

Looking Forward: East Milton Square

March 2021



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Landscape Architecture and Planning



Acknowledgments

TOWN OF MILTON



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PART I: INTRODUCTION

EAST MILTON, 1940S

EAST MILTON TODAY

OVERVIEW

PLANNING PROCESS

VISION PLANNING PROCESS & VISION STATEMENT



East Milton Square, 1940s

East Milton Square, Today



Overview

The Milton Planning Board asked Barrett Planning Group LLC and Dodson & Flinker to assist with developing a vision plan for East Milton in the fall of 2019. This engagement came at the heels of a report from the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) in May 2019. At the Town's request, ULI had assembled a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to assess conditions in East Milton and make recommendations for "a workable strategy for the future development of East Milton Square through the creation of a mixed-use overlay district."

One of the major reasons the Town asked ULI to assemble a TAP was a stalled proposal to redevelop a site in East Milton for multifamily residential use. The Planning Department asked ULI to advise the Town about "best practices" in district planning and community engagement, evaluating district boundaries, and sorting out "next steps" for moving forward with some type of mixed-use plan for East Milton Square – Milton's largest commercial zoning district intermixed with a single-family residential zone. Not surprisingly, ULI's first recommendation was to work on building community consensus.

Although the consultant's original scope consisted of three major community engagement sessions working hand-in-hand with a six-member working group, it became clear that large public meetings were not the best option for developing a consensus plan. After two such meetings, the working group was opened to a larger group of stakeholders

– mainly, neighborhood residents who expressed interest and wanted to help. That decision proved invaluable for the entire planning process. It introduced new ideas and a fresh perspective into the conversations about East Milton Square.

East Milton is changing faster than most of the available, tried-and-true data sources can document. Young households looking for a home to buy in a community close to Boston see East Milton Square's possibilities quite differently from longer-term residents. As East Milton's neighborhoods continue to transition to a younger demographic – young professional couples and families, former residents of Boston and other close-in communities who want a suburban home with urban amenities – the demand for "places to go and things to do" will support new markets and new investment, including new investment in housing choices that do not exist today.

The take-home message from this 15-month planning process is the Town needs to liberate East Milton from the land use policy constraints that limit this area's capacity to evolve and respond to market opportunities. If that happens, East Milton will prosper. The development that occurs there will create the economic conditions needed to address facility and infrastructure challenges in the commercial core and adjacent neighborhoods.

Guiding Questions



What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and trends relate to East Milton Square?



Can the Town build consensus regarding future land use in East Milton Square?



What is the overall community vision for East Milton Square?



What regulatory tools and strategies can enable the Town to realize this vision?

Planning Process

Work for this project essentially took place in two phases, in part because the COVID-19 pandemic halted the planning process in and in part because the consultant team and Planning Board agreed to expand the original Steering Committee to gain additional community perspectives.

PROJECT PHASE 1

KICK-OFF

November 2019. Dodson & Flinker and Barrett Planning Group conducted site walks of the neighborhood. Barrett Planning Group and Town Planner William Clark conducted interviews with original Steering Committee members to learn about the project, neighborhood concerns, and other background information.

COMMUNITY MEETING 1 OF 3

November 21, 2019. Consultants present project background and scope to members of the community. Participants engaged in several visioning activities including a map exercise to identify strengths and weaknesses, visual preference surveys, and opportunities to provide open responses to questions.

COMMUNITY MEETING 2 OF 3

January 29, 2020. Following an initial presentation highlighting takeaways from the November meeting, regional development trends, and case studies, participants provided additional feedback on “deal breakers,” what was missing in our analysis so far, and other related questions.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

January-March 2020. Barrett Planning Group met with the Town Planner and Steering Committee, with the following areas of focus for each meeting:

January 21, 2020. Committee charge and brainstorming for how to engage the public.

February 19, 2020. Overview of public feedback from two community meetings and next steps.

March 5, 2020. Corcoran 40B Presentation to Steering Committee about general project plans. While this visioning process for East Milton Square intentionally did not focus on specific projects, the Steering Committee and consultants sought to learn more about a significant potential development that could affect the outcome of our work.

PROJECT PHASE 2

WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED

August 2020. Following a project pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Planning Board invited residents to join an expansion of the original Steering Committee by open invitation. Three of the five original Steering Committee members continued with the project, and the East Milton Square Working Group (WG) was formed.

WORKING GROUP MEETING 1 of 5

August 20, 2020. During this initial meeting, consultants introduced the Working Group to the project, shared background information, and presented and takeaways to date.

WORKING GROUP MEETING 2 of 5

September 17, 2020. Consultants shared an overview of existing conditions to ensure that the Working Group’s visioning was based on a shared foundation of relevant information. Topics presented included zoning; current land use in East Milton; traffic, parking, and pedestrian safety; demographics; and market demand. The Working Group then participated in a visioning exercise so the consultants could draft a vision statement to frame the project.

BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

October 2020. During the September meeting, some of the Working Group expressed concern that this process lacked the perspective of businesses in East Milton Square. With this in mind, Barrett Planning Group conducted nearly twenty interviews (both in person and by phone) with owners or employees of businesses in East Milton Square. Findings are presented in the next section of this report.

WORKING GROUP MEETING 3 of 5

October 15, 2020. This meeting began with a presentation on additional or clarifying existing conditions based on Working Group questions identified during the September meeting. Following this, Barrett Planning Group presented a draft vision statement and Dodson & Flinker presented three concept sketches for consideration. Working Group members were asked to reflect on these and provide feedback prior to the November meeting.

WORKING GROUP MEETING 4 of 5

November 19, 2020. Working Group members indicated a preference for the most transformative concept (discussed in the Vision chapter of this report). Based on this feedback, the consultant team presented implementation strategies that could bring about the desired change for East Milton Square.

WORKING GROUP MEETING 5 of 5

December 17, 2020. During the final Working Group meeting, members and consultants discussed a revised vision statement, strategies

and implementation, and reviewed case studies presented during the second community meeting in greater detail.

COMMUNITY MEETING 3 of 3

January 21, 2021. This final meeting to the public presented an overview of the project and public engagement process; the takeaways from the various methods of public engagement; final vision for East Milton Square; and suggested strategies for consideration in the final report.

We thank the original project Steering Committee, the East Milton Working Group, Milton Planning Board, Planning Department, and members of the community for their participation in this process!



Community Input

Primary Concerns

The following primary concerns were identified throughout the public engagement process:

- Traffic (especially cut-through traffic)
- Parking supply, management, enforcement
- Delivery trucks
- Illegal U-turns
- Nothing for East Milton residents, East Milton businesses and employees to do or to draw people from other parts of town
- Limited variety of businesses, retail, and goods & services
- Area not pedestrian-friendly
- Limited housing options
- Cost of housing
- Limited bus service, no bus shelter
- Lack of consideration for current residents with regard to future development
- Concern that building height/mass for larger developments would be excessive and out of character with the neighborhood
- Lack of defining character for the neighborhood
- Whether the neighborhood has the infrastructure to handle increased housing

Visual Preferences

During the first community meeting, attendees participated in two visual preference surveys, which allowed the consultants to develop a sense for the the desired physical character of the neighborhood and possible design principles.

Buildings Visual Preference Survey Takeaways

- Preference for 1.5-to-3 story wood frame buildings with ground floor commercial and complex roofs
- All photos of buildings over 3 stories received more red dots than green dots



Public Realm Visual Preference Survey

- Strong desire for improved streetscape with sidewalk cafes, parklets, gardens, and opportunities for coming together
- Some interest in traffic calming and bike infrastructure
- Preference for brick, pavers, and other high-quality materials



Select Highly Rated Images



Feedback from Area Businesses

September-October 2020 Interviews

- Parking/lack of parking enforcement is a problem, and businesses hear this from their customers, as well.
- There is some lingering resentment about the loss of parking at the Deck.
- Overall, businesses seem less concerned about backups caused by delivery trucks.
- In general, businesses support beautification efforts that would tie the Square together, but the degree of uniformity they would accept varies. There is also the question of who would be financially responsible for these efforts.
- Most businesses were in favor of a focused “East Milton Square Business Association” to supplement the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and offering more targeted representation.
- Businesses universally agreed that if they had to start all over, they would still come to East Milton!

“We need to take the perspective of business owners into greater consideration.”

-Member of the East Milton Square Working Group



East Milton Square Working Group

The Vision Plan chapter of this report outlines the results of the Working Group's participation and contributions to this process, this brief outline serves to provide some context to their role. The consultant team and Planning Board expanded the original Steering Committee to gain more diverse community perspectives. (As someone noted during the first community meeting, "Why are there no women on this committee?")

The consultant team's approach to our work with this dedicated group entailed the following steps:

- Educate Working Group members about existing conditions, issues and opportunities, commercial and residential development local and regional markets, and other relevant topics to ensure their feedback is based on common understandings.
- Engage members in discussions to learn more about community wishes, concerns, and hopes for East Milton. Develop a guiding vision for this plan.
- Introduce concept plans showing a range of possibilities for East Milton Square based on what we have heard through the public engagement process thus far.
- Based on the preferred concept, present strategies and implementation methods that can allow the Town to realize this vision.

The diagram to the right indicates general areas of consensus and lingering questions that may indicate the need for further community conversation.

Areas of General Agreement



Future Vision for East Milton Square *(See Next Page)*



Desire for Transformation in East Milton Square



Need for Zoning Changes

Lingering Questions



Tolerance for Building Height & Other Trade-Offs



Tools and Policies to Bring About Change



Responsibility (& Rights) of Town vs. Businesses

A Vision for East Milton Square

This plan envisions East Milton Square as a vibrant and welcoming neighborhood that showcases the Town's history and embraces opportunities for intentional growth and change. An efficient circulation system connects the Square to nearby major roads, establishing the area as a local and regional destination with a range of thriving commercial, recreational, residential, and cultural opportunities. As the Town continues to implement its Complete Streets plan, East Milton Square benefits from traffic calming measures and pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly facilities.

Quality housing that is affordable across a broad income range and harmonious with the neighborhood brings increased diversity and bustling foot traffic to the district. The improved streetscape features beautiful vegetation, sidewalk seating, and inviting building façades. Subtle yet recognizable physical features woven throughout the Square create a distinctive identity for the district while allowing businesses to retain their individual characters. Patrons comfortably walk around the Square to visit its variety of popular businesses and enjoy Manning Park's well-maintained green space. Effective neighborhood-scale signage and parking management have improved the experience of traveling to and from the Square and protected neighborhood quality of life for East Milton residents.

The Town steadily implements a defined plan for East Milton and welcomes opportunities that encourage the neighborhood's managed evolution. Environmental stewardship is prioritized throughout the planning process, setting a standard for the Town to continue in future planning efforts. Respectful, consistent, and continual collaboration among Town staff, business owners, local business associations, and residents furthers this shared community vision toward a flourishing and sustainable East Milton Square.

Vision Planning



EXISTING CONDITIONS

East Milton Square has diverse character with a mix of: storefront buildings along Adams Street and Granite Avenue; small free-standing commercial structures; the Milton Market-place shopping center; civic, educational and religious buildings; and single-family, two-family and small multi-family houses. I-93 divides the neighborhood in half. The street grid is irregular, with curves, cul-de-sacs and angled intersections. The shapes and sizes of blocks and parcels vary widely.

CONCEPT PLANS

The following pages present Concept Plans that show potential future development in East Milton Square—ten to fifty years in the future. The scenarios illustrate different ways that East Milton Square could evolve, depending on actions that the Town and private landowners take.

Three concept plans were developed and shown to the Working Group. The Working Group discussed their pros and cons and in a subsequent survey voted on their preferred concept. Concept 3 was the Working Group's most preferred diagram. It was subsequently revised and refined to develop the Final Vision Plan. All of the concept plans are shown and described on the next pages.

CONCEPT 1, BUILD-OUT UNDER CURRENT ZONING



Concept 1

Concept 1, Build-Out Under Current Zoning shows one potential outcome for the build-out of East Milton Square under the current zoning.

The area stays largely the same. This is because the current zoning—especially the parking requirements—make it difficult to redevelop lots at the same, or greater, intensity than what currently exists. In addition, many lots in the district are small and have irregular shapes. Development on these lots does not achieve an economy of scale and it is challenging to fit parking on them.

In response to these challenges, the drawing shows changes primarily in the block bounded by Granite Avenue, Adams Street, and Mechanic Street. Here, several buildings are shown to be demolished to make room for parking, which serves several new buildings. The drawing assumes that parcels would be consolidated, and/or in some cases that property owners would work together to allow cross access and shared off-street surface parking.

The drawing shows further lot consolidation on the north side of Adams Street west of Franklin Street. Here an existing one-story row of shops has been replaced by two multi-story buildings which use expanded surface parking to the rear (necessitating demolition of an existing building).

The small-scale of redevelopment shown in Concept 1 makes it unlikely that projects will help meet town goals like revitalizing the commercial district, providing diverse and affordable housing, or improving streetscapes and walkability.

What are Concept Plans and Why Create Them?

Concept Plans are drawings that show the potential future development of a place. The scenarios do not show what will happen; they illustrate only the direction of what could happen. Their purpose is: to reveal the possibilities of the neighborhood; to develop and test design and policy principles that can be encoded in zoning and other town actions; and to enable Milton residents to evaluate which future they prefer so that the Town can then take actions to steer the neighborhood in that direction. The drawings do not imply that the Town of Milton will “take” any property or engage in any development on private property. Instead, they show what private property owners could do, if they so chose.

Concepts 2 and 3

Concepts 2 and 3 show two potential outcomes for the build-out of East Milton Square that become possible if the Town revises its zoning. Concept 2 shows a moderate change scenario, whereas Concept 3 shows more significant redevelopment.

To some degree, the two concepts represent two stages in the long-term evolution of the area. Over much of human history, village centers have generally evolved from less developed to more developed. As a center became more active and more desirable, buildings were built taller, closer together, and covered a greater percentage of the land. Three primary factors changed that evolutionary pattern over the past century: prioritizing auto transportation over foot traffic (especially dedicating a high percentage of lot area to off-street parking); adopting zoning that prevents evolution of a place by limiting building height and lot coverage (explicitly and through off-street parking requirements); and market forces that made it unprofitable to redevelop centers. The three factors are closely linked. For example, local preference for auto transportation can lead to increased zoning requirements for off-street parking, which then reduce the potential return on investment for redevelopment.

Milton faces a fundamental question: should East Milton Square evolve into a more auto-oriented area with free-standing commercial structures and plentiful surface parking, or should it evolve into a more walkable mixed-use center? The area's zoning is calling for the former: more auto-orientation (as shown in Concept 1). On the other

Recent town plans and public input gathered during this project show a strong consensus for the area's evolution toward more mixed-use, more concentrated activity, and more walkability.

hand, recent town plans and public input gathered during this project show a strong consensus for the area's evolution toward more mixed-use, more concentrated activity, and more walkability (as shown in Concepts 2 and 3). Concepts 2 and 3 test what level of redevelopment (or stage in East Milton's evolution) is desirable over the coming decades, and whether there are particular guardrails that should be put in place to ensure that evolution results in a place that meets the Town's goals.

Concept 2 shows more development than Concept 3. This is primarily a result of how off-street parking is provided in the two diagrams. Concept 2 has surface parking only. Concept 3 shows several parking garages. We are assuming that transportation practices and market forces will continue to require some off-street parking in East Milton Square for the coming decades and that the amount of development possible on a lot will continue to be closely related to how much parking can be provided in the area. Structured parking can unlock more development on a lot if: 1. there is adequate room to build it, 2. the zoning does not set other limitations that prevent a developer from taking advantage of the unlocked potential (for example, building height limitations), and 3. rents or sale prices warrant the substantial investment in structured parking.

Despite the difference between surface and structured parking, Concepts 2 and 3 share an overall approach to off-street parking. Parking is centralized and shared across lot lines as much as possible. When possible, parking is located in a larger lot in the middle of a block. This would improve the utilization of parking lots reducing the overall number of spaces needed, improves the look, feel, and pedestrian safety of streets, utilize high value street frontage for commercial spaces, improve traffic flow, and reduce the amount of space wasted on parking lot circulation. This overall approach was generally supported by the Working Group and is recommended for future development in East Milton Square. See the recommendations section for strategies to implement this approach through zoning and other actions.

Because of the size and shape of blocks in East Milton Square, there are only small number of locations in East Milton Square that are suitable for larger centralized parking lots.

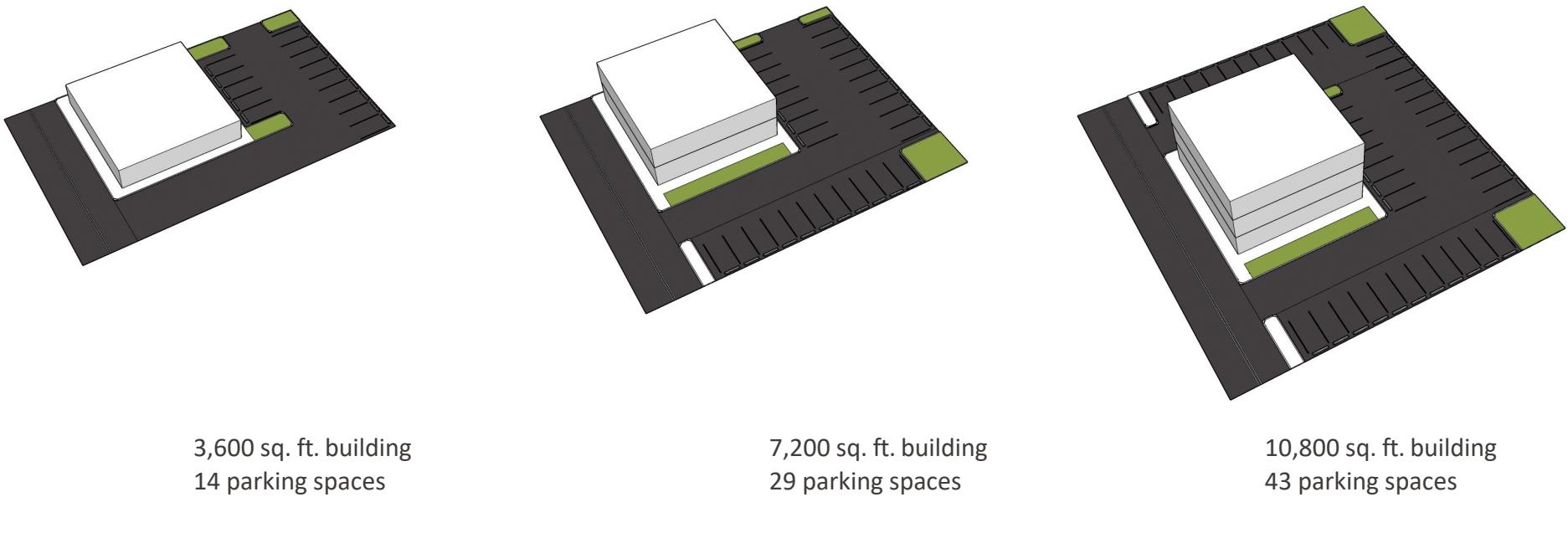
- If additional decks could be built over I-93, they could be used for shared, centralized parking lots. Given the challenges and cost of this kind of project, this is not shown in the concept plans.
- The lots bounded by Granite Avenue and Bassett Street (adjacent to the Milton Marketplace shopping center) already have a substantial amount of off-street parking. If lots were consolidated and redeveloped, there is enough space for structured parking in this area (shown in Concept 3).

Potential Locations for Larger Parking Lots in East Milton Square



- The block bounded by Granite Avenue, Bassett Street, Adams Street, and Franklin Street has some potential for shared parking. This area is unlikely to be large enough for both additional development and an above-grade parking structure. Surface and below-grade parking seem more viable here.
- The block bounded by Granite Avenue, Adams Street and Mechanic Street has space for a large shared surface parking lot or a parking structure if there is significant lot consolidation and redevelopment. This parking structure would be conveniently located to serve the existing core commercial uses along Adams Street and Granite Avenue.

The Town could consider partnering with private entities to develop shared parking at these key locations or the Town could further explore acquiring some of these properties in order to build public parking.



The images above show how current zoning parking requirements in East Milton Square drive its development patterns. Approximately the same amount of space must be dedicated to off-street parking as to building area. On an idealized lot, parking can be tucked behind a one-story building. If a two story building is built, the most efficient site design is to locate parking beside and behind the building. At three stories, it is most efficient to wrap the building with parking on three sides.

CONCEPT 2: MODERATE CHANGE



Concept 2

The build-out shown in Concept 2 shows a moderate change scenario. Changes are described in callouts. Key ideas underlying the design are to use buildings to shape public spaces by placing them at key corners and aligned along sidewalks; to minimize curb cuts and hide parking behind buildings; to improve the continuity of the pedestrian network by connecting through and across blocks; and to add small parks, where possible.

The concept diagram represents several approaches to off-street parking that can both smooth parking utilization and minimize the negative impacts of off-street parking:

- Improve cross access between parking lots to facilitate sharing of parking. This often also enables curb cuts to be closed.
- Design buildings with ground floor surface parking hidden by a liner space along the street. This is similar to current site design at 552 Adams Street (Starbucks).
- Only in areas not intended for active pedestrian use, place parking on the Ground floor with other uses above.

The build-out shown in Concept 2 would require changes to the area's zoning.

The scale of development shown would facilitate the creation of some affordable housing and other public benefits.

CONCEPT 3: TRANSFORMATION



Concept 3

The build-out shown in Concept 3 is based on the same key design ideas as Concept 2.

In this concept, structured parking enables more building area while still ensuring adequate parking. This scenario requires more lot consolidation or coordination among property owners and substantially more private investment than Concept 2. This build-out would require changes to the current zoning.

The benefits of this scale of redevelopment could include:

- greater potential for affordable housing,
- more residents to support businesses and a make a more lively place,
- more parking supply, some of which could potentially be made available to the general public,
- increased chance of public benefits from development, like streetscape improvements or investment in pocket parks,
- greater sustainability by concentrating development in a previously developed area,
- increased tax revenue.

EXISTING CONDITIONS FOR VISION PLAN



Concept 3 was preferred by members of the Working Group. Based on their feedback, a more detailed version of Concept 3 was created—the Vision Plan for East Milton Square.

The Vision Plan is a visual representation of the Vision Statement presented elsewhere in this report. It provides an aspirational view of the build-out of East Milton Square over the coming decades. It can also help guide implementation by the Town and other entities.





FINAL CONCEPT: VISION PLAN FOR EAST MILTON SQUARE

Overview

The final concept plan for East Milton Square builds off of the “Transformation” drawing, which was the highest rated option in a survey of Working Group Members. The Vision Plan focuses on the heart of East Milton Square, showing the transformation of the area into a thriving mixed-use center.

New buildings (shown in brown) are infilled on sites with significant potential among the existing buildings (gray) that seem the least likely to change—either because of the quality of the buildings or uses, or the degree to which they maximize the potential of their sites. As described earlier, the Vision Plan does not require any landowner to do anything with their property. It illustrates a shared vision for East Milton Square that provides for the continuation of existing uses while setting a framework for future development and town improvements. It shows how incremental change over time can build toward a more vibrant, cohesive, walkable mixed-use center that meets the Town’s economic development, housing, and sustainability goals.

Existing Building

New Building

Data Sources: MassGIS, Town of Milton

0

400

800ft



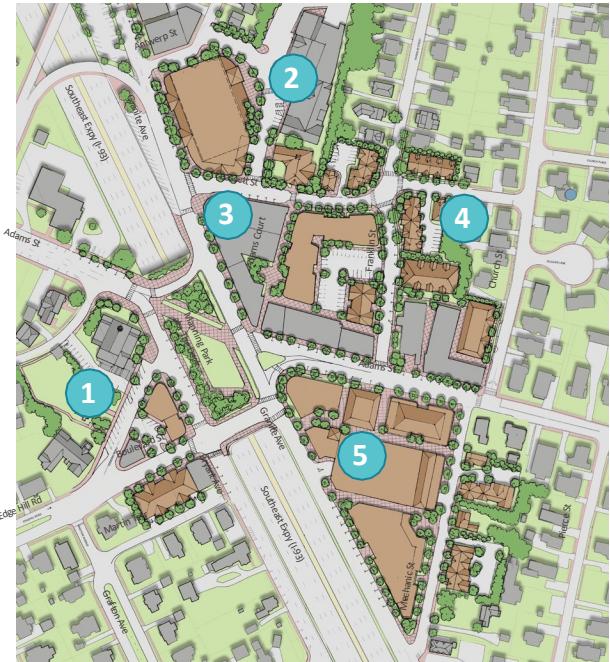
Design Principles for Redevelopment in East Milton Square

- **Maintain and enhance diversity, flexibility and resilience** of uses, of spaces, and of people living in and visiting East Milton Square
- **Fill gaps** between existing buildings to create a more consistent and lively edge along sidewalks
- **Use building massing** to shape outdoor spaces.
- **Place buildings at corners** to define streets and intersections.
- **Consolidate and share off-street parking** across lot lines.
- **Improve streetscapes** and enhance livability by minimizing curb cuts.
- **Build pocket parks** and other small green spaces where possible.

Redevelopment

The following numbered descriptions are keyed to the inset map on the following page.

- 1 On the west side of I-93 new mixed-use buildings are shown along Bryant Avenue and Boulevard Street. These buildings complement the existing small cluster of civic and commercial uses and frame the western edge of Manning Park, which is currently being rebuilt.
- 2 On the east side of I-93, redeveloped buildings and sites are shown along Granite Avenue from Antwerp Street wrapping the corner to Bassett Street and along Bassett Street to east of Franklin Street. The redevelopment of these areas, would visually and functionally incorporate them into the walkable center of East Milton and provide additional commercial space and opportunities for diverse housing. A parking garage sits at the corner of Granite Avenue and Bassett Street. It is lined by commercial space and surrounded by generous pedestrian spaces. Circulation at the Milton Marketplace shopping center is simplified and streamlined. Along the north side of Bassett Street a moderate-sized mixed-use buildings sits in front of the Milton Marketplace building, where there is currently a parking lot. The L-shaped building frames a small greenspace or patio for cafe seating or another pedestrian-oriented outdoor use. Proceeding east along the north side of Bassett Street, smaller commercial and residential buildings create a transition to the surrounding neighborhood. These sites provide opportunities for less pedestrian-oriented (but still walkable) commercial uses like real estate agents, insurance agencies, and professional offices. They also are



well suited for “missing middle” housing types, like small multi-family buildings, townhouses, and apartment houses (buildings that look like mansions, but contain apartments).

- 3 The block bounded by Bassett Street, Granite Avenue, Adams Street, and Franklin Street shows a mix of existing buildings and redevelopment. The existing storefront buildings along Granite Avenue and Adams Street remain. An L-shaped building is added behind the existing storefront commercial structures. It frames a mid-block pedestrian corridor and service alley that connects Adams Street to Bassett Street by Milton Marketplace. A small plaza sits in the middle of the pedestrian passage. Another mixed-use building sits on the east side of Franklin Street just behind the existing building on Adams Street.

Another alley/pedestrian path runs behind the buildings that front on Adams Street. Surface parking in the middle of the block would be supplemented by below grade parking extending beneath the new buildings. This could be used for service functions, alleviating the issue of delivery trucks blocking Franklin Street.

4 The east side of Franklin Street shows several new buildings with a size and massing that would provide a transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods and provide for diversity of commercial spaces and housing, including the missing middle housing types described earlier.

5 The block bounded by Adams Street, Granite Avenue, and Mechanic Street is shown as entirely redeveloped. This is one of the largest blocks in the area, and one of two locations that appear to have potential for a parking garage. New mixed use buildings line Adams Street. A parking garage runs east-west from Mechanic Street to Granite Ave. It is fronted by a liner space on Mechanic Street. A triangular building with ground floor parking occupies the southern corner of Mechanic Street and Granite Avenue. The interior of the block has a network of pedestrian paths that make it easy to access the parking garage and to move between buildings. Smaller commercial, residential and mixed-use buildings line the east side of Mechanic Street. They provide a transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods and space for diverse commercial uses and housing unit types.

Parking

Throughout the plan, parking is consolidated into larger shared lots or parking structures. Curb cuts are minimized. A comparison of the block bounded by Adams Street, Granite Avenue and Mechanic Street is instructive. Currently the block has 23 curb cuts. The Vision Plan shows just three curb cuts.



Shared parking lots and structures



Parking garage with retail and office liner, Boulder, CO (Source: SA+R Architects)



Parking with restaurant liner & apartments above, Dedham, MA (Source: Streetview)



Below-grade parking with apartments, Belmont, MA (image source: Google Streetview)

Pedestrian Network

The Vision Plan shows improvements to East Milton Square's pedestrian network. Where possible, public sidewalks can be widened and curb bumpouts and crosswalks can be added to improve the safety of street crossings. Pedestrian paths can be added to the interior of blocks to create shortcuts and provide a respite from the heavy traffic on some of East Milton Square's streets.

Robust street tree planting can create a canopy over streets and sidewalks. Tree survival depends on adequate soils and root space and consistent long-term maintenance.



Gathering Spaces

Outdoor gathering spaces bring life to a town center. This kind of space was strongly supported in the Visual Preference Survey administered during the first community meeting for this project. The Vision Plan shows several outdoor gathering spaces distributed throughout East Milton Square. These kinds of spaces function best when they are located adjacent to pedestrian traffic, near active commercial uses (especially restaurants and cafes), away from excessive traffic noise and pollution, and in areas where they can take advantage of sun and shade to moderate temperature extremes.



Top: Pedestrian circulation in block interiors.
Bottom: Shared pedestrian gathering spaces.

Building Massing and Design

The drawing illustrates techniques for maintaining a human scale in building massing and for creating a cohesive, but varied, pedestrian realm. Both are fundamental for creating a successful town center.

Larger buildings often have simple massing overall, but feature small jogs to break up long expanses of walls. These jogs correspond with the design of bays in the facade of the building.

Buildings may have rounded or clipped corners.

Both of these techniques can effectively highlight building entrances, accentuate street intersections, terminate views, or create space for small seating areas or gardens. Larger buildings generally have flat roofs, though they may include lower level projections with sloped roofs, and/or upper story step-backs.

Smaller buildings are often composed of simple masses that have been added together. These forms are reminiscent of residential buildings that have grown over time. They reduce the apparent size of a building and enable it to better fit an odd-shaped lot. Roof forms reflect the additive massing, resulting in several smaller roof planes instead of one big one. This prevents the roof from overwhelming the scale of the building, while still allowing the building to be designed for effective rooftop solar panels.

Throughout the plan building massing is designed to shape public spaces and minimize wasted “leftover” space.





Building Height

Establishing an appropriate height for buildings in East Milton Square is one of the most difficult planning decisions the Town faces. Currently the zoning for the business district allows 3-story or 45 feet by right, with up to 5-stories of 65 feet by special permit. The result has been that when taller buildings are proposed the permit process becomes highly contentious. This leaves both project proponents and neighbors in a stressful state of uncertainty.

Currently, no buildings in East Milton Square that exceed two and half stories (except church spires or other projections). This is likely the result of the zoning's height limitations and the lack of development in the area over the past decades.

However, market conditions have changed dramatically in the last decade. Across the United States, mixed-use buildings are being built at a pace unseen in generations. There is now a market for mixed-use buildings in East Milton Square, with stronger demand for the housing component than the commercial component.

The cost of land and the cost of construction in the Boston metro area are both quite high. The result is that generally taller buildings are required projects to be economically viable. Though projects vary, it is buildings are quite often in the four to six story range. This is especially true for projects with affordable housing.

Planning for East Milton Square cannot ignore this market reality while it continues to struggle with competing desires: some development to meet Town goals and keeping the area looking as it does now.

The images on the following page show a visualization of various building heights at a typical location on Adams Street. The image series shows buildings similar in height to what exists currently, three story buildings within the allowed height range, five story buildings topping out at the maximum height possible by special permit height, and five story buildings with the upper stories stepped back above the third floor.

A stepback is when the upper stories of a building is recessed from the front facade of the building. This technique reduces the sense of enclosure along the street and can increase light that reaches the street and other buildings (by reducing shadows). It also creates usable spaces for terraces along the street, a valuable amenity. Requiring an upper story stepback may be a viable technique for reconciling the debate about building height in East Milton Square. For example, zoning could be revised to allow five stories by right with the upper two stories stepped back from the front facade. Stepback requirements are typically set at 10-15' or are based on an angle related to shading or the desired ratio of street enclosure.

Above: Examples of buildings with upper story stepbacks



Visualization of various building heights at a typical location on Adams Street.

Top Left: one-story buildings similar in height to what exists currently.

Bottom Left: three-story buildings within the allowed height range.

Top Right: five-story buildings topping out at the maximum height possible by special permit height.

Bottom right: five-story buildings with the upper stories stepped back above the third floor.



Massing Model of Vision Plan
View from east looking down Adams Street

- Existing Building
- New commercial floor
- space New residential floor
- space New parking garage



Massing Model of Vision Plan
View from southwest

- Existing Building
- New commercial floor
- space New residential floor
- space New parking garage



**Massing Model of Vision
Plan View from west**

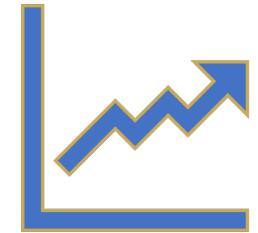
- Existing Building
- New commercial floor
- space New residential floor
- space New parking garage



Massing Model of Vision Plan
View from north

- Existing Building
- New commercial floor
- space New residential floor
- space New parking garage

PART 2. MARKET OVERVIEW & DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDIES

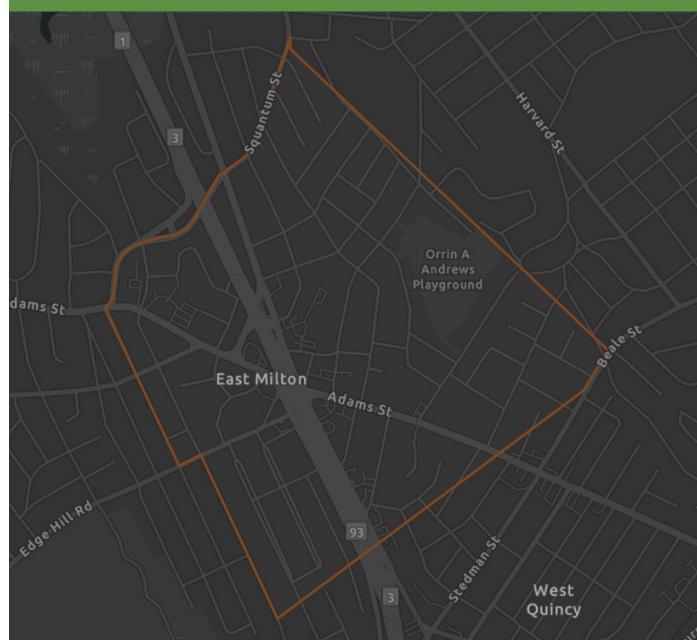


Community Demographics

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

East Milton

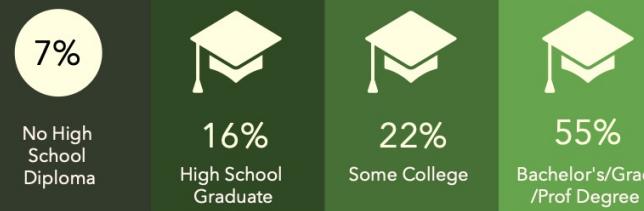
Area: 0.39 square miles



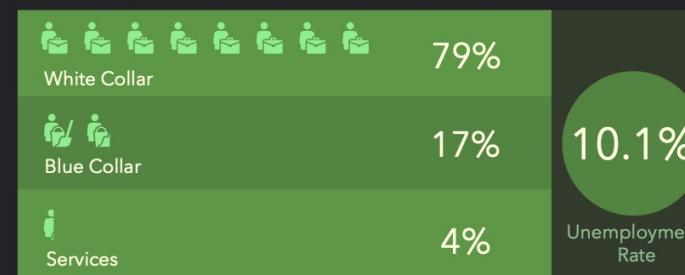
This infographic contains data provided by Esri.
The vintage of the data is 2020, 2025.

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EDUCATION



EMPLOYMENT



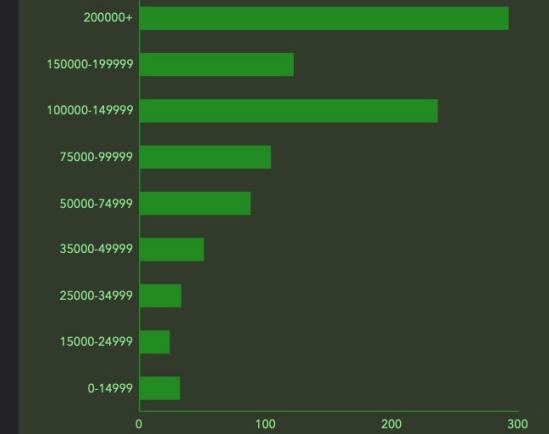
KEY FACTS



INCOME

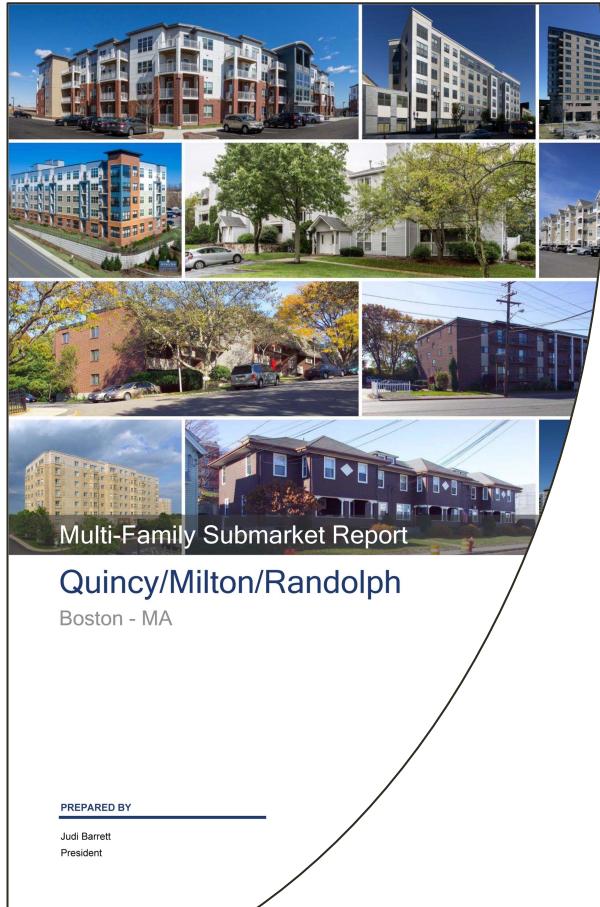


HOUSEHOLD INCOME (\$)



Source: ESRI Business Analyst, 2020.

Market Demand & Area Trends



Multi-Family Area Trends – Quincy/Milton/Randolph Submarket

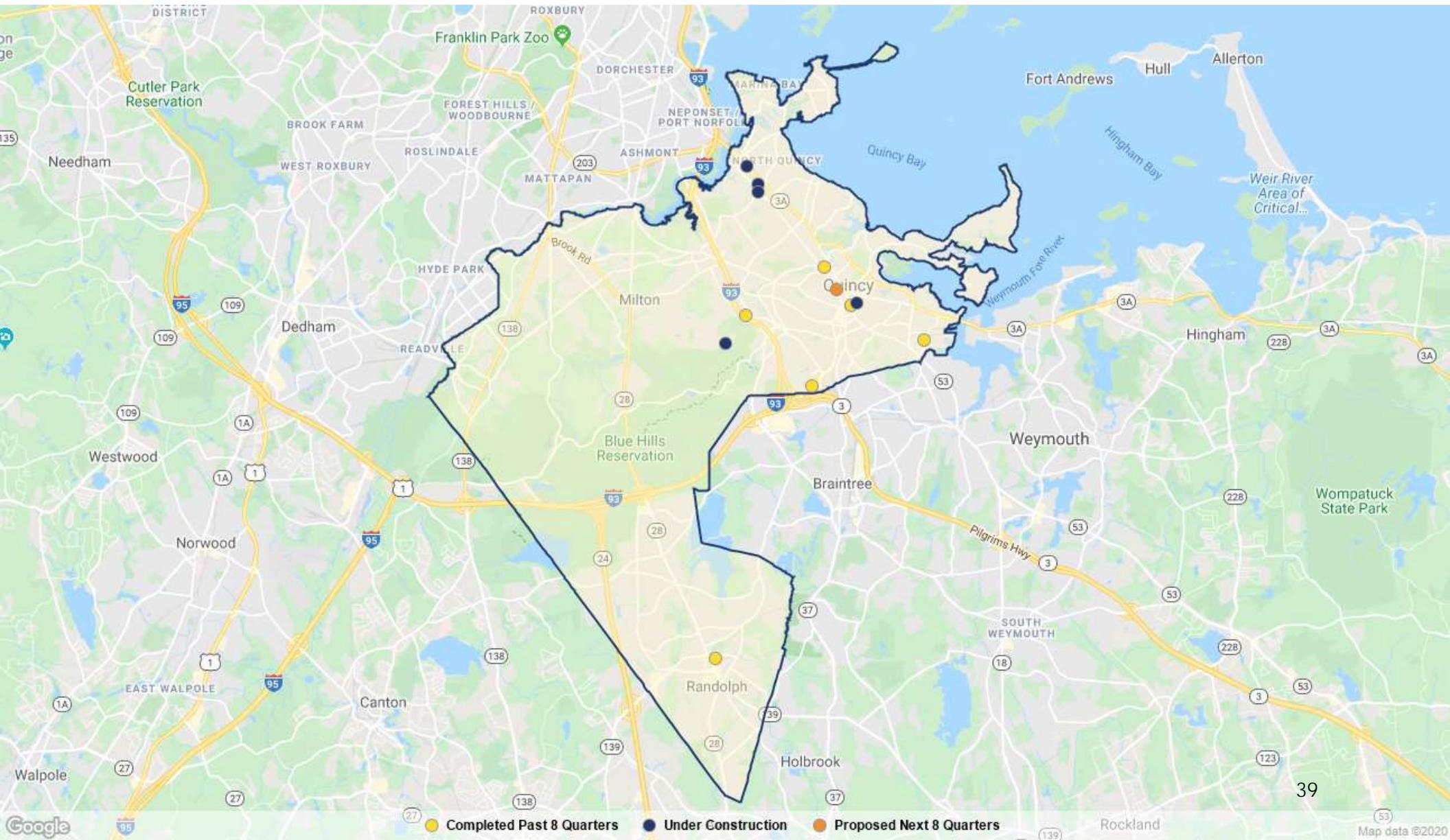
Period	Vacancy Rate	Market Asking Rent/Unit	Market Asking Rent/Unit Growth	Inventory Units	U/C Units	12 Mo Abs. Units	Market Sale Price/Unit	Market Cap Rate
2024	7.7%	\$2,206	0.3%	12,394		287	\$298,071	4.9%
2023	7.5%	\$2,200	0.5%	12,057		267	\$299,552	4.8%
2022	7.4%	\$2,189	0.9%	11,753		366	\$300,464	4.8%
2021	8.6%	\$2,169	1.3%	11,508		387	\$302,108	4.7%
2020	5.9%	\$2,142	2.5%	10,761		133	\$300,628	4.7%
YTD	4.6%	\$2,111	3.1%	10,492	1,112	535	\$293,067	4.8%
2019	4.7%	\$2,089	1.9%	10,492	1,112	566	\$291,989	4.7%
2018	7.8%	\$2,049	4.1%	10,230	764	622	\$280,924	4.7%
2017	8.1%	\$1,969	2.0%	9,585	1,176	567	\$280,604	4.7%
2016	8.1%	\$1,931	1.9%	8,965	1,120	312	\$263,606	4.8%
2015	3.5%	\$1,895	5.1%	8,221	1,096	47	\$239,507	4.9%

This area market has been slower than Boston as a whole, but despite (or perhaps because of) slow rent growth, absorption rate is very high.

2,200+ units have been created since 2016 with 1,100 underway. Institutional investors are looking for opportunities. This contributes to the uptick in Chapter 40B activity in Milton over the past 12-18 months.

- Under Construction
- Completed Past 8 Quarters
- Proposed Next 8 Quarters

Multifamily and Mixed-Use Developments in Nearby Locations



Target Market: East Milton, Massachusetts

East Milton seems to be attracting young, well-educated homebuyers from Boston, Cambridge, and other inner-core locations. They want a community with great schools and easy access to Boston, and a home they can afford. East Milton offers the move-up opportunities they seek.

As these households continue to relocate to East Milton, demand for amenities – recreation, entertainment, food services, and so forth – will grow, contributing to East Milton's economic transformation. They will also become a more vocal force in community decision-making.

TARGET MARKET SUMMARY

East Milton

Area: 0.39 square miles

KEY FACTS

2,742
Population

44.4
Median Age

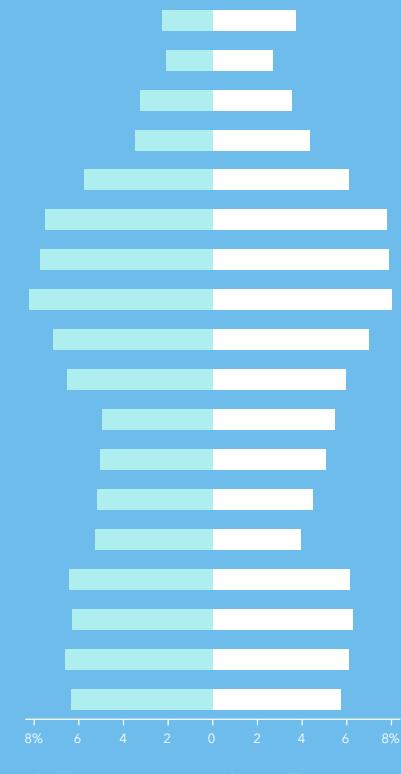
2.8
Average Household Size

\$128,678
Median Household Income



This infographic contains data provided by Esri, Esri and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Esri and GfK MRI. The vintage of the data is 2020, 2025. © 2020 Esri

AGE PYRAMID



The largest group:
2020 Females Age 50-54

The smallest group:
2020 Males Age 80-84

ANNUAL LIFESTYLE SPENDING

\$4,771

Travel

\$178

Theatre/Operas/Concerts

\$156

Movies/Museums/ Parks

\$120

Sports Events

\$9

Online Games

\$176

Audio

Tapestry Segments



Pleasantville
710 households

72.3%
of Households



Savvy Suburbanites
139 households

14.2%
of Households



Top Tier
88 households

9.0%
of Households

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, 2020.

Case Studies

The Bradford Apartments

Cushing Square Belmont, MA

- Three-building residential and commercial development, leasing 2020-2021
- 38,000 square ft. of commercial area in 6 retail spaces
- 124 residential units
 - 112 market-rate units
 - 12 affordable units
- Market-rate rents
 - Studio: from \$2000 per month
 - 1-bedroom: from \$2,600 per month
 - 2-bedroom: up to about \$4,500 per month
- 202 parking spaces, including two below- grade parking garages



Case Study #2: Washington Street, Dedham Square

Dedham, MA. 2015-2018

Snapshot: Dedham's Existing and Occupied Mixed-Use Buildings (2019)

Property	Land Area			Built	Floor Area		Comm/Res Ratio
	Acres	Sq. Ft.	Units*		Res.	Com.	
5 Eastern Avenue	0.20	8,712	26	1910	16,336	8,168	50%
290 Washington	0.28	12,197	10	2004	13,200	2,130	16%
420 Washington	0.44	19,166	26	2006	27,256	8,800	32%
439 Washington	0.29	12,632	10	2009	11,294	1,600	14%
408 Whiting Ave	0.67	29,185	14	2012	9,587	3,774	39%
29 Bridge Street	0.80	34,848	12	2012	11,960	5,980	50%
125 Washington	0.75	32,670	45	2012	30,052	2,800	9%
321 Washington	0.61	26,572	27	2015	23,898	2,598	11%
333 East Street	0.26	11,326	14	2016	18,300	1,455	8%
338 Washington	0.56	24,394	60	2018	45,200	6,400	14%
360 Washington	0.28	12,197	14	2018	14,312	7,400	52%

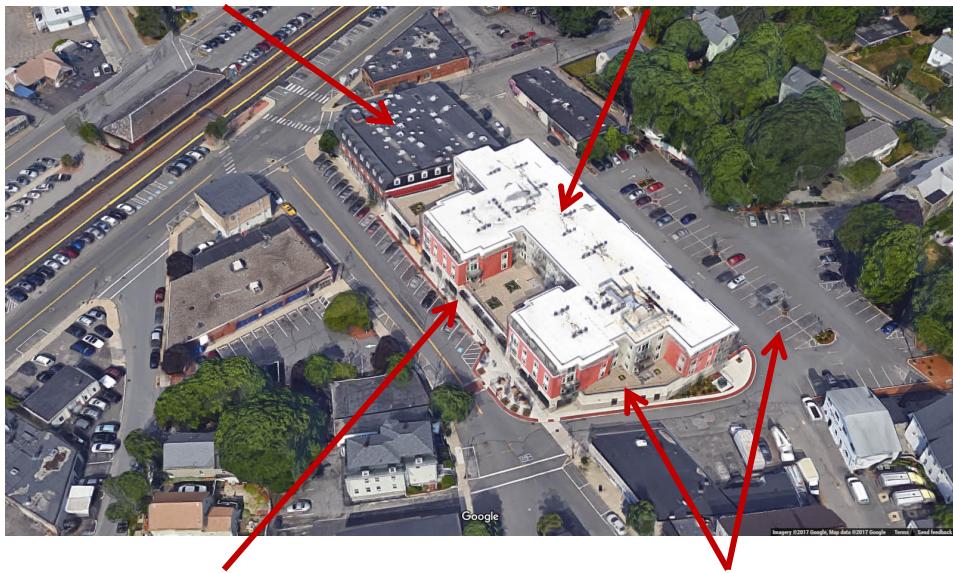
Source: Dedham Planning Department, 2019.

Note: there are no affordable housing units in these mixed-use buildings.



Case Study #3: Haven Street, Reading MA

2 Haven Street:
Office/Condos Over Retail



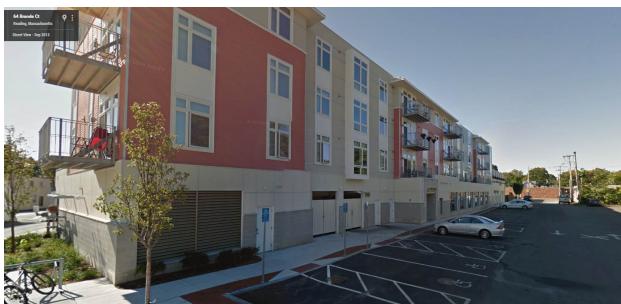
On-street parking and
pedestrian amenities

30 Haven Street: 53 one- and two- bedroom
apartments over 22,000 square feet of retail



Surface parking
and ground-floor
garage

53 residential units
• 39 market rate units
• 14 affordable units
Market rate rents start at
\$2,000 per month



Case Study #4: Live 155, Northampton MA

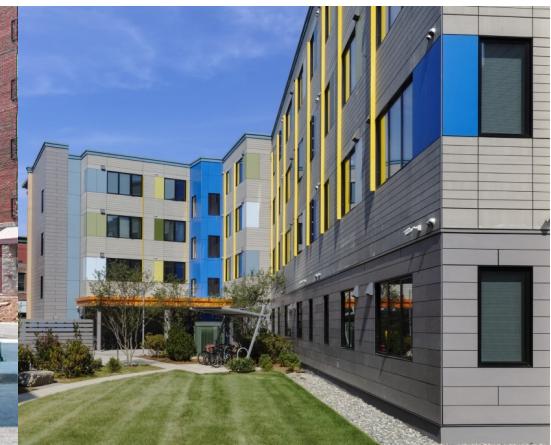


70 residential units:

- 43 affordable units
- 27 market rate units

Market Rate Rents start at \$1,000 per month

- 2,300 square feet of retail space
- No on-site parking



Case Study #5: Parkside on Adams, Roslindale MA



Award-winning adaptive reuse of a historic substation for retail/restaurant use

43 residential units

- 37 market rate units
- 6 affordable units

Market Rate Rents (as of 2016):

- Studio: from \$1,550
- 1-bedroom: from \$2,100
- 2-bedroom: from \$2,600

38 parking spaces



PART 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

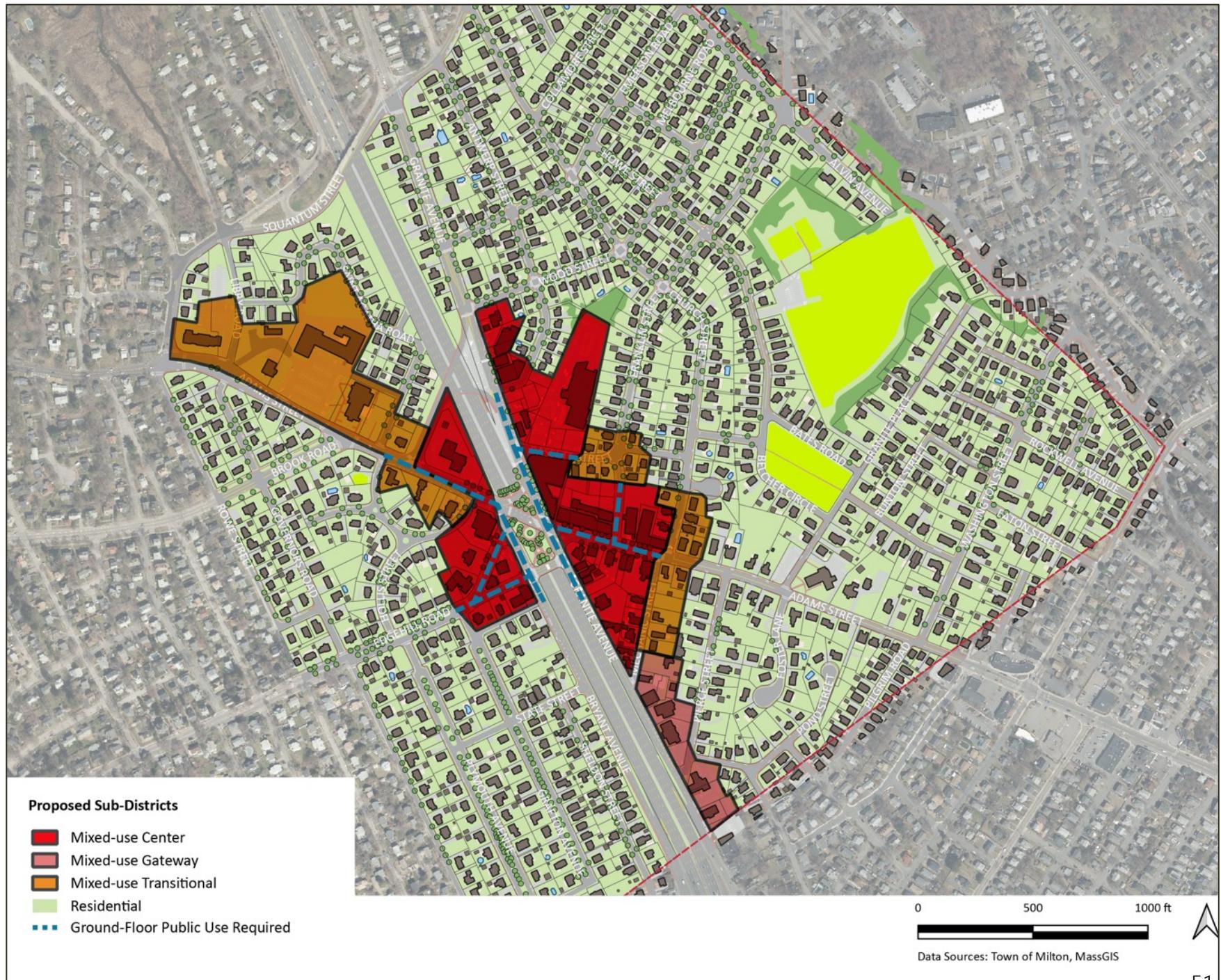
Recommendations

Strategies for Exploration

Targeted Area for Improvement	Commercial District Revitalization	Housing	Sense of Place	Walkability & Circulation	Sustainability
Strategy: Prioritize near- and long-term implementation of a plan for East Milton Square.					
Create an Advisory Committee to work with the Planning Board or Master Plan Implementation Committee on strategy selection and drafting regulatory changes.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Task the Master Plan Implementation Committee with strategy selection and drafting regulatory changes.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adopt (or revise and adopt) the vision statement, vision plan, and design principles for East Milton Square. Encode them in the Town's zoning and implement them through Town actions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy: Establish zoning that supports Town-wide and neighborhood-specific goals as identified through community planning processes. (E.g., Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, East Milton Square Working Group)					
Establish a new business/mixed-use district or an overlay district such as a Chapter 40R district or Planned Development District. (Preferred approach: new business/mixed-use district.)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Expand business district to incorporate existing businesses and allow room to grow.	✓		✓		
Establish subdistricts so that zoning can be tailored to the desired character for various parts of East Milton Square.	✓		✓		
Calibrate building and site standards to subdistricts.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Allow for increased height according to subdistricts.	✓	✓	✓		
Reduce or eliminate parking requirements, or provide for zoning incentives in lieu of requiring each individual property to provide parking.	✓			✓	
Allow mixed-use by Site Plan Approval in newly established district/overlay district.	✓	✓	✓		✓

Targeted Area for Improvement	Commercial District Revitalization	Housing	Sense of Place	Walkability & Circulation	Sustainability
Strategy: Establish East Milton as a local and regional “park once” destination residents and visitors can enjoy exploring on foot.					
Improve enforcement of traffic laws.	✓		✓	✓	✓
Institute effective parking management strategies, such as tiered paid parking, fee-in-lieu of parking, encouraging shared parking options, etc.	✓		✓	✓	✓
Strengthen the walkability, attractiveness, and uniqueness of East Milton Square.	✓		✓	✓	✓
Strategy: Hold community conversations about Milton’s role in addressing (or perpetuating) broader inequities.					
Invite members from the Affordable Housing Subcommittee of the Equity and Justice for All Advisory Committee in planning efforts specific to East Milton Square.	✓	✓	✓		✓
Strategy: Prioritize environmental sustainability in the planning process for East Milton Square, setting a standard for the Town to follow in future planning efforts.					
Concentrate development in existing centers.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Require or incentivize green stormwater management in new construction where possible.					✓
Incentivize net-zero buildings, and/or buildings and sites that meet other sustainability metrics.					✓
Continue to invest in complete streets improvements.	✓		✓	✓	✓
Evaluate the feasibility of a commuter shuttle to reduce traffic in East Milton Square. (This can be funded through various means including a BID.)	✓		✓	✓	✓
Explore traffic-calming measures in commercial areas and neighboring residential streets.	✓			✓	✓
Strategy: Work with property owners and businesses to create a brand or identity for East Milton Square.					
Encourage the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) with property owners.	✓		✓		
Support local business efforts to establish a district-based business association.	✓		✓		
Invest in streetscape improvements.	✓		✓		
Incorporate neighborhood-scale wayfinding.	✓		✓	✓	50✓

Suggested Changes to Zoning Districts



Suggested Subdistrict Purpose Statements

Mixed Use-Center Subdistrict

Purpose: To foster an active pedestrian-oriented mixed-use commercial center at moderate density, with a focus on ground floor commercial uses and housing that includes affordable units.

Mixed Use-Gateway Subdistrict

Purpose: To support the Mixed-use Center by providing additional residents within walking distance. To help meet Milton's housing needs by providing mixed-use and multi-family residential buildings with diverse housing units configurations and varied price points, including affordable housing.

Mixed Use-Transitional Subdistrict

Purpose: To allow room for East Milton Square's walkable commercial center to grow over time, while providing transition to adjacent residential areas.

Possible Zoning For Subdistricts

	Current Residence C	Current Business District	Mixed-Use Center	Mixed-Use Gateway	Mixed-Use Transitional
Front-Setback (min/max)	--/20'	--	2'/10'	0/10'	5'/20'
Building height (min/max)	--/35'	--/45' (65' by SP)	20'/60'	--/55'	--/55'
Ground floor height (min)	--	--	14'	10'	10'
Upper floor height (min)	--	--	10'	10'	10'
Stories (max)	2.5	3 (5 by SP)	5	4	4
Upper Story Stepback Requirement	--	--	Above 3 stories	Above 3 stories	Above 2 stories
Required Pedestrian-Oriented Frontage Elements	--	--	Y	N	Y
Ground Floor Public Use Requirement	--	--	See map	N	See map

Possible Parking

	Mixed-Use Center	Mixed-Use Gateway	Mixed-Use Transitional
Parking Requirements	Commercial: 1/1,000 ft ² (or detail per use) Residential: 1 per dwelling unit Mixed-Use: Calculate shared parking factor for uses Parking Structures: by Site Plan Approval		
Parking Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground floor liner use required for parking structures • No new parking in front of or beside building except in structures with liner 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground floor liner use required for parking structures

