

# Millville, MA



## A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT



**Urban Land  
Institute**

**Boston/New England**

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# Executive Summary

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The Millville Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened on November 7, 2018, at the Millville Town Hall, under the direction of the Boston/New England District Council of the Urban Land Institute. The TAP consisted of 10 real estate and land use professionals, two ULI staff representatives, and a report writer. Over the course of the day, the panel met with local business owners, representatives from the Town of Millville, and other key stakeholders.

## Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process

Offers an overview of the Urban Land Institute's Boston/New England District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels, and provides a list of the panel members and stakeholders who took part in this particular TAP. The chapter also outlines the study area for the TAP, and describes the process undertaken by the panelists and stakeholders during the information gathering sessions and subsequent charrette.

## Chapter 2: Background and History

Provides a brief overview of Millville and the town's three main questions for the TAP. Includes a brief history of the Town; a physical description of the sites under consideration and the Town's unique natural characteristics; detail on the town's geography; and key population and demographic information that provide insight into the issues facing Millville today.

## Chapter 3: Assets and Opportunities

Examines the strengths of this historic town's location along the Blackstone River, including access to the Blackstone Bikeway.

## Chapter 4: Challenges

Outlines the challenges involved in developing revenue-earning opportunities from the properties that were considered in this TAP. Provides detail on stakeholder concerns including the lack of and development of eateries, cafes, or other gathering places that would provide a sense of community in this small town.

## Chapter 5: Recommendations

Addresses the three questions posed by the Town at the beginning of the process. Includes short-, medium and long-term recommendations for both of the sites that were the focus of the TAP.

## Chapter 6: Funding and Resources

Identifies programs that can help the Town of Millville achieve its goals, including those offered by MassDevelopment. Additional information on these programs can be found in the appendices of this report.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions

Outlines conclusions of the TAP, including the ability for the the Town of Millville to develop a working plan and reinvestment schedule that would lead to successful redevelopment of the focus sites.

# ULI & the TAP Process

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## Urban Land Institute (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. The mission of ULI is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help sustain and create thriving communities. Founded in 1936, the institute now has more than 40,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service, including developers, architects, planners, lawyers, bankers, and economic development professionals, among others.

The Boston/New England District Council of ULI serves the six New England states and has over 1,300 members. As a preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI Boston/New England facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, and regional leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

## MassDevelopment

MassDevelopment, the state's finance and development agency, works with businesses, nonprofits, financial institutions, and communities to stimulate economic growth across the Commonwealth. Through these collaborations the agency helps

create jobs, increase the number of housing units, revitalize urban environments, and address factors limiting economic growth including transportation, energy, and infrastructure deficiencies. MassDevelopment has worked with ULI since 2011 to sponsor and support the TAP process in cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

## Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

The ULI Boston/New England Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) at the request of public officials and local stakeholders of 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 specially assembled with expertise in the issues posed spends one to two days visiting and analyzing existing conditions, 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.



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## The Panel

ULI Boston/New England convened a volunteer panel of experts who represent a wide range of commercial real estate disciplines. The task was to analyze the challenges and opportunities facing the Town of Millville as it seeks to re-purpose unused properties into sources of income to fund town services and diversify options for residents. Panelists included architects, real estate attorneys, planners, developers and marketing professionals.

## Co-Chairs

Jamie Simchik, Principal, Simchik Planning & Development

Ronnie Slamin, Project Director, Joseph J. Corcoran

## Panel

Judi Barrett, Principal, Barrett Planning Group LLC

Paul Lagg, Town Planner, Town of Eastham

Bill Lawrence, Principal, Cityscope, Inc.

Meaghan Markiewicz, Project Designer, Form + Place

Lauren Michaels, Account Supervisor, Soloman McCown

Peter McNally, Executive Director, 195 District

Geoffrey Morrison-Logan, Director of Planning, Urban Design & Landscape Architecture, VHB

Claire O'Neill, VP Planning & Development, MassDevelopment

**Panelists have donated their time.**

## ULI Staff

Manikka Bowman, Director, Policy & Outreach

Sara Marsh, Manager

## TAP Report Writer

Clea Simon



Millville Panelists



Panelists on site tour

## Stakeholders

The TAP benefited from the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders—representatives from the local business community, as well as town and regional historic commission members—who came together to discuss issues relating to the overall community and economic future of Millville.

Throughout the course of the day, representatives of the town, as well as other stakeholders, also posed general inquiries about possibilities for expanding Millville's economy and providing both tax revenue to the town and resources, such as eateries and gathering places, for its residents. These queries, as well as the original three questions, were raised during a tour of the sites as well as in two sequential meetings with stakeholders. As per the TAP process, the panel then spent the afternoon in charrette addressing possible short-term and long-term solutions. These options were then presented to stakeholders and town officials following dinner at the end of the TAP day.

The following is a list of stakeholders:

Joe Rapoza, Board of Selectman Chair  
Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, Blackstone Valley Tech Superintendent  
Hillary Carney, Town Planner (via phone)  
Lincoln Barber, Building Commissioner  
Jeannie Hebert, Director, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Trish Settles, AICP, Program Manager, CMRPC  
Tim and Lynn Foley, Foley Woodworking, Inc.  
Lisa Caden and Cassie Heneault, Blackstone Valley Cultivation Co.  
Ken Marcotte, Sr., President, Ken's Yard and Lawn  
Marty Green, President, Marty Green Properties LLC  
Neil Rosborough, Owner, Millville Service Company  
Ken Tubman, President, Cymbal Health Tech  
Jennifer Callahan, former Town Administrator  
David Maloney, Manager, Blackstone Historic Commission Visitor Center  
Lois M. Salome, former teacher, Longfellow School who was unable to attend, was read into the record.

## The TAP Process

The Millville TAP was held on November 7, 2018. Panelists from ULI Boston/New England were greeted at the Millville Town Hall by former Town Administrator Jennifer Callahan, who led the ULI panel on an hour-long tour of Millville by van.

The tour began with a visit to the old Longfellow Municipal Center, a former grammar school that had been converted to the site of the Millville Town Hall, at 8 Central Street. The main part of the brick building, which is on the National Historic Registry, dates back to 1850. A newer extension had been added before the building was deemed unusable due to snow damage to the roof several years ago and has been entirely vacant since July. The site, which includes the historic Udor Tower, sits on a rise near the Blackstone River and is a point of pride for Millville. One of the larger buildings in town, it has a potential river vista (broken only by trees and the current police headquarters) as well as proximity to the railroad and main town roads. In addition, several of the adjacent railroad houses could be taken by a developer. However, the main building would require significant (an estimated \$3–\$4 million investment) renovations to make it habitable once more. In addition to fixing the roof, the building would need a new boiler/heating system and electrical system.

The tour then moved onto the nearby 181 Central Street, the site of the former U.S. Rubber plant, which was taken by the town in 1990. The riverside site lies on the Providence-Worcester freight train line and had been used for industrial purposes dating back to the late 18th Century, with the first mills founded in 1727. Currently, the site holds a large, vacant brick mill building as well as smaller structures. A vacant parking area also contains barrels and trash receptacles. The riverbank is occluded by brush and young trees.

The tour then moved onto the Millville Lock, a nearby scenic park that forms part of the paved Blackstone River Bikeway. This area showcased the natural beauty of the river, especially with the New England autumn foliage in full display. The tour drove up the road into North Smithfield, Rhode Island, highlighting the amenities that are available in neighboring towns (and states) but missing in Millville. Millville currently has no eatery, grocery store, or coffeehouse of its own, driving even devoted residents to take their breaks and their shopping dollars out of town.

Two back-to-back meetings with stakeholders and town officials followed the tour. In these meetings, the bikeway was frequently mentioned. Residents discussed their use of the bike path and lamented the lack of refreshments or gathering spots along the path in Millville. Several noted that amenities such as a cafe or coffee house would not only be valued by residents, it would also provide an impetus for residents of surrounding communities to take a break in Millville. The same was brought up in regard to the weekday commuter traffic, estimated at 6,000 cars a day. If Millville were to have a coffee shop, some opined, many might stop for a break here.

Following the stakeholder meetings, the panelists then engaged in an intensive “closed door” charrette to develop recommendations based on the information provided in their research prior to the meetings as well as the input from the stakeholders. “Next step” recommendations were then shared with citizens of Millville, business owners and representatives of the town at a public presentation at the Town Hall that evening.

# Background and History

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## Questions for the panel

Millville enlisted the help of ULI to provide an outside perspective on ways to reposition town-owned land for redevelopment. The town focused on three specific questions concerning properties owned by the town at 8 Central Street and 181 Main Street.

These questions were:

1. How can the TAP help the Millville identify and maximize the development potential for both 8 Central Street and 181 Main Street properties with the highest and best use redevelopment plans?
2. What are the specific action steps the town needs to take to realize the successful redevelopment of both properties as soon as possible?
3. Can the TAP, along with MassDevelopment, assist the town in the actual marketing of such redevelopment plans to interested partners or work with the town in creating strategies to link potential developers to each of the two projects?

## History

The Town of Millville is the second-youngest municipality in the state. It is located in the Blackstone River Valley in the southeastern portion of Worcester County approximately 42 miles southwest of Boston, 23 miles southeast of Worcester and 20 miles north of Providence. It is the smallest of the 13 towns in the valley, with only five square miles.

Now a suburban residential community, the Town's origins are in industry. In 1870, the Joseph Bannigan Rubber Company was situated here and left a legacy of the so-called Bannigan houses, which housed workers.

The company became the Woonsocket Rubber Company and then the United States Rubber Company, which failed in 1930. Other industry that made use of the abundant natural resources, including the river, were the John Scot (Wool) Mill and Lawrence Felting. These helped give the area its name. Originally, "the Mills," the resulting settlement became Millville Village.

This once industrial path has been preserved, in part, by the Millville Lock. Built in 1827–28 as part of the Blackstone Canal trench, the lock served to expedite the passage of materials up and down the river and was joined by a towpath, used by horses that hauled boats through the canal. The lock is now part of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, adjacent to the Blackstone Valley Bikeway.

While the Town is justifiably proud of its industrial heritage, this history has left Millville with several structures that it no longer uses, specifically the aforementioned sites at 8 Central Street and 181 Main Street. As the town no longer has industry as a revenue source, it has asked for advice in turning these sites into revenue-generating properties.

The town has very few commercial outlets, beyond George's Variety, a convenience store; Mill Tavern Pizza, and Marty's Liquor. Residents usually travel to neighboring communities, such as Uxbridge, Blackstone, or N. Smithfield, RI, for groceries and conveniences. There is no town-water or sewer, and residents need private wells and septic systems.



## Population and demographics

Millville is primarily a suburban residential community of 3,242 residents, consisting largely of single-family homes. The town does have one low-income six-unit apartment building, a building housing apartments for the elderly, and several formerly single-family houses that have been converted to multiple units.

Accessory apartments are allowed only by special permit for family members, and units must be converted back to single-family once the family member no longer resides in the accessory apartment.

The town benefits from a low crime rate of 49.3 crimes per 1,000 residents, lower than that of neighboring Blackstone (70.2) or North Smithfield, RI (105.5) and comparable to (although marginally higher than) Mendon (44.6). The town had six full-time law enforcement officers as of 2016, including five officers. It shares a regional school system with Blackstone, although grades K–8 are available in the town. (Grades 9–12 are accommodated in the regional high school, located in Blackstone.) Slightly more than 3% of Millville's residents are foreign born, and 97% are U.S. citizens. In 2009, the estimated median household income was \$69,635, more than \$5,000 greater than the state average of \$64,496.

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# Assets and Opportunities

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The Town of Millville has a number of strengths that could assist the town with repositioning the 8 Central Street and 181 Main Street properties.

## A) Bike path

The assets of the town include its proximity to the popular and well-maintained Blackstone River Bikeway, which, when completed, will extend for 48 miles along the Blackstone River, connecting Worcester, MA, to Providence, RI. Part of the Blackstone River Heritage Corridor, the 4.2 mile section that runs through Uxbridge, Millville, and Blackstone includes more than 3.5 miles of paved multi-use pathway and includes the Triad Bridge, which brings cyclists to the Millville Lock, one of the best remaining examples of the canal and lock system once prominent on the Blackstone River. Recreational activities on the patch also include walking and jogging

## B) Blackstone River

In addition to enlivening the adjacent bike path, the river itself is available for recreation and draws canoers and kayakers in season. Its tree-lined riverfront is another asset, full of New England's natural beauty.



Blackstone River

## C) Town Hall

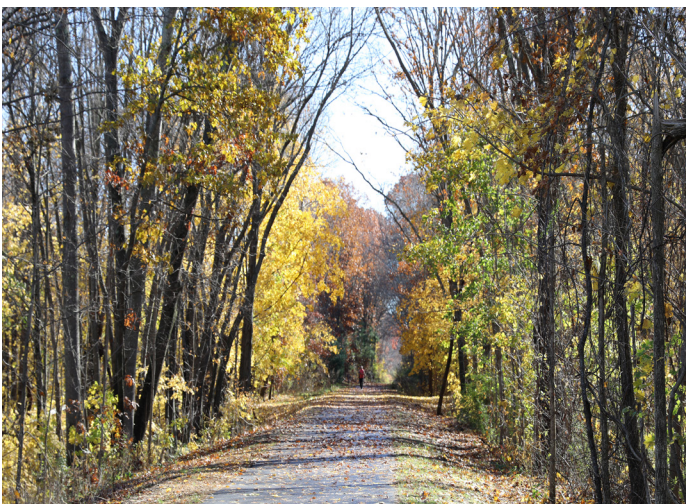
The historic Longfellow School, built in 1850 was re-purposed to be the Town Hall, along with adjoining Udor Tower, which is thought to date back to 1890, may be counted among the Town's manmade attractions. The Udor Tower served as a cistern ("udor" is Greek for "water"), collecting rainwater through a conical roof, now gone, which it would feed through copper piping into a nearby, and now demolished house. This was state-of-the-art plumbing at the time.

## D) New and one-time revenue

Millville is positioned to benefit from new business revenue, generated from the establishment of the newly licensed cannabis manufacturer, the Blackstone Valley Cultivation Company. This business may be seeking additional licensing for a retail outlet, which would further increase the revenue stream. These funds join the one time non-recurring revenue received from an insurance claim for the old Town Hall.

## E) Commutability

Commutability to nearby hubs, including Woonsocket and Worcester, as well as a regular stream of approximately 6,000 commuters daily, could be turned to the town's advantage.



Blackstone River Bikeway

# Challenges

## A) Frugality

Challenges to the successful redevelopment of the sites in question include the town's hesitancy to invest in its own future. This has limited reinvestment for either upkeep or improvement of these properties. Indeed, this frugality has already made prospects for the Town Hall site more expensive, as delayed repair work has increased the potential cost.

## B) Geography and size

Both the shape of the town—a long rectangle—and its small size make town services more difficult and complicate cooperative ventures with neighboring municipalities.

## C) Regulatory barriers

Restrictive zoning barriers also hinder some development. For example, even small (cottage-style) industry is limited to certain areas. In addition, some stakeholders noted that the permitting process can be confusing.



Former mill site

## D) Environmental issues

Questions around environmental issues present a pressing challenge, as the grounds around the former mill site, especially, are overdue for a complete assessment. The absence of such an assessment makes long-term planning in particular difficult.

## E) Water and sewer issues

Stakeholders also noted the lack of town water and sewer services as a challenge both for locals attempting to start new businesses and those attempting to lure developers. A town official who runs a meadery in nearby Blackstone noted that he located his business, which is similar to a winery, there because of the its good quality municipal water.

## F) Governmental and civic capacity

Finally, the board noted a lack of government and civic capacity to engage with these issues. Additional public engagement, education and involvement were noted as necessary next steps toward moving Millville forward.



Millville on a map



# Recommendations

## A) Old Town Hall/Longfellow Municipal Building at 8 Central Street



### Short Term

During the site visit, objects ranging from leftover furniture to municipal paraphernalia, such as T-shirts were seen in the Old Town Hall/Longfellow Municipal Building at 8 Central Street. While the building was no longer in use, these objects contributed to a sense of clutter. The town should finish cleaning out the building. The town is advised that it is always marketing the building, and that an empty and clean building will contribute to the sense that the site is ready to go for any future projects. With this in mind, Millville needs to establish a small stewardship fund for this final cleanup and to maintain a clean and inviting appearance.



The Udon Tower also requires maintenance. The nearly 140-year-old stone structure, which stands on the grounds of the Old Town Hall/Longfellow Municipal Building and is also part of the Central Street Historic District, is a great source of local pride. However, the tower is beginning to show its age. During the site visit, some of its stone stairs appeared to be in disrepair. This structure should be maintained and be lighted at night.

The site's proximity to the Blackstone River should be optimized. Daylight the river to make it more accessible and to create view pathways. As with the two other recommendations, this will entail allocating a small budget for upkeep.

### Medium Term

Several steps are recommended. These would essentially amount to information gathering, which is necessary before any further plans are made for this site. The town is advised to allocate or obtain funding for a feasibility study to conduct a code analysis, examine the existing water/sewage capacity currently on site, and explore environmental concerns and redevelopment costs, as well as possible development scenarios.

At the same time, the Town town can activate the site and excite both local and potential developer interest by using it for small pop-up opportunities that may be linked to the bike trail and, potentially, the second site as well.

### Long Term

Millville should consider rehabilitating the old Town Hall and consolidating city services, such as the police, municipal offices, and library, in the efficient modern layout of a rehabilitated building. With these town services consolidated in the building, perhaps on the building's upper floors, additional space, such as the first floor, could then be used for a coffeehouse/ café, gathering space, history gallery and/or co-working/

exhibition space. Such an arrangement would require an initial investment. However, it would create a civic hub, consolidating town services in a way that would cement the identity of a town center and promote local pride, and it would free the town from various outstanding leases. In addition, it would make good use of a historic and beloved building. In addition, a refreshment or community use of the first floor would provide the kind of gathering place that stakeholders frequently requested.

A second option would be to seek out an investor, possibly a nonprofit, to redevelop the building, perhaps as affordable senior housing. This option would allow the Town town to retain the main structure, which has historical significance and is a source of local pride, but would save the town from the entire cost and responsibility of redevelopment. It would also address another need stated as a priority by the community. In addition, senior housing has the potential to access affordable housing funding, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, which would help make the project feasible.

A third, and decidedly final, option would be to do nothing with the extant structure, which would result in its further decay and the eventual need for it to be demolished. This would result in Millville losing a piece of its history as well as a source of local pride. In addition, the town would need to allocate funding for the demolition.

## B) 181 Main St



### Short Term

The town should complete the environmental assessment of the former industrial site. This is a necessary precursor to any permanent future use. Even as environmental assessment is proceeding, there is much the town can do to change perception of the site. Clearing the site and providing access to the river and the bikeway should be a priority. This will involve the removal of trash, barrels, and dumpsters currently on the site. The demolition and removal of the other (non-brick) structure on the site should be considered part of this process. Stabilizing and securing the brick mill building must be a top priority for both safety and liability.

Explore environmental permitting for short-, medium-and long-term goals. In the short- term, pre-permitting should be explored for the clearing of natural elements, such as saplings and brush, to improve the appearance of the site and provide river access.



### Medium Term

Activate the site in ways that will appeal to the community and potential developers and positively change perception of the site. Activities such as pop-up events, use of the space for gatherings such as fairs or events (such as a beer garden), partnerships with local businesses or other open space opportunities are all options.

### Long Term

Millville retains ownership of the site and re-purposes the site and the stabilized building for open-air community events . In addition to bolstering community spirit and civic pride, such a use could become a catalyst for economic development on adjacent sites.

Alternatively, the Town determines specific uses for the developable area, i.e., the area removed from the flood zone. One option, for example, would be to sub-divide and sell parts of the developable area for private small-scale development. As previously stated, this option would rely on the results of the complete environmental assessment. A second option would allow the town to finesse any environmental issue and do nothing, simply maintaining the space as open public land.

## C) Action Steps

### Short Term

The town should reach beyond its borders and explore an inter-local community development rider. This would allow Millville to pool and draw from regional resources. The town should also obtain or allocate resources to build civic capacity among the people of Millville. The town was also advised to seek Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission funding for EPA work and then finish the environmental assessments at both sites and engage environmental counsel to advise on next steps.

As previously noted, the town must secure the structures at both sites to reduce liabilities and to make them more marketable. This will require coordination with the fire department.

Again, as previously noted, sites need to be cleaned and cleared. In the case of removal of natural elements, such as saplings, the town will need to engage the Conservation Commission. In order to move further with these steps, the town will need to create both local and state pre-permitting strategies and also explore the implications for development in sites that have been listed in the National Historic Registry.

### Medium Term

Action steps recommended for the medium term again covered both sites. The town was advised to choose and finalize a development program for each site, focusing on uses that would have local appeal and support. The town should then issue requests for proposals (RFP) from developers. Simultaneously with the call for RFP, the town can work to attract potential developers through place-making and branding, which will be discussed in the next set of recommendations.

### Long Term

A second phase of community engagement is recommended to finalize both the vision and the coordination of resources for optimizing these spaces. The town can then respond to proposals and move forward.

## D) Marketing/Placemaking

Marketing and placemaking were recommended as key to an overall strategy for identifying and reaching out to potential developers. The town of Millville needs to set the narrative. The steps to controlling the narrative begin with branding. Drawing from previously released material, “Millville on the Move” could be used to brand economic development efforts. The town then needs to define its success stories as promotable achievements.

### Virtual

Online platforms and social media may be better used to leverage the Millville’s profile and promote itself. The town has a website, for example, but this needs to be updated and modernized for accessibility and attractiveness. Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, can also be used to promote and engage the community. Again, branding, as in “Millville on the Move,” is recommended. To create, follow through, and maintain this strategy, members of town staff need to be identified and tasked with managing online and social media content. After one year, this campaign should be evaluated and revised as necessary.

### Physical

Marketing and placemaking can also be used to activate Millville’s downtown. The town is encouraged to experiment with options to revitalize and draw both the community and outsiders to downtown. Options include securing commitments by a food truck that would situate itself by the bike path. This would create a reason for those using the path to stop and enjoy Millville. In addition, it would provide the kind of gathering space and eatery that stakeholders cited as missing in their community. Similar options included a pop-up retail and/or beer garden at either the riverfront mill site or the old Town Hall.

With any of these options, developing signage from the bike trail to showcase these options and draw day-trippers is recommended. These activities could also be connected to the existing playground,

again showcased by additional signage. The town was also advised to review the calendars of surrounding municipalities for other ideas for “Millville on the Move” events. Such events should, of course, be included in the online outreach as well.

In summary, in order to activate the downtown, placemaking is essential to social and community infrastructure. The first recommendations are physical and involve using a food truck to draw traffic downtown and adding signage to downtown. The town should also consider the impact of upcoming road, street and sidewalk reconstruction and how to program and use event space. The remaining recommendations focus on outreach. These include utilizing social media platforms for a downtown voice as well as creating and distributing fact sheets and redevelopment information packets to engage and inform Millville residents. The town should also explore the possibility of regional partnerships as a way to maximize efforts

Development outreach is further recommended in order to maximize the pool of potential investors and developers in both sites. As the town puts out the call for requests for request for proposals (RFP ), the town is advised to leverage its branding, i.e., “Millville on the Move,” to shape its brochure, creating a consistent and favorable image of a Town that is serious about its future. This should also highlight key demographic information that may be seen as favorable to developers, such as the low crime rate and relatively high household income. The town can then connect to developers through trade organizations and state resources including ULI.



# Funding and Resources

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Various sources of funding were identified that could be utilized to realize the recommendations.

## A) MassDevelopment Real Estate Technical Assistance Program

This program works with municipal officials, planners, local stakeholders, and others to provide technical assistance that uses creative solutions and clear action steps to address site-specific and district-wide economic development challenges. Next application round is Spring 2019.

## B) Public financing

Funding sources include MassWorks grants, District Improvement Financing (DIF)/Tax Increment Financing (TIF), special assessments, CPA, and CDBG.

In addition, MassDevelopment has various financing opportunities for developers, manufacturers, nonprofits, etc.

# Conclusions

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Millville, a beautiful New England town, must begin to regard itself as an active investor in its own future.

Initially brought in to answer three specific questions about two properties that the Town is seeking to reposition for development, it became apparent that other underlying issues were causes of concern. A lack of basic resources as well as a desire for a place that felt like a true Town Center were brought up again and again, concerns that played into recommendations for the best and highest uses of both the sites.

These interrelated issues also brought up the question of civic engagement. Although Millville has great natural beauty and stakeholders frequently mention “town pride” as a factor that helped many to choose it as their home, it became apparent during discussions that there was a disconnect between positive sentiment toward the town and an understanding of the obligations of the citizenry to keeping the town solvent and moving forward. Positive engagement, including renewed efforts at resident education and outreach via social media, were seen as possible remedies to this disconnect. An engaged and informed citizenry would be better able to judge the possibilities extant in this lovely town and to decide on the allocation of resources for town services and redevelopment options for Millville.

It became apparent as well throughout the day that although the town initially sought relief for both these sites, as well as underlying issues of debt and insolvency, via the involvement of outside investors, much work needs to be done before any such development becomes profitable or, in fact, feasible. Although the town currently lacks sufficient income, the revenue from the new Blackstone Valley Cultivation cannabis business may be earmarked to such much-needed investment. The one-time payout from the insurance settlement for the damage to Town Hall should also be utilized to advance the recommendations. Although the amount of revenue will likely not match the outlay needed, options for additional financing assistance were outlined. Such steps are seen as necessary for forward progress. Instead of seeking to offload these properties, the town could see them as assets that will be better handled, and possibly sold and/or developed in the future, once some initial investment is applied .

As one of the stakeholders commented, the question about the town’s identity was key. “It starts with a step,” said a local businessman. While there are many viable possibilities, the Town of Millville must take those first steps as an investor in itself in order to move toward a viable, engaged and sustainable future.