

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

June 2025

PROJECT SCOPE



Quantitative Analysis

- Demographic, Economic, and Employment Trends
- Real Estate Trends
- Demand for New Uses
- Existing Land Use and Zoning
- Assessment of Cultural District Opportunities

Engagement Activities

- Town Tour and Site Visits
- Interviews with Stakeholders
- Two Public Workshops
- Online Survey
- Coordination with Town Staff

Desired Outcomes

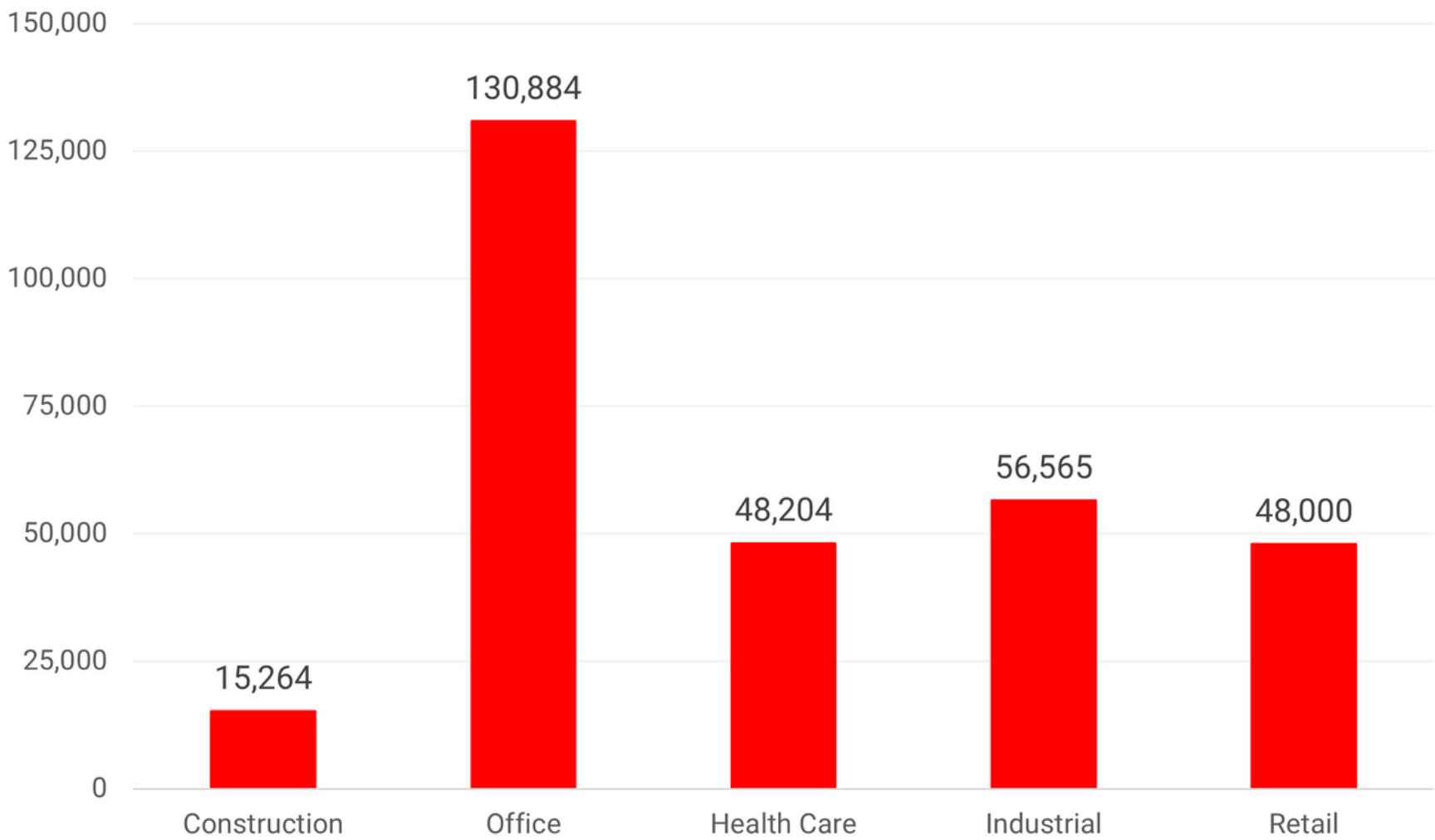
- Analysis of current and future trends.
- Goals and actions to guide economic development activity.
- Identify opportunity sites.
- Prepare an implementation matrix.

KEY FINDINGS

- Acton’s population is aging alongside a decline in residents ages 35-54. This has implications for the workforce and household spending.
- Most residents who work, commute out of town for jobs. However, retail and manufacturing jobs import workers from other communities. There is an imbalance with resident employment sectors and industry sectors in Acton.
- A majority of Acton’s households are owners and housing prices are high. This presents a barrier to entry for those who may want to both live and work in town. More rental housing is on the way.

The study identified several opportunity sites/areas across Acton that could support a range of uses. RKG identified future demand for space in Acton based on projected employment growth.

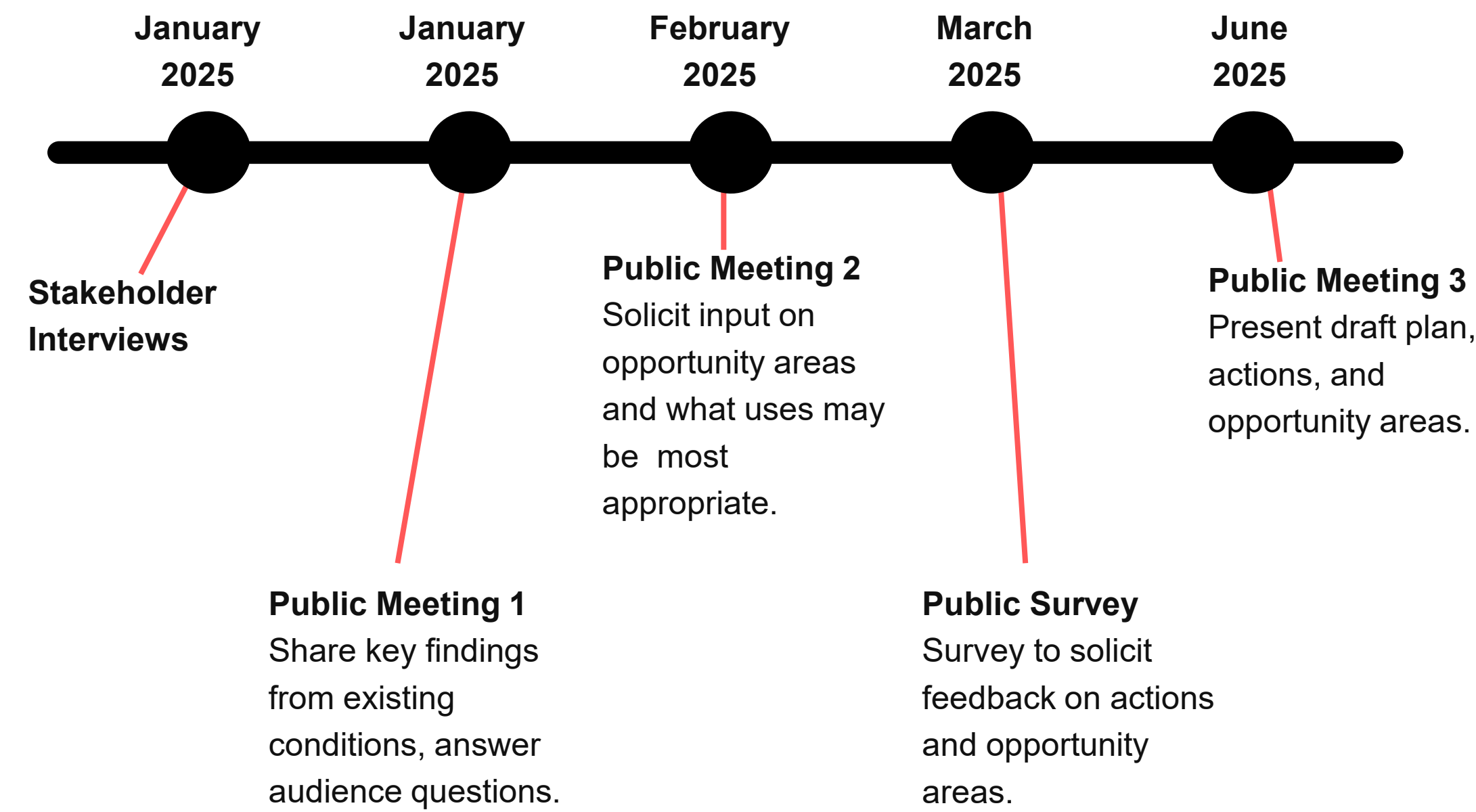
Estimated SF Demand in Acton by Industry Sector



Source: US Census, Esri/STDB and RKG (2024)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

RKG, in concert with the town, facilitated several public engagement opportunities.



GOALS & ACTIONS

The draft Economic Development Plan includes **7 Goals** and **29 Actions**.



GOAL 1:

Attract, retain, and grow consumer and service-based businesses in the Town of Acton’s emerging Town Center districts (e.g., West Acton Village, Kelley’s Corner and South Acton).



KEY ACTION ITEM:

Review existing regulations and permitting process to identify changes that could help streamline building rehabilitation, parking requirements, and signage to assist business attraction and expansion.

GOALS & ACTIONS



GOAL 2:

Leverage public-sector initiatives to encourage more retail, restaurant, and small-scale office development.



KEY ACTION ITEM:

Consider the inclusion of a town-wide inventory for selected development sites and available spaces on an economic development website. Provide the location, permitted uses, contact information, and a link to town permitting information and programs.

GOALS & ACTIONS



GOAL 3:

Expand opportunities for smaller-scale industrial, advanced manufacturing, and medical-related uses across the Town of Acton's industrial and business parks.



KEY ACTION ITEM:

Initiate a quarterly roundtable discussion group (with Town, broker/developer and local business/employers) focused on industrial development and business growth to discuss retention, expansion, workforce and infrastructure needs, and how the Town can provide support.

KEY ACTION ITEM:

Utilize the findings from the market analysis for identification of target industry sectors as identified by the projected 10-year employment growth.

GOALS & ACTIONS



GOAL 4:

To increase and diversify the local housing stock, particularly in the areas of workforce and affordable housing options, to attract and retain the local workforce.



KEY ACTION ITEM:

Consider the potential for allowing mixed-use projects, that may include multi-family residential housing within other business districts.

KEY ACTION ITEM:

Incentivize and allow smaller sized housing such as townhomes and multi-family units across a wider swath of the Town's residential zoning districts where suitable land is available to diversify housing choices at various price points.

GOALS & ACTIONS



GOAL 5:

Create a streamlined and predictable process for business development and expansion in the Town of Acton.



KEY ACTION ITEM:

Continue to refine and modernize the Zoning Bylaw and subdivision and site plan regulations to create a clear pathway to a development decision in a timely manner.

KEY ACTION ITEM:

Promote changes in the zoning and development review process through the town's website, social media, trade publications, and state publications to help identify Acton as a business-friendly community.

GOALS & ACTIONS



GOAL 6:

Improve form, design, and aesthetics across Acton's Town Districts.



KEY ACTION ITEM:

Consider an outside review of Town land use regulations and procedures at the staff, planning board, and Select Board levels to make them more efficient and predictable.



GOAL 7:

Continue to explore the potential/opportunities for the designation of a Cultural District(s).



KEY ACTION ITEM:

Form a Cultural District partnership with a diverse mix of stakeholders who represent the shared interests of the Cultural District.

OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Massachusetts Ave/Piper Road

Site Characteristics:

26 Acres

Good roadway access and visibility

Lacks sewer

Use Considerations:

- Small-scale office or medical office.
- Large format retail.

Town Actions:

- Consider wastewater solutions.
- Consider zoning changes to allow for retail development.



OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Massachusetts Ave/Hosmer Street

Site Characteristics:

22 Acres

Good visibility, access slightly constrained

Lacks sewer

Use Considerations:

- Limited for now, possible multifamily site.

Town Actions:

- Consider zoning changes to allow for multifamily by-right.
- Greater flexibility in FAR and minimum lot size.



OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Nagog Office Park

Use Considerations:

- Mixed-use development.
- Multifamily development.
- Retail/service businesses.

Town Actions:

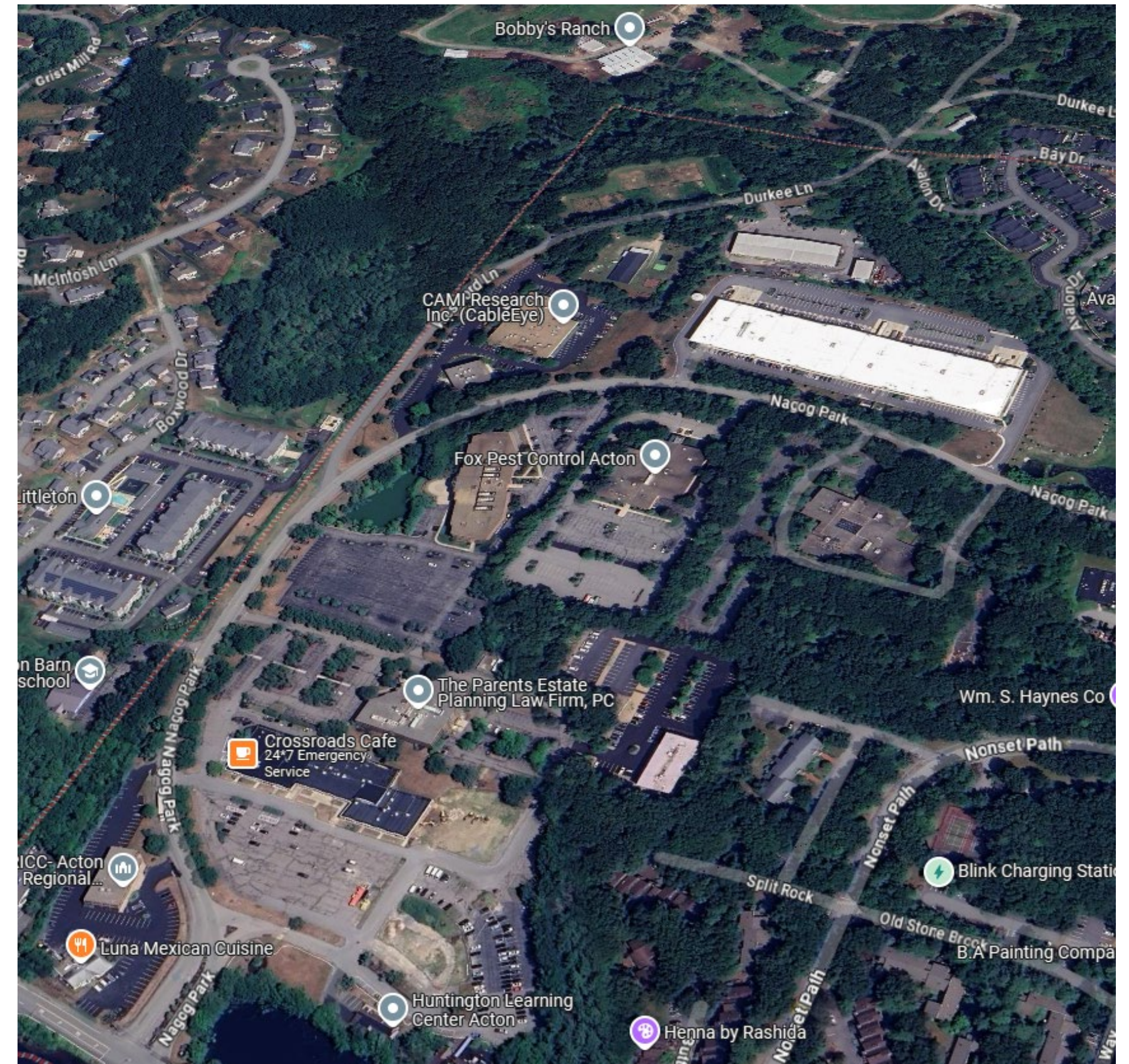
- Consider zoning changes to support these options.
- Consider allow restaurants by-right.
- Review current height limitations.

Site Characteristics:

27 Acres

Good visibility and accessibility

Private sewer, but capacity needs to be studied



OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Powder Mill Road Corridor

Use Considerations:

- Mixed-income multifamily development.
- Retail with higher intensity.

Town Actions:

- Market this area and available sites.

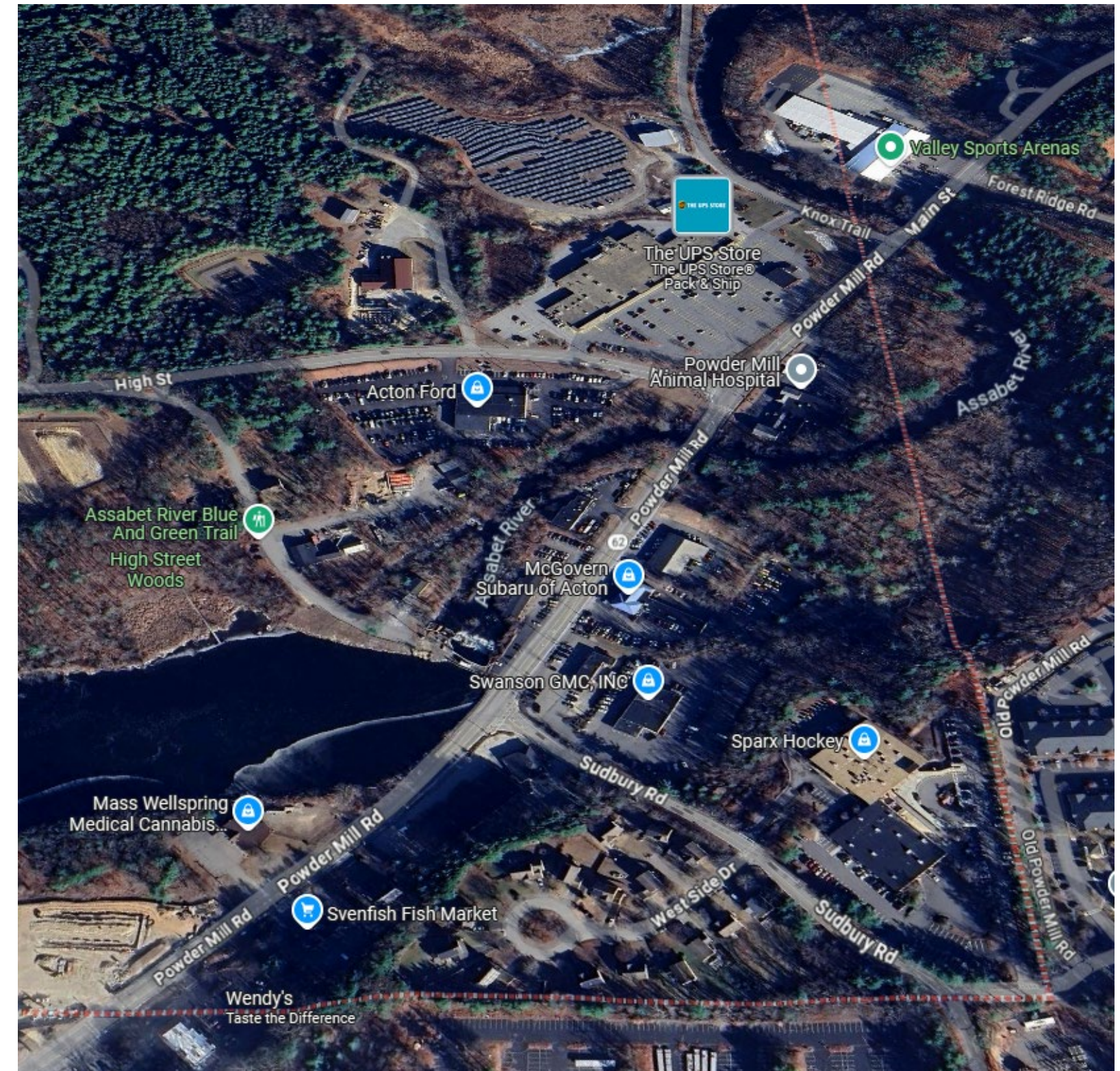
Site Characteristics:

44 Acres

Good access

Served by town sewer

Flexible overlay district



OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Kelley's Corner

Use Considerations:

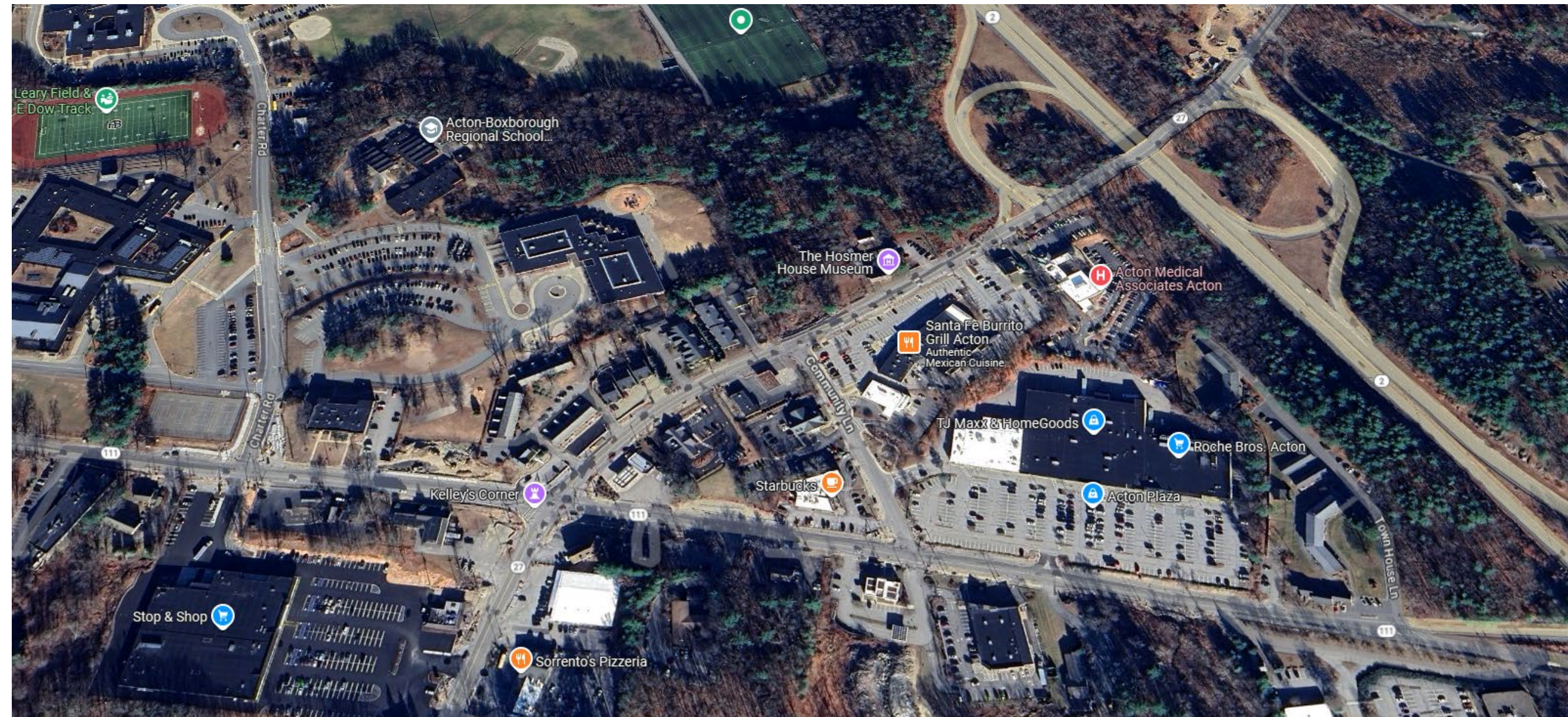
- Mixed-use development.
- Multifamily development.
- Retail and other compatible commercial uses.

Town Actions:

- Continue to market this area and available sites.
- Work with property owners to maximize opportunities for commercial and housing.

Site Characteristics:

- Large area with multiple parcels and owners
- Access to Route 27/Route 111
- Access to town sewer
- Undergoing public infrastructure investments



OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Great Road Corridor

Use Considerations:

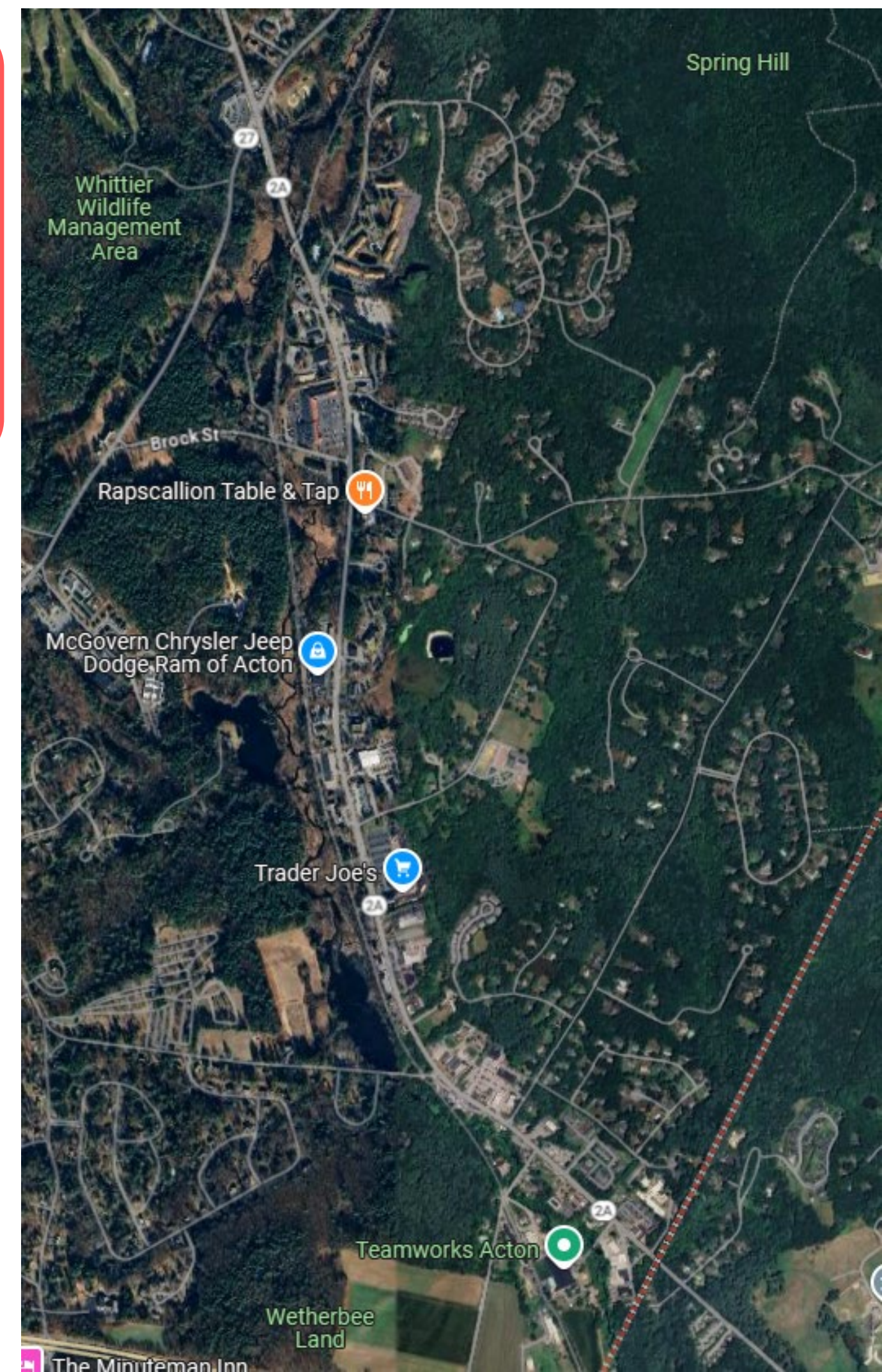
- Smaller-scale infill development.
- Focus on retail and services.
- Likely to redevelop on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

Town Actions:

- Comprehensive review like the Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative.
- Possible shared parking solutions should a larger development occur, or a new node of activity arise.
- Consider wastewater solutions.

Site Characteristics:

Multiple parcels and owners
Some large and deep parcels
Active roadway corridor
Access to rail trail
Lack of sewer
Lack of available sites



OPPORTUNITY AREAS

South Acton Village

Use Considerations:

- Mixed-use development.
- Multifamily development.
- Retail and other compatible commercial uses.

Town Actions:

- Continue improving public infrastructure and pedestrian amenities.

Site Characteristics:

- Half-mile radius around the commuter rail
- Residential and consumer activity
- Rail access
- Access to town sewer



OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Former W.R. Grace Properties

Use Considerations:

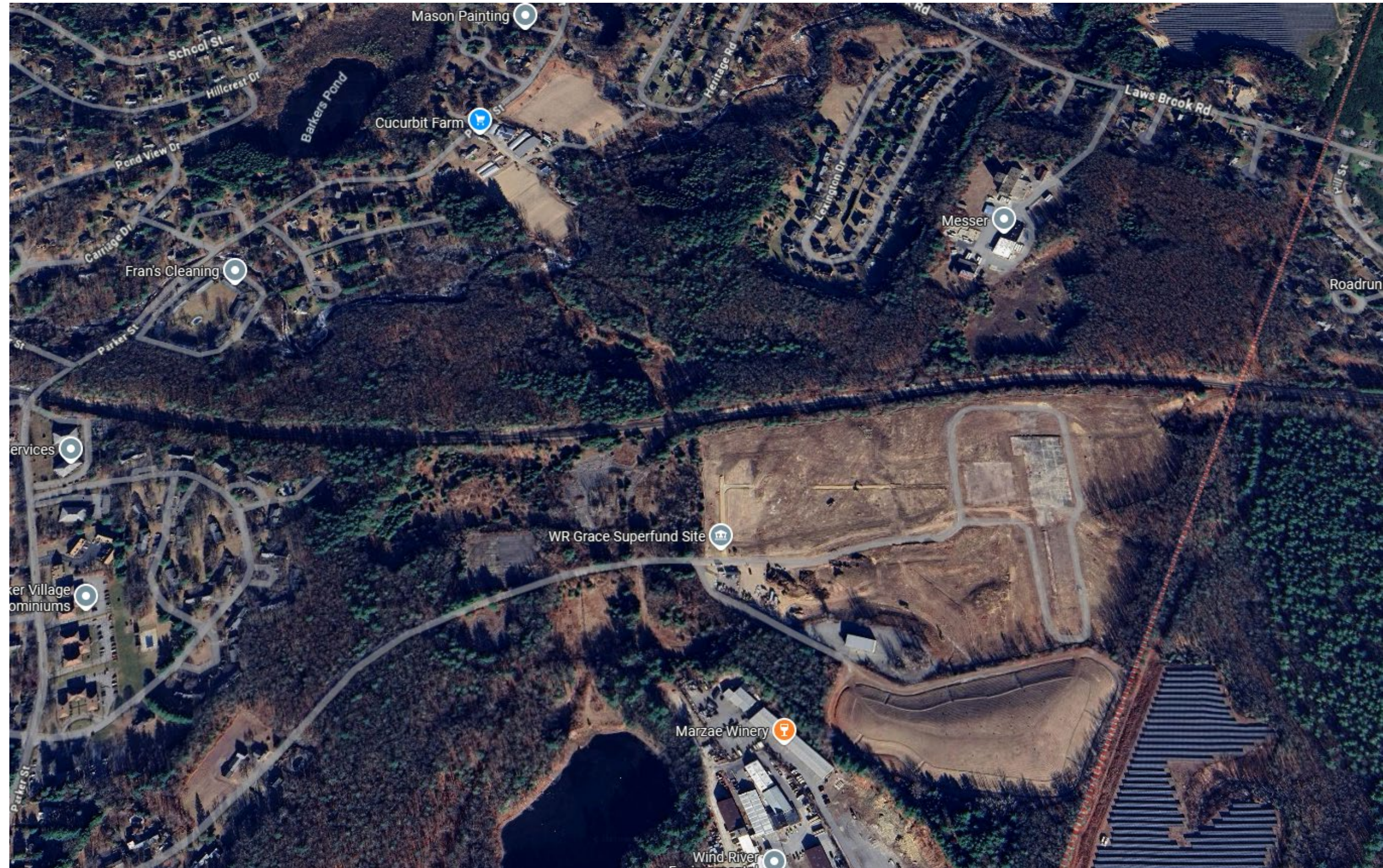
- Clean industrial
- Other uses (expand current solar uses, park/open space)
- Possible residential use.

Town Actions:

- Consider rezoning for a wider range of uses.
- Consider land banking but be aware of tax implications.

Site Characteristics:

- 183 acres of land
- Predominately vacant
- Served by town sewer
- Challenging site history



QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS.

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THANK YOU!