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Celebrating Fifty-two Years of Service - 1963-2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Jean Bubon, AICP, Sturbridge Town Planner;
Sturbridge Planning Board

From: Eric R. Smith, AICP, Principal Planner

RE: Sturbridge Commercial Tourist District PDA Enhanced Report

Date: August 19, 2015

This Memo represents an addendum to the existing Sturbridge Commercial Tourist (CT) District PDA Report. In that PDA Report, CMRPC staff recommended that the Town of Sturbridge consider changes to the minimum lot size and frontage requirements for lots in the Commercial Tourist zoning district. Based on our analysis of existing lot sizes and frontage for 112 lots in the CT District, CMRPC's staff recommendations for new dimensional standards of lot size and frontage in the CT District were for a minimum lot size of quarter-acre (+/-10,000 square feet) with 100 feet of frontage. This would provide a lot with a 100+/- feet of depth. We also noted in the Report that our 25-hour technical assistance effort did not allow for an analysis for further subdivision of existing lots based on this Standard, but noted that the Town could apply for additional DLTA assistance in 2015 or utilize their Local Planning Assistance (LPA) hours for this analysis.

Based on feedback from the February 24, 2015 Sturbridge Planning Board meeting in which CMRPC staff provided the CT District PDA Project Presentation, CMRPC staff has conducted an analysis of potential subdivision of land for lots within the CT District, which is presented below, as well as a reviewed the Town of Sturbridge's Design Guidelines for comparison with the Town of Ashburnham's Center Village Design Guidelines and provided an expanded list of funding resources, given it was determined that the CT District area would qualify for funding under the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Downtown Initiative (MDI) grant assistance program. The Sturbridge Planning Board voted to support use of LPA to enhance the existing Draft PDA Report in these areas on February 24, 2015.

Potential Subdivision Analysis and Split Zoning District Lot Assessment Discussion

For this analysis, existing lots would need to have a 1/2 acre (.50 acres) of land area + 200 feet of frontage to be subdivided into 1/4 acre lots with 100 feet of frontage. Therefore the analysis focused on such lots and there were twenty five (25) such lots of the 112 lots CMRPC analyzed as part of the 2014

PDA Assessment. In some cases parking requirements for restaurants could also be a limiting factor for subdivision potential in cases where even the new dimensional requirements would allow for it.

As we undertook the potential subdivision analysis we also assessed if these lots if are split into the CT District and an adjoining zoning district. However, CMRPC staff has not looked at other lots that are split into two (or more) zoning districts beyond this set of 25 lots. Review of additional split lots would need to take place within an additional analysis that could be funded under FY 2016 LPA hours.

The set of 25 parcels are indicated on the attached Map as well as included on a Table provided at the end of this Memo.

1. **367 Main Street-** would have the potential to be subdivided into two lots. But given location of existing building, which is a Friendly's restaurant, and the parking lot to the east, subdivision potential would probably not be likely, especially for restaurant uses and their parking requirements. See aerial photo of 367 Main Street below in Figure 1.

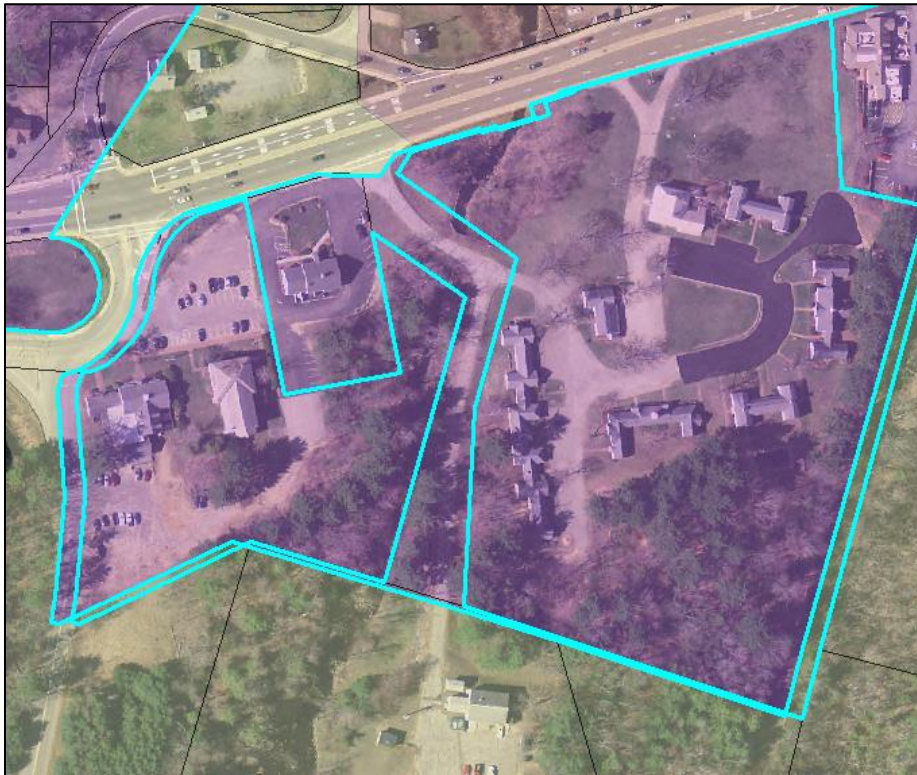
Figure 1: 367 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



2. **371 Main Street.** This property is also identified as "The Lodges" and is owned by Old Sturbridge Village (OSV); Assessors list owner of record as "Sturbridge Corp"; As shown in Figure 2 on the following page, this parcel is separated by a right-of-way. The property, which contains a number of buildings located on it, is primarily used as lodging facilities for visitors of Old Sturbridge Village but includes additional uses beyond The Lodges, as there are commercial buildings located to the front

of the property. The parcel is 35.24 acres. CMRPC did not measure the significant frontage, given that future subdivision for additional development is unlikely given the existing uses of the property.

Figure 2: 371 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



3. **380 Main Street-** This property is utilized as the Sturbridge Visitor Center. CMRPC staff believes potential subdivision is low given current use as the Visitor Center and associated parking. The property has a very interesting boundary, as indicated in Figure 3 below, as some of the 0.78 acres appear in separate boundaries outside of the road layout for the Old Sturbridge Village entrance. The property is owned by Old Sturbridge Village though the Town maintains the parking lot (*building too?*). Besides the Visitor Center the South Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce has their offices there.

Figure 3: 380 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



4. **392 Main Street** – This property is an office condominium development. The building takes up most of the lot currently as indicated in Figure 4 below. So even with subdivision potential, CMRPC staff does not see how much more development could actually occur. The property has 373.5 feet of frontage with 1.04 acres of land.

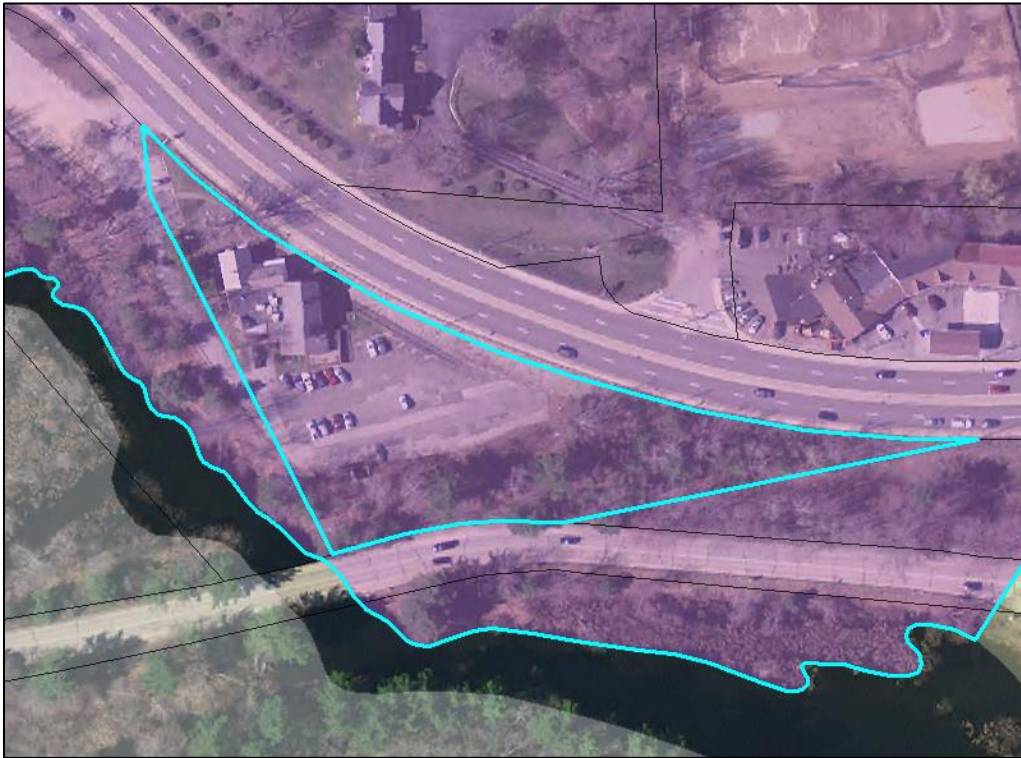
Figure 4: 392 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



5. **407 Main Street** – This is the new location of the Sturbridge Coffee House and there is a steakhouse that is slated to open in the former TJ's location in the fall. This parcel is an interesting-triangular shaped property (see Figure 5 on the following page) with significant frontage (735.78 feet). The lot

size is 1.71 acres. The lot size is the limiting factor for further subdivision under current zoning. Future subdivision potential under the recommended 100 feet of frontage and 10,000 square feet of land area is limited given that there are topography issues associated with the property. There are also environmental features on the eastern undeveloped portion that limit potential to subdivide the property and get one more building in. Parking requirements associated with the restaurant uses also limit any subdivision opportunities.

Figure 5: 407 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



6. **408 Main Street-** Is an existing hotel property, which already has two structures on it (see Figure 6 on the following page). Additional development seems limited even if subdivided further, given the existing hotel use and the two structures. Property has 390 feet of frontage with 2.38 acres of land area.

Figure 6: 408 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



7. **413 Main Street** – Is property associated with the former Basketville property. This property was discussed in the Draft PDA Report (see text below) 413 Main Street is a 2.06-acre parcel with 442 feet of frontage.
8. **419 Main Street** is the former Basketville Building. Though it could be subdivided under the recommended lot area and frontage requirements, the building runs right through the middle of the lot. So there would be setback violation considerations. There are parking requirement issues associated with the redevelopment of this building. Therefore subdivision potential is highly unlikely.

From the Draft Report: *“The 419 Main Street property is a recent example of successful a vacant building being redeveloped (It was formerly occupied by Basketville, the basket maker company which has an outlet store located in Putney, VT). The lot area of 419 Main Street is only 0.50 acre; though lot frontage is 217.38 feet and lot coverage is 25.4%. CMRPC Staff notes that the adjoining 413 Main Street parcel is owned by the same entity and was combined for zoning purposes to make a conforming lot (413 Main Street is a 2.06-acre parcel).”* (See Figure 7 on page 7 for aerial photo map showing the 413 Main Street and 419 Main Street parcels; Figure 8 on page 7 shows the redeveloped 419 Main Street parcel.)

Figure 7: 413 and 419 Main Street GIS Aerial Photo Map



Figure 8: 419 Main Street After Redevelopment



9. **420 Main Street** - There are four buildings on this commercially-developed parcel already (see Figure 9 below). The lot contains 773.81 feet of frontage, although there is frontage on Route 20 and Cedar Street in this case. The parcel contains 3.26 acres in lot area. Realistically probably at most there could be one additional lot created through the subdivision process (including ANR), given most of the buildings are located to the easterly of this property.

Figure 9: 420 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



10. **428 Main Street**- This parcel is located at the southeast corner of Main Street and Snell Street, which gives this lot frontage on two streets. As shown on Figure 10 on the following page, there is the landlocked parcel of 426A Main Street, which could be combined with a new lot subdivided off of 428 Main Street to give a larger lot off of Snell Street. The Main Street frontage for 428 Main Street is 118 feet. There would be challenges to get 100 feet of frontage from Snell Street with the existing structure. A Google Street View of 428 Main Street is provided in Figure 11 on page 10.

Figure 10: 428 and 426A Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



Figure 11: 428 Main Street Google Street View



11. **446 Main Street**- This lot has a commercial brick building, located in the center of the lot. The property does have +/- 312.5 feet of frontage, which would allow for up to 2 additional lots (3 total) to be created under the 100 feet of frontage scenario. The parcel is 2.49 acres. Subdivision would most likely occur upon redevelopment, as the building does not seem to be the most attractive building in the CT District. See Figure 12 below for a Google Street view photo and Figure 13 on the following page for the GIS aerial photo map. As indicated on the map, there are split zoning issues which could also be addressed during a Commercial Tourist Zoning District rezoning effort, as a sliver of the rear portion of 446 Main Street is located in the neighboring suburban residential zoning district.

Figure 12: 446 Main Street Google Street View



Figure 13: 446 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



12. **453 Main Street-** This property already has two buildings on this lot (see Figure 14 below for Google Street view photo). Therefore, any subdivision would just create a situation to have each building on its own independent lot, although there is a shared parking arrangement between the two buildings. There is 252.56 feet of frontage, which would limit to just two total lots under the 100 feet of frontage scenario. Lot size is 2.14 acres.

Figure 14: 453 Main Street Google Street View



13. **469 Main Street** – This property is currently a Dunkin Donuts and has 235 feet of frontage (see Figure 15 for photo of the Dunkin Donuts via Google Street View). Lot size is 3.64 acres. In theory could create 2 lots (sub'n via ANR) under the 100 feet of frontage scenario, but given the building location and parking requirements for the Dunkin Donuts use makes the subdivision potential low. There is significant depth to this lot (see Figure 16 for parcel map), but there are areas of environmental constraints to the rear (wetlands, floodplain and river protection area associated with the Quinebaug River).

Figure 15: 469 Main Street Google Street View



Figure 16: 469 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



14. **472 Main Street.** This is property with a 104 assessors land use code (two-family residential). From review of the aerial photo (see Figure 17 and Figure 18 below) there is a house and some accessory structures. In addition, currently there are two driveways servicing this lot. The parcel has 226.07 feet of frontage, which means the lot could be subdivided into two lots under the 100 feet of frontage scenario; That would be the limiting factor for subdivision potential even though there are 2.4 acres of land; only if a road was constructed could there be any further potential (and that could be limited), although the lot is fairly deep. CMRPC staff also notes how this parcel is split into two zones and is one of the areas where zoning boundary adjustment should be proposed (see Figure 18 below).

Figure 17: 472 Main Street Google Street View



Figure 18: 472 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



15. **479 Main Street** – This property was provided as an example in the CT District PDA Report, which noted the property *“is...a lot conforming for both lot size and frontage... This lot is home to the Kaizen Sushi Bar and Grill. It is a successful example making reuse of an older structure (it*

was built in 1870s according to the Assessors).” Below in Figure 19 is the aerial photo GIS map showing the parcel boundary with Figure 20 the Google Street View photo of the building provided on the following page. Under the 10,000 square-foot lot area and 100 of frontage standard the property could be subdivided, though parking considerations for restaurants and other parking intensive uses could be a limiting factor. The parcel has 340.9 feet of frontage and 1 acre of land. Therefore, in theory could be two new lots to create 3 lots of 100 feet of frontage and each with 10,000 square feet of lot area as a minimum.

Figure 19: 479 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



Figure 20: 479 Main Street Google Street View



16. **480 Main Street** – This parcel is a Town of Sturbridge-owned parcel at the corner of Route 20 (Main Street) and Arnold Road. It is currently used as the Town’s Senior Center and offices for the Council of Aging. An Aerial Photo GIS Map of this parcel is provided in Figure 21 on the following page. The lot is .78 acres (or approximately 33,977 square feet) with 200 feet of total frontage (the lot has frontage on both Main Street and Arnold Road). Under the 100 feet of frontage and 10,000 square feet of lot area standard, in theory the 480 Main Street parcel could be subdivided to create a new commercial lot on Main Street (which could help put some additional land back on the tax roll, for example). However, based on CMRPC staff’s conversations with the Town Planner, the existing lot configuration has the potential to allow for the construction of more common parking to the front of the Senior Center building, while still allowing for a substantial green space to be retained. There is also the potential to use the existing green space as a park and/or a public gathering space utilizing principles of placemaking¹.

¹ “Placemaking is simply a way of creating a place in a community where people want to visit and be. These places are welcoming, safe, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, usable, accessible and invite interaction. Placemaking is where a space is turned into a place where residents, and others, can connect with each other to meet, greet, gather, and come together as a community. A space becomes a place when there is a reason to go there.” from the Placemaking for REALTOR® Associations: Guide to Transform Public Spaces to Community Places.

Figure 21: 480 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



17. **489 Main Street** – Current use is an apartment building and associated parking on .78 acres of land with 200 feet of frontage (see Figure 22 below for a Google Street view of the property). Given the current apartment use with the parking, subdivision potential seems minimal.

Figure 22: 489 Main Street Google Street View



18. **500 Main Street** – A mixed commercial building known as “The Boardwalk” (see Figure 23 below for Google street view photo of the site). The site has 240 feet of frontage with 1.65 acres of lot area. Given various uses and parking, subdivision potential seems very low at this time.

Figure 23: 500 Main Street Google Street View



19. **506 Main Street** is now merged with **510 Main Street** in Sturbridge’s Assessors Records with the completion of the new Cumberland Farms gas station and convenience store. Given the investment in the new service station it would therefore seem that subdivision potential is highly unlikely. There would also potentially be the setback violation considerations. This property was also discussed in the Draft Report.
20. **524 Main Street:** A property with 0.50 acres on the southeast corner of Bates Hill Road and Main Street. It is currently a property with a single-family house with a garage. Aerial photos (see Figure 24 for the Street Aerial Photo GIS Map and Figure 25 for the Google Street View Photo on the following page) indicate some additional accessory uses as well. If the zoning allowed $\frac{1}{4}$ acre lots and 100 of frontage it would appear that this lot could become subdivided into two distinct lots, given the fact that the property has frontage both on Main Street and Bates Hill Road.

Figure 24: 524 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



Figure 25: 524 Main Street Google Street View



21. **559 Main Street** – This is the Sturbridge Marketplace parcel. Given the building and parking required for its uses, subdivision potential seems very limited. The property does have 250.1 feet of frontage and 1.39 acres of land area.

22. **595 Main Street** - This is the vacant lot across from the Blackington Building that has parking. Most of the lot is vacant and wooded otherwise. The property does have 739.9 feet of frontage and 2.51 acres of land areas, which does give subdivision potential for seven lots (six additional lots) based on the significant road frontage. However, environmental constraints and parking requirements for the Blackington Building make subdivision of this parcel unlikely. Both the Planning Board and Conservation Commission have approved plans for the development of a parking lot to serve the Blackington Building and this lot is currently under construction. The addition of meaningful parking to serve the Blackington Building should be an asset in attracting new tenants.
23. **8 Brookfield Road** – is Town-owned property that has been leased for commercial uses. It is a corner lot located at the northeastern corner of Main Street (Route 20) and Brookfield Road (Route 148). Figure 26 below provides a Google Street View of the building and parking lot. The property has 300 of total frontage (frontage on both Main Street and Brookfield Road) on 1.10 acres of land area. Two Town departments have requested use of this building; the recreation department would like to use the space for indoor summer camp facilities on rainy days (currently they have to cancel day camp on such days). Additionally, the Production Coordinator and Cable Advisory Committee have requested use of the building for a recording studio. As of this date, no decisions have been made on the future use of this building.

Figure 27 provided on the following page shows the aerial photo GIS map for 8 Brookfield Road, which appears to indicate the parcel is split into two zones. However after conferring with the Town Planner, the zoning is not split here it is all CT District. Of interest on this property at 8 Brookfield is the parcel boundary. As indicated in Figure 27, CMRPC staff observed how a portion of the parking lot is in the roadway Right-of-Way and there is vacant land to the rear of the building. The Town Planner provided background information on a reconfiguration of Brookfield Road with Main Street (1989 was date referenced) so there might be deed references to all roadway/right-of-way going through the parking lot area.

Given the public ownership, future subdivision potential under the 10,000 lot area and 100 feet of frontage standard is likely low. In fact if the property is utilized by the Town’s Recreation Department, the vacant land to the rear of the existing building could be used for day camp or related recreational activities.

Figure 26: 8 Brookfield Road Google Street View



Figure 27: 480 Main Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



24. **9 Holland Road** – This property is a Mill building on 8.5 acres of land that has lots of road frontage. CMRPC staff did not measure the frontage for this property. A review of this property indicates there are environmental constraints with further development. Any further development is expected to consist of redevelopment within the existing built-up footprint. Figures 28 and 29 on the following page provide the aerial photo GIS map and the Google Street View photo, respectively. CMRPC staff will be assisting the Town of Sturbridge on an assessment of this mill as part of our agency’s Mill Redevelopment Technical Assistance (MRTA) program, which will be taking place in the second half of 2015.

Figure 28: 9 Holland Road Aerial Photo GIS Map Figure 29: 9 Holland Road Aerial Google Street View



25. **8 School Street-** This is a multi-family dwelling unit (111 is the Assessors land use code). The property has 235 feet of frontage (there is frontage on two roads: School Street and Clarke Road) and the lot size is 0.68 acres (or 29,620.8 square feet). Figure 30 on the following page shows the aerial photo GIS map of this property. Under the Town of Sturbridge's Zoning Bylaw generally any subdivision potential needs to give considerations of the square-foot per unit requirement for multi-family housing units. However, multi-family housing units are not allowed in the Commercial Tourist District (only accessory apartments / housing units above commercial are allowed), so these are non-conforming housing units and therefore, the property's nonconforming status would complicate subdivision opportunities.

Figure 30: 8 School Street Aerial Photo GIS Map



Review of Design Guidelines

At the February 24, 2015 Sturbridge Planning Board meeting, the Board members were impressed with the design of the new GFA Federal Credit Union in Ashburnham's Village Center, in particular how the Town of Ashburnham had utilized their Center Village Design Guidelines to have that new building look similar to the existing building that was torn down and blend in with the neighboring historic buildings. Therefore, the Sturbridge Planning Board requested CMRPC staff to review the Center Village Design Guidelines to see if there are any elements included in those design guidelines that are missing in the Sturbridge's Design Guidelines. CMRPC staff's review of the two sets of design guidelines indicates that the elements contained in both design guidelines are very similar. In fact, it appears that the Town of Ashburnham utilized the Sturbridge Design Guidelines (or a similar model/example) when adopting their guidelines.

Additional Funding Resources

- **Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI)**: DHCD's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. The primary mission of the MDI is to make downtown revitalization an integral part of community development in cities and towns across the Commonwealth. MDI's guiding principles are that the most effective approach to downtown revitalization is a holistic one; that it addresses economic and community development needs; and that it provides a framework of interrelated activities that promote positive change in a downtown to keep it healthy and prosperous.

The deadline passed for the FY '15 round of funding (December 4, 2014 was the deadline). Hopefully the program will continue as it represents a potential funding source for a detailed parking study of this PDA (The State makes use of Nelson Nygaard Consulting Associates, a leading parking management and planning consultant firm), a market study for potential new businesses and even walkability, as the State added this component this year: *“Requests for assistance may address development of recommendations regarding such aspects of downtown walkability as: improving safety at intersections or along main street areas; enhancement of the walking environment through such elements as landscaping and improved maintenance; reviewing the ease of walking routes between destinations such as shops, civic buildings and parking areas; or how increasing walkability can be a tool to create lively public places.”*

For more information: <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html>. DHCD Staff Contact: Emmy Hahn, Program Coordinator/MDI, at 617-573-1364 or elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us. Note Ms. Hahn indicated to CMRPC staff and the Sturbridge Town Planner that the CT District PDA area has been deemed to be eligible for this program.

- MassDevelopment: MassDevelopment’s Real Estate Pre-Development Services offer the opportunity for market feasibility analysis and site planning assistance for Town-owned property, which includes 8 Brookfield Road.

For more information: <http://www.massdevelopment.com/real-estate-development/>

I look forward in discussing the information contained this Memo with the Town Planner and the Planning Board. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there are any questions and/or you require additional information. I am able to attend a future Planning Board meeting to present the findings contained in this Memo upon request.