



Urban Land
Institute

Boston/New England

Wakefield TAP
March 2, 2021



About ULI – the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI at the local level

Boston/New England District Council covers nearly all of New England with over 1,400 Members—developers, architects, planners, public officials, financiers, students, etc.



Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

Wakefield, MA

ULI Boston/New England is committed to supporting communities in making sound land use decisions and creating better places. A TAP brings together ULI members with a range of professional expertise to provide focused, collaborative consultation to a local government or qualifying non-profit organization.

TAP Impact on Communities:

- **82%** said their behavior and approach to **Municipal Planning and Economic Development Strategies** was affected
- **67%** said there were **increased municipal investments** related to the stated goals and recommendations of their TAP report.
- **62%** said at least **one key developable asset addressed in their TAP report had been redeveloped consistent with ULI Boston/New England recommendations**

Final Deliverable – Written report (12 weeks) will be available at <http://boston.uli.org>

PANEL SPONSOR:



The Panel

Co-Chairs

- Ed O'Rourke, Environmental Health and Engineering, Inc.
- John Martin, Elkus Manfredi Architects

Panelists

- Jeff Birenbaum, CHA / University of Miami
- Tanya Mitchell, member of the ULI Boston Real Estate Advisory Committee
- Diana Pisciotta, Denterlein
- Melvin A.Vieira Jr, RE/MAX Destiny – ULI Boston Real Estate Advisory Committee
- Corey Zehngebot, Graffito SP

ULI Staff

- Manikka Bowman, Director of Policy + Outreach
- Michelle Landers, Executive Director
- Sara Marsh, Manager
- John Wilson, Associate

TAP Writer

- Michael Hoban





Panel Assignment: Address These Questions





Study Area – South Main Street, Wakefield

1. **Short Term: Vacant Storefronts** - What model bylaws could the town propose to address empty storefront windows and require better stewardship of buildings?
2. **Long Term: Sites under-utilized** - Should the Town seek iconic buildings? What are the best uses given the national decline of walk-in retail businesses? What would be appropriate scale of new buildings given the location of these parcels? What model bylaws would the ULI Team recommend to address parking for the uses proposed?
3. **Marketability-** How to attract good developers to sites that require investment and vision? Strategies for working with existing property owners to support efforts to identify buyers who will create an ROI for the original owner and invest in appropriate redevelopment?



What did we hear?

Assets and Opportunities

- **South Main Street is the southern gateway to downtown**
 - New middle school (1000+ students); playing fields active afternoons/weekends
 - Civic center active with multiple users
 - Within a 5–10-minute walk of commuter rail stop
 - Growing number of nearby higher-density residential projects
- **Infrastructure and recreation upgrades in planning stages**
 - New rail trail anticipated behind the subject area, creating excitement and greater opportunities for retail and living
 - Planned roadway and sidewalk improvements
- **Existing zoning creates some flexibility and opportunity**
 - Mixed-use zoning overlay district
 - 1600 linear feet of frontage
- **Retail environment has potential**
 - Several strong retail anchors
- **Significant surface parking available during off-peak hours**



Assets and Opportunities



Challenges

- **Multiple unwelcoming elements at gateway to Main St district**
 - Vacant storefronts; unknown interior conditions
 - Buildings in disrepair and in need of exterior upgrades; long term ownership with limited incentive to reinvest
 - Non-conforming uses
 - Environmental remediation may be required for developable sites
- **Existing public conditions are challenging:**
 - Narrow sidewalks and no tree canopies
 - Lackluster public realm
 - Civic Center/CVS both set back from property lines and less engaging at pedestrian level
- **Lack of pedestrian connectivity**
 - Lack of crosswalks, particularly near Civic Center parking lot and Middle School
 - Main Street and W. Water Street is not currently an inviting intersection to cross from North to South Main Street



Vacant storefronts on South Main St

Challenges

- **Limited activation on South Main Street**
 - No programming (outdoor, temporary, pop-up)
 - No existing arts/culture/music/theater venue
- **The State of retail**
 - Challenging retail environment spurred by global pandemic; retail leakage
 - Risk that redevelopment makes ground floor retail unaffordable
- **Planning and Zoning**
 - Perceived lack of parking
 - Challenges during pick you/drop off period –Safety Concerns
 - Special permit for increased density, but possibly not enough

A grayscale background image showing several hands holding pens, poised over documents and papers on a table, suggesting a collaborative meeting or a formal review process.

Recommendations

Recommendations – Short Term *(1 year and under)*

Encourage investment in key parcels

- Centralize economic development process
- Create clear lines of communications for various stakeholders which includes investors, developers, business owners, and residents

Market the South Main Street Corridor

- Wayfinding
- Signage for parking - wayfinding – and walkability
- Create Merchant's association and conduct shared communications/activations

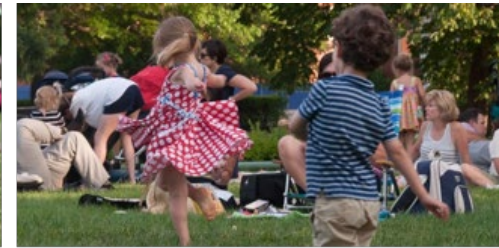
Planning

- Revise mixed use overlay district parameters

Placemaking- Embrace dual nature of vacant and underutilized sites

- Leverage surface parking (and/or temporary street closures) for outdoor amenities; could include:
 - Food truck, outdoor seating, public art, pop up Food and Beverage
 - Explore Farmers/makers markets at Richardson/Main Street
- Proposed development vs rail trail – balance against pedestrian and bicyclists
- Temporary / evaluate cross walks at Santander / approximate to playing field; Paint – rapid beacons – test for long term (VHB) plan
- Using empty storefront windows as "empty canvas" - storefronts thru art

Placemaking Strategies



Recommendations – Medium (1 to 3 years)

Streamline regulatory process for developments and review current planning efforts

- Evaluate / derive code related to aesthetics (awnings, façade)
- Explore staffing capacity
- Community programming to support playing fields with retail program

Define Southern Gateway to Main Street

- Design and build passive green space at the beginning of rail trail on Town land (*symbolic and gateway to town center*)
- Incentive to businesses for frontage on rail trail
- Evaluate environmental conditions and remediation – funding programs

Recommendations – Long term (3 – 10 years)

- Re-parcelization of existing sites for wholesale redevelopment vs. rehabilitation
- Redevelopment western side of the street
- Curate a program for landlords to incentivize to bring in local tenants / businesses

Possible Redevelopment Scenario



Possible Redevelopment Scenario, 3D View

ALL BUILDINGS SET BACK 10'
FROM PROPERTY LINE TO
WIDEN + ENHANCE SIDEWALKS

458-472 MAIN STREET

4 STORIES
± 50 APARTMENTS
± 7,500 SF RETAIL SPACE
± 65 PARKING SPACES BELOW

474-486 MAIN STREET

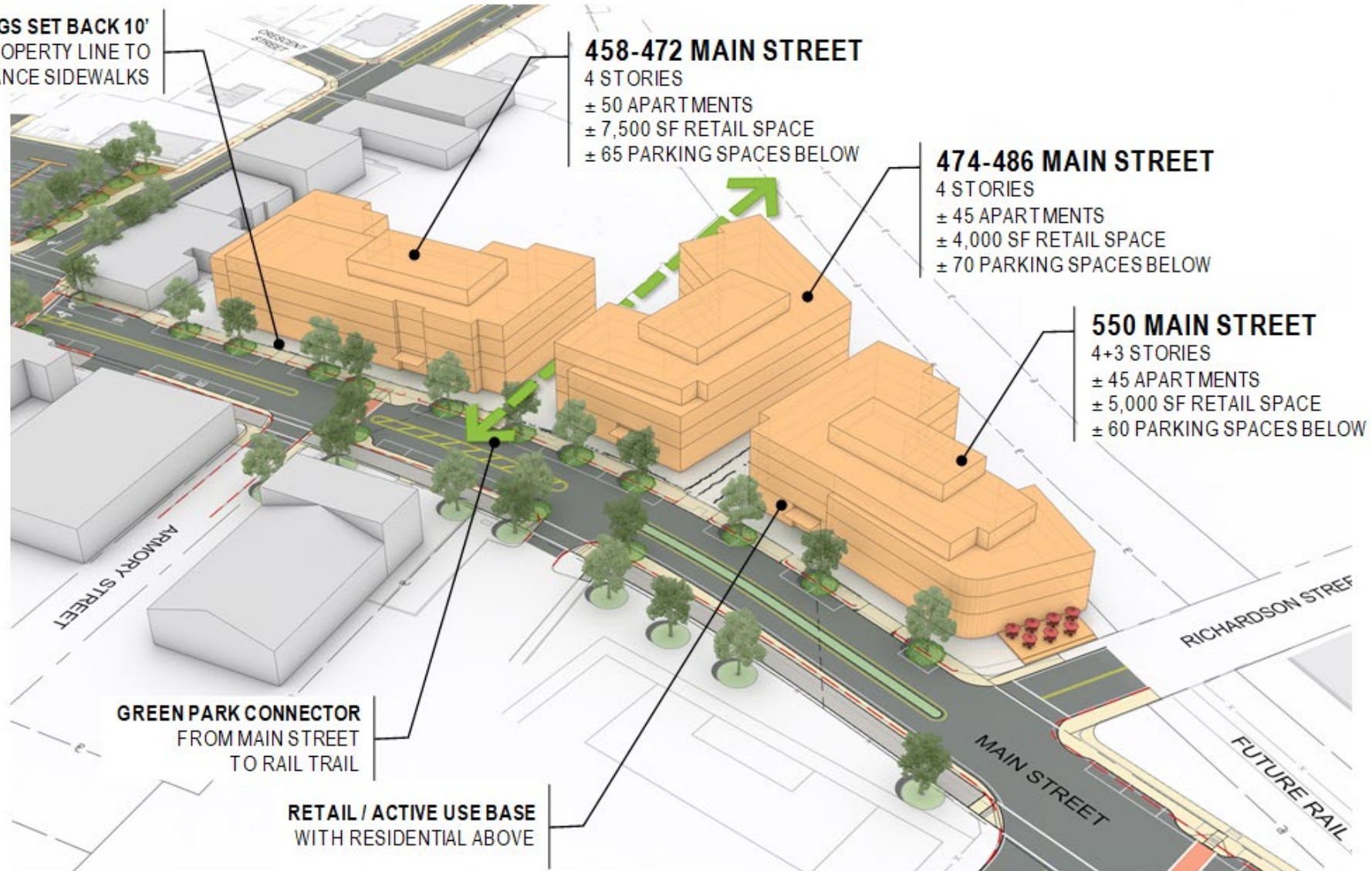
4 STORIES
± 45 APARTMENTS
± 4,000 SF RETAIL SPACE
± 70 PARKING SPACES BELOW

550 MAIN STREET

4+3 STORIES
± 45 APARTMENTS
± 5,000 SF RETAIL SPACE
± 60 PARKING SPACES BELOW

GREEN PARK CONNECTOR
FROM MAIN STREET
TO RAIL TRAIL

RETAIL / ACTIVE USE BASE
WITH RESIDENTIAL ABOVE





Funding & Resources

Supplemental funding and financing resources

State grants

- MassDevelopment
- MassWorks
- Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)

Financing

- MassDevelopment (tax-exempt bonds, bridge financing, loans, etc.)
- Mass Housing Workforce
- Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP)
- City funding sources
- CPA (Community Preservation Act)

Housing Tax Credit Program (Federal and State)

Property owner/developer partnerships

Brownfields Tax Credits

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Q&A

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