

# *Downtown Ashland Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan*

Ashland,  
Massachusetts

---

Prepared For **Ashland Redevelopment Authority**  
101 Main Street  
Ashland, MA 01721

Prepared by **Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.**  
101 Walnut Street  
Watertown, MA 02471

November 2010

# Table of Contents

## Executive Summary

Introduction .....	S-1
Summary of the URDP .....	S-1
Urban Renewal Plan Area Characteristics and Deficiencies .....	S-1
Public Action as a Catalyst for Private Investment .....	S-1
Urban Renewal Plan Vision and Recommendations .....	S-1
Urban Renewal Plan Goals and Objectives .....	S-1
Implementation Plan .....	S-1
Commonwealth’s Sustainable Development Principles.....	S-2

## Section 1: Characteristics – Requisite Plans and Associated Information

List of URDP Maps .....	1-1
Existing Characteristics .....	2
Project Area Description (Figures A-1 and A-2).....	3
Project Area Topography (Figure A-3) .....	3
Existing Properties and Property Ownership (Figures C-1 – C-3) .....	4
Land Use and Zoning (Figures D-1 – D-3, E-1 and E-2) .....	4
Access and Transportation (Figures F-1 and F-2).....	4
Property Acquisition, Disposition and Building Demolition, Rehabilitation and Construction.....	5
Parcels to be Acquired (Figure G-1) .....	5
Lots to be Created for Disposition (Figure H-1) .....	6
Buildings to be Demolished (Figure I-1).....	8
Buildings to be Rehabilitated (Figure J-1).....	9
Buildings to be Constructed (Figure K-1).....	9
Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan and Public Improvements (Figures L-1 and L-2).....	10

## Section 2: Area Eligibility

Introduction .....	2-1
Background Information.....	1
Project Area Context.....	2
Local Area History.....	2
Project Area Today .....	4
Existing Property Ownership.....	4
Existing Structures .....	5
Existing Site Contamination .....	9

# Executive Summary

---

## Introduction

- The following items will be written once plan elements are finalized

---

## Summary of the URDP

---

### Urban Renewal Plan Area Characteristics and Deficiencies

- 

---

### Public Action as a Catalyst for Private Investment

- 

---

### Urban Renewal Plan Vision and Recommendations

- 

---

### Urban Renewal Plan Goals and Objectives

- 

---

## Implementation Plan

---

## Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles

Prior to beginning of the URP process, the Town of Ashland developed an overall vision plan for the downtown area and established goals and objectives for revitalizing it. Where appropriate, those vision plan elements were incorporated into the URP keeping in mind the Sustainable Development Principles of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> The Commonwealth's principles are listed below with an explanation of how they apply to the URP.



<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles (website link: [http://www.mass.gov/Agov3/docs/smart\\_growth/patrick-principles.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Agov3/docs/smart_growth/patrick-principles.pdf))



- **Concentrate Development and Mix Uses.** The URP best fits the principle of concentrate development because it promotes mixed-use development on key parcels in the town center that will re-use buildings, infrastructure and sites and protect their historical value where appropriate. Furthermore, the URP recommends remediation of a key area for commercial redevelopment.
- **Advance Equity.** The URP was developed as the result of previous community planning processes that identified key actions and created a vision for the downtown area, and then there was community consensus on the urban renewal project area and actions. The URP includes a combination of public and private actions.
- **Make Efficient Decisions.** The URP outlines a redevelopment strategy for the downtown area to provide developers with a clear understanding of what is expected in the project area. The URP includes Redeveloper Obligations outlining requirements for development proposals and job creation.
- **Protect Land and Ecosystems.** The URP addresses the principle of protecting land and ecosystems by increasing open space and recreational opportunities (Town Green and riverside park), and providing opportunities for the development of a multi-use path in downtown.
- **Use Natural Resources Wisely.** The Redeveloper Obligations promote green site development. The ARA will promote green design and execution, conserving energy and utilizing alternative energy for new and renovated buildings.
- **Expand Housing Opportunities.** The URP will expand housing opportunities, including affordable housing, in the 125 Front Street development project.
- **Provide Transportation Choice.** The URP promotes transit oriented development adjacent to the MBTA passenger rail station. In addition, improved pedestrian and bicycle circulation will be incorporated throughout the project area.
- **Increase Job and Business Opportunities.** The URP supports the expansion of businesses along Front Street and by the MBTA passenger rail station. The URP will create opportunities for new businesses and jobs to move into the downtown area, making use of existing infrastructure and housing options.
- **Promote Clean Energy** – The ARA will encourage new development and rehabilitation of existing structures to utilize energy efficiency and conservation strategies.
- **Plan Regionally.** The Urban Renewal Plan for downtown Ashland was developed taking into consideration regional context, access, market area and economics.

**Introduction ..... 1**

**Summary of the URDP ..... 1**

    Urban Renewal Plan Area Characteristics and Deficiencies ..... 1

    Public Action as a Catalyst for Private Investment ..... 1

    Urban Renewal Plan Vision and Recommendations ..... 1

    Urban Renewal Plan Goals and Objectives..... 1

    Implementation Plan ..... 1

**Commonwealth’s Sustainable Development Principles..... 1**

Existing Land Use .....	10
Existing Zoning.....	12
Other Land Use Regulations .....	15
Existing Utilities .....	17
Vehicular Access and Circulation.....	17
Existing Parking .....	19
Bicycle and Pedestrian Access and Circulation .....	19
Public Transportation .....	20
Existing and Planned Public Open Space.....	21
Market Context.....	23
An Economic Development Vision and Action Plan for the Town of Ashland .....	23
Ashland Economic Policy Plan.....	26
Retail Market Study: 125 Front Street, Ashland, MA .....	28
Area Eligibility Designation .....	30
Area Eligibility Findings.....	31
Underutilized Parcels .....	31
Potential for Site Contamination .....	32
Incompatible Land Uses .....	32
Inadequate Infrastructure.....	33
Diversity of Property Ownership, Irregular Lot Size/Shape and Older Building Stock.....	33
Buildings in Disrepair .....	33
Inadequate Vehicular Access .....	34
Need for Public Open Space Improvements.....	34
Poor Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation and Accommodation .....	35
URP Conformity to Local Comprehensive Plan.....	35
Needs Assessment.....	36

**Section 3: Project Objectives**

Introduction .....	3-1
Overall Redevelopment Goal and Strategy .....	2
Urban Renewal Plan Goals and Objectives.....	2
Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Project/Improvements.....	4
125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project.....	4
Police and Fire Redevelopment Project.....	5
Front Street Commercial Expansion Support .....	6
Gamewell Parcel Redevelopment Project .....	6
Megunko Road Commercial Park Project.....	7
Pleasant Street Riverfront Park Project .....	7
Proposed Transit-Oriented Development Project .....	7
Railroad Crossing Improvements.....	8
Open Space Network.....	8
Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property .....	9

Summer and Main Street Site .....	9
<b>Section 4: Financial Plan</b>	
Summary of Project Costs .....	4-1
Property Acquisition .....	1
Estimated Relocation Costs .....	2
Site Preparation Costs .....	2
Public Involvement Costs .....	2
Financing Approach .....	3
Potential Funding Sources .....	4
<b>Section 5: Requisite Municipal Approvals</b>	
Public Hearing .....	5-1
Municipal Approvals .....	1
Environmental Notification Form .....	1
Opinion of Counsel .....	1
<b>Section 6: Site Preparation</b>	
Introduction .....	6-1
Site and Building Assessment for Contamination Issues .....	1
Building Demolition .....	1
Building Relocation .....	2
<b>Section 7: Public Improvements</b>	
Introduction .....	7-1
Infrastructure .....	1
Site Assessment and Remediation .....	1
Transportation .....	2
Streetscapes .....	4
Public Open Space .....	4
<b>Section 8: Relocation</b>	
Introduction .....	8-1
Businesses and Residents to be Displaced .....	2
Date Displacement is Expected to Begin .....	4
Needs of Occupants .....	4
Commercial Occupants .....	4
Residential Occupants .....	4
Availability of Replacement Locations .....	4
Estimated Relocation Cost .....	5
Description of Funds/Funding Commitment .....	5
Assurance Statement .....	5
Coordination with Other Land Acquisition Activities .....	6
Real/Personal Property Issues .....	6

**Section 9: Redeveloper's Obligation**

**Section 10: Disposition**

**Section 11: Citizen Participation**

**ATTACHMENTS**

**A. Ashland Downtown District (ADD) Bylaw**

**B. Ashland: Executive Order 418 Plan**

**C. Guiding Growth in Ashland: Pond Street Opportunities**

**D. Downtown Vision: Ashland, Massachusetts**

**E. Retail Market Study: 125 Front Street Ashland, MA**

**F. 2003 Comprehensive Plan**

**G. Town of Ashland: Study on Oak Hill Estates and 125 Front Street**

**H. Town of Ashland Grade Crossing Study**

**I. Economic Studies**

**J. CAC Meeting Minutes**



# List of Tables

<b>Table</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1-1:	XX.....	1-xx

# List of Figures

**\*Note: All figures are located in Section 1, *Characteristics*.**

## **Figure No. Description**

---

A-1.	Project Area Location
A-2.	Aerial Photo of Project Area
A-3.	Project Boundary and Topography
B-1.	Boundaries of Proposed Clearance and Rehabilitation Areas
C-1.	Existing Property Lines, Building Footprints and Parking Areas
C-2.	Proposed Property Lines, Building Footprints and Parking Areas
D-1.	Existing Land Use As Per Town Land Use Codes
D-2.	Existing Zoning
D-3.	National Register Recommendations
F-1.	Existing Thoroughfares Public Right-of-Ways and Easements
G-1.	Parcels to be Acquired
H-1.	Lots to be Created for Disposition
I-1.	Buildings to be Demolished
J-1.	Buildings to be Rehabilitated
K-1.	Buildings to be Constructed
L-1.	Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan



# 1

## 12.02(1): Characteristics

This section presents the required plans and/or maps of the proposed urban renewal area (the “Project Area”) and the adjacent surrounding area, as required for a state-approved Urban Renewal Plan (URP), in accordance with 760 CMR 12.02(1). The required maps as well as supplemental graphics aim to demonstrate the need for improvements in downtown Ashland. This section also includes a narrative explaining these plans and/or maps as well as references to other sections of the URP for further detail.

**[PLACEHOLDER FOR IMAGE]**



---

## List of URP Maps

The following plans are included to show the existing and proposed characteristics of the Project Area. The existing conditions plans and descriptive narratives support the finding that the Project Area qualifies as an Urban Renewal Area. Future conditions and redevelopment/revitalization recommendations are also illustrated and are included here in accordance with State requirements for URPs. This information was provided by the Town and is based on the Town Assessor's maps as well as site verification conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010. Below is a list of the required and supplemental maps and figures provided in this URP.

### **Required Maps:**

- A-3. Project Boundary and Topography
- B-1. Boundary of Proposed Clearance and Rehabilitation Areas
- C-1. Existing Property Lines, Building Footprints and Parking Areas
- C-2. Proposed Property Lines, Building Footprints and Parking Areas
- D-1. Existing Land Use as Per Town Land Use Codes
- D-2. Existing Zoning
- E-1. Proposed Land Use (*Not Applicable*)
- E-2. Proposed Zoning (*Not Applicable*)
- F-1. Existing Thoroughfares Public Right-of-Ways and Easements
- F-2. Proposed Thoroughfares, Public Right-of-Ways and Easements (*Not Applicable*)
- G-1. Parcels to be Acquired
- H-1. Lots to be Created for Disposition
- I-1. Buildings to be Demolished
- J-1. Buildings to be Rehabilitated
- K-1. Buildings to be Constructed

### **Supplemental Graphics:**

- A-1. Project Location
- A-2. Aerial Photo with Project Boundary
- A-4. FEMA Floodplain Delineation Map
- D-3. National Register Recommendations
- L-1. Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan



**[TO INSERT MAPS HERE]**



---

## Project Area and Ownership

The following sections reference and briefly describe the required and supplemental maps that illustrate the Project Area proposed for revitalization under this URP.



---

### Project Area Description (Figures A-1 and A-2)

The Town of Ashland is located 20 miles east of Worcester, 22 miles west of Boston in Middlesex County and is bordered by Sherborn on the east, Framingham on the north, Southborough on the west and northwest, and Hopkinton and Holliston on the south. Refer to Figure A-1 for a locational map of Ashland and the Project Area.

While Ashland is predominantly residential although the area designated proposed for revitalization under this URP (the “Project Area”) is located in one of the Town’s several village commercial centers– the historic center of the town and the Ashland Downtown District (ADD). The approximately 103-acre Project Area is generally bounded by the Sudbury River to the north, Wildwood Cemetery to the east, Union Street to the south, and along Pleasant Street to Forest Avenue to the west. Specifically, as shown on Figure A-2, the Project Area consists of the following boundaries:

Homer Avenue	From Chestnut Street to Main Street
Summer Street	From Main Street to Park Road
Park Road	Between Summer and Cherry Streets
Cherry Street	Beginning at Park Road to Pleasant Street
Megunko Road	From Cherry Street running due west and north to the railroad tracks
Railroad Tracks	From Megunko Road to the crossing at High Street
High Street	From the railroad crossing to the High Street/Cordaville Road/Pleasant Street 3-way intersection
Pleasant Street	From Cordaville Road/High Street/Pleasant Street 3-way intersection to Main Street
Main Street	Between Pleasant Street and Water Street
Myrtle Street	Between Water Street and the Sudbury River at Mill Pond
Sudbury River	From Mill Pond running southeast to Front Street



---

### Project Area Topography (Figure A-3)

The topography within the Project Area generally slopes downward towards the Sudbury River. Refer to Figure A-3 for the Project Area boundaries and topography.



---

### Project Area Floodplain (Figure A-4)

According to the 2010 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain map (see Figure A-4), the Project Area falls within the 100-year floodplain.



---

### Clearance and Rehabilitation Areas (Figure B-1)

As part of this URP, the ARA proposes to acquire property within the Project Area and either rehabilitate or demolish certain buildings that are determined to be in severe disrepair and, therefore, unfit for reuse. Figure B-1 shows the parcels to be acquired and the buildings to be rehabilitated and demolished within those acquisition areas. Refer to the 'Property Acquisition, Disposition and Building Demolition, Rehabilitation and Construction' sub-section below for more information.



---

### Property Ownership (Figures C-1 and C-2)

There are 134 parcels within the Project Area boundary. Figure C-1 shows the property lines, building footprints and parking areas. Refer to Section 2, *Area Eligibility* for a detailed description of existing property ownership and Attachment A for a complete list of property ownership within the Project Area.

Figure C-2 shows the proposed property lines, building footprints and parking areas. Refer to Section 3, *Project Objectives* for detailed descriptions of the proposed public actions and anticipated redevelopment initiatives for the above-referenced sites.

---

### Land Use and Zoning (Figures D-1 - D-3)

Figures D-1 shows the existing land uses within and adjacent to the Project Area based on the Town's land use data. Figure D-2 shows the existing zoning districts applicable to the Project Area. Refer to Section 2, *Area Eligibility* for a detailed description of the existing land uses and zoning.

Figure D-3 is a supplemental graphic highlighting the recommended historic resources as part of the *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report*.<sup>1</sup> Refer



---

<sup>1</sup> Town of Ashland, *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report*, Ashland Historical Commission, prepared by Kathleen Kelly Broomer Architectural Historian Preservation Consultant, June 18, 2010.



to Section 3, *Project Objectives* for a detailed description of these proposed changes to the Project Area as they relate to land use, zoning and historic resources.

Required figures showing the proposed land uses and zoning are not applicable as no land use or zoning changes are proposed as part of the URP. All proposed actions conform with existing zoning. Refer to Section 3, *Project Objectives* for a description of the proposed public actions that may facilitate a change in as a result of the implementation of this URP.

---

## **Access and Transportation (Figures F-1 and F-2)**

Figure F-1 shows the existing thoroughfares, public rights of way and easements within and adjacent to the Project Area. Refer to Section 2, *Area Eligibility* for a detailed description of the existing access and transportation conditions.

The required map showing the proposed thoroughfares, public rights of way, and easements is not applicable because there are no major changes to roadways or easements are proposed as part of this URP. Refer to Section 3, *Project Objectives* for a description of proposed changes to the Project Area as they relate to access and transportation.

**[PLACEHOLDER FOR IMAGE]**





---

## **Property Acquisition, Disposition and Building Demolition, Rehabilitation and Construction**

This section presents the report graphics that illustrate the proposed parcels to be acquired, lots to be created for disposition, and the buildings to be demolished, rehabilitated and/or constructed as part of this URP.



---

### **Parcels to be Acquired (Figure G-1)**

Figure G-1 identifies the 15 parcels totaling 15.39 acres of land to be acquired by the ARA for implementation of this URP. The parcels to be acquired include 12 privately-owned parcels and one parcel that consists of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2331 hall. The following Table 1-1 lists these parcels along with the owner, lot size, present and proposed uses, and the associated URP project initiatives.



**Table 1-1  
Property Acquisition**

Parcel ID	Address	Owner	Lot Size	Current Use <sup>1</sup>	Proposed Use
<b><i>Police/Fire Redevelopment Project</i></b>					
014/014.0-0084-0000.0	137-151 Main Street	Town of Ashland	0.84 ac.	Police Headquarters and Fire Station	Mixed Use <sup>2</sup>
014/014.0-0085-0000.0	159-165 Main Street	Fournier, Leonard	0.12 ac.	Retail with Residential	Mixed Use
<b><i>Gamewell Parcel Redevelopment</i></b>					
014/013.0-0085-0000.0	60 Pleasant Street <sup>3</sup>	Gamewell RE Inc.	4.16 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
<b><i>Megunko Road Commercial Park</i></b>					
014/014.0-00044-000.0	2 Megunko Road	Bruen, Peter & Frances	1.67 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0132.0000.0	93 Megunko Road	MCL Development Corp	0.69 ac.	Commercial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0131.0000.0	101 Megunko Road	Lefter, Claudio & James	0.69 ac.	Commercial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0130.0000.0	123 Megunko Road	Lefter, Claudio & James	0.69 ac.	Parking/Storage	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0129.0000.0	135 Megunko Road	Leacu, William	0.95 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0128.0000.0	165 Megunko Road	No Smile LLC	0.91 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0127.0000.0	183 Megunko Road	Camille E J Family Limited Partners	1.52 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
<b><i>Marathon Park Expansion</i></b>					
014/013.0-0050-0000.0	329-331 Pleasant Street	Bond Bradford	0.28 ac.	Single-Family Residential	Open Space/Recreation
014/013.0-0052-0000.0	311 Pleasant Street	Ashland Memorial Associates	1.90 ac.	VFW Hall	Open Space/Recreation
<b><i>Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property</i></b>					
014/014.0-0079-0000.0	6 Cherry Street <sup>4</sup>	Ferdezi, Louis	0.39 ac.	Single-Family Residential	Residential
014/013.0-0090-0000.0	Metcalf Avenue	Cassie, William	0.29 ac.	Residential <sup>5</sup>	Residential
<b><i>Summer and Main Street Project</i></b>					
014/014.0-0067.0000.0	19 Summer Street	9-19 Summer St. LLC	0.29 ac.	Retail	Public Parking
<b>Total Acreage of Full Acquisitions</b>			<b>15.39</b>		

Sources: Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, [date]; VHB, Inc. site survey, July 2010.

R&D = Research and Development

- 1 Observed use according to site survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010 for this URP.
- 2 Transfer of ownership from the Town to ARA.
- 3 Designated a 43D Priority Development Site by the Town (approved by the State).
- 4 Recommended to be listed the National Register as part of the new Ashland Center Historic District as identified by the Town's *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report* (June 2010).
- 5 The only structures at this site are trailers; no permanent structures were observed by VHB.



## Lots to be Created for Disposition (Figure H-1)

Figure H-1 identifies the lots to be combined for disposition by the ARA. Table 1-2 lists the 16 individual privately- and publically-owned lots (totaling 16.26 acres) to be combined and made available to private developers in order to facilitate specific redevelopment projects, as proposed under this URP.

**Table 1-2**  
**Lots to be Combined for Disposition**

Parcel ID	Address	Owner	Lot Size	Current Use <sup>1</sup>	Proposed Use
<i>125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project</i>					
014/014.0-0289-0000.0	Main Street	Town of Ashland <sup>2</sup>	0.30 ac.	Open Space/Parking Lot	Mixed Use
014/014.0-0300-0000.0	Front Street	Town of Ashland <sup>2</sup>	1.26 ac.	Parking Lot	Mixed Use
014/014.0-0301-0000.0	125 Front Street	ARA	1.56 ac.	Parking Lot	Mixed Use
014/014.0-0302-0000.0	Front Street	ARA	0.22 ac.	Undeveloped	Mixed Use
<i>Police and Fire Redevelopment Project</i>					
014/014.0-0084-0000.0	137-151 Main Street	Town of Ashland <sup>3</sup>	0.84 ac.	Police Headquarters and Fire Station	Mixed Use
014/014.0-0085-0000.0	159-165 Main Street	Fournier, Leonard	0.12 ac.	Retail with Residential	Mixed Use
<i>Gamewell Parcel Redevelopment</i>					
014/013.0-0085-0000.0	60 Pleasant Street <sup>4</sup>	Gamewell RE Inc.	4.16 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
<i>Megunko Road Commercial Park</i>					
014/014.0-00044-000.0	2 Megunko Road	Bruen, Peter & Frances	1.67 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0132.0000.0	93 Megunko Road	MCL Development Corp	0.69 ac.	Commercial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0131.0000.0	101 Megunko Road	Lefter, Claudio & James	0.69 ac.	Commercial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0130.0000.0	123 Megunko Road	Lefter, Claudio & James	0.69 ac.	Parking/Storage	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0129.0000.0	135 Megunko Road	Leacu, William	0.95 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0128.0000.0	165 Megunko Road	No Smile LLC	0.91 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0127.0000.0	183 Megunko Road	Camille E J Family Limited Partners	1.52 ac.	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
<i>Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property</i>					
014/014.0-0079-0000.0	6 Cherry Street <sup>5</sup>	Ferdezi, Louis	0.39 ac.	Single-Family Residential	Residential
014/013.0-0090-0000.0	Metcalf Avenue	Cassie, William	0.29 ac.	Residential	Residential
<b>Total Acreage of Land to be Assembled for Disposition</b>			<b>16.26 ac.</b>		

Sources: Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, [date]; VHB, Inc. site survey, July 2010.

1 Observed use according to site survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010 for this URP.

2 For the purposes of this URP, it is assumed that the ARA has an agreement with the Town to include Town property in the 125 Front Street Redevelopment Project.

3 Transfer of ownership from the Town to ARA.

4 Designated a 43D Priority Development Site by the Town (approved by the State).

5 Recommended to be listed the National Register as part of the new Ashland Center Historic District as identified by the Town's *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report* (June 2010).



**Buildings to be Demolished (Figure I-1)**

Table 1-3 lists the 10 privately- and publically-owned parcels that contain a building(s) to be demolished as part of this URP (a total of 33,301 gross square feet). Refer to Figure I-1 for the locations of the buildings to be demolished.

**Table 1-3  
Buildings to be Demolished**

Parcel ID	Address	Owner	Building Size (GSF)	Current Use <sup>1</sup>	Purpose of Demolition (Proposed Use)
<i>Police/Fire Redevelopment Project</i>					
014/014.0-0084-0000.0	137-151 Main Street	Town of Ashland	4,922	Police Headquarters	Mixed Use
<i>Megunko Road Commercial Park</i>					
014/013.0/0132.0000.0	93 Megunko Road	MCL Development Corp	N/A	Commercial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0131.0000.0	101 Megunko Road	Lefter, Claudio & James	2,000	Commercial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0129.0000.0	135 Megunko Road	Leacu, William	144 <sup>2</sup>	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0128.0000.0	165 Megunko Road	No Smile LLC	693	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0127.0000.0	183 Megunko Road	Camille E J Family Limited Partners	10,706	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
<i>Marathon Park Expansion</i>					
014/013.0-0050-0000.0	329-331 Pleasant Street	Bond Bradford	1,074	Single-Family Residential	Open Space/Recreation
014/013.0-0052-0000.0	311 Pleasant Street	Ashland Memorial Associates	5,586	VFW Hall	Open Space/Recreation
<i>Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property</i>					
014/013.0-0090-0000.0	Metcalf Avenue	Cassie, William	784 <sup>2</sup>	Vacant Residential	Residential
<i>Summer and Main Street Project</i>					
014/014.0-0067.0000.0	19 Summer Street	9-19 Summer St. LLC	7,392.	Retail	Public Parking
<b>Total Square Footage of Building Demolition</b>			<b>33,301</b>		

Sources: Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, [date]; VHB, Inc. site survey, July 2010.

GSF = Gross Square Feet

1 Observed use according to site survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010 for this URP.

2 The only structures at this site are trailers; no permanent structures were observed by VHB.



---

## Buildings to be Rehabilitated (Figure J-1)

Table 1-4 lists the buildings to be rehabilitated as part of this URP (a total of 86,783 gross square feet). Refer to Figure J-1 for the location of properties to be rehabilitated.

**Table 1-4**  
**Buildings to be Rehabilitated**

Parcel ID	Address	Owner	Building Size (GSF)	Current Use <sup>1</sup>	Proposed Use
<i>Police/Fire Redevelopment Project</i>					
014/014.0-0084-0000.0	137-151 Main Street	Town of Ashland	5,044	Fire Station	Mixed Use
014/014.0-0085-0000.0	159-165 Main Street	Fournier, Leonard	6,067	Retail with Residential	Mixed Use
<i>Gamewell Parcel Redevelopment</i>					
014/013.0-0085-0000.0	60 Pleasant Street	Gamewell Realty, Inc.	73,475	Industrial	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
<i>Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property</i>					
014/014.0-0079-0000.0	6 Cherry Street <sup>2</sup>	Ferdezi, Louis	2,197	Single-Family Residential	Residential
<b>Total Sq. Ft. of Building Rehabilitation</b>			<b>86,783</b>		

Sources: Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, [date]; VHB, Inc. site survey, July 2010.

GSF = Gross Square Feet

1 Observed use according to site survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010 for this URP.

2 Recommended to be listed the National Register as part of the new Ashland Center Historic District as identified by the Town's *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report* (June 2010).



---

## Buildings to be Constructed (Figure K-1)

Figure K-1 shows the new buildings to be constructed as part of this URP. Table 1-5 lists the new buildings to be constructed as part of the project initiatives, with their present use and proposed new use.



**Table 1-5  
Buildings to be Constructed**

Parcel ID	Address	Owner	Current Use <sup>1</sup>	Proposed Use	Size
<i>125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project</i>					
014/014.0-0289-0000.0	Main Street	Town of Ashland <sup>2</sup>	Open Space/Parking Lot	Mixed Use	3-story
014/014.0-0300-0000.0	Front Street	Town of Ashland <sup>2</sup>	Parking Lot	Mixed Use	29,400 GSF
014/014.0-0290-0000.0	41 Front Street	Bianchi, Nancy	Retail	Mixed Use	
014/014.0-0301-0000.0	125 Front Street	ARA	Parking Lot	Mixed Use	
014/014.0-0302-0000.0	Front Street	ARA	Vacant (undeveloped)	Mixed Use	
<i>Police and Fire Redevelopment</i>					
014/014.0-0084-0000.0	137-151 Main Street	Town of Ashland	Fire Department	Mixed Use (Rehab)	XXX GSF
014/014.0-0084-0000.0	137-151 Main Street	Town of Ashland	Police Headquarters	Mixed Use (New)	
014/014.0-0085-0000.0	159-165 Main Street	Fournier, Leonard	Retail with Residential	Mixed Use (Rehab)	

Sources: Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, [date]; VHB, Inc. site survey, July 2010.

GSF = Gross Square Feet

1 Observed use according to site survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010 for this URP.

2 For the purposes of this URP, it is assumed that the ARA has an agreement with the Town to include Town property in the 125 Front Street Redevelopment Project.

## Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan and Public Improvements (Figure L-1)

Figure L-1 shows the proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan for this URP. Refer to Section 3, *Project Objectives* for a detailed description of the Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan and proposed public improvements.



<b>List of URP Maps</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Project Area and Ownership</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Project Area Description (Figures A-1 and A-2) .....	4
Project Area Topography (Figure A-3).....	4
Project Area Floodplain (Figure A-4) .....	5
Clearance and Rehabilitation Areas (Figure B-1) .....	5
Property Ownership (Figures C-1 and C-2).....	5
<b>Land Use and Zoning (Figures D-1 - D-3) .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Access and Transportation (Figures F-1 and F-2) .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Property Acquisition, Disposition and Building Demolition, Rehabilitation and Construction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Parcels to be Acquired (Figure G-1) .....	7
Lots to be Created for Disposition (Figure H-1) .....	9
Buildings to be Demolished (Figure I-1) .....	10
Buildings to be Rehabilitated (Figure J-1).....	11
Buildings to be Constructed (Figure K-1).....	11
<b>Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan and Public Improvements (Figure L-1) .....</b>	<b>12</b>



# 2

## Area Eligibility

---

### Introduction

In order to undertake the actions contained in this Urban Renewal Plan (URP), the Project Area must be designated as an Urban Renewal Area, first by the Ashland Redevelopment Authority (ARA) and then by the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Specifically, elements discussed in this section include a brief historical overview of the Town of Ashland, and the physical characteristics, existing zoning that regulates downtown redevelopment, existing land uses, existing access and transportation conditions, and property ownership of the Project Area. In accordance with 760 CMR 12.02(2), the following section provides background information such as location, history, relevant statistics, and rationale for the Project Area boundaries, as well as a needs assessment that supports the proposed public actions that aim to meet the project goals and objectives, as presented in Chapter 3, *Project Objectives*. This chapter also presents data, such as inspections of buildings/sites and other descriptive material documenting that the Project Area is decadent, substandard or blighted, pursuant to the definition in M.G.L c. 121B, Section 1 and, therefore, eligible to be designated as an Urban Renewal Area. The overall purpose of this section is to provide a description of existing conditions and a background, and presents a context for the community's goals.

---

### Background Information

The following sections describe the Project Area, including context, local history, and existing site, building, land use/zoning, access, and market conditions.





---

## Project Area Context

The Town of Ashland is located in eastern Massachusetts, bordered by Sherborn on the east, Framingham on the north, Southborough on the west and northwest, and Hopkinton and Holliston on the south. Ashland is 20 miles east of Worcester and 22 miles west of Boston. Ashland, which is approximately 13 square miles and has a total population of 14,674<sup>1</sup>, lies within Middlesex County, in the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy metro area just off of the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90, or I-90) between Interstate 95 (I-95) and Interstate 495 (I-495). Refer to Figures A-1 and A-2 for a locational map and aerial map of the Project Area, respectively.

Ashland has excellent rail, air, and highway facilities. State Route 128 and Interstate Route 495 divide the region into inner and outer zones, which are connected by numerous "spokes" providing direct access to the airport, port, and intermodal facilities of Boston. Principal highways include State Routes 126 and 135. I-90 is easily accessible in the neighboring town of Framingham.

The Project Area consists of the Town's historic downtown commercial village with mixed-use buildings and is partially bounded by the scenic Sudbury River and includes most of Ashland's key municipal facilities: Town Hall; the Ashland Public Library; and the police and fire stations as well as the Post Office. Railroad tracks serving both freight rail and the MBTA's Framingham-Worcester line bisect the downtown area, crossing Main Street between Summer Street and Front Street. Pleasant Street, which extends to the new commuter rail station, is lined by light industrial uses on one side and residential homes on the other.



---

## Local Area History

Ashland is a historic industrial community on the Sudbury River at the western edge of greater Boston. Before industry flourished, the Town of Ashland was a stopping point on a major Indian trail which later became known as the Bay Path, connecting Cambridge and Connecticut. It was here that a community of Natick Indians was established as the Village of Magunkaquoq in about 1659. The area saw considerable growth during the Early Industrial period, with expansion of industry and commerce, particularly gristmills, sawmills, paper mills, and an emery mill on water privileges, and boot and shoemaking, which led to the incorporation of Unionville



---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census, 2000.



(Ashland) in 1846.<sup>2</sup> Ashland's territory was taken from Hopkinton, Holliston and Framingham.

The establishment of the Boston & Worcester Railroad, later the Boston & Albany, in the 1830s was key in the early development of Ashland, although it remained a mainly centralized residential town with limited industry until the mid 20th century. After the damming of Indian and Cold Spring Brooks, industrial businesses, such as the Dwight Paper Company, survived along the Sudbury River for a number of years; however, the loss of hydropower caused a shift in Ashland's industry (away from milling and light manufacturing to chemical and dye manufacturing).<sup>3</sup> The Town is also known as the site of Henry Warren's invention of the electric clock, later manufactured here under the Telechron name.

The Late Industrial period brought tremendous change to Ashland with the seizure of the Sudbury River for the metropolitan Boston water supply system and construction of three reservoirs wholly or partly in the town.<sup>4</sup> However, while the industries on the river east of the town center were lost to the construction of the reservoir, some industries operating west of the town center continued to thrive in the last quarter of the 19th century by using steam in place of waterpower.

For most of the 20th century, Ashland's population remained slow in growth, until the post-war boom beginning in the 1950s. In the 1960s the Town's character changed from that of a rural New England mill town to that of a commuter suburb of the Boston metropolitan region by the 1980s. Many farms and open spaces have given way to single-family housing, although some untouched land still remains, including the Ashland Town Forest and Ashland State Park. Although Ashland remains predominantly residential, it has multiple commercial villages, including a historic downtown commercial center, which provides mostly local services and retail for local residents. Visitors come from out-of-town for "Ashland Day"—an annual celebration of traditional New England spirit and tradition.

A five-year decline (2004-2008) in economic activity in Ashland primarily involved two industries: professional/technical services; and retail. By the end of 2008, Ashland had lost 23 percent of the retail establishments and 22 percent of the

▼  
<sup>2</sup> Town of Ashland, *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey Final Report*, submitted to the Ashland Historical Commission, prepared by Kathleen Kelly Broomer, June 18, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> *Planning for Change: Growing a Greener Community*, Town of Ashland, March 2007. (website: [http://www.ashlandopenspace.org/docs/osrp/ashland\\_osrp\\_308\\_draft.pdf](http://www.ashlandopenspace.org/docs/osrp/ashland_osrp_308_draft.pdf))

<sup>4</sup> Town of Ashland, *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey Final Report*, submitted to the Ashland Historical Commission, prepared by Kathleen Kelly Broomer, June 18, 2010.



professional and technical services establishments that operated locally in 2004.<sup>5</sup> Durable goods manufacturing also lost three establishments, which may seem insignificant, but Ashland has only fourteen employers in this sector.<sup>6</sup> The planned downtown improvements proposed as part of this URP aim to strengthen Downtown Ashland's ability to attract new businesses and create new housing opportunities by building off of existing transportation infrastructure (i.e., the MBTA commuter line) and creating new amenities (i.e., public open space) to increase both jobs and the local tax base.



---

## Project Area Today

Ashland's developed landscape is characterized by its largely single-family suburban homes on relatively small lots. The downtown core is walkable and of human scale, with traditional architecture, contributing to Ashland's small-town feel. New subdivisions and condominiums in town are changing the traditional look of Ashland. Single-family homes are clustered and close together on subdivided lots while condominiums in town are beginning to fill in former industrial or commercial corridors.

---

## Existing Property Ownership

The total land area of the Project Area, including right-of-way (ROW) is 103.32 acres. The Project Area is made up of 134 individual parcels totaling 77.83 acres (3,390,275 square feet) and including privately-owned, Town-owned, and State-owned properties. The majority of the Project Area parcels consist of privately-owned properties (120 parcels totaling approximately 68.35 acres representing 88% of the total parcel area; or 2.98 million square feet of land area). Twelve parcels totaling approximately 7.86 acres representing 10% of the total parcel area are owned by the Town, including two parcels owned by the ARA. Two parcels of land totaling 1.6 acres representing 2% of the total parcel area are owned by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The remaining land area, 25.2 acres, consists of public streets, or ROW, under the ownership of the Town of Ashland and railroad ROW under the ownership of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). Table 2-1 provides a summary of property ownership within the Project



---

<sup>5</sup> *Town of Ashland, Massachusetts Economic Policy Plan*, prepared for the Town of Ashland, prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., August 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *Town of Ashland, Massachusetts Economic Policy Plan*, prepared for the Town of Ashland, prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., August 2010.



Area. Attachment A provides a full list of the individual parcels, including the address, name of the owner, size, and associated land use and zoning.

**Table 2-1  
Summary of Land Ownership**

<b>Parcel Ownership</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Area (sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Area (acres)</b>	<b>Percent of Total Parcel Area (%)</b>
Privately-owned Parcels	120	2,977,326	68.35	88%
Town-owned Parcels	12	342,382	7.86	10%
Commonwealth of Massachusetts (MBTA)	2	70,567	1.62	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>3,390,275 sq. ft.</b>	<b>77.83 ac.</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, xxx

The Town represents the largest single landowner within the Project Area. The Town-owned parcels are located primarily along Main and Front Streets. They are primarily categorized as 'Urban Public/Institutional' and/or 'Commercial' land uses and include the Ashland Town Library, the Ashland Police Department, and a fire station. The two parcels under ARA ownership are on Front Street and are part of the 125 Front Street Redevelopment Project.

The largest private property owner in the Project Area is GMOL Trust who owns 10-60 Main Street, a 7.79-acre site in the northern section of the Project Area. This site consists of the historic mill buildings and is zoned ADD "A." The second largest private property owner is Latter Rain Facilities, Inc. owns four parcels totaling 4.78 acres on Pleasant Street (two of which are vacant) representing approximately 6.1% of the available land within the Project Area. Gamewell Realty, Inc., who owns two parcels (60 Pleasant Street consists of a vacant building and is designated a 43D Priority Redevelopment Site) totaling 4.36 acres of land representing 5.6% also on Pleasant Street, is the third largest property owner in the Project Area. Both the Latter Rain Facilities, Inc. and Gamewell Realty lands are zoned ADD "A."

---

## Existing Structures

In July 2010, a visual evaluation of all properties within the Project Area was conducted by VHB, Inc, including the parcel, or site, conditions and the exterior of all buildings (if visible). There are a variety of property uses including commercial, retail, multi-family residential, industrial, public/institutional, and mixed use. Types of building construction largely consist of masonry, concrete masonry unit, and wood.



Site evaluations considered the current land use and if the parcel contained on-site parking, truck accommodation, on-street parking, sidewalks, dumpsters, surface drainage features, standing water, and an estimate of the percentage of impervious area. Site evaluations rated the conditions of walkway and driveway pavement, fencing/site walls, trees/landscaping, exterior signage and lighting, on-site material storage, and utilities.

Building evaluations rated the conditions of a building's foundation (if visible), walls, windows, doors, cornices/eaves, porch/balcony, exterior stairs, loading dock, handicap accessibility, and chimney and roof (if visible). Interior inspection was not part of the visual evaluation. The exterior building condition ratings included the following four categories:

- **Good Condition** - The building within this category appeared to be maintained and in a structurally stable condition. In some cases, there were clear signs of recent rehabilitation such as new paint, new doors, windows and/or roofing surface.
- **Satisfactory Condition** - Buildings in this category exhibited stable conditions and required only minor maintenance or rehabilitation, such as new paint and window replacements. In some cases, exterior features such as the entranceways require moderate improvements to make them code compliant.
- **Moderate Disrepair** - This category includes buildings in need of minor structural repairs, porch or roof replacements or siding replacement. Certain building components appeared to be reaching the end of their useful periods. Some of the buildings require extensive maintenance of surface materials, and possibly structural components, although not typically visible.
- **Severe Disrepair** - Buildings that are visually dilapidated and need extensive repairs are categorized in this group. Most of these buildings require major investment in façade improvements, storefronts, walls and/or other architectural features.

Table 2-2 summarizes the building conditions in the Project Area.



**Table 2-2**  
**Summary of Building Conditions**

<b>Building Condition</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent (%) of Total Buildings</b>
Good Condition		
Satisfactory Condition		
Moderate Disrepair		
Severe Disrepair		
<b>Total</b>		

Source: VHB, Inc. site survey conducted in July 2010.

### Existing Historic Resources

There are a number of historic buildings that play a significant role in shaping the unique historic characteristics of downtown Ashland. The Ashland Historical Commission received a matching grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to conduct an intensive survey of historic resources in the town and identify resources that are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>7</sup> The *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey* conducted in 2010<sup>8</sup> documented historically and architecturally significant buildings, structures, objects, and landscapes constructed in Ashland before 1960. According to the survey, approximately 171 historic resources were recorded, including areas, buildings, objects, cemeteries, and landscapes. The following Ashland properties/sites are currently listed in the National Register:

- Ashland Town Hall at 101 Main Street (listed in 2004);
- Ashland Reservoir Ashland Dam and Spillway (listed in 1990)<sup>9</sup>; and
- Hopkinton Reservoir Hopkinton Dam and Spillway (listed in 1990)<sup>10</sup>.

The Ashland Town Hall falls within the Project Area. Refer to Figure E-3 for the locations of the listed and recommended to be listed historic resources.

<sup>7</sup> Historic resources recorded in the survey will be included in the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth, maintained by the MHC. The survey also includes for National Register listings and a list of further study recommendations for some properties.

<sup>8</sup> Town of Ashland, *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report*, Ashland Historical Commission, prepared by Kathleen Kelly Broome Architectural Historian Preservation Consultant, June 18, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Listed in National Register as part of Water Supply System of Metropolitan Boston Thematic Resource Area.

<sup>10</sup> Listed in National Register as part of Water Supply System of Metropolitan Boston Thematic Resource Area.



One property within the Project Area, 179-181 Main Street (or the Railroad House-Ashland Hotel [a.k.a. John Stone Inn]), is recommended to be listed in the National Register.<sup>11</sup> This parcel is currently the Stone’s Public House restaurant located on Main Street. A second property on Main Street (at Water Street) that is recommended to be listed directly abuts the Project Area.

Almost all of the parcels recommended to be listed the National Register as the new Ashland Center Historic District designation falls within the Project Area (Figure E-3). The proposed boundaries of this historic district include: Main Street; Front Street; Homer Avenue; Alden Street; Central Street; Church Court; and Maple Court (Figure E-3). Table 2-3 lists the individual properties to be included in the Ashland Center Historic District that fall within the Project Area, as recommended by the survey.

**Table 2-3**  
**URA Properties within the Potential Historic District**

Historic Name	Address <sup>1</sup>
Ferdenzi House	6 Cherry Street
Wiggins Block	44 Front Street
Ashland Public Library	66 Front Street
Boston & Albany Railroad Station	20 Homer Avenue
Dwight Printing Company	10–60 Main Street
(Lombard Governor Co. Plant)	73–75 Main Street
Edwin Perry House	98–100 Main Street
Brick Store	101 Main Street
Ashland Town Hall	118 Main Street
Federated Church of Ashland	118 Main Street (rear)
Village Burial Ground	117–119 Main Street
James Jackson House	151 Main Street
Central Fire Station	159 Main Street
Ashland News Store	175 Main Street
Stone-Lentros Barn	205 Main Street
Wenzel-Thayer Livery Stable	19 Summer Street

Source: Town of Ashland, *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report*, June 2010.

Note: Properties are potentially eligible individually, meeting National Register Criterion A (for historical significance to the community) and Criterion C (for architectural significance) at the local level. MHC staff must evaluate a property and concur with a recommendation before a National Register nomination may be prepared.

1 Refer to Figure E-3 for the location of the proposed historic district.

A second historic district named Stone Park Area includes Cherry, Park, Summer, Linden, and Esty Streets, and is recommended to potentially be combined w/Ashland Center Area. The Stone Park Area is adjacent to the Project Area.

<sup>11</sup> Properties are potentially eligible individually, meeting National Register Criterion A (for historical significance to the community) and Criterion C (for architectural significance) at the local level. MHC staff must evaluate a property and concur with a recommendation before a National Register nomination may be prepared.



Table 2-4 lists the six properties within the Study Area that are recommended for further study to determine their historic significance and if they should be recommended to be listed on the National Register. A number of additional properties that are recommended for further study about the Project Area.

**Table 2-4  
URA Properties Recommended for Further Study**

Historic Name	Address
Horse Trough	78 Front Street
Horse Trough	134 Front Street
New England Telephone Building	94–96 Pleasant Street
New England Telephone Building	20 Pleasant Street
New England Telephone Building	37 Summer Street
New England Telephone Building	49 Summer Street

Source: Town of Ashland, *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report*, June 2010.

Note: Properties are potentially eligible individually, meeting National Register Criterion A (for historical significance to the community) and Criterion C (for architectural significance) at the local level. MHC staff must evaluate a property and concur with a recommendation before a National Register nomination may be prepared.

1 Refer to Figure E-3 for the locations of the historic properties recommended for further study.

## Existing Site Contamination

According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), there are four “open” Release Tracking Numbers (RTNs), or “21E sites”, within the Project Area.<sup>12</sup> Two “open” contaminated sites are located within the Proposed TOD Development area and one “open” contaminated site is located within Megunko Road Commercial Park Project area. Additionally, the Nyanza Chemical Waste Dump site is a 35-acre parcel of land located next to the active industrial uses along Megunko Road just south of the Project Area. From 1917 to 1978, the Nyanza Chemical Waste Dump site was used to produce textile dyes, intermediates, and other products and Nyanza Inc. operated on the property from 1965 until 1978 when it ceased operations.<sup>13</sup> Over 45,000 tons of chemical sludge generated by Nyanza's wastewater treatment processes, along with spent solvents and other chemical wastes, were buried on site. The site was capped in 1992 and cleanup and restoration of the wetlands adjacent to the source area and the draining areas to the river was completed in 2001; however, there is a known ongoing source of groundwater contamination in the area. In 2008, additional sampling was conducted to test

<sup>12</sup> Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, *Waste Site/Reportable Release Look Up*, Ashland. (website: <http://db.state.ma.us/dep/cleanup/sites/search.asp>)

<sup>13</sup> U.S. EPA New England Superfund Factsheet Overview, FY 2007 (website link: <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/accomp/factsheets07/ashland.htm>)





mercury levels and evaluate the effectiveness of various remedial alternatives. In September 2010, EPA memorialized its cleanup decision by signing the Nyanza OU4 (Sudbury River) Record of Decision.<sup>14</sup>

---

## Existing Land Use

The Project Area is located in the Town's historic downtown commercial center, which generally includes the Main Street corridor from Summer Street and Homer Avenue to the vicinity of Front Street and the adjacent, contributing sub-areas. The sub-areas include a mill complex at the northern gateway into the downtown area; a linear arrangement of low-rise buildings north of Town Hall, in the vicinity of the Main Street and Pleasant Street intersection; a collection of irregular lots with buildings set back erratically from the road, and some with multiple buildings on one lot, situated to the east; and to the south, a fourth area, generally around Summer Street and Homer Avenue, where small lots of a more consistent shape and size have been developed with relatively small structures and transitional land uses.<sup>15</sup>

The scale of streets and buildings – in particular the landmark Town Hall, Federated Church, firehouse, and Post Office - are products of the 19th century and are prime ingredients of the small town flavor found there. Other historic buildings in Ashland's downtown include the library, the Ocean House, John Stone's Inn, and the Masonic Lodge Building. Historic factory buildings from Ashland's industrial past also add unique architectural elements that give Ashland its character. Some of these buildings include the Dwight Paper Company building on the Sudbury River, and Warren Telechron building on Homer Street.

In general, the built environment of Downtown Ashland is a bit jumbled, with breaks between buildings and little visual cohesion.<sup>16</sup> The downtown commercial center of Ashland is small, consisting of approximately 30 small retail stores, several branch banks, a Walgreen's, a Napa Auto Parts store, some medical and other small office type buildings. Some of the one-story structures compromise downtown's visual quality by detracting from the vertical design of other buildings nearby, and in these cases the land tends to be underutilized.<sup>17</sup>

▼  
<sup>14</sup> U.S. EPA New England Region 1, *Record of Decision Nyanza Chemical Waste Dump Superfund Site Operable Unit 4 (Sudbury River)*, September 2010. (website link: <http://www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/sites/nyanza/471144.pdf>)  
<sup>15</sup> *Town of Ashland Economic Policy Plan*, prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., August 2010.  
<sup>16</sup> *Town of Ashland Economic Policy Plan*, prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., August 2010.  
<sup>17</sup> *Town of Ashland Economic Policy Plan*, prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., August 2010.



Table 2-5 presents the Town’s current land uses based on the assessor’s parcel data. Figure D-1 illustrates the Town’s classified land uses per current the Assessor’s Office parcel data.

**Table 2-5  
Land Use Classification**

<b>Land Use Classification</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Parcel Area (sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Parcel Area (acres)</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Developable Area (%)</b>
<i>Residential Sub-Total</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>819,927</i>	<i>18.8</i>	
High-Density Residential	2	17,829	0.4	
Medium-Density Residential	9	95,585	2.2	
Low-Density Residential	5	130,650	3.0	
Multi-Family Residential	43	575,863	13.2	
Commercial	37	709,778	16.3	
Industrial	8	442,057	15.3	
Urban Public/Institutional	14	489,545	11.2	
Vacant <sup>1</sup>	8	375,923	8.6	11.2
Forest	5	211,073	4.9	
Non-Forested Wetland	2	110,207	2.5	
Transportation	1	11,326	0.3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>3,393,275</b>	<b>77.9</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: Town of Ashland Assessor’s Office parcel data, XXX; VHB, Inc. site survey conducted in July 2010.

Note: Similar land uses as shown in the full parcel list (Attachment A) are grouped here by category. Refer to Figure D-1.

1 Eight (8) parcels out of the 134 total parcels varying in land use type are vacant or partially vacant according to the VHB, Inc. site survey.

The Project Area land uses consist of a mix of mostly residential, commercial, industrial, urban public/institutional, and vacant or partially vacant land. As illustrated by Figure D-1, commercial activities are mostly located along Front and Main Streets and mixed in with other uses along Pleasant Street and Megunko Road. The industrial area is located primarily along the Sudbury River and the abandoned rail bed (off Pleasant Street and Megunko Road). Residential properties are largely along the smaller, internal Project Area roadways, including Park Road, Cherry Street, Tilton Avenue, Forest Avenue and Metcalf Avenue. Residential uses are also mixed in with commercial uses on Front Street. In addition, the wetland resource areas and the proposed river access and abuts various properties within the Project Area. The land uses proposed in this URP will result in a more appropriate use, such as housing abutting natural resource areas. In addition, this



URP will increase the opportunity for new mixed-use properties in downtown Ashland.

11.2 percent of the Project Area can be classified as vacant or partially vacant parcels or unoccupied buildings.

---

## Existing Zoning

The Town of Ashland Zoning Ordinance identifies a series of zoning districts that regulate building size, setbacks, parking, signs, and other related characteristics that promote the orderly improvement or development of land. Presently, as illustrated in Figure D-2, majority of the Project Area falls within a Special District: the Ashland Downtown District (ADD). The ADD is divided into three sub-areas: Downtown District “A”; Downtown District “B”; and Downtown District “C” (described further below) – all of which are applicable to the Project Area. The purpose of the ADD is to promote village style redevelopment with a mix of commercial, retail, and residential uses in a walk-able environment with a density that is consistent with the design principles as well as to broaden the tax base, enhance long-term economic vitality, and improve the quality of life of residents.

The Rail Transit District (RTD) special district RTD “E” abuts Project Area just south of the train tracks around the MBTA commuter station. The purpose of the RTD is to promote a transit-oriented private and public development to include higher density development and to reduce dependency on single-occupancy vehicles. Table 2-6 presents the zoning districts that currently regulate development in the Project Area and their associated land areas.



**Table 2-6  
Project Area Zoning Districts**

<b>Zoning Classification</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Total Zone Area (sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Total Zone Area</b>	<b>Percent of Total Project Land Area</b>
Downtown District "A"	30	1,158,260	26.6	34%
Industrial	36	1,131,253	26.0	34%
Downtown District "B"	24	540,580	12.4	16%
Downtown District "C"	40	427,324	9.8	12%
Residential "B"	3	109,336	2.5	3%
Commercial "B"	1	23,725	0.5	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>3,390,478</b>	<b>77.8</b>	<b>100%</b>

The largest zoning districts within the Project Area are Downtown District "A" and Industrial, both of which comprise of approximately 34% of the total land area area of the Project Area parcels. Downtown District "B" and Downtown District "C" are the next predominant zoning districts making up 16% and 12%, respectively of the total Project Area. Zoning information is based on the Town of Ashland Zoning Bylaw for the ADD adopted by the Town of Ashland Special Town Meeting on November 19, 2008 (Article 19).

### **Downtown District "A"**

Thirty parcels of the 134 total parcels that make up the Project Area are located within the Downtown District "A" zoning district. The ADD sub-area A is designed to promote the highest level of mixed use, encouraging retail on the first floor and commercial and/or residential on the upper floors. This category allows as-of-right mixed uses (business and residential uses within the same building), business offices, bank or financial institution, home occupation, restaurant/bakery, food service (cafeteria, lunch counter ice cream establishment), catering services, retail, veterinary/animal hospital/kennel, agriculture/horticulture, theaters/cinemas, indoor recreation (health club, day spa), and light industrial/manufacturing. Drive-up windows, a business office, bank/financial institution or residential use in a building larger than 20,000 gross floor area, outdoor storage of products for sale, fast-food restaurants, outdoor vending, Bed and Breakfast, outdoor commercial recreation, and indoor bowling alleys and skating rinks are allowed by special permit. Prohibited uses include auto service stations, retail of motor vehicles, trailers or motorized marine equipment, adult entertainment establishments, tattoo parlors, and storage trailers and outdoor storage of goods.



## **Industrial**

Thirty-six parcels of the 134 total parcels that make up the Project Area are located within the Industrial zoning district. Commercial uses such as restaurants, retail, auto/boat repair, animal hospital, adult entertainment, wireless communication, all industrial/manufacturing uses (except junk yard/auto salvaging) are allowed in the Industrial zoning district. All institutional uses (except hospitals), agricultural uses, are allowed within the Industrial zone. All residential uses, drive-through, all accessory uses (except for accessory scientific uses) are prohibited in the Industrial zone.

## **Downtown District “B”**

Twenty-four parcels of the 134 total parcels that make up the Project Area are located within the Downtown District “B” zoning district. The ADD sub-area B is designed to promote some mixed use where feasible especially commercial/retail on the first floor and residential on the upper floors. This category allows as-of-right mixed uses (business and residential uses within the same building), business offices, bank or financial institution without drive-up window, home occupation, restaurant/bakery, food service (cafeteria, lunch counter ice cream establishment), retail sales in building less than or equal to 10,000 square feet of gross floor area, veterinary/animal hospital/kennel, agriculture/horticulture, theaters/cinemas, indoor recreation (health club, day spa), printing, and service industries (appliance repair). A special permit is required for banks with drive-up windows, outdoor storage of products for sale, restaurant/bakery with outdoor seating, fast-food restaurant (with or without drive-up window), catering services, retail 10,000 or more square feet of gross floor area, open air vending, Bed and Breakfast, outdoor commercial recreation, indoor bowling alleys and skating rinks, and light manufacturing. Prohibited uses are generally the same as Downtown District “A.” The Downtown District “B” also prohibits a business office, bank/financial institution or residential use in a building larger than 20,000 gross floor area.

## **Downtown District “C”**

Forty parcels of the 134 total parcels that make up the Project Area are located within the Downtown District “C” zoning district. The ADD sub-area C is designed to allow mixed uses where feasible, but at a lower density than A and B. This category allows as-of-right mixed uses (business and residential uses within the same building), business offices, bank or financial institution without drive-up window, home occupation, restaurant/bakery with no outdoor seating or drive-up window, veterinary/animal hospital/kennel, and agriculture/horticulture. A special permits is required for outdoor storage of products for sale, restaurant/bakery with outdoor



seating, cafeteria/lunch counter/ice cream shop, catering services, retail sales/services in a building less than 10,000 square feet of gross floor area, open air vending, Bed and Breakfast, outdoor commercial recreation, theaters/cinemas, indoor commercial recreation (health club/day spa), indoor bowling alleys and skating rinks, and light industrial/manufacturing. Prohibited uses are generally the same as Downtown District "A." Additionally, the Downtown District "C" also prohibits fast-food restaurants, bank/financial institution with drive-up windows, retail sales and/or services in building less than or equal to 10,000 square feet gross floor area, and a business office, bank/financial institution or residential use in a building larger than 20,000 gross floor area.

### **Residential "B"**

There are three parcels located on Pleasant Street within the Residential "B" zoning district (Figure D-2), one of which is Town-owned. Primary residential uses allowed by right in the Residential "B" zoning district include single- and two-family dwellings, assisted living and senior housing. Accessory uses, including scientific uses, child and/or adult care, and rooming and boarding of no more than 2 persons are also allowed in the Residential "B" zoning district.

---

## **Other Land Use Regulations**

### **Floodplain Overlay District**

In addition to the zoning districts described above, the Floodplain Overlay District (FPOD) also governs development within the Project Area (as established in Section 8.0 of the Ashland Zoning Ordinance). The precise boundaries of the FPOD are defined by the 100-year flood elevations shown on the 2010 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) (refer to Figure A-4).

The purpose of the FPOD is to protect the public health, safety and general welfare; to protect human life and property from the hazards of periodic flooding; to preserve the natural flood control characteristics and the flood storage capacity of the floodplain; and to preserve and maintain the groundwater table and water recharge areas within the floodplain. All development, including structural and nonstructural activities, whether permitted as a right or by special permit, must be in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 131 § 40 and the requirements of the Massachusetts State Building Code pertaining to construction in the floodplains.



## **Conservation Commission**

The Sudbury River is a great asset to the Town and the downtown area. Riverfront development that is environmentally sensitive will support the downtown revitalization process. Areas along the immediate river banks of the Sudbury River, which flows along the northern border of the Project Area, are included in the FEMA 100-year flooding zone. Some small areas within the Project Area also fall within the 500-year floodplain. Refer to Figure L-1 for these areas. The remainder of the Project Area has been determined to be outside of the 100- and 500-year floodplains.

The Ashland Conservation Commission serves the town in a regulatory and advisory way. The Commission administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Ashland Wetlands Protection Bylaw and the Ashland Stormwater Management Bylaw. Through these laws the Commission ensures the environment is protected in order to:

- Safeguard the town's water supply
- Protect groundwater quality and availability
- Control flooding and storm damage
- Prevent pollution and erosion
- Ensure that habitats for wildlife are preserved

## **Chapter 43D – Priority Development Sites**

Ashland Town Meeting recently adopted the provisions of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 43D, the Expedited Permitting Law, and designated two locations as Chapter 43D Priority Development Sites: 60 Pleasant Street (Gamewell parcel); and 61 Waverly Street (outside of the Project Area). By adopting the provisions of Chapter 43D, Ashland qualifies for state grant money to evaluate development opportunities on the Priority Development Sites as well as several other commercially or industrially zoned properties. To comply with the law, Ashland was required to adopt expedited permitting regulations that guarantee a streamlined review and decision process for any site designated under Chapter 43D. This designation can reassure a developer that a proposed real estate investment will be supported by an expedited permitting process.

## **Demolition Delay Bylaw**

The Demolition Delay for Historically or Architecturally Significant Buildings Bylaw was enacted for the purpose of protecting and preserving significant buildings within the Town of Ashland that constitute or reflect distinctive features of the



architectural or historical resources of the Town. The Bylaw also aims to encourage the owners of such buildings to seek out alternative options to preserve, rehabilitate or restore such buildings rather than to demolish them, thereby promoting the public welfare and preserving the cultural heritage of the Town. To achieve these purposes, the Ashland Historical Commission is authorized to advise the Inspector of Buildings with respect to the issuance of permits for the demolition of significant buildings. The issuance of demolition permits of significant buildings is regulated as provided by the Bylaw.

---

## Existing Utilities

The drinking water supply is municipally owned and operated, with five groundwater wells and a filtration plant located next to the Hopkinton Reservoir. While Ashland owns and maintains its public sewer infrastructure, the Town purchases wastewater disposal service from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). NSTAR provides electricity throughout most of the MetroWest region, and telephone and high-speed internet services are available from Verizon and Comcast. According to the *Ashland Economic Policy Plan*, there are no known utility service issues that would compromise Ashland's ability to meet the needs of commercial, industrial, or residential uses.

---

## Vehicular Access and Circulation

Existing traffic conditions are based off of the *Ashland Grade Crossing Study* prepared by VHB, Inc. for the Town of Ashland in April 2010. Refer to Attachment H of this URP report for a copy of this study. The *Ashland Grade Crossing Study* presents the existing traffic characteristics along the Main Street system in downtown Ashland, identifies pedestrian and bicycle use (discussed further below), highlights current safety issues, provides a discussion of the existing roadway infrastructure and observations, and provides grade separation options as well as non grade separation or mitigation options.

### Existing Traffic Conditions

Primary vehicular access to the Project Area is from Main Street off of Union Street (Route 135) to the south and Pleasant Street at the northern end. Other important vehicular routes include Front Street and Homer Avenue. The traffic study area focuses on downtown Ashland in the vicinity of the existing grade crossings, specifically the section of Main Street from the intersection of Front Street, south to





the intersection of Summer Street/Homer Avenue and Cherry Street near the crossing. Data was collected on four key intersections:

- Main Street at Front Street;
- Main Street at Homer Avenue/Summer Street;
- The railroad crossing on Main Street; and
- The railroad crossing on Cherry Street.

Based on the traffic count data (24-hour ATR traffic counts obtained in September 2009), Main Street within the Project Area carries about 15,400 vehicles per day (vpd). Average daily demands on Front Street are about 7,000 vpd. Summer Street, between Park Road and Main Street, carries approximately 5,200 vpd and Cherry Street carries approximately 4,000 vpd.

According to the traffic operations analysis<sup>18</sup>, the intersection of Main Street at Front Street in the morning peak hour condition operates poorly, which is probably a result of the signal timing for the southbound left-turn movement. The southbound Main Street left-turn movement operates at LOS F in the evening condition, but the entire intersection operates at LOS D. The Main Street at Homer Avenue/Summer Street intersection operates well in the morning and evening peak hour conditions operating at LOS C and LOS B, respectively. The southbound left-turn movement only runs for seven seconds while the opposing northbound traffic is stopped. When the northbound through movement is permitted in advance, any vehicles waiting to turn left in the southbound directly are halted and, in turn, all the through traffic is also blocked. This results in a queue length of 470 feet in the morning peak hour condition and 500 feet in the evening peak hour condition for the Main Street southbound left-through lane.

## **Railroad Crossings**

There are three services using this railroad corridor: MBTA commuter passenger trains; Amtrak intercity passenger trains; and CSX freight trains. Two train grade crossings are within the Project Area: Main Street; and Cherry Street. According to the train event counts, these grade crossings, on average, have a total of 34 train movements per day, with train speeds ranging from 40 to 60 miles per hour over two main line tracks. The MBTA, Amtrak, and CSX operate trains over the crossing. The number of trains per day varies based on freight movement by CSX.



<sup>18</sup> The traffic operations analysis allows a level of service (LOS) rating to be assigned to the intersection. LOS is a qualitative measurement of the operation conditions of an intersection. The measurement represents the driver's perception of operation conditions, including such indicators as travel time, speed maneuverability, comfort, and safety. LOS C or better is defined as the generally acceptable condition; LOS D is considered the minimum acceptable condition.



Main Street is categorized as an urban minor arterial roadway with three traffic lanes crossing the rail line. There is also a parking lane on either side of the crossing. The Main Street crossing is a public at-grade crossing, owned by CSX and is not designated as a Quiet Zone. There are two highway traffic signals with simultaneous preemption. Other traffic control devices include: advanced warning systems; stop lines and other pavement markings; railroad crossing signals; and two railroad crossing signs. There are four train-activated gates with four mast-mounted flashers: two for the roadway; a pedestrian gate; and the driveway gate at Stone's Public House. There is also a warning bell and a median.

Cherry Street is classified as an urban collector road and consists of two lanes crossing over the rail line. Traffic control devices at this crossing include: advanced warning systems; a railroad crossing sign; and two automatic gates, one bell, and three mast-mounted flashers.

## **Traffic Study Findings and Recommendations**

The existing condition of vehicular and train traffic is anticipated to worsen over time. Future passenger rail and freight traffic is expected to increase, thereby worsening congestion. To begin addressing this, the following short-term, mid-term, and long-term improvements were identified in the traffic study.

### **Short-Term**

Traffic Signals, Roadway Improvements, and Pedestrian Crossings:

- Re-grade the Main Street grade crossing to repair existing dips in the pavement.
- Replace the existing signal systems with modern equipment and vehicle detection.
- Reduce the pedestrian crossing time to be slightly longer than the recommended minimums (according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials).
- Upgrade pedestrian crossings and accessible ramps to provide anti-slip and standardized crossing aprons.
- Reduce pedestrian crossing distances by creating pedestrian 'neck downs' along Main Street where appropriate.
- Eliminate the southbound left-turn movement from Main Street onto Homer Avenue or provide an exclusive left turn lane and through/right turn lane at Homer Avenue/Summer Street intersection.



- Provide two full lanes of traffic between Front Street and Homer Avenue/ Summer Street.
- Ensure adequate preemption time at the Main Street traffic light for emergency services, such as fire and police responses.
- Grade Crossings:
  - Install physical barriers that effectively barricade the railroad tracks from Stone's Public House and the sidewalks on both sides of Main Street to channel pedestrian movement.
  - Remove the school bus stop that is just south of the Main Street crossing.
  - Extend the gate arm at the driveway for Stone's Public House to completely block the driveway exit during train events. Modify driveway geometry to further discourage left turns onto Main Street.
  - Improve street lighting at the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings.
- Railroad Signals:
  - Reduce the total preemption time from 60 seconds to 45 seconds.
  - Continue coordination with the MBTA on current and future scheduling to minimize potential impacts to the grade crossings, particularly at the Main Street crossing.
  - Install a rear westbound home signal so that if an outbound train needs to be held for crossover at the interlocking, it does so outside of the advanced approach to the Main Street crossing. Coordinate with CSX as needed to achieve this.

#### **Mid-Term**

- Coordinate with the MBTA to convert their existing access road to a public bypass road.
- Find an alternative to the existing driveway at Stone's Public House that is capable of accommodating emergency vehicles.
- Relocate the police and fire stations to an area of Ashland where emergency response times would not be affected by grade crossings during a train event.
- If the Town decides to implement a Quiet Zone, this designation would be pursued through FRA. A Quiet Zone would lift the requirement for trains to blow their horn through both the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings.



- Modifications to the driveway at Stone's Public House would be required to comply with FRA's regulations, but additional measures can be employed to further increase the safety at the grade crossings:
  - Provide medians at the Cherry Street crossing or consider making Cherry Street one-way.
  - Add sidewalks and pedestrian gates at the Cherry Street crossing, and install physical barriers that effectively barricade the railroad tracks from pedestrian movement.
  - Install additional signage at the grade crossings.
  - Consider implementing Monitoring Programs and Operation Lifesaver Programs. The Monitoring Program could include people and/or cameras at the grade crossings.
- An alternative to establishing a Quiet Zone would be to install wayside horns in lieu of the train horns. This would direct the sound right at the grade crossing, but because there is still an audible warning, this would not be considered a Quiet Zone.

### **Long-Term**

- As a long-term priority, a grade separation option would offer the Town of Ashland the greatest level of public safety at the grade crossings and would enhance the quality of life through alleviating traffic congestion. A grade separation option is the most effective means to improve public safety at the grade crossings, but these options are costly and time consuming to achieve and may have adverse implications for neighboring businesses because of the physical and/or visual separations of Main Street that result from a grade separation.

---

## **Existing Parking**

Inadequate parking surfaced as a frequent complaint in recent surveys of downtown-area businesses.<sup>19</sup> ARC Services completed a parking study for the Ashland Redevelopment Authority in March 2006. This parking study concluded that there are a total of 315 public parking spaces (on-street or off-street in municipal lots) within the downtown district.<sup>20</sup> This parking study did not include parking spaces on

▼  
<sup>19</sup> *Town of Ashland Economic Policy Plan*, prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., August 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Total parking represents "legal" spaces (i.e., marked spaces and/or designated spaces). Several "created" parking spaces in both public and private parking areas were observed as part of the March 2006 ARC Service Parking Study.



privately-owned land for owners, employees and/or customers of the various businesses within the downtown district.

On-street parking inventory indicated that there are a total of 120 on-street parking spaces within the Project Area. On-street parking includes:

- 75 parking spaces along Front Street (12 spaces on the north side and 54 spaces on the south side);
- Approximately 31 parking spaces along Main Street;
- 10 parking spaces on Summer Street; and
- 4 spaces along Homer Avenue.

Off-street parking inventory indicated that there are a total of 195 off-street parking spaces. These include:

- 101 spaces at the municipal lot;
- 22 spaces in the Homer Avenue lot;
- 8 spaces in the Library lot; and
- 64 spaces in the Town Hall lot.

---

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Access and Circulation**

The public realm of Downtown Ashland does little to define the area as a destination as the streets are wide, and crossing them is unpleasant. Ashland has sidewalks in the downtown area, on most of the nearby residential streets, and along Pleasant Street between downtown and the MBTA station. A continuous sidewalk system does not exist in other commercial areas, but most residential neighborhoods have sidewalks.<sup>21</sup>

The vehicular volume and railroad crossings create a unique pedestrian and bicycle environment. As part of the *Ashland Grade Crossing Study*, pedestrian and bicycle counts were collected at both intersections along Main Street. Overall, the pedestrian environment and volume is typical of a suburban downtown area. Bicycle use is minimal, as would be expected in a suburban downtown and, according to Ashland's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), the Town recognizes the need for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.



<sup>21</sup> *Town of Ashland Economic Policy Plan*, prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., August 2010.



There are existing sidewalks on both sides of Main Street, and there are pedestrian gates that go down during train events. The unique layout of the Main Street corridor and the railroad crossing places emphasis on providing safe and accessible amenities designed to limit the conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular/rail traffic. Pedestrian crosswalks span all approaches at the intersections of Main Street at Front Street and Main Street at Homer Avenue/Summer Street. An exclusive pedestrian phase is provided in the signal phasing at both intersections. According to the information contained within the traffic controller cabinets, the crossings at Front Street are timed to provide approximately 34 seconds of “walk” and flashing “don’t walk” time for pedestrians, while the crossing at the Summer Street/Homer Avenue intersection is timed to provide 29 seconds. According to standard engineering practice, this amount of time is significantly higher than what is generally provided.

Bicycle facilities along the Main Street corridor are very limited. There are no provisions for bicycle use at the Main Street or Cherry Street grade crossing. Observations during commuter hour conditions noted that the study area had a small number of bicycle users.

---

## Public Transportation

### Commuter Railroad Station

In 2002, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) opened a commuter rail station on the Framingham/Worcester Line, as part of an effort to improve transportation options between Boston and Worcester and reduce traffic congestion on regional highways. The station is located on Pleasant Street, roughly two-thirds of a mile west of downtown Ashland. As of September 2010, thirteen inbound trains and eleven outbound trains serve downtown Ashland during the weekdays providing connection to Worcester/Union Station and Boston’s Back Bay and South Stations. The station includes 678 parking spaces half on the south side of the tracks and half on the north side.

The commuter station also serves residents of Hopkinton, Holliston, Milford, Marlborough, and six other communities. At least 427 people typically board commuter rail trains from the Ashland station on weekdays, including 182 or more from Ashland, and only 11 nonresidents commute to Ashland on the MBTA trains.<sup>22</sup>



---

<sup>22</sup> 2008–09 MBTA Systemwide Passenger Survey Reports, Central Transportation Planning Staff, June 2010.



CSX operates freight service and Amtrak, passenger rail service (along the Northeast Regional route), over the same tracks. Although the actual number of CSX freight trains varies somewhat, as many as forty-five trains per day pass through Downtown Ashland.<sup>23</sup>

## **Bus Service**

LIFT offers hourly bus service between Ashland, Framingham and Hopkinton. The LIFT 5 route services Framingham, Ashland and Hopkinton and stops at following Ashland locations:

- Downtown Ashland
- Ashland High School

The LIFT 6 route services the towns of Framingham, Ashland, Holliston, Milford, and Natick, and stops at the following Ashland locations:

- Market Basket
- Shaw's Supermarket

---

## **Existing and Planned Public Open Space**

There is no significant body of existing open space within the Project Area as majority of the Town's conservation or recreation space is located outside of downtown. A small public park, Marathon Park, is located on Pleasant Street in the northwest portion of the Project Area across from the MBTA commuter station. Also, a small town green exists on the corner of Main and Front Streets, which is considered inadequate for a large public gathering. Eight parcels totaling approximately eight acres within the Project Area are undeveloped and consist of non-forested wetlands and/or forest.<sup>24</sup>

The Sudbury River was dammed near downtown Ashland, forming what is now Mill Pond, which is just north of the Project Area. According to the Ashland March 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), *Planning for Change: Growing a Greener Community*, this location near downtown provides residents with easy access to boating, fishing, and walking opportunities making the pond a well-used



<sup>23</sup> Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), *Ashland Grade Crossing Study* (April 2010), Appendix A, Meeting Notes, K. Hughes to R. Carey, October 20, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, XXX.



recreational amenity.<sup>25</sup> Stone Park just south of Park Road and abuts the Project Area has two ball diamonds, an athletic field, and a skate park. The park also includes a children's play area. Sudbury River park off High Street abuts the western edge of the Project Area.

Other resource-based connections that cross the Ashland town line include the Hopkinton State Park, Hopkinton Reservoir, and Waushakum Pond. Ashland State Park, although completely within town, draws visitors from out of town.

### **Existing and Proposed Trails**

According to the Ashland OSRP, one of the primary recreation activities Ashland is walking or hiking natural trails. There are a number of trail systems for passive recreational use in Town Forest, around the Ashland Reservoir, and at the Warren Conference Center. Some trails in the Town, however, cross unprotected land or are aligned along roadways.

The Bay Circuit Trail traverses portions of Ashland and runs north and west into Framingham and Southborough and east into Sherborn. This trail and other broader green connections unite Ashland and its neighbors by providing recreational opportunities, natural resource protection and wildlife connections that traverse political boundaries. Currently, much of the Bay Circuit Trail is aligned on roads through town. The OSRP identifies the need for trail realignment for the Bay Circuit in order to provide more interesting hiking opportunities and for other trail systems to connect preserved open space/parks to the downtown core. Specifically, the OSRP identifies an action item to create a trail from downtown to the Town Forest.



---

## **Market Context**

A number of economic development and/or market studies have been prepared for Ashland. This section presents excerpts relative to Downtown Ashland from the November 2010 report *An Economic Development Vision and Action Plan for the Town of Ashland* prepared by Larry Koff and Associates and Bluestone Planning Group in order to provide context for Ashland's past and existing economic conditions. The action plan also provides recommendations for future and sustained economic growth in Ashland. Two additional studies also provide economic condition findings



<sup>25</sup> *Planning for Change: Growing a Greener Community*, Town of Ashland, March 2007. (website: [http://www.ashlandopenspace.org/docs/osrp/ashland\\_osrp\\_308\\_draft.pdf](http://www.ashlandopenspace.org/docs/osrp/ashland_osrp_308_draft.pdf))





relative to the Project Area and are also summarized below:

- *Ashland Economic Policy Plan* prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc. (November 2010); and
- *Retail Market Study: 125 Front Street* prepared by Lisa Davis Associates (September 2008).

Refer to Attachment I to this document for the full studies/reports.

---

### ***An Economic Development Vision and Action Plan for the Town of Ashland***

*An Economic Development Vision and Action Plan for the Town of Ashland* is intended to provide an understanding of the Town's economic base and to prepare an action plan for town-wide economic development.<sup>26</sup> This report's recommendations fall into two categories: (i) a vision to enhance Ashland's commercial character; and (ii) specific strategies and tools to retain and attract businesses, which are summarized below. The following presents excerpts of the vision and action plan relative to downtown Ashland. Refer to Attachment I to this document for the full reports.

#### **Ashland's Economic Base**

*Businesses in Ashland contribute 9 percent of the Town's tax base. Many of Ashland's largest employers are goods producers such as Kidde-Fenwal, Terumo Cardiovascular Systems, and MatTek. These businesses tend to be located along Route 135 and in the Downtown. By far, the highest number of Ashland businesses and largest number of employees are in the office/business services and contractors/construction sectors. These businesses are located in the Downtown as well as along the Route 135 and 126 corridors, and they are predominantly small businesses. This sector accounts for almost 18 percent of the total jobs followed closely by manufacturing and retail trade.*

#### **Issues and Opportunities**

*The following is a synopsis of the prominent current issues and potential opportunities identified through these surveys as well as discussions with residents, civic leaders and municipal staff.*

- *Current market conditions – Surprisingly, the vacancy rate for commercial uses in Ashland appears to be substantially lower than that found in the region.*



---

<sup>26</sup> *An Economic Development Vision and Action Plan for the Town of Ashland*, prepared by Larry Koff Associates and Bluestone Planning Group, November 2010.



- *Environmental contamination – Because of contamination released by the former Nyanza chemical company into nearby soils and waterways, areas near the current Nyanza Superfund site [which is adjacent to the Project Area south of Megunko Road] are saddled with various limitations on economic development. Some of these limitations, such as restrictions on building into the ground in certain locations, are imposed by state or federal environmental protection agencies. Quality economic development in these areas is further complicated by the stigma of past pollution, which may itself discourage potential projects.*
- *Zoning restraints –A major barrier to investment is the current zoning bylaw, the sign bylaw and the lack of a professional design review process.*
  - *The zoning bylaws are narrowly tailored to encourage specific hoped-for developments, and often lack flexibility to accommodate a sufficient range of suitable development. Too much emphasis has been given to the concept of mixed use overlay districts. The zoning districts need to be consolidated into some general categories which reflect a coherent vision such as has been recommended in the concluding section of the report for the downtown and the business corridors. The districts need to permit a reasonable mix of quality uses. These uses should reflect existing, not hoped for, market conditions. Land uses such as storage/warehousing, automotive, and drive-through services should be limited or prohibited in places where they would be unsuitable.*
  - *More focus needs to be placed on the design review process rather than on specific types of uses and densities. Landscaping, site planning, signage, and design features should reflect the desired character of Ashland’s downtown and commercial corridors.*
- *Limited space for expanding businesses – Some businesses are outgrowing their current locations and, if they cannot expand in their current locations, they are exploring the possibility of moving.*
- *Limited transportation access and visibility – Ashland lacks “gateway” entrances into town and is often perceived to be difficult to access via nearby thoroughfares (I-90 and I-495). Improving way-finding from regional highways and enhancing the entrances to the town’s commercial areas would lend Ashland a greater sense of place and stature within the region. Moreover, there is poor traffic circulation within Ashland, particularly between the Rte. 135 and Rte. 126 corridors, discouraging travel across the Town.*
- *Substandard infrastructure – The Town’s own water and sewer capacity may need to be expanded to accommodate new growth.*
- *The Downtown and Route 135 have a similar mix of residential, office, retail, and industrial businesses. ..there is no clear pattern of building setbacks, signage,*



*landscaping, and curb cuts. Many of the buildings are of poor construction or lack maintenance. The public infrastructure of sidewalks and street trees, likewise, is lacking.*

- *Low market profile – While the town has many notable retail and industrial businesses such as John Stone’s, Kidde-Fenwal, and Market Basket, the visibility of these companies is often lost because of a number of factors. The Town of Ashland’s commercial areas are often perceived to be some distance from the major regional road network.*
- *Other limitations include the substantial site contamination in the downtown area (such as along Megunko Road), the presence of the rail lines through the downtown, a limited number of large sites served by infrastructure, the prevalence of wetlands along the corridors, and a confusing pattern of zoning and decisions by various Boards, which have allowed secondary service, retail, and industrial use to locate in Town, often in the wrong place.*

The following opportunities as they relate to Downtown have been identified by the plan:

- *Potential development sites –...there are a large number of potential development and redevelopment sites [including the following areas/sites located within the Project Area: Megunko Road parcels; and Pleasant Street, including the Rail Transit District and, more specifically, the MetroWest site near the train station]. Some of these will require new zoning to attract desired redevelopment. The Planning Board and the ARA need to establish some prioritization of these sites so as to focus limited staff and volunteer board resources on the most viable opportunities.*
- *Interested business owners – Our surveys and discussions with local businesses and property owners has identified considerable support and interest in the Town by the business community. The Town needs to consider forming a group of local business leaders to advise the Town on appropriate business incentives and economic strategies.*
- *Commuter rail station – The commuter rail station is primarily used by Ashland commuters traveling toward Boston, and at present has virtually no relationship with nearby properties which include a church, light industrial businesses, and single family residences. However, future development in this area could make greater use of the station’s proximity, for example high density residences and limited convenience retail.*

### **Recommendations**

The following is a summary of recommendations from the *An Economic Development Vision and Action Plan for the Town of Ashland* to encourage village-scale mixed use commercial development in downtown Ashland (a number of which are consistent with the proposed public actions presented herein):

- **Implement grade crossing mitigation.**



- Secure a site suitable for a new public safety building and relocate the Police and Fire Departments out of Downtown Ashland, as recommended in the *Fire and Police Station Space Needs Assessment and Location Study* (2006).
- Secure state financial assistance for design and construction of a new public safety building and public realm enhancements on Main and Pleasant Streets.
- Prioritize the non-grade separation options outlined in the *Ashland Grade Crossing Study* (2010).
- **Revise Ashland Zoning Bylaw and, as necessary, the Zoning Map.** The zoning bylaw should be revised to identify general districts which focus on the “form” – i.e., the density, scale, site planning, and design of buildings – rather than a specific mix of uses.
- **Institute a streamlined permitting process.**
- **Improve the public realm.** Prioritize certain nodes and improve the public realm through the investment in infrastructure, roadway improvements, landscaping, and other planning tools to encourage the development of a coherent vision.
- **Retain and expand existing businesses through the creation of a business retention program.** This program will require support from representatives of the business community in cooperation with various Town boards and committees, including the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, and the ARA. The infrastructure and regulatory concerns of existing businesses must be addressed in a partnership with local business leaders to ensure that wherever possible local businesses are retained. Concurrently, the Town will need to undertake a focused program of attracting new commercial development at key sites.
- **Evaluate the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) in Downtown.**
- **Update the Ashland Comprehensive Plan.** Review the Capital Improvements Plan to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Undertake the planning of key sites.**

---

### ***Ashland Economic Policy Plan***

Provided as supplemental market context information relative to the Project Area, the following section presents excerpts of the August 2010 *Ashland Economic Policy Plan* prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Refer to Attachment I for the full report.



*Downtown Ashland has basic pedestrian infrastructure, but it does not have the qualities of a pedestrian-oriented place. A downtown without such qualities usually has trouble attracting and keeping enough stores to support a viable retail base, and to some extent that can be seen in Ashland because most opportunities to purchase goods and services locally exist in the auto-oriented commercial areas along Route 135 and Route 126.*

### **Downtown - Business Development**

*Downtown Ashland is home to municipal services, institutions such as a church and post office, membership organizations, and approximately seventy-five businesses: banks, restaurants and take-out food service establishments, beauty salons and other personal services, some retail stores, business services, a few small manufacturing firms, and business, professional, and medical offices.<sup>27</sup> There are other offices within walking distance of downtown, too. In general, Downtown Ashland is an employment and services center more than a retail center. The businesses tend to be specialized, and there are not many businesses that generate or cater to pedestrian traffic. People seem to go to the downtown area for a specific, and likely single, purpose.*

*Due to its limited number of retail businesses, Downtown Ashland "leaks" a considerable amount of resident spending on goods and services. Under current conditions, approximately 54 percent of consumer spending by households within a mile of the downtown area occurs in other parts of Ashland and in other communities. Although some types of retail clearly serve both local and non-local customers, such as electronics and appliances, beer and wine, gasoline stations, and health care products, there is considerable leakage in clothing, sporting goods, furniture, groceries, food services, and general merchandise. The demand for goods such as office supplies and home furnishings is more than twice the total sales volume for these products within a one-mile radius of downtown, and the demand for clothing and accessories is a staggering 98 times total downtown sales.*

### **Downtown - Vacant or Underutilized**

#### **Land**

*The most obvious example of underutilized land in Downtown Ashland is also one of its most visible locations: the parcels extending from the corner of Main Street and Front Street easterly along Front Street (125 Front Street). This area currently consists of a small town green, the barbershop building and the parking lot surrounding it, and vacant land that the Ashland Redevelopment Authority purchased from the MBTA in 2005. Ashland already recognizes the potential benefits of redeveloping this area, having commissioned a downtown vision plan in 2005 and follow-up studies in 2008 [the Retail Market Study: 125 Front Street discussed further below]. On the north side of Front Street there are several abutting non-*



<sup>27</sup> Dun and Bradstreet, Ashland Business List (2009, 2010).



*residential parcels with redevelopment potential as well. In general, the downtown properties composed of one-story buildings could be candidates for vertical redevelopment under the right market conditions, provided that Ashland's zoning offers enough flexibility and density to support small-scale projects.*

#### **Pleasant Street - Business Development**

*Approximately fourteen businesses operate on Pleasant Street, including light industry, and most of the businesses occupy stand-alone buildings. The Town recently designated an industrial property on Pleasant Street as a Priority Development Site under M.G.L. c. 43D. Also on Pleasant Street is the MetroWest Worship Center, located close to the train station. In most cases, the nonresidential uses are not complementary uses to the neighborhood, except perhaps the Veterans of Foreign Wars property, which provides a local gathering spot for club members.*

#### **Pleasant Street - Vacant or Underutilized**

##### **Land**

*There are some small tracts of undeveloped land as well as vacant properties on Pleasant Street, generally along the railroad tracks on the south side of the street. The town has designated one of the underutilized properties, Gamewell at 60 Pleasant Street, as a Chapter 43D Priority Development Site.*

---

### **Retail Market Study: 125 Front Street, Ashland, MA**

A site-specific market study was performed by Lisa Davis Associates (LDA) to assess the market potential to support commercial space and to determine achievable rents for a commercial space at the 125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment project site. This section presents key excerpts from the market study. The full report is included as Attachment I of this URP report.

*Primary and Secondary Trade Areas for Ashland were defined by LDA by determining the geographic area from which a retail or service entity in downtown generates its sales. The Primary Trade Area (PTA) is the geographic area from which 70 to 75 percent of retail sales in the retail study area can be expected to originate.<sup>28</sup> The PTA represents the market area where downtown businesses such as convenience goods and service businesses could expect the highest penetration of the market to come from. Based on LDA's research, there is an estimated 44,873 people residing within the PTA with a median household income in the PTA is \$82,431, which is expected to grow at a rate of 4.6 percent per annum to \$101,380 in*



---

<sup>28</sup> For the purposes of this study, the primary trade area has been defined as a 3-mile radius from the project area.



2013.<sup>29</sup> Over the next five years, the population is expected to grow at an annual rate of 0.34 percent to reach an estimated 45,645 persons in 2013.

The Secondary Trade Area (STA) represents the area in which approximately 10 to 15 percent of retail sales in the retail study area can be expected to originate, or an area from which consumers come to downtown to buy comparison and specialty goods.<sup>30</sup> There are an estimated 107,546 persons residing within a 5-mile radius of the Project Area and the per capita income is \$46,133.

Retail leakage represents the difference between money spent by residents in the PTA on retail goods and services and the estimated sales revenue by retail establishments in the PTA. If the money spent exceeds sales revenues, it means that residents of the PTA are spending money outside of the PTA, and that there is a demand for additional retail facilities within the trade area. Overall retail demand exceeds retail supply in the PTA by \$108.5 million. Examination of the categorical sales and expenditures estimates as shown on the table below indicates that in seven categories demand (expenditures) exceeds supply (sales). In four categories supply (sales) exceeds demand (expenditures) - Auto Parts, Accessories and Tire Stores, Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores, Food and Beverage Stores and Health and Personal Care Stores. The category with the largest amount of leakage are Apparel and Accessory stores followed by Eating and Drinking Establishments.

The findings of the market study determined that there is demand for additional retail facilities in the PTA. There is a gap of more than \$108 million between supply of the relevant categories and demand in the PTA. Assuming one third of this gap can be accommodated by additional retail facilities in the PTA, this represents approximately \$36 million in potential sales that could take place in the PTA if appropriate and well managed retail stores in certain categories were to open. Assuming that the average retail store experiences sales in the range of \$200 to \$225 per square foot<sup>31</sup>, there is a potential for approximately 160,000 to 180,000 square feet of additional retail business in the PTA. Based upon this analysis, there appears to be sufficient retail demand to support the proposed 8,193 sq. ft of retail space. Rents in the range of \$14 to \$16 per square foot would be achievable with national tenants paying on the lower end and local tenants paying in the higher range. The market study indicated the greatest demand for apparel stores and eating and drinking establishments. There is little demand for food stores, furniture stores, auto parts stores, and health and personal care stores. Given the small amount of retail space and the project's location, the likely tenants for this space are small local "mom and pop" retailers.

▼  
.....  
<sup>29</sup> Environmental Systems Research, Inc. (ESRI)

<sup>30</sup> For the purposes of this study, the secondary trade area has been defined as a 5-mile radius from the project area.

<sup>31</sup> Based on data from *Dollars & Cents of Shopping Center, 2007* prepared by the Urban Land Institute.



## Area Eligibility Designation

In order to designate the Project Area as an Urban Renewal Area, the Ashland Redevelopment Authority (ARA) is required to make a finding that the Project Area is either substandard, decadent, or blighted open in accordance with the Regulations under M.G.L. Chapter 121B. Such a designation will enable the ARA to undertake certain revitalization activities to stimulate economic development within the Project Area. Consequently, this report assembles data from a variety of sources to support its recommendation that the Project Area can be designated as "decadent" and that it is improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise.

The data includes Town records identifying parcel ownership, land and building assessments, square footage of land and buildings and building usage. In addition, in July 2010, VHB, Inc. performed site inspections of the parcels and building exteriors, and has set up a searchable database of these properties.

Undertaking urban renewal action, such as the acquisition of private property, requires that a project area is determined to be substandard, decadent or blighted open. The most appropriate finding for this area is that it is decadent. Decadent is defined as:

*Decadent - an area which is detrimental to the sound growth of a community as a result of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation, obsolete, or in need of major maintenance or repair, or because much of the real estate in recent years has been sold, or taken for nonpayment of taxes upon foreclosure of mortgages, or because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced, or because of a substantial change in business or economic conditions, or because of inadequate light, air, or open space, or because of excessive land coverage or because diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes or obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise, or by reason of any combination of the foregoing conditions (760 CMR 12.01)...*

Presently, the Project Area exhibits many of the decadent conditions described in this definition, such as diversity of property ownerships, irregular lot size, and parcels with obsolete buildings, among others. Further, this URP demonstrates that the Project Area has the potential of generating major public benefits that cannot be achieved by the ordinary operations of private enterprise alone and, therefore, there is a need for governmental intervention.





---

## Area Eligibility Findings

As required by M.G.L. c. 121B, section 12.02(2), this section presents the data and descriptive material that demonstrate that the Project Area can be considered decadent, as defined above. The Project Area is decadent due to a variety of factors, including underutilized land, incompatible land uses, diversity of property ownership, irregular lot size and/or shape, buildings in disrepair, inadequate vehicular and pedestrian access, and lack of public open space. Also, redevelopment of downtown Ashland has been hindered because of known and/or perceived site contamination.



---

### Underutilized Parcels

*Findings: There are key properties in the Urban Renewal Area that are fully or partially vacant. Approximately 11.2 percent of the parcel area within the Project Area have been identified as “vacant.” These parcels have a higher and better use.*

Generally, the majority of downtown buildings are occupied. Out of the 134 parcels total that were surveyed by VHB, Inc. in July 2010, there are 8 parcels that have been identified as being “vacant” as a current land use, or 11.2 percent of the total parcel area that makes up the Project Area. “Vacant” includes parcels that are totally and/or partially vacant as well as parking lots.

In terms of underutilized parcels, there are key properties in the Project Area that could be better utilized with a higher and better use. For example, the 125 Front Street project area currently consists of a small town green, a small retail building with a barbershop and the parking lot surrounding it, and vacant land that the ARA purchased from the MBTA in 2004 with Town Meeting approval. The Gamewell Parcel (located at 60 Pleasant Street) consists of an existing building that is considered “obsolete” because it has been vacant for an extended period of time (approximately six years). The site was previously used as an industrial/manufacturing use. The Town, with state approval, has designated this underutilized property as a Chapter 43D Priority Development Site. Megunko Road consists of a number of industrially zoned parcels that are currently used for storage, stockpiling, and/or truck parking and, therefore, are considered to be underutilized. Lastly, the area surrounding the MBTA commuter station (the Proposed TOD Development area) consists of some small tracts of undeveloped land as well as a few vacant and/or underutilized properties along the south side of Pleasant Street abutting the train tracks.



---

## Potential for Site Contamination

*Findings: There are potentially contaminated sites in the Project Area. The existence or perception of contamination makes it unlikely that these sites will be redeveloped without public action.*

According to DEP's records, there are four "open" contaminated sites (Release Tracking Numbers (RTNs), or "21E sites") within the Project Area. Two "open" contaminated sites are located within the Proposed TOD Development area and are slated for acquisition: 280-330 Pleasant Street; and 330 Pleasant Street. One "open" contaminated site is located within Megunko Road Commercial Park Project area and is slated for acquisition: 2 Megunko Road. Due to prior industrial soil contamination, no investment is being made to upgrade the infrastructure-roads, water and sewer as well as the buildings in the Project Area. Additionally, contamination has been released into nearby soils, groundwater and waterways by the U.S. EPA Superfund Nyanza Chemical Waste Dump site just south of the Project Area. Due to uncertainty about the status of DEP regulations for site reuse, areas near the current Nyanza Superfund site, including Megunko Road are saddled with various limitations on economic development, such as restrictions on building into the ground in certain locations and the stigma of past pollution – both of which discourages potential reinvestment and redevelopment projects.



---

## Incompatible Land Uses

*Finding: An even pattern of zoning has allowed secondary service, retail, and industrial use to locate in Town, often in the wrong place.*

Inadequate buffers exist between commercial/industrial uses and residential uses. This is most evident in the Project Area along Pleasant and Front Streets. The south side of Pleasant Street (including the Proposed TOD Development area) consists of industrial uses, which are allowed by zoning, but are incompatible with the existing residential uses on north side of the street. Along Front Street there is a mix of residential with commercial uses, including a lumber yard that is proposing to expand their retail operations within the Front Street Commercial Expansion area.



---

## Diversity of Property Ownership and Irregular Lot Size/Shape

*Findings: The ownership, use, and size/shape of the privately-owned land within the Project Area varies making it difficult to assemble land in order to redevelop large areas or for existing businesses to expand.*

Eight-eight percent of the parcels are privately-owned and the Town owns 10% of developable land within the Project Area most of which are not contiguous (Table 2-1). One of the largest private land owners within the Project Area, Latter Rain Facilities, Inc., owns four parcels on Pleasant Street totaling 4.78 acres, or 6.1% of developable land in the Project Area. These parcels are currently zoned ADD "A." The wide variety of private land owners with non-contiguous parcels restricts business expansion and growth in downtown Ashland. Also, the collection of small and/or irregular lots with buildings set back erratically from the road and, in some cases, multiple buildings existing on a single lot as well as the number of older/historic buildings make reuse difficult. The ability for existing businesses or landowners to expand or reuse of the lots and/or structures are limited without land assemblage. These limitations are evident at 125 Front Street and Megunko Road, for which land assemblage is proposed in order to encourage redevelopment. Furthermore, other parcels are land-locked and do not have adequate parking at Main and Summer Streets.



---

## Inadequate Vehicular Access

*Finding: Downtown Ashland lacks "gateway" entrances into town and is often perceived to be difficult to access via nearby thoroughfares.*

Main Street within the Project Area carries about 15,400 vehicles per day on average. According to the traffic operations analysis, the Main Street/Front Street intersection in the morning peak hour condition operates poorly, which is probably a result of the signal timing for the southbound left-turn movement. Additionally, the presence of the rail lines through downtown restricts vehicle traffic circulation (specifically at the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings). Regarding access to sites, a number of downtown industrial sites lack signage at their entry points, such as those located on Megunko Road.



---

## Need for Public Open Space Improvements

*Finding: Downtown Ashland lacks adequate public open space and/or gathering spaces.*

According to the Town's Assessor's parcel data, there is no public open space land use within the Project Area. A small public park, Marathon Park, is located on Pleasant Street in the northwest portion of the Project Area across from the MBTA commuter station. Also, a small town green exists on the corner of Main and Front Streets, which is considered inadequate for a large public gathering. Eight parcels totaling approximately eight acres are undeveloped and consist of non-forested wetlands and/or forest. This is largely due to the fact that these undeveloped parcels are landlocked or lack adequate access.

The Sudbury River was dammed near downtown Ashland, forming what is now Mill Pond, which is just north of the Project Area. While this location near downtown provides residents with easy access to recreational activities the lack of adequate connections limits access to this existing open space amenity. Also, Stone Park just south of Park Road and abuts the Project Area has two ball diamonds, an athletic field, and a skate park. The park also includes a children's play area. Sudbury River park off High Street abuts the western edge of the Project Area. There is a need to provide better connections to the existing public open spaces surrounding downtown Ashland.



---

## Poor Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation and Accommodation

*Finding: Downtown Ashland has basic pedestrian infrastructure, but it does not have the qualities of a pedestrian-oriented place. Bicycle facilities throughout the Project Area are very limited.*

The public realm of Downtown Ashland does little to define the area as a destination. The streets are wide, and crossing them is unpleasant. At times, the roadway width acts as a barrier between each side of the street.

There are no provisions for bicycle use along Main Street corridor and specifically at the Main Street or Cherry Street railroad crossing. Observations during commuter hour conditions noted that the study area had a small number of bicycle users (according to the *Ashland Grade Crossing Study*).



## URP Conformity to Local Comprehensive Plan

In accordance with 760 CMR 12.02(2)(f), this URP is based on local survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010 and conforms to the most recent comprehensive master plan undertaken for the Town of Ashland in 2003 – the *Ashland Comprehensive Plan*.<sup>32</sup> The *Ashland Comprehensive Plan* is a document that is intended to serve as a guide for the future growth of Ashland and is “the basis for redevelopment and master planning within the community.” The Plan recommends what Ashland should preserve from its past, as well as the work needed to enhance the town and guide its physical and social development. The “Directions for the Future”, or goals and policies of the Plan, are categorized into the following:

1. General Goals & Policies
2. Housing
3. Open Space & Recreation
4. Environment
5. Economic Development
6. Transportation
7. Town Facilities
8. Historic Preservation
9. Downtown
10. Outlying Areas

The *Ashland Comprehensive Plan* identifies the need to “re-energize the downtown area and the adjacent rail transit district.” Based on a resident survey conducted in 2000 and a focus group in 2001, residents “strongly and somewhat strongly” supported the following actions that relate to downtown Ashland and are addressed in this URP making it in conformance with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan:

- Promoting a sense of community;
- Insuring that neighborhoods are well buffered from commercial areas;
- Providing sidewalks/pedestrian facilities on major streets;
- Increase permanent open space;
- Maintain Ashland's historical character; and
- Increase commuter rail service.

▼  
.....  
<sup>32</sup> *Ashland Comprehensive Plan*, Town of Ashland, 2003.



## Needs Assessment

Based on the eligibility findings presented above, the following is required in order to attract private investment and new business and/or residents to downtown Ashland:

1. Consolidated/create contiguous developable lots;
2. Understand the level of contamination, viable reuse options and required remediation;
3. Buffer residential uses from industrial uses;
4. Protect historic resources;
5. Better vehicle access to downtown and specific sites (e.g., industrially zoned land);
6. Safe pedestrian facilities and bicycle accommodations;
7. Better organized parking to serve land-locked parcels at Main and Summer Streets;
8. Adequate public gathering space; and
9. Connect public open spaces surrounding downtown.

At minimum, the following public actions are required to encourage private investment in downtown Ashland:

- Acquire vacant/underutilized parcels and demolish vacant buildings (if reuse is not viable);
- Consolidate irregular/vacant/underutilized lots for disposition;
- Identify potentially contaminated sites, conduct site assessments and remediate to a standard appropriate for reuse/redevelopment;
- Identify and plan for infrastructure needs of potential businesses;
- Implement recommended vehicle circulation improvements (i.e., signal timing); and
- Plan and implement public realm improvements (pedestrian and bicycle facilities, public open space and connections to existing open space).

Refer to Section 3, *Project Objectives* for goals and objectives as well as the specific public actions identified to realize the goals of this URP.



<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background Information .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Project Area Context.....	2
Local Area History .....	2
Project Area Today .....	4
Existing Property Ownership.....	4
Existing Structures .....	5
Existing Site Contamination .....	9
Existing Land Use .....	10
Existing Zoning .....	12
Other Land Use Regulations.....	15
Existing Utilities.....	17
Vehicular Access and Circulation .....	17
Existing Parking .....	21
Bicycle and Pedestrian Access and Circulation .....	22
Public Transportation .....	23
Existing and Planned Public Open Space .....	24
Market Context .....	25
<i>An Economic Development Vision and Action Plan for the Town of Ashland.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Ashland Economic Policy Plan .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Retail Market Study: 125 Front Street, Ashland, MA .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<b>Area Eligibility Designation.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Area Eligibility Findings.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Underutilized Parcels.....	34
Potential for Site Contamination .....	35
Incompatible Land Uses .....	35
Diversity of Property Ownership and Irregular Lot Size/Shape .....	36
Inadequate Vehicular Access .....	36
Need for Public Open Space Improvements .....	37
Poor Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation and Accommodation.....	37
<b>URP Conformity to Local Comprehensive Plan.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Needs Assessment .....</b>	<b>39</b>

# 3

## Project Objectives

---

### Introduction

Since its inception in XXX, the Ashland Redevelopment Authority (ARA) has made economic development its mission and is currently focusing on improving the business environment in downtown Ashland. The ARA's recent focus has been the redevelopment of 125 Front Street and the preparation of this URP for downtown Ashland. To support this URP, the ARA created a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) in 2010 to provide the community's perspective and help guide this URP.

This URP builds upon previous and current studies for Ashland and the downtown areas. Since the early 1960s, Ashland has prepared four comprehensive plans, the most recent one being the *2003 Comprehensive Plan*, which "serves as the basis for redevelopment and master planning within the community."<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Town has prepared or commissioned other plans and/or studies since 2002, such as the *Community Development Plan* of 2004<sup>2</sup> and the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* of 2007.<sup>3</sup> In February 2006, Ashland completed the *Downtown Vision* – a plan prepared by Von Grossman and Company that focuses on urban design and the public realm, and identifies some sites with reuse possibilities.<sup>4</sup> In October 2009, Ashland joined seventy-five other Massachusetts communities that have designated sites for business development under the Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting Program. The decision to designate two Chapter 43D Priority Development Sites made Ashland eligible for a new planning grant, this time to evaluate the development potential of several other properties. More recently, in June 2010, the Ashland Historical Commission has just completed an extensive historic resources inventory. Additionally, various economic development plans and site-specific market studies have been conducted, including: the August 2010 *An Economic Development Vision and*

▼  
.....  
<sup>1</sup> *Ashland Comprehensive Plan*, Town of Ashland, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *Ashland Executive Order 418 Plan*, prepared for the Town of Ashland by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services, and Brian K. Barber, June 2004.

<sup>3</sup> *Planning for Change: Growing a Greener Community*, Town of Ashland, March 2007. (website: [http://www.ashlandopenspace.org/docs/osrp/ashland\\_osrp\\_308\\_draft.pdf](http://www.ashlandopenspace.org/docs/osrp/ashland_osrp_308_draft.pdf))

<sup>4</sup> *Downtown Vision*, prepared by Von Grossman & Company, prepared for the Town of Ashland, February 2006.



*Action Plan for the Town of Ashland; the August 2020 Ashland Economic Policy Plan; and the September 2008 Retail Market Study: 125 Front Street.*

This section presents the overall redevelopment strategy of the URP and its goals and objectives, including the specific public actions proposed to spur private development. It also describes the proposed conditions (i.e., changes to design review procedures; land use and/or zoning), and presents an implementation plan as the next steps and timeline for the revitalization of Ashland’s downtown.

---

## Overall Redevelopment Goal and Strategy

In order to provide guidance for the future development of downtown Ashland and the subsequent URP, the Ashland Redevelopment Authority (ARA) and the Citizens Advisory Committee worked with Town Representatives to establish an overall goal to direct the recommendations contained in this URP for the downtown. The overall goal for the Ashland URP is:

*To increase the vitality of the historic downtown by creating a more vibrant area through a series of public actions intended to stimulate private investment resulting in a revitalized town center with a mix of uses and an enhanced, pedestrian-friendly environment for all the people of Ashland.*

---

## Urban Renewal Plan Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives presented herein evolved out of the public participation process as well as build upon past studies. The URP redevelopment recommendations are intended to address the findings described above and improve deficient and inadequate conditions, as identified in Section 2, *Area Eligibility* and aim to proactively revitalize the Project Area.

The overall vision for the downtown focuses on strengthening the sense of place, enhancing a small-town character and increasing the vitality of the downtown. In order to achieve the above-mentioned overall goal of the Ashland Downtown URP, the following five goals have been established:

1. Encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized land and buildings.
2. Support expansion of existing businesses.
3. Promote a variety of housing options, including affordable housing.
4. Improve access to and mobility throughout downtown.
5. Reinforce the sense of a “downtown” through a pedestrian-friendly environment.
6. Create opportunities for public open space.

7. Rehabilitate/redevelop distressed property.

The following lists the redevelopment objectives associated with each goal.

1. To encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized land and buildings.
  - a. Create contiguous developable land.
  - b. Understand contamination conditions, required remediation and reuse potential.
  - c. Solicit interest from developers and new or existing businesses.
  - d. **Rezone developable land, as needed.**
  - e. Identify infrastructure needs to support new development.
  - f. Work with property owners to become project partners and to address infrastructure and/or regulatory concerns.
  - g. Promote sustainable design for all new development and rehabilitation projects.
2. Support expansion of existing businesses.
  - a. Work closely with existing businesses to identify expansion limitations and needs, such as adequate infrastructure.
  - b. Assemble parcels to facilitate redevelopment.
  - c. Encourage the expansion of commercial and industrial businesses at appropriate sites, such as along Front Street and surrounding the MBTA commuter station.
3. To provide a variety of housing options, including affordable housing.
  - a. Reuse underutilized parcels and/or buildings within existing residential areas for housing.
  - b. Ensure the development of affordable housing units.
4. To improve vehicle access to and mobility throughout downtown.
  - a. Improve vehicular circulation, specifically along the Main Street corridor.
  - b. Improve railroad crossings.
  - c. Improve access to developable parcels, specifically truck access to underutilized industrial parcels.
  - d. Provide bicycle accommodations.
  - e. Connect downtown to the MBTA commuter station.
5. To reinforce the sense of a “downtown” through a pedestrian-friendly environment.
  - a. Improve pedestrian crossings, specifically at railroad crossings.
  - b. Improve streetscapes, including sidewalks, lighting, etc.
6. To create opportunities for public open space.
  - a. Re-define/re-establish the town green.
  - b. Improve/expand existing downtown open space.
  - c. Develop an integrated open space network through downtown by connecting new and existing parks.
  - d. Improve pedestrian access to the riverfront.
7. Rehabilitate/redevelop distressed property.
  - a. Rehabilitate historic structures.
  - b. Remove dilapidated/vacant structures.

All new development and infrastructure projects are recommended to follow sustainable development principles. Some examples of energy efficient and sustainable development strategies include:

- Reuse of site materials
- Local materials for development
- Local plantings
- Efficiency in roadway and building design

- Efficient storm-water and drainage systems
- Permeable paving materials in parking and pedestrian areas
- Energy-efficient lighting
- Green-roofs

---

## **Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Project/Improvements**

In order to meet the URP goals and objectives presented above, the following nine key redevelopment projects or revitalization initiatives are recommended along with specific public actions intended to stimulate and support private development/investment within the Project Area:

1. 125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project
2. Police and Fire Redevelopment Project
3. Front Street Commercial Expansion Support
4. Gamewell Parcel Redevelopment Project
5. Megunko Road Commercial Park Project
6. Pleasant Street Riverfront Park Project
7. Proposed TOD Development Support
8. Railroad Crossing Improvements
9. Open Space Network
10. Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property

Refer to Figure L-1 for the locations of the proposed revitalization and redevelopment projects or improvements.



---

### **125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project**

125 Front Street is located on the eastern edge of Ashland's downtown adjacent to the former rail station. Front Street has a mixture of residential and retail including Ashland Lumber, Catch 22 Restaurant, North Star Elks Lodge, Sovereign Bank, and Paves TV. Landmark buildings, such as the Ashland Public Library and the former rail station are close to the redevelopment site.

The 125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project includes strengthening the edge of Front Street and extending the boundary of downtown by introducing new residential units (including affordable units) with ground-floor retail. The project is proposed on a 1.56-acre site purchased from the MBTA by the ARA with Town



Meeting approval in 2004 with Community Preservation Act funds. In 2006, the ARA hired a consulting firm to study the parcel and develop a conceptual plan for redevelopment. The plan, which includes a 3-story 29,400 gross square foot building with ground-floor retail and a total of 14 housing units (four of which will be affordable) on the second and third floors has been accepted by the Ashland Planning Board and endorsed by the ARA. New curb-side parking for shopper convenience and an improved pedestrian environment, including pocket parks and new sidewalks are also proposed. The ARA will be approaching the abutting private land owner for a possible public/private partnership for the redevelopment of this area.

The Town has given a crossing easement for the proposed green space at the intersection of Main and Front Streets. A second public open space is proposed on the east side of this building and directly opposite the newly renovated library. It is located to maintain the view between two of the Town's most historic structures, the Ashland Public Library and the former rail station. This open space is envisioned as a civic space that supports the library functions with a place for readings, performances, or simply a sunny place to read.

- ARA Action:** Initiate a public/private partnership with the private property owner.
- ARA Action:** To assemble multiple parcels for disposition.
- ARA Action:** To release Request for Proposal to solicit interest from developers/joint venture with private land owner.
- ARA Action:** To upgrade Front Street with LID lighting, underground utilities and new sidewalks.

#### **New Downtown Public Open Space**

- ARA Action:** To redefine the existing Town Green at the intersection of Main and Front Streets.
- ARA Action:** To define a second public open space directly opposite the newly renovated library as a civic space that supports the library functions with a place for readings, performances, or just to read.



---

### **Police and Fire Redevelopment Project**

The current fire station on Main Street is inadequate for Ashland's fire department's needs, but the historic building is a valuable downtown landmark and contributes to the scale and character of the center. This building has strong potential for reuse, either alone, or as part of a larger development. The police station is also functionally inadequate for the Town's needs, does not add to the overall character of the downtown, and has limited opportunity for reuse as a commercial property.



Once the Town secures a site for relocation of the police headquarters and fire and rescue operations (based on a feasibility study by others), demolition of the existing police station and renovation of the historic fire station is proposed. This would facilitate construction of a mixed use development, including ground-floor retail and residential units on the second and third floors as well as parking spaces in the rear of the building(s). The ARA may form a joint partnership with the abutting private property to either acquire that property or enter into a joint venture redevelopment. Combining the publically-owned parcels with the privately-owned parcel may enhance redevelopment opportunities.

- ARA Action:* To transfer ownership to ARA.
- ARA Action:* To support relocation of the police headquarters and fire and rescue operations to another site elsewhere in town.
- ARA Action:* To demolish police headquarters building.
- ARA Action:* To acquire the abutting privately-owned parcel or form a joint venture with the property owner to make redevelopment of all parcels more feasible.
- ARA Action:* To upgrade Front Street with LID lighting, underground utilities and new sidewalks.



---

### **Front Street Commercial Expansion Support**

There are a number of businesses between Front Street and the Sudbury River that represent an opportunity for expansion of existing commercial uses. The ARA is prepared to support commercial expansion in this area, if requested.

- ARA Action:* To support expansion commercial expansion needs, such as parking (as a compatible use), pedestrian access, acquisition, etc.



---

### **Gamewell Parcel Redevelopment Project**

The Gamewell parcel is located at 60 Pleasant Street and was previously used for as an industrial/manufacturing use. The building is considered obsolete because it has been vacant of commercial uses for approximately six years. The site has been designated by the Town by state approval as a 43D Priority Development Site.

- ARA Action:* To acquire property (and demolish existing building, if required for redevelopment purposes) and solicit interest from developers.



---

### Megunko Road Commercial Park Project

Due to known or the potential for contamination at numerous sites along Megunko Road, redevelopment of this area is perceived as being too expensive. Public action, through the ARA, is needed to complete initial remediation actions, including clean-up (remediation, as needed), building demolition, and redevelopment of multiple parcels into a commercial park.

- ARA Action:* As a long-term action, ARA to acquire all seven parcels and conduct clean-up activities to a level that makes redevelopment feasible.
- ARA Action:* To assemble multiple privately-owned parcels for disposition.
- ARA Action:* Solicit interest from developers.



---

### Pleasant Street Riverfront Park Project

Includes the expansion of Marathon Park onto adjacent land (including the VFW site) to improve public riverfront access and provide an open space amenity in support of the proposed Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project (described below).

- ARA Action:* To acquire two privately-owned parcels.
- ARA Action:* To plan for and redevelop into public open space.



---

### Proposed Transit-Oriented Development Project

Any development at or around the Rail Station needs to be closely coordinated with planning for the Gayner property to the south, because their success will be interdependent. Connections to the area from the MBTA access road, Megunko Road, proposed paths connecting to Downtown adjacent to the rail right-of-way, Pleasant Street and pathways around the Sudbury River are all set to converge on this location.

To encourage the redevelopment of the area surrounding the existing MBTA commuter station into a pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented development (TOD) with higher densities and a mix of uses, including new housing opportunities, and retail and office uses that support and make efficient use of transportation infrastructure. In general, the ARA will be prepared to support private developer needs in this area, including clean-up and reuse of vacant parcels.

- ARA Action:* To support TOD actions by property owners to create a mix of uses linked to passenger rail service at the adjacent MBTA facility.



- **ARA Action:** Closely coordinate any redevelopment with planning for the Gayner property to the south.



---

## Railroad Crossing Improvements

Based on the findings of the *Town of Ashland Grade Crossing Study*, a number of the options are recommended. The ARA is prepared to support Town actions associated with railroad crossing improvements to improve the safety of the existing roadway crossings over the train tracks at the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings.

These options are summarized below. Tables 5-1 and 5-2 of the *Town of Ashland Grade Crossing Study* (Attachment H) summarize the entire list of grade separation and non-grade separation options that were established.

- **ARA Action:** To support the Town in modifying/upgrading railroad signals at the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings. To implement signal improvements/synchronize signals.
- **ARA Action:** To work with the Town in implementing a Quiet Zone (this would lift the requirement for trains to blow their horn through both the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings). As an alternative, install wayside horns in lieu of the train horns, which would direct the sound right at the grade crossing.



---

## Open Space Network

The planned open space improvements in downtown include the new public open space opportunities proposed as part of the 125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project as well as an expanded and improved Marathon “Riverfront” Park on Pleasant Street. In addition, a fifteen-foot-wide reservation has been created to accommodate this path along the back of the 125 Front Street parcel, to link to a future path system connecting to the MBTA station and other town destinations.

- **ARA Action:** To plan for and develop multi-use path as part of the 125 Front Street Development Project. (A fifteen-foot-wide reservation has been created to accommodate this path along the back of the parcel, to link to a future path system connecting to the MBTA station and other town destinations.)



---

## Summer and Main Street Site

This corner is an important gateway into Downtown Ashland from the northwest and northeast. Overall, there is no strong aesthetic that fits with the other structures in Downtown or that gives visitors and residents a sense they have arrived in a historic downtown with a vibrant street life. Public action at this site (acquisition and demolition) would result in the opportunity for the existing businesses to expand,



including the ability to concentrate customer parking behind the buildings in a shared manner to serve many Downtown businesses and conceal parking.

**ARA Action:** To acquire and demolish and dispose?



---

### **Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property**

There are a couple of distressed properties within the Project Area that would be acquired by the ARA. One property, the Ferdenzi House at 6 Cherry Street, is a potential historic resource as it is recommended to be listed the National Register as part of the new Ashland Center Historic District (identified by the Town's *Communitywide Historic Properties Survey – Final Report* of June 2010).

- ARA Action:** To acquire, rehabilitate/preserve, and dispose of the potential historic resource (the Ferdenzi House at 6 Cherry Street), as identified by the Town's survey.
- ARA Action:** To acquire, clear/demolish and dispose of the potentially vacant residential trailers on Metcalf Avenue (parcel number 13.0-0090) for residential redevelopment.



**Introduction ..... 1**

**Overall Redevelopment Goal and Strategy ..... 2**

**Urban Renewal Plan Goals and Objectives..... 2**

**Proposed Revitalization and Redevelopment Project/Improvements ..... 4**

    125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project ..... 4

    Police and Fire Redevelopment Project ..... 5

    Front Street Commercial Expansion Support ..... 6

    Gamewell Parcel Redevelopment Project ..... 6

    Megunko Road Commercial Park Project..... 7

    Pleasant Street Riverfront Park Project..... 7

    Proposed Transit-Oriented Development Project ..... 7

    Railroad Crossing Improvements ..... 8

    Open Space Network..... 8

    Summer and Main Street Site..... 8

    Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property ..... 9

# 4

## Financial Plan

The Financial Plan, as presented in Table 4-1 below, lists all estimated costs for implementation of the Urban Renewal activities described in this report. **COSTS ARE STILL BEING CALCULATED AND WILL BE ADDED AT A LATER DATE.**

---

### Summary of Project Costs

The following are descriptions of how the key project costs were estimated.



---

#### Property Acquisition

Figure G-1 shows the 11 privately-owned parcels proposed to be acquired by the ARA for implementation of this URP. Table 1-1 of Section 1, *Characteristics* lists these parcels along with the owner, lot size, present and proposed uses, and the associated URP project initiatives.

The estimated total cost for proposed acquisitions is \$5,559,100 and is based on the total Ashland Assessor's Department appraised values, including land and building values (Table 4-1). After this URP is approved, but before any acquisitions occur, appraisals will be completed according to the requirements and guidelines of the "Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice" (USPAP).

**No properties have been identified in which any officer or employee of the municipality or of the operating agency has, or is believed to have, any direct or indirect interest. TOWN ATTORNEY TO PROVIDE CORRECT WORDING REGARDING ARA MEMBER OWNERSHIP**



---

#### Estimated Relocation Costs

The estimated relocation costs are \$XXXX and are based on the prior experience and are based on 2010 dollars. The estimated relocation costs are only an estimate, as exact costs cannot be determined until the actual time of relocation.



---

## Site Preparation Costs

**Demolition:** Total cost of demolition is \$XXXX (Table 4-1). The building demolition estimates consider demolition of the whole building with no concern for particular elements or components or material types being demolished. Foundation walls are included as part of the demolition estimates and the building foundations were considered to have a six inch thick color slab, which has also been included in the removal costs. The cost for removal of elements containing hazardous or flammable liquids, such as mechanical and electrical equipment and other building elements containing hazardous materials are not included in these preliminary estimates. Preliminary demolition estimate costs are based on volume and area unit costs compiled in "2010 Building Construction Cost Data", 64th Edition, published by R.S. Means.

**Site Evaluation and Remediation:** Total estimated cost for site remediation is \$XXXX (Table 4-1). Limited information is available on the potential of encountering hazardous materials on various sites to be redeveloped or within various buildings to be demolished. Therefore, a more detailed building assessment must be conducted to identify potential areas or sources of contamination. Once this evaluation is completed, more detailed actions and costs for remediation, if necessary, can be estimated.



---

## Public Involvement Costs

The cost estimates for public improvements are provided based on 2010 costs for similar public improvement projects in Massachusetts.

---

## Financing Approach

Table 4-1 presents the project budget and phasing (within five and ten years) and the gross and net project costs. Land sales costs are based on land values from Assessor's data.

**Table 4-1  
Downtown Ashland Revitalization and Redevelopment Project Budget**

<b>1 Acquisition</b>	
Land Acquisition <sup>1</sup>	\$5,559,100
Appraisals	
Legal	
<i>Subtotal</i>	
<b>2 Relocation</b>	
Relocation Consultant	
Relocation Payments	
<i>Subtotal</i>	
<b>3 Site Improvements</b>	
3a. Building Demolition	
3b. Misc. Site Work	
3c. Park/Trail Connections	
3d. Riverfront Park	
3e. Streetscape Improvements	
3f. Roadway Improvements	
<i>Subtotal</i>	
<b>4 Building Rehabilitation</b>	
Relocation of one structure	
<b>5 Administrative</b>	
Employee (1 staff / 5 years including benefits)	
<b>6 Consultants</b>	
Site Engineering (10% Site Improvement Total)	
Traffic Analysis of Main / Central / Elm Intersection	
Environmental Assessment of Site and Buildings	
<i>Subtotal</i>	
<b>7 Fees</b>	
Bond Fees	
Misc. Fees	
<b>8 Contingency</b>	
Real Estate Reserve (20%)	
Design and Construction Contingency	
<i>Subtotal</i>	
<b>Gross Project Cost</b>	
<b>Income from sale or lease (estimated)</b>	
<b>NET PROJECT COST</b>	
<b>Town Share</b>	
<b>URDG Request</b>	

- 1 Based on the total assessed value (land value and building value). Refer to Table 1-1 of Section 1, *Characteristics* for a list of properties to be acquired.

---

## Potential Funding Sources

The ARA has identified a number of funding sources for many of the proposed urban renewal actions. Following is a summary of the potential grant sources referenced in Table 4-1 above and describes their applicability to this URP.

**Summary of Project Costs ..... 1**  
    Property Acquisition..... 1  
    Estimated Relocation Costs..... 1  
    Site Preparation Costs..... 2  
    Public Involvement Costs ..... 2

**Financing Approach ..... 2**

**Potential Funding Sources ..... 4**

# 5

## Requisite Municipal Approvals

---

### Public Hearing

A public hearing was held on                     . A transcript of that hearing has been submitted as part of this plan. (to be added at a later date)

---

### Municipal Approvals

Copies of the Town Council Vote approving the Plan and the Planning Board Resolution and Vote follow. (To be added at a later date)

---

### Environmental Notification Form

Once the URP is approved and an initial project has been identified with funding sources, the Town will prepare an Environmental Notification Form (ENF). The Town has included appropriate funds in the budget to prepare the ENF and complete the MEPA process.

---

### Opinion of Counsel

A copy of the Opinion of Counsel follows. (to be added at a later date)



**Public Hearing..... 1**  
**Municipal Approvals ..... 1**  
**Environmental Notification Form ..... 1**  
**Opinion of Counsel ..... 1**



# 6

## Site Preparation

---

### Introduction

Site preparation activities will address the existing conditions on the sites that will be developed for public use as well as sites that will be prepared for disposition and private development. This section provides a summary of the activities planned as part of the site preparation process.

---

### Site and Building Assessment for Contamination Issues

Based on available information regarding contamination on some sites, as well as information about the past uses within the and observed conditions within certain sites, the Redevelopment Authority will encounter hazardous materials on various sites to be redeveloped or within various buildings to be demolished. According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) searchable database, there are three “open” Release Tracking Numbers, or “21E sites”, within the Project Area: 280-330 Pleasant Street; 330 Pleasant Street; and 2 Megunko Road. Also, while the point of contamination is outside of the Project Area, the U.S. EPA Superfund Nyanza Cleanup site is located south of the Project Area and, therefore, contamination is known and/or perceived within the Project Area, specifically along Megunko Road.

The extent of clean-up that will be required on any of these sites cannot be quantified until additional testing is performed and, in some cases, the redevelopment program is defined.

Initial site and building assessments must be conducted to identify potential areas or sources of contamination. Once this evaluation is completed, actions can be better defined.

---

## Building Demolition

A total of 10 privately- and publically-owned buildings are proposed to be demolished for the Project (refer to Table 1-3 of Section 1, *Characteristics*). All utility services to the structures will be cut and capped within ten feet of the existing building foundations. All building materials, floor slabs and foundations of the demolished buildings will be removed and disposed off-site. To the extent possible, the demolition contractor will be required to recycle demolished building materials. Any open excavations will be backfilled with on-site soils or imported clean fill and will be graded "level." The project site will be enclosed by chain link fencing to prevent public access. Erosion controls will be implemented to prevent erosion and sedimentation beyond the site boundaries. The site will be stabilized with annual rye grass (or similar vegetation) upon completion to minimize erosion following demolition and prior to redevelopment. Any retaining walls will stay in place.

**Introduction ..... 1**  
**Site and Building Assessment for Contamination Issues..... 1**  
**Building Demolition ..... 2**

# 7

## Public Improvements

---

### Introduction

As required by 760 CMR 12.02(7), this UPR includes specification of all public improvements in the Project Area, including a description of their general design and an explanation of how the public improvements will help achieve the objectives of the UPR.

The proposed public improvements described herein are based on the recommended UPR redevelopment projects and revitalization initiatives (presented in Section 3, *Project Objectives* of this UPR report). Proposed public improvements generally include infrastructure upgrades, site assessment and remediation, transportation-related improvements, including roadway and pedestrian safety improvements, streetscape improvements, and new public open space. Refer to Figure L-2 for the locations of the proposed public improvements.

---

### Site Assessment and Remediation

As a long-term public action, the ARA plans to acquire all seven parcels on Megunko Road and work to improve the site conditions so that redevelopment of the area is feasible. According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), there is one “open” contaminated site located within Megunko Road Commercial Park Project area slated for acquisition: 2 Megunko Road. Additionally, contamination has been released into nearby soils, groundwater and waterways by the U.S. EPA Superfund Nyanza Chemical Waste Dump site just south of Megunko Road.

Because of the known and perceived site contamination, no investment is being made to improve the sites, buildings or to upgrade the supporting infrastructure (roads, water and sewer) along Megunko Road. Also, due to uncertainty about the status of DEP regulations for site reuse, areas near the current Nyanza Superfund site, including Megunko Road are saddled with various limitations on economic



development, such as restrictions on building into the ground in certain locations and the stigma of past pollution – both of which discourages potential reinvestment and redevelopment projects. In order to address this uncertainty, the ARA proposes to work to fully understand the levels of contamination through site assessments, as required by state and federal regulations. Once contamination issues are clearly defined, the ARA will work to remediate the sites to a standard that makes the properties developable for appropriate reuse/redevelopment, as allowed by state and federal regulations.

Section 4, *Financial Plan* provides cost estimates for site assessment and remediation activities.

---

## Transportation

The ARA supports the Town's actions for public transportation improvements in the Downtown area related to traffic signals, roadway improvements, railroad signals and crossings, and safe pedestrian circulation. The following improvements by the Town are included here as they occur within the URP Area, and need to be coordinated with other URP activities.

The following Town initiated transportation improvements aim to relieve traffic congestion along Main Street, specifically the Main Street/Front Street intersection, which operates poorly in the morning peak hour condition due to inadequate signal timing for the southbound left-turn movement. Additionally, the presence of the rail lines through downtown restricts vehicle traffic circulation, specifically at the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings.

The public realm of Downtown Ashland does little to define the area as a destination as the streets are wide, and crossing them as a pedestrian is unpleasant. The proposed pedestrian improvements will help create a safe and inviting environment for pedestrians.

### Traffic Signals and Roadway Improvements

- Re-grade the Main Street grade crossing to repair existing dips in the pavement.
- Replace the existing signal systems with modern equipment and vehicle detection.
- Eliminate the southbound left-turn movement from Main Street onto Homer Avenue or provide an exclusive left turn lane and through/right turn lane at Homer Avenue/Summer Street intersection.
- Provide two full lanes of traffic between Front Street and Homer Avenue/Summer Street.



- Ensure adequate preemption time at the Main Street traffic light for emergency services, such as fire and police responses.

#### **Railroad Signals**

- Reduce the total preemption time from 60 seconds to 45 seconds.
- Continue coordination with the MBTA on current and future scheduling to minimize potential impacts to the grade crossings, particularly at the Main Street crossing.
- Install a rear westbound home signal so that if an outbound train needs to be held for crossover at the interlocking, it does so outside of the advanced approach to the Main Street crossing. Coordinate with CSX, as needed to achieve this.

#### **Pedestrian Safety Improvements and Grade Crossings**

- Reduce the pedestrian crossing time to be slightly longer than AASHTO recommended minimums.
- Upgrade pedestrian crossings and accessible ramps to provide anti-slip and standardized crossing aprons.
- Reduce pedestrian crossing distances by creating pedestrian ‘neck downs’ along Main Street where appropriate.
- Install physical barriers that effectively barricade the railroad tracks from Stone’s Public House and the sidewalks on both sides of Main Street to channel pedestrian movement.
- Remove the school bus stop that is just south of the Main Street crossing.
- Extend the gate arm at the driveway for Stone’s Public House to completely block the driveway exit during train events. Modify driveway geometry to further discourage left turns onto Main Street.
- Improve street lighting at the Main Street and Cherry Street crossings.

---

## **Streetscapes**

A key goal of this URP is to reinforce the sense of a “downtown” in order to attract residents and visitors to downtown Ashland and, therefore, support local business. A more pleasant pedestrian environment will be accomplished through the installation of new LID lighting, underground utilities, new sidewalks as part of the 125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment and the Fire and Police Redevelopment Projects. Other streetscape improvements include paving treatments, street trees, informational and directional signs, and occasional benches and coordinating trash urns along sidewalks.



The roadway improvements described above will incorporate streetscape enhancements, including new sidewalks and curbs, tree plantings, lighting, and crosswalks to enhance pedestrian safety. Where public utilities need to remain, the Town will retain an easement through the new disposition parcels for these utilities. To the extent possible, overhead wires will be placed in underground conduits.

Section 4, *Financial Plan* provides cost estimates for the streetscape improvements.

---

## Public Open Space

### **125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project**

As part of the 125 Front Street Mixed Use Redevelopment Project, the ARA proposes to redefine and reconstruct the existing Town Green at the intersection of Main and Front Streets and to define a second public open space on the other side of the new building directly opposite the newly renovated library.

A new Town Green provides an open space at the visual center of town, the intersection of Main and Front streets. It is a natural crossroads and gathering place. It will be a mix of pathways, planted areas, lawns, and have plenty of trees and seating. The design could incorporate a major piece of public art or perhaps a large electric clock, reflecting the town's history. A building with ground floor commercial use will define the edge of the space, and a hard surface area next to the building allows for an outdoor café, outdoor art shows, or other temporary uses.

The new public park opposite the Town Library is proposed as a civic space that supports the library functions with a place for passive recreation, such as group readings and/or performances. This proposed park aims to maintain a visual linkage and create a pedestrian connection between two of the Town's most historic structures: the Public Library; and the Richardson train station.

A fifteen-foot-wide reservation has been created as part of the project plans to accommodate a multi-use path along the back of the 125 Front Street parcel, to link to a planned Town-wide open space network, which could run west through downtown to the Commuter Rail Station and connect to a "river walk" on the east side of downtown.

### **Pleasant Street Riverfront Park Project**

The ARA plans to build in existing public open space through the expansion of Marathon Park as part of the Pleasant Street Riverfront Park Project. This expansion of open space would provide an amenity to new residential uses proposed as part of the Proposed TOD Project across Pleasant Street.



Section 4, *Financial Plan* provides cost estimates for the creation of new public open spaces, including required property acquisition costs.

**Summer Street Municipal Parking Lot**

The ARA plans to build a municipal parking lot to serve a number of businesses located at the corner of Summer and Main Streets. Currently, a number of businesses share access and parking in this area. One property is currently underutilized and would provide a key access point to a reorganized parking lot, which could then be shared by all abutting businesses.

Section 4, *Financial Plan* provides cost estimates for the creation of new public open spaces, including required property acquisition costs.





**Introduction ..... 1**  
**Site Assessment and Remediation ..... 1**  
**Transportation ..... 2**  
**Streetscapes ..... 3**  
**Public Open Space..... 4**

# 8

## Relocation

---

### Introduction

Under Chapter 79A of the Massachusetts General Laws, all businesses and residents displaced by public action are entitled to receive relocation assistance and payments. The purpose of the Chapter 79A statute is to provide for the fair and equitable treatment of all parties to be displaced as a result of public action. 760 CMR 27.00, the applicable state regulation, spells out the terms and procedures for such assistance and payment.

It is the Town of Ashland's intention to assist the affected businesses and residents in relocating successfully, consistent with the parameters set by Chapter 79A and 760 CMR 27.00, and the Town invites cooperation of site occupants in that regard.

All lawful occupants determined by the Town of Ashland to be displaced as a result of the physical improvements described in this URP will be provided relocation assistance and payments in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, 42 U.S.C. Section 4601, et seq., and the applicable implementing regulations set forth in Title 49, Part 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations (together, the "Uniform Act"). The Town of Ashland will also adhere to the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 79A and 760 Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Part 27.00. The Town of Ashland will provide all notices to occupants required by applicable law.

Under the Uniform Act and applicable law, the Town of Ashland must provide certain assistance with respect to the relocation process for physical improvements identified above. For the management of the relocation of occupants identified below including providing required relocation advisory services, review and assessment of relocation claims and payments and other matters pertaining to compliance with the Uniform Act and other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, the Town of Ashland will elect to retain a relocation consultant. Working with its consultant, the Town of Ashland will:

- Assess each occupant's relocation needs;

- Assist with development of this relocation plan;
- Prepare written notices to the occupants as required; and
- Assist in the timely and accurate preparation and assessment of relocation claims.

The Town of Ashland will seek to be designated a "Relocation Advisory Agency" by the Bureau of Relocation within the Department of Housing and Community Development of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the Project. The Town of Ashland may elect to maintain a Relocation Office for this project located at location central to the project. The Relocation Office will be staffed and open as necessary to provide assistance to the affected occupants.

---

## **Businesses and Residents to be Displaced**

At the time this URP was prepared, a total of 15 parcels are to be acquired as part of implementation of this URP (refer to Table 1-1 for the list of proposed property acquisitions). Within these parcels, the following relocations are estimated: three retail businesses; 4 residential uses; eight industrial/commercial uses; and one not-for-profit. The property owners and occupants of parcels proposed for acquisition for implementation of this URP are identified below.

**Table 8-1  
Businesses and Residents to be Displaced**

Parcel ID	Address	Owner	Current Use <sup>1</sup>	Number of Businesses	Number of Residents	Proposed Use
<i>Police and Fire Redevelopment Project</i>						
014/014.0-0085-0000.0	159-165 Main Street	Fournier, Leonard	Retail with Residential	1	1	Mixed Use
<i>Megunko Road Commercial Park Project</i>						
014/013.0/0132.0000.0	93 Megunko Road	MCL Development Corp	Commercial	1	0	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0131.0000.0	101 Megunko Road	Lefter, Claudio & James	Commercial	1	0	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0130.0000.0	123 Megunko Road	Lefter, Claudio & James	Parking/Storage	1	0	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0129.0000.0	135 Megunko Road	Leacu, William	Industrial	1	0	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0128.0000.0	165 Megunko Road	No Smile LLC	Industrial	1	0	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
014/013.0/0127.0000.0	183 Megunko Road	Camille E J Family Limited Partners	Industrial	1	0	Industrial/Manufacturing/R&D
<i>Marathon Park Expansion</i>						
014/013.0-0050-0000.0	329-331 Pleasant Street	Bond Bradford	Single-Family Residential	1		Open Space /Recreation
014/013.0-0052-0000.0	311 Pleasant Street	Ashland Memorial Associates	VFW Hall	NA	NA	Open Space /Recreation
<i>Rehabilitate/Redevelop Distressed Property</i>						
014/014.0-0079-0000.0	6 Cherry Street <sup>4</sup>	Ferdezi, Louis	Residential	0	1	Residential
014/013.0-0090-0000.0	Metcalf Avenue	Cassie, William	Residential	0	1	Residential
<i>Summer and Main Street Project</i>						
014/014.0-0067.0000.0	19 Summer Street	9-19 Summer St. LLC	Retail	2	0	Public Parking
<b>Total Displacements</b>						

Sources: Town of Ashland Assessor's Office parcel data, March 2009; VHB, Inc. site survey, July 2009.

R&D = research and development

1 Observed use according to site survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2009 for this URP.

2 This parcel is not slated for acquisition by the ARA. The 125 Front Street site will be redeveloped under a public-private partnership.

## Date Displacement is Expected to Begin

The Town of Ashland expects the relocation process to proceed under the following timeline:

Milestone	Target Date
Relocation Advisory Agency	TBD
Initial Occupant Assessment Meetings	TBD
Delivery of General Information Notices	TBD

Completed Relocation Plan	TBD
Commence Negotiations with Property Owners	TBD
Delivery of Notices of Eligibility	TBD
Complete Relocation of All Occupants	TBD

---

## Availability of Replacement Locations

All occupants to be displaced will be offered adequate replacement units in a timely manner. A general review of the commercial and residential real estate market in Ashland and the immediately adjacent communities demonstrate that there are sufficient vacancy rates to support the successful and timely relocation of all affected occupants to replacement locations. Due to the fact that there may be some time between the preparation of this relocation plan and the eventual date that affected occupants would be required to seek replacement locations, it has been determined to be unnecessary at this time to supply actual replacement locations as part of this plan. It is worth noting that pertinent state and federal relocation regulations dictate that replacement dwellings must be provided to displace residents before they are required to relocate. Similarly, displaced businesses will be offered assistance in identifying suitable replacement business locations, regardless of their status as an owner or tenant.

---

## Estimated Relocation Cost

The ARA has estimated that the total cost to relocate the affected occupants is between \$XX and \$XX. This estimate was developed following several inspections of the premises, a survey of all occupants and a rough comparison of the cost to relocate similar displaced occupants. It is expected that this amount will be sufficient to cover the costs for the actual reasonable move expenses and related ancillary relocation benefits in conformance with applicable federal and state law, regulations and guidance. Actual costs will, of course, depend upon many factors unknown at this time including, but not limited to, unusual or extraordinary specialized services necessary to dismantle, move and reconnect the displaced business' personal property and the condition and accessibility of available replacement location sites.

---

## Description of Funds/Funding Commitment

Projects identified in the URP are expected to be funded through a variety of grants programs and other financial mechanisms. Relocation funding is tied to project funding and will be finalized when these grants are received. The estimated costs will be updated if needed, at the time of relocation.

---

## **Assurance Statement**

The ARA assures that it will carry out the relocation of occupants for the Project in accordance with the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Act and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 79A. It further assures that before any relocation takes place, it will have in place adequate funding to ensure that all occupants are provided with prompt and complete payments as required. The ARA acknowledges that all displaced persons shall be treated in a fair, equitable and consistent manner; that it will work to minimize the adverse impact of displacement on the occupants to be displaced by this project; and, to the maximum extent feasible, prevent the closure of businesses.

---

## **Coordination with Other Land Acquisition Activities**

Currently, there are no other land acquisition activities underway or planned by the ARA or other governmental agencies in the immediate vicinity of the Project. As such, The ARA does not face the need to coordinate the relocation of occupants with other governmental agencies.

---

## **Real/Personal Property Issues**

The ARA will actively consult with business owners, tenants, property owners and real estate appraisers to ensure that all items are properly classified as personal property as defined by MGL c. 79A, Section 1. Based upon an inspection of the properties involved and the nature of the affected displaced businesses, there does not appear to be any unique or compelling issues with respect to classification of property as real estate or personal property. It is not expected that any separate offers will be made to displaced businesses for tenant-owned improvements.



**Introduction ..... 1**  
**Businesses and Residents to be Displaced ..... 2**  
**Date Displacement is Expected to Begin ..... 3**  
**Availability of Replacement Locations..... 4**  
**Estimated Relocation Cost ..... 4**  
**Description of Funds/Funding Commitment ..... 4**  
**Assurance Statement ..... 5**  
**Coordination with Other Land Acquisition Activities ..... 5**  
**Real/Personal Property Issues ..... 5**

# 9

## Redeveloper's Obligation

Once parcels are acquired, prepared for redevelopment and assembled with adjacent parcels as proposed, the ARA will either negotiate directly with interested developers as outlined in URP Section 10 – *Disposition* or issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for specific disposition parcels, outlining the desired uses for the parcels (Figure C-4) as well as the need for redevelopment proposals to be consistent with this URP. In this public solicitation process, each redeveloper shall be required to provide, at a minimum, the following information to the ARA:

- A full description of the proposed development, with conceptual level site plan, floor plans and elevations,
- Financial resources of the developer with development pro forma and a sources and uses statement,
- Proposed job creation (job titles, hourly wages, salaries, and personal),
- Timetable for design, permitting and construction by the week from purchase of site to obtaining an occupancy permit
- Past experience with similar size projects and references,
- Identification of all equity partners and development team members resumes, and
- Other pertinent information to be included in the RFP.

REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS "STANDARD FORM OF CONTRACT FOR SALE OF LAND FOR PRIVATE REDEVELOPMENT," which shall be approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development as required by 760 CMR 12.00, shall be incorporated into the RFP. As appropriate, completed design guidelines and updated zoning regulations will also be incorporated into the RFP.

Designated developers will be required to comply with the goals and objectives of this plan. Additional specific requirements for redevelopment will be as follows:



- Job creation shall be a minimum of one job per 1,000 square feet of proposed non-residential building development;
- Buildings shall be designed to be in keeping with the neighborhood character, the main façades (IE: front door façade and/or façade facing the public street) of each building shall be masonry or clapboard that reflect neighboring architecture. Buildings should contain variation in detail to provide visual interest and to avoid monotony, such as breaks in roof and wall lines, towers, cupolas and building ornamentation. Mechanical equipment, such as transformers, HVAC units and similar features, shall be integrated into the design and screened on roof tops by the building architecture or on the site by use of berms, landscaping or fencing; and
- Due to the urban character of the project area, buildings shall be located at the back of the sidewalks and any proposed parking shall be located behind buildings and setback a minimum of 15-feet from all property lines. This set back area shall be landscaped with trees, shrubs and ground cover, with a minimal amount of lawn.

# 10

## Disposition

Figure H-1 identifies the 13 individual lots (privately- and publically-owned) to be created for disposition in order to stimulate redevelopment as part of this URP. Table 1-3 of Section 1, *Characteristics* presents information on these lots, including parcel number, address, owner, lot size, current observed land use, and proposed URP action or project element.

Under Chapter 121B and M.G.L. 30B, the sale or lease of industrial or commercial real property by redevelopment authorities or their successors, engaged in the development and disposition of the real state in accordance with an approved plan, is exempt from public disposition procedures required of all other local entities. The ARA, vested with the powers of an urban renewal agency, will exercise this authority and negotiate directly with any existing business and/or resident within the Project Area who wishes to relocate onto one of the new parcels, provided they meet the requirements of this plan. Following any such negotiations, the ARA will move forward with a process that will solicit proposals from outside entities to facilitate the redevelopment of the remaining disposition sites.

The proposed redevelopment improvements shown for each new lot are conceptual in nature and are intended to depict one option for maximizing development in the Project Area consistent with the goals of this Plan. In addition, Figure H-1 depicts disposition parcels for redevelopment by the private sector. These parcels and their locations have been chosen to provide the maximum opportunity to facilitate private redevelopment of this area. However, any proposed redeveloper(s) of the site will be provided with the opportunity to propose an alternative building and/or parcel arrangement for the site provided such an arrangement meets the requirements of this Plan, the goals and objectives of the Town and applicable law. Any such development proposal will be reviewed by ARA and the appropriate Town representatives in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Plan and the terms of the Land Disposition Agreement(s) to be negotiated with the proposed redeveloper.

# 11

## Citizen Participation

This URP is the culmination of an extensive public outreach and participation process starting in XX and running through XX. During this time period, a number of public meetings were held as part of the Town's preparation of their 2003 *Comprehensive Plan*, 2006 *Downtown Vision: Ashland Massachusetts*, and 2007 *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)* as well as for this URP.

The public participation process started in XXX with a visioning forum for the downtown. Furthermore, Ashland's Open Space Committee was committed to involving the public in updating the OSRP. Six public forums were conducted between December 2002 and June 2006, and two town-wide surveys were conducted to solicit input from the public as the plan progressed. Also, the Committee created a website to keep the public informed about the planning process, invite input and post all activities, including monthly meetings, public forums and surveys. A draft of the OSRP was prominently displayed at the public library for four weeks to solicit public comment. It is important to note that the preparation of this URP was a result of this public input and the resulting recommendations of the Downtown Vision and OSRP. In addition, a number of specific actions in this URP come directly from the Downtown Vision plan and OSRP as the result of public input.

The key component of the planning process was the active participation of the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) assembled by the ARA for this URP. The CAC is comprised of the following individuals representing local residents, local businesses and local property owners: Stan Bennett; Cappy Fournier; Sara Hines; Catherine Jurczyk; Art Love; Jackie Perrone; Janet Platt; Judith Sallet; Barbara Hescocock; and Enzo Scalora. The CAC has over the course of the project from XXX to XXX attended meetings and worked to advise the ARA on issues pertaining to revitalization and redevelopment of downtown Ashland. At the meetings, presentations were made on site conditions, economic analysis and market demands, redevelopment options, the elements of this URP, infrastructure improvements, implementation strategies and funding initiatives, with discussions encouraged on all outstanding issues. Refer to Appendix J for copies of the meeting minutes of the CAC.