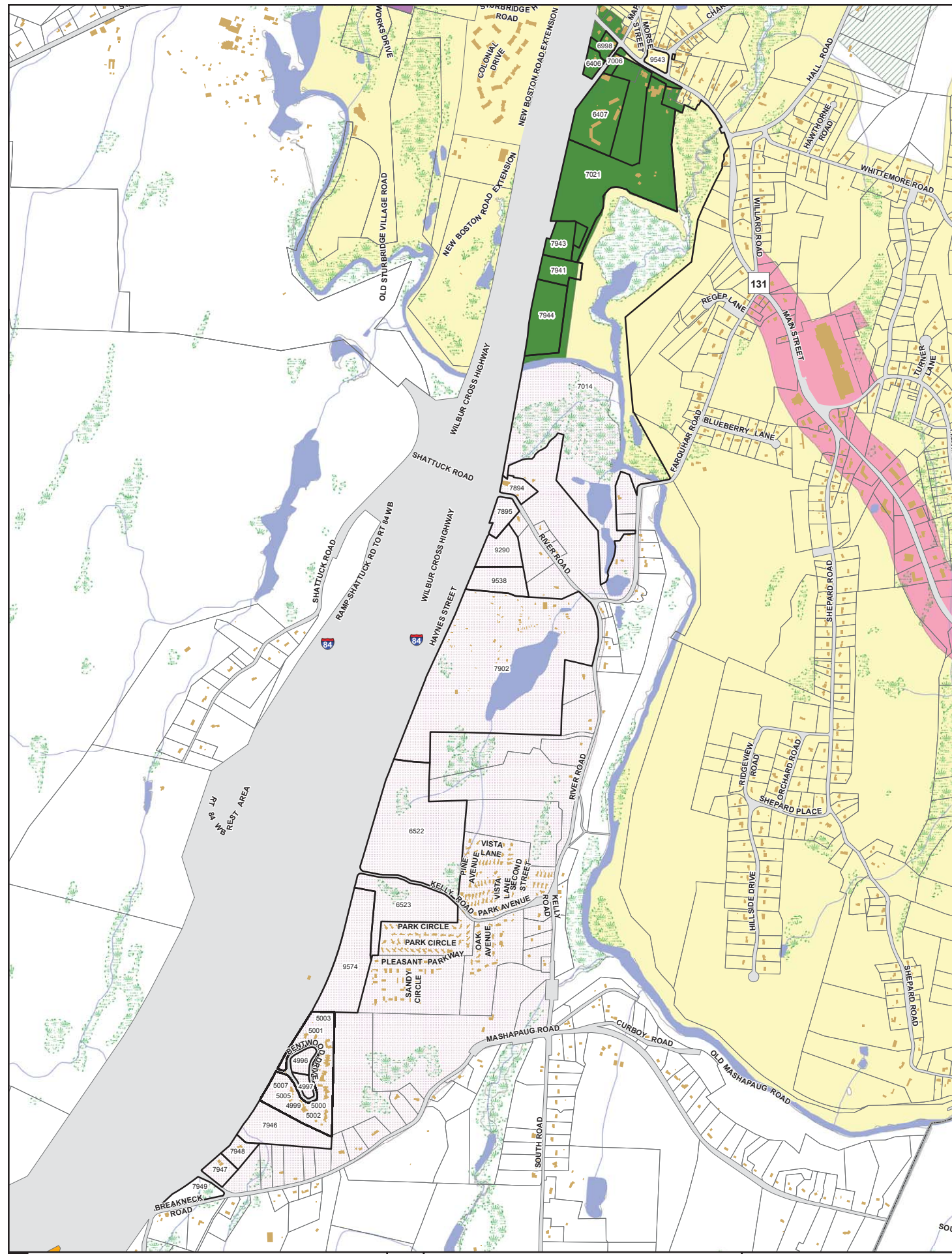
- Area along Route 15, Haynes St. approx. 3 miles from Route 131 in the north to Breakneck Rd in the south
- 61 parcels totaling approximately 153 acres
- Predominate use is residential, with some commercial/recreational uses
- At least 12 parcels of open, undeveloped or under-developed space with frontage on Haynes St.



**Overview Map**  
Haynes Street PDA Analysis  
Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts







# PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

Divided into two principal zones

- Historic/Commercial District: covers parcels around the municipal buildings, Publick House
- Special Use District: designated in 1998 at Town Meeting. Provides for a mix of uses and also for Planned Unit Business Development (PUBD).
- PUBD: Planned Unit Business Development allows for a mix of typically non-residential, non-retail uses

**Zoning Map**  
Haynes Street PDA Analysis  
Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts

Focus Parcels	<b>Zoning Districts</b>	Historic / Commercial District
Property Parcels	Commercial District	Industrial Park
Structures	Commercial 2 District	Rural
Mass. DEP Wetlands	Commercial / Tourist	Special Use Zone
Stream	General Industry	Suburban Residential
## Object ID #		<b>LEGEND</b>







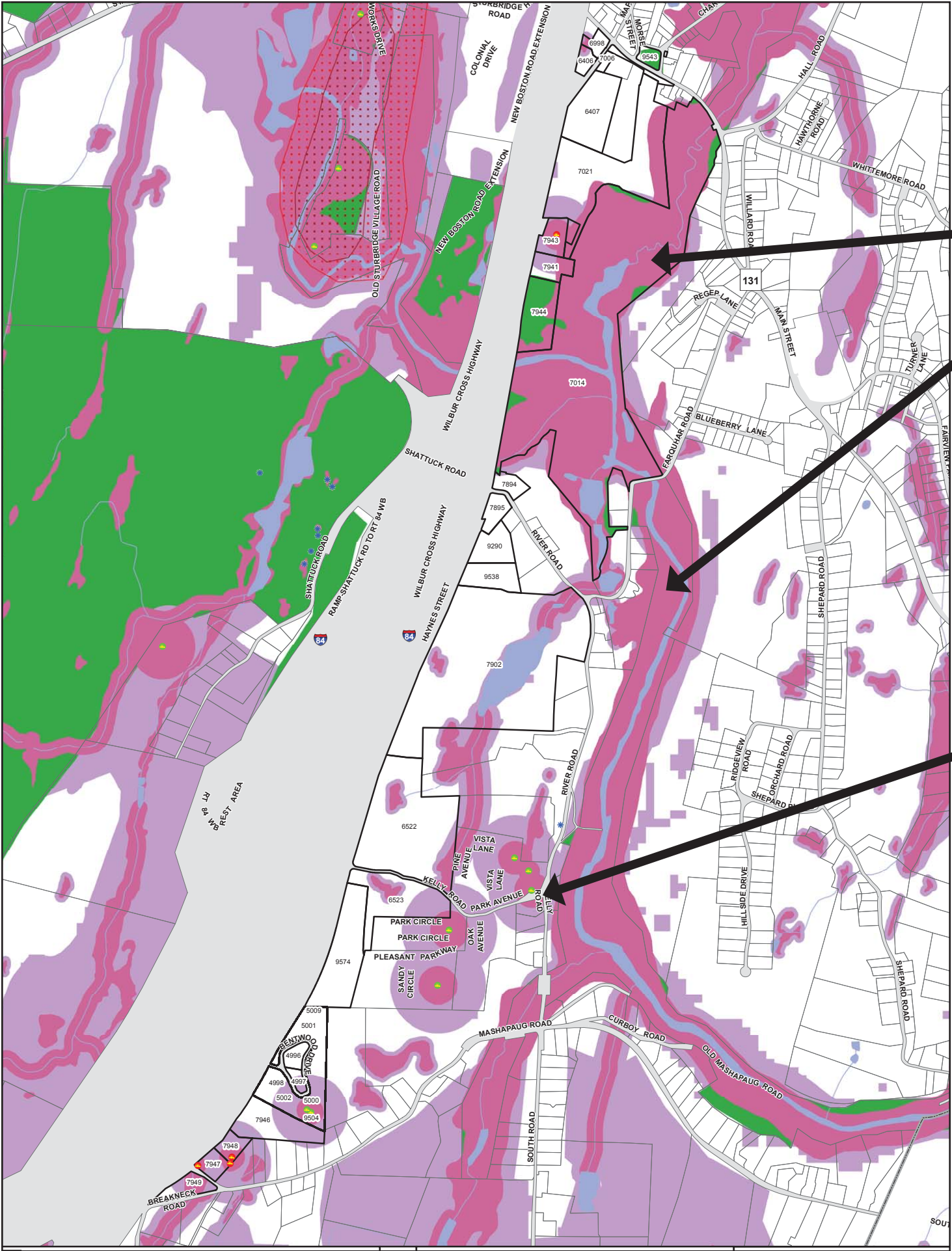
- Significant environmental constraints
- Lack of water and sewer infrastructure
- Goals and vision that are unclear
- Limited and restrictive zoning; no incentives
- Poor connectivity to major activity and services areas
- Jumble of existing uses that limit new use compatibility
- Commercial tax rate slightly high for Central Mass towns but lower than cities in MA



## CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES



# CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES



Significant Wetland Areas

Well-head projection areas

Constraints Map  
Haynes Street PDA Analysis  
Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts

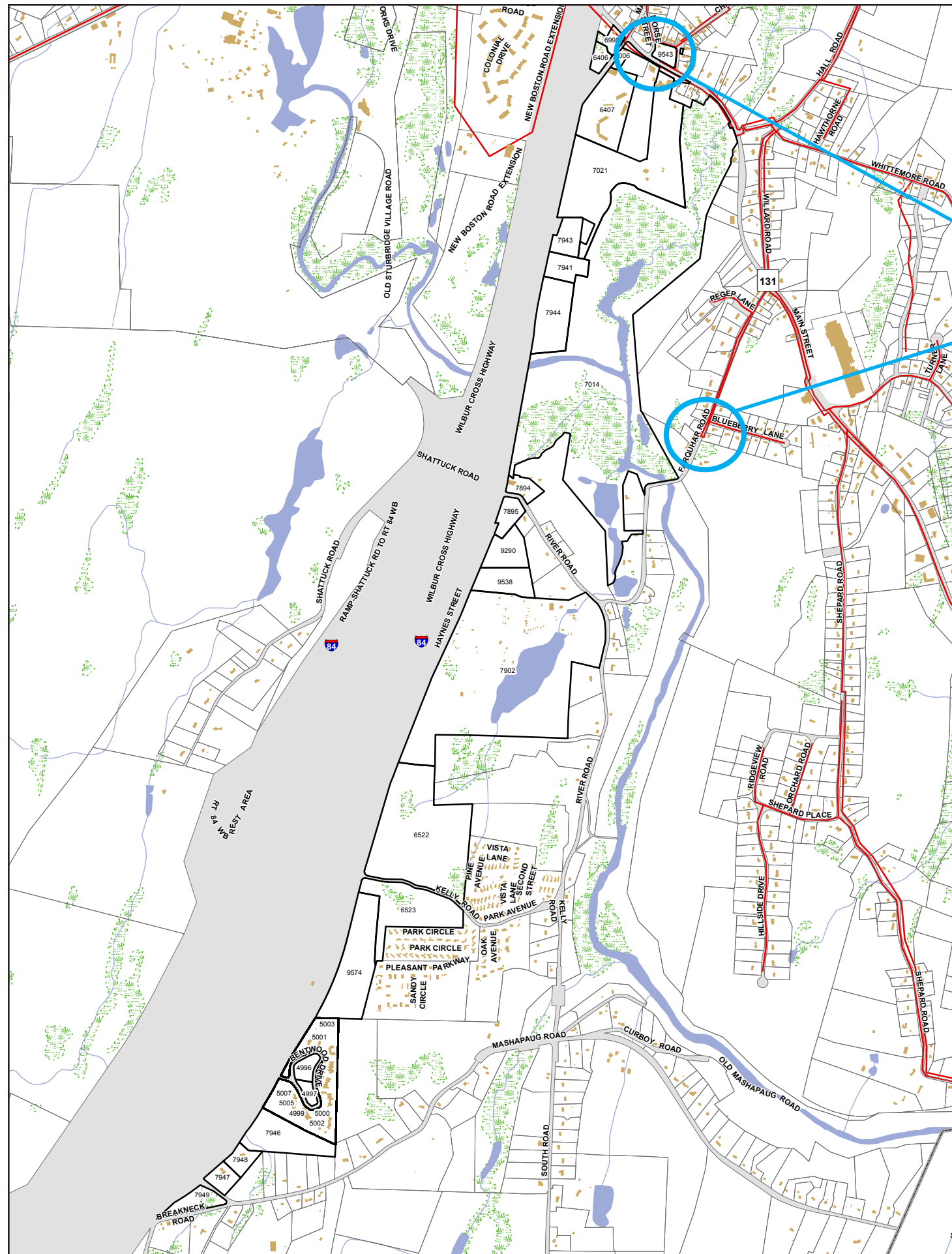
Focus Parcels	NHESP Certified Vernal Pools	Medium Yield Aquifer
Property Parcels	Community Groundwater Source	High Yield Aquifer
Structures	Non-Community Groundwater Source	Absolute Constraint
Stream		Partial Constraint
Object ID #		Protected Open Space
<b>LEGEND</b>		



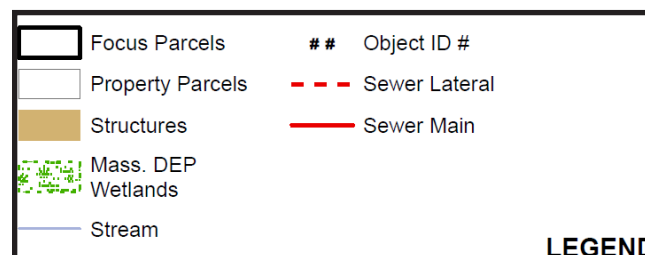


# CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

- No Sewer along Haynes Street
- Nearest connections would need to come from Route 131 or Farquhar Rd
- All line extensions would need to pass through watershed areas and cross streams
- Chicken and Egg: The Town can't afford to extend sewer without private investment, private investment not likely without sewer



**Sewer Map**  
Haynes Street PDA Analysis  
Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts







**Natural resources and water assets:** navigable rivers and streams with possible access to Old Sturbridge Village (OSV)

**Access to I-84 and other major roadways:** direct connection to I-84.

**Town name recognition and OSV:** major marketing potential by making connection to OSV and other attractions

**Interested and active Town government:** town planners, Town manager, Board of Selectmen and Economic Development Coordinator have demonstrated long-term interest in future of this corridor



**OPPORTUNITIES AND ADVANTAGES**



## Considerations...

- Preserving the viewshed along the corridor
- Preserving the maximum amount of existing forest
- Still drawing consumers to the region
- Avoid retail unless as accessory to other use



**USE ANALYSIS**





## TYPES OF COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

- Outdoor adventure parks
- Indoor sports/recreation
- Accessory businesses to passive recreation (trails, blue-trails)



**CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS**  
Regional Planning Commission

# USE ANALYSIS: COMMERCIAL RECREATION



## MARKET CONSIDERATIONS

Product/Consumer Behavior	MPI
Participated in backpacking in last 12 months	125
Participated in canoeing/kayaking in last 12 months	117
Participated in roller skating in last 12 months	115
Participated in baseball in last 12 months	110
Participated in bicycling (mountain) in last 12 months	109
Attend sports events: baseball game - MLB reg seas	108
Participated in boating (power) in last 12 months	108
Participated in fishing (fresh water) in last 12 months	107
Participated in bicycling (road) in last 12 months	105
Spent on sports/rec equip in last 12 months: \$100-\$249	104
Participated in horseback riding in last 12 months	104
Participated in swimming in last 12 months	101
Participated in archery in last 12 months	101
Spent on sports/rec equip in last 12 months: \$250+	100

Table 7- Market Potential Index (MPI); ESRI Business Analyst, 2017

- Analyzed consumer behavior in a 30-minute drive-time radius around the Route 15 corridor
- Market Potential Index (MPI) developed by ESRI Business Analyst
- 100 is the national average response for each of the Product/Consumer Behavior categories
- MPI above 100 represent positive responses greater than national average



# USE ANALYSIS: COMMERCIAL RECREATION

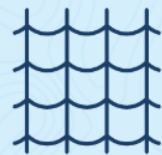




# AERIAL ADVENTURE PARK - MASSACHUSETTS

## ALL AGES & SKILL LEVELS

Challenge (and surprise) yourself with feats of strength, stamina, agility and bravery as you maneuver through the great outdoors in a range of rope courses for kids and adults.



Crawl



Swing



Climb



Balance



Traverse



Zipline



**USE ANALYSIS: OUTDOOR RECREATION**

PHOTOS FROM BOUNDLESS ADVENTURE AERIAL ADVENTURE PARK, BERLIN, MA, 2018 (<https://boundlessadventures.net/ma-park/>)





## ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Not a very large market; uncertain investment potential
- Examples found were typically on 20+ acres
- Not all outdoor recreational uses would be compatible with goals of corridor
- Increased traffic from visitors could cause serious bottlenecks at the intersection of Routes 131 and 15
- Not necessarily a year-round use

## POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Outdoor adventure park style integrates well with existing woodlands
- Would have minimal impact on viewshed
- Water and sewer not (as much) of a consideration as other uses
- The right development would be both a draw for the region and a service to residents



**USE ANALYSIS: OUTDOOR RECREATION**





## ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Greater water/sewer needs than other recreation types
- Greater impacts on land and forest cover
- Uncertain investment climate
- Current zoning height limitations may constraint

## POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Soccer teams, skating rinks, roller rinks, multi-purpose facilities, etc.
- Can provide both a regional draw and local service
- Comparatively easy to design in a way that minimizes impact on viewshed



**CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS**  
Regional Planning Commission

# USE ANALYSIS: INDOOR RECREATION



## ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Much more limited economic impact
- Requires development of smaller, more spread out business activity along trails
- Potentially greater investment from the community (trail development, maintenance, etc.)
- Current zoning not particularly friendly to smaller businesses opening to support recreation corridors

## POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Potentially less need for water / sewer infrastructure
- Potential knock-on effects for existing surrounding businesses (e.g. lodging, restaurants)
- Minimal impact on viewshed or woodlands
- Could lead to more diverse economic activity along the corridor



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# USE ANALYSIS: PASSIVE RECREATION





## MARKET CONSIDERATIONS

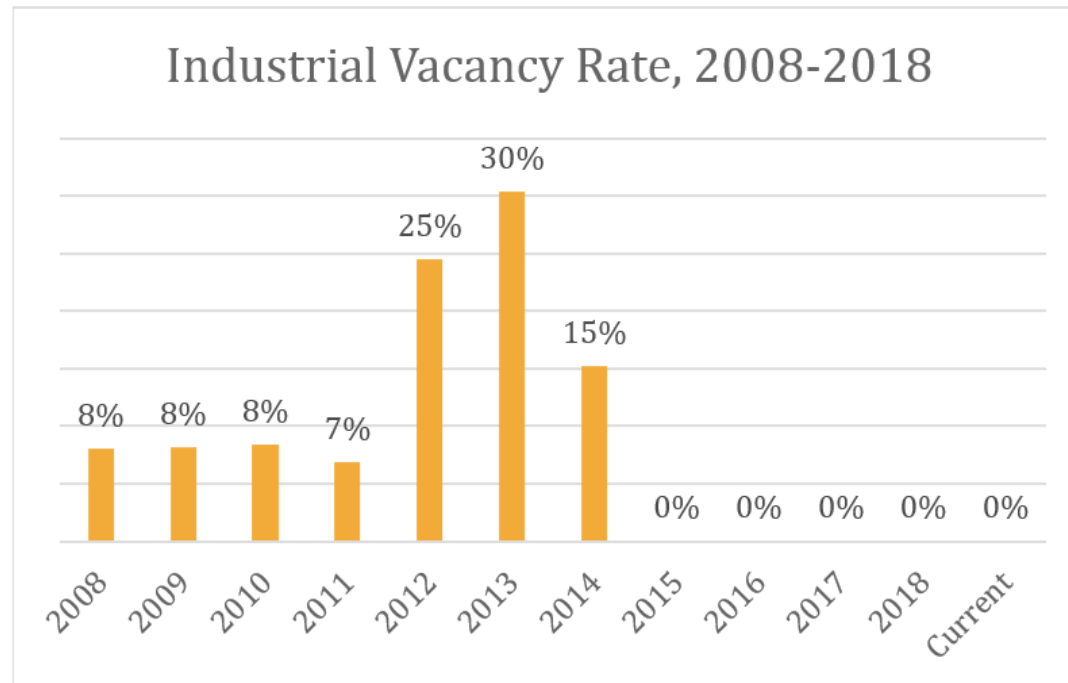


Figure 3 - Historic Vacancy Rates for Industrial Property, 2008-2018; CoStar, 2018

- Analyzed vacancy rates for industrial property and net absorption
- Vacancy rate in Sturbridge is estimated at 0% (Costar, 2018) for the past three years.
- Total square footage has remained stable since 2008 (~ 13,000 sf)
- For Worcester County, vacancy rate of warehouse/ industrial space is around 6% indicating high demand regionally



# USE ANALYSIS: MANUFACTURING AND WAREHOUSE/ DISTRIBUTION



## ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Heavy demand for water and sewer infrastructure
- Large impact on forest canopy
- Traffic impact could be substantial depending on the type of business
- Not as compatible with existing uses
- Would contribute little to tourism industry

## POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Warehousing/Distribution currently has some of the highest demand of uses examined
- Greater positive impact on employment
- Warehousing/Distribution has lower potential water/sewer needs than some other use types
- Comparatively stable market over time



# USE ANALYSIS: MANUFACTURING AND WAREHOUSE/ DISTRIBUTION





# MARKET CONSIDERATIONS

Table 6 - Resident occupation in Sturbridge by NAICS description; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010 - 2016

Resident Occupation by NAICS Sector	2016 Estimate
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,270
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	759
Manufacturing	592
Retail trade	577
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	427
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	282
Construction	192
Wholesale trade	181
Public administration	149
Information	120
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	110
Other services, except public administration	79
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	-

Healthcare is one of the key employment sectors for residents of Sturbridge

Represents about 8% total private workforce in Sturbridge

Between 2009 and 2016 sector employment grew about 38%

Growth in this sector is projected to continue well into the middle of this century

A high-growth, high-profit sector



## USE ANALYSIS: HEALTHCARE/MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENTS



## ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Heavy demand for water and sewer infrastructure
- Large impact on forest canopy
- High employment leads to big traffic impacts
- Would contribute little to tourism industry
- Current zoning may exclude many types of medical establishments

## POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Large positive impact on local and regional employment
- Long-term market outlook is very stable
- Tend to be less controversial for residents than some other use types
- May be a positive step toward diversifying the Town's economy



**USE ANALYSIS: HEALTHCARE/MEDICAL  
ESTABLISHMENTS**





## USE RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***Outdoor and Passive Recreation***

- Most suitable development type given the goals and considerations for the corridor
- Have the most minimal impact on existing infrastructure
- Would be compatible with existing tourism industry and businesses already in the corridor
- Traffic impacts could be considerable depending on the development, but likely less than other development types

### ***Warehousing and Distribution***

- Projected growth and less stringent infrastructure demands might make this an attractive option
- Traffic impacts could be a problem, but may be mitigated with careful planning and site plan review

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***Water and sewer investments***

- For almost any other type of use, water and sewer must be extended along Haynes St.

### ***By-law amendments to consider***

- PUBD: Consider repealing or else revising the PUBD to make the lot dimensions reducible to 20 acres by grant of the planning board, rather than special permit of the ZBA
- Setbacks: clarify language in the PUBD to ensure setbacks are measured from the edge of the ROW and not the viewshed easement along Route 15
- Height limits: raise height limits in the SU district and PUBD to ensure desired uses to not need a variance



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# RECOMMENDATIONS



# THANK YOU!

Questions or comments? Feel free to contact Ron M. Barron, Associate Planner, CMRPC via the contacts below:

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