

DOWNTOWN URBAN REVITALIZATION PLAN

Worcester, Massachusetts

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DEFINITIONS

ACEC – Area of Critical Environmental Concern
 ACS – American Community Survey
 AUL – Activity and Use Limitation (under MCP)
 BFE – Base Flood Elevation (FEMA)
 BID – Business Improvement District
 Bikeway – The Blackstone River Bikeway
 BOR – Massachusetts DHCD Bureau of Relocation
 BRF – MassDevelopment Brownfields Redevelopment Fund
 CCOOD – Commercial Corridors Overlay District
 CDBG – Community Development Block Grant
 CDE – Community Development Entities
 CEDS – *Central Massachusetts Grows: Greater Worcester Area Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*
 CFR – Code of Federal Regulations
 CMR – Code of Massachusetts Regulation
 CMRPC – Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
 CN – Common Name
 CSO – Combined Sewer Overflow
 DHCD – Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
 DIF – District Improvement Financing
 EACC – Massachusetts Economic Assistance Coordinating Council
 EDIP – Economic Development Incentive Program
 EEA – Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
 ENF – Environmental Notification Form (under MEPA)
 EOA – Economic Opportunity Area
 EPA – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
 GDI – Growth District Initiative
 HDIP – Housing Development Incentive Program
 HECCMA – Higher Education Consortium of Central Massachusetts
 HN – Historic Name
 HOME – HOME Investment Partnership Program
 Hub – the WRTA Bus Transportation Hub
 HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
 LAND – Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity Grant
 LID – Low Impact Development
 LSP – Licensed Site Professional (under MCP)
 LWCF – Land and Water Conservation Fund
 MACRIS – Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
 MBTA – Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
 MassDOT – Massachusetts Department of Transportation
 MassDEP – Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
 Master Plan – Theatre District Master Plan, December 2012
 MCP – Massachusetts Contingency Plan (310 CMR 40.00)
 MCPHS – Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Science University
 MGD – Million gallons per day
 M.G.L. – Massachusetts General Law
 MEPA – Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (301 CMR 11.00)
 MHC – Massachusetts Historical Commission
 MHRTC – Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
 NMTC – New Markets Tax Credit
 NOI – Notice of Intent (under WPA)

DEFINITIONS

NPDES – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (under EPA)
NRDIS – National Register Historic District
OHM – Oil and Hazardous Materials (under MCP)
PARC – Massachusetts Parkland Acquisition and Renovations for Communities Grant
P&W – Providence and Worcester Railroad Company
RAO – Response Action Outcome (under MCP)
ROW – Right(s)-of-Way
SFHA – Special Flood Hazard Area
SOD – Sign Overlay District
SPD – Streetscape Policy District
SWPPP – Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (under EPA)
T&G – Worcester Telegram and Gazette
TDI – MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative
TIF – Tax Increment Financing
UCL – Upper Concentration Limit
UPass – WRTA bus pass for college students
URA –Urban Revitalization Plan Area
URDG – Urban Revitalization Development Grant
URP –Urban Revitalization Plan
USGS – U.S. Geological Survey
WBDC – Worcester Business Development Corporation
WPA – Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (310 CMR 10.00)
WPI – Worcester Polytechnic Institute
WRA – Worcester Redevelopment Authority
WRTA – Worcester Regional Transit Authority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Introduction

The Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP or the Plan) was initiated by the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA) in cooperation with the City of Worcester and the Worcester City Council. The URP process involved collaboration with stakeholders, including area property owners, residents, city officials and the URP Citizen Advisory Committee. Stakeholders have the mutual interest of revitalizing the downtown area by publicizing arts and tourism destinations, improving the visitor experience, attracting new or expanding existing commercial and industrial users, enhancing residential quality of life, and remediating brownfields to increase developable land area.

Information used throughout this document was obtained from a wide range of publicly accessible online resources and studies, as listed below:

- MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative (TDI), Worcester Theatre District, 2015
- *Downtown Worcester Theatre District Master Plan*, December 2012, prepared for the Worcester Business Development Corporation in association with the City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development, Crosby/Schlessinger/Smallridge (the Master Plan);
- *Worcester Student Survey 2014*, the City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development in partnership with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce;
- *Mercantile Center*, as presented on website, <http://www.mercantileworchester.com/>;
- *The Grid Downtown Worcester | The Master Plan*, undated, prepared by MG2, Bell Partners and EMBARC Studio;
- *Cost and Benefit Analysis of Blackstone Canal Revitalization*, Worcester Polytechnic Institute: Interactive Qualifying Project, December 18, 2014, prepared for John Giangregorio: President, Blackstone Canal District Alliance;
- *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, Worcester, Massachusetts*, October 2012, prepared for the City of Worcester Office of Economic Development, I² Community Development Consulting;
- *Housing Market Study*, October 2012, prepared by the City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development; RKG Associates;
- *City of Worcester Urban Design Guidelines*, November 2012, developed through the City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development and Department of Public Works and Parks, with preliminary assistance by Sasaki Associates, Inc.
- *Central Massachusetts Grows: Greater Worcester Area Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*, 2012, The Greater Worcester Area Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission;
- *Market Overview – Downtown Theatre District, Worcester, MA*, October 2011, prepared for Worcester Business Development Corporation, Chan Krieger NBBJ and GLC Development Resources;
- *Downtown Worcester Strategic Opportunity Study*, July 2010, prepared for MassDevelopment and the City of Worcester Economic Development Department, Utile, Inc. Architecture + Planning;
- *The Beacon/Federal Neighborhood Revitalization Plan and Project Workbook*, August 2009, prepared for the City of Worcester, The Cecil Group Inc., Concord Square Planning & Development, FXM Associates, and Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (the Beacon/Federal Plan);
- *Sensible (Sense-Able) Bridges: Conceptual Design Presentation*, City of Worcester, June 2, 2009;

- *North Main Economic Development Strategy*, November 2008, prepared for the City of Worcester Economic Development Division, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. in association with Basile Baumann Prost & Associates, Inc. and Finegold Alexander + Associates, Inc.;
- *Real Estate Development Opportunity Assessment, Downtown Worcester*, January 2008, Utile, Inc. Architecture + Planning;
- *Worcester North Main Market Analysis, Office, Flex/R&D, Residential, Retail & Lodging Sectors*, prepared for the City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic and Neighborhood Development;
- *Washington Square Redevelopment Strategy, Worcester, Massachusetts*, 2006, prepared for the City of Worcester Division of Economic Development, BSC Group;
- *Central Business District Parking Study*, April 2004, prepared for the City of Worcester Department of Public Works, Traffic Engineering Division, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.;
- *Arts District Master Plan*, June 2002, prepared for Arts District Task Force ARTS Worcester, City of Worcester, Community Partners Consultants, Inc. in association with Economics Research Associates (the Arts Plan);
- *Union Station Urban Revitalization Plan*, October 1996, WRA; and
- *Predevelopment Study: Wyman-Gordon Property and The South Worcester Industrial Park*, March 1995, prepared for the Office of Planning and Community Development, Comprehensive Facilities Solutions, Inc. and Abbelire, Inc. (the Predevelopment Study).

Information and recommendations contained in the above-referenced reports are incorporated into this URP, as appropriate. Overall, the URP has a 20-year implementation phase (April 2036) to accommodate the projects that require long-range planning.

II. Urban Revitalization Area Description

The Urban Revitalization Area (URA), also referred to herein as the Study Area, has an irregularly-shaped boundary comprised of approximately 118 parcels and 380 properties (including approximately 67 business and 214 residential condominium units) within a 118.4-acre area, of which approximately 24.6 acres are public ways, 10.1 acres are railroad ROW, and approximately 93.7 acres are parcels. Please refer to *Figures A-1 Project Location and URA Boundaries* and *Figure A-2: Aerial Photography with URA Boundary* for perspective on the Study Area in Worcester. For ease of reference, *Figure A-1* also includes reference numbers for key parcels that are discussed in this URA. *Section 1.2: Supplemental Narrative for URP Figures* provides descriptive information of the URA, including an index of the properties that are referenced on the figure. A complete list of parcels and respective owners within the URA is presented in **Attachment A: URA Parcel Ownership Table and Map**.

As shown in *Figure A-2 Aerial Photography with URA Boundary* and *Figure D-1: Existing Land Use*, the URA contains diverse co-existing land uses, including commercial, retail, residential, transportation (rail), and industrial/manufacturing.

The Study Area encompasses revitalization opportunity areas in the heart of Worcester, with the P&W ROW running through the middle of the URA. As described in detail in *Section 2.2 of Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility*, the area north of the Providence and Worcester (P&W) ROW is part of the traditional downtown, with high density mixed-use development consisting of business office, commercial and residential, interspersed with institutional and cultural uses. The area south of the railroad is dominated by former manufacturing sites and active industrial uses.

Adjacent to the URA, commercial and multi-family residential development predominate to the north, west, south and southeast. The residences are typically multi-family (e.g., triple decker and small apartment buildings), and the commercial developments are a mix of service and industrial businesses.

Immediately northeast of the Worcester Common is the CitySquare District Improvement Financing (DIF) District, consisting of the CitySquare and Mercantile Center redevelopment projects. CitySquare is a \$500+ million multi-phased public-private partnership currently underway in the heart of downtown Worcester, which includes:

- Unum Group's 214,000-square-foot LEED Silver office building;
- St. Vincent Hospital's new 66,000-square foot Cancer and Wellness Center;
- A 168-room AC Hotels by Marriott;
- Worcester Common Parking Garage, a 550-space underground parking facility; and
- A 370-unit residential development (with 479 parking spaces).

Mercantile Center is a \$70 million investment located adjacent to CitySquare and comprised of the office towers at 100 and 120 Front Street and 2 Mercantile, containing a total of 642,300 square feet of mixed-use office and retail space with a 1,647-space structured parking garage. UMass Memorial Health Care has leased approximately 75,000 square feet of space in Mercantile Center and renovations are underway. An additional 183,000 square feet of vacant space will be improved as it is leased. Building façade improvements and lobby renovations are also planned.

Adjacent uses located further northeast of the URA include large-scale public and institutional uses (e.g., the DCU Center, St. Vincent Hospital) as well as Union Station Intermodal Transportation Station and the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) Transportation Hub (Hub).

The Canal District is east of the URA, in the vicinity of Green Street. The Canal District was designated to celebrate the industrial history associated with the Blackstone Canal, which now runs beneath Harding Street. There are a number of surviving mill buildings dating from the late 1800's along Green Street, Water Street and Winter Street. Some have been successfully repurposed, e.g., the Crompton Collective, and are integral to the district's urban industrial character. Programming events in the district have included a Blackstone Canal Fest, a year-round farmer's market, seasonal horse and wagon tours, race events, and walking tours. In fall 2015, the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC) announced a new indoor hockey facility is to be built at the corner of Harding and Winter Streets in the Canal District. The 3.5-acre site currently contains a shuttered manufacturing facility with brownfields issues. WBDC is currently overseeing the demolition and cleanup activities on the site, then Marathon Sports Construction will build the facility. Construction is set to be completed by August 2017.

III. Statement of Need

This URP evaluates data from a variety of sources to support the recommendation that the URA meets the eligibility standards defined in Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) c. 121B for consideration as a decadent and blighted open area, and that it is improbable that the area would be redeveloped per the ordinary operations of private enterprise. Data evaluated includes parcel ownership, land and building assessments, parcel size and configuration, and current condition. The finding that the URA is a decadent and blighted open area is based upon all properties within the URA and not limited to properties identified for acquisition.

The area's characteristics are consistent with the definitions of decadent and blighted open area per M.G.L. c. 121B, section 1, as follows:

Decadent Area: defined as an area which is detrimental to the sound growth of a community as a result of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation, obsolete, or in need of major maintenance or repair, or because much of the real estate in recent years has been sold, or taken for nonpayment of taxes upon foreclosure of mortgages, or because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced,

or because of a substantial change in business or economic conditions, or because of inadequate light, air, or open space, or because of excessive land coverage or because diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes or obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise, or by reason of any combination of the foregoing conditions.

Blighted Open Area: defined as a predominantly open area which is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, welfare or sound growth of a community because it is unduly costly to develop it soundly through the ordinary operations of private enterprise by reason of the existence of ledge, rock, unsuitable soil, or other physical conditions, or by reason of the necessity for unduly expensive excavation, fill or grading, or by reason of the need for unduly expensive foundations, retaining walls or unduly expensive measures for waterproofing structures or for draining the area or for the prevention of the flooding thereof or for the protection of adjacent properties and the water table therein or for unduly expensive measures incident to building around or over rights-of-way (ROW) through the area, or for otherwise making the area appropriate for sound development, or by reason of obsolete, inappropriate or otherwise faulty platting or subdivision, deterioration of site improvements or facilities, division of the area by ROW, diversity of ownership of plots, or inadequacy of transportation facilities or other utilities, or by reason of tax and special assessment delinquencies, or because there has been a substantial change in business or economic conditions or practices, or an abandonment or cessation of a previous use or of work on improvements begun but not feasible to complete without the aids provided by this chapter, or by reason of any combination of the foregoing or other condition; or a predominantly open area which by reason of any condition or combination of conditions which are not being remedied by the ordinary operations of private enterprise is of such a character that in essence it is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, welfare or sound growth of the community in which it is situated.

As discussed in **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility** (see *Section 2.8: Area Eligibility Designation*), the URA has many characteristics that contribute to the current decadent and blighted open conditions, as listed below.

- Many structures with physical conditions that lack the mechanical and building systems necessary to meet contemporary needs.
- Facilities that constitute a barrier to development due to scale, conditions and use restrictions.
- Structures which are quite old, indicating the potential for regulated materials typically found in older buildings.
- A diversity of ownership and/or irregular lot shapes and sizes that make it unlikely the area will be redeveloped under the normal operation of the private market.
- Substantial changes in business and economic conditions.
- Existing conditions that are detrimental to public health, safety and welfare and which are unlikely to be resolved by the operation of private enterprise.
- Portions of the URA that are currently underutilized.
- The presence of many incompatible uses which are directly adjacent to each other without adequate buffer.
- Inadequate transportation options, roadway conditions and traffic circulation.
- Infrastructure that is in need of improvements to supply adequate service.
- The Wyman-Gordon Parcels, which comprise a large vacant area with known contamination issues, require remediation, and are characterized by other site constraints that are unduly expensive to complete without public intervention.
- Severe economic hardship in the City of Worcester, as evidenced by an unemployment rate in excess of the state average and a high concentration of low and moderate income households.

IV. Project Vision

The overarching vision of the URP is to build on the current momentum of downtown revitalization through strategic public investments to cultivate a safe and vibrant downtown with a strong and sustainable economic vitality. A revitalized downtown will provide an 18-hour live, work and play environment which offers new opportunities to underperforming properties, connects people and places, and capitalizes on Worcester's unique location and characteristics.

This URP embodies the vision that was defined in the 2012 Theatre District Master Plan, which reads as follows:

We envision a downtown Theatre District that is an active, mixed-use, 18-hour neighborhood with significant institutional and residential growth supporting a vibrant entertainment and cultural environment drawing residents, businesses, and visitors to downtown Worcester. Key corridors, including Main Street, Federal Street and Front Street will serve to tie District-wide activity together to make a walkable, inviting center of activity. Federal Street, the heart of the District, will be a tightly compressed pedestrian street plaza – a public gathering space – lined with food, entertainment and retail activity that:

- *Creates a sense of place;*
- *Serves as the center of the expanded Theatre/Creative District; and*
- *Connects all of the entertainment and creative venues both in the District and throughout downtown.*

Key destinations within the District, such as City Hall, the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, the YWCA, and the Worcester Public Library, and destinations outside the District such as Union Station, the DCU Center and Mechanics Hall will connect to continue the comprehensive transformation of downtown Worcester as the heart of one of New England's great cities.

This Vision must be built with the understanding of the strengths, and challenges, of the current marketplace and the need to support the many investments already made by many dedicated stakeholders. The realization of this Plan requires partnerships with other active property owners and investors including residential developers, CitySquare II Development Company, LLC (CitySquare), and Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) University.

Because the above Master Plan vision focuses on the Theatre District area, additional consideration was given to developing a separate, but related, vision for the URA south of the P&W ROW. A public forum regarding the 11 parcels that previously contained Wyman-Gordon Company manufacturing activities (collectively referred to herein as the Wyman Gordon Parcels) was held in September 2015. During breakout sessions, participants were asked to consider a number of questions, including how various reuses would suit the area, how transportation and circulation could be improved, and what public amenities they would like to see incorporated into the URP. As a result, the following general vision was developed:

Ultimately, transform an abandoned manufacturing site into a productive development that will draw local and regional users. Redevelopment should be appropriate for the mixed-use character of the area, contribute to a positive impression of the neighborhood and the city, encourage pedestrian and traffic connections with surrounding neighborhoods and the nearby downtown area, and incorporate public amenities. The development should include recreational opportunities, such as a private indoor athletic facility with a track, multi-sports fields, and a pool. The redeveloped site should encourage healthy lifestyle choices, offer sustainable job opportunities, and contribute to the city's tax base.

This URP is a reflection of current conditions in the city and the WRA's development priorities, which are dynamic and subject to change. Any major changes to the URP will be subject to City Council approval as well as submitted to The Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for approval, including a detailed description of the change, the purpose and effect of the plan change on project activities, and pertinent revisions of the original application to reflect the change.

V. Goals and Objectives

As described in **Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives** (*Section 3.1: Urban Revitalization Area Goals and Objectives*), the goals and objectives for the Project build on the Vision to create an environment that has a strong identity and sense of place within downtown Worcester, and to identify buildings and sites that provide the primary transformation opportunities for institutional, residential, and entertainment/cultural uses, and the infrastructure improvements needed to support those uses. The plan embraces, and seeks to build upon, the area's historic legacy. The objectives listed below were established in order to achieve this goal.

- Incorporate the priorities and goals of previous studies and master plans, as appropriate, to identify and prioritize development projects.
- Foster an environment for businesses and institutions to thrive and create sustainable jobs.
- Facilitate land assembly and disposition to advance the goals, objectives and activities of the URP by identifying parcels that have high potential for development.
- Redevelop former industrial properties and in so doing increase the number and diversity of well-paying jobs in the city.
- Encourage and preserve economic diversity and quality of life by providing opportunities for businesses serving a diversity of incomes and skills.
- Increase real estate tax income-generating properties in the URA.
- Encourage private sector investment and utilize public funds judiciously and strategically as a catalyst for private investment.
- Improve wayfinding, circulation and pedestrian connections within the URA as well as with key destinations throughout the city, to promote the integration of residential, institutional, cultural, and commercial uses.
- Improve access to modern and efficient public transportation options in order to make the URA more accessible, with consideration to intermodal transportation networks.
- Stimulate and leverage institutional presence and investment throughout the URA.
- Develop venues (e.g., restaurants, entertainment, and shopping) which attract area college students to the URA.
- Provide necessary public services efficiently and effectively.
- Create connections (including wayfinding) between the downtown and Wyman-Gordon Parcels that safely facilitate all modes of transportation and are aesthetically appealing.
- Establish an entertainment core linked to activity centers and open spaces.
- Increase stock of market-rate housing.
- Manage and increase the parking supply with appropriate thought given to shared usage and proximity to high demand areas.
- Improve roadways and sidewalks, as well as traffic circulation, as appropriate.
- Improve infrastructure systems to support modern development needs.
- Consider future cultural, food and sports-related programming opportunities to improve the quality of city experiences.

VI. Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles

The Commonwealth has established ten principles that encourage smart growth and sustainable development. Below is a discussion of how effectively the Worcester URP promotes these principles using redevelopment, open space and transportation improvements to attract economic development.

Concentrate Development and Mix Uses

Support the revitalization of city and town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that is compact, conserves land, protects historic resources, and integrates uses. Encourage remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure rather than new construction in undeveloped areas. Create pedestrian friendly districts and neighborhoods that mix commercial, civic, cultural, educational, and recreational activities with open spaces and homes.

The URP advances the principle of concentrating development and mixed-uses. The Study Area is highly urbanized and contains cultural resources, residential neighborhoods, commercial development, active industrial/manufacturing, a public common area and the Wyman-Gordon Parcels. The Project includes revitalizing former industrial areas and brownfields to create local and regional jobs and stimulate the local economy. The city is also focused on reusing and redeveloping existing commercial and industrial properties that are no longer functional.

Advance Equity

Promote equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning and decision making to ensure social, economic, and environmental justice. Ensure that the interests of future generations are not compromised by today's decisions.

The URP seeks to advance public and private investment in a community of need. The WRA, in collaboration with the City of Worcester, has undertaken outreach to include residents, stakeholders and advocates, and incorporated their input into the URP. Implementation of the URP will increase job opportunities for local residents; provide expansion potential for existing businesses, and promote remediation of brownfields. A major component of the URP involves redevelopment of a former manufacturing site, including public access to new amenities and recreational opportunities. These URP activities promote equity for current and future generations of Worcester residents.

Make Efficient Decisions

Make regulatory and permitting processes for development clear, predictable, coordinated, and timely in accordance with smart growth and environmental stewardship.

The City of Worcester considers customer service to be a top priority, and their website offers extensive E-services, including online permitting for building, electrical, gas, plumbing and mechanical permits and the Online Customer Service Center with a live chat feature during business hours. The city's Executive Office of Economic Development administers the economic development agenda and programs of the city; promotes, develops and expands investment and employment in the city; secures the commitment of private capital into new or existing business in the city; and administers and coordinates all federal, state and local programs involving the preparation of property for real estate development through the remediation or removal of contaminated buildings, soils or substances.

The Office also offers assistance for new business owners in identifying the appropriate office for zoning, permitting, and licensing processes, and holds free workshops for prospective business owners. Finally, Worcester published a

Building in Worcester: A Developer's Guide, City of Worcester (April 2009).¹ Worcester's business development resources reflect a process designed to promote efficient and coordinated decision-making. Thus, the URP complies with the Make Efficient Decisions Principle.

Protect Land and Ecosystems

Protect and restore environmentally sensitive lands, natural resources, agricultural lands, critical habitats, wetlands and water resources, and cultural and historic landscapes. Increase the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces and recreational opportunities.

As a highly urbanized area, the URA does not contain significant natural resources, critical habitats or agricultural lands. Therefore, the Worcester URP focuses on the protection and restoration of architectural, cultural and historic landscapes, sustainable development practices for new development, and increased open space and recreational opportunities.

There are numerous historic buildings within the URA with intact, but unmaintained, architectural elements. Façade improvements and rehabilitation efforts will preserve and enhance the historic architectural resources. New development will incorporate sustainable design principles, where feasible. Open space improvements are also an important component of the URP, and will advance quality of life and opportunities for recreation. Thus, the URP is consistent with the Master Plan as well as this sustainable development principle.

Use Natural Resources Wisely

Construct and promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, and materials.

New construction and redevelopment efforts will incorporate state stormwater management standards, low impact development techniques, and promote energy efficiency in building construction to the extent practicable. In 2010, Worcester became a state-designated Green Community under the Commonwealth's Green Communities Act. This designation recognizes the city's energy efficiency efforts and vision for a sustainable energy future. Worcester has a municipal initiative called "Worcester Energy" which has the following goals:

- To lead by example and improve the energy efficiency of municipal operations;
- To communicate the city's efforts related to energy efficiency, conservation and sustainability; and
- To provide resources and information in order to encourage residents, businesses and institutions to take action to reduce their energy use and carbon footprint.²

Sustainability and the efficient use of natural resources will be incorporated into the new development and rehabilitation projects outlined in this URP, and is therefore consistent with this design principle.

Expand Housing Opportunities

Support the construction and rehabilitation of homes to meet the needs of people of all abilities, income levels, and household types. Build homes near jobs, transit, and where services are available. Foster the development of housing, particularly multi-family and smaller single-family homes, in a way that is compatible with a community's character and vision and with providing new housing choices for people of all means.

¹ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/permitting/chapter43d/worcester-guidebook-final.pdf>

² <http://www.worcesterenergy.org/>

Existing housing within the URA is primarily located within the downtown area, and almost exclusively consists of apartment dwellings and residential condominiums. In general, conditions at many of the residential structures in the downtown area are moderately to significantly deteriorated due to deferred or inadequate maintenance, health and sanitation violations, recurrent police activity, and complaints about garbage and illicit activity. The URP includes the development of new residential units in currently underutilized structures and encourages façade improvements for a number of buildings with residential units. The city will also coordinate with property owners to encourage rehabilitation of existing downtown units and increase the variety and quality of downtown rental and condominium housing.

South of the P&W ROW, current residential development within the URA is limited to two single-family residential units. These homes appear occupied and well-maintained. However, they are surrounded by expanses of vacant and neglected land enclosed by chain link fences. Redeveloping this portion of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels with some appropriately scaled residential development has the potential to significantly enhance the housing opportunities available in the immediate area. Based on this, the URP will foster residential development that is compatible with the URA's character and vision, and will provide improved housing choices for people of all means.

Provide Transportation Choice

Maintain and expand transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality. Prioritize rail, bus, boat, rapid and surface transit, shared-vehicle and shared-ride services, bicycling, and walking. Invest strategically in existing and new passenger and freight transportation infrastructure that supports sound economic development consistent with smart growth objectives.

The Worcester URA is adjacent to the city's multi-modal transportation center, which includes Amtrak and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail service, commercial bus service (e.g., Peter Pan) at Union Station, and the recently constructed WRTA Hub at 60 Foster Street. The Blackstone River Bikeway (also referred to herein as "the Bikeway") will also come into the city through the URA and terminate at Union Station. The URP seeks to facilitate pedestrian connections to these facilities by improving the connectivity while increasing downtown pedestrian traffic with new office, commercial, retail, hotel and residential facilities. Roadway improvements proposed within the URA will incorporate pedestrian amenities, bus shelters, and bicycle lanes, as appropriate. Therefore, the URP is consistent with the principle of providing transportation choice.

Increase Job and Business Opportunities

Attract businesses and jobs to locations near housing, infrastructure, and transportation options. Promote economic development in industry clusters. Expand access to education, training, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Support the growth of local businesses, including sustainable natural resource-based businesses, such as agriculture, forestry, clean energy technology, and fisheries.

The Worcester Commercial Corridors Overlay District (CCOD), adopted in February 2015 (refer to the discussion of zoning in **Chapter 12.02 (1)**), provides a very clear indication of the city's intent to promote both redevelopment of existing buildings and new development of consistent and compatible character; encourage a mix of complementary uses; foster the development of high-quality, pedestrian-scale environments through site and building design; reduce the amount of land devoted to parking and utilize parking areas more efficiently; and preserve and enhance the historical, cultural and architectural assets of the city. The CCOD also encourages mixed-use development by integrating residential uses with urban-appropriate setbacks, parking and landscaping requirements. The URP advances the principle of increasing job and business opportunities near housing, infrastructure and transportation options.

Promote Clean Energy

Maximize energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities. Support energy conservation strategies, local clean power generation, distributed generation technologies, and innovative industries. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of fossil fuels.

The URP calls for energy conservation to be incorporated in all projects, particularly commercial renovation and redevelopment. It is anticipated that the redevelopment of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels will showcase sustainable design technologies. Waste materials from demolition and construction of the new facilities will be recycled when possible.

Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly amenities, improved pedestrian connections and increased public transportation opportunities will reduce miles traveled, which translates into reduced greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of fossil fuels.

Plan Regionally

Support the development and implementation of local and regional, state and interstate plans that have broad public support and are consistent with these principles. Foster development projects, land and water conservation, transportation and housing that have a regional or multi-community benefit. Consider the long-term costs and benefits to the Commonwealth.

The local master plan most recently associated with the URP is the 2012 Theatre District Master Plan. As noted above, this URP embodies the vision that was outlined in that plan, and seeks to create an active, mixed-use, 18-hour neighborhood with significant institutional and residential growth supporting a vibrant entertainment and cultural environment drawing residents, businesses, and visitors to downtown Worcester. Other plans, including a 1995 Predevelopment Study of the Wyman-Gordon property, have focused on the area south of the P&W ROW. The 1995 study noted the many assets of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, including central location, large and relatively flat urban tracts of land, proximity to Union Station and highways, and existing municipal utilities. The primary disadvantage of the area is the known hazardous waste contamination. There are many potentially suitable uses for the property, including mixed-use facilities, sporting/recreation facilities, public safety facilities, and low intensity manufacturing or office facilities. Some portions may also be suitable for residential and/or retail uses.

At the regional level, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) published the document *Central Massachusetts Grows! Greater Worcester Area Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* in 2012. The CEDS process focused on the identification of common issues and a joint commitment to success, understanding that needs and interests of different stakeholders within the region should be balanced. The CEDS Action Plan identifies the following four goals, one each for industrial and commercial development, transportation, and workforce development:

1. To strengthen the industrial and commercial sectors within the CEDS Region.
2. To play a part in establishing an expanded, integrated, coordinated, truly multi-modal regional transportation network.
3. To play a part in establishing a comprehensive network of water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure and other necessary utilities and promote green energy.

4. To provide an array of workforce development initiatives (employment, education, and training) for corporate and private citizens throughout the CEDS Region.³

The URP supports all of the above goals, particularly Goal #1. The CEDS Activity Implementation Plan associated with Goal #1 includes the following actions:

- Within the City of Worcester and older suburban towns, encourage reinvestment and reuse of brownfield sites, especially brownfield sites where feasible.
- Encourage reinvestment and reuse of sites in older commercial districts and downtowns.
- Provide information about the region's economic development potential through the conduct and maintenance of an industrial site survey.
- Promote economic growth in locations with public utilities that can be developed as clusters or nodes and eventually become linked to public transit.
- Encourage collaboration among government, industry and public and private institutions in marketing this area as a place where value and opportunity can be found.
- Work to provide gap lending and micro-financing to enable start-up companies to gain the technical assistance necessary to begin work.
- Work in partnership with technical and higher education institutions and the private business sector to create and develop innovation and incubator centers.

The report notes that the City of Worcester is a major economic engine in the region with tremendous intellectual capital due to the academic institutions and a highly skilled and educated workforce.⁴ The CEDS document also identifies *Priority Projects* throughout the region, which includes the following actions that are relevant to the URP:

- Downtown Worcester Revitalization
- CitySquare
- Main Street Improvements
- TOD – Sensible (Sense Able) Bridges
- Wayfinding; and
- The Wyman-Gordon Parcels.⁵

Overall, the URP is consistent with these plans, which have broad public support and are based on the premise that a strong downtown will significantly benefit the region.

³ CMRPC, *Central Massachusetts Grows! Greater Worcester Area Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*, 2012, pp. 75-78.

⁴ *ibid*, p. 80.

⁵ *ibid*, pp. 100-108.

12.02 (1) CHARACTERISTICS

The plans and information presented herein describe the existing characteristics of the Study Area, as well as the proposed future conditions. *Section 1.1: URP Figures* presents the required and supplemental plans and figures for the Project. *Section 1.2: Supplemental Narrative for URP Figures* provides additional discussions of map content, as appropriate, with references to other sections of the URP for further detail.

Section 1: URP Figures

The figures presented herein and listed below adhere to the state’s requirements for urban renewal plans to support the findings that the Study Area meets the eligibility requirements for an urban renewal area. The maps and plans were developed using MassGIS supplemented by field observations.

Required Figures

- A-1 Project Location and URA Boundaries
- A-2 Aerial Photography with Project Boundary
- A-3 Topography
- B-1 Boundaries of Proposed Clearance and Rehabilitation Areas
- C-1 Existing Property Lines, Building Foot Prints and Parking Areas
- C-2 Proposed Property Lines, Building Foot Prints and Parking Areas
- D-1 Existing Land Use
- D-2.1 Existing Zoning
- D-2.2 Existing Zoning Overlay Districts
- E-1 Proposed Land Use
- F-1 Existing Roadways, Public Rights-of-Way and Easements
- F-2 Proposed Roadways, Public Rights-of-Way and Easements
- G-1 Parcels to be Acquired
- H-1 Lots to be Created for Disposition
- I-1 Buildings to be Demolished
- J-1 Buildings to be Rehabilitated
- K-1 Buildings to be Constructed

Supplemental Figures

- S-1 Study Area Location – USGS Locus
- S-2 Index of Key Buildings
- S-3 Environmental Constraints
- S-4 Priority Private Redevelopment Sites
- S-5 Public Realm Improvements
- S-6 URP Concept Plan

Figure A-1: Project Location and URA Boundary

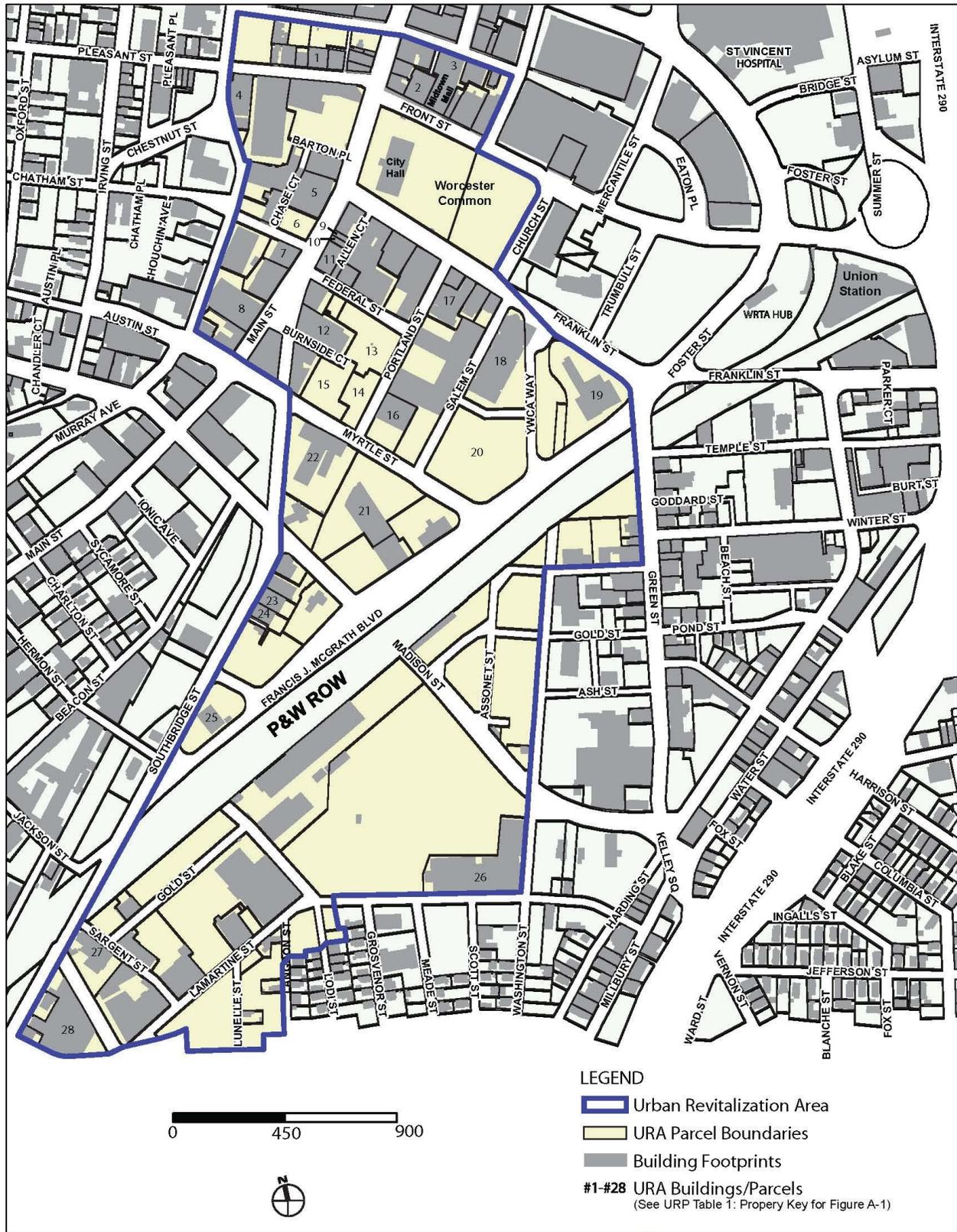


Figure A-2: Aerial Photography with URA Boundary

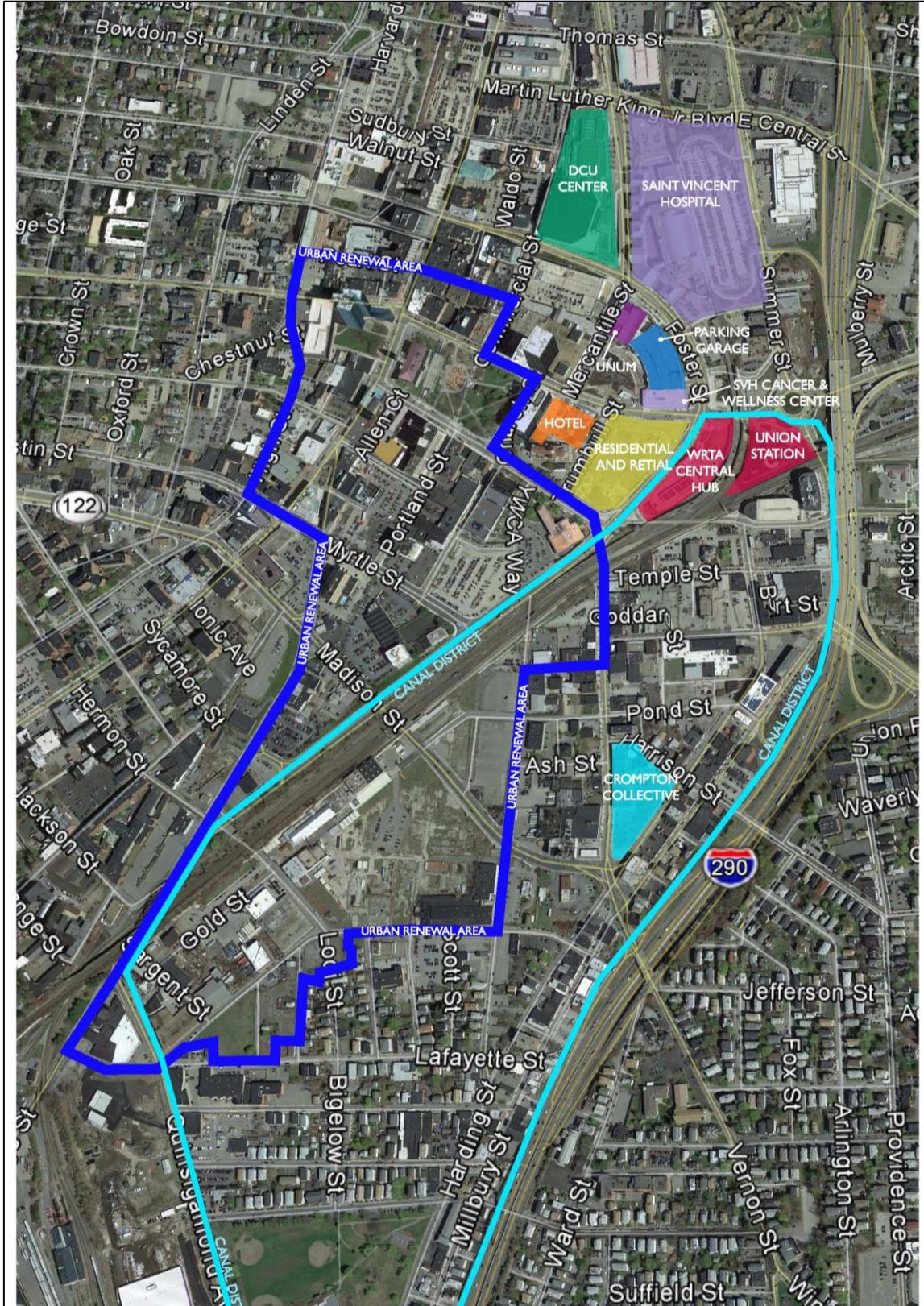


Figure A-3: Topography

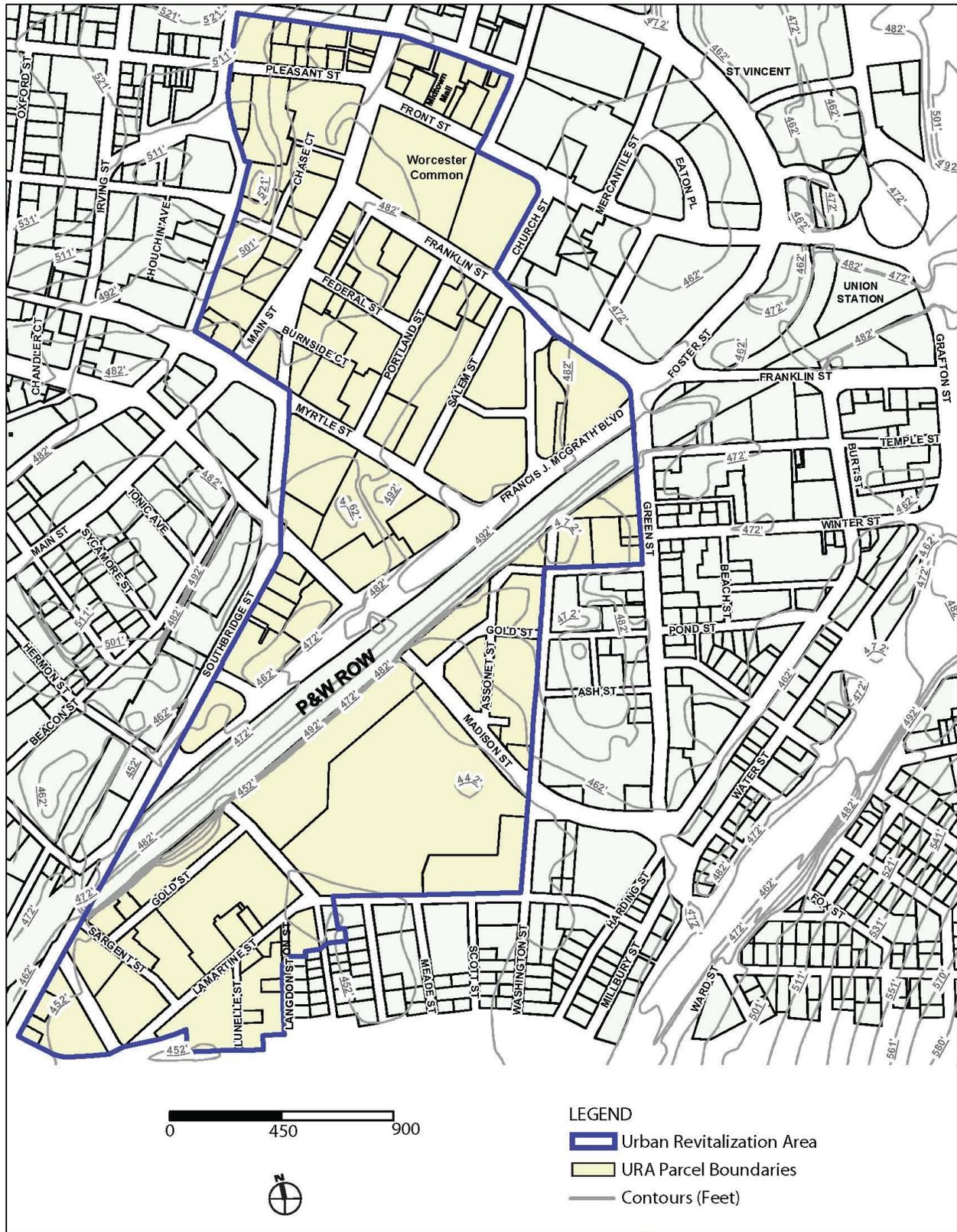


Figure B-1: Boundaries of Proposed Clearance and Rehabilitation Areas

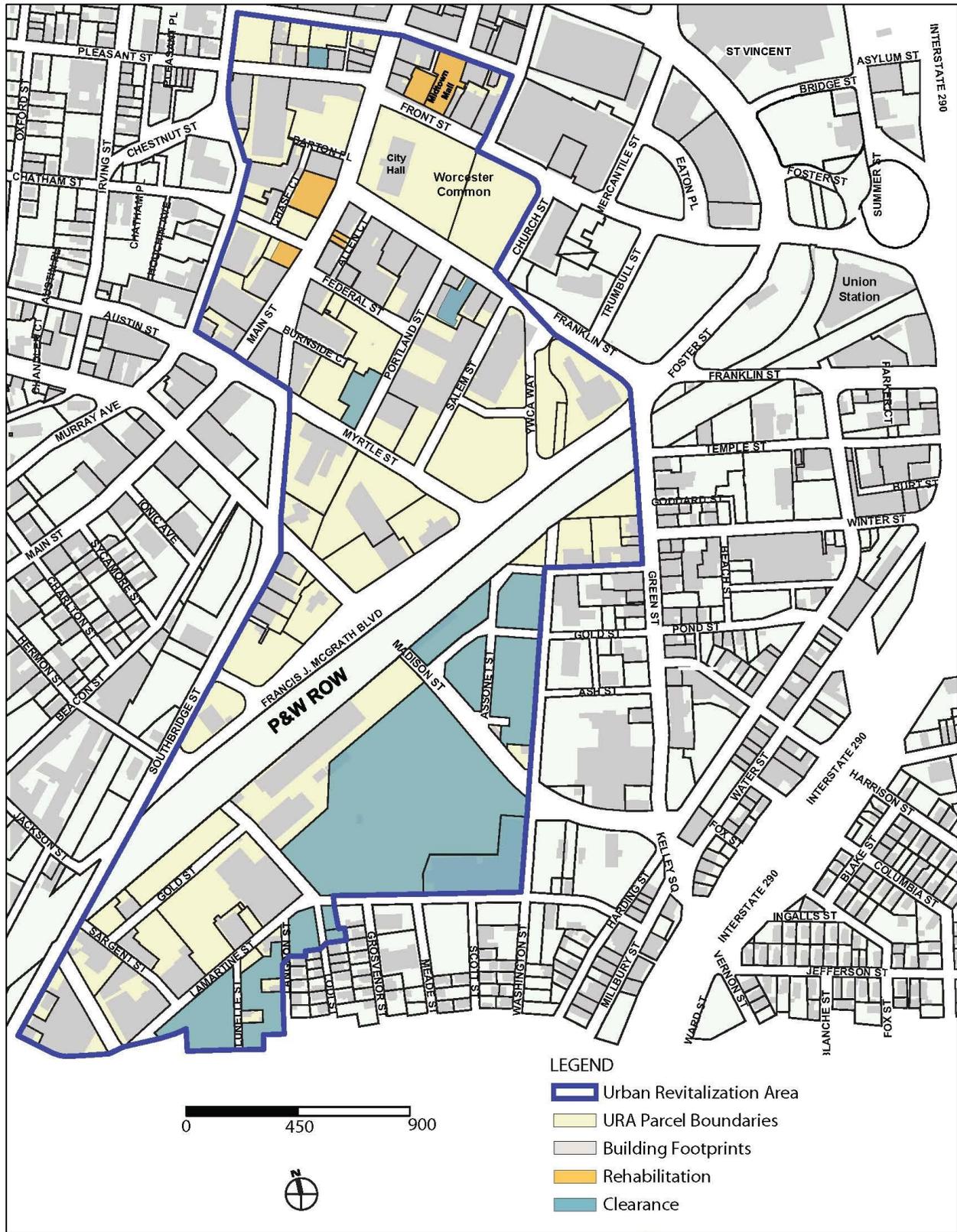


Figure C-1: Existing Property Lines, Building Foot Prints and Parking Areas

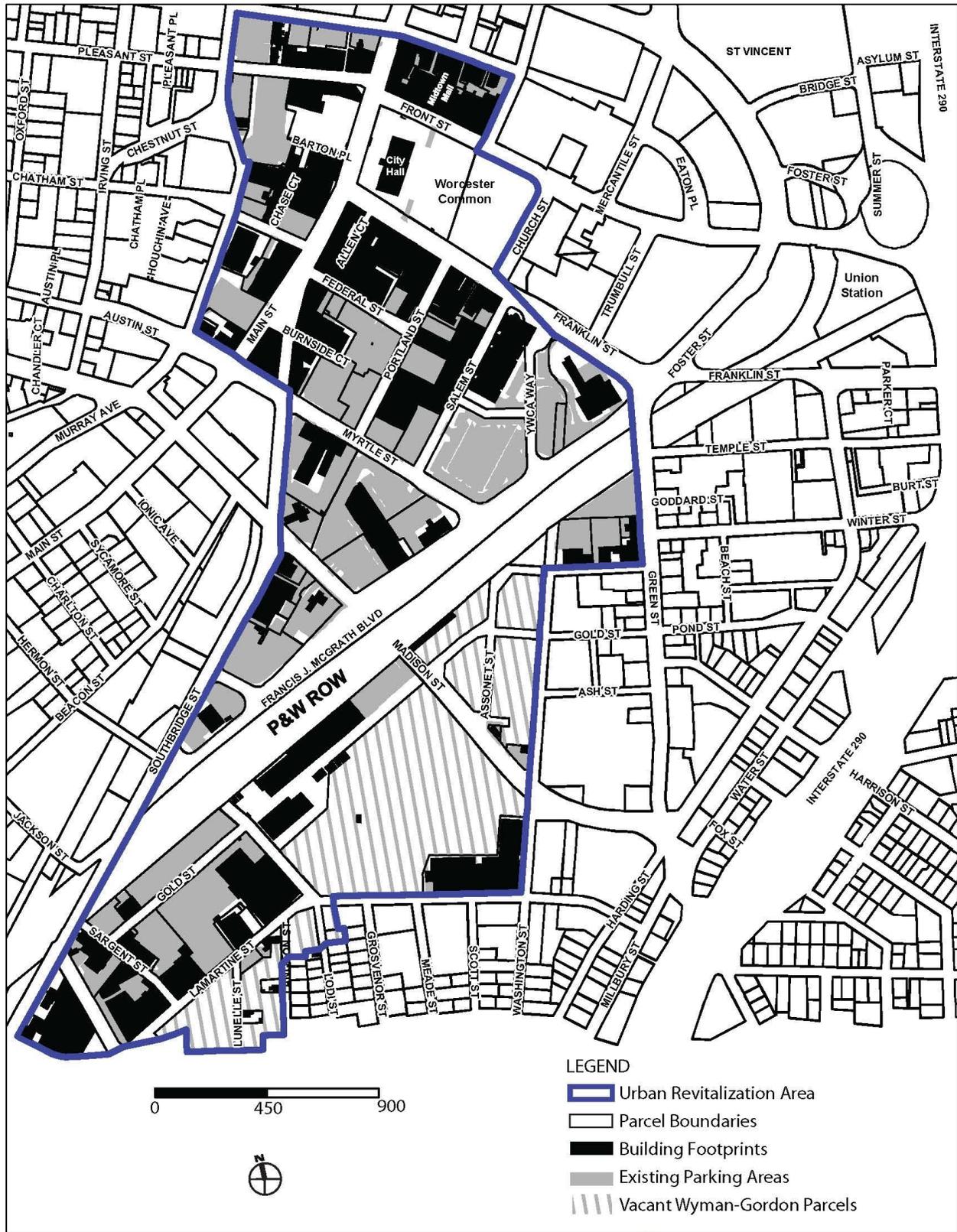


Figure C-2: Proposed Property Lines, Building Foot Prints and Parking Areas

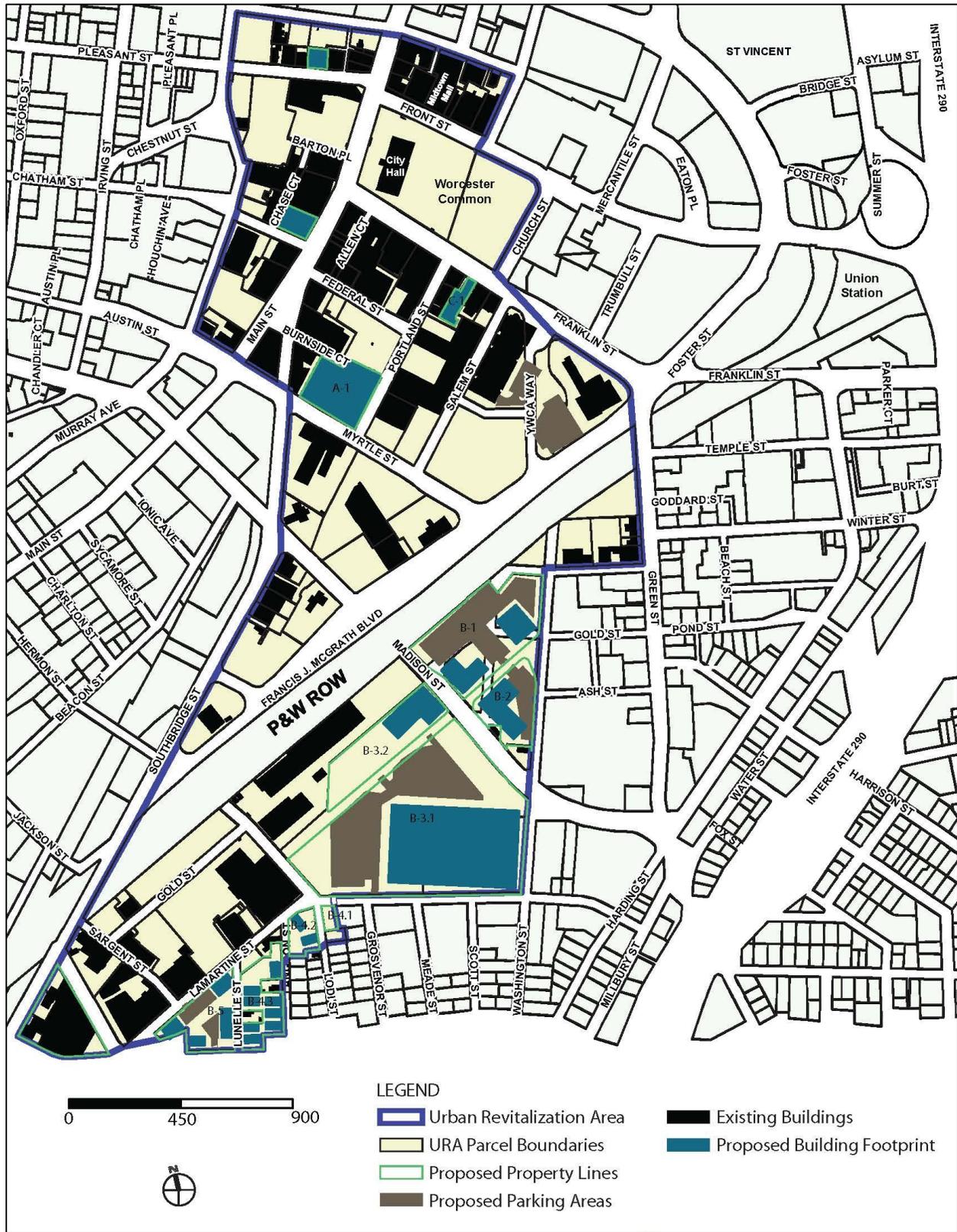


Figure D-1: Existing Land Use

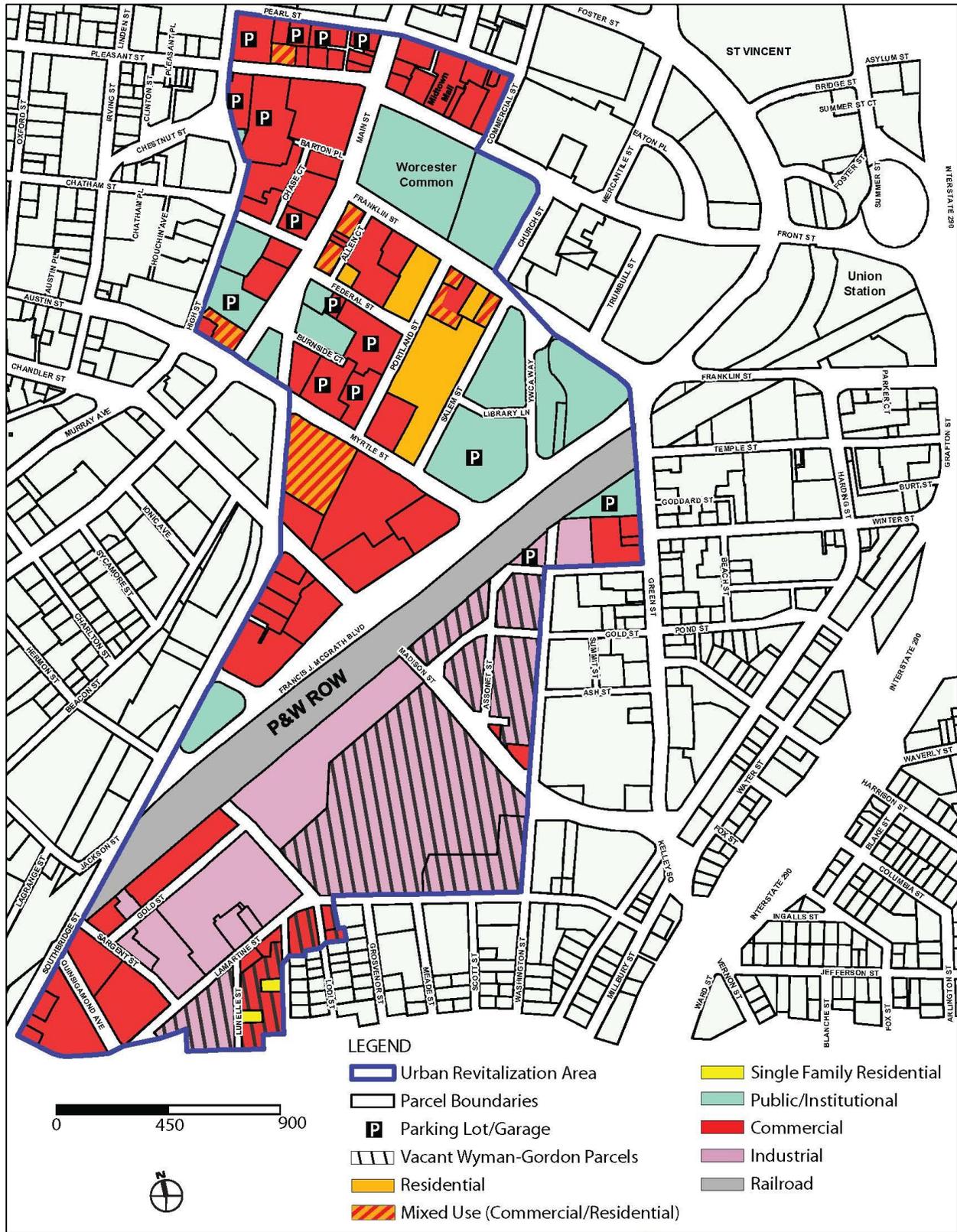


Figure D-2.1: Existing Zoning

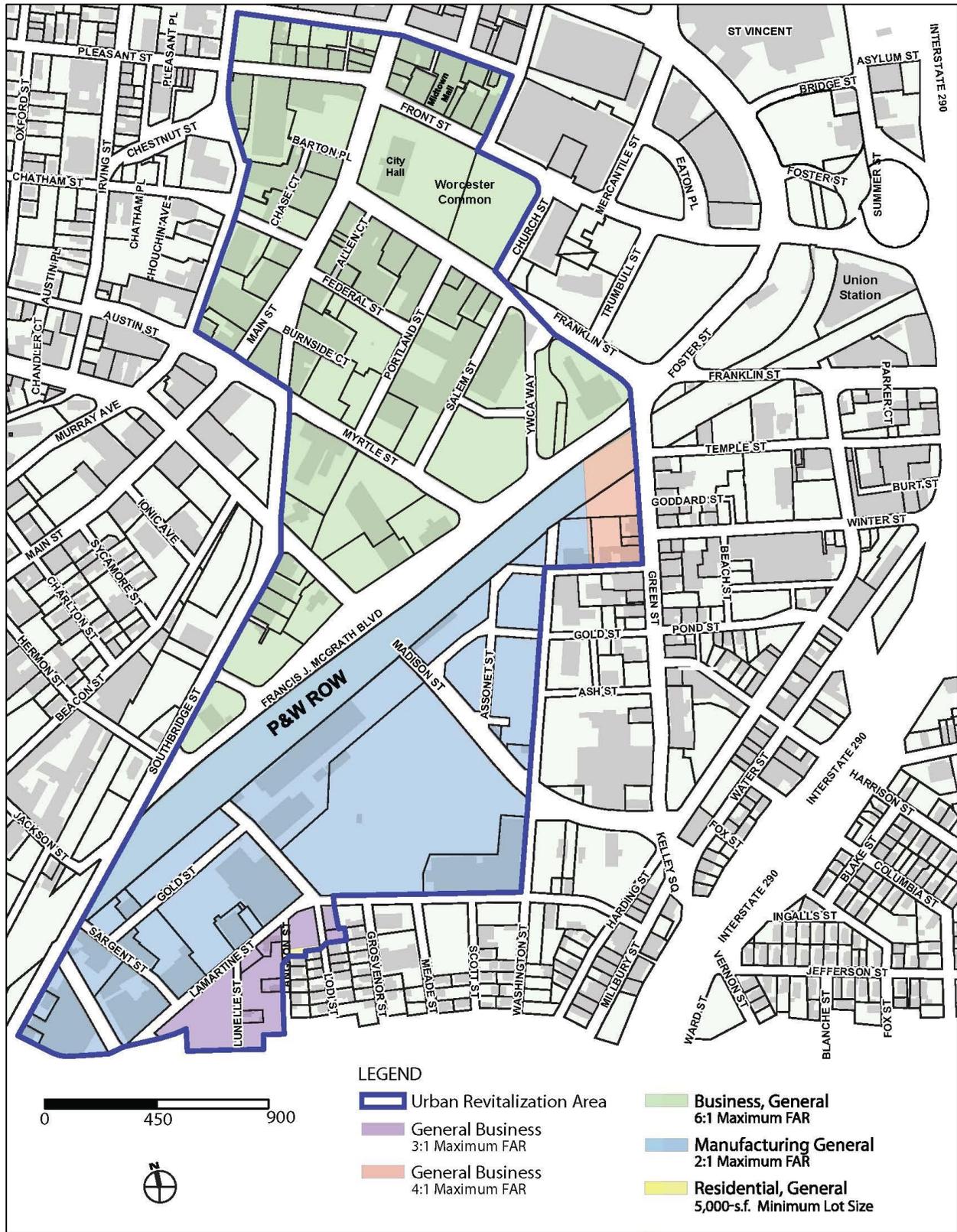


Figure D-2.2: Existing Zoning Overlay Districts

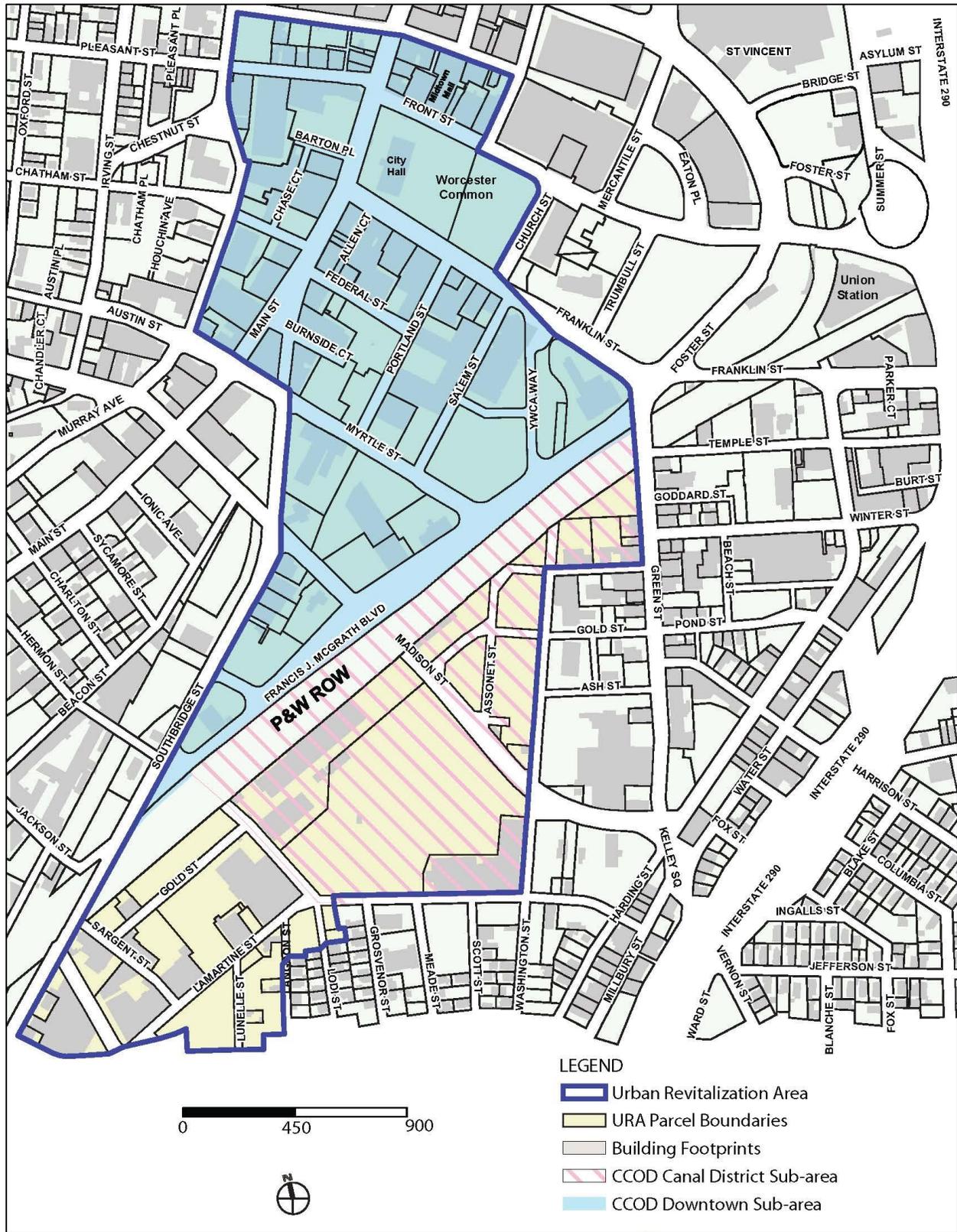


Figure E-1: Proposed Land Use

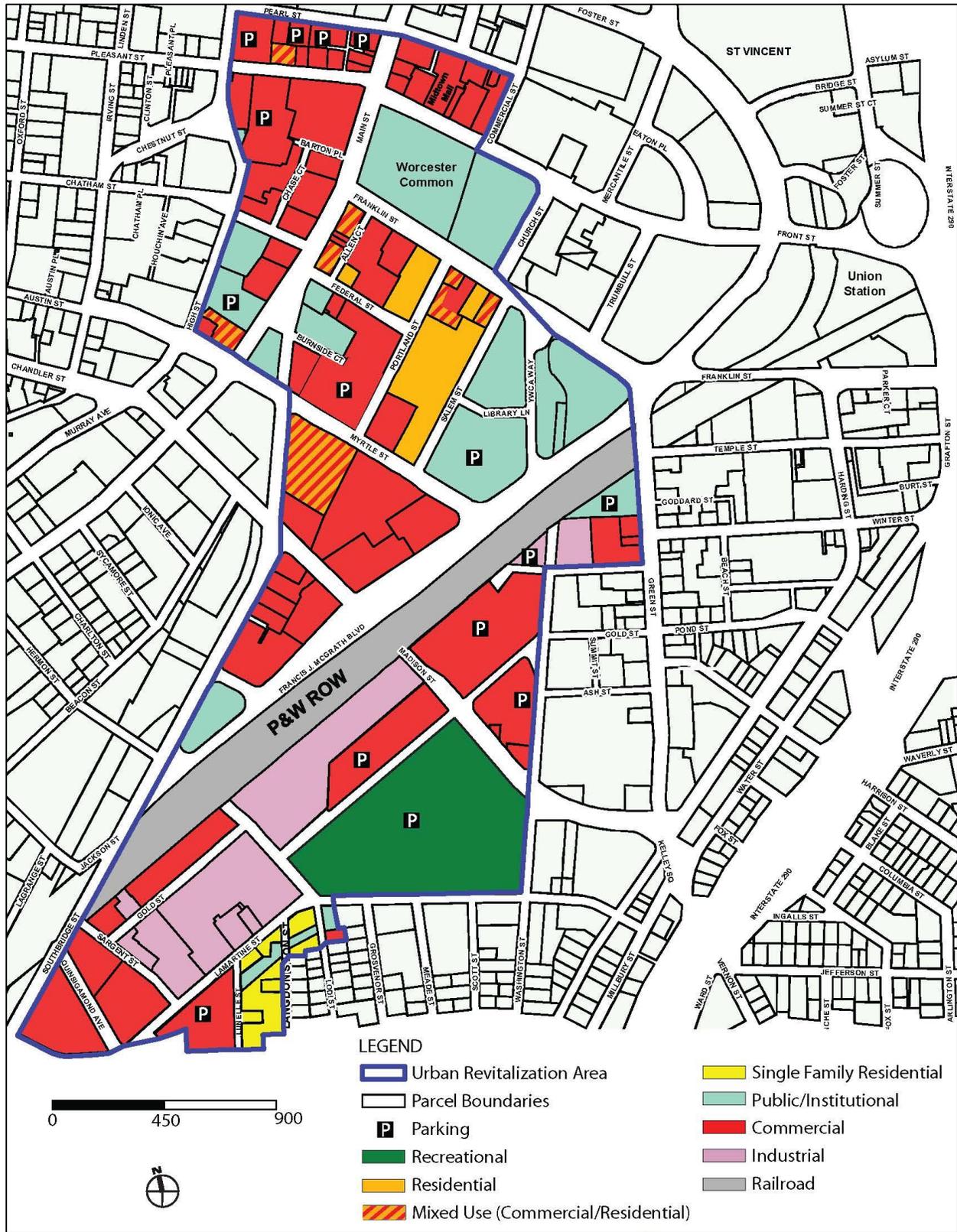


Figure F-1: Existing Roadways, Public Rights-of-Way and Easements



Figure F-2: Proposed Roadways, Public Rights-of-Way and Easements

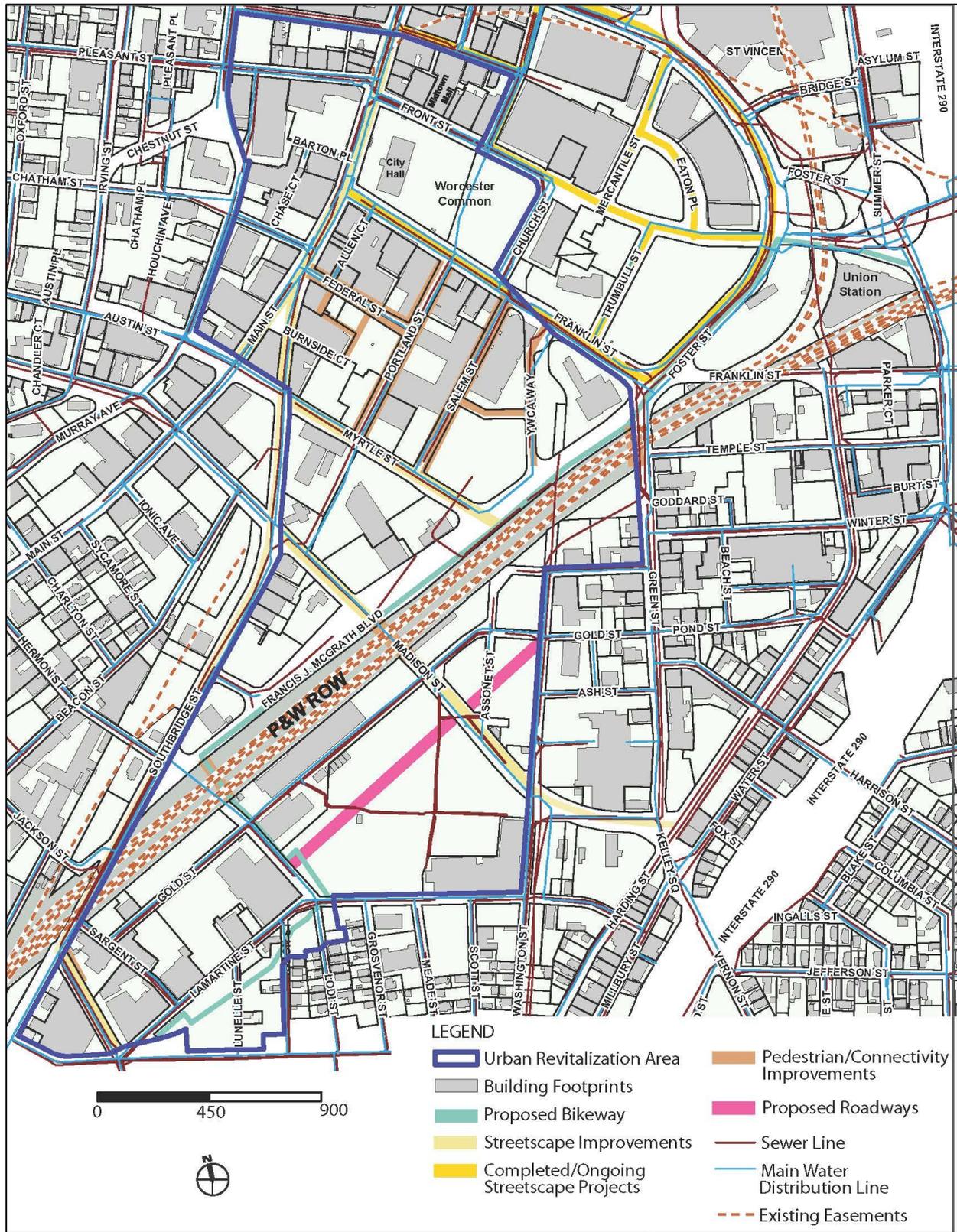


Figure G-1: Parcels to be Acquired or Transferred

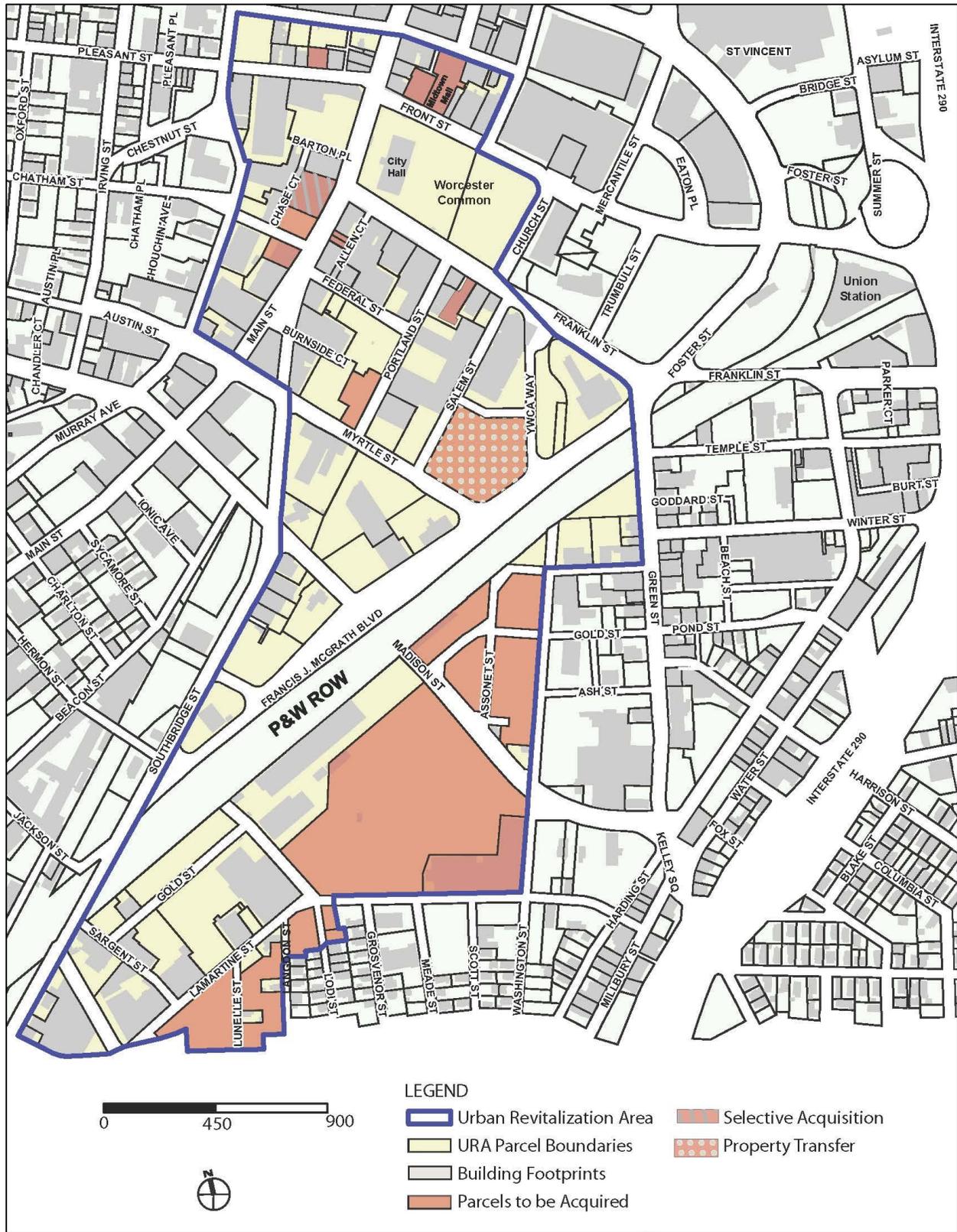


Figure H-1: Lots to be Created for Disposition

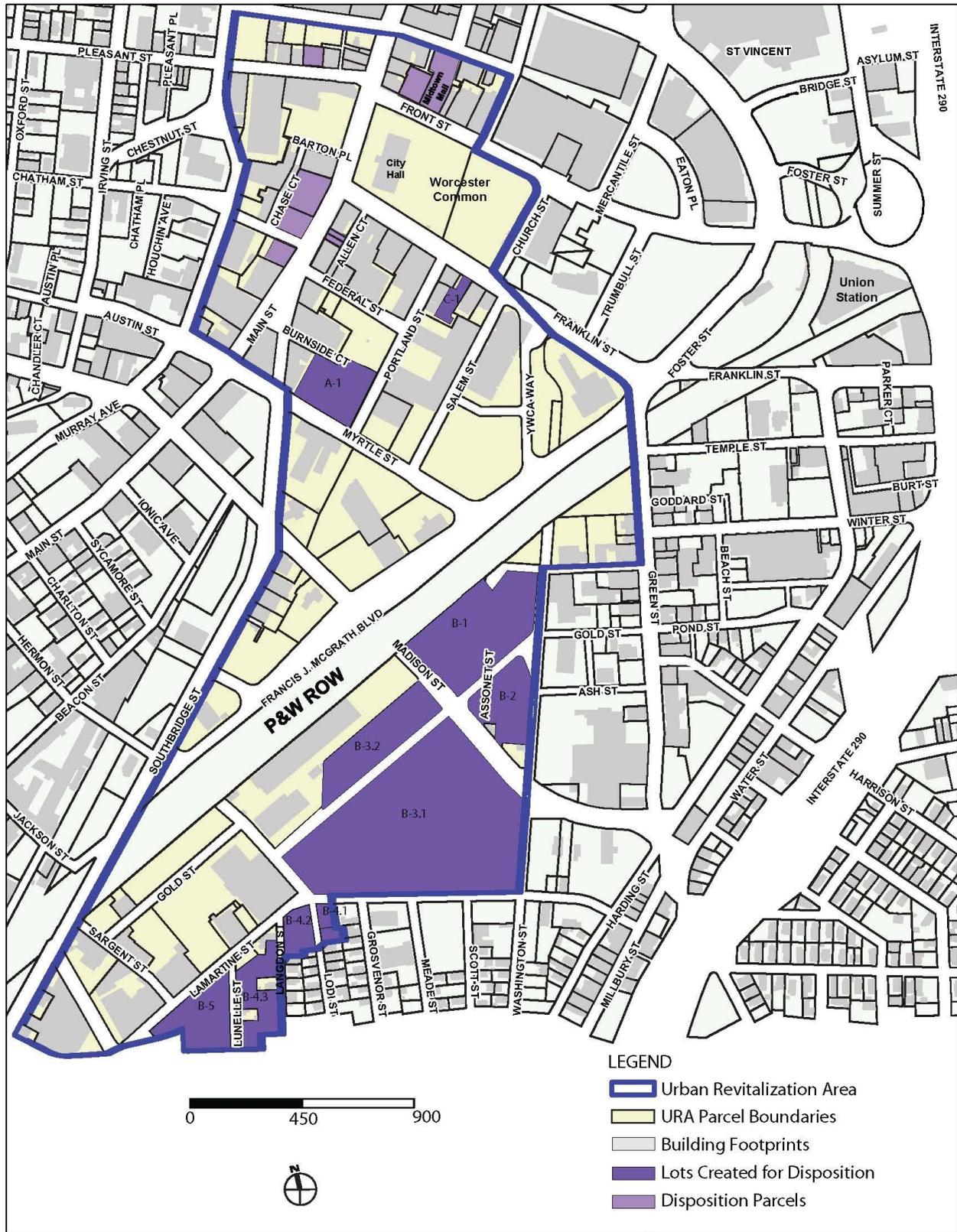


Figure I-1: Buildings to be Demolished

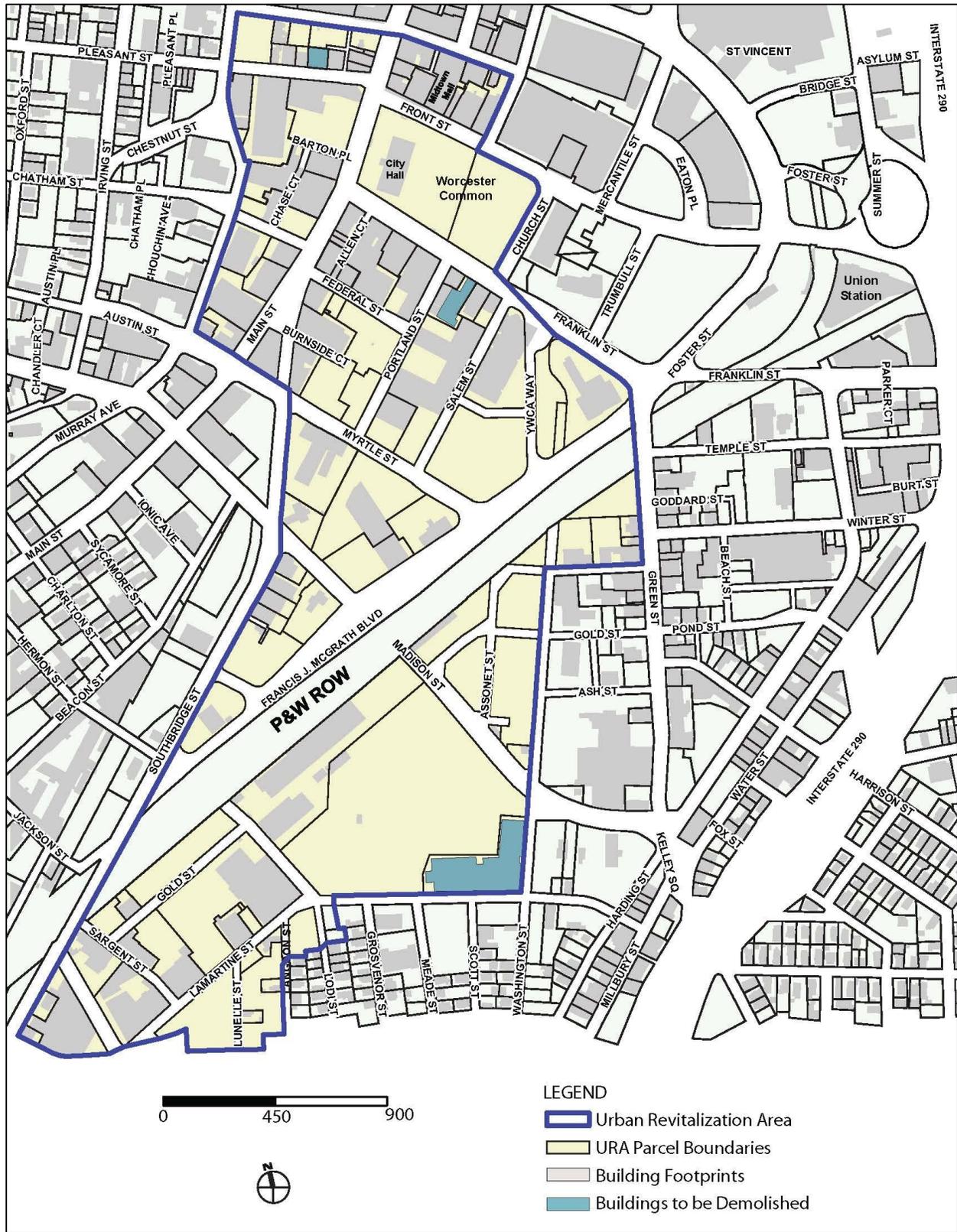


Figure J-1: Buildings to be Rehabilitated

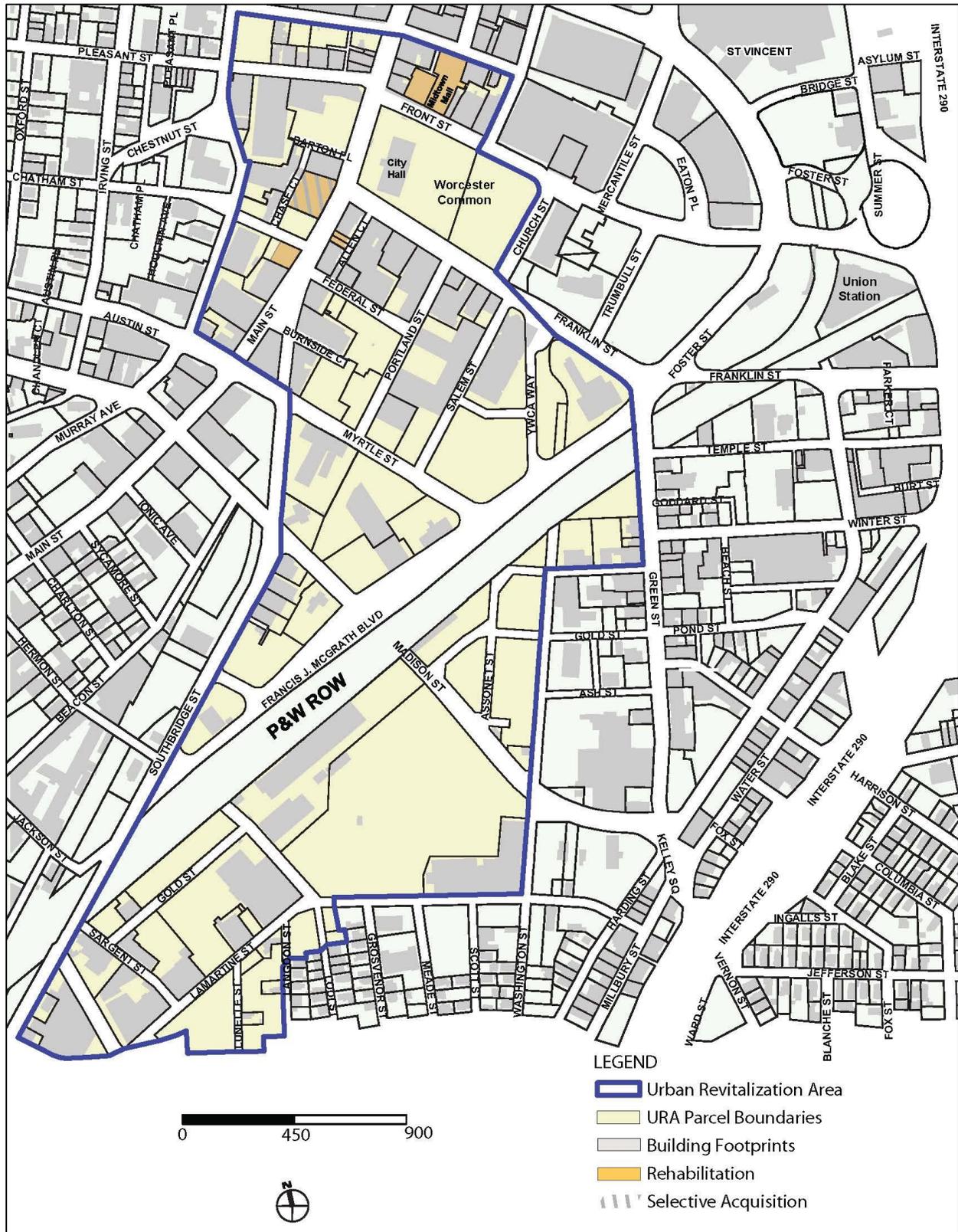


Figure K-1: Buildings to be Constructed

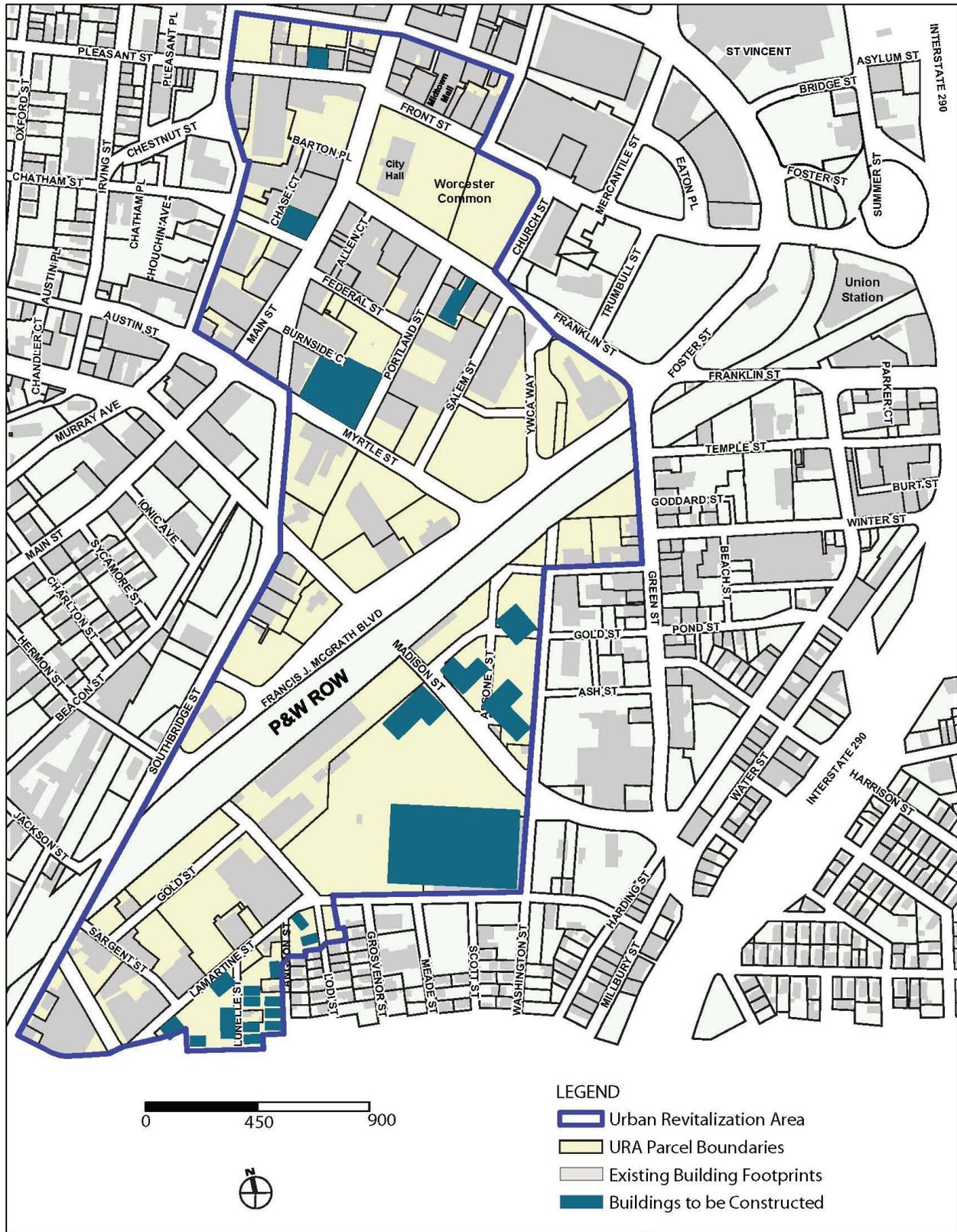


Figure S-1: Study Area Location – USGS Locus

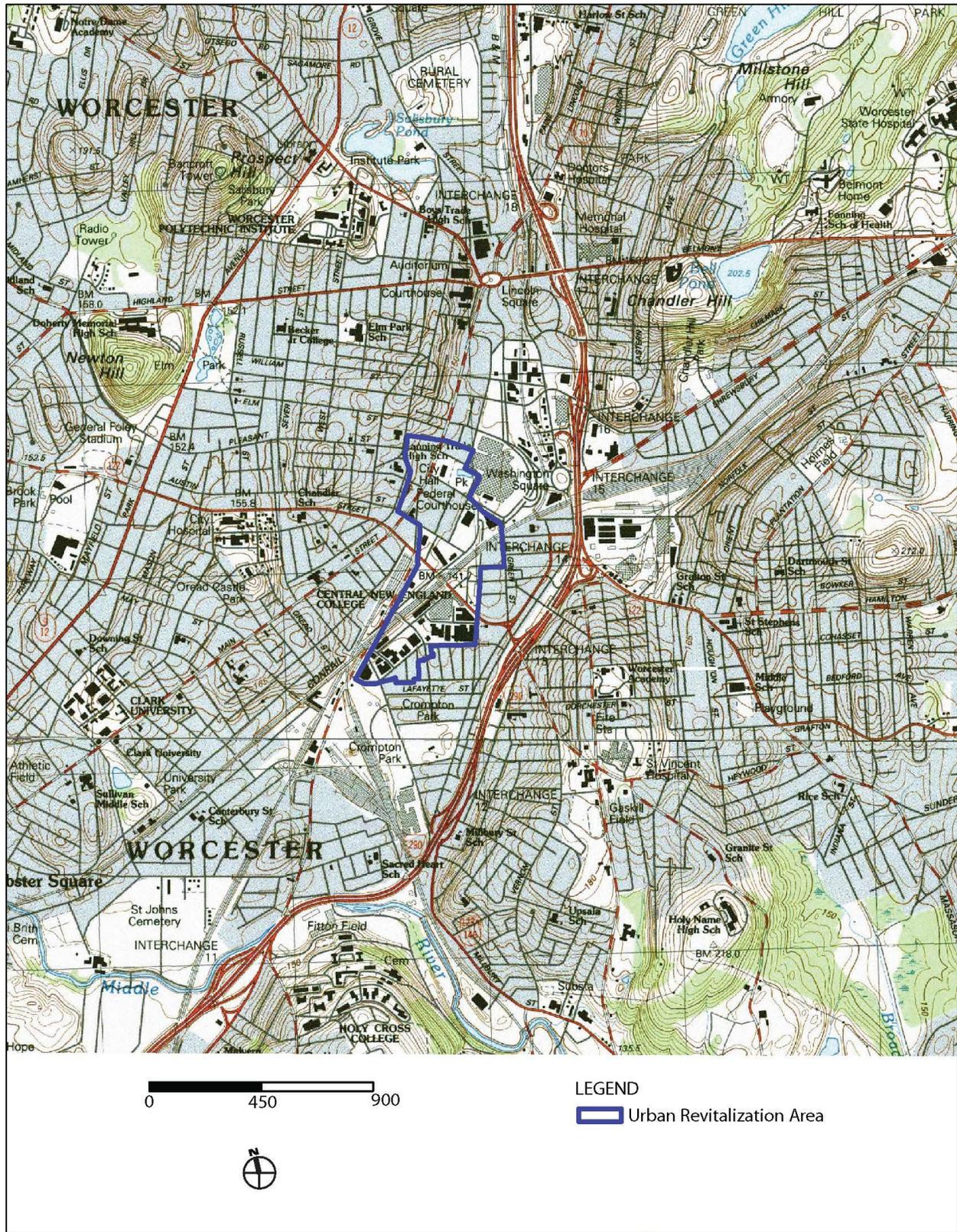


Figure S-2: Environmental Constraints



Figure S-3: Priority Private Redevelopment Sites

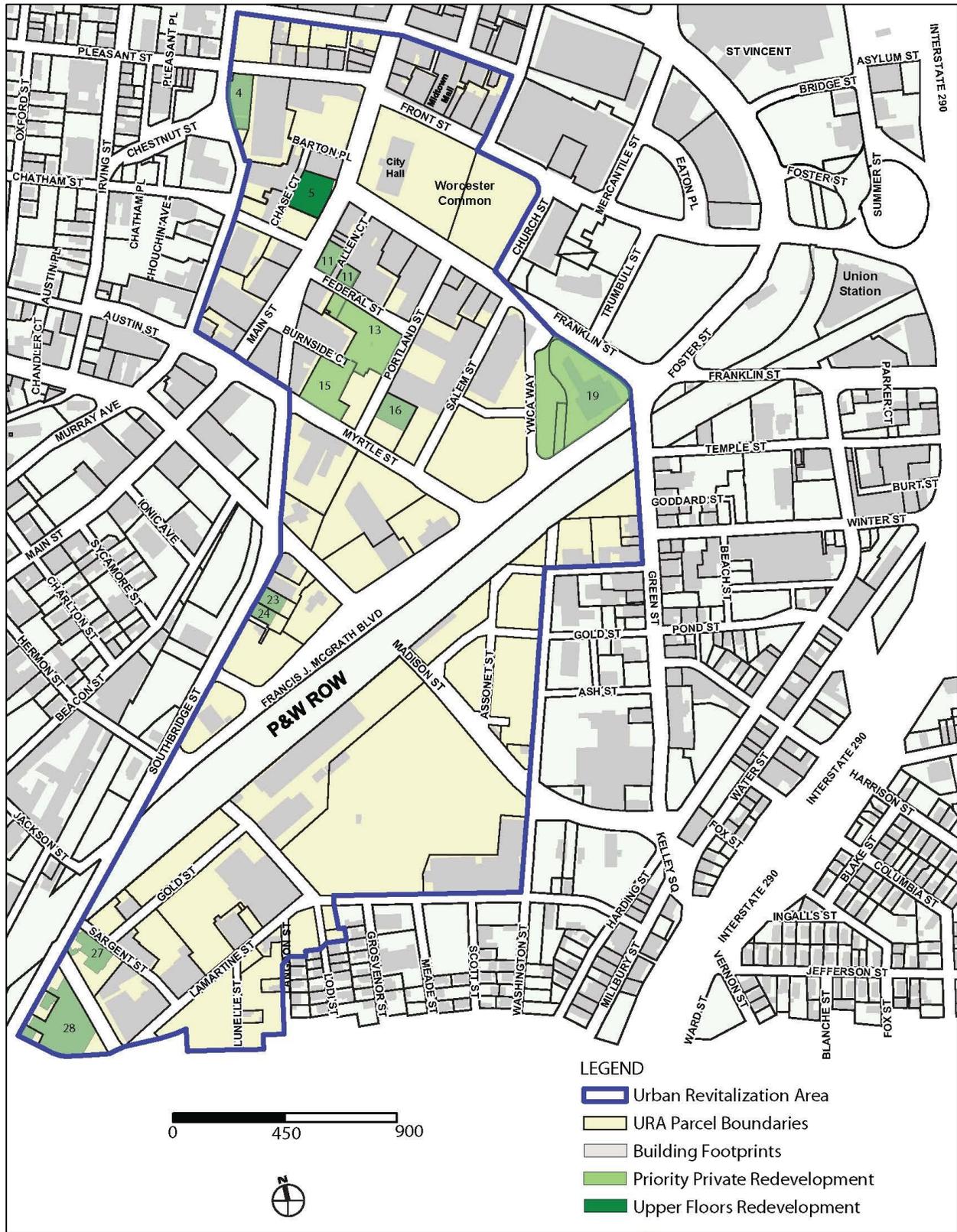
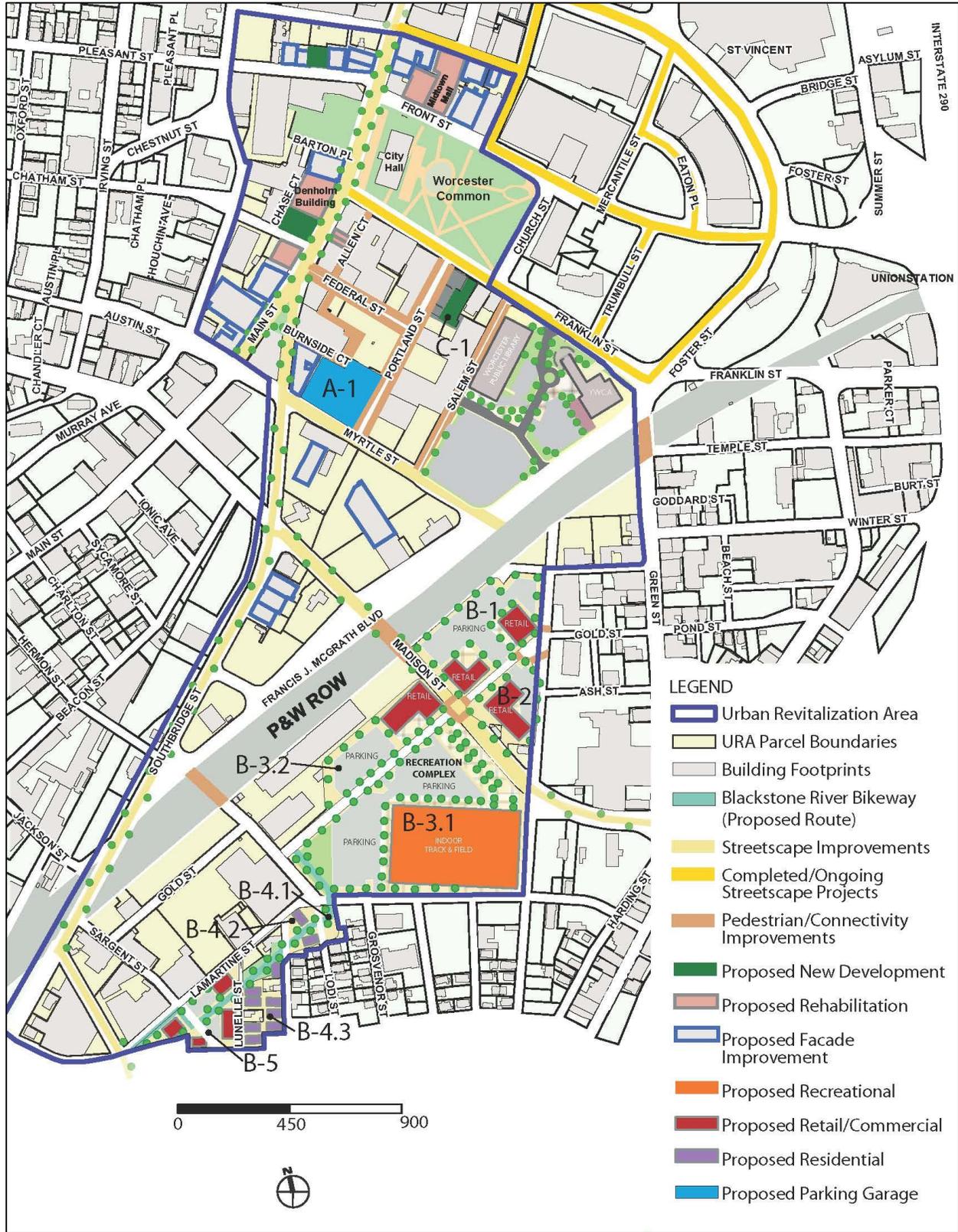


Figure S-5: URP Concept Plan



Section 1.2: Supplemental Narrative for URP Figures

Most of the figures presented in *Section 1.1* are self-explanatory, but some warrant a brief narrative to provide insight into the information provided. The following material expands on the information presented in some of the figures, with references to other sections of the URP, as appropriate.

1.2.1 Figure A-1: Project Location and URA Boundaries

The URA is generally bounded as follows:

- Beginning at the intersection of Myrtle Street and Southbridge Street (near the Hanover Theatre) extending approximately 245 feet northwest along Myrtle Street to Main Street;
- At Main Street, Myrtle Street becomes Austin Street, and the boundary continues northwest along Austin Street for approximately 240 feet to High Street;
- Turn north onto High Street, extending approximately 560 feet to the intersection with Chatham Street, where the road becomes Aldrich Street;
- Continue along Aldrich Street in a northerly direction for approximately 490 feet, to the merge with Chestnut Street;
- Continue northward on Chestnut Street for approximately 360 feet to Pearl Street;
- Turn eastward on Pearl Street for approximately 655 feet to Main Street;
- Cross Main Street onto Mechanic Street, continuing in an easterly direction for approximately 550 feet to the intersection with Commercial Street;
- At Commercial Street, turn sharply southward and travel approximately 335 feet to Front Street;
- At Front Street, turn sharply eastward for 310 feet to the intersection with Church Street;
- At Church Street, turn southward for approximately 455 feet to Franklin Street;
- Heading in a southeasterly direction along Franklin Street for approximately 715 feet to the intersection with Foster Street, where the roadway becomes Green Street;
- Heading southward, Green Street travels through the aqueduct tunnel beneath the P&W ROW, and extends approximately 705 feet to Plymouth Street;
- Turn westward at Plymouth Street for approximately 405 feet to Washington Street;
- Turn southward along Washington Street for approximately 1,320 feet to Lamartine Street;
- Turn sharply westward onto Lamartine Street for approximately 760 feet to the rear of 55 Lamartine Street (Parcel 05-014-00026);
- Turn southward behind 55 Lamartine and 30 Lodi Street (Parcel 05-0014-00027) for approximately 160 feet, then sharply westward, following the parcel boundaries;
- The boundary crosses Lodi Street, continuing westward along the rear boundary of 65 Lamartine Street (Parcel 016-013-36-41) to Langdon Street;
- At Langdon Street, turn southward for approximately 315 feet to the southern boundary of 9 Langdon Street (Parcel 05-013-00130);
- Follow the parcel's southern boundary in a westward direction for approximately 85 feet, then southward for approximately 60 feet to Lafayette Street;
- At Lafayette Street, continue westward for approximately 305 feet, then turn northward to follow the southern parcel boundary of 103 Lamartine Street (Parcel 05-013-00412) for approximately 90 feet, then westward for approximately 285 feet to the intersection of Lamartine Street, Lafayette Street and Quinsigamond Avenue;
- Continue on Lafayette Street for approximately 440 feet, crossing Quinsigamond Avenue, to the intersection with Southbridge Street;

- At Southbridge Street, turn northeasterly for 2,300 feet, crossing under the P&W ROW, to the intersection of Southbridge and Madison Streets;
- Traveling slightly further north, continue for 510 feet to the starting point at Southbridge and Myrtle Streets.

The URA encompasses redevelopment opportunity areas in downtown Worcester. The area north of the P&W ROW is a mix of commercial and residential uses, interspersed with institutional and cultural uses. Much of this area is centered along or near Main Street. The area south of the P&W ROW is primarily industrial and commercial, and includes the unoccupied Wyman-Gordon Parcels. Please refer to **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility** for detailed information on the Study Area.

A number of key parcels are discussed throughout this URP with regard to potential URP-related activities, façade improvements and/or private development, as well as important downtown landmarks. For ease of reference, many of these are referenced numerically on *Figure A-1*. The numbers shown on *Figure A-1* correlate to the buildings/addresses listed in *Table 1: Property Key for Figure A-1* (see next page).

1.2.2 Figure A-2: Aerial View of Study Area

As shown in the aerial view, the URP and surrounding area are highly urbanized due to the densely developed downtown, transportation uses, and industrial past. This figure also points out some of the important landmarks and projects in the URA vicinity. Please refer to **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility** (*Section 2.2: Study Area Location and Context*), as well as **Attachment E: Overview of Worcester Projects**, for additional information on landmarks and projects in and around the URA. In general, urban areas are highly dynamic, and it is possible that demolition and/or construction has occurred since this aerial was taken. Nonetheless, the aerial is included because it provides important context information that is difficult to convey in a schematic plan.

1.2.3 Figure B-1: Boundaries of Proposed Clearance and Rehabilitation Areas

M.G.L. c. 121B, § 1 defines “clearance” as “the demolition and removal of buildings from any substandard, decadent, or blighted open area by an operating agency in accordance with subsection (d) of section 26.” This figure generally highlights the proposed redevelopment areas as well as the structures identified for rehabilitation. The three buildings to be acquired for demolition (see *Figure I-1* and *Table 6* later in this chapter) meet the definition of Clearance, as discussed in **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility**, *Section 2.8: Area Eligibility Designation*.

1.2.4 Figure C-1: Existing Property Lines, Building Footprints and Parking Areas

The Study Area is comprised of approximately 118 parcels and 380 properties (including approximately 67 business and 214 residential condominiums). For purposes of this URP, the P&W ROW is counted as a parcel. The URA is approximately 118.4 acres in total, with approximately 93.7 acres exclusive of public roads and public ROW. *Figure C-1* depicts the property lines and building footprints within the URA.

Figure C-1 also depicts existing parking areas. Most of the lots are private, but there is one municipal garage and two municipal surface lots in the URA. The garage is the Federal Plaza Garage located across from the Hanover Theatre at 570 Main Street. Another garage within the URA is the Worcester Plaza Garage located behind the Worcester Plaza tower at 40 Pleasant Street. This is a private facility but open to the public. The municipal surface lots are the McGrath Municipal Lot behind the Worcester Public Library and the General Josiah Pickett Municipal Lot at 43 Green Street just south of the P&W underpass.

Table 1: Property Key for Figure A-1

Key #	Building/Common Name	Street Address	Parcel Number
1	Former Olympia Theatre	17 Pleasant Street	03-031-00018
2	Unnamed Building	12 Front Street	02-025-005+6
3	Midtown Mall	22 Front Street	02-025-007+8
4	Unused Parking Structure	56 Pleasant Street	03-20A-10+11
5	The Denholm Building	484 Main Street Six 1 st Floor Units	CO-NDO-03005 (03-20B-U-100, 105 110, 120, 150 & 170)
6	Surface Parking Lot	518 Main Street	03-20A-00032
7	The Money Stop	526-538 Main Street	03-019A-00022
8	Federal Plaza Parking Structure	570 Main Street	03-19A-00005
9	Metro PCS	517 Main Street	03-013-00002
10	Great Wall Restaurant	521 Main Street	03-013-00003
11	Residential Condominiums	531 Main Street and 17 Federal Street	CO-NDO-02014
12	The Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts	2 Southbridge Street and 151 Main Street	03-013-00011 and 03-013-00009
13	Surface Parking Lots	30 Federal Street and 12 Federal Street	03-013-00021 and 03-013-00012
14	Surface Parking Lot	35 Portland Street	03-010-00012
15	Surface Parking Lot	30 Myrtle Street	03-010-00008
16	Printer's Building	44 Portland Street	03-012—49-52
17	Former Paris Cinema	66 Franklin Street	03-012-002-4
18	Worcester Public Library	16 Salem Square	05-001-00001
19	YWCA Central Massachusetts	1 McGrath Boulevard and 1 YWCA Way	05-002-00001, 05-002-00002 and 05-002-00003
20	McGrath Parking Lot	6 Library Lane	05-001-00002
21	Madison Place Shopping Center	74 and 90 Madison Street	03-011-00001 and 03-011-00002
22	Madison Tower Condominiums	70 Southbridge Street	CO-NDO-088.1
23	Union Music	142 Southbridge Street	03-006-00013
24	George's Coney Island Hot Dog	158 Southbridge Street	03-006-14+20
25	Worcester South Division Fire Station	180 Southbridge Street	03-005-00012
26	Former Wyman-Gordon Facilities	Multiple Addresses	Multiple Parcels
27	Sargent Card Factory and Miss Worcester Diner	300 and 302 Southbridge Street	05-012-00013
28	Johnstone Supply, Flea Market, Port of Worcester Tattoos, Worcester Corvette City, Hurricane Betty's	4 Quinsigamond Avenue, 328 Southbridge Street and 350 Southbridge Street	05-012-16-21, 05-012-0026A, and 05-012-00027

1.2.5 Figure D-1: Existing Land Use

Existing land use was obtained from Worcester GIS, supplemented by field observations. Existing land uses vary widely across the URA, as shown in *Table 2: Existing Land Uses*.

Table 2: Existing Land Use

Land Use Classification	Area (acres)	% of Total Property Area	% of Total Property Area (Exclusive of Roadways)
Commercial	30	25.3%	31.9%
Industrial	29.2	24.7%	31.1%
Roads/Public Ways	24.5	20.7%	-
Public/Institutional	17.3	14.6%	18.4%
Transportation/Railroad ROW	10.1	8.5%	10.8%
Multi-Family Residential	3.7	3.1%	3.9%
Mixed Use	3.4	2.9%	3.6%
Single Family Residential	0.2	0.2%	0.2%
Total	118.4	100%	100%

This breakdown, along with knowledge of the general conditions within the Study Area, supports the following conclusions:

- Exclusive of roadways, commercial and industrial land uses each comprise about 31% of the area. Of the industrial land, approximately 20.5 acres, or 70%, is associated with vacant Wyman-Gordon Parcels.
- Exclusive of roadways, combined commercial and industrial land uses comprise over 60% of the URA.
- Residential land uses comprise a small percentage of overall land area because housing is almost exclusively concentrated in multi-family apartment or condominium developments.
- The amount of public/institutional land reflects the many government and non-profit land uses within the URA (e.g., City Hall, Worcester Common, the Worcester Public Library, and the YWCA Central Massachusetts).
- The extensive roadway network within the URA comprises a significant portion of the land area (approximately 21%), but also provides opportunities for connectivity within the URA and to key nearby destinations.

Please refer to **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility** (*Section 2.2: Study Area Location and Context*) for additional information on land use in and around the URA.

1.2.6 Figure D-2.1: Existing Zoning and Figure D-2.2: Existing Zoning Overlay Districts

Zoning information was obtained from the City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance, as Amended through February 3, 2015. As shown in *Table 3: Existing Zoning and Zoning Overlay Districts* (see next page), the URA contains zoning districts for General Business and General Manufacturing, as well as a very small General Residential zone. Also present are the Commercial Corridors Overlay Districts (CCOD) and Sign Overlay Districts (SOD).⁶

Taken together, BG-6.0 and MG-2.0 together encompass over 83% of the URA. Worcester’s Zoning Ordinance clearly defines permitted uses by zoning district for residential use, general use, business use, and manufacturing use as

⁶ The SOD’s do not control allowable uses thus are not shown on Figure D-2.2.

allowed, not allowed, or requiring a special permit. In terms of residential uses, the districts zoned for general business allow multi-family dwellings (high-rise and low-rise) and two- or three-family detached dwellings, but BG-6.0 does not allow single family attached or detached dwellings.

Table 3: Existing Zoning and Zoning Overlay Districts

Zoning Classification ¹	Detail ²	Area within URA (acres) ³	% of URA
BG-6 General Business	FAR 6 sf/ 1 sf	46.29	49.4%
MG-2 Manufacturing, General	FAR 2 sf/ 1 sf	32.08	34.2%
RG-5 Residence, General	Minimum Lot Size 5,000 sf	10.11	10.8%
BG-3 General Business	FAR 3 sf/ 1 sf	3.55	3.8%
BG-4 General Business	FAR 4 sf/ 1 sf	1.68	1.8%
Total		93.7	100%
Commercial Corridor Overlay District (CCOD) ⁴	Purpose	Total Area within URA (acres) ⁵	% of URA
CCOD – C	To encourage compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly redevelopment of the city's downtown and commercial corridors.	34.85	30%
CCOD –D		64.02	55%

Notes:

1. Source: City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance, as amended through February 3, 2015.
2. FAR = Floor Area Ratio, sf = square feet/foot
3. The area excludes public roadways.
4. The CCOD zoning ordinance, adopted February 3, 2015, replaced the Arts Overlay District & Mixed-Use Overlay District and Parking Overlay Districts.
5. The area of the URA within each CCOD is calculated based on the entire URA, including streets and rights-of-way.

As shown in *Table 4*, on the following page, the uses permitted in each zoning district were considered in relation to some of the uses proposed in the Concept Plan.

The CCOD is superimposed on top of the underlying conventional zoning districts and defines modified dimensional requirements, urban design aspects, and parking requirements. The CCOD is intended to promote the following:

- Active streets and a pedestrian-friendly environment;
- Redevelopment of existing buildings and new development that is of consistent and compatible character;
- Foster the development of a mix of complementary uses with high-quality, pedestrian-scale environments through site and building design;
- Reduce the amount of land devoted to parking and utilize parking areas more efficiently; and
- Preserve and enhance the historical, cultural, and architectural assets of the city.

Table 4: Permitted Uses and Consistency with Concept Plan

Use ¹	Zoning District ²				
	RG-5	BG-3	BG-4	BG-6	MG-2
Office (Professional)	SP	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bank/Credit Union (Without Drive-thru)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bank/Credit Union (With Drive-thru)	N	SP	SP	SP	SP
Food Service (With and Without Consumption/Sale of Alcoholic Beverages)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Food Service (with Drive-thru)	N	SP	SP	SP	SP
Wholesale Businesses or Storage Conducted Entirely Within an Enclosed Structure	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Retail Food Sales	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Retail Sales, Including Retail with Incidental Fabrication Assembly	N	Y	Y	Y	SP
Service Shop/Personal Services	SP	Y	Y	Y	SP
Indoor Recreation, Health Club (Private)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Non Residential Parking Facility (Non-accessory)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Residential Single-family (Attached, Detached, or Semi-detached),	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Residential Two-family Detached	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Residential Three-family Detached	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Residential Multi-family dwelling (High Rise, Low Rise)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Loft, Creative Entrepreneur	N	Y	Y	Y	N

Notes:

1. Source: Source: City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance, as amended through February 3, 2015.
2. Y=Yes; N=No; SP=Special Permit

There are four CCOD sub districts. As shown on *Figure D-2.2*, two of the sub districts are within the URA. These are the Canal District Parking Subarea (CCOD-C) and the Downtown Parking Subarea (CCOD-D).

All uses permitted in the underlying zones are permitted in the CCOD, except the following:

- Automobile Refueling Station; Auto/Truck body or paint shop; Motor Vehicle Service, repair, garage uses may be allowed by special permit in existing buildings construction prior to January 1, 1950 that were built and previously used for the express purpose of serving such use, provided that the building still retains original physical features central to the proposed use. In addition to the special permit review criteria, the Planning Board will also consider whether an existing building retains physical features, such as repair bays and/or specialized built-in equipment, and whether these characteristics are unique and central to the proposed use.
- Motor vehicle, trailer, boat sales.
- Single-family detached dwelling; two family detached dwelling.

In addition, uses involving drive-through service require a special permit. Non-accessory surface parking facilities (i.e., parking facilities without a structure above or below it) are not permitted within the CCOD where the underlying zone is BG-6. FAR restrictions do not apply to mixed-use developments as long as at least one of the uses is residential and

a non-residential use is located on the ground floor and includes an active façade. Conversion of existing buildings to multi-family residential uses, mixed-use buildings with a residential component, or a loft, creative entrepreneurs use is permitted by special permit of the Planning Board where not allowed as of right in the underlying zoning district. There is no minimum lot area requirement for multi-family residential uses. The maximum FAR increases to 2.0 throughout the CCOD, but is allowed to be higher if consistent with the underlying zoning district.

There are also three SOD's:

- BSOD: Blackstone River Parkway Sign Overlay District
- DSOD: Downtown/Blackstone Canal Sign Overlay District
- USOD: Union Station View Corridor Sign Overlay District

The SOD's seek to provide for the thoughtful integration of signage into the surrounding area for permanent installations and temporary or portable signs. Applicants with proposed sites that contain combined building footprints of 50,000 square feet or greater in commercial or mixed-use development may submit a Special Permit application to the Planning Board for Comprehensive Sign Approval.

As discussed in **Chapter 12.02 (2)**, *Section 2.7: Consistency of Concept Plan with Existing Zoning*, the current zoning and zoning overlay districts are consistent with the proposed developments, although some projects may require a Special Permit from the Planning Board. Based on this, no changes to existing zoning or overlay districts are proposed at this time, and a proposed zoning map (typically *Figure E-2*) is not included in this URP.

1.2.7 Figure E-1: Proposed Land Uses

Overall, the existing and proposed land uses are fairly consistent, particularly in the downtown area. The most notable change is the conversion of the Wyman Gordon Parcels from industrial land to primarily commercial (recreation/business/retail) with a small amount of residential development.

1.2.8 Figure G-1: Parcels to be Acquired or Transferred

Figure G-1 highlights the privately owned parcels within the URA to be acquired by the WRA and the city-owned parcel to be transferred to the WRA. *Table 5: Parcels to be Acquired or Transferred*, on the next page, provides information regarding the address, lot size, owner, zoning, present use and the proposed use(s) of each parcel. In all, approximately 27.2 acres from some or all of 24 parcels, plus the six condominium units on the first floor of the Denholm Building, have been identified as candidates for acquisition. Acquiring specific condominium units is unusual, but appropriate where the current condition of the condominium(s) are adversely affecting the overall health of the building and/or visually contribute to the URA's decadent and blighted open area conditions. In addition, the McGrath Parking lot, a city-owned property, is to be transferred to the WRA for eventual redevelopment.

The city and WRA will coordinate efforts in implementing the URP, with incentives for property owners to encourage private redevelopment of properties and maximize strategic private investments.

Table 5: Parcels to be Acquired or Transferred

Assessors Map	Address	Lot Size (acres)	Owner	Zoning	Current Use	Proposed Use
Acquisition for Rehabilitation						
02-025-007+8	22 Front Street Midtown Mall	0.522	Marcus, Dean & Judith	BG-6.0	Retail 1 st floor, Retail and Commercial lower and upper floors.	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial above and below floors.
02-025-005+6	12 Front Street	0.269	Marcus, Dean & Judith	BG-6.0	Retail 1 st Floor, Commercial/Office 4 Upper Floors (Predominantly Vacant)	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial Above
03-019A-00022	526-538 Main Street The Money Stop	0.270	Rizzo, Louis A., Trustee	BG-6.0	Retail/Restaurant 1 st Floor, Vacant 2 nd Floor	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial Above
03-013-00002	517 Main Street Metro PCS	0.0354	Isperduli, James	BG-6.0	Retail Store, 1 st Floor; Vacant 4 Upper Floors	Retail on 1 st Floor Residential Above
03-013-00003	521 Main Street Great Wall Restaurant	0.395	Mindy Jiang Realty Trust	BG-6.0	Restaurant 1 st Floor; Vacant 4 Upper Floors	Retail on 1 st Floor Residential Above
Selective Acquisition for Rehabilitation						
CO-NDO-03005 ¹	484 Main Street	N/A	N/A	BG-6.0	Commercial/Office Condominiums (1 st Floor Units), many vacant	Commercial, Retail & Restaurant
03-20B-U-100	The Denholm Building 1 st Floor Units	0.098	PPM V Partnership LP			
03-20B-U-105		0.040	Denholm Condominium Trust			
03-20B-U-110		0.026	Denholm Condominium Trust			
03-20B-U-120		0.022	Angelou, Sideris & Ekaterini			
03-20B-U-150		0.081	Denholm Condominium Trust			
03-20B-U-170		0.029	Fortier, Joseph J & Naomi R			
Acquisition for Demolition/ Redevelopment						
03-012-002-4	66 Franklin Street Paris Cinema	0.477	Worcester Park Plaza LLC	BG-6.0	Vacant Movie Theater	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial Above
03-031-00018	17 Pleasant Street Olympia Theater	0.152	First Olympia Realty, LLC	BG-6.0	Retail 1 st Floor (3 Units); Vacant Theater Above	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial/Office Above
03-20A-00032	518 Main Street	0.298	Main Five Zero Seven LLC	BG-6.0	Surface Parking Lot	Retail on 1 st Floor Commercial/Office Above

Assessors Map	Address	Lot Size (acres)	Owner	Zoning	Current Use	Proposed Use
Transfer for Redevelopment						
05-001-00002	6 Library Lane McGrath Parking Lot	2.29	City of Worcester	BG-6.0	Surface Parking Lot, Public	Improve Parking Layout between the Library and YWCA Central Massachusetts and Potentially Redevelop a Portion of the Lot
Acquisition for Assemblage²						
03-010-00012	35 Portland Street	0.51	Portland Salem Realty LLC	BG-6.0	Surface Parking Lot, Private	Assemble with Some or All of Two Adjacent Parcels for a Structured Parking Facility
05-009-00019	149 Washington Street	1.78	WG Washington Street LLC	MG-2.0	Manufacturing Building/Vacant	Wyman-Gordon Central Area Indoor Recreation Complex and Commercial/Retail Development
05-010-00001	115 Madison Street	10.9	Wyman-Gordon	MG-2.0	Surface Parking Lot, Private	
05-007-00005	0 Washington Street	0.90	Wyman-Gordon	MG-2.0	Surface Parking Lot, Private	Wyman-Gordon North of Madison Commercial/Retail Development
05-006-00013	0 Assonet Street	1.63		MG-2.0	Surface Parking Lot, Private	
05-007-00004	37 Gold Street	0.899		MG-2.0	Surface Parking Lots Private; open-fronted sheds	
05-007-00003	40 Gold Street	0.727		MG-2.0	Surface Parking Lot, Private	
05-014-00026	55 Lamartine Street	0.120	Wyman-Gordon	BG-3.0	Vacant	Wyman-Gordon South of Lamartine Residential and Commercial Development
05-014-00027	30 Lodi Street	0.092		BG-3.0	Vacant	
05-013-36-41	65 Lamartine Street	0.445		BG-3.0	Vacant	
05-013-00130	9 Langdon Street	1.114		BG-3.0	Vacant	
05-013-00412	103 Lamartine Street	1.339		BG-3.0	Vacant	

Notes:

¹Only the former theater is slated for demolition on this parcel. See *Table 7*.

²The parcels identified for assemblage are grouped, as differentiated by shading. There are some structures on parcels to be assembled that will be demolished. See *Table 7*.

1.2.9 Figure H-1: Lots to be Created for Disposition

A number of new parcels will be created based on assemblage. These proposed parcels are simply identified herein as Parcels A-1, B-1 to B-5, and C-1 (with sub-parcels noted where a public street divides the parcel). Please note that these are temporary ID's, not official Assessor's parcel numbers. Additional information on the lots to be created for disposition is presented in *Table 6* (on the next page).

Parcel A-1 will be assembled behind the Hanover Theatre. It is anticipated that Parcel 03-010-00012 at 35 Portland Street will be acquired by the WRA, who will work in partnership with the owner of Parcels 03-010-00008 and (potentially) 03-010-00021 (30 Myrtle Street and 30 Federal Street, respectively), the WBDC subsidiary New Garden Park, Inc. to develop a new parking structure on Parcel A-1 along Myrtle Street. Therefore, these two parcels are not being acquired by the WRA as part of the URP, but are included in *Table 6* because portions are anticipated to be part of the lot to be assembled for disposition.

The Wyman-Gordon Parcels south of the railroad are to be assembled into separate parcels (Parcels B-1, B-2, B-3.1, B-3.2, B-4.1, B-4.2, B-4.3, and B-5). This approach is consistent with the Concept Plan discussed later in this chapter.

The Paris Theater at 66 Franklin Street is on Parcel 03-012-002-4, which also contains apartment buildings that front Portland Street. The lot to be created, listed herein as Parcel C-1, is limited to the portion of the property that contains the former Paris Theater.

Table 6: Lots to be Created for Disposition

Parcel ID	Address	Existing Lot Size (acres)	Proposed Lot Size (acres) ¹	Current Owner(s)
Behind Hanover Theatre – Assemble Portions of the Following Parcels into One Lot (Parcel A-1)				
03-010-00012	35 Portland Street	0.51	A-1 = 1.23 ac	Portland Salem Realty LLC
03-010-00008 ²	30 Myrtle Street	0.73		New Garden Park Inc.
03-013-00021 ²	30 Federal Street	0.97		
Wyman-Gordon, North of Madison – Assemble the Following Parcels into Two Lots (Parcels B-1 and B-2)				
05-007-00005	0 Washington Street	0.90	B-1 = 3.34 ac	Wyman-Gordon
05-006-00013	0 Assonet Street	1.63		
05-007-00004	37 Gold Street	0.899	B-2 = 1.71 ac	
05-007-00003	40 Gold Street	0.727		
Wyman-Gordon, Central Area – Assemble the Following Parcels into Two Lots (Parcel B-3.1 and B-3.2)				
05-010-00001	115 Madison Street	10.90	B-3.1 = 2.3 ac	Wyman-Gordon
05-0009-00019	149 Washington Street	1.78	B-3.2 = 10.05 ac	WG Washington Street LLC
Wyman-Gordon, South of Lamartine – Assemble the Following Parcels into Two Lots (Parcels B-4.1, B-4.2, B-4.3, B-5)				
05-014-00026	55 Lamartine Street	0.120	B-4.1 = 0.16 ac	Wyman-Gordon
05-014-00027	30 Lodi Street	0.092	B-4.2 = 0.40 ac B-4.3 = 0.99 ac	
05-013-36-41	65 Lamartine Street	0.445	B-5 = 1.61 ac	
05-013-00130	9 Langdon Street	1.114		
05-013-00412	103 Lamartine Street	1.339		
Former Paris Theater, Franklin Street – Divide Existing Parcel into Two Lots (Parcel C-1)				
03-012-002-4 ³	66 Franklin Street	0.48	C-1 = 0.25 ac	Worcester Park Plaza LLC

Notes:

¹Acres for parcels to be assembled are approximate.

²35 Portland Street will be acquired, use of the two adjacent parcels owned by WBDC/New Garden Park Inc. will occur through a partnership with the WRA.

³Parcel 03-012-002-4 will be divided into two lots. 66 Franklin Street will be a separate parcel from the lot containing the two apartment buildings along Portland Street.

1.2.10 Figure I-1: Buildings to be Demolished

Table 7 lists the buildings to be demolished, as shown on Figure I-1. Some of the demolition will occur on parcels slated for assemblage.

Table 7: Buildings to be Demolished

Parcel ID	Address	Lot Size (acres)	Owner	Current Use	Proposed Use
03-012-002-4 ¹	66 Franklin Street Paris Cinema	0.48 ¹	Worcester Park Plaza LLC	Vacant Movie Theater	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial Above
03-031-00018	17 Pleasant Street Olympia Theater	0.15	First Olympia Realty, LLC	Retail 1 st Floor (3 Units); Vacant Theater Above	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial/Office Above
05-009-00019	149 Washington Street	1.78	WG Washington Street LLC	Manufacturing Building/Vacant	Recreational Complex

Note

¹Only the former cinema structure on Parcel 03-012-002-4 will be demolished. The two buildings with frontage along Portland Street with first floor commercial and residential above will be left in place.

There are three buildings on Parcel 03-012-002-4 at 66 Franklin Street - the former Paris Cinema (originally the Capitol Theatre) and two brick buildings with frontage along Portland Street. The Cinema’s façade at 66 Franklin Street is about three stories in height, but the rear portion of the theater, and the buildings with frontage along Portland Street, are up to five stories. As noted above, the buildings along Portland Street will on a separate parcel and left in place when the theater portion of the building is demolished.

The Olympia Theater structure at 17 Pleasant Street adjoins adjacent buildings on both sides, and is about the height of a five- to six-story building. The building façade above the first floor is predominately solid red brick with windows of varying sizes that appear covered from the interior, as well as two sets of doors in the upper stories previously used for a fire escape. The fire escape stairs are no longer present but are visible in a photo from the 1940’s found online.⁷

The WRA understands that demolition of the Paris Cinema and Olympia Theater is not ideal given their age and contributions to the city’s cultural history in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. However, the Paris Cinema structure has been condemned by the Worcester Fire Department due to concerns regarding its structural integrity. The Olympia Theater has been unoccupied and unmaintained for many years. In the mid-to late 1900’s, the interiors of both theaters were modified to accommodate additional screens. The exterior features of each building are not architecturally significant and do not contribute to the historical context of the area. Rehabilitation of either building as an arthouse theater venue could be considered, but the following challenges may discourage potential developers:

- High costs associated with addressing structural issues;
- Meeting current building codes and accessibility requirements;
- Retrofit of current technology;
- Uncertainty of market for arthouse theatres; and
- Competition from nearby multiplex theatres.

⁷https://www.google.com/search?q=worcester+olympia+theatre&rlz=1C1GGGE_US571US571&espv=2&biw=1280&bih=939&source=Inms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwii-rfN99vJAhUGox4KHR_LAb0Q_AUICGd#imgrc=3tCgXGgAGiP9JM%3A

Given these factors, it may be difficult for a small urban venue to compete with multiplex theaters and generate enough attendance for financial success. However, the WRA will continue to explore all opportunities for redevelopment, including rehabilitation.

Demolition of the structure at 149 Washington Street is necessary as part of the redevelopment of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, as shown in the URP Concept Plan (*Figure S-5*) and discussed later in this chapter. This large structure is unoccupied, in poor condition, and contributes to the blighted open condition of the area.

1.2.11 Figure J-1: Buildings to be Rehabilitated

The buildings identified for acquisition for rehabilitation purposes are shown in *Table 8: Buildings to be Rehabilitated* on the next page.

Overall, the intent of rehabilitation is to maintain the existing uses of occupied buildings while improving their conditions, amenities and marketability. However, structures which are entirely or partially vacant may have new uses. For example, the upper floors of 517 and 521 Main Street are currently vacant; and rehabilitation of the vacant areas for residential use is proposed.

Rehabilitated buildings will improve the urban context by providing up to date technology features that appeal to businesses, and amenities to draw new residents, customers, and visitors into the downtown. With few exceptions, retail businesses in downtown Worcester are small, locally owned businesses. National or regional chains are not currently a significant presence, although a balance of local and national businesses would be optimal. It is anticipated that the CitySquare Project, adjacent to the URA, will attract some national retail. Therefore, the URP emphasizes that rehabilitating existing buildings for commercial retail on the first floor and either residential or office space above may offer a significant opportunity to improve conditions for local and small businesses, and may draw some national or regional chains into the area.

Table 8: Buildings to be Rehabilitated

Parcel ID	Address	Lot Size (acres)	Owner	Current Use	Proposed Use
02-025-007+8	22 Front Street Midtown Mall	0.522	Marcus, Dean & Judith	Retail 1 st floor, Retail and Commercial lower and upper floors.	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial Above
02-025-005+6	12 Front Street	0.269	Marcus, Dean & Judith	Retail 1 st Floor, Commercial/Office 4 Upper Floors (Predominantly Vacant)	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial Above
03-019A-00022	526-538 Main Street The Money Stop	0.270	Rizzo, Louis A., Trustee	Retail/Restaurant 1 st Floor, Vacant 2 nd Floor	Retail on 1 st Floor, Commercial Above
03-013-00002	517 Main Street Metro PCS	0.0354	Isperduli, James	Retail Store, 1 st Floor; Vacant 4 Upper Floors	Retail on 1 st Floor Residential Above
03-013-00003	521 Main Street Great Wall Restaurant	0.395	Mindy Jiang Realty Trust	Restaurant 1 st Floor; Vacant 4 Upper Floors	Retail on 1 st Floor Residential Above
CO-NDO-03005	484 Main Street The Denholm Building	N/A	N/A	N/A	Commercial, Retail and Restaurant
03-20B-U-100	1 st Floor Units	0.098	PPM V Partnership LP	Post Office	
03-20B-U-105		0.040	Denholm Condominium Trust	Unknown/Storage	
03-20B-U-110		0.026	Denholm Condominium Trust	Dress for Success Worcester	
03-20B-U-120		0.022	Angelou, Sideris & Ekaterini	Cafe	
03-20B-U-150		0.081	Denholm Condominium Trust	Unoccupied/ Formerly Commercial/Office	
03-20B-U-170		0.029	Fortier, Joseph J & Naomi R	Antiques/Collectibles	

1.2.12 Figure K-1: Buildings to be Constructed

New buildings are planned at the following locations:

- 66 Franklin Street (only the portion of the former Cinema building)
- 17 Pleasant Street
- 518 Main Street
- Myrtle Street and Portland Street (behind the Hanover Theatre)
- The Wyman-Gordon Parcels

The proposed new buildings at 66 Franklin Street, 17 Pleasant Street and 518 Main Street may consist of commercial/office space or a combination of first floor commercial/retail/restaurant space with residential or commercial above. A boutique hotel may be considered, particularly on Franklin Street or Pleasant Street. The design of any new construction will be sensitive to the historic nature of both areas in terms of scale and materials.

A parking garage structure is proposed behind the Hanover Theatre at the corner of Portland and Myrtle Streets. According to the Theatre District Master Plan, the structure could be 4 to 6 levels above grade and hold between 450 to 675 spaces. The proposed new garage will have vehicular access on Myrtle Street and pedestrian access to Burnside Court, the pedestrian plaza to Federal Street and Myrtle/Portland Streets. The structure could operate as a shared facility for residents, students, office workers, as well as visitors and theater patrons through a combination of monthly and hourly payment methods.

As noted previously, the Wyman-Gordon Parcels will be grouped into new lots referred to as Parcels B-1 to B-5 (see *Figure H-1* and *Table 6*, above). In the central area (Parcels B-3.1 and B-3.2), commercial recreational facilities and complementary commercial retail are proposed. Some potential recreational uses include indoor track and field facilities with a pool, or a stadium. North of Madison, three commercial/retail buildings are proposed. South of Lamartine, townhouse-style residences and an off-road segment of the Blackstone River Bikeway are planned on Parcels B-4.1 to B-4.3, along with commercial/retail stores on Parcel B-5.

1.2.13 Figure S-2: Environmental Constraints

Environmental constraints are identified to determine whether any natural environmental conditions are present which could pose a constraint to the redevelopment of the URA. Within the URA, there are no rare species, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), surface or groundwater water supplies, or vernal pools present within the URA. A FEMA floodplain overlaps the southwest corner of the URA in the vicinity of Lamartine and Sargent Streets and Quinsigamond Avenue. Please refer to the discussion of area-wide environmental conditions in **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility**.

There are two sites within the URA that are categorized by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Oil and/or Hazardous Material Sites with Activity and Use Limitations. This means the sites have been evaluated under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP) (310 Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) 40.00), and an Activity and Use Limitation (AUL) has been placed as a deed restriction on the property. The purpose of an AUL is to narrow the scope of exposure assumptions used to characterize risks to human health from a release by specifying the activities and uses that are both prohibited and allowed at the disposal site in the future.⁸ Thus, an AUL on a property alerts prospective property owners that the property may have restrictions on future uses without

⁸ <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/cleanup/compliance/ce613.pdf>

further cleanup activities. Please refer to the discussion of area-wide environmental conditions in **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility**.

1.2.14 Figure S-3: Priority Private Redevelopment

The WRA strongly supports the redevelopment or rehabilitation of a number of key properties within the URA, although direct acquisition or investment is not under consideration at this time. These properties are listed below in *Table 9: Priority Private Redevelopment*. For ease of reference, the property key numbers from *Figure A-1* and *Table 1* are included. Please also refer to the discussion of the overall redevelopment strategy in **Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives**.

Table 9: Priority Private Redevelopment

Key # ¹	Building/Common Name	Street Address	Parcel Number
4	Unused Parking Structure	56 Pleasant Street	03-20A-10+11
5	The Denholm Building	484 Main Street Upper Floors)	CO-NDO-03005 (03-20B-U-100, 105 110, 120, 150 & 170)
11	Residential Condominiums	531 Main Street and 17 Federal Street	CO-NDO-02014
13	Surface Parking Lots ²	30 Federal Street and 12 Federal Street	03-013-00021 and 03-013-00012
15	Surface Parking Lot ²	30 Myrtle Street	03-010-00008
16	Printer’s Building	44 Portland Street	03-012—49-52
19	YWCA Central Massachusetts	1 McGrath Boulevard and 1 YWCA Way	05-002-00001, 05-002-00002 and 05-002-00003
23	Union Music	142 Southbridge Street	03-006-00013
24	George’s Coney Island Hot Dog	158 Southbridge Street	03-006-14+20
27	Sargent Card Factory and Miss Worcester Diner	300 and 302 Southbridge Street	05-012-00013
28	Johnstone Supply, Flea Market, Port of Worcester Tattoos, Worcester Corvette City, Hurricane Betty’s	4 Quinsigamond Avenue,328 Southbridge Street and 350 Southbridge Street	05-012-16-21, 05-012-0026A, and 05-012-00027

Note:

¹Key #'s were presented in *Table 1: Property Key for Figure A-1*.

² As noted in the text, portions of 30 Federal Street and 30 Myrtle Street may become part of Parcel A-1, to be assembled to support construction of a new parking structure located at Portland and Myrtle Streets. Areas not needed for the parking structure could be redeveloped.

1.2.15 Figure S-4: Public Realm Improvements and Figure S-5: URP Concept Plan

The proposed Concept Plan presents the conceptual vision for the long-term redevelopment of the URA. It includes the public realm improvements shown in *Figure S-4*, along with anticipated private development, as discussed throughout this URP. These include the following:

- Opportunities for Rehabilitation of structures which are not achieving their highest and best use;
- Opportunities for Redevelopment of parcels which are currently vacant or occupied by obsolete structures;
- Improved parking opportunities for the Hanover Theatre, Worcester Public Library and YWCA Central Massachusetts;

- Increased outdoor public space and Bikeway improvements;
- Use of “Complete Streets” approach in upgrades to streetscapes and aqueduct passages to create a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environment;⁹
- Improved traffic connectivity, including the incorporation of wayfinding; and
- Façade rehabilitation programs to improve storefront aesthetics.

In addition to the above-noted physical aspects of the Concept Plan, opportunities for innovative programming and placemaking will also be pursued in coordination with other city department or cultural organizations. For example, the city may expand the public space in front of the Hanover Theatre and 551 Main Street to allow outdoor seating and programming, facilitate pedestrian access and enhance the overall theater experience. The Concept Plan reflects the Theatre District Master Plan and other relevant plans and studies, public input provided during the URP process during Citizen Advisory Committee Meetings and Public Forums, and the priorities established by the city for future development. Please refer to the discussion of the overall redevelopment strategy in **Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives** for additional information, and the overview of public realm improvements in **Chapter 12.02 (7) Public Improvements**.

⁹ Complete Streets are defined as roadways that are safe, comfortable, and accessible for everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, or how they choose to travel. For information on MassDOT’s Complete Streets program refer to https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/GreenDOT/CSPrimerHTAdvisory5-2-14_508.pdf

12.02 (2) ELIGIBILITY

DHCD must make the following six findings in order to approve a proposed URP:

- Without public involvement, the area would not be (re)developed;
- The proposed projects will enhance/promote private reinvestment;
- The plan for financing the project is sound;
- The designated urban revitalization area is a decadent, substandard or blighted open area;
- The Urban Revitalization Plan is complete; and
- The Relocation Plan is approved under M.G.L. c. 79A.

This chapter focuses on supporting the finding that the Study Area is a decadent and blighted open area, and that these conditions are present to a reasonable degree in all portions of the area. The discussion begins with an overview of the City of Worcester and its history, followed by a description of the trends and conditions that are relative to the physical and economic deterioration that has accompanied the Study Area's decline. The data and other descriptive material presented herein demonstrates that the Study Area meets the eligibility criteria to be categorized as a decadent and blighted open area within the definitions of M.G.L. c. 121B, section 1.

Section 2.1: Background Information

2.1.1 Worcester Redevelopment Authority

The WRA is a corporate and politic body, established by the City of Worcester and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under former M.G.L. c. 121 section 2600, the predecessor to the present M.G.L. c. 121B section 4 (M.G.L. c. 121 was recodified in 1969 as M.G.L. c. 121B). The WRA has the powers of an “operating agency” under section 11 of M.G.L. c. 121B and additional powers as an “urban renewal agency” under sections 9 and 45 to 57 of the same chapter. The broad development capabilities of the WRA includes the power to engage in “urban renewal projects” and other projects, the power to buy and sell property, the power to acquire property through eminent domain, and the power to designate projects under M.G.L. c. 121A. The WRA's previous urban renewal projects have included:

- Area D Urban Renewal Project
- Elm Park Urban Renewal Project
- Expressway Urban Renewal Project
- New Salem Urban Renewal Project
- Medical City Urban Renewal Project (formerly East Central Urban Renewal Plan)
- Union Station Urban Revitalization Plan (currently active)

2.1.2 Theatre District Master Plan

The Downtown Worcester Theatre District Master Plan (2012) was a joint effort of the City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development and the WBDC. The primary goal of the Master Plan was:

“To create a district identity and sense of place within downtown Worcester, and to identify buildings and sites that provide the primary transformation opportunities for institutional, housing and entertainment/cultural uses, and the infrastructure improvements needed to support those uses.”

The plan's vision, which is embodied in this URP, is to achieve:

“an active, mixed-use, 18-hour neighborhood with significant institutional and residential growth supporting vibrant entertainment and cultural environment drawing residents, businesses, and visitors to downtown Worcester.”

Its primary goal is to create a district and sense of place within downtown Worcester, and to identify buildings and sites that provide the primary transformation opportunities for institutional, housing, and entertainment/cultural uses, and the infrastructure improvements needed to support those uses.

2.1.3 Gateway Cities Program

Worcester is one of 26 designated Gateway Cities under the Commonwealth's Gateway Cities Initiative. Gateway Cities are urban centers that anchor the regional economy, and which meet criteria defined by the state with regard to population, median household income and educational attainment. The Gateway Cities Initiative recognizes that despite significant economic challenges, these urban centers offer competitive business costs, affordable housing, easy access, and a high quality of life outside of the traditional Boston core. The state's vision for Gateway Cities is that they *“actively participate in, and contribute to, the Commonwealth's overall economic success by taking advantage of their distinctive ability to be desirable locations for innovators, entrepreneurs and businesses and places where people with choices choose to live. As this vision is achieved, our Gateway Cities will not only prosper, they will provide a distinctive competitive advantage for the Commonwealth as a whole.”*¹⁰

Section 2.2: Study Area Location and Context

The City of Worcester is referred to as the *“Heart of the Commonwealth”* and it is also the hub of the Central Massachusetts region. Bordering towns are Holden and West Boylston to the north, Boylston and Shrewsbury to the east, Millbury and Auburn to the south, and Leicester and Paxton to the west. According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total land area of approximately 38 square miles¹¹. An elevated state highway, Interstate Route 290 (I-290), extends east to west through the center of Worcester about a half-mile from the URA. Other major area roadways include Interstate Route 190 (I-190), which extends northward from I-290, and Massachusetts Route 146, which runs southward from I-290 to Providence, Rhode Island.

The URA contains diverse co-existing land uses, including commercial, retail, residential, transportation (rail), and industrial/manufacturing. It encompasses areas of opportunity in the heart of Worcester with the P&W ROW running through the middle of the URA. North of the P&W ROW is part of downtown Worcester, and to the south is part of South Worcester, with much of the area falling within the Green Island neighborhood and the Canal District. The tracks run along a system of concrete viaducts and steel trestles. The arches of the concrete viaducts are used as tunnels to allow connections between the north and south areas along Green Street¹², Madison Street (Route 122A) and Herman Street; Quinsigamond Avenue and Sargent Street both connect to Southbridge Street, which runs beneath a steel trestle.

¹⁰ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/gateway-cities-and-program-information.html>

¹¹ <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/LND110210/2582000,25027>

¹² The Green Street ROW is outside of the URA boundary.

2.2.1 North of P&W

Land uses north of the P&W ROW are consistent with a typical downtown area, and include a mix of business office, commercial and residential development, interspersed with institutional and cultural uses. Much of this area is centered along or near Main Street and Franklin Street. Many of the buildings are three to six story connected structures with street-level commercial storefronts and residential or office space above. Many of the street-level façades have been modified from their original condition, although the upper floors retain original features on many buildings. Signage is inconsistent and tends to be older. There are many vibrant businesses within the URA, but a substantial number of the street-level units are unoccupied, many with “*For Lease*” signs in the windows. The upper levels of many commercial buildings are also unoccupied.

There are some taller office and residential structures. These include the Worcester Plaza, a 24-story glass office tower located at 446 Main Street, the ten-story Madison Tower residential condominium building at 70 Southbridge Street, the 11-story Park Plaza apartments at 507 Main Street, and the nine-story Bancroft Commons apartments at 50 Franklin Street. These apartment and condominium buildings contribute to pockets of high density residential land use within the URA.

The block of properties bounded by Myrtle Street, Southbridge Street, Madison Street and Francis J. McGrath Boulevard has a somewhat different character than the surrounding area. This block includes Madison Place shopping center and office building, the Madison Condominiums (see above), a Shell Gas Station, and the Callahan & Fay Brothers funeral home, and is more typical of suburban development than high density downtown development. The buildings are stand-alone or strip mall type structures surrounded by large areas of surface parking. Madison Place is a 38,400-square-foot property. There is an elevation change on the property such that the first floor of Madison Place is accessed from Madison Street, and the second floor fronts Myrtle Street. On the Madison Street side, the first floor is currently partially occupied by small businesses, including New York City Express (a private transport company), a Caribbean restaurant and a small ethnic grocery store. On the Myrtle Street side, the building is occupied by the U.S. Social Security Administration.

The largest area of public open space in the URA is the Worcester Common, supplemented by the much smaller Federal Plaza (also called the Francis R. Carroll Plaza) in front of the Hanover Theatre. A small private greenspace is located in front of the Worcester Plaza building at 446 Main Street.

The Hanover Theatre holds close to 200 events per year which draw significant crowds into the Downtown. Most events require a ticket for admission, and shows include Broadway touring productions, comedians, musicians, and children’s character shows. Most Hanover Theatre events occur during non-business hours, e.g., plays and concerts at night and on weekends. City programming events on the Worcester Common can also draw significant crowds. Events on the Worcester Common include the Out to Lunch Summer Concert Series and Farmer’s Market, the Worcester Common Oval ice skating rink, and the Annual Festival of Lights. These events occur during business hours as well as evenings and weekends.

Institutional land uses in the downtown portion of the Study Area include the YWCA Central Massachusetts facility, the Worcester Public Library and the Worcester South Division Fire Station at 180 Southbridge Street. Recently, the Quinsigamond Community College Healthcare and Workforce Development Center moved into 20 Franklin Street, the former Telegram & Gazette (T&G) building owned by WBDC. Last April, WBDC also welcomed the Downtown Innovation Center as a new tenant at 20 Franklin Street. The Innovation Center will provide low-cost incubator space for entrepreneurs to collaborate and to start a business. Once a start-up is successful, rental space is available on the building’s fourth floor. The goal is to retain innovators who are graduating from the city’s many colleges and bring that energy downtown. The Innovation Center was funded by WBDC, a federal grant, donations from various

foundations, and six city banks. Starting in the fall of 2013, Becker College leased renovated space in 76 Franklin Street to provide dormitory housing for about 70 students. The Cathedral of St. Paul, home of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester, is located at the corner of High and Chatham Streets.

2.2.2 South of P&W

This area is part of South Worcester, most of it within the Green Island neighborhood. Land uses are predominantly industrial and warehouse facilities, supplemented by perimeter commercial businesses along Green Street and Quinsigamond Avenue, and residences on the side streets off Lamartine Street (e.g., Lodi Street and Grosvenor Street). A significant portion of the industrial land is vacant, much of it formerly occupied by Wyman-Gordon facilities, and a brick structure located at 300 Southbridge Street next to the Miss Worcester Diner (Parcel 05-12-0013) is unoccupied. There are a number of active businesses in the vicinity of Sargent Street and the western end of Lamartine and Gold Streets (e.g., a scrap metal company, industrial laundry facility and an active Wyman-Gordon facility).

There is an automobile repair facility at the corner of Lamartine and Langdon Streets. Langdon and Lunelle Streets each contain one single-family dwelling, which are surrounded by large fenced-off areas of broken pavement and weedy vegetation. Both of the houses are older, probably dating back to the 1940's, but the buildings and yards appear well kept and maintained. An auto parts store and the Miss Worcester Diner are situated along Quinsigamond Avenue near Southbridge Street.

In the vicinity of Washington, Gold and Assonet Streets there are a number of paved parcels. One parcel at the corner of Washington and Plymouth Streets is used for MedStar employee parking. The rest of the parcels are vacant and fenced off with weedy vegetation breaking through the expanse of pavement. Washington Street extends under the railroad but then dead ends, likely because of fill used when Francis J. McGrath Boulevard was constructed. This area is sectioned off with jersey barriers and has become a local area for skateboarding. There is extensive graffiti and evidence of use, but overall this "D.I.Y. Park" is not extensively littered or disorderly. On the east side of Madison Street, between Washington and Assonet Streets, are two small businesses – an auto glass repair shop and a fly fishing outfitters retail store.

Plymouth Street, is a short, narrow two-lane road with sidewalks on both sides that connects Green Street with the upper area of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels. Only the north side of Plymouth Street is within the URA, and this area consists of structures that appear to be consistent with light industrial uses. The small section of Green Street that lies within the URA is also part of the Canal District, and contains a single-story block of commercial storefronts (e.g., an insurance company, pub and locksmith).

2.2.3 Adjacent to the URA

In terms of adjacent land uses, residential and commercial development predominates to the north, west, south and southeast. The residences are typically multi-family (e.g., triple decker and small apartment buildings), and the commercial developments are a mix of service and industrial businesses. As shown in the aerial view of the URA presented in *Figure A-2*, immediately east of the Worcester Common is the CitySquare/Mercantile Center redevelopment area. CitySquare is a \$500+ million multi-phased project currently underway in the heart of downtown Worcester, which includes:

- Unum Group's 214,000-square-foot LEED Silver office building;
- St. Vincent Hospital's new 66,000-square-foot Cancer and Wellness Center;
- A 168-room AC Hotel by Marriott;
- Worcester Common Parking Garage, a 550-space underground parking facility; and
- A 370-unit residential development (with 479 parking spaces).

Mercantile Center (adjacent to CitySquare) is a \$70 million investment comprised of the office towers at 100 and 120 Front Street with a total of 642,300 square feet of mixed-use office and retail space and a 1,647-space structured parking garage. UMass Memorial Health Care has leased approximately 75,000 square feet of space in Mercantile Center and renovations are underway. An additional 183,000 square feet of vacant space will be improved as it is leased. Building façade improvements and lobby renovations are also planned.

Adjacent uses located further northeast of the URA include large-scale public and institutional uses (e.g., the DCU Center, St. Vincent Hospital) as well as Union Station Intermodal Transportation Station and the WRTA Hub.

The Canal District is east of the URA, in the vicinity of Green Street. The Canal District was designated to celebrate the industrial history associated with the Blackstone Canal, which now runs beneath Harding Street. There are a number of surviving mill buildings dating from the late 1800's along Green Street, Water Street and Winter Street. Some have been successfully repurposed, e.g., the Crompton Collective, and are integral to the district's urban industrial character. Programming events in the district have included a Blackstone Canal Fest, a year-round farmer's market, seasonal horse and wagon tours, race events, and walking tours. In fall 2015, WBDC announced a new hockey facility will be built at the corner of Harding and Winter Streets in the Canal District. The 3.5-acre site currently contains a shuttered manufacturing facility with brownfield issues. WBDC is currently overseeing the demolition and cleanup activities on the site, then Marathon Sports Construction will build the facility. Construction is set to be completed by August 2017.

Section 2.3: Area History

2.3.1 Local History

The region containing the URA was originally occupied by the Nipmuc tribe and called Quinsigamond. Two initial attempts to establish English settlements were both abandoned due to Native American hostilities. The first settlement occurred in 1673 and was located in the area near Lake Quinsigamond. Called the Plantation of Quinsigamond, the settlement was abandoned during the King Philip's War and destroyed by Native Americans. The second settlement attempt occurred in 1684 in the area now known as Lincoln Square, and was called Worcester.¹³ This settlement also experienced Native American hostilities and was abandoned around 1702. A permanent settlement was successfully established in 1713 by Jonas Rice. His land was situated on the easterly slope of what is now Union Hill. Worcester's population reached approximately 200 citizens by 1718.¹⁴

Although Worcester was originally agricultural, significant industrial development began in the early 1800's and continued for the next 150 years. Local mills initially manufactured textiles, wire, nails and paper, but production expanded into myriad industries throughout the city. Power was obtained by damming small streams, and subsequently by using the water for steam until electricity was available.¹⁵ The Blackstone Canal was completed largely by laboring Irish immigrants in 1828 to provide a connection between Worcester and the City of Providence. The Canal facilitated transport of the textiles and other goods manufactured in Worcester to a harbor for shipping. The opening of the Boston and Worcester Railroad Company in 1835 replaced the Canal and allowed further expansion for shipping manufactured goods via rail to Springfield, Norwich and Boston.¹⁶ The Blackstone Canal closed in 1848. Covering the canal began in 1849 and was the longest-lasting project in Worcester history.¹⁷

¹³ Thomas F. O'Flynn, *The Story of Worcester, Massachusetts* (Little, Brown, and Company, 1913), 14.

¹⁴ O'Flynn, *The Story of Worcester, Massachusetts*, 22.

¹⁵ <http://www.worcesterma.gov/city-clerk/history/general/worcester-common>

¹⁶ <http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-Northeast/Worcester-History.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.worcesterhistory.org/bcinfo/fail.pdf>

Worcester grew rapidly in the 19th century, and its population roughly tripled between 1800 and 1920, when it reached 179,754. This growth was largely fueled by an influx of immigrants from Ireland, Sweden, Canada, Poland, Italy, Lithuania, Greece, Armenia and Lebanon. Worcester was officially designated as a city in 1848. A street railway began operations on Main Street in 1861, and quickly expanded to other parts of the city.¹⁸ Telephones and electric street lights were first used in Worcester in 1879 and 1883, respectively. The 1800's also saw the establishment of public and private institutions of higher learning, including Holy Cross (1843), Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) (1865), State College at Worcester (1874), Clark University (1887), and Becker Junior College (1887).

In the early 1900's, densely settled residential development occurred throughout the city to accommodate the expanding population. Housing near the city's many manufacturing facilities typically consisted of triple-deckers and close-set single-family homes on small lots. Further from the mills many grand homes were constructed for Worcester's wealthy professionals and civic leaders in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Some of these were located close to downtown along Salisbury Street, Massachusetts Avenue, and Cedar Street.

During the First and Second World Wars, Worcester's thriving manufacturing industry supported military efforts by supplying a vast array of goods, including uniforms, office supplies, weapons and forged metal parts for bombers. Worcester's population peaked in 1950 at 203,000 citizens. Subsequently, Worcester began to experience suburban migration and the city suffered an economic downturn which was exacerbated by the loss of manufacturing jobs to places providing cheaper labor in the 1960's and 1970's.¹⁹

2.3.2 URA History

North of P&W

In the Worcester Common area, twenty acres of level ground were originally set aside by the second group of settlers as Worcester Common in 1669 for militia training, burials, and livestock grazing. However, over the years, lots within the designated Common were granted to individuals such that the area was reduced to its current size of approximately five acres. A large meeting house was constructed on the Common by 1719, and the Town of Worcester was incorporated in 1722. The Old South Church replaced the Meeting House in 1763 and was used for town meetings, annual elections, and any business requiring citizen participation. On July 14, 1776, Isaiah Thomas publicly read the Declaration of Independence at the Old South Church on his way to Boston. A Town Hall was built next to the church in 1825. The Old South Church was removed in 1887 to accommodate the present City Hall, which was constructed in 1898.^{20,21}

In the downtown/Main Street area, the urban fabric of stores, churches, businesses government uses, and houses evolved over time to meet the needs of local residents. The early structures were demolished to accommodate newer development through the early to mid-20th century, although some structures date to the late 1800's (e.g., 586-596 Main Street and 418-426 Main Street). Through the 1950's, the downtown area was a vibrant shopping and commercial center, and local residents traveled into the city by car, streetcar and bus. Retail stores in the vicinity of City Hall included J.C. MacInness, Kresge's, Barnards, Filene's and Denholm's (originally Denholm's and McKay) on Main Street. Front Street offered C.T. Sherer, Woolworth's and Newberry's.²² However, as noted above, in the 1960's and 1970's suburban migration and a downturn in economic conditions for manufacturing resulted in a significant change in the downtown, and these stores were largely shuttered by the early 1980's.

¹⁸ <http://www.worcesterma.gov/city-clerk/history/general/worcester-common>

¹⁹ <http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-Northeast/Worcester-History.html>

²⁰ <http://www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/2e/a9/2ea982935ba5e18ead6b31f4aa9cf94d/historical-highlights.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/2c/d9/2cd9ee3ed6405eaf581eb46d02db6231/city-hall-and-common.pdf>

²² <http://www.telegram.com/article/20120112/COLUMN21/101129840&Template=printart>

An urban renewal effort adjacent to the URA in the late 1960's included the Worcester Center Galleria shopping mall, which opened in 1971 but struggled continuously, losing its anchor tenants by the late 1980's. New owners changed the name to the Worcester Common Fashion Outlets in the mid-1990's, but the mall was shuttered in 2006. This is now being redeveloped as part of the CitySquare project described above.

The Hanover Theatre at 2 Southbridge Street is an excellent example of how the usage and context of a downtown structure has changed over time. The original structure was built in 1904 as the Franklin Square Theatre, later changed to the Grand Theater. In 1925, the structure was significantly expanded and upgraded to a luxurious 3,000 seat facility with ornate features and a two-story lobby. In 1967, the theatre was significantly altered for use as a movie theater until it closed in the late 1990's. In 2002, the Light the Lights! Capital Campaign embarked on a six-year restoration project, and the facility reopened in March 2008 as the Hanover Theatre. The project, which cost almost \$31 million, restored the theatre's historic attributes and modernized its infrastructure. The *Hanover's Report to the Community 2015, Broadening our Impact* notes that during the 2014-2015 season, 168 events drew almost 191,823 visitors.²³ The Hanover Theatre is renovating a vacant and derelict building next door at 551 Main Street, which will provide restaurant, office, dance, and theater practice space. This project will greatly improve the aesthetics of the block, provide easily accessible pre- and post-theatre dining options, facilitate community outreach, and improve functionality of theater operations.

South of P&W

Most of the area south of the P&W ROW is within the Green Island neighborhood. The Green Island neighborhood is so named because before the late 1800's, the Blackstone River and canal traversed the district. The river branched and rejoined itself to form an island on the land now referred to as the Wyman-Gordon site. This created an island that is still known as Green Island, even though the Blackstone canal was covered by Harding Street in 1848.

The Wyman-Gordon Company has had a presence in this area since 1883, when it opened a plant to forge metal crankshafts. The company grew significantly for about 100 years, becoming one of the largest manufacturers of forgings, castings, engine components, and composite structures for the aerospace, mining, agricultural, construction, and forestry industries.²⁴ Residents of nearby neighborhoods most likely worked at Wyman-Gordon and shopped and dined at nearby commercial businesses along Millbury Street and Green Street.²⁵ With the end of the cold war, there was a decrease in spending by the aerospace industry which resulted in significant downsizing of Wyman-Gordon's operations in the 1990's. Although there is still an active Wyman-Gordon plant situated between Madison and Hermon Streets, most of the company's facilities in this area were closed and had fallen into disrepair by the early 2000's. Demolition of some buildings began in 2001.^{26,27} Some of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels included as part of the URA have known contamination issues associated with metal forging activities and are restricted by AUL's.

Section 2.4: URA Data and Characteristics

This section presents available statistics and data to provide an overview of the URA's characteristics and support the characterization of decadent and blighted open areas.

As noted in the discussion of land use presented in **Chapter 12.02 (1)** (see *Section 1.2.5: Existing Land Use*) and *Table 2: Existing Land Use*) commercial and industrial land uses comprise over 50% of the URA. Residential uses comprise

²³ http://issuu.com/thehanovertheatre/docs/2015_thehanovertheatresreportotheco

²⁴ <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/wyman-gordon-company-history/>

²⁵ *Predevelopment Study: Wyman-Gordon Property and The South Worcester Industrial Park (March 1995)*, pp. 5 - 6.

²⁶ http://www.pccforgedproducts.com/brands/wyman_gordon/america/locations/worcester/overview/

²⁷ <http://www.telegram.com/article/20130324/NEWS/130329789/1116>

a small percentage of land area because housing is concentrated in multi-family apartment or condominium developments. There is also an extensive roadway network within the URA which provides opportunities for connectivity.

2.4.1 Land Ownership

The table below indicates the ownership of parcels by type of ownership. As shown, the majority of parcels are privately owned, with Wyman-Gordon a significant property owner. The City of Worcester owns just under one-third of the land within the URA. City-owned properties within the URA include City Hall, Worcester Common, Worcester Public Library and the McGrath Parking Lot. Nonprofit institutions account for a small portion (approximately 6%) of land ownership. Please refer to **Attachment A: URA Parcel Ownership Information and Map** for additional information on property ownership.

Table 10: Summary of Land Ownership

Land Distribution	# of Parcels	Area (acres)	% of Total Study Area
Privately Owned Land			
Various Owners	87	40.3	33.9%
Wyman-Gordon Company	12	23.5	19.9%
P&W ROW	1	10.1	8.5%
<i>Subtotal</i>	100	73.9	62.3%
Publicly Owned Land			
City of Worcester (Except Streets), MassDOT ¹ , U.S. Government	9	13.1	11.1%
Streets and Public Ways City of Worcester	-	24.2	20.8%
<i>Subtotal</i>	9	37.3	31.9%
Nonprofit Owned Land			
Cultural, Religious, Education or Service Nonprofit Organizations ² (e.g., YWCA, Hanover Theatre, Worcester Catholic Diocese)	9	6.8	5.8%
Total	118	118.3	100%

Note:

¹MassDOT=Massachusetts Department of Transportation

²This reflects property ownership only and does not capture non-profit organizations leasing space in privately-owned buildings.

2.4.2 Parcel Size

Parcel sizes vary widely throughout the URA, with the smallest parcel at 285 square feet and the largest approximately 10.9 acres. Taken as a whole, within the URA approximately 39% of the parcels are ¼-acre or less, and approximately 56% are ½-acre or less. North of the P&W ROW, approximately 35% of the parcels are ¼-acre or less, and approximately 58% are ½-acre or less. In the downtown area, the largest parcels are city-owned and associated with City Hall and Worcester Common. The non-profit YWCA Central Massachusetts also owns three contiguous parcels totaling approximately 2.7 acres.

South of the P&W ROW, approximately 40% of the parcels are ¼-acre or less, and approximately 49% are ½-acre or less. Overall, because many of the parcels in the area south of the railroad are owned by Wyman-Gordon and they are fairly concentrated across a wide area, this section is predominated by larger parcels.

2.4.3 Cultural Resources

A review of the MHC Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth identified extensive historic resources within the URA, including a number of state and National Register-listed districts. Many buildings retain significant original features which have deteriorated over time. Information was obtained from MassGIS as well as through extensive online research using the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). The MACRIS data is compiled from a variety of records and files maintained by the MHC, including but not limited to, the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth, National Register of Historic Places nominations, State Register of Historic Places listings, and local historic district study reports.²⁸

The URA contains many architecturally significant structures including some National Register-listed properties. In addition, there are National Register-listed Districts, state historic districts, and/or city-designated districts within the URA that are identified below.

Table 11: Historic Districts within the URA

District ID	Historic Districts (State or National Register) ¹	District Name
WOR.E	NRDIS	Worcester City Hall and Common
WOR.AR	MHC	517-525 Main Street
WOR.DP	MHC	Main-Franklin Streets Area
WOR.DR	MHC	Front-Commercial Streets Commercial Area
WOR.Q	NRDIS	Lower Pleasant Street District
WOR.W	NRDIS	Southbridge-Sargent Manufacturing District
WOR.CR	NRMRA	The Worcester Multiple Resource Area
WOR.EF	NRMPS	Diners of Massachusetts Multiple Property Submission

Sources: MACRIS Database <http://mhc-macris.net/> and National Park Service <http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/>.

Notes:

¹NRDIS=National Register District, MHC=Massachusetts Historical Commission, NRMRA=National Register Multiple Resource Area, NRMPS=National Register Multiple Property Submission

Table 12 (on the next page) identifies the historic structures (buildings and non-buildings) that may be affected by activities recommended in the URP, including acquisition for rehabilitation or demolition. The historic name (HN) of the building is noted, along with the common name (CN) where appropriate. The ID is the MHC Inventory Number, followed by a local designation, if provided on the MACRIS database. Finally, the Notes column identifies the approximate year of construction (see table notes) and whether the structure is National Register-listed or located within one of the historic districts listed above in *Table 11*. There are also many resources listed in the MACRIS database which are recommended for façade improvements. These will be undertaken under the city’s Façade Program by individual property owners. The MACRIS-listed buildings which are recommended for façade improvements include those listed in *Table 13*. Notice of the public hearing was sent to MHC. A copy of this URP has also been made available to MHC and the Worcester Historical Commission for review.

²⁸ <http://mhc-macris.net/>

Table 12: Historic Resources Impacted by the URP

Building/Structure	Address	ID ²	Notes ³
Historic Resources Proposed for Rehabilitation			
HN: Woolworth’s CN: Midtown Mall	22 Front Street	WOR.2453	c 1941
Unnamed Office/Commercial Building	12 Front Street	WOR.1001 130-CBD-64	r 1851
HN: Ransom F. Taylor Block CN: The Money Stop	526-536 Main Street	WOR.775 130-CBD-41	r 1894
HN: Cheney-Ballard Building CN: Metro PCS	517 Main Street	WOR.772 AR	r 1870 Within WOR.AR and WOR.DP
HN: Holbrook-Sawyer Building; Cheney-Laugher Building CN: Great Wall Restaurant	521 Main Street	WOR.773 AR	r 1855 Within WOR.AR and WOR.DP
Historic Resources Proposed for Demolition and Redevelopment			
HN: Capitol Theatre CN: Paris Cinema	66 Franklin Street	WOR.2392	c 1926 Within WOR.DP
HN: Lothrop’s Opera House CN: Olympia Theater	17 Pleasant Street	WOR.792 Q	c 1890 NRDIS: Within WOR.Q and WOR.CR

Sources: MACRIS Database <http://mhc-macris.net/> and National Park Service <http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/>.

Notes:

¹HN=Historic Name(s) of the building/ CN=Common Name of the building

²The first ID is the MHC Inventory Number, the second is a local identification, if provided on the MACRIS database.

³c=circa. According to MHC, circa indicates the age of the building within ±10 years. r=range. According to MHC, range indicates the age of the building within ±50 years.

Table 13: Historic Resources Recommended for Façade Improvements

Historic Resources Suggested for Façade Improvements			
Chase Building	40-48 Front Street	WOR.1003 / 130-CBD-66	1886 / Within WOR.DR
HN: Clark Block CN: Shacks	401 Main Street	WOR.766 / 130-CBD-33	1854
Rogers Block	418-426 Main Street	WOR.790 / 130-CBD-36	1869 / NRDIS: Within WOR.Q and WOR.CR
Odd Fellows Hall	9 Pleasant Street	WOR.791 / Q	c 1880 / NRDIS; Within WOR.Q and WOR.CR
HN: J. Marcus Rice Block CN: Ellis Building	29 Pleasant Street	WOR.793 / Q	r 1874 / NRDIS; Within WOR.Q and WOR.CR
Lamb Block	37 Pleasant Street	WOR.794 / Q	1888 / NRDIS; Within WOR.Q and WOR.CR
Enterprise Building	538-542 Main Street (Both addresses are on Parcel 03-19A-00013)	WOR.776 / 130-CBD-42	1900 / NR Individual Property, NRDIS WOR.CR
White-Dexter Building		WOR.777 / 130-CBD-43	c 1872
Colton’s Block	588 Main Street	WOR.778 / 130-CBD-45	r 1860 / NRDIS Within WOR.CR
Stevens Building	24-44 Southbridge Street	WOR.1005 / 130-CBD-68	r 1851 / NR Individual Property NRDIS WOR.CR
George’s Coney Island Hot Dog Sign	158 Southbridge Street	WOR.929 / 142X-B	c 1940
HN: Sargent Card-Clothing Factory	300 Southbridge Street	WOR.1190 W	1866 NRDIS, Within WOR.W and WOR.CR
Miss Worcester Diner	302 Southbridge Street	WOR.2110 / 142X-E	1948 / NR Individual Property NRDIS WOR.ER
HN: Worcester Lunch Car and Carriage Manufacturing Co. CN: Flea Market & Port of Worcester Tattoo	4 Quinsigamond Avenue	WOR.2359	c 1916, expanded in 1924
HN: NY, NH & H RR Bridge – Providence Branch #42.96 CN: B&A RR Bridge, Main Line Branch #44.77	Madison Street	WOR.9049	1910
Providence and Worcester Railroad Bridge	Southbridge Street	WOR.903	1910
HN: NY, NH & H RR Bridge – Providence Branch #42.78 CN: B&A RR Bridge-Main Line Branch #44.94	Hermon Street Bridge	WOR.9050	1910
Boston and Albany Railroad Bridge #44.52	Green Street	WOR.950	1910

Sources: MACRIS Database <http://mhc-macris.net/> and National Park Service <http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/>.

Notes:

¹HN=Historic Name(s) of the building/ CN=Common Name of the building

²The first ID is the MHC Inventory Number, the second is a local identification, if provided on the MACRIS database.

³c=circa. According to MHC, circa indicates the age of the building within ±10 years. r=range. According to MHC, range indicates the age of the building within ±50 years.

2.4.4 Age of Structures

Based on information available from Assessor records, in conjunction with field observations and information contained in the MACRIS database (discussed above), it is reasonable to assert that a preponderance of structures within the URA were constructed prior to 1940. *Table 14* summarizes the age of the buildings within the URA based on the City Assessor's data, which indicates that approximately 61% of structures were constructed prior to 1940, and 75% were constructed prior to 1960.

Table 14: Age of Structures

Date of Construction	# of Buildings	Buildings by Age (%)
Pre-1900	33	35%
1901 to 1940	25	26%
1941 to 1960	13	14%
1961 to Present	14	15%
Unknown	10	11%

Source: Worcester Assessor's records.

The presence of so many older structures indicates an increased potential for decadent conditions, outdated or abandoned facilities, lack of accessibility, maintenance issues, and the presence of regulated materials common to older buildings (e.g., lead paint and asbestos).

2.4.5 Vehicular and Pedestrian Access

Worcester has excellent access to Routes I-290, I-190, the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90), and Route 146. Route I-290 extends for about 20 miles (32.44 km) between Auburn and Marlborough, Massachusetts. It is a continuation of I-395, located north of I-90, and runs through downtown Worcester and across Lake Quinsigamond.

Much of the URA is within Worcester's Streetscape Policy District (November 2012), which seeks to integrate a high quality of life, street safety, connectivity to work and activity districts, access to transportation options, and the creation of a clean and comfortable public environment.²⁹ Streets within the District are categorized as follows:

- Primary Streets:
 - The principal commercial, business, and civic streets within the District. Provide through-trips and connections to activity centers and neighborhoods.
 - Includes Main Street and Major Taylor Boulevard.
- Gateway Streets:
 - The primary entry routes to the District from I-290 and points south and east; provide connections to other major routes; serve as vehicular and pedestrian routes connecting Union Station, Main Street and the Canal District.
 - Includes Madison Street, Front Street, Franklin Street, and Green Street.
- Connector Streets:
 - Tie Primary Streets and Gateway Streets together; provide secondary links in the overall street grid; serve both vehicles and pedestrians; provide links to shopping destinations and connections between primary vehicular routes.
 - Includes Southbridge Street, Myrtle Street, High Street, Aldrich Street, and Chestnut Street.

²⁹ <http://www.worcestermass.org/uploads/2d/f1/2df101a157d3f2d6900707eaaca3fdc8/Streetscape-Policy-2012-3-11-13-.pdf>

- Internal Streets:
 - Small-scale tertiary streets in the overall city grid; serve as important pedestrian connectors between civic, cultural, entertainment, and residential precincts within the District.
 - Includes Federal Street, Portland Street, Salem Street, Chatham Street, Pearl Street, Mechanic Street, Commercial Street, Plymouth Street and Gold Street.

2.4.6 Bus and Rail Access

As noted previously, the Union Station Intermodal Transportation Station is located just northeast of the URA. The white stone structure was built in 1911, but fell into disrepair after it was closed in 1974. It was renovated and reopened in 2000, and an intercity bus terminal was added in 2006 with service provided by Peter Pan and Greyhound Bus Lines. A 500-space parking garage constructed in 2008 is attached to the rear of Union Station for use by travelers and businesses with office space in the station. Union Station provides service to the MBTA Commuter Rail Framingham/Worcester Line, and currently 14 MBTA Commuter Rail trains per day depart Union Station for Boston's South Station, including a non-stop train from Worcester to Boston that will debut in May 2016. Union Station is also a stop along Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited passenger line which offers daily service between Chicago and Boston, traveling through Worcester, Albany, New York, and Cleveland, Ohio.

The WRTA Hub is located at 60 Foster Street, just east of the URA. This new, 14,000-square-foot facility opened in 2013 and contains the WRTA's administrative offices, customer service center, and a bus pavilion with an enclosed public waiting area, restroom facilities, ticket vending machines and eight bus slips. WRTA provides bus transportation services to the 37 communities that comprise its service area. All bus routes service Downtown via the WRTA Hub.

There are multiple WRTA bus routes throughout the downtown area, including Route 10, added in August 2015, that supports students from Assumption College and Worcester State University. Route 10 operates during the academic year, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. This route runs through downtown and is open to all commuters, although college students can purchase unlimited passes (UPass) for a nominal fee for use during a semester. This route is noteworthy because it was developed through an agreement with the Higher Education Consortium of Central Massachusetts (HECCMA) and is subsidized by the two schools.

South of the P&W ROW, a number of WRTA bus routes extend either along Green Street to Harding Street or along Southbridge Street. However, there is currently no service along Lamartine Street, Washington Street or Quinsigamond Avenue.³⁰ In addition to bus and rail service, planning is currently underway for the expansion of the Bikeway through the URA to Union Station.

2.4.7 Area-wide Summary of Environmental Conditions

The URA is highly developed and does not contain any areas of quality natural conditions or habitat. With the exception of a floodplain in the southwest corner (see *Figure S-2*), the URA does not contain any wetland resource areas, vernal pools, ACEC, rare species habitats, or water supply protection areas. The floodplain is categorized as a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) Zone AE, elevation 449 feet. A Zone AE is defined as "*areas subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event determined by detailed methods. Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) are shown.*"³¹ Mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements and floodplain management standards apply. The lowest adjacent grade elevation to a structure must be at or above the BFE for a structure to be outside of the SFHA.

Contamination from historic manufacturing is known to be present on the Wyman-Gordon Parcels. As shown on

³⁰ <http://www.therta.com/wp-content/themes/therta/system-map.htm>

³¹ <http://www.fema.gov/zone-ae-and-a1-30>

Figure S-2, there are two sites within the URA that are categorized as MassDEP Oil and/or Hazardous Material Sites with Activity and Use Limitations. This means the sites have been evaluated under MassDEP’s MCP regulations, and an AUL has been placed as a deed restriction. As noted previously, an AUL on a property alerts prospective property owners that the property may have restrictions on future uses without further cleanup activities.

The table below lists the MassDEP sites within, and adjacent to, the URA. On the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, RTN#2-0010256 and RTN#2-0010760, the response action outcome (RAO) are Class A-3, which indicates that the concentrations of Oil and Hazardous Materials (OHM) in soils and/or groundwater have not been reduced to background but they do not exceed an applicable Upper Concentration Limit (UCL), and that one or more AULs has been implemented on the site.

Table 15: MassDEP Listed Sites

	MassDEP Site Name & Address	MassDEP RTN #	Chemical Type	Category
In URA	Wyman-Gordon Co 105 Madison Street	2-0010256	Oil and Hazardous Material	RAO Class A-3/Closed Site with AUL
	Stanley Tools 149 Washington Street	2-0010760	Oil and Hazardous Material	RAO Partial Class A-3/ Closed Site with AUL
	Stanley Tools Building 149 Washington Street	2-0010473	Oil	72 Hour/Phase III Open
Adjacent to URA	Harding St Realty Corp. 38-40 Pond Street	2-0000513	Oil	21E Site Tier 2/Phase II
	CK Smith Tank Farm 233 Southbridge Street	2-0000266	Unknown	RAO Class B-2/Closed Site with AUL
	Daniel Frelander 53 Hermon Street	2-0014603	Hazardous Material	RAO Class A-3/ Closed Site with AUL
	AJD Enterprises 79 Beacon Street	2-0014444	Oil and Hazardous Material	RAO Class A-3/Closed Site with AUL
	Castle Metals 70 Quinsigamond Avenue	2-0000365	Unknown	RAO Class A-3/Closed Site with AUL
	Getty Station 399 Southbridge Street	2-0001110	Oil	RAO Class A-3/Closed Site with AUL
	Former Manufacturing Gas Plant 42 Quinsigamond Avenue	2-0019512	Coal Tar	Two Hour Reporting Category/Unclassified Compliance Status
	Former Commonwealth Gas Property 42 Quinsigamond Avenue	2-0019674	Not Noted	120 Day Reporting Category Tier I/Phase II

Source: MassDEP GIS and MassDEP Waste Site/ Reportable Releases Look Up <http://public.dep.state.ma.us/SearchableSites/>

2.4.8 Existing Infrastructure

Existing utilities that service the Study Area include electricity, gas, water, sewer, drainage and telecommunications. Worcester’s Water/Sewer Operations Division is an Enterprise operation responsible for the supply and conveyance of potable water and for the collection and conveyance of all sanitary sewage and stormwater throughout the city. This division provides an average of 24 million gallons per day (MGD) for both in-city use and sale to towns and water districts adjacent to Worcester. The supply system consists of 10 reservoirs located in five neighboring towns. Worcester’s complex distribution system includes over 592 miles of water mains ranging in size from 3.4-inch to 54-inch diameter pipes, 6,100 fire hydrants, and nearly 40,000 service connections. In addition, the sanitary combined

stormwater systems are made up of approximately 750 miles of various sized mains, 28 sewage pumping stations and a Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) Treatment Facility. Wastewater is treated at the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement facility in Millbury. The Water Treatment Plant is located on a 6-acre site adjacent to the eastern shore of Holden Reservoir No. 2 at a facility with a flow capacity of 50 MGD.

Section 2.5: Demographic, Economic and Market Analysis

With a population over 180,000 residents, Worcester is the second largest city in New England with an enviable list of assets, including:

- A long list of colleges and universities in the city providing a vibrant set of over 35,000 students, as well as faculty and staff;
- Direct (and improving) commuter rail service to Boston, the refurbished Union Station Intermodal Transportation Station, and the adjacent Transportation Hub;
- Significant private-public development projects in or near downtown such as CitySquare/Mercantile Center and Gateway Park; and
- Key attractors such as the DCU Center, Mechanics Hall and the Hanover Theatre, and major employers such as St. Vincent Hospital, UMass Memorial Healthcare and UMass Medical School, other health care companies and hospitals, insurance companies (Hanover, Unum), and industrial leaders such as Polar Beverages, CSX Rail and Simplex Grinnell.

Despite these advantages, Worcester remains a Gateway City in Massachusetts with relatively high poverty rates, low household incomes, and low home values compared to statewide averages. These economic, demographic and real estate market conditions tend to be more challenging in the downtown area, which is the focus for the URP.

This section presents an economic development assessment of the URA that is informed by relevant data measures and input from private, non-profit, and public sector development leaders. This work builds from numerous other city planning efforts, most notably the 2012 Theatre District Master Plan, and a wide-range of data and information on downtown Worcester, including the 2016 MassDevelopment TDI report, which includes data on Worcester's Theatre District.³²

This discussion considers available data and relevant information about downtown Worcester to project current and future economic development opportunities and priorities. Significant data resides in publications such as the Worcester Regional Research Bureau's 2015 Almanac and the MassDevelopment TDI report referenced above. The intent here is thus to provide some highlights and relevant data measures that reflect current market conditions for the city and downtown.

2.5.1 Overview of Economic/Demographic Market Conditions

The uniquely formed area for the URP may be completely appropriate for revitalization and redevelopment, but does not easily lend itself to geographically consistent data measures. Consequently, the data included in this brief overview varies among the more focused TDI District (from the Master Plan) to the slightly broader ZIP code (e.g., real estate data for 01608) to city-wide measures.

³² See http://www.massdevelopment.com/assets/pdfs/annual-reports/TDI_report_022016.pdf

Summarizing available data that is most relevant to redevelopment opportunities and challenges, we note the following conditions, followed by a discussion of each:

- City-wide, Worcester has some relatively strong economic indicators;
- Residents of Worcester, and the downtown area in particular, face economic hardships;
- Downtown real estate market conditions are challenging in terms of both available product and lease rates; and
- Data indicates other challenges and needs for downtown.

Worcester has some relatively strong economic indicators.

As of 2014, there were approximately 100,000 jobs in Worcester (99,722) which is more than any other Gateway City in Massachusetts. Worcester has a jobs-to-population ratio of 0.54, which is slightly higher than the statewide average of 0.50, and significantly higher than the Gateway City average of 0.41. Coupled with the fact that Worcester has more employees working in the city than residents who are working overall, this is an indicator of a relatively strong employment base and the daily reality of commuters coming into the city.³³ Further, Worcester's unemployment rate is relatively low compared to other Gateway Cities, and the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher (30%) is significantly above the Gateway City average (23%) while trailing the state average (39%).

Residents of Worcester, and the downtown area in particular, face economic hardships.

Despite the presence of a relatively solid employer base, most resident-based data measures point to a distressed market. For example, the city's poverty rate is 21.4% compared to a statewide average of 11.4%. For the TDI District, the poverty rate almost doubles to 40.4%. Similarly, median household income in Worcester is \$45,932, compared to a statewide average over \$66,000. For the TDI District, median household income is just \$22,593. The lower median household incomes (especially downtown) may be partly due to the large population of college students from MCPHS University. Median home values see a similar pattern. Data measures like these are challenging because they:

- Reflect the current perceptions of downtown in terms of a concentration of poverty, homelessness, public safety concerns, etc.; and
- Do not include the current/planned market-rate housing in downtown Worcester which is likely to improve these measures over time.³⁴

Downtown real estate market conditions are challenging in terms of both available product and lease rates.

A frequently noted comment from Worcester development experts is that there is a lack of larger, high-quality (Class A) office space available. Data from Co-Star (provided by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce) indicates that there are six Class A buildings in the downtown area with about 100,000 square feet available across multiple buildings, an average lease rate of \$20 per square-foot and a vacancy rate of 14.3%. Please note that only two of these buildings are within the URA (28-38 Franklin Street and 446 Main Street).

Class A space may see an upswing shortly when UMass Memorial Healthcare relocates and expands to approximately 700 employees within a renovated Mercantile Center office location (this estimate includes 200 planned new positions). Class B office space is much more abundant with higher vacancy rates and lower lease rates. The net effect is a market where average lease rates are often higher in the rest of Worcester than downtown. This condition is not

³³ Worcester has a remarkably high concentration of jobs in the "eds and meds" categories of education and health care with 48% of all jobs in those sectors compared with 28% statewide.

³⁴ The resident-based data is derived from American Community Survey (ACS) data that covers 2010 to 2014 and thus changes slowly as the ACS covers multiple years to arrive at statistically viable estimates.

a sign of a vibrant market. Further, Valassis Policy Map estimates a very high vacancy rate for commercial (including retail) space in the TDI District of 32.6% and retail lease rates that are higher outside the downtown area. Combined, these real estate data indicators point to both the opportunities and challenges of attracting new tenants and investment.

Data indicates other challenges and needs for downtown.

Two important issues that stand out for the downtown Worcester market are the need for more attractions in downtown Worcester and the perception and reality of public safety. These issues were recently highlighted in the results of the 2014 *Worcester Student Survey*, which indicated that:

- Students perceive downtown Worcester as generally not offering amenities for the city’s college students and not being pedestrian friendly (despite its fairly compact form and sidewalks).
- Students are most interested in seeing a downtown with a healthy food store, fast-casual Mexican food (e.g., Boloco or Chipotle), bookstores and cafes with Wi-Fi, and additional entertainment options (e.g., live music venues).³⁵

Public safety is a frequently cited concern for downtown Worcester in terms of interest from developers, quality retail stores, and attracting younger populations. This is discussed further below.

2.5.2 Economic Development Issues and Challenges

Based on research, findings from interviews with private and public sector development experts, and previous plans, Worcester is well poised for growth and has experienced significant pockets of redevelopment success. However, success has been slow to expand into the inner core of downtown surrounding City Hall and the Worcester Common. Thus, the city still faces a number of key issues and challenges in terms of redevelopment and the attraction of private investment in the URA. One challenge is that developers have traditionally categorized the downtown area as an “8 to 5” market for workers. The positive development activities and successes near the URA, e.g., CitySquare and Mercantile Center, described previously, are beginning to shift that perception, but more work is needed to attract younger professionals, college students or others seeking urban experiences.

Along those lines, the most prevalent economic development issues and challenges in the URP include the below listed conditions, followed by a discussion of each.

- Developers generally believe that market rents for residential and office space do not support private investment in new building construction (despite some recent exceptions);
- Real and perceived loitering and public safety concerns around Worcester Common and nearby retail that act as a deterrent to private investment;
- First floor vacancies and low-value retail uses peppered throughout the URA;
- Numerous small to medium-sized buildings that can be characterized by a mix of vacancy, low-quality Class B and C office space, and lower-income housing tenants.
- Downtown Worcester is a relatively compact area, and could become more pedestrian friendly as well as develop transit options which appeal to a wider market of users.

³⁵ Worcester Student Survey 2014, the City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development in partnership with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, p 3.

<http://www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/3d/85/3d8537b8483485c5bdccf21c86e1006b/student-downtown-survey.pdf> ;

- The Wyman-Gordon site and other areas south of the McGrath Boulevard (sometimes referred to as the Canal District) present a mix of environmental concerns, weak pedestrian connectivity to downtown, and uncertain private development interest.

Market Rents that Don't Support New Construction/Speculative Investment.

A commonly heard statement from multiple development experts was that Worcester's relatively modest lease rates and sales values generally do not support new construction. This is very typical in Gateway Cities as a relatively weak market combined with construction costs that don't vary much from area to area results in lower capital investment. Worcester has seen some exceptions to this, as the CitySquare project (now with multiple developers and major tenants) has included significant private investment, fueled by upfront public infrastructure funding (MassWorks grants). Other examples include the nearby Mercantile Center project which will include approximately \$72 million in private investment for acquisition and site improvements and the Gateway Park project with WPI and multiple development partners. Still, office rents top out at about \$25 per square-foot for new Class A space with older/Class B space available at a significantly lower rate. A closely associated sentiment from developers is that they will not undertake major projects on speculation, thereby requiring existing or committed tenants to occupy space. And they need to ensure that if trying to acquire properties that they can purchase at a market price grounded in market realities.

Lingering public safety concerns in downtown Worcester.

Despite some improvements over time, the city's violent crime rate remains higher than the Gateway City average, and more than twice the state average.³⁶ The commonly expressed descriptions revolve around loitering, drugs, and panhandling combined with a perception of insufficient police presence and other safety amenities (e.g., street lights). Along these lines, stakeholders mentioned that when college students arrive in Worcester, they are essentially told (explicitly or implicitly) to stay on campus and be very careful about going downtown. Multiple private developers mentioned that these perceptions are a significant deterrent to private redevelopment interest.

It is relevant to note that in mid-January of 2016 the city implemented a community policing approach to address quality of life issues that may concern visitors to the city center and nearby businesses. Foot patrols have become a daily presence in and around the Common. Police activity focuses on decreasing drug-related activity, providing assistance to those who may need services or shelter, and enhancing community partnerships and relationships with daily interactions with business owners and citizens.

First floor vacancies and low-value retail uses.

According to one local retail expert, there are approximately 33 ground floor vacancies in the Worcester downtown area/Theatre District; and the current mix of retail, service and restaurant offerings in the Study Area is less than desirable. While some high-quality ventures have been successful, the current mix of retail uses trends toward service retail supporting lower-income populations. One challenge is the prevalence of parking garages attached to major office buildings often resulting in office workers staying within the building they work in rather than frequenting local establishments and contributing to street-level activity. In addition, the low median household income of downtown Worcester (less than \$25,000) is a major obstacle to attracting retailers. The more recent/ongoing build-up of market-rate housing in the area will change this demographic over time but has not shown up in census data yet.

³⁶ Based on the 2012 ACS Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics from the FBI, Worcester had 959 violent crimes per 100,000 population compared to a Gateway City average rate of 678 per 100,000 and a statewide average of 406 per 100,000. Data accessed from: <http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/index.cfm>

Low quality small-medium sized buildings in downtown core.

Many of the small-medium sized buildings in the URA also have relatively low-value upper floors – a mix of vacancy, lower rent residential apartments, and Class B or C office space. Some of the current landlords appear to be stuck in a situation where they aren't attracting enough higher-paying tenants to cover higher-quality rehabilitation of spaces. Others are open to selling the property, but may be seeking a sale value well-above market price.

To further emphasize this point, a number of these properties are in strategically critical locations next to or near other properties that have been redeveloped. For example, buildings on Franklin Street on either side of the revitalized Quinsigamond Community College and Innovation Center at 20 Franklin Street are generally in disrepair (e.g., the Paris Cinema) or only attracting lower-income tenants/customers. Similarly, CitySquare and Mercantile Center are located on the edge of the URP on Front Street but the remainder of Front Street (including the Midtown Mall) is largely distressed and/or vacant. Finally, the 500 block of Main Street near the Hanover Theatre also includes significant opportunity for higher and better uses.

Weak perceptions of walkability and unrealized transit markets.

Although Worcester's downtown area is relatively compact with sidewalks, almost 45% of college students who responded to the 2014 survey indicated that they think downtown Worcester is not pedestrian friendly, with another 32% of respondents feeling neutral. This may be the result of a number of factors, including campus proximity to downtown, poor signage, and public safety concerns.

In terms of transit markets, most college students do not use WRTA buses, limiting the ease of access from college campuses to downtown. In addition, opportunities to link transit to economic development in Worcester may not be fully realized yet. deficient. For example, when asked directly, some developers down-played the importance of Union Station and improvements to commuter rail to Boston as a critical element of their projects. That said, the introduction of an express train to Boston has helped boost local awareness of commuter rail as a key tool for redevelopment.

Long-term challenges at Wyman-Gordon site.

The Wyman-Gordon Parcels are the largest vacant/undeveloped site in the URA, and as the crow flies, it is fairly close to both the rest of downtown and other key areas of the city (e.g., Union Station, Canal District, Shrewsbury Street restaurants). That said, it presents a number of challenges for near-term redevelopment including: a) environmental issues with uncertain severity that will require clean-up and thus pose a development risk; b) lack of connectivity to the rest of downtown given the railroad ROW and aqueduct tunnels and McGrath Boulevard/Foster Street; and c) a mix of industrial, automotive repair and other surrounding/existing uses that are less conducive to residential or mixed-use development.

2.5.3 Economic Development Implications

Worcester, like every city, may have its challenges and obstacles, but its list of assets is strong and the potential opportunities to redevelop the downtown into a more vibrant focal point for positive economic activity are enticing. While the city and various partners are understandably frustrated at the lack of progress on a number of key sites in the downtown area, that is a better problem to have than many Gateway Cities in Massachusetts, which lack overall market demand and have many fewer assets to leverage and connect. From this perspective, redevelopment supported with a continued long-term vision working toward an 18-hour downtown area for Worcester can be more tactical and methodical than purely wishful thinking.

Through research and interviews, a number of positive developments related to downtown revitalization are worth highlighting:

- The positive spillover effects of CitySquare and its \$500+ million of public-private development are only just beginning. Most tangible are the completed buildings for Unum and Saint Vincent Cancer and Wellness Center. The benefits of this project cannot be fully leveraged until more of it is complete, including the new AC Hotel by Marriott and luxury residences by Roseland, a Mack-Cali company.
- There is a significant upswing in market-rate housing in downtown Worcester. By one estimate, downtown Worcester is experiencing an increase of 1,000 market-rate units (many of them near but not in the URA). Most developers expect the potential for even more residential development. Given that the TDI Theatre District has a population of about 2,200 residents, this is a significant boost towards building an 18-hour downtown which will demand and require additional services, retail and other amenities in the area. It also should boost median household incomes, thereby making the area more attractive for retailers.
- Starting in May 2016, Worcester will have a non-stop train to Boston that will reduce the travel time to just 46 minutes. The city, Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders are advocating for an increase in the number of non-stop trains between Worcester and Boston each day. This kind of accessibility to Boston, combined with less costly housing options, should be a major selling point for Worcester in the coming years.

Developers consistently gave high marks to city officials and public/private economic development leaders in terms of being supportive, responsive, creative and generally easy-to-work-with. This kind of positive, coordinated economic development environment can be a selling point for Worcester (especially compared to other cities). The active Economic Development Coordinating Council appears to be a positive force for collaborative and aligned efforts that should be continued and highlighted.

Section 2.6: Property Conditions

An exterior visual assessment of each parcel within the Study Area was conducted as part of the URP process. Where a parcel contained a building, the assessment evaluated the structure and the overall property. Based on field observations and assessor's data, each parcel was identified as categorized by condition, as follows:

- Excellent: Conditions of the building parts appear new/well cared for, and in no need of cleaning or maintenance.
- Good: Condition of the building parts are in deteriorating shape, in need of paint, washing, caulking, re-pointing, scraping rust, etc. The structure is still able to function at its intended purpose. The condition/deterioration is surficial.
- Fair: Conditions have worsened beyond cosmetic repairs. Thin cracks in masonry walls could allow the potential for moisture penetration. Damaged exterior walls could be indicative of constant dampness or interior moisture reaching into the interior. The need for repair and attention to the underlying causes could represent moderate disrepair. Broken glass, damaged frames, missing roof shingles, broken, disrupted, or sagging cornice, eaves, and gutters are individual items of this category. Entire systems of enclosures have not failed, and the damaged items could be repaired or replaced.
- Poor: Worsening conditions are now beyond the weather protecting exterior materials of the building. Water/ice entering under or behind these exterior materials will or has degraded the entire structure. Severe disrepair includes wide cracks in masonry walls, a sinking foundation, the broken or rotted out conditions of walls, sills, windows, doors, eaves, metal fasteners severely reduced by rust, and entire roofing assemblies missing. Disrepair is at a level that indicates a potential for compromised structural integrity. A rating of Poor may also indicate that the parcel is vacant with deteriorated pavement conditions and/or remnants of structures that have been removed.

A visual survey of the exterior of buildings was completed to determine general condition. Of the 118 parcels within the URA, approximately 80% have structures and the remaining 20% are used for parking or are vacant. As shown in *Table 16*, 54.7% of the buildings are categorized as Fair/Serviceable, Moderate Disrepair or Poor/Severe Disrepair.

Table 16: Building Conditions Overview

Building Condition	# of Parcels	Percent (%) of Total Buildings
Excellent	4	4.2%
Good/Acceptable	32	33.7%
Fair/Serviceable, Moderate Disrepair	43	45.3%
Poor/Severe Disrepair	9	9.5%
Unknown	7	7.4%
Total	95	100%

The overall perception of the area is overwhelmingly that it is in poor condition with aging structures and obsolete features. Elements that contribute to this perception include the age, condition and façade/signage of many downtown buildings, the intersecting presence of the railroad ROW and viaduct tunnels. The condition of many of the vacant parcels also gives an impression of disrepair, particularly the Wyman-Gordon Parcels. Street and sidewalk conditions in some areas (e.g., Gold Street, Lamartine Street, and Pearl Street) also boost the perception of poor conditions. Viewed comprehensively, these conditions pose a barrier to redevelopment of the area.

Section 2.7 Consistency of Concept Plan with Existing Zoning

The existing zoning appears to be consistent with the proposed Concept Plan. For example:

- Redevelopment south of the ROW (i.e., new Parcels B-1, B-2, B-3.2, and B-5) will occur within an MG-2 District, and Parcels B-1, B-2, and B-3.2 are also within the CCOD-C Overlay District. The proposed uses are commercial (which may include, but are not limited to, retail sales, personal services, food service and/or bank/credit union) and business/professional office space. These are all permitted uses under existing zoning; a Special Permit would be required if a drive-thru is proposed. Design of the new structures would be consistent with the CCOD-C stipulations for building orientation, active façades, and landscaped parking buffers.
- The proposed indoor recreation facility on new Parcel B-3.1 is a permitted use in an MG-2 District. Given the unique functional aspect of this development, a Special Permit for the building orientation active façade may be necessary, but sidewalk connections and integrating the development into the fabric and character of the area will be a priority.
- Proposed residential development on new Parcels B-4.1, B-4.2 and B-4.3 is within a BG-3 District, with the exception of a sliver of an RG-5 District. Single and multi-family residential development is a permitted use within both BG-3 and RG-5 Districts.
- The proposed parking garage on Portland and Myrtle Streets is a permitted use within a BG-6 District, and will be consistent with CCOD-D requirements for façade details and landscaping to maintain an attractive streetscape.
- Redevelopment at 66 Franklin Street, 17 Pleasant Street and 518 Main Street, all of which are within a BG-6 District, is expected to be commercial on the first floor (e.g., retail, services or restaurant) and office space

above. All of these are permitted uses within BG-6, and buildings will be consistent with orientation and active façade design standards of the CCOD-D.

Section 2.8: Area Eligibility Designation

In order to designate the Study Area as an URA, the WRA is required to make a finding that the area contains decadent and/or blighted open areas in accordance with M.G.L. c. 121B. This section integrates the information presented above with the elements of the regulatory definitions to demonstrate that the area meets these requirements.

2.8.1 Area Eligibility Findings

After extensive and thoughtful review of available data, in conjunction with input from stakeholders and officials from the City of Worcester, the most appropriate findings for the URA are decadent and blighted open. The regulatory definition of each was presented in the **Executive Summary, III. Statement of Need**, and is summarized below.

Decadent – An area which is detrimental to the sound growth by reason of any combination of the following conditions:

- the buildings are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation, obsolete, or in need of major maintenance or repair;
- the real estate in recent years has been sold, or taken for nonpayment of taxes upon foreclosure of mortgages;
- buildings have been torn down and not replaced and under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced;
- there has been a substantial change in business or economic conditions;
- there is inadequate light, air, or open space;
- there is excessive land coverage; or
- there is diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes or obsolete street patterns which make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise.

Blighted Open – A predominantly open area which is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, welfare or sound growth of a community by reason of any combination of the following conditions:

- the area is unduly costly to develop soundly through the ordinary operations of private enterprise by reason of the existence of ledge, rock, unsuitable soil, or other physical conditions;
- the necessity for unduly expensive excavation, fill or grading, foundations, retaining walls or measures for waterproofing structures or for draining the area or for the prevention of the flooding thereof or for the protection of adjacent properties and the water table therein;
- the necessity for unduly expensive measures incident to building around or over rights-of-way through the area, or for otherwise making the area appropriate for sound development;
- the presence of obsolete, inappropriate or otherwise faulty platting or subdivision;
- deterioration of site improvements or facilities;
- diversity of ownership of plots;
- inadequacy of transportation facilities or other utilities;
- tax and special assessment delinquencies;
- there has been a substantial change in business or economic conditions or practices, or an abandonment or cessation of a previous use or of work on improvements begun but not feasible to complete without the aids provided by urban renewal; or

- a predominantly open area which by reason of any condition or combination of conditions which are not being remedied by the ordinary operations of private enterprise is of such a character that in essence it is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, welfare or sound growth of the community in which it is situated.

The remainder of this section focuses on relating the above definitions to the existing conditions of the URA. Some of this discussion is unavoidably repetitive because buildings or areas often meet more than one aspect of the definitions.

2.8.2 Decadent Criteria

Building(s) Out of Repair, Physically Deteriorated, Unfit for Human Habitation or Obsolete

Finding: The Study Area contains numerous buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation or obsolete.

Many buildings in downtown Worcester are no longer utilized to their fullest potential. One reason for this situation is that the older buildings are functionally obsolete and lack standard amenities considered necessary in the current business environment. Based on observations in the field and Assessor's information, 61% of structures were constructed prior to 1940, and 75% were constructed prior to 1960, thus are 50 or more years old. Their physical conditions lack the mechanical and building systems necessary to meet contemporary needs. The floor plans and ceiling heights of existing buildings do not allow flexibility or meet the requirements sought by contemporary businesses, which makes the spaces more difficult to lease to growing businesses. Further, façades in many of the downtown buildings have been altered from their original condition and/or have an unkempt appearance due to lack of maintenance and architecturally inappropriate updates. These factors inhibit demand, and under these circumstances it is unlikely that the situation will improve without assistance. Poor conditions also have a negative impact to the pedestrian environment, further reducing an area's utilization.

Finding: Chronic underutilization and long-term vacancies are a significant issue in Worcester.

Underutilized parcels have structures that may be unoccupied, or are occupied but not at an optimal level. There are many areas within the URA that are underutilized, including (but not limited to) the properties described below.

- Retail spaces on the first level of the Midtown Mall at 22 Front Street (Parcel 02-025-007+8) are being used for storage, and the upper and lower levels have few occupants. There is also first floor retail available on Portland Street.
- Buildings along Main Street and Front Street have office space vacancies. For example, 12 Front Street (Parcel 02-025-007+8) and 40-44 Front Street (Parcel 02-025-00012) are only partially leased.
- Some buildings have active street level storefronts with vacant upper or lower floors that could be developed for housing, commercial or office space. These include 526-538 Main Street (the Money Stop), 517 Main Street (MetroPCS), and 521 Main Street (Great Wall Restaurant).
- The Olympia Theater building at 17 Pleasant Street (Parcel 03-031-00018) has three street level storefronts, but the upper floors (which comprise the former theater, circa 1890 and subsequently modified) are vacant and in significant disrepair. The rear of the building has a lower floor that is accessible from a surface parking lot off Pearl Street but is also unoccupied.
- The former Paris Cinema at 66 Franklin Street (Parcel 03-012-002-4) has been closed since 2006. The condition of this historic building (circa 1926) is significantly deteriorated and the structure has been condemned by the Worcester Fire Department.

Properties with Demolished Buildings

Finding: The Study Area contains a number of properties with demolished buildings.

Of the eleven Wyman-Gordon Parcels south of the P&W ROW, ten are vacant parcels which likely contained buildings that were demolished years ago. As noted in the previous discussion of existing conditions in the URA, these parcels are primarily fenced off and comprised of cracked concrete and weedy vegetation. The parcels total approximately 25 acres and dominate the southern side of the URA. This area is the primary focus of the discussion of Blighted Open conditions presented in the next section.

Downtown has significantly changed over time, and there are a number of surface parking lots where buildings have been demolished. Examples include 518 Main Street, once the site of a brick office building, and the McGrath Municipal Parking Lot behind the Worcester Public Library which was cleared in the 1960's as part of the New Salem Urban Renewal Plan.

Diversity of Ownership, Irregular Lot Sizes or Obsolete Street Patterns

Finding: Small or irregular lot size maximizes problems of assembling development parcels.

As indicated in *Table 10: Summary of Land Ownership*, ownership and uses of the privately owned lands are quite varied. Development in the downtown area is very dense, and many of the parcels are irregularly shaped. In some cases, buildings were constructed on very small or oddly shaped lots to accommodate older existing buildings, resulting in some very narrow buildings wedged between larger buildings. Historically, downtown property owners have not demonstrated a willingness to work together to create mutually beneficial joint undertakings.

South of the P&W ROW, the Wyman-Gordon Parcels are irregularly shaped and span a large area. Prospective development would be facilitated by a more thoughtful configuration of property lines.

2.8.3 Blighted Open Criteria

Physical Conditions that Make Development Difficult or Unduly Expensive

Finding: On the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, the existing contamination triggers regulatory and remediation requirements that can make development on the parcel extremely expensive and unlikely to occur without public intervention.

The long-term use of the site for industrial purposes has resulted in soil and groundwater contamination in some areas. The site has been evaluated under the MCP, and cleanup has occurred to a point where the site poses no significant risk to public health, public welfare and the environment in its current state. However, additional investigations would be required before the site could be redeveloped. Data collected from investigations would be used to determine the extent of remediation required to comply with the MCP. It should be noted that MCP standards are dependent on the proposed use, with more intensive uses requiring higher standards of cleanup. Efforts could include soil borings and groundwater monitoring wells for data collection, assessment of site conditions by a Licensed Site Professional (LSP), and the implementation of appropriate remediation measures, e.g., hazardous materials transport and disposal at licensed facilities.

Obsolete, Inappropriate or Faulty Existing Development

Finding: Parcels with obsolete, inappropriate or faulty development create a challenging environment for stimulating economic development.

The parcels considered to be Blighted Open within the URA include the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, formerly associated with manufacturing. No longer in use, facilities on the property are obsolete and offer an excellent opportunity for redevelopment.

North of the P&W ROW, the McGrath Parking Lot may also be considered an inappropriate or faulty existing development. The lot was once part of a neighborhood which included the former location of St. Spyridon Church and Orange Street. The area was cleared as part of the New Salem Urban Renewal Plan in the 1960's. While the lot provides important parking for the Worcester Public Library and YWCA, it was identified in the Theater District Master Plan as an important redevelopment opportunity. The Master Plan noted that the 1.5-acre lot is a *“sea of surface parking, with limited landscaping and pedestrian amenity”* and that the area *“can be improved to offer parking, provide an additional anchor to bring activity to the District and clarify pedestrian connectivity for the area.”*³⁷ The WRA recognizes the importance of parking behind the public library, and any future development would prioritize replacing existing parking spots.

The three surface parking lots behind the Hanover Theatre could also be better utilized. Assembling these parcels and constructing a parking garage facility offers a significant opportunity for the businesses, residential and cultural uses of the area.

Deteriorated Conditions; Abandonment of Previous Uses

Finding: The URA contains a preponderance of structures that were constructed in or before the 1960's.

The presence of many older structures in the URA indicates the potential for decadent conditions, outdated or abandoned facilities, maintenance issues, and the presence of regulated materials typically found in older buildings (e.g., lead paint, asbestos). Visual observations indicate the presence of deteriorated conditions in select buildings throughout the URA.

Inadequate Connectivity and Transportation Facilities

Finding: There are challenges associated with connectivity between the north and south areas of the URA and a lack of transportation options in the south side of the URA.

Creating pedestrian-friendly amenities and encouraging connectivity are key components of creating a thriving urban environment. Drivers should also have a clear sense of place with appropriate signage on roads with good lighting and pavement conditions. The URA is served by a network of streets and sidewalks, some of which are in poor condition as well as lack appropriate lighting, signage, and/or wayfinding. For example, the drab concrete walls and poorly lit viaduct tunnels beneath the railroad tracks are a connectivity barrier between the southern area and downtown.

Finding: The lack of bus service along Lamartine Street and Quinsigamond Avenue may limit connectivity between the north and south sections of the URA, as well as between the south section and the rest of Worcester.

Proximity to the WRTA Hub and Union Station Intermodal Transportation Station is an excellent feature of the URA, but more is needed to encourage connectivity between the south side of the URA and the downtown. Bus route coverage in the downtown area is comprehensive, but the URA south of the P&W ROW is minimally served by the WRTA. The closest bus routes travel down Green Street through Kelly Square to Harding Street (Route 4) and along Southbridge Street (Routes 25 and 42). There is no route that directly serves Lamartine or Washington Streets.³⁸

³⁷ Master Plan, p. 46

³⁸ <http://www.therta.com/fixe-route-service-overview-and-maps/#South>

According to their website, the WRTA is currently undergoing a comprehensive service analysis of its fixed-route system, and recommended changes include the eventual addition of a new route that creates connections between seven colleges, Union Station, Greendale Mall, and Walmart on Route 146.

Finding: There are extensive impervious areas in the URA. Stormwater management infrastructure may be inadequate, or has the potential to be improved, in some areas.

Some limited flooding occurs on Southbridge Street during storm events, but overall flooding is not considered a significant issue in the URA. However, it is highly likely that the stormwater collection and treatment infrastructure is aging and in poor condition. In recent years, many new technologies and efficiencies have evolved and could be incorporated into new development designs for increased efficiency and improved environmental conditions. For example, low impact development (LID) practices manage rainfall at the source mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source.

Underutilization and Vacancies

Finding: There are parcels throughout the downtown that are underutilized due to abandonment of previous uses.

In the downtown area, a number of properties are currently unoccupied, including (but not limited to) the former Paris Cinema on Franklin Street (Parcel 03-12-2-4). As noted above, many more downtown properties are underutilized, in some cases being partially occupied with high vacancy rates, and others with significant square-footage that is undeveloped. Examples of partially occupied buildings include The Olympia Theater building at 17 Pleasant Street (Parcel 03-31-00018) and Midtown Mall at 22 Front Street (Parcel 02-025-007+8). Examples of partially undeveloped buildings include and 517, 521 and 526-538 Main Street (Parcels 03-013-00002, 03-013-00003 and 03-19A-00022, respectively), all of which have one or more undeveloped upper floors.

Finding: Vacant/underutilized land is present on multiple parcels south of the P&W ROW.

South of the P&W ROW are the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, with a land area of approximately 25-acres and known contamination issues. The parcels are predominantly vacant and underutilized. Most are fenced off with broken concrete and weedy vegetation. One of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels contains a large structure (Parcel 05-009-00019) which is vacant and dilapidated.

Substantial Changes in Business and Economic Conditions

Finding: Worcester has suffered through a number of economic setbacks, starting with suburban migration in the 1960's and most recently during the Great Recession.

Worcester's retail and commercial vibrancy through the 1940's and 1950's is well documented, but since the 1960's, downtown Worcester's retail and commercial businesses have been in decline. The cumulative effects of Worcester's economic difficulties include a lack of reinvestment in downtown properties, low market rents, vacant storefronts and difficulty in maintaining tenants. Manufacturing, which once thrived in the area south of the railroad, began to decline in the 1970's, resulting in large tracts of vacant land and obsolete facilities. Severe economic hardship in the City of Worcester is evidenced by an unemployment rate in excess of the state average and a high concentration of low and moderate income households.

Ongoing large-scale investments at the site of the former Worcester Center Galleria (the CitySquare Project), along with renovations to 100 and 120 Front Street are generating a great deal of energy and will bring in new workers, residents and visitors to the area. The URA is proximate to the CitySquare District, but the existing conditions are a deterrent to private investment. City officials believe that urban revitalization activities associated with CitySquare can be leveraged and will, over time, extend into the URA.

2.8.4 Other Urban Renewal Eligibility Considerations

Some other important factors relative to determining whether the proposed Worcester revitalization area is eligible for designation as an urban renewal area are discussed below.

Traffic Circulation and Parking

Finding: Within the URA there are issues with roadway conditions, intersection inefficiencies, and parking. Connections can also be improved in some areas.

The City of Worcester has recently undertaken a number of street improvement projects, including the ongoing repaving work along Myrtle Street, and the work planned for Main Street. Overall, much of the area's roadway network is in good repair. However, some roadways with less than optimal conditions include Sargent Street, Gold Street, and Assonet Street near the Wyman-Gordon Parcels. Sidewalk conditions are generally also good, but there are some areas with uneven surfaces that present challenges for pedestrians and obstacles for the disabled.

Signage and Wayfinding

Finding: Signage and wayfinding resources should be improved within the URA.

Signage and wayfinding resources throughout the URA should be significantly improved to aid traffic circulation and promote the development of a sense of place. Because the street layout is irregular, signage and wayfinding is extremely important for both pedestrians and drivers.

As part of a public-private partnership, the City of Worcester is implementing a \$3 million Worcester Wayfinding initiative in Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017 to improve the overall visitor experience and leverage Worcester's significant historic contributions to industry, arts, culture and innovation through improved signage, mapping, and public art in eight districts and ways, including downtown, the Canal District, and South Worcester. Efforts will include gateway or district markers that incorporate public art, consistent street and district directional indicators, and pedestrian-oriented information kiosks. A mobile app will be developed to further integrate the comprehensive wayfinding program.

Aesthetics

Finding: Aesthetics could be significantly improved throughout the URA.

Aesthetics in an urban environment strongly evoke a response that can contribute to a sense of place and feeling of safety. Aesthetically pleasing elements include pedestrian amenities, period and feature lighting, clean sidewalks, landscape features, banners, and public art. Downtown has recently added many aesthetic features, including period lighting, banners, some public art and pedestrian amenities, but these could be improved and expanded. Rehabilitation of the many beautiful and historic buildings in the downtown area will also significantly improve the area's aesthetic appeal.

South of the railroad ROW, there are few, if any, aesthetic features. Lighting fixtures are typical mercury vapor on steel poles, and there is no landscaping or public art.

Environmental Justice

Finding: There are incompatible uses that are directly adjacent to each other without adequate buffer.

South of the railroad ROW, residences are situated close to vacant lots and industrial uses. A fast-food restaurant is located across the street from the vacant Wyman-Gordon structure at the corner of Washington and Lamartine Streets.

Inadequate Open Space

Finding: There is insufficient public open space within the URA, and existing public spaces could be improved.

Parks can serve many different uses, from specialized functions to providing visual appeal. Large areas are not necessary to improve the sense of openness, and effective public spaces, particularly in densely settled urban areas can take the form of small pocket parks and plazas that offer visual and physical relief from structures, streets, and sidewalks. These spaces can be permanent or temporary (e.g., pop-up parks). The only public open spaces within the URA are the Worcester Common behind City Hall and Federal Plaza in front of the Hanover Theatre. These areas are actively used for sitting outdoors or for passive recreation/walking, but some issues have been observed at the Common. As a result, there is a perception that the Common is not safe. As noted in *Section 2.5*, above, the city recently implemented a community policing approach, with foot patrols in and around the Common. Police activity is focused on decreasing drug-related activity, providing assistance to those who may need services and shelter, and enhancing community partnerships and relationships with daily interactions with business owners and citizens. The city incorporates year-round engaging programming for Worcester Common to appeal to a wide range of users, and is always looking for opportunities to expand the appeal and uses of the Common.

The expansion of Federal Plaza, in front of the Hanover Theatre, will help minimize pedestrian gridlock during events and improve safety by creating a separation from automobile traffic. Installation of a new small public plaza behind the Worcester Public Library will increase the opportunity for outdoor passive recreation and allow the library to incorporate outdoor events into their programming.

There are currently no public open spaces in the southern portion of the URA. In addition to improving open spaces in the downtown, there is also an opportunity to incorporate new public open space for recreation in the redevelopment of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, including the extension of the Bikeway off-road along Lamartine Street. Opportunities for the strategic incorporation of public open spaces of varying sizes are a key element within this portion of the URA.

Section 2.9: Area Eligibility Acquisition, Clearance and Disposition

2.9.1 Clearance and Spot Clearance

DHCD requires justification for clearance as well as spot clearance areas. A building meets the clearance criteria if more than 50% of the floor area is functionally obsolete, structurally substandard, or is not reasonably capable of being rehabilitated for productive use. If conditions warranting clearance do not exist, the appropriate treatment may be spot clearance to remove substandard buildings and blighting influences. Spot clearance may involve buildings that are in good condition, but whose demolition is necessary to achieve the Plan objectives within the URA.

As shown in *Table 17*, the three buildings slated for demolition meet the criteria for clearance. Based on inspections of the buildings recommended for demolition, it is reasonable to assert that well over 50 percent of the floor area of each structure is functionally obsolete, structurally deficient, or is not reasonably capable of being rehabilitated for productive use. In addition, given the age and history of the structures, it is likely that there are issues with hazardous materials (e.g., lead paint, asbestos, and potentially residual manufacturing waste) that must be addressed to achieve successful brownfields reuse.

Table 17: Clearance and Spot Clearance

Parcel ID	Address	Type of Clearance	Owner	Notes
03-012-002-4 (Parcel C-1)	66 Franklin Street Paris Cinema	Clearance	Worcester Park Plaza LLC	Vacant former theater condemned by Worcester Fire Department.
03-031-00018	17 Pleasant Street Olympia Theater	Clearance	First Olympia Realty, LLC	Retail 1 st Floor (3 Units) but vacant former theater above is in deteriorated condition.
05-009-00019 (Parcel B-3)	149 Washington Street	Clearance	WG Washington Street LLC	Vacant industrial structure with contamination issues; functionally obsolete and a blighting influence.

Section 2.10: URP Conformity with Local Comprehensive Plan

Conformity is assessed with regard to consistency with the 2012 Theatre District Master Plan, a recent public forum for the Wyman-Gordon Parcels, and the 1995 *Predevelopment Study for the Wyman-Gordon Property and The South Worcester Industrial Park*.

As noted previously, this URP embodies the vision that was defined in the Theatre District Master Plan, and focuses on creating a welcoming sense of place, serving as the center of a creative district, and facilitating connections between key destinations throughout downtown. The Master Plan also notes the importance of partnerships with property owners, investors, and institutions as a key to progress. Actions proposed for the northern section of the URA are consistent with the Master Plan.

South of the railroad ROW, a public forum regarding the Wyman-Gordon Parcels was held in September 2015. During breakout sessions, participants were asked to consider a number of questions, including how various reuses would suit the area, how transportation and circulation improvements could be improved, and what public amenities they would like to see incorporated into the URP. The concepts proposed as part of this URP reflect those results.

Conceptual designs for the Wyman-Gordon Parcels were presented in the 1995 *Predevelopment Study*. Although 20 years has passed since that study was published, the area is largely unchanged and this URP is consistent with its general conclusions that the larger area would be suitable for light industrial or heavier commercial use, or for a theme-specific use like a sports stadium.

In terms of zoning, the city approved the CCOD zoning overlay district in February 2015 (refer to the discussion of existing zoning in *Section 1.2.6 of Chapter 12.02 (1)*). This overlay district provides a very clear indication of the city's intent to promote both redevelopment of existing buildings and new development of consistent and compatible character; encourage a mix of complementary uses; foster the development of high-quality, pedestrian-scale environments through site and building design; reduce the amount of land devoted to parking and utilize parking areas more efficiently; and preserve and enhance the historical, cultural and architectural assets of the city.

12.02 (3) PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Section 3.1: Urban Revitalization Goals and Objectives

The overall goal for the Project is to create an environment that has a strong identity and sense of place within downtown Worcester, and to identify buildings and sites that provide primary transformation opportunities for institutional, housing, commercial, and entertainment/cultural uses, and the infrastructure improvements needed to support those uses. The plan embraces, and seeks to build upon, the area's historic legacy. The following objectives were established in order to achieve this goal:

- Incorporate the priorities and goals of previous studies and master plans, as appropriate, to identify and prioritize development projects.
- Foster an environment for businesses and institutions to thrive and create sustainable jobs.
- Facilitate land assembly and disposition to advance the goals, objectives and activities of the URP by identifying parcels that have high potential for development.
- Redevelop former industrial properties and in so doing increase the number and diversity of well-paying jobs in the city.
- Encourage and preserve economic diversity and quality of life by providing opportunities for businesses serving a diversity of incomes and skills.
- Increase real estate tax income-generating properties in the URA.
- Encourage private sector investment and utilize public funds judiciously and strategically as a catalyst for private investment.
- Improve wayfinding, circulation and pedestrian connections within the URA as well as with key destinations throughout the city, to promote the integration of residential, institutional, cultural, and commercial uses.
- Improve access to modern and efficient public transportation options in order to make the URA more accessible, with consideration to intermodal transportation networks.
- Stimulate and leverage institutional presence and investment throughout the URA.
- Develop features (e.g., restaurants, entertainment, and shopping) which attract area college students to the URA.
- Provide necessary public services efficiently and effectively.
- Create connections (including wayfinding) between the downtown and Wyman-Gordon Parcels that safely facilitate all modes of transportation and are aesthetically appealing.
- Establish an entertainment core linked to activity centers and open spaces.
- Increase stock of market-rate housing.
- Manage and increase the parking supply with appropriate thought given to shared usage and proximity to high demand areas.
- Improve roadways and sidewalks, as well as traffic circulation, as appropriate.
- Improve infrastructure systems to support modern development needs.
- Consider future programming opportunities for live, work, study and play.

Section 3.2: Overall Redevelopment Strategy

This URP establishes the Worcester Downtown URA, which is comprised of interdependent commercial, residential, and industrial areas. This URP compiles information pertinent to the city's efforts within the URA to guide private investors. This plan allows the WRA to negotiate directly with potential developers for the redevelopment of parcels, and provides the mechanism for land assemblages to accomplish redevelopment objectives. The genesis of the URP

planning process was the 2012 Theatre District Master Plan, which included a comprehensive assessment of the area, a robust public engagement visioning process, and the formulation of a redevelopment plan for the area.

The WRA notes that the urban renewal process, in conjunction with CitySquare and Mercantile Center, has generated a great deal of interest from property owners. One large residential and commercial property landowner, in particular, recently teamed with a property management company and an architect/design firm and commissioned a redevelopment plan for 12 downtown buildings. This private plan, referred to as “The Grid,” acknowledges the extensive reinvestment currently underway, and asserts that implementation of The Grid’s vision in conjunction with these initiatives will attract students and professionals to downtown, create a new brand to enhance the area’s vibrant identity, and maintain an active street presence. If implemented, this plan will significantly improve a number of buildings which were identified by the URP Citizen Advisory Committee and other stakeholders as contributing to the decadent conditions of the Study Area. Based on this owner’s apparent motivation to undertake the improvements privately, these buildings were not included as acquisition targets in the URP. The overall development strategy proposes a targeted approach to address the area’s needs, as described in **Chapter 12.02 (2) Eligibility**, and to further the goals and objectives described above.

The historical nature of many structures within the URA presents both challenges and opportunities during URP implementation. Since many of the URA’s structures in the downtown area reflect an era when it was the region’s primary shopping and office district, the existing land use patterns and mix of uses already embodies the desired urban form, containing elements such as sidewalks, mixed-uses, varied and historical architectural styles, and highly concentrated development. However, the age of the buildings, in combination with deferred maintenance and neglect, cumulatively pose significant challenges, including functional obsolescence, visual blighting, accessibility, and inadequate compliance with modern safety codes.

In general, private rehabilitation efforts will be encouraged and facilitated by the WRA staff, who will work with the city’s various departments, boards, and commissions to build consensus and establish conditions to facilitate rehabilitation. In addition, the WRA strongly supports the redevelopment or rehabilitation of a number of key properties within the URA, although direct acquisition or investment is not under consideration at this time. These properties are shown in *Figure S-3: Priority Private Redevelopment Sites* and were listed in *Table 9: Priority Private Redevelopment*.

The WRA understands that there is a wide range in the level of effort that these properties would require to maximize their potential. The WRA will actively look for opportunities to coordinate with the property owners to move improvement efforts forward.

The city and WRA will actively seek funding for elements and overall implementation of the URP, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The WRA will continue to partner with other economic development agencies, including the WBDC and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to strengthen the region’s position as an economic leader in Massachusetts through targeted investment, and by bringing skills and resources to challenging and complex projects.

Section 3.3: Implementation

As noted in the *Table 18*, on the next page, implementation of the URP is anticipated to be undertaken in phases. This approach is consistent with the Market and Economic Analysis presented in **Attachment D**. Overall, the URP has a 20-year implementation phase (April 2036) to accommodate the projects that require long-range planning. Along these lines, and addressing the issues and challenges described above, there are a number of near-term and longer-term redevelopment opportunities and strategies for Worcester to consider.

This URP is a reflection of current conditions in the city and the WRA's development priorities, which are dynamic and subject to change. Any major changes to the URP will be subject to City Council approval as well as submitted to DHCD for approval, including a detailed description of the change, the purpose and effect of the plan change on project activities, and pertinent revisions of the original application to reflect the change.³⁹

Section 3.4: Regulatory Requirements

Regulatory considerations for URP implementation include obtaining the necessary permits and approvals for the URP. As noted below, additional approvals may be required for individual projects, but these will be obtained by proponents for those developments, as appropriate.

The URP requires DHCD approval along with submittal of an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) in accordance with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) (301 CMR 11.0). Coordination with MHC is also required. At the local level, the URP requires approvals by the Worcester City Council, City Administrator, and consistency reviews by the WRA, Planning Board and the City Solicitor (refer to **Attachment B: Required Approvals and Actions**).

Implementation of projects within the URA by proponents of individual projects may include filing with MEPA, as necessary, and obtaining MassDEP approval under the MCP for the site remediation work to address contamination at the Wyman-Gordon Parcels. Coordination with MHC may also be required. At the local level, proponents would need to obtain any necessary approvals from the Planning Board, and the respective proponent for projects that are within the FEMA floodplain will be required to file a Notice of Intent (NOI) with the Worcester Conservation Commission under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) (310 CMR 10.00). Any project with site disturbance of greater than one acre will also be required to file a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Stormwater Discharges and Construction Dewatering Activities/Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

³⁹ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/legal/regs/760-cmr-12.html>

Table 18: URP Projects by Phase

Activity ID	Activity Description
Phase 1 – Short-term (0 to 5 Years)	
1.1	Upgrade Federal Plaza in front of the Hanover Theatre to better accommodate pedestrians and events at the theatre and 551 Main Street.
1.2	Improve traffic patterns and signalization at Quinsigamond Avenue and Southbridge Street.
1.3	Acquire and improve the façade and rehabilitate the interior of 12 Front Street.
1.4	Acquire and improve the façade and rehabilitate the interior of 22 Front Street.
1.5	Improve the conditions and amenities (including lighting and safety features) in Allen Court and Burnside Court and cultivate use as pedestrian connections.
1.6	<p>Acquire a portion of Parcel 03-012-002-4 (Parcel C-1) and demolish the former theater at 66 Franklin Street. Redevelop for commercial uses, e.g., office space or first floor commercial with market-rate housing above.</p> <p>1.6.A Prepare the site for redevelopment by demolishing the existing structure.</p> <p>1.6.B Sell the parcel to a qualified developer for a redevelopment.</p>
1.7	<p>Assemble a new lot (Parcel A-1) off Myrtle Street and behind the Hanover Theatre and construct a structured parking facility.</p> <p>1.7.A Assemble three contiguous parcels behind the Hanover Theatre. Design and construct a new parking facility that is 4 to 6 levels above grade and can accommodate approximately 450 to 675 spaces.</p> <p>1.7.B The proposed new garage will have vehicular access on Myrtle Street and pedestrian access to Burnside Court, a new pedestrian plaza to Federal Street and Myrtle/Portland Streets.</p> <p>1.7.C The structure could operate as a shared facility for residents, office workers, visitors, and theater patrons through a combination of monthly and hourly payment methods.</p> <p>1.7.D Minimize the visual impact of the structure through the strategic use of screening and signage.</p>
1.8	Acquire 538 Main Street (the Money Stop) for redevelopment, including the elimination of the billboard on top of the structure.
1.9	Improve roadway and sidewalk conditions, as well as pedestrian amenities along Main Street, Southbridge Street, Madison Street and Quinsigamond Avenue.
1.10	Coordinate with the Worcester Wayfinding program, to be implemented through the Department of Public Works.
1.11	Reconfigure McGrath Parking Lot, including the realignment of Library Lane (a public way) to improve efficiency with the YWCA facility parking, install an outdoor plaza beside the library.

Phase 2 – Medium term (0 to 10 years)		
2.1	Improve the façade and first floor of the Denholm Building at 484 Main Street.	
	2.1.A	Acquire the condominium units on the first floor of the Denholm Building.
	2.1.B	Prepare for the units for rehabilitation and sell to qualified developers.
2.2	Acquire and rehabilitate 517 and 521 Main Street for residential use in the upper floors. These two narrow buildings could be connected on the interior to improve efficiencies and accessibility.	
2.3	Acquire the Wyman-Gordon Parcels and assemble into five new lots (Parcels B-1 to B-5) to facilitate redevelopment for new business opportunities and job creation.	
	2.3.A	Perform environmental assessment and remediation of contamination to render the site suitable for development.
	2.3.B	Demolish existing structures and outbuildings.
	2.3.C	Facilitate the creation of developable lots, as follows: Parcels B-1 and B-2: Commercial/retail development parcels north of Madison. Parcel B-3.1 and B-3.2: Commercial recreational complex with complementary commercial/retail development in central area. Parcels B-4.1, B-4.2, B-4.3 and B-5: Multi-family residential, commercial/retail development, and Blackstone Valley Bikeway south of Lamartine.
	2.3.D	Realign Gold Street, including the signalized intersection at Madison and Gold Streets.
2.4	Acquire and develop the parking lot adjacent to the Denholm Building at 518 Main Street for Retail/Commercial uses.	
2.5	Improve P&W aqueduct tunnels with public art, lighting and pedestrian amenities	
2.6	Eventually promote redevelopment of the Myrtle Street frontage of the McGrath Parking Lot for commercial/office space (replace parking, where necessary).	
Phase 3 – Long-term (0 to 20 years)		
3.1	Acquire and demolish the structure at 17 Pleasant Street and redevelop for commercial uses, e.g., office space or first floor commercial with market-rate housing above.	

Section 3.5: Façade Improvements

As shown in the URP Concept Plan (*Figure S-5*), façade improvements are planned for a number of key buildings which are slated for rehabilitation, but improvements will also be encouraged at the following locations:

- YWCA Central Massachusetts
- Worcester Public Library
- 40-44 Front Street, Chase Building
- 37 Mechanic Street, Mid-State Building
- 401 Main Street, Shack's Worcester,
- 415 Main Street
- 9 Pleasant Street, Odd Fellows Hall
- 29 Pleasant Street
- 37 Pleasant Street
- 472 Main Street
- 542 Main Street, Federal Plaza Garage
- 588 Main Street, Colton Apartments
- 24 Southbridge Street, Stevens's Building
- 70 Southbridge Street (commercial 1st floor)
- 74 Madison Street and 90 Madison Street, Madison Place
- 158 Southbridge Street, George's Coney Island Hot Dogs,
- 142 Southbridge Street, Union Music
- 134 Southbridge Street, Guertin's Graphics
- 300 Southbridge Street, Sargent-Card Factory
- 302 Southbridge Street, Miss Worcester Diner
- 4 Quinsigamond Avenue, Johnstone HVAC
- 328 Southbridge Street, Corvette City
- 350 Southbridge Street, Hurricane Betty's

These improvements may be coordinated through the City of Worcester's existing Façade Program, which seeks to leverage private investment in the physical and aesthetic improvement of commercial properties with first floor/street level storefronts and enhance the attractiveness of targeted areas. First floor/street-level retail tenants may apply with the approval of the property owner as a co-applicant. Eligible activities could include complete façade renovations, lighting, signage, windows, doors, awnings, painting, and entryways.⁴⁰ All façade improvements must comply with the City of Worcester Design Guidelines.⁴¹

Section 3.6: Economic Benefits

Redevelopment of the URA will return property that is currently underutilized into places of commerce and productivity, increasing employment opportunities for the local and regional workforce. Consistent with the objectives outlined for the URP, economic benefits of the proposed plan focus on the following:

- Act as a catalyst for private investment.

⁴⁰ <http://www.worcesterma.gov/development/business-assistance/facade-awning-grant>

⁴¹ <http://www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/cb/05/cb052133f3fedebd8780e710395f45be/facade-design-guidelines.pdf>

- Create temporary employment opportunities during construction, then sustainable and permanent jobs in a wide variety of fields.
- Provide a wide range of leasable space options for new and existing local businesses and institutions.
- Provide amenities and interesting programming which will encourage repeat visits to downtown by area residents and students.
- Provide opportunities for market-rate housing in the downtown area.
- Return vacant and underutilized land to the city's tax rolls.
- Provide adequate and strategically located fee-based parking facilities.
- Improve retention of college graduates in the area.

Redevelopment within the URA will create temporary employment opportunities during construction and permanent jobs upon completion. Construction activity is expected to create an estimated 1,005 temporary jobs over the course of implementation. An estimated 1,327 new permanent full-time equivalent positions are anticipated, primarily consisting of office workers associated with commercial development.

12.02 (4) FINANCIAL PLAN

The financial plan for the Worcester URP is based on financial cost estimates of the programs and projects which have been designed to fulfill the previously stated goals and objectives. *Table 19*, on the following page, presents the cost estimates of implementing the URP, and notes the potential sources of funding, as described later in this chapter. Additional detail for each cost category is also presented below.

Section 4.1: Land Acquisition and Assemblage

Parcel acquisition may occur either publicly by the WRA or by a private developer. The estimated costs for parcel acquisition by the WRA are based on information obtained from the City of Worcester Assessor's office. Before any acquisition by the WRA, the WRA will engage a professional, licensed appraiser to evaluate the subject property and prepare an up-to-date appraised value before action on a prospective acquisition is undertaken.

Section 4.2: Relocation Costs

In total, 20 parcels and six business condominium units have been identified for acquisition, plus one city-owned property will be transferred to the WRA. Currently, there are about 40 businesses occupying these buildings. The WRA anticipates that there will be no relocation costs associated with the residences along Portland Street which are on the same parcel as the former Paris Cinema, because the residential buildings will remain on the parcel and only the (vacant) cinema will be demolished. Thus, all of the relocations are anticipated to be associated with businesses. Cost estimates take into consideration the size and type of businesses to be relocated. Please refer to **Chapter 12.02 (8)** for additional information on relocation.

Section 4.3: Rehabilitation Costs

The estimated costs of rehabilitation are calculated using a per square-foot unit cost for urban projects of \$125 to \$150. The estimate included in *Table 19* is preliminary, and as such conservatively applies the higher end of the range of \$150. This estimate includes rehabilitation of the following buildings:

- 22 Front Street/Midtown Mall
- 12 Front Street
- 526-538 Main Street/The Money Stop
- 517 Main Street/Metro PCS Building
- 521 Main Street/The Great Wall Restaurant Building
- 484 Main Street/The Denholm Building – First Floor Condominium Units

Section 4.4: Demolition and Site Preparation

Site preparation costs include building demolition, foundation removal, fence removal, soil erosion control and grading of parcels. Site remediation to meet MassDEP requirements for future industrial and commercial use may include removal of asbestos and lead paint, and/or soil or groundwater remediation. A cost for site remediation will be estimated only after testing is done on any building and parcel being considered for acquisition. Thus, it is important to note that estimated remediation costs have not yet been determined.

Table 19: Revitalization and Development Budget Estimate

URP Public Action	Total Estimated Cost	Funding/ Resources in Place	Potential Funding Source
Land Acquisition			
· Land Acquisition ¹	\$16,867,750	\$2,509,500	S, T, U
· Appraisals	\$50,000		S, T, U
· Legal Costs	\$500,000	\$500,000	B
Relocation Costs			
· Relocation Plan	\$25,000		S, T, U
· Relocation Consultant	\$340,000		S, T, U
· Relocation Payments (<i>Estimated</i>)	\$2,800,000		S, T, U
Rehabilitation Costs			
Rehabilitation Costs	\$26,251,650		
Demolition and Site Preparation			
· Demolition	\$459,379		K, S, T, U
· Site Preparation	\$250,000		K, S, T, U
· Remediation	TBD		H, O.2
Public Realm Improvements			
· Connectivity & Tunnels	\$1,350,000		C
· Streetscape Improvements	\$5,000,000	\$500,000	C, D
· Parking Structure	\$12,500,000		
· Quinsigamond Avenue Improvements	\$400,000	\$400,000	F, G, K, Q
· Bike Path Improvements	\$2,125,000	\$2,125,000	D
· Federal Square Park Improvements	\$2,100,000		
· Elimination of Assonet Street	\$400,000		
· Realignment of Gold Street	\$1,000,000		
· Reconfiguration of McGrath Lot & New Library Plaza	\$800,000		
· Wayfinding	\$500,000	\$500,000	B
Consultants			
· Site Engineering	\$5,313,603		
· Environmental Assessments	\$495,000		
Administrative			
Legal	\$100,000	\$100,000	B
Administration/Staff	\$200,000	\$200,000	B
Fees (Bond Fees, Misc. Fees)	\$100,000		
Contingency 20%	\$15,948,536		
Total Estimated Project Costs	\$95,912,858		
Income from Sale or Lease (<i>Estimated</i>)	\$16,867,750		
Net Project Cost	\$79,045,108		
Funding/Resources in Place	\$6,834,500	\$6,834,500	
Grants (future)	TBD		
Total Estimated Funding Required	\$72,210,608		

Notes:

¹ Land acquisition estimate reflects Assessor’s valuations for parcels to be acquired or transferred.

Section 4.5: Public Realm Improvements

As described in **Chapter 12.02 (7): Public Improvements**, there are a wide variety of public improvements proposed as part of the URP implementation. These include streetscape and roadway improvements, new parks and upgrades to existing parks, extending the Bikeway, pedestrian circulation improvements, parking improvements, lighting, signage, and associated improvements in the public realm. Estimates for these actions consider design and engineering costs.

Section 4.6: Sources of Funding

The WRA intends to rely on a mix of funding sources, including federal, state and local funding opportunities, to spur private investments to implement the URP. Below are descriptions of typical sources of funding. The last column in *Table 19* references the source that the WRA believes could be appropriate for that particular activity.

- A. WRA Proceeds
- B. City Funding/In-kind Support
- C. MassWorks Infrastructure Funding
- D. Transportation Enhancement Program
- E. Chapter 90 Funding
- F. Massachusetts Parkland Acquisition and Renovations for Communities (PARC) and Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Programs
- G. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- H. EPA Brownfields Funds
- I. Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP), including Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- J. Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP)
- K. CDBG
- L. Funding from Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40R
- M. Federal and Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
- N. The New Markets Tax Credits Program
- O. MassDevelopment
 - O.1 TDI Program
 - O.2 Brownfields Redevelopment Fund (BRF)
- P. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 108 Loan
- Q. Gateway Cities Program
- R. HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME)
- S. Urban Revitalization Development Grant (URDG)
- T. District Improvement Financing (DIF)
- U. Bonds

Each funding option is briefly described below.

- A. WRA Proceeds: The WRA does not currently have a budget for any of the recommended actions in the plan. However, according to M.G.L. c. 121B, Redevelopment Authorities such as the WRA, have the power to issue bonds, borrow money, invest funds, receive grants and accept gifts. As the WRA acquires and disposes of property, they will be able to generate income that can be reinvested into the Study Area.
- B. City Funding/In-kind Support: City funding or in-kind support from City staff may be the best resource for some of the identified URP actions. Funding could come from bonding or the annual City budget process.

“Seed” funds will need to be identified in order to create a self-sustaining budget for future actions. The following city funding sources are potential mechanisms to generate revenue for the WRA to perform actions throughout the life of the plan and beyond:

1. **Property transfers:** The plan identifies a City-owned parcel to be transferred to the WRA. This would be considered a WRA acquisition. The process for the WRA to acquire this property would be done so by a vote of the City Council to transfer ownership from the city to the WRA. Once acquired, the WRA would then own this asset which could be sold and generate revenue.
 2. **Grants and Gifts:** An allocation of funds from the City Council to the WRA would enable the WRA to begin taking on projects, such as land acquisitions, site clean-up, and parcel assemblage. Funding these initial actions would allow the WRA to use revenue from initial actions to fund future projects.
- C. **MassWorks Infrastructure Funding:** A state program that promotes economic development and job creation through improvements to streets, sidewalks, and other specified infrastructure. Eligible activities include design, construction and/or reconstruction of existing and or newly relocated streets, sidewalks and related infrastructure. This program is a potential source of funds for URP projects involving roadway, streetscape, infrastructure and bridge improvements.
- D. **Transportation Enhancement Program:** A federal program that provides funding for a wide range of non-traditional surface transportation projects. Examples include development and improvement of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and safety education programs, acquisition or improvements of scenic or historic sites, preservation of abandoned railway corridors, alleviation of environmental impacts on water quality or wildlife, and other projects. Streetscape and Bikeway improvements along major streets in the Study Area may be eligible for funding from this program.
- E. **Chapter 90 Funding:** A 100% reimbursable state funding program provided to each municipality for local roadway improvements. Funds must be allocated to roadway projects, such as resurfacing and related work and other work incidental to the above such as preliminary engineering. Potential funding for project design costs associated with roadway improvements.
- F. **Massachusetts Parkland Acquisition and Renovations for Communities (PARC) and Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Programs:** The PARC and LAND Grants provide financial assistance to city and town conservation commissions to acquire critical open space. The open space must be used for conservation or passive recreation purposes. PARC Grants aid cities and towns in acquiring, developing, and renovating park and outdoor recreation facilities. LAND Grants assist municipal conservation commissions acquiring land for natural resource and passive outdoor recreation purposes.
- G. **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF):** Provided to the States, and through the States to local governmental jurisdictions, on a matching basis for up to fifty percent (50%) of the total project-related allowable costs for the acquisition of land and the development of facilities for public outdoor recreation. Appropriations from the LWCF may be made annually by Congress to the Secretary of the Interior who apportions the funds to the States. Payments for all projects are made to the state organization that is authorized to accept and administer funds paid for approved projects. Local units of government participate in the program as subgrantees of the State with the State retaining primary grant compliance responsibility.
- H. **EPA/MassDEP Brownfields Funds:** The federal program provides funds to inventory, characterize, assess, and conduct planning (including cleanup planning) and community involvement related to brownfield sites. If contamination is discovered there are a number of federal and state grant programs to carry out clean-up activities, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Brownfields Cleanup Grant, which provides funds for site clean-up for brownfield sites owned by the applicant; HUD Brownfields Economic Development Initiative, which provides financial assistance to public entities in the redevelopment of brownfield sites; MassDEP Brownfields Site Assessment/Cleanup Grant of Service, which through the EPA

provides funding for site assessment and clean-up of brownfields on behalf of municipal and non-profit entities by using state contractors (rather than granting funding directly to the applicant).

- I. Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP): A tax incentive program administered through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) designed to foster job creation and stimulate business growth throughout the Commonwealth. Participating companies may receive state and local tax incentives in exchange for job creation, manufacturing job retention and private investment commitments. Designated as an Economic Target Area (ETA), Worcester is eligible to apply as a 'Certified Expansion Project', which includes a local tax exemption and approval by the municipality. Additionally, Worcester is a state-designated Gateway City making it eligible to apply for a 'Manufacturing Retention Project'.
 1. Tax Increment Financing (TIF): EDIP tool that promotes redevelopment by use of public/private partnerships by offering tax breaks to developers. TIF is authorized by M.G.L. c. 40 section 59 and implementing regulations 760 CMR 22.01. Under this legislation, landowners may be granted property tax exemptions of up to 100% of the tax increment. A municipality may enter into a TIF Agreement with a landowner for a maximum term of 20 years. M.G.L. c. 40 section 60 also authorizes a TIF for housing in urban centers. A TIF Zone must be in an area approved by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) as an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA) or found to be an area "*presenting exceptional opportunities for economic development*" by the Director of Economic Development. Certification of the TIF Plan is issued by the EACC after the plan is accepted by municipal vote.
- J. Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP): Designed to increase residential growth, expand diversity of housing stock, support economic development, and promote neighborhood stabilization in designated Housing Development Zones within Gateway municipalities by providing incentives to rehabilitate multi-unit properties that would be sold or leased as market-rate units (residential units priced for households above 110 percent of the area's household median income). The program provides two incentives for developers to rehabilitate housing units in multi-unit buildings: a new local-option property tax exemption and a new tax credit for qualified rehabilitation expenses. Each year, there will be up to \$1 million available for the Housing Development Tax Credit.
- K. Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG): A federally funded program designed to help small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. Assistance is provided to qualifying cities and towns for housing, community, and economic development projects that assist low and moderate-income residents, or by revitalizing areas of slum or blight. Communities may apply on behalf of a specific developer or property owner. Eligible CDBG projects include but are not limited to housing rehabilitation or development, micro-enterprise or other business assistance, infrastructure, community/public facilities, public social services, planning, removal of architectural barriers to allow access by persons with disabilities, and downtown or area revitalization.
- L. Funding from Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40R: Housing production within the Commonwealth has not kept pace with the growing number of households looking for an affordable place to live. To help meet this demand, the Commonwealth adopted Chapter 40R within the General Laws allowing municipalities to encourage housing production that is aligned with the principles of "*smart growth*." Eligible municipalities, upon approval, will receive zoning incentive payments for housing creation based on number of units of new construction. Each new housing unit that meets the statutory requirements will allow the city to collect \$3,000 per building permit.
- M. Federal and Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit: Since April 2004, the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program (MHRTC) has been catalyzing the rehabilitation, reuse and revitalization of historic properties across the Commonwealth. These historic structures have been rehabilitated to create

quality affordable and market-rate housing, community centers, commercial and office space, performing arts venues, restaurants and more, benefiting our communities in numerous ways. The MHRCT allows the certified rehabilitation of an income-producing property to receive up to 20% of the cost of certified rehabilitation expenditures in state tax credits. This credit, many times coupled with the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit, is a critical source of attaining project feasibility. The credits can be sold to a third party investor for funds which are often put back into the project. The credit program makes evident the economic and community benefits of preservation.

- N. The New Markets Tax Credits Program: The New Markets Tax Credit Program (NMTC Program) was established by Congress in 2000 to spur new or increased investments into operating businesses and real estate projects located in low-income communities. The NMTC Program attracts investment capital to low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their Federal income tax return in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial institutions called Community Development Entities (CDE's). The credit totals 39 percent of the original investment amount and is claimed over a period of seven years (five percent for each of the first three years, and six percent for each of the remaining four years). The investment in the CDE cannot be redeemed before the end of the seven-year period.
- O. MassDevelopment: MassDevelopment works with businesses, nonprofits, and local, state, and federal officials and agencies to strengthen the Massachusetts economy. Through these collaborations, they help create jobs, increase the number of housing units, eliminate blight, and address factors limiting economic growth including transportation, energy and infrastructure deficiencies. Offering a wide range of finance programs and real estate development services, MassDevelopment supports economic growth, development, and investment across all sectors of the Massachusetts economy: public and private, commercial, industrial, and residential; and nonprofit, including healthcare, educational, cultural, and human service providers. They work in collaboration with private and public sector developers, businesses, and banks to identify investors and leverage public and private funds to support economic growth.
1. *TDI*: MassDevelopment's TDI Program is a redevelopment program for Gateway Cities designed to enhance local public-private engagement and community identity; stimulate an improved quality of life for local residents; and spur increased investment and economic activity. TDI is an integrated systems approach to investment and urban redevelopment on a scale that can amplify and accelerate revitalization. Along with the new tools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Transformative Development Fund, MassDevelopment also utilizes additional existing finance products, and coordinates with private- and public-sector partners, to encourage development activity by private landowners, enterprises, and investors.
 2. *Brownfields Redevelopment Fund (BRF)*: The BRF is administered by MassDevelopment, the state's economic development and financing agency, which works with private businesses and nonprofits to create housing and economic growth in blighted areas. It provides technical assistance and money, in the form of both loans and grants, to worthwhile projects around the state.
- P. HUD Section 108 Loan: The HUD Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program (Section 108) provides communities with a source of financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and other physical development projects, including improvements to increase their resilience against natural disasters. This flexibility makes it one of the most potent and important public investment tools that HUD offers to state and local governments. Section 108 offers state and local governments the ability to transform a small portion of their CDBG funds into federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects capable of revitalizing entire neighborhoods. Such public investment is often needed to inspire private economic activity, providing the initial resources or simply the confidence that private firms and individuals may need to invest in distressed areas. Loans typically range from \$500,000 to \$140 million,

depending on the scale of the project or program. Under Section 108, project costs can be spread over time with flexible repayment terms, and borrowers can take advantage of lower interest rates than could be obtained from private financing sources.

- Q. Gateway Cities Program: The state has a number of resources supporting the revitalization of Gateway Cities, including (but not limited to) Brownfields Programs (M.G.L. c. 21E and Chapter 206, Acts of 1998), Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting (M.G.L. c. 43D), Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act (M.G.L. c. 40R), CDBG, Community Investment Tax Credit Program (Community Partnership Act) (Chapter 238, Acts of 2012), and Growth Districts Initiative (GDI) (Section 2C of c. 303, Acts of 2008).⁴²
- R. HOME Investment Partnership Program: The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) provides formula grants to States and localities that communities use - often in partnership with local nonprofit groups - to fund a wide range of activities including building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership or providing direct rental assistance to low-income people. HOME is the largest Federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households.
- S. Urban Revitalization Development Grant (URDG): As authorized by M.G.L. c. 121B, sections 45 through 57 the Department may provide an Urban Revitalization Development Grant (URDG) to a municipality in an amount equal to half of the net project cost of a project, as determined by the Department. All grants are subject to a prior appropriation by the Legislature sufficient to fund the grant. Approval of an Urban Renewal Plan by the Department shall be a necessary condition of such a grant, but such approval shall not guarantee that the Department will make a grant. Such URDG projects will require detailed information regarding the redeveloper and redevelopment proposal, including the financing of the redevelopment, and the operating agency's management plan for the project site, to the extent known. An URDG request may be submitted in conjunction with an application for approval of an Urban Renewal Plan or as a separate grant application for a project under an approved plan. Any applicant for a grant shall provide all information requested by the Department for use in its determination of the grant request.
- T. District Improvement Financing (DIF): Channels tax dollars into targeted redevelopment districts. DIF is authorized by M.G.L. c. 40Q and its implementing regulations 402 CMR 3.00 et seq. New to Massachusetts, DIF has been implemented in other states with considerable success. A city or town wishing to utilize DIF must first designate a development district and a corresponding development program. The district and program must then be certified by the EACC. A development district may be as small as one parcel or may comprise up to 25% of a town or city's land. A district can be in effect for a maximum of 30 years. Each district must have a unique development program.
- U. Bonds: Municipal bonds are debt securities issued by a government entity to fund day-to-day obligations and to finance capital projects. Because of the significant cost of many of the actions, loans or bonds will need to be applied for. The payback of these bonds will require a business model that will generate revenue from projects in the Plan.

⁴² <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/cd/gateway/stateresourcessupportingrevitalizationofgatewaycities.pdf>

12.02 (5) REQUISITE MUNICIPAL APPROVALS

As required by M.G.L. c. 121B, Section 48, evidence of each required municipal approval is to be included in the final URP. Please refer to **Attachment B** for the required approvals and actions, including evidence of a Public Hearing (with MHC notification), approval of the URP by the local boards and officials, and the Opinion of Legal Counsel. MHC was sent a notice for the May 5, 2016, WRA Public Hearing by letter, and was also notified of the June 14, 2016, City Council Public Hearing.

The MEPA ENF for the URP has not yet been filed by the WRA, but a copy will be sent to DHCD when the document is submitted for review by the EEA Secretary.

12.02 (6) SITE PREPARATION

Site preparation activities will address the existing conditions on the sites that will be developed for public use as well as sites that will be prepared for disposition and private development. This chapter provides a summary of the activities planned as part of the site preparation process, as required by 760 CMR 12.02 (6). Areas to be affected by site preparation activities are presented in *Figure I-1: Buildings to be Demolished* and *Figure J-1: Buildings to be Rehabilitated* (see **Chapter 12.02 (1) Characteristics**). Site preparations will include the action items described below

Section 6.1: Site and Building Assessment for Contamination Issues

Based on known information about the past uses within the Study Area and based on observed conditions within certain structures, there is the potential of encountering hazardous materials on various sites to be redeveloped or within various buildings to be demolished. Initial site and building assessments must be conducted to identify potential areas or sources of contamination. Once this evaluation is completed, actions and costs for remediation, if necessary, can be estimated.

Section 6.2: Demolition to Support Redevelopment

Structural demolition is proposed at the following locations:

- 66 Franklin Street
- 17 Pleasant Street
- 149 Washington Street

All utility services to the structures will be cut and capped within ten feet of the existing building foundations. All building materials, floor slabs and foundations of the demolished buildings will be removed and disposed of off-site, as appropriate. To the extent feasible, the contractor will recycle demolition debris. Any open excavations will be backfilled with on-site soils or imported clean fill and graded. Public access to construction sites will be restricted by the use of appropriate fencing materials. Erosion and sediment controls will be implemented to control stormwater.

On Parcel 03-012-002-4 at 66 Franklin Street, only the former Paris Cinema structure is planned to be demolished. Two residential buildings which are also situated on the parcel will remain intact. The process to remove a building that abuts an adjacent structure will generally follow the process described previously, except that utility service will only be cut to the portion of the building to be removed.

Section 6.3: Building Rehabilitation

Building rehabilitation is proposed at the following locations:

- 12 Front Street
- 22 Front Street
- 526-538 Main Street
- 517 Main Street
- 521 Main Street
- 484 Main Street (1st floor units)

Where buildings are proposed for rehabilitation, information gathered during the initial site and building assessments will be used to identify the appropriate measures for addressing materials requiring special handling and disposal. All work will be conducted under the supervision of qualified professionals who are knowledgeable and licensed, as appropriate.

12.02 (7) PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

A number of proposed public improvements are included in the redevelopment recommendations presented in **Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives**. These improvements are intended to support or enhance private redevelopment initiatives or recommendations, as well as enhance the URA. As required by 760 CMR 12.02 (7), this chapter describes proposed public improvements in the Study Area, and notes how the improvements will foster one or more of the URP objectives. *Table 20* presents an overview of the public realm improvements.

It should be noted that while no specific stormwater improvement projects are noted, the collection and treatment of stormwater must be addressed in the redevelopment plan for any parcel and will be a significant consideration in the redevelopment of the Wyman-Gordon Parcels.

Section 7.1: Connectivity Improvements

One of the key objectives of this URP is to improve connectivity throughout the URA for all modes of circulation, including pedestrian, vehicular and bicycles. Key connections to be improved include alleyways as well as the numerous “tunnels,” or roadway underpasses beneath the railroad tracks. Connectivity improvements will enhance the pedestrian and cycling experience, as well as wayfinding, public safety, and help with placemaking by bringing unique and identifiable design elements into the public realm throughout the URA. The actions listed in *Table 20* will advance a number of the URP connectivity objectives by facilitating all modes of transportation to develop better linkages between residential, institutional, cultural and commercial uses, activity centers and open spaces. Some of the connectivity improvements will also create new and inviting pedestrian spaces which will enable the city and abutters to expand programming opportunities to improve the quality of life for those who live, work, study and play in Worcester.

Section 7.2: Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape improvements are proposed along roadways that are considered “gateways” into downtown as well as roadways within the URA that are primary circulation corridors. These streetscape improvements will employ current “complete street” design elements such as enhanced sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, bicycle accommodation, bus shelters, landscaping, lighting, wayfinding, and other elements that make the roadway a circulation corridor for all modes of transportation. Streetscape projects will also incorporate utility and drainage improvements as needed. The streetscape improvements will be designed in accordance with Worcester’s Streetscape policy, as follows:

The City of Worcester is committed to providing a high quality, safe, pedestrian-friendly environment with multi modal accommodation and a positive experience of the street. The Downtown and Canal District, collectively the Streetscape Policy District (SPD), will be developed into a vibrant urban environment through the consistent use of durable but aesthetically pleasing materials, diligent maintenance, and targeted resources to leverage private development. The Streetscape Policy will achieve a sense of continuity on key linear corridors and provide a rational strategy for transitioning from one neighborhood to another.

Section 7.3: Roadways and Circulation

Roadway and circulation improvements will support URP objectives which focus on increased safety for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists, improved traffic flow throughout the URA, and the long-term ability to accommodate additional traffic volumes associated with URA redevelopment. Some roadway improvements will be done in

conjunction with streetscape improvements. Other roadway improvements include the re-alignment of streets to improve circulation connections and open up larger parcels for redevelopment. Where necessary, intersection signalization will also be included. The roadway improvements will incorporate “complete street” features.

Section 7.4: Parking

The proposed parking improvements will support events, as well as commercial and cultural development within the URA. A new parking structure is at the rear of the Hanover Theater to support redevelopment activities in that area, such as the rehabilitation of many buildings, as well as events at the theater and other venues. Parking will also be incorporated into the development plans for most of the vacant parcels proposed for redevelopment, particularly in the Wyman Gordon area.

Section 7.5: Open Space

Open space improvements will support aesthetics, quality of life, opportunities for healthy activity and connectivity. Improvements are proposed for the existing Federal Square, and new park(s) are proposed in association with the redevelopment of the Wyman Gordon areas. Furthermore, the proposed route of the Bikeway through the URA, will be enhanced in some areas to give it an “off road” alignment through a linear park setting.

Table 20: Overview of Public Improvements

Location		Property Owner	Proposed Action(s)
Connectivity Improvements			
Allen Court	Private Way	City of Worcester	Change in Use/Pedestrian Way
Portland Street	Public Street	City of Worcester	Enhance pedestrian circulation
Federal Street	Public Street	City of Worcester	Enhance pedestrian circulation
Burnside Court	Private Way	City of Worcester	Amenities, lighting, period features
Green Street Tunnel	Railroad Aqueduct	P&W Railroad	Improve pedestrian amenities/aesthetics
Madison Street Tunnel	Railroad Aqueduct	P&W Railroad	Improve pedestrian amenities/aesthetics
Hermon Street Tunnel	Railroad Aqueduct	P&W Railroad	Improve aesthetics, Bikeway safety.
Southbridge Street Underpass	Highway Underpass	City of Worcester	Improve pedestrian amenities/aesthetics
Wayfinding Downtown	Throughout	City of Worcester	Part of Wayfinding Master Plan
Streetscape Improvements			
Madison Street	Public Roadway	City of Worcester	Repave street/sidewalk, improve curbing, install new lighting, plant new trees and landscaping
Main Street	Public Roadway	City of Worcester	Repave street/sidewalk, improve curbing, install new lighting, plant new trees and landscaping
Southbridge Street Underpass	Public Roadway	City of Worcester	Repave street/sidewalk, improve curbing, install new lighting
Quinsigamond Avenue	Public Roadway	City of Worcester	Repave street/sidewalk, improve curbing, install new lighting
Transportation/Transit			
Southbridge Street/ Quinsigamond Avenue	Public Roadways	City of Worcester	Traffic Circulation Improvements to improve a gateway into the city
Gold Street	Public Roadway	City of Worcester	Realign Gold Street to support parcel assemblage
Assonet Street	Public Roadway	City of Worcester	Remove Assonet Street to support parcel assemblage
Library Lane	Public Roadway	City of Worcester	Realign Library Land to support reconfiguration of McGrath Lot (see Parking, below)
Parking			
Rear of Hanover Theater	Myrtle and Portland Streets	Portland Salem Realty LLC and New Garden Park, Inc.	Structured parking facility
McGrath Parking Lot	Library Lane and Myrtle Street	City of Worcester	Reconfiguration of McGrath Lot (includes modification of Library Lane)
Open Space and Recreation			
Federal Square	Public ROW	City of Worcester	Update and improve the existing park
Blackstone River Bikeway	Public Roadways	City of Worcester	Improve safety and wayfinding features
Blackstone River Bikeway	Off-Road Segment	Wyman Gordon	Install off-road segment for bike path
Worcester Public Library Plaza	Adjacent to Library	City of Worcester	Create a new public plaza adjacent to the Worcester Public Library

12.02 (8) RELOCATION

In accordance with the CMR 27.02 and 27.03, the WRA intends to provide fair and equitable treatment to parties displaced due to public actions associated with the URP. Businesses and residents displaced by public action are entitled to receive relocation assistance and payment under M.G.L. Chapter 79A, as overseen by the Massachusetts Bureau of Relocation (BOR).

The WRA will request a relocation advisory agency designation prior to any relocation. The WRA will prepare and submit a detailed relocation plan to the BOR for review and approval before relocation activities commence for any property involving public acquisition for redevelopment pursuant to M.G.L. c. 79A and 760 CMR 27.00. While the WRA may have a dedicated staff member to assist with relocation, the WRA anticipates engaging the services of an experienced relocation consultant to provide assistance, e.g., finding alternative sites, identifying relevant zoning issues, and reviewing moving cost estimates.

The WRA acknowledges that each legal occupant at the time of the acquisition is entitled to remain on the said property for not less than four months from the date of receipt of the notice to vacate. The WRA will consult with the BOR in advance of property acquisition to ensure that 760 CMR, M.G.L. c. 79a and 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 24 are met. No residential units are anticipated to require relocation at this time.

Site occupant surveys have not been undertaken at this time due to the fact that site occupants may change between now and the point in the future when acquisition of property and relocation of occupants may occur. When appropriate, the relocation plan will consider a number of factors, including the size of the existing business, the need for visibility, proximity to public transportation, customer access, and any necessary special equipment.

Table 21 (on the next page) presents a list of businesses which currently occupy the buildings to be acquired, and which may require relocation as part of the URP's implementation.

Table 21: Businesses Potentially Requiring Relocation

Parcel ID	Business	Address	Type of Business
02-025-005+6	Main Beauty Supply	12 Front Street	Business Tenant/Beauty Products
	The Newsroom	12 Front Street	Business Tenant/Convenience Store
	Lili's Smoke Shop	12 Front Street	Business Tenant/Smoking Products
	Talyta's Cafe	12 Front Street	Business Tenant/Food Cafe
	The Great Charismatic Chapel	12 Front Street	Business Tenant/Church Services
02-025-007+8	United States Postal Service Convenience Center	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Post Office
	Illucion Party Store	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Party Goods
	AZ Central Market	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Convenience Store
	Ahenfie Barbershop	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Barbershop
	Sputnic's Clarrissa Hair Salon	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Hair Salon
	CJ & Carlson Printing	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Printing Service
	Laptop and PC Repair of Worcester	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Computer repair
	Original Grandmum	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Fabric Textile Store
	Eagles Alterations	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Tailor
	Sabanas Latin Food	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Restaurant
	The Eyebrow Place	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Cosmetology
	4 U Clothing	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Clothing Store
	Kim's Jewelry and Gifts	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Jewelry Sales and Repair
	International City Guards Chaplain Association Inc.	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Local services
	Max Talent	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Talent Agency
	Boost Mobile	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Cell Phone Sales & Service
	Church Yome Levantare	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Place of Worship
	Army of Lord Ministry	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Place of Worship
	Final Call World Outreach Ministry	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Place of Worship
	Apostolic Way Church	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Place of Worship
Christ Center for Prayer	22 Front Street	Business Tenant/Place of Worship	
03-013-00002	Metro PCS	517 Main Street	Business Tenant/Cell Phone Sales and service
03-013-00003	Great Wall Chinese Restaurant	521 Main Street	Business Tenant/Restaurant
03-019A-00022	The Money Stop	526 Main Street	Business Tenant/Pawn Shop, Cash Checking
CO-NDO-03005 03-20B-U-100	United States Postal Service	484 Main Street #100	Business Tenant Post Office Services
CO-NDO-03005 03-20B-U-110	Dress for Success	484 Main Street #110	Business Tenant/Retail Clothes Store
CO-NDO-03005 03-20B-U-120	Denholm Cafe	484 Main Street # 120	Business Tenant/Food Cafe
CO-NDO-03005 03-20B-U-170	J & N Fortier Inc.	484 Main Street #170	Business Tenant/Antiques/ Collectables Appraisal Services
03+031-00018	Spectrum Health Systems	17 Pleasant Street	Business Tenant/Health Service Program
	Everyday Miracles Peer Recovery Center	17 Pleasant Street	Business Tenant/Recovery Help Center

12.02 (9) REDEVELOPER'S OBLIGATION

To the maximum extent possible, the WRA seeks to stimulate and leverage private investment and activities within the URA. After approval of the URA, the WRA will be responsible for the disposition of properties requiring public acquisition for redevelopment. The WRA, in consultation with the city, will outline the desired uses for the parcels in accordance with this URP. For each public acquisition and disposition event, potential redevelopers shall be required to provide, at a minimum, the following information:

- A full description of the proposed development;
- A detailed description of the nature and location of any public improvements being sought;
- Financial strength of the developer with financial sources;
- Proposed job creation and job retention – temporary, permanent and construction jobs;
- Timetable for design, permitting and construction;
- Past experience and references; and
- Partners or development team.

When submissions are made by interested developer(s), WRA will check each proposal for completeness and adherence to submission requirements. The WRA will evaluate the proposals, considering issues such as (but not limited to) the following:

- Job creation and retention;
- Acquisition cost of city or WRA parcels;
- Commitment to add new industrial, commercial and/or retail activity;
- Advancement of URP goals and objectives, including job creation; a clean and safe physical and natural environment; and access and circulation;
- Adherence to applicable zoning and city design principles that reflect energy efficiency; and
- Representation that the developer shares the WRA's vision for the revitalization of the URA.

After evaluations are completed, the WRA will identify a preferred developer. The selected developer and the WRA will enter into a Land Disposition Agreement, to be approved by the DHCD as required by 760 CMR 12.00, and a Development Agreement. The preferred developer will be required to comply with the goals and objectives of this URP, current zoning regulations, and with Design Guidelines as may be promulgated by the City of Worcester.

12.02 (10) DISPOSITION

Under M.G.L. c. 121B and c. 30B, the sale or lease of industrial or commercial real property by redevelopment authorities or their successors, engaged in the development and disposition of the real estate in accordance with an approved plan, is exempt from public disposition procedures required of all other local entities. The WRA, vested with the powers of an urban renewal agency, will exercise this authority and negotiate directly with any business within the Study Area who wishes to relocate onto one of the designated redevelopment parcels, provided they meet the requirements of this Plan. Following negotiations, the WRA will move forward with a process that will solicit proposals from outside entities to facilitate the redevelopment of the remaining disposition sites.

The proposed building, parking and service area improvements shown for each new lot on the URP Concept Plan are conceptual in nature and are intended to depict an option which maximizes development potential and is consistent with the goals of the URP and previous planning studies. The disposition parcels for redevelopment by the private sector (see *Figure H-1*) provide the maximum opportunity to facilitate private redevelopment of this area. However, the selected redeveloper(s) will be provided with the opportunity to propose alternative building and/or parcel arrangements for the URA, provided they meet the requirements of this URP, the goals and objectives of the city and the WRA and applicable law. All development proposals will be reviewed by the WRA and the appropriate city representatives in accordance with the goals and objectives of the URP and the terms of the Land Disposition Agreement(s) to be negotiated with the developer.

12.02 (11) CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

This URP incorporates input received from public outreach efforts undertaken during the planning process, as well as the recommendations that were developed for other area projects which incorporated extensive public outreach (e.g., the Theatre District Master Plan). The main components of the WRA's overall approach to citizen participation throughout the URP process included:

- WRA URP Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC);
- Public Forum;
- Public Hearings
- Online availability of the draft Urban Revitalization Plan; and
- Media outreach (e.g. recording the forums for broadcast on local government access channel television, newspaper).

The citizen involvement process was initiated in autumn of 2014. A WRA URP CAC was formed, comprised of a dedicated group of stakeholders that included local residents, business owners, property owners and municipal officials committed to the development and implementation of the URP. To-date, the Committee has met nine times. Please refer to **Attachment C: Public Participation** for a member list and meeting information. Information presented at meetings has included site conditions, redevelopment options, elements of this URP, proposed infrastructure improvements, and implementation strategies and funding initiatives. Discussions, question and answer periods, and future planning steps rounded out the meetings. The WRA is grateful for the commitment of the URP CAC throughout this planning process.

In addition to the CAC meetings, the WRA held a public hearing in February 2015 and a public forum in September 2015 (see **Attachment C**). Forum attendees included local residents, business owners, property owners, CAC members, public officials, institutional representatives and elected officials. Comments and concerns expressed at public forums regarding such matters as traffic volume and circulation, recreation/open space, public infrastructure improvements, and private property physical improvements are reflected in the goals and objectives, defined in **Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives**.

Attachment C also presents materials related to the public hearings and public forum. Attendees have included local residents, business owners, property owners, URP CAC members, public officials, institutional representatives and elected officials. Comments and concerns expressed at public forums regarding such matters as traffic volume and circulation, recreation/open space, public infrastructure improvements, and physical improvements of private property are reflected in the goals and objectives, defined in **Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives**.

Attachment A
URA Parcel Ownership Table and Map

Attachment B Required Approvals and Actions

- WRA Public Hearing and Declaration of Necessity
- Planning Board Finding Consistency with Comprehensive Plan
- Board of Selectmen Approval of URP
- Certification by Legal Counsel

WRA Public Hearing and Declaration of Necessity

Planning Board Finding Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

Board of Selectmen Approval of URP

Certification by Legal Counsel

Attachment C Public Participation

- CAC Meetings
- Public Meetings
- Newspaper Articles about the URP

CAC Meetings

January 22, 2015
February 13, 2015
April 16, 2015
April 30, 2015
May 14, 2015
June 4, 2015
August 27, 2015
November 19, 2015
February 11, 2016

Public Meetings

Public Hearing, February 26, 2015

Public Forum, September 16, 2015

Public Hearing, May 5, 2016

(including MHC Notification and Response)

Public Hearing, February 26, 2015

Public Forum, September 16, 2015

Public Hearing, May 5, 2016

(including MHC Notification and Response)

Newspaper Articles about the URP

Attachment D Market and Economic Analysis

Attachment E Overview of Worcester Projects

ATTACHMENT E: SUMMARY OF WORCESTER PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

1. Introduction

Worcester has a number of significant ongoing or recently implemented projects within and proximate to the URA. This attachment summarizes the major development projects, residential projects, higher education investments and development initiatives which are ongoing or recently completed relative to the URA.

- Major Development Projects
 - CitySquare
 - Mercantile Center
 - DCU Center Arena and Convention Center Complex
 - WRTA Administration and Bus Transfer Hub/ Operations Garage
 - Union Station and Union Station Parking Garage
 - Washington Square
- Residential Projects
 - Canal Lofts
 - Junction Shop Lofts
 - 371-379 Main Street
 - Former Worcester Courthouse
 - Grid by MG2
- Higher Education Investments
 - Quinsigamond Community College
 - Becker College
 - Mass. College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences University
- Development Initiatives
 - Urban Renewal
 - Wayfinding
 - Commercial Corridors Overlay District
 - Interdepartmental Review Team
 - Worcester Student Survey 2014

Worcester also has a number of business assistance programs through the city's Executive Office of Economic Development. Each program has specific guidelines and eligibility criteria. These are not discussed individually herein, but additional information can be found on the city's Business and Community Development website.⁴³

Financial and technical assistance programs include the following:

- Brownfield Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund
- Economic Development Incentive Program
- Façade & Awning Incentive Grant Program
- Housing Development Incentive Program
- HUD Section 108 Guarantee Program
- Microloan Program

⁴³ <http://www.worcesterma.gov/development/business-assistance>

Technical Assistance programs include the following:

- Business Retention
- Business Start-up Guide
- Creative Industries
- Developer's Guidebook
- Site Search Assistance
- Worcester Business Guide
- Worcester Interdepartmental Review Team

Finally, in addition to the municipal departments in Worcester, there are a number of other public and private partners providing small business services and fostering start-ups in the city, including the following:

- Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives (MBI)
- Massachusetts Life Sciences Center
- Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP)
- Massachusetts Office of Business Development
- MassDevelopment
- Worcester Business Development Corporation
- Worcester Business Resource Alliance
- Worcester Local First
- Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce,

The remainder of this attachment presents an overview of selected projects and initiatives.

2. Major Development Projects

2.1 CitySquare

CitySquare, a \$500+ million, multi-phased project in the heart of downtown Worcester, is one of the largest public-private development projects in the Commonwealth. Upon completion, the project is anticipated to create more than 2.2 million square feet of commercial, medical, retail, entertainment and residential space. The approximately \$470 million private investment will be supported by a \$94 million public investment in the project area, which was designated a District Improvement Financing (DIF) District in 2005. This designation, the first of such in the Commonwealth, enables the city to utilize tax revenues generated from property within the DIF project area to fund public infrastructure and public project elements in support of this major and pivotal redevelopment project.

Over the past several years, the City of Worcester has been diligently working with the developer, CitySquare II Development Co. LLC ("CSII"), to complete the abatement and demolition of the former Worcester Common Fashion Outlets mall as well as portions of the adjacent parking garage. As a result, private development is ongoing within the project, and includes the completion of a 214,000 square foot building for Unum (Paul Revere Life Insurance), and the renovation of an 860-car parking garage. This construction has resulted in an \$85 million investment and the creation of more than 300 construction jobs. Unum moved into its new office building in January 2013, retaining 700 jobs and creating 50 net new jobs. In addition, Saint Vincent Hospital has completed the constructing a 66,000 square foot cancer and wellness center. The new center represents a \$21 million capital investment by Vanguard (parent company of Saint Vincent Hospital).

A new two-level subterranean parking garage is under construction at the corner of Front and Mercantile streets, and is expected to open to vehicles in spring 2016. Surface-level construction of a full service 168-room hotel is scheduled get underway in early summer 2016 and open in 2017 under the AC Hotel by Marriott brand. The hotel will also be accompanied by a 6,000 square-foot standalone restaurant. A commercial office building, up to 200,000 square feet,

is also planned above the garage. A 370-unit residential development with approximately 12,000 square feet of ground level retail will be located directly across from the recently completed bus hub. Combined, the garage, hotel and residential development represent a \$160 million investment in Downtown Worcester.

The physical infrastructure surrounding CSII has also undergone considerable changes. As a public component of the project, a new roadway network has been constructed, creating an east–west connection through the downtown. Front Street and Mercantile Street are now open and accessible to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This project will leverage significant additional private investment in future phases, which are envisioned to consist of new construction for office, residential, retail, entertainment and hotel opportunities.

2.2 DCU Center Arena and Convention Center Complex

The City of Worcester and SMG-managed DCU Center completed a substantial \$32-million-dollar renovation and expansion project at the arena. This was the first major refurbishment project at the city-owned Arena since it opened over 30 years ago. The DCU Center improvements were funded through revenues generated from a Special Finance District Zone (SFD). The Arena underwent a five-month period of complete shutdown from May to September 2013 to allow these improvements to occur.

Key components of the project include:

- Reconstructed main entrance, lobby and box office to better accommodate ticketing, circulation and security needs.
- Expanded concourse along Foster Street side of building.
- Two party suites and two new major bathroom facilities.
- Facelift for Interior of arena concourse (paint, fixtures, floor treatments, etc.).
- New streetscape along Major Taylor Boulevard and Foster Street sides of building.
- Upgrades to mechanical and electrical systems, particularly HVAC system - chiller, cooling tower and emergency generator.
- A new restaurant, “Figs and Pigs Kitchen + Pantry” located at the corner of Commercial and Foster Street in a new incubator restaurant space.

2.3 WRTA Administration and Bus Transportation Hub

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) recently constructed a new 14,000-square foot administrative and bus transportation hub (Hub) adjacent to the Union Station Intermodal Station Facility. This state-of-the-art building houses administrative offices, customer service operations, and user amenities. The transfer hub has eight bus slips and provides riders with shelter from weather conditions, bicycle amenities, and automated message boards.

2.4 Union Station Intermodal Station Facility

Union Station was constructed in 1911, and since the late 1990’s has undergone an extensive renovation to become Central Massachusetts’ premier intermodal facility, with transportation options which include high speed rail, commuter rail, inter- and intra-city bus services, and taxi services. Recent upgrades at Union Station include expanded commuter rail service, restroom facility renovations, improvements to the Harding Street entrance for taxi queuing, and a comprehensive signage overhaul. There is an adjacent 500-car parking garage with electric vehicle charging stations.

2.5 Washington Square

A \$7.7 million reconfiguration reduced the rotary to a smaller roundabout and created several new development parcels totaling more than three acres adjacent to Union Station. The roundabout also functions as a gateway to some of the city’s most important developments including CitySquare, the Regional Justice Center, Saint Vincent Hospital,

the DCU Arena and Convention Center, and the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts. First Bristol Corporation is currently constructing an extended stay hotel at Washington Square. The hotel will have approximately 110 Rooms, 120 parking spaces, a fitness center, a pool, and continental breakfast. It is planned to be six stories and is estimated to cost \$14 million. Around the corner from the Washington Square rotary is the Osgood Bradley Building, a former manufacturing building. Vision Development, Inc. has converted the 8-story, 160,000 square foot building into 82 units of 1, 2, and 4-bedroom apartments for purpose-built student housing (unaffiliated).

3. Residential Projects

In addition to the residential units to be developed as part of CitySquare (noted above), below are highlights of some nearby residential developments.

3.1 Canal Lofts

The former Chevalier Furniture Building, a 90,000-square foot four (4)-story structure, was purchased by Winn Development for a 64-unit mixed income residential development. The building is fully leased.

3.2 371-379 Main Street

The upper floors of two underutilized buildings have been converted into 55 micro-loft units, 26 of which are committed to the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) University. These are market-rate housing units geared toward graduate students and young urban professionals. Ground level façade improvements support first floor commercial use of both buildings.

3.3 Former Worcester Courthouse

In spring 2015 the New Hampshire-based developer Brady Sullivan was selected through a city disposition process to redevelop the former Worcester Courthouse with the intent of creating 115 high-end apartment units and 3,000 square feet of retail space. The courthouse property consists of 4.28 acres on the north end of Main Street, just south of Lincoln Square. The main building was constructed in 1843, and additions were built in 1880 and 1954.

4. Higher Education Investments

4.1 Quinsigamond Community College

Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) recently took occupancy of approximately 72,500 square feet in 18-20 Franklin Street (the former T&G building) for its Allied Health programs. It also expanded its Workforce Development and Training, Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language programs. This downtown space supports over 2,000 students and administrators.

4.2 Becker College

Becker recently leased 40 dwelling units to house 72 students at 72 Franklin Street from a private property owner. Other students have also been placed in privately-owned downtown buildings to address the college's demand for additional student housing.

5. Development Initiatives

In addition to the URP, the city has extensive development initiatives, programming activities and cultural development initiatives to encourage businesses to move into or expand within Worcester, as well as to facilitate positive experiences for residents and visitors in the downtown area, including:

5.1 Wayfinding

A public-private partnership between the City of Worcester and the Worcester Cultural Coalition, working with the local business, higher education and cultural communities, the Worcester Wayfinding Project is intended to develop a comprehensive wayfinding system, including signage, district identifiers and information kiosks capable of guiding Worcester visitors to their destinations while giving them the sense of Worcester's rich cultural history and future. As designed, the Worcester wayfinding system will not only guide visitors, but also share the stories and spirit of the community via public art installations and online mobile communication tools. In July 2014, the city secured \$2 million from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and has committed an additional \$1 million of its own. The initial plan includes over 175 wayfinding installations and 24 public art pieces to create a comprehensive and aesthetically pleasing navigation system. The first phase of sign fabrication and installation is ongoing.

5.2 Commercial Corridors Overlay District

The Commercial Corridors Overlay District (CCOD) is a multifaceted approach to stimulating redevelopment in the city's downtown and commercial corridors. The intent of the ordinance is to promote active streets, denser development, mixed-uses, and a pedestrian-friendly environment. This will be achieved through regulations governing dimensional requirements, urban design aspects, and parking requirements. The CCOD encompasses the downtown area and connecting major commercial corridors of the city, including Main, Chandler, Pleasant, Highland, Shrewsbury, and Grafton Streets. It also includes the Canal District area. The Overlay District replaces the Arts Overlay District, Mixed Use Overlay District, and Parking Overlay Districts. In June 2014, the Planning Board voted to recommend the City Council's adoption of the ordinance and map amendment. The City Council approved the ordinance in February 2015.

5.3 Interdepartmental Review Team

To help developers by answering questions and advising them of any City approvals that may be required, the city offers an informal and voluntary 'Pre-Application' meeting between City staff and the project proponent. Known as the Interdepartmental Review Team (IRT), this informal City team offers a preliminary review of a project to streamline the development process. The initial IRT consultation can usually clarify whether a project qualifies as 'By-Right' or whether it requires additional approvals – such as a Variance and/or Special Permit. The IRT meets bi-weekly and is comprised of multi-disciplinary staff from the Executive Office of Economic Development, Department of Inspectional Services, and the Department of Public Works and Parks. In 2014, 26 IRT meetings were held to provide feedback on a total of 72 development plans.

5.4 Worcester Student Survey 2014

The City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development, in partnership with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, conducted a survey of college student perceptions of downtown Worcester. A total of 1,128 students from ten higher education programs participated in the online survey in spring 2014. The motivation for the survey was to better understand current student perceptions of downtown Worcester and what college students want as part of their downtown experience.

The majority of respondents felt that the city is not pedestrian friendly and does not offer the amenities necessary for the city's student population. However, most agree that downtown is easily accessible from campus. The top five establishments students would be excited to see in downtown Worcester are a health food grocery store, Wi-Fi café/lounge, fast casual Mexican food, a bookstore and more live music entertainment. Students were given the opportunity to offer comments, and the top three trends were the need to improve transportation and parking, safety and cleanliness, and promotions, events and marketing to the student population. Finally, students felt that a mix of local and national retail and service-based businesses would be optimal.