

Imagining A New Village Center For MONTAGUE CITY



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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Montague is collaborating with Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) and VHB to assess redevelopment on the former Farren Care Center site at 340 Montague City Road.

For this study, VHB's goals are to

- (1) Identify the community's needs** for future development in Montague City
- (2) Define goals for the project site**, as informed by site research and public feedback
- (3) Evaluate alternative development concepts**, focusing on site layout, land uses, and density.

PLANNING TIMELINE



April 26
Kick Off

May-July
Stakeholder Interviews



August 13
Public Meeting 1

November 8
Public Meeting 2



January
Final Report

KEY MEETING OUTCOMES

Tonight, we seek input from the community with regards to the following questions:

- What mix of land uses would best fit the needs of Montague City at the project site?
- What are some desired qualities of public realm, building form and design?
- What kinds of housing needs can be met by allowing residential uses at this site?
- What ideas haven't we thought of yet?

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

From the stakeholder and public meetings, VHB found the following factors crucial to determining future uses for the project site.

- **Montague's housing stock is aging and largely homogenous (single-family).**

1952

median year of
housing unit
construction in
Montague¹

4%

housing stock in
Montague built
since 2000²

.01%

of all housing
permits granted
between 2000 and
2020 were for
multi-family
housing³

1. 2023 Visioning Phase Report for the Canal District Master Plan (Dietz & Company Architects)

2. U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021 5-year estimates. Table S504: Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units

3. U.S. Census Bureau Annual Building Permit Survey (Reported and Imputed)

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

From the stakeholder and public meetings, VHB found the following factors crucial to determining future uses for the project site.

- Montague's housing stock is aging and largely homogenous (single-family).
- **The housing needs of low-income households in Montague are not being met.**

23%

of rental households spend more than half their income on rent⁴

24%

increase in monthly rent between 2016 and 2021⁵

11,000

units is the projected affordable housing gap in western MA⁶

4. 2023 Visioning Phase Report for the Canal District Master Plan (Dietz & Company Architects)

5. U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021 5-year estimates. Table S2506: Financial Characteristics for Housing Units with a Mortgage

6. Western Massachusetts Housing Coalition

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

From the stakeholder and public meetings, VHB found the following factors crucial to determining future uses for the project site.

- Montague's housing stock is aging and largely homogenous (single-family).
- The housing needs of low-income households in Montague are not being met.
- **The housing needs of older adults in Montague are not being met.**

19%

of Montague residents are 65 or older⁷

32%

of households are headed by an older adult (65+)⁸

14%

of households consist of an older adult (65+) living alone⁹

7. U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021 5-year estimates. Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

8. 2023 Visioning Phase Report for the Canal District Master Plan (Dietz & Company Architects)

9. U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021 5-year estimates. Table S1101: Households and Families

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

From the stakeholder and public meetings, VHB found the following factors crucial to determining future uses for the project site.

- Montague's housing stock is aging and largely homogenous (single-family).
- The housing needs of low-income households in Montague are not being met.
- The housing needs of older adults in Montague are not being met.
- **Montague City Village would benefit from commercial uses.**



Maker
Spaces

Lodging

Daycare

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

From the stakeholder and public meetings, VHB found the following factors crucial to determining future uses for the project site.

- Montague's housing stock is aging and largely homogenous (single-family).
- The housing needs of low-income households in Montague are not being met.
- The housing needs of older adults in Montague are not being met.
- Montague City Village would benefit from commercial and recreational uses.
- **Montague residents have expressed an interest in recreational amenities.**

Community
Garden/
Park

Recreation
Center

Link to Rail
Trail

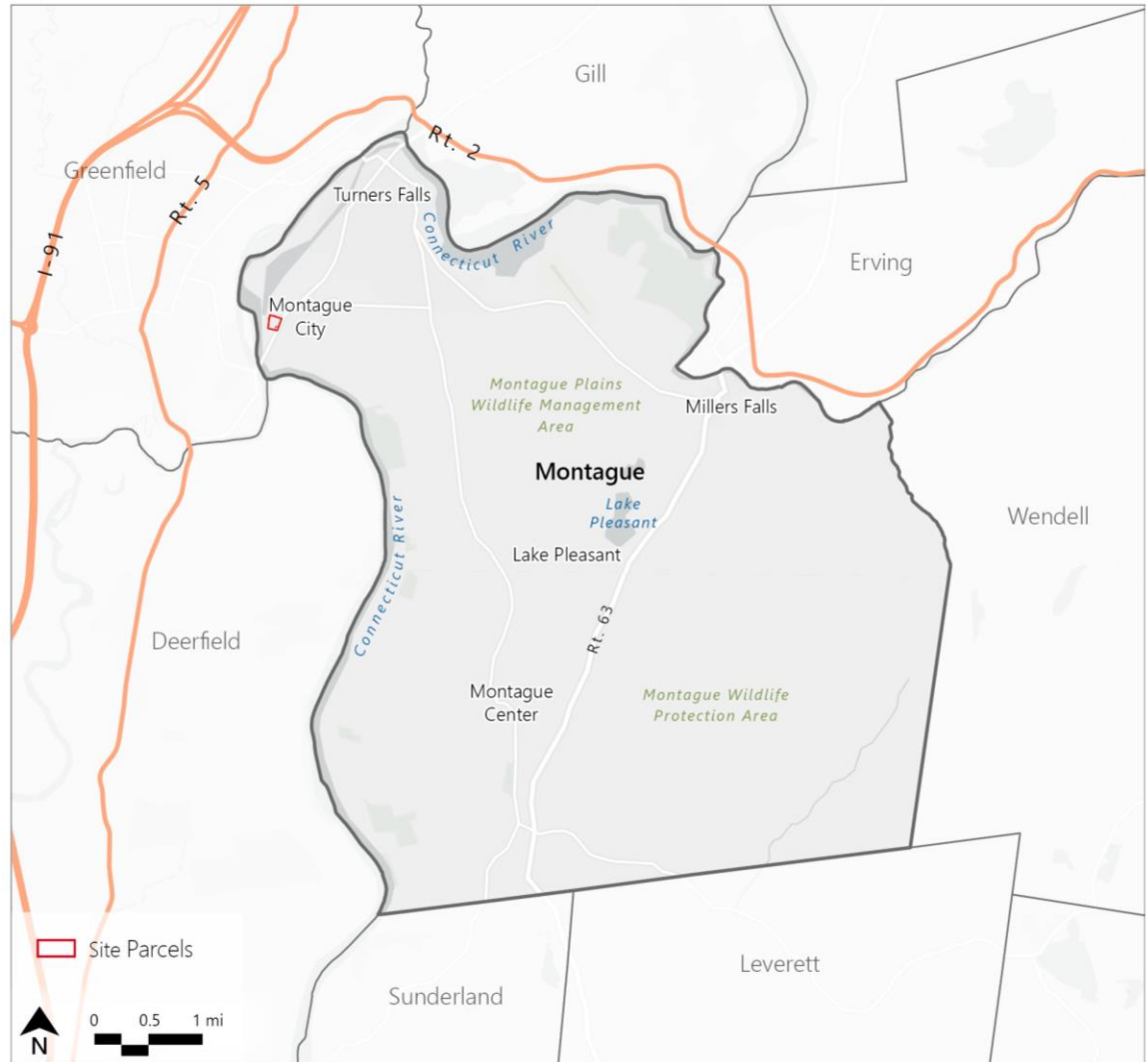
TOWN OF MONTAGUE

The Town of Montague (pop. 8,580) is in Franklin County, along the east bank of the Connecticut River.

Route 2 runs along the northern boundary, providing east-west connections.

I-91 and Route 5 run along the western boundary and provide north-south connections.

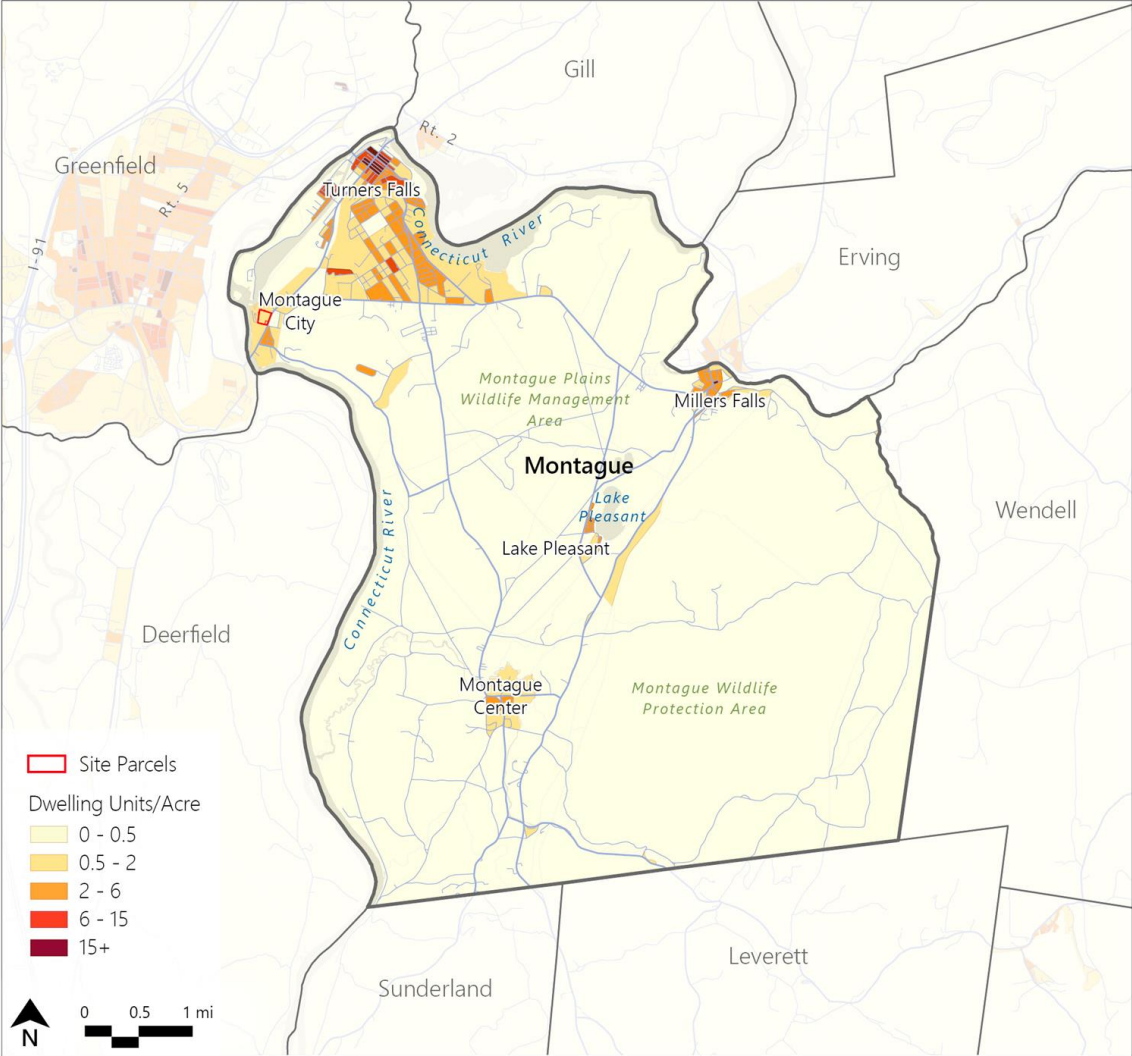
Route 63 connects Montague to communities east of the Connecticut River.



RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

Montague consists of five villages, with Turners Falls being the most populous and well-known in the region.

The village of Montague City is located roughly 1.5 miles to the southwest of Turners Falls, along Montague City Road.



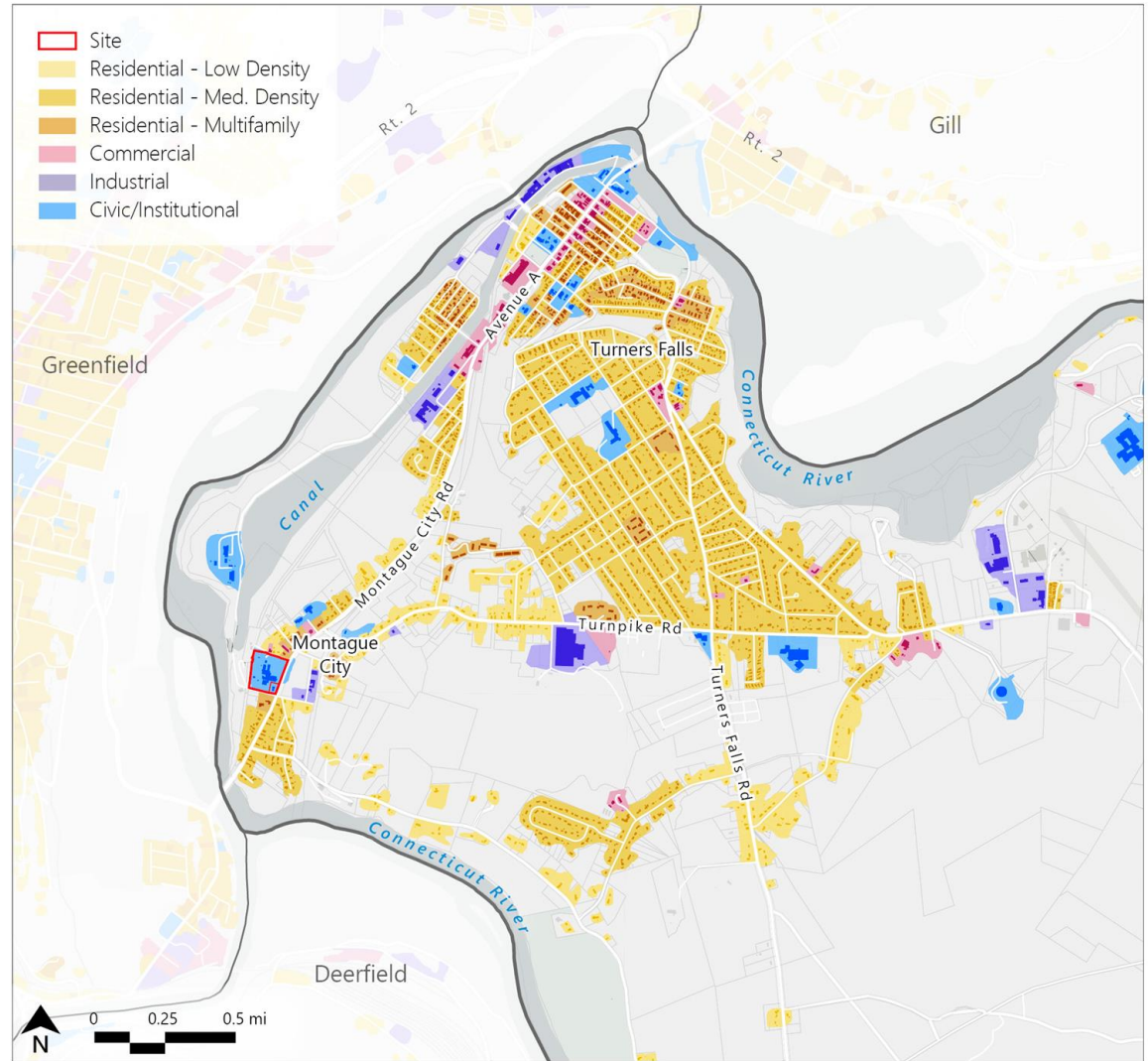
NORTHWEST MONTAGUE

Turners Falls is the densest village in Montague and is the primary hub of public services, employment, and events.

Commercial space is concentrated along Avenue A.

Turners Falls also extends into a large neighborhood of single-family homes.

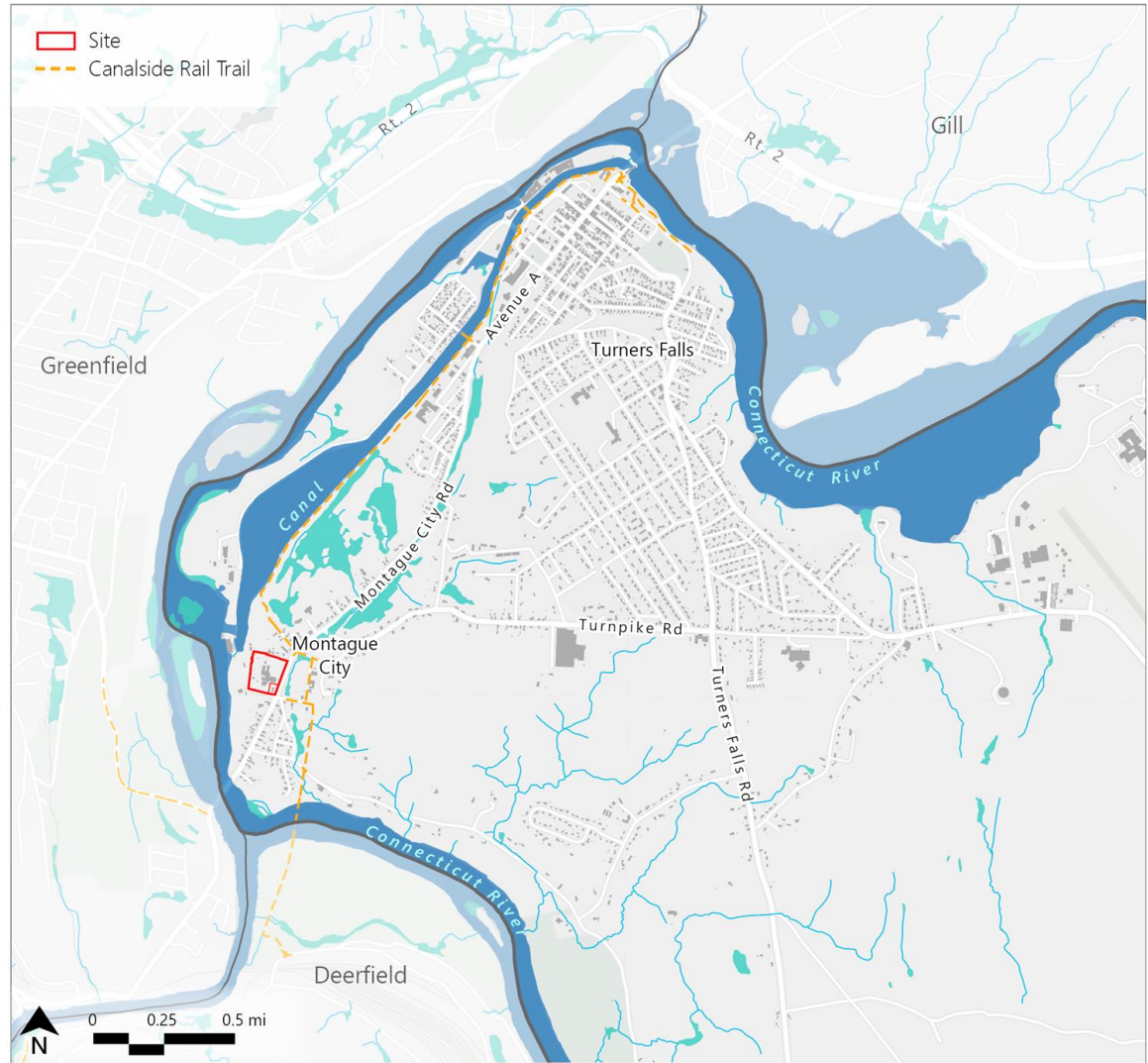
Montague City, the neighboring village to Turners Falls, is located close to the town border, along Montague City Road.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Connecticut River is the primary hydrologic features in Montague.

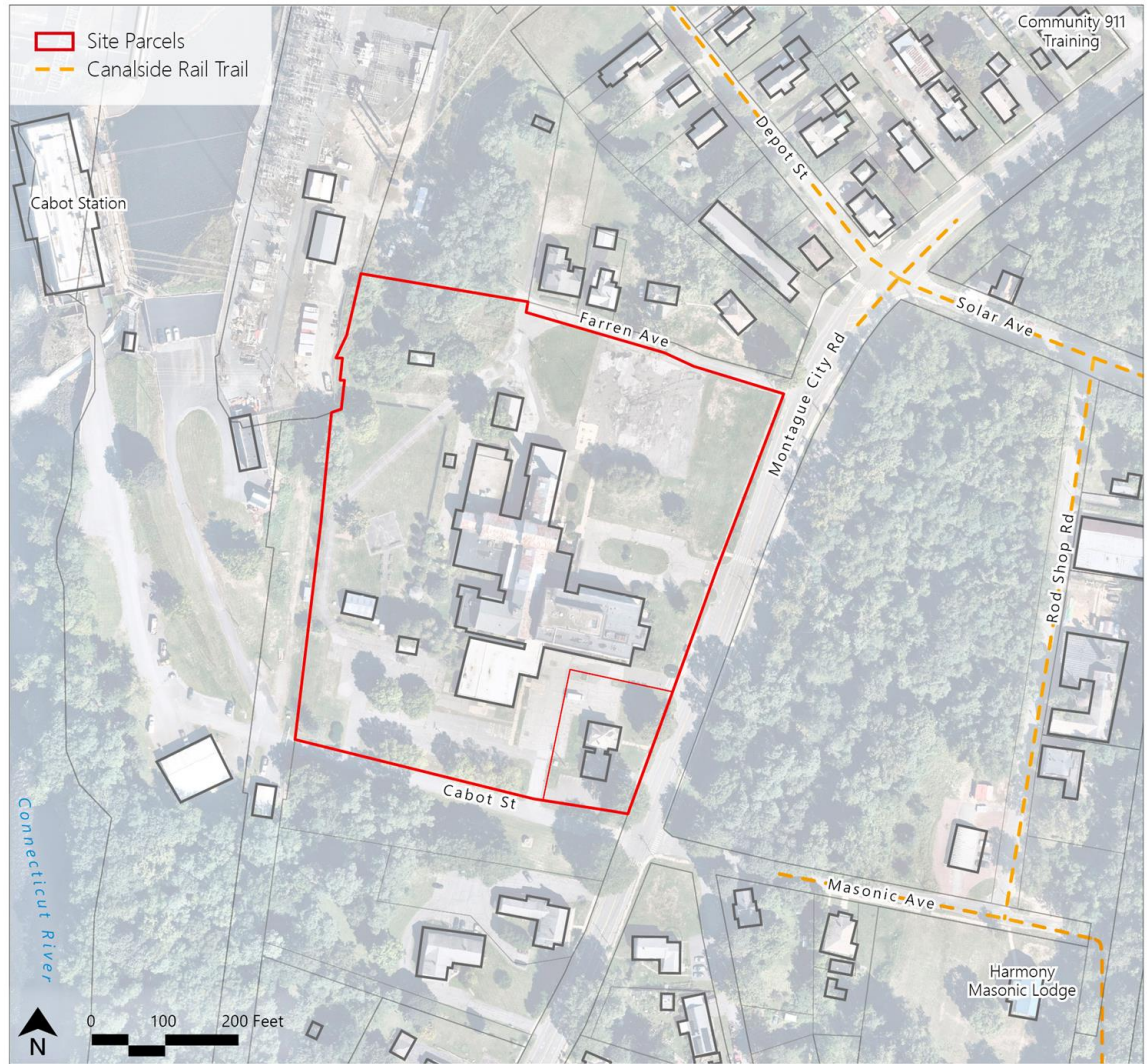
Streams and wetlands extend from the river into Montague City and Turners Falls, limiting development in some places.



THE SITE

The project site, located on Montague City Road, is just over 8 acres in size.

This site, located at the heart of Montague City, presents an opportunity for the Town to address housing needs and recreational/commercial desires voiced by community members.

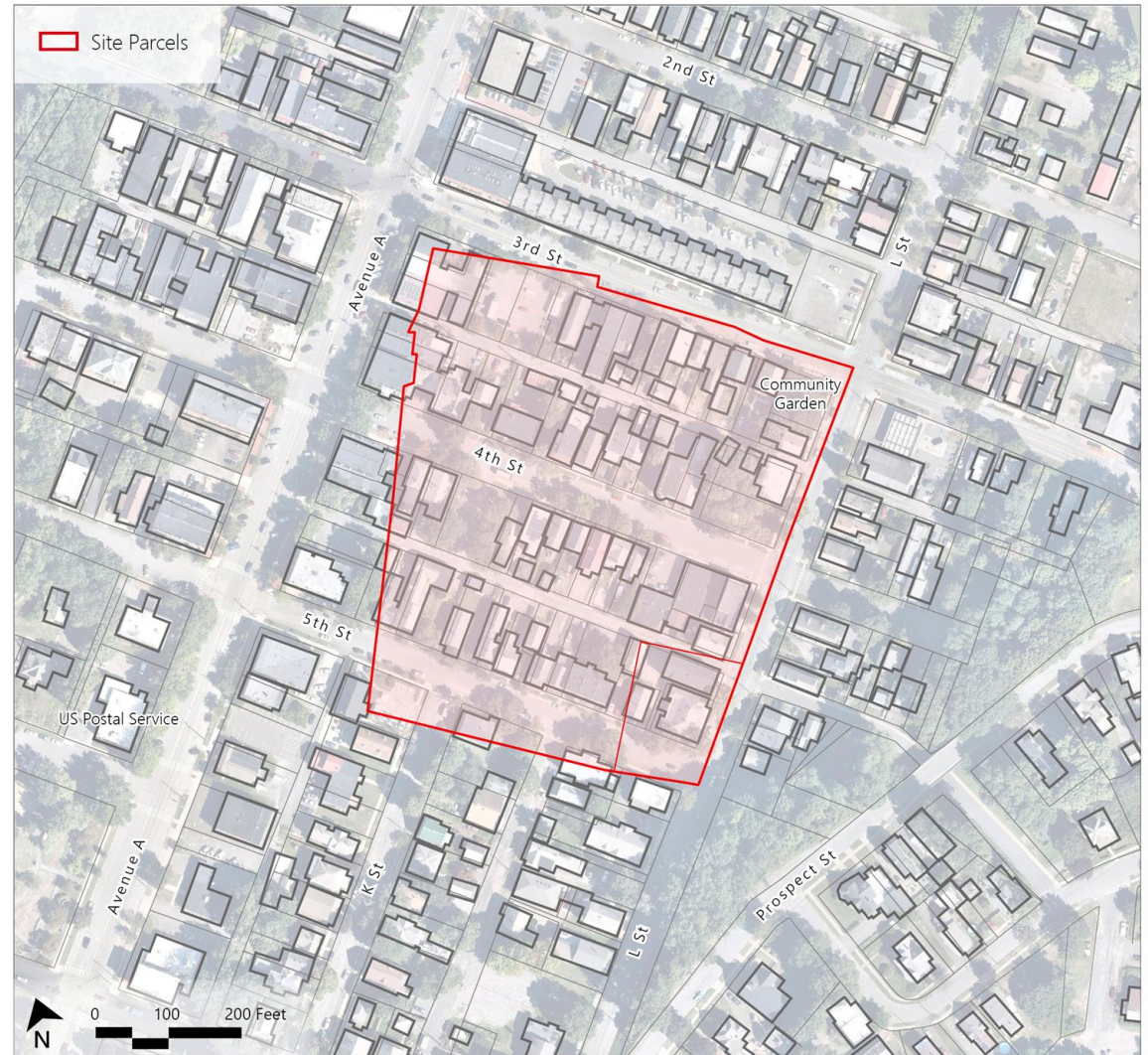


SCALE COMPARISON

When superimposed on downtown Turners Falls, the project site is slightly smaller than two standard rectangular blocks.

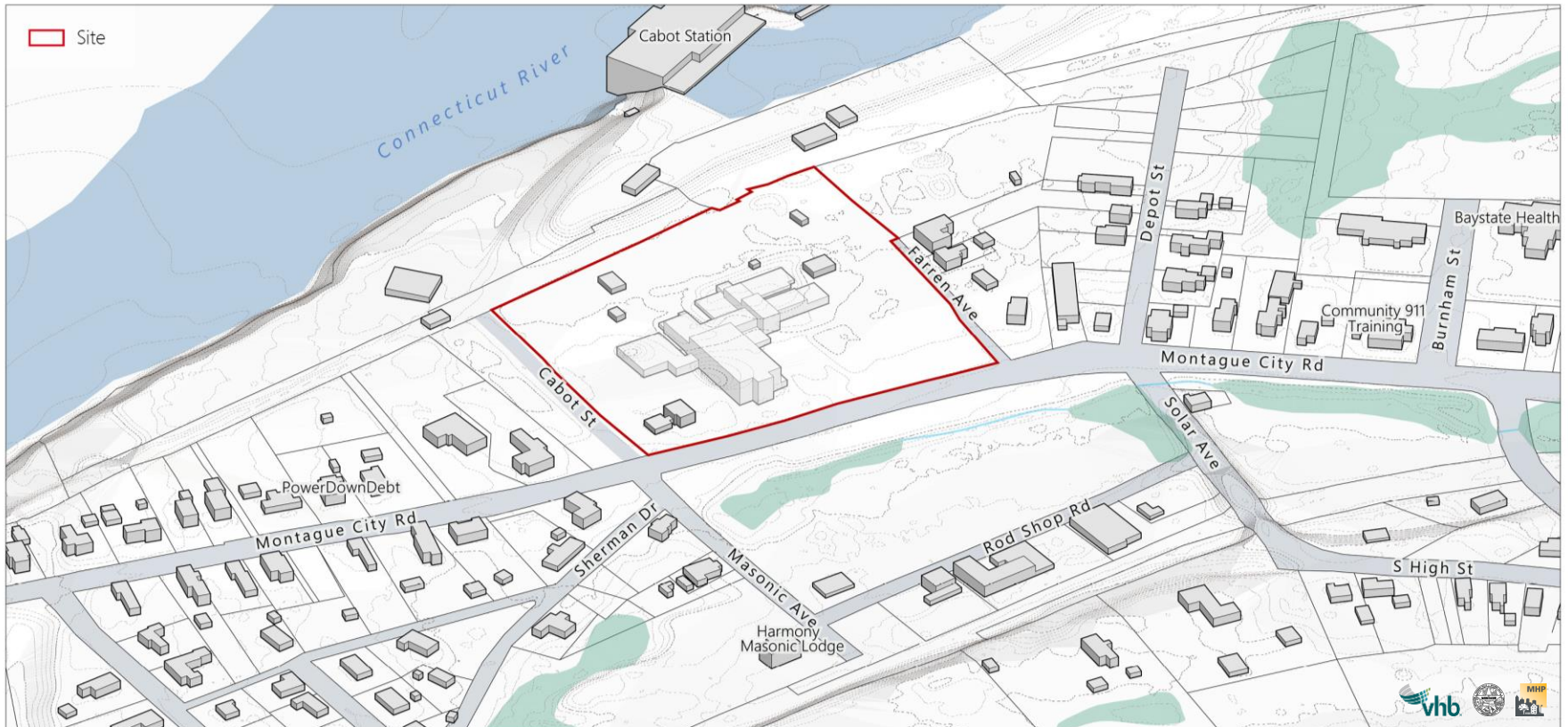
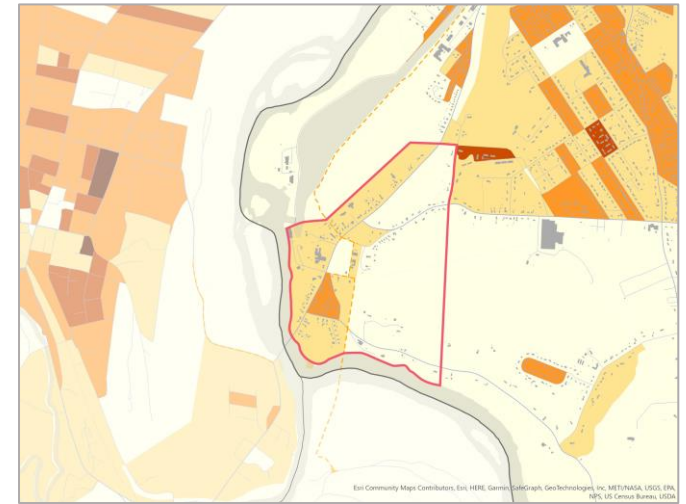
This graphic illustrates the area of the project parcel in comparison to blocks on 3rd, 4th, and 5th Streets in Turners Falls.

The estimated number of residential units outlined in red is 130 units, for a density of 16 units/acre.



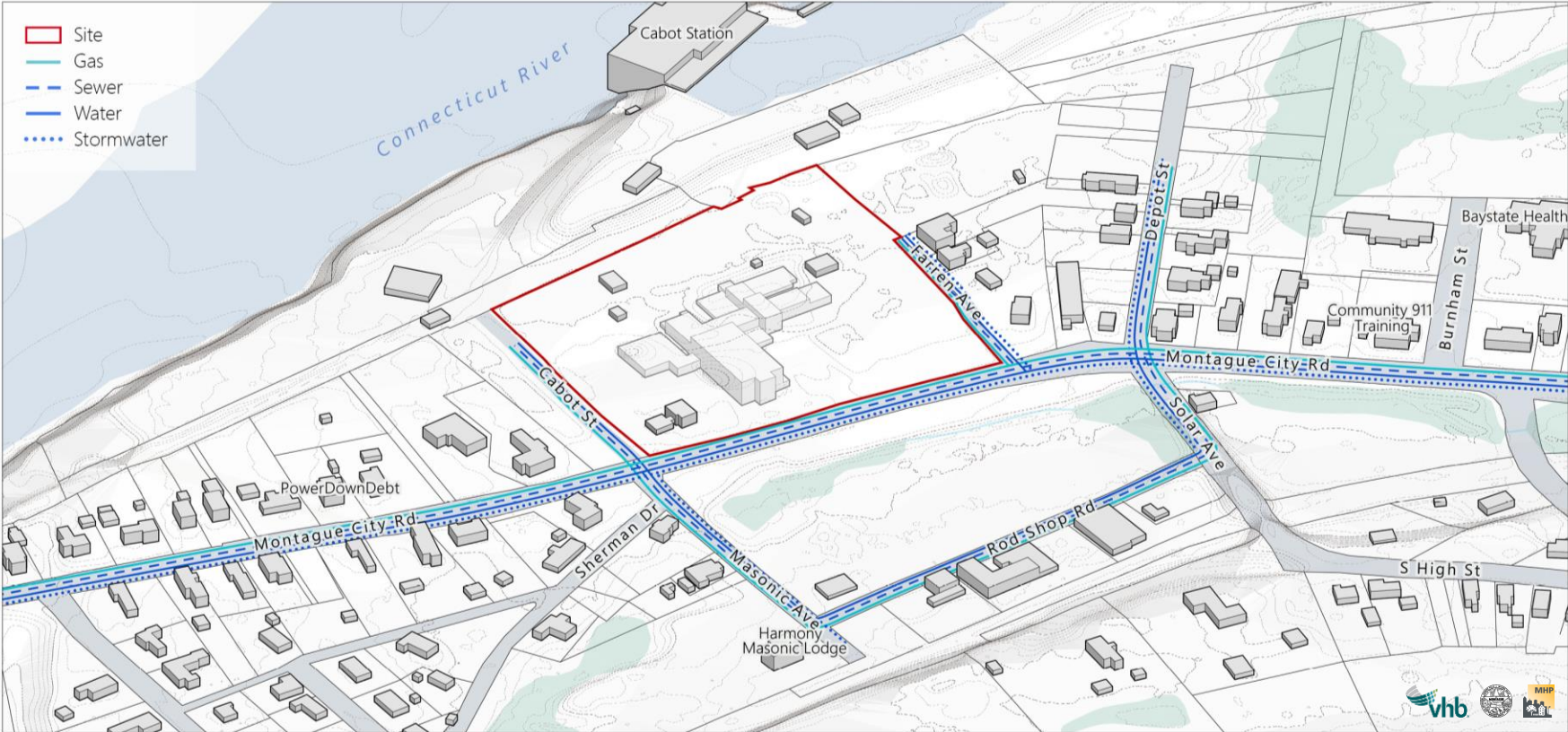
VILLAGE CONTEXT

Montague City Village (roughly 330 acres) is home to approximately 550 residents. Behind the site is Cabot Station, a hydroelectric station.



UTILITIES

The Site is served by gas, sewer, water, and stormwater systems already in place along Montague City Road.



TRANSPORTATION

Montague City Road is the primary corridor for vehicular traffic. Bus 32 stops at the front of the site.

The Canalside Rail Trail traverses Rod Shop Road and Solar Avenue to Depot Street.

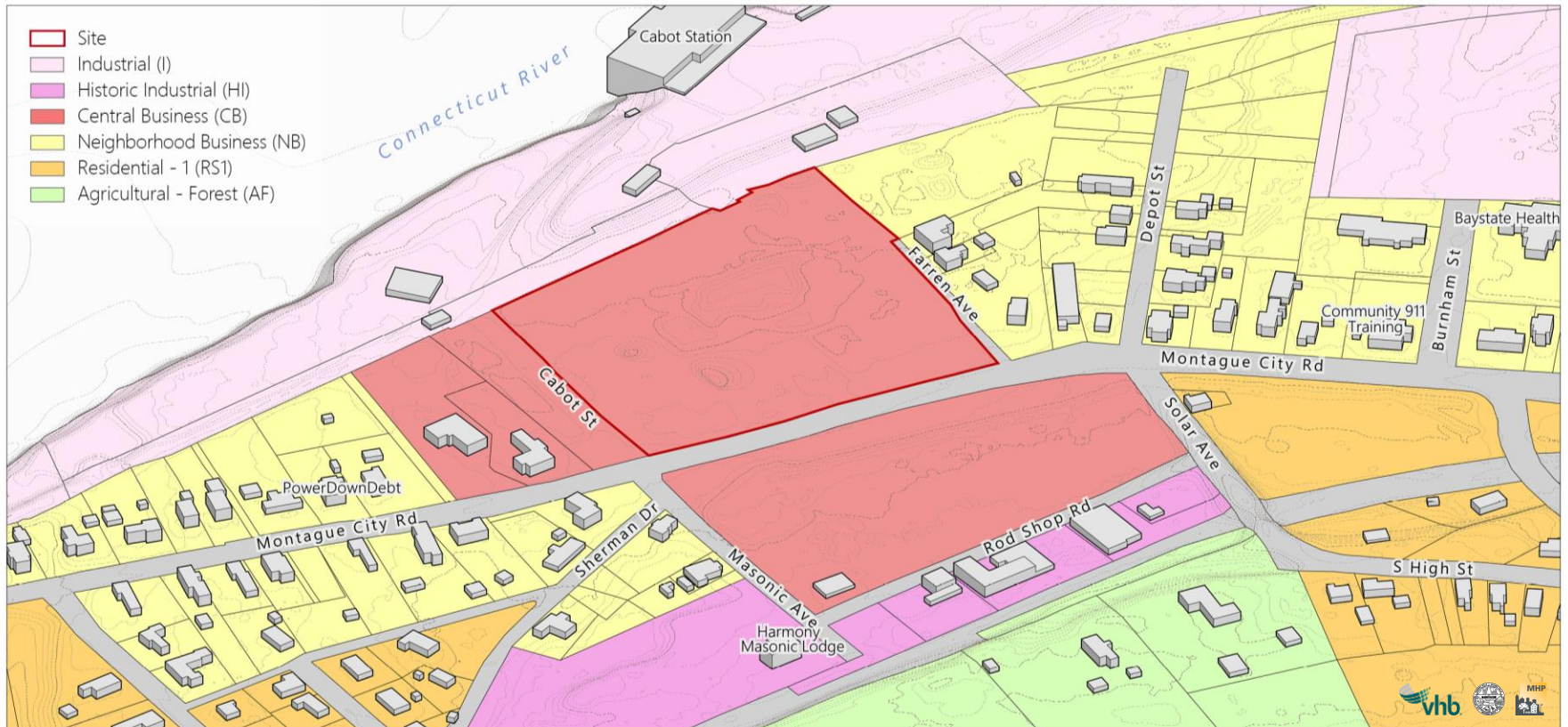


ZONING

The project site is zoned as a Central Business district.

Land uses allowed in this zone include mixed-use with first floor commercial, small-scale retail, business / professional / medical offices, social clubs or lodges, hotels, parking lots or garages, and public utilities. Residential is not allowed in this district.

Dimensional requirements include 15-foot rear yard setback and a maximum building height of 36 feet. The CB District has no minimum lot size, lot frontage, or front yard setback requirements.



THE VISION

Montague City's new Village Center will provide **a dense, mixed-use hub that unites the surrounding community** and unlocks new housing and economic opportunities in Montague.

The Village Center will be focused on **inclusivity**, meeting the needs of all residents and visitors, regardless of age or income.

New development within the Village Center will enhance the **quality of life** and showcase Montague City's commitment to **public health, arts and culture, and natural resources.**

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FORMS



A LOW DENSITY

Montague City Road

Single-family detached

Currently hosting a medical business, but is also typical of local residences



B MEDIUM DENSITY

3rd Street

Row home

Multiple connected residences with street frontage and limited setback



C HIGH DENSITY

Avenue A (Historic Crocker Bank)

Mixed-use

Ground floor commercial

Gary's Coins and Antiques, The Country Creemee

2nd and 3rd floor residential:

Apartments are a mix of 1-2 BR units

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FORMS



A LOW DENSITY

Montague City Road

Single-family detached

Currently hosting a medical business, but is also typical of local residences



1 unit per acre

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FORMS



B MEDIUM DENSITY

3rd Street

Row home

Multiple connected residences with street frontage and limited setback



6-8 units per acre

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FORMS



C HIGH DENSITY

Avenue A (Historic Crocker Bank)

Mixed-use

Ground floor commercial

Gary's Coins and Antiques, The
Country Creemee

2nd and 3rd floor residential:

Apartments are a mix of 1-2 BR units



15-20 units per acre

ALTERNATIVE 1: VILLAGE GREEN

These conceptual designs focus on classic village element: a central green.

Central lawns or parks provide a communal space for events, recreation, relaxation, and social gathering. Surrounding development can build upon these important activities.



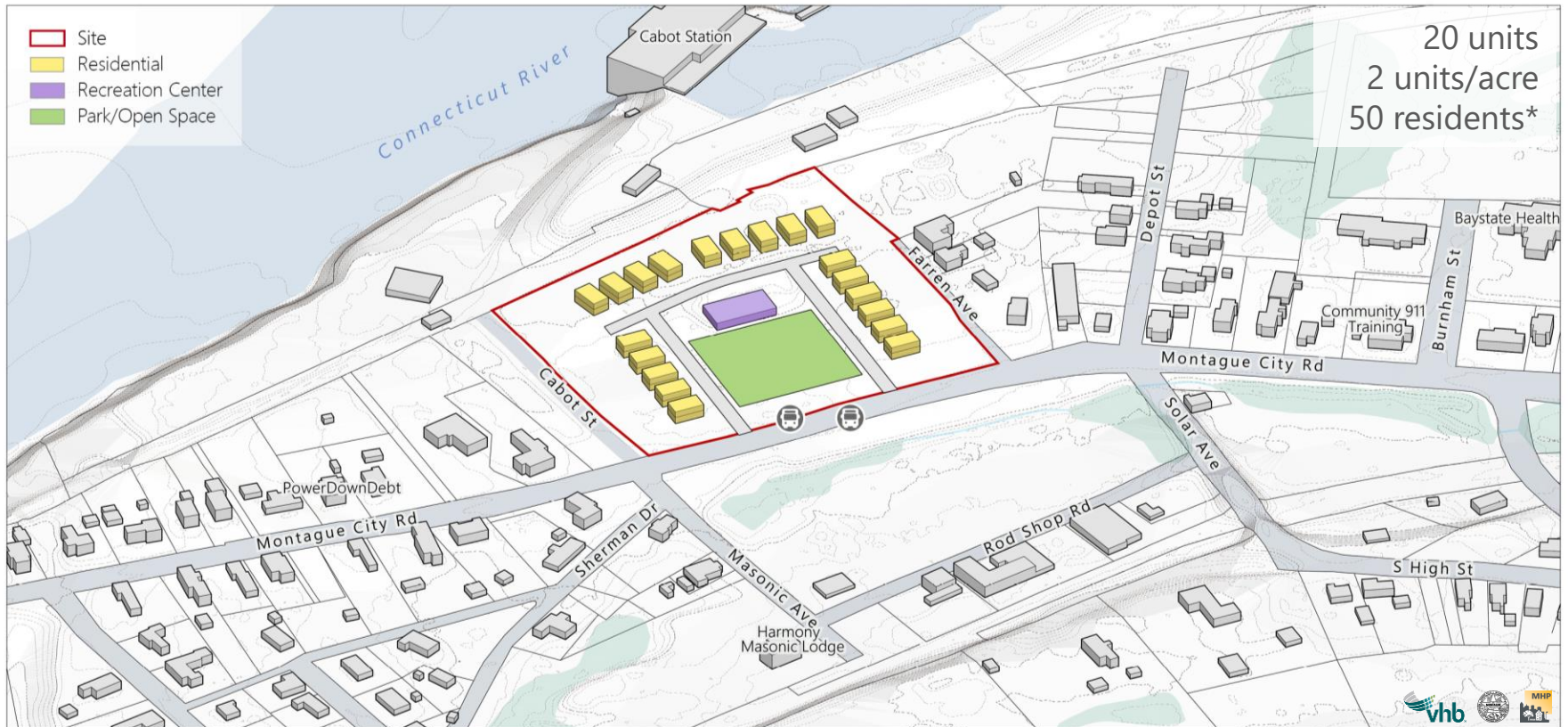
ALTERNATIVE 1A: VILLAGE GREEN

A **low-density** design could feature double- or triple-deckers that match much of the current housing stock in downtown Turners Falls.

LOW DENSITY

MEDIUM DENSITY

HIGH DENSITY



20 units
2 units/acre
50 residents*

Resident approximations calculated using Montague's average household occupancy size (U.S. Census Data, ACS 2017-2021)

ALTERNATIVE 1B: VILLAGE GREEN

A **medium-density** design could feature rowhomes, resembling housing stock on 3rd Street in Turners Falls.

LOW DENSITY

MEDIUM DENSITY

HIGH DENSITY



ALTERNATIVE 1C: VILLAGE GREEN

A **high-density** design could feature apartment buildings with units ranging in bedroom counts and square footage.

LOW DENSITY

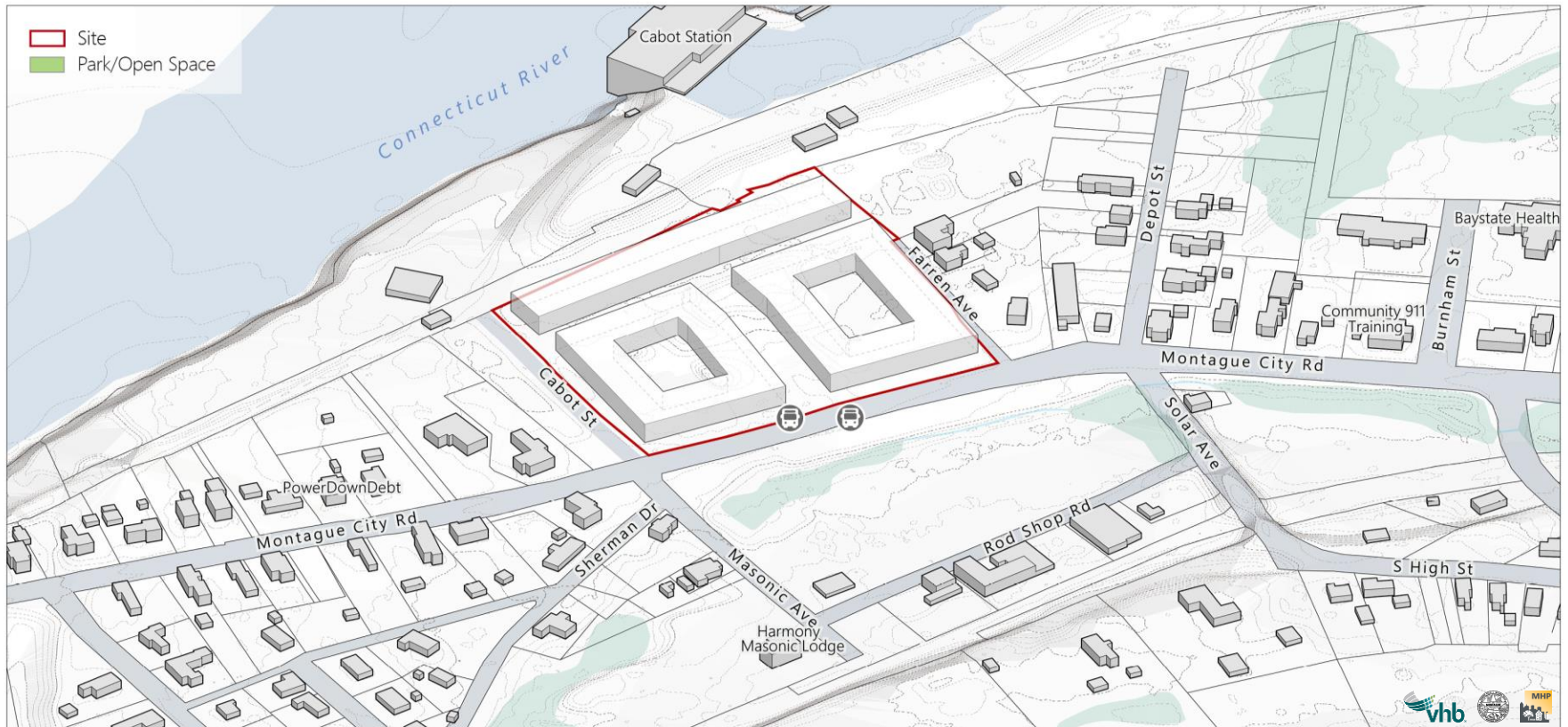
MEDIUM DENSITY

HIGH DENSITY



ALTERNATIVE 2: URBAN BLOCKS

These conceptual designs capitalizes on the developability of the site and creates distinct land use "blocks."



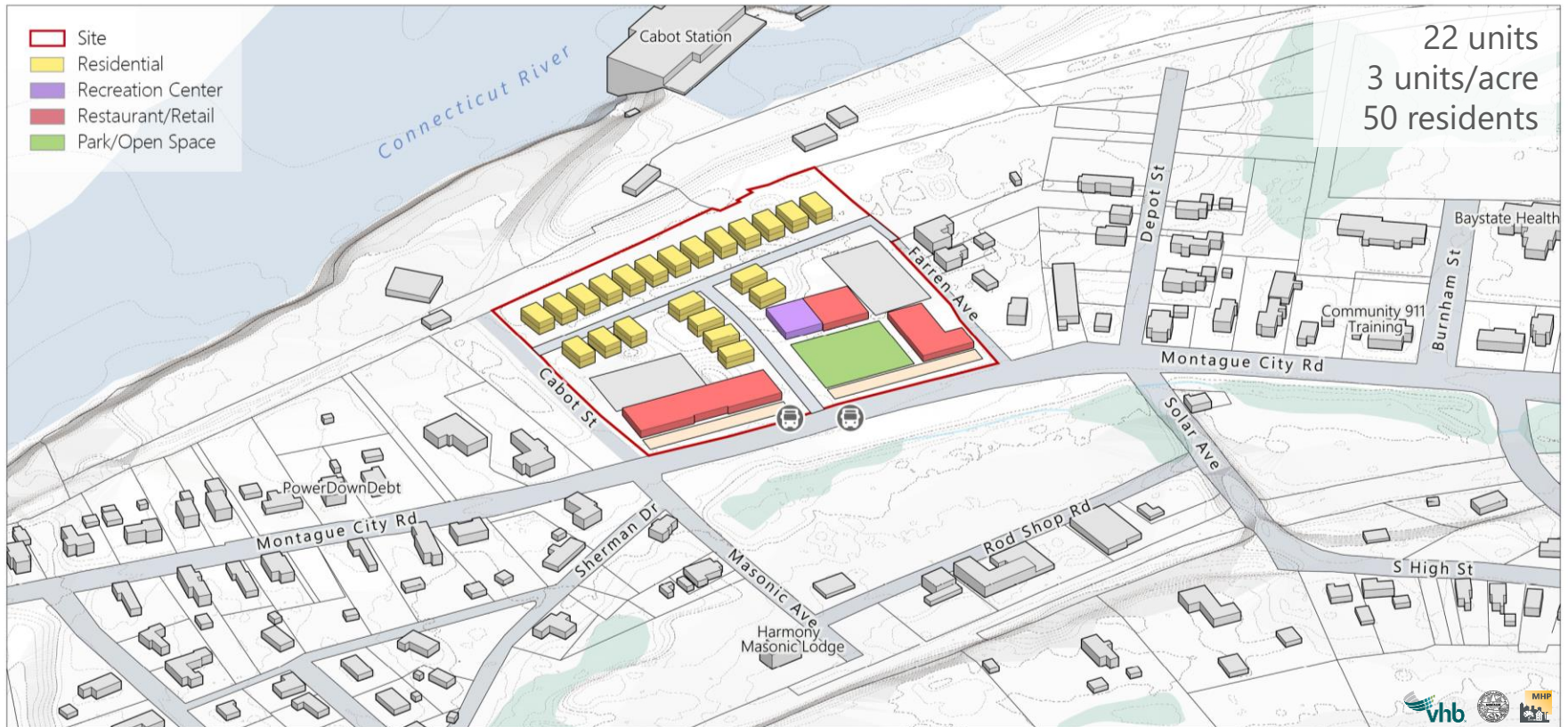
ALTERNATIVE 2A: URBAN BLOCKS

A **low-density** design could feature a combination of double- or triple-deckers along with separate buildings for retail, restaurants, and recreation.

LOW DENSITY

MEDIUM DENSITY

HIGH DENSITY



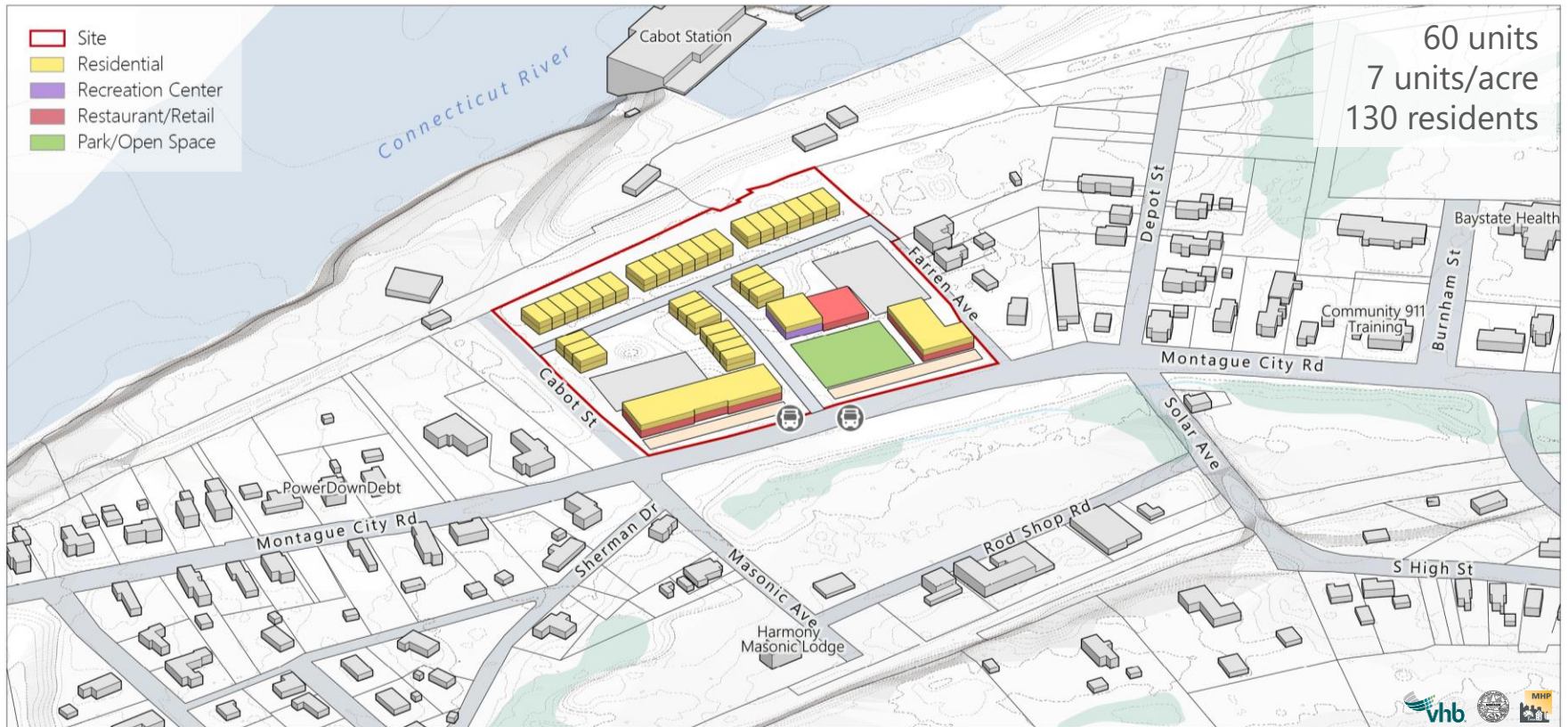
ALTERNATIVE 2B: URBAN BLOCKS

A **medium-density** design could feature row homes and blocks of mixed-use buildings with commercial uses on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floors.

LOW DENSITY

MEDIUM DENSITY

HIGH DENSITY



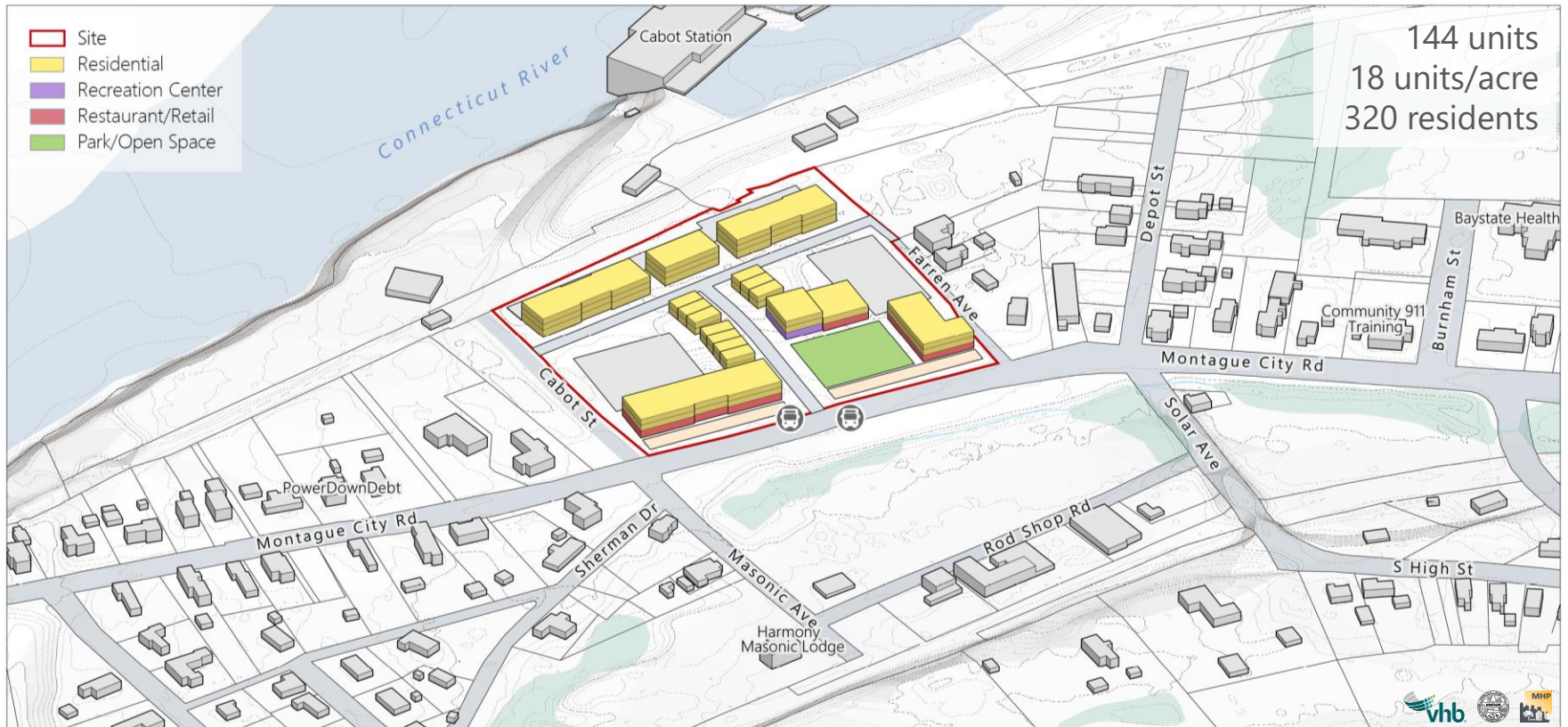
ALTERNATIVE 2C: URBAN BLOCKS

A **high-density** design could feature a combination of row homes, apartment buildings, and mixed-use buildings with commercial on the ground floor.

LOW DENSITY

MEDIUM DENSITY

HIGH DENSITY



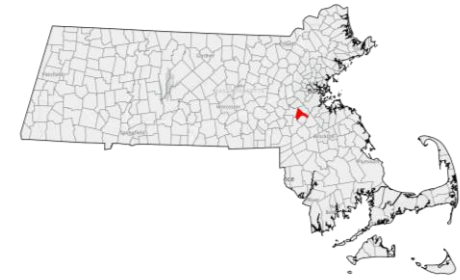
BENCHMARK PROJECTS

Looking at precedent projects can help facilitate urban design studies for several reasons.

- Precedent projects provide valuable insights into **what has worked well and what hasn't** in similar projects.
- Precedent projects can also serve as a **source of inspiration**, sparking new ideas and approaches that may not have been considered otherwise.
- Precedent projects can provide a **benchmark for quality and performance**, helping to set realistic goals and expectations.



CASE STUDY: Westwood



PROJECT NAME: Islington Village
SIZE: 3.5 acres
COMPLETION: Ongoing
DEVELOPER: Petruzzello Properties

OVERVIEW:

The Islington Center Redevelopment Project involves eight parcels of land along Washington Street in the area of the East Street/School Street intersection.

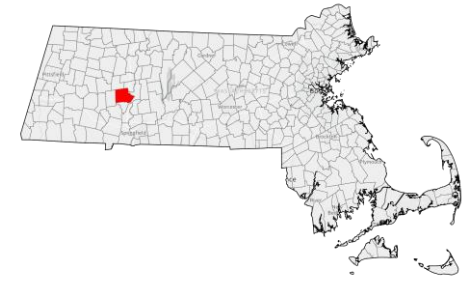
BENEFITS:

- Increase value of town-owned property from \$615,500 in 2018 to ~\$2,769,000.
- Increase annual tax revenues for the parcels from \$62,000 to \$424,000 per year.
- Add 12 units to Subsidized Housing Inventory.



Image credit: Town of Westwood, Petruzzello Properties

CASE STUDY: Northampton



PROJECT NAME: The Lumber Yard
SIZE: 1.3 acres
COMPLETION: 2018
DEVELOPER: Valley Community Development and Way Finders

OVERVIEW:

A \$19 million mixed-use development with 55 affordable apartments and 5,400 square feet of commercial space.

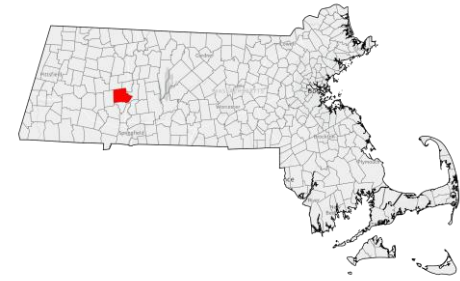
BENEFITS:

- Brings new life to the former Northampton Lumber Company lot
- 55 one, two, and three bedroom apartments
 - 43 apartments available at 60% Area Median Income (AMI)
 - 12 apartments available at 30% AMI



Image credit: RentCafe

CASE STUDY: Northampton



PROJECT NAME: Live 155
SIZE: 3.5 acres
COMPLETION: 2018
DEVELOPER: Way Finders

OVERVIEW:

A mixed-use, mixed-income development in the heart of Northampton, Live 155 provides people with an opportunity to live in one of the area's most desirable communities.

BENEFITS:

- Adds 47 units to Northampton's subsidized housing inventory (SHI)
- 2,300 square-foot retail space on first floor



Image credit: Apartments.com

OPEN DISCUSSION

1. What mix of land uses would best fit the needs of Montague City at the project site?
2. What are some desired qualities of public realm, building form and design?
3. What kinds of housing needs can be met by allowing residential uses at this site?
4. What ideas haven't we thought of yet?