



ULI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

WAREHAM VILLAGE

WAREHAM, MA

FEBRUARY 4, 2020



**Urban Land
Institute**

Boston/New England

URBAN LAND INSTITUTE (ULI)

ULI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. The mission of ULI is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Founded in 1936, the institute now has over 40,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service, including developers, architects, planners, lawyers, bankers, and economic development professionals, among others.

ABOUT ULI BOSTON

ULI Boston/New England serves the six New England states and has over 1,400 members. As a preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI Boston/New England facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, and regional leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

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MassDevelopment is the Commonwealth's economic development and finance authority. The authority works closely with state, local and federal officials to boost housing and create jobs. With the power to act as both a lender and developer, MassDevelopment also works to fill in gaps in infrastructure, transportation, energy and other areas that may be holding back economic growth. MassDevelopment has worked with ULI since 2011 to help sponsor and support the TAP process in cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

ABOUT THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL (TAP) PROGRAM

ULI Boston/New England's Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) at the request of public officials and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use challenges who benefit from planning and development professionals providing pro bono recommendations.

At the TAP, a group of diverse professionals specially assembled with expertise in the issues posed spend one to two days visiting and analyzing existing conditions, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a way consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

Learn more at: <https://boston.uli.org>

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Executive Summary

The Wareham Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened on February 4, 2020, at Stone Path Malt in Wareham, Massachusetts, under the direction of the Boston/New England Chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI). Over the course of the day, eight ULI members met with local business and property owners, residents and non-profit organizations from the Town of Wareham. The purpose of the TAP was to provide guidance to the Town on redevelopment strategies and to encourage reinvestment in the Wareham Village commercial district, which encompasses Merchants Way and a portion of Main Street. The TAP presented their findings and recommendations to the public later that evening at Stone Path Malt.

Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process.

Provides an overview of ULI's District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) as well as a list of the panel members and stakeholders who took part. The chapter also highlights key elements of the study area for the TAP, and describes the process undertaken by the panelists and stakeholders to arrive at their recommendations.

Chapter 2: Background and History.

Gives a brief overview of the issues that the TAP was asked to assess and includes the questions that the Town posed to the panel. Also provides key population and demographic information and a brief overview of the study area.

Chapter 3: Assets and Opportunities.

Identifies the positive aspects of Wareham Village as well as conditions that are favorable to successful redevelopment. These include an engaged community and government entities willing to enact change; outdoor amenities, including the waterfront and Besse Park; the potential for a walkable business district; easy

access to multiple highways and Cape Cod as well as seasonal rail service; and an existing base of neighborhood businesses, restaurants, and retail.

Chapter 4: Challenges. Examines the obstacles the Town may face as they redevelop Wareham Village into a more vibrant residential/commercial district. These include an outdated zoning code that is not compatible with growth strategy; inadequate communication channels between government agencies and boards and Town stakeholders; inadequate access to the waterfront; a focus on projects in hierarchically less important locations and limited diversity of retail offerings and businesses on Main Street.

Chapter 5: Recommendations.

Proposes a number of actions that the Town can implement to achieve its goal of creating a more vibrant, pedestrian-friendly Wareham Village. Key recommendations include: Updating the zoning to allow for greater density; restructuring and recruiting subject matter experts to serve on land use-related boards; implementing public realm improvements; and facilitating redevelopment of key parcels along Merchants Way. The section also includes two separate development proposals targeting two specific development sites.

Chapter 6: Funding Sources/Resources.

Provides a list of potential funding sources through federal and state agencies, as well as an appendix of articles and papers that could be used for modeling some of the recommended actions.

Chapter 7: Conclusion.

Offers a final assessment of the redevelopment potential of the Wareham Village.

The TAP Process

ULI Boston/New England convened a volunteer panel of experts whose members represent the range of disciplines necessary to analyze the challenges and opportunities facing Wareham, specifically the Wareham Village commercial corridor. Practice areas included architects, attorneys, developers, designers, engineers, grant managers, and planners. The following is a list of panelists:

Panel Members

Co-Chairs

James Heffernan, commercial real estate attorney; co-founder, Navem Partners, LLC

Michael A. Wang, architect, AIA, LEED AP BD+C; principal, Form + Place

Panel

Susan Connelly, director of community assistance and strategic partnerships, Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP)

Andrew Consigli, principal, Civico Development

Mary Ellen DeFrias, VP for Community Development, MassDevelopment

Richard Friberg, principal, TEC, Inc. (TheEngineeringCorp.com)

Christine Madore, VP of real estate services, MassDevelopment

Panelists have donated their time.

ULI Staff

Sara Marsh, manager, Boston/New England District Council

TAP Writer Mike Hoban, principal, Hoban Communications

Stakeholders

The TAP benefited from the participation of the diverse group of stakeholders – local business and property owners, representatives from study area businesses, potential investors, non-profits, and Wareham residents.

The following is a list of stakeholders:

George Barrett, owner, Barrett's Heating & Appliance Center Inc. (348 Main Street)

Linda Burke, VP of marketing & communications, AD Makepeace Co., Wareham

Tim Ciaffoni, attorney, property owner (191 Main Street)

Michael Giancola, commercial real estate broker, president, Southeast Commercial Real Estate

Jamie Herring, president, Herring Properties, Princeton, NJ

H. James Herring, owner, Nassau Street Properties, Princeton, NJ

Matthew Herring, board advisor, Boston Geospatial

Leanne Hunt, owner, Cafe Soleil (241 Main Street)

Robert Hunt, owner, Cafe Soleil (241 Main Street)

Kat Jones, executive director, Onset Bay Association

Frank Mahady, principal, FXM Associates (author, 2019 Wareham Economic Development Strategy report)

Karen Moore, owner, Americana Cafe (208 Main Street)

Clive Olson, owner, Olson's Garden Center, Wareham

Cindy Parola, broker/owner, Laforge Realty, Wareham

Kate Sawyer, branch manager, Eastern Bank (226 Main Street)

Elizabeth Sellon, owner, Elizabeth & Company Home Offerings (ECHO), Wareham

Shelley Stormo, executive director, Verilife, (112 Main Street)

Peter Ward, owner, Americana Cafe (208 Main Street)

The Assignment

The Wareham TAP was held on February 4, 2020. Panelists from the ULI Boston/New England District Council were greeted at the Narrows Crossing Restaurant in Wareham by Kenneth Buckland, director of planning and community development for the Town of Wareham, and Mary Mackey Bruce and Peter Teitelbaum, members of the Wareham Redevelopment Authority and the Wareham Board of Selectmen. Following introductions and breakfast, panelists drove to a public parking lot located adjacent to Besse Park on Main Street, located just outside the study area and diagonally across the street from Verilife, the first recreational marijuana dispensary opened in Southeastern Mass. Panelists were then taken by van on a tour of the study area, which extends from Besse Park at the intersection of Main Street and Sandwich Road to the intersection of Sawyer Street and Main Street, a distance of approximately one-third of a mile. The study area also includes Merchants Way, located parallel to Main Street, which fronts the Wankinco River, a tributary of the Wareham River. Merchants Way is separated from the water by MBTA commuter railroad tracks, which are active seasonally for the CapeFLYER passenger rail service.

Panelists first observed the construction site of Tobey Hospital's emergency department expansion, a \$25 million capital project located at the south end of Main Street at the former Tobey Homestead, which had been listed on the National Register of Historic Places before being demolished in 2019. The new facility is expected to be completed in late 2020, potentially driving additional retail/restaurant traffic to Wareham Village.

The group then proceeded north up Main Street where panelists briefly observed the commercial district along Main Street, which

is comprised of a mix of office buildings of varying quality, service businesses, retail, and restaurants. While many of the retail and restaurant properties are well-maintained and have the folksy appeal consistent with historic New England downtowns, a number of the commercial buildings appear to have been neglected for an extended period of time, with some properties completely vacant. Panelists also observed a handful of architecturally appealing buildings along Main Street (including the U.S. Post Office and Eastern Bank), although there are no buildings of historic significance remaining in the study area. While businesses experience a slowdown during the winter months, panelists were told most businesses remain open year around, with some closing for multiple week vacations during the off season.

Next, the group left the study area and traveled approximately three-quarters of a mile to the Tremont Nail Factory site, passing a CVS-anchored retail plaza along the way. The Town, with support from MassDevelopment, is redeveloping the Tremont Nail Factory site, which is registered on the National Register of Historic Places and includes roughly 48,000 square feet of space in eight buildings on a 7.2 acre lot. The property was acquired by the Town in 2004 with Community Preservation Act funds. Panelists were given a brief tour of the site and observed the picturesque water views outside of the 6,400 square foot Freight Building, which is used sporadically for events, and were told that there is a marijuana products manufacturing facility scheduled to open its doors on the site in 2020.

The group tour then proceeded back to the northern edge of the study area to a potential redevelopment site, which includes a closed gas station, a parking lot, and the district

fire station abutting the MBTA commuter rail station. Across the street from the fire station is a vacant 2,000 square foot building (274 Main Street). The panelists walked the length of Merchants Way, first observing the MBTA CapeFLYER train station in close proximity to the water and headed south. Merchants Way is set back from the water and railroad tracks. Most of the properties within the parcel appear to have unsecured dumpsters at the rear of their buildings, and there is a proliferation of trash and liquor “nip” bottles in the area. There are a significant amount of parking spaces, both at the rear of the Main Street properties and along the street parallel to the railroad tracks.

Finally, the group traveled to the Stone Path Malt facility, where the ULI panelists interviewed stakeholders, listed in the previous sub-section, in two separate panel discussions for the remainder of the morning. In the afternoon, panelists engaged in an intensive charrette to develop recommendations based on the input from the stakeholders as well as background information provided by the Town (which included a briefing book, previous studies and plans, and direct dialogue). The day ended with the panel sharing their analysis and recommendations in a limited public forum at the Stone Path Malt Tap Room that evening.



Tremont Nail Factory



Charrette

Background and History

Wareham Village, one of the Town's two traditional village centers, is a classic New England waterfront village. The focus area comprises Main Street, which offers a mix of businesses, office, retail and restaurants, and Merchants Way, a parcel of land that runs parallel to both Main Street and the Wankinco River and railway. Merchants Way serves as a secondary vehicular roadway and parking area. The Town sought the help of the TAP to provide guidance on devising a redevelopment strategy for Wareham Village, which is the Town's historical downtown commercial district. Despite offering an array of service businesses and food options, Wareham Village has experienced disinvestment and neglect for well over a decade, as detailed in the Town's 2018 Slums and Blight Inventory.

The Town's 2019 Economic Development Strategy and Market Analysis suggests that

the area can support high density rental housing, additional retail, restaurant uses, and office space that can be developed as complementary mixed-uses. The Town recognizes that the study area's current zoning does not facilitate greater intensity of these uses, and is willing to up-zone the area accordingly to catalyze redevelopment

Recent development activity in and around the study area could further strengthen Wareham Village as the town's economic center, beginning with Tobey Hospital's emergency department expansion at the southern end of the study area, expected to be completed by the close of 2020; the redevelopment of the Tremont Nail Factory site; and the presence of Verilife, the thriving recreational marijuana dispensary operating just outside of the study area (212 Main Street). These developments are seen as a potential source of customers for a revitalized Wareham Village.



Fire house

The Town has identified two sites within the study area as focal points for redevelopment. The first is a parcel of public land on the northern edge of the study area that includes a parking lot and the Wareham District Fire Station, as well as an adjacent privately owned gas station which has been closed for some time. The second site is in close proximity to the historic train station along the waterfront, and includes one derelict building (195 Main Street, also known as the Cornwell Building) and one building that could use substantial improvement (191 Main Street). A vehicular/pedestrian walkway leading directly to the train station is also located one building over from 195 Main Street.

Questions to be addressed by the panel

1. Assuming up-zoning is approved, what development concepts work best on these two sites?
 - a. What combination of parcels together with the designated properties would create a marketable site?
 - b. Should we expand the lot size by combining the private properties with the public land that is currently used for parking (in the Merchant's Way property)?
 - c. Can you provide hand-drawn building site layouts? [We would like graphics to help support a change in zoning by showing the public what potential redevelopment could look like. We have local architects who have the capacity to render concepts, but would like to know what it might look like in terms of massing and bulk.]
2. Our recent market analysis suggests opportunities for high density rental housing, additional retail and restaurant uses. What are your thoughts?
3. We have created a Wareham Redevelopment Authority (WRA) with Chapter 121B authorities. Is this the right tool to drive development in this area? Are there other programmatic tools that should be considered to facilitate redevelopment? If the WRA makes sense,

how can we best advance redevelopment in this area?

4. What mix of financing tools are available to support the redevelopment of these key properties and other properties in the downtown area?

The Town of Wareham

First settled by Europeans in 1678, Wareham was officially incorporated in 1739. It is largely a residential town, but also a resort destination, with its population doubling every summer. Wareham is bordered by Marion to the southwest, Rochester to the west, Middleborough to the northwest, Carver and Plymouth to the north, and Bourne to the east. The Town is connected to multiple highway systems, including Interstates 195 and 495 (which terminate in the Town), as well as U.S. Route 6 and Massachusetts Route 28, which continue to Cape Cod. The Town also has seasonal rail service in the form of CapeFLYER, a summer weekend passenger train that runs from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day from South Station to Hyannis. There is a local bus service, the OWL, which



Cape Flyer Rail Tracks

provides bus service around Wareham, as well as private bus lines to and from Boston.

Wareham's early economic development was dominated by iron-related manufacturing and maritime industries such as shipbuilding, whaling and fishing, and salt production. The Tremont Nail Factory, established in 1819, was the first nail factory in the nation. By the late 1800s, summer tourism and cranberry growing emerged as dominant industries. Long thought of as a pass-through to Cape Cod, the Town has recently sought to rebrand itself, changing its official slogan from, "The Gateway to Cape Cod" to "It's Better Before the Bridges". The rebranding campaign emphasizes its 50-plus miles of shoreline, hiking trails, boating, and fishing opportunities, as well as its pro-business mindset. The Town has also been receptive to the burgeoning marijuana industry, with the Verilife dispensary, marijuana products manufacturer Organa Brands, and grower Coastal Cultivator gaining approvals to establish businesses in Wareham since late 2018.

Population/Demographics

The Town of Wareham's population was estimated at 22,666 (July 2018, U.S. Census Bureau), increasing from 21,822 in April of 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau). The median household income in 2018 was \$63,365, well below the Massachusetts median household income of \$79,835, with 11.3 percent of the population designated as living in poverty. The median home value in Wareham is \$301,144, well below the Massachusetts median of \$426,330 and the \$400,299 median for Plymouth County (as per Zillow, January 2020). Rents are also well below state and county averages. In Q1 of 2019, one bedroom rental units averaged \$1,465 per month, with two bedroom units averaging \$1,711, according to Zillow.

Study Area

Wareham Village extends from Besse Park at the intersection of Main Street and Sandwich Road to the intersection of Sawyer Street and Main Street, a distance of approximately one-third of a mile. The study area also includes Merchants Way,



L-R 195 and 191 Main St.

located parallel to Main Street, which runs along the Wankinco River, a tributary of the Wareham River, but is separated by the railway. The village is a mix of office, business, retail and restaurant uses, many of which are thriving, but some properties are suffering from neglect and disinvestment. The Wareham Economic Development Plan 2019 stated that “conditions in the Village Center reflect underwhelming investments in building upgrades, with vacancies, derelict buildings and empty lots; yet (there are) key town holdings and program opportunities to advance change.”

In 2018 the Town completed the Slums and Blight Inventory that determined the area fits the State’s Slum and Blight standards that should open up opportunities for additional public funding, including CDBG. Wareham also obtained an Opportunity Zone overlay designation for downtown.

At the southern border of the study area, just past Besse Park, Tobey Hospital is constructing an emergency department expansion designed to accommodate 40,000 patients annually. Across the street there

is an office building, bait shop, gas station and Cumberland Farms convenience store. Heading north, there is a fully leased retail building at 173-189 Main Street that is listed for sale on the MLS; an office building at 191 Main Street in need of exterior improvements that is also for sale (as part of a portfolio that includes nearby 7 Center Street and 75 High Street); and 195 Main Street, a vacant and blighted building that is scheduled to be taken by the Town for non-payment of taxes and demolished. 195 Main Street is one of the sites expected to play a key role in the redevelopment of the village. There are four vehicular alleyways and two pedestrian mews that connect from Main Street to Merchant’s Way. The alleyway leading most directly to the train station (near 195 Main) is the largest and most aesthetically appealing.

The other site being considered as a cornerstone for redevelopment is located at the northern edge of the study area, consisting of the district fire station, a town-owned parking lot, and a privately-owned gas station, which is closed for business.

Assets and Opportunities

Potential for Waterfront Access – With the waterfront in such close proximity to Main Street and Merchants Way, there is the potential to create either direct access to the Wankinco River or to enhance the sightlines of the picturesque views it could offer to outdoor cafes, residents of multifamily developments or office users.

Supportive Government Structure – Having the Community Development Block Grant program in place and the Wareham Redevelopment Authority (WRA) as an existing steward of the study area means that proposals can be approved, funded, and implemented more quickly and efficiently.

Willingness to Change – During stakeholder meetings, multiple landlords and business owners expressed a desire to see tangible improvements in Wareham Village, an attitude that is shared by Town officials and evidenced by the creation of the WRA.

Strong Existing Infrastructure

- Unlike many towns in the Cape Cod region, Wareham has its own public water and sewer
- Plenty of free municipal parking
- Traffic calming measures have already been instituted on Main Street
- Main Street and Merchants Way provide two access points to Wareham Village, and the streets are connected by multiple pedestrian and vehicular alleyways
- The Town has made some infrastructure improvements to Wareham Village in recent years, including streetscape improvements

Existing Institutional and Business Draws – There are a number of existing businesses and attractions that already bring people to the area that could support a revitalized downtown: The waterfront and its recreational activities; Tobey Hospital and the expanded ER; the Verilife marijuana dispensary; Besse Park; a mix of restaurants; and annual events such as Oysterfest, the Wareham Village Christmas Parade, Scarecrow Festival, etc.

Cooperation with Onset Bay Association – At stakeholder meetings, the director of the OBA expressed a willingness to share ideas and work in collaboration with the Wareham Village Association. This includes the possibility of alternating the location of some of their annual events such as the Blues Festival or Food Truck Festival to Wareham Village.

Seasonal Population Surge – The doubling of the Town's population during warmer weather months creates more exposure and potential traffic for existing and future businesses.

The CapeFLYER – The CapeFLYER's Boston to Cape Cod weekend passenger train service offers 24 low-cost trips each weekend from Memorial Day to Labor Day with a stop at Wareham Village.

Housing Affordability – Median home prices and rents in Wareham are far below that of the Massachusetts and Plymouth County averages.

Room for Growth – With multiple town-owned parcels within the study area; a number of properties for sale both on Main Street as well as in close proximity to the study area (the Baker property, etc.), and the redevelopment of the Tremont Nail factory, there is ample opportunity for growth in Wareham Village.



Wareham train station

Walkability – The relative size of Wareham Village and the close proximity of its attractions (the waterfront, Besse Park, the marina) as well as its multiple pedestrian/vehicular connections from Main Street to Merchants Way provide the necessary elements for a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Favorable Topography – The six to eight foot difference from the waterfront to Main Street provides some relief from potential flooding for buildings and businesses along Main Street and on the north and east portions of Wareham Village. Parts of Merchants Way and part of the south and west portions of Wareham Village will need to institute flood mitigation measures.

Proximity to Multiple Highways and Cape Cod – Wareham Village is easily accessible by Interstates 195 and 495 as well as U.S. Route 6 and Massachusetts Route 28, which connect directly to Cape Cod.

Challenges

Inadequate Access to the Waterfront –

The rail line prevents direct access to the waterfront, and any pedestrian access plans (either as a bridge or a walkway) would require approval by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

Merchant's Way – The Town-owned parcels that are located between Main Street shops and the waterfront have a myriad of challenges, including:

- **Unsafe Pedestrian Conditions** – The 25 MPH speed limit makes for unsafe pedestrian traffic and there are inadequate sidewalks and crosswalks to the train station, public restrooms, or waterfront.
- **Visually Unappealing** – The rear face of many buildings are in need of significant

reinvestment, and there is trash in the streets with dumpsters scattered throughout the site.

- **No Lighting** – The parking areas along Merchants Way do not have adequate lighting to ensure pedestrian safety and a sense of security.
- **Lack of Cohesive Landscape Design** – There are no integrated landscaping areas or efforts to screen trash and loading areas.
- **No Incentive for Landlords to Improve Buildings** – Many of the buildings are held by long-term owners with minimal or no mortgages, who can maintain tenants with low rents without investing in upgrades.



Rear of 191 Main St.

- **Lack of Dual Storefronts with Main Street** – Many of the businesses have a storefront on Main Street but lack any kind of access or storefronts on Merchants Way, diminishing the vibrancy of the pedestrian environment.

Potential Issues with Redevelopment of Fire Station Parcel – The Fire Station is owned by the Wareham Fire District, which is a separate local government authority. Decisions on the disposition of District property are made by the District through a process separate from and not controlled by the Town. This may pose challenges to redevelopment efforts.

Communication – With the exception of the online weekly newspaper, there is inadequate communication between Wareham Town officials and local stakeholders. There is an over-reliance on social media, with multiple Facebook pages delivering inconsistent, sometimes conflicting, messaging. The Wareham Village Association does have a Facebook page (1,800-plus followers) but it is not updated regularly (no posts from December 1, 2019 through early March 2020). A relative case in point was the fact that many of the stakeholders were not aware of the TAP public meeting that followed the daylong charrette.

Current Zoning Code not Compatible with Growth Strategy – There are limited options for new uses under the current zoning code. More specifically, it does not allow for the type of height or density that would be needed to support mixed-use development, including multi-family residential. It also provides no guidance on uses, which affect the feasibility of development projects.

Limited Diversity of Retail, Business Offerings – Although there are a number of restaurants that are doing well, there is a dearth of businesses (gift shops, cafes/coffee shops, entertainment/performance venues, art galleries, kid-friendly options) that would encourage people to walk and linger in the Wareham Village. There are also too few outdoor dining or entertainment options.

Parking – Although there appears to be adequate parking, stakeholders informed panelists of the reluctance of customers to walk any distance to businesses and restaurants. This is exacerbated by the practice of business owners and their employees taking up spaces that should be reserved for customers.

Lack of Pedestrian Crosswalks – Besse Park and the Pellozzi Square are in need of clearly marked crosswalks and enforcement of the pedestrian crosswalk laws. As noted above on Merchants Way there are no crosswalks despite traffic often moving in excess of 25 MPH.

Lack of Adequate Lighting – According to stakeholders, Main Street and the public parking lots are poorly lit and there is no lighting along Merchants Way, contributing to safety concerns in the evening.

Trash and Overall Cleanliness of Streets – During the tour, it was noted that there was a good deal of trash and liquor nip bottles strewn on Merchants Way, and many of the dumpsters appeared to be overflowing and unsecured. Stakeholders noted that used needles are common in the area. Panelists also observed that the curbs on Main Street are packed with trash.

Flooding – Portions of Wareham Village are within a FEMA-designated flood hazard zone, which adds complexity to any redevelopment planning.

Government Largest Landowner – The Town and the County own several parcels of land, limiting tax revenue and uses that would be ideal for creating residential density required for revitalization of the study area. This does, however, provide an opportunity for control on future uses and development, particularly the fact that the Town owns Merchants Way

Downtown business community lacks representation – According to business owners at the stakeholder meetings, the current business association does not meet the needs of the business community.

Recommendations

Update Zoning to Allow for Greater Density

In order to incentivize investment and redevelopment in Wareham Village, there must be changes to the zoning that allow for increased density for all property types – residential, retail, restaurant and commercial property uses. Increased density of multifamily housing is necessary to support a vibrant, walkable downtown that remains active after 5pm.

One principle change would be to allow for an increased number of units per lot size – ideally one unit per 1,000 square feet. Currently, zoning requires a minimum 10,000 square foot lot for the first residential unit, a high barrier to entry given that many of the lot sizes are only 10,000 to 15,000 square feet. Current restrictions make multifamily residential financially unfeasible for developers.

Allowing for multifamily residential to be developed along Main Street and Merchants Way alone however will not increase density significantly enough to gain the critical mass needed to allow new businesses and retail/restaurants to thrive. That is why it is also suggested to ease density restrictions west of Main Street (possibly to medium density) to build more housing units in the immediate, walkable area.

Additional improvements to zoning would include:

- **Clearly Specify By Right Uses** – Developers and investors need to have clarity in terms of what uses are allowable for Wareham Village. This section of the zoning code should reflect the uses that the Town believes will best help to

achieve its goal of a vibrant walkable downtown (i.e. residential, entertainment uses, pubs, art galleries, gift shops, etc.).

- **Include Site Plan Review in Zoning Code Update** – This would allow for some design control mechanisms without adding another layer of complexity for developers, such as special permits or zoning change requests.

Improve Local Boards and Recruit Talent for Local Boards – The Town should actively seek out subject matter experts from the commercial real estate development industry (planners, engineers, architects, etc.) to serve on local land use boards. Residents with a passion for seeing the redevelopment of Wareham Village – who also possess the requisite expertise – can play an invaluable role in the process when projects are being developed or are seeking approval. The Town also needs to avoid having members of the Select Board sitting on other boards [such as the Wareham Redevelopment Authority] to avoid any conflict of interest.

Best Practices for the Wareham Redevelopment Authority [WRA]

Municipal redevelopment authorities have the capacity to use public land to create ongoing income-generating opportunities within a commercial district, which in turn can be re-invested in the community. In order to maximize the potential of the opportunities that Wareham Village provides, the panelists suggest the following:

- **Grant Land Leases for Merchants Way Property Extensions and Other Parcels** – Granting land leases rather than selling the properties outright serves

a dual purpose. First, leasing allows private developers to obtain rights to a property at a lower price point, thus conserving funds that can be used towards development of the property. Second, the Town retains the rights to the property while deriving an ongoing revenue stream which can be adjusted upward as Wareham Village is revitalized. The funds can then be reinvested into the district to fund other projects or to maintain infrastructure.

- **Leverage Grants and Other Funding Sources** – The 2018 Slums and Blight Inventory completed by the Town opened up opportunities for additional public funding, including Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The public funding can then be leveraged to attract private investment. A list of public funding sources follows in a later section, and includes resources that enable placemaking, storefront and façade improvements, etc.
- **Keep Focus on Wareham Village** – Although there are many worthy redevelopment projects being considered in Wareham, the redevelopment of Wareham Village should be the priority. A successful reimagining of Main Street and Merchants Way can be the cornerstone to the revitalization of Wareham Village and Wareham as a whole. The redevelopment of Tremont Nail Company, while promising, will divert energy and funding away from the primary goal. The WRA may also want to simplify the scope of the project, delaying the construction of the boardwalk or a bike path, as both projects would require the cooperation and coordination with the MBTA and MassDOT. The redevelopment of Wareham Village should be the short term goal, with the other projects included in a long term strategy.
- **Create a Transparent and Predictable Community Input and Engagement Process** – This can be accomplished by hosting public events to discuss

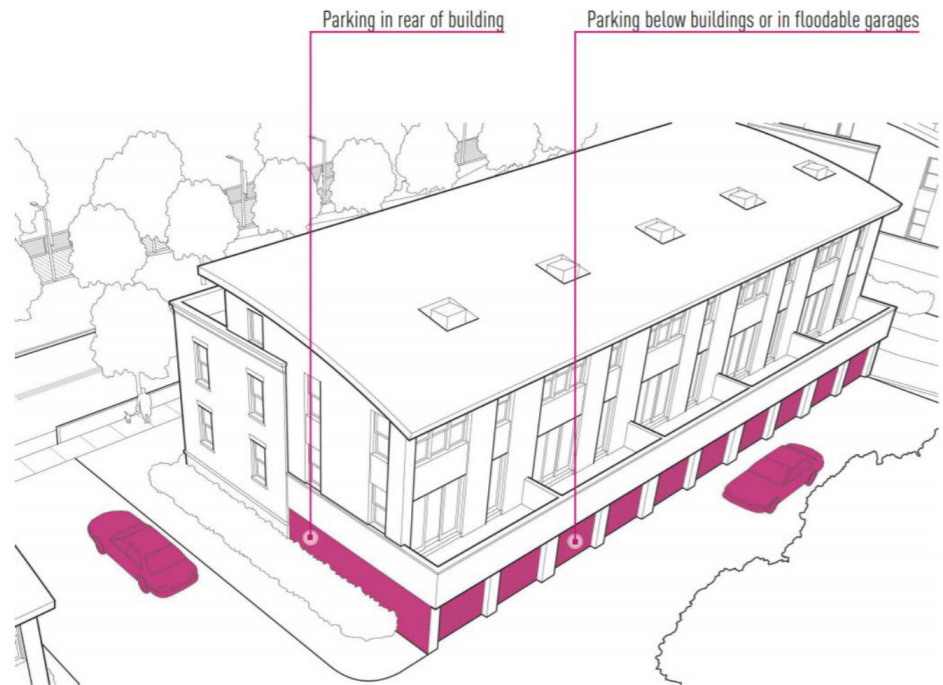
upcoming plans or proposals before Town meetings, clarifying the WRAs role in the process, and making a concerted effort to seek meaningful public input through existing channels such as social media. The WRA should consider using a service such as coUrbanize, a community engagement platform that helps planners, developers, and municipalities better communicate with community members.

- **Seek Guidance from Other Redevelopment Authorities** – Experience is the best teacher, and seeking out other redevelopment authorities that have successfully transformed blighted or waterfront-anchored downtowns to provide peer-to-peer training or general guidance could be invaluable.

Improve Communication – Although panelists acknowledge that resources are often scarce in municipalities, there needs to be more intentional planning around communicating with the public by the Town. This includes promoting recreational and educational events within Wareham as well as notifying residents when key municipal meetings are being held. Efforts to better communicate these matters will promote transparency and build the community’s trust in Town officials’ decision-making processes. During the stakeholder meetings, panelists learned that much of the information is disseminated through social media, particularly Facebook, but that there is no consistent messaging due to the proliferation of Facebook accounts dedicated to Wareham and Wareham Village. The panel recommends:

- Considering a redesign/update of Town website, possibly making “Forms and Documents” interactive online forms rather than PDFs to streamline processing
- Recruit volunteers to help with messaging efforts
- Update all websites and social media more consistently (Town of Wareham, WarehamVillage.org, discover-wareham.com, Town and Wareham Village

Example of floodgate garage parking, credit: Historic Mill District Design Guidelines presentation, prepared by Gamble Associates.



- Facebook pages etc.), especially when promoting events and meetings
- Deliver consistent messaging across Town media channels
- Reduce reliance on social media groups (but continue to promote through social media)
- Create a clear entitlement process that residents can access online

Prepare Waterfront for Climate Resiliency/ Take Advantage of Topography

– Main Street is elevated 6’ to 8’ above Merchants Way. Any proposed zoning changes in Wareham Village must build in protection against the impacts of climate change to make the area more resilient to adverse events. For example, buildings constructed along Merchants Way should consider constructing first floor parking with “floodable garages” that can be evacuated during severe storm activity.

Implement Public Realm Improvements – The Town should also consider the following:

- **Continue Infrastructure Improvements** – Although the Town has completed upgrades to the Wareham Village in recent years, the 2018 Slums & Blight

Inventory found that approximately 46% of the Wareham Village infrastructure components were found to be in fair or poor condition.

- **Improve/Relocate Crosswalks** – While any redevelopment design for Merchants Way (rendering in Development Design Proposals section) will include a more organized system to ensure pedestrian safety, Main Street is in need of clearly marked crosswalks, particularly the more heavily-trafficked Besse Park and Pellozzi Square locations.
- **Plan to Add a Rail Crossing** –The CapeFLYER is under the jurisdiction of MassDOT, and the Town should continue their ongoing talks with the state entities to devise a way to allow pedestrians to safely cross to and from the waterfront.
- **Improve Lighting** – Install lighting on Merchants Way, and improve the lighting along Main Street, which is currently insufficient for evening pedestrian traffic.
- **Improve Trash Pickup** – The Town needs to create a centralized trash system for Wareham Village, possibly through a Building Improvement District (BID) or some other mechanism.

- **Landscape Improvements** – Both Merchants Way and Main Street are in need of streetscape improvements, including vegetation, outdoor furniture, etc.

Development Design Proposals

Panelists devised two separate design proposals for consideration, targeting the two sites that have the most potential for meaningful redevelopment for Wareham Village – the fire station parcel and 195 Main Street/Merchants Way.

Plan I: Creating a Central Community Gathering Space – One of the keys to revitalizing a downtown village is to create a sense of place, and one of the crucial components to placemaking is a community gathering space. Currently, there is no central public gathering space that can serve as a focal point for Wareham Village. The site of the derelict building at 195 Main Street that the Town is considering demolishing could potentially be transformed into a centrally-located open space, creating a corridor from Main Street to Merchants Way that would use the Pavilion (former train station now used as public restrooms) as a focal point for the community gathering space.

This public space should have the ability to accommodate both active and passive uses and the Town and Wareham Village Association could work to coordinate programming that can create vibrancy. Local businesses should benefit from the



creation of a destination public space and seek to engage it through revitalizing storefronts and creating opportunities for outdoor dining. Merchants Way is now an underutilized parcel, serving mainly as a parking lot and vehicular passageway, with no real utility. While the rear of many of the buildings facing Merchants Way are less than aesthetically pleasing, there is great potential to re-imagine these properties through the thoughtful redesign of the street section. One scenario would be to encourage/mandate building owners to make the necessary improvements, potentially opening up the backs of their buildings for uses like outdoor dining facing the waterfront. In conjunction with the open space created where 195 Main

Closer look, Merchants way, future land use option



Future land use option 1

now stands, the much needed central public gathering space could open up possibilities for a walkable downtown that would draw people to the village. An improved pedestrian environment along the back of Main Street shops, with lighting, urban furniture and the thoughtful integration of hardscaping and landscaping, could connect to the park and provide a place to stroll along the waterfront.

The other cornerstone of creating that walkable downtown village experience would be to improve the streetscape of Main Street. The two completed streetscapes should offer complementary but distinct experiences for visitors. In creating these two unique pedestrian corridors, attention should be paid to the pedestrian mews (through-block pedestrian connections), and how to best create those connections between Main Street and Merchants Way, allowing for outdoor dining, shops and public art to develop a true pedestrian-friendly environment within the district. Encouraging storefronts to turn the corner into these through-block connectors will help provide a vibrant public realm. Furthermore, connections from the new centrally-located park, across the railroad tracks, to the water's edge should be explored.

If the Town of Wareham can resolve the issue of consolidating fire services and relocating the district fire station, that site, along with the Town parking lot and shuttered gas station, represents an excellent opportunity to add

multifamily housing in Wareham Village. The placement of multifamily housing on the north side of the village near the train station would serve as a solid anchor for one end of the redeveloped district. On the southern side, just outside of the study area beyond Besse Park, the Baker property should be strongly considered for dense residential development as well. The increased density is necessary to support businesses and restaurants in the re-imagined study area. In addition to the residential anchors on Main Street, the Town should also consider allowing medium density residential development east of Main Street towards High St. While higher density multi-family residential with ground floor commercial uses is appropriate near the waterfront, less-dense housing typologies, like townhomes, can help transition the scale of development from the Main Street corridor into the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Plan II: Community Gathering Space at Fire Station Site

A second master-plan concept considered by panelists for the village would also involve a transformation and reorganization of Merchants Way, incorporating many of the same elements as the previous plan but in a different configuration. In this concept, instead of focusing on providing a new pedestrian way immediately along the rear of Main Street shops, property owners would be allowed to extend the backs of their properties into a portion of Merchants Way. These expansions



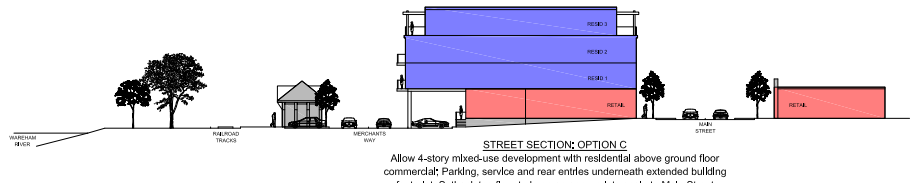
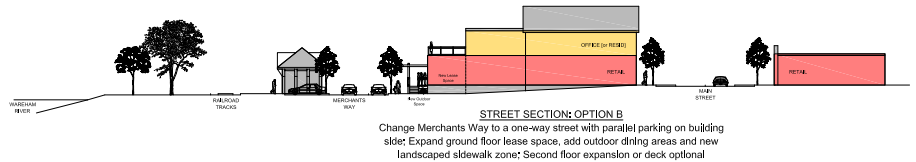
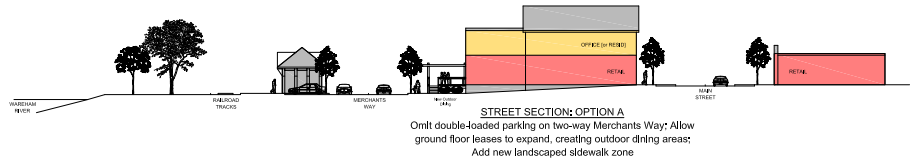
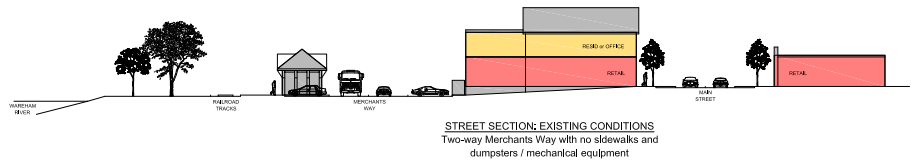
Future land use option 2

could include a physical extension of buildings, particularly if older building stock was adaptively reused or replaced with new ground-up development. Alternatively, property lines could be extended to create exclusive use areas for outdoor dining facing the waterfront.

This proposal would also differ in the usage of redevelopment sites. The 195 Main Street parcel would now be redeveloped as a 40 foot wide pedestrian passage area, allowing for some high density mixed-use residential on the remainder of the site. The fire station parcels could be transformed into usable open space for larger events, still allowing space for high density residential to the south side of the site. The open space could also serve as a trailhead for a new waterfront path linking to the Tremont Nail Company site (located .7 miles away), which the Town is redeveloping. This design would serve to extend a greenspace throughout the entire corridor from Besse Park up to the Tremont Nail factory site.

One suggested design for the large open space would be to take advantage of the 6-8 foot elevation difference of the topography from Merchants Way up to Main Street. An amphitheater similar that of, or a terraced park design could be installed to create a community gathering area which could be used for outdoor events (live music, theater performance, etc.) that would act as a draw for the downtown.

In either plan, parking must still be maintained and reconfigured on Merchants Way to accommodate business, restaurant, and retail customers as well as users of the newly created open space. Although the plans call for either extending the public realm or properties into Merchants Way, this can be accomplished by making the driving area fully one-way and reducing the road width to 20 feet. Another suggestion would be to add planters between the roadway and the backs of the properties, for aesthetic value and as a safety measure.



Existing conditions section diagram and three alternative development concepts show how the Merchants Way street section can be modified to accommodate:

- A. Outdoor dining area off the back of the ground floor commercial leases; plus a landscaped sidewalk zone.
- B. Expanded ground floor lease areas with associated amenities [outdoor space and second floor deck / expansion].
- C. Redevelopment as a 4-story mixed-use building with residential above ground floor commercial and covered parking.

Each of these alternatives takes a different approach to the Merchants Way street section, exploring one-way traffic, parallel parking, and parking below extended upper stories.

Funding and Resources

Federal Grants

CDBG (Community Development Block Grants)

State Grants

MassDevelopment/Commonwealth

Places – A collaborative initiative between MassDevelopment and the crowdfunding platform Patronicity, Commonwealth Places provides a funding mechanism for community-driven placemaking projects throughout Massachusetts. Also helps to incentivize private investment. MassDevelopment also provides help with brownfields, site readiness, and technical assistance for a variety of projects, and provides financing assistance (tax-exempt bonds, bridge financing, loans, etc.)

MassWorks – Provides grants to prepare communities for success with a particular emphasis on projects that support the production of multi-family housing in appropriately located walkable mixed-use districts, result in direct and immediate job creation, and/or support economic development in weak or distressed areas.

Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)/MA Downtown Initiative (MDI)

– Offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns.

MassDOT

Chapter 90 Program – Provides funds for capital improvement such as highway construction, preservation and improvement projects.

CPA (Community Preservation Act) – Helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities.

Federal/State Historic Tax Credits

Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)

(More detailed explanations and contact information may be found in the 2019 Wareham Economic Development Strategy report)

Conclusion

The redevelopment of Wareham Village has been the subject of multiple studies over the years, and the recommendations of those studies have remained remarkably consistent: Improve the public realm; develop better access to the waterfront; create a walkable downtown; incentivize development; and update the zoning so that mixed-use development is by-right and the approvals process for developers is predictable.

The findings of the ULI panelists differ little from previous studies, but offer a simplified plan of action that keeps the focus primarily on Main Street and Merchants Way. For any redevelopment plan to succeed, increased density across all uses must be allowed, beginning with residential. Without an increase in multifamily housing in the study area and beyond, there is not enough of a critical mass of people to support existing and future local businesses. This requires a zoning change, which Town officials have indicated that they are willing to do.

In addition to improving zoning, the Town needs to focus on improving and updating

boards to implement new zoning and provide clear, consistent guidance to community members and developers. Related to this, the Town and the community need to improve and streamline channels of communication.

Also, while the Town has been considering proposals for ambitious projects such as constructing a boardwalk and investing time and funds in the redevelopment of the Tremont Nail Factory, redeveloping the Main Street and Merchants Way section of Wareham Village should reap the most immediate rewards. The renewal of the designation of Wareham Village as a “slum and blight” district not only underscores the need for improvements to this vital commercial district but also presents opportunities to leverage public funding to partner with private investment to make that change happen.

There is much reason for optimism. The willingness on the part of the Town of Wareham, business and property owners, and Wareham residents to move forward with change is evident.



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