SITE ANALYSIS/REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

Maple Avenue on the Ten Mile River

Seekonk, Massachusetts

June 30, 2022

Prepared for MassDevelopment and Town of Seekonk, Massachusetts
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Figure 1. The Maple Avenue site is located just off Central Avenue/Route 152 in Seekonk on the Ten Mile River.

1. INTRODUCTION

The course of the Ten Mile River helps explains the evolution of the Maple Avenue site in Seekonk as a place of manufacturing from the 19th century through to the early 21st century. Abandonment and a catastrophic fire in 2012 has made change imperative, impelling the Town to acquire the property in 2019. Today, the three parcels that make up the 8.2 acre site are in stasis as remediation continues, and the future is yet to be written. This report explores the potential for redevelopment on the 36 Maple Avenue site as a precursor to a developers' request for proposal (RFP). The three primary components of this work are 1) documentation of the site context and property information; 2) redevelopment scenarios; and 3) an implementation strategy to advance the project toward eventual redevelopment.

This work has been conducted under a MassDevelopment Real Estate Technical Assistance grant, which has allowed the Town of Seekonk to work with Madden Planning and Goode Landscape Studio to advance the understanding of the site and its potential. The Town Planner and the Conservation Agent led the effort for the Town of Seekonk. The project began in March 2022 and was completed in June 2022. During this time, the project team met with the neighboring community in April and the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board in a joint meeting in early June 2022. The Town is conducting a number of related studies, several of which will directly inform the future of the site.

In terms of nomenclature, this report identifies the site as the "Maple Avenue site" on the Ten Mile River. This is to distinguish it from the historic Attleboro Dyeworks, founded in 1878, which later became R. Wolfenden & Sons on Olive Street in Attleboro, famous for its historic smokestack. Although the Maple Avenue site in Seekonk was home to the Attleboro Dyeing and Finishing Corporation (ADFC) from 1945 to 1980, it has a much longer history associated with the Kent family and their manufacturing enterprises, which evolved from a sawmill into the production of their renowned tennis racquets.

The project goals center on redevelopment of a blighted and surplus public property and the return of the site to the active tax rolls. The work seeks to advance smart growth – compact development complemented by open space amenities – and to test out the range of possible redevelopment scenarios as a way of informing future Town decisions and strategies.

Future use of the site will be determined by the intersection of market demand, financial feasibility, and the Town regulatory framework. As this report details, the site is well situated on the banks of the Ten Mile River but has no visibility from Central Avenue/Route 152, the primary access point (Figure 1). Given its history, the site is zoned for industrial uses and is adjacent to industrial uses north of the river but is surrounded by residential uses on the other sides. Redevelopment for residential and some mixed uses would require a zoning change. At 8.2 acres, it's a relatively small site, especially since only 2.7 acres are designated for redevelopment. This size limits the economies of scale and

Figure 2. The dam on the Ten Mile River helped fuel the manufacturing process but is now at the end of it useful life.

might make feasibility for some uses more challenging. Situated near to Interstate-95 and to the Attleboro and South Attleboro commuter rail stations, this part of Seekonk could seize the growing market for clean tech and energy related companies that are prominent on the South Shore. The site could also help fill the regional demand for housing, especially some proportion of affordable housing, with easy access to Providence, Pawtucket, Boston and adjacent metropolitan areas. Small start-up companies, maker spaces, craft studios, and a brewery could also be targeted uses on this site, potentially in combination with industrial and/or residential uses.

The concept plans indicate the potential for approximately 40 townhouses in one scenario, or a 25,000 square foot (sf), one story industrial building in another. A third scenario illustrates a mixed use, two story building with approximately 36,000 sf. In all of these scenarios, a riverfront trail and several acres of woodland adjacent to the river would provide amenities for future occupants of the site as well as nearby neighbors. For a site that has been gated off and inaccessible for ten or more years, redevelopment will allow the community to have access once again to the waters and the banks of the Ten Mile River for boating, fishing, and passive recreation.

Project Goals

The following goals have guided the current study as well as the Town's overall strategy to remediate and clean up the site in order to dispose of it through a developers' request for proposal (RFP):

1. Redevelop blighted and surplus public property: support ongoing efforts to remediate site and remove building debris
2. Return the site to the active tax rolls: work toward disposition through a developers' Request for Proposals (RFP)
3. Advance smart growth: design compact development with complementary open space and a focus on form
4. Identify a range of redevelopment scenarios: cast a wide net for possible uses to attract developer interest on a challenging site

Community Planning and Engagement

The Maple Avenue reuse study aims to align with previous and ongoing Town Plans and is informed by conversations with the community and Town leaders about the future of the site.

Alignment with Town Studies

Several current and ongoing Town plans inform this effort. In 2019, the Town launched an interactive planning process to update the

Town's Master Plan with the assistance of the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD). The Planning Board will be adopting the completed draft elements in the summer/fall 2022 (e.g., Economic Development Element), while other elements are just getting underway (e.g., Housing Element). The redevelopment of the Maple Avenue site helps to achieve several of the goals in the current and previous planning efforts:

- Promote Town prosperity and fiscal health through economic development *(Seekonk Master Plan, ED, 2019)*
- Encourage sustainable, smart growth patterns *(Seekonk Master Plan, Land Use, 2012)*
- Maintain the viability of industrial areas *(Seekonk Master Plan, Land Use, 2012)*
- Promote more multifamily housing (Seekonk Housing Production Plan, 2010)

The Town has engaged GPI Engineering to study the Pond Street Bridge and the Ten Mile River Dam (Figure 2). The Pond Street Bridge, which needs improvement, provides an important connection between South Attleboro, the local industrial parks, and Central Avenue (Route 152), all close by the Maple Avenue site. The Ten Mile River Dam is immediately adjacent to the site and was integral to the original manufacturing system creating a mill pond so that water could be sluiced into raceway to run machinery before flowing out into a small canal. The dam is at the end of its useful life, and the GPI study will evaluate the consequences of dam removal as it affects the Maple Avenue site as well as upriver and downriver conditions.

ES&M Engineering is working with the Town on the ongoing remediation of the site (summarized in Section 2) as well as a study of wastewater options for this part of Seekonk. In 1917, Attleboro purchased land in Seekonk for their wastewater treatment plant, which is accessed off of Pond Street, but does not serve any properties in Seekonk. The ES&M study will analyze the potential for the Town of Seekonk to use capacity in the Attleboro Wastewater Treatment Plant and extend sewers to serve the northern portion of Seekonk, including Maple Avenue, which is approximately one mile from the plant. Other options that will be considered are the use of package plants or the continued use of septic systems.

Community Conversation

The community, including a local steering committee, has been appraised over the last several years of the ongoing site remediation. For the current study, the project team held a community forum on April 6, 2022, in the Memorial Baptist Church adjacent to the site, to discuss the site context and potential land use and development programs that could be on the site (Figure 3).

In response to questions about how the site was used prior to the fire, nearby residents talked about fishing near the dam and access to the water. The Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Gammino Pond Conservation Area, and the Rhode Island Ten Mile Greenway were raised as examples of other nearby places with waterfront trails (Figure 4). It was noted that dam removal could help the fish, although there were concerns about flooding upstream. Some noted that a kayak put in at the Maple Avenue site could comfortably travel downstream to the Ten Mile River Park near the dam at Armistice Boulevard. While there was a desire for public access to trails, neighbors also expressed concern about attracting too many people, suggesting that a few public parking spaces but not too many should be provided and

Figure 3 Community input helped shape the development concepts.

that there should be a way to close access at dusk. Others noted that having a viable use there with employees and/or residents and with more open views would make use of the site feel safer.

Images of other industrial and residential developments were shown as examples of potential uses. Residents asked questions about how sewage would be handled. Several expressed concerns about housing and affordable housing, although lofts like Hope Artiste Village and the Village Lofts seemed like good examples. A discussion ensued about impacts to schools, with some noting that industry would have less impact on that score. Commercial recreational uses were suggested but others noted that they would bring in too much traffic. A brewery was also suggested as part of a mixed use complex. The project team took all suggestions and noted that some issues raised would require further analysis, either in this study (e.g., concept plan layouts, scale of development, zoning options) or in future studies (tradeoffs related to school impacts, financial and market feasibility, sewage demand, etc.).

Based on the community conversation and prior input, the development team tested out three scenarios: industrial, residential, and mixed use. These concept plans were presented to the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board in a joint public meeting on June 8, 2022, along with the site analysis and implementation strategy. Questions and comments raised were about concurrent activities to prepare the site for development as the remediation continues; funding sources for nearby infrastructure projects; concerns about impervious surfaces and climate change implications; the effect of economic cycles and future uncertainty; fiscal impacts; and the fact that the previous industrial building was having little success attracting tenants even before the fire.

Over the four-month period of this study, the project team met regularly with the Town Planning and Conservation Commission staff and MassDevelopment staff. A site reconnaissance in early April also informed the project team's understanding of the site.

Figure 4. The woodland trails at Gammino Pond include storyboards.

2. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Maple Avenue site is small but has many factors that affect its future, including access, surrounding uses, wetlands and floodplains, environmental contamination, zoning, and the regional and local real estate market. The site's competitive advantages, issues, and opportunities are discussed below based on this preliminary study.

Site Context Today

In southeastern Massachusetts, the Town of Seekonk borders Pawtucket and East Providence, Rhode Island. The Maple Avenue site is about 45 miles from Boston and about nine miles from Providence. Other nearby centers are Attleboro (5 miles), Fall River (20 miles) and New Bedford (33 miles). Rhode Island TF Green Airport is 21 miles away, while Logan Airport in Boston is 45 miles away.

The site is well served by Central Avenue/Route 152, which connects directly to downtown Attleboro and the commuter rail station, approximately eight minutes away by car. At Bakers Corner, Central Avenue turns west toward Route 1A and Interstate-95, which is only minutes from the site (Figure 5). The Bristol Shopping Center in South Attleboro is highly visible from Interstate95 and provides grocery and other retail offerings. The South Attleboro commuter rail station, which is adjacent to the shopping center, is temporarily closed but will reopen again once repairs to the stairs are made. The Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) operates the #16 bus that runs between downtown Attleboro and the Bristol Shopping Center. The #16 bus passes directly by the site on Central Avenue, with 13 buses in each direction on a weekday.

On the north bank of the river, Pond Street provides another route to Attleboro and South Attleboro. The Orion Industrial Park and other small industrial business have access from Pond Street, as does the Attleboro Wastewater Treatment Plant. The New England Power Company has an easement that crosses the northern parcel of the Maple Avenue site, parallel to Pond Street. Bakers Corner, which has convenience retail and restaurants, is to the south within a 10-minute walk of the site. Immediately adjacent to the Maple Avenue property are several residences and a church, while downstream on the river is woodlands, wetlands, and land subject to flooding. The nearby Ten Mile River Lofts in Pawtucket are downstream of the Maple Avenue site in a similar setting, set back from the road. This adaptive reuse development has a mix of uses, including residential units and several small industrial businesses overlooking the river.

The Ten Mile River provides many opportunities for recreational activities, both in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In Seekonk, this includes hiking and walking at Gammino Pond Conservation Area, Seekonk Meadows Park, and Caratunk Wildlife Refuge. Gammino Pond also allows kayaking and canoeing, while fishing is possible at nearby Falls Pond and Ten Mile River Fishing Spot in Attleboro.[1] The Ten Mile River Greenway

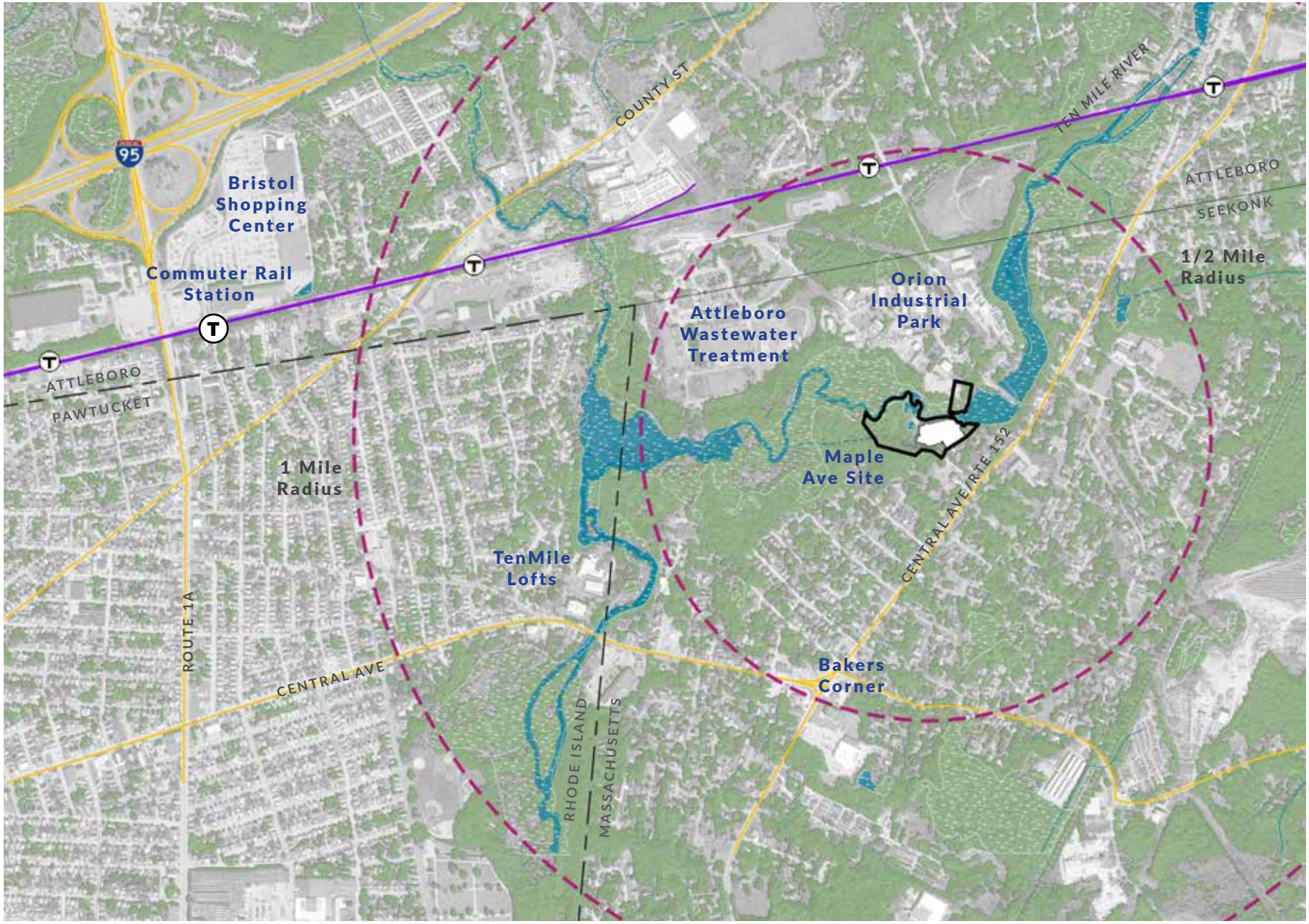

Figure 5 The Maple Avenue site is on the Ten Mile River, close to the South Attleboro Commuter Rail and Interstate I-95.

begins near Central Avenue in Pawtucket and extends along the west side of the river to East Providence, connecting Slater Park and several major parklands along the way. The watershed for the Ten Mile River extends upstream into Attleboro and North Attleborough to the I-495 corridor and downstream to the meet the Narragansett Bay Watershed.

Patterns of Development

This part of Seekonk has always been a crossroads, a point where the Ten Mile River could be crossed connecting north-south routes on either bank. The river and its surroundings would have provided a transportation corridor and livelihood for the Wampanoags prior to European settlements. By the early 18th century, the British Crown granted a tract of land on either side of the Ten Mile River to the Kent family, beginning their long involvement in the area in and around the Maple Avenue site. While not a major falls, the topography of the area allowed for a small dam, a mill pond, and waterworks that eventually would power manufacturing processes for over 150 years, gradually increasing in scale until larger global economic forces shifted the equation.

By 1831, the Pond Street Bridge, originally known as Read's Bridge, crossed the river and connected to points north and south as well as east via Oakhill Avenue.[2] Since then, small businesses and churches have continuously clustered along Central Avenue between Pond Street and Oakville Avenue. Central Avenue swept west to make another important river crossing at Kent's Bridge into what is today, Pawtucket, and connecting to the Boston Newport Road. The Kent family launched their southern mills at this crossing of the Ten Mile River in what became known as Lebanonville.[3] A grist and sawmill at this location was converted to a cotton factory in 1809; this mill burned in 1888.[4]

The Kent family's northern mills were established at the Maple Avenue site, first as a grist mill and sawmill (Figure 6). By the 1840s, the sawmill was thriving and evolved over the years from producing dowels to tool handles to croquet mallets and sporting goods. The Memorial Baptist Church stands on the site of the 17-room mansion that Virgil Kent built in 1840; this home was razed in 1968.[5]

Figure 6. 1850 map by Henry Francis Walling showing the Kent family's northern mills with a grist mill and turning shop (Norman B. Levanthal Map and Education Center).

Figure 7. Kent tennis rackets were popular in Newport and beyond (catalogue, 1931).

Figure 8. The historic Royce and Helen Kent house is near to the Maple Avenue site.

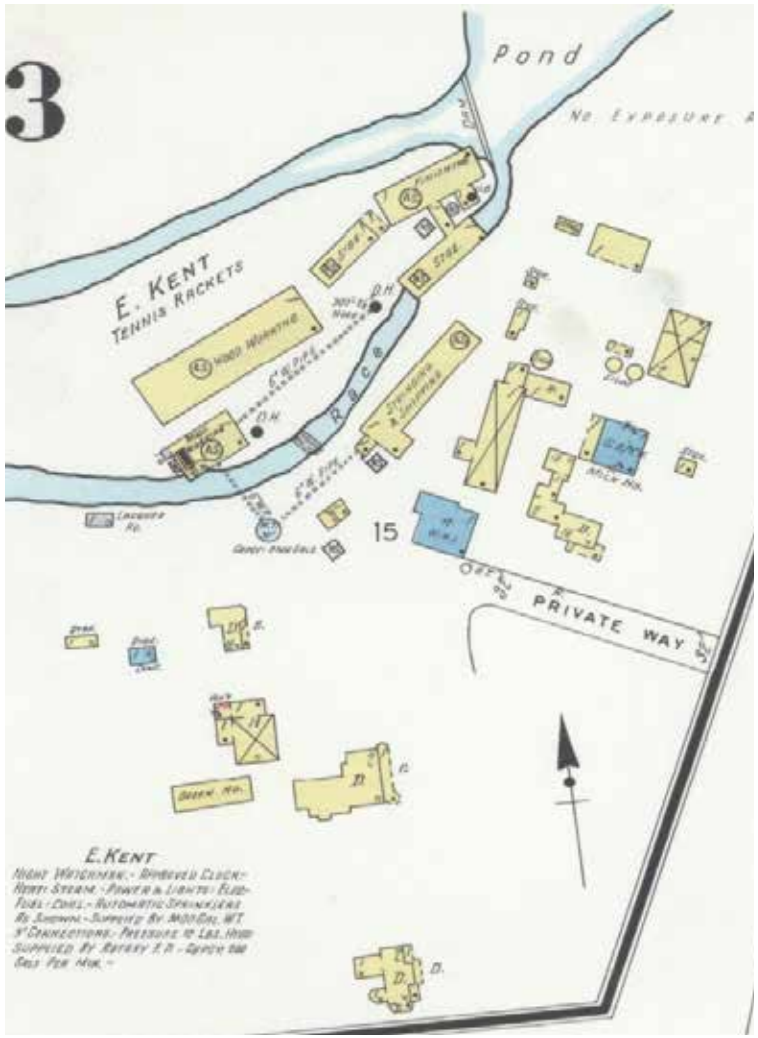

Figure 9. The Kent factory lay on either side of the raceway. The two Kent mansions are to the south (Sanborn Map Company, 1930).

After 1876, Elijah Kent began working on innovative techniques to produce tennis racquets. This enterprise was first known as the E. Kent company and by 1891 was reportedly turning out about 1,000 tennis racquets per week and employing 100 people.[6] Kent racquets were renowned, and the company became one of the largest manufacturers of racquets in the 1920s and 1930s (Figure 7). In 1911, a second house was built as a wedding present to Royden and Helen Kent. This historic house still stands at 328 Central Avenue (Figure 8). By 1930, the manufacturing complex included a series of production facilities on either side of the raceway. Royden incorporated the company as Kent, Inc. in 1934 and it continued to thrive until he died in 1940.[7] The factory was sold in 1945. The new owner, the Attleboro Dyeing and Finishing Corporation continued to expand the manufacturing facilities, building over the raceway, and ultimately culverting the canal under the parking area. The description of manufacturing processes is provided in the section below.

Property Information

Manufacturing, Abandonment, and Acquisition

The Kent family (E. Kent and Kent, Inc.) manufactured tennis rackets on the site in a series of small buildings on either side of a raceway that sluiced water from the mill pond continuing west into the old canal, and discharging into the Ten Mile River further downstream. Operations included wood working, lacquer, finishing, stringing, shipping, and storage (Figure 9).

The Attleboro Dyeing and Finishing Corporation (ADFC), incorporated in 1945, dyed fabrics in large stainless steel kettles, then subsequently dried the fabrics and impregnated resins into the fabric using rollers and a heat cure. Packaging occurred on the second floor of the facility (Figure 10). The process used river water for dark color dyes and municipal water for light color dyes. Cleaning water and possibly process water flowed into floor drains, and then into the raceways under the building, culverts under the parking lot (about 400 linear feet) before discharging to the canal and on to the river downstream. Wastes generated by the industrial process included dye water, dye fixing agents (copper, chromium, and manganese), waste fabric coatings (styrene-butadiene rubber and acrylic latex) and waste dye "carriers" (toluene and biphenyl).[8]

In the 1960s, the three settling ponds, or lagoons, were built, and sludge was allowed to settle before being discharged into the river. It appears that waste waters were diverted first to Lagoon #1, then to Lagoon #2 via an underground pipe. Lagoons #2 and #3 were connected and after settling, wastewater discharged to the river via a sluice gate from Lagoon #2 north to the river. A discharge pipe is also present in the southeast corner of Lagoon #3. Lagoon #1 apparently was connected by an underground pipe to a fiberglass tank structure, which may have housed a pump.

ADFC ceased operations on the site in 1980 and was dissolved in 1990, but the property remained in the family as R.O.C. Realty.[9] Between 1980 and 2009, the site was leased to various businesses including GHP Associates, National Environmental Systems, Martell's Metal Works, Mike's Machine, Grinnell Cabinet Makers, Walsh Electric, and Hillman Enterprises. In 2009, half the building's roof collapsed, and the 101,000 square-foot building was condemned. On May 1, 2012, there was a catastrophic fire that left the building in ruins[10] (Figure 11). R.O.C. Realty was dissolved as a corporation in 2012.[11] In 2009, the Town began the process of taking the property due to non-payment of taxes and received a tax lien judgement and acquired the property on November 6, 2019. [12]

Currently, access to the site is restricted with fencing along portions of the site and a locked gate at the Maple Avenue entrance. Today, most of the industrial building is in ruins, and only the southwestern portions are still standing. Two other structures remain on the site: a former two-story office building near the Maple Avenue entrance (3,500 square feet, c. 1960) and the remains of former pump house (400 sf), southeast of the former manufacturing plant (Figure 12). [13]

After the 2012 fire, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), working with the Town's Conservation

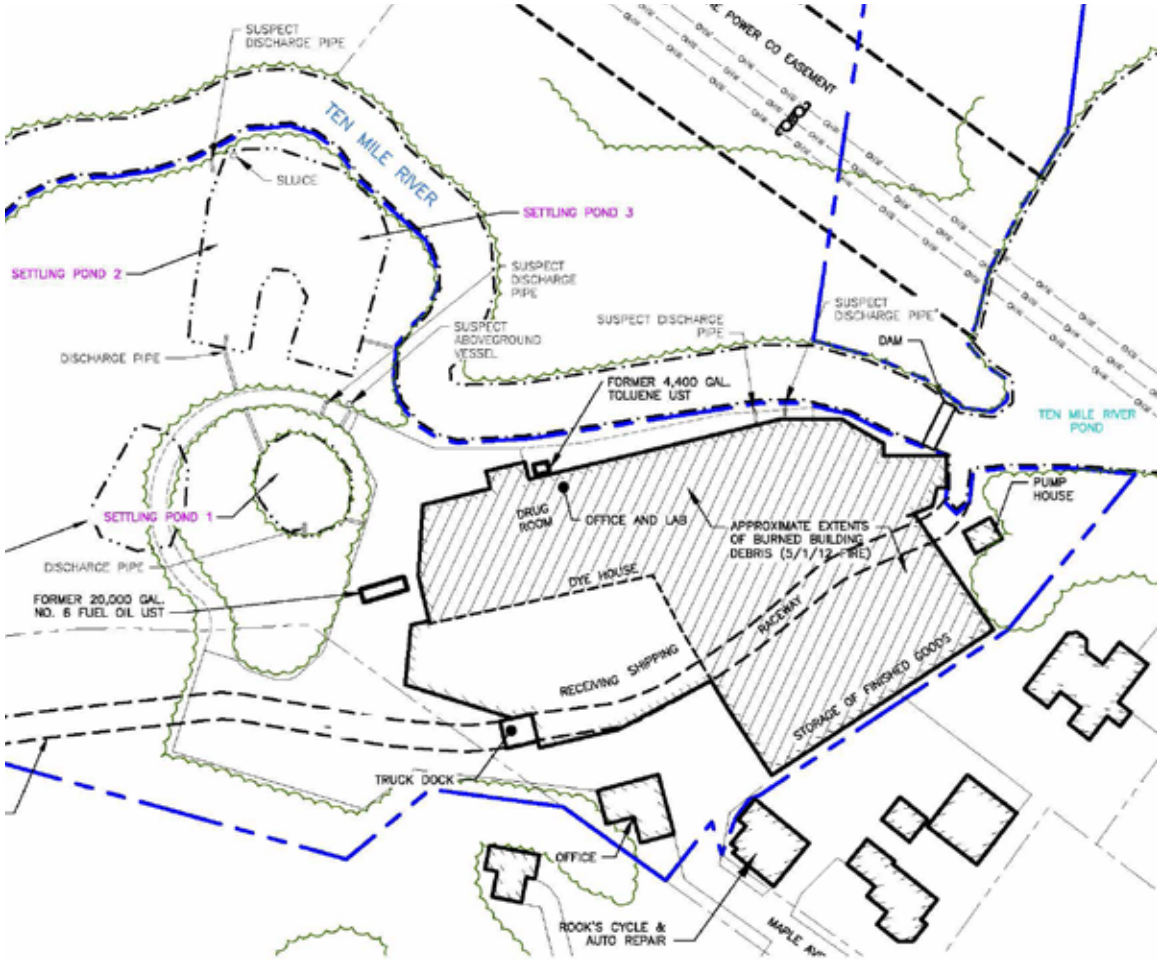

Figure 10. The Attleboro Dyeing and Finishing Corporation expanded the building over the raceway, and after the 1960s, diverted effluent into the three Settling Ponds (Ransom Consulting, Inc, Historic Details, 2017).

Figure 11. The 2012 fire reduced the building to ruble.

Figure 12. The office building on the right and parts of the shipping section on the left still stand.

Commission, requested the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assistance for the assessment and remediation of hazardous waste on the site. Between 2012 and 2019, the EPA and DEP were able to gain some access to the site to conduct this work, which has been ongoing since then. In September 2020, Ransom Consulting released the Phase 1 through 3 reports, which document the initial site investigation, the comprehensive site assessment, and the identification, evaluation, and selection of alternatives and remedial actions.[14] Further description of the environmental conditions is provided below, under Environmental Remediation Status.

Land Ownership

The land has essentially been owned by two families since the colonial period (Table 1).

The Town of Seekonk now owns the site, which consists of three parcels as well as water rights. The recent survey prepared by Ransom Consulting, provides more detailed information and varies slightly from the Assessor's historic data (Table 2, Figure 13).

Lots #6 and #477 are on the south shore of the river and together have access from Maple Avenue. Lot #9 is on the north bank, immediately adjacent to the dam and the mill pond. While it is near Pond Street, Lot #9 does not have any roadway frontage. The previously developed land on the Maple Avenue site consists of the ADFC building footprint and the adjacent asphalt parking areas. This impervious area totals about 2.7 acres, all of which lies on the south bank of the river (Lots #6 and #477).

The most recent deed includes "all right, title, and interest in and to all dams, flowage rights, flowed land, trenches, raceways, canals, waterpower, and water rights, littoral or riparian rights and the Mill Ponds… appurtenant to…".[15] At one time, water that was diverted from the mill pond ran through the raceway to the old canal, which is referenced in the 1934 and 1945 deeds. The canal, which is about 25 to 30 feet wide at the top of bank, has only a small flow of water, perhaps ten feet below the top of bank. It daylights on the western edge of Lot #6, then extends westward to flow into the Ten Mile River further downstream.

The Maple Avenue property abuts mixed residential and auto repair uses on the east, between the site and Central Avenue. The southern edge of the site is well defined by a 15-foot high escarpment along the property line with the Memorial Baptist Church. The land to the west is zoned industrial but remains forested floodplain without any development except the old canal. The abutting properties on the north side of the river, which front on Pond Street, are a mix of industrial, commercial, and residential. According to the Phase 2 report, a breach in the dam may be responsible for the low water in the mill pond.[16]

Table 1. History of Site Ownership

Acq.	*Sold*	*Owner*
-	1934	Ida B. Kent, Laurence H. Kent, Royden E. Kent, Helen F. Kent
1934	1945	Kent, Inc.
1945	1981	Attleboro Dyeing and Finishing Corporation, Manuel O. Castro, President
1981	2019	R.O.C. Realty, Richard O. Castro, President
2019	-	Town of Seekonk

Table 2. Parcel Area

Lot #	Ransom Survey	Assessor's Data
Lot 6	6.10 ac	5.80 ac
Lot 477	1.20 ac	2.00 ac
Lot 9	0.90 ac	0.94 ac
TOTAL	8.20 ac	8.74 ac

Source: Ransom Consulting, Existing Conditions Plan, October 2018; Assessor Property Cards

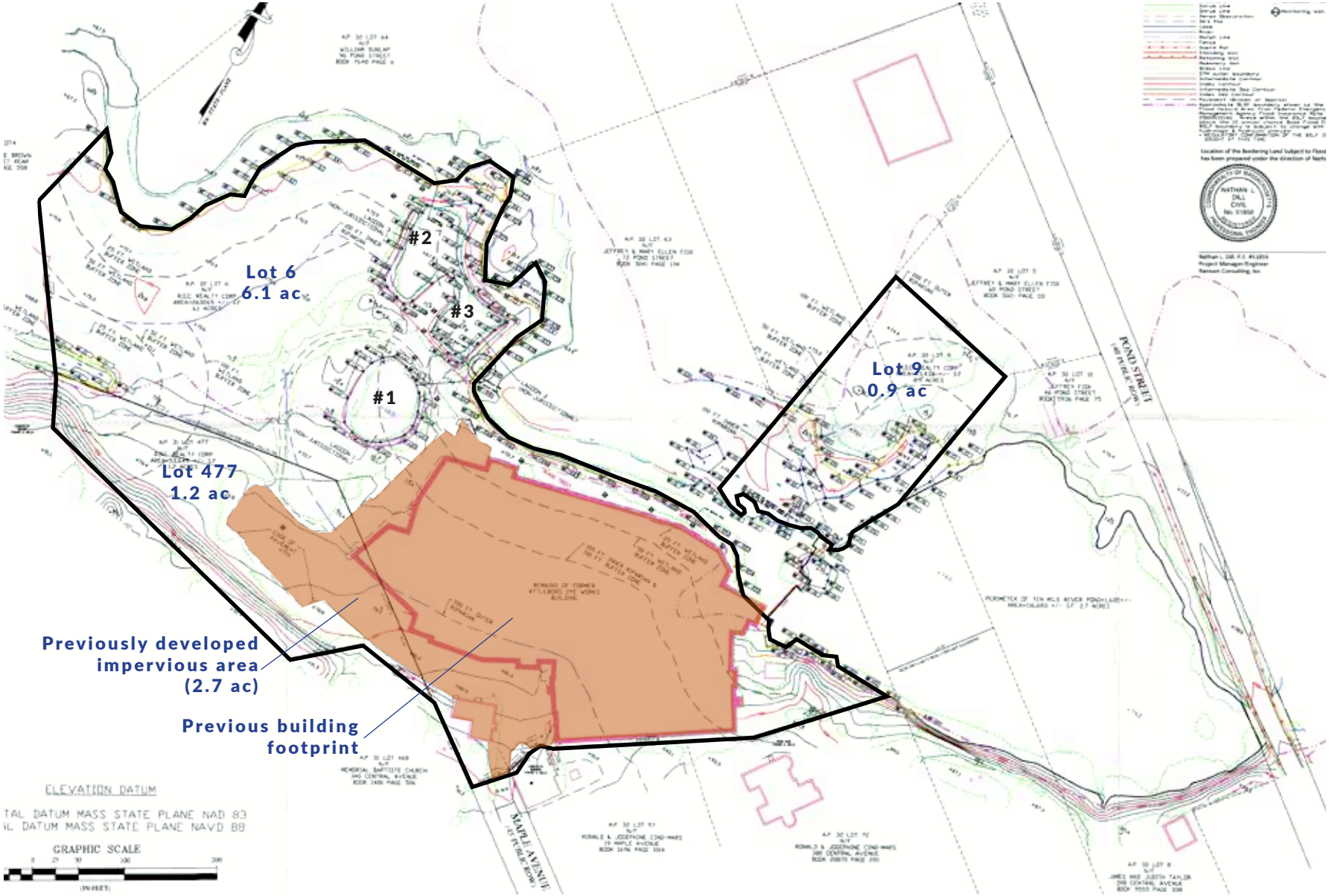

Figure 13. The Maple Avenue site consists of three parcels totalling 8.2 acres (Ransom Consulting, Inc, September 30, 2018).

Infrastructure

The Town of Seekonk does not have public wastewater collection or treatment, so development is served by on-site disposal systems including package plants and septic systems.[17] Although the Attleboro Wastewater Treatment Plant is nearby and in Seekonk, it does not treat any effluent from Seekonk. Its discharge is downstream of the Maple Avenue site. The Town is currently studying sewage treatment options in this part of Seekonk including the viability of connecting into the Attleboro Wastewater Treatment Plant, an idea that would likely take several years to plan and implement. Issues to be addressed include future capacity, Town and City agreements, and the cost of installing sewer pipes in the existing roads. The upland portions of the Maple Avenue site are course stratified deposits of sand and gravel, while the floodplain areas are alluvium. The areas around the settling ponds shows some artificial fill may have occurred.[18] The site is approximately one mile from the Attleboro Wastewater Treatment Plant via town streets.

The Town is served by 12 municipal wells in three well fields.[19] Zone II Wellhead Protection Zones lie approximately 1,000 feet east of the site on the east of Central Avenue/Route 152, but are not located on the site itself. Water service enters the site via Maple Avenue, connecting to the old office building and the former manufacturing facility.

National Grid provides electric service to the site via overhead lines on Maple Avenue. Bay State Gas provides gas service in Seekonk with connections to the site via Maple Avenue.

The power transmission lines have crossed through the northern portion of the property since at least 1918, when the Kent family granted a maintenance easement to the Seekonk Electric Company. The easement is now held by the New England Power Company.

Environmental Remediation Status

Hazardous waste was first identified on the site in 1980 (toluene), and the EPA conducted site assessments in 1981, and then multiple times in the 1990s and 2000s. In 1998, a No. 6 fuel oil underground storage tank and a toluene underground storage tank were removed and disposed off-site. A release of heavy metals was discovered Lagoons #2 and #3 in 2008. Lagoon #1 does not appear to present a potential condition of imminent hazard. Investigations on the site have included soil borings, groundwater monitoring wells, collection and laboratory analysis of soil, lagoon/canal sediment, river/pond sediment, groundwater and river surface water samples; groundwater elevation survey; and human health risk and ecological risk characterizations.[20]

At this point, there is no evidence of significant contamination to groundwater, and surface water contamination is limited to arsenic. Petroleum hydrocarbon, metals, and PCB were found in the lagoon and canal sediments. River sediments, including in the mill pond, seem to be attributable to upstream discharges on the Ten Mile River.[21]

Metals and PCB impacts are found in surficial soils at the northwestern portion of the site, and lead and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (HAP) impacts from the burned debris are found in the immediate vicinity of the building. Localized metals impacts are also in the southeastern portion of the site. Other localized impacts to soils include semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOC) near Lagoon #1; toluene and arsenic near the former underground storage tanks; extractable petroleum hydrocarbons (EPH) and PAH and naphthalene in the western portion of the building footprint.[22]

Comprehensive remedial actions are necessary to achieve a permanent solution at the site. Recommendations include a Notice of Activity and Use Limitations (AUL) on portions of the site; excavation and off-site disposal of lagoon and canal sediments, which can be managed as a non-toxic substance; soil excavation on portions of the industrial building footprint; abatement of hazardous building materials and demolition of the former industrial building, which will provide access to underlying soils and the raceway; and groundwater monitoring.

The remediation of Settling Pond #3 was completed in 2021, and the remediation of Settling Ponds #1 and #2 is beginning now (note that Settling Pond #1 is to the south, #2 is to the northwest, and #3 is to northeast). [23]

Figure 14. Settling Pond #3 has been remediated and is considered a wetland.

Wetlands Regulatory Requirements

The Maple Avenue site features floodplains as delineated by FEMA and several types of inland wetlands that are subject to regulation by the Commonwealth (310 CMR 10.00 Wetlands Protection, 2014) and the Town of Seekonk Conservation Commission Regulations (2012) (Figure 14).

The Ten Mile River and some of the bordering lands are designated as an AE Regulatory Floodway. Just at the site, the land broadens out into an expansive 100-year floodplain (AE, 1% Chance of Flooding) as the river flows downstream to join the Seven Mile River. The northwestern portion of the site falls within this floodplain and is designated by the Commonwealth as *Bordering Land Subject to Flooding* (Figure XX).

Land Subject to Flooding provides valuable storage capacity for floodwater that overtops the banks of the river and also provides wildlife habitat. With the exception of boardwalks and open space improvements, no built structures are recommended in the designated 100-year floodplain of the Maple Avenue site, regardless of first floor elevations, compensatory flood storage measures, or any other mitigation.

The river and the adjacent canal are considered *Land under Water Bodies and Waterways*. In addition to being in the floodplain, the Lagoons are designated *Bordering Vegetated Wetlands*. In Seekonk, *Bordering Vegetated Wetlands* are protected within 0 to 25 feet with a "no touch" rule in order to protect natural vegetation. No structures are allowed in the zone between 25 and 50 feet of a wetland edge, but site and landscape improvements are possible. Structures are possible within the 50 to 100 foot zone but require permitting through the Seekonk Conservation Commission.

Riverfront areas are regulated to protect natural environments. Where significant prior site disturbance has occurred, such as at the Maple Avenue site, redevelopment along the riverfront can improve existing conditions. In these situations, redevelopment may be allowed within the riverfront area if it is confined to previously developed areas. For the Maple Avenue site, this limits development to the approximately 2.7-acre area that was previously impervious surfaces of the former building footprints and adjacent parking and loading areas (Figure XX). New development will need to carefully manage stormwater, and plan for the hydrologic conditions after the dam is removed.

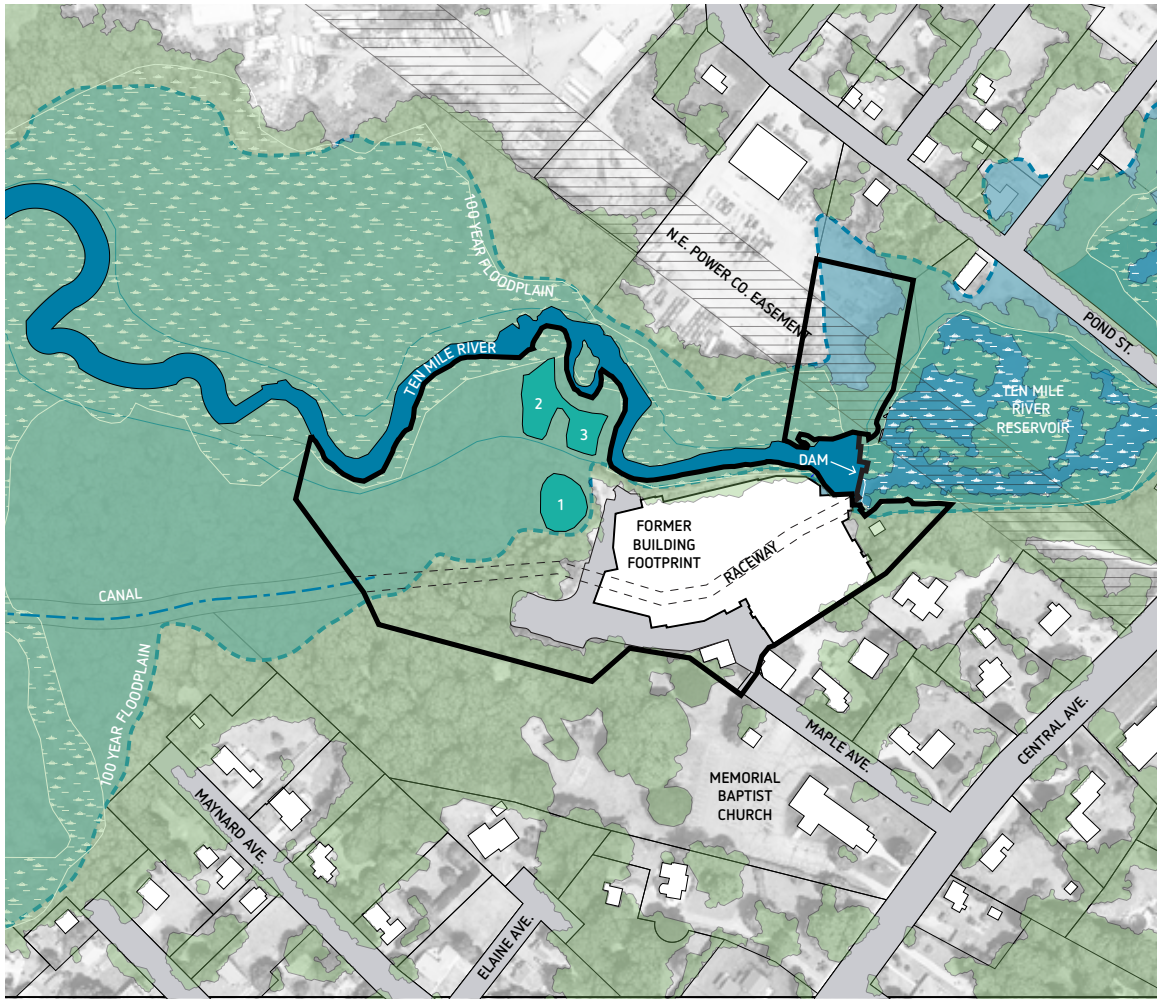

Figure 15. The western portion of the site is in the 100-year flood plain. The settling ponds and the river are wetland areas.

Zoning

The Maple Avenue site is zoned industrial and is part of relatively large industrial district along Pond Street and the Ten Mile river in the northwestern corner of Town (Figure 16). The site abuts the R-1 Residential Zone, which fronts along both sides of Central Avenue south to Bakers Corner. A few small Local Business zones to the northeast reflect the history of small businesses clustered in the area around Central Avenue and Oakhill Avenue. The summary of zoning requirements below provides key highlights that relate to potential development, but the Zoning By-Laws should be consulted for further details.[24]

Uses allowed by right in the Industrial zone include research, manufacturing, processing, fabrication, assembly, storage, mini-storage, freight handling, and commercial greenhouses. Single family, two family, and multi-family residential uses are not allowed, although up to eight units of accessory residential above ground floor commercial may be allowed with a special permit. Other uses that may be permitted with a special permit include retail, restaurants, hotels, larger office buildings (>25,000 sf), labs, commercial recreation, workshops, and non-residential mixed uses, among other. Junk, used material salvage, and salvage operations that are not related to onsite manufacturing are prohibited.

The Industrial District calls for a maximum of 3 stories or 40 feet and minimum 20,000 sf lots. A

variance would be needed for the requirement of a 50-foot frontage since the site is accessed directly from Maple Avenue without any frontage. The minimum depth of the front yard is 50 feet, and the minimum depth of the rear and side yards is 20 feet, except when adjacent to a residential district, which would then be 50 feet. Development and Design Standards in the zoning call for a minimum 25-foot landscaped buffer to separate industrial uses from residential uses; a minimum 10-foot landscaped buffer should be provided otherwise.

The Town of Seekonk does not currently allow two-family or multifamily housing in any zoning district except the Luther's Corner Business District (LCVD), where a maximum of 4.3 units per acre is possible. A Multifamily Development Overlay district can be superimposed to allow a maximum of 4.3 units per acre, but the overlay has to be 40 or more acres in size. The R-1 District is designated for "older or otherwise well-established residential areas" and only allows single family housing with a maximum of 3 units per acre and a maximum height of 3 stories or 40 feet.

Under Chapter 40B, the Commonwealth encourages the production of affordable housing and establishes a benchmark of 10% subsidized housing. For municipalities that are below this threshold, developers have the right to appeal adverse local decisions for housing developments that provide at least 20 to 25 % of the units serving households at or below 80% of area median income (AMI). Under Chapter 40B, a developer can request, and the Zoning Board of Appeals can approve, a project with greater density and more flexible standards than local zoning in order to make the project more feasible.[25] The Town of Seekonk is far below the State's threshold, with only 1.7% subsidized housing.

Massachusetts recently passed the Housing Choice Initiative (MGL Ch. 358, s.18). This initiative promotes as-of-right zoning for multifamily housing in MBTA Communities and in MBTA Adjacent Communities, such as Seekonk. This law seeks to establish contiguous districts of reasonable size (50 acres) that will allow multifamily housing – suitable for families and without age restriction - as of right at 15 units per acres. While the Maple Avenue site does not constitute a large enough area, the requirement of 15 units per acre establishes a benchmark for compact housing in municipalities close to transit facilities.

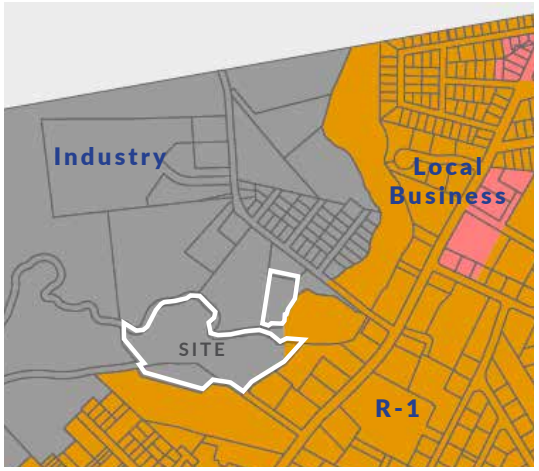

Figure 16. The site is currently zoned Industrial.

3. DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

The development scenarios explore the reuse of the site for industrial, residential, and mixed use, recognizing that zoning regulations may have to change to allow some of these conditions. The purpose of the scenarios is to inform future financial feasibility testing and sewage generation studies; to frame implementation choices; and to begin to establish project requirements and guidelines for a developers RFP. These concept plans indicate generally how much development could fit on the site, given the parameters discussed in Section 2 above. In subsequent project phases, more detailed design, layout alternatives, and specific programs will refine these accommodation studies, so these development concepts and programs should be considered preliminary.

An overview of the economic development potential accompanies each scenario. Development is not likely to occur for several years given the need for ongoing remediation, so immediate market demand is not the primary consideration. Instead, the focus should be on more sustained generational trends and emerging trends that are likely to be robust. Further analysis can test market interest in the site and determine financial feasibility of the development scenarios.

In all cases, buildings and parking areas are limited to areas of previously developed land and no development occurs in the floodplain or within 25 to 50 feet of the settling ponds, which are designated wetlands. The previous developed portion of the site is about 2.7 acres or 33 percent of the total property area. Although previous development on the site extended right to the river's edge in places, the proposed concepts have established a minimum 25 foot setback from the riverfront (50 feet where possible) to allow for continuous public access on landscaped trails in this zone.

These scenarios assume that a package sewage plant could be used, although further work is needed to correctly size these facilities. In all scenarios, the package plant and related septic fields are positioned on the southern portion of the property, which is an upland area screened by the steep embankment on that edge. In each scenario, consideration is given to fire truck access on the driveways and parking areas, either as turn arounds or a hammerhead layout, appropriate to the small size of the site.

With development limited to the previously developed area, approximately 5.5 acres can be set aside for natural woodlands, public trails, and points of waterfront access. No specific parking is provided for the open space areas, but each scenario could allow for a set aside of a few spaces.

For industrial and mixed use concepts a setback of 50 feet from the property line and adjacent residential uses is assumed. For the residential layouts, a setback of 35 feet is assumed. Parking generally follows parking standards in the zoning code, although the number of employees in any industrial uses cannot be projected exactly, so more general assumptions are used.

Industrial Development Scenario

The site is zoned for industrial and abuts industrial uses on Pond Street north of the river. Preserving and promoting industrial properties helps maintain the Town's fiscal health while providing jobs. While the site has been a manufacturing site for over 100 years, it does lack roadway visibility and is relatively small, two factors which might affect its viability for any type of commercial/industrial use. The relatively close proximity to Interstate-95, accessible via two alternative arterial routes, is an asset. The proximity to adjacent residential uses may affect some industrial operations such as truck traffic, noise, or other potential nuisance factors. The lack of municipal sewage treatment will limit the feasibility of some uses, such as life sciences, which demand large quantities of water in their processes.

In Southeastern Massachusetts, primary industry clusters are electric equipment, and fabricated and primary metal manufacturing. Emerging industries, which might also be attracted to the open space and other amenities on the site, include clean tech, wind energy start-ups, and medical device companies (Figure 17, 18). A concerted effort would be required to attract these high value enterprises with their well-paying jobs. Example of other nearby industrial uses are landscaping and construction yards, fuel oil services, asphalt paving, building equipment, waste management, and autobody operations, many of which can be found in the Pond Street area.

A number of the anchor institutions in the region could help define and build connections to potential industrial users. Institutes like the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Fall River and academic research at UMass Dartmouth, University of Rhode Island, and Brown University among others are at the forefront of emerging technologies in the area. The programs at Bristol Community College should align with the primary and emerging industry clusters to ensure a trained workforce in the future.

The industrial concept plan illustrates the potential for approximately 25,000 sf footprint, which in this case is assumed to be a one-story building (Figure 19). A loading dock and approximately 42 spaces are indicated, a ratio of 1.7 spaces per 1,000 sf (the number of employees is unknown at this point). The density of development is a floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.07 across the entire 8.2-acre site (2.1 FAR on the developable portion of the site)

Figure 17. Fabricated and primary metal manufacturing in Southeast Massachusetts

Figure 18. Industrial facilities in Worcester, MA (Table Talk Pies)

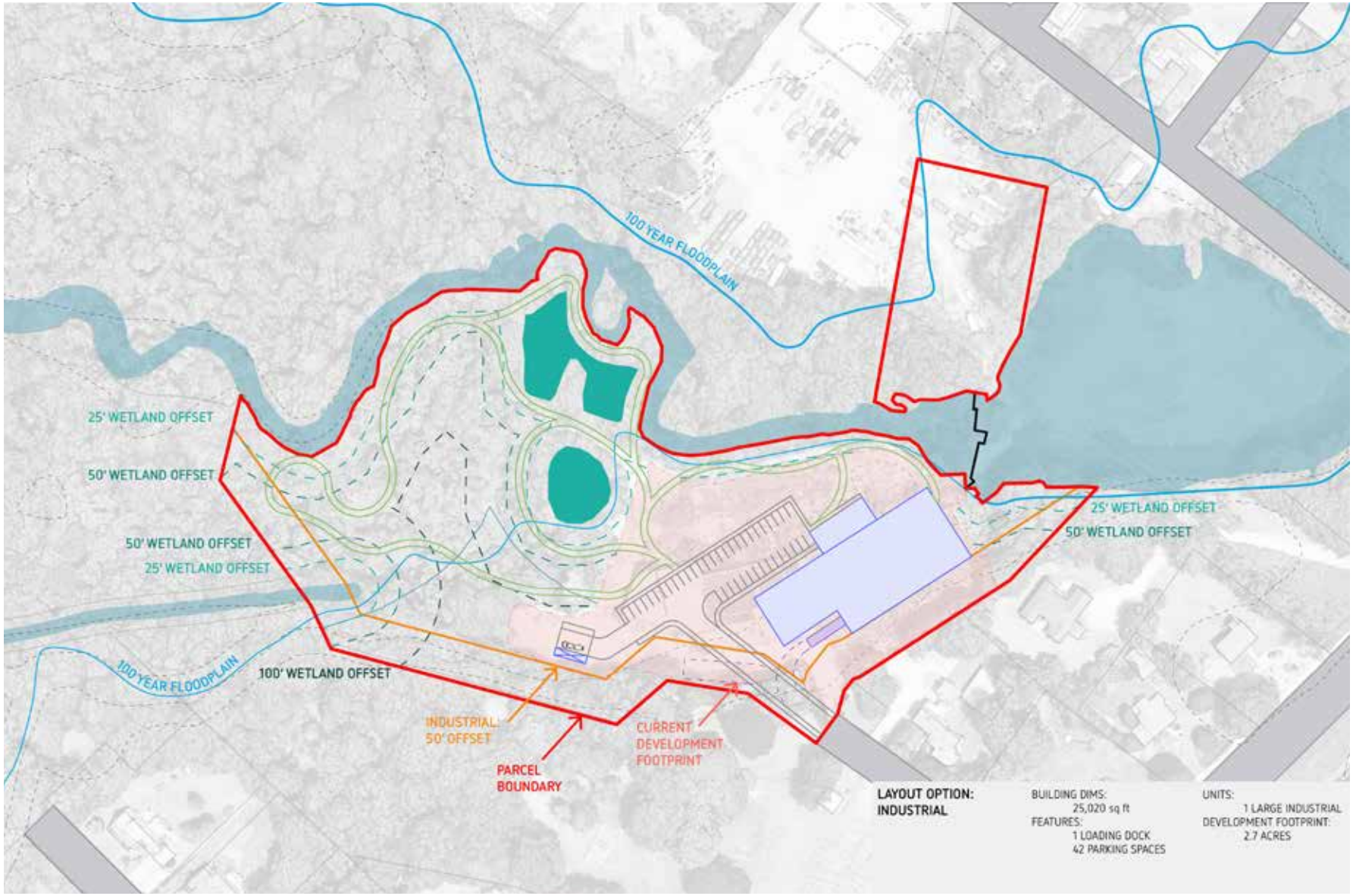

Figure 19. The industrial development concept plan illustrates a one-story building with approximately 25,000 square feet of floor area, complemented by riverfront and woodland trails.

Residential Development Scenario

The site is in the Providence-Warwick Statistical Metropolitan Area (SMA) but is also close enough to the Boston-Cambridge-Newton SMA to feel its effects. The Boston area's population has been growing for two decades, with a slight decline last year, and the Providence-Warwick area has also showed this sustained growth. Population growth is one aspect that fuels the housing market, but the more nuanced life cycle moves of the millennial generation as they enter their home-buying period also increases demand. Finally, both the Boston and the Providence-Warwick metropolitan areas have seen steady declines in housing inventory especially since the pandemic began.[26] The current rise in interest rates may dampen home buying, but these rates may not be applicable two or three years out when the site is ready for development.

The quiet suburban lifestyle that Seekonk offers is particularly valued as people are changing their work styles to commute less and work remotely. At the same time, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is promoting housing production, especially more compact smart growth, in many of its grant programs and legislative actions, such as Housing Choice. Given the relatively small size of the site and the character of adjacent residential districts, the concept plan considered a range of residential precedents including town houses and similar style wood frame multifamily housing (Figures 20-22).

The residential concept plan illustrates approximately 41 units of housing, laid out as two to 2 ½ story townhouses arranged around a loop driveway (Figure 23). Density is calculated at 5 units per acre for the entire site, or 15 units per acre on the developable portion. Parking is approximately two spaces per unit in a combination of first floor garages and shared surface parking. Some of the properties would have back yards overlooking the riverfront, providing a nice amenity. Access to the dam location is intentionally kept open to allow for a prominent point of public access to riverfront trails. Access to woodland trails would also be publicly accessible from the end of the driveway and other points within the development.

Figure 20. Liberty Commons, Leominster, MA

Figure 21. Ipswich River Place Condos, North Reading, MA

Figure 22. 751 Metacom Ave, Bristol, RI

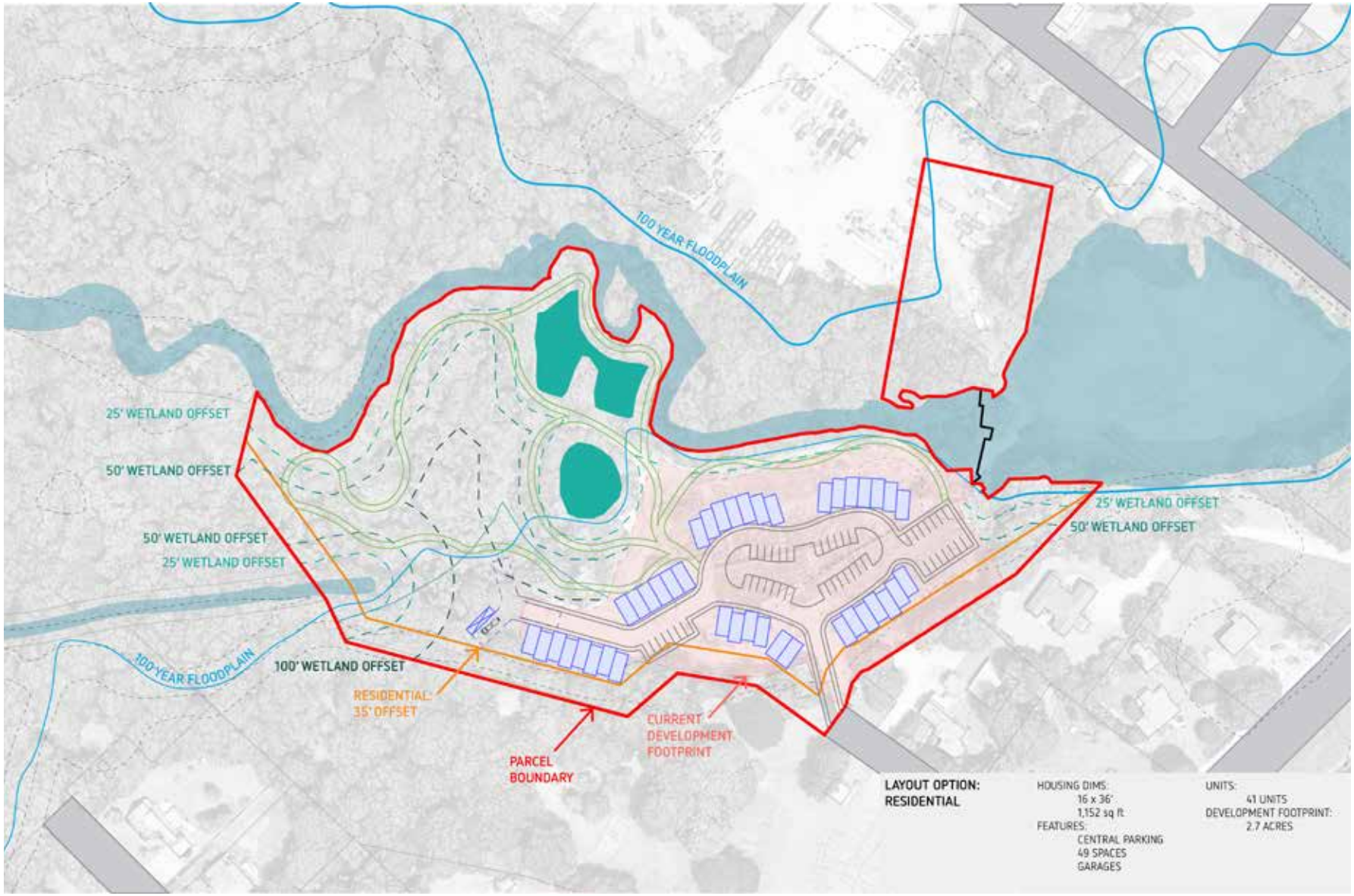

Figure 23. The residential development concept plan illustrates approximately 40 units of housing at 2.5 stories, complemented by riverfront and woodland trails.

Mixed Use Development Scenario

During the community meeting in April 2022, ideas regarding a mix of uses were generated, including a brewery. Since the site has so little visibility from the road, typical retail and restaurant uses are unlikely, but destination activities could be further explored in market studies. A brewery is an example of a small manufacturing process combined with a destination retail activity. Other possibilities for the site are small manufacturing and craft workshops, studio space, and makerspaces. These could be combined with loft apartments, creating a unique riverside setting for residents, workers, and visitors. Loft spaces could be promoted as life/work studio space. Many precedents for this type of program are in renovated buildings; the challenge on this site will be to consider feasibility and ambiance with new construction (Figures 24-26).

The mixed use/loft scenario imagines a two story structure with approximately 36,000 square feet of development (Figure 27). The FAR would be 0.10 as calculated for the entire site and 0.31 as calculated just on the developable portion of the site. A mix might be 12,000 to 18,000 sf of commercial/industrial uses and 15 to 20 units of residential use on the upper floor and possibly portions of the first floor. The combination of uses would need to be carefully considered to address noise, odors, or any other impacts between tenants. As illustrated, the massing of the building could take advantage of the riverfront views, but a publicly accessible passageway to the dam is recommended to ensure that the building does not wall off the water's edge. Parking is provided at approximately two spaces/1,000 sf of building floor area. A number of layout variations could be explored to accommodate this program, depending on the ultimate mix of uses.

Figure 24. Technocopia Maker Space, Worcester, MA

Figure 25. Ten Mile River Lofts, Pawtucket, MA

Figure 26. Wormtown Brewery, Worcester, MA

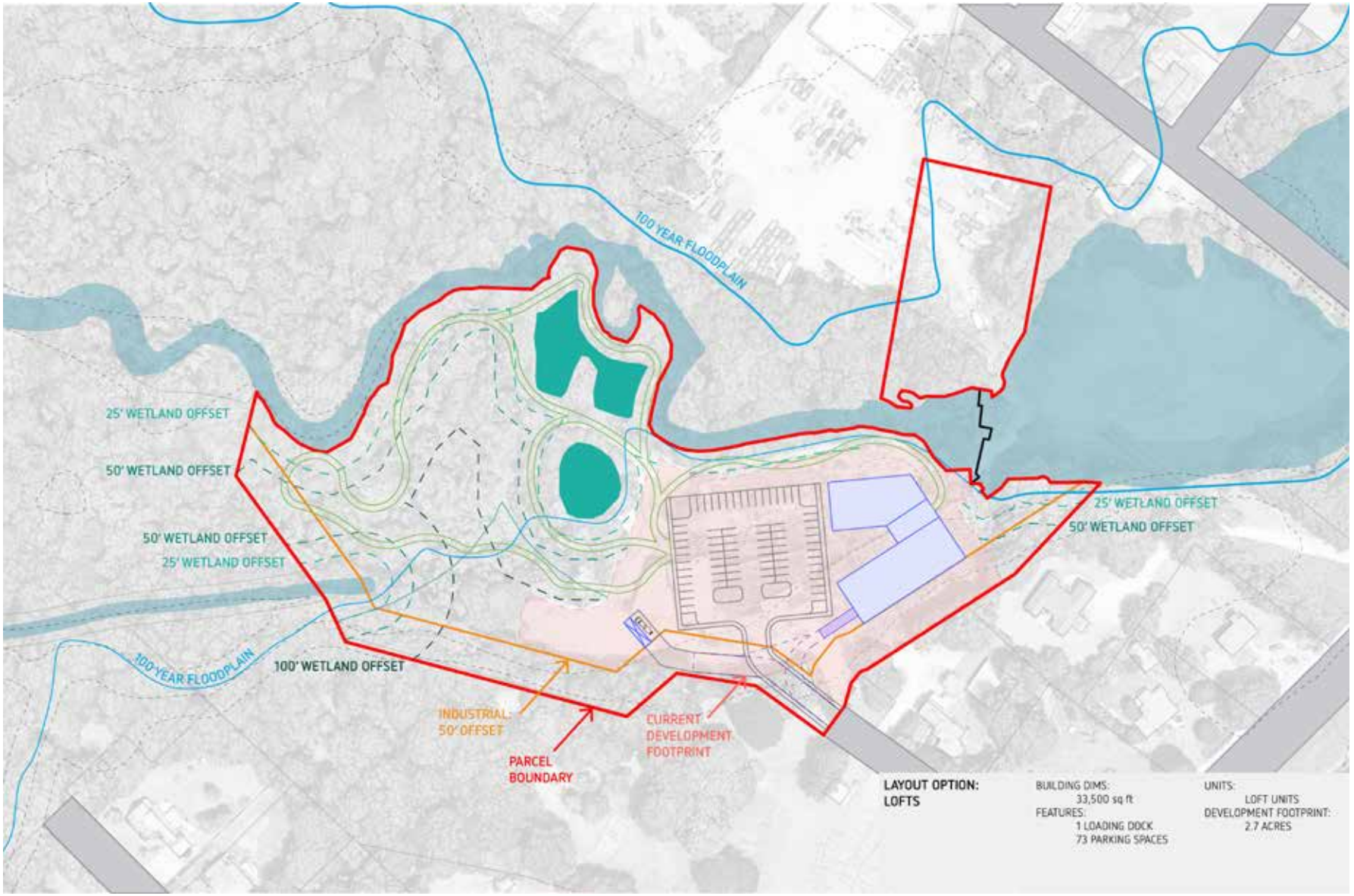

Figure 27. The mixed use development concept plan illustrates a two-story building with approximately 36,000 square feet of floor area, complemented by riverfront and woodland trails.

Figure 28. Caratunk Wildlife Refuge has woodland trails and waterfront access.

Open Space Amenities

The redevelopment of the site will restore access to the riverfront and woodlands on the site (Figure 28). This access has been restricted for generations due to manufacturing and more recently due to the dangers of the building wreckage and contamination. The presence of residents and/or employees on the developable eastern end of the site will change an isolated site into one that is occupied and livelier, helping to ensure that public use of the recreational amenities is more visible. The open space amenities in turn will add value to future development.

Continuous riverfront trails and several loops within the forest would be an opportunity for interpretive signage about the natural environment of the river and the historic evolution of the site. The removal of the dam, which is being considered, will change the hydrology to some degree, but has the potential to invigorate the natural setting and restore the original river flow and habitats. Once the dam studies are completed, this information will help inform future site design and the level of first floor elevations for buildings. As can be seen already at Settling Pond #3, the remediation process can transform the legacy of hazardous materials into benign wetland and pond areas that enhance the landscape.

Suggested Development Guidelines

The disposition of publicly owned property offers an opportunity to establish guidelines to achieve civic goals. At this early stage, this report recommends that the Town maintain as much flexibility as possible regarding future uses and density given the site challenges (small size and lack of visibility) and the uncertainty of market conditions two to three years out. Some potential guidelines for site development include the following:

- Limit new development to areas that were previously developed (former building footprint and paved parking areas)
- Limit new construction to upland areas outside of the 100-year floodplain, except for structures related to open space amenities.
- Set new development at least 25 feet from river's edge, even in previously developed areas
- Create a continuous publicly accessible trail on the river's edge
- Establish a publicly accessible open space amenity on the western end of the site, with a network of trails, interpretive signage, and landscape improvements
- Set first floor elevations above future flooding levels, taking into account climate change and dam removal implications
- Specify specific storm water management strategies tailored to site conditions and environmental objectives.

4. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This site analysis and redevelopment study is the first step in considering the future of the site once remediation and building demolition is complete, a process that might take several years. The ultimate objective is to dispose of public land through a developer RFP. Following state and local regulations, a typical developer RFP process identifies a third party entity (private for profit, non-profit, or other) that can achieve redevelopment and restore the property to the tax rolls.

The decision points in the redevelopment process are highlighted in Figure 29. Many of these steps are or will be happening concurrently.

Remediation and Site Clean Up

In order to maximize developer interest in the site and improve financial feasibility, as much remediation, demolition, and general clean up as possible should be done before issuing an RFP. The Town is currently seeking funding for these activities through MassDevelopment and is also looking into the potential for use of America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Historically, EPA allows only one clean-up grant per site, which has already been obtained, although ARPA funding may change this equation.

Sewage Options and Dam Removal

Other studies that the Town is currently conducting also will have a direct impact on understanding the development potential on the site, including the sewage treatment options and the dam removal study. The sewage study, which is being conducted by ES&M, may affect use and/or density of development, as well as the timeline. The dam removal study (GPI Engineering) will provide valuable information on the shape and flow of the water adjacent to the site and will inform future landscape design.

Real Estate and Market Feasibility Study

With greater clarity about what's possible on the site, a next step will be to explore what the market thinks through a real estate and market analysis. The Town has already identified an EPA Technical Assistance grant that might fund this work. This analysis can dive further into industrial, residential, and mixed use precedents, absorption, and rents in the region and can model financial feasibility with a development proforma. With this groundwork in place, the proforma can be updated to reflect any future market changes. The proforma also gives the Town insight about what is really feasible, enhancing their ability to negotiate with the ultimate developer of the site.

The real estate and market feasibility study would provide a good opportunity to interview small and midsize industrial firms and real estate developers to understand local nuances and begin to generate interest in the site. Ongoing community engagement should be integrated into this study to be sure that residents and Town leaders are

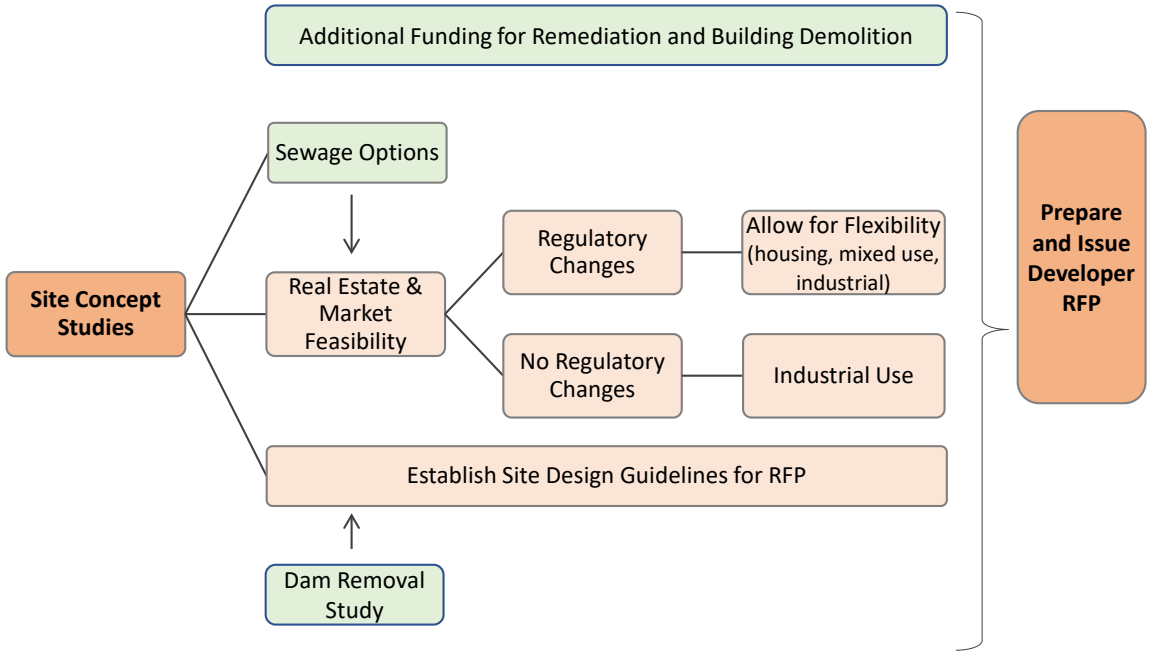

Figure 29. Several elements of the implementation can happen concurrently, including remediation, building demolition, dam removal and sewage option studies, and real estate and market analysis study.

aware of the market considerations and can continue to clarify goals and guidelines for site development.

Regulatory Strategy

Knowledge about the market and the feasibility of development on this site will help the Town decide on its regulatory strategy. If there is a viable industrial market for this site and general acceptance of this potential use, the Town could decide to retain the existing zoning and move forward once site remediation and building demolition is completed. In this case, the RFP would be issued to allow industrial uses in compliance with zoning as well as any additional requirements that are deemed appropriate for this site, such as design guidelines, riverfront setbacks, open space requirements, and any specific limitations on industrial operations.

Allowing more flexibility in uses and density may be desirable to ensure development interest and more creative responses from developers. The current Zoning By-Laws has no available district that would allow this kind of flexibility for multifamily and/or mixed use development. Dropping a new designation on this particular site alone could be considered "spot zoning," but other options are possible.

The Town might encourage a "friendly" use of Chapter 40B, a state statute that encourages developers to build affordable housing (at least 25% of the units) by allowing more flexibility over local zoning. This approach could be used for multifamily residential alone or with complementary commercial/workshop uses.

Rezoning the site to R-1 could allow up to eight units as of right, given the minimum lot size of 14,400 sf on the developable portion of the site (3 units per acre on 2.7 acres). Given the constrained nature of the site and lack of frontage, it's not clear this many single family lots could be achieved. Since the entire site is 8.2 acres, a variance on lot size could allow 24 units in a clustered development, preserving the publicly accessible open space component in the riverfront, floodplains, and wooded portion of the sit. The feasibility of this density would need to be tested.

A new or updated overlay district is another strategy to consider. The current Multifamily Development Overlay District requires a minimum of 40 acres at 4.3 units per acre. This overlay could be modified (or a new one created) to allow for it to land on smaller sites. With the currently

allowed density, this would accommodate 35 units given the acreage of the overall Maple Avenue site and up to four stories or 55 feet in height. Given the recent Massachusetts Housing Choice legislation, which encourages 15 units per acre, greater densities may be warranted. The current (or new) overlay could also be adapted to allow greater flexibility for mixed uses.

Site Disposition and Request for Proposal

The disposition of this Town-owned property will follow Massachusetts State Chapter 30B and the Town of Seekonk Surplus Property Disposition Policy #28 (1995). A typical RFP has the following components:

1. **Public Advertisement:** Brief notice of RFP availability, property identification, and technical logistics.
2. **Overview of the RFP**: Schedule, contact information, site visit, questions, and other administrative information
3. **Property Description**: The property description in this report (Section 2) can become the basis for this element with updates as necessary.
4. **Project Requirements and Guidelines**: This report begins to identify project goals and guidelines and identifies next steps to define use and density after market studies are completed. Community input is encouraged to inform the final set of goals and objectives, project requirements, and development guidelines prior to issuing the RFP.
5. **Submission Requirements**: This element defines the format and content of proposals including cover letter, development team composition and qualifications, project concept, forms, and in a separate submittal, the financial plan.
6. **Evaluation and Developer Selection Criteria**: These criteria should reflect back the project understanding, and project requirements and guidelines based on the submitted materials.
7. **General Terms and Conditions**: As established by Town legal counsel
8. **Appendices**: Forms and other materials as needed.

The RFP must be advertised in compliance with Chapter 30B, but also should be disseminated widely to encourage as many submittals as possible to maximize the Town's choices. The competitive bid process, selection of the developer, and any subsequent negotiation leading to the final disposition would be led by the Board of Selectmen, with executive sessions for important real estate decisions.

Key ingredients for a successful disposition are to have a clean site that is ready for development and a clear set of Town goals for the property, supported by easily understood facts and requirements. Town expectations for the site should be synchronized with the realities of market interest, financial feasibility, and developer capabilities. With goals and expectations established ahead of time, expedient public decision making helps attract quality developers and keeps them at the table through negotiation and ultimate redevelopment.

The disposition of the Maple Avenue site on the Ten Mile River will open up the next chapter for a property that has played a prominent role in the Town during its different phases of manufacturing through to its abandonment and acquisition after the fire. The Town's ongoing work is already restoring this blighted property to make it and the Ten Mile River more accessible for community use and to return it to the active tax rolls. With careful planning, the design of the new development can be a model for smart growth with a compact arrangement of buildings that allows for significant open space. This study shows that a number of different uses could be accommodated on the site, but encourages the Town to maintain flexibility for now in the interest of encouraging developer interest and finding the best possible solution for a challenging site.

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