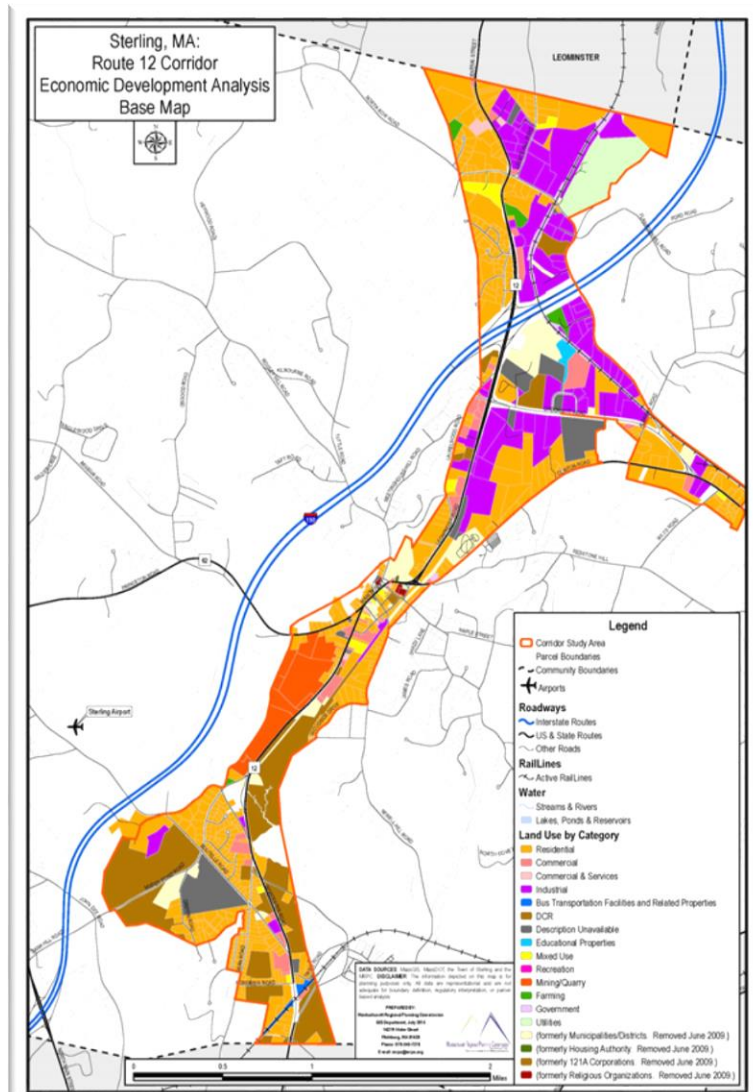


Route 12 Corridor Economic Development & Zoning Analysis

STERLING, MASSACHUSETTS FINAL REPORT



Prepared By:
Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
January 2016

**Assistance Provided under Montachusett Regional Planning Commission's
District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) with
Funding Provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) supported this project with funding provided by the Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program. Under Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2006, the DLTA program enables Regional Planning Agencies to provide technical assistance to communities for “any subject within regional planning expertise”.

Sterling Economic Development Committee

James Patacchiola, Chairman
Brian Kindorf
Maureen Cranson
Michael E. Pineo
Paul Cathcart
Richard Maki
Rosanne Mapp
Michael Szlosek, Town Administrator

Report Credit

Chantell Fleck, MRPC Principal Planner
Noam Goldstein, MRPC, Regional Planner
Renée Marion, MRPC, GIS Analyst
John Hume, MRPC, Planning & Development Director
Glenn Eaton, MRPC, Executive Director

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	Development Trends within the Route 12 Corridor	2
A.	Sterling Route 12 Development Potential Analysis.....	2
B.	Business, Market Analysis & Inventory of Current Operating Businesses	9
C.	Utilities – Water, Sewer, and High Speed Internet	12
D.	Land Use and Business Inventory	12
III.	Recommendations.....	15
A.	Overview	15
B.	Zoning Options for the Route 12 Corridor.....	17
C.	Other Economic Development-Related Zoning Recommendations	21
D.	General Recommendations for Expanding Economic Development Opportunities within Route 12 Corridor	22
IV.	Conclusion	24
	Attachments	25

I. Introduction

In February 2015, the Town of Sterling submitted a request for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) service from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC). MRPC awarded DLTA to the Town of Sterling on February 18, 2015 to draft an Economic Development & Zoning Analysis for the Route 12 Corridor with assistance from the Town of Sterling Economic Development Committee. The DLTA program provides technical assistance at no cost to the Town of Sterling. The study was funded through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The DLTA program was established by Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2006, which enables staff of Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) such as MRPC to provide technical assistance to communities for projects meeting certain criteria determined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MRPC is a unit of regional government created under the General Laws (MGL Chapter 40B, Sections 1-8). Regional planning commissions (agencies) provide planning advisory services and technical assistance to its 22 member communities.

The scope of this DLTA project was to: **Review and analyze the zoning along an area of Route 12 and develop recommendations for any changes to existing zoning.**

The four tasks to meet this objective were:

- Task #1 Survey existing zoning in the study area to determine areas where the zoning does not reflect current or proposed uses including non-conforming uses.
- Task #2 Conduct a build-out scenario utilizing GIS that identifies buildable lands, environmental constraints, and developed lands by zoning district.
- Task #3 Identify opportunities for renovation/re-use of existing properties and, where necessary, indicate changes in zoning that might be required.
- Task #4 Provide recommendations based upon findings and offer example bylaws/ordinances from other communities throughout the region and state.

This Economic Development & Zoning Analysis consists of a development potential analysis where MRPC GIS staff took a look at and mapped the environmental and development characteristics of all zoning districts within the corridor including undevelopable acres with absolute and partial development constraints, developed acres, and developable acres. Moreover, an inventory and analysis of economic data, market data, and existing utilities were comprised to see the current trends and issues in regards to promoting economic development opportunities within the Route 12 Corridor. The compiling of such analysis has painted such a picture where potential zoning revisions, possible policy changes and other planning efforts may be pursued to promote economic development while retaining community character.

While compiling this analysis, the Economic Development Committee was an active participant providing feedback and guidance in forming the study area. The

Committee's knowledge of the community was vital in the creation of the business inventory and extremely helpful in producing a complete report.

II. Development Trends within the Route 12 Corridor

A. Sterling Route 12 Development Potential Analysis

The Town of Sterling Route 12 Corridor is zoned for the following uses: Commercial, Light Industrial, Neighborhood Residential, Rural Residential & Farming, and Town Center District respectively. As future development may occur within these given zoning districts it is important to understand the impacts associated with economic development. In order to plan accordingly it is important to ask the following questions: Where will future development occur along the Route 12 Corridor? And what is the best type of development for those zoning districts involved?

One way to address these types of questions is to perform a "Development Potential Analysis". A development potential analysis is a tool that determines what the maximum development would be if all available land was utilized to its full potential. The analysis depends on current zoning regulations and factors and any environmental limitations that would hinder development on the site(s). The results do not provide a timeframe estimating when development would occur; however, the results attempt to quantify the maximum amount of development that could occur if there were no changes to the outcome.

The results are useful to decision makers who are faced with the challenges of future economic development that may take place over time. It provides a rough picture or estimate of what already exists and which areas have potential for both new growth and/or redevelopment.

A development potential analysis involves two phases: mapping followed by quantifying development. In order to reach accurate results, it is crucial to have the necessary geographical data as well as skillful GIS staff to perform the initial phase of the analysis. Current Level 3 parcel data for the Town of Sterling was provided by MassGIS as well as current Zoning coverage. Additionally, environmental and land use data was provided by the state GIS (Geographic Information Systems) agency, MassGIS.

Environmental data is a key component to the development potential analysis. Certain environmental elements are considered inappropriate for development and can be either defined as "Absolute Constraints" or "Partial Constraints" for the purposes of determining development potential. Absolute constraints are defined as water (coded by Land Use data), 100 Foot DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) RPA (River Protection Act) Buffers, Slopes >26%, and Permanently Protected Open Space. Partial Constraints are defined as FEMA Flood Zones 100 and 500 year as well as DEP Wetlands. Absolute constraints are completely unsuitable for development, while partial constraints could be developed if pursued in an appropriate manner.

Once the constraints have been determined and defined, the next step is to identify lands that have already been developed. Based on MassGIS Land Use data the categories that are included in “Developed Lands” are participation, spectator, and water recreation, residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, waste disposal, power lines, cemeteries, and urban public/institutional.

The final category that is determined is “Future Developable Lands”. In order to determine what has potential for development GIS tools are utilized and involve combining all of the constraints and currently developed lands. The result produced is a new coverage indicating lands that are developable based on areas that do not have any development or constraint.

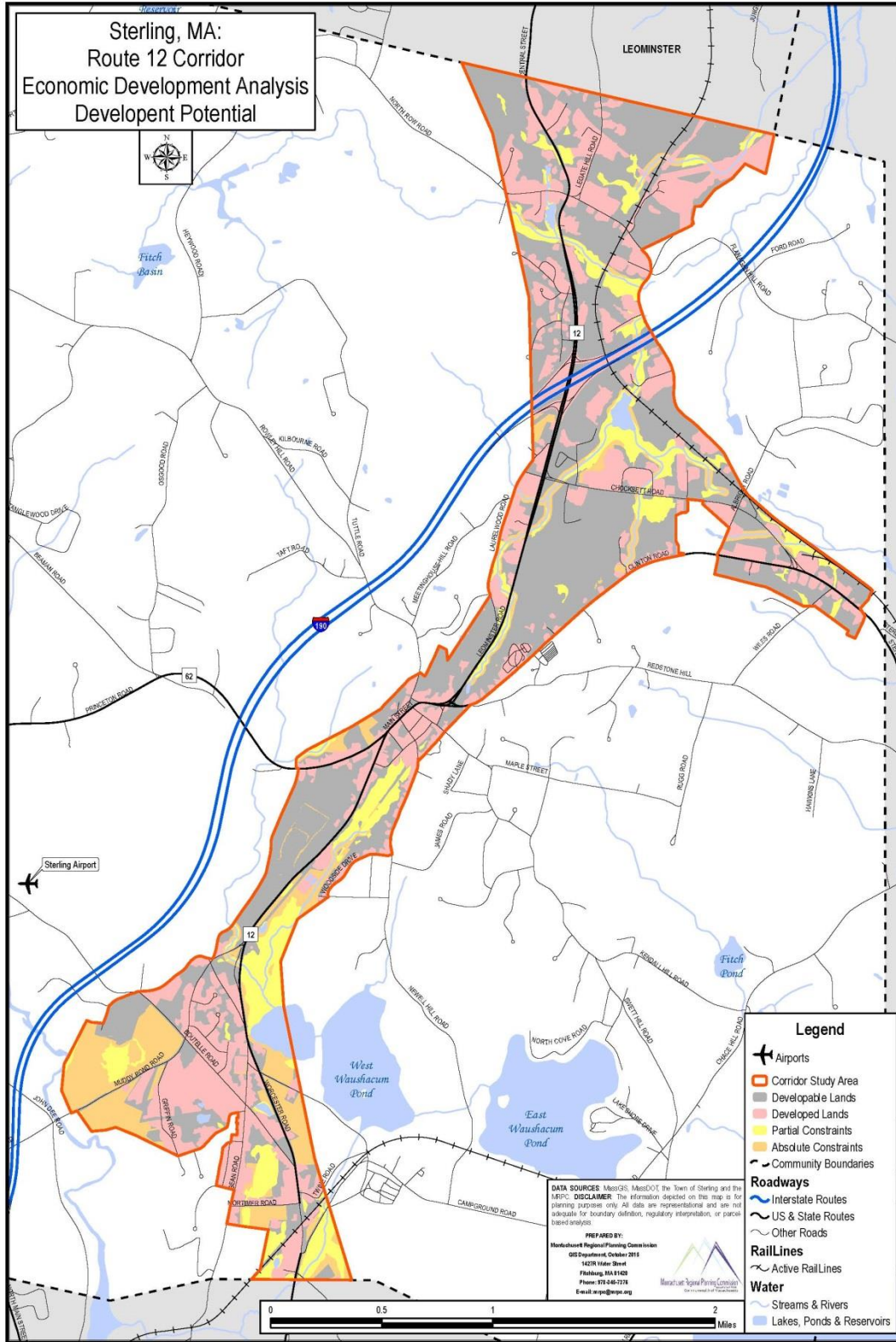
The Economic Development Analysis Potential map (Map 1) that follows depicts all of these data categories (Absolute Constraints, Partial Constraints, Developed Lands, and Future Developable Lands) and provides information for local officials to identify the location of future developable lands. Table 1 that follows includes the acreage of those constraints within the Route 12 Corridor.

Map 2 that follows depicts the Environmental Development Analysis by type of environmental constraints.

Map 3 and Table 2 reflect the Zoning constraints of the Route 12 Corridor. GIS tools offer additional useful information by calculating the acreage for each category (Absolute Constraints, Partial Constraints, Developed Lands, and Future Developable Lands) by zoning district.

The data provided by the GIS phase of the development potential analysis is then given to the planner who further investigates the future developable lands within the given zoning districts by providing recommendations.

MAP 1



MAP 2

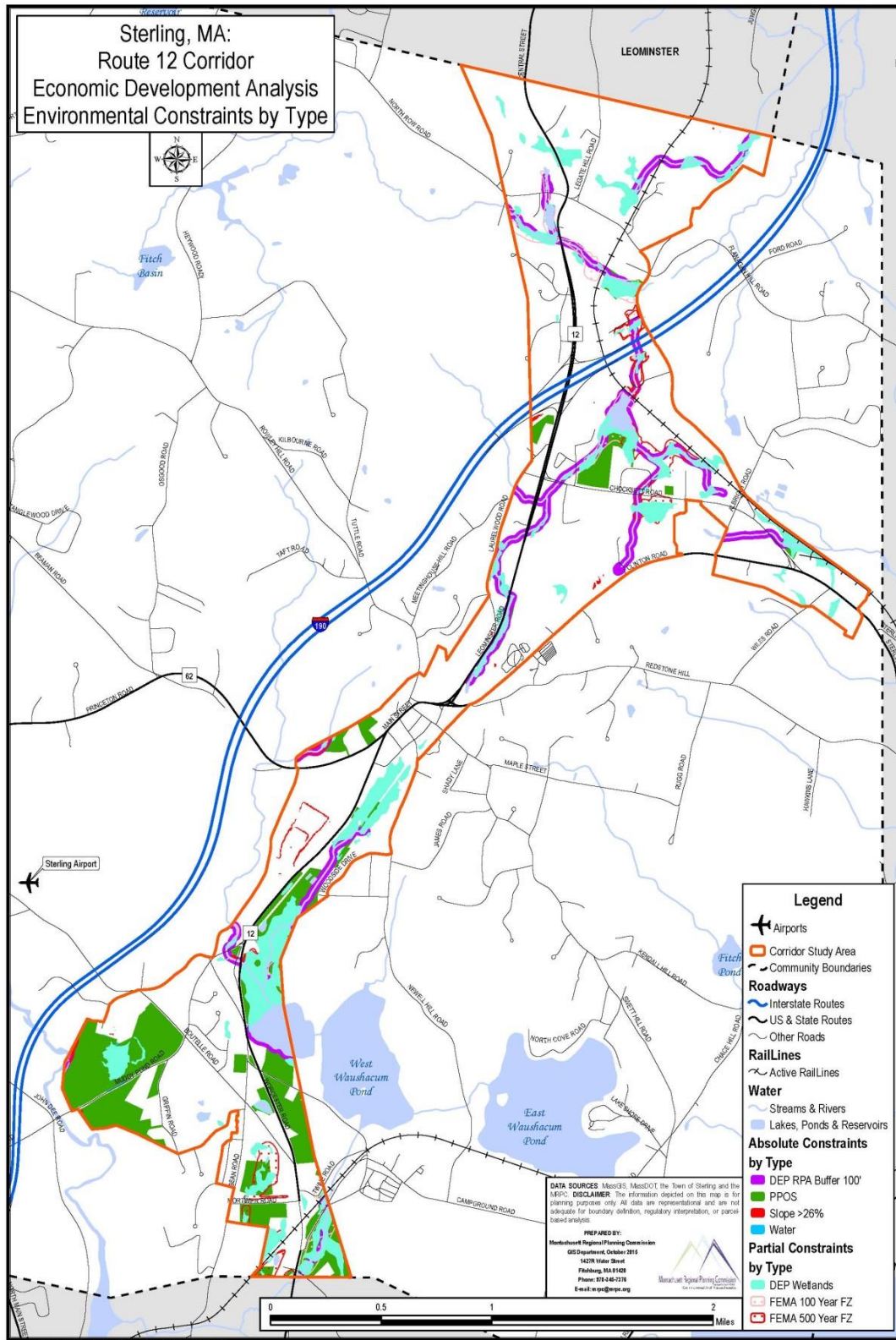


Table 1 Sterling Route 12 Development Potential
--

Absolute Constraints		
Type	Square Meters	Acres
DEP RPA Buffers 100	822070.52	203.14
PPOS	1377444.35	340.37
Slope >26%	18839.40	4.66
Water	165213.59	40.83

Partial Constraints		
Type	Square Meters	Acres
DEP Wetlands	918255.98	226.91
FEMA 100 Year FZ	456969.61	112.92
FEMA 500 Year FZ	246379.04	60.88

Developed Lands		
	Square Meters	Acres
Total	3081225.60	761.38

Developable Lands (without Partial Constraints)		
	Square Meters	Acres
Total	4088846.54	1010.37

Developable Lands (with Partial Constraints)		
	Square Meters	Acres
Total	5356172.36	1323.53

MAP 3

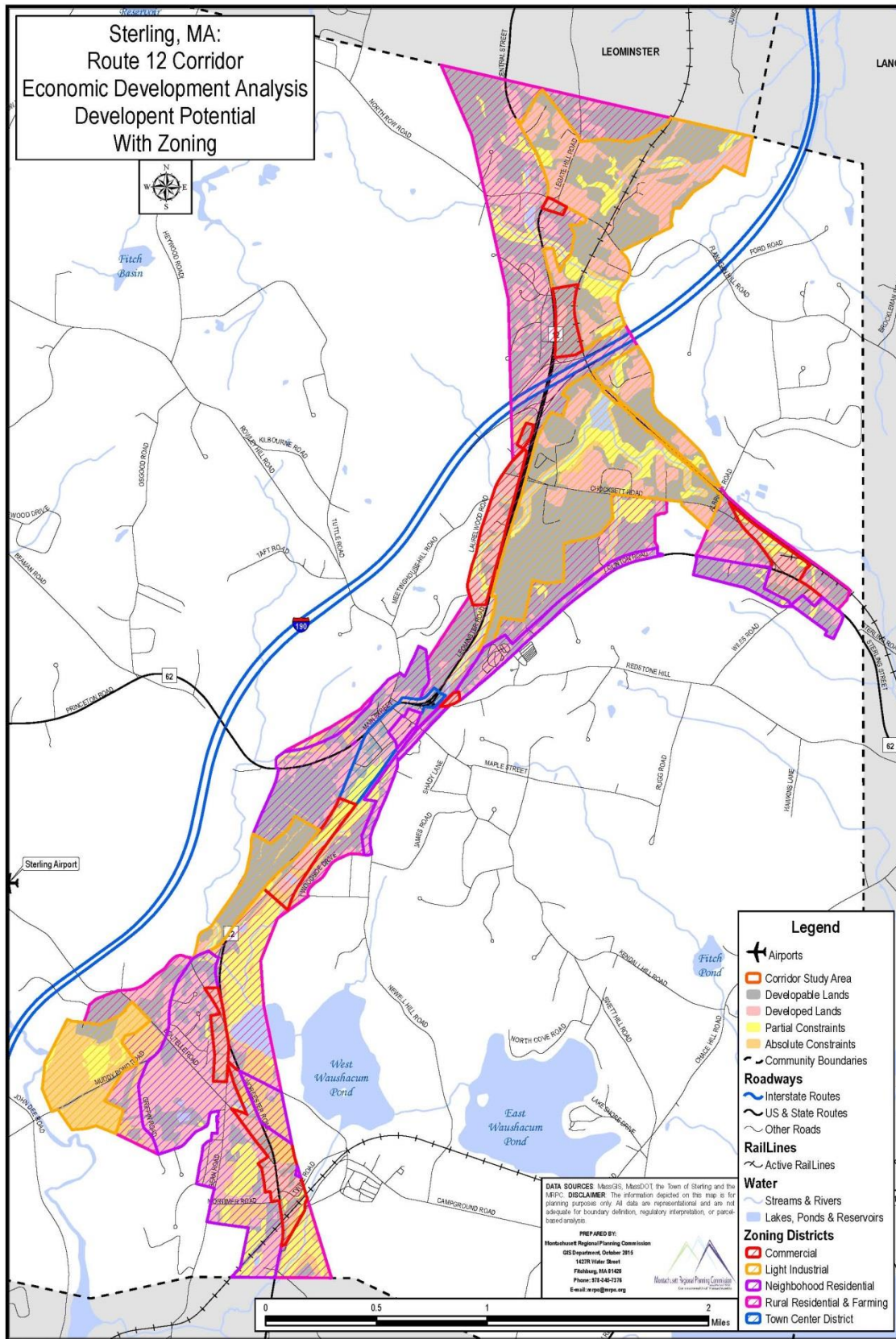


Table 2
Sterling Route 12 Development Potential by Zoning District

Absolute Constraints		
Zone Code	Square Meters	Acres
Commercial	227462.49	56.21
Light Industrial	949722.22	234.68
Neighborhood Residential	229571.06	56.73
Rural Residential Farming	976774.49	241.37

Partial Constraints		
Zone Code	Square Meters	Acres
Commercial	95601.41	23.62
Light Industrial	527173.29	130.27
Neighborhood Residential	205207.56	50.71
Rural Residential Farming	761205.85	188.10
Town Center District	32302.74	7.98

Developed Lands		
Zone Code	Square Meters	Acres
Commercial	371634.82	91.83
Light Industrial	836102.72	206.60
Neighborhood Residential	930055.67	229.82
Rural Residential Farming	849761.29	209.98
Town Center District	96910.66	23.95

Developable Lands (without Partial Constraints)		
Zone Code	Square Meters	Acres
Commercial	227640.20	56.25
Light Industrial	1579069.69	390.20
Neighborhood Residential	723540.02	178.79
Rural Residential Farming	1532527.33	378.69
Town Center District	33796.55	8.35

Developable Lands (with Partial Constraints)		
Zone Code	Square Meters	Acres
Commercial	321831.03	79.53
Light Industrial	1996247.38	493.3
Neighborhood Residential	890253.43	220
Rural Residential Farming	2089354.69	516.3
Town Center District	66099.29	16.33

1. Development Potential Analysis Findings

Reviewing the results of the Development Potential Analysis, it can be clearly seen that there is a large amount of land that is underutilized for economic development within the Route 12 Corridor. Currently, the amount of developable land available within the corridor without zoning constraints equals 1,010.37 acres. Add the zoning constraint where economic development is allowed only in the Commercial, Light Industrial, and Village Districts only 454.80 acres are available for development. Again, we see the trend with lands designated developable land with partial constraints without zoning having 1,323.53 acres available for development; add the zoning constraints and only 589.16 acres are for economic development purposes. Overall, due to the zoning constraints on the remaining developable and developable lands with partial constraints, there is 1,289.94 acres of land that is prohibited from economic development located within the Route 12 Corridor. Options for possible solutions to relieve some of these zoning restrictions will be explored further in the recommendations of this report.

B. Business, Market Analysis & Inventory of Current Operating Businesses

Business/Market Analysis

To assess market potential as an aspect of economic development for the Town of Sterling, an analysis was conducted using the ESRI Business Analysis Online (ESRI - BAO) analytic tool. This tool was developed to provide a “snapshot” of the local economy and the retail market supply and demand within a given study area. Among the information it provides is an analysis of disposable income, existing businesses by Standard Industrial Code (SIC) and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), consumer spending to show market demand or retail potential, and an examination of business revenues or retail sales to show market supply. This section presents the results of the Business Analyst Online assessment.

The business summary indicated that in the year 2015, the Route 12 Corridor had a total of 166 businesses, which employed 1,604 employees. The majority numbers of businesses located within the Route 12 Corridor were of Industrial and Services categories. Based on classification by Standard Industrial Code (SIC), 30.7% of these businesses were in Industrial uses; including Agricultural & Mining, Construction and Manufacturing. The category Services by Standard Industrial Code (SIC) was at 28.3%. Based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), 21.1% of these businesses were Industrial uses including Construction and Manufacturing. The number of individuals employed in the Route 12 Corridor by Standard Industrial Code (SIC), was highest in the category of Manufacturing which employed 528 individuals at 32.7% with the category of Services following in that 359 individuals are employed at 22.4%. The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) also indicated Manufacturing as the highest employer in Corridor with the number of individuals employed being 557 at 34.7%.



Business Summary

Sterling Rt 12 Corridor Study Area
Area: 3.67 square miles

Prepared by MRPC
Latitude: 42.44278540
Longitude: -71.7552521

Data for all businesses in area

Total Businesses:	166
Total Employees:	1,604
Total Residential Population:	1,136
Employee/Residential Population Ratio:	1.41:1

by SIC Codes

Agriculture & Mining	14	8.4%	97	6.0%
Construction	21	12.7%	94	5.9%
Manufacturing	10	6.0%	528	32.9%
Transportation	6	3.6%	34	2.1%
Communication	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Utility	3	1.8%	13	0.8%
Wholesale Trade	13	7.8%	138	8.6%

Retail Trade Summary

Home Improvement	20	12.0%	168	10.5%
General Merchandise Stores	2	1.2%	11	0.7%
Food Stores	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Auto Dealers, Gas Stations, Auto Aftermarket	2	1.2%	14	0.9%
Apparel & Accessory Stores	2	1.2%	9	0.6%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	1	0.6%	1	0.1%
Eating & Drinking Places	3	1.8%	41	2.6%
Miscellaneous Retail	5	3.0%	72	4.5%
	4	2.4%	19	1.2%

Finance, Insurance, Real Estate Summary

Banks, Savings & Lending Institutions	19	11.4%	77	4.8%
Securities Brokers	7	4.2%	15	0.9%
Insurance Carriers & Agents	1	0.6%	2	0.1%
Real Estate, Holding, Other Investment Offices	2	1.2%	6	0.4%
	10	6.0%	54	3.4%

Services Summary

Hotels & Lodging	47	28.3%	359	22.4%
Automotive Services	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Motion Pictures & Amusements	7	4.2%	19	1.2%
Health Services	4	2.4%	33	2.1%
Legal Services	6	3.6%	131	8.2%
Education Institutions & Libraries	1	0.6%	2	0.1%
Other Services	2	1.2%	61	3.8%
	26	15.7%	112	7.0%

Government

	8	4.8%	65	4.1%
--	---	------	----	------

Unclassified Establishments

	7	4.2%	31	1.9%
--	---	------	----	------

Totals

	166	100.0%	1,604	100.0%
--	-----	--------	-------	--------

Source: Copyright 2015 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved. Eri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2015.

November 13, 2015

©2015 Eri

Page 1 of 2



Business Summary

Sterling Rt 12 Corridor Study Area
Area: 3.67 square miles

Prepared by MRPC
Latitude: 42.44278540
Longitude: -71.7552521

by NAICS Codes	Businesses		Employees	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	4	2.4%	37	2.3%
Mining	0	0.0%	4	0.2%
Utilities	1	0.6%	6	0.4%
Construction	21	12.7%	95	5.9%
Manufacturing	10	6.0%	557	34.7%
Wholesale Trade	13	7.8%	136	8.5%
Retail Trade	14	8.4%	62	3.9%
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	2	1.2%	8	0.5%
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Electronics & Appliance Stores	2	1.2%	12	0.7%
Bldg Material & Garden Equipment & Supplies Dealers	2	1.2%	11	0.7%
Food & Beverage Stores	2	1.2%	8	0.5%
Health & Personal Care Stores	0	0.0%	3	0.2%
Gasoline Stations	1	0.6%	1	0.1%
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	1	0.6%	1	0.1%
Sport Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
General Merchandise Stores	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	3	1.8%	5	0.3%
Nonstore Retailers	1	0.6%	10	0.6%
Transportation & Warehousing	5	3.0%	31	1.9%
Information	2	1.2%	12	0.7%
Finance & Insurance	9	5.4%	23	1.4%
Central Bank/Credit Intermediation & Related Activities	7	4.2%	15	0.9%
Securities, Commodity Contracts & Other Financial	1	0.6%	2	0.1%
Insurance Carriers & Related Activities; Funds, Trusts &	2	1.2%	6	0.4%
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	8	4.8%	45	2.8%
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	8	4.8%	34	2.1%
Legal Services	1	0.6%	2	0.1%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation	13	7.8%	71	4.4%
Educational Services	3	1.8%	61	3.8%
Health Care & Social Assistance	9	5.4%	147	9.2%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	2	1.2%	23	1.4%
Accommodation & Food Services	5	3.0%	77	4.8%
Accommodation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Food Services & Drinking Places	5	3.0%	77	4.8%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	23	13.9%	83	5.2%
Automotive Repair & Maintenance	7	4.2%	16	1.0%
Public Administration	8	4.8%	65	4.1%
Unclassified Establishments	7	4.2%	33	2.1%
Total	166	100.0%	1,604	100.0%

Source: Copyright 2015 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved. Eri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2015.

November 13, 2015

©2015 Eri

Page 2 of 2

Esri-BAO was also used to develop a Retail Market Place Profile for the Route 12 Corridor in Sterling. The database used for this analysis includes the latest market statistics for Retail Trade and Food Services and Drinking Places (the retail market), utilizing data from the 2007 Census of Retail Trade and Consumer Expenditure Surveys (2011 and 2012) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retail sales data also incorporates 2014 business data from Dunn & Bradstreet. Consumer spending data is drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual Consumer Expenditure Surveys and the Census of Retail Trade which is then adjusted by Esri, based on demographic profiles specific to the given study area. This provides for improved differentiation of spending, particularly in smaller markets where distinctions can be difficult to measure and for big-ticket items where consumer preferences are more pronounced.

The database reflects geographic inventories and boundary definitions such as block groups, tracts, and counties based on 2010 Census geography, enabling the analysis to be applied at a finer level than the overall community. In this case, the analysis was conducted for the entire Town of Sterling. Dollar estimates of supply and demand are presented in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) which defines 27 industry groups in the Retail Trade sector as well as four industry groups within the Food Services and Drinking Places subsector. (Complete results of the Market Analysis are in located in Attachment A.)

The results of the retail market analysis of the entire Route 12 Corridor within the Town of Sterling includes a summary of current businesses by SIC and NAICS classification, disposable income of population within the community, and the Retail MarketPlace Profile. The first set of rows in the MarketPlace Profile indicates total demand and supply by major industry categories (retail, food and drink, and retail and food and drink combined). Considering all industries combined, there is a total demand of \$21.6 million for retail and food and drink, but only \$12.6 million in goods supplied by the 15 retail businesses represented in the market. This means that there is "leakage" of approximately \$9 million spent by Sterling consumers for goods purchased outside of the Route 12 Corridor. Looking at specific industries, the categories of Building Material and Supply Dealer, Florist, Used Merchandise, Full-Service Restaurants is shown as being a surplus within the Corridor.

In terms of total magnitude, the categories showing the greatest leakage in dollar value are Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers, Automobile Dealers, Food & Beverage Stores/Grocery Stores, Auto Part -Accessories & Tire Shops, Furniture Stores, Home Furnishing Stores, Lawn & Garden Equip - Supply Stores, Specialty Food Stores, Beer Wine & Liquor Stores, Gasoline Stores, Shoe Stores, Jeweler Stores, General Merchandise Stores, Office Supply Store, Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses, and Vending Machine Operators, Special Food Services, and Drinking (alcohol) establishments have a 100 percent "leakage" factor, meaning these businesses are completely absent in within the Corridor.

Taking this analysis a step further, a driving time of 5, 10 and 15 minutes beyond the Route 12 Corridor was applied to narrow down specific business leakage. The results

indicate that the 5 minute radial driving time beyond the Route 12 Corridor has the same leakage factor that is reflected in the corridor. For the 10 minute radial driving time beyond the Route 12 Corridor the results leakage were Other Motor Vehicle Dealers, Lawn & Garden Equip – Supply Stores, , and Vending Machine Operators, Special Food Services have a 100 percent “leakage” factor. The 15 minute radial driving time beyond the Route 12 Corridor had no categories where there was 100% “leakage”; therefore market needs would be met. These industry categories could represent opportunities for development and investment within the Study Area, taking into account the type and magnitude of industry under consideration and the location of competitive businesses within proximity to the Route 12 Corridor.

C. Utilities – Water, Sewer, and High Speed Internet

Utilities such as high speed internet and water and services can be a deal breaker for drawing business development to an area. If a community is serious about growing industry and business in their community having these assets are essential. Below is an overview of the Town of Sterling’s existing utilities:

- High Speed Internet is available throughout the Town per services through Comcast (Cable) and Verizon (DSL.)
- There are no public sewer services in the Town.
- There is public water service through most of the Town including the Route 12 Corridor. During a phone interview with the Assistant Water Department Superintendent, Paul Lyons, he indicated that there would be a potential problem for expanding economic development opportunities. The current capacity for water withdrawal as regulated by the MA DEP from Town wells has been met. And further water withdrawal would be prohibited for potential new development. This issue could be a limiting factor for any new industry growth within the Town. The Town could explore investigating this issue more by performing a Water Study and adopting water conservation regulations.

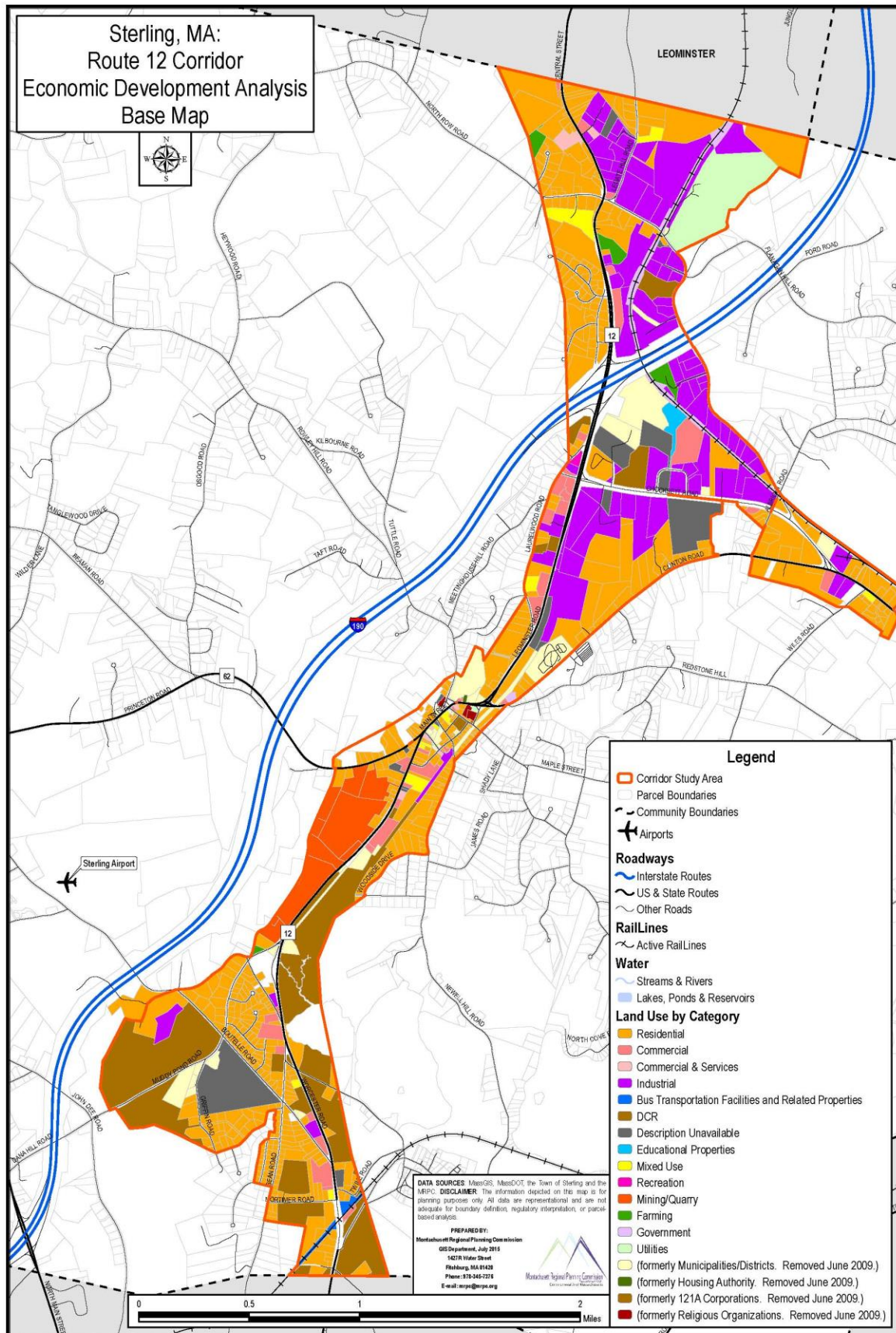
D. Land Use and Business Inventory

In the Route 12 Corridor, the current land uses were identified in a compiled map using the most recent Assessor’s data from the Town of Sterling from the year 2011. The Route 12 Corridor designation for this analysis was formed by the Sterling Economic Development Committee, with consideration as to where existing business and industry currently exist along the corridor. (Land Use Map (Map 4) located below and in Attachment B .)

The Land Use Map and the current Assessor’s data were used in forming a Business Inventory for the Route 12 Corridor. The Business Inventory was comprised of a

windshield analysis which was made virtually through online maps, satellite images and cross-referencing with the current zoning districts and land use categories found within the corridor. In addition to the imagery and inventory, the establishments were also related to the information found in the assessor's database for their respective legal addresses. Overall, the findings totaled 89 establishments, which were checked for zoning/land use compliance. Over a third of these establishments were non-compliant. (Business Inventory located in Attachment C.)

MAP 4 – Route 12 Corridor Land Use Map



III. Recommendations

A. Overview

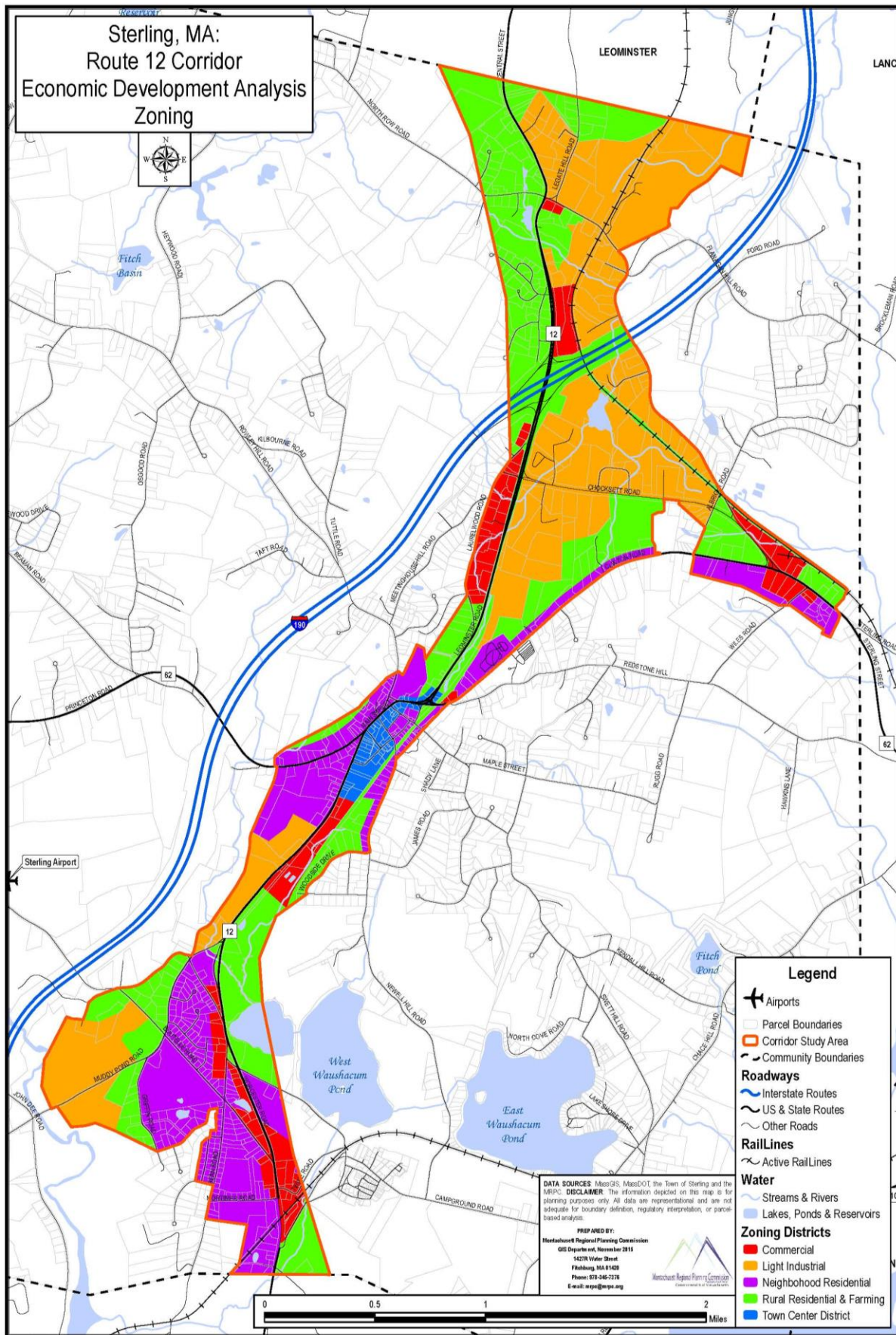
The Route 12 Corridor in Sterling offers three distinct areas with differing characteristics for development. The northern portion of Route 12 intersects with Interstate 190. This intersection could potentially propel large commercial and industrial development and redevelopment opportunities. A large portion of the land located in the north portion has been zoned industrial, while a smaller portion has been zoned commercial, and the remaining as residential.

Somewhat in the middle of the Corridor is the Town Center District, which is compact, and regulated to one side of Route 12. The district is surrounded on three sides by the Neighborhood Residential District which prohibits most commercial uses. The southern portion of the district abuts the Commercial District.

The Southern portion of the corridor is comprised of four separate zoning districts of Rural Residence (RR), Neighborhood Residence (NR), Commercial (C) and Light Industrial (LI). The commercial district is located along Route 12 although inconsistently with residential sprinkled in with residential. Light Industrial is also located along the route with another portion being located just beyond Route 12.

In all three areas located in the Route 12 Corridor, inconsistent zoning along the corridor is persistent, with the commercial districts being limited in its use to propel development opportunities. (Route 12 Corridor Zoning Map (Map 5) located below and in Attachment B.) Looking to the market analysis data, industrial uses have been well established in the northern portion of the corridor. Zoning is needed for more commercial uses to provide vital services for commuters from Route 190 and employees within Sterling.

MAP 5 – Route 12 Corridor Zoning Map



B. Zoning Options for the Route 12 Corridor

Two broad approaches are identified for achieving the goal of expanding economic development opportunities within the Route 12 Corridor: 1) re-zone land in the Corridor for new economic development that would provide jobs, add to the tax base, and allow for controlled access to Route 12 in order to minimize traffic impacts; and 2) to enact an overlay district that would leave underlying zoning in place but impose design standards to achieve high quality development. The key components of each approach and their application is outlined below. (Model Bylaws have been included in Attachment D.)

A. Re-Zone Land in the Corridor currently zoned residential to Commercial or Light Industrial, or Town Center District to expand economic development. Incorporate appropriate design standards to minimize impacts on adjacent property and preserve road capacity.

B. Create a Two New Overlay Districts with Design Standards (See Appendix B for map of potential overlays.)

1. Northern Route 12 -Enterprise Overlay (Excluding Town Center District)

1. The district could be drawn to overlay existing commercial, residential and industrial districts in the Corridor. These include Rural Residence (RR), Commercial (C) and Light Industrial (LI) districts in Sterling. The underlying use regulations would remain in play.

2. Design standards would help to achieve high quality development.

3. The concept offers protections to homeowners in the Corridor by insuring new development will achieve high standards of design.

5. High quality development should result in greater tax revenue over time due to higher re-sale value of properties.

6. Greater intensity of development is possible by reducing impacts through design guidelines. The overlay district could promote high intensity development in locations where water has excess capacity, and roadway improvements will accommodate higher levels of traffic. For example, greater impervious coverage may be possible for projects that provide public benefits, such as public parks, open space, or sewer and water main extensions.

7. Local review processes would remain in place.

8. Some types of design standards such a bylaw might include are:

Water Quality

- Allow Low Impact Development (LID) as an alternative to catch basin-manhole systems to recharge more rainfall on-site and purify runoff to maintain water quality.

Open Space

- Large buffers and/or dense landscaping can protect residential properties from intrusive impacts.
- Set aside unique resources or habitats of endangered species in undisturbed open space.
- Provide links to the regional bikeway or existing trails.
- Offer a density bonus for off-site preservation of open space, i.e. consider a transfer of development rights program.

Landscaping

- Require tree plantings along Rt. 12 and other road frontages to provide visual relief from buildings and parking lots.
- Establish internal pedestrian paths and link to adjacent developments to promote walking.
- Use natural materials to screen utilities and waste areas.
- Require a landscaping plan by a registered landscape architect for larger developments.

Access Standards

- Establish regional identity at entrances through the use of landscaping, fencing, signage, etc. relying on native materials and local motifs.
- Encourage divided access ways and acceleration/deceleration lanes to enable vehicles to enter and exit developments safely and enter traffic flow smoothly.
- Minimize curb cuts onto Rt. 12 and promote shared access among adjoining lots through the use of common driveways, cul-de-sacs, loop roads, and cross lot connections.
- Incorporate transit friendly design features in shopping plazas and high employment locations.

Parking Standards

- Minimize the visual impact of parking lots from the roadway, e.g. use landscaped buffer for lots in the front yard or encourage placing parking lots behind buildings.
- Use interior landscaping to soften the impact of large number of vehicles, place landscaping around the periphery of lots, and plant deciduous trees for shade.
- Give parking space preference to car-pool vehicles for large employers.
- Allow shared parking to reduce the extent of impervious surfaces when adjacent uses have different hours of peak use.

View Protection

- Require analysis of visual impact of a project on the Corridor, and seek to retain scenic vistas from the highway.
- Within developments, leave open vistas to important features such as lakes, farms, ridges, historic sites, etc.
- Protect ridgelines by siting structures off the peak of a ridge.

Lighting Standards

- Use decorative luminaires and require cut-offs to reduce glare on adjacent properties.

- Require underground wiring.
- Limit the height of light poles.

Building Layout

- Design for internal compact pattern to promote shared parking facilities and pedestrian environment.
- Except where an existing pattern has been established, require deep setbacks from the highway to preserve visual character.
- Create strong edge effect by use of transition areas between developments of different character; separate uses with open space.

Architectural Standards

- Require elevations of proposed buildings from a professional architect.
- Structures should contain pitched roofs, breaks in roofs and wall lines, and variation in detail to provide visual interest and avoid monotony.
- Use local materials, e.g. clapboard, brick, or stone.
- Buildings should try to match traditional building styles in the area.
- Require national franchise chains to substitute corporate designs with custom designs that fit the unique characteristics of each site.
- Prohibit continuous length of flat, blank walls adjacent to streets, pedestrian pathways, and other public spaces.
- New buildings should be Energy Star rated. Consider using sustainable building practices such as the LEED rating system.
- Require screening of rooftop mechanical equipment.

Infrastructure Availability

- Vary intensity of development with availability of water and/or sewer service.
- Offer incentives for developer contributions to service extensions.

2. Southern Route 12 - Neighborhood Business Overlay (Excluding Town Center District)

1. The district could be drawn to overlay existing commercial, residential and industrial districts in the Corridor. These include Rural Residence (RR), Neighborhood Residential (NR), Commercial (C) and Light Industrial (LI) districts in Sterling. The underlying use regulations would remain in play. This overlay would promote small commercial development along Route 12
2. Design standards would help to achieve high quality development.
3. The concept offers protections to homeowners in the Corridor by insuring new development will achieve high standards of design.
5. High quality development should result in greater tax revenue over time due to higher re-sale value of properties.
7. Local review processes would remain in place.
8. Some types of design standards such a bylaw might include are:

Water Quality/Conservation

- Allow Low Impact Development (LID) as an alternative to catch basin-manhole systems to recharge more rainfall on-site and purify runoff to maintain water quality.
- Inclusion of Water Conservation Planning for the Site and to help set thresholds for water saving measures

Open Space

- Large buffers and/or dense landscaping can protect residential properties from intrusive impacts.
- Set aside unique resources or habitats of endangered species in undisturbed open space.

Landscaping

- Require tree plantings along Rt. 12 and other road frontages to provide visual relief from buildings and parking lots.
- Use natural materials to screen utilities and waste areas.

Access Standards

- Establish regional identity at entrances through the use of landscaping, fencing, signage, etc. relying on native materials and local motifs.
- Minimize curb cuts onto Rt. 12 and promote shared access among adjoining lots through the use of common driveways, cul-de-sacs, loop roads, and cross lot connections.

Parking Standards

- Minimize the visual impact of parking lots from the roadway, e.g. use landscaped buffer for lots in the front yard or encourage placing parking lots behind buildings.
- Allow shared parking to reduce the extent of impervious surfaces when adjacent uses have different hours of peak use.

View Protection

- Require analysis of visual impact of a project on the Corridor, and seek to retain scenic vistas from the highway.
- Within developments, leave open vistas to important features such as lakes, farms, ridges, historic sites, etc.
- Protect ridgelines by siting structures off the peak of a ridge.

Lighting Standards

- Use decorative luminaires and require cut-offs to reduce glare on adjacent properties.

Building Layout

- Design for internal compact pattern to promote shared parking facilities and pedestrian environment.
- Create strong edge effect by use of transition areas between developments of different character; separate uses with open space.

Architectural Standards

- Require elevations of proposed buildings from a professional architect.
- Structures should contain pitched roofs, breaks in roofs and wall lines, and variation in detail to provide visual interest and avoid monotony.
- Use local materials, e.g. clapboard, brick, or stone.

- Buildings should try to match traditional building styles in the area.
- Require national franchise chains to substitute corporate designs with custom designs that fit the unique characteristics of each site.
- Prohibit continuous length of flat, blank walls adjacent to streets, pedestrian pathways, and other public spaces.
- New buildings should be Energy Star rated. Consider using sustainable building practices such as the LEED rating system.
- Require screening of rooftop mechanical equipment.

Infrastructure Availability

- Vary intensity of development with availability of water and/or sewer service.

C. Other Economic Development-Related Zoning Recommendations

1. The Town Center District

The Town Center District has been established but can be improved upon. Currently, mixed use is prohibited; there is forty-foot front set back that does not adhere to the current built environment and there are no design guidelines for commercial development. Further, the district is small and regulated to one side of the street.

Recommendation: Revise the current bylaw for a mixed-use Center Village Zoning District to promote activity and diversity to foster an active, mixed-use village center. Also, expand the current district across the street for a more cohesive village environment.

There are ways to encourage economic development that are consistent with village character. If carefully designed, this type of Zoning District and associated provision within the Zoning

Bylaw could preserve the existing mixed uses while encouraging any new construction to be compatible with the setbacks and scale of existing structures. Moreover, a village district can help foster well-planned, mixed use, compact developments in keeping with the character of a traditional New England village and to help create a place with a unique and positive local identity. It can provide opportunities for development and expansion of the town's economic diversity and vitality. This type of zoning bylaw would also provide additional opportunity for people to shop, work, and utilize services in the vicinity of their residences; promote a pedestrian-friendly environment; and encourage the growth of the local economy and jobs, including development of flexible space for small and emerging businesses.

2. Streamline Permitting

Currently, the zoning bylaw is set up in such a way that in a lot of circumstances dual permits of both a Special Permit and Site Plan Review are required. The Special Permit

and Site Plan Review process can serve the same purpose for overseeing and regulating a use. The difference between the Site Plan Review and Special Permit process is that a Site Plan Review cannot be denied, the use can only be conditioned and is locally regulated; while in the Special Permit process, the permit granting authority has the right to deny a permit if regulations and conditions are not met. And further, a Special Permit must also meet the standards set by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40A notwithstanding any additional regulations required by the locality.

Recommendation: To help streamline the permitting process it is recommended that per use either Site Plan Review or Special Permit separately is chosen as a mechanism to facilitate the permitting process thereby eliminating redundancy to the permitting process for the Town and the developer.

At this time the Sterling Economic Development Committee is working on a Streamline Permitting Guide for the Town Sterling.

Recommendation: Adopt the 43D Provision from the State into the Sterling Protective Bylaw, to initiate priority sites for development opportunities and further to use the Streamline Permitting Guide to facilitate such development.

D. General Recommendations for Expanding Economic Development Opportunities within Route 12 Corridor

Business Needs -The Economic Development Committee should continue outreach methods to the business community to ascertain business needs. Doing so could help focus efforts for potentially expanding services and growing specific industry to meet any needs that are identified.

Recommendation: The Economic Development Committee should survey local business to determine the needs of the local business community. (See Attachment E for example survey.)

Utilities – The Town should continue to expand water services to potential businesses. Earlier in this study it had been identified that the current water withdrawal threshold from the Town’s well’s, threshold set by the Massachusetts DEP, is at capacity according to the Sterling Water Department. With this threshold at capacity any new development proposed could be reduced significantly.

Recommendation: The Board of Selectmen, Economic Development Committee, and the Water Department should investigate this issue further by undertaking a Water Study to explore options to expand water service, especially to the areas for priority economic development.

Funding Opportunities

Zoning Revisions- Zoning Revisions recommended within this Analysis can potentially be funded through District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) as long as such revisions promote Housing and Economic Development opportunities for the Town.

Infrastructure Improvements - To pursue a Water Study for expanding water infrastructure DLTA funding can be leveraged for such a project. For construction funding some possible loan programs could be considered through MA DEP, and USDA.

If the Town identifies a site with a developer who is going to create jobs, funding for infrastructure projects could be obtained through the Economic Development Administration (EDA). Projects would have to be approved within the Montachusett Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS plan is available at this link here: http://www.mrpc.org/sites/montachusetttrpc/files/file/file/2014_ceds_final_eda_approved.pdf

Other grant programs that could be utilized for infrastructure improvements include MassWorks and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). For more information on the TIP program please contact Brad Harris, Transportation Director at the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC).

Business Site Redevelopment - If any sites in the future are identified for redevelopment purposes possible Brownfield's funding could be obtained for Site Assessments work and Site Planning if the funding is available. Currently, the MRPC has a Brownfield's grant from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to do Site Assessments within the Montachusett Region. Please contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director for more information on the program.

IV. Conclusion

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and the Sterling Economic Development Committee have been engaged with the Route 12 Economic Development & Zoning Analysis for nearly two years. The Sterling EDC and Town Administrator put forth and application for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) for the Town of Sterling. The DLTA program by the State Legislature provides Regional Planning Commissions with the resources to undertake vital planning activities such as this. This effort was meant to identify potential obstacles for economic development, to engage stakeholders and the public in the planning process, and further create a long-range plan for the Town of Sterling to implement.

Included as part of this Analysis was the outreach effort for the public held on June 2nd, 2016. Over 22 participants took part in the Public Forum which engaged them in a conversation within in a larger group and also within breakout sessions. A full report about the Public Forum can found in Appendix F. The forum itself was very positive with themes that include an openness for regulatory changes to promote a more business friendly Town, reducing the number of vacancy's and continuing to be engaged with future planning efforts to accomplish the communities goals.

On behalf of the MRPC, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the Sterling Economic Development Committee and to the Town Administrator Michael Szlosek for their invaluable contributions to this project.