6. Economic Development

Introduction

Tewksbury's economy serves as a source of jobs, community wealth and public services for people living in the town and other towns in the nearby region. Building, changing and strengthening a local economy requires insight, planning, partnerships, and considerable effort on the part of local government. A community should periodically assess the state of its economy and make efforts to enhance it by increasing the number of high-paying jobs, broadening the tax base, or providing new services and products to local and regional residents.

Economic development takes other elements of planning into consideration in order to formulate the most successful course of action for a city or town. For example, before rezoning land for new business growth or recruiting new businesses and industry, a community should review its transportation systems, natural resource policies, housing market, and the condition and adequacy of its public facilities. The effectiveness of an economic development plan hinges on its compatibility with these ingredients of community development.

Commercial and industrial development in Tewksbury. Photos by Mary Coolidge, October 2002.

Existing Conditions

Tewksbury has a reasonably diverse economic base. Although it is missing an identifiable downtown area, the town has many small businesses, self-employment and service businesses scattered along Route 38, known locally as "Main Street," and elsewhere throughout the community. Tewksbury has a significant amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial purposes, 477 acres and 2,155 acres respectively.

Historically, Tewksbury's economy was based on agriculture and small industry. Greenhouses, gardening, horticulture, orchards and nurseries became increasingly common, and Tewksbury

gained renown for its carnation farms.[1] Since 1971, however, 63% of the land previously used for farming has been developed or converted to another use, and land once used for agricultural production began another lifecycle.[2] A decade ago, only 553 acres of farmland remained in Tewksbury and today, there is virtually none.[3] Like much of the Northern Middlesex area, Tewksbury grew rapidly after World War II. Half of all homes in Tewksbury as of 1957 had been built in the preceding six years, and the town's housing inventory more than doubled between 1960-1980 in response to the regional highway system.[4] Tewksbury has issued about 2,700 residential building permits since 1980, averaging 112 per year between 1996-2002.[5] With so many homes being built and new companies locating in town, growth has brought jobs and tax revenue to Tewksbury and simultaneously changed the size and composition of its economic base.

During the 1990s, Tewksbury's population increased 5.5%, comparable to the state as a whole, while Middlesex County's population increased only 4.6%. Over the past 20 years, however, the number of people living in Tewksbury grew by 17.1% even though the county's overall population increased by only 6.7%.[6] Although Tewksbury has some remaining land left for new residential development, the town is largely built out except for vacant industrial and commercial parcels. A recent analysis of Tewksbury's build-out potential indicates that the town could absorb another 4.7 million ft^2 of industrial and commercial growth.[7]

Regional Economy

For purposes of economic analysis, the Commonwealth is divided into seven regions based on transportation, employment base and labor market areas. The strengths, weaknesses and potential of each area have been characterized in a recent state policy report, Toward a New Prosperity, published by the Massachusetts Department of Economic Development.[8] Tewksbury is located in the Northeast Region (Map 1) where high-tech manufacturing is strong, e.g., computers, electronics and defense systems. High-tech manufacturing requires a workforce with higher levels of education than would be required by traditional manufacturing concerns such as paper, machinery or plastics

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[1] Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Committee, Town of Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Plan 1998-2003 (April 1998).

[2] MassGIS, State Vector Library, [database online] "luph295.dbf," in d-Base format [updated May 2001].

[3] Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Committee, Town of Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Plan 1998-2003, April 1998.

[4] Technical Planning Associates, Tewksbury Master Plan (May 1958); Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table H34: Tewksbury.

[5] Bureau of the Census, Residential Construction Branch [database online], "Manufacturing, Mining and Construction Statistics: Building Permits," INTERNET <http://www.censtats.census.gov/bldg.bldgpermit.shtml> [cited August 2002, June 2003]. Data concerning permits issued prior to 1996 obtained from Open Space and Recreation Plan.

[6] Census 2000, Summary File 1, Table DP-1: Tewksbury and Middlesex County.

[7] Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), "EOEA Build-Out Study," in EXCEL format [Tewksbury_buildout-final.xls], 2001.

[8] Sequel to Choosing to Compete, the state's first strategic economic development plan (1992).

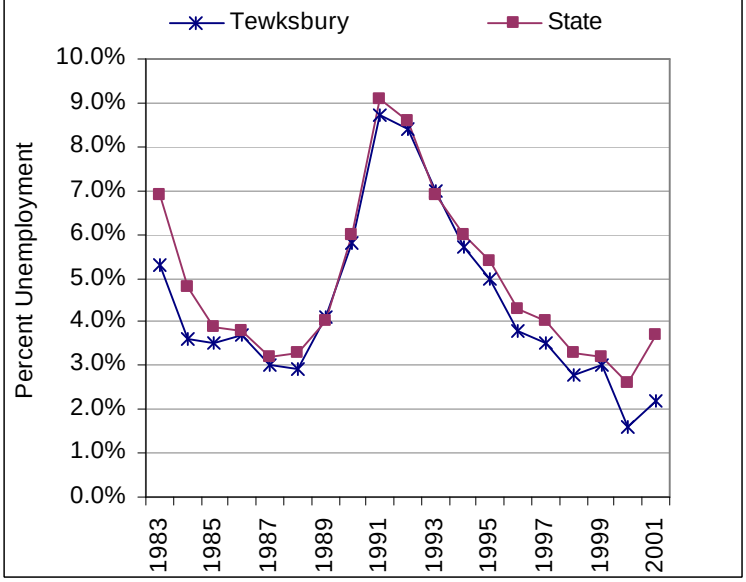
producers, so it is not surprising to find that people in Tewksbury's region are relatively well-educated. A testament to the area's manufacturing-based economy is the high percentage of people employed in the industry, 20.8%, well above the statewide average of 13.4%.[9] Tewksbury surpasses the region, for 24.5% of its labor force works in manufacturing.[10]

Neighboring Lowell is historically responsible for bringing manufacturing jobs into the Northern Middlesex area. When the textile industry began to decline and better mobility to other areas of the region and state became a reality, the towns surrounding Lowell began to suburbanize. Between 1960-1970, the population of Tewksbury and other towns nearby increased 30%. During the past 20 years, high-tech manufacturing has made a name for itself in Northern Middlesex, a previously untapped market. Due the success of various firms, today the territory maintains its reputation for supporting a profitable high-tech industry.

Labor Force and Employment

The labor force in Tewksbury includes 17,891 people, 17,490 of whom were employed during 2000. Tewksbury's unemployment rate in 2000 was 1.6%, which is below both the Northern Middlesex Region (2.5%) and the Commonwealth as a whole (2.6%).[11] In 2001, the unemployment rate (2.2%) still remained below the state average (3.7%) despite a slight increase (Figure 1). Last year, 2002, when the economy began to weaken, Tewksbury's unemployment rate rose to 4.4% while unemployment statewide increased to 5.5%.

Fig. 1: Local & State Unemployment Trends
Source: DET, 2002.



The labor force in Tewksbury is somewhat less well educated than workers in municipalities throughout Middlesex County and the Commonwealth. In Tewksbury, 34% of the adult population has an associates degree or higher, a 6% increase from 1990.[12] In contrast, 40% of persons in the labor force statewide and throughout Middlesex County also have an associates degree or higher. The gap is more pronounced among persons with a four-year college degree or graduate school education. County and statewide, the

[9] Massachusetts Department of Economic Development, Toward a New Prosperity, 2002

[10] Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training (DET), LAUS [database online], INTERNET at <http://www.state.ma.us/detma/> [data cited and compiled by J. A. Barrett, August 2001].

[11] DET, 2000

[12] Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table DP-2: Tewksbury.

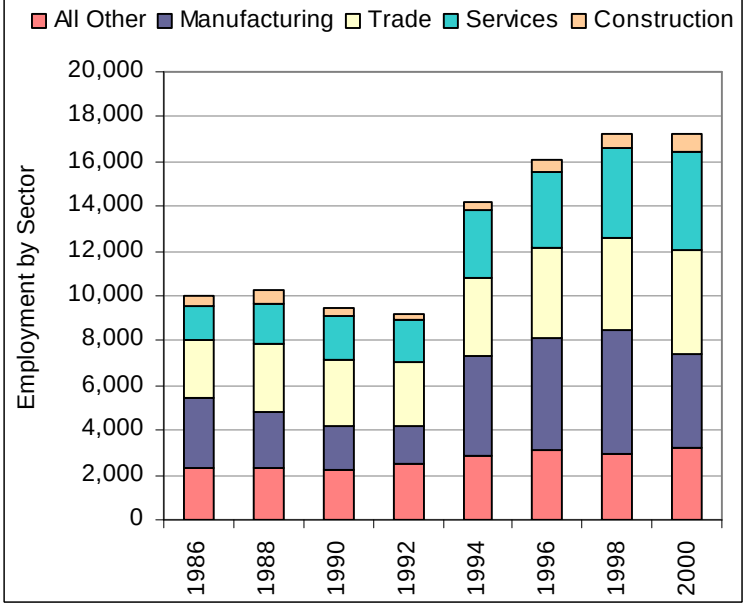
percentage of people with an undergraduate or graduate degree is 43.6% and 33.2% respectively, while in Tewksbury it is significantly lower, 25.2%. Though Tewksbury residents as a whole have not attained the same level of education as residents elsewhere in the state, the increase that has occurred since 1990 is most likely a factor in the earnings growth that can be seen in household income statistics, especially among younger households.

Despite the historic importance of manufacturing in Lowell, Tewksbury and other towns nearby, more local residents work in professional service (23%) and educational and health service industries (37%) than in manufacturing (17%).[13] In addition, more Tewksbury residents commute to non-local jobs than those who work locally. About 68% of the town's labor force commutes at least 30 minutes to work each day, traveling to locations outside the Lowell Metropolitan Statistical Area (Lowell PMSA), which includes Tewksbury.[14] Since 1990, the number of people who drive alone to work and do not carpool has increased 3% to almost 88%. The number of people who work at home in Tewksbury has also increased, from 1.8% to 2.4%.[15] Throughout Massachusetts, 74% of employed commuters drive alone to work and 3.1% work at home.

Local Employment Base

According to the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), Tewksbury's major employers include Raytheon, DeMoulas Supermarkets, Wal-Mart, Megatech Corporation and Home Depot.[16] In the past 20 years, three industries – services, manufacturing and trade – have supplied 75-80% of total employment in Tewksbury, such that no single industry had a monopoly on jobs, as shown in Fig. 2. Employment in all sectors increased significantly between 1990-1999, especially when compared to the Northern Middlesex area and the state as a whole. Three sectors absorbed the highest rates of employment growth during the mid-1990s: services, wholesale and retail trade, and government.[17] Nine hundred more people work in service

Fig. 2: Employment Base Trends
Source: DET, 2002.



[13] Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P49: Tewksbury.

[14] Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P-26: Tewksbury, Lowell PMSA.

[15] Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table DP-3: Tewksbury.

[16] Northern Middlesex Council of Governments "Northern Middlesex Area Largest Employers 2002," available at <www.nmcog.org/economic.htm>, INTERNET [accessed 31 October 2002].

[17] Town of Tewksbury, Bond Anticipation Note, May 2002. The increase in government employment reported by DET, which is the source relied upon in Tewksbury's most recent bond prospectus, may

industry jobs than was the case in 1996, and during the past decade there has been a 53% increase in overall services employment. Some service jobs pay comparatively low wages, but the wages vary tremendously depending on an employee's occupation and the nature of the service itself.

While manufacturing employment increased 60% in Tewksbury between 1990-1999, higher than the growth rate for Middlesex County and the Commonwealth (22%), it declined sharply in 2000-2001.[18] Tewksbury appears to be following long-term regional and statewide trends that show a continual decline in traditional manufacturing jobs as high-tech, business and personal services, health care, and wholesale and retail trade gain increasingly large shares of local and regional employment. Overall, manufacturing is expected to remain important to the Northern Middlesex economic base and it presently provides about one-fourth of all jobs in the area.[19] Historically, it has supplied a foundation for "spin-off" business development, i.e., when companies contract out for services such as catering and cleaning, thereby helping to expand and diversify both the local and regional economy.[20] As other industries absorb a larger share of the Northern Middlesex economic base, spin-off opportunities will continue to change.

Wages paid by manufacturing and high-tech industries are usually high in relation to other sectors. For all employers in Tewksbury, the average annual wage increased from $24,837 to $46,754 during the 1990s, and manufacturing undeniably played a role in the strength of local wage growth. In 1999, Tewksbury's statewide rank for average annual wage was 28 out of 351 cities and towns. Though high-wage employers operate in Tewksbury, the number of local residents who hold a job with one of these firms is difficult to discern. Pay scales, the size of the employment base and the fit between local jobs and labor force characteristics collectively determine whether a town's economy provides direct employment benefits to its population. Fifteen years ago, the size of Tewksbury's employment base exceeded the size of its labor force but today, the number of jobs compared to persons in the labor force has fallen to .88 (Fig. 3).

Household Income

During the same decade that local wages in Tewksbury increased by 90%, households with incomes between $25,000-$75,000 decreased by 70%. Similarly, households with incomes over $75,000 and over $150,000 increased dramatically, which is consistent with county and statewide trends. On the lower end of the spectrum, however, households with incomes between $10,000-$15,000 increased

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over-represent actual government job growth in Tewksbury. As of 1997, DET changed its methodology for reporting state government employment by allocating jobs to their actual geographic location rather than to the location of the employer agency. As a result, government jobs previously reported as "Boston" declined while government jobs in many communities across the state seemingly increased. Communities with a large state agency or facility, such as Tewksbury Hospital, were affected by this change more than other communities.

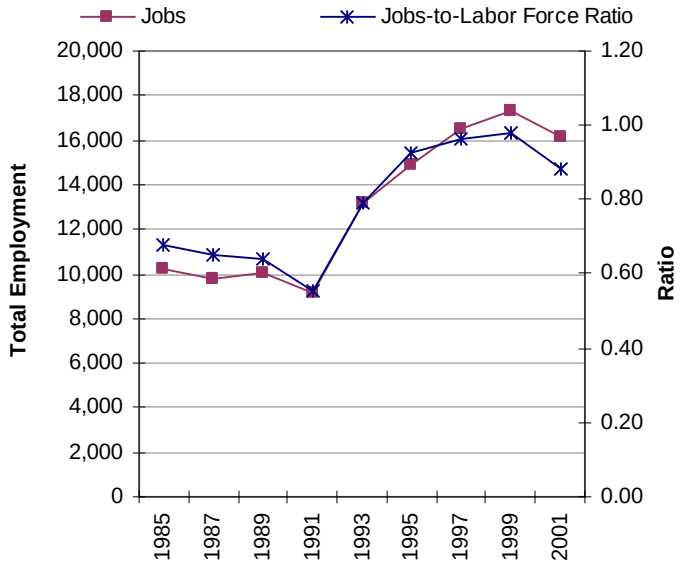
[18] Ibid; see also, Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training (DET), ES-202 Series, Tewksbury, "Employment 1985-2001," [database online], INTERNET at <http://www.detma.org/> [accessed June 2003].

[19] NMCOG, "Introduction to the Northern Middlesex Region," INTERNET at <http://www.nmcog.org/regional.htm> [accessed 5 November 2002].

[20] See Massachusetts Department of Economic Development, Toward a New Prosperity (2002) and DET, SDA Long-Term Job Outlook Through 2008," (Rev. 2003).

by 26% in Tewksbury and as did the number of households with incomes between $15,000-$24,000, or 41%. County and statewide, households with incomes in these ranges decreased. Tewksbury has a higher proportion of lower-income households than many parts of the state, though to some extent its lower-income profile may correlate with elderly population growth (see also, Population and Housing).[21]

Fig 3: Employment Base and Labor Force Comparison Data



Housing and Economic Development

Between 1994-2001, the number of homes and condominiums sold in Tewksbury remained above 600 per year.[22] The average selling price for a single-family home has increased $120,000 since the late 1980s and the median price of a condominium, just over $81,000.[23] Virtually all of the growth in housing prices in Tewksbury has occurred since 1995, however, because both single-family home and condominium prices dropped significantly during the recession of the early 1990s and did not recover to pre-recession levels until mid-decade. Like most communities in Eastern Massachusetts, Tewksbury is beginning to see a gap between the affordability of its housing stock and the wages paid by local employers. Residents who moved to Tewksbury in 1997 paid a median purchase price of $165,000 for their home, yet by 2002, new residents moving into the community paid a median purchase price of $289,900. Generally, the increase in building permits and home sales locally is a reflection of suburban trends across the country.

Tax Structure

As a percent of total assessed valuation, commercial and industrial assessments in Tewksbury declined between 1990-1999, from 27.6% to 23.9%, while residential assessments increased.[24] The same trend occurred throughout the Commonwealth, for commercial and industrial assessments recovered slowly compared to residential assessments after the recession of the early 1990s. In Tewksbury, commercial values did not recover to pre-recession levels until Fiscal Year (FY) 2001, the town's last three-year re-valuation, though industrial assessment recovery could be seen as early as 1997. Owing to the strength of Tewksbury's housing market and the amount of residential

[21] DET, 2000.

[22] Banker & Tradesman "Free Market Statistics," [online database], Boston, Massachusetts, available at http://www.thewarrengroup.com/html, INTERNET [accessed July 2002]

[23] Ibid.

[24] Assessed value represents the full and fair cash market value of a property, i.e., the amount for which it could be sold to a willing buyer under normal sale conditions.

development that took place during the 1990s, residential property values constitute 76.7% of the town's total assessed valuation today, up considerably from 73.5% in 1989. Not surprisingly, the average single-family tax bill increased by 62% during the 1990s and by another 12.4% since 2000. Compared to the other Massachusetts communities, Tewksbury homeowners paid the state's 149th highest average tax bill during FY 2003 and the assessed value of their homes, $214,482, ranked 136.[25]

In FY 2002, Tewksbury's ten largest taxpayers included Raytheon, DeMoulas Supermarkets, New England Power Company, 495 Network Center, BCIA 1925 Andover Street, Highwood Holdings, Ames Pond LLC, Colonial Gas/Lowell Gas, Archstone Communities, and Massachusetts Electric.[26] These concerns provide a range of services including public utilities, electronics, groceries, office and apartment buildings. The largest taxpayer, Raytheon, paid 2.35% of the total tax levy in 2002.[27]

Planning, Zoning and Infrastructure

Previous Master Plans

The location of commercial and industrial land uses in Tewksbury, and to some extent the composition of its economic base, can be traced to goals and policies articulated in the town's earlier master plans, which were prepared for the Planning Board in 1958 and 1973. When the first plan was completed, Tewksbury had very little industrial land and only one large manufacturing employer, Raytheon. A small aviation facility had opened in the early 1950s, and pockets of business activity had formed along Route 38, mainly small retail and personal service establishments and a drive-in theatre. Commercial greenhouses operated throughout the central, west and north sections of town, providing employment to about 100 people. The highways that became I-93 and I-495 had been anticipated for several years, and in light of Tewksbury's 400% increase in municipal and school service costs since the late 1940s, local officials decided that the town should seek additional industrial development.[28] As a result of the 1958 master plan, Tewksbury re-zoned large amounts of land along East Street and adjacent to what was then the proposed I-495 right of way. A planned connector road that would serve the town's new industrial areas and residential neighborhoods between I-93 and I-495, parallel to the railroad bed, was never built.

The Comprehensive Plan, Tewksbury's second master plan, was completed in 1973. It promoted several goals for the town's future, including two economic development goals that appear to have guided some of the town's policy decisions over the past 30 years:

- Encourage varied social and economic opportunities for residents of the Town; and
- Retain and expand Tewksbury's share of its regional economic activity.

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[25] Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Municipal Data Bank [online database], "Average Single-Family Tax Bills," series, FY88-03. FY03 rankings are based on partial data available as of January 2003, including 279 of the 340 communities for which average single-family bill statistics are calculated each year.

[26] Bond Anticipation Notes, May 2002.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Master Plan (1958), 5-7, 15.

These goals were set to ensure that residents would have equal opportunities for employment, housing, public services and education. The Comprehensive Plan's economic development objectives were to increase job opportunities within the town, and to encourage industrial development in specific industrial districts and corridors, providing necessary public facilities and access.[29] Much like its predecessor, the 1973 plan called for an industrial connector road to alleviate traffic on Route 38 and local streets as Tewksbury's industrial zones continued to build out, but it never materialized. In fact, many of the commercial and industrial development issues that Tewksbury contends with today were evident in 1973, along with their associated land use and traffic conflicts.

Zoning

Tewksbury's Commercial District extends along Route 38, which runs northwesterly from the Wilmington line to Lowell and intersects I-495. Route 38 is a two-lane state road that consists of numerous strip malls, "big box" businesses, homes, municipal services and small, locally owned stores. The amount of land zoned for commercial uses in Tewksbury is approximately 477 acres.[30] In the Commercial District, 190 acres (40%) are actually being used for business purposes and the rest of the land is in residential, forest, wetland and some industrial uses (see Table 1). Almost 30% of the Commercial District's land is used for single-family homes or apartments and over 12% is forested. Between 1971-1999, 125 acres of commercial development were added to pre-existing business base in Tewksbury,[31] or a 40% increase.

Table 1: Commercial District Land Use (1999)

Description	Acres	Percent	Description	Acres	Percent
Cropland	0.1	0.0	Industrial	28.5	6.0
Forest	58.1	12.2	Transportation	13.3	2.8
Wetland	19.8	4.1	Power Lines	8.2	1.7
Open land	10.2	2.1	Recreation	0.1	0.0
Multi-family	6.5	1.4	Urban-Public (Institutional)	11.1	2.3
Residential	129.9	22.9	Cemeteries	2.2	0.5
Commercial	189.6	39.7			
			Total	477.6	

Source: MassGIS [library on-line], "lus295.dbf." Calculations by author.

[29] Comprehensive Plan (1973), 11-12, 21, 54-55.

[30] NMCOG [by interview with John Matley], "tewk_zone.dbf," November 2002.

[31] MassGIS [library online], "lus295.dbf," available at <www.state.ma.us/mgis>, INTERNET (updated January 2002; cited 4 November 2002).

Tewksbury has zoned a strikingly large amount of land for industrial development, though not all of the land is usable. The Heavy Industrial District (2,155 acres) covers about 16% of the town's land area and is located mainly along East Street, I-495 and Woburn Street.[32] The amount of land actually used for industrial purposes today is about 418 acres, or 19% of the entire zone.[33] Other uses in the Heavy Industrial District are forests, wetlands, housing and commercial buildings (see Table 2). In the past 30 years, industrial development has absorbed about 331 acres of land. Today, almost 62% more land is used for industry in Tewksbury than was the case in 1971.[34] The larger consumer of land was residential development.

Tewksbury residents are concerned about land use conflicts where development in the Heavy Industrial District abuts residential land. Tewksbury's zoning requires minimum rear and side yard setbacks of 100 feet for industrial development adjacent to homes, but setbacks are not the only issue. Uses allowed in the Heavy Industry zone vary considerably: research laboratories, equipment manufacturing facilities, electronic industry, electrical appliance assembly, welding, stone or monument works, ceramic products, manufacturing, retail and wholesale sales, farm supply warehouses, heating fuel storage, junkyards, transportation or freight terminals, truck stops, landscaping businesses and steel fabrication facilities. Not long ago, the town also allowed residential uses in the Heavy Industry district and as a result, the district contains both homes and industrial facilities. This condition, coupled with limited setbacks and industrial uses that generate considerable truck traffic, has created a very difficult situation for residents, local officials and business owners. Furthermore, soils found in the Commercial and Heavy Industrial Districts are not always appropriate for the development that has occurred over time. Two of the more sensitive soil classes, Paxton Woodbridge and Canton-Hollis-Chatfield, have severe limitations for commercial and industrial uses because of wetness, low permeability, and high water table.

Table 2: Heavy Industry District Land Use (1999)

Description	Acres	Percent	Description	Acres	Percent
Cropland	13.2	0.6%	Commercial	102.5	4.8%
Pasture	11.6	0.5%	Industrial	418.8	19.4%
Forest	796.0	36.9%	Transportation	107.8	5.0%
Wetland	189.7	8.8%	Waste disposal	34.9	1.6%
Open Land	74.6	3.5%	Open Water	63.6	3.0%
Recreation	0.2	0.0%	Power Lines	193.0	9.0%
Multi-Family	18.2	0.8%	Urban-Public (Institutional)	1.6	0.1%
Residential	104.3	0.0%	Transportation Facility	25.5	1.2%
			Total	2,155.4	1.0

Source: MassGIS [library on-line], "lus295.dbf." Calculations by author.

[32] Open Space and Recreation Plan, (April 1998).

[33] MassGIS [library on-line], "lus295.dbf," available at <www.state.ma.us/mgis>, INTERNET (updated January 2002; cited 4 November 2002).

[34] Ibid.

Town Center

The most important physical feature of a downtown or central business district is its attractiveness to pedestrians. A pedestrian-oriented area is walkable, with appropriate safety features such as crosswalks and signals, and it provides a mix of interesting, accessible businesses and services that would be attractive and convenient to someone walking (or driving) by. Other characteristics of a traditional downtown include on-street parking, attractive street lighting, trash receptacles, benches, street plantings, narrow roadways, window displays that cater to pedestrians, mixed-use buildings, sidewalks and bus stops. Accordingly, some uses are clearly inappropriate because they cater mainly to vehicular traffic: drive-in restaurants, auto service businesses, warehouses and used car lots.[35] The shape of Tewksbury's Commercial District is not conducive to a traditional town center or downtown because it runs the entire length of the community, with broadly distributed commercial activity that attracts vehicular, not pedestrian, traffic.

Finding an identifiable "sense of place" in Tewksbury is very difficult. In order to go from one place of business to another, patrons must drive. Tewksbury's Commercial District functions as a classic strip commercial zone, with gas stations, shopping centers and "big box" stores located on both sides of the corridor. Many communities locate these types of uses close to highway access points and guide interior commercial development toward a more condensed downtown area or recognizable center.

Tewksbury Town Hall and Town Common (2002).

Tewksbury has elements of a town center, for midway along Route 38 at the corner of North, Pleasant and Main Streets, the Town Hall, Fire Station, Town Green, Police Station and several churches make up a picturesque and appealing part of town. The right buildings are in the right place for a traditional downtown. Unfortunately, the Commercial District's physical form and the established pattern of commercial development along Route 38 work against a functional town center, although the ingredients exist to create one.

Roadways

Two major regional highways pass through Tewksbury's boundaries: Interstates 495 and 93. I-495 provides two exits into Tewksbury, one in the northwest section near Ames Pond and the Ames Pond Industrial Park and the second at Route 38. While I-93 passes through the town's eastern boundary, it does not provide direct access to Tewksbury. Potential exit ramp construction in the future might enhance Tewksbury's marketable features by attracting distributors and industries that value close highway access. Two state-numbered routes also cross through Tewksbury, including Route 38, "Main Street," and Andover Street, Route 133. Traffic along Route 38 tends to

[35] Daniels, Keller, Lapping, The Small Town Planning Handbook.

"bottleneck," meaning traffic is delayed when drivers make left turns. Naturally, traffic on Route 38 is generated both locally and regionally, in part because it serves cut-through traffic between I-495 and I-93 and also because Route 38 provides important intra-regional connections with Route 129 in Wilmington and Route 110 in Lowell.

Water and Sewer

The majority of Tewksbury residents (98%) are served by the public water system, which relies mainly on water withdrawn from the Merrimack River.[36] Until 2003, only 35% of the town had access to sewer service. Recently, Tewksbury voters agreed to extend sewer service throughout the town. A preliminary schedule for the proposed sewer construction program was recently completed and implementation is expected to start soon. The extension of the sewer system to new areas will eliminate some natural limitations to development and create opportunities for new growth. At the same time, it creates unique planning challenges as once-undevelopable land becomes attractive to development that may or may not be consistent with the town's goals. The issue is whether Tewksbury has the organizational, regulatory and policy framework to meet these challenges.

Master Plan Goals

In 2002, the Master Plan Committee sponsored two public visioning forums to engage citizens in exploring ideas and identifying goals for the new Master Plan. The sessions attracted a variety of residents and local officials who offered their own ideas and viewpoints about the town's needs, goals and opportunities for the future. Of the priorities that participants expressed, several relate to Economic Development, including:

- Promote a mixed-use village center of traditional design in the area surrounding Town Hall;
- Promote a coordinated approach to land use on Route 38, aiming for small-scale, mixed-use development, consolidated curb cuts, and attractive landscaping, lighting and parking;
- Subordinate the rate and total amount of development to the capacity of Tewksbury's environmental resources;
- Improve and enhance Tewksbury's gateways;
- Establish and follow sustainable economic development policies to provide local employment and tax revenue, encourage a diverse economic base and direct business and industrial growth to appropriate locations, and
- Give preference to reuse and redevelopment of existing structures and infill development over new growth, assuring that reuse activities respect the architectural integrity of historic buildings.

In order for these goals to be realized, Tewksbury residents need to take a more active role in local decision-making. More important than the development of economic goals, ideas and plans will be the hard work of implementation. The Master Plan's emphasis on three issues – reuse and redevelopment of existing property, a town center, and sustainable economic development policies – can be carried out if enough people invest time, effort and knowledge in their community and a structure exists to facilitate their participation.

[36] Northern Middlesex Council of Governments "Town of Tewksbury," available at <www.nmcog.org/tewksbury.htm>, INTERNET [accessed 20 December, 2002].

Analysis of Needs and Planning Considerations

A vital, adaptable, high-value economic base does not happen by accident. It requires coherent zoning policies that promote quality commercial and industrial development in the right locations, and considerable effort on the part of cities and towns. A common mistake that communities make is to "over-zone" for commercial and industrial development, that is, to zone far more land for non-residential uses than the market can absorb. Over-zoning usually decreases the value of individual sites and over time, it attracts low-quality commercial and industrial development. However, focusing commercial and industrial development in appropriate areas usually encourages higher value uses and protects the interests of existing businesses. A second common mistake borrows from the saying, "if you build it, they will come," and paraphrased, it is this: if towns zone for business, it will come. Zoning alone does not bring business into a community and sometimes, it brings the wrong mix of businesses. Building a strong economy takes organizational resources and public investment, both of which hold more sway than regulations over the kind of development that occurs on commercially or industrially zoned land.

The present condition of the Commercial District in Tewksbury attests to all of these problems – over-zoning, insufficient capacity to manage economic development, and inconsistent or limited public investment. Similarly, the industrial-residential land use conflicts that residents have identified stem from an era when many suburban communities made "over-zoning" choices, hoping to capitalize on their proximity to new highways and out-migration from urban areas. In Tewksbury, the town not only over-zoned years ago, but also zoned land prematurely and in some locations, inappropriately. Today, the particular mix of businesses in some parts of town is incompatible with adjacent neighborhoods. Bluntly, the town has what it zoned for, yet surely local officials did not intend in the 1960s to build a community with so much haphazard, low-value development. The Master Plan emphasizes three needs that seem particularly crucial if Tewksbury is to capture its share of regional economic growth in ways that benefit businesses, residents and the town's fiscal future: increasing the value of existing built assets, developing a town center, and establishing adequate local capacity to manage economic development.

1. Tewksbury needs to focus on strategies to revitalize and reuse existing commercial and industrial property. The condition and appearance of established built assets directly affect the town's image and its ability to attract high-value development.

When Tewksbury conducted its last three-year revaluation process, there were significant vacancy rates in several classes of non-residential property. According to data supplied by the assessor's office, hotel/motel, storage and mill building uses all registered vacancy rates of 20-25% while multi-office, nursing home, office, rooming house and department store uses were 8-10% vacant.[37] Recently, several buildings that were traditionally used for commercial or heavy industrial purposes have been subdivided and are being converted to new commercial uses, such as office buildings or office parks.[38] In addition to existing structures, Tewksbury has several tracts of reusable land that have been purchased by developers who want to know what the best possible redevelopment option might be.

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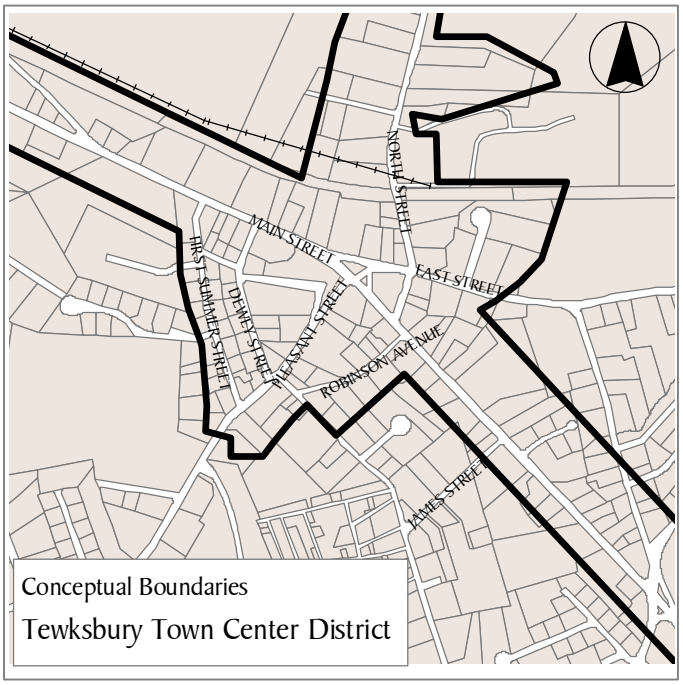
[37] Jay Kelley, Chief Assessor, "Vacancy Rates," in WORD file format (31 December 2002).

[38] Steve Sadwick, Director of Community Development, to Mary M. Coolidge, Community Opportunities Group, 7 January 2003.

Tewksbury residents say they do not oppose continued growth per se, but they object to the consequences of not carefully planning for it: traffic, noise, air pollution, and loss of recreational space. Residents want job creation and retention, yet they remain concerned about where businesses are located and will be locating in the future. Several areas in Tewksbury present potential economic opportunities. For example, the Perkins property (adjacent to Rocco's Dump) near I-93 would naturally be a good site to consider for future highway access, office-research or mixed-use development. Industrial land on Woburn Street is underutilized and holds promise for successful redevelopment. Areas that have strong potential for reuse, redevelopment and enhancement, such as Heathbrook Plaza, Oakdale, Purity Supermarket, Brooks Pharmacy, and areas that will receive sewer service in the future, should be economic development priorities for the added value they could bring to Tewksbury.

2. Past master plans have emphasized the importance of developing a recognizable town center, yet Tewksbury has been unable to follow through. The absence of a downtown area or town center detracts from the quality of life in Tewksbury, and it is symptomatic of land use and economic weaknesses that have existed in town for many years.

Residents say they long for a place where they can walk and shop, stop for a cup of coffee at a café, or meet friends to relax. The development that has taken place over time along Route 38, "Main Street," has produced a strip commercial district more than a town center. Participants at the Master Plan visioning meetings said that a major weakness in their town is its lack of an identifiable downtown or village center, and that commercial growth is uncontrolled. The most obvious area for town center development is where the town's key municipal buildings and services are already located. However, major changes would be required in order to transform the area into one that is visually and operationally a town center. A similar challenge was raised in Tewksbury's 1973 Comprehensive Plan.



Tewksbury has welcomed commercial and industrial development for many years. More restaurants and service businesses exist in town now than a decade ago, suggesting that Tewksbury is poised to attract businesses appropriate for a village center or downtown area if the town has an effective economic development strategy and devotes resources toward implementing it. A town center is about more than just conducting daily business activities and integrating residential uses with commercial uses. It involves civic pride, and a town center helps to create a better-connected community by becoming a destination and gathering place for residents.

3. Tewksbury needs local capacity to manage the economic development process. Better regulations will help to improve the quality, appearance and operational features of commercial and industrial development, but zoning does not build an economic base. Communities that want a vibrant, diverse economy have to work for it by offering resources, opportunities and incentives that meet the needs of existing and prospective businesses.

Though Tewksbury has attracted commercial and industrial development, its economic growth seems to be investor-driven rather than community-driven. This is due in part to an uncoordinated approach to economic development, a problem that exists in many Massachusetts communities. Tewksbury does not have a strategic economic development plan, and it apparently has no policies to guide the town in terms of business retention or growth. In its present condition, Route 38 illustrates many of the problems associated with investor-driven development. Many architectural styles and business types exist along Route 38, and while a mix is appropriate, in Tewksbury's case it is visually and operationally chaotic. For example, "big box" stores, small locally owned businesses, restaurants, franchises, and auto service and repair establishments co-exist on Route 38 in a pattern punctuated by large parking lots, uncontrolled curb cuts and low-density development. Tewksbury's zoning allows a wide range of uses in the Commercial District, which is important for adaptability, but the bylaw sets few design or qualitative standards – and development has responded accordingly.

Tewksbury should have an economic development policy plan so the town can "take charge" of its own economic growth. An economic development policy plan highlights the types of businesses and industries that a community wants to emphasize through a combination of retention and recruitment initiatives. It also accounts for a town's tax base goals, the capacity of its infrastructure to absorb employment growth, and the capacity of its environmental resources to absorb new or more intensive development. In addition, it targets locations for reinvestment and new investment and articulates an organizational strategy to manage economic development. An effective strategy usually brings interested residents and local officials together in an economic development commission or council, and often it calls for partnerships with neighboring communities or regional institutions. Tewksbury has zoned a great deal of land for non-residential development, but it does not appear to have an economic vision. With an organization, a vision and a plan, Tewksbury could have a more valuable, attractive and diverse business base than it has today.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Tewksbury's economic base has changed considerably since the early 1970s, largely in response to regional transportation improvements, outward growth of the Eastern Massachusetts economy, and the availability of industrial and commercial land in town. Today, residents are concerned about the impact of non-residential development on neighborhoods, roadways and the environment, yet they recognize that Tewksbury needs commercial and industrial tax revenue. The Master Plan recommends several economic development actions that address local capacity, the vitality of the town's economic base, the taxable value of commercial and industrial land, and the compatibility of economic growth with neighborhood life.

Economic Development Policies

Local capacity. Tewksbury should have a community-based organization to assist the town with economic development policy and bring new resources into town to stabilize and strengthen the economy. Since there are several organizational models for economic development, choosing the right one requires that Tewksbury decide, first, whether local government should lead the way and second, whether the town wants to engage in real estate development. The most common models include an economic development council (EDC), an industrial development commission (IDC) or an economic development and industrial corporation (EDIC).[39]

- Economic development council. In Massachusetts, local economic development councils (EDC) are typically non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations that advocate for business development and work in a spirit of partnership with local government. Some EDC's provide member services comparable to a chamber of commerce, but their main purpose is to deliver or act as a conduit for small business technical assistance, financial resources, marketing, promotions and business recruitment. Though an EDC usually includes local government representation on its board of directors, it is uncommon to find formal ties between a council and municipality. However, a few communities in Massachusetts have entered into contracts with a local EDC to purchase economic development capacity instead of establishing an economic development department inside town hall.
- Industrial development commission (IDC). An industrial development commission, also known as a development and industrial commission, is a city or town board appointed by the mayor, selectmen or in some communities, by the city manager or town manager. Municipalities may create an IDC by adopting the provisions of G.L. c.40, Section 8A. Not to be confused with an industrial development financing authority, which has statutory power to issue revenue bonds for industrial development, an IDC carries out economic policy functions, oversees business retention and recruitment programs, advocates for business development inside town government, provides zoning and permitting advice to prospective businesses and often comments on commercial or industrial permit applications filed with the Planning Board. An IDC usually advises a community's economic development department and may assist with

[39] Note; in some cities and rural areas, community development corporations (CDC) also engage in economic development. Coalition for a Better Acre in Lowell is an example of a CDC that sponsors a number of economic development activities.

special projects such as developing a marketing plan for the town. As a public body, an IDC is subject to open meeting and public records laws.

- Economic development and industrial corporation (EDIC). Massachusetts communities may form an EDIC by adopting the provisions of G.L. c.121C or obtaining a special act of the legislature. Like an industrial development commission, an EDIC is created by an affirmative act of the municipality. Unlike an industrial development commission, an EDIC is a non-profit corporation with a public charter – either a general law charter or a special act charter. Though sponsored by a city or town, an EDIC is a separate organizational and financial entity. Its main purpose is to engage in real estate development, on its own or in conjunction with other organizations, including private developers. By creating an EDIC, the sponsoring city or town may issue general obligation bonds to finance an EDIC project and it may transfer property to the EDIC without adhering to all of the procedural requirements normally imposed on public land disposition. An important difference between an EDIC and other non-profit development organizations is that its activities must be consistent with a locally approved economic development plan. Some communities also control EDIC activity by requiring prior approval from the selectmen or city council before an EDIC project can go forward. Often, municipalities establish an EDIC to address a specific need, and eventually they commission the EDIC to carry out other projects at a later date.[40]

Possibly, Tewksbury's interests would be better served by working through established regional organizations than by creating its own economic development agency, municipal or non-profit. While some communities are comfortable with a role in economic development that goes far beyond the traditional police powers of cities and towns, others are philosophically conservative and for them, sophisticated projects and extraordinary interventions run contrary to their basic values. Tewksbury has to decide how far local government should go to direct the town's economic future.

Regardless of organizational model, certain tasks must be done in order for the town to take any approach to economic development. These tasks include:

- Reach agreement about Tewksbury's economic development priorities, e.g., developing a town center area, recruiting eco-industrial companies, or retaining existing businesses.
- Identify priority sites or areas for economic development, taking into account environmental resources, the condition and capacity of roadways, and relative impact.
- Conduct a barriers analysis in order to tailor the town's economic development strategies to actual, not imagined, constraints. For example, if Tewksbury wants to stimulate investment in an underutilized site or contiguous sites, the town should first commission a market analysis and feasibility study, identifying both the constraints against investment and realistic opportunities. Zoning that does not account for the economics of redevelopment will fail, and quite possibly zoning regulations alone could never install enough added value in a property to attract the desired type of investment. In these cases, the town or its economic development partner may need to orchestrate favorable financing, including grants, or negotiate tax increment financing agreements. Sometimes redevelopment constraints stem from problems of ownership, a condition that may require the town or a regional development authority to obtain site control.

[40] A "project-specific" example is the Watertown EDIC, which was formed to redevelop the Watertown Arsenal.

Redevelopment and reuse of underutilized or vacant property. Tewksbury needs incentives to revitalize and improve the taxable value of established commercial and industrial areas, particularly land along Route 38 and the industrial district on Woburn Street. High-quality companies in an expansion mode favor sites in attractive, accessible, well-maintained business and industrial areas because developing new facilities is a major investment. Tewksbury cannot control all of the factors that influence corporate siting decisions, but the town's ability to attract and retain profitable firms will be affected, in part, by the image of its existing business districts.

The Master Plan's land use element describes regulatory approaches to promote reuse, but convincing developers to invest in established sites is much harder than recruiting business development on vacant land. Sometimes communities have to create disincentives to develop vacant parcels – mainly by down-zoning or re-zoning – in order to focus commercial and industrial investment in established but underutilized areas. Tewksbury may need help from outside economic development organizations and state agencies, and the town should tailor its business outreach to current industry and business trends, both regionally and statewide.

In addition to adopting better zoning regulations, Tewksbury should critically examine some redevelopment case studies. For example, Digital Equipment Corporation's former mill complex in downtown Maynard has been redeveloped as a mixed-use facility with more than 70 technology, manufacturing and service businesses. Tewksbury also needs to evaluate the appropriateness of some widely used economic development tools and be prepared to use them. Business improvement districts (BID), tax increment financing (TIF), industrial revenue bonds, grants and low-interest loans, and lease-purchase agreements all have particular applications and limitations. They can make the difference between an effective economic development strategy and a weak one.

A town center for Tewksbury. Tewksbury will benefit immeasurably from having a town center that provides a civic and cultural focal point for the entire community. Many of the ingredients of a traditional town center exist in Tewksbury, but for reasons described in past master plans and the present one, the town will never have a functional center without suitable zoning, community development and transportation policies, and capital investment. Tewksbury should create a town center committee to spearhead the planning process, taking care to include residents, owners and tenants of commercial property, and representatives of community institutions with a potential stake in the outcome: banks, realtors, developers, the school department, police and other town departments, local churches, and the town's historical commission. Planning Board leadership is important, but a town center committee should not be "top-heavy" with members of existing town boards. The committee's charge should consist of the following tasks:

- Articulate a clear vision for the town center, one that provides economic, fiscal, aesthetic and social benefits to the town.
- Review and modify, where appropriate, the conceptual boundaries for a town center district by street name, working from the conceptual boundary map (Map 2). Throughout, the committee should consider traditional town center design principles.
- Prepare an inventory of land and businesses in and adjacent to the revised town center district boundaries in order to understand and outline existing commercial, residential, recreational and cultural opportunities and constraints.
- Through a structured consultation process, give local residents and business owners opportunities to specify the visual, economic and operational aspects of the town center they would like to see in Tewksbury. Consideration should be given to aesthetics (landscaping, street

trees, lighting, amenities), sidewalks, allowed business types and mixes, traffic circulation, sign and façade requirements, allowed residential uses, parking, and where feasible, utility burial.

- Prepare a town center concept plan that addresses traditional town center design principles, such as:
  - A pedestrian-oriented environment, including walkability and appropriate safety features.
  - Mixed-use development, such as retail/office on the first floor with residential or additional businesses above.
  - Adequate sidewalks.
  - A mix of interesting, desirable, accessible businesses and services, with window displays geared toward the pedestrian.
  - On-street parking and bus stops.
  - Attractive street lighting, landscaping and street plantings.
  - Benches and convenient trash receptacles, maintained by the town.
  - Roadway treatments that alert drivers to pedestrian traffic and create a perception of narrower width.
- With assistance from the Community Development Department, develop town center design guidelines for Tewksbury. The guidelines should encourage:
  - Traditional building form. Buildings should remain at a pedestrian scale (two to three stories) and provide a mix of interesting/characteristic details appropriate for Tewksbury. Traditionally, commercial buildings in town center and downtown areas have three components: a business on the first floor, the upper façade on the next two and the cornice that connects the roof to the façade. Design standards should balance all three components effectively while taking into consideration Tewksbury's historical context. Mixed-use buildings would have retail/commercial on the first floor, and residential or office space on the second and third floors.
  - Subordination of parking in relation to buildings. Where possible, insist that parking be located to the rear or side of buildings for new construction, redevelopment and reuse. Alternatively, the visual intrusiveness of parking can be reduced with architectural design changes that make buildings the focal point of a site and with appropriate landscaping. Landscaping, tree buffers and safety features should be added to parking areas, particularly where they abut residential neighborhoods or homes.
  - New standards of signage and overall aesthetics. Design standards for signage should clearly describe the types, sizes, height and widths, locations and materials allowed in the town center district. These standards are important for both aesthetic and safety reasons. Strip developments like Route 38 often have large, bright, clustered signs, which confuse and distract motorists and make commercial areas unattractive.
  - High quality landscaping and pedestrian amenities. Guidelines should specify types of trees and other vegetation, materials and sizes for lighting, benches, trash receptacles and other pedestrian amenities and design ideas to make these amenities consistent with each other.
  - On-site lighting in traditional and pedestrian scale. Improvements should be made to the center's street lighting. Tewksbury already has attractive lighting in the town green and this

is the type of design that would be appropriate in other parts of the town center. Adding similar streetlights to improved sidewalks would provide visual coherence and a sense of connectedness and walkability throughout the center.

- An improved "sense of entry" to the town center. Attractive signs, street lighting, flags or banners, and streets with sidewalks on both sides would make entry to the town center district more obvious and appealing. Engaging the pedestrian or motorist in a clear distinction between the industrial/residential portions of Route 38 and the town center is crucial to its character and identity. For example, when entering downtown Andover from I-93, the motorist is treated to an entire roadway of American flags that line the street.
- Protection of older buildings that contribute to the town center's image. Historic buildings and buildings that contribute to the character of the area should be preserved. New construction should be compatible with existing structures.

- Identify the types of commitments that will be necessary to finance town center improvements in Tewksbury, including but not limited to community investment, developer contributions, grants and low-interest loans, and funding from MassHighway.