

RETROFITTING THE SUBURBS

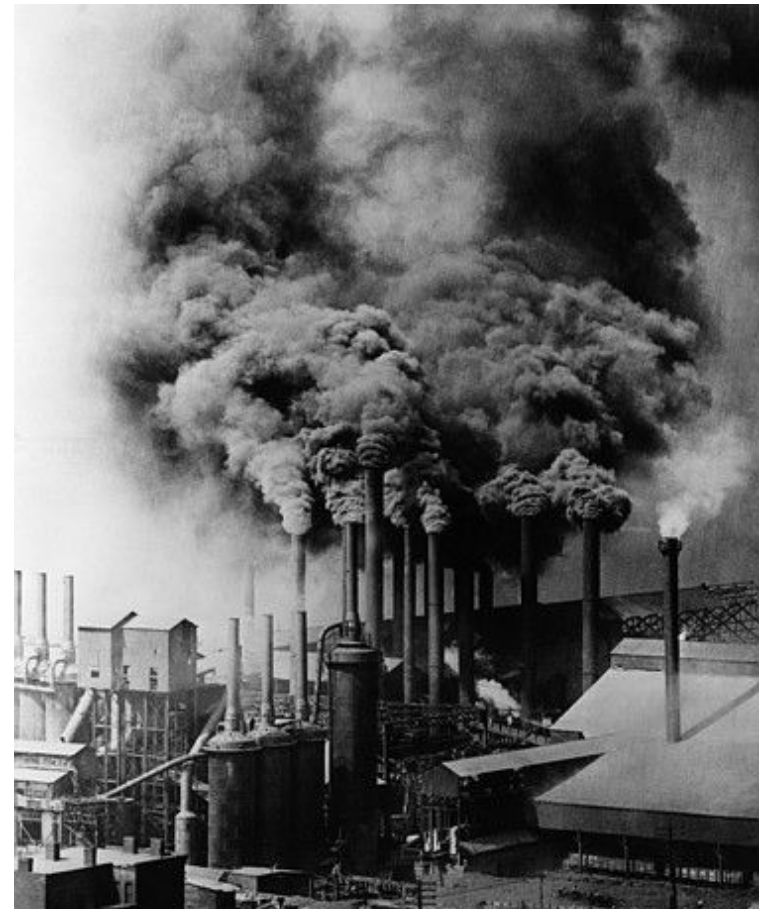
Transforming strip malls | Metro Boston Suitability Analysis



MetroWest Regional Collaborative

October 22, 2020

Suburban Retrofits | How We Got Here



Suburban Retrofits | How We Got Here



Suburban Retrofits | The need



Suburban Retrofits | Working towards a sustainable future

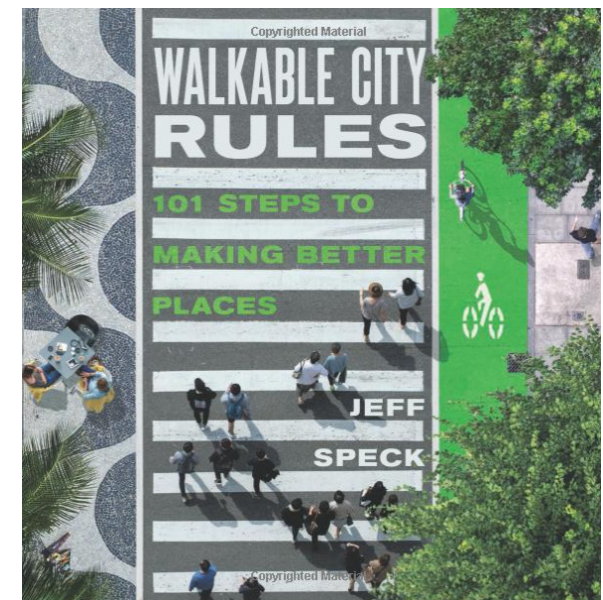
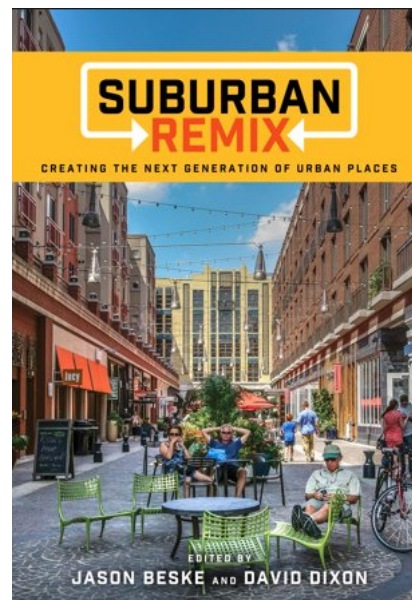
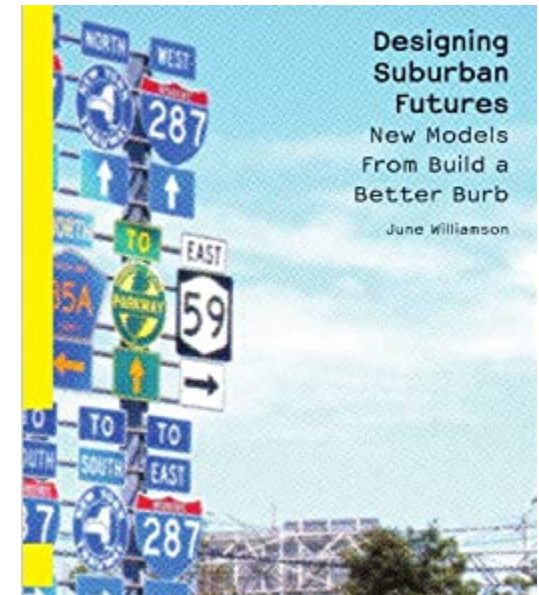
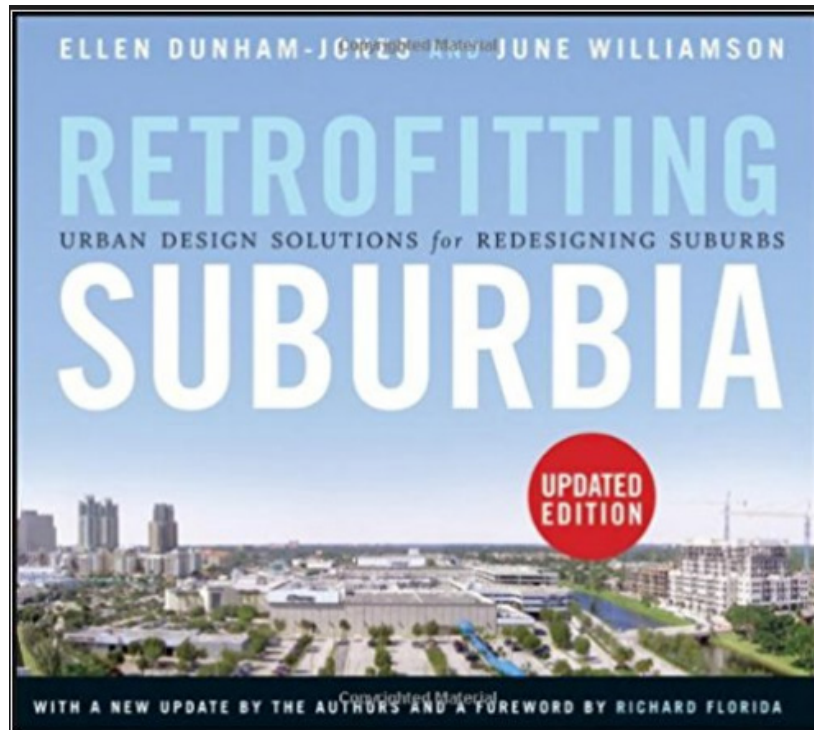
2/3 of Americans live in suburbs. "Urbanization of suburbs...will represent the vast majority of new real estate development over the next generation."*

The suburbs will continue to be part of America's future but they will look different.

Our population is aging, diversifying, household sizes are declining, and proportion of children are falling. Cultural preferences for new type of living have changed demand.

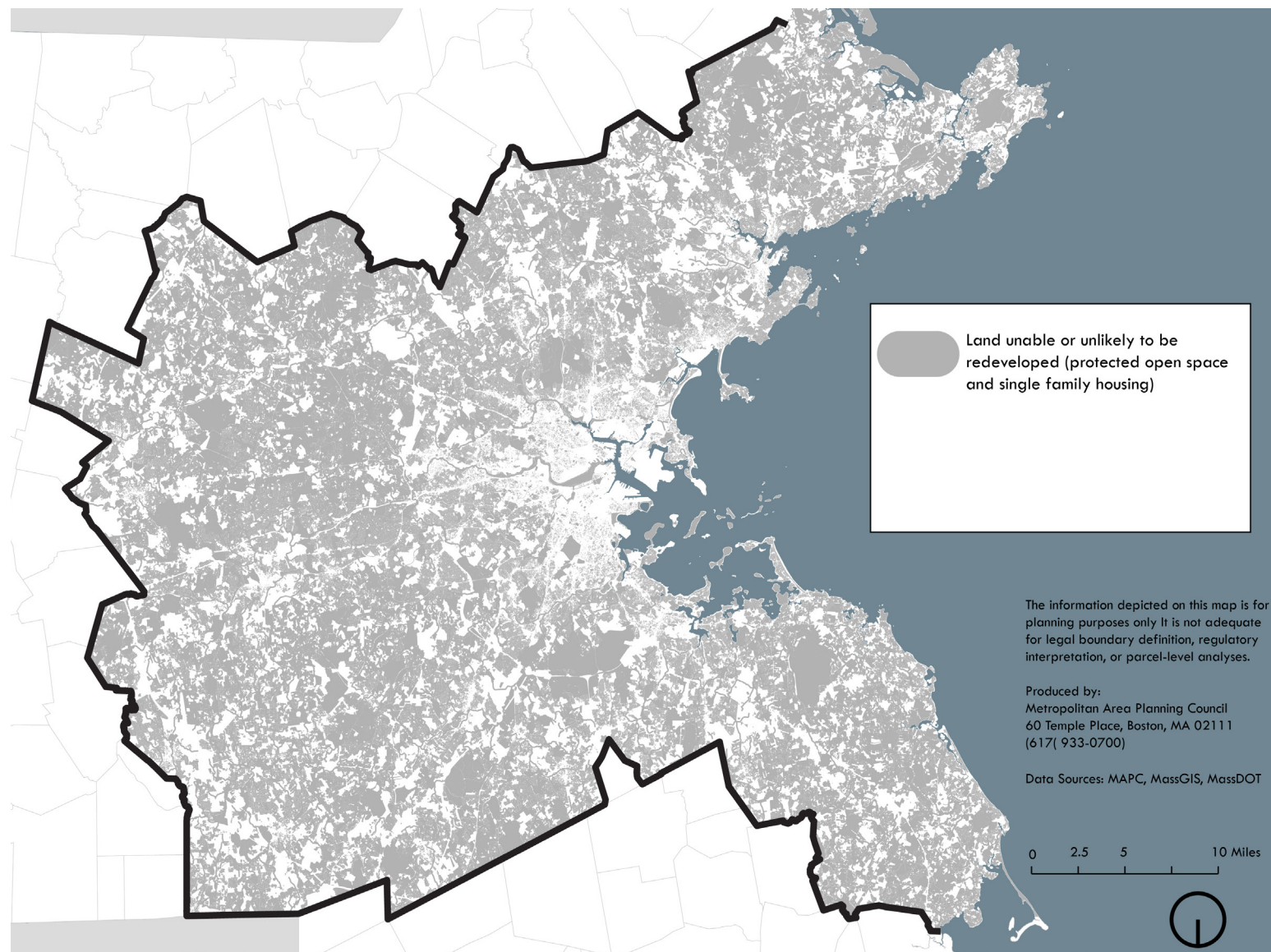
*See Suburban Remix. Beske and Dixon. 2018.

Suburban Retrofits | Working towards a sustainable future



Suburban Retrofits | The MAPC region

Metro Boston needs to produce >400,000 housing units over the next 20 years.* Where can this housing, along with additional needs for commercial space go?



*See mapc.org/learn/projections for more info.

Suburban Retrofits | Strip Malls



Strip Malls | The Potential

Strip malls (and related types of retail spaces) provide a great opportunity for redevelopment.

- Every community in the region has them.
- As single-story, single-use structures with abundant parking, they are often under-utilized. The changing nature of retail may exacerbate this aspect.
- Parcels are typically small enough that they can be redeveloped in a relatively short amount of time.
- Multiple contiguous parcels can be redeveloped incrementally to create cohesive neighborhoods over the long term.
- It can be easier politically to change uses and forms than single family districts.

Strip Malls | The Opportunity

Mashpee Commons



The Dior Dedham



Woburn Village

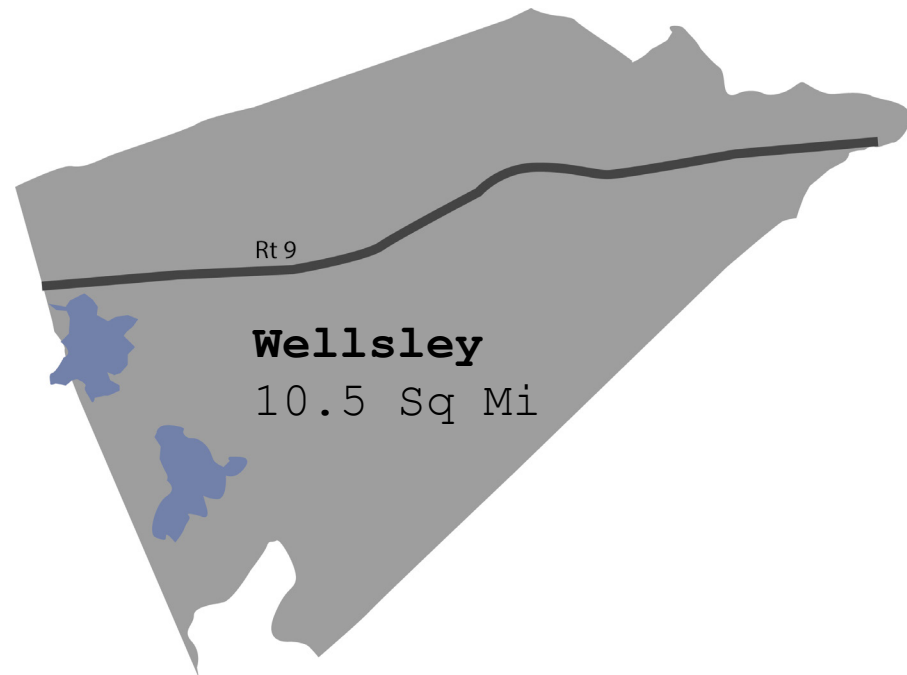


Strip Malls | How much land is there?

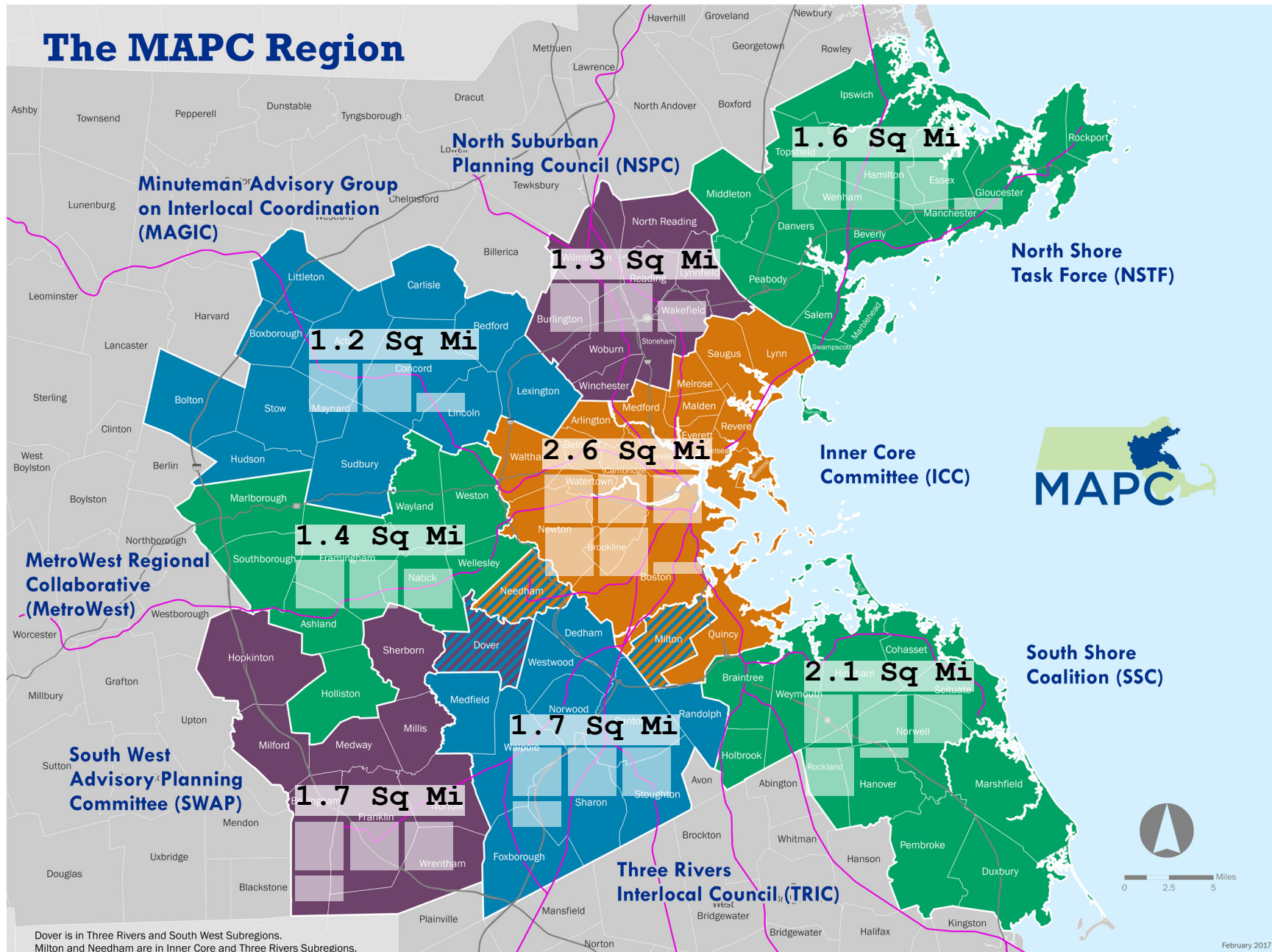
MAPC first identified the amount of land devoted to strip malls and related types of autocentric retail spaces. In the MAPC region there are approximately:

- **3,100 sites**
- **10.5 square miles of buildable area** (i.e., excluding wetlands, steep slopes, etc.)

For comparison, the amount of land devoted to strip malls in our region is equivalent to all of Wellesley



Strip Malls | How much land is there? (By subregion)



Strip Malls | Capacity Analysis

MAPC then performed a capacity analysis to understand the full potential of redevelopment. Assumptions were made for different types of communities (as defined by MAPC). Each community had 3 sets of assumptions: near transit, along a principal arterial roadway, and the rest of town.



Assumptions

1. SF / unit
2. Res parking req.
3. Comm parking req.
4. % open space
5. % setback area
6. Maximum floors
7. % groundfloor commercial

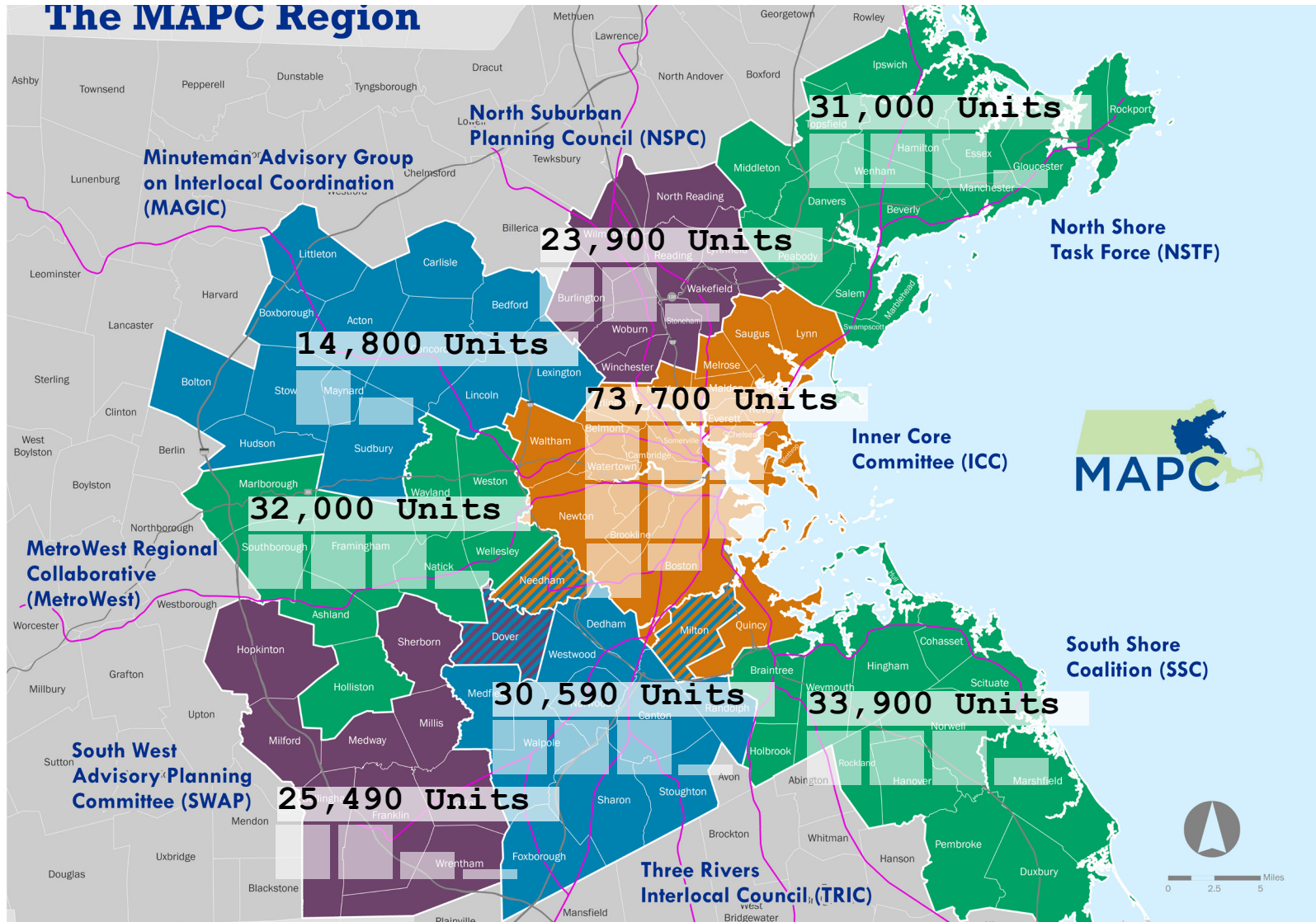
- Metro Core
- Sub-Regional Urban Center
- Streetcar Suburb
- Mature Suburb
- Established Suburb
- Maturing New England Town
- Country Suburb

- Metro Core
- Seaport / Airport
- Neighborhood Subway
- Transformational Subway
- Urban Gateway
- Town + Village
- Commerce Park
- Suburban Transformation
- Trolley Suburb

- Route 1
- Route 9
- Etc.

Strip Malls | Capacity Analysis

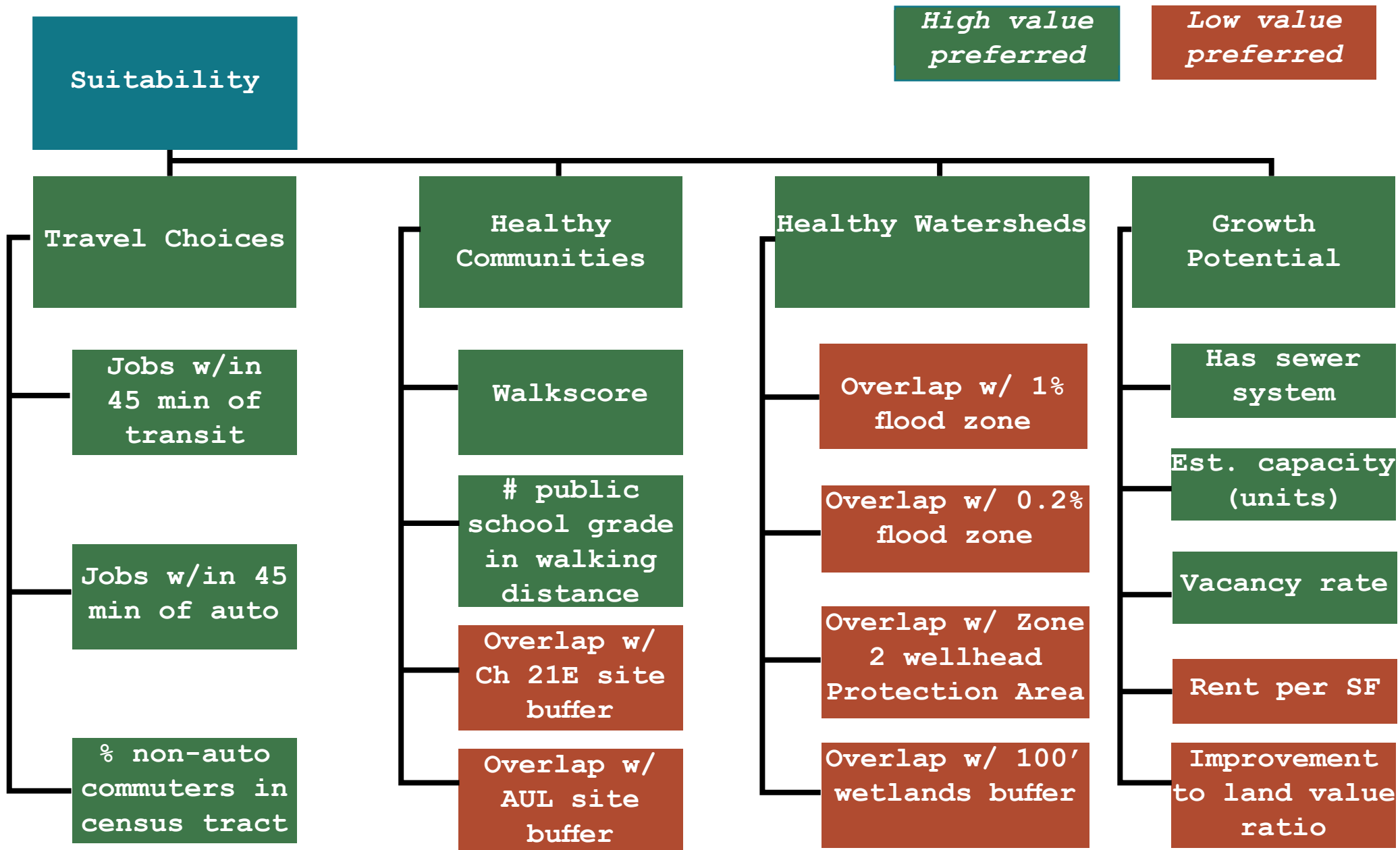
Based upon the analysis, MAPC estimates lots with strip malls in our region can accommodate approximately **270,000 housing units**.^{*} While clearly not every lot can or would be redeveloped, this figure nevertheless shows the potential for one way to help accommodate our growth needs on already developed lots.



^{*}This estimate assumes all development will be mixed-use, thus retaining all existing commercial space. If only considering multi-family development, the capacity is 350,000.

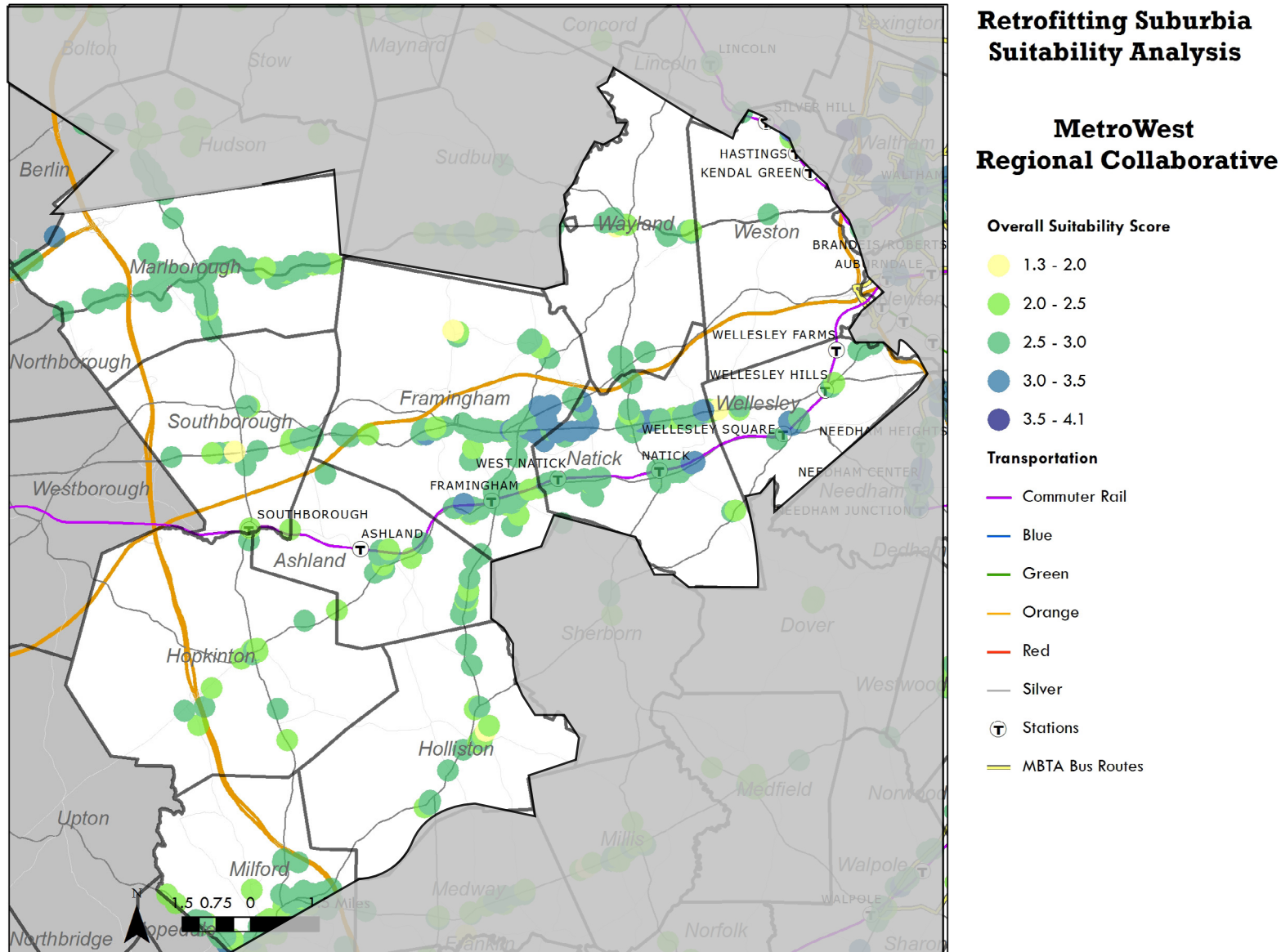
Strip Malls | Suitability Analysis

For the final stage of analysis, MAPC performed a suitability analysis, which provides a relative ranking of which sites are best suited to redevelopment, based upon a variety of criteria.



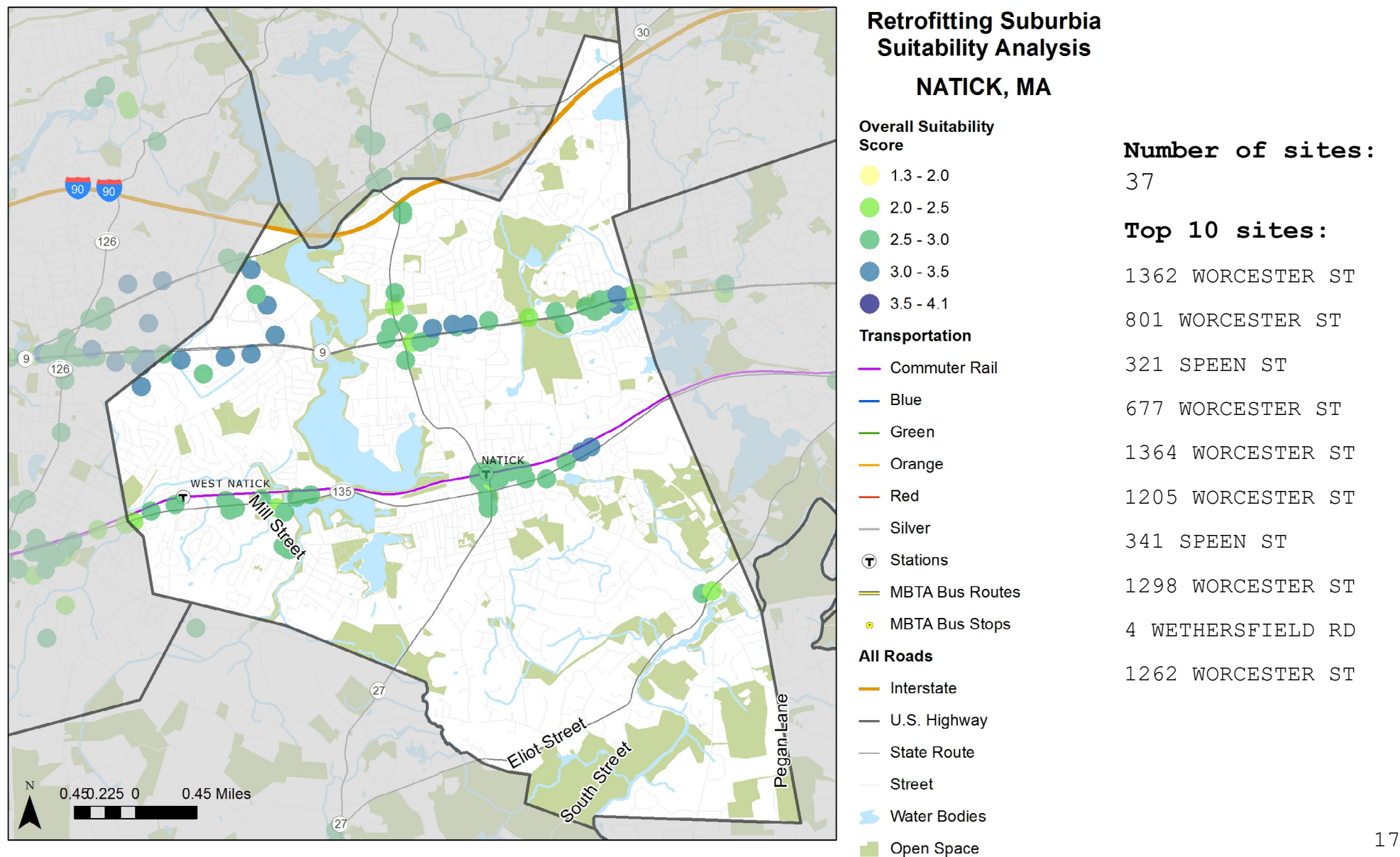
Strip Malls | Suitability Analysis

For the final stage of analysis, MAPC performed a suitability analysis, which provides a relative ranking of which sites are best suited to redevelopment, based upon a variety of criteria. A higher score corresponds to a site with higher suitability.



Strip Malls | Municipal Example

Below provides an example of the analysis on the municipal level. As expected, there are numerous suitable sites around the commuter rail stations.



Retrofitting Suburbia Analysis | Potential Policy Implications

This analysis can be used for a variety of means to help plan for future growth in a sustainable manner:

- **Local government**
 - Provide education to local landowners on the opportunity and potential
 - Help identify locations for updated planning and rezoning for mixed-use development
 - Work with landowners to identify barriers to redevelopment
- **State government**
 - Incorporate analysis as part of scoring for various grant programs
 - Utilize for prioritization for infrastructure investments, such as funding for sewer
- **Private sector**
 - Connect developers with landowners on sites that help achieve region's goals

Retrofitting Suburbia Analysis | Next Steps

MAPC will continue this work with the following activities (beginning fall 2020):

- **Additional Analysis and Pilot Project**
 - Test which assumptions (e.g., parking requirements) have greatest impact on capacity
 - Analyze potential fiscal impact and environmental impacts
 - Working with local community on understanding barriers of top sites and attempt to facilitate redevelopment
 - Expand to other suburban types (e.g., office parks)?
- **MetroCommon 2050 Research Brief**
 - Compile and publish results from initial and future phases of work
- **MAPC Digital Tool**
 - Develop a digital mapping tool to view results of research (similar to ArcMap Storyboard)

Discussion

Visit metrocommon.mapc.org to learn more about our upcoming regional, long-range plan.

Chris Kuschel, AICP
ckuschel@mapc.org
617 933-0731

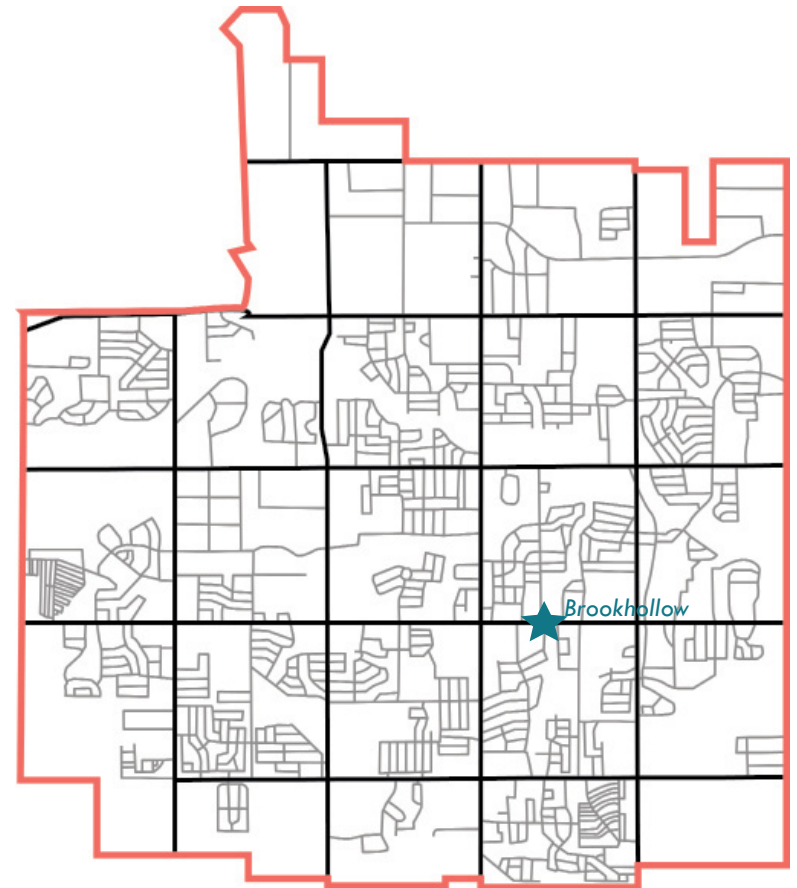


www.mapc.org

Appendix | Case Study Examples

BROOKHOLLOW SHOPPING CENTER, Desoto TX





Parcel size: 5 acres

Retrofit strategy: Adaptive reuse supplemented by infill development

Existing space: 50,000 square feet







Keys to success

Work locally. Understood market potential, the area's culture, and particulars of the site.

Keep costs down. Non-affluent area necessitates the need to minimize costs. Focusing on re-use of existing building saved significantly.

Active outdoor space. Overcapacity of parking allowed surplus space to use for food vendors and seating to activate the space.

Break up big box space. Breaking down large anchor space allows for more smaller, local businesses. Helps create a “micro” urbanism by concentrating retailers.

Work closely with tenants. Allowed for more successful spaces that best meet needs of tenants. Shared common spaces can facilitate greater interaction among businesses.

THE DIOR DEDHAM, Dedham MA



Parcel size: 0.8 acre

Retrofit strategy: Small parcel
redeveloped to create incremental
change







Proposed Mixed Use Development
 918 Boston / Providence Turnpike - Dedham, Mass.





Keys to success

Use local help. Using architects and attorneys who know the town allowed the developer to navigate local politics and know what the town is expecting.

Get access to cash. High requirements by mortgage lender makes it critical to have enough liquid assets. The developer found a partner with sufficient funds.

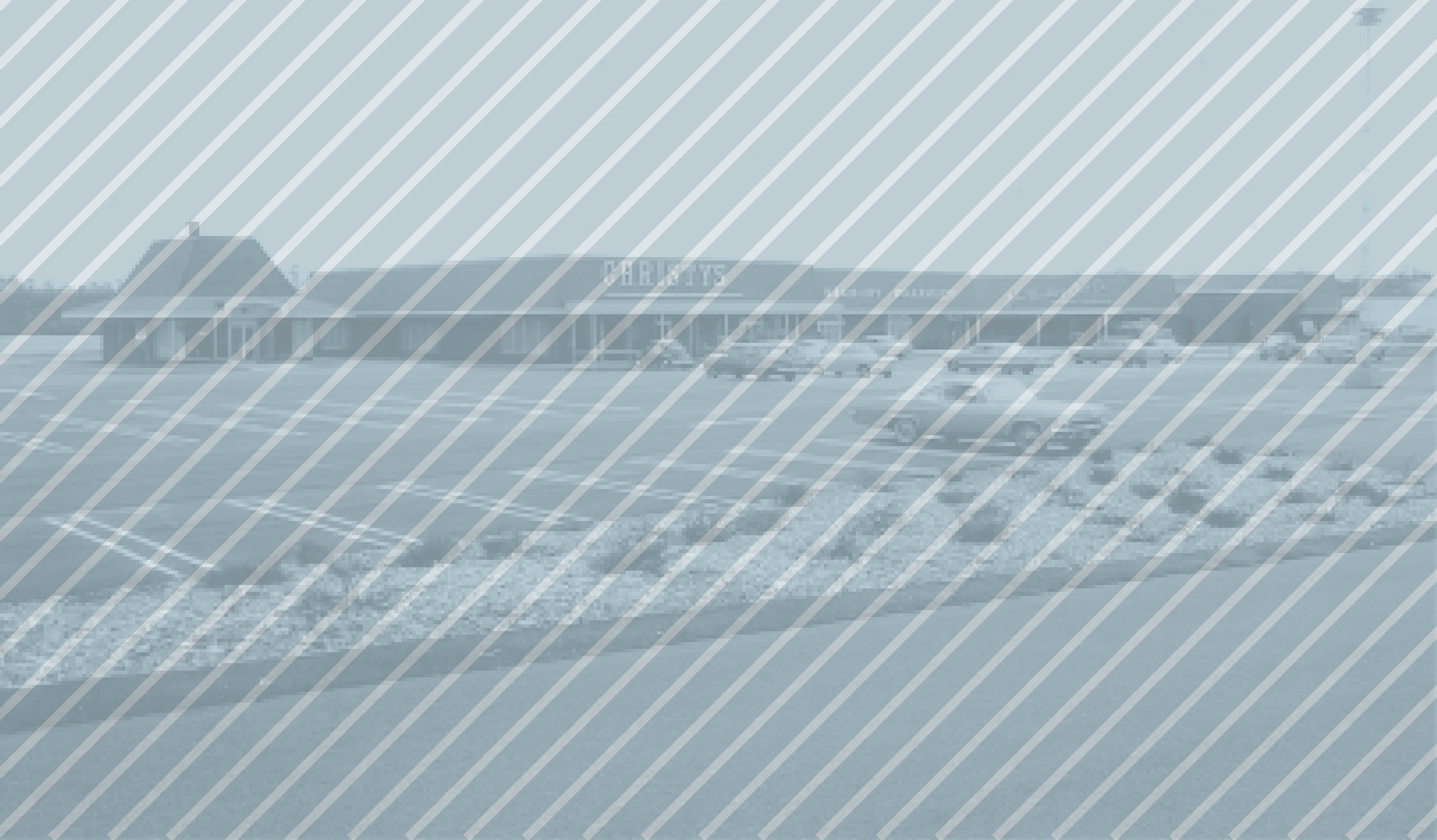
Have patience. The long lead time and red tape can be daunting for a new developer.

When possible, work within existing zoning. By proposing a development that aligned with existing zoning, a potentially insurmountable roadblock was removed.

Learn, learn, learn. The land owner, who is not a developer by trade, spent time understanding the market and what makes for a successful project.

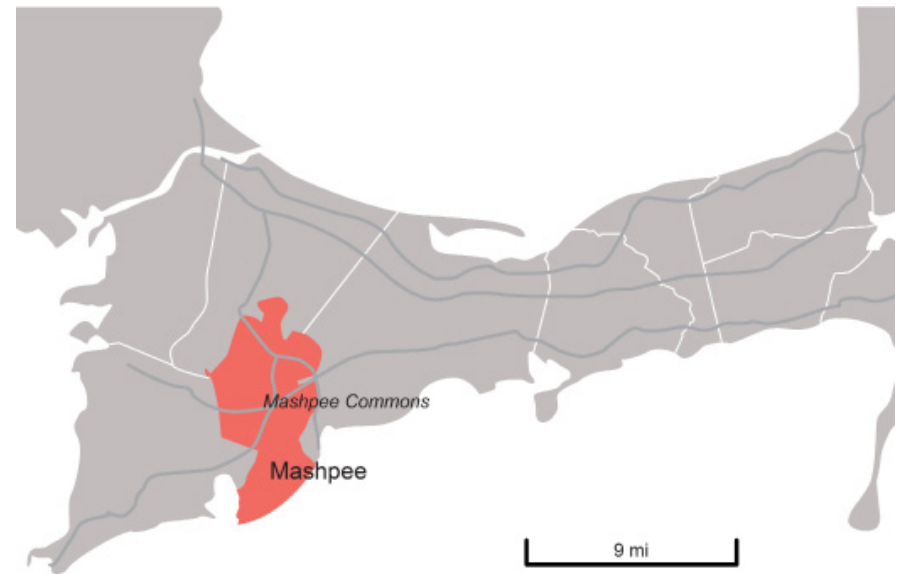
Leverage planning studies. Two planning studies (by MAPC and ULI) provided a vision and market analysis for the area.

MASHPEE COMMONS, Mashpee MA



Parcel size: 140 acres (56 acres developable)

Retrofit strategy: Large-scale redevelopment over long term







Keys to success

Follow path of least resistance. The developer looked for alternatives to changing existing zoning and regulations, which would have been extremely difficult in the circumstances.

Start with commercial uses but include civic uses and a vision of civic and residential. Mashpee Commons began as a retail center but included uses such as post office, church, and library. As demand for residential exploded in Mass, residential neighborhoods are now poised to meet that demand.

When possible focus on a single, large land owner. As a large landowner, the developer is able to effect transformative change in a community with no traditional town center.

Be in it for the long term. A criticism of some large developments is a feeling of lack of authenticity. Although Mashpee Commons has one owner, the long-term nature of its development has allowed for the evolutionary creation of a town center