



Welcome Home

Essex



Affordable Housing Trust Committee

April 24, 2025

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Agenda

- Webinar Results
- Draft Housing Sites
- Draft Housing Goals
- Next Steps





Webinar Results

What we learned in January

Webinar Key Takeaways

- 13 to 19 live survey participants.
- Asked about:
 - Household Size + Fit
 - House Scale + Type
 - Cost Burden
 - Development Constraints



Household Size + Fit

Think about your home and family. Is your home:

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Too big. You have rooms you don't use or need, and as a result pay higher property taxes and utilities.



Just right: There's enough space for each person in your home. You don't have any needs and don't feel as though ...



Too Small: There isn't enough space now, or enough space to fill anticipated needs in the next few years.



20%

40%

60%

80%

100%

House Scale + Type

Think about the types of housing you, your family, neighbors, and friends need. When exploring multifamily housing, where should the town focus?

19



Smaller single family homes, potentially starter homes or “clustered cottage” style homes.



More duplexes and triple deckers.



More small apartment buildings with 10 apartments or fewer.



20%

40%

60%

80%

100%

Cost Burden Experience

If your family was looking to move from an apartment into a single-family home in Essex, would you be able to afford to do so?

15



Yes, we would be able to buy a house.



No, I don't think we would be able to buy a house (list reasons in the chat).



I'm either not sure, or think we might be able to barely afford a house.



20%

40%

60%

80%

100%

Development Constraints

Are there other development constraints we should be considering? Let us know!

4

7

land owned by conservations groups such as MECT, Greenbelt, Trustees. Great causes but also limits available Essex Land.

Already having trouble paying school costs; more housing, especially "affordable" housing will make this much worse. Open space is what makes Essex special. We don't want to ruin it.

Sea level rise will impact areas of Essex.

Taxpayers are not going to be happy about subsidizing housing (paying more) for new residents who do not pay their fair share of real estate taxes.

Protect open green spaces even if not officially protected. Environment is so important.

Severely limited sewer capacity.

Build affordable housing on major roads where there are already buildings rather than spoil rural agricultural land and green spaces.



Draft Goals and Strategies

For the Housing Production Plan

The relationship between goals and strategies.

The goal is where we are going, the strategies are how we get there.

Because a single strategy may help achieve more than one goal, there will be a “many to many” relationship between the strategies and goals.

Strategies will be developed by the planning team and taken to the committee for review, followed by public engagement.

This is a skeleton of what a goals / strategies table will look like:

Strategy	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4
Lorem Ipsum		X		
Upsum Dolor	X		X	
Lipsum isom		X		X

Draft Goal 1

Expand housing options for small-scale housing options.

Encourage and expand options in Essex for the following housing types:

- ADUs
- Tiny homes
- Duplexes Triplexes
- Mixed-use housing
- Townhouses
- Cottage houses

Draft Goal 2

Continue to proactively encourage or discourage conversion of full-time units to seasonal based on their location.

- Some units are in locations that are dangerous and unsafe during the winter and seasonal conversion is encouraged.
- In other parts of town, seasonal units should be limited / discouraged.

Draft Goal 3

Receive Designation as a
Housing Choice Community.

- Will allow the town to receive funding from state grant sources.
- Town will have to demonstrate “housing choice best practices”

Draft Goal 4

Ensure that housing needs are addressed through a sustainability and conservation lens.

- Maintain existing recreation space.
- New housing works towards climate resiliency and advances clean energy initiatives.

Draft Goal 5

Address housing need at every income level by developing more deed-restricted Affordable Housing.

- “Capital A affordable housing”.
- In partnership with:
 - Housing Authority
 - Non-profit developers
- Targeted affordable mix: low, very low, and moderate-income residents

Draft Goal 6

Target Housing Development in the Essex Downtown District EDD.

- Target and encourage housing development in Essex's downtown, especially for multi-family development.
- Encourage greater density around the EDD.

Draft Goal 7

Continue the funding and expansion of the Essex Municipal Affordable Housing Trust.

- Explore additional funding options
 - Developer incentives.
 - IZ bylaw with Fee-in-Lieu for bypassing requirements.
 - Developer fees.

Draft Goal 8

Work to actively preserve all units on the SHI.

- Work with the housing authority.
- Ensure that units do not fall off the SHI for any reason.

Draft Goal 9

Pursue strategies for infill and redevelopment.

- Limited vacant land for new development.
- Land that is vacant often has severe challenges and development constraints.

Draft Goal 10

Adopt zoning and incentive strategies that will advance affordable housing production.

- Affordable housing production incentives (density bonus, starter-home/aging in place programs, etc.).
- Zoning change recommendations.



Draft Housing Sites

Required by EOHLC for HPP approval

Essex HPP Potential Housing Sites

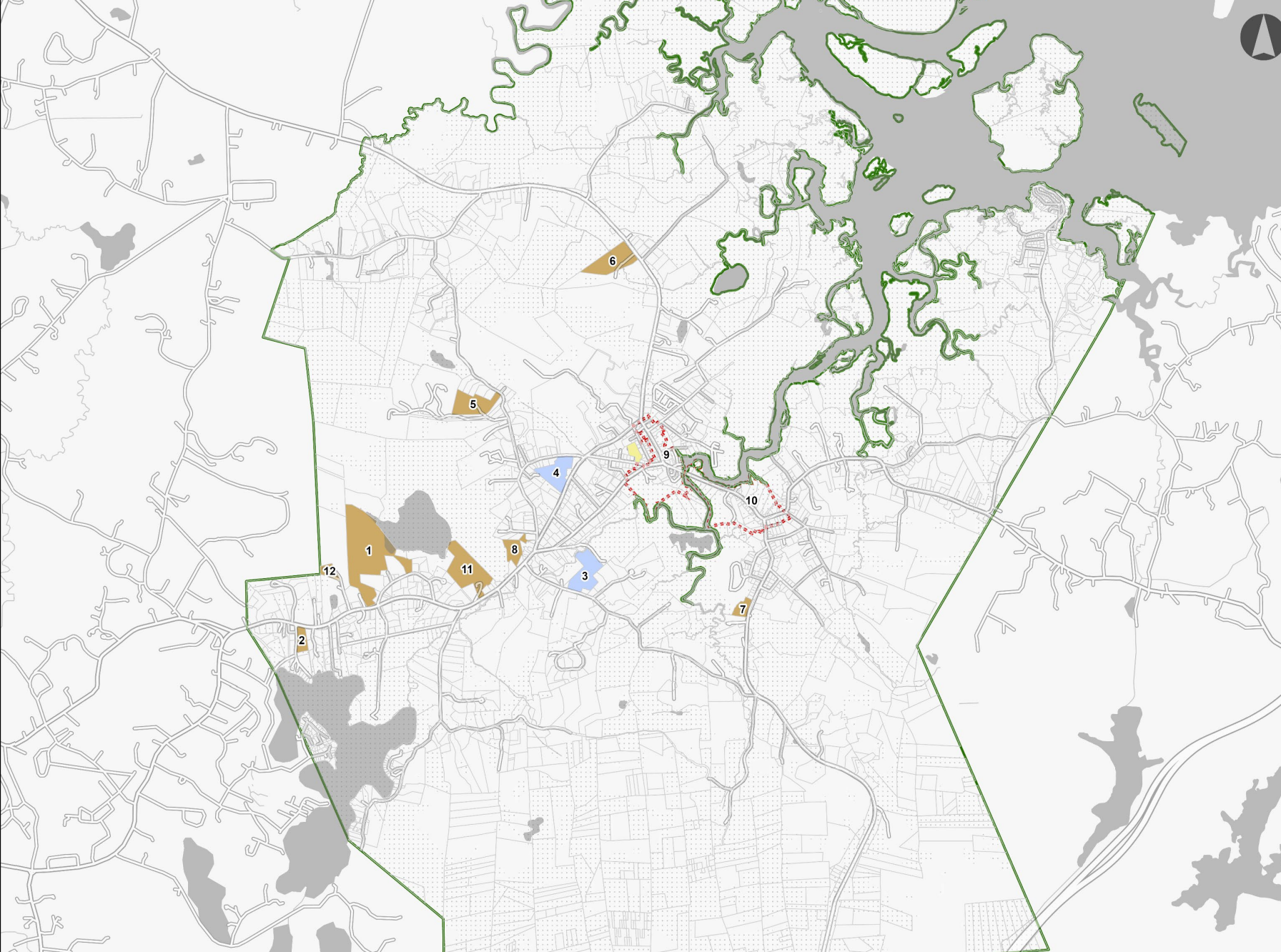
-  Essex Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Excluded Land
-  Housing Authority Housing
-  Essex's Downtown District
- Potential Housing Sites**
-  Potential Affordable Housing Site
-  Potential AH or Elementary School

The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.

Produced by:
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(617) 933-0700

Data Sources: MAPC, EOHL, MassGIS, MassDOT

April 2025



0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile

Draft Site #1

25 County Road

Size 41.8 acres

Current Use Single Family

Adjacent Uses Single Family / Vacant

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability Excellent

Constraints The northern portion of the parcel is critical natural landscape (trees north of the house and to the east).



Site Number
Address Number

Draft Site #2

0 Red Gate Road

Size 3.4 acres

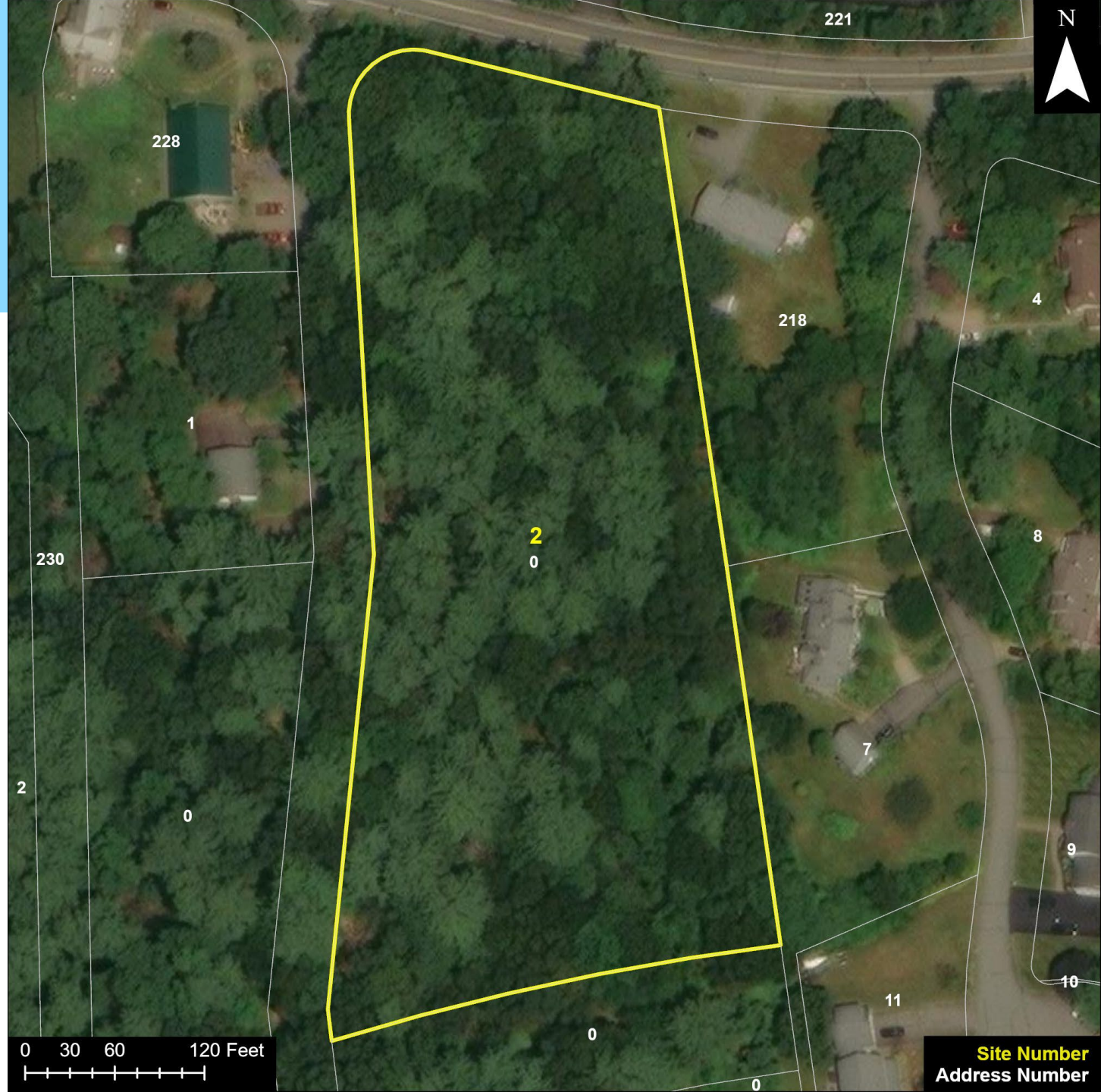
Current Use Vacant

Adjacent Uses Single Family / Vacant

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability Moderately High

Constraints A portion of the parcel is in a Wellhead Zone II overlay, it's about 6,800 sq ft in the southeast corner. This will not be an issue for development.



Draft Site #3

30 Apple Street

Size 11.5 acres

Current Use Vacant

Adjacent Uses Single Family / Transfer station

Water / Sewer? Yes, for water. Sewer would need connectivity. It ends at the northern tip of the parcel.

Multifamily Suitability Excellent

Constraints 1% Annual flood area in the northwest forested portion of the site. This will not be an issue for development. Site may be used for elementary school in the future.



Draft Site #4

12 Story Street

Size 9.9 acres

Current Use Elementary School

Adjacent Uses Single Family

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability: Excellent

Constraints Small freshwater pond in the southeast corner of the site, which will not impact development. Site may continue to be an elementary school in the future.



Draft Site #5

36 Belcher Street

Size 11.1 acres

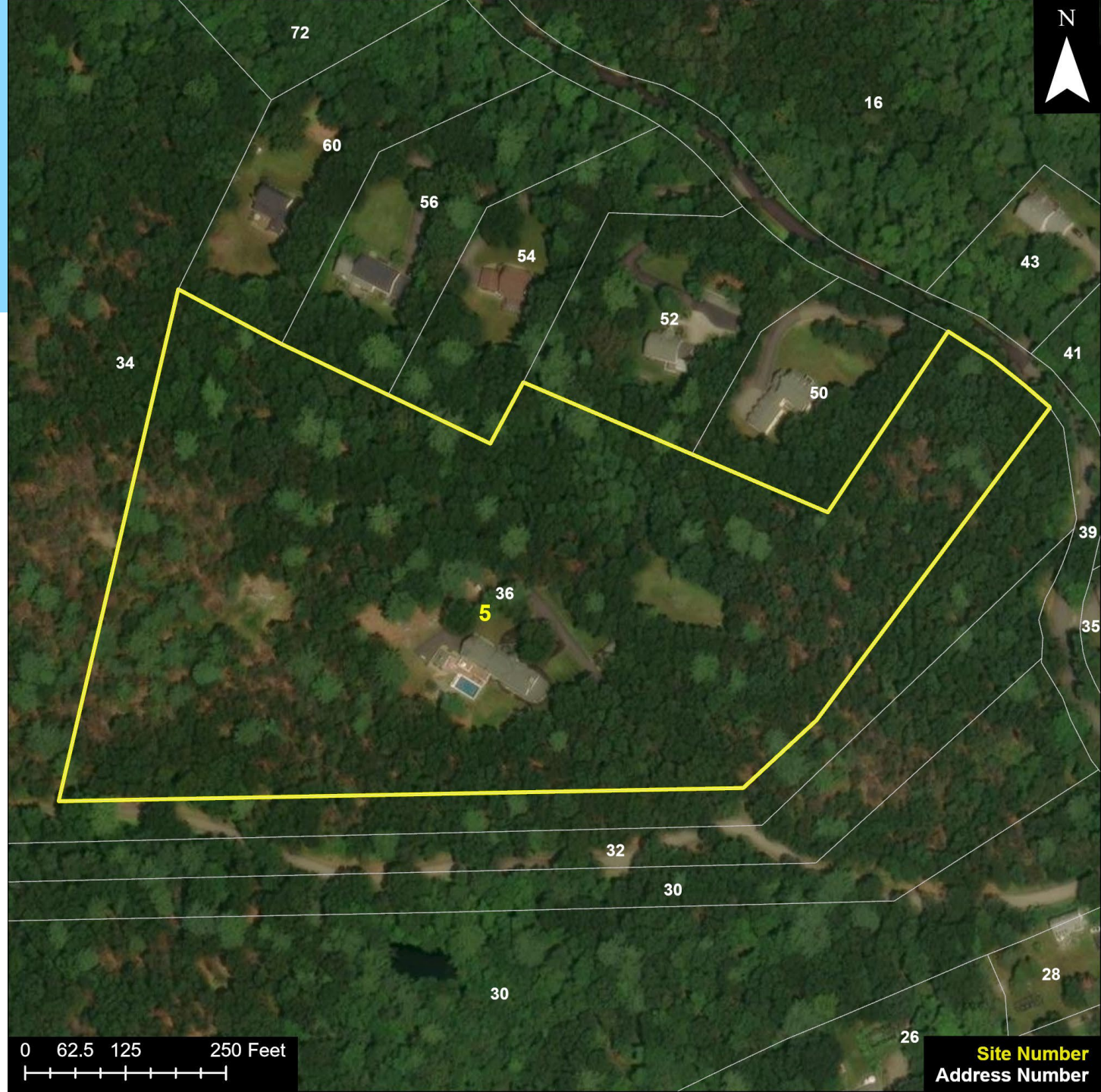
Current Use Single Family

Adjacent Uses

Water / Sewer? Yes, for water. No sewer access.

Multifamily Suitability: Moderate

Constraints Wastewater would have to be managed on-site. The Western third of the parcel is part of a critical natural landscape, which may be a development concern.



~~Draft Site #6~~

94 John Wise Avenue

Size 12.7 acres

Current Use Single Family / Agriculture

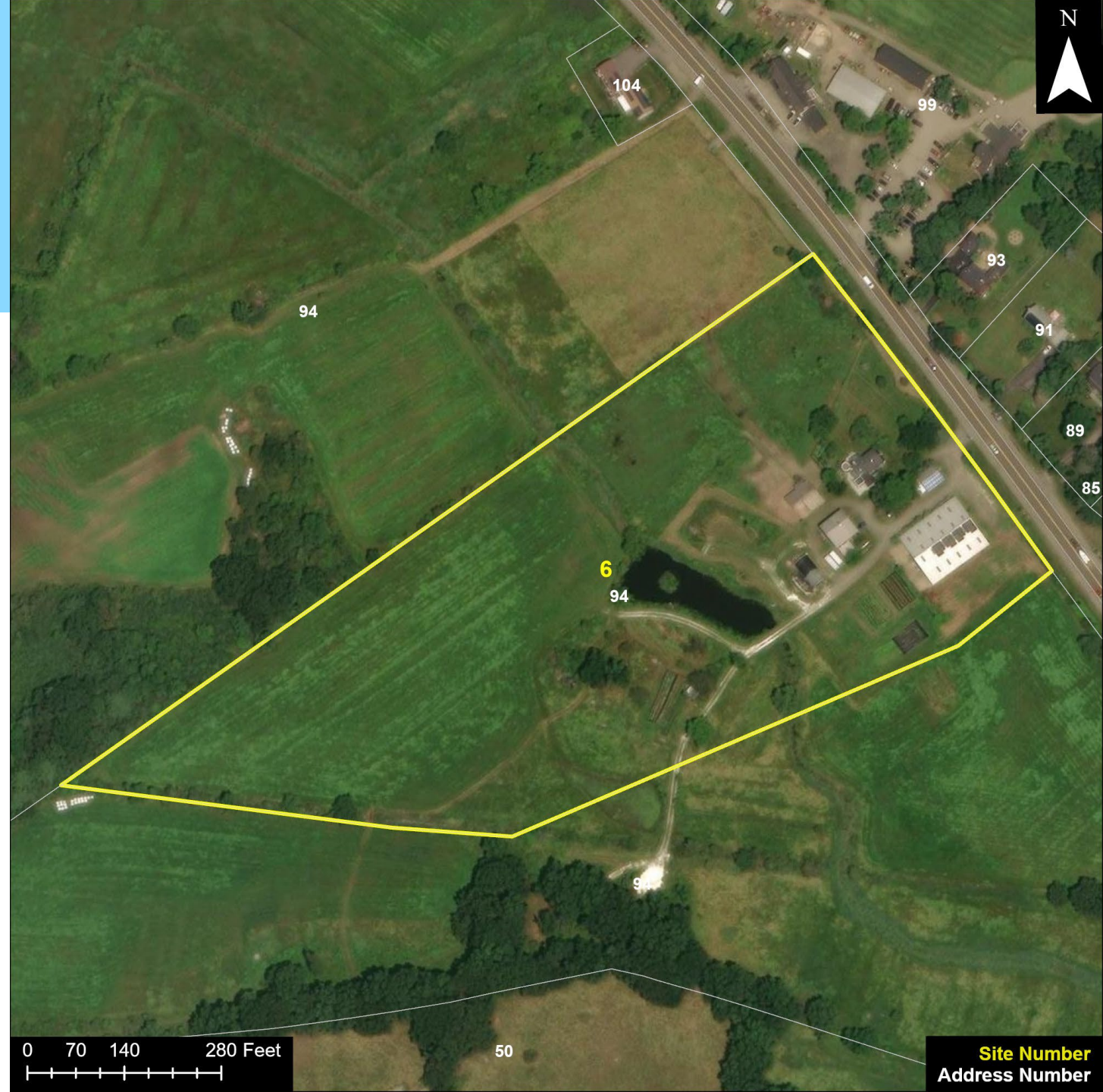
Adjacent Uses Single Family / Agriculture

Water / Sewer? Yes, for water. No sewer access.

Multifamily Suitability: Moderate

Constraints The portion of the site with agriculture use (southwest) is part of the critical natural landscape. In this instance it is an extended buffer for encouraging biodiversity; development would not directly impact protected species. A portion of the site is a FEMA X flood zone, with a 0.2% chance of an annual flood. Wastewater would have to be managed on-site unless the sewer line is extended by 5 parcels. The single-family home, the Benaiah Titcomb House (1700), is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

MAPC does not recommend moving forward with this site.



Draft Site #7

89 Southern Avenue

Size 3.3 acres

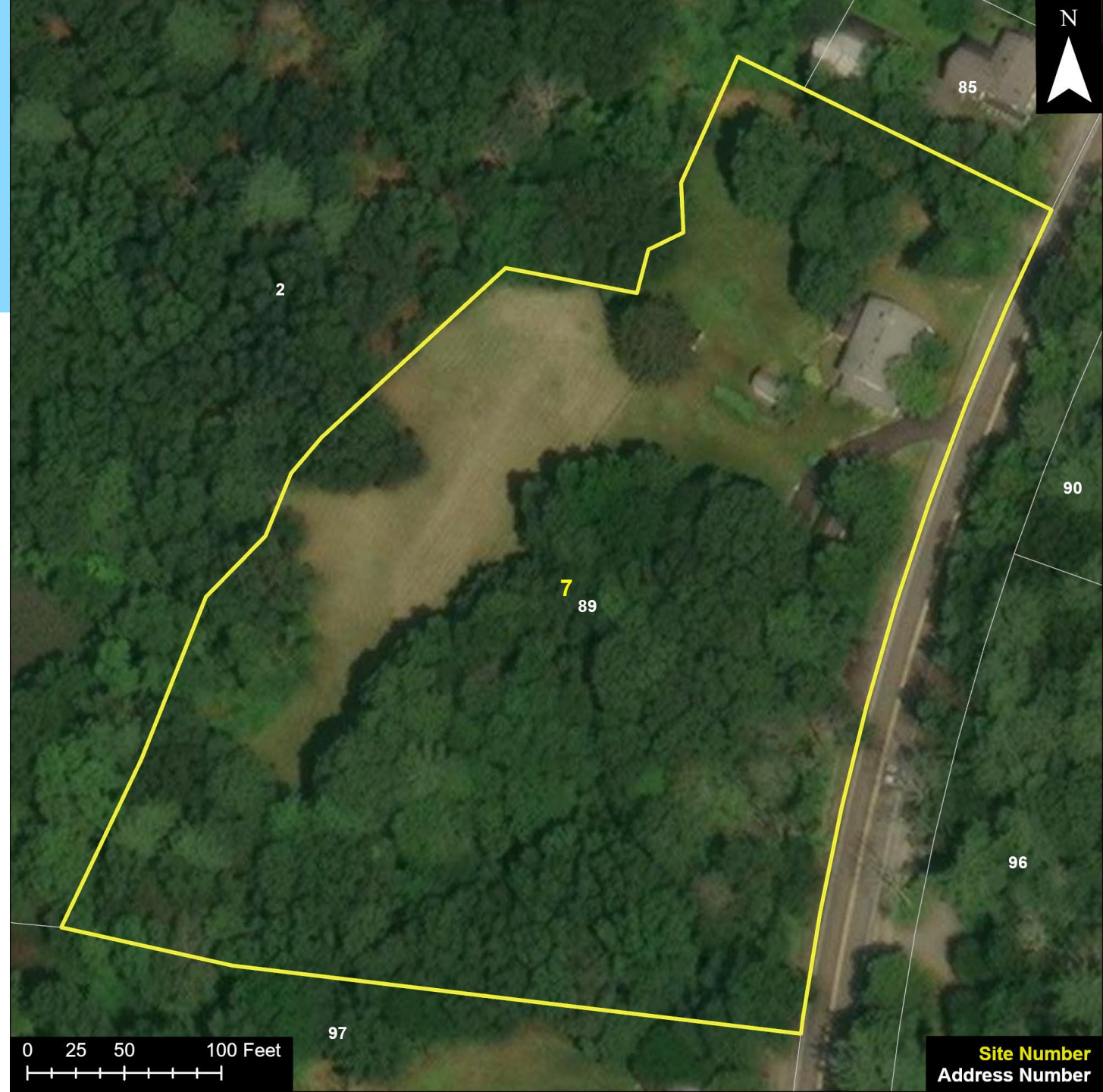
Current Use Single Family

Adjacent Uses Single Family / Vacant

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability: Excellent

Constraints There are marine wetlands which border the southwest corner of the parcel. This does not present an immediate challenge to development. Sea level rise will begin to impact the parcel around the year 2070, but even if there is a 10ft rise the impacts will not go beyond the southwest corner.



Draft Site #8

103 Western Avenue

Size 5.6 acres

Current Use Single Family

Adjacent Uses Single Family / Vacant

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability: Excellent

Constraints Parcel shape may lead to development challenges.



Draft Site #9

44 Main Street

Size 0.54 acres

Current Use Antique Store (Closing, to be demolished)

Adjacent Uses Commercial

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability Excellent

Constraints None



Site Number
Address Number

Draft Site #10

148 Main Street

Size 0.33 acres

Current Use Former B&B

Adjacent Uses Mix of commercial and residential, both single and multifamily are nearby.

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability Moderate

Constraints Affordable Housing on this site would likely be limited to adaptive re-use of the existing principal structure for 5-7 units. Rear portion of the site has around 2,400 sq ft that are part of a 1% annual flood area. This floor area will likely be underwater in 2070 due to climate change; however, the principal building and surrounding area is not likely to be directly impacted.



Site Number
Address Number

Draft Site #11

125 Western Avenue

Size 17.69 Acres

Current Use Lumberyard

Adjacent Uses Single Family / Vacant

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability: Excellent

Constraints In the northwest portion of the parcel (the "point") there is a wetland that is in a FEMA X zone with a 0.2% chance of an annual flood. That area is also part of critical natural landscape and a protected species habitat. The rest of the parcel is developable without constraint concerns.



Draft Site #12

197 Western Avenue

Size 2.8 acres

Current Use Factory

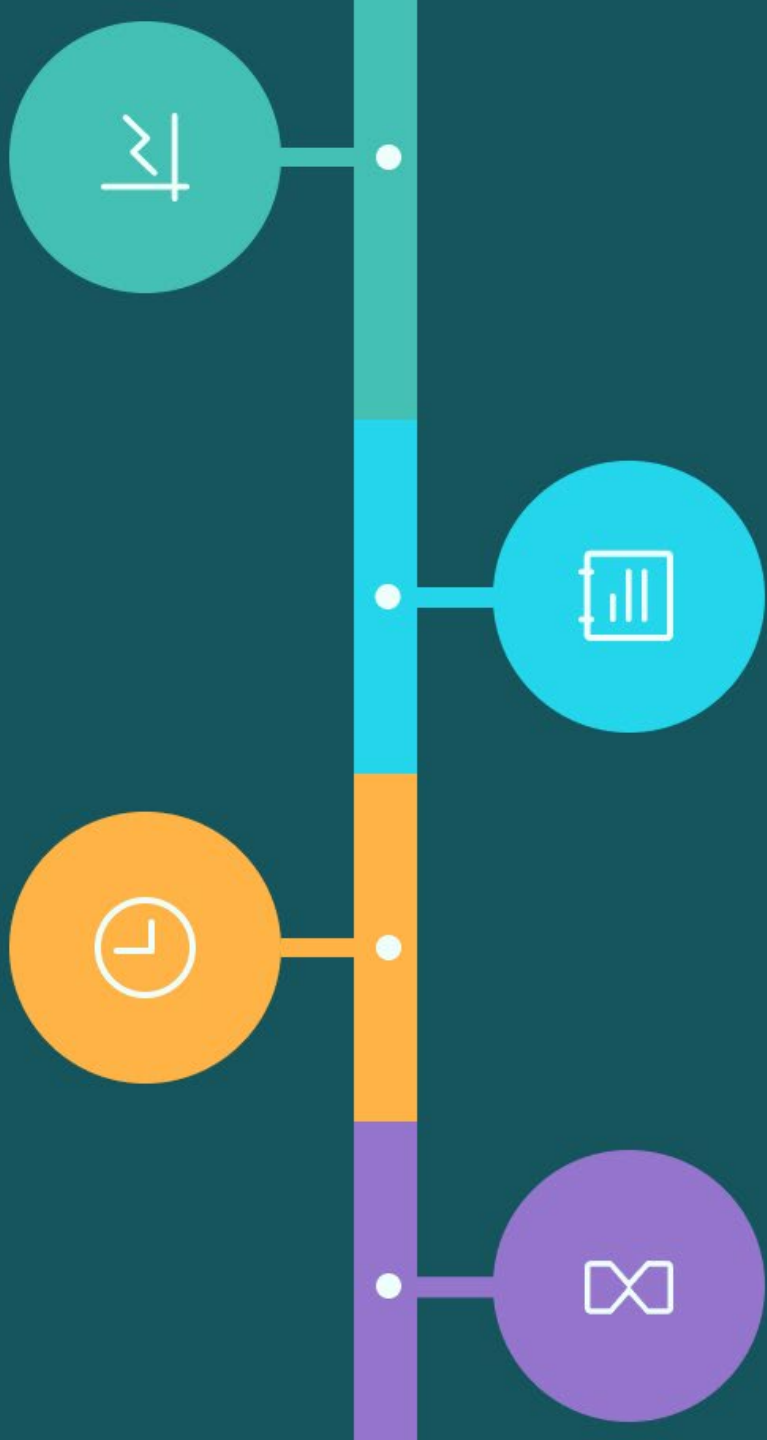
Adjacent Uses Residential, Commercial,
Vacant Land

Water / Sewer? Yes

Multifamily Suitability: Excellent

Constraints The property line does not extend to the street, and the access road is part of an adjacent property.





Timeline & Upcoming Meetings

Where we are. Where we're going.

HPP Timeline

EXPLORING AND DATA GATHERING

- Project Startup
- Strategizing
- Housing Needs Assessment
- Public Engagement

2024 - 5
Q4 - Q1



CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

- Land use and zoning audit
- Draft site selection
- Constraints analysis
- Housing type / design

2024 - 5
Q4 - Q1



GOALS + STRATEGIES

- Refine site selection
- Draft goals
- Draft strategies
- Public Engagement

2025
Q1 - Q2



FINAL PLAN & DELIVERABLES

- Refine goals and strategies
- Draft Housing Plan
- Executive summary
- Educational Materials

2025
Q3 - Q4



ADOPTION & PROJECT CLOSE

- Public Comment period
- Joint Select and Planning Board meeting
- Vote for plan adoption

2025
Q4



Some of these items and groupings are fluid since some items have dependences and others do not.

Committee Meeting Timeline

MEETING #2

- Discuss housing needs assessment findings
- Project messaging
- Prepare for first engagement event

2024
Q3 - Q4



MEETING #3



- Review constraints and opportunities
- Debrief the first public engagement event
- Provide input on housing strategies

2024 - 5
Q4 - Q1



MEETING #4

- Prepare draft goals and strategies for the public.
- Discuss feasibility of strategy recommendations.
- Prepare for second engagement event

2025
Q1 - Q2



MEETING #5

- Debrief second engagement event.
- Finalize goals and strategies as needed

2025
Q3 - Q4



MEETING #6

- Review of draft plan
- Reaching consensus on recommendations, goals, strategies

2025
Q4



The process is scoped to have six total committee meetings for this project.



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Thank you!