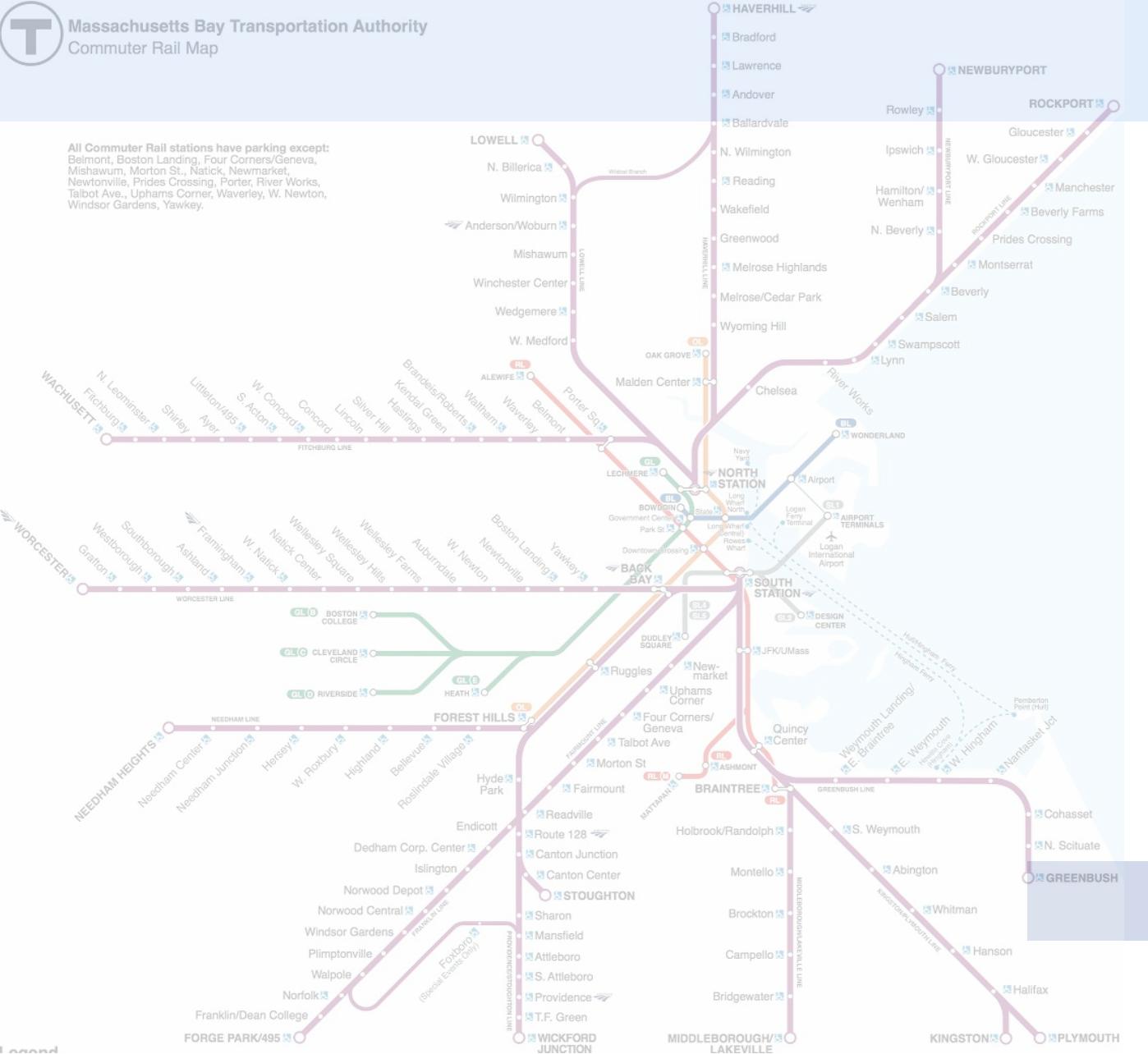


# METHUEN MBTA COMMUNITIES

# City Council Presentation

## MBTA Communities Act and Potential Scenarios

### February 5, 2024



Innes  
Associates Ltd



J M GOLDSON

EMPOWERING PEOPLE.  
CREATING COMMUNITY.

**Introductions**

**MBTA Communities 101**

**Phase I Report**

**Options for City Council**

**Next Steps**

# MBTA Communities 101

## Compliance

## Requirements

# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act

## What is the MBTA Communities Act MGL c. 40A Section 3A?

The law established a requirement that each of the 177 designated MBTA Communities ([MGL c. 161A Section 1](#)) must have zoning that:

1. Provides for at least 1 district of reasonable size in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right.
2. Cannot have age-restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children.
3. Must have a minimum gross density of 15 dwelling units per acre.
4. Part of the district must be located within 0.5 miles from a commuter rail, subway, ferry, or bus station, if applicable.

## What is the purpose behind the new law?

1. Massachusetts has a significant housing shortage, and we need to produce more housing.
2. The amount of housing that is financially attainable to most households is dwindling.
3. The Commonwealth is at a disadvantage to compete for businesses, jobs, and talent.
4. Placing housing near transit is good housing, economic, transportation, and climate policy.

# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act

## What are the implications if the City does not comply?

- Per Section 3A:
  - Housing Choice Initiative
  - Local Capital Projects Fund
  - MassWorks infrastructure program
- Access to these additional grant programs:
  - Community Planning Grants, EOHLG
  - Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, EOED
  - Urban Agenda, EOED
  - Rural and Small Town Development Fund, EOED
  - Brownfields Redevelopment Fund, MassDevelopment
  - Site Readiness Program, MassDevelopment
  - Underutilized Properties Program, MassDevelopment
  - Collaborative Workspace Program, MassDevelopment
  - Real Estate Services Technical Assistance, MassDevelopment
  - Commonwealth Places Programs, MassDevelopment
  - Land Use Planning Grants, EOEEA
  - Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grants, EOEEA
  - Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning and Project Grants, EOEEA

- Loss of the opportunity to:
  - Support economic development by locating housing near centers of economic activity.
  - Address housing needs identified through other planning processes, including the current master plan process.
- Attorney General Advisory Guidance (March 2023)
  - **"All MBTA Communities must comply with the Law.** Communities that do not currently have a compliant multi-family zoning district must take steps outlined in the DHCD guidelines to demonstrate interim compliance. Communities that fail to comply with the Law may be subject to civil enforcement action."

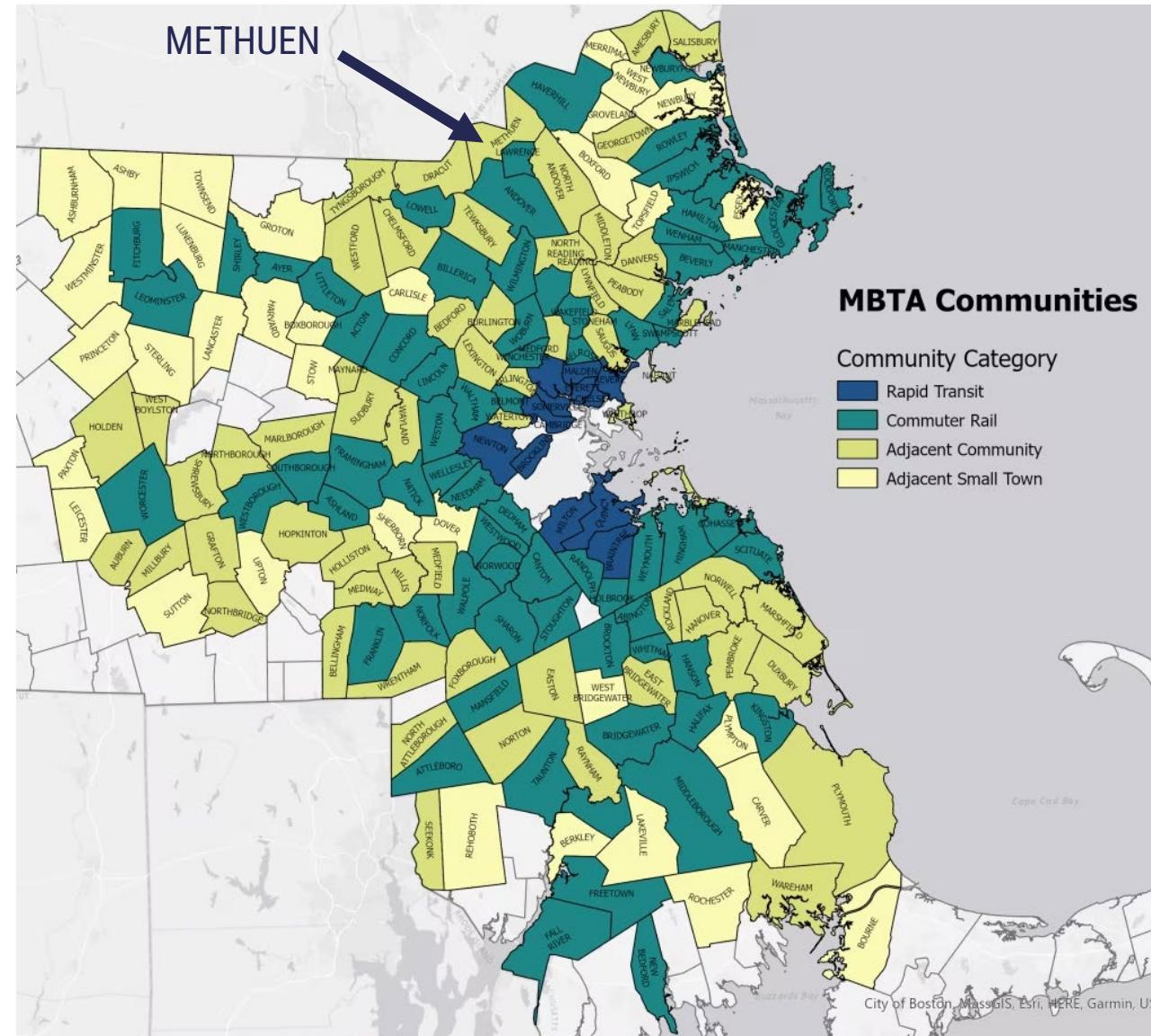
# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act

**177 MBTA Communities**

The date of compliance is based on the service type.

**Methuen is an Adjacent Community.**

**The compliance deadline is December 31, 2024.**



# Methuen's Requirements

Communities wishing to demonstrate compliance must meet three major tests:

- ▶ Minimum Land Area (in acres and including requirements for contiguous parcels and minimum contiguous district size).
- ▶ Unit Capacity (minimum number of dwelling units).
- ▶ Minimum Density (number of dwelling units per acre).

## Methuen's minimum land area requirements

Metric	Methuen's Requirement
Minimum Land Area	50 acres
% to be Located in Station Area	0%
Minimum Contiguous District Size	25 acres or 50% of the final district size

## Methuen's minimum unit capacity requirements

Metric	Methuen's Requirement
Minimum Unit Capacity	2,019 units
% to be Located in Station Area	0%

## All 177 Communities: Minimum density requirement

Metric	Methuen's Requirement
Minimum Density Requirement	15 DU/AC

# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act

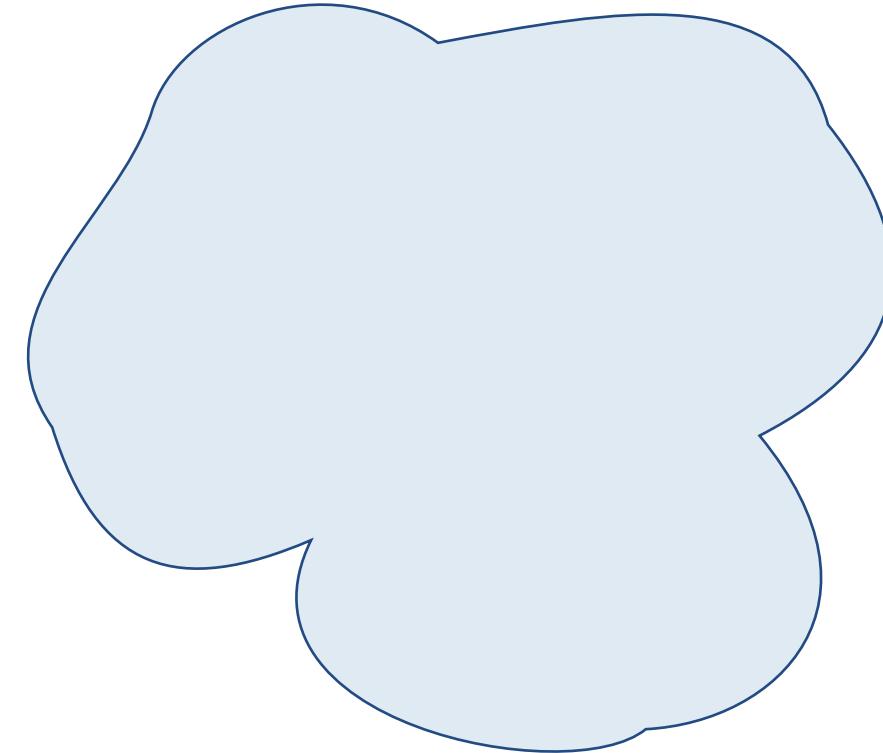
## What are the compliance tests we need to complete?

There are three primary compliance tests every MBTA Community will need to complete.

**Land Area**

**Capacity**

**Zoning**



# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act

## What are the compliance tests we need to complete?

There are three primary compliance tests every MBTA Community will need to complete.

### Land Area

### Capacity

### Zoning

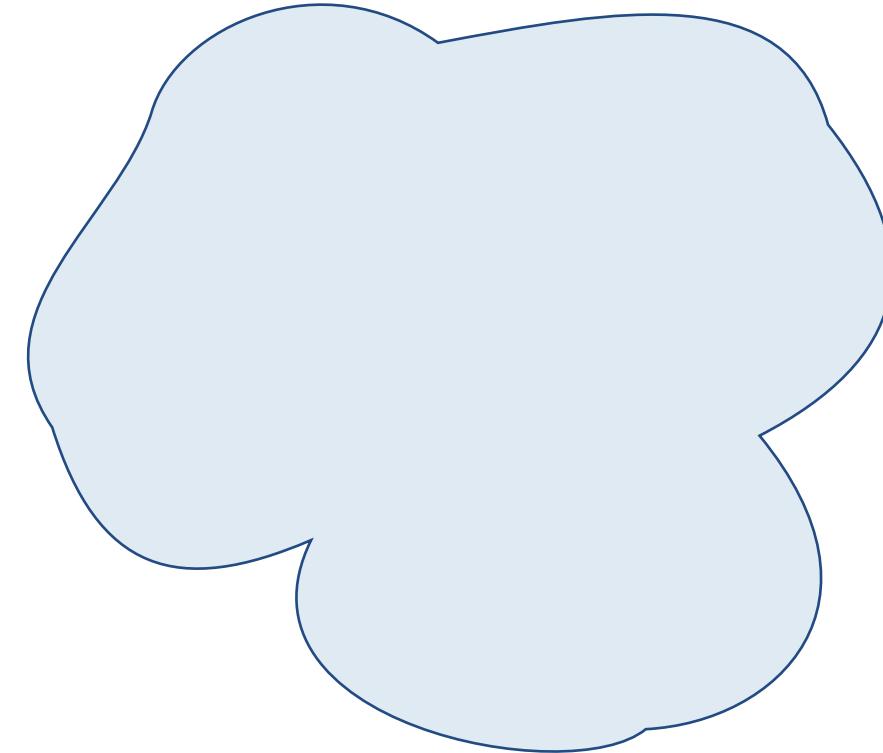
- Location
- Size
- Transit Adjacency
- Excluded Land

# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act

## What are the compliance tests we need to complete?

There are three primary compliance tests every MBTA Community will need to complete.

### Land Area



### Capacity



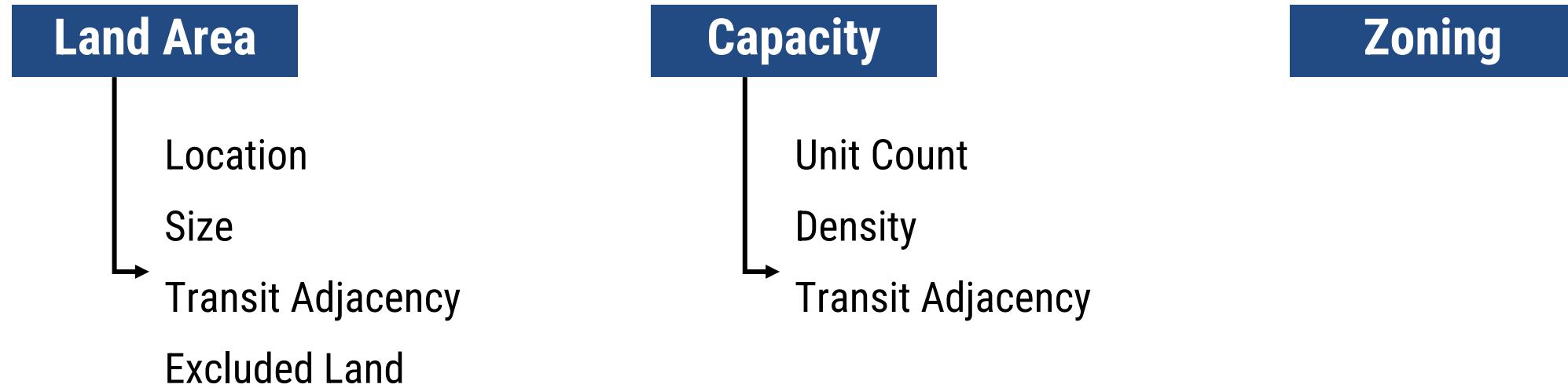
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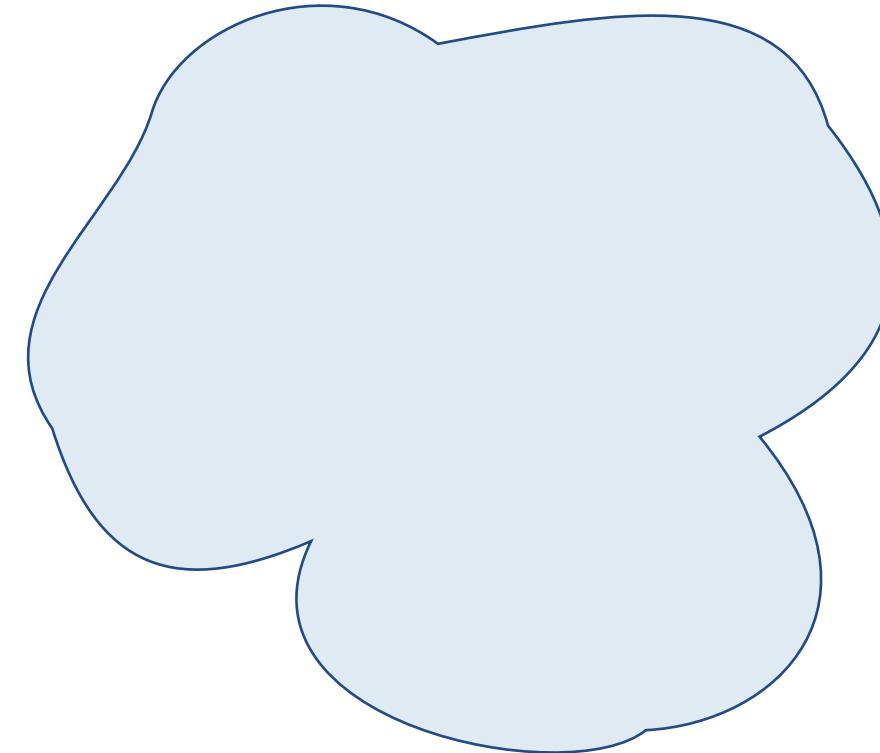


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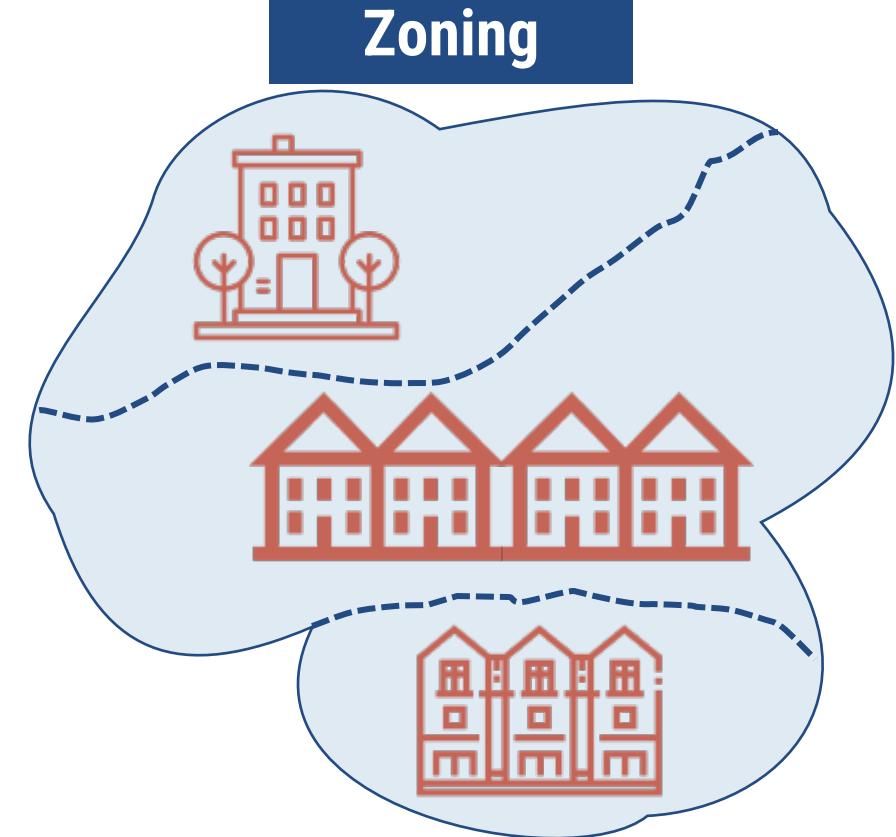
### Land Area



### Capacity



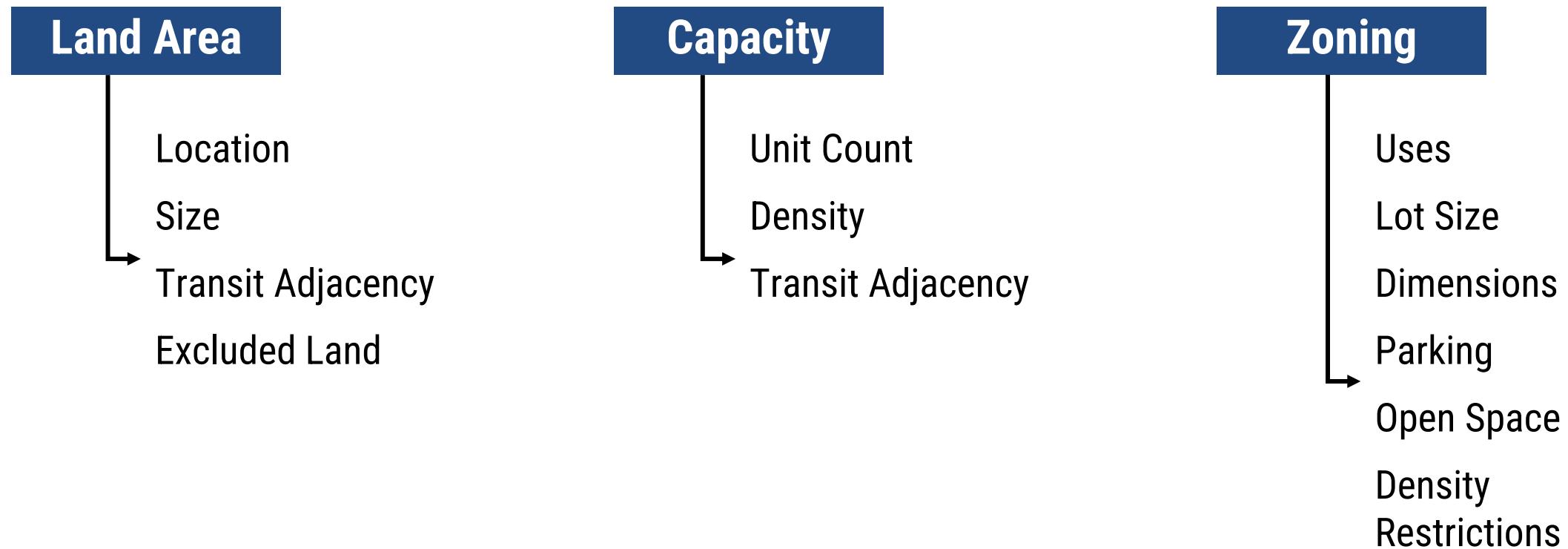
### Zoning



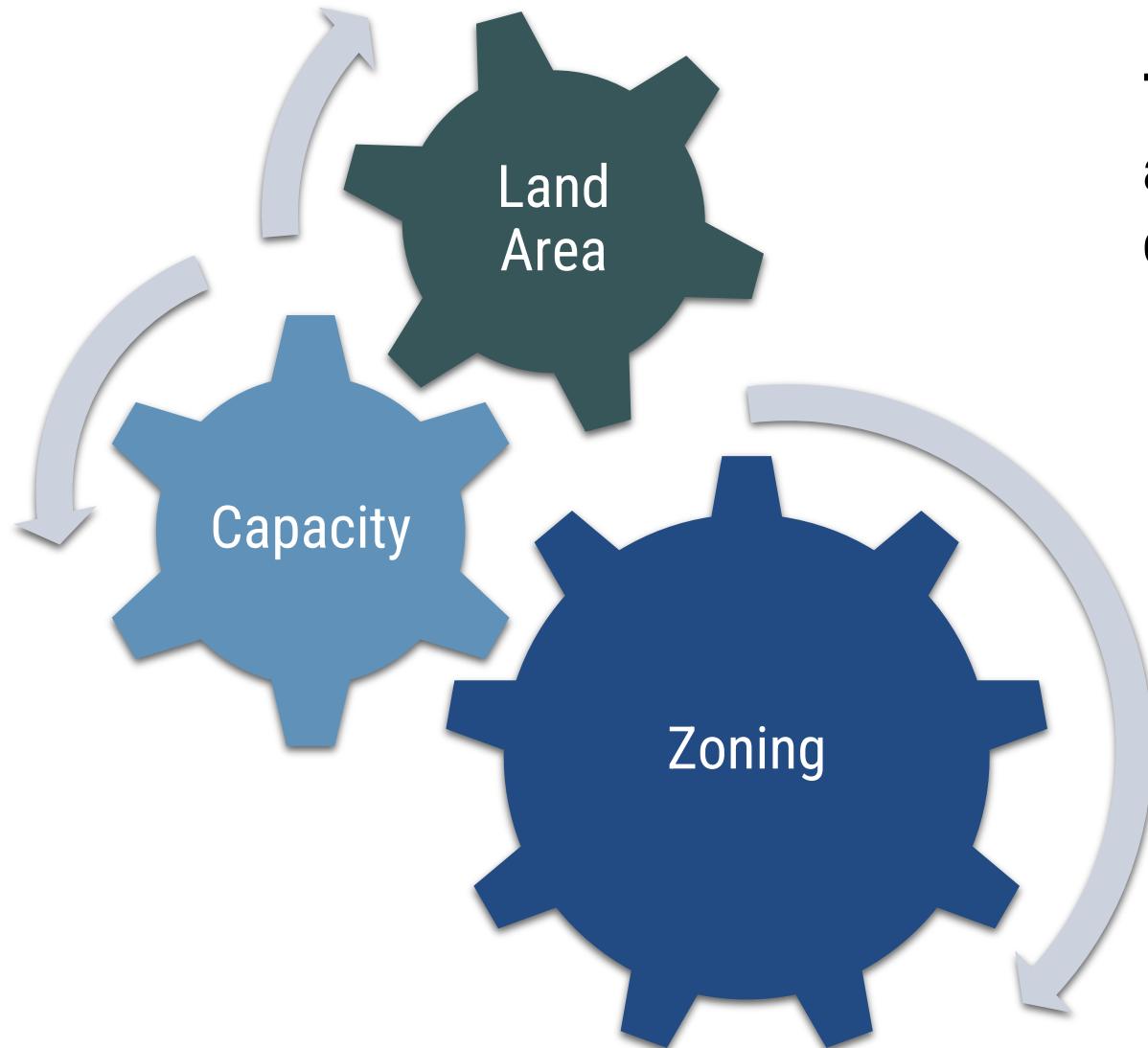
# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act

## What are the compliance tests we need to complete?

There are three primary compliance tests every MBTA Community will need to complete.



# Overview of the MBTA Communities Act



**The relationship between each test and measurement is key to creating compliant district(s) and zoning.**

**LET'S REVIEW EACH TEST...**

# 1 – Land Area

The area of land that the Town has designated as its zoning district.



**What are Methuen's minimum land area requirements?**

Metric	Methuen's Requirement
Minimum Land Area	50 acres
% to be Located in Station Area	0%
Minimum Contiguous District Size	25 acres or 50% of the total district size

## 2 – Unit Capacity

The number of dwelling units could be produced in a specific land area according to the requirements of the applicable zoning.

### What are Methuen's minimum unit capacity requirements?



Metric	Methuen's Requirement
Minimum Unit Capacity	2,019 units
% to be Located in Station Area	0%
Minimum Density Requirement	15 DU/AC

## 3 – Zoning

What someone can or cannot do with a piece of land.

### What are Methuen's zoning requirements?

#### Lot Size.

#### Regulated Uses.

- By Right.
- Special Permit.
- Site Plan Review.

#### Building Height.

Setbacks.

Parking.

Floor Area Ratio.

#### Lot Coverage.

#### Open Space Requirements.

Dwelling Units per Acre.

Lot Area per Dwelling Unit.

#### Parking.

Design Review.

Design Guidelines.

Mixed Use.

Landscaping Requirements.

Lighting.

Multiple Buildings on Lot.

### How is multifamily housing defined under Section 3A?

“Multi-family housing” is defined as a building with 3 or more residential dwelling units or 2 or more buildings on the same lot with more than 1 residential dwelling unit in each building.

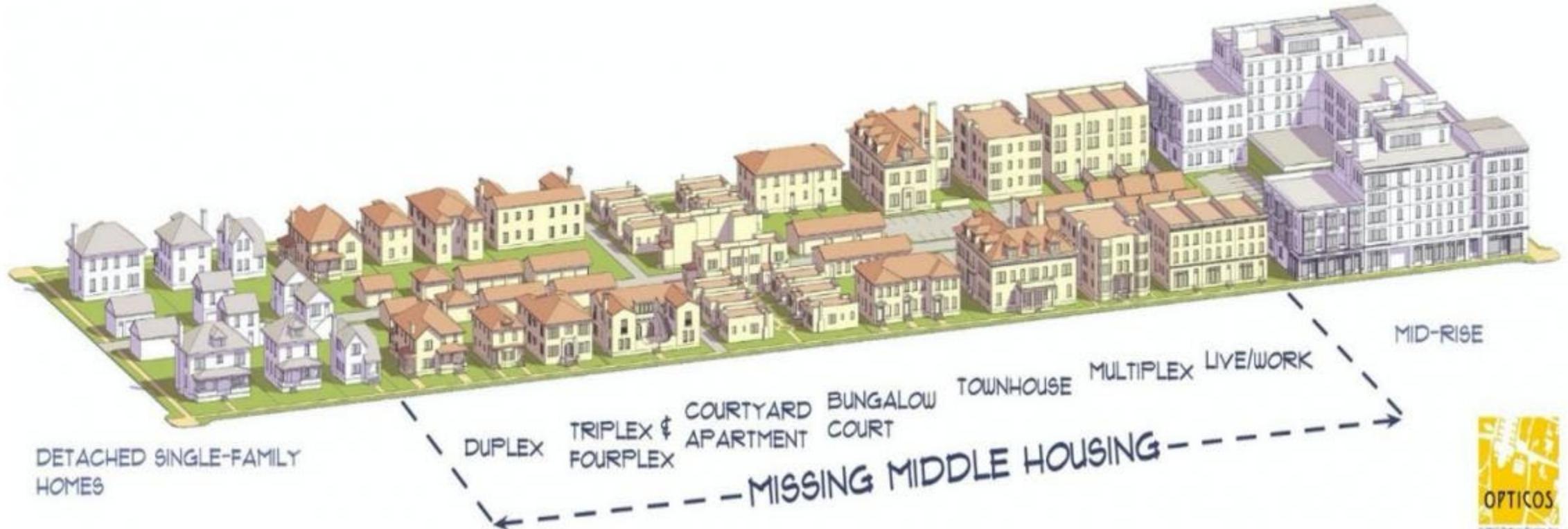


Image Source: Opticos

# Phase 1 Report

## Initial Tests and Engagement

# Phase 1 Report

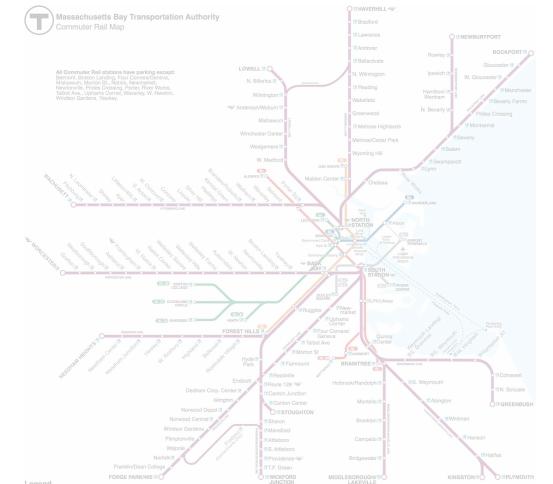
Record of initial tests, meetings with the Housing Working Group (HWG), and Elected Officials Workshop in November 2023.

# METHUEN MBTA COMMUNITIES

# Draft Report - revised January 2024



J M G O L D S O  
—  
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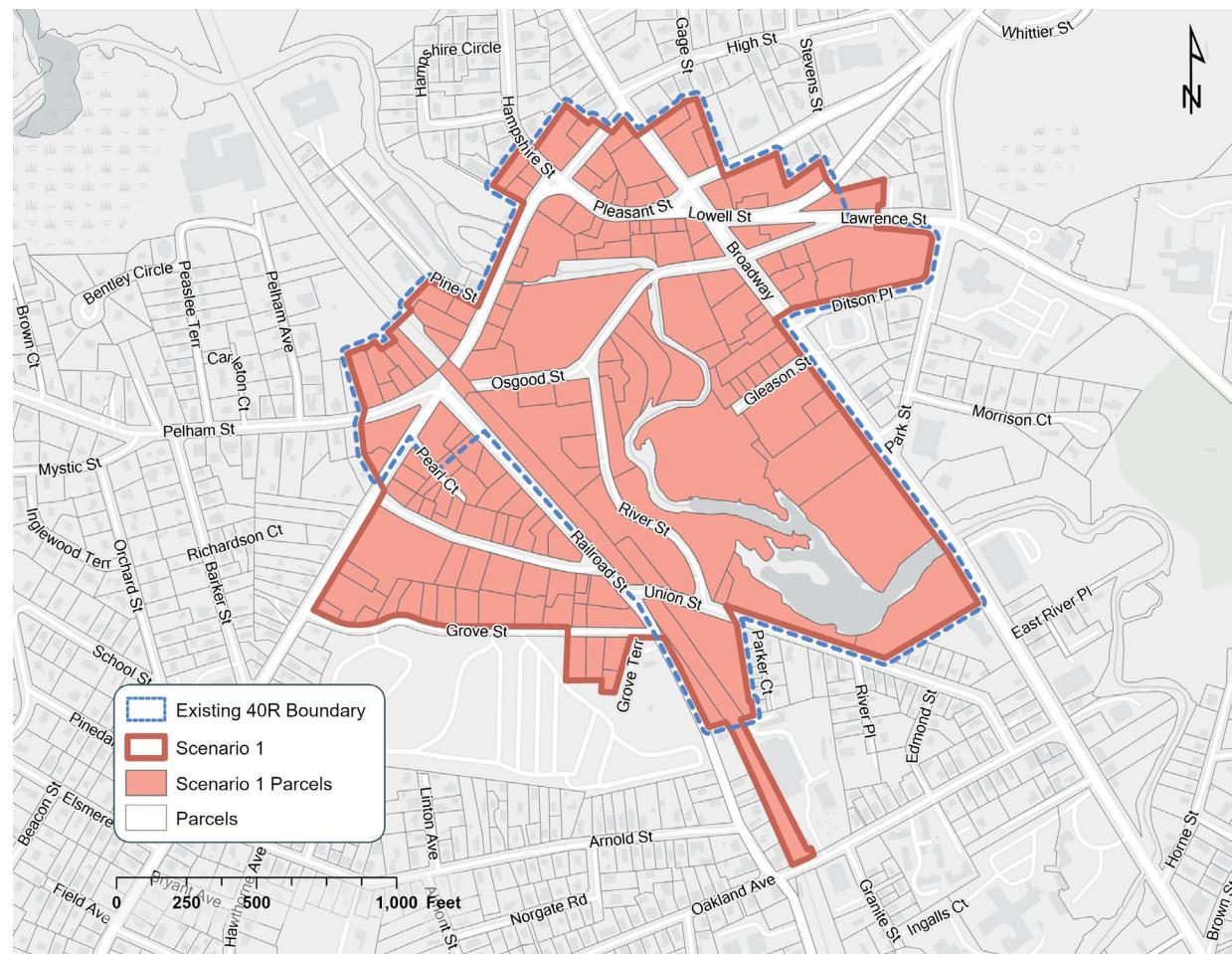
# Initial Community Engagement

At the October meeting of the HWG, the consultant team presented three options for review. The consultant team worked with City staff from the Planning Division to test several iterations prior to sharing the results with the members of the HWG.

These options were as follows:

- ▶ Expanding the boundaries of the Downtown (the MCSGOD: the City's current 40R overlay district).

## Initial Geographic and Unit Capacity Tests



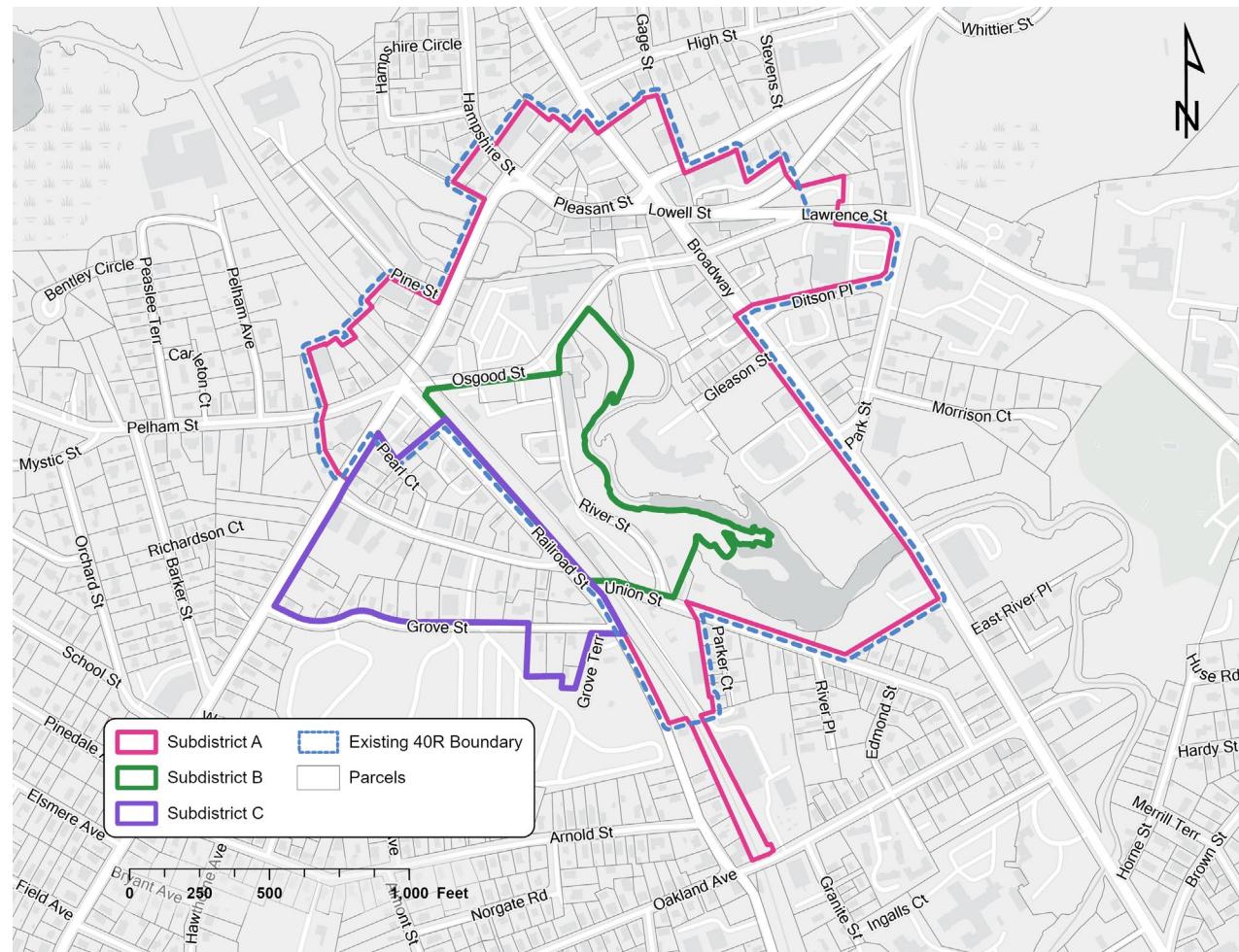
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These options were as follows:

- ▶ Expanding the boundaries of the Downtown (the MCGOD: the City's current 40R overlay district).
- ▶ Testing modifying the height of three subdistricts defined within the MCGOD. (Two subdistricts would have a maximum height of 4 stories and the third would have a maximum height of 5 stories.

## Initial Geographic and Unit Capacity Tests



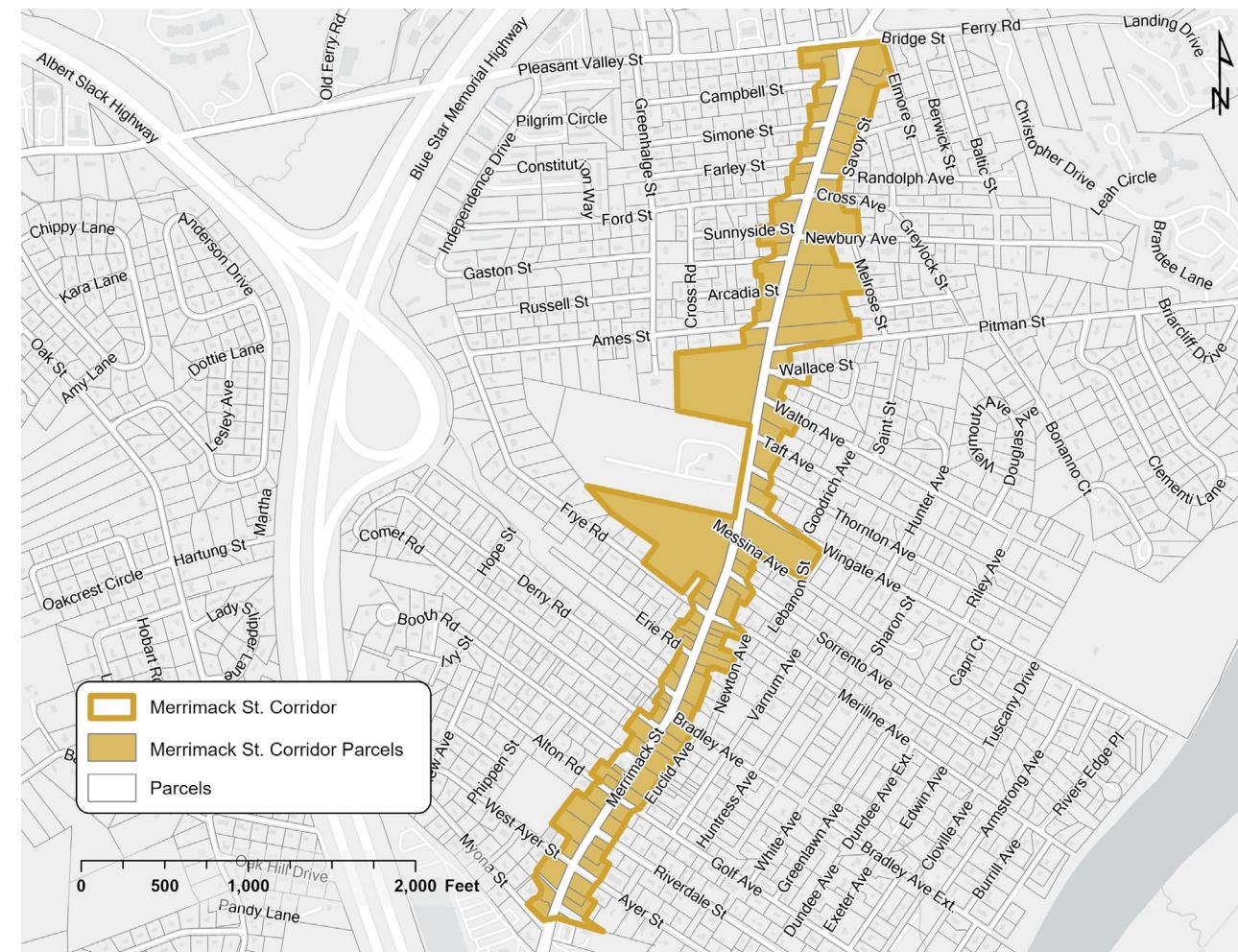
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- ▶ Testing modifying the height of three subdistricts defined within the MCGOD. (Two subdistricts would have a maximum height of 4 stories and the third would have a maximum height of 5 stories).
- ▶ Evaluating the Merrimack Street corridor as a possible location for a multi-family overlay district.

## Initial Geographic and Unit Capacity Tests

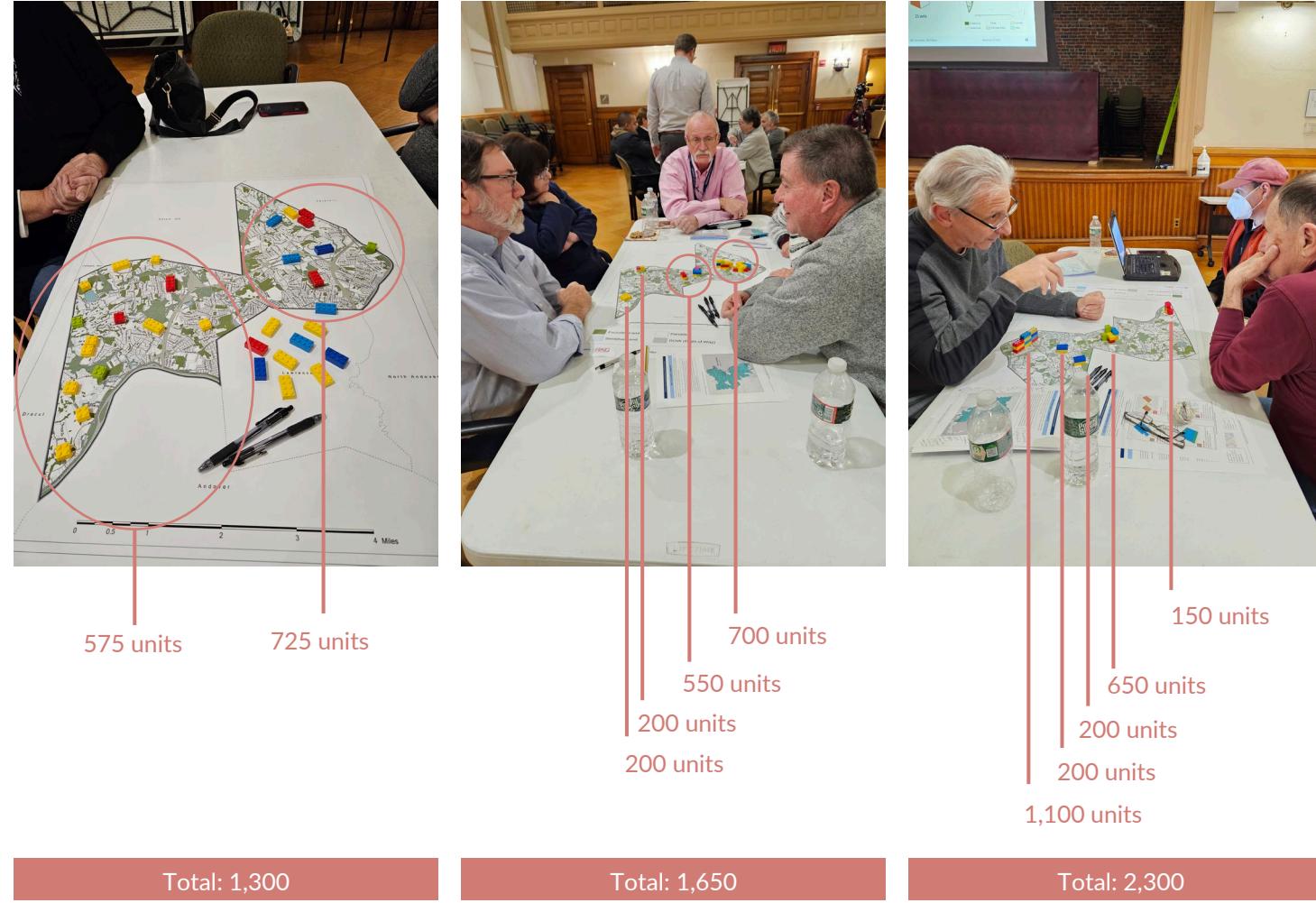


# Initial Community Engagement

The pictures to the left are the results of the table-based conversations at the November workshop. Participants at each table used the maps to identify specific areas of exploration. Lego™ bricks were used to consider where housing units should be located. The 2x8 bricks represented 100 units and the 2x4 bricks represented 25 units. Color and height had no meaning.

Methuen's minimum required unit capacity is 2,019. Participants varied in the amount they distributed. The presentation did include the results of the October tests.

The results are mapped in the chapter on tests and results.



## Next Steps

### Recommendations for Phase 2

Phase 1 will wrap up in January, or early February, with a meeting of the HWG to discuss the draft report and a presentation of options to the City Council.

Phase 2 will begin in early February and include the following components:

- ▶ Additional meetings with the HWG.
- ▶ A workshop with new City Councilors.
- ▶ Public meetings/hearings with the Community Development Board and the City Council.
- ▶ Materials for public outreach and education.
- ▶ Draft and final zoning.
- ▶ Materials for the compliance application to be submitted to EOHLC.

The project is expected to extend into the summer to avoid conflicting with the City's budget season. The City must submit their compliance application before December 31, 2024.

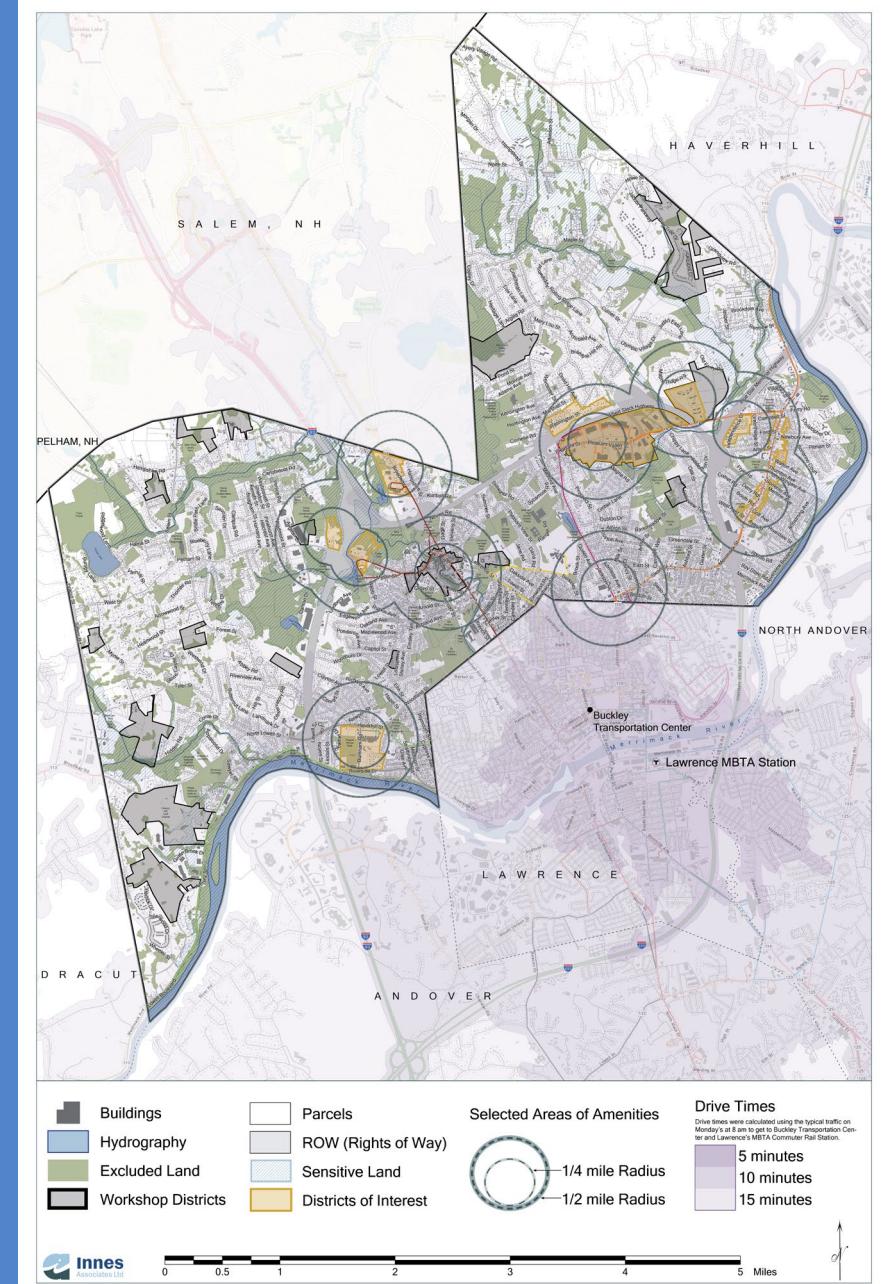
## Options for City Council

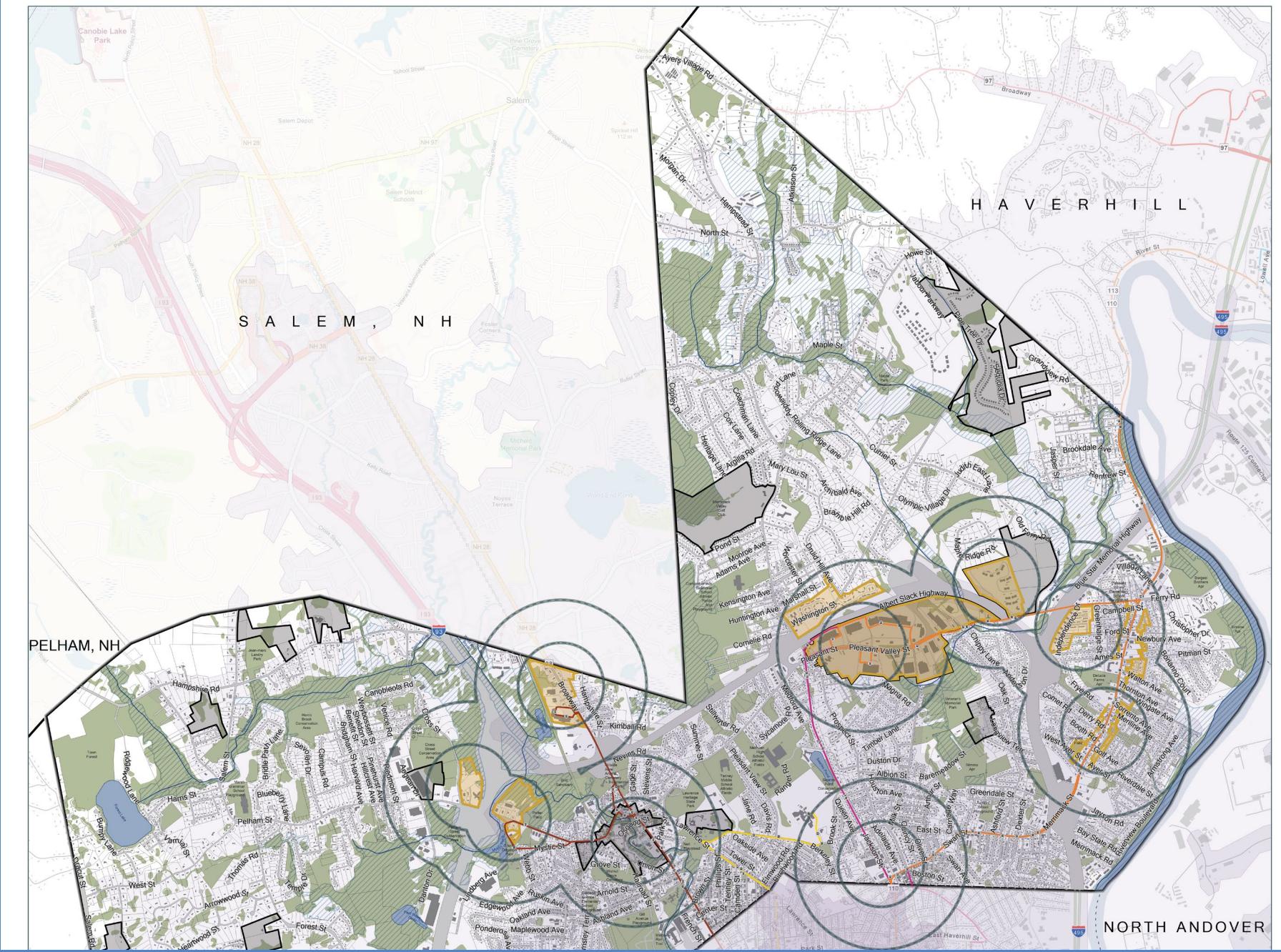
# Potential Test Areas

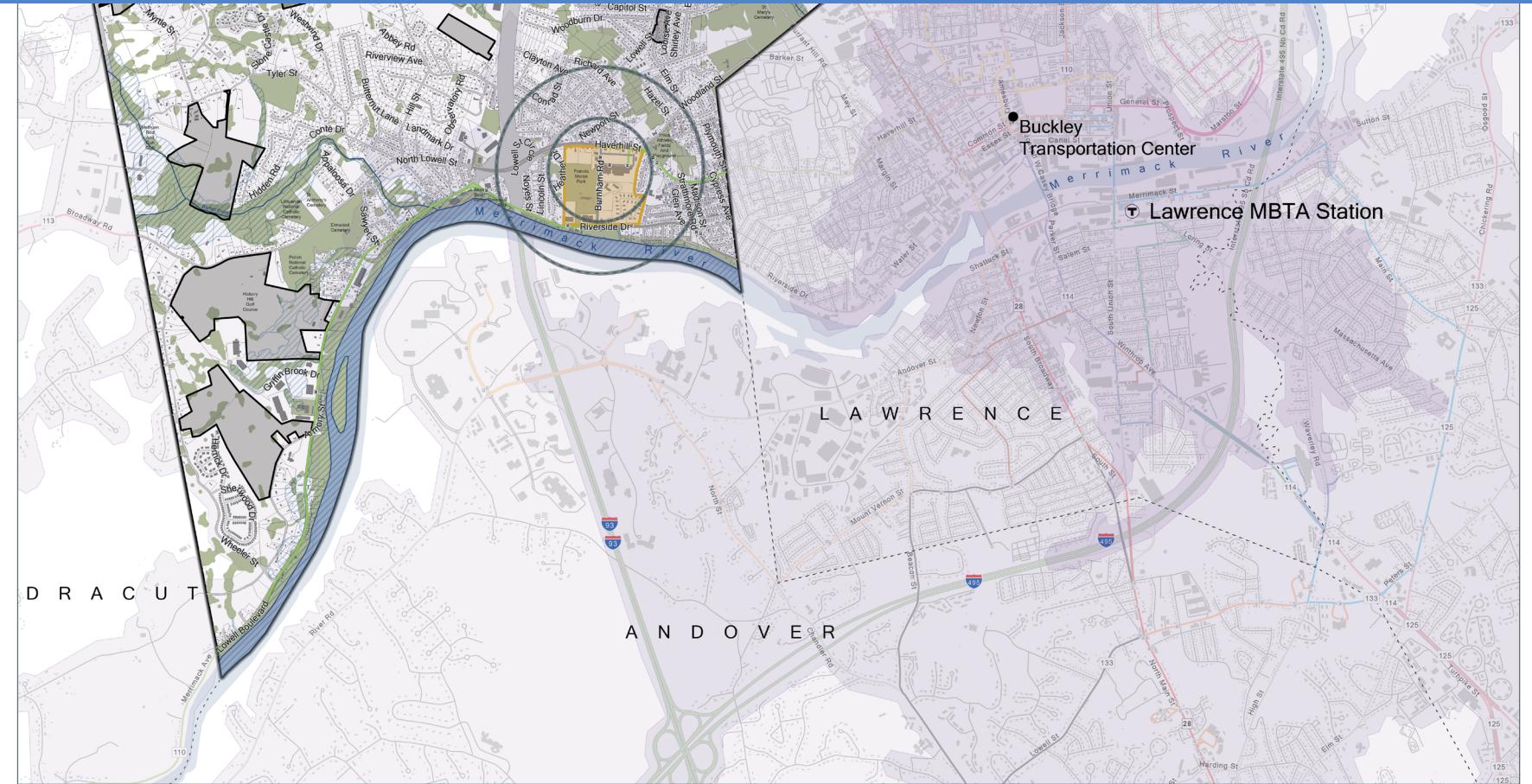
These test areas are from a combination of input from the November 14 Workshop for City Officials, the Housing Working Group, and City staff.

Our goal is to – with help from the City Council  
– narrow these suggested areas down to 5 or 6  
for further testing.

Please send us your individual thoughts by  
February 20 (next City Council meeting).



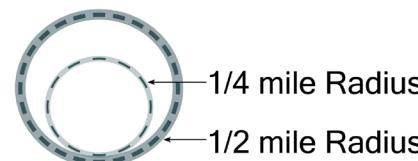




 Buildings  
 Hydrography  
 Excluded Land  
 Workshop Districts

 Parcels  
 ROW (Rights of Way)  
 Sensitive Land  
 Districts of Interest

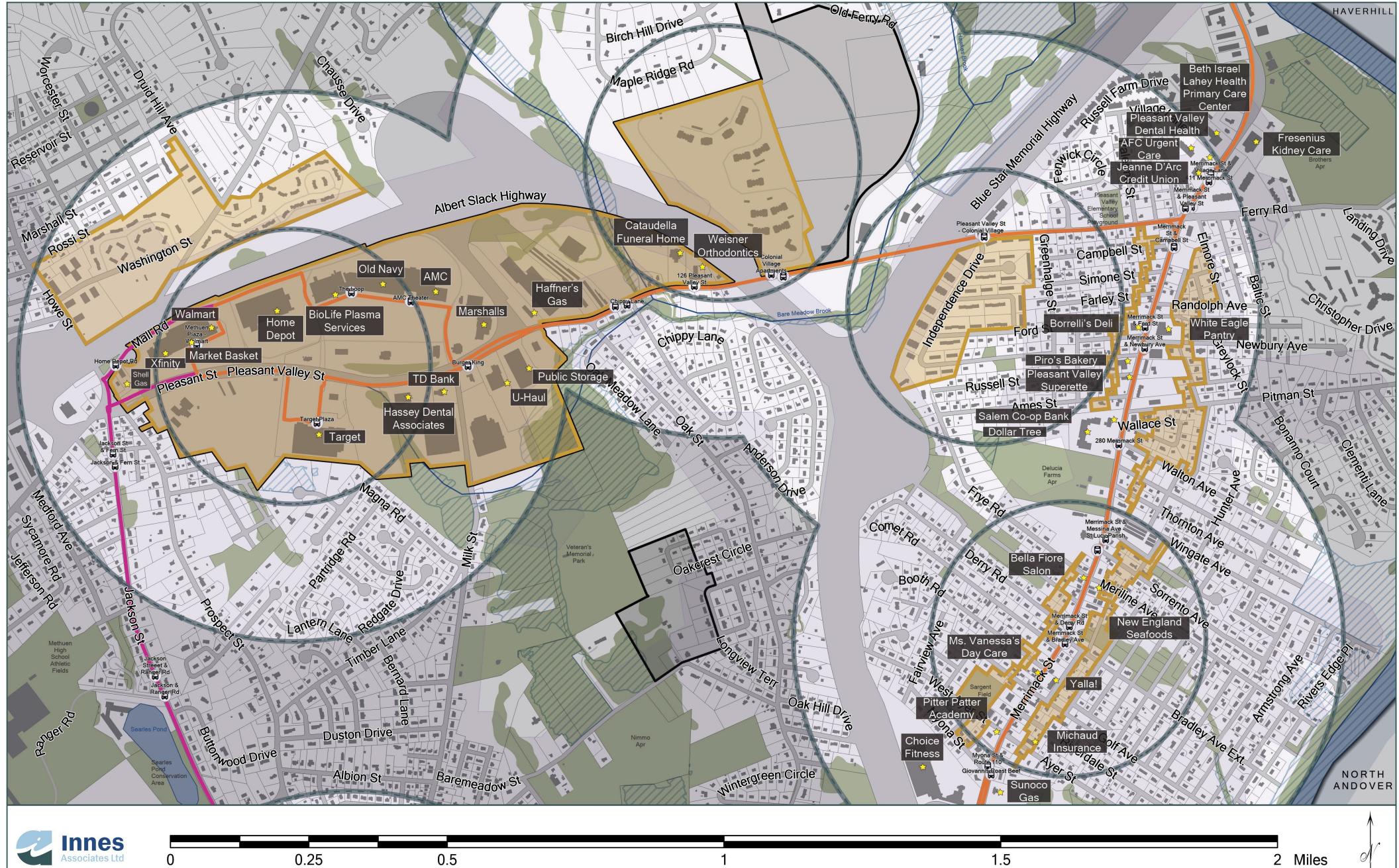
#### Selected Areas of Amenities

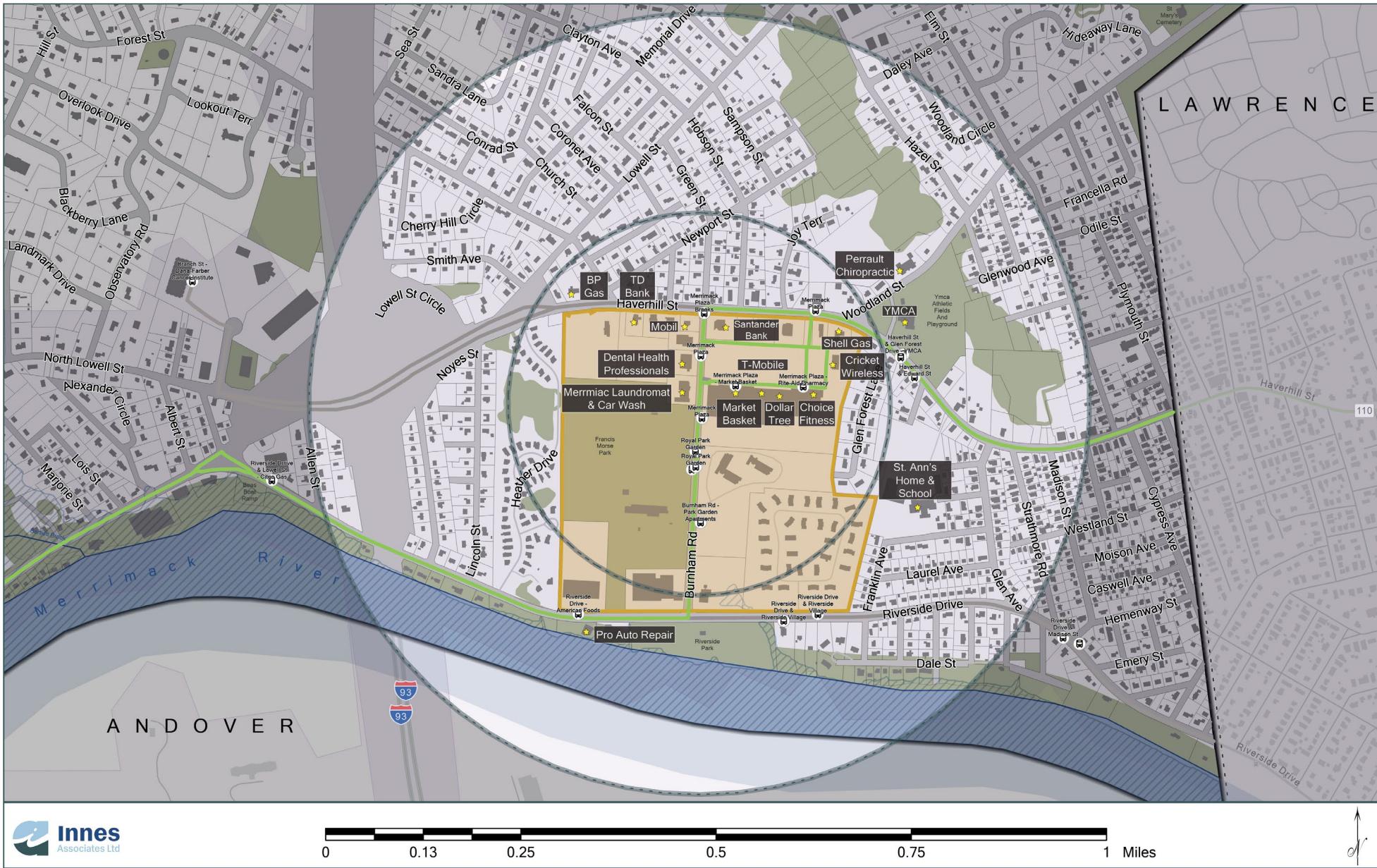


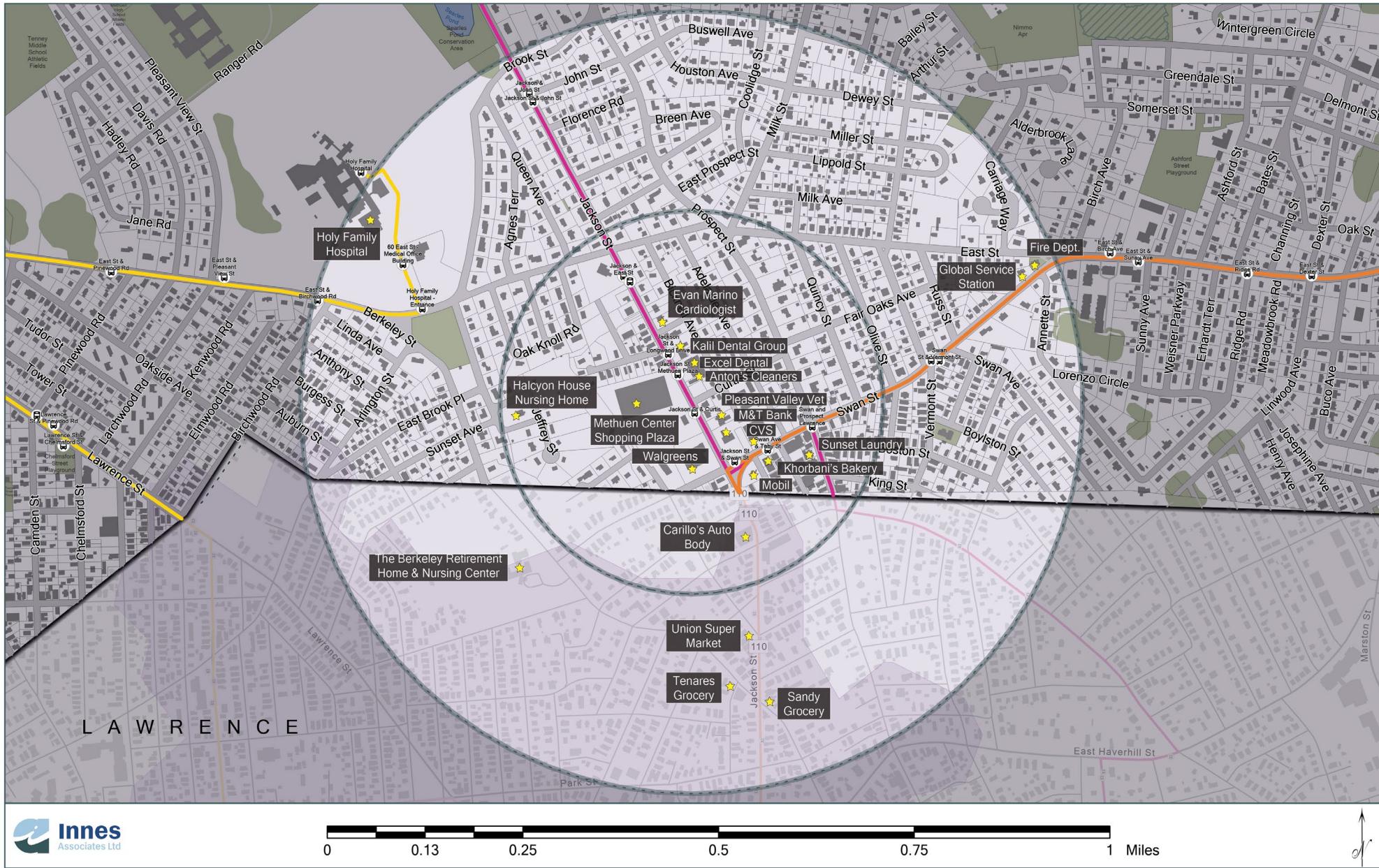
#### Drive Times

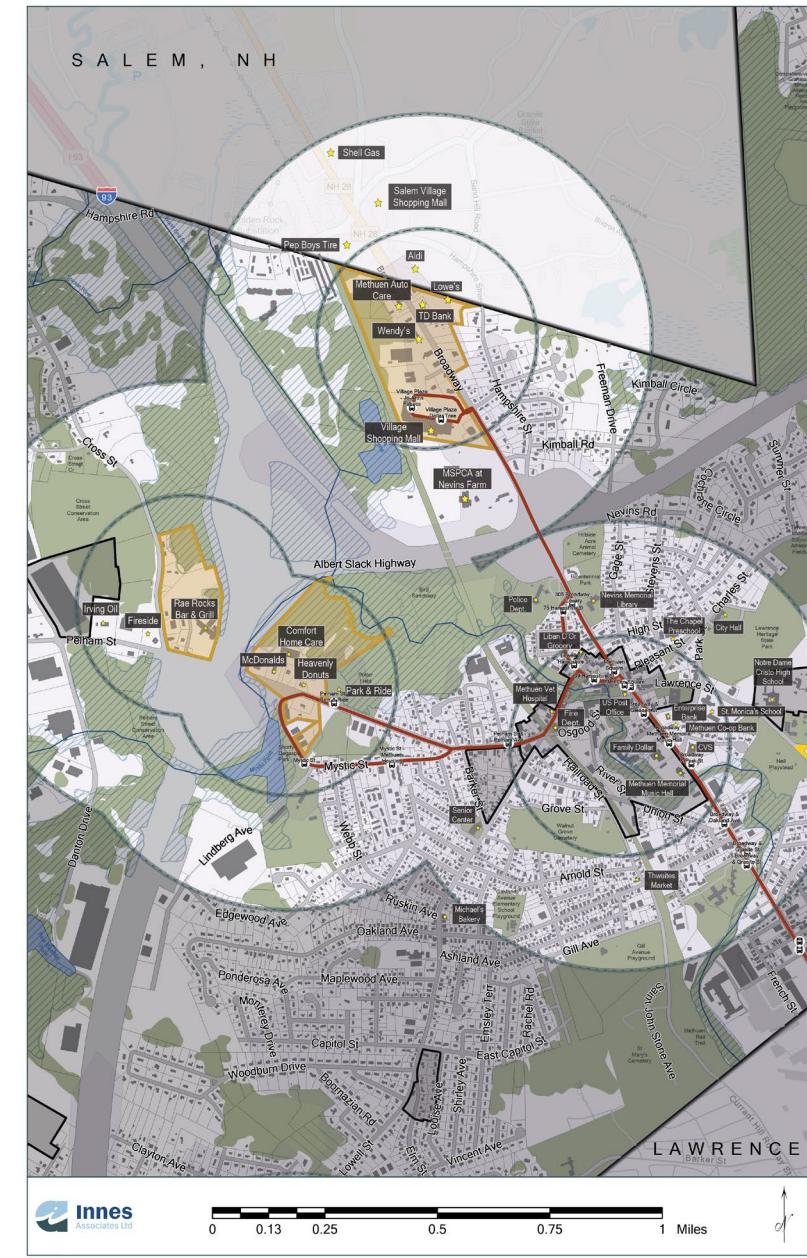
Drive times were calculated using the typical traffic on Monday's at 8 am to get to Buckley Transportation Center and Lawrence's MBTA Commuter Rail Station.

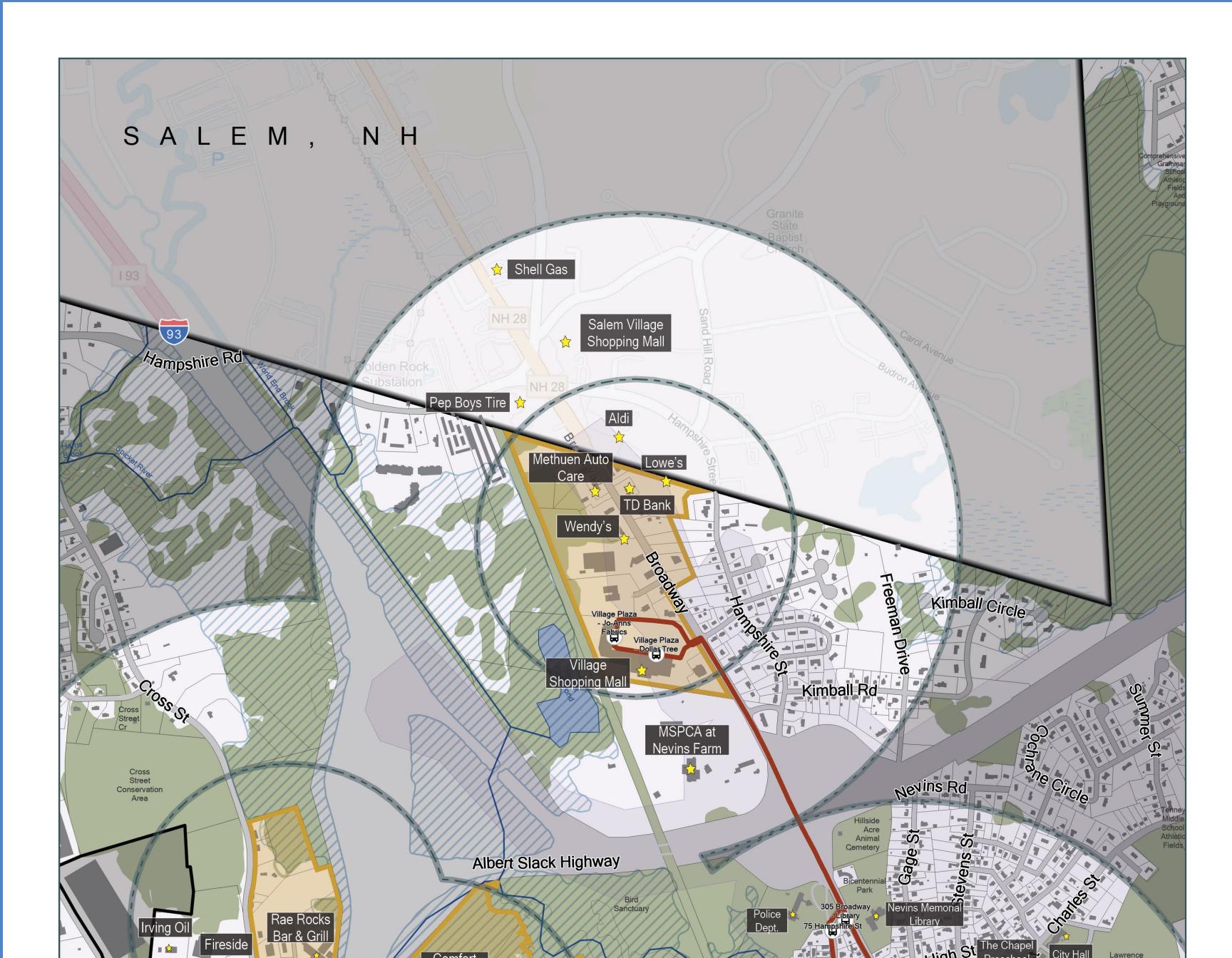
5 minutes
10 minutes
15 minutes

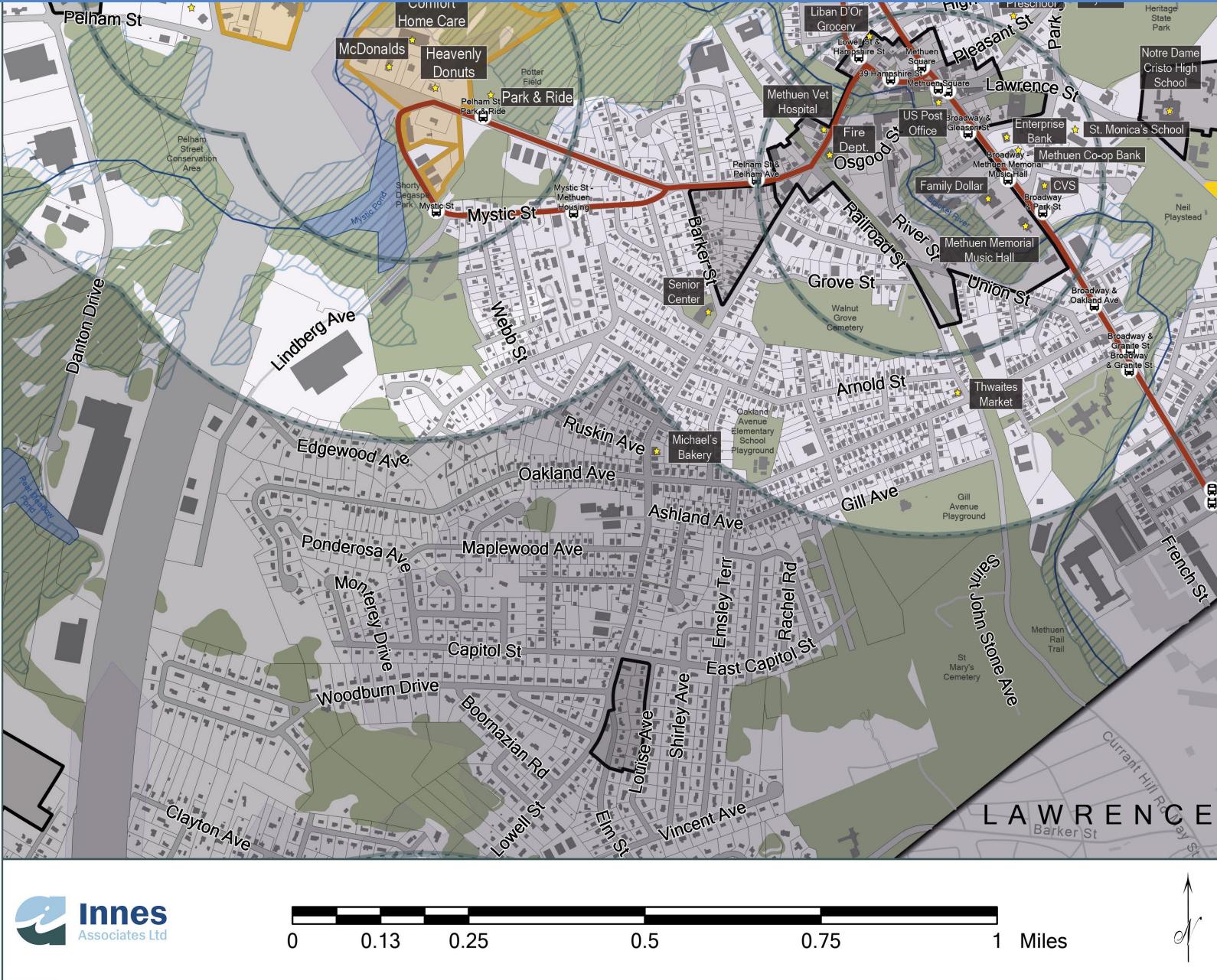












## Next Steps

## Next Steps

Tonight's meeting wraps up Phase 1!

Recommendations for Phase 2

Phase 2 includes the following components:

- ▶ Testing areas identified by the City Councilors
- ▶ Additional meetings with the HWG.
- ▶ Public meetings/hearings with the Community Development Board and the City Council.
- ▶ Materials for public outreach and education.
- ▶ Draft and final zoning.
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