

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

Redeveloping The Mill Street Corridor

Gardner, Massachusetts

April 21, 2011



**Urban Land
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Boston

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Executive Summary

Under the direction of the Urban Land Institute's Boston District Council, The Gardner Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened in Gardner, MA in February 2011, bringing together stakeholders, City and community leaders, and a panel of land use and development professionals for a day-long session focused on two former industrial sites in the Mill Street Corridor now owned by the City.

Focusing on the Garbose site and multi-parcel S. Bent property, both on Mill Street, the team met with the Redevelopment Authority's Executive Director, members of the City's Department of Community Development and Planning, and City officials over the course of the day, toured the Mill Street Corridor sites, and interviewed more than 20 stakeholders and community leaders to understand the sites, the City's objective's, and its place in the regional market for industrial and commercial space. Data collected and prepared by the City's Department of Community Development and Planning staff prior to the TAP informed this discussion.

The panel then held a "closed door" charrette during which it identified opportunities and constraints for each of the sites and the Mill Street Corridor overall to develop a viable strategy and action items that the City can pursue as it continues its efforts to realize redevelopment and positive economic activity on these sites. The outcome of this collaborative effort was a presentation by the TAP panelists at a public meeting and this report.

The report that follows is separated into four chapters and provides background about the TAP program, an overview of the issues associated with the Mill Street Corridor, the Panel's recommendations regarding the concept and the City's next steps.

Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process gives an overview of the Urban Land Institute's Boston District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) and provides a detailed list of participants in the February 2011 Gardner TAP including City officials, stakeholders, and a panel of land use and development professionals.

Chapter 2: Background and Assignment provides a thorough overview of the Garbose and S. Bent properties and enumerates the City's efforts, including clean up and planning with state and federal agencies, toward redevelopment within the corridor. The panel reviews the City of Gardner's Objectives for this Technical Assistance Panel and maintains the importance of thinking about developing the sites individually, as well as part of a larger corridor.

In *Chapter 3: Observations and Findings* the panel enumerates the relevant issues raised in the tour, considers the regional context within which sites in the Mill Street Corridor would compete if redeveloped, and assesses the specific opportunities and constraints that play on each of the sites. The panel determines that its adjacency to Timpany Plaza creates the most opportunity for the Garbose site and, clean up costs aside, redevelopment issues on the site are less complex than those associated with the S. Bent Site.

Finally, in *Chapter 4: Recommendations*, the panel provides a series of recommendations to the City, which includes a list of actionable items that could be completed in parallel to keep the process moving along.

Figure 1: State Context (Orthophoto, Summer, 2008)

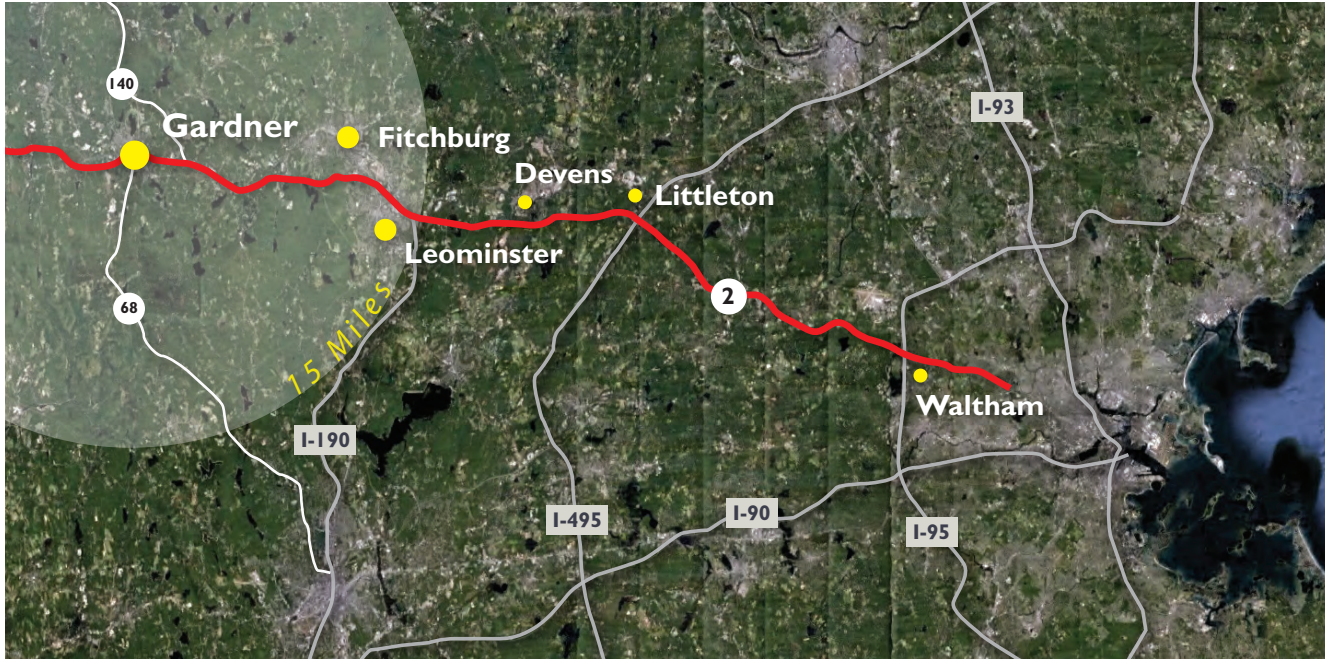


Table 1: Distance and Travel Time to Gardner From:

Fitchburg	14 miles	18 minutes
Leominster	15 miles	22 minutes
Devens	21 miles	25 minutes
Littleton (Rt. 495)	28 miles	34 minutes
Waltham	42 miles	57 minutes
Worcester (via 68)	27.5 miles	45 minutes

1 | Background

a. Urban Land Institute (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute now has nearly 30,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service.

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help sustain and create thriving communities. The Boston District Council serves the six New England states and has over 1,100 members.

b. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

The ULI Boston Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes Technical Assistance Panels at the request of public officials and local stakeholders of under-resourced communities and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use challenges who benefit from planning and development professionals providing pro bono recommendations. At the TAP a group of diverse professionals representing the full spectrum of land use and real estate disciplines typically spend one to two days visiting and analyzing existing built environments, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a way consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

c. Panelists and TAP Process

Panel Members

ULI Boston convened a panel of volunteers whose members represent a range of disciplines associated with land use and development required to assess the challenges associated with redevelopment of the Mill Street Corridor. Disciplines represented included planning, architecture, development and construction, real estate law, and finance and marketing. Members were selected with the intent of convening a robust array of professional expertise relevant to the City's objectives for this TAP. The following is the list of panelists:

- Gabriel Safar, Attorney, Dionne & Gass (TAP Co-Chair)
- Richard Lampman, Architect and Builder, Tocci Building Corporation (TAP Co-Chair)
- Ira Baline, Senior Associate, Bergmeyer Associates, Inc.
- Mika Brewer, Senior Vice President - Real Estate, MassDevelopment
- Russell Burke, Director of Planning, BSC Group
- Tony Caner, Vice President, Grubb & Ellis Company
- Craig Lizotte, Manager of Land Development Services, Vanasse Hangen & Brustlin, Inc.

Caitlin Bowler of ICON architecture, inc. served as a consulting technical writer. Michelle Landers of ULI Boston provided organizational and technical support in preparation for and during the TAP event.

Officials from the City of Gardner who served as primary contacts for ULI Boston included the following:

- Robert Hubbard, Executive Director, Gardner Redevelopment Authority
- Trevor M. Beauregard, Economic Development Coordinator, Department of Community Development and Planning

Stakeholders

The success of this TAP would not have been possible without the cooperation of the diverse group of stakeholders—local residents, business people, and city officials, as well as representatives of several state and federal agencies—who met with the panel and shared ideas, assessments and opinions on a range of issues related to the Mill Street Corridor redevelopment.

Stakeholders at the morning panel included a mix of local residents, business people, and city officials:

- Rhael McCaie, Owner, Superior Kitchens
- Shauna Larsen, Superior Kitchens
- Jim Bellina, President and CEO, Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce
- Ellie Fox, President & Treasurer, Colonial Cooperative Bank
- Peter Haley, Realtor, Morin Real Estate
- Doug Pochini, Realtor, Pochini Real Estate
- Jeff Ashworth, Vice President, Commercial Lending, Athol Savings Bank
- David Schmidt, Energy Management Program Coordinator, Mt. Wachusett Community College
- Peter Hazel, Vice President, Business Development, GFA Federal Credit Union
- Donna Warshaw, Executive Director, RCAP Financial Services
- Thomas Smith, Economic Development Coordinator, NGRID

- Kim Proctor, Business Sales Representative, UNITIL
- Henri Sans, Attorney

Two members of City government joined the panel for a working lunch. They included:

- Mark Hawke, Mayor
- Ron Cormier, City Councilor and Vice Chairman of the Gardner Redevelopment Authority

Stakeholders at the afternoon panel included local government officials as well as representatives of several state agencies currently working with the Gardner Redevelopment Authority:

- Allen Jennell, Brownfields Section, Environmental Protection Agency
- Rosemary Scrivens, Central Regional Director, Mass Office Business Development
- Shyla Matthews, Vice President, Community Development, MassDevelopment
- Tim Sappington, Executive Director, NC Mass Workforce Investment Board
- Robert Hankinson, City Engineer, City of Gardner
- Pete Sabettini, Planning Board, City of Gardner
- Ed Lepkowski, Chairman, Gardner Redevelopment Authority
- Cleo Monette, Treasurer, Gardner Redevelopment Authority
- Tim Horrigan, Clerk, Gardner Redevelopment Authority
- Trevor Beauregard, Economic Development Coordinator, City of Gardner

TAP Process

The Gardner TAP was held on February 17, 2011. In the morning, Rob Hubbard and Trevor Beauregard welcomed the panelists at the Gardner Library and then led a short bus tour down Main Street—through the Redevelopment Project Area—to the Mill Street Corridor, location of the City-owned Garbose and S. Bent sites.

After the tour the ULI panel interviewed a diverse series of stakeholders, listed in the previous subsection, during two separate panels. The panelists then engaged in an intensive “closed door” charrette to develop recommendations addressing some of the critical issues associated with redevelopment of the Mill Street Corridor, as well as “next step” recommendations that were shared with the City staff and some members of the public at a public presentation that evening.

The presentation is available electronically by request from the Gardner Redevelopment Authority and at the ULI Boston website <http://boston.uli.org>.



Gardner Redevelopment Authority Executive Director, Rob Hubbard, discusses aspects of the S. Bent site with two TAP panelists and the City's Economic Development Coordinator, Trevor Beauregard.



Members of the ULI Technical Assistance Panel during concluding discussions at the Gardner Public Library at the end of the day.

2 | Background & Assignment

a. The Mill Street Corridor

The Mill Street Corridor is comprised of 14 individual parcels totaling 55.34 acres, all of which have frontage on either Mill Street or Timpany Boulevard. Two former industrial sites—the Garbose and S. Bent sites—account for seven of the 14 parcels. At 10.74 acres (zoned commercial) the Garbose property is the largest single parcel, with frontage on both Mill Street and Timpany Boulevard; the S. Bent property (zoned industrial) totals 27.4 acres, but that acreage is split amongst six parcels both north and south of Mill Street. Both sites are included within the Mill Street Corridor 43D Expedited Permitting District, which guarantees local permitting within 180 days following submission of all required application documents. (This, unfortunately, does not guarantee that all state level permits be issued or denied within that time period.)

The Garbose and S. Bent sites should be considered both independently and in concert during discussions of future alternatives. Though now zoned differently, because of physical adjacency and synergistic potential the City has signaled it would be willing to work with an interested partner to master plan the Mill Street Corridor to function as one site. This alternative should be kept on the table, but because of the different issues facing each of the sites—from use potential and buildable areas to level and duration environmental remediation required—the City should not forgo an opportunity on one site because both sites are not utilized in that specific plan.

Figure 2: Mill Street Corridor Parcels, Zoning & Use

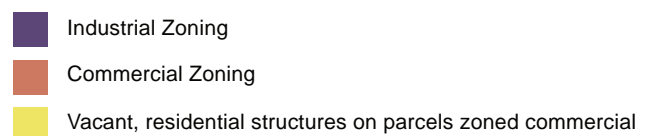


Table 1: Parcel Size and Developable Acreage by Site

Site	Total	Less Wetlands/ Topography	Less Disputed Acres	Developable
Garbose	10.74	± 2.5	—	± 8.0 acres
S. Bent	27.4	± 10.0	± 2.5	± 15.0 acres

Source: Survey Plans provided by City of Gardner

Figure 3: Mill Street Corridor (Orthophoto, Summer, 2008)



0 100 200 400 600 Feet

▲ Single Family Homes

Legend

- S. Bent Property
- Garbose Property
- Private Ownership

The Garbose Site

- 10.74 acres – Frontage on both Timpany Boulevard and Main Street
- Zoned commercial
- City just completed ownership transaction and now in full control of parcel
- Parcel bifurcated by Pail Factory Brook, causing the southwest portion of the site to be subject to the Rivers Act and therefore undevelopable (see Figure 6, p. 15).
- Parcel is identified as a Brownfield per the EPA's definition: "the expansion, redevelopment or reuse of the property may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant."

Cleanup estimated at \$800,000 to \$1.4M, for which part or all of a \$1M Revolving Loan Fund secured by the City can be used.

- Site is adjacent to Timpany Plaza, making it ideal for commercial expansion should the owner or lessees be interested in such an option

The S. Bent Site

- 27.4 acres, across 6 parcels – Frontage on Mill Street and Winter Street
- Zoned industrial
- City has controlled the site since 2004
- Parcel is identified as a Brownfield per the EPA's definition: "the expansion, redevelopment or reuse of the property may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant."

Estimated cost of completing demolition of the derelict mill complex and additional assessment and cleanup work at the site is not yet known.

- The City purchased the rail spur connecting the MSC to the main trunk line of the Providence and Worcester Railroad (from Boston & Maine Corporation). Mandatory upgrades to meet current railroad standards estimated to cost \$250,000.
- There are unresolved title issues related to approximately two acres of land adjacent to the former Ramsdell Pond that was created by filling the pond.

b. The City's Efforts to Date

As cited above in each of the site descriptions, staff from the City and the Gardner Redevelopment Authority have been working closely with several state and federal agencies to address brownfield remediation and reclamation issues on each site. Since 2004, they have marshaled combined investment of over \$1M toward this clean up effort. (These agencies include the Environmental Protection Agency, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, MassDevelopment, and the Department of Housing and Community Development.)

The City and Redevelopment Authority are both very supportive of efforts in the Mill Street Corridor, as well as other revitalization efforts throughout the City. An Urban Renewal Plan for the Main Street Corridor, started in 2007, will be formally submitted to the state's Department of Housing and Community Development in May of this year." The City has also worked with downtown property owners as opportunities have arisen, resulting in 78 new units of affordable assisted living in one half of the Heywood Wakefield building on Pine Street just behind the library, as well as demolition of the GEM Industries buildings property to the north side of Main Street. This second project will allow for significant redevelopment activity under the Urban Renewal Plan.

c. City of Gardner's Objectives for the TAP

The TAP was a one day event intended to provide individuals within the City and Redevelopment Authority with some outside perspective on parcels in the Mill Street Corridor, on which the City has focused much of its redevelopment activities over the past five years.

In preparation for the TAP the City developed a set of questions for the panel to address, related to (1) identification and attraction of end users for either or both of the properties it now owns in the Mill Street Corridor and (2) the draft of its site clean up and preparation plans for each of these sites.

Questions Regarding:

(1) IDENTIFYING AND ATTRACTING END USERS

- What are the most appropriate targeted industries and end-users for the Mill Street Corridor, with a focus on the S. Bent and Garbose properties?
- What is the best strategy to attract new end-users, with a focus on the S. Bent and Garbose properties?
- Does the rail spur present an opportunity to attract rail-dependent end-users?
- Does the MSC provide opportunities for clean/green technology and renewable energy sectors based on the skill base available from Mt. Wachusett Community College Sustainable and Energy Management Program?
- Are there federal/state programs and incentives to help prepare and implement an appropriate marketing campaign?

(2) SITE CLEAN UP AND PREPARATION

- Are the current plans for cleanup and demolition of blighted buildings on the S. Bent and Garbose properties adequate? If not, what additional steps should be taken?
- Management and implementation of a redevelopment plan is expected to center on a partnership between the City and the GRA, but the framework of the partnership is conceptual at this time. What organizational/management options should be considered to move this project forward?

The panel reviewed the materials provided to panelists by the City before the TAP. During the day, through tours and interviews with stakeholders, panelists gained an overview of the process to date, as well as the market dynamics and development issues driving the process, and City and stakeholder aspirations for the area. Following a 3 hour charrette, the panel developed a series of recommendations and considerations for the City and Redevelopment Authority moving forward, which are presented in the following report.

3 | Observations & Findings

a. Issues raised in Tour & Discussions

After discussion on the tour with Rob Hubbard and Trevor Beauregard and lengthy interviews with stakeholders during morning and afternoon sessions, the panel identified key issues with direct relevant to redevelopment in the Mill Street Corridor.

The Big Issues

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS

Stakeholders from the public and private sectors were unified in their emphasis on the need for new jobs in Gardner. One community leader relayed that the City had lost four to five hundred jobs in the last five years through the closing of long standing companies. The City's motivation for getting sites in the Mill Street Corridor "pad ready" is very clear.

GROWING THE TAX BASE

Like all Cities, Gardner's Mayor and Chamber of Commerce would love to see the City's tax base grow—ideally such growth would come from industrial, manufacturing, or bio-tech businesses that bring good jobs along with taxable revenues.

Other residents mentioned a better variety of commercial opportunities, and even a chain restaurant, such as a Chili's or Olive Garden as potentially desirable development. The common explanation for the lack of such amenities in the City is the inadequate demographic base required to attract a national franchise.

Gardner: Beyond Chair City

REPUTATION

Although it has not actually been a major furniture manufacturer in decades, Gardner is still known as "Chair City" and recognized well beyond the region for the unique role it played in development of the Commonwealth's larger manufacturing economy.

Superior Kitchen—the sole remaining business in the Mill Street Corridor, which manufactures custom mid-range kitchen cabinetry—is representative of the City's current status. The business continues to trade on Gardner's reputation for woodworking as the furniture maker for the world, but suffers from reduction in skilled laborers; as older workers leave the workforce, the business is left to rely on younger workers whose skills are not up to the levels of their predecessors. While the company would like to expand, without highly skilled labor it is not clear to them and others in their situation just how long Gardner's cachet as The Chair City will last.



LIVABILITY: LOWER COSTS OF LIVING AND DOING BUSINESS

In 2011 Gardner's competitive advantage comes from its livability factor. Cost of living in Gardner is lower than much of the surrounding area; for instance, handsome and spacious, historic houses on Winter Street, a stone's throw from the S. Bent site, were estimated by the tour guides to be valued at no more than \$200,000.

Gardner provides a walkable downtown, good City services, and other qualities often associated with a small town, as well as close partnerships with larger

institutions associated with a City, including a well regarded hospital and community college—Heywood Hospital and Mt. Wachusett Community College. Finally, the City also offers incredible proximity to a wide range of recreational and natural amenities, including Crystal Lake, Otter River Conservation Area, Dunn Pond State Park, the Gardner Municipal Golf Course and, further afield, Wachusett Mountain Ski Area.

PROACTIVE CITY GOVERNMENT & CIVIC INSTITUTIONS

As described in Chapter 1, the City and Redevelopment Authority have been deeply involved with the progress made within the Mill Street Corridor, demonstrating commitment to moving this complex and extensive clean up process along, both in terms of human resources and leveraged capital. In April of 2010 the City was awarded a \$1M Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund grant (RLF) that the City plans to use toward the remediation of the Garbose site.

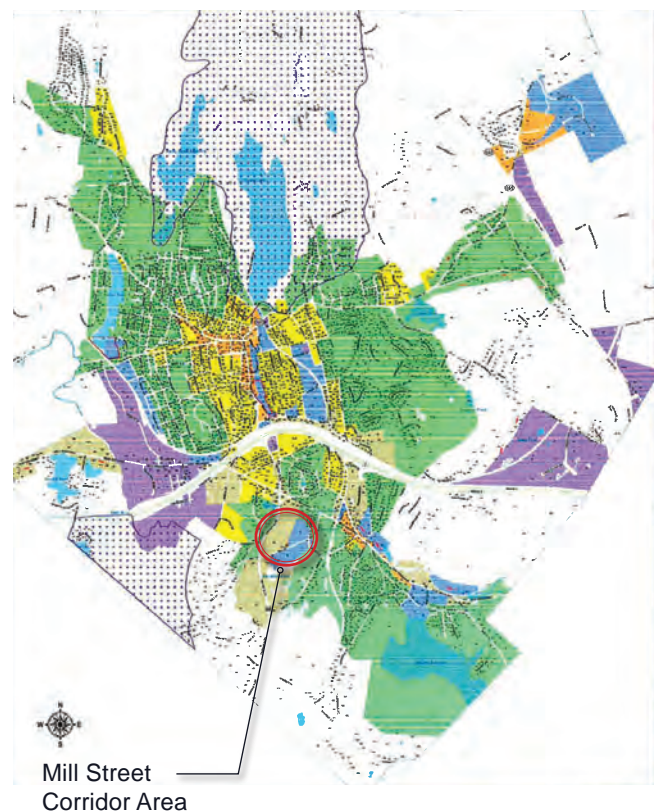
The City and Redevelopment Authority are now working closely with the Brownfields Support Team (BST), an initiative launched in September 2010 by Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray to coordinate interagency participation and efforts regarding Brownfields remediation to determine next steps in the remediation process. The BST brings together representatives from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, and MassDevelopment, as well as necessary federal agencies, to help municipalities navigate the complex and challenging problems often associated with Brownfield remediation. Working with the BST Gardner continues to identify resources to initiate redevelopment efforts in the Mill Street Corridor; as part of the BST the City will be working with Allen Jennell from the EPA's Brownfields Section to identify instances on the S.Bent site that require "short term mitigation of an imminent threat to human health and environment," which include friable asbestos in unsecured locations such as S. Bent.

In addition to government staff and officials, local banks and the Chamber of Commerce, both represented at the ULI TAP, expressed concern about the future of Gardner as well as commitment to working with the City and potential businesspeople toward revitalizing and reengaging these properties to bring them closer to their higher and best use.

LIMITED INDUSTRIAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

The Mayor cited limited industrially zoned land within Gardner as another reason the Mill Street Corridor's redevelopment was so important to the City. The purple areas circled in the zoning map below show the MSC in relation to Gardner's industrial zones. Route 140 may be another area where the City might encourage future private industrial growth while it works to rehabilitate the sites it owns.

Figure 4: Gardner Zoning Map (Revised May 16, 2005)



DOWNTOWN RENEWAL PLAN

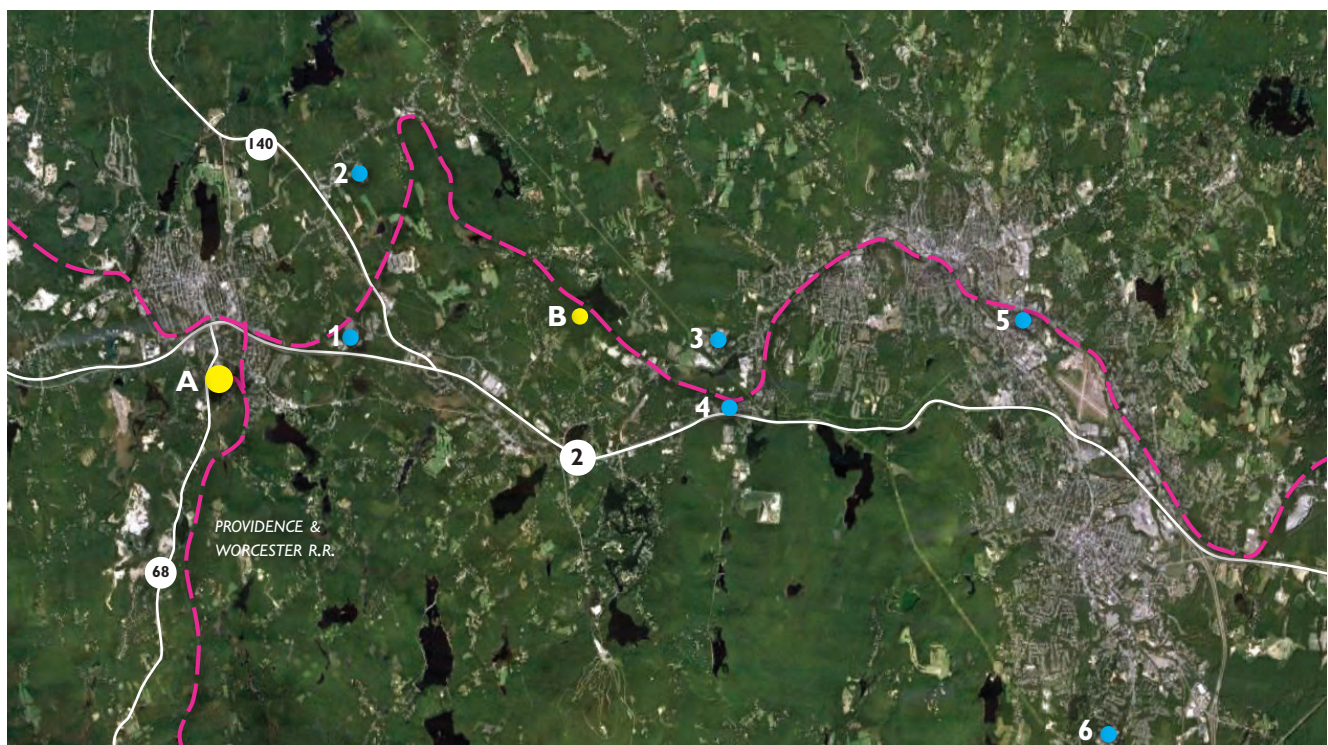
The City of Gardner, through its Redevelopment Authority, has nearly completed an Urban Renewal Plan for its Main Street Corridor. A Redevelopment Authority completes such a plan to facilitate redevelopment of blighted or sub-standard areas, and DHCD approves such a plan if it deems that the defined project area would not be redeveloped by private enterprise alone, without either government subsidy or without use of government powers.

If not for the City's recent completion of its Urban Renewal Plan, which was made possible through a year's worth of work and significant consulting fees, the Mill Street Corridor would be an ideal area for inclusion for such a plan. There are complex and expensive development issues associated with both

sites, resolution of which might be expedited if site control was given exclusively to the Redevelopment Authority, which is exempt from M.G.L. Chapter 30(b), the Uniform Procurement Act, if it is engaged in the development and disposition of real property in accordance with an urban renewal plan.

Initiation of a second Urban Renewal planning process immediately after completion of this most recent effort would be a challenge. Great planning and care will be required as the City thinks about how it eventually plans to dispose of this land, given that it will be subject to the restrictions and open bidding processes required under Chapter 30(b).

Figure 5: Existing and Proposed Industrial Development in the Gardner, Fitchburg & Leominster Area
(Google Earth, 2010; Not comprehensive)



PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:

- A** Mill Street Corridor (GARDENER)
- B** Westminster Business Park (WESTMINSTER)

EXISTING INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:

- 1** Summit Industrial Park (GARDENER)
- 2** East Gardner Industrial Park (GARDENER)
- 3** Industrial Road Park (FITCHBURG)
- 4** Authority Drive Park (FITCHBURG)
- 5** Falulah Industrial Park (FITCHBURG)
- 6** Jytek Industrial Park (LEOMINSTER)

DEVENS & REGIONAL COMPETITION

Gardner is just west of center in Central Massachusetts' Montachusett Region, making any industrial development space it offers slightly further from the region's major hubs—Worcester and greater Boston—than its closest competitors in Fitchburg, Leominster, and Devens. Just two years past the nadir of 2008-2009's "Great Recession," it is difficult to judge what the final price for industrial space will be when the market finally stabilizes—which will determine what kind of rents Gardner might expect to see in the Mill Street Corridor. (Figure 5 below shows the Mill Street Corridor site in relation to other established and tenanted industrial/business parks in the region and their relative location to rail lines and major highways. (This is not a comprehensive list of the region's industrial parks, nor does it address vacant or build-to-suit opportunities in these or other unidentified business parks/properties in the region.)

Prior to 2008, industrial space similar to what City officials would like to see in the Mill Street Corridor was fetching \$7.00/SF in Devens, while office space

in Fitchburg, Leominster, and Worcester was leasing for \$14-\$18/SF, net of electric. Since then, lease rates for industrial space at Devens have dropped to \$3.75-\$5.50/SF, while office space in Fitchburg, Leominster, and Worcester dropped to \$12/SF - \$16/SF net of electric. These rents may increase somewhat as the market stabilizes, but as it considers the market potential of the Mill Street Corridor, City officials should not necessarily expect to attract Devens/Fitchburg rents on the site. A market analysis, which is discussed in more detail later in this report, will help the City get a more realistic perspective on this issue.

Gardner City officials should also try to keep close tabs on other proposed developments in the region, such as the 60 acres of MEPA approved industrial development (another 190 acres of industrial in process of MEPA permitting) at the undeveloped Westminster Business Park in Westminster, MA. This site also has rail frontage and the owners are offering to add a rail spur.

b. Mill Street Corridor Opportunities

The Mill Street Corridor and the Garbose and the S. Bent sites in particular share some opportunities for development.

Shared Opportunities

CITY OWNERSHIP

The City may not want to be a land owner or land lord over the long term, but in the short term ownership and market conditions allows the city time to develop a go-forward strategy. The Central Massachusetts office market continues to shake off the lingering ef-



A view west down the Mill Street Corridor, toward Timpany Boulevard, from the intersection of Winter and Mill Streets. Southern portion of S. Bent site is to the left.

fects of “The Great Recession” slowly,¹ allowing the City ample time to sort out the complex remediation, infrastructure, and title issues associated with both sites, without too much fear of losing a potential end user to another site.

ROBUST UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Mill Street Corridor benefits from robust utility infrastructure, which includes 3 Phase service on Mill Street (National Grid), access to high pressure gas line that ends 500 feet from Mill Street at the southeast corner of Timpany Plaza (Unitil), and generally adequate sewer lines in place, though some work might need to occur to increase sewer capacity depending on size and scale of a new user. Both National Grid and Unitil offer incentive programs and work closely with potential customers to determine and price potential needs.

PROXIMITY TO ROUTE 2

Just three quarters of a mile to Route 2, the Mill Street Corridor has fairly good proximity to this major state highway, which also connects to Interstate 91 to the west and Interstates 190, 495, and 95 to the east.

¹ Tony Caner and Tim Van Noord, “Market Overview: Central Massachusetts,” prepared for Urban Land Institute and City of Gardner Redevelopment Authority Technical Assistance Panel, February 17, 2011.



A view of Timpany Plaza from the southwest corner. The Garbose site is adjacent to the Super Stop & Shop (to the right) and may provide an opportunity to expand this successful shopping development.

GARBOSE SITE

COMMERCIAL ZONING / ADJACENCY TO TIMPANY PLAZA

While the City has indicated that it would be willing to consider rezoning this area to strengthen the Corridor's appeal as an industrial zone, the site's adjacency to the thriving Timpany Plaza and its current commercial zoning creates a good opportunity for redevelopment of the site to support activity at Timpany Plaza. At the time of the panel Average Daily Traffic (ADT) data for Route 68 was not available, but given the success Wal-Mart and Timpany Plaza enjoy (anecdotal), frontage on Route 68 is a very positive attribute for the Garbose site.



A view east across the Garbose site toward the last remaining structures.



The Pail Factory Brook that separates the southwest corner of the Garbose site (1.95 acres) from the remainder of the parcel.

S. Bent Site

INDUSTRIAL ZONING / RAIL SPUR

Selected for its adjacency to the pond and first made viable through construction of the dam and sluice, the site was used for industrial purposes until 2001. In 2009 the City purchased the rail spur that connects this site to the main trunk line of the Providence and Worcester Railroad, which makes the site ideal for a company whose operations rely on a rail connection. Mandatory upgrades to the rail spur are estimated at \$250,000, but depending on the scale and value of future operations, this may be worth the effort and cost.



The general location of the rail spur, now owned by the City, that connects the S. Bent site to the Providence & Worcester rail line.



One of several structures on the S. Bent site that have been demolished through collaboration between the City and the Redevelopment Authority. The slabs of these demolished structures remain and will likely require remediation upon removal.

c. Mill Street Corridor Constraints

Both the Garbose and the S. Bent sites are constrained significantly by various issues.

Garbose Site

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION

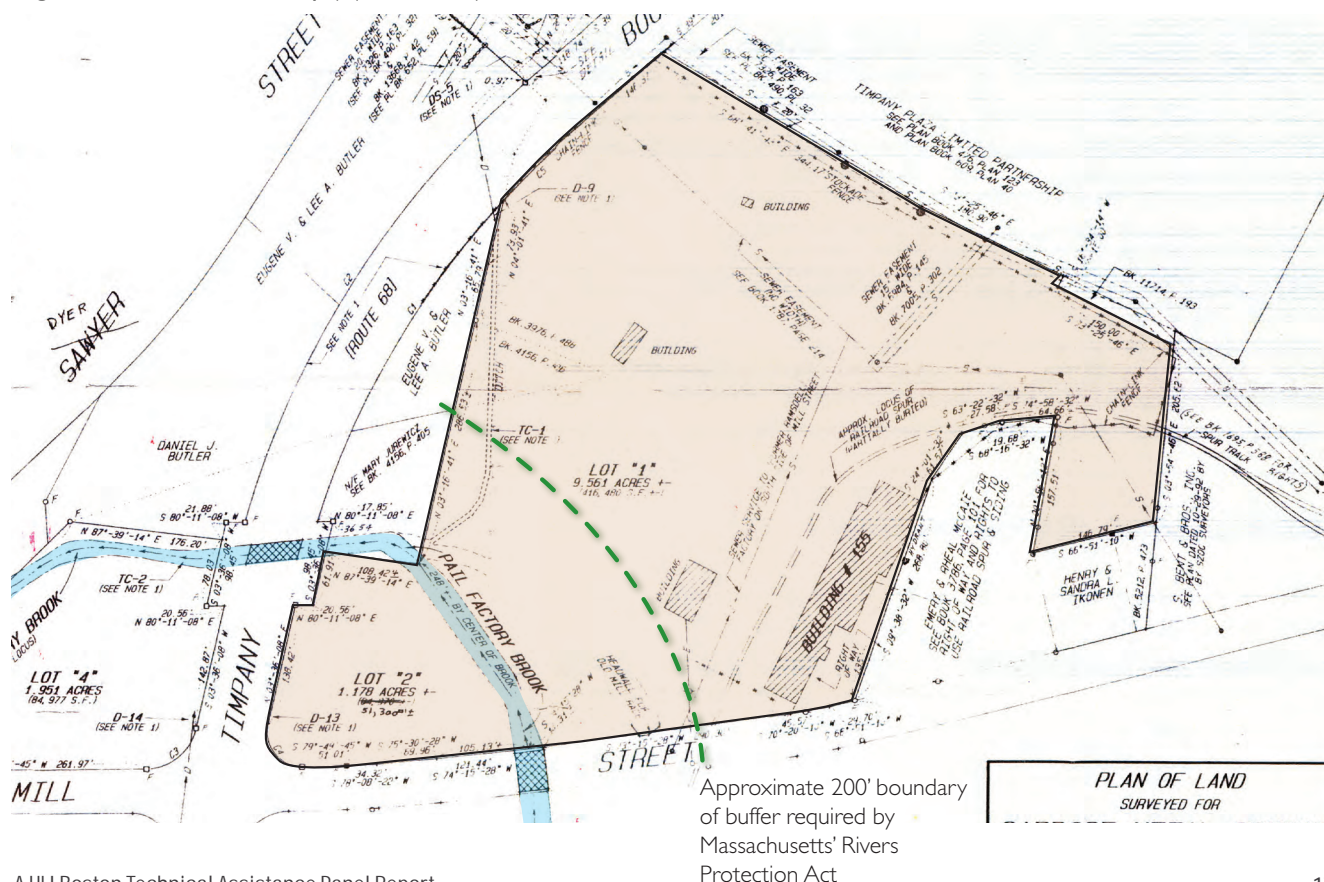
Environmental contamination is the largest barrier to redevelopment at the Garbose site. As noted earlier, much work has been done toward remediation: between 2003 and 2008 the owners spent \$200,000 on environmental investigations, assessments, and related reporting to MA DEP and the EPA funded \$125,000 for additional assessment work by the City in 2009. Cleanup estimated at \$800,000 to \$1.4M. for which the City has secured a \$1M Revolving Loan Fund that can be used toward this effort, but which will not cover the entire cost and would require parcelization of the site for administrative purposes regarding accessing the loan.

WETLANDS, RIVERS & FLOODPLAINS LIMIT DEVELOPABLE LAND

Pail Factory Brook flows across the southwest corner of the Garbose site, creating a 1.78 acre parcel labeled Lot "2" on the site survey.² The presence of the Pail Factory Brook makes the Garbose site subject to the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act (Chapter 258 of the Acts of 1996), which requires a 200-foot riverfront area buffer extend on both sides of a river or stream, rendering the land undevelopable.

² Survey completed for the Garbose Metal Company, dated April 30th, 1996.

Figure 6: Gorbouse Site Survey (April 30, 1996)



S. BENT SITE

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION

Environmental contamination is a major constraint on site development at the S. Bent site as well. To date, the City has spent \$810,000 on preparation of a hazardous materials report (a prerequisite to demolition of an industrial building), demolition, remediation of soil contamination, and asbestos abatement and remediation. (Funding has been assembled using fund from CDBG, EPA, MA DEP, MassDevelopment, and the City.)

The City and Redevelopment Authority have completed about one third of demolition required, but all slabs remain and there will almost certainly be additional issues when/if those are removed. Clean up of storage areas and elevator pits will be another issue, as these areas tend to become “hot spots” due to spills.

The full extent of clean up and its costs is not yet known, and will only be identified once further hazardous assessment has been completed. In the mean time, the City will be working with the EPA on removal of unsecured material with an imminent threat to human health and the environment, specifically friable asbestos.

WETLANDS, RIVERS & FLOODPLAINS / TOPOGRAPHY LIMIT DEVELOPABLE LAND

The presence of the wetlands and the 100 Year Flood Plain limit total developable area on the parcels south of Mill Street. Topography and steeper grading limit developable area on the parcel north of Mill Street. Figure 7 illustrates some of these issues.



Structures on the S. Bent parcel north of Mill Street step up to accommodate the site's steep topography.

LOW VISIBILITY

With frontage only on Mill Street, the site is not visible at all from Timpany Boulevard. Depending on the nature of the future user, this may or may not be an issue.

TITLE ISSUES FOR INFILL LAND

There are approximately two acres of land (as reported by the Redevelopment Authority) in the southwestern parcel of the S. Bent property—land created through fill decades ago by the company to provide space for construction of several timber drying sheds—for which ownership is not determined. At the time when the S. Bent Company filled the former Ramsdell Pond, no local or state authorities showed concern; the matter was only identified in 2009 when the City and the Redevelopment Authority ordered official surveys for both the Garbose and S. Bent sites (See Figure 7).

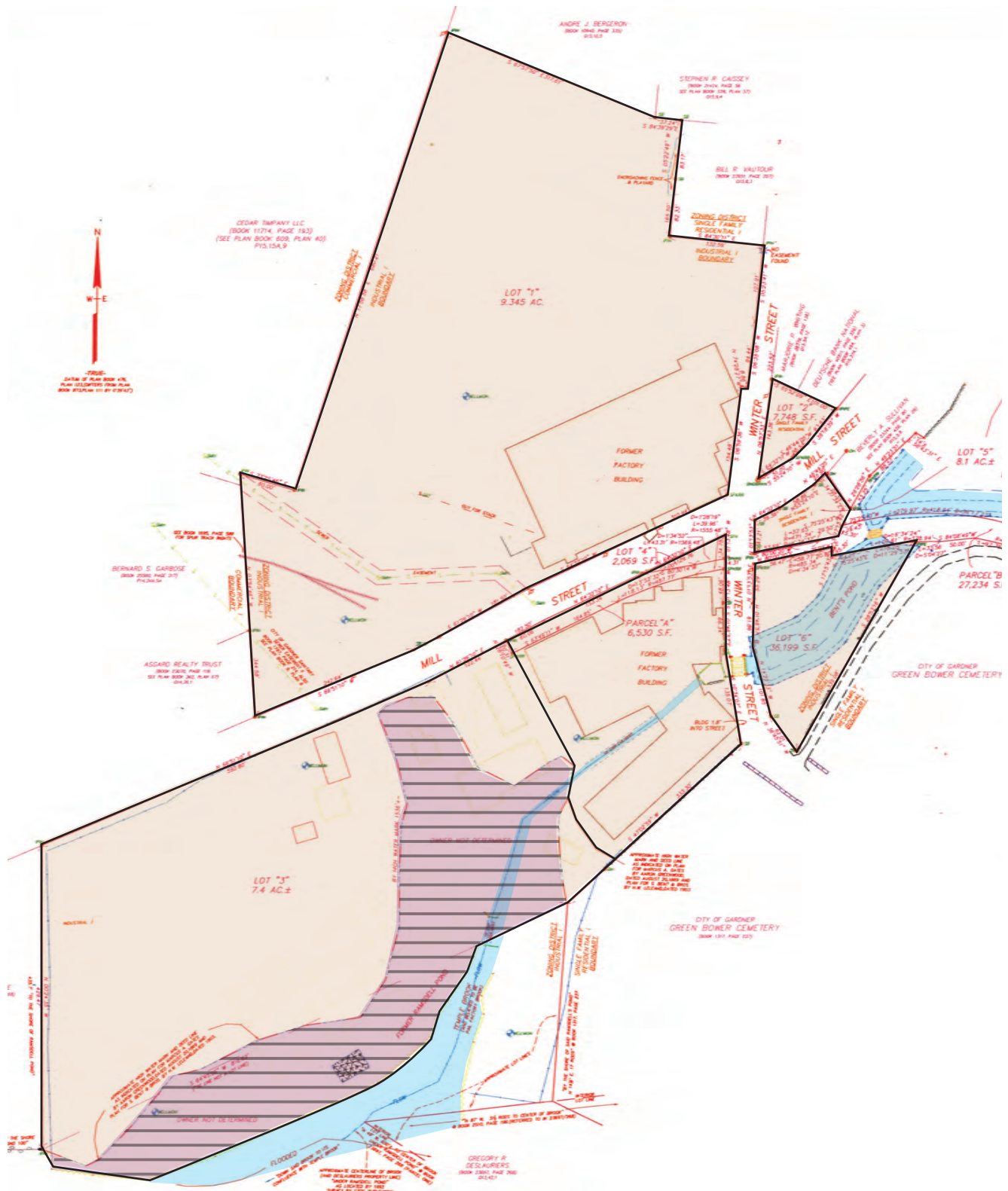
CONDITION OF DAMS

Selected for its adjacency to the pond and made viable through construction of the dam and sluice, the site was used for manufacturing purposes until 2001. The Bent Mill Dam was inspected in 2009 and was deemed to be in fair conditions, with a list of deficiencies. MassDOT is planning to reconstruct the Winter Street bridge, adjacent to the dam, which could be a good opportunity to make repairs to the dam; currently that action is not part of the department's mandate.

PROXIMITY TO RESIDENTIAL ABUTTERS

The S. Bent Company engaged in operations at this site for decades, only ending operations in 2001. Although Gardner needs jobs and individuals at the Redevelopment Authority are confident that abutters would prefer to see productive activity at the site rather than the continued deterioration of abandoned structures, the proximity to the neighborhood along Winter Street remains a constraint in terms of the kind of industrial activity that can take place at the S. Bent property as well as the scale of those operations.

Figure 7: S. Bent Site Survey (March 31, 2009)



4 | Considerations & Recommendations

a. Existing Conditions Survey

The City should build on its existing survey of each site to determine the actual parameter of developable land. From this it could work with a planner or civil engineer to determine the sites' maximum capacity—for the sites in concert (combined into one larger parcel) and individually. The results of this exercise will inform later master planning efforts.

b. Flexibility

Remain flexible throughout the process, especially regarding end users. Take no actions that preclude other actions, until necessary. For instance, upgrading the rail spur may not preclude the City from ultimately leasing or selling the land to a developer uninterested in the spur, but it would be an unfortunate and avoidable misuse of limited resources.

c. Timing & Parallel Actions

Timing will be very important to minimizing the months and man-hours the City and Redevelopment Authority will have to spend getting each of these sites ready for development. Close communications and careful planning with the Brownfields Support Team will be a key component in this process.

The following are actions that can be completed in parallel, as long as intended outcomes are coordinated first when required.

Clean Up / Demolition

Though the details of remediation activities have yet to be fully determined for either site, move ahead with the process for each site independently when possible. Can further demolition occur on the S. Bent site while remediation activity continues on the Garbose site? Is there a way to time activity to minimize the overall remediation schedule and free up the most funds at once?

Master Planning

Build on the Existing Conditions Survey to determine several schematic site plan alternatives that will help the City market the site to potential end users and/or developers. Given zoning requirements, site constraints, and utility requirements for each site, what is each site's maximum capacity for industrial, office or mixed development? What is the maximum development the City would like to see? Determining these extents will be critical to marketing efforts.

Permitting

Continuing permitting activity during clean up/demolition will allow sites to be as close to "pad ready" when the market improves, making the sites more attractive to potential users. Using results from master planning efforts, secure permits for the maximum allowable development with which the City is comfortable, knowing that plans can always be scaled back within issued permits.

Market Analysis

It need not be done to the level of detail that a potential developer would take it, but some resources need to be invested in thorough market analysis that give the City a reasonable idea of the size/type of development that would be appropriate for the site from a market perspective. Once clean, what is the value of each of these parcels? What are the end user rents the City, or a developer, could expect to collect from a commercial development? From an industrial development? This may influence the City's strategies toward each site significantly.

d. Ownership Mechanisms

The City's ownership of these parcels and its responsibilities regarding the disposition of real property under M.G.L. Chapter 30(b), the Uniform Procurement Act, will need to be considered carefully, especially if a potential buyer or developer surfaces.

e. Rail Spur

Purchase of the rail spur was a wise investment for Gardner, but no further investment should be made in upgrades unless there is firm commitment from a rail-dependent business at the S. Bent property. As part of the City's research efforts, it should take a look at the businesses in other parts of the state—especially those in Fitchburg and Leominster—that utilize rail to see whether such a company would be a good fit for the S. Bent property and the City.

f. Incubator Space?

During the first stakeholder interview a panelist asked Mr. Beauregard about the kinds of inquiries he typically received from businesspeople looking for space in Gardner. Mr. Beauregard reported that most callers were looking for spaces of 4,000 - 6,000 SF or 5,000 - 10,000 SF; none were looking for spaces any larger. The panel reached no consensus, but agreed that this reported trend warranted further research by the City—which could dovetail with a market analysis—about the viability of developing Flex space on the site, that could be leased or sold and marketed to smaller start up businesses.