

Wood Road Revitalization & Mixed-Use Development Initiative Existing Conditions Report



*Source: Massachusetts Tier 3 Assessors/ Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
Land Parcel Database, FY2022*

Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Town of Braintree
Braintree Wood Road Core Team
2023- 2024

Wood Road Existing Conditions Report

Contents

Wood Road Existing Conditions Report	1
Contents	1
Introduction	2
Project Purpose	2
Existing Conditions Report Purpose	2
Recent Local Studies & Planning Efforts.....	2
Study Area, Drive Time, & MAPC Region Characteristics.....	7
Wood Road Study Area Characteristics.....	7
Wood Road Drive Time Area Characteristics	8
Metropolitan Area Planning Council Area Characteristics	11
Infrastructure, Zoning, and Economic Landscape Analysis	12
Electric, Water, & Sewer Existing Conditions	12
Electric Infrastructure	12
Water Infrastructure	13
Sewer System at Wood Road	13
Stormwater Management.....	13
Key Observations.....	14
Zoning Analysis.....	14
Key Observations:	15
Land Use.....	17
Land Use Types.....	18
Building Density	20
Year Built	20
Business & Industry Data	21
Vacancies, Construction, & Rent	23
Municipal Tax Comparisons	23
Research & Development	25
Key Takeaways & Next Steps	26
Key Takeaways.....	26
Next Steps	27

Please be aware that the availability and accuracy of the data presented in this document may vary. Data may not always be readily available, fully accurate, or of the specific geographic size or granularity required for analysis or decision-making. For questions, comments, or further information, please contact Raul Gonzalez, Senior Economic Development Planner, at RGonzalez@MAPC.org

Introduction

Project Purpose

The Braintree Wood Road Revitalization and Mixed-Use Development Initiative is designed to transform a key development area into a modern innovation hub. By focusing on mixed-use development, the initiative aims to leverage the strategic location and inherent advantages of the area. This area, situated on the west side of the highway and comprising Wood Road, Rockdale, and North Street, is envisioned to become a cutting-edge center for innovation, contributing to the town's economic growth and diversification.

Existing Conditions Report Purpose

The purpose of the existing conditions report in the first phase of the project is to lay the groundwork for the initiative by providing a detailed analysis of the current economic and spatial landscape. This involves reviewing and synthesizing relevant plans, studies, and data to understand the area's economic position relative to the broader Metro Boston region. By identifying key attributes, potential impediments, and opportunities, the report aims to establish a clear baseline from which to plan for the area's future development. This foundational analysis is crucial for informed decision-making in subsequent phases, ensuring that the project's vision and recommendations are grounded in the current realities of the priority development area.

In essence, the existing conditions report serves as a critical starting point that informs the entire project by identifying where the area stands today and what needs to be addressed to realize the town's vision for a vibrant, innovative hub. This initial phase sets the stage for engaging with the community and stakeholders in envisioning the area's future and developing a strategic plan to achieve it, emphasizing the project's commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) principles to ensure equitable benefits from the revitalization efforts.

Recent Local Studies & Planning Efforts¹

1. **Braintree Municipal Planning Division.** *Braintree Master Plan 2023-2033*. City of Braintree, 2023.

The Braintree Master Plan outlines the city's vision for sustainable growth and development over the next decade, focusing on economic development, housing, transportation, and infrastructure. It identifies Wood Road as a key area for commercial and mixed-use development, aiming to create a vibrant space that attracts both businesses and visitors. The plan serves as a strategic framework for guiding future urban planning and development decisions in Braintree.

¹ A more comprehensive examination of the literature review can be found in Appendix A: *Zoning Analysis & Literature Review*

Key Observations:

- **Land Use and Zoning** - Braintree's land use is primarily residential, with significant commercial and industrial areas, including within the Wood Zone District. Zoning bylaws have been amended numerous times but not recodified since the 1980s, affecting clarity and interpretation.
- **Economic Development** - Braintree is strategically positioned to benefit from regional economic trends, particularly in the life sciences sector, due to its access to transit and competitive property tax rates.
- **Transportation, Circulation, and Transit** - The town's transportation network is a key asset but faces challenges due to growing demands and changing needs.
- **Location and Industry** - Wood Road is located at the interchange of Interstate 93, MA Route 3, and U.S. Route 1. This area is notable for a mix of hotels, commercial offices, life science firms, and distribution companies. It is home to a significant building repositioning project, now hosting a major life sciences tenant. The report highlights the potential for further conversions in this area, given the available building stock and convenient highway access.
- **Professional, Scientific & Technical Services Sector** - The report notes that industries within this sector are performing well across Greater Boston, and Braintree's lower rents combined with excellent transit and highway access are driving local demand. It specifically mentions that life sciences conversions on Wood Road and Columbian Street are already underway or planned.
- **Opportunity Areas** - Wood Road is listed as one of the Opportunity Areas in Braintree. These are areas identified for potential development or improvements. The report suggests that these areas, including Wood Road, are key locations for future town planning and development efforts.

2. **Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).** *Red Line Life Sciences Study.* Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2023.

This study, conducted in collaboration with local municipalities and the MAPC, explores the potential for life sciences development along the Red Line corridor, with a focus on Braintree. It assesses existing conditions, identifies opportunities for growth, and proposes strategies to attract life sciences businesses. The report highlights Braintree's competitive advantages, including its industrial real estate and strategic location, positioning it as an emerging hub for the life sciences sector.

Key Observations:

- Braintree's strengths lie in its competitively priced industrial real estate with space for modernization.
- Challenges include workforce accessibility, real estate market variability, and intense competition from regions with larger, diverse labor pools.
- The report suggests Braintree aims to utilize its competitively priced industrial real estate and surplus space to support and expand life science businesses, especially downstream and step-up companies.

- It faces labor challenges with respect to specific education and population size, but its large industrial properties with high vacancy rates offer significant revitalization potential.
- The report recommends Braintree's strategy involves promoting itself as a desirable location for life science firms, leveraging its distance from the Boston/Cambridge area and its capacity for industrial redevelopment.
- Emphasis is on municipal government's role in business development within the sector.

3. **South Shore Economic Development Corporation.** *South Shore 2030: Choosing Our Future.* MassDevelopment & Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2023.

A forward-looking report that examines the challenges and opportunities for economic and housing development in the South Shore region, with a focus on smart growth strategies along the Route 3 corridor. It emphasizes the need for coordinated development efforts to address infrastructure limitations and promote sustainable growth, providing valuable insights for policymakers and developers interested in the South Shore's future.

Key Observations:

- **Interconnection of Housing and Economic Development** - Younger individuals prioritize living locations over job proximity, reversing traditional economic development strategies.
 - **Need for Growth in New Industries** - The South Shore's economy can be too focused on local-serving industries, lacking external wealth influx and job creation, particularly affected by national contractions in retail and financial services.
 - **Economic Development Assets** - Transit-oriented development (TOD) offers significant opportunities, bolstered by a dynamic workforce and entrepreneurial base.
 - **Economic Development Challenges** - External perceptions, historical community development biases, and a strong inclination towards re-urbanization challenge the South Shore's growth. There is also a pervasive belief that the region cannot impact its future independently.
 - **Existing Conditions Challenges** - An aging workforce, concentration in shrinking industries, and transportation issues are significant hurdles.
 - **Responsive Economic Development Strategy** - Attracting younger residents, improving housing affordability, strengthening public-private partnerships, retaining and supporting key sectors, promoting entrepreneurship, recruiting businesses, and enhancing infrastructure.
 - **Competitive Assessment** - Some towns' resistance to development hampers efforts to sustain talent and diversify the economy.
 - **Target Business Analysis** - Focus on expanding export-oriented sectors (insurance, financial services, headquarter operations) and exploring diversification opportunities in manufacturing, life sciences, and data analytics.
4. **Town of Braintree.** *2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan.* Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) & Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), 2019.

This plan addresses Braintree's strategies for mitigating natural and manufactured hazards, with a particular focus on flood risk management and climate adaptation measures. It includes detailed flood zone maps, critical infrastructure assessments, and recommendations for reducing vulnerability to extreme weather events. The document is essential for urban planning and emergency management professionals looking to enhance the town's resilience.

Key Observations:

- The plan's flood zone map categorizes small portions of Wood Road, North Road, Rockdale Street, and most of Granite Street in 100-year flood zones, mostly within Zone A and a couple of areas, generally near the highway interchange, within Zone AE, though instances of actual flooding have been rare.
- Zone A has a 1% annual chance of flooding with approximate floodplain delineation, while Zone AE includes detailed hydraulic analyses and Base Flood Elevations (BFEs), necessitating flood insurance.
- The plan underscores a significant rise in extreme heat events, impacting vulnerable populations, with a decrease in extreme cold events. Notably, the Braintree Medical Facility Center at 340 Wood Road is in a recognized extreme heat hotspot.
- Braintree faces the intensification of the urban heat island effect, where commercial and industrial areas with heat-absorbing surfaces exhibit higher temperatures. Satellite imagery reveals these heat islands on hot days, impacting residential and critical facilities, particularly those near business or industrial zones. In response, Braintree has established a tree committee, enacted a general ordinance, and initiated aggressive replanting plans supported by a Tree Fund to mitigate these effects and enhance urban cooling.

5. **Braintree Parks and Recreation Department.** *2018 Braintree Open Space and Recreation Plan.* City of Braintree, 2018.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan aims to protect and enhance Braintree's green spaces and recreational facilities. It outlines the community's needs, sets priorities for future developments, and proposes actions to improve access to open spaces. The plan emphasizes the importance of natural resources for the community's health, wellness, and quality of life, serving as a guide for sustainable land use and recreation planning.

Key Observations:

- Sixty-eight acres of the Blue Hills Reservation are located in the northwestern corner of Braintree separated from the main area by Route 128/I-93, mostly wetlands, with parking and map kiosk on West Street, and Chickatawbut area access off Wood Rd.
- The Blue Hills Reservation, encompassing approximately 7,000 acres, is a significant natural asset that is internally connected to the Braintree portion. During the Master Plan process, public input highlighted a notable concern: the need for adequate parking to facilitate access to the Blue Hills. This feedback underscores the importance of creating accessible entry points to this extensive green space. Notably, the current lack of sufficient parking infrastructure has led to a trend where residents frequently travel to neighboring communities to access similar amenities.

- The Wood Road District is at the edge of the Great Cedar Swamp, a significant wetland located on the Blue Hills Reservation. It is classified as a swamp and is part of the Cedar Swamp Conservation Area. This conservation area plays a crucial role in protecting a large wildlife habitat, covering an area of approximately 84.38 acres. It is an important ecological feature and contributes to the biodiversity and environmental balance of the region.
- There are three Certified Vernal Pools at the edge of the Wood Road District, along the border with Quincy.
- The MA Highway Facility 59 is a closed landfill along Wood Road.

6. **Massachusetts Department of Transportation.** *Braintree Split I-93 Route 3 Assessment.* Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2023.

This assessment examines traffic, safety, and mobility issues at the Braintree Split, proposing a series of improvements to address congestion and enhance transportation efficiency. It provides an analysis of current conditions and recommends short-term and long-term strategies for improving traffic flow and safety, critical for regional transportation planning and infrastructure development.

Key Observations:

- The Braintree Split I93 Route 3 Assessment highlights traffic concerns at the Braintree Split, impacting the adjacent Wood Road District with issues of congestion and bottlenecks.
- Proposed short-term improvements near Wood Road include upgrading lanes, enhancing HOV access, and implementing advanced traffic systems to improve safety and flow.

Study Area, Drive Time, & MAPC Region Characteristics²

Wood Road Study Area Characteristics

The Wood Road Study Area, encompassing 0.3 square miles, with no permanent residents.³ The Wood Road District is a hub of different business activities spanning various industries, including automotive dealerships, manufacturing, legal services, financial advisory, healthcare, retail, telecommunications, construction, and more.

It hosts a wide range of businesses from small legal and accounting firms to larger corporations involved in manufacturing and healthcare services. The district caters to a variety of consumer needs through retail outlets, medical practices, and service-oriented businesses.

The Wood Road area features a diverse array of businesses, with a significant presence in sectors such as software, health services, manufacturing, and professional services⁴. It is also notable that there is a prevalence of small to medium-sized enterprises. Overall, the region seems to be characterized by a mix of technical, professional, and health-related services.

With employee sizes mostly ranging from one to ten, there is a prevalence of small operations. The most frequent business types include professional services such as attorneys and financial advisory services while health services and technology firms are also notable. Additionally, the Wood Road District is home to four hotels, built between 1974 and 2001, offering a combined total of 445 rooms⁵. These include a 133-room hotel, a 106-room hotel, and two 103-room facilities. This diverse accommodation range contributes significantly to the district's lodging options, catering to both modern and traditional preferences.

The study area includes critical environmental features like floodways and wetlands, which are essential considerations for planning and development to ensure sustainability and resilience against environmental risks.⁶ Overall, the Wood Road Study Area is depicted as a small, densely populated area with a rich business environment with environmental features that must be considered in planning and development processes.

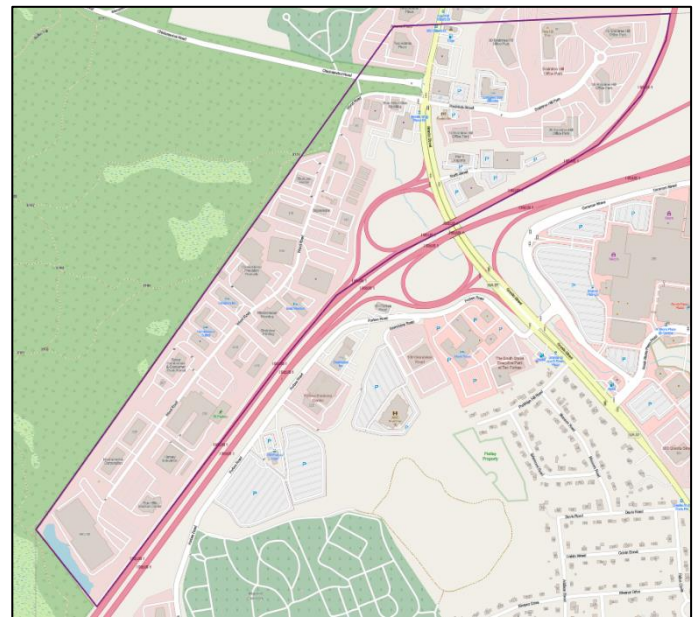


Figure 1 The Wood Road Study Area (2019)

² For additional detailed data, refer to Appendix B: *Comprehensive Data Accumulation on Wood Road Study Area, the 15-Minute Drive Time, and the MAPC Region*

³ **Town of Braintree, Massachusetts**. "Property Assessment Information FY2024." 2024. <https://braintree.patriotproperties.com/default.asp>.

⁴ **DataAxle**. *DataAxle Reference Solutions*. DataAxle, 2023.

⁵ **CoStar Group**. *CoStar Real Estate Analytics*. CoStar, 2023.

⁶ **Town of Braintree**. *2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan*. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) & Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), 2019.

Wood Road Drive Time Area Characteristics

Along with the Wood Road Study Area, a 15-minute Drive Time analysis through *ESRI Business Analyst* was used to understand the accessibility and catchment area of a location based on how far people are willing to travel by car to reach it. This approach can offer insights into the potential customer base, accessibility, and market size for businesses or services within the area, providing a unique perspective than a static geographic area study might. It is often chosen for its relevance to consumer behavior, traffic patterns, and economic activity, which are crucial for planning and development decisions.

Below, the demographic profile for the 15-minute drive time from the Wood Road District in Braintree, Massachusetts, presents a view of the community's educational background, income levels, employment sectors, and household income distribution⁷.

- **Demographics:** The region has a population of 378,504, with a median age of 40.8 years, and it is comprised of 149,533 households with a median disposable income of \$72,662.
- **Education Levels:** Educational attainment varies, with 10.1% lacking a high school diploma, 24.0% with a high school diploma as their highest qualification, 21.6% with some college or an associate degree, and a noteworthy 44.4% holding a bachelor's degree or higher.
- **Median Household Income:** This is the income amount in the middle of a list of all household incomes in the region when it is ordered from lowest to highest. In this case, half of the households in the region earn less than \$91,664, and half earn more.
- **Per Capita Income:** This is the average income earned per person in a given area in a specified year. It is calculated by dividing the area's total income by its total population. For this region, the per capita income is \$50,942, indicating the average income amount each individual makes.
- **Median Net Worth:** This represents the middle value of net worths when all the net worths in the region is listed from lowest to highest. Net worth is the difference between the total assets and total liabilities of an individual or household. The median net worth in this region is \$159,899, meaning half of the population has a net worth below this amount, and half has a net worth above it.
- **Employment Sector Distribution:** Employment is predominantly in white-collar jobs, accounting for 68.4% of employment, while blue-collar workers make up 14.1%, and the service sector employs 17.5% of the workforce; the unemployment rate stands at 5.1%.
- **Household Income Distribution:** Income distribution shows a large disparity, with 15,095 households earning less than \$15,000; the largest group, 27,044 households, earns between \$100,000 and \$149,999, and there are 24,601 households with incomes of \$200,000 and above.

⁷ Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). *ESRI Business Analyst*. ESRI, 2023.



Figure 2 ESRI Wood Road Study Area and 15-minute Drive Time

Within the 15-minute drive time area from the Wood Road District, the educational attainment reveals a community where the percentage of individuals without a high school diploma and those whose highest education is a high school diploma are higher compared to both Massachusetts and national averages. However, the area also boasts a considerable number of residents with bachelor's and graduate or professional degrees, a figure that does not quite reach the higher proportion of such degrees found statewide.⁸

Household income analysis shows that the area has a considerable segment of lower-income households earning under \$15,000, aligning closely with the state and national percentages. Households earning over \$200,000 also represent a notable portion of the community, albeit not as high as the state average.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

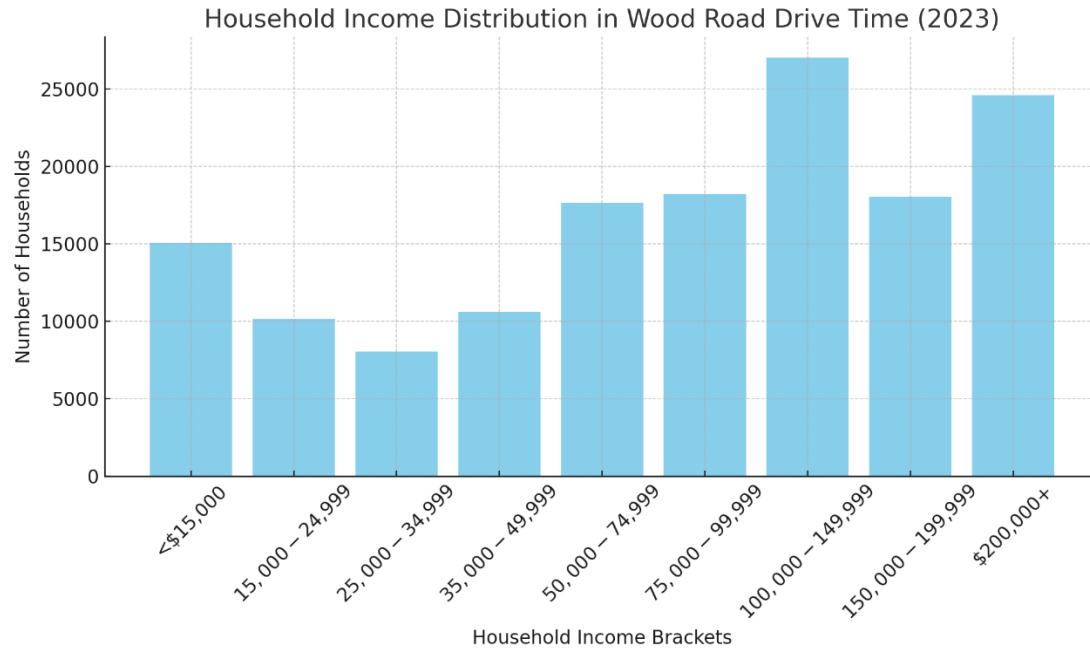


Figure 3 Distribution of Household Incomes within a 15-Minute Drive Time of Wood Road, Braintree, MA (ESRI Business Analyst, 2023)

The per capita income in this area stands above both the Massachusetts and national averages, with an anticipated increase projected for the coming years. When it comes to net worth, the area has a larger percentage of its population with a net worth under \$15,000 similar to state and national levels. However, there is a robust presence of households in the higher net worth categories, from \$150,000 to under \$1 million, when compared to the national average.¹⁰

The labor force in the area leans towards white-collar occupations, with management, business, financial, and computer or mathematical jobs being more represented here than in the national workforce. Conversely, fewer individuals are employed in production and transportation or moving occupations compared to the national average.

The area has a strong employment base, with over 204,000 people employed and an unemployment rate that reflects a healthy job market. The area is expecting a steady growth in population, households, and families, albeit at modest rates.¹¹

The age distribution shows a relatively balanced mix, with slightly more males in the younger age groups and females in the older age groups. This suggests a diverse population in terms of age. With an average household size of 2.49, the area is close to the national average and slightly above the state average, indicating a community with a mix of singles, couples, and families.¹²

In terms of disposable income, the area falls within the Massachusetts and national ranges for the lower income brackets. However, it displays a stronger representation in the higher disposable income brackets,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

specifically those earning \$100,000 and above, compared to the national average.¹³ This suggests a local economy with a considerable proportion of affluent households.

This demographic profile of the drive time area suggests a community with a mix of educational backgrounds, a strong presence of white-collar employment, a wide range of household incomes, and an above-average net worth compared to national figures. The population is stable with a modest growth outlook, and the average household size indicates that it may be a family-centric community.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council Area Characteristics

The MAPC region encompasses 101 cities and towns in the Greater Boston area, stretching from the inner core of Boston to more suburban and rural communities at its edges. This area is characterized by a diverse range of communities, each with unique economic, social, and environmental attributes.¹⁴

1. **Population and Demographics:** The MAPC region had a total population of approximately 3,489,136 in 2023, with a median age of 39.5 years. This demographic data indicates a diverse age distribution and suggests a mix of young, working age, and older residents within the region.
2. **Household Dynamics:** There were around 1,372,766 households within the MAPC region, with an average household size of 2.45, which aligns closely with national averages.
3. **Economic Indicators:** The median disposable income in the MAPC region was noted to be around \$72,662 in 2023, which provides insights into the spending power and economic status of the region's residents. Additionally, the unemployment rate in the MAPC region was lower than the national average, at 4.0%.
4. **Housing and Affordability:** The total number of housing units in the MAPC region was significantly high, at 1,459,136, with a Housing Affordability Index (HAI) of sixty-three. This suggests a large housing stock but also points to challenges related to affordability, given the HAI's reflection of the median income sufficiency for purchasing a median-valued home without financial strain.
5. **Diversity Index:** The region had a diversity index of sixty-five, indicating a moderate level of demographic diversity within the community.

Key Observations

Multiple themes collectively paint a picture of the Wood Road Study Area, particularly as it is compared to - and contrasted with - the Drive Time Area and the MAPC region, highlighting its demography, economic landscape, housing challenges, and environmental issues.

That being said, the Wood Road Study Area is distinctly commercial with a significant concentration on business services. In contrast, the Drive Time Area is characterized by a sizeable population with high income levels and educational attainment, suggesting it could provide a customer base and workforce for the businesses in the Wood Road Study Area. The MAPC region at large shares similar economic indicators to the Drive Time Area but on a broader scale, with wider demographic diversity and housing challenges, indicating a varied and complex regional backdrop that encompasses both the Wood Road Study Area and its surrounding Drive Time Area.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

1. **Business Landscape:** The area is characterized as a diverse business hub with a mix of small legal/accounting firms and larger corporations in sectors like automotive manufacturing, healthcare, and retail. This diversity supports a vibrant economy but also highlights the need for strategic planning to support small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and ensure economic resilience.
2. **Economic Indicators:** Indications of economic health of the Drive Time Area such as median disposable income, unemployment rates, and household income levels offer insights into the standard of living and economic challenges faced by residents.
3. **Housing and Affordability:** The lack of availability of housing units, coupled with affordability indices, points to the critical issue of housing access and affordability, particularly for the Study Area and Drive Time.
4. **Infrastructure and Environmental Features:** The inclusion of data on floodways, wetlands, contours, and soil types within the Study Area underscores the importance of environmental considerations in planning and development. These features impact land use, development potential, and the ecological sustainability of the area.

Infrastructure, Zoning, and Economic Landscape Analysis

Electric, Water, & Sewer Existing Conditions

The Wood Road District is served by the Braintree Electric Light Department (BELD), a longstanding institution with a rich history. Over the years, it has built a reputation for providing reliable and affordable electric service to the residents and businesses of Braintree. BELD, a vertically integrated utility, owns and operates a variety of generation, transmission, and distribution equipment.

In addition to electric service, the Wood Road District relies on the Braintree Water and Sewer Department to ensure the availability of clean and reliable water and sewer services. This department's primary mission is to enhance the quality and reliability of the water and sewer systems within the Town of Braintree, all while maintaining the highest level of service at the most affordable cost to the ratepayers. The Braintree Water and Sewer Department plays a crucial role in safeguarding public health and environmental conservation by managing and maintaining these critical infrastructure elements.

Together, the Braintree Electric Light Department and the Braintree Water and Sewer Department form the backbone of essential utility services in the Wood Road District. Their commitment to reliability, safety, and cost-effectiveness ensures that the residents and businesses of Braintree can enjoy a high quality of life and continue to thrive in their vibrant community.

Electric Infrastructure

The Reliability & Redundancy report from BELD focuses on their commitment to providing a reliable and redundant electrical service to Braintree. Key elements include two 58 MW fast-start turbines, and 9.5 miles of 115kV underground transmission lines forming a loop system.¹⁵ Their distribution system consists

¹⁵ **Braintree Electric Light Department and Water and Sewer Department.** *Electric, Water, & Sewer Existing Conditions Report.* Braintree Municipal Utilities, 2023.

of three substations, each with dual transformers, ensuring redundancy. BELD prioritizes offering reliable service at reasonable costs, employing a long-term approach and a hedging plan to stabilize electric rates.

In 2004, BELD initiated a project to create an additional utility access route for Wood Road, which previously had only a single access path. This new route included the installation of two pipes under Route I-93/128 using horizontal directional drilling: a 12-inch pipe for water and a 16-inch pipe for electric and communication services.¹⁶ The project concluded with improved infrastructure on Wood Road and Brooks Drive, enhancing water supply redundancy, fire protection, and providing an alternate high-voltage source for electric customers, especially at the end of Wood Road.

Water Infrastructure

Previously, Wood Road's water delivery, fed solely from Granite Street, was inadequate, prompting the old Haemonetics building to have a private fire pond. In 2002, a 12-inch watermain under I-93 was added, linking Forbes Road's 8-inch main to Wood Road, enhancing water supply and redundancy.¹⁷ Currently, the 8-inch section of Wood Road's watermain is being upgraded to twelve inches for better service. Future considerations include expanding the 8-inch Forbes Road/Brooks Drive main, given its proximity to large mains near the treatment plant.¹⁸

Sewer System at Wood Road

The existing gravity sewer system serves several Wood Road buildings but terminates near #290.¹⁹ The last five buildings use a private sewer pump at #340, connecting back to the town's system. Any future redevelopment plans should actively explore the enhancement of the sewer infrastructure, potentially through a mix of private initiatives and public partnerships.

Additionally, it is pertinent to acknowledge that the town's sewer system ultimately integrates with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) system, connecting along the Fore River and extending to Deer Island.

Stormwater Management

Future redevelopment in the Town of Braintree will be subject to the comprehensive guidelines established by the Stormwater Ordinance. Detailed regulations include the need for stormwater management permits for new development and redevelopment projects, the prohibition of illicit connections and discharges, and requirements for the design, construction, and maintenance of stormwater facilities.²⁰ Given these regulations, it is imperative for future redevelopment projects within Braintree to incorporate stormwater management strategies that align with both the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Storm Water Discharges and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Stormwater Management Standards. Many properties have individual stormwater systems, with limited roadway drainage infrastructure.²¹ Developers should

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ **Town of Braintree.** "Chapter 13.14 Stormwater Management." *Code of the Town of Braintree*. Last modified May 29, 2018. <https://ecode360.com/33485335>.

²¹ **Braintree Electric Light Department and Water and Sewer Department.** *Electric, Water, & Sewer Existing Conditions Report*. Braintree Municipal Utilities, 2023.

consider these requirements early in the planning process to ensure designs are compliant and contribute positively to the town's efforts in protecting and enhancing its environmental resources.

Key Observations

1. BELD, the Wood Road District's electric service provider, has a strong track record of reliability and affordability with a vertically integrated utility setup.
2. Infrastructure improvements, including a 12-inch water main under I-93, have enhanced water supply and redundancy in the area.
3. Sewer systems in the district may require a public pump for long-term viability, potentially involving new infrastructure and land acquisition.
4. Stormwater management in the Wood Road District needs attention, particularly for properties with individual systems and limited roadway drainage infrastructure.

Zoning Analysis

The analysis of Braintree's zoning ordinances and amendments highlights zoning as a regulatory framework dividing regions for different purposes, guiding land use and development. It addresses growth management, sustainability, and infrastructure needs while balancing diverse interests, adapting over time to integrate sustainability and technological advancements into urban development.

Zoning changes in Braintree are governed by Article XV of their Zoning Bylaws, which outlines the detailed procedures for making amendments. Zoning changes or map amendments must comply with Massachusetts General Laws (MGL). The community's strong preference for a well-considered Master Plan prior to any comprehensive rezoning efforts was evident, leading to the withdrawal of a proposed comprehensive rezone in 2019. This decision underscores the local commitment to deliberate and inclusive urban planning. By prioritizing the development of a Master Plan, the community aims to ensure that future zoning changes align with broader objectives and address the needs and concerns of all stakeholders.

The Wood Road District lies entirely within Braintree's Highway Business Area. The Highway Business District in Braintree consists of clustered areas along the highways and has a suburban retail and office character. This district allows for various commercial uses such as automotive, banks, business/professional offices, hotels/motels, medical facilities, restaurants, and retail stores. Many of the businesses in this district are located in strip malls and include the major landmark South Shore Plaza, located directly south of I-93 from the Wood Road District.

The Highway Business District in Braintree is characterized by specific zoning rules, particularly regarding parking structures and building coverage. To incentivize the use of parking structures and efficiently manage off-street parking requirements, properties employing parking structures are entitled to an increased building coverage allowance of up to 30%.²² Properties using parking structures to meet off-

²² **Town of Braintree, MA.** "§135-701 Table of Dimensional and Density Regulations: Notes." In *Zoning Ordinances*, Article VII Area Regulations. Amended October 27, 1992, and May 11, 1994. <https://ecode360.com/BR1350/laws/LF1032967>.

street parking criteria are allowed increased building coverage, up to a maximum of 30%.²³ This increase is contingent upon maintaining a minimum of 25% open space and a maximum of 75% lot coverage. These regulations are part of a broader framework aimed at managing the district's development while balancing the need for parking, building space, and open areas.

Standard parking requirements for offices, retail, and medical facilities with specific ratios for each (medical facilities at 6.7 per 1000 sq ft, general offices at 5 per 1000 sq ft, and general business/retail at 4 per 1000 sq ft. In the Highway Business Zone, reductions may be allowed under section 135-803 but require a professional engineer's study. Properties must reserve necessary parking as landscaped open space, building it if required by the Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA). If they cannot demonstrate compliance with the required amount of parking, whether to be constructed or in reserve, then a variance is needed.

Furthermore, signage allowed in a highway business zone is limited under section 135-904.2 of the Braintree Zoning Bylaw, and further requires review if visible from a major artery or highway. Over the past several years, multiple Applicants have filed for relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals for sign packages that exceed what is allowed under Section 135-904.2. This calls for a reevaluation of signage bylaws to better accommodate contemporary business visibility needs while maintaining aesthetic and safety standards within the community.

Key Observations:

The Braintree Zoning Ordinances provide detailed regulations for the Highway Business Area. The key provisions relevant to the area include:

1. **Purpose** - The Highway Business zoning district is intended to provide areas for commercial development with access to major highways, suitable for retail, service, and business uses that require large sites and generate significant vehicular traffic.
2. **Permitted Uses** - The district permits a variety of uses, including retail establishments, business and professional offices, banks, hotels, motels, restaurants, research and testing labs, light manufacturing, and other similar uses. Some specific uses are subject to additional conditions or may require a special permit.
 - a. Multifamily dwellings are allowed with a minimum lot size of 43,560 square feet, a minimum frontage of 100 feet, 2,000 square feet of open space per unit, and the number of units determined by requiring 5,000 square feet per one-bedroom or studio unit plus 1,000 square feet for each additional bedroom, with the open space requirement included in this calculation.
 - b. Signage regulations allow for one ground sign per lot (not exceeding 150 sq ft and 35 ft in height), marquee and roof signs are prohibited, projecting signs over public ways are not allowed, and wall signs are limited to one per store/business, with a maximum of 150 sq ft in area and 4 ft in height, with additional restrictions on visibility and total signage area per building frontage. Gasoline service stations and repair garages may have one ground

²³ **Braintree Planning Department.** *Braintree Zoning Ordinances & Amendments Analysis.* Braintree Town Government, 2023.

sign containing the logo of the oil company, not exceeding 150 square feet in area and forty feet in height, subject to approval by the Zoning Board of Appeals

- c. A building-mounted wireless communication link may be located on any building or structure located in a Highway Business. Additionally, wireless communication towers may also be located within the district.
3. **Parking** - In the Highway Business District, properties that use parking structures to meet off-street parking requirements, as outlined in § 135-806 of the Braintree Zoning Ordinances, may increase their allowable building coverage by 5%. This means the total maximum building coverage can be up to 30%, provided that the site maintains at least 25% open space and meets the 75% lot coverage requirement.
- a. Section §135-803 outlines conditions under which a decrease in off-street parking requirements can be granted, typically through a special permit or site plan review. This decrease is contingent upon preserving the intent of the parking regulations, ensuring sufficient parking for intended uses, and is based on a comprehensive parking study conducted by a registered professional engineer.
 - b. The study should assess factors such as the size and type of on-site uses, tenancy composition, parking turnover rate, peak traffic and parking loads, local parking habits, and availability of public transportation.
 - c. Additionally, if a decrease is allowed, a portion of the site must be reserved for potential future parking needs, maintained either as landscaped or in a natural state, and this area cannot count towards open space requirements.
4. **Dimensional Requirements** - There are specific requirements regarding minimum lot size, frontage, yard setbacks, building height, and coverage, and are as follows:

Regulation	Requirement
Minimum Lot Size	25,000 square feet
Minimum Frontage	100 feet
Minimum Lot Depth	150 feet
Minimum Lot Width	150 feet
Minimum Setbacks/Yard	
- Front Yard	50 feet
- Side Yard	30 feet
- Rear Yard	50 feet
Maximum Height	50 feet for habitable buildings, 45 feet for nonhabitable buildings
Maximum Stories	4
Maximum Building Coverage	25% of the lot
Maximum Lot Coverage	75% of the lot
Minimum Open Space	25% of the lot

Regulation	Requirement
<p>Uses Not Permitted: No building, structure or part thereof shall be erected or placed within 100 feet of any residential or Open Space and Conservancy District line. However, there are exceptions by Special Permit.</p>	

Figure 4 Braintree Zoning Ordinances & Amendments Analysis for the Highway Business District (2023)

In the Highway Business Area of Braintree, specific guidelines govern signage to maintain aesthetic and safety standards. Buffer zones are enforced, prohibiting any building or structure in Commercial or Highway Business Districts from being erected within one hundred feet of residential or Open Space and Conservancy District lines.²⁴ Additionally, existing structures in the Highway Business Districts can be expanded, but only in compliance with zoning regulations and with limitations on increasing impervious surfaces.

Land Use

As mentioned above, the Wood Road District displays a dynamic blend of commercial potential and mixed-use development opportunities. As of 2022, there are fifty-one parcels for a total assessed value of \$277,968,300 according to CoStar Group²⁵ and \$302,652,700 in 2024, according to Patriot Properties.²⁶ It has become a vibrant hub for various industries, including automotive dealerships, legal services, financial advisory, healthcare, retail, telecommunications, and construction. This diversity is marked by a significant presence in sectors such as software, health services, manufacturing, and professional services, highlighting the area's capacity for economic vitality and visitor attraction.

The Braintree Master Plan suggests a strategic vision for transforming the Study Area into a dynamic hub of activity and growth. It states that, "Wood Road offers the opportunity to promote more commercial uses and mixed-use developments. This area has the potential to become a vibrant area that attracts visitors."²⁷ In essence, the Braintree Master Plan's vision for Wood Road is to transform it into a thriving, multifaceted hub that leverages its commercial potential and mixed-use developments to create a lively, attractive, and economically robust area.

The strategic promotion of more commercial uses and mixed-use developments within the Wood Road District reflects a vision to transform it into a bustling area that draws visitors. This vision aligns with the district's existing foundation, which is poised for further growth and development, aimed at creating a vibrant community space that attracts a diverse audience.

Additionally, two reports, MAPC's "Land, Economy, Opportunity: Industrial Land Supply and Demand in Greater Boston" and the Urban Manufacturing Alliance's 2018 report, "An Urban Revival: How Land Use Tools and Real Estate Strategies are Fueling the Resurgence of Light Manufacturing in Greater Boston,"

²⁴ **Braintree Planning Department.** *Braintree Zoning Ordinances & Amendments Analysis*. Braintree Town Government, 2023.

²⁵ **CoStar Group.** *CoStar Real Estate Analytics*. CoStar, 2023.

²⁶ **Town of Braintree, Massachusetts.** "Property Assessment Information FY2024." *Board of Assessors of Braintree, MA*, 2024. <https://webpro.patriotproperties.com/braintree/default.asp>.

²⁷ **Braintree Municipal Planning Division.** *Braintree Master Plan 2023-2033*. City of Braintree, 2023.

highlight the decline and evolving demand for industrial spaces in Greater Boston, relevant to areas like Wood Road. From 2011 to 2021, industrial space decreased by 3.5%, yet its use intensified.^{28 29}

These studies emphasize the critical role of industrial sectors in providing accessible, well-paying jobs and underscore the risk of converting industrial land to other uses under real estate pressures. They advocate for zoning reforms to support industrial activities, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, by integrating them into mixed-use developments. This is particularly pertinent for Wood Road, suggesting a need for policies that balance industrial preservation with development demands, ensuring the area can adapt to and support the industrial sector's growth and diversification.

Land Use Types

The Wood Road District encompasses a variety of land uses, reflecting its dynamic economic composition. The assessor's data for the Wood Road District parcels show a diverse range of land uses, reflecting a vibrant mix of commercial, industrial, and service-related activities.³⁰

LUC	Description	Count	% of Total	Total Value
340	OFFICE	12	27.91%	\$8,783,100
325	STORE	6	13.95%	\$7,681,500
300	HOTEL	4	9.30%	\$5,266,800
316	COM WHS: Commercial Warehouse	4	9.30%	\$3,020,800
337	PARKLOT: Parking Lot	4	9.30%	\$3,627,800
322	DISC ST: Discount Store	2	4.65%	\$4,884,200
330	AUTO SS: Auto Service Station	2	4.65%	\$2,720,600
401	IND WHS: Industrial Warehouse	2	4.65%	\$8,067,100
314	TRK TRM: Truck Terminal	1	2.33%	\$586,200
335	CARWASH	1	2.33%	\$1,125,600
341	BANK	1	2.33%	\$1,256,100
342	PROF OF: Professional Office	1	2.33%	\$11,490,800
377	IN RECR: Indoor Recreation	1	2.33%	\$10,962,800
392	UNDEV: Undeveloped Land	1	2.33%	\$7,900
400	FACTORY	1	2.33%	\$6,156,700
403	ACCLAND: Accessory Land	1	2.33%	\$125,400
404	R+D BLD: Research and Development Building	1	2.33%	\$18,408,700
900	US GOVT: U.S. Government Property	1	2.33%	\$3,114,900

²⁸ **Metropolitan Area Planning Council.** *Land, economy, opportunity: Industrial land supply and demand in Greater Boston.* 2023.

²⁹ **Urban Manufacturing Alliance.** *An Urban Revival: How Land Use Tools and Real Estate Strategies are Fueling the Resurgence of Light Manufacturing in Greater Boston.* 2018.

³⁰ **Town of Braintree, Massachusetts.** "Property Assessment Information FY2024." *Board of Assessors of Braintree, MA,* 2024. <https://webpro.patriotproperties.com/braintree/default.asp>.

LUC	Description	Count	% of Total	Total Value
901	COMMASS: Commonwealth of Massachusetts	1	2.33%	\$485,000

Figure 5 Braintree Assessors Data for Study Area Land Use Codes (2023)

Key observations include:

- Professional Offices and Research:** The district houses a sizable number of office buildings (LUC 340), including Braintree Hill Office Park, indicating a large concentration of professional services. The presence of a research and development building (LUC 404) highlights the district's role in innovation and technological development.
- Hospitality Focus:** Multiple parcels are utilized as hotels (LUC 300), such as Best Western, Hampton Inn, and Sonesta Simply Suites, with substantial total values and significant lot sizes, suggesting a strong hospitality presence in the area.
- Commercial and Industrial Activity:** There are some commercial warehouses (LUC 316) and industrial warehouses (LUC 401), indicating activity in goods storage and distribution. These include properties owned by Ryder Truck Rental, AGNL Pane LLC, and Newcomb Enterprises, with considerable lot sizes and high total values.
- Retail and Services:** Discount stores (LUC 322) and stores (LUC 325) represent the retail sector, with substantial total values indicating their importance in the district's economic landscape. The presence of an auto service station (LUC 330) and a carwash (LUC 335) indicates service-related business activities that cater to vehicular traffic in the area.
- Infrastructure Support:** Parking lots (LUC 337) are essential to support the commercial and service activities in the district, as indicated by multiple parcels dedicated to this use.
- Government and Accessory Land:** Properties classified as U.S. government property (LUC 900) and commercial assessed (LUC 901) suggest government-related activities and additional commercial uses, respectively.
- Land Development Potential:** The presence of undeveloped land (LUC 392) and accessory land (LUC 403) provides opportunities for future growth and development within the district.
- Diverse Ownership and Value:** The district displays a range of ownership from individual trust holdings to corporate entities, with a wide array of property values. This indicates a mix of established businesses and development potential that can attract a broad spectrum of investment.
- Mixed Use Store/Shop Model:** Addresses at 230, 236-240, and 130 Wood Road are designated as mixed-use store/shop models, indicating a combination of retail space and office uses in a single building or complex.
- Mixed Use Commercial Warehouse:** Locations at 165 and 320 Wood Road are characterized as mixed-use commercial warehouses, suggesting facilities that serve both storage and distribution needs, along with potential retail or office components.

- **Mixed Use Industrial Warehouse:** The parcel at 66 Wood Road is identified as a mixed-use industrial warehouse.
- **Mixed Use Professional Building Store:** Properties at 115, 32, 340 Wood Road, and others listed (120 Granite St, 150 Granite St, etc.) are noted as mixed-use professional buildings, indicating spaces that likely combine professional services offices with retail or other commercial uses.

The transaction data from 1955 to 2022 for a set of parcels indicates a total of fifty-one sales with a cumulative value of \$138,467,893. Sales volumes were particularly high in 2019, with over \$42 million in transactions, and there were several years – including 2020 – with minimal recorded prices, suggesting atypical sale conditions.³¹

Building Density

A common indicator of building density is Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which represents the ratio of a property's total building area to its total land area. As an example, a FAR of 1.0 indicates an equal amount of building and land area, a FAR of more than 1.0 indicates a greater amount of building area (higher density), and a FAR of less than 1.0 indicates a greater amount of land area (lower density). To calculate FAR, you divide the total floor area of the building by the total area of the plot. It is expressed as a decimal number, and it varies depending on zoning laws for the area.

FAR is an indicator of density. Commercial and light industrial buildings may be given to lower FARs, as these types of facilities are often single-story structures with expansive building footprints.

FAR Range	Count	Share
0	7	12.96%
<0.1	2	3.70%
>=0.1, <0.25	9	16.67%
>=0.25, <0.45	20	37.04%
>0.45	16	29.63%
Total	54	100%

Figure 6 Parcels by Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in Wood Road Study Area, 2022. Source: Massachusetts Tier 3 Assessors/ Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Land Parcel Database, FY2022, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-property-tax-parcels>

Among parcels in the Study Area, seven had no buildings, generally addresses that started with “0” (with the exception of 10 Rockdale, wedged between the Extended Stay America and FedEx parking lots). For the remaining parcels, the median FAR was 0.378. There were only two parcels, 150 Wood Road, and 44 Granite Street, with a FAR over one.³²

Year Built

The data related to the year of construction for existing buildings in the Wood Road Study Area of Braintree offers valuable insight into the district's historical development patterns. As of 2022, a significant share of

³¹ CoStar Group. *CoStar Real Estate Analytics*. CoStar, 2023.

³² Massachusetts Tier 3 Assessors/Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) “Land Parcel Database, FY2022.” <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-property-tax-parcels>.

buildings within the Wood Road Study Area were constructed between 1960 and 1989.³³ This notable concentration of development activity suggests that these years were a pivotal time for growth in the area.

There is a noticeable drop in development after the 1990s, with only three buildings constructed in the 2000s and none in the following two decades. The lack of new construction in the 2010s and 2020s could indicate a potential for renewal or redevelopment. As buildings age and economic conditions change, there may be opportunities to revitalize the area with new construction that can better serve the current needs of the community and the market.

Year Built	Count	Share
No Data	8	18.18%
Pre-1960	2	4.55%
1960-1969	9	20.45%
1970-1979	6	13.64%
1980-1989	8	18.18%
1990-1999	4	9.09%
2000-2009	3	6.82%
2010-2019	0	0.00%
2020 -	0	0.00%
Total	44	100%

Figure 7 Parcels by Year Built in Wood Road Study Area, 2022. Source: Massachusetts Tier 3 Assessors/ Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Land Parcel Database, FY2022, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-property-tax-parcels>

Business & Industry Data

Business data for the Wood Road Study Area and Braintree in 2022 shows a diverse range of businesses. The highest count of businesses falls under Professional Scientific and Technical Services (110), followed closely by Health Care and Social Assistance (107). Finance and Insurance (68), and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (27) also have significant representations.³⁴ The average weekly wages for these sectors in Braintree are highest for Utilities, specifically Electric Power Distribution at \$5567.00, with Professional Scientific and Technical Services also having a high average at \$2662.00. Health Care and Social Assistance, and Finance and Insurance sectors show averages of \$1141.00 and \$2604.00 respectively.³⁵ Additional observations are below:

Largest Employers (2016-2022)

- Lists major companies operating within the Wood Road District, indicating the diversity of businesses. It includes firms like EngageSmart Inc., Partners Healthcare At Home, MIB Group Inc., and others, showcasing sectors such as software, healthcare services, and manufacturing. Other

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ DataAxle. *DataAxle Reference Solutions*. DataAxle, 2023.

³⁵ Department of Economic Research, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. "Employment and Wages (ES-202)." *Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2024*, <https://www.mass.gov/lists/employment-and-wage-es-202-data>.

major employers include New England Quality Care Alliance, Consolidated Precision Products, Perrone Group, and Health Services Administrators.³⁶

Business Industry Types

- In the Wood Road Study Area, the dominant business sectors are Retail Trade, Professional, Scientific & Tech Services, and Finance & Insurance, with Retail Trade alone accounting for eighty businesses. The area also has a strong presence in the Health Care & Social Assistance sector, along with a substantial number of businesses in the Clothing and Accessories category. Less represented sectors include Utilities, Mining, and Public Administration, each with only one business listed.
- The Retail Trade sector employs the highest number of individuals with 2,111 employees, followed by Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe and Jewelry Stores with 942 employees, and the Accommodation & Food Services sector with 694 employees. The Professional, Scientific & Tech Services sector also has a significant workforce with 567 employees. On the lower end of the spectrum, sectors like Management of Companies & Enterprises, Gasoline Stations & Fuel Dealers show minimal to no employment numbers.

Business Composition of the Study Area

- Branches form a sizable portion of businesses within the Wood Road Study area, with a calculated 32.68% of the total business count. Headquarters have a minimal presence at 1.31%, which suggests a relatively small number of businesses have their main operations in the area, with Perrone Group and HSA Insurance holding their headquarters there.
- The majority of the business landscape is composed of independent companies, comprising 62.09%, indicating a vibrant community of unique businesses. Kiosks are the smallest category at 3.92%, consisting of ATM's and a FedEx drop box.

Employee Size

- The employee size data for businesses in the Study Area averages at around fourteen employees per business, though reveals a wide range of organization sizes, from small enterprises with a single employee to larger entities employing up to 199 individuals.³⁷
- That being said, for a considerable number of businesses, the employee count is either not available or not applicable, suggesting potential gaps in data collection or reporting.
- A handful of businesses employ a larger workforce, with employee counts ranging from 100 to 199, indicating the presence of some medium-sized enterprises within the study area, with thirteen businesses having more than fifty employees.³⁸

Sales Data

³⁶ DataAxle. *DataAxle Reference Solutions*. DataAxle, 2023.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

- The total sales for Wood Road Study Area businesses in 2023 amounted to approximately \$793,598,000. The businesses with the highest reported sales figures are predominantly in the automotive, manufacturing, and consulting sectors.³⁹
- These entities span across various industries, including automotive sales (e.g., Herb Chambers Ford of Braintree with \$82,072,000), manufacturing (e.g., Wollaston Alloys Inc with \$23,263,000), consulting and management services (e.g., Perrone Group with \$20,962,000), and health services (e.g., Health Services Administrators with \$17,157,000).⁴⁰
- Sales figures vary widely, indicating a diverse economic landscape with entities ranging from small to large revenue generators. The median sales for a Wood Road business were \$1,007,000 in 2023.⁴¹

Vacancies, Construction, & Rent

The Wood Road Study Area's commercial real estate market in 2024 highlights thirty buildings with over 1 million square feet of space. A small portion, about 10%, is vacant, with direct and sublet vacancies combined slightly higher at 10.2%. Available space is slightly above this at 11.3%. Occupancy remains high at 89.8%. Compared to 2023, there has been no change in building count or square footage, but the direct vacancy has significantly reduced from 24.1% in 2022, indicating an absorption of previously vacant space.⁴²

The rents for office spaces are averaging around \$21.67, consistent across direct and sublet spaces, with non-office NNN and base rents slightly lower. The construction and rent data reveal that in 2020, there was a notable peak in construction activity with one building encompassing 152,000 square feet. Office rental rates have experienced variations over the years, with the highest gross and base rents recorded in 2021 at \$23.49 and \$23.50, respectively. Since 2020, there has been no further construction, suggesting a lull in development activities. However, the consistent gross and base office rents of \$21.31 from 2023 to 2024 suggest that the office rental market has begun to stabilize following earlier fluctuations.⁴³

Municipal Tax Comparisons

The municipal tax comparison data for Braintree in comparison to other neighboring municipalities indicates that in the fiscal year 2023, the single-family tax bill for Braintree was \$5,992, which is on the lower end compared to almost all other nearby municipalities such as Canton (\$7,686), Hingham (\$11,177), Dedham (\$8,581), Holbrook (\$6,446), Stoughton (\$6,430) and Quincy (\$6,705). The only neighboring community with a lower tax bill was Weymouth at \$5,481. The 2021 population of Braintree was 38,822, which is substantial when compared to neighboring areas like Holbrook with a population of 11,335, but smaller than Quincy which had a population of 101,119.⁴⁴

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² **CoStar Group.** *CoStar Real Estate Analytics.* CoStar, 2023.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ **Data Analytics and Resources Bureau.** *Tax rates by class.* Massachusetts Department of Revenue, 2024.

Municipality	Form of Government	2021 Population	FY 2023 Single Family Tax Bill	2020 DOR Income Per Capita	2022 EQV Per Capita	Land Area	Population Density	2018 Total Road Miles
Braintree	Mayor	38,822	\$5,992	\$48,491	\$229,892	13.75	2,823	142.93
Canton	Open Town Meeting	24,470	\$7,686	\$64,467	\$260,594	18.8	1,302	113.42
Dedham	Representative Town Meeting	25,240	\$8,581	\$68,317	\$261,246	10.25	2,462	109.82
Hingham	Open Town Meeting	24,311	\$11,177	\$140,318	\$356,733	22.21	1,095	131.86
Holbrook	Representative Town Meeting	11,335	\$6,446	\$35,211	\$147,355	7.25	1,563	51.37
Quincy	Council And Alderman	101,119	\$6,705	\$39,487	\$202,990	16.57	6,103	226.46
Stoughton	Representative Town Meeting	29,132	\$6,430	\$38,538	\$178,071	16.09	1,811	128.2
Weymouth	Council And Alderman	57,670	\$5,481	\$40,953	\$183,834	16.79	3,435	184.19

When it comes to income per capita, Braintree had \$48,491 in 2020, which is less than Hingham (\$140,318) but more than Holbrook (\$35,211). The Equalized Valuation (EQV) per capita in 2022 for Braintree was \$229,892, which is relatively moderate when compared to Hingham's \$356,733, indicating a higher property value per person in Hingham. Land area and population density figures show Braintree has 13.75 square miles with a population density of 2,823 people per square mile, demonstrating a more densely populated area compared to some of its counterparts like Canton, which has a larger land area of 18.8 square miles and a lower population density of 1,302 people per square mile. Braintree also has a total of 142.93 road miles, which is significant but less than Quincy, which boasts 226.46 road miles.⁴⁵

The tax rates for Fiscal Year 2024 for the town of Braintree, Massachusetts, are set at \$9.48 per \$1,000 of assessed value for residential properties, \$20.25 per \$1,000 for commercial and industrial properties, and \$20.19 per \$1,000 for personal property. Braintree has a total assessed value of approximately \$8.9 billion, which is more than Holbrook (\$1.8 billion), Stoughton (\$5.3 billion), and Dedham (\$6.7 billion), but less than Hingham (\$9.5 billion), Weymouth (\$11.5 billion), and significantly less than Quincy (\$20.8 billion).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Its largest share is in residential property, comprising nearly 80% of the total value, with smaller proportions in commercial, industrial, and personal property classes.⁴⁶

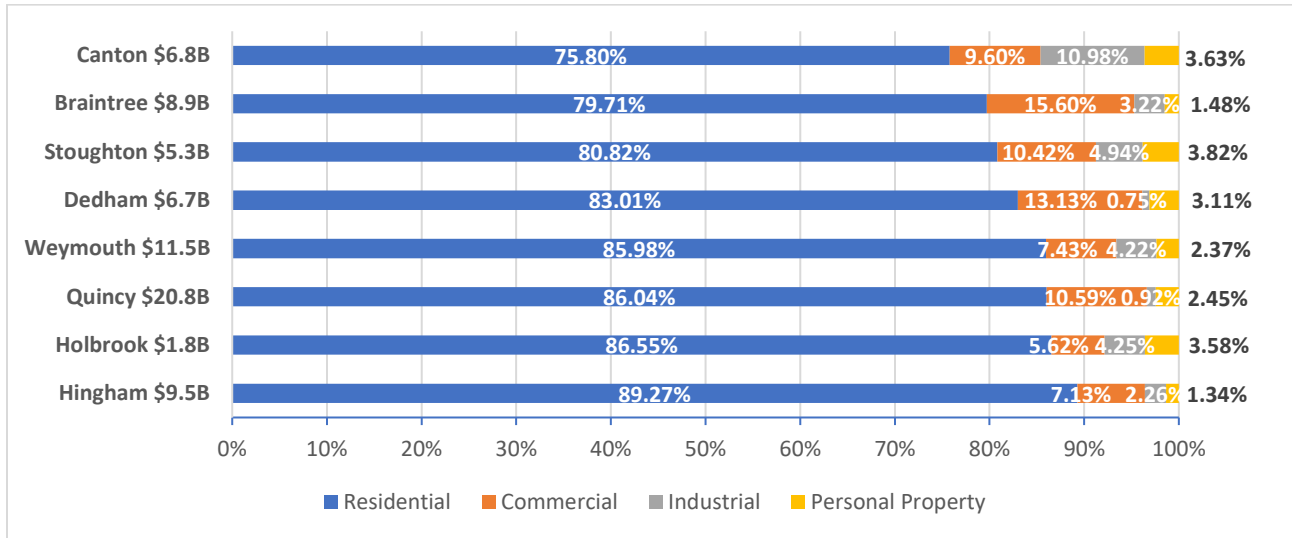


Figure 8 Proportional Distribution of Assessed Property Values by Category for Selected Municipalities (ES-202, 2024)

According to the ES-202 chart above, although predominantly residential at 79.71%, Braintree has a notably higher proportion of commercial properties at 15.6% compared to its counterparts. Although its industrial property percentage of 3.22% falls below that of some neighboring municipalities like Stoughton and Canton, Braintree still maintains a moderate industrial presence. Additionally, its personal property percentage of 1.48% underscores the presence of tangible assets owned by businesses and individuals.⁴⁷

Research & Development

The findings on Tech and Innovation within the Wood Road catchment area reveal a focus on Research and Development (R&D) facilities. In the 15-minute drive distance from Wood Road, defined by ESRI, there are six R&D facilities, covering a total of 45,000 square feet.⁴⁸ The research and development tenants within the Wood Road drive time include Dana-Farber Brigham Cancer Center, Abveris, Goldman Environmental Consultants, Beacon Clinical Research, Binj Laboratories of Virginia, and Donadio Environmental Service. These entities span across industries such as health care, environmental consulting, and biotechnology. They occupy spaces ranging from 400 to 23,012 square feet, with employee counts from 2 to 50, indicating a variety of operational scales. Their presence underscores the area's role as a hub for professional, scientific, and technical services.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ **Department of Economic Research, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.** "Employment and Wages (ES-202)." *Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development*, 2024, <https://www.mass.gov/lists/employment-and-wage-es-202-data>.

⁴⁸ **Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).** *ESRI Business Analyst*. ESRI, 2023.

⁴⁹ **CoStar Group.** *CoStar Real Estate Analytics*. CoStar, 2023.

The total number of jobs related to R&D in the 15-minute drive of Wood Road includes 1,573 jobs, as indicated by ES202 2023 data for NAICS 2-Digit sectors. The average wages for R&D positions in Braintree are notably high, at \$2,600.00, indicating the provision of quality jobs in the area.⁵⁰

Key Takeaways & Next Steps

Key Takeaways

1. **Diverse Business Ecosystem.** The Wood Road Study Area boasts a rich tapestry of businesses spanning various sectors, providing a solid foundation for economic vitality and resilience.
2. **Strategic Location for Growth.** With its strategic location near major highways, the area is well positioned to attract further commercial development.
3. **Potential for Mixed-Use Development.** There is a clear opportunity to enhance the area's appeal through mixed-use developments, as outlined in the Braintree Master Plan, which can contribute to a vibrant community space.
4. **Infrastructure Needs.** Essential utility services like electricity, water, and sewer systems are necessary and require upgrades to support future growth and address current inadequacies in stormwater management.
5. **Zoning as a Catalyst or Barrier.** The current zoning bylaws present both opportunities and challenges, indicating the need for careful review and potential amendments to support the area's development vision.
6. **Commercial Real Estate Dynamics.** While the commercial real estate market shows high occupancy, the presence of vacancies signals a need for strategic initiatives to attract new businesses.
7. **Changing Work Patterns.** Trends such as remote working may affect the demand for office space and parking, suggesting that future development must consider evolving work habits.
8. **Environmental Considerations.** The presence of critical environmental features within the district necessitates thoughtful development planning to ensure ecological sustainability.
9. **Community and Economic Balance.** Emphasizing Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) principles in development efforts will be essential for ensuring that revitalization benefits are equitably distributed.
10. **Future Development Trajectory.** The lack of recent construction suggests potential for redevelopment, which must be balanced with the preservation of existing valuable structures and character.

⁵⁰ **Department of Economic Research, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.** "Employment and Wages (ES-202)." *Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2024*, <https://www.mass.gov/lists/employment-and-wage-es-202-data>.

Next Steps

Phase II of the Wood Road Revitalization and Mixed-Use Development Initiative is centered around the Community Visioning Process, where a strategy will be crafted to engage with stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, and workshops to develop a shared vision and preliminary recommendations for the Wood Road area's development, while incorporating diversity and inclusion in the feedback process.

Phase III involves creating an Implementation Matrix that outlines the practical steps, responsible parties, and the resources needed to realize the community's vision, followed by compiling a final report that summarizes the existing conditions, community inputs, strategic vision, actionable recommendations, and the framework for implementation.

Building upon the insights garnered from the Existing Conditions Report, we propose a structured approach for Phases II and III of the project, which will be executed as delineated below:

Phase II: Community Visioning Process

1. **Analyze Existing Conditions Data for Engagement Strategy:**
 - Develop a community engagement strategy informed by the Existing Conditions Report, incorporating its demographic profiles, business ecosystem, and infrastructure.
2. **Leverage Land Use and Zoning Analysis for Visioning:**
 - Use insights from the literature review, land use types, and zoning analysis to facilitate discussions on the future land use and mixed-use development potential during community visioning sessions.
3. **Focus on Infrastructure in Community Surveys and Focus Groups:**
 - Tailor community surveys and focus groups to gather specific feedback on public utility improvements, stormwater management needs, and transportation enhancements as identified in the report.
4. **Incorporate Business and Industry Data into Economic Visioning:**
 - Draw on detailed business and industry data to shape the economic development vision, focusing on growth sectors and addressing potential impacts of parking and remote work trends.
5. **Consider Environmental Features in Development Recommendations:**
 - Ensure recommendations align with environmental considerations, such as flood zones and conservation areas, highlighted in the report.
6. **Utilize R&D Findings for Sector Development:**
 - Build on the report's focus on R&D facilities to develop a strategy for attracting suitable companies, addressing workforce accessibility, and leveraging vacant industrial spaces.

Phase III: Implementation Matrix Development

1. **Zoning and Land Use Recommendations:**

- Propose zoning changes that facilitate the envisioned mixed-use development, considering the existing commercial and industrial landscape and potential for new construction.
- 2. Align with Regional Economic Trends:**
- Ensure that the implementation matrix aligns with the broader economic trends and demographic shifts identified in the MAPC area characteristics, especially focusing on the needs and potentials for the life sciences sector.
- 3. Final Report Integration:**
- Compile a final report that integrates the Existing Conditions Report findings with the community vision and the implementation matrix, providing a roadmap for the project's next phases.

In both phases, the emphasis should be on extensive and inclusive community engagement, leveraging the study area's strengths, addressing its challenges, and positioning the Wood Road area for sustainable, resilient growth that benefits the entire community.

This roadmap for Phases II and III ensures that the Wood Road Revitalization and Mixed-Use Development Initiative is poised for success, weaving together a tapestry of community goals and aspirations, strategic insights, and actionable plans. As we embark on these next steps, we remain committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable future for the Wood Road area, grounded in the insights of the Wood Road community and the foundation laid by the Existing Conditions Report.