



Spencer Town Center Revitalization Planning Project:  
FINAL REPORT

*Submitted to:*  
Town of Spencer

*Submitted by:*  
The Cecil Group, Inc.  
FXM Associates  
BETA Group

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Through the course of its creation *The Spencer Town Center Revitalization Report* received invaluable insight and guidance from the Community Development Block Grant Community Advisory Group and assistance from the Spencer Town staff. The Community Advisory Group is comprised of a broad base of key stakeholders within the Spencer community, who have volunteered their time to support the efforts of this report. In addition to the Community Advisory Group, *The Spencer Town Center Revitalization Report* benefited greatly from the input provided by residents and business owners who participated in the several public workshops, which were held as part of this project. The Community Advisory Group members and Town staff who assisted in this project are listed here in alphabetical order.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Project Overview

Spencer's Town Center is the traditional heart of the community that it serves. Unlike many other similarly-sized New England communities, the downtown today retains a broad array of locally-oriented shops, services and civic uses that are components in the daily life of the citizens. The array of banks, restaurants, small offices and repair shops, grocery, pharmacy and other stores and services are centrally arranged along Main Street, and spread along connecting streets that lead directly into residential neighborhoods that are within easy walking or bicycling distance of the Town Center. The Town Center includes a major regional retail destination in the form of Whitco – a discount appliance store that occupies a central location. The historic Town Hall is prominently located, perched on the hillside that climbs steeply at the northern end of the Town Center.

The Town Center has many fundamental physical, economic and market advantages that bode well for its future. Balancing these advantages, however, are a number of serious issues and challenges that must be overcome if the full potential of the downtown is to be realized.

Recognizing these challenges, the Town initiated a comprehensive process to prepare a plan and implementation strategy to improve the Town Center. This process has been conducted by the Town using funds provided through the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant program. The process has been directed by the Town's Director of Development & Inspectional Services, with project management assistance provided through an agreement with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. An eight-member Community Advisory Group has helped guide the planning process, with representatives from the business community, citizens and elected officials. The planning process has engaged a broad array of citizens, business and property owners and individuals interested in the future of the Town Center through a series of meetings, workshops and open houses to discuss ideas and find answers.

This Report consists of the Town Center Plan, and includes the research and findings of the professional team that has been assembled to provide an array of perspectives. The consultant team has been led by The Cecil Group (planning, urban design and landscape architecture), the BETA Group (traffic and utility infrastructure), and FXM Associates (market and real estate advisors). This Report contains:

- Goals -The goals that the community has expressed for their Town Center
- Evaluations of Conditions - Studies and investigations that the consultant team prepared including an overview of housing conditions, building conditions, street, traffic and streetscape conditions, relevant economic and market data, and reviews of the utility infrastructure needed to serve the downtown.
- Recommendations – Recommendations for reinvestment and improvements in the Town Center that are needed to fulfill the Town's goals.

- Implementation Strategy – Organized lists of tasks, responsibilities and resources that will be required to complete the Plan’s recommendations.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

### Key Opportunities and Challenges

Spencer is unusually well positioned to strengthen its Town Center so that it is a far more attractive destination for citizens, businesses and visitors. The Town’s underlying economic strengths, combined with the strategic advantages of its regional location form an unusually promising foundation that can be used to leverage positive reinvestment.

- Market Fundamentals – The mix, extent and types of uses located in the Town Center are unusually diverse and relatively healthy in comparison to other similarly-sized communities.
- Architectural History and Character – The Town Center hosts numerous examples of valued historic architecture and unique site features including stairs, walls and landscaping that are related to the hillside location of many of the buildings. The resulting character is an asset, and should be preserved where practical.
- Civic Core: Library, Sugden Block, and Town Hall – The “civic core” of public buildings each contribute a high architectural quality and substance to the downtown. These assets should remain and be enhanced where possible through renovation and revitalization with new uses, facilities and site improvements.
- Traffic as an Opportunity – The level of traffic along Route 9 is an asset, connecting the Town to the region and nearby communities. The convenient access for citizens and customers is a positive attribute of the Town Center from a business and civic perspective. Lower levels of congestion and safer circulation can be accomplished through focused improvements.
- Appearance: Architecture and Signage – Many of the buildings and some signage in the downtown provide a neglected appearance that can be detrimental to some businesses and discouraging to those who might be interested in investing in the downtown as a place to work or live. Improving the overall appearance is a basic economic strategy that has an indirect benefit of an improved civic self-image of the community.
- Whitco as a Unique Business and Regional Draw – The activity and employment associated with Whitco as a unique discount appliance retailer is a positive contribution to the downtown. The challenge for the community is to explore methods to leverage the activity in ways that will enhance other uses and reinforce the overall downtown revitalization effort.
- Appearance: Streetscape – The streetscape in the Town Center suffers from deferred maintenance and provides an overall environment for pedestrians that could be far more attractive and responsive to the historic qualities of the downtown.
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Environment and Connectivity – The Town Center is conveniently located in relationship to surrounding neighborhoods. The connections are important, as they support the business environment and the overall vitality of the district. Improved connections will improve the downtown.

- Circulation Problems – The downtown suffers from a series of side streets which connect to Main Street, but which are not aligned. Some of the streets are very narrow, and the relatively steep slopes create challenging intersections and restricted circulation patterns. To be successful, the downtown should be easy for motorists and pedestrians to navigate, and improvements can be made to accomplish this.
- Underutilized Land and Building Stock – Some of the buildings and land in the Town Center are visibly underutilized. While most of the storefronts along Main Street are occupied, empty buildings and storefronts dot the side streets. Upper floors of some buildings appear vacant or underutilized. This is both an opportunity and problem – space may be available for new and expanded uses, but the overall economic contribution of the Town Center is diminished if buildings and sites are partially or completely empty.
- Opportunity for a Return on Investment (and enhanced Tax Base) – The revitalization of Spencer Town Center should be understood as a public and private reinvestment opportunity. The challenge is to use the positive economic and market characteristics of the Town Center and convert underutilized land and buildings into productive places to work, live and shop, which will translate directly into an enhanced tax base, jobs and property values.

#### Principal Recommendations

Successful revitalization of the Town Center requires a multi-year commitment that advances many improvements in concert with one another. The need for consistent, coordinated action cannot be overstated. The following list highlights the major components that will be key factors in accomplishing a successful Town Center revitalization effort in Spencer.

- Focus – The Town Center revitalization effort should focus on specific areas as necessary priorities. A core area should become the focus of streetscape, circulation, façade, and signage, and the focus for attracting redevelopment and use enhancements. This core area generally consists of both sides of Main Street (Route 9) in the area of the densest commercial and civic development. This area extends generally from a “gateway” somewhat west of the High Street intersection to a second “gateway” approximately at the intersection of Ash Street.
- Maintaining Market Critical Mass – The mix, type and amount of commercial uses within the downtown is its greatest asset and foundation for the future. The Town should actively discourage land use and development initiatives through its policies and regulations that would relocate existing uses to other locations, and seek additional, complementary uses by actively promoting the Town Center as a business location. This recommendation recognizes that the Town cannot control market forces, and that in some circumstances new, desirable uses may reasonably replace existing uses. However, every effort should be made to avoid significant or long-term vacancies on the land and within the buildings along the core area of Main Street.
- Circulation Improvements and Related Improvements – The Town should initiate and accomplish the realignment of Pleasant Street as it approaches Main Street, so that it aligns with Wall Street. This alteration should be accompanied by signalization and roadway improvements to create improved and coordinated flows between signals and Mechanic

Street and Pleasant Street. In combination with re-organization of allowable turning movements and reduction in some circulation restrictions - where possible - the access to and through the downtown will be greatly enhanced. The Town should seek and direct state funds to accomplish as much of this improvement as possible, providing Town funds as a supplement.

- Open Space: Plaza and Town Green – A related benefit of the realignment of Pleasant Street will be the shaping of an improved “town green” on the west side of Pleasant Street along Main Street. A high quality space can hold small events and amenities appealing to everyone. Across Pleasant Street, a small plaza should be created to serve as a “front door” for both the Sugden Block and as a visual and pedestrian corridor leading to the historic Town Library.
- Municipal Parking – The realignment of Pleasant Street will provide an opportunity for the Town to acquire the existing parking lot that is across from the Sugden Block/Library. An improved and properly laid out parking lot should be able to maintain needed parking spaces that could help support the businesses and uses within an improved Sugden Block.
- Sugden Block Management and Improvement Strategy – The Town should retain the Sugden Block and provide for its improvement and management by a new development/economic improvement entity as described below. An agreement would need to be structured to provide net revenues to the library. However, there are advantages if this can be a part of an investment portfolio in the future quality of uses and architecture of the Town Center, while remaining in public control.
- Reinvestment: Town Center “Industrial Park” – The Town Center grew around a dense collection of industrial mills and uses that have mostly departed. A collection of small sheds and buildings remain along the streets leading downhill from Main Street and Maple Street (Pearl, Wall, Elm, and Mechanic Streets). This Plan envisions the redevelopment of this area as a “mini business park”, serving as an incubator for small businesses. However, the building stock needs to be evaluated and re-organized, some sites opened for parking, and street improvements accomplished. The Plan envisions the creation of a Town-based entity that would be stewards of this area, purchasing and/or leasing facilities, seeking and coordinating community reinvestment funds from public resources, and renting the improved spaces to businesses that could take advantage of the workforce and regional location.
- Reinvestment: Housing and Mixed Use – Another necessary reinvestment target is a series of buildings and sites that are underutilized and deteriorating which have (or could have) housing as a use component, along with retail, services or commercial uses. The improvements to these buildings are more than cosmetic, and this Plan envisions the formation of a redevelopment entity to sponsor and market re-use of key locations.
- Reinvestment Stewardship: Town Leadership through New Entities – In order to advance the stewardship and redevelopment opportunities of the Sugden Block, industrial, commercial and residential properties, the Town and its citizens need to form dedicated entities to serve as stewards. This Plan recommends the formation of a study committee to investigate the relative merits of various models for such entities, such as a Community Development Corporations (CDC’s), Economic and Industrial Development Corporations (EDIC), or other mechanism. The most appropriate approach should then be employed to create a structure, secure leadership and participation commitments, and advance redevelopment.

- Façade and Signage Improvement Program – The Town should undertake a façade and signage improvement program to provide grants and/or loans to area property owners to reinvest in the appearance of the businesses. As part of this process, we suggest staging a small design competition to solicit inventive ideas for key parcels, and providing methods to create interest and support for these improvements from property owners and positive support from the entire community.
- Streetscape Improvements – In conjunction with the street and roadway improvements, the Town should advance designs and secure funds to create a more attractive and safe pedestrian environment with enhanced sidewalks, crosswalks, street trees in appropriate locations, signage and amenities.
- Zoning and Regulatory Framework – The downtown zoning framework should be amended as required to support the range and intensity of uses within the Town Center consistent with the redevelopment and land use vision advanced by this Plan.
- Other Infrastructure Improvements – The Town should seek and provide funding to undertake the technical investigations needed to establish the scope and resources required to bring the antiquated downtown sanitary sewer system to current standards through a series of planned, budgeted and funded improvements coordinated with street or other utility work.

Figure 1: Project Area



The information analyzed for this study includes the survey of the housing stock conditions, ownership patterns, development patterns, utilization patterns, interviews with Community Advisory Group members, town staff and community members as well as the economic conditions market assessment conducted as part of this project.

The Susceptibility to Change Analysis included a total of 245 properties within the Town Center Study Area. Each property was categorized as one of three conditions. The three categories are:

- High Susceptibility to Change - Properties categorized as being highly susceptible to change indicate situations where a single factor or combination of factors could contribute to a likely change in use or condition. Some factors that could contribute to a property's likely availability or reinvestment include if a change in ownership is imminent or just occurred, if significant property investments are anticipated, if underutilization is currently occurring, if property consolidation is possible or if market conditions shift the economic value of the property.
- Moderate Susceptibility to Change – Properties categorized as being moderately susceptible to change indicate situations where a single factor or combination of factors could contribute to a change in use or condition. The moderately susceptibility to change condition is associated with properties that may have active or appropriate uses, but could attract reinvestment, due to parcel size, location or character of existing use.
- Low Susceptibility to Change - Properties categorized as having a low susceptibility to change are properties that are unlikely to change use or condition. A low susceptibility to change condition is associated with civic facilities, municipal owned properties, sites that appear to be intensively used, and for which other locations may not be as desirable, and parcels of land and use patterns which are likely to remain substantially the same because of their height and density and improvements and character of the district around them.

The greatest concentration of properties determined to be highly susceptible to change are located on either side of Wall Street between Main Street and Pearl Street. The largest concentrations of properties determined to be moderately susceptible to change are located along Pearl and Valley Streets and Mechanic Street. The largest concentrations of properties determined to have a low susceptibility to change are located along the west and east portions of Main Street. Overall 13% of the properties reviewed in the Town Center Study Area were found to have a high susceptibility to change, 29% were found to have a moderately susceptibility to change, and 59% were found to have a low susceptibility to change. *Figure 6: Susceptibility to Change Analysis* illustrates the parcel-by-parcel basis likelihood for change. *Figure 7: Property Ownership* illustrates the ownership patterns in the Town Center. *Figure 8: Property Value* illustrates the parcel-by-parcel assessed property values in the Town Center and *Figure 9: Property Size* illustrates the parcel-by-parcel property size by categories within the Town Center. *Figure 10: Photo Inventory* illustrates the conditions and type of buildings found in the Spence Town Center Study Area.

The Susceptibility to Change Analysis for the Spencer Town Center reveals that there are several concentrations of properties that are gradually moving toward change. Efforts can be taken to either reinforce the existing uses and conditions through regulation changes, infrastructure improvements aimed at lessening the likelihood of change or programs and initiatives can be put in place to accelerate change through development. A property's level of susceptibility to change can reflect a variety of factors and circumstances. Identifying and understanding the factors and circumstances that drive change is critical in developing effective revitalization strategies.

Figure 6: Susceptibility to Change Analysis

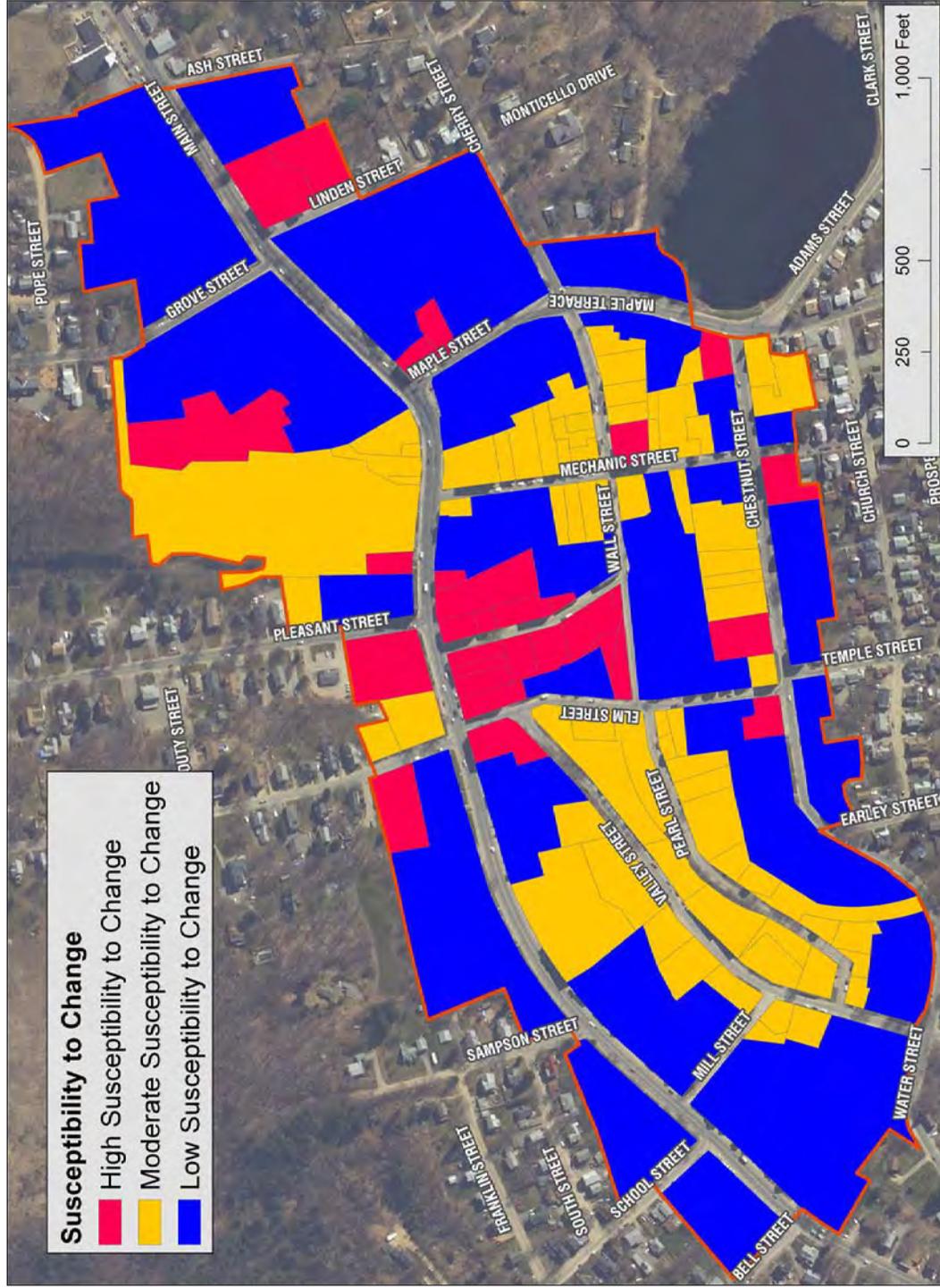


Figure 7: Property Ownership

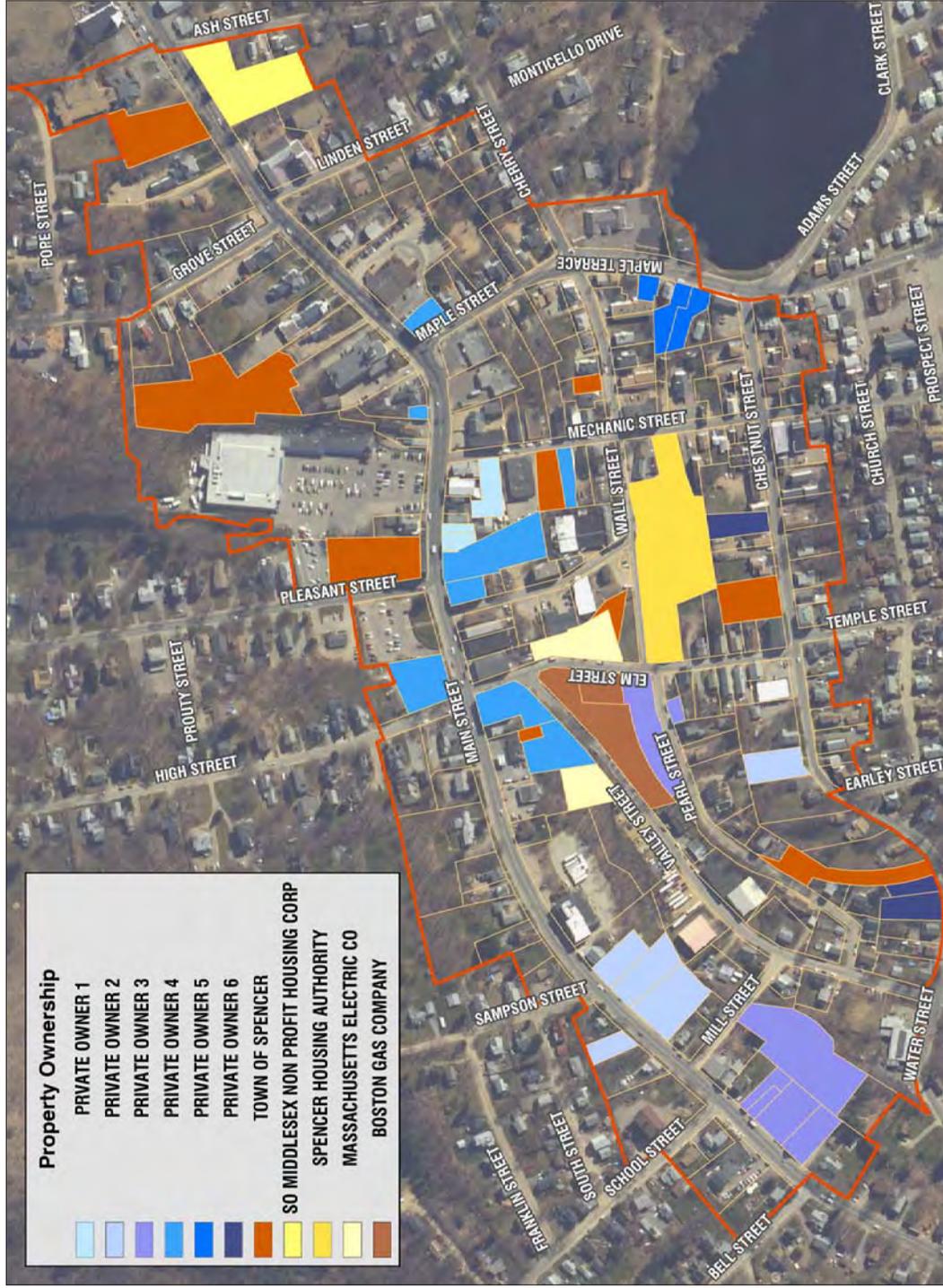


Figure 8: Property Value

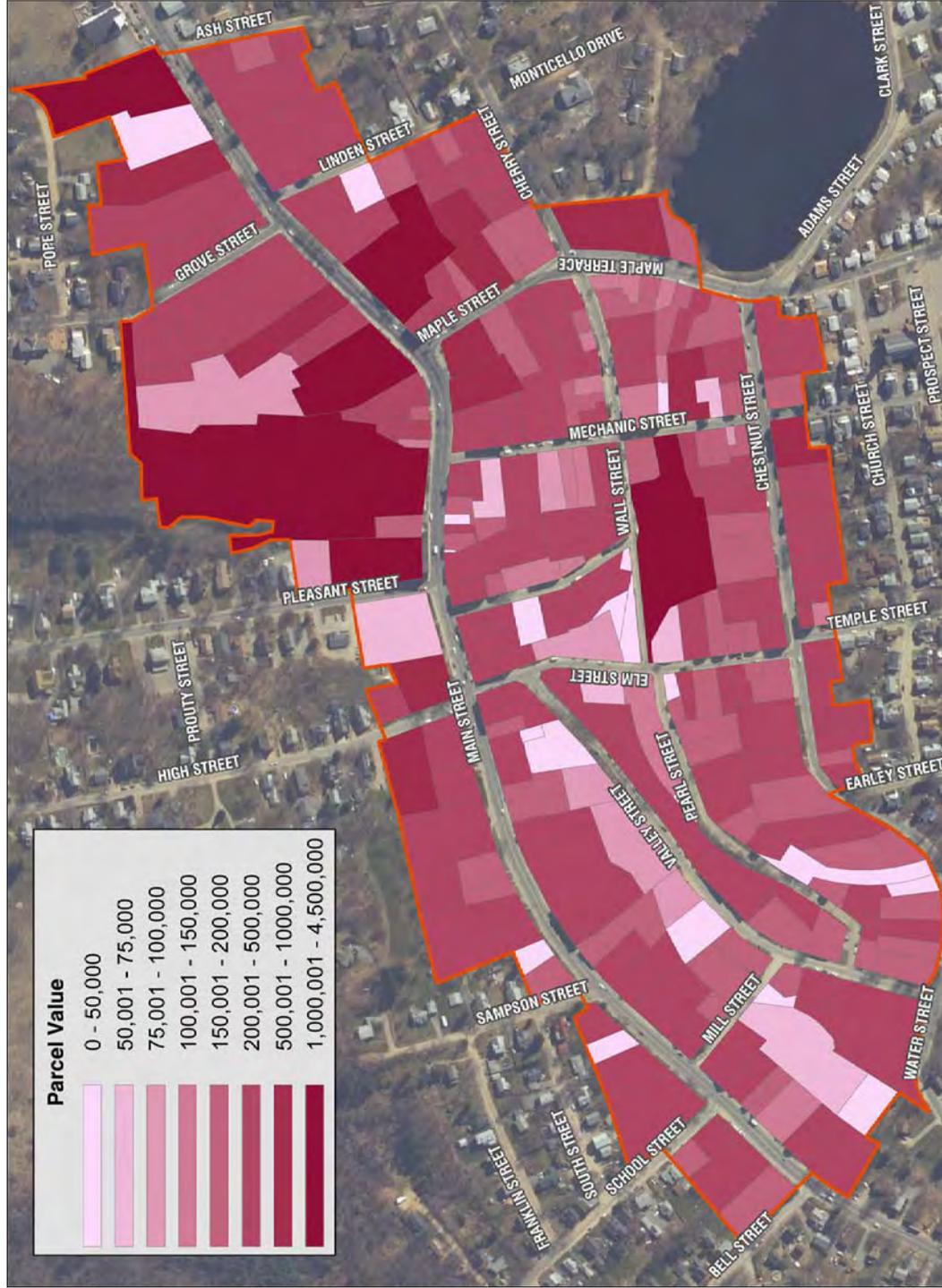


Figure 9: Property Size

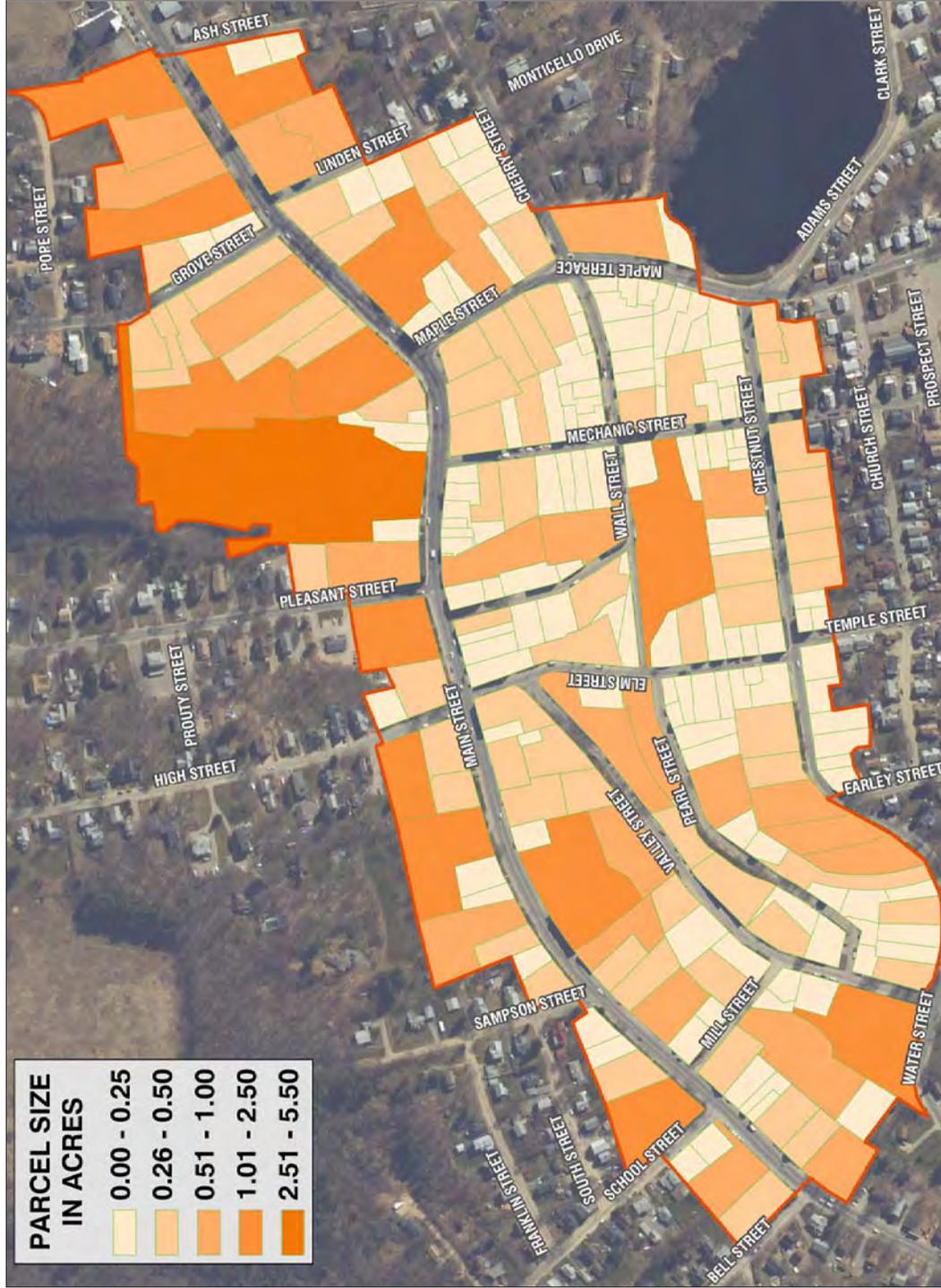


Figure 10: Photo Inventory



7 High Street



136 Main Street



10 Linden Street



12 Linden Street



31 Cherry Street



6 Maple Street



7 Maple Street



18-20 Maple Street



24 Wall Street



40 Wall Street



40 Wall Street



40 Wall Street



27 Elm Street



17 Cherry Street



22 1/2 Cherry Street



20 Cherry Street



18 Cherry Street



44 Mechanic Street



40 Mechanic Street



8 Chestnut Street



1 Chestnut Street



7 Chestnut Street



27 Maple Street



23 Maple Street



26 Maple Street



28 Maple Street



2 Chestnut Street



13 Mechanic Street



15 Mechanic Street



19 Mechanic Street



28-30 Mechanic Street



8 Pleasant Street



53 Chestnut Street



9 Maple Street



25 Chestnut Street



36 Chestnut Street



57 Chestnut Street



67 Chestnut Street



100 Chestnut Street



98 Chestnut Street



94 Chestnut Street



39 Valley Street



41 Valley Street



11 Mill Street



36 Valley Street



34 Valley Street



24 Valley Street



21 Valley Street



15 Valley Street



2 Valley Street



7 Pearl Street



11 Pearl Street



33 Pearl Street



200 Main Street



31 Mechanic Street



35 Main Street



32 Main Street



34 Main Street



88 School Street



36 Main Street



38 Main Street



40 Main Street



45 Main Street



53 Main Street



52 Main Street



56 Main Street



60 Main Street



71 Main Street



75 Main Street



85 Main Street



106 Main Street



9 Linden Street



116 Main Street



95 Main Street



124 Main Street



126-130 Main Street



111 Main Street



134 Main Street



18 Wall Street



138 Main Street



140 Main Street



142 Main Street



62 Wall Street



55 Mechanic Street



157 Main Street



14 Grove Street



24 Chestnut Street



7 Cherry Street

## Infrastructure Existing Conditions

The data collection and existing conditions infrastructure analysis of Spencer's Town Center Study Area consisted of the research and examination of seven infrastructure components including water mains, sewer mains, drainage systems, private utilities, roadways, parking, and traffic conditions. These seven components comprise the infrastructure system which supports and underlies the development and land use capabilities of Spencer Town Center. The condition, location, efficiency and capacity of each component directly affects the manner in which the Town Center functions. An examination of each Spencer Town Center's infrastructure component was completed by BETA Group and is illustrated in *Figure 11: Existing Utilities* and *Figure 12: Existing Traffic Conditions*.

### Infrastructure and Utility Conditions

#### *Water Mains*

BETA was provided with an AutoCAD drawing of the Town's existing water mains. The accuracy of this drawing is not known, but for the purpose of this investigation, it illustrated the location of the existing water mains. Based on the AutoCAD drawing, there are approximately 14,600 linear feet of water main within the project area. The Town also provided a listing of the water mains in the project area which indicated size, age and material of the mains. Below is a table indicating age, size, and material of the water mains in the study area as provided by the Town.

Street	Material	Age	Diameter	Length
Ash St.	Univ.	1938	6"	734'
Cherry St. (Mechanic St. to Maple St.)	DI	1992	8"	500'
Cherry St. (Maple St. to Ash St.)	DI	1995	12"	795'
Chestnut St. (Maple St. to Mechanic St.)	CI	1915	6"	312'
Chestnut St. (Mechanic St. to Elm St.)	CI	1915	8"	656'
Chestnut St. (Elm St. to Early St.)	CI	1924	6"	743'
Chestnut St. (Early St. to Valley St.)	DI	1994	8"	-
Elm St.	CI	1923/1924	6"	933'
Grove St.	DI	1984	12"	2211'
High St.	DI	1974	8"	325'

Linden St.	DI	1994	8"	649'
Lloyd Dyer Dr.	DI	1991	8"	-
Main St.	DI	1984	12"	2251'
Main St.	DI	1980	12"	1647'
Maple St. (Main St. to Cherry St.)	DI	1997	12"	474'
Maple St. (Cherry St. to Church St.)	DI	1998	12"	763'
Mechanic St. (Chestnut St. to McDonald St.)	DI	1981	8"	625'
Mechanic St. (Main St. to Chestnut St.)	DI	1992	8"	925'
Pearl St.	DI	1984	8"	1054'
Pleasant St. (Main St. to Grant St.)	Univ.	1929	8"	1377'
Sampson St. (Main St. to South St.)	CI	1924	6"	210'
School St. (Main St. to Franklin St.)	CI	1914	6"	610'
Valley St. (Chestnut St. to Mill St.)	CI	-	6"	696'
Valley St. (Chestnut St. to end of main)	CI	-	6"	395'
Wall St.	Univ.	1932	8"	833'

No records exist regarding conditions of the existing water mains. The Town noted in a meeting with BETA that there are no immediate issues regarding the water mains and there have been no recent system failures in the study area.

Figure 11: Existing Utilities

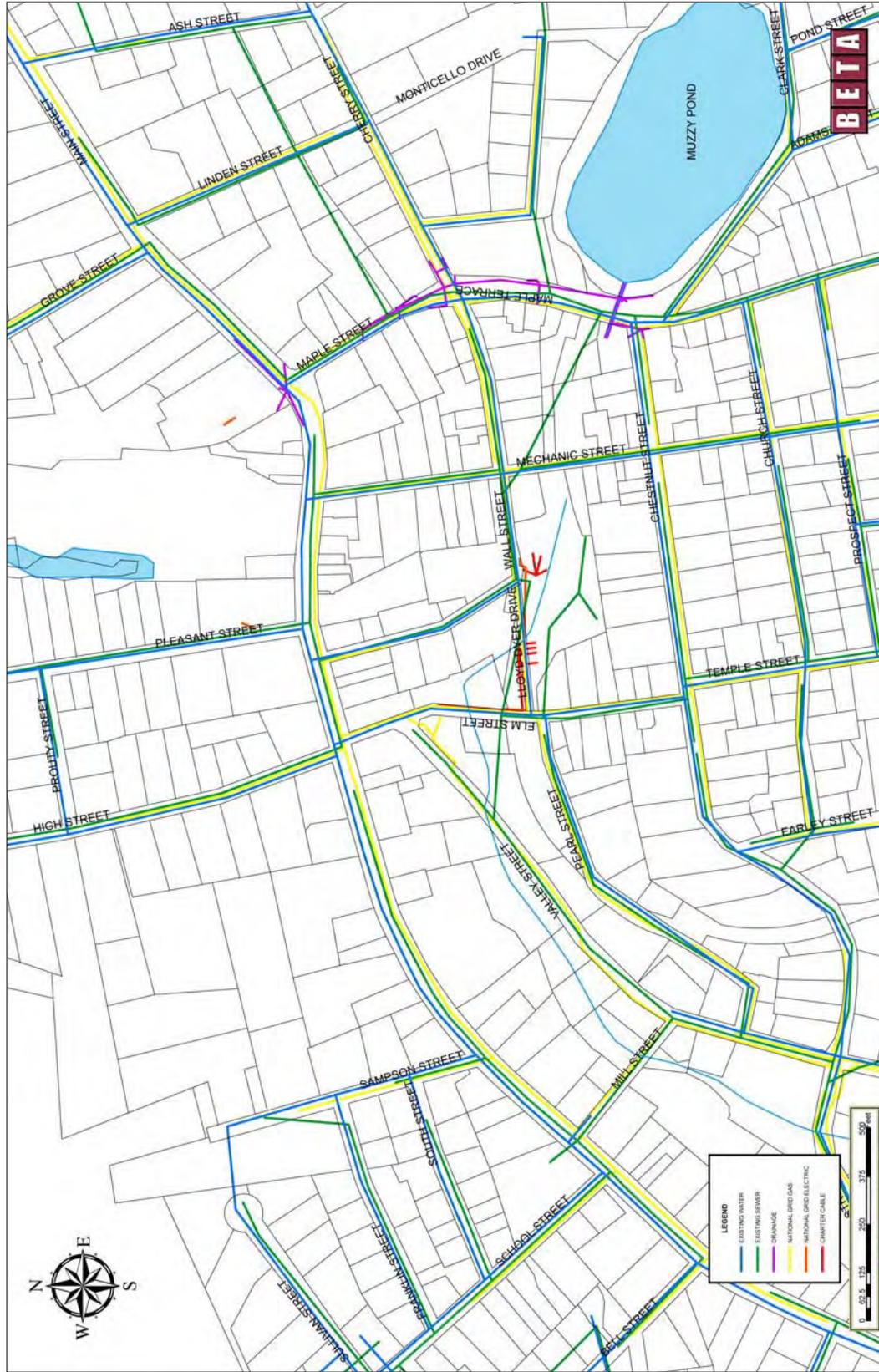
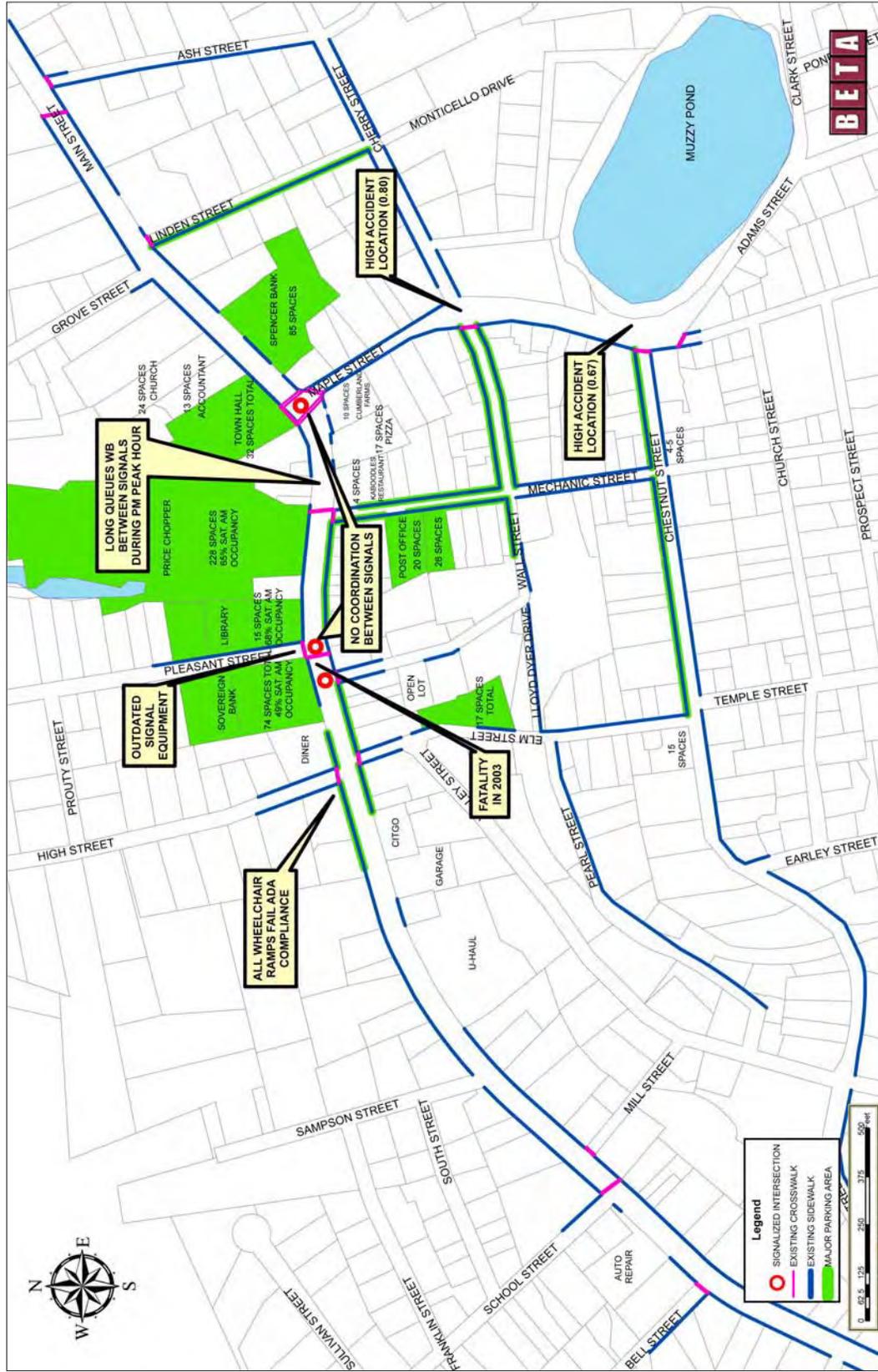


Figure 12: Existing Traffic Conditions



### *Sewer Mains*

The AutoCAD drawing provided to BETA by the Town also illustrated existing sewer mains. Again, since the accuracy of the drawing is unknown, it served to show approximately where existing sewer mains were located. Based on the representation of the sewer, there are approximately 16,100 linear feet of sewer pipe within the project area.

During a meeting with the Sewer Department Superintendent, Mark Robidoux, BETA was informed that the no sewer record drawings exist after most were destroyed in a fire in the 1920's. Mr. Robidoux expressed that the sewer system within the project area is constructed of vitrified clay (vc) pipe, and that cracked/broken pipe and possibly crushed or collapsed pipe is possible. Sewer manholes in the area are old and likely need to be rebuilt. Mr. Robert McNeil, Utilities and Facilities Superintendent, also mentioned during the meeting that there is a collection of sewer and drain pipes that run through private property without any easements from Summit St. to Maple St. in between Main St. and Cherry St., although only the area from Ash St. to Maple St. is within the project area.

Information provided to BETA by Mr. Robidoux indicates that almost all of the sewer mains within the project area were installed between 1880 and 1910 and are vc pipe. It was also noted that infiltration and inflow is an issue. With cracked sewer pipe, groundwater infiltration into the system is a likely problem. It is believed that many homes may have sump pumps directly connected to their sewer connections. The sump pumps discharge groundwater directly into the sewer system, which increases treatment costs.

Also, no sewer studies have been conducted in this area and very little Closed Circuit Televising (CCTV) of the sewer pipes has been done.

### *Drainage*

BETA was informed during the meeting that the culvert on Wall St. had recently collapsed, and could possibly be downsized since upstream contributions have been rerouted over several years. It was also noted that catch basins are cleaned annually and that the Town is currently developing a map of the drainage system using GPS to locate catch basins and outfalls. No drainage maps currently exist and the actual pipe conditions are unknown.

### *Private Utilities*

BETA contacted and attempted to obtain record drawings of private underground utilities within the study area. Locations of private utilities are shown in *Figure 11: Existing Utilities*, however, conditions of the private utilities were not provided to BETA.

## Roadway, Parking, and Traffic Conditions

### *Roadways*

#### Main Street (Route 9)

Main Street is classified as a principal arterial and runs east-west through downtown Spencer. Land use is a mix of residential and commercial use, primarily retail use between Sampson St and Linden Street. In the project vicinity, Main Street is generally a two lane roadway (one lane in each direction) measuring approximately 36' to 48' in width. Between Mechanic Street and Maple Street, Main Street has a steep vertical alignment of approximately 9% which limits sightlines for traffic in this area. Sidewalks are located on both sides of the roadway although there is a long break (approximately 600') in continuous sidewalk on the south side of the roadway between the U-Haul driveway and Citgo Station. Within the project limits, sidewalks on the south side of Main Street measure 5.5' to 11' in width and sidewalks on the north side measure 6.5' to 7.5' in width. Roadways, curbing and sidewalk are generally in fair condition; however, all sidewalk ramps need to be updated to meet ADA compliance. Painted pedestrian crosswalks are located along Main Street on the east side of School St, at the eastbound and southbound approaches to the Pleasant St signal, on the east side of Mechanic St (leading to the Price Chopper Lot), along all approaches to the Maple St signal, and at the First Congregational Church driveway just west of Ash Street. Pavement marking lane lines are faded to the point of being non-existent throughout most of the Main Street corridor.

On the south side of Main Street, one hour on-street parking between 6AM-6PM is permitted between Tony's Cleaners (west of Elm St) and Mechanic St, except between Wall St and the bus stop east of Pleasant Street. On the north side of Main Street, one-hour on-street parking from 6AM to 6PM is permitted in front of the Moxie Diner and just west of High Street. Parking on Main Street is prohibited in the vicinity of the Wall St and Pleasant St signals and in front of Sovereign Bank. This allows for approximately 22 parking spaces on the south side of Main Street and approximately 8 parking spaces on the north side of Main Street. It should be noted that parking is prohibited on either side of Main Street during the winter parking ban which occurs November 1st thru April 15th, between the hours of 12:01 AM and 6 AM.

#### Bell Street

Bell Street is a two lane (one lane each direction) residential local roadway generally running in the north-south direction. A sidewalk is located on west side of the roadway and there is a painted crosswalk at the southbound approach to Main Street. Bell Street is stop-controlled at the intersection of Main Street. Roadways, curbing and sidewalks are generally in fair condition. Vehicles are only permitted to park on the odd numbered side of Bell Street during the winter parking ban.

### School Street

School Street is a residential north-south directional roadway, consisting of one lane in each direction. It is stop-controlled at the intersection of Main Street and a sidewalk is located on east side of the roadway. Roadways, curbing and sidewalks are generally in fair to poor condition. During the winter parking ban vehicles are only permitted to park on the odd numbered side of School Street.

### Mill Street

Mill Street is a two lane residential roadway serving as a north-south connector between Main St and Valley St. There are no existing sidewalks and roadway paving is generally in fair to poor condition. At the northbound approach to Main Street, where there is a painted crosswalk, Mill Street is stop-controlled. During the winter parking ban vehicles are prohibited from parking on the odd numbered side of Mill Street; however, the narrow width of the roadway would make on-street parking difficult and emergency vehicle access could be an issue.

### Sampson Street

This two lane residential roadway generally is stop-controlled at the intersection of Main Street. There are no existing sidewalks and roadway paving is generally in poor condition. During the winter parking ban, vehicles are prohibited from parking on either side of Sampson Street.

### High Street

High Street is a two lane residential roadway that runs north from Main St. A sidewalk is located on both sides of the roadway. There is a painted crosswalk at the southbound approach to Main Street, where High Street is stop-controlled. Roadways, curbing and sidewalks on High Street are generally in fair condition. Vehicles are prohibited from parking on either side of High Street while the parking ban is in effect during winter months.

### Elm Street

Elm Street is a local roadway with a mix of residential and commercial uses. It consists of two lanes (one lane each direction) and serves as a north-south connection between Main St and Chestnut St. A sidewalk is located on the east side of Elm Street from the southerly parking lot to Main Street. There is a short stretch of sidewalk on the west side of the road in the vicinity of Main Street. Elm Street is stop-controlled at Main Street (but missing a stop line) and there is a painted crosswalk at the northbound approach. Roadways, curbing and sidewalks on Elm Street are generally in fair to poor condition. During the winter parking ban, vehicles are prohibited from parking on either side of Elm Street.

### Valley Street

This local roadway runs east-west between Water St and Elm St and consists of one lane in each direction. The land use on this road is a mix of commercial and residential. There are no sidewalks along this roadway and roadway paving is in poor condition. Valley Street is stop controlled at both approaches to Water Street / Chestnut Street but uncontrolled at other intersections. Vehicles are prohibited from parking on the odd numbered side of the street during the winter parking ban.

### Pearl Street

Pearl Street is a residential roadway generally running east-west between Valley St and Elm St. It consists of two lanes (one lane each direction) and is uncontrolled at its intersections with Elm St and Valley St. There is a narrow bituminous sidewalk (no curbing) on the south side of this roadway and paving and sidewalks are in poor condition. The winter parking ban prohibits parking on the odd numbered side of Pearl Street.

### Chestnut Street

This two lane roadway serves as an east-west connection between Valley St and Maple St and has a mix of commercial and residential land use. There is a narrow bituminous sidewalk along the north side of this roadway between Maple St and Elm St and all along the south side of this roadway. Roadway paving and sidewalks are in poor condition. Chestnut Street is stop-controlled at its intersections with Maple Street and Mechanic Street and uncontrolled at other intersections. In addition, there is a flashing beacon signal at the Chestnut St / Mechanic St intersection where the Chestnut St approaches have a flashing red signal and the Mechanic St approaches have a flashing yellow signal. During a weekday observation, vehicles were parked along the north side of Chestnut Street between Maple Street and Elm Street; however it should be noted that vehicles are prohibited from parking on either side of this street during the winter parking ban.

### Lloyd Dyer Drive

Lloyd Dyer Drive is a short residential /commercial roadway generally running east-west between Wall St and Elm St, and it is stop controlled at both of these intersections. It consists of two lanes, one in lane each direction. There is a narrow bituminous sidewalk on the south side of this roadway and roadway paving and sidewalks are in poor condition. Vehicles are prohibited from parking on the odd numbered side of the street during the winter parking ban.

### Wall Street

Wall Street is a local two lane roadway that runs north-south between Main St and Lloyd Dyer Dr and curves to the east to connect with Mechanic St and Cherry St. This road is stop-controlled at the Lloyd Dyer Dr and Mechanic St / Cherry St intersections. To the north, Wall Street measures approximately 24' in width and is signal controlled at Main

Street. There is a short stretch of bituminous sidewalk on the north side of Wall Street west of Mechanic Street and on both sides of Wall St at the northbound approach to the Main Street signal. Both roadway paving and sidewalks are in poor condition. During a weekday observation there were a few vehicles parked on the north side (odd numbered side) of Wall Street just west of Mechanic Street. It should be noted that during the winter parking ban, parking is only permitted between Mechanic St and the Flexcon Building (at Main St) on the odd numbered side of the street.

#### Pleasant Street (Route 31)

Pleasant Street is classified as an urban minor arterial. It is a two lane roadway that runs in the north-south direction between Main Street and Meadow Rd. In the vicinity of this project, Pleasant St measures approximately 32' in width and is signal-controlled at Main Street. There is a bituminous sidewalk on the east side of Pleasant Street at the approach to the Main Street signal. Both roadway paving and sidewalks are in fair condition. During a weekday observation there were no vehicles parked along this roadway and parking is prohibited on either side of Pleasant St during the winter parking ban.

#### Mechanic Street

This local roadway connects to Main St from the south. Mechanic Street at the approaches to Chestnut Street is controlled by a flashing yellow beacon and is uncontrolled at other intersections within the project limits. Sidewalks are located on both sides of the roadway and parking is prohibited on both sides of Mechanic St during the winter parking ban.

North of Cherry Street, Mechanic Street is a one-way southbound, single lane roadway in a retail/commercial area. In this section of Mechanic Street, the paving and sidewalks are in fair to poor condition. Vehicles park on both sides of the roadway, often parking on the sidewalk curb due to the narrowness of the road.

South of Cherry Street, Mechanic Street is primarily residential where it is a two-way roadway with one lane in each direction. Paving and sidewalks in this area are in fair to poor condition. There were no parked vehicles observed along Mechanic Street south of Cherry St.

#### Maple Street (Route 31)

Maple Street is classified as an urban minor arterial. It is a two lane roadway that runs south of Main St. In the vicinity of this project, Maple St measures approximately 32' in width and is signal-controlled at Main Street. There is a bituminous sidewalk on the east side of Pleasant Street at the approach to the Main Street signal. There is also a painted pedestrian crossing at the northbound approach to Adams St / Chestnut St. Both roadway paving and sidewalks are in fair condition. There are no vehicles parked along this roadway and parking is prohibited on both sides of Maple St during the winter parking ban.

### Cherry Street

Cherry Street is a two lane roadway that serves as an east-west connection between Greenville St and Mechanic St. East of Maple Street, Cherry Street is a two directional roadway. Between Maple Street and Mechanic Street, Cherry Street is a one-way roadway westbound measuring approximately 30' in width. In the vicinity of this project, Cherry Street is stop controlled only at the westbound approach to Maple St, where there is a steep downgrade of approximately 13%. There are sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, mostly without curbing and sidewalks are in poor condition. There is a painted pedestrian crossing at the west leg of Cherry St at the intersection of Maple St. Roadway paving is generally in poor condition. There are a few vehicles parked on both sides of the roadway between Maple St and Mechanic St. During the winter parking ban, parking is only permitted on Cherry St between Mechanic St and Maple St on the even numbered side of the street on even numbered days of the month, and on the odd side of the street on odd numbered days of the month.

### Grove Street

This is a residential two-lane roadway that connects Main Street and Highland St in the north-south direction. At the southbound approach to Main Street, Grove Street is stop-controlled and there is a painted crosswalk at this southbound approach. A sidewalk is located on the west side of Grove Street and a few vehicles are parked on the east side of the road. Roadway paving and sidewalk on are generally in fair condition. Vehicles are prohibited from parking on the odd numbered side of the street during the winter parking ban.

### Linden Street

Linden Street is a two lane roadway that runs north-south between Main Street and Cherry Street. It is stop-controlled at both the Main Street and Cherry Street approaches. There is a bituminous sidewalk with curbing on the east side of Linden Street along which there are several vehicles parked. At the northbound approach to Main Street there is a painted pedestrian crosswalk. Both roadway paving and sidewalks are in fair condition. Parking is prohibited on the odd numbered side of the street during the winter parking ban.

### Ash Street

This is a two-lane residential roadway (one lane each direction) that generally runs north-south between Main Street and Cherry Street. It is stop-controlled at both the Main Street and Cherry Street approaches. A narrow bituminous sidewalk exists on the west side of the roadway along which there are a few vehicles parked. There is a 20 mph speed limit sign posted on the northbound side of Ash Street near Cherry Street. There is no parking allowed on the odd numbered side of the street during the winter parking ban.

Roadway and sidewalk inventory details as well as land use and parking restrictions have been discussed in detail for the study area. The 16 local roads and 3 arterial roads, which

comprise the study area, are centered on the intersection of Routes 9 and 31. The roads and sidewalks within this study area are generally in fair to poor condition.

*Parking*

BETA conducted an inventory of available parking for the area on and adjacent to Main St. Below is a summary of our findings.

On –Street Locations on Main St (Total of 30 unmarked parking spaces)

Street	Side of Street	Location	Approximate # of spaces
Main St	north	94’ in front of Kenwood Diner & 75’ west of High St	8
Main St	south	126’ from Citgo to Elm St, 98’ from Elm St to Wall St , 236’ from bus stop to Mechanic St	22

Off-Street Lots (Total of 497 marked parking spaces)

- Sovereign Bank Lot – 74 spaces
- Library Lot – 15 spaces
- Price Chopper Lot – 228 spaces
- Town Hall Lots – 32 spaces
- Spencer Bank Lot – 85 spaces
- Small lots between Main St, Elm St, Wall St & Mechanic St – 63 spaces

On Thursday May 28, 2009 BETA met with Town officials to determine the appropriate time period and study area for a limited 2-hour occupancy study of public parking spaces. The Town requested the study to include Main Street on-street parking between High St and Maple St, as well as the major lots used for municipal parking: Sovereign Bank Lot, the public library lot and the Price Chopper Parking Lot. At the Town’s request, BETA conducted the occupancy study on a Saturday from 10AM-12PM, when parking use was anticipated to be highest. The occupancy study was performed on Saturday, June 13, 2009 from 10 AM to 12 PM and the results are as follows:

- Main St On- Street Parking (between High St and Maple St) - 57 % occupancy
- Sovereign Bank Lot - 49 % occupancy
- Library Lot - 68 % occupancy
- Price Chopper Lot - 65 % occupancy

Based on BETA’s existing parking evaluation, there is sufficient parking to meet the current retail demands of the downtown; however, the available parking is consolidated within a couple blocks of the town center. The primary spaces used include Main Street

between High Street and Mechanic Street, Sovereign Bank Lots, Library Lot and Price Chopper Lot.

### *Traffic*

#### Signalized Intersections

The signalized intersections at Wall St / Pleasant St and Maple St are located approximately 650' apart on Main St but are not currently interconnected to operate as coordinated signals.

Main St / Wall St and Main St / Pleasant are signalized intersections located approximately 100' apart and are controlled as one fully actuated traffic signal system. This is a 4-phase signal consisting of the following phases: a leading eastbound Main St phase at Wall St; an eastbound-westbound Main St phase; a side street phase (including Wall St, Pleasant St and driveway approaches); an audible chirping pedestrian phase. Traffic controller and cabinet are outdated and in need of replacement. Also, there is currently no emergency pre-emption system.

Wall Street is a northbound, single lane approach restricted to left turns only at the T-intersection at Main Street. Main Street eastbound consists of one lane at the Wall Street approach and two lanes (left and thru/right) at the Pleasant Street approach. It should be noted that the eastbound approach to Pleasant Street is not controlled by the signal which can cause confusion for drivers. Main Street westbound consists of 2 lanes (left/thru and right) at Pleasant St and one lane at Wall Street. Pleasant Street and a private alley/driveway form a 4-way intersection at Main Street. Pleasant St southbound is a one-lane approach. The alley driveway across from Pleasant Street is a one lane northbound approach restricted to right turns only onto Main Street.

Main Street forms a 4-legged fully actuated signalized intersection with Maple Street (to the south) and Town Hall Municipal Driveway (to the north). This is a 3-phase signal including a Main Street eastbound-westbound phase, a Maple St and driveway northbound-southbound phase, and an exclusive pedestrian audible phase. Traffic controller and cabinet have recently been updated as part of the Maple Street Improvement Project; however, there is currently no emergency pre-emption system.

The eastbound Main Street approach consists of two lanes: a left/thru and right turn lane. The westbound Main Street approach also consists of two lanes: a right/thru and left turn lane. The northbound Maple St approach and southbound Municipal Driveway approach each consist of a single multi-use lane.

#### Traffic Observations

Based on discussions with the Town as well as findings from previous traffic studies, BETA focused traffic observations on Main Street between the Wall St / Pleasant St signal

and the Maple St signal, where the most traffic problems tended to occur within this study area.

#### AM Peak

Morning traffic was observed on Tuesday, June 16, 2009 between 7AM-9AM. The morning peak hour occurred between 7-8 AM, which is consistent with the AM peak periods determined in 2004 and 2005 studies. During this period, eastbound traffic on Main St experienced the longest queues with eastbound traffic at the Wall Street signal queuing as far as 20 cars back to the Citgo Station. Eastbound traffic at the Maple Street signal (approximately 650' east of Pleasant Street signal) experienced queues up to 17 vehicles long. Estimating a 20' length per vehicle, this observation is pretty consistent with eastbound queues documented in 2005 as 411' at the Wall Street signal and 403' at the Maple Street signal. Westbound queues reached 10 vehicles (approx. 200') at the Pleasant St signal and 8 (approx. 160') vehicles westbound at the Maple St signal, which is also consistent with queue data reported in 2005. Queues on Pleasant Street southbound ranged from 4 to 8 vehicles (80' to 160') and queues at Maple Street northbound reached 8 vehicle lengths (about 160'). Other approaches had light traffic and negligible queues.

It should be noted that all queues during the AM peak quickly dissipated within one signal cycle and did not block downstream traffic at the adjacent signal. Overall, during the AM peak hour, there are minimal delays and queuing in this corridor. The 2005 Study reports an overall Level Of Service (LOS) B at both signals which seem consistent with our observations.

#### PM Peak

Evening traffic was observed on May 28, 2009 from 4-6 PM. The peak PM period in this area occurred between 4-5 PM which is consistent with the afternoon peak periods determined in 2004 and 2005 studies.

During this period, westbound traffic on Main St experienced the longest queues with westbound traffic at the Wall Street /Pleasant St signal queuing as far back as to the Maple Street signal (approximately 650' east of Pleasant St). These observations are fairly consistent with 2005 existing conditions which reported maximum queue lengths of 562' and LOS D at this westbound approach. Maple Street westbound experienced long queues as well, particularly between 4-4:30 PM when maximum queues for short periods of time extended beyond Ash St, approximately 1,000' east of Maple St. This westbound queue at Maple St is significantly longer than those reported back in 2005 (316'). The increase in westbound delays and queues may possibly be attributed to more traffic using Route 56 to the east to avoid Maple Street (Route 31) while Maple Street is currently under construction.

Eastbound traffic experiences queues up to 200' long at both the Maple Street signal and the Wall Street signal. Queues on Pleasant Street southbound extended to 160' and

queues at Maple Street northbound reached 12 vehicle lengths (about 240'). Other approaches had light traffic and negligible queues.

Most queues during the PM peak dissipated within one signal cycle; however, for about 20 minutes, westbound traffic at the Wall Street signal blocked downstream traffic from moving at the Maple St signal. The progression of traffic between these two signals could be improved significantly by coordinating the signal phases, especially during the PM peak when traffic is heavier. The 2005 Study reports an overall LOS C at both signals during the PM which seems consistent with our observations.

#### Accident Data

Based on accident data gathered from 2000 to 2004 as part of the *Route 31 FDR*, there were three locations within this study area found to be safety problems based on high incidents of accidents or severity of accidents. The crash rate is reported in number of accidents per million entering vehicles (A/MEV). Accident rates higher than the Statewide or District 3 average are considered to be safety concerns.

Intersection	Total # of accidents (2000-2004)	Fatalities?	Computed Crash Rate	Statewide / District Crash Rate	Control
Main St / Wall St / Pleasant St	7	Yes 1 reported in 2003	0.33	0.87 / 0.83	signalized
Maple St / Cherry St	14	No	0.80	0.66 / 0.80	unsignalized
Maple St / Adams St / Chestnut St	6	No	0.67	0.66 / 0.80	unsignalized

It should be noted that there are geometry and roadway alignment improvements currently under construction at the intersections of Maple St / Cherry St and Maple St / Adams St / Chestnut St as part of the Maple Street Roadway improvement project. These are both wide intersections with awkward geometries that can cause confusion for drivers. The improvements under construction will tighten the intersections and improve safety.

BETA focused on traffic observations at and between two closely spaced signalized intersections on Main Street. The signalized intersection of Maple and Main Streets and Wall, Pleasant and Main Streets are the locations where the most traffic congestion tended to occur within the study area.

There are queuing issues on Main Street between these intersections during the AM Peak (7-8 AM) in the eastbound direction and during the PM Peak (4-5 PM) in the westbound direction. Queues during the AM peak quickly dissipated within one signal cycle and did not block downstream traffic at the adjacent signal. Likewise, most queues during the PM peak dissipated within one signal cycle; however, for about 20 minutes, westbound traffic at the Wall Street signal blocked downstream traffic from moving at the Maple St signal. The progression of traffic between these two signals is problematic because the signal phasings and timings are not coordinated.

Based on accident data gathered from 2000 to 2004 as part of the Route 31 FDR, there were three locations within this study area found to be safety problems based on high incidents of accidents or severity of accidents. Those locations included the intersection of Maple and Cherry Streets; the intersection of Maple, Adams and Chestnut Streets; and the intersection of Main, Wall, and Pleasant Streets.

## **Demographic and Economic Overview**

This section of the report assesses key population, business and employment characteristics and trends affecting economic development potential in the Town of Spencer. Data are presented for the Town and Worcester County, the broader economic region stretching from the northern to the southern border of Massachusetts. Most potential investors in real estate and new business development look to trends within the larger region as significant drivers of development potential in local communities. The Worcester urban area is the second largest in the state after the Boston metro area. Also included at the end of this section is a Retail Gap Analysis which shows specific store types that might find Spencer Town Center an attractive location.

### Population and Jobs

The Town of Spencer is located about 20 minutes west of Worcester City on Route 9. Spencer is largely residential and is bedroom community in the greater Worcester area. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the Spencer workforce commutes to the City of Worcester.<sup>1</sup> The Town comprises about 34 square miles and features the intersection of Routes 9 and 31 at the approximate center of Town.

Worcester County has a population of 790,000 persons (2008 estimate).<sup>2</sup> As shown in Table A, the county has had strong population growth since 1990 somewhat higher than the state average. The county has grown by 5.24% since year 2000, and is estimated to grow another 2.74% over the next five years.<sup>3</sup> Both percentages are higher than the statewide average of 1.42% and 0.45%, respectively, for the State of Massachusetts.<sup>4</sup> As indicated in Figure A, regional population growth has trended about the same the statewide population, but increased at a faster rate beginning in 1992.

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<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, Economic Analysis Department, July 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Claritas Site Reports, Worcester County, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

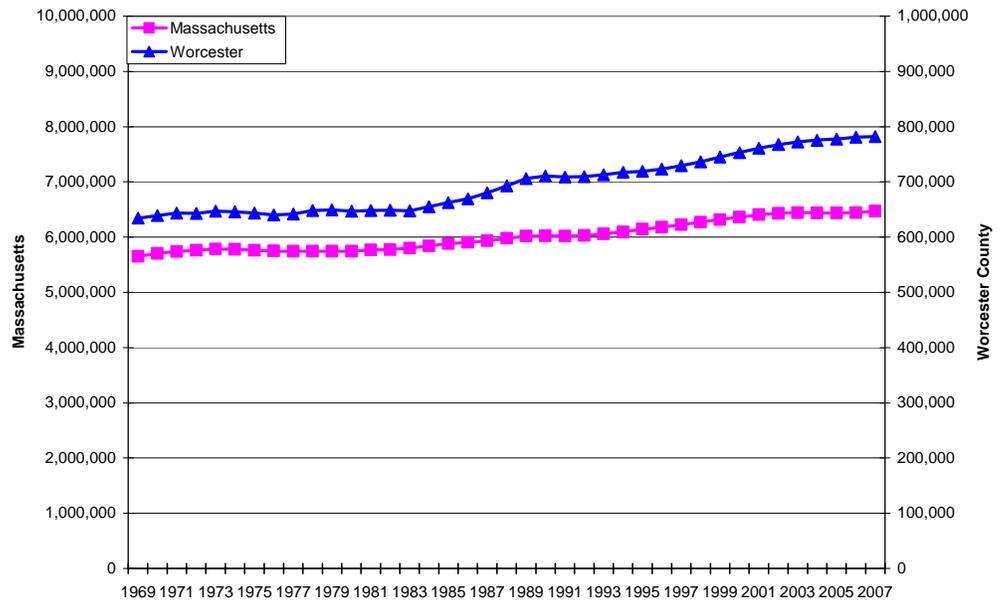
<sup>4</sup> Claritas Site Reports, Massachusetts, 2008.

**Table A. Population Growth Summary**

Population	Spencer Town	Worcester County	Massachusetts
1990 Census	11,618	709,728	6,016,425
2000 Census	11,664	750,963	6,349,097
2008 Estimate	12,119	790,276	6,439,192
2013 Projection	12,379	811,968	6,468,130
Growth 1990-2000	0.40%	5.81%	5.53%
Growth 2000-2008	3.90%	5.24%	1.42%
Growth 2008-2013	2.15%	2.74%	0.45%

Source: Claritas SiteReports, 2008.

**Figure A. Worcester County and Massachusetts Population, 1969-2007**

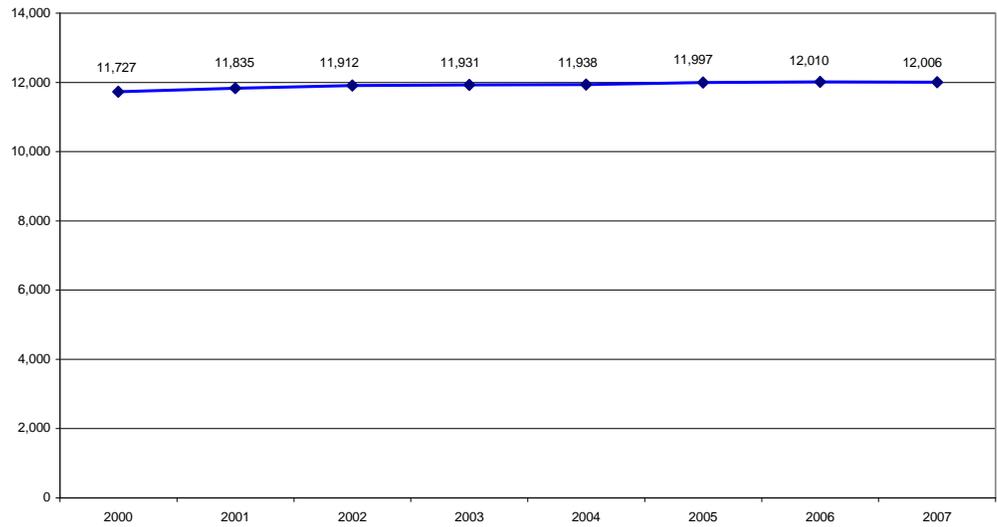


Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30 and FXM Associates

The Town of Spencer has a population of 12,100 persons (2008), or about 1.5% of the county total. The town grew by 0.40% from 1990 to 2000, and by 3.90% from 2000 to 2008. It is expected to grow by 2.15% by 2013 to 12,400 persons.<sup>5</sup> Figure B shows that recent population growth in Spencer has been relatively flat since 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Claritas Site Reports, Town of Spencer, 2008.

Figure B. Spencer Town Population, 2000-2007

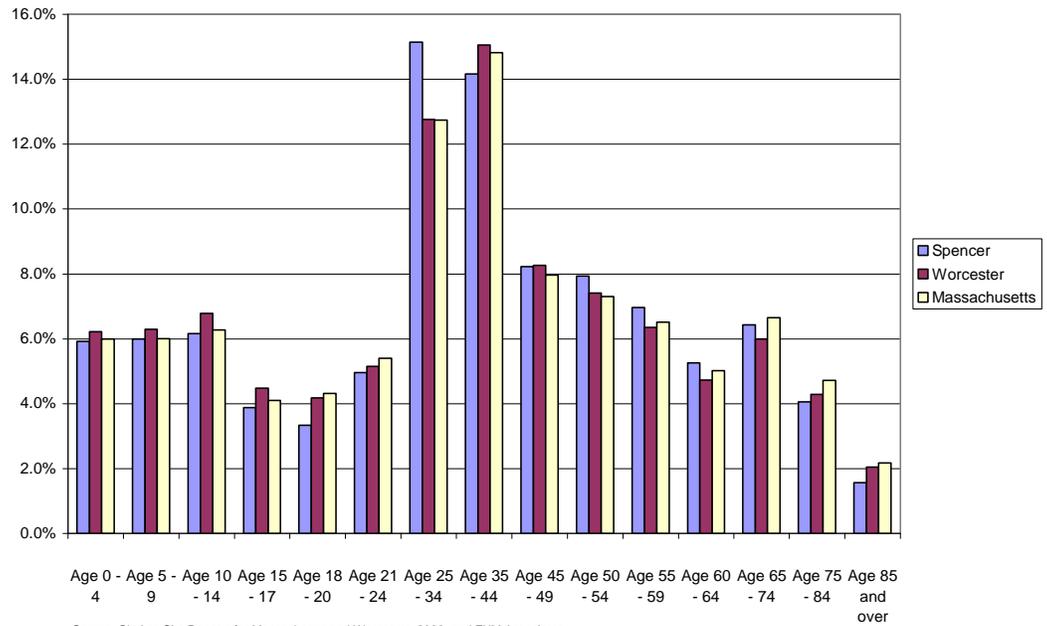


Source: US Census Bureau, Population Division, Population Estimates 2000-2007.

A key demographic that is relevant to future economic development in Spencer is the distribution of population by age group. Figure C shows the percent of Spencer and Worcester County population by five-year age increment in relation to the age distribution for the entire state. This graph illustrates that the county's age distribution is nearly the same as the statewide age distribution. The Worcester County median age is 37.8 years, slightly younger than the Massachusetts median of 38.5 years<sup>6</sup>. The median age for the Town of Spencer is 38.3 years.

<sup>6</sup> Claritas Site Reports, Massachusetts, Worcester County and Spencer, 2008

**Figure C. Worcester County and Massachusetts Population by Age Group, 2008**



Other relevant demographic observations include:

- Spencer has a greater percentage of its population in the 25-34 age group than Worcester County as a whole (15.1% vs. 12.8%)
- Both Worcester County (\$29,002) and Spencer (\$26,420) have lower per capita incomes than the statewide average (\$32,102). The Spencer per capita income is 82% of the state average.
- A similar pattern is shown by total household incomes. Worcester County has a median household income of \$59,822 compared to \$57,387 for the Town and \$62,043 for the state.
- Residents of Worcester County and Spencer are less well educated than the rest of the state with 27% and 25%, respectively, having college degrees compared to the statewide average of 33%.
- Residents of Spencer have a slightly longer commute to work at 30.2 minutes than the average for Worcester County (28.3 minutes). This reflects the high percentage (29%) of Spencer workers commuting to the City of Worcester.

Table C summarizes employment for Worcester County, Spencer and the Spencer Town Center area. Worcester County has 415,900 employees, 4,200 (1%) of which are located in Spencer. Total sales in Worcester County are estimated at \$46.4 billion in 2008 with \$0.5 billion occurring in Spencer.<sup>7</sup> The average sales per employee were \$111,158 in Worcester County and \$108,517 in Spencer in 2008, compared to the statewide average of \$109,036 sales per employee. Although the average sales per employee in the Town Center is the same as the average for the Town for all industries, the sales per Manufacturing employee is nearly double that of the Town as a whole, but the Retail sales per employee in the Town Center is only two-thirds that of the Town average.

**Table C. Summary of Employment by Category, 2008**

**Spencer Town Center**

SIC Code	Business Description	Total Establishment	Total Employees	Sales (in Millions)	Sales Per Employee
TOTL	All Industries	141	587	63.7	\$108,518
MANU	All Manufacturing (SIC 20-39)	8	38	5.3	\$139,474
RETL	All Retailing (SIC 52-59)	37	183	18.3	\$100,000
SERV	All Services (SIC 70-89)	59	205	18.6	\$90,732
GOV	Public Administration (SIC 90-97)	10	32	0	\$0

**Spencer Total**

SIC Code	Business Description	Total Establishment	Total Employees	Sales (in Millions)	Sales Per Employee
TOTL	All Industries	433	4,227	458.7	\$108,517
MANU	All Manufacturing (SIC 20-39)	19	1,217	93.8	\$77,075
RETL	All Retailing (SIC 52-59)	84	1,072	158.7	\$148,041
SERV	All Services (SIC 70-89)	158	986	83.5	\$84,686
GOV	Public Administration (SIC 90-97)	19	141	0	\$0

**Worcester County**

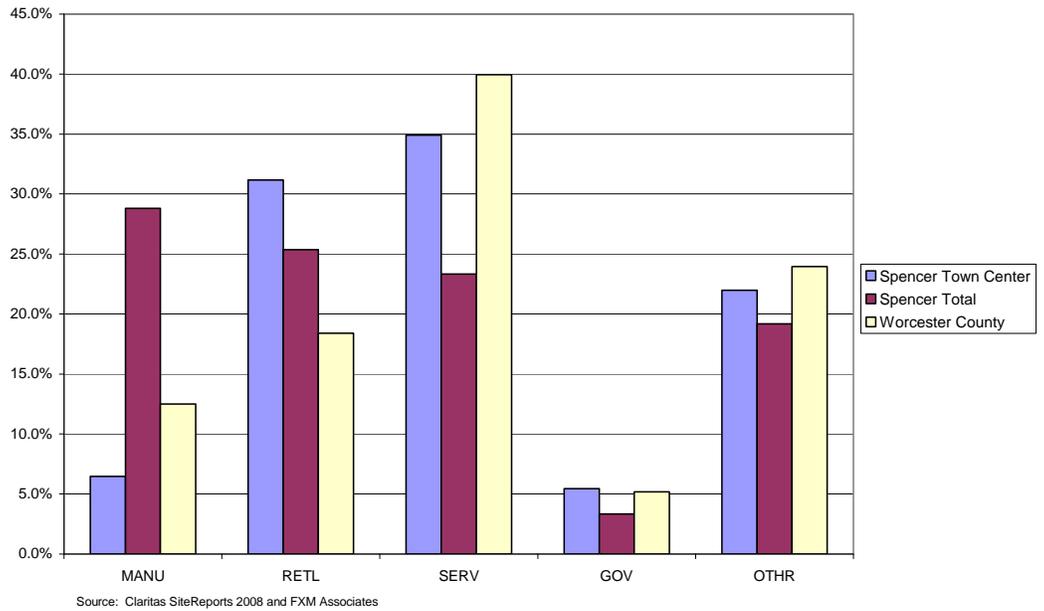
SIC Code	Business Description	Total Establishment	Total Employees	Sales (in Millions)	Sales per Employee
TOTL	All Industries	32,744	415,845	46,224.4	\$111,158
MANU	All Manufacturing (SIC 20-39)	1,775	52,008	4,075.6	\$78,365
RETL	All Retailing (SIC 52-59)	6,483	76,512	9,715.5	\$126,980
SERV	All Services (SIC 70-89)	13,221	166,149	15,671.4	\$94,321
GOV	Public Administration (SIC 90-97)	1,458	21,577	0	\$0

Source: Claritas SiteReports, 2008.

Figure D presents a breakdown of employment by major category for Worcester County, Spencer and the Spencer Town Center. Manufacturing accounts for 29% of Spencer's total employment, more than double the proportion for the county as a whole. The Spencer Town Center has a higher percentage of retail and service employment than the rest of the Town; this is typical of business districts.

<sup>7</sup> Claritas Business Facts for Massachusetts, Worcester County and Spencer, 2008.

**Figure D. Employment by Category, 2008**



Trends

In addition to demographic and business characteristics for 2008 from the proprietary Claritas Site Reports service, FXM Associates also compiled extensive population, income and employment data from public sources:

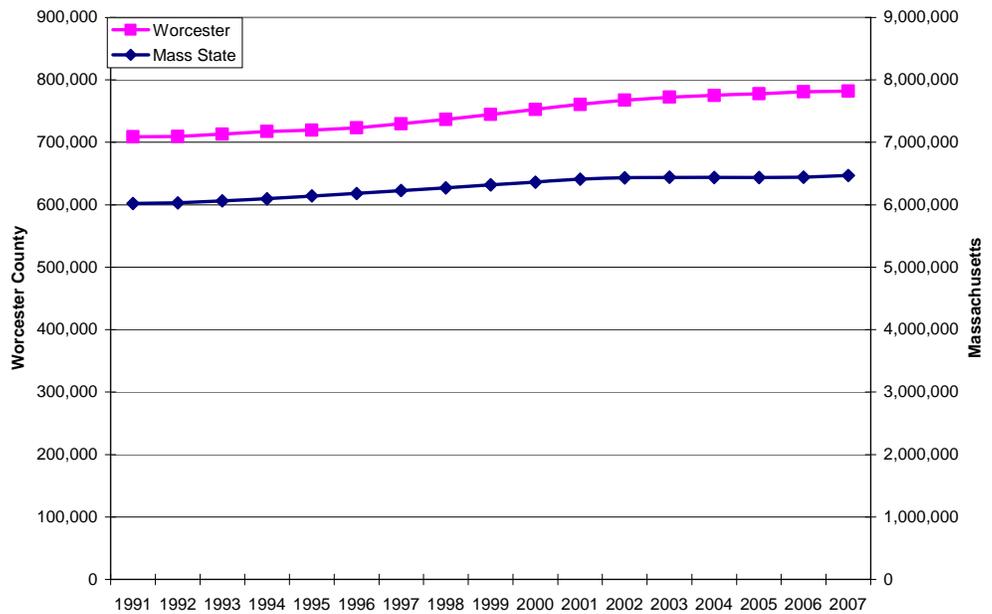
- US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, 2009. Tables CA 04, county income and employment summary; CA 25N, full and part-time employment by NAICS industry code; CA 25, full and part-time employment by SIC industry code; and CA 30, regional economic profile.
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, 2009. ES-202, Employment and wages data; CES-790, Current Employment Statistics.
- US Census Bureau, Division of Population Estimates, 2000-2007 estimates for cities and towns. On the Web at [www.census.gov/popest/cities/SUB-EST2007-states.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/SUB-EST2007-states.html).

These sources provided continuous data on changes in population and employment characteristics at the county level from 1969 to 2000 by SIC industry group code, and from 2001-2007 by NAICS industry group code. SIC stands for Standard Industry Classification and was the employment classification system used by the states and federal government to track employment data by industry. In 2001, the federal government adopted the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) that established a common industry classification system for the US, Mexico and Canada. FXM conducted extensive analysis of SIC and NAICS data for Massachusetts and Worcester County to establish a consistent dataset for 1991 to 2007 based on NAICS industry classifications for analyzing trends in state and county employment.

### Population Related Trends

Figure E compares Massachusetts and Worcester County annual population trends from 1991-2007. This chart shows even more clearly than Figure A the more rapid growth of Worcester population from 1996 to 2002, and the slower rate of growth since then. Please note that the 2007 population for Massachusetts and Worcester County do not match exactly the values in Table A because they are from different sources. Claritas Site Reports, used in the earlier table, is a proprietary database which provided annual detailed demographic and employment estimates and is reconciled with government estimates only for Census years. For all other years, Claritas conducts independent research and uses proprietary formulas to derive their estimates. The data in Figure E and subsequent figures and tables are from published government sources and are intended to show short and long-term trends in major characteristics; they do not attempt to match the Claritas level of detail between Censuses.

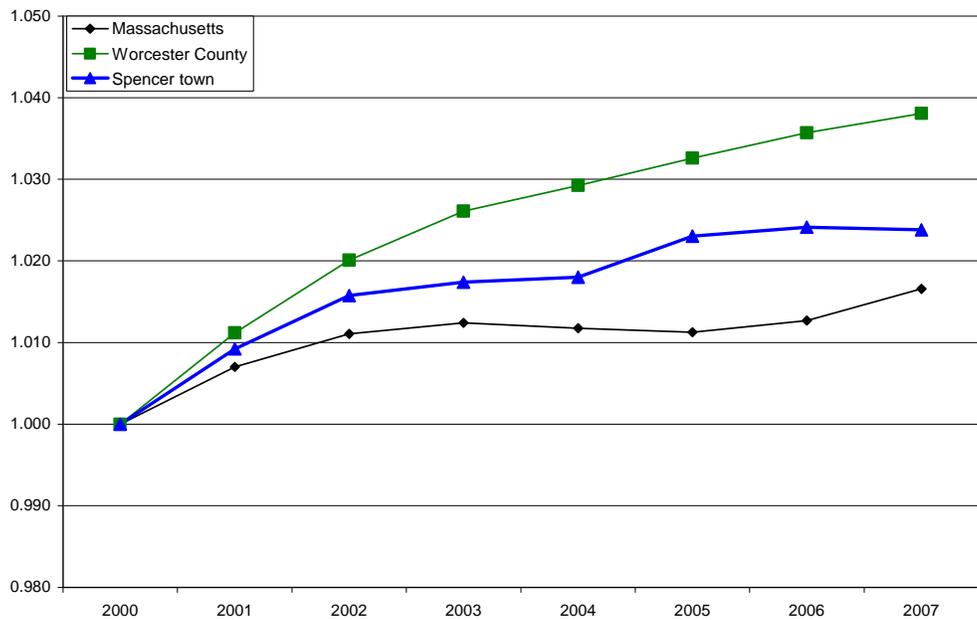
**Figure E. Massachusetts and Worcester County Population**



Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30 and FXM Associates

One method commonly used to portray growth trends between two or more datasets is to create an index chart using a common base year and ratioing annual values to that base year. For Spencer, Worcester County and Massachusetts, 2000 was selected as a common base year. Growth relative to 2000 is shown in Figure F; this graph clearly shows that both Worcester County and Spencer have grown more rapidly than statewide population.

**Figure F. Population Trends for Spencer, Worcester County and Massachusetts, 2000-2007**

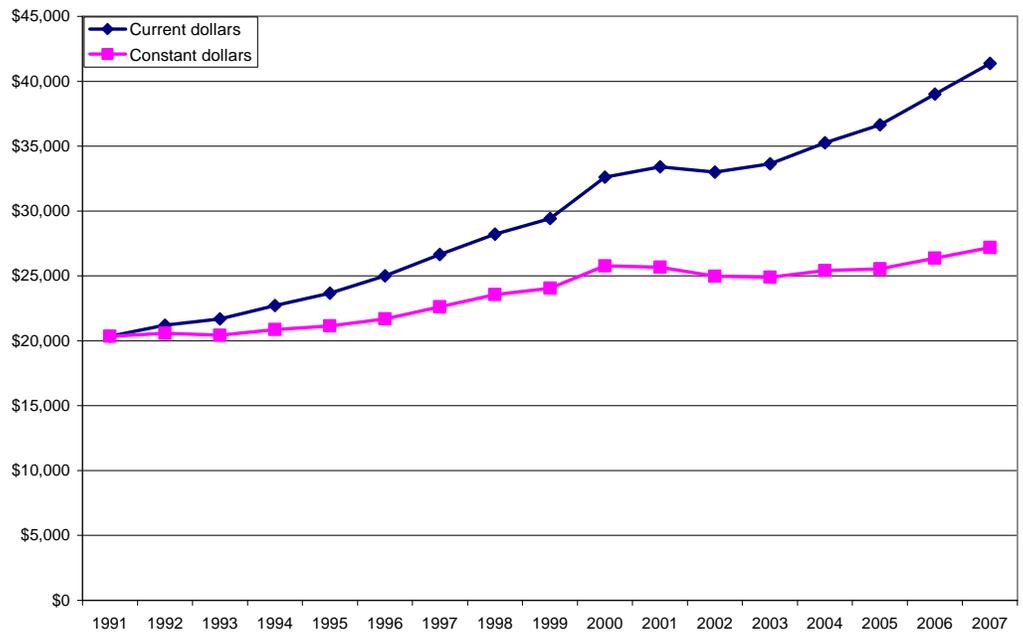


Source: US Census Bureau, Population Division, Table SUB-EST2007; and FXM Associates.

A similar method is used to portray personal income data. That is to again use a common base year and illustrate income growth (total, by household or per capita) in current dollars (i.e., the year in which the dollars were earned) and in constant dollars (showing changes in relative purchasing power). Figure G shows the trend in per capita income for Worcester County. Income per capita has more than doubled in current dollars since 1991, but increased only one-third (33.5%) in constant \$1991 dollars. Current dollars are the value of income in the year it is recorded (i.e. \$1999 dollars are those earned in \$1999), while constant dollars represented the change in purchasing power relative to the 1991 base year. As an example, an income of \$30,000 in 1999 only buys as much as \$25,000 would have in 1991. Personal income data was not available for the town of Spencer.

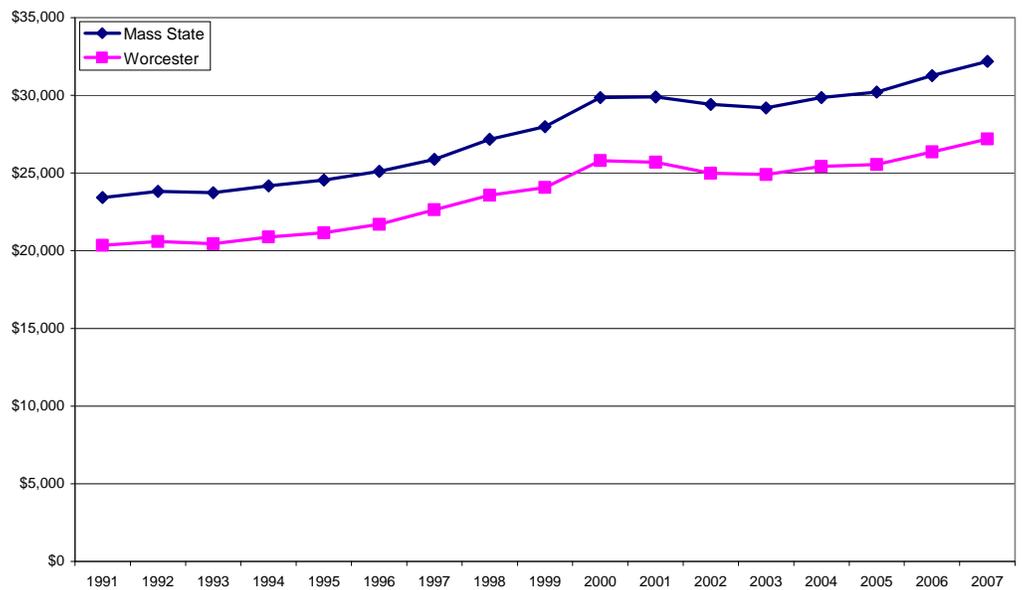
Figure H illustrates the 1991 to 2007 trends for Massachusetts and Worcester County personal income per capita in constant 1991 dollars. Worcester County per capita income trend parallels that of Massachusetts but is about 14 to 18 percent lower.

**Figure G. Worcester County Personal Income Per Capita**



Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30 and FXM Associates

**Figure H. Mass State and Worcester County Personal Income per Capita  
Constant 1991 Dollars**

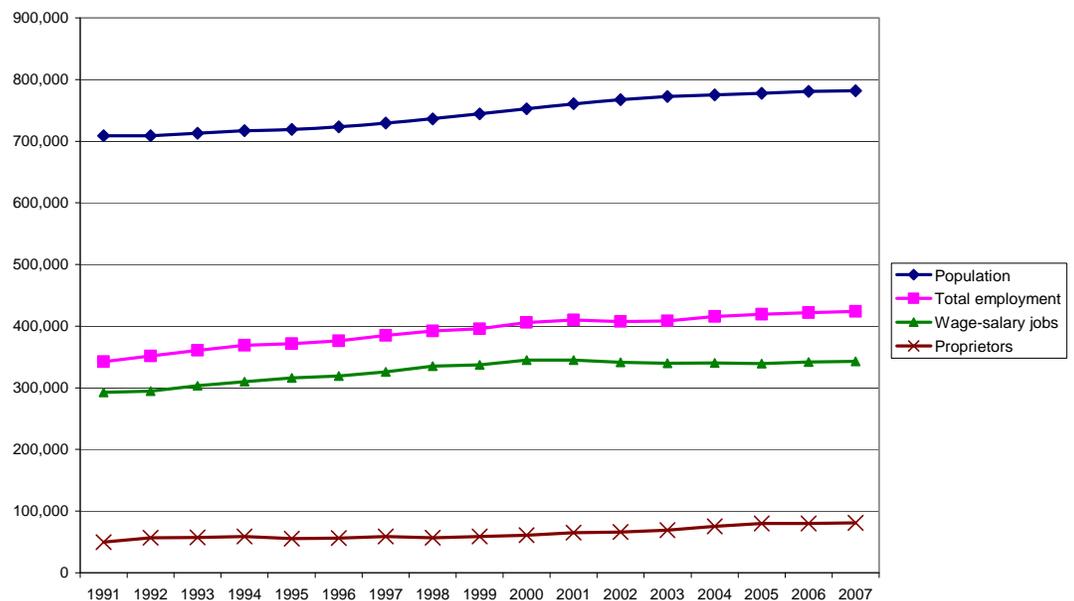


Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30 and FXM Associates

### Employment Related Trends

Figure I portrays long term trends in total population and employment by wage and salary jobs and proprietors' employment for Worcester County. Employment growth has been similar to population growth for the 1991-2007 period, but leveled off earlier in 2001 and has recently been increasing at 0.5% per year. Wage and salary employment peaked at around 345,000 jobs in 2001 and has declined by 0.5% since then. However, the number of proprietors in the county has grown by 25% indicating that one and two person firms have been a major source of new jobs in recent years.

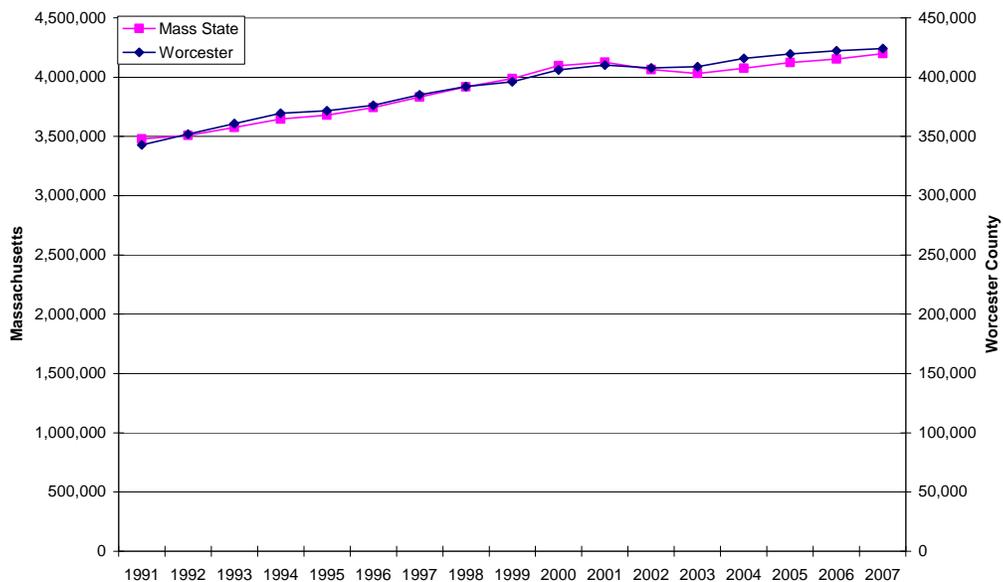
**Figure I. Worcester County Population and Employment, 1991-2007**



Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30 and FXM Associates

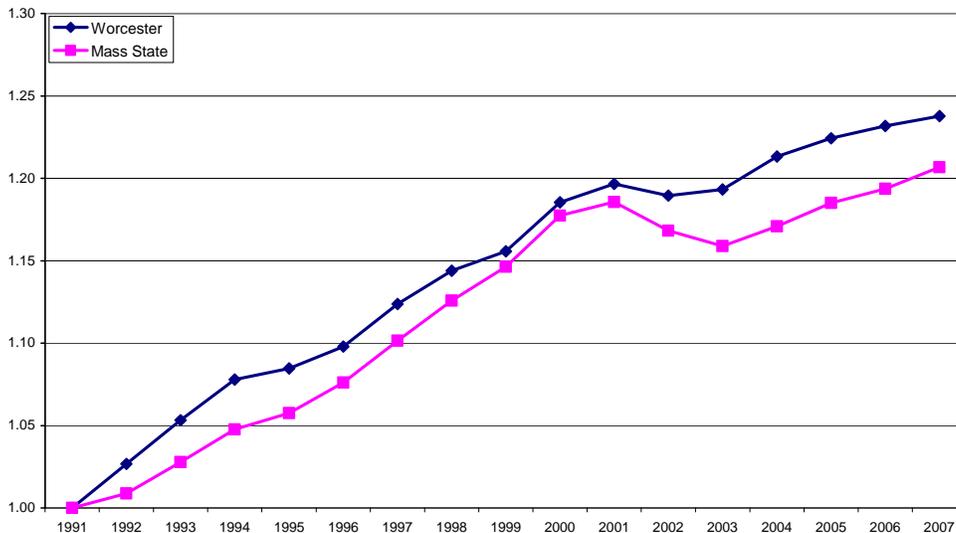
Figure J plots total employment for Worcester County and the state of Massachusetts for the period between 1991 and 2007. Worcester County and Massachusetts statewide employment have been in virtual lock-step since 1991. This is reinforced by Figure K which shows relative indexed-employment growth for the state and county for 1991 to 2007. Employment in the Town of Spencer is shown in Figure L for wage-and-salary employment that is covered by state unemployment insurance. Although this graph does not account for all employment in Spencer, it does provide a good indication of recent trends.

**Figure J. Worcester County and Massachusetts Employment Trends, 1991-2007**



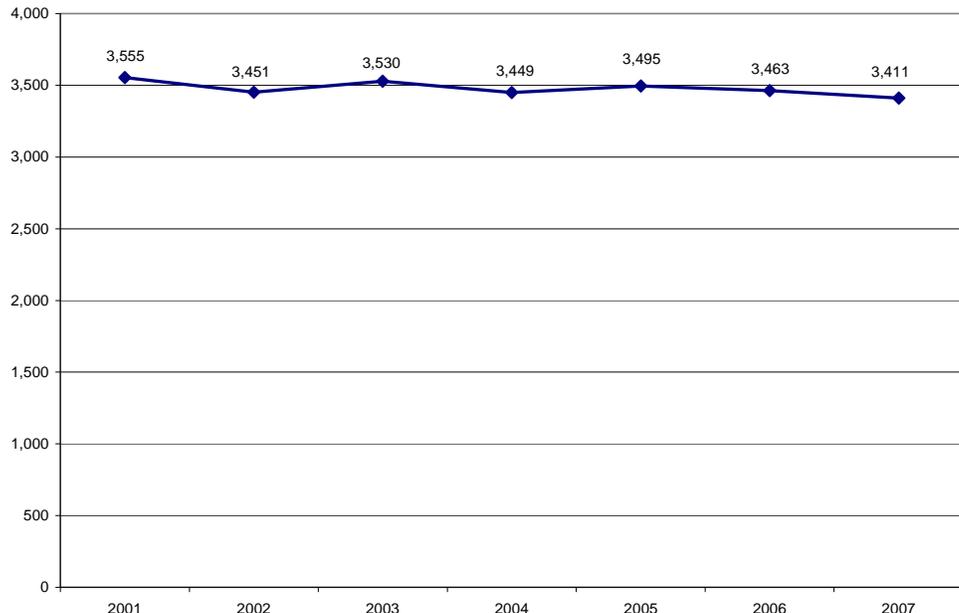
Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30 and FXM Associates

**Figure K. Massachusetts and Worcester Employment Growth Index  
1991 = 1.00**



Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30 and FXM Associates

Figure L. Spencer Employment, 2001-2007

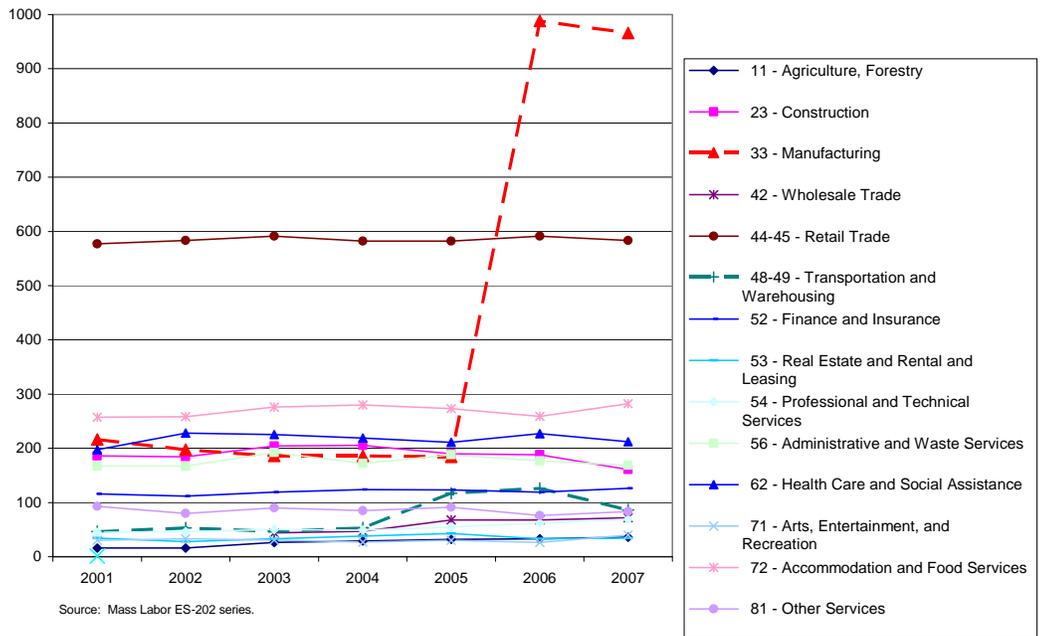


Source: Massachusetts Department of Labor and Work Force Development, ES-202 series.

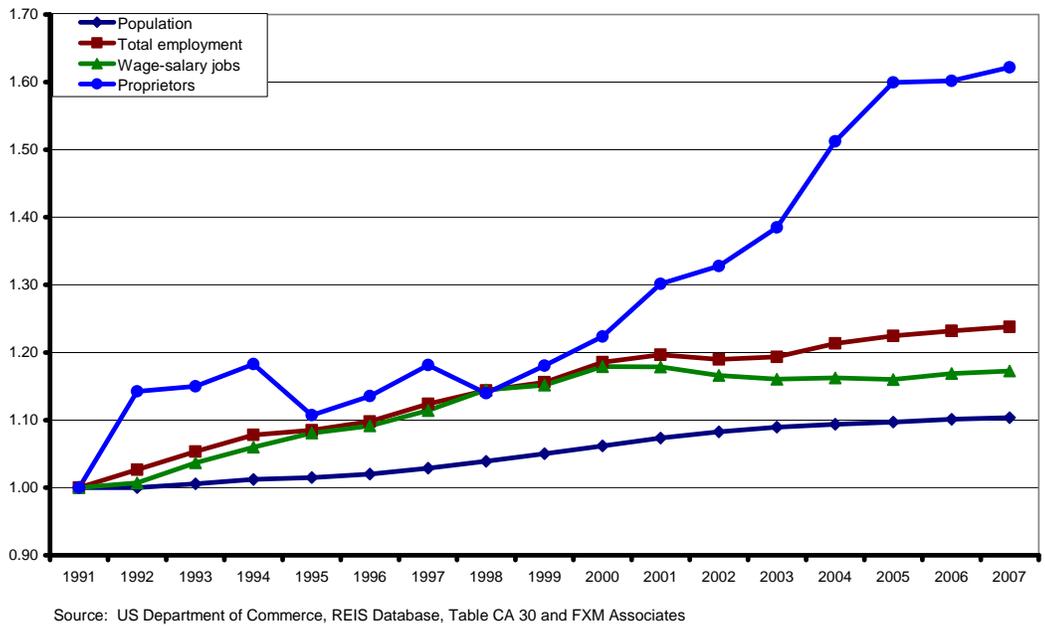
Employment by NAICS category in Spencer for the 2001-2007 period is shown in Figure M. Although this graph is cluttered, the principal points are that most employment categories were stable from 2001-2007 except for the two shown in heavy dashed lines: Manufacturing (orange line) and Transportation and Warehousing (green line). Manufacturing jumped from 184 employees to 988 employees in 2005, and an increase of this magnitude looks somewhat suspicious and may represent an anomaly in data report by the state. To a lesser extent, employment in Transportation and Warehousing more than doubled in 2004 from 53 to 123 employees.

Figure N shows growth indices for population, total employment, wage and salary employment and proprietors' employment from 1991 to 2007. What is somewhat surprising on this graph is the magnitude of proprietors' job growth compared to other categories, particularly in the 2000-2005 period. However, the percentage of proprietors relative to total employment for Worcester County is and has been almost exactly the same as in the rest of Massachusetts. Proprietors have grown to 19.1% of total employment in Worcester compared to 18.3% in the rest of the state. No information on the number of proprietors in Spencer was available.

**Figure M. Spencer Employment Trends by Category, 2001-2007**

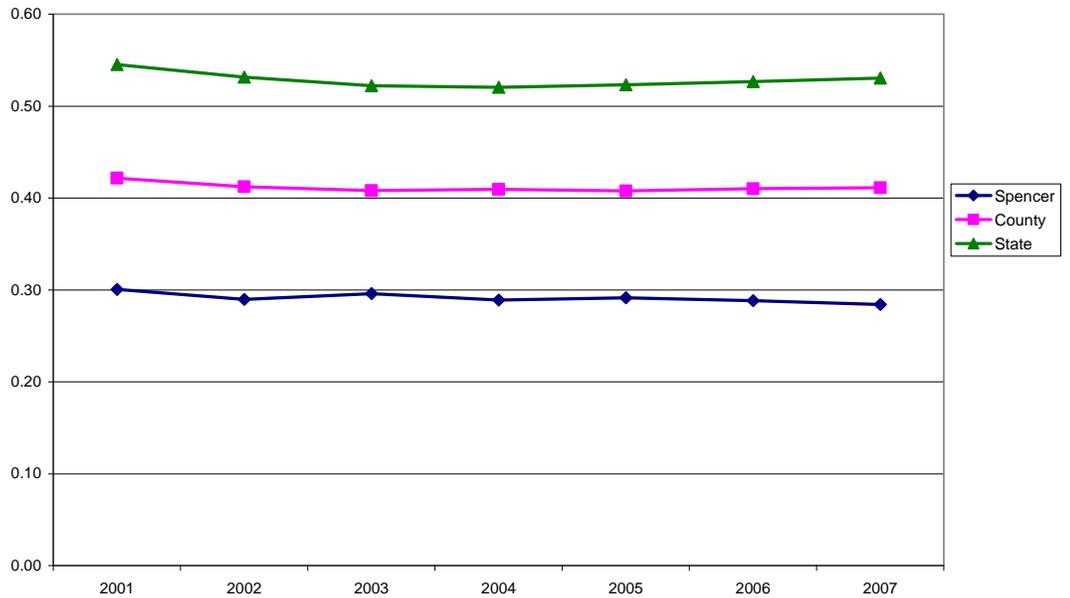


**Figure N. Worcester County Population and Employment Index Trends  
1991 = 1.00**



Another interesting trend in Worcester County is the number of jobs per capita in Spencer and the county compared to statewide average. Figure O shows that the trends were nearly parallel through 2007 but the Worcester County percentage is about 10 points less than the statewide average. Also, the Spencer trend is more than 20 points below the state averages. The source of these disparities is a concern because it is not readily apparent from the distributions of population by age for the county and the town which approximate that of the state as a whole. Most likely the difference reflects labor force participation rates – meaning fewer of the adult population in Spencer and Worcester County are seeking full and part time employment compared to the average statewide.

**Figure O. Employment Per Capita, 2001-2007**



Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 30(Wage and Salary Employment); Mass Labor, ES-202 series and FXM Associates

As mentioned above, FXM used two basic data sources for employment: The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Regional Economic Information System (REIS); and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (Mass Labor), ES 202 Reports. Figure M shows a comparison of employment estimates from these two sources of employment by category. The principal difference between the two datasets is that Mass Labor includes only those workers covered by state unemployment insurance while REIS includes all full-time and part-time employees and proprietors regardless of whether they are eligible for unemployment compensation or not. The principal differences are found in those jobs which have a considerable amount of part-time seasonal employment (Construction and Retail Trade) or self-employed people (Finance and Insurance, Real Estate, and Professional and Technical Services).

Year 2007 employment by NAICS category are shown in Table E and Figure P for Worcester County and the town of Spencer. The most significant difference between the two employment profiles is that the town of Spencer has a much higher percentage of jobs in Manufacturing (28%) and Retail Trade(17%) than the county (13%and 12%, respectively). The county has greater percentages of its employment in Health Care and Social Services (16% versus 6% in the town) and Government (15% vs. 5%).<sup>8</sup>

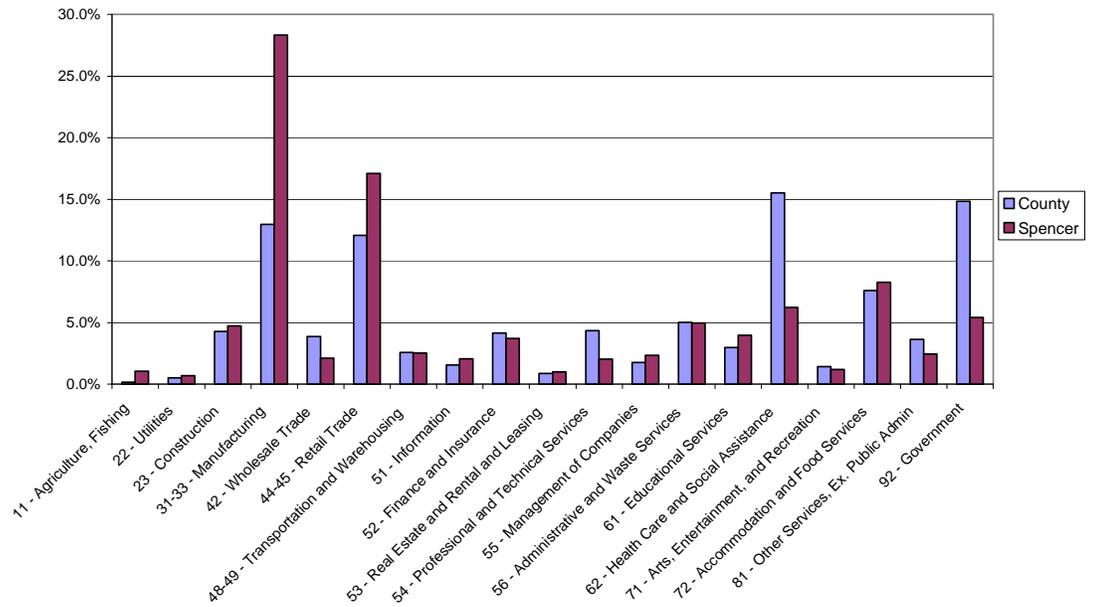
**Table E. Worcester County and Spencer Town Employment by NAICS Category, 2007**

NAICS Category	Total County	%	Spencer	%
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	538	0.2%	36	1.1%
22 - Utilities	1,624	0.5%	23	0.7%
23 - Construction	13,706	4.3%	161	4.7%
31-33 - Manufacturing	41,651	13.0%	966	28.3%
42 - Wholesale Trade	12,391	3.9%	72	2.1%
44-45 - Retail Trade	38,769	12.1%	583	17.1%
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	8,254	2.6%	86	2.5%
51 - Information	4,956	1.5%	70	2.1%
52 - Finance and Insurance	13,299	4.1%	126	3.7%
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,791	0.9%	34	1.0%
54 - Professional and Technical Services	13,868	4.3%	69	2.0%
55 - Management of Companies and Enterprises	5,656	1.8%	80	2.3%
56 - Administrative and Waste Services	16,088	5.0%	169	5.0%
61 - Educational Services	9,529	3.0%	135	4.0%
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	49,840	15.5%	212	6.2%
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4,550	1.4%	40	1.2%
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	24,364	7.6%	282	8.3%
81 - Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	11,615	3.6%	83	2.4%
92 - Government	47,610	14.8%	184	5.4%
<b>Total ES 202 Employment</b>	<b>321,099</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,411</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, ES-202 Reports.

<sup>8</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, ES-202 Reports, 2007.

**Figure P. Worcester County and Spencer Employment by NAICS Category, 2007**



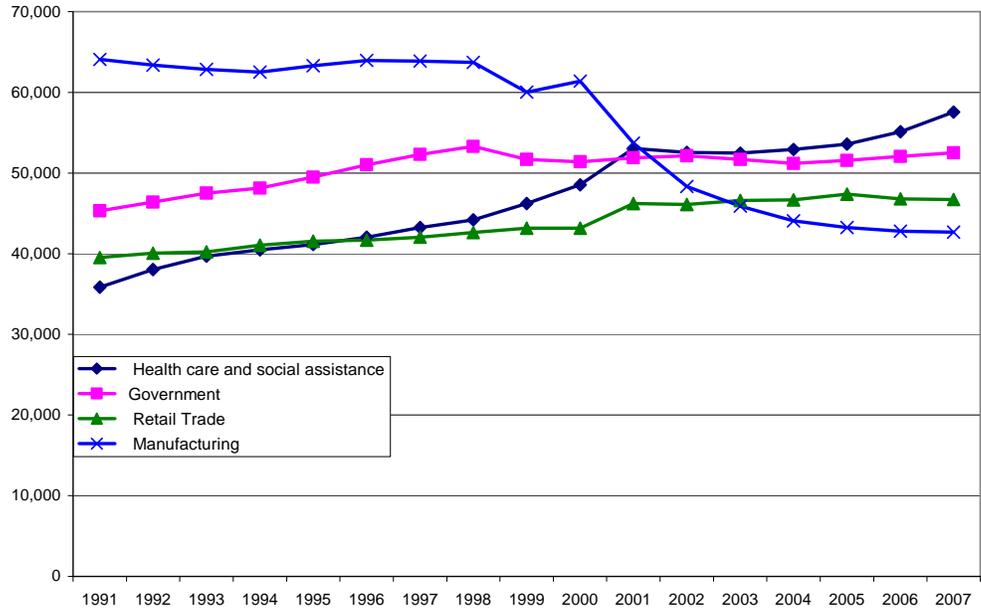
Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development ES-202, and FXM Associates

The major employment sectors in Worcester County are: health care, government (federal, state and local), retail trade, and manufacturing. These four categories account for about one-half (47%) of all employment in the county.<sup>9</sup> In Spencer, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Health Care, and Accommodation and Food Services total nearly 60 percent of the town’s employment.

Figure Q illustrates the trends in major sectors of employment in Worcester County for 1991-2007. Health care jobs increased steadily through 2000, fell off slightly between 2000 and 2003, and have continued to increase at about 4% per year through 2007. Government employment peaked at 53,300 jobs in 1998, and has leveled off at about 52,000 jobs. Retail trade has been steady at 46,000 to 47,000 jobs since 2001. (Uptick in retail jobs in 2000-2001 is probably due to the changing definition of “Retail Trade” between SIC and NAICS categories.) Manufacturing employment in the county has been declining since 1991 with an accelerated drop off from 2000 to 2005; it appears to be leveling off at 42,700 jobs in 2007.

<sup>9</sup> US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 25N, and FXM Associates.

**Figure Q. Worcester County Employment, Major Sectors**



Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 25 and FXM Associates

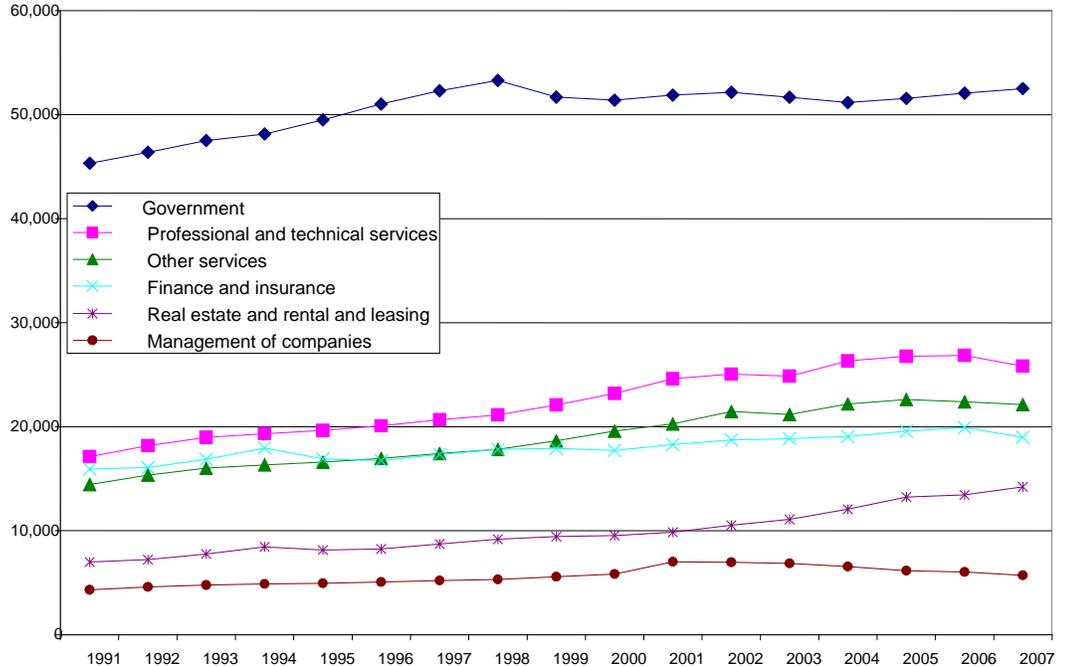
One factor in Worcester County’s economic development is office-using employment. Figure R shows Worcester County total and office-using employment for 1991-2007. Office-using employment includes the categories of government, services, professional and technical services, finance and insurance, real estate, and management of companies. Recent trends for each of these six categories are shown in Figure S. Except for real estate, each of these categories have remained relatively stable throughout the 2000-2007 period.

**Figure R. Worcester County Office-Using and Total Employment, 1991-2007**



Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 25 and FXM Associates

**Figure S. Worcester County Office-using Employment, 1991-2007**



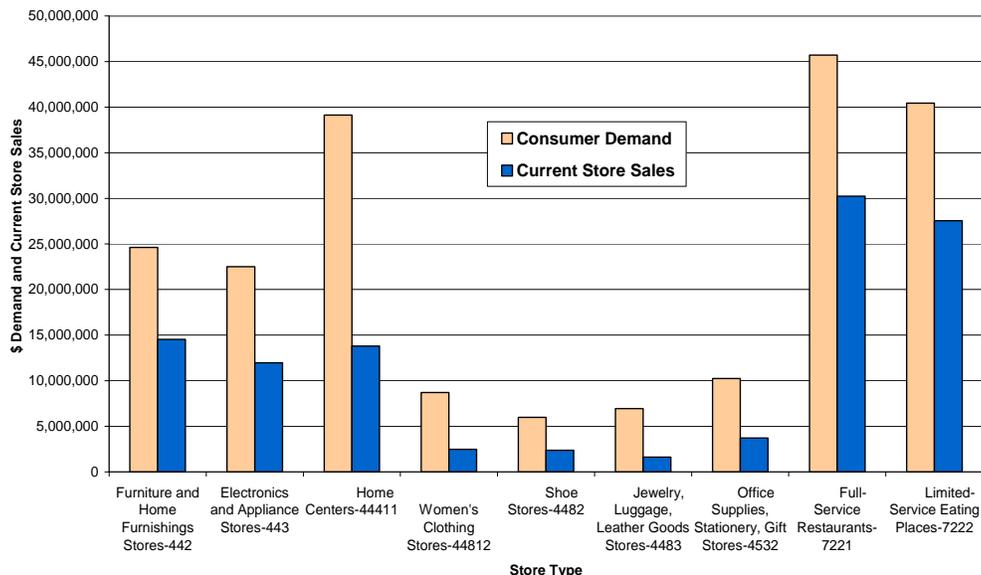
Source: US Department of Commerce, REIS Database, Table CA 25 and FXM Associates

### Retail Gap Analysis

Part of the analysis of potential development opportunities in the Spencer Town Center area involved assessing the current demand for retail goods compared to the actual store sales in the Town Center project area. This is called a Retail Gap Analysis, and the opportunities for possible additional retail uses in the Town Center will be driven in part by this analysis which is a standard tool used by all major retailers. It has also been used successfully by local communities to attract smaller retailers who typically cannot or do not perform such analyses on their own. Economic development professionals, real estate brokers, and business advocacy groups have used data from a Retail Gap Analysis to show prospective business owner/tenants the advantages of establishing a retail store in their downtowns. The basic premise of the Retail Gap is as follows: if the local population is already spending a certain amount for various types of retail goods then it will be advantageous to these consumers to make their purchases closer to home than they may now be doing. Similarly, it will be advantageous to retailers to provide those goods as close as possible to the market being served.

The following graph shows by store type and dollar amount of potential sales the differences between consumer demand within 5, 10, and 15 minute drive times of Spencer Town Center and actual store sales within those respective drive times. Convenience retailers or small food purveyors, for example, typically are looking for unmet demand within a 5-minute drive time, while larger or destination stores or restaurants will look for demand within a 15-minute drive time or longer. Where existing stores or restaurants do not now exist to capture that demand within the respective drive times, a Retail Gap exists and it shows the prospective business owner/tenant that he/she has a reasonably good chance of capturing that demand by locating in Spencer Town Center. The most effective strategy used by real estate brokers, developers, or community economic development advocates to realize the opportunities implicit in the Retail Gap analysis has been to find retail stores or restaurants already established in the broader region that correspond to the types of stores identified by the gap analysis, show them the sales opportunity that could be realized within their downtown, and match them with property or building owners willing to negotiate a leasing or sales deal that comports with the costs the prospective business tenant/owner is willing to pay (and which is competitive with other locations in the market area).

### Selected Retail Opportunities: 15-minute Drive Time Market Area



As data in the graph show, both full-service and take-out restaurants, for example, would appear to have a good chance of success in Spencer Town Center based on current consumer demand and limited competitive sales within the 15-minute market area. Small electronic and appliance stores, women's clothing, office supplies/stationary stores could also find a location in Spencer Town Center attractive for capturing demand for specialty and niche products not easily available in the market area defined by a convenient drive time.

## VISIONING PROCESS AND PLAN METHODOLOGY

### **Visioning Process**

A critical component of formulating a comprehensive revitalization plan and implementation strategy, which fully addresses a community's aspirations and concerns, is to identify and understand what the community perceives as the study area's assets, challenges, opportunities and goals. This public input is used to create the Vision Statement, which informs all aspects of the plan and implementation strategy. This process was employed in the Spencer Town Center Revitalization Planning Project process through public workshops and then confirmed through regular meetings with the Community Advisory Group and interviews with key community stakeholders.

### Community Visioning Process

The Spencer Town Center community visioning process used interactive public workshops to gather input from multiple groups of participants regarding the Town Center's positives, negatives, and the community's goals and objectives for the area. The direct feedback gathered through this method was distilled into a composite Visioning Statement, which represents the overall goals for the Spencer Town Center, and the objectives, which are the preferred method of how the defined goals are to be achieved. The visioning process successfully yielded a cohesive image of what the community would like the Spencer Town Center to be and the specific manner in which to achieve this desired goal. The goals and objectives defined through this process function to inform and guide the revitalization development scenarios and ultimately the final plan and implementation strategy.

### Community Visioning Results and Statement

The following Vision Statement and supporting goals and objectives for Spencer Town Center were developed based on discussions with the Community Advisory Group at a May 20<sup>th</sup> 2009, meeting regarding their vision, goals and objectives for the Town Center and based on the input received from citizen participants at the May 28<sup>th</sup> 2009 public meeting. The Vision Statement and supporting goals and objectives were confirmed and refined with the Community Advisory Group over a series of meetings to finalize the following:

#### *Visioning Statement*

Spencer's Town Center should be the center of business, entertainment and civic activity for the Town of Spencer and be a welcoming destination for residents and visitors. Accessibility by automobile and a safe and engaging pedestrian environment will serve the continuously active business center. The continued mixed-use environment of the Town Center will preserve and encourage the historical character and function of the district.

Central civic open spaces will host and engage activities and recreation while creating a civic landmark and enhancing community identity. Spencer Town Center will be a source of Town pride that inspires increased civic use and stewardship in the area.

### *Goals and Objectives*

#### Character

#### Qualities

Spencer Town Center will be distinguished by virtue of ...

- Solidifying itself as the center of business, social and civic life for the Town of Spencer in the traditional manner of historical New England town centers
- Motivating residents to become more involved in civic activities and revitalization
- Encourage the founding of a local stewardship group
- Restore the condition of Town Hall
- Host events in the Town Center that foster civic pride (a town day)

#### Land Use

#### Mix of Uses

Spencer Town Center will maintain a mix of uses that...

- Creates consistent activity throughout the day
- Include more restaurants and coffee shops in the Town Center business mix
- Remains consistent with the traditional balance of uses in the Town Center
- Support the existing businesses with municipal programs such as storefront improvement programs and small businesses loan programs
- Seek property redevelopment opportunities for Mechanic and Pearl Streets
- Encourages ground floor retail and services that support the pedestrian environment
- Improve sidewalks and improve streetscape elements (light posts and landscaping)

#### Urban Design

#### Texture

Spencer Town Center should be developed to provide an urban fabric that ...

- Preserves historical buildings while actively exploring new development opportunities
- Seek redevelopment or reuse of vacant and underutilized buildings in the Town Center

- Preserves and strengthens the existing and traditional mix of architecture in the Town Center
- Pursue historic preservation of eligible buildings in the Town Center
- Locate appropriate uses in underutilized historic buildings

#### Open Space and the Public Realm

Spencer Town Center should have public open spaces that...

- Function as a traditional New England Town Common open space areas
- Design a civic open space that is consistent with a traditional town commons in a central location
- Create a civic space to host events and activities
- Increase the amount of public open space in the Town Center
- The public open space should be able to host civic events (“Taste of Spencer” and farmers’ markets)
- Define a civic location and identity for the Town Center
- Locate the civic open space in a prominent setting on Main Street
- Provide a maintenance and upkeep program for the civic open space
- Display an identifiable element in the civic open space (sculpture, monument)

#### Infrastructure

##### Pedestrian Network

Spencer Town Center should have a pedestrian network that...

- Increases pedestrian safety along and crossing Main Street
- Improve pedestrian crosswalks on Main Street
- Implement traffic calming elements
- Improve sidewalk conditions throughout the Town Center
- Connects to existing and planned pedestrian paths
- Connect the Town Center to the existing bicycle path
- Formalize the connections between the Town Center and the open space trails behind Price Chopper
- Engages with commercial uses (windows, patio seating) by creating lively sidewalks
- Install streetscape elements, such as street lights, trees and landscaping throughout the Town Center

## Vehicle Circulation

Spencer Town Center should have a vehicle circulation network that...

- Reduces vehicular congestion on Main Street
- Improve roadway conditions throughout the Town Center
- Improve traffic signal coordination in the Town Center
- Improve the Route 9 and Maple Street intersection
- Increases public parking to support local businesses
- Increase Town-owned public parking in the Town Center

## **Plan Methodology**

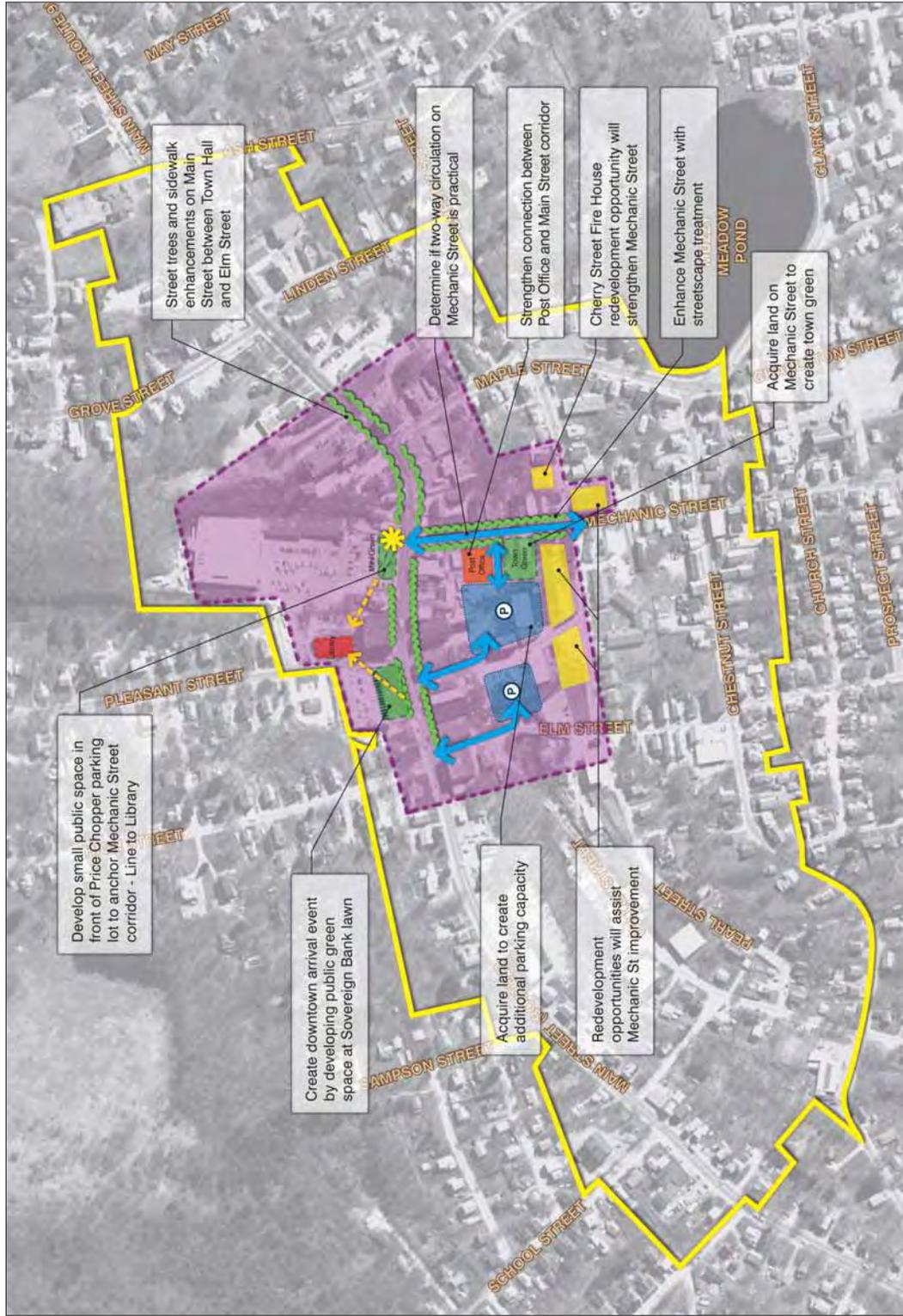
The data gathered through the assessment phase of the project was used to inform and guide the development scenario alternatives created to address the needs of Spencer's Town Center. A comprehensive understanding of the existing characteristics and conditions as well as the community's vision for the area is integral to formulating plans that achieve the desired result. A full grasp of the dynamic elements affecting an area also provides multiple options to address the challenges. For the Spencer Town Center three different development alternatives were formulated, each addressing the Town Center's needs in a different manner by emphasizing different aspects of the area's character. The three alternative development scenarios created were the Core Strategy Scenario, the District Strategy with Industrial Zone Scenario and the Central Corridor/Green Space Scenario and they are described in detail here.

### Alternative Development Scenario #1: Core Strategy Scenario

The Core Strategy Development Scenario focuses revitalization efforts on the concentrated area in the Town Center and focuses on improving multiple aspects within that area. As illustrated in *Figure 13: Core Strategy Development Scenario*, the area's approximate boundaries are Pearl Street Elm Street, Maple Street and the properties along the northern side of Main Street.

The Core Strategy Development Scenario includes extensive sidewalk improvements and street trees along Main Street from Town Hall to Elm Street and down Mechanic Street from Main to Pearl Streets. Intensive streetscape improvements along these corridors will enhance the Town Center as an identifiable and defined district as well expand the primary business district through a strengthened connection to the businesses and civic uses located on Mechanic Street. The Core Strategy Scenario also includes the creation of several public open spaces along the main corridors in relief of the historic town center building fabric. These public open spaces will also act as streetscape anchors along the pedestrian network and as arrival events for the Town Center district. Acquiring land to create additional parking capacity behind the buildings that front the south side of Main Street is also a component of the Core Strategy Scenario. Additional parking capacity in the immediate Town Center is critical to support the Town Center businesses and uses and to enable future growth. The Core Strategy Scenario also identifies several areas on Mechanic and Pearl Streets where redevelopment opportunities may exist, which would strengthen the growth and expansion of the Town Center business district. These redevelopment opportunities would be reinforced by the additional parking and streetscape improvements made in the area just south of Main Street. The Core Strategy Development Scenario revitalizes the Spencer Town Center by reinforcing the existing strengths of the Town Center area, identifying opportunities for growth and redevelopment and defining the district as a destination.

Figure 13: Core Strategy Development Scenario



### Alternative Development Scenario #2: District Strategy with Industrial Zone Scenario

The revitalization efforts of the District Strategy with Industrial Zone Development Scenario address each area of the Town Center. As illustrated in *Figure 14: District Strategy with Industrial Zone Development Scenario*, three distinct zones are identified within the Town Center Study Area and each features development elements to enhance it.

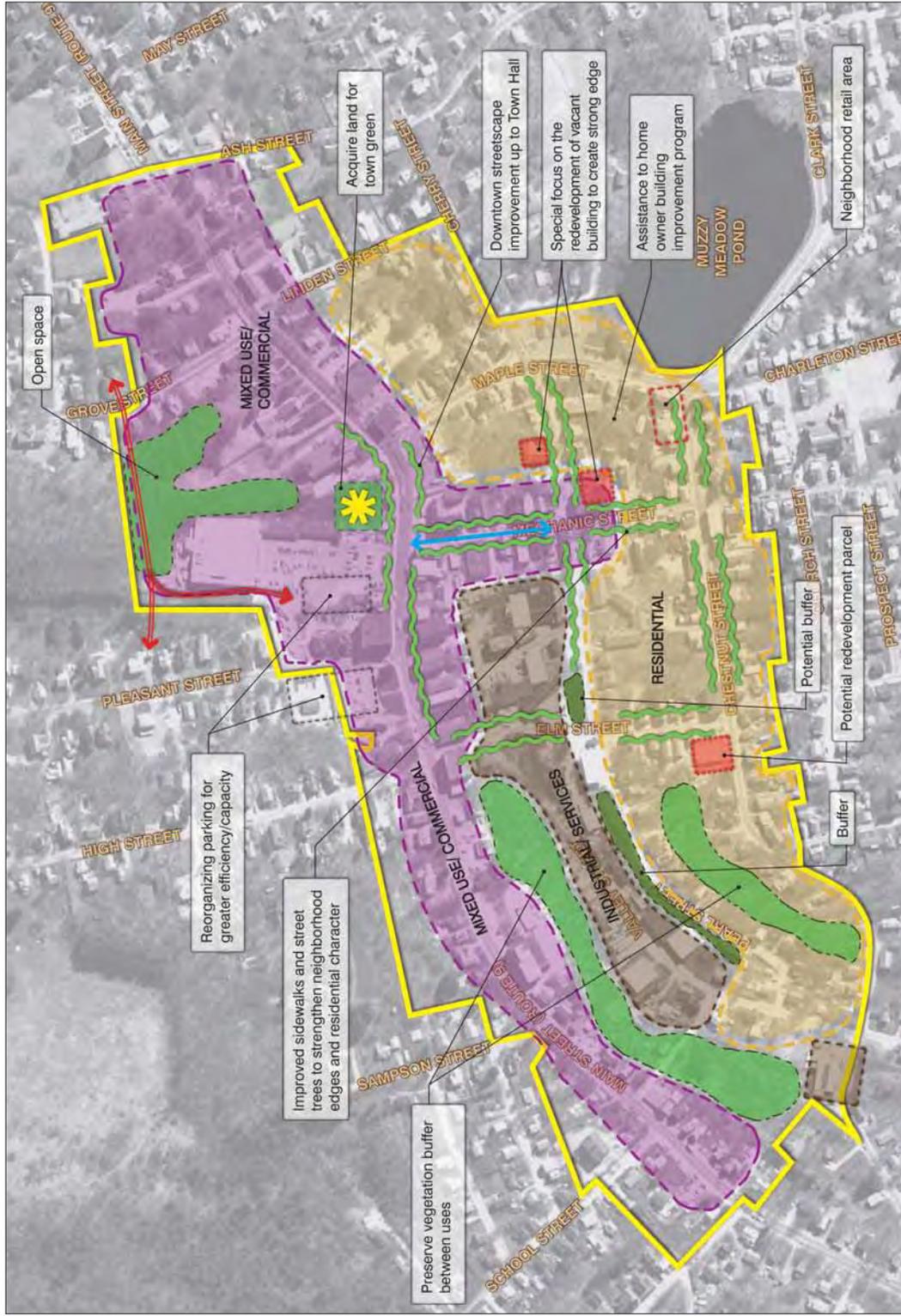
The mixed use/commercial zone enhancement elements include streetscape improvement along parts of Main Street, and Mechanic Street, an enhanced vegetated buffer along the industrial/services zone, formalize the existing walking paths that are located in the open space north of the Town Hall and the proposal to create a town green public open space in the vicinity of the Price Chopper's parking lot. The streetscape elements, formal walking paths and the proposed town green enhance the character of the pedestrian environment within the mixed use/commercial zone, while vegetated buffers conceal the adjacent industrial uses. The reorganization of parking for greater efficiency and capacity supports the existing uses and functions in the Town Center.

The enhancement elements for the industrial/services zone include its expansion to the east to include the area behind the buildings that front the south side of Main Street, streetscape element on Elm Street and the creation of new and the enhancement of existing vegetative buffers between the industrial/services zone and adjacent residential and mixed use/commercial zones. The expansion of the industrial/services zone allows for growth and expansion of businesses in historically industrial areas. The vegetative buffers and streetscape improvements proactively address typical concerns of uses located adjacent to industrial and service businesses.

The residential zone enhancement elements include streetscape improvements along parts of Elm, Mechanic, Cherry, Pearl and Chestnut Streets, identification of residential redevelopment opportunities as well as potential neighborhood retail areas, new vegetative buffers between residential and industrial/services zones and the introduction of homeowner assistance building improvement programs. The streetscape elements and vegetative buffers in and along the residential zone strengthen the neighborhood edge and improve the connection to the Main Street business district. Redevelopment opportunities in and homeowner assistance building improvement programs combine to improve the overall quality and condition of the housing stock. Potential neighborhood retail opportunities could add convenience amenities to the residential neighborhood.

The District Strategy with Industrial Zone Development Scenario revitalizes Spencer Town Center by addressing challenges that each segment of the study area faces and raises the overall quality of the entire Town Center Study Area.

Figure 14: District Strategy with Industrial Zone Development Scenario



### Alternative Development Scenario #3: Central Corridor/Green Space Scenario

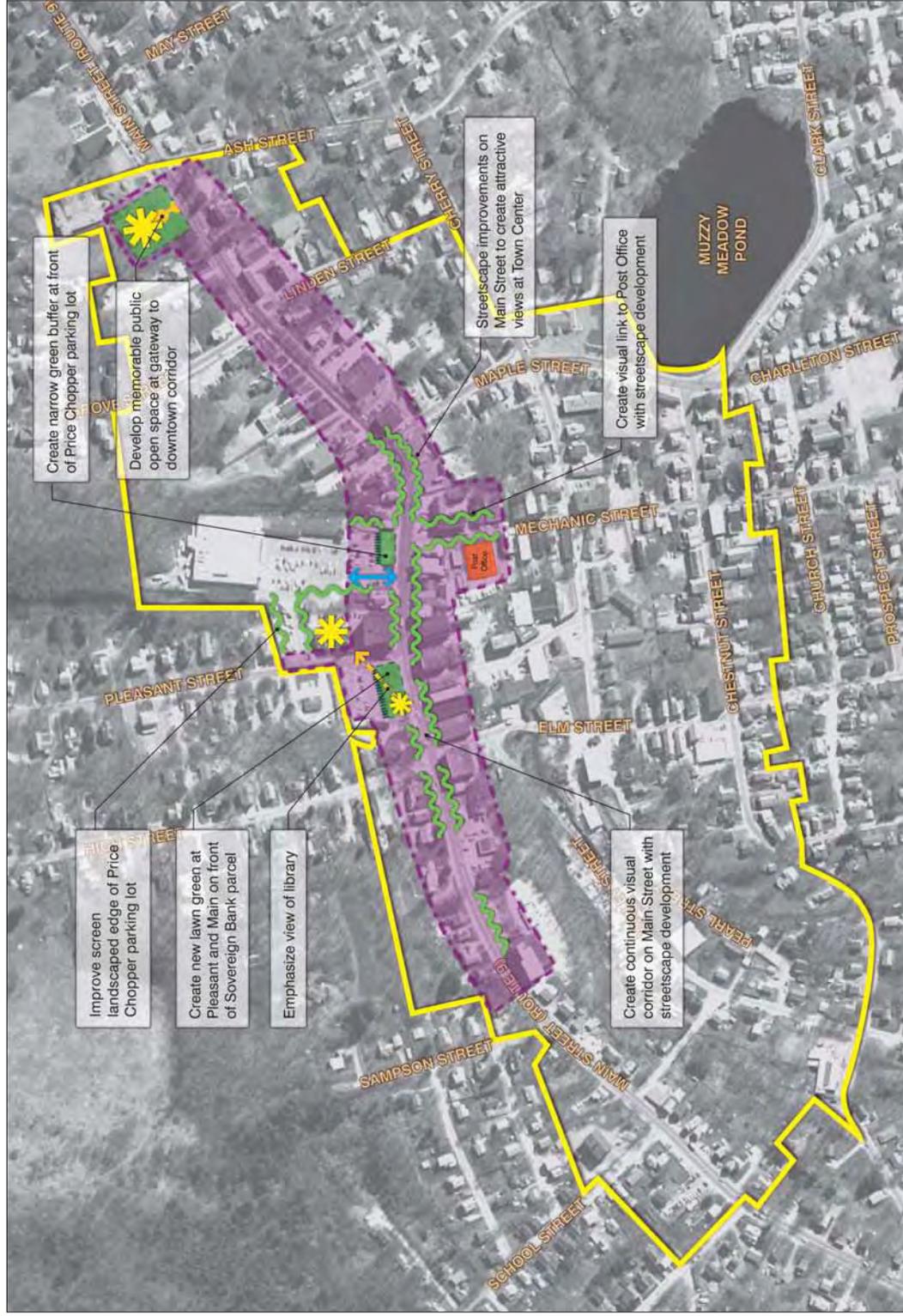
The Central Corridor/Green Space Strategy Development Scenario focuses revitalization efforts on the Town Center's Main Street corridor. *Figure 15: Central Corridor/Green Space Strategy Development Scenario* illustrates the focus on the area of Main Street located between Sampson Street in the west and Ash Street in the east. This area of Main Street represents Spencer's primary business district, central civic area and the main thoroughfare for vehicles passing through Spencer. Improvement efforts made to this area aim to improve the Town's business district, the civic uses and enhance the image of the most visible area of town, through the increase of open space and presence of streetscape amenities.

The Central Corridor/Green Space Strategy Development Scenario includes sidewalk improvements and street trees along Main Street from Sampson Street to Ash Street and extending onto Mechanic Street, as far as the Post Office. Streetscape improvements enhance the pedestrian environment for business and civic patrons and reinforce the successful uses that currently exist in this area. These streetscape improvements will also strengthen the image of the Town Center to visitors and patrons, presenting Spencer as a successful and pleasant Town to visit, shop and live in.

The Central Corridor/Green Space Strategy Development Scenario also features improvements to existing green space and the creation of additional public green space. The changes in the existing public open spaces and the creation of additional public open spaces are meant to amplify the civic uses, create gateway events to mark the Town Center along the Main Streets corridor, anchor the pedestrian network and provide relief from the historic town center building fabric.

Although the Central Corridor/Green Space Strategy Development Scenario focuses its improvements in the Town Center's business district, its components stretch beyond this area along Main Street. By expanding the business district's strengths outside of the business district, these elements reinforce the positive elements associated with the entire Town of Spencer.

Figure 15: Central Corridor Green Space Strategy Development Scenario



## PREFERRED PLAN SUMMARY

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### Preferred Plan Description

The three different development scenarios were presented first to the Community Advisory Group and then to town residents at a public design workshop on July 15<sup>th</sup>. The three development scenarios generated comments by the attendees and the Community Advisory Group. The feedback received from these interactive meetings and additional community outreach to members of the Spencer Town Center business community, civic community, Town staff and residents guided the adjustments made to the development scenario concepts. The concepts and theories presented in the three development scenarios were revised and integrated into a single preferred development scenario.

The Preferred Development Scenario was presented to the Community Advisory Group on August 5<sup>th</sup>. The Preferred Development Scenario is a combination of elements featured in each of the original three development scenarios. Specifically, the Preferred Development Scenario features a mixed use downtown, an expanded business area and extensive streetscape improvements, as illustrated in *Figure 16: Preferred Development Scenario* and *Figure 17: Central District Illustrative*. The key elements of the Preferred Development Scenario include the following items:

- Streetscape Improvements – The Preferred Development Scenario features extensive streetscape improvements throughout Spencer’s entire Town Center through a three phased implementation strategy. The first phase of streetscape improvements will occur on Main Street between the Town Hall and extend past High Street. The second phase of streetscape improvements will be located south of Main Street and include Mechanic, Pearl, Elm and Wall Streets. The final phase of streetscape improvements includes Valley, Chestnut, Linden Mill and the western portion of Pearl Street.
- Gateway Events – The Preferred Development Scenario includes four gateway events on each of the primary entrances into the Town Center. The gateway events are located on the east and west ends of Main Street as well as at Muzzy Meadow Pond on Maple Street and the intersection of Pleasant and Main Streets. These gateway events reinforce the Town Center as a specific location and destination. The three Main Street gateway events are anticipated to be variations on the streetscape design that runs through Main Street. The gateway event at Muzzy Meadow Pond can use its unique location to create a more distinct feature such as a deck and walk overlooking the pond.
- Additional Parking Areas – The Preferred Development Scenarios proposes the creation of several new parking lots south of Main Street off of Wall and Mechanic Streets to increasing the total volume of parking resources in the Town Center and support the adjacent commercial and retail businesses. Increased and evenly distributed parking resources are critical for the success of area businesses and for encouraging pedestrian movement throughout the Town Center.

Figure 16: Preferred Development Scenario

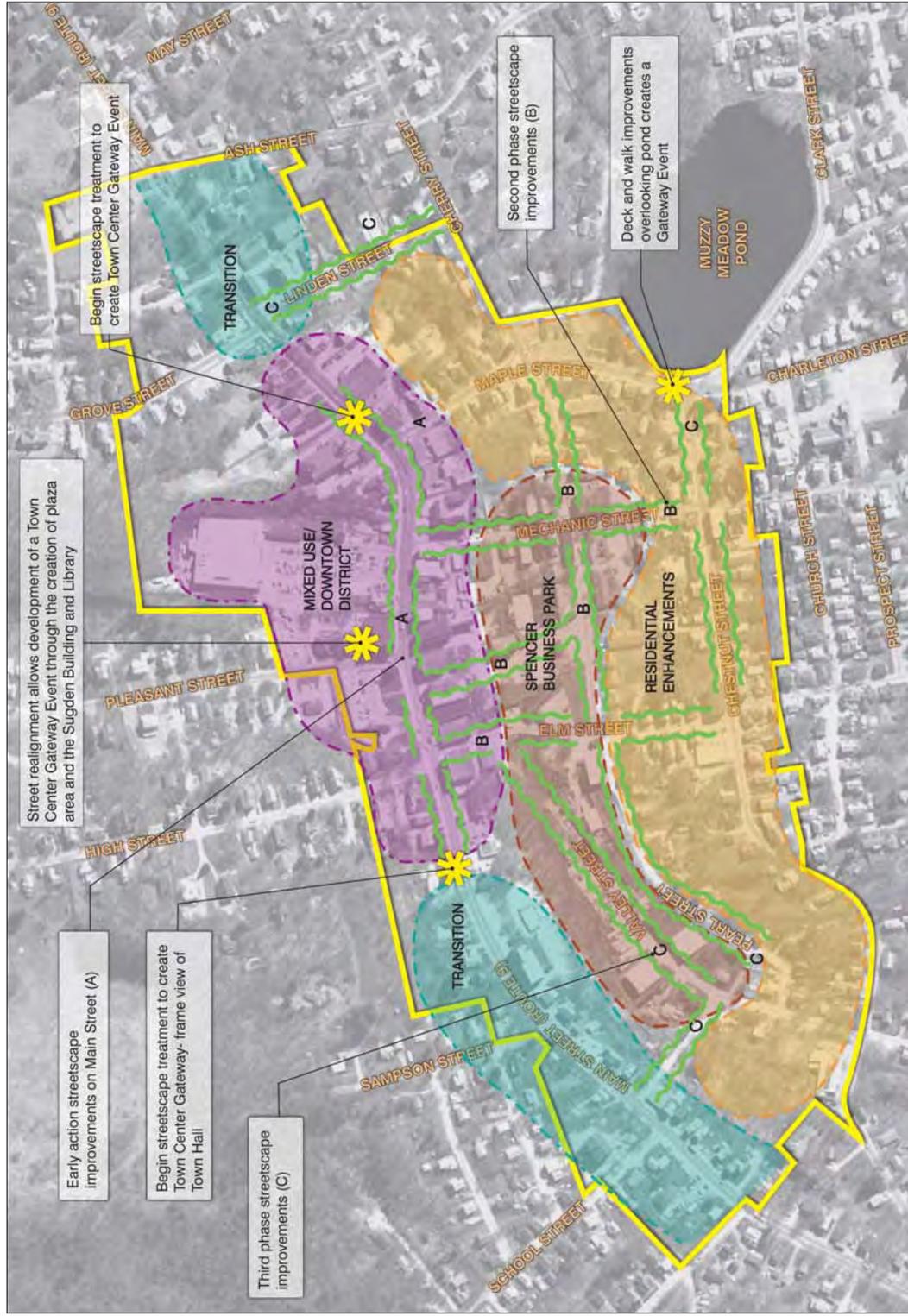


Figure 17: Central District Illustrative



- Expanded Commercial District – The Preferred Development Scenario contains an expanded commercial district within the Town Center. The Preferred Development Scenario proposes to extend the existing commercial district east past Elm Street to include the intersection of Mechanic and Pearl Streets. The expanded commercial district will remain behind the retail and restaurant businesses that line Main Street. The proposed streetscape improvements and the additional parking located off of Wall and Mechanic Streets will support and encourage the commercial district expansion.
- Street Realignment – The Preferred Development Scenario includes a proposal to realign Pleasant Street to connect with Wall Street across Main Street. This realignment would provide significant circulation benefits to the Town Center area such as the elimination of one of two signals on Main Street reducing congestion and improving traffic flow along Main Street. Additionally the road realignment would likely enable vehicles to turn right onto Main Street from Wall Street and thus allow traffic to circulate back into the Town Center and not only out of it after driving up Wall Street. The road realignment will reduce the existing park on the corner of Main and Pleasant Streets, but create an opportunity for new open space on the opposite corner directly adjacent to the Sugden Building. The new open space directly adjacent to the Sugden Building could be used for a combination of sidewalk cafes and activity space for library sponsored events. Beyond improving traffic and circulation the realignment of Pleasant Street improves the view lines of the library from Main Street and creates open spaces on either side of Pleasant Street simultaneously creating a gateway event and improving the pedestrian environment.

### Preferred Plan Achievements

The key elements of the Preferred Development Scenario combine to achieve the objectives necessary to initiate sustainable revitalization in Spencer Town Center. The primary concepts and theories that the above listed key elements support are the enhanced pedestrian environment, the improved vehicular circulation, the upgraded business district support features and the presence of improvements efforts throughout the entire Town Center Study Area. The key elements often overlap to support more than one primary development concept or theme. The primary development concepts and themes are interrelated systems that support and advance each other, in the same manner as different aspects of any complex town center.

#### *Enhanced Pedestrian Environment:*

The Preferred Development Scenario significantly enhances the pedestrian environment throughout the Town Center Study Area through extensive streetscape improvements, the addition of gateway elements, and the addition and distribution of dispersed parking resources. Streetscape features such as street trees, streetlamps, benches, improved sidewalks, decorative flowers, accessible open space, and commercial sidewalk activity improve and enliven pedestrian environments, which encourages pedestrian activity. The extensive streetscape improvements proposed by the Preferred Development Scenario throughout the Town Center Study Area create a pleasant and safe pedestrian network

that links the various Town Center districts and neighborhoods together. The four gateway features proposed by the Preferred Development Scenario provide additional opportunities to enhance the pedestrian environment with unique features, sculptures, a performance space or natural resource observation areas. The additional parking in dispersed locations becomes critically important to pedestrian activity, because of the challenging topography of Spencer's Town Center. Increased parking resources in alternative locations provide individuals the opportunity to park and walk through different areas of the Town Center without facing the physically challenging grade changes.

*Improved Vehicular Circulation:*

The Preferred Development Scenario improves the vehicular circulation of the Town Center Study Area, particularly within the central business district area through street realignment, the elimination of a traffic signal, and the creation of additional parking resources. The realignment of Pleasant Street at the Main Street/Wall Street intersection provides the opportunity for several circulation improvements including the ability to travel directly north from Wall Street to Pleasant Street, the ability to travel east from Wall Street onto Main Street, and the elimination of one traffic signal along Main Street. If these proposed improvements are realized then vehicular circulation should improve considerably. Additionally, creating additional parking resources in areas of the Town Center that currently have limited parking options should serve to reduce traffic congestion caused by the Town Center's current centralized parking configuration.

*Upgraded Business District Support Features:*

The Preferred Development Scenario provides support feature upgrades for the Town Center central business district. The specific elements that support and encourage the success of the business district are the enhanced pedestrian environment and improved vehicular circulation. Reduced vehicular congestion and increased parking resources are important to increase the accessibility for potential patrons to reach all businesses in the Town Center. The improved pedestrian network not only provides safe and enjoyable means for patrons to walk from parking areas to businesses, but also connects the various Town Center districts and neighborhood to the businesses. A safe and enjoyable pedestrian network increases the likelihood that someone who works on Valley Street or lives on Chestnut Street will walk to the Sugden Building to patronize the business services located there. In this manner the businesses located in the Town Center can function as activity generators themselves and directly contribute to the sidewalk pedestrian activity. The streetscape improvements and specifically their gateway features will also serve the area businesses, by identifying Spencer Town Center as a specific designated location and destination for shopping, business and civic uses.

*Improvements to the Entire Town Center Study Area:*

The Preferred Development Scenario proposes improvements within all neighborhoods and districts of the Town Center Study Area. Many of the key elements in the Preferred Development Scenario either extend to multiple Town Center districts or serve multiple Town Center communities. The extension of improvements through multiple districts, which will serve multiple communities, is best exemplified by the scope of the streetscape improvements. The streetscape improvements make strong connections from residential neighborhoods to the central business district and through the commercial areas serving businesses and residents alike. The four proposed gateway features can serve multiple purposes of identifying the boundaries of the Town Center, but also providing civic and neighborhood amenities, such as a deck and walk overlook at Muzzy Meadow Pond. By encompassing and connecting all Town Center sub-districts, the proposed improvements provide the foundation for future investments, both public and private, in the whole Spencer Town Center Study Area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The revitalization recommendations for the Spencer Town Center are centered on a phased implementation of the Preferred Development Scenario conducted in concert with corresponding infrastructure upgrades and implementation of sustained economic development outreach and support resources for the Town Center business community. While the Preferred Development Scenario focuses on the physical planning aspects of the Town Center revitalization efforts, it possesses aspects consistent with and in support of the infrastructure and economic development recommendations. The success of the Town Center revitalization requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach and relies on the implementation and execution of the infrastructure and economic development as well as the physical planning recommendations.

### **Strategies for Physical Planning**

The physical planning recommendations for the revitalization of Spencer's Town Center are focused on a phased implementation of the Preferred Development Scenario. The actionable recommendations consist of streetscape and sidewalk investments, redevelopment of existing open space and the acquisition for reuse of underutilized and unsafe properties. However it is the primary development concepts or themes, which are of primary importance. Different combinations of streetscape elements, furniture and landscaping can contribute to create a safe and inviting pedestrian environment that reaches throughout the Town Center. The Preferred Development Scenario recommendation is the concept of an expansive, safe and friendly pedestrian network not the configuration of street trees, decorative streetlights and pedestrian benches. The principal concepts and themes of the Preferred Development Scenario are the physical planning recommendations for the revitalization of Spencer Town Center.

The principal concepts and themes of features in the Preferred Development Scenario are the following:

- Enhanced Pedestrian Environment - The Preferred Development Scenario recommends significantly enhancing the extended Town Center pedestrian environment through extensive streetscape improvements, the addition of gateway elements, and the addition and distribution of dispersed parking resources. The recommended streetscape improvements focus on creating a pleasant and safe pedestrian network that links the various Town Center districts and neighborhoods together with pedestrian level elements that enrich the pedestrian experience and encourage pedestrian activity.
- Improved Vehicular Circulation - The Preferred Development Scenario recommends improving the vehicular circulation of the Town Center Study Area, with street realignment, the elimination of a traffic signal, and the creation of additional parking resources. Functional town centers require functional vehicular circulation and accessibility to succeed as centers of business, civic, retail or any type of activity. The

recommended circulation improvements should contribute to less congestion, better circulation patterns and improved parking resources.

- Upgraded Business District Support Features - The Preferred Development Scenario recommendations provide support to the businesses located in Spencer Town Center. Improvements to the pedestrian environment and vehicular circulation are key elements which support and contribute to the success of the Town Center businesses. Successful businesses located in the Town Center function as activity generators and contribute to vehicular and pedestrian activity. Additionally, the streetscape gateway features also enhance the Spencer Town Center businesses by designating the area as a destination for shopping, business and civic uses.
- Improvements to the Entire Town Center Study Area - The Preferred Development Scenario recommends investing in all neighborhoods and sub-districts of the Town Center Study Area. Installing improvements in all areas of the Town Center area in addition to purposefully extending features to connect various neighborhoods and sub-districts is vitally important for future public and private investments in the whole Spencer Town Center Study Area.

### **Strategies for Infrastructure**

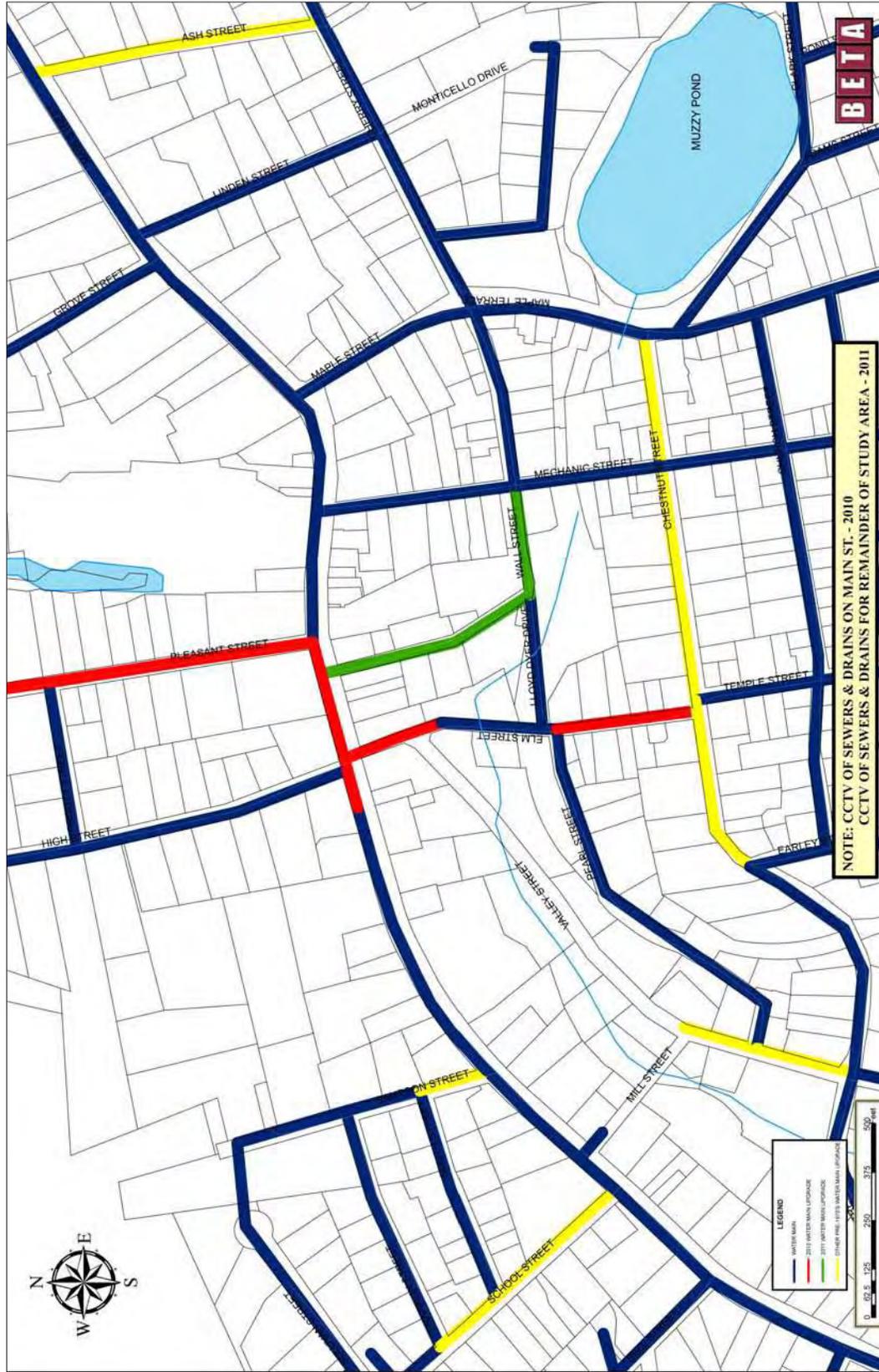
The infrastructure improvement recommendations for the revitalization of Spencer's Town Center are focused on improving system capabilities, correcting weaknesses, increasing efficiencies and expanding capacities. The recommendations made by BETA Group are based on their data collection, site observations, existing conditions assessment, and meetings with town staff regarding the Town Center's infrastructure systems. Although the infrastructure improvement recommendations extend beyond the boundaries and scope of the Preferred Development Scenario, the recommendations support the goals and objectives of the Preferred Development Scenario. *Figure 18: Utility Recommendations* illustrates the extent of the recommended infrastructure improvements.

### Utility and Infrastructure Recommendations

#### *Water Mains*

According to the Town's Utilities and Facilities Superintendent, Robert McNeil, there have been no major issues in the past with the water system. Mr. McNeil did express interest, however, in upgrading all water mains within the project area that were installed prior to 1970 or that were not cement-lined ductile iron. The Town recently installed a portion of new 12" ductile iron water main on Elm St. The remaining portions are designed and will be constructed in 2010. Further, the Town has just completed the design of a 12" water main that will service the new water storage tank. This project will construct two water mains on Pleasant St. and Main St (one local main and one dedicated tank main). The dual mains will be constructed in Spring 2010. The design to replace the water main on

Figure 18: Utility Recommendations



Wall St. is planned for 2010 with construction occurring in 2011. This work will precede the TIP project.

Other remaining study area work is summarized below in the list of the remaining streets within the project area that should be upgraded based on the criteria set forth by Mr. McNeil:

Street	Material	Age	Diameter	Length (ft)
Ash St.	Universal	1938	6"	734
Chestnut St. (From Maple St. to Early St.)	Cast Iron	1915-1924	6" & 8"	1,711
Pleasant St. (From Main St. to Grant St.)	Universal	1929	8"	1,377
Sampson St. (From Main St. to South St.)	Cast Iron	1914	6"	210
School St. (From Main St. to Franklin St.)	Cast Iron	1914	6"	610
Valley St. (From Chestnut St. to end)	Cast Iron	Unknown	6"	1,091

**5,733 ft**

In addition to upgrading these mains, BETA recommends fire flow testing and hydraulic analyses be conducted to determine water pressures, capacity, and water demand within the project area to confirm pipe diameter requirements.

*Sewer Mains*

Based on the age of the Town's sewer mains and lack of recorded information, BETA recommends the Town develop a CCTV inventory of all the sewers within the project area. This will identify locations in need of rehabilitation, pipe conditions, as well as provide the Town with sewer service locations.

Using the CCTV inventory and by locating sewer structures using GPS, record drawings of the Town's sewer system within the project area could then be developed. Rim and invert elevations could also be taken to provide the Town with accurate record drawings.

BETA also recommends conducting an infiltration/inflow investigation.

A sump pump investigation is also recommended to identify sump pumps connected to the sewer, or an amnesty program could be initiated to have residents with sump pumps connected to the sewer come forward. A program could then be developed to disconnect sump pumps from the sewer.

### *Drainage*

The Town should also develop a CCTV inventory of the drainage within the study area. This will identify pipe locations and pipe conditions and determine locations in need of rehabilitation. Along with the water main on Wall St., the design to replace the drainage on Wall St. is slated for 2010 with construction occurring in 2011.

Outfall sampling should also be considered in order to determine storm water compliance or areas of non-compliance.

### *Private Utilities*

No information was provided to BETA from private utilities regarding future upgrades. BETA recommends contacting the private utility companies prior to any construction work on roads and utilities.

## Circulation and Parking Recommendations

### *Circulation*

With the current road configuration and traffic movement restrictions, there are portions of the study area that could be improved with modifications to the roadway alignment as well as changing traffic patterns. Currently there are some turn restrictions and one-way traffic movement on Mechanic Street. This limits traffic circulation in this area. There is also no right turn allowed out of Wall Street onto Main Street. To further complicate traffic, Pleasant Street does not line up with Wall Street creating a confusing intersection.

BETA proposes changing the traffic pattern on Wall Street to one-way movement westbound (between Mechanic Street and Lloyd Dyer Drive) and northbound (between Lloyd Dyer Drive and Main Street). This will complement the existing southbound one-way pattern on Mechanic Street and simplify traffic patterns at Wall Street where few vehicles currently travel southbound. In addition, we recommend shifting the Pleasant Street intersection to the west to align with Wall Street and allow unrestricted turn movements from both Pleasant Street and Wall Street approaches. The realignment of Pleasant Street would allow for a simpler traffic signal configuration and provide a location to develop a landscaped pedestrian plaza just west of the historic Sugden Building.

### *Signal Upgrades*

The current signals at Maple Street and Pleasant Street operate independently of one another causing periodic congestion between the signals for traffic caught between them. Providing communication between these signals would improve this situation.

BETA recommends updating the traffic signal equipment at the intersections of Main Street / Wall Street / Pleasant Street and Main Street / Maple Street. To improve traffic operations, these signals should run as a coordinated interconnected system with optimized timing. Emergency pre-emption is also recommended for these signals.

### *Parking*

Based on BETA's existing parking evaluation, there is sufficient parking to meet the current retail demands of the downtown; however, the available parking is all consolidated within a couple blocks of the town center. The primary spaces used include Main Street between High Street and Mechanic Street, Sovereign Bank Lots, Library Lot and Price Chopper Lot.

With the proposed re-alignment of Pleasant Street, some of the parking in the southern Sovereign Bank lot will need to be relocated. The Preferred Development Scenario proposes parking provisions of five lots located just south of Main Street and accessible from Wall Street and Mechanic Street. These new lots will accommodate all parking spaces displaced from the Sovereign Bank due to the Pleasant Street realignment. In addition, these new lots will provide additional parking to support the businesses along Mechanic Street and Cherry Street, as well as future development in the area.

### **Strategies for Economic Development**

Within the Town of Spencer overall, population, employment, and business sales have been stable for at least the past decade, and this stability is reflected in business conditions within the Town Center. The Town Center area features a relatively high concentration of town-wide employment in grocery stores and other retail shops and restaurants, and because of this is frequented by town residents daily or weekly. Workshop and public meeting participants expressed a strong connection to the Town Center as the central place for shopping, cultural, and civic engagements. For any downtown area of a community, the objective stability of the business environment and the perception of its importance to the community are noteworthy. Continued public support of existing businesses, including municipal expenditures for upgraded water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure, is both desirable from an economic development perspective and consistent with the goals and objectives of the Preferred Development Scenario.

As shown in the preceding analyses, the larger area economy (Worcester County) has performed slightly better than the State of Massachusetts overall over the past ten years and even modest future growth will allow for Spencer to realize additional economic development opportunities, including within the Town Center area. Specifically, much of the growth in regional employment has come from small firms, including in professional and technical services, and the possibility of modest rents in an attractive downtown area will be desirable for some of these firms and new ones yet to emerge. Spencer Town Center's relatively unique "downtown" ambience among communities immediately west of Worcester can be a competitive advantage for attracting small professional firms, and the relative isolation from larger regional retailing opportunities shows up as a competitive advantage for capturing additional retail opportunities (the so called "retail gap", illustrated in the previous section).

To help realize these market-driven economic development opportunities, as well as to sustain existing businesses and jobs, infrastructure improvements in the Town Center area should be pursued. Many of the key elements identified in the physical planning recommendations will support the Town Center businesses, such as additional parking resources, improved vehicular circulation, and an enriched pedestrian network. Although these elements are primarily public investments in the general Town Center area, if the Town Center's business community's interests are taken into account then these public physical planning elements can provide substantial support to the existing businesses. Additionally public investments, such as the façade grants recommended in this study, will also enhance the prospects for existing businesses to improve their sales and for potential new ones to find the Town Center area more physically attractive as well as strategically located to capture resident market spending opportunities.

Currently, the Spencer Town Center area lacks vacant and developable sites for new businesses but has several older buildings that could be upgraded or reconfigured to support new business opportunities. A local Community Development Corporation (CDC) and/or affiliation with an existing CDC may be one mechanism to further opportunities to provide competitive below-market-priced "incubator" as well as market-priced space for new creative economy and other businesses needing production or office space. For the retail sector, the retail gap analysis identified full-service and take-out restaurants, small electronic and appliance stores, women's clothing, and office supplies/stationery stores as immediate opportunities in Spencer Town Center based on current consumer demand and limited competitive sales within a 15-minute drive time market area.

## IMPLEMENTATION

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Implementing the physical planning, economic development and infrastructure recommendations are the final and most critical piece of the Spencer Town Center revitalization efforts. The revitalization recommendations extend through multiple disciplines and will require coordination across municipal departments, government agencies, non-profit organizations, the existing business community and local citizens to achieve the revitalization affects sought for Spencer Town Center. The coordination, phasing and funding of these efforts should be led by a single entity, such as a municipal office, a local nonprofit organization or a citizen advisory group. Dedicated leadership and a long term commitment to implementing the selected strategies are essential to achieving a comprehensive revitalization of the Town Center.

### **Physical Planning Implementation Strategies**

The implementation of the proposed physical planning recommendations and planning strategies will require a multipronged effort including substantial efforts, participation and support from all interested parties as well as significant coordination across multiple agencies. Implementation of the physical planning initiatives can be executed in multiple ways. A key concept for implementation that could be used to focus on both the physical planning and economic development recommendations is the creation of a community economic development entity, such as a Community Development Corporation (CDC) or Economic Development Industrial Corporation (EDIC). The formation of a community economic development entity for the primary purpose of pursuing revitalization efforts in Spencer Town Center would address many of the coordination and leadership efforts required for effective implementation. A community economic development entity dedicated to Spencer Town Center revitalization would allow municipal offices and community organizations to support the revitalization efforts as opposed to leading them, in addition to current organizational missions. Additionally, depending on the type of community economic development entity that is established, economic development and physical planning initiatives can be jointly pursued.

The specific physical planning implementation strategies to achieve the recommendations and the Preferred Development Plan are zoning recommendations, foundation of a community economic development entity and façade and signage improvements and standards.

### Zoning Recommendations

Overall the zoning in the Town Center Study Area is appropriate and encourages desirable and appropriate uses. However two location adjustments in the local zoning would contribute to advancing the concepts of the Preferred Development Plan. First is the expansion of the Village Residential zone along both sides of Chestnut Street. This area is

currently primarily residential and this change would reinforce this use. Additionally, it would help to concentrate business uses further north along Pearl Street, further solidifying that area as an expansion of the Town Center business district. Second is the expansion of the Town Center Mixed Use zoning district west along both sides of Main Street for several hundred feet. Extending the Town Center Mixed Use zone extends the Town Center business district and presents a more favorable street presence along Main Street than the current Commercial zoning district located to the south.

In addition to the zoning location adjustments, an amendment to the zoning bylaws should be considered that requires, at the Planning Board's discretion, a site plan and parking plan review in the Town Center zoning districts. It is critical that future developments are consistent in their goal of creating an attractive district conducive to a pedestrian environment. Additionally including reasonable requirements regarding landscaping, signage, lighting, fencing or other elements to ensure that the parking provided complements the district's traditional character, should also be considered as a complement to the primary purpose of parking relief within the Town Center.

The Town should not approve new zoning that would encourage the scale or types of commercial, retail or service establishments that are currently located within the downtown district and that would provide unfavorable competition. This recommendation recognizes, however, that there are certain larger scale and auto-dependent businesses that cannot – and should not – be located in the downtown because they are not conducive to a pedestrian-oriented mixed use district.

To avoid discouraging desirable development, the Town could also pursue zoning and other encouraged “partnered” development. This approach would pair improvements in the Town Center with improvements in other locations. So, for example, if a retail concentration would be allowable as part of a new proposed zoning district or zoning change, the Town could link approvals to a requirement that certain amounts or types of development also be accomplished in the Town Center. This would have the effect of ensuring that new investment in other locations would simultaneously serve to strengthen the downtown economic environment. The particular mechanism employed would require careful crafting and legal review, but relevant precedents exist for similar strategies. Among the methods that might be considered is “contract zoning”, in which agreements about downtown development would proceed and be triggered by an approval of a new or revised zoning standard.

#### Foundation of a Community Economic Development Entity

The foundation of a community economic development entity to function as a central vehicle to achieve the Town Center implementation strategies is of critical importance. A study committee should be formed to examine the different entities which could be established and to determine the entity's complete mission statement. Three elements which should form the basis of the community economic development entity mission are the operation of a business incubator or business park, the redevelopment of underutilized

buildings and the operation and management of the Sugden Block Building. Of particular importance is the Sugden Block Building, which is currently for sale by the Town. Ownership of the building should be conveyed to the community economic development entity. This will enable the building to be eligible for public grants and advantaged financing for improvements. Also if properly managed and operated it will not only contribute activity and revitalization to the Town Center but also begin generating revenue for the Town Library again as originally conceived by the Sugden family.

#### Façade and Signage Improvements and Standards

A building façade and signage improvement program should be established for the Spencer Town Center to assist and encourage business owners to improve their buildings and businesses. This program can be established using Community Development Block Grant funds or revolving low cost funds sponsored by area banks. Façade and signage design guidelines should be established for program participants. A committee should be formed to administer the program and for the creation of the design guidelines. The committee should include representatives from the Town Center businesses as well as residents and staff.

Although it is not necessarily part of the façade and signage improvement program, architectural façade repair and landscaping elements for the Spencer Town Hall should be made a priority. The Town Hall contributes to the civic activity and pedestrian realm as well functions a symbol for both the Town of Spencer and the Town Center. The condition of that building can be considered emblematic for the whole Town Center area.

A detailed Implementation Matrix is included at the end of this section, which lists available programs, tools and mechanisms that could be applied to the implementation of the recommended planning strategies.

#### **Potential Organizations to Implement Economic Development and Physical Planning Initiatives**

This section of the economic development opportunities assessment summarizes FXM Associates' investigation of community based economic development entities, including interviews with selected community development professionals. There are likely multiple options and models suitable for advancing the proposed reuse/redevelopment of under-utilized industrial property, and goals for increased business activity within the Spencer Town Center. This examination focused on two types of community economic development entities discussed by the consultant team and the Community Advisory Committee: Community Development Corporation (CDC), and Economic Development Industrial Corporation (EDIC).

### Community Development Corporation

The term “community development corporation” or “CDC” refers to a type of not-for-profit entity that is characterized by community-based leadership, representing a geographic area (usually a neighborhood, municipality or region), and primarily engaged in housing production or job creation.<sup>10</sup> The National Congress of Economic Development (NCCED) defines community development as the economic, physical and social revitalization of a community, led by people who live in and around designated geographic areas of that community. CDCs are formed by residents, small business owners, congregations, and other local stakeholders to revitalize low and moderate income communities by producing affordable housing and creating jobs for community residents. CDCs often foster job creation through micro-business lending, small business technical assistance, small business incubation (provision of space at low or no cost to start-up businesses), or sponsored commercial and mixed-use real estate development projects in their target areas. Some CDCs also provide a variety of social services, including workforce training programs, in conjunction with other private, municipal or state agencies.

In Massachusetts, Community Development Corporations generically encompasses any community-based, non-profit organization working to improve economic, social or housing conditions especially for low and moderate income residents of a neighborhood, city or group of municipalities, or region. CDCs in Massachusetts have been legally defined with specific organizational requirements (e.g. board members representing constituency/geography served) and certain entitlements. Certified CDCs are deemed to have quasi-public agency status under state law, with four relevant considerations noted below. The relative importance of each is determined by a CDC’s particular mission, capacity, resources and economic development priorities.<sup>11</sup> Benefits to state-certified CDCs are:

- Brownfield development liability protections similar to municipalities;
- Mortgage lending certification required but no certification fee;
- Massachusetts Community Development Finance Corporation (CDFC) provides loans to small businesses sponsored by or through CDCs;
- Municipalities can award CDCs contracts to apply for and administer federal funds without full-scale compliance with state procurement regulations (Chapter 30B) – although this benefit is rarely used.

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<sup>10</sup> *What is a CDC?* at the National Congress for Economic Development at [www.ncced.org](http://www.ncced.org) The NCCED focuses on developing and sustaining community development corporations and other and other community economic development entities by providing tools and other technical assistance resources.

<sup>11</sup> FXM Associates interview with Joe Kiesberg, President, Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC), September 2009

State-certified CDCs also enjoy enhanced linkages with the extensive professional network that has been involved in various aspects of community development over the past 30 years, and access to an array of public and private community development resources.<sup>12</sup> Organizing and sustaining any community-based organization requires a significant investment of human and capital resources; and obtaining state certification requires another level of organizational effort that may or may not be necessary to accomplish its goals or short-term objectives.

Typically, it takes about two years of diligent effort for a coalition of community development advocates to complete the initial organizational process. Local founders of a CDC formulate a set of by-laws, file for incorporation status with the Massachusetts Secretary of State, and then apply to the IRS for designation as a tax-exempt non-profit organization. The IRS designation is necessary for the organization to obtain grants and gifts from government, corporate, foundation, or individual sources. CDC funding resources exist from both the state and federal governments for organizations that meet the respective eligibility requirements. Community development advisors often recommend preparing a business plan that identifies potential types and amounts of organizational income and expenses projected over a 3 year period.

*Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC)*

The Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC) is a statewide advocacy and technical assistance organization representing more than 85 member corporations and at least two-thirds of its members operate economic development programs.<sup>13</sup> The MACDC works with many types of community development organizations, requiring only that community development is part of its mission and the organization is non-profit (Internal Revenue Service designation of 501 C (3) tax-exempt status). Its website highlights the steadily increasing capacity and impact of CDCs in areas such as small business development, commercial real estate development, workforce development, and individual development accounts. The Growing Opportunities, Assets and Leaders (GOALS) is sponsored by MACDC and has enabled CDCs to create or preserve jobs, grow or start locally owned businesses, and attract public and private investment in communities across the Commonwealth. MACDC supports CDC efforts by facilitating training, sharing best practices, building stronger partnerships between CDCs and the private sector, advocating for supportive public policy, and building member capacity to implement economic development programs. Recently, MACDC has focused on supporting entrepreneurship in low-income and minority

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<sup>12</sup> Debbie Michel, Division of Community Services, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) (617) 573-1400

<sup>13</sup> *MACDC Economic Development Programs* at the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations website [www.macdc.org](http://www.macdc.org)

communities, non-residential and mixed-use commercial development projects, workforce development, and CDCs operating Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).<sup>14</sup>

MACDC notes that CDC sponsored commercial and industrial real estate projects are typically very difficult to complete because these are precisely the projects the private sector has avoided. These projects often are very expensive due to the need for major demolition or rehabilitation, difficult site assembly and infrastructure issues, and environmental contamination. The high costs associated with such projects often cannot be covered by prospective tenants due to typically lower market demand (and rents) in CDC communities. The Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program offers the only significant source of public subsidy for such projects, although MACDC acknowledges that CDBG funding is extremely limited. MACDC initiatives to overcome this financing gap include expanding private sector financing for commercial and industrial real estate projects through partnerships with banks and insurance companies, assisting CDCs to access Federal New market Tax Credits, advocating for more non-residential project funding through CDBG and Community Action Grant (CDAG) programs, and ensuring CDC access to grant and loan funds from the state Brownfields Redevelopment Fund.

- The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to address revitalization efforts and the needs of low- and moderate-income residents by supporting housing, community and economic development activities in small cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth.
- The Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) Program provides funding for publicly owned or managed projects that have a significant impact on the overall economic condition of a city or town, including activities that will significantly improve conditions of low and moderate income persons through: (a) support of workforce housing needs across a range of incomes; (b) generation and/or retention of long term employment; (c) leveraging significant private investment; and (d) improvement of physical conditions.

As the statewide advocate for community development corporations, the MACDC president suggested that parties in Spencer interested in and committed to promoting economic development projects pursue the following approach:

- Determine what you want to do (mission/purpose), organize by-laws, get board members, and describe economic development needs, opportunities, and issues – identifying any targeted sites that may need remediation

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<sup>14</sup> Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are matched savings accounts funded by the state and administered by DHCD through community non-profit organizations that enable low-income families to save, build assets, and enter the financial mainstream). *Individual Development Accounts* at Executive Office of Housing and economic Development website [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov)

- Decide whether the organization is going to exist for a long time and is intended to have sustained community development activities;
- Consult/meet with MACDC and determine if the CDC needs to comply with state CDC definition/certification.

Partnering with an existing CDC already engaged in business development or industrial or commercial real estate development could be an alternative -- and possibly more expedient -- way to facilitate reuse/redevelopment of underutilized property, and foster new business growth in the Town Center. Organizations need to generate a certain volume of business activity to sustain the organization and continue operations. Recognizing that 1-2 projects every 2-3 years will not provide sufficient income/revenues, some CDCs in less-urbanized communities form multi-municipal corporations. There may be an existing entity that can work with the Town of Spencer without the need to create a CDC, or an existing CDC in the Spencer area capable of helping to implement recommended commercial real estate and business development projects in for Spencer Town Center. In evaluating options for establishing a community development corporation, MACDC recommend that Town officials and other interested parties investigate other models for community-based economic development organizations with these CDC and state agency contacts.

- *Hilltown CDC*, located in Chesterfield, represents nine communities in western Massachusetts, including Northampton, Pittsfield, Palmer, Ware, and Springfield as described at [www.hilltowncdc.org](http://www.hilltowncdc.org). The CDC is dedicated to supporting start-ups and entrepreneurship, growth of local businesses, strengthening the local economy and creating more local jobs. Its economic development activities offer business owners training programs, individual business consulting, and publishing an annual business directory to promote marketing.

Contact: Alexander Baker, Executive Director (413) 296-4536 ext. 18

Seth Isman, Economic Development Director (413) 296-4536 ext. 12

- *Quabog Valley CDC* located in Ware, serves 16 communities in Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester Counties, including the Town of Spencer.<sup>15</sup> The CDC offers programs and services in partnership with other organizations focused on economic development as described at [www.qvcdc.com](http://www.qvcdc.com). Program and service categories include Computer and Business Training, small business loans, technical assistance, business planning, as well as sponsored activities to promote community development and tourism. MACDC staff mentioned the QV CDC's experience working with the Marlborough CDC on a commercial/business development project similar to economic development activities proposed for Spencer Town Center.

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<sup>15</sup> The Quabog Valley CDC serves the towns of Belchertown, Brimfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holland, Morrison, New Braintree North Brookfield, Palmer, SPENCER, Wales, Ware, Warren, West Brookfield.

Contact: Susan Rutherford, Executive Director (413) 283-3003

- *Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)* is the designated planning entity for the City of Worcester and the surrounding 39 communities which comprise the southern two-thirds of Worcester County as described at [www.cmrpc.org](http://www.cmrpc.org) and including the Town of Spencer in the West Subregion.

Contact: Trish Settles, Principal Planner (508) 459-3320

#### *Franklin County Community Development Corporation*

The Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC) was established in 1979 as a non-profit economic development organization with a mission to provide comprehensive business development services. The FCCDC purchased and renovated a 36,000 sq. ft. industrial building in 1989 located in downtown Greenfield, Massachusetts to provide commercial office and light manufacturing space for entrepreneurs and small businesses. The FCCDC Venture Center is now a highly touted model for a community based business incubator; currently, it accommodates eight start-up and growing companies, and operations will expand when renovation of the First National Bank building is completed.<sup>16</sup> Space is rented at below-market rates during initial years of tenancy, and increases yearly to reach market rents during the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year of occupancy to prepare business owners for graduation from the facility.<sup>17</sup> The Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center is a flagship program of the Venture Center, promoting economic development through entrepreneurship, opportunities for sustaining local agriculture, and best practices for specialty food producers from the New England region

In 2007 the FCCDC counseled more than 80 business owners, trained 40 in business planning and marketing, granted 6 new loans and serviced 49 existing loans with an aggregate principal balance outstanding of approximately \$1.8 million. The Food Center has more than 40 members producing more than 100 different products, and recently celebrated two members who graduated to their own facilities. The FCCDC team consists of six experienced staff, industry consultants, and dedicated volunteers; the organization is funded by program fees (rental income, loan payments and tuition), state and federal grants, and private contributions.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Venture Center at the FCCDC* at the Franklin County Community Development Corporation website [www.fccdc.org](http://www.fccdc.org)

<sup>17</sup> FXM Associates and The Cecil Group interviews with John Waite, Executive Director, Franklin County Community Development Corporation (September 2009)

### Economic Development Industrial Corporation

An Economic Development Industrial Corporation (EDIC) is a corporation established by a municipality for the public purpose of implementing local economic development projects in accordance with an approved economic development plan.<sup>18</sup> An economic development plan is a detailed plan showing one or more economic development projects within an economic development area, and must be approved by a two-thirds vote at an annual or special town meeting. EDICs have become the primary economic development organizational tool for many Massachusetts municipalities from which all planning and program implementation originates. A town must receive certification from the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to establish an EDIC. Any municipality that has been designated a labor surplus area by the U.S. Department of Labor due to high unemployment is eligible to establish an EDIC under M.G.L. Chapter 121C. Communities not designated as labor surplus areas by the U.S. Labor Department and ineligible to establish an EDIC may use special legislation to establish EDIC-like organizations to undertake local economic development projects.

An EDIC is created by a municipality to attract new industry to the community, to expand existing industry through economic development projects to be financed and implemented by the EDIC, and to address unemployment and lack of business opportunity. Projects implemented by EDICs are restricted to development of industrial and manufacturing properties, and designed to decrease the unemployment rate, and eliminate decadent and blighted open areas in the municipality. Communities have used C.121C as the basis for special legislation that expands the range of eligible activities beyond industrial and manufacturing to include commercial, business, recreational, social services, educational and other non-industrial projects. An EDIC may acquire land by eminent domain in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 79 or Chapter 80A, and with an affirmative two-thirds vote of town meeting as well as prior advice of the Massachusetts Office of Business Development and the Director of DHCD. Under special legislation, a municipality is able to add specific features to the EDIC organizational structure, powers and authority and activities that are viewed as relevant to its specific local context.<sup>19</sup>

The EDIC board of directors consists of seven members appointed by the municipality with one member experienced in industrial development; one member experienced in financial matters; one member experienced in real estate matters; one member

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<sup>18</sup> *Economic Development Industrial Corporation Program Description* at the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development website [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov)

<sup>19</sup> The following communities use Chapter 121C as the basis for special legislation to create Economic Development Industrial Corporations (EDIC) or similar entities, or to add specific features to the organizational structure, powers and authority and activities: Acton, Athol, Amherst, Billerica, Boston, Brockton, Everett, Framingham, Lynn, Mashpee, Plymouth, Shrewsbury, Quincy, and Watertown.

representative of low income people; and one member experienced in municipal government. The primary powers of an EDIC are to:

- Prepare plans and cost estimates for economic development projects;
- Acquire property by negotiation, by eminent domain if approved by a two-thirds vote of the municipality, or otherwise;
- Implement improvements necessary to the development of the area sited for industrial and manufacturing development in accordance with an economic development plan;
- Convey, mortgage, lease, transfer, exchange, or otherwise dispose of any property or interest in the property as may be required;
- Borrow money, invest money, and issue bonds, including revenue bonds;
- Receive and accept grants, loans, or advances from any federal agency, the Commonwealth, or the municipality;
- Finance pollution control facilities;
- Manage any project owned or leased by the EDIC, and, to enter into agreements with public or private interests for the purpose of managing the project;
- Act as an urban renewal corporation under Chapter 121A.

Following an affirmative vote by Town Meeting to establish an EDIC, the Board of Selectmen or chief administrative official must submit the following documents to DHCD:

- A transmittal letter requesting certification.
- A certified copy of the Town Meeting vote establishing the need for an EDIC and authorizing its creation.
- Evidence that there is significant demand for industrial land.
- Evidence that the Redevelopment Authority (if there is one) is unable to assemble industrial land.
- Department of Labor statistics which verify that the town is an area of substantial unemployment.
- Documentation showing that the economic development target area in the municipality is decadent, substandard, or blighted open space as defined by M.G.L. Chapter 121B Section (1), is zoned for industrial or manufacturing uses, and contains no more than forty-five (45) dwelling units.
- Copy of a plan showing the economic development area is decadent, substandard, or blighted.
- A list of seven members appointed to the EDIC, including names, qualifications and terms of office.

## **Infrastructure Implementation Strategies**

### Water Main

Water main design and installation along Main Street needs to be coordinated with ongoing public works projects including the new tank project and needs to be completed prior to the proposed Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project. This includes installation of two new parallel water mains on Main Street between Pleasant Street and Elm Street. Other water main upgrades noted in the recommendations are not as critical with regard to timing and should be programmed into a capital improvement program for the study area. Funding for this work can be sought using Department of Environmental Protection State Revolving Funds. Other monies can be generated from rate adjustment in the enterprise account.

### Sewers and drains

No records exist for sewers or drains in the study area. Cleaning and television inspection of sewers and drains should be conducted first for Main Street and then for the remainder of the study area. Main Street sewer upgrades would be a priority to enable time to design and construct a system to correct deficiencies prior to the TIP project. Drain upgrades along Main Street could be rolled into the TIP project. Other sewer and drain deficiencies should be programmed into a capital improvement plan for the study area, with the exception of pipes with imminent failures. Those would be handled on an emergency basis. Funding for sewers would mirror water main funding options. Drainage funding would likely come from general funds.

### Roadways

Roadway work along Main Street between Maple Street and High Street may be conducted using TIP monies. Other roadway improvements will likely be either funded using general funds or Chapter 90 monies.

### Parking

New parking areas will be implemented as land and funding become available. There is currently adequate parking available; however, to facilitate an expanded business base additional parking will be necessary in the future.

### Traffic

The primary traffic upgrades for the study area target the two signalized intersections along Main Street between Maple Street and Pleasant Street. Upgrading the signals at Pleasant Street and providing communication between this future signal and the signal upgraded by the Massachusetts Highway Department at Maple Street will improve the flow of traffic along Main Street as well as reduce queuing along the secondary roads.



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