

# Charlton Village District Priority Development Area (PDA) PDA Assessment Report



Prepared by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)  
For the Town of Charlton

May 2015



## **Acknowledgements**

The Charlton Planning Board would like to thank the following individuals who played a significant role in preparing this Plan. They contributed in many ways and dedicated numerous hours of volunteer time to make this Plan a reality.

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The Planning Board also wishes to provide a special thank you to Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) Principal Planner Eric R. Smith, AICP for his invaluable consultant assistance on this Village District Study.

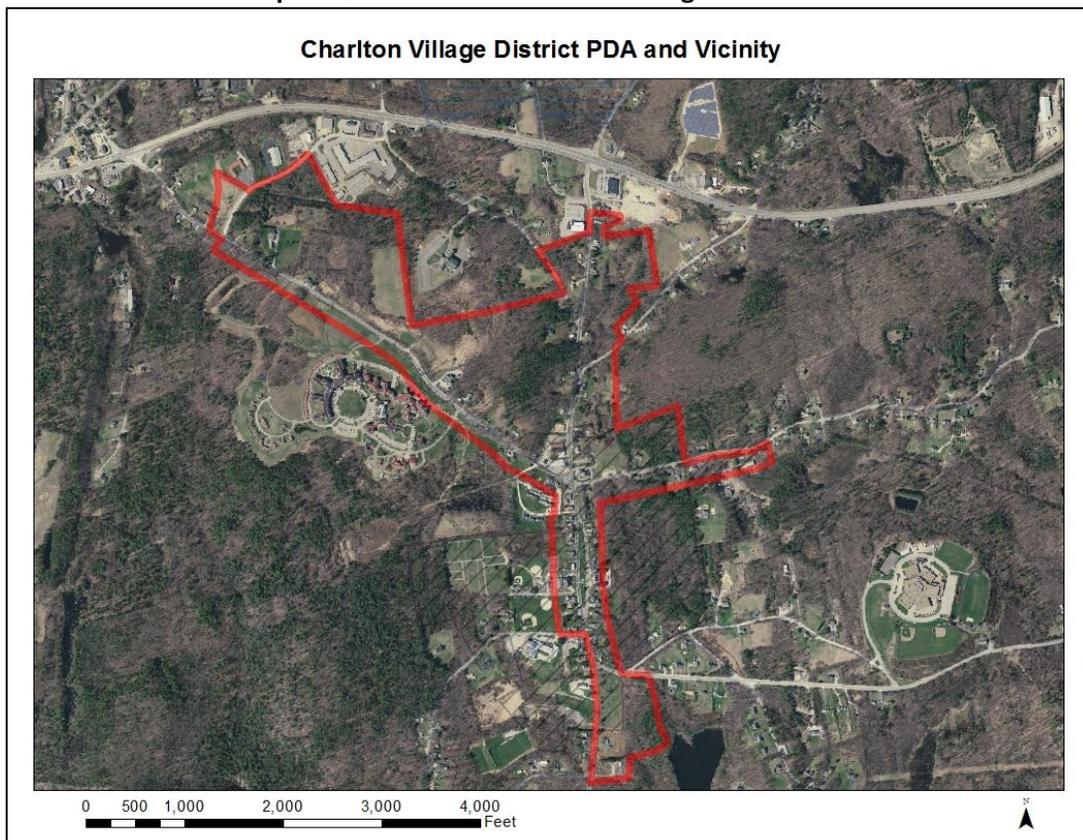
May 20, 2015

## Town of Charlton - Charlton Village District PDA

### *Purpose of Analysis*

The Charlton Village District PDA (#54-9) was identified as a Priority Development Area in the [Central Thirteen Prioritization Project Report](#) (also identified as the “Main Street Village PDA” in this Report). Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are areas within a municipality that have been identified as capable of supporting additional development or as candidates for redevelopment. These are areas on which a town is focusing its energy to promote thoughtful economic development that is closely tied to the community’s goals. In addition to being a locally-identified PDA by the Town of Charlton, the Charlton Village District was one of 46 Regionally-Significant Priority Development Areas within the Central Thirteen Prioritization Project. Map 1 below shows the location of the Charlton Village District PDA.

**Map 1: Location of the Charlton Village District PDA**



PDA assistance projects are intended as a “next step” following the completion of a prioritization project. Planning funds from the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program support this effort and up to 25 hours of technical assistance may be provided to each interested community. Specifically, the objective of this project is to provide participating communities with a packet of information for a PDA that can be used to guide them in identifying possible zoning changes, development of a Chapter 43D application<sup>1</sup> or other grant applications (MassWorks; DHCD’s Downtown Technical Assistance), promotion to developers, as a template for future analysis of additional PDAs, etc. CMRPC staff worked with each participating community to ensure that the technical assistance provided was tailored to the town’s specific needs. As the tasks requested for this assessment exceeded the 25-hour DLTA support, the Town of Charlton added additional support by the Planning Board authorizing CMRPC Staff to utilize the Town’s 20 hours of Local Planning Assistance (LPA) funds during FY 2015.

### ***Study Area Selection***

The Town of Charlton’s request was submitted on behalf of the Town of Charlton by John P. McGrath, Chairman, Charlton Planning Board and Jay Detarando, Chairman, the Charlton Economic Development Commission. The Town requested the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) for assessment and analysis on the Charlton Village District PDA (#54-9). The Town applied for this DLTA as part of looking for more information that would support a comprehensive planning document/blueprint that both formats relevant Village District data/resource information and would provide a structure of recommendations/strategies as a guide and resource for furthering positive priority area development and planning. The Town committed to reaching out to other local parties of interest (i.e. Village District Property owners) for their participation in the Project.

The second focus area was to assist with recommendations in making a Charlton Village a destination. The assessment and subsequent recommendations for implementation included making use of a wayfinding signage system. The initial impetus for this idea came from a March 2014 Citizen Planner’s Training Collaborative (CPTC) session on small-town economic development. As part of CMRPC’s Village District PDA assessment, we conducted an inventory of existing conditions and provided recommendations on four (4) vacant parcels in the Village District PDA (see page 14 for the identification of these parcels, the assessment of which follows accordingly).

To allow for public input, the Town of Charlton requested CMRPC assistance by attending three (3) public meetings:

- A formal Project Kick-off meeting with the Planning Board and Economic Development Commission, which was held on September 17, 2014.
- A Public Workshop (also serving as a project half-way point meeting) in which the Town and CMRPC invited the Public/Property owners to this meeting); CMRPC Staff assisted in the development of a meeting flyer. The Town provided assistance with the abutters list and mailing. This Workshop was held October 15, 2014.
- A Final Presentation, to present the Project findings and draft Report, which was provided at the February 4, 2015 Planning Board meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mass.gov/hed/business/licensing/43d](http://www.mass.gov/hed/business/licensing/43d)

## **Infrastructure**

The Town of Charlton Village District is a location within the community that has water and sewer services. Both have been developed recently. Town sewer was made available in the Charlton Village in 2006. Town water was made available even more recently, in 2013, after years of planning with water service being brought to the community from the Town of Southbridge. Other utilities available within the Village Center are 3-phase electric power and broadband (both Charter cable and Verizon provide broadband internet services).

### **Intro / Background: Previous Planning in the Study Area**

The Town of Charlton does not have a traditional Downtown, such as many of their surrounding communities do. As the Town noted in their DLTA PDA Request Letter for *“...several years, our two local boards (Planning Board and Economic Development Committee) have jointly administered a comprehensive planning process for the Village District, which to-date has included long-range planning and implementation elements from our 2008 Charlton Master Plan, our 2004 E.O. 418 Community Development Plan and various greenway and tree management efforts as funded from a series of grants from the Mass. DCR Urban Forestry Program. Field efforts have included adoption of our Village District Zoning By-Law as well as a few follow-up expansions of the Village District zoning boundaries.”*

The initial idea of a Village District came up during work on the Town’s 2004 Community Development Plan, which was coordinated by Bill Scanlan of CMRPC. Then as the Town was working with VHB in 2007 on the Master Plan, there was great interest in the Village District concept. The Town even brought in another VHB team for a special planning session related to the Village District and that is reflected in the Charlton Center Chapter of the 2008 Charlton Master Plan.

Subsequent to the Master Plan development, the Village District zoning by-law and zoning map amendment was approved at the October 28, 2008 Charlton Fall Special Town Meeting. At the May 20, 2013 Annual Town Meeting, the Town amended the zoning map again by extending the southern boundary of the Village District to encompass the parcel on which developer Ken LeBlanc initially proposed to eventually develop a Village-style sandwich shop and accompanying parking lot (Mr. LeBlanc’s property being the forth site that CMRPC focused on as part of this Study). That area includes the Town’s Bay Path Cemetery where Grizzly Adams is buried.

This Charlton Center Village area was to be the part of the Town where traditional development could be allowed. For example, one concept includes a shop/office on the first floor and then residential on the upper floors.

In addition, the Town has been very successful in making use of DCR’s Urban Forestry grants program. The Town was able to use DCR funding to plant street and other trees in the area around the ballfields behind the library and adjacent to the Charlton Elementary School. These trees help green an area the town is promoting for recreation use as part of making Charlton Town Center a destination, as there are hiking trails behind the Westridge Cemetery that connect with the Overlook senior residential development (see the figures on the following page).

*Tree planting behind Charlton Library*



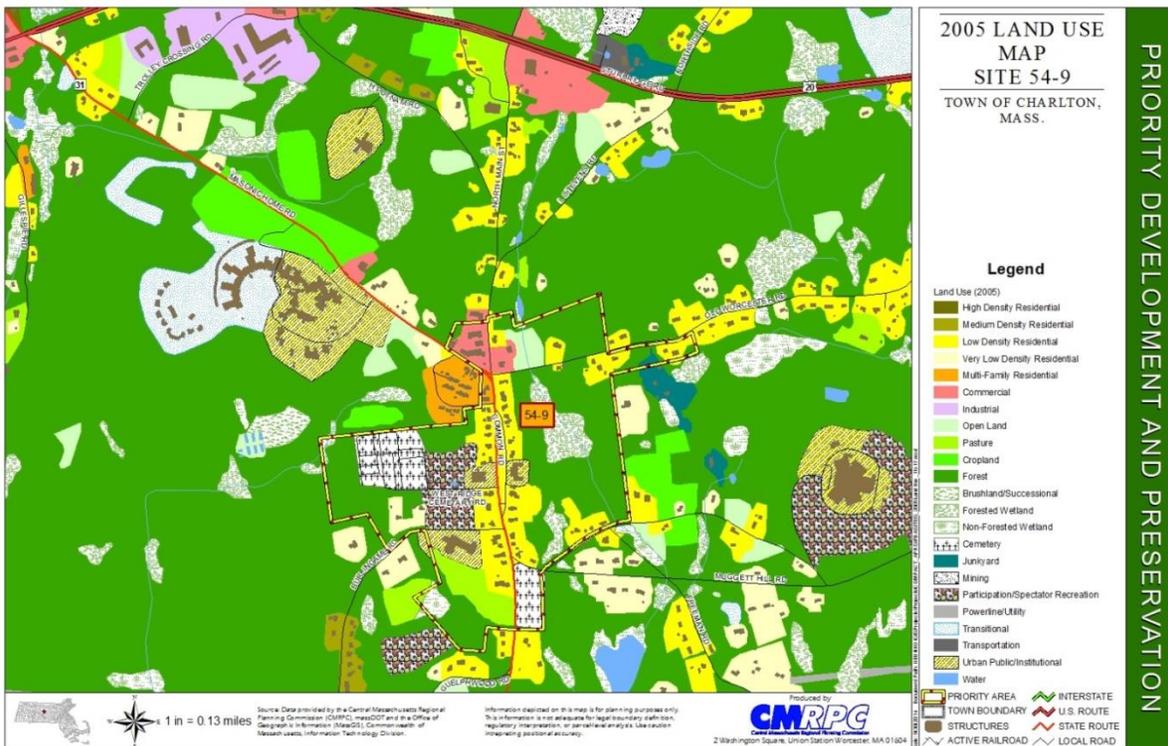
*Trail to the rear of Westridge Cemetery*



**Land Use**

Existing land use, as based on 2005 MassGIS data and shown in Map 2 below, details the commercial development at the intersection of Masonic Home Road, North Main Street, Main Street, and Old Worcester Road. Most of the land uses along Main Street in the area of Charlton Center are residential with the municipal uses of the Town Library and Town Hall here as well. Other significant land uses of note in the Village District vicinity are the Charlton Elementary Schools, the recreational fields, two cemeteries and then The Overlook development. On the outskirts to the east is Bay Path Vocational Technical High School and then to the north is the commercial area near Route 20 and North Main Street that includes CVS. To the northwest are the industrial-related uses along Trolley Crossing Road and also St. Joseph’s Church.

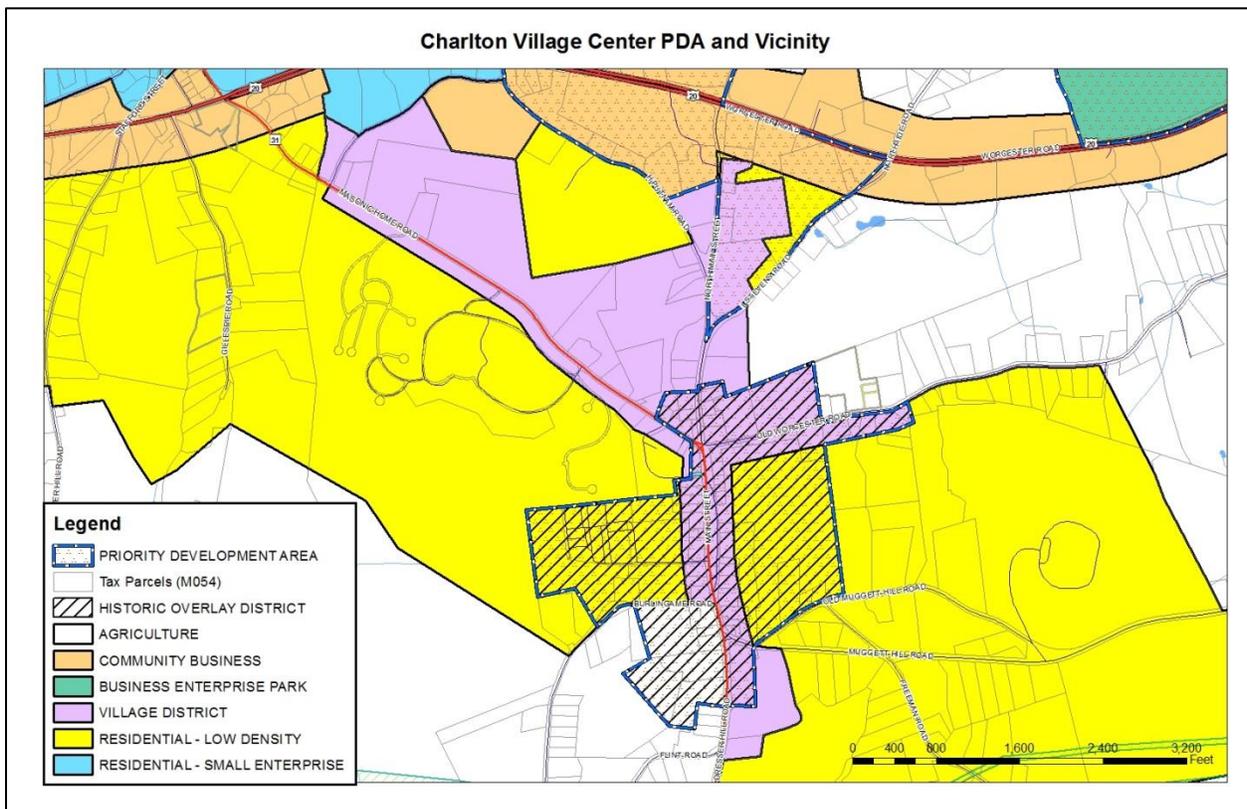
**Map 2: Existing Land Use**



## Zoning

The intention of the Charlton Village District PDA is to have this PDA comply with the boundary of the Town's Charlton Village Zoning District. CMRPC Staff noticed, however, that when mapped the Charlton Village Center PDA is in fact currently following the boundary of the Charlton Center Historic District Zoning Overlay. This zoning overlay matches the boundary of the Charlton Center National Register Historic District. CMRPC Staff spoke to the Charlton Planning Director about this matter and believes it was intended by the Planning Board and Economic Development Committee to have the PDA boundary match the boundary of the Charlton Village Zoning District. CMRPC Staff recommends that the Town send a letter to CMRPC to ask for the PDA boundary to be changed on the PDA map so that the Charlton Village District PDA matches the Village Zoning District boundary.

**Map 3: Zoning in the Vicinity of the Charlton Village District PDA**



Section 3.1.5.11 of the Town's Zoning Bylaw provides the purposes of the Village District, which is: *"to promote mixed use development consistent with traditional New England villages, to provide pedestrian-scale amenities to encourage small-scale retail uses and commercial services in harmony with a residential environment, and to offer flexibility in design standards that recognizes strict adherence to well-intended regulations can inhibit the originality needed to preserve and create vigorous village environments."*

CMRPC has analyzed the Village District zoning as part of this PDA Assessment. As part of this analysis, we have also included a review of zoning within the three (3) surrounding zoning districts that are within and/or adjacent to the Four (4) Sites of Interest. Table 1 on the following page provides the dimensional

requirements for the Village District, Agricultural District, Low-Density Residential (R-40) and Community Business (CB) zoning districts.

**Table 1: Charlton Zoning Dimensional Requirements**

ZONING DISTRICT	MIN. LOT AREA (Sq. Ft.)	MIN. LOT FRONTAGE (Feet)	MIN. FRONT YARD (Feet)	MIN. SIDE YARD (Feet)	MIN. REAR YARD (Feet)	MAX. BUILDING COVERAGE % of Lot	MAX. BLDG HEIGHT (Feet)
Village (V)*	10,000*	75	10*	10	10	60*	36
Agricultural (A)	60,000	175	30	15	30	25	36
Low Density Residential (R-40)	40,000	150	30	15	15	30	36
Community Business (CB)	40,000	150	40	15	15	30	36

There are a series of footnotes in the Zoning Bylaw related to the dimensional requirements. One of these is for the Village District, which states that:

*“To accomplish the purposes of the Village District, the Planning Board may authorize by special permit a reduction of front, side and rear setback standards for new or preexisting structures. The Board must find that the required setbacks would result in, or have resulted in, construction of structures that are not in keeping with the area’s scale and character. The Board must further find that the relaxation of said standards will not interfere or negatively impact abutting properties, particularly property used or zoned for residential purposes.*

CMRPC Staff notes that the Village District dimensional requirements provide for higher density and reduced setbacks versus the outlying districts. It is these characteristics of the Village District that provide the opportunity to have a village-scale environment that the Town aspires to have in this area. In addition, there is also a requirement for a maximum front yard setback of 25 feet. As noted in the footnote above, there is opportunity for flexibility in setbacks of new structures, with the Planning Board required to make a Special Permit finding. The flexibility could especially be important for development of the LeBlanc property (see page 20 for the detailed discussion of Mr. LeBlanc’s parcel).

**Agricultural, Floriculture and Horticultural Use Assessment:** The following are allowed as a by-right permitted use in the Village District: Raising and keeping of livestock, including but not limited to horses, cattle, sheep, goats, swine, fur animals and poultry, on a **parcel over five (5) acres** (emphasis added; CMRPC Staff notes that most of the parcels within the built portion of the Village District tend to be less than five acres); Raising of crops, whether for sale or personal consumption, on a parcel of any size; Raising of crops, whether for sale or personal consumption, on a parcel of any size; Indoor commercial horticulture/floriculture establishments, e.g. greenhouses (for this use, CMRPC Staff recommends that the Town change this use to be allowed subject to site plan approval just within the Village Center District, which will allow design and placement considerations to be addressed).

Within the Village District, the following are uses allowed subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval: Raising and keeping livestock, including but not limited to horses, cattle, sheep, goats, swine, fur animals and poultry, on a parcel of five (5) or fewer acres. There are no agricultural-related uses allowed by Special Permit within the Village District.

**Residential Use Assessment:** one-family and two-family as well as accessory apartments are allowed as by-right permitted uses. The following are uses allowed subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval: Lodging and/or boarding house, Major Residential Development, Dwelling units over first floor commercial uses and within one and two-family dwellings, a mix of residential and commercial uses. Multi-family dwellings are allowed subject to granting of a Special Permit by the Planning Board, subject to the provisions of Section 5.1 of the Zoning Bylaw.

**Public and Semi-Private Use Assessment:** No such uses are allowed by-right in the Village District. The following are uses allowed subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval: Public, private, sectarian or denominational school (non-profit); Day-care centers; Family day-care homes; Religious use; Nursing and/or convalescent homes; Hospitals and clinics for in- and outpatient care (non-profit); Community and/or neighborhood centers; Other institutional and philanthropic uses; Cemeteries; and other municipal uses voted by Town Meeting (CMRPC notes the Town has made use of this use provision for the Library reconstruction project, recreational fields construction and for the future Fire Station). There are no such uses allowed subject to granting of a Special Permit by the Planning Board within the Village District.

**Recreational Use Assessment:** Private membership clubs and Picnic and beach areas are such uses that are allowed by-right in the Village District. Following are uses allowed subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval: Other recreational facilities conducted for gainful profit, including indoor and outdoor theatres, physical fitness centers, health clubs and indoor and outdoor tennis and racquetball facilities; and Public recreational facilities. There are no such uses allowed subject to granting of a Special Permit by the Planning Board within the Village District.

**Business Use Assessment:** Following are uses currently allowed by-right in the Village District: Personal and consumer services establishments, including but not limited to: barber shops, shoe and leather repair, beauty shops, and *laundry or dry cleaning establishments and laundromats* (emphasis added). CMRPC Staff recommends that the Planning Board consider moving the “laundry or dry cleaning establishments and laundromats” use into its own use category. Our rationale for this approach is to provide for this use to be allowed in the Village District subject to a site plan review and approval in order for the Planning Board to review design and scale considerations of this use in the Village District.

**Following are business uses allowed subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval:** Retail establishments serving the convenience goods needs of a local area including but not limited to: grocery, delicatessen, baker, supermarket, drug stores and similar uses, having less than 20,000 sq. ft. of gross Building Area; Hotel or Inn; Restaurants; Office of licensed medical and dental practitioners limited to general outpatient care and diagnosis; Business, professional and general offices with less than 12,000 gross square feet of floor area per structure; Banks; and Automatic Teller Machines {ATMs}.

**Following are business uses allowed subject to granting of a Special Permit by the Planning Board:** Retail establishments serving the convenience goods needs of a local area including but not limited to: grocery, delicatessen, baker, supermarket, drug stores and similar uses, having 20,000 sq. ft. of more of gross building Area; Other eating and drinking establishments, most notably known as bars and grills; Business, professional and general offices with 12,000 or more gross square feet of floor area per structure; and Schools (for profit).

**Communications, Transportation and Public Utility Use Assessment:** No such uses are allowed by-right in the Village District. **Following are uses allowed subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval:**

- Taxi or limousine service and other vehicles for hire with drivers and having no more than three (3) vehicles and containing no more than nine (9) passengers in any one vehicle.
- Water storage tanks, for public water systems as defined by 310 CMR 22.02, provided that the height of the structure shall not exceed 75 feet, that any portion of the structure shall not be less than 300 feet from any residential structure, and that the distance from the base at ground level of any tank to any property or street line be equal to twice the height of the tank. Neither the minimum lot size specified in section 3.2.4 nor any other minimum lot size shall apply to such use.
- Pumping stations, for public water systems as defined by 310 CMR provided that any portion of the structure shall not be less than 300 feet from any residential structure. Neither the minimum lot size specified in section 3.2.4 nor any other minimum lot size shall apply to such use. Provided that the minimum set back from lot lines specified in Section 3.2.4 or a setback equal to the height of the pumping station structure, whichever is greater, shall apply.
- Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installation

**Following are Communications, Transportation and Public Utility uses allowed subject to granting of a Special Permit by the Planning Board:** Communications Tower for federally licensed amateur radio operator, limited to 75 feet in height, and requiring a minimum distance between the base of the Tower and the property boundary line and/or any residential structure to be equal to the height of the Tower, including any aerials or antennas that may be mounted on the Tower.

**Industrial Use Assessment: Only the following industrial uses are allowed in the Village District, which is subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval:** The following research and development or office uses: a. scientific or research laboratories; b. offices for technical, executive, professional or administrative uses.

**Accessory Uses Assessment: The following accessory uses are allowed by-right in the Village District:**

- Customary home occupations conducted as a gainful business, provided that all parking for such businesses shall be provided on the premises where the home occupations are conducted; and further provided that all products thereof are produced or sold on the premises.
- Accessory professional office in a dwelling conducted by the resident occupant, provided that all parking for such professional services shall be provided on the premises where the professional offices are located.
- Accessory building such as a private garage, playhouse, *greenhouse*, toolshed and private swimming pool. *Note the issue with allowing greenhouses by-right in the Village District that CMRPC identified under the agricultural use assessment section.*
- Trailer for office and storage use only during construction. The trailer for office/storage use shall not be used for habitation. These temporary on-site construction office/storage trailers may be located on the building site upon issuance of a building permit and must be removed within fourteen (14) days after an occupancy permit has been issued.

**The following are accessory uses allowed in the Village District, which is subject to regulation by means of a site plan review and approval:** Food services as accessory use to serve employees of and

visitors to principal use; and fitness center as accessory use to serve employees of principal use; and Emergency power back up facility with less than or equal to 30 megawatts of power output.

**There is one (1) accessory use allowed subject to Special Permit in the Village District:** Day Care Center or any child care facility- including day care and family care as accessory use to serve employees of principal use.

**Prohibited Use Assessment: CMRPC Staff offers the following recommendation on a use currently prohibited in the Village District.** One use not currently allowed is “Auction Galleries” CMRPC would recommend consider changing this use to Planning Board Special Permit, would allow them to be tastefully designed and to help make the Village District a destination. Such use can be also related to art galleries and the various cultural activities offered at the Charlton Arts and Activities Center (CAAAC).

***Other zoning bylaw related findings and assessment related to the Charlton Village Center PDA:***

The Village District Regulations, found in Section 5.17 of the Zoning Bylaw provides regulatory oversight by the Charlton Planning Board in helping development to be designed to achieve an attractive Village-scale design and environment. Important elements of these regulations are as follows:

- Section A provides the set of landscaping requirements, including provisions of buffers and street trees. Key examples of these requirements include:
  - “A landscaped buffer zone along the side and rear of each lot, of at least the width of the required side and rear setback, shall be provided where a proposed non-residential use abuts a residential use.” CMRPC Staff notes our support for having a landscaped buffer when business/commercial uses abut residential uses.
  - Screening of mechanical equipment such as HVAC, telephone boxes and electrical transformers is required.
- Section B addresses Parking and Access:
  - Provides the design requirement that *“parking areas shall be located to the side and rear of structures. No parking area shall be designed such that parking is within the required or authorized front yard setback. The Planning Board may, at its discretion, allow 25% of the total parking to be located to the front of the structure.”*
  - Provides the Planning Board with regulatory authority in allowing for flexibility of parking space provisions by authorizing the Board to waive 25% of parking space generation requirements. CMRPC notes support of this approach, especially in mixed-use developments where parking can be shared between certain types of land uses (e.g. residential and commercial, where residents are away at work during the day, the parking spaces can be utilized by customers for businesses’ that are open during the day only.).
- Section C provides for a set of pedestrian amenities that new developments in the Village District shall provide. Section 5.17.3.2 is important for the Complete Streets Certification Program discussed on pages 32-33: *“If no public sidewalk exists across the frontage of the lot, a paved sidewalk of at least four feet in width shall be provided within the front yard setback and to the maximum extent possible; the sidewalk shall be designed to create a continuous pedestrian walkway with the abutting properties.”*

Flexible Development (see Section 5.7 of the Zoning Bylaw) is not currently allowed in the Village District. The Flexible Development provision is the Town of Charlton's provision for cluster subdivisions, also known as Open Space Residential Design subdivisions. CMRPC Staff recommends the Charlton Planning Board consider amending the zoning bylaw to allow Flexible developments in the Village District with appropriate based dimensional requirements. The Miller property and perhaps also the Overlook's vacant parcel are candidates for this type of development.

Senior Living Facilities Bylaw (see Section 5.11), provides Flexible Zoning for Additional Senior Living Options. Provides Mixed-Use Opportunity with Medical Facilities Allowed in Village District but also the surrounding Agricultural, Low Density Residential (R-40) and even Residential-Small Enterprise (R-SE) Zoning Districts. The Overlook could make use of this Bylaw. According to the Charlton Planning Director, there are market opportunities for such development. The Miller parcel also has potential to be developed with for Senior Living Facilities.

### ***Development Suitability, Opportunities and Constraints***

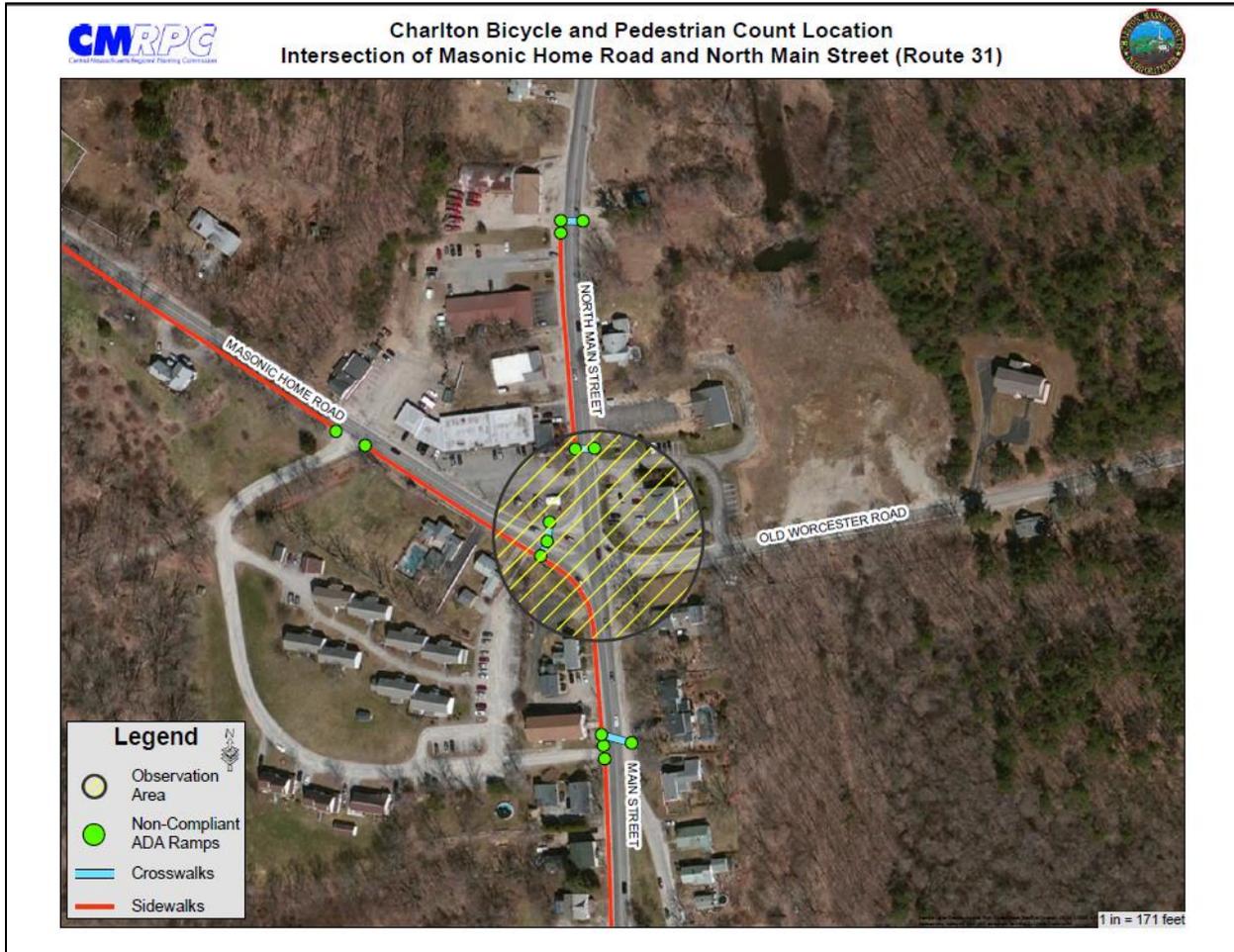
Residential Market Demand Opportunity: There is market demand for residential development in this PDA, based on a recent national survey. According to a recent *Better Cities and Towns* e-newsletter article, "[a recent national survey](#) by TransitCenter found a big, unmet desire for mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. TransitCenter is interested, they report, because the kind of neighborhood a person lives in is the primary factor in who takes transit. However, mixed-use doesn't necessarily mean cities. About 18 million people--or six percent of the nation--would like to live in mixed-use suburban neighborhoods, but currently don't. About 10 percent of Americans would like to live in mixed-use small towns, but don't. That gap will create a flow of people moving to fulfill their unmet desires."<sup>2</sup> More residents living in the Charlton Village Center could correspond to an increased market demand for commercial and service uses. This would include restaurants (see discussion below). There are demographic trends in favor of walkable communities, of which Charlton Village has the elements to be.

An additional consideration when analyzing commercial development suitability is traffic: the number of cars that travel past the site. CMRPC has identified +/- 10,000 Average Daily Vehicle Trips (ADT) along the section of Route 31, North of Dresser Hill Road and Burlingame Road (based on available traffic counts taken in May 2000 and May 2002). In addition, CMRPC Transportation Planning Staff also undertook a pedestrian count initiative in June 2014. The results of this pedestrian count indicated that the bulk of pedestrians are found on Saturday mornings, which likely corresponds to when youth sporting events are taking place at the athletic fields located in this area (In total, 4 pedestrians were recorded in the am weekday hours, 19 in the pm weekday hours, and 41 on Saturday). Map 4 showing the bicycle and pedestrian count locations in Charlton Center is included on the following page.

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<sup>2</sup> The full article is available at <http://bettercities.net/news-opinion/blogs/robert-steuteville/21350/small-cities-and-towns-are-urban-places-too>

## Map 4: Charlton Center Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Locations



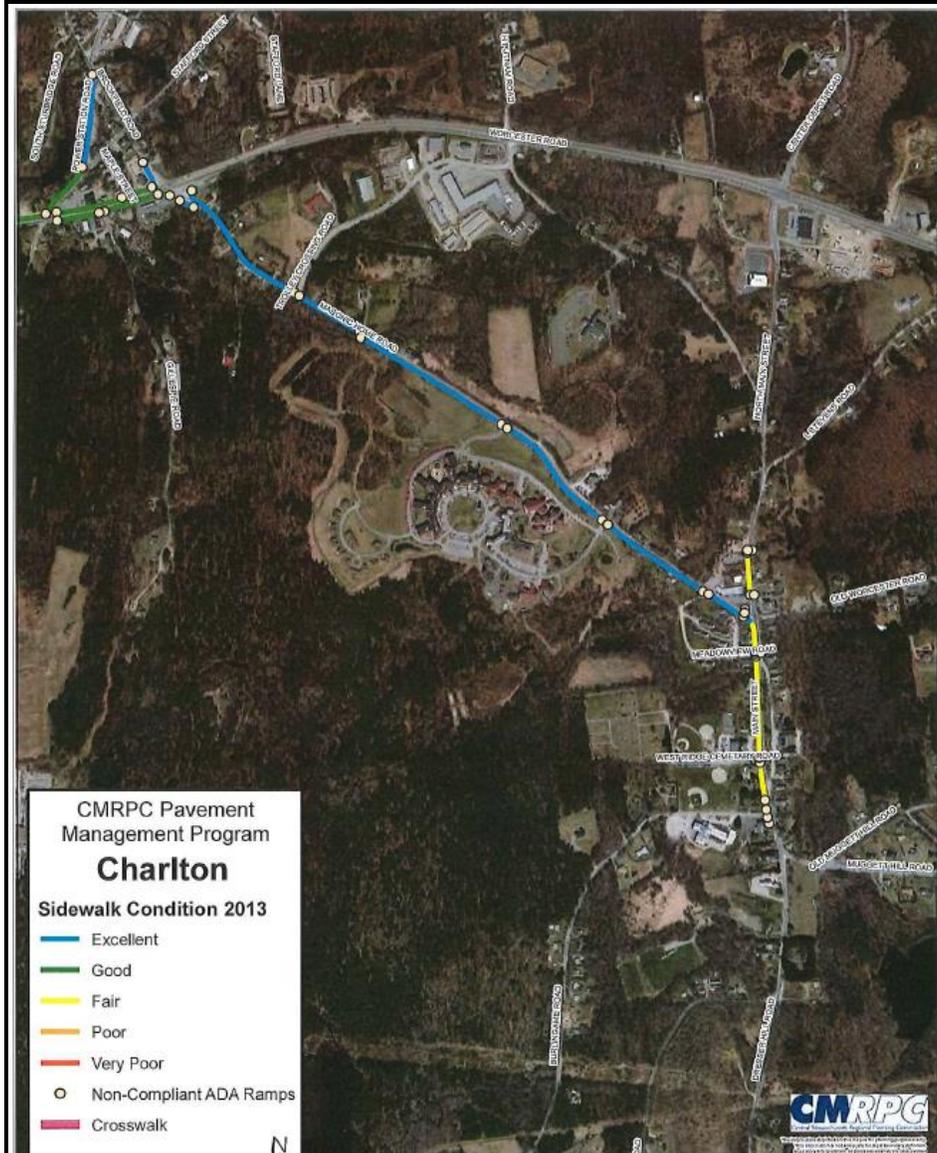
### ***Sidewalks: Constraint and an Opportunity***

During the October 15, 2014 Public Workshop, participants had identified a lack of a comprehensive sidewalk system and the need to improve sidewalks as a constraint within the Village District (See Map 5 on the following page for location of existing sidewalks). There are existing sidewalks, a key to walkability, and there is an opportunity for having additional commercial development along walkways/sidewalks. At the October 2015 Workshop it was noted by participants that there are some areas that lack sidewalks, including North Main Street up to the CVS at Route 20. Currently there is no existing sidewalk network heading towards the LeBlanc property.

The Planning Board requested information about any potential grants to help funding of sidewalks. CMRPC Staff has learned that the Town can make use of its own Chapter 90 funds. The Town of Ashburnham has a sidewalk account to help with sidewalk maintenance in Ashburnham Village and S. Ashburnham Village. The City of Worcester has a similar program. There is also a new State Complete Streets Certification Program, which is discussed in detail in the resource section on pages 32-33.

In addition, the Planning Board can have property owners/developers install sidewalks on their property frontage as part of site plan reviews for properties, as provided in Section 5.17.3.2 within the Village District regulations that are incorporated in the Charlton Zoning Bylaw.

**Map 5: Sidewalk Inventory and Condition: Charlton Village Center and Vicinity**



### ***Economic Development Opportunities***

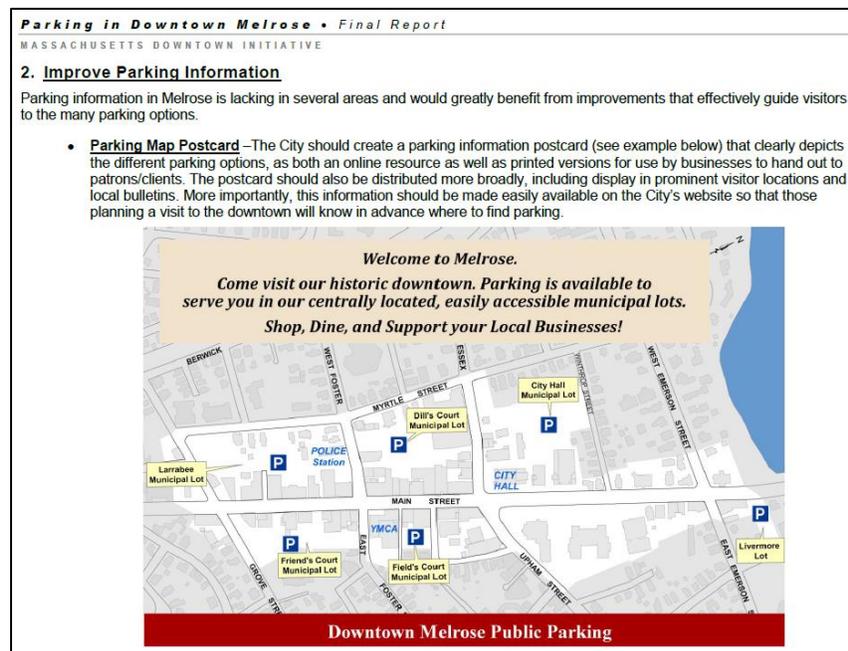
- There is no restaurant (of the sit down formal type; there are existing pizza establishments) in the Charlton Village Center. A Cracker Barrel approach (but locally-based) with a restaurant that also sells antiques/unique/local gifts is one opportunity that has been identified by Mr. Ken LeBlanc. The Bay Path Regional Vocational – Technical High School Culinary Program was identified as an asset. The School is only 1 mile away from the Village Center.

- The Town could direct economic development in the Center Village the way towns of Pomfret and Putnam have in northeastern Connecticut. Like those communities, the Town of Charlton is part of “*The Last Green Valley.*” Putnam now has a First Fridays event, which is designed to bring people to shop and eat at their downtown establishments. For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.discoverputnam.com/>. Pomfret is marketing their community where “Quiet country roads lead to pastoral byways, historic landmarks, unique shops and exceptional restaurants.” For more information visit: <http://www.visitpomfret.com/index.html>.
- Heritage Tourism: As an example, the Town can build on the legacy and final resting place of Grizzly Adams, who is buried at the Bay Path Cemetery. The Last Green Valley organization may be able to assist with heritage tourism promotion and information about The Last Green Valley is included on page 33.

**Parking both as a Constraint and an Opportunity**

Participants at the October 2015 workshop identified lack of a central/municipal parking lot in the Village District as a constraint. However, there are a host of parking locations available in the area around the Town Hall and Library, including on-street parking around the Charlton Common. Improved signage could be a way to direct visitors to existing parking in these areas. The former DPW facility on Town-owned property on North Main Street is a brownfield property that could be cleaned up for parking use. Clean up for such use tends to be a much less costly effort than if property was used for commercial/residential purposes.

Parking availability was an issue also identified during CMRPC’s assessment of the Spencer Town Center in 2014. We learned how the City of Melrose (a community that made use of the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) program, discussed further on page 31 for assistance in the area of parking). One recommendation that was provided to the City of Melrose was to develop a Parking Map Postcard (see the figure below for this example). The Town of Charlton could develop a similar map for existing parking areas and publish on the Town’s website and post at Town Hall and other locations.



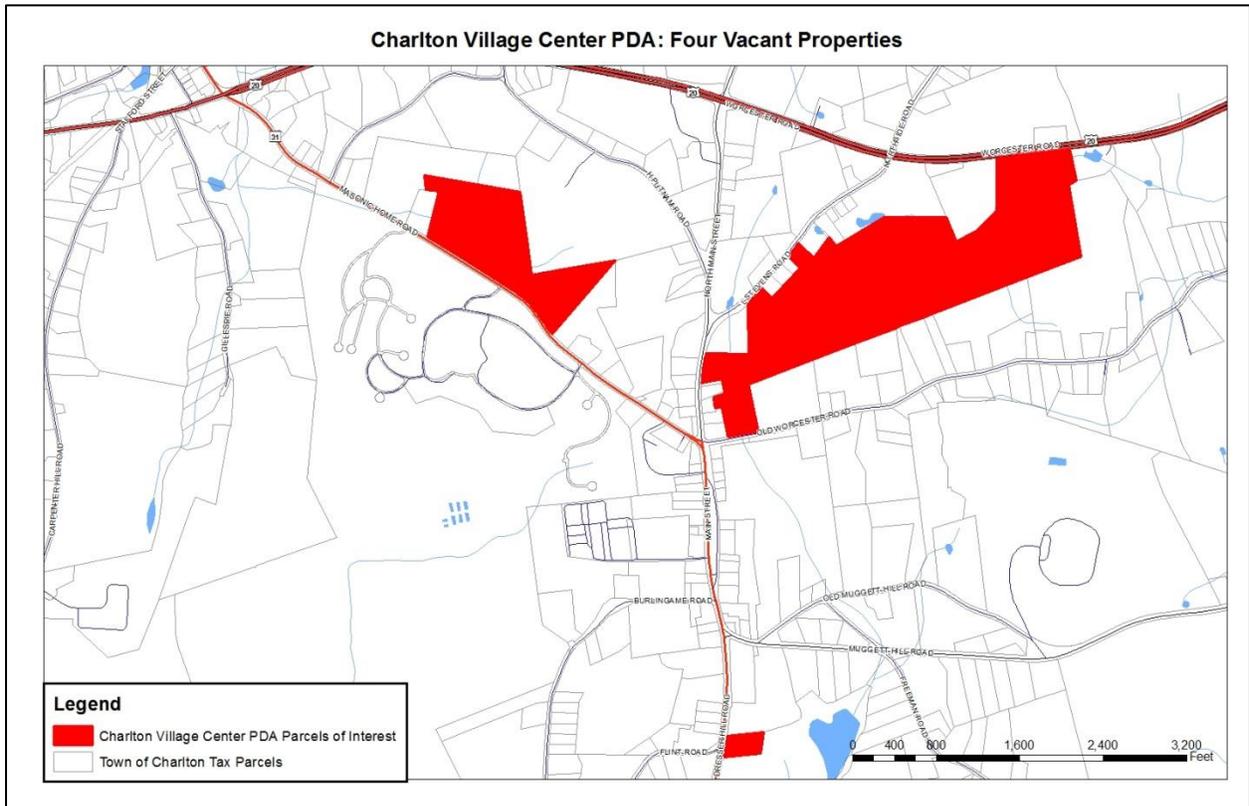
**Four Opportunity Properties:**

As indicated at the beginning of this Report, the study participants requested that an assessment of four (4) vacant properties would be one focus of this PDA DLTA assistance effort. As part of this assessment, CMRPC Staff conducted an inventory of existing conditions as well as provided an assessment and analysis of these four (4) vacant parcels. The four (4) vacant properties are as follows:

- 1) The Overlook’s undeveloped parcel on the easterly side of Route 31: Parcel 34-B-1 (25.96 acres); It is a large vacant parcel off of Route 31 to the north and across the street of the Overlook Masonic Home property. It is owned by the Masons.
- 2) The vacant Carpentier parcel, which is on the east side of Rt. 31, identified as Parcel 35-D-27 (3.093 acres).
- 3) The Miller Property (actually two abutting parcels owned by the Miller family): Parcel 35-D-6 (74.186 acres) and Parcel 35-D-2.1 (3.02 acres).
- 4) The LeBlanc Property: Parcel 42-C-7.1 (1.5 acres)

Map 6 below shows these parcels; following the map is an assessment of each property.

**Map 6: The Four Vacant Properties Assessed as part of the Village District PDA Project**



### Overlook Parcel

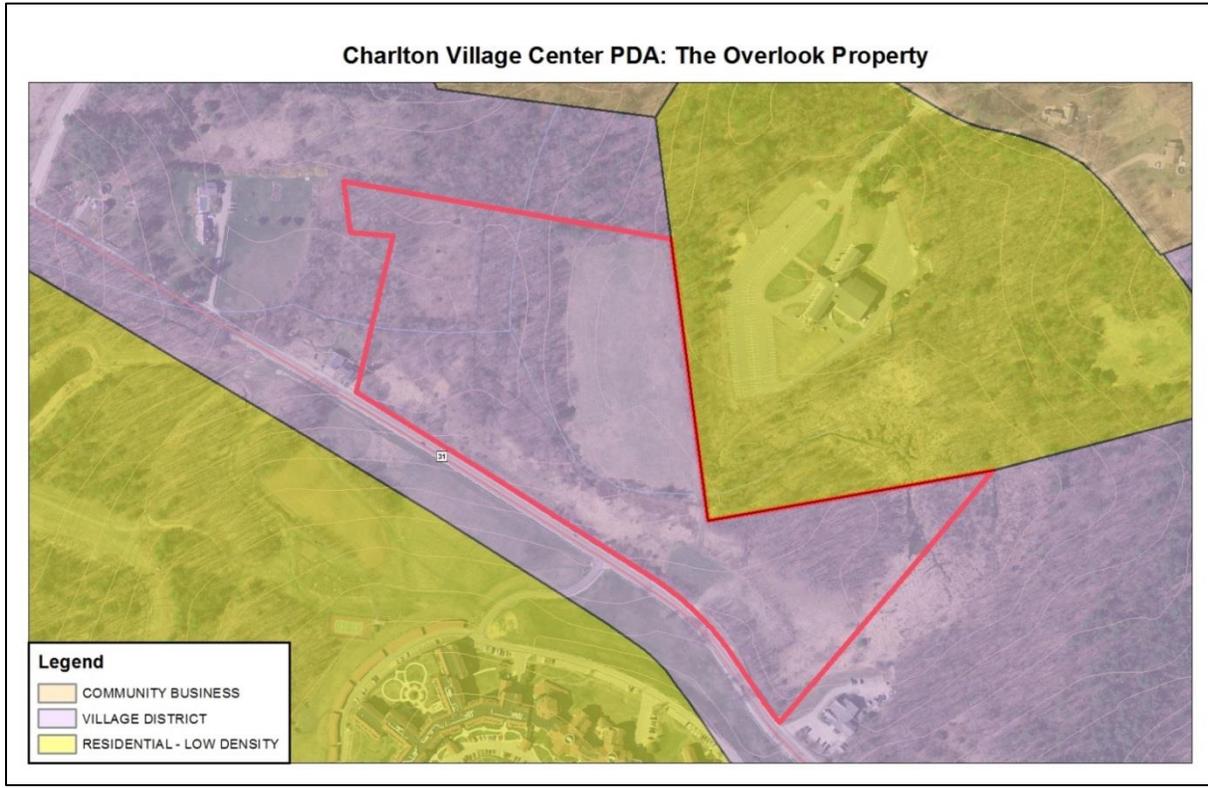
The Overlook's undeveloped parcel is on the easterly side of Route 31 and is identified as Parcel 34-B-1 by the Charlton's Assessors. This 25.96-acre has an irregular, almost V-shape quality to it (see Map 7 on page 16 for location of this parcel, which is currently included in the Village District zoning district). Based on analysis of site characteristics and constraints (see Map 8 on page 16), along with a site visit and viewing of the site from the existing Overlook development (see photos below), there appears to be various buildable areas within this approximately 26-acre property. One of these buildable areas abuts the St. Joseph's Church parcel that is accessed off of H Putnam Road Ext. During the work on this assessment, rezoning of the Church Parcel to Village District zoning was discussed. See the recommendations section on page 28 for more information.

*Figure on the left provides View of the Vacant Overlook parcel from the existing Overlook development; the photo on the right is view of the vacant Overlook parcel from the St. Joseph's Church parking lot.*

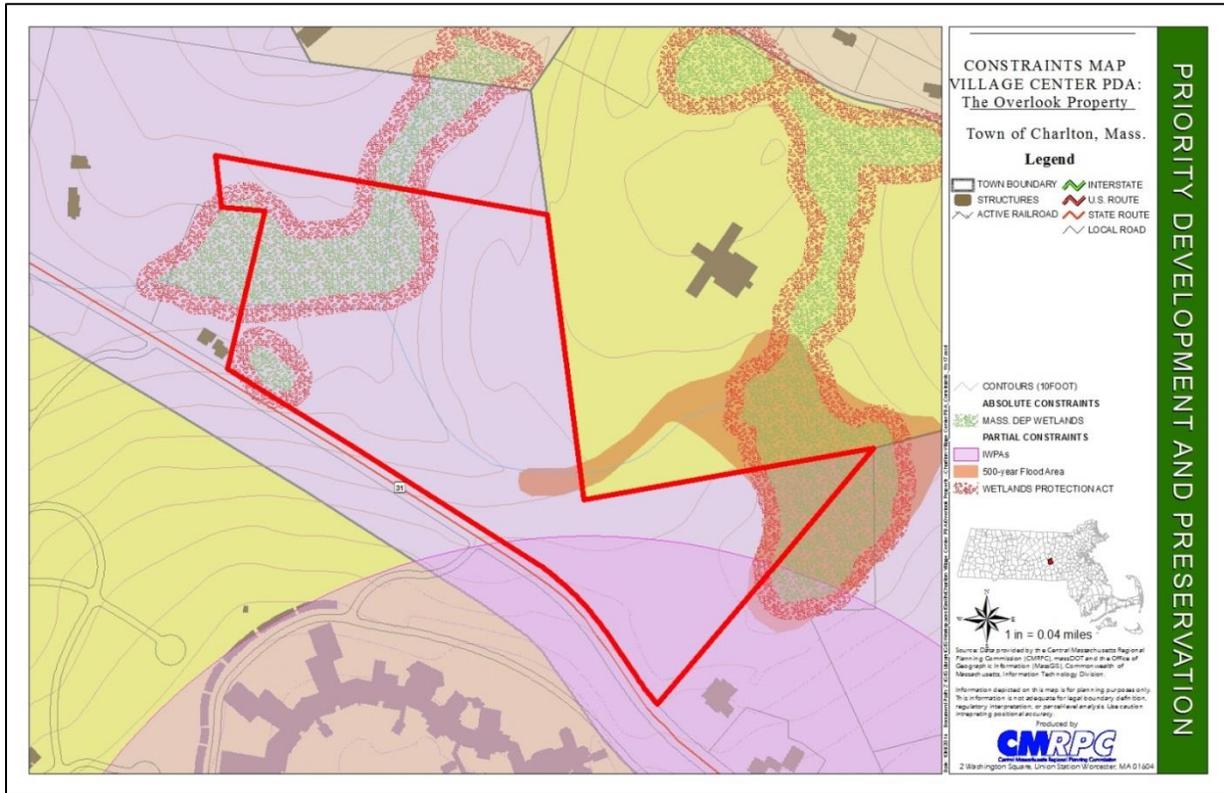


The site has potential for a small to medium mixed use development, a residential cluster development (see recommendation to allow Flexible development in the Village District on page 30) or even a senior living facilities development. CMRPC Staff notes that at the Project Workshop, participants identified a pedestrian connection opportunity that could be created to allow pedestrian access from the Church to Route 31 through the vacant Overlook parcel. This trail connection could be incorporated into any development plans and approvals.

**Map 7: The Vacant Overlook Parcel, Northside of Masonic Home Road (Route 31)**



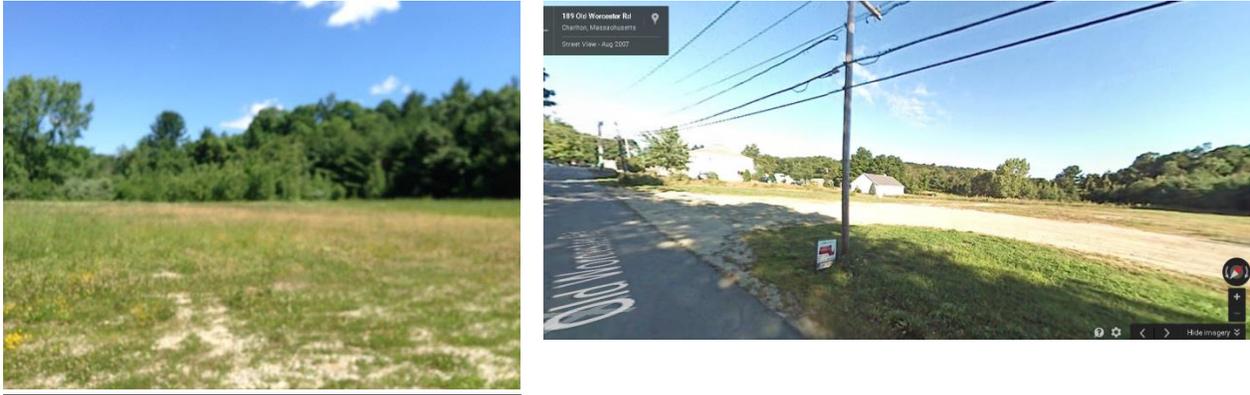
**Map 8: The Vacant Overlook Parcel – Environmental Constraints**



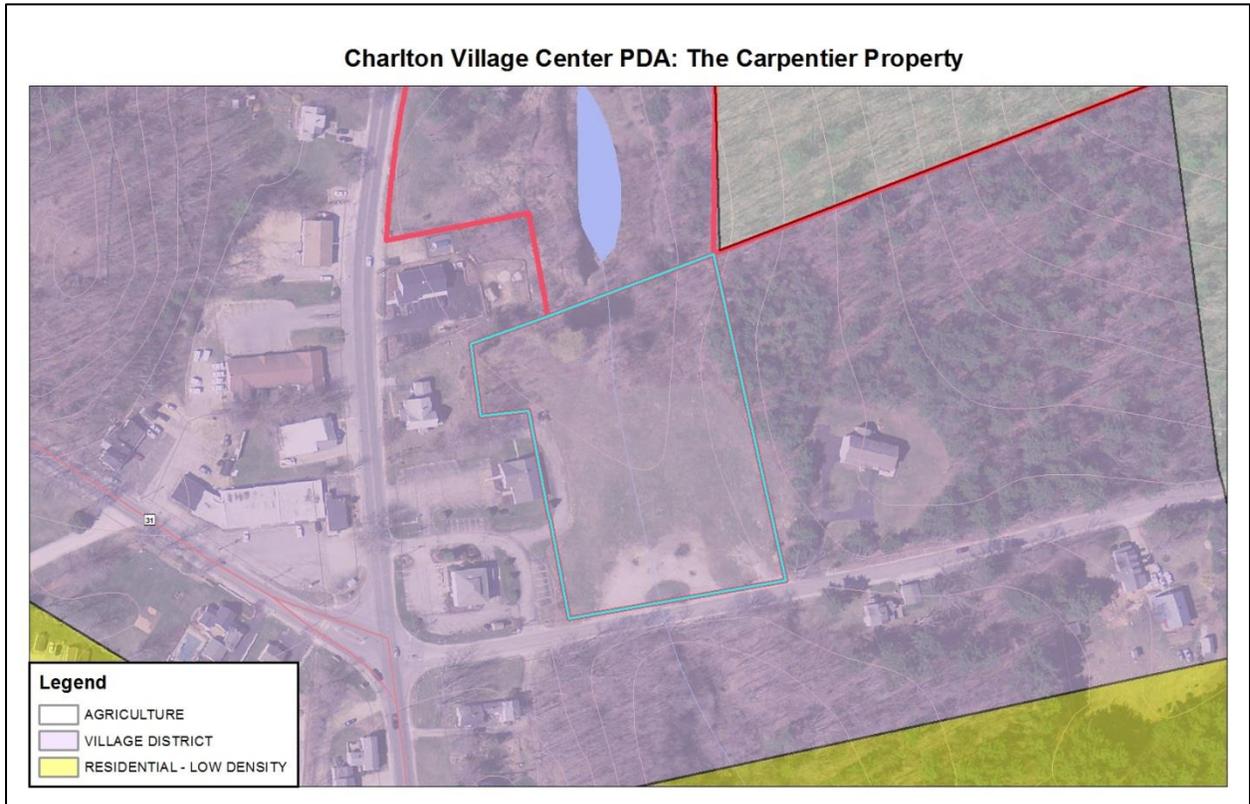
Carpentier parcel

The Carpentier undeveloped parcel is a 3.1-acre parcel that is located on the east of Route 31, with frontage off of Old Worcester Road (see Map 9 below for site location). It is identified as Parcel 35-D-27 by the Town Assessors. It is in close proximity to the Carpentier Plaza, which is the largest commercial development in the core of the Charlton Village Center. The site offers prime opportunities in the form of a mixed-use, smart-growth development. For example, the mixed-use Rutland case studies presented on pages 25 and 26 are of similar scale. The site is only about a few hundred feet from the Route 31 intersection, which represents the central core of the Charlton Village District.

Photo of vacant Carpentier parcel; Google Street View of Carpentier parcel looking towards Route 31



Map 9: The Vacant Carpentier Property



Map 10 below, which details the Environmental Resource/Constraints in the vicinity of the vacant Carpentier property, indicates a stream running through the middle of Carpentier parcel, as it leaves the Miller property to the north (the assessment on the Miller Property follows) which in the past was directed underground. According to the Conservation Agent, this past site change would not prevent future build-out of this property, but a structural engineering analysis would need to take it into account as part of the planning and permitting for any development.

**Map 10: The Carpentier Property - Environmental Constraints**



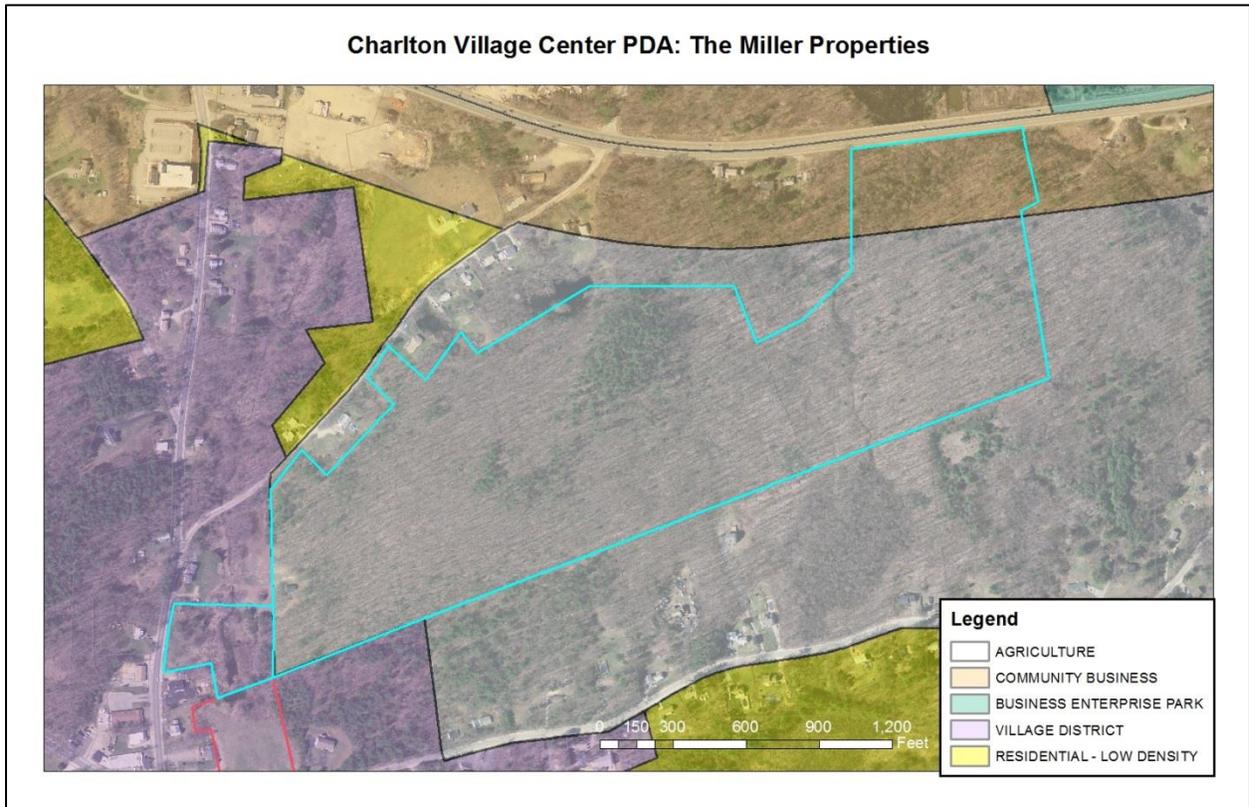
Miller Property

There are two (2) Miller family-owned properties that are part of this assessment: a larger 74.19-acre parcel (identified as Parcel 35-D-6 by the Charlton Assessors) and the smaller 3.02 parcel (identified Parcel 35-D-2.1 (3.02 acres); Map 11 on page 19 shows the location of these two parcels. The smaller Miller-owned parcel has frontage on North Main Street and is currently within the Village District. This property does have some environmental constraints, as the small stream discussed above runs through the middle of this property and there are some wetlands on the southern portion (see Map 12 on page 20). Behind this property is the larger 70+ acre Miller property. Most of this property is zoned agricultural with a small portion on the northeast included in the Community Business District.

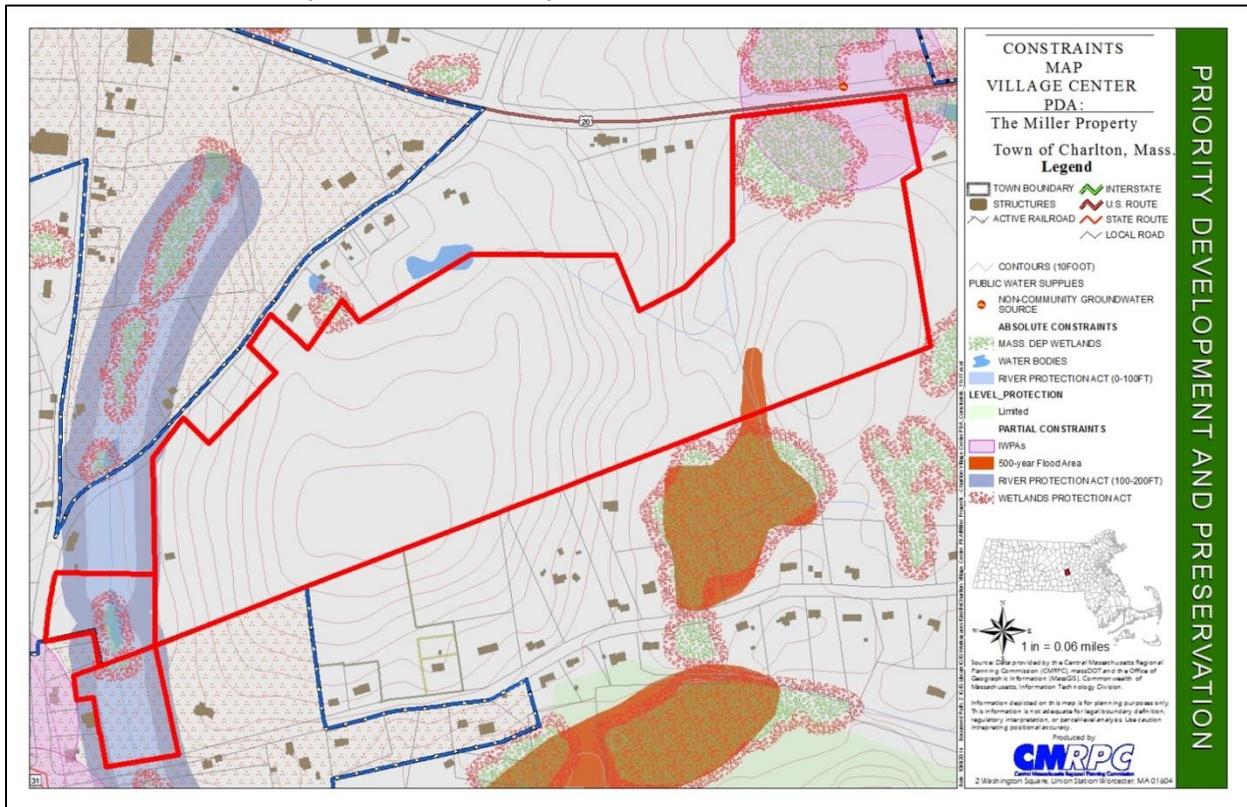
The best access to the larger Miller property is off of L. Stevens Road, which is the section that is currently zoned agricultural. The frontage of the Community Business District zoned section, although provided off of Route 20, has a significant amount of wetlands. A review of the topography indicates that the land does have some significant slopes, but there appears to be a plateau area in the center part of this property. Based on the location of the Miller parcels from the center of the Village District

(see Map 15 of the quarter mile radius on page 25), one potential use could be a Flexible Residential Development or Senior Living Facilities. CMRPC Staff does recommend that the Planning Board consider working with the property owner for rezoning the Agricultural portion to become incorporated in the Village Zoning District. Our recommendation does not include rezoning the Community Business portion.

**Map 11: The Miller Properties**



**Map 12: The Miller Properties – Environmental Constraints**

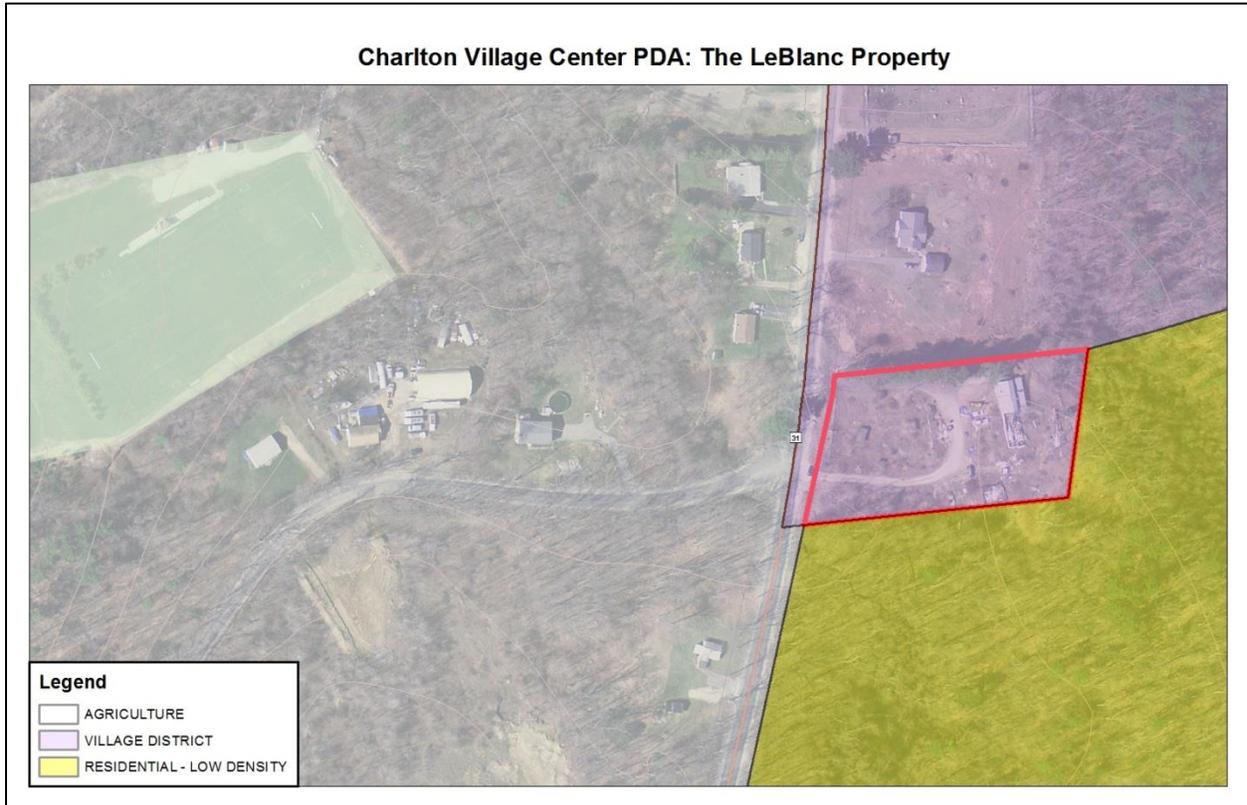


LeBlanc Property

Mr. Ken LeBlanc is the property owner of a 1.5-acre parcel at 19 Dresser Hill Road, which is identified as Parcel 42-C-7.1 by the Charlton Assessors (see Map 13 on page 21 for location information). At the beginning of this project, the Charlton Planning Director had indicated to CMRPC Staff of Mr. LeBlanc’s interest in constructing a sandwich / ice-cream shop. Mr. LeBlanc believes there is a market for such use given there are recreational ballfields across the street (the soccer field to the west of the site shows on Map 13) and also further down the street behind the library. The LeBlanc property is included in the Village District, after an expansion of the District’s boundary was approved at the May 20, 2013 Annual Town Meeting.

As part of CMRPC Staff’s assessment of the Village District PDA, we were able to provide an analysis of this lot to determine how zoning regulations would shape development of this lot. The minimum lot size of the Village District is 10,000 square feet. The property is 1.5 acres, which almost 60,000 square feet, so in theory the property could be subdivided further. Road frontage would be a limiting factor absence construction of an interior road. The frontage requirement is 75 feet in the Village District and the parcel has 200 feet of frontage. Alternately, via the Approval Not Required (ANR) subdivision process, two lots could be created.

### Map 13: The LeBlanc Property and Vicinity

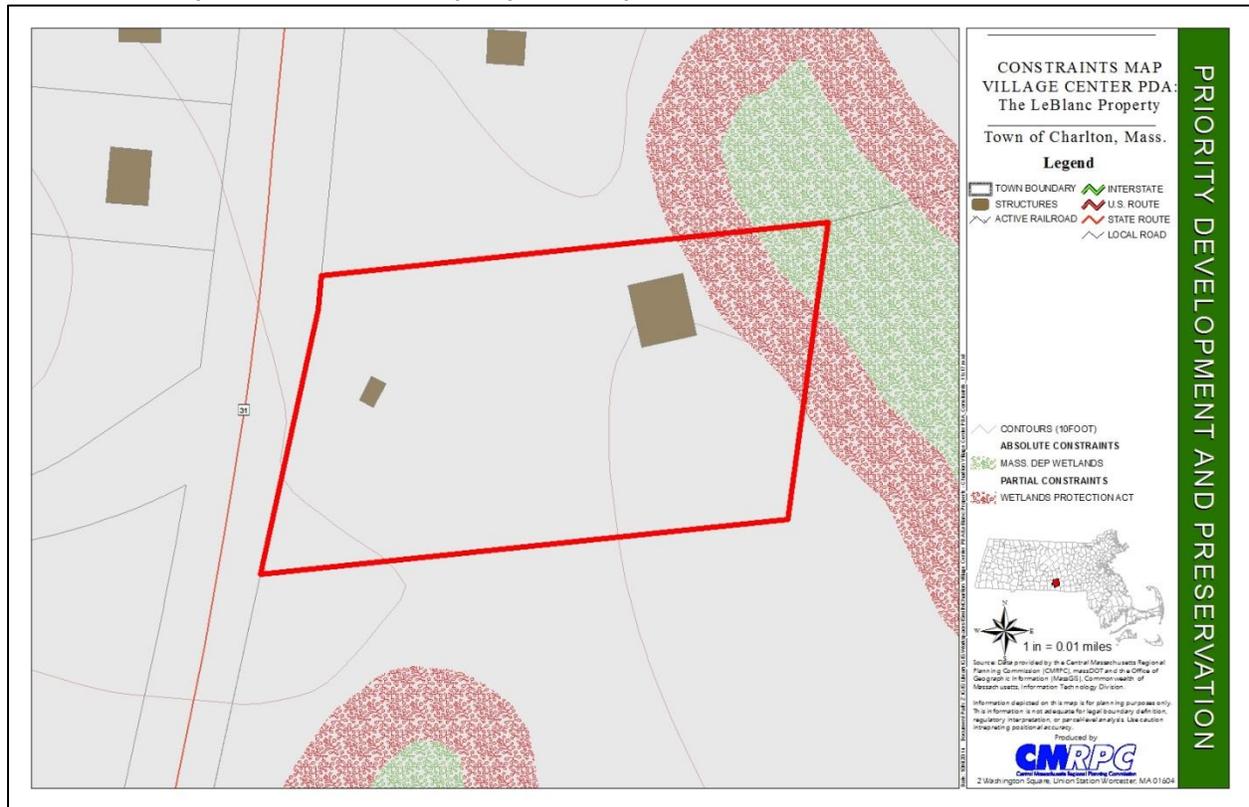


The Village District Regulations found in Section 5.17 of the Zoning Bylaw would apply to this property site. Therefore, during site plan review and approval elements as bike paths, sidewalks, landscaping and parking would be considered. There are no sidewalks outside of this property currently.

As CMRPC Staff conducted the assessment for this property, additional uses were realized that could be considered by the property owner beyond the envisioned small scale sandwich and ice-cream shop. For example, a larger scale mixed use development could be developed given the acreage and the vision of Village Center as a mixed-use environment. This could be accomplished by building residential above the restaurant or in a horizontal building pattern. CMRPC Staff and the Charlton Planning Director discussed these ideas with Mr. LeBlanc and he was open to giving these ideas further consideration.

*Building envelope drives building siting:* The zoning setbacks for the Village District governs building location opportunities, also known as potential building envelop on a lot. The minimum front yard setback is 10 feet. That dimension helps provide a village-scale environment. A property could be built deeper, however, there is the 25-foot max setback requirement of the Village District. (see Map 14 that provides the location of constraints on the following page).

**Map 14: The LeBlanc Property: Close-up View with Environmental Constraints**



Given the 60% building coverage requirement on a 1.5-acre lot, up to 39,204 square-foot area could be covered with buildings.

**Wayfinding as an Opportunity:**

An opportunity to better market businesses and activities within the Charlton Village is to help direct travelers in the area (especially on Route 20) to the Village Center by way of “Wayfinding”. Coined in 1960 by the urban planner Kevin A. Lynch, he defined the term as “a consistent use and organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment.”<sup>3</sup>

The technique of wayfinding can help direct people to Charlton Village Center. CMRPC Staff noted during work on this Project that there is no existing signage along Route 20 directing people to the Charlton Village Center. To assist communities to develop a Wayfinding program, the Commonwealth offers the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI). See more details of this program on page 31. CMRPC Staff was able to confirm from DHCD that the Town of Charlton would be eligible for this program.

Below are a series of wayfinding examples from the towns of Maynard and Hingham that used the MDI program funding to help develop a Wayfinding program. CMRPC is familiar with the Town of Maynard’s wayfinding system, as that one has been implemented. It assists the Town in directing people to the

<sup>3</sup> See “What is Wayfinding” at <https://thewayfinding.wordpress.com/what-is-wayfinding/>

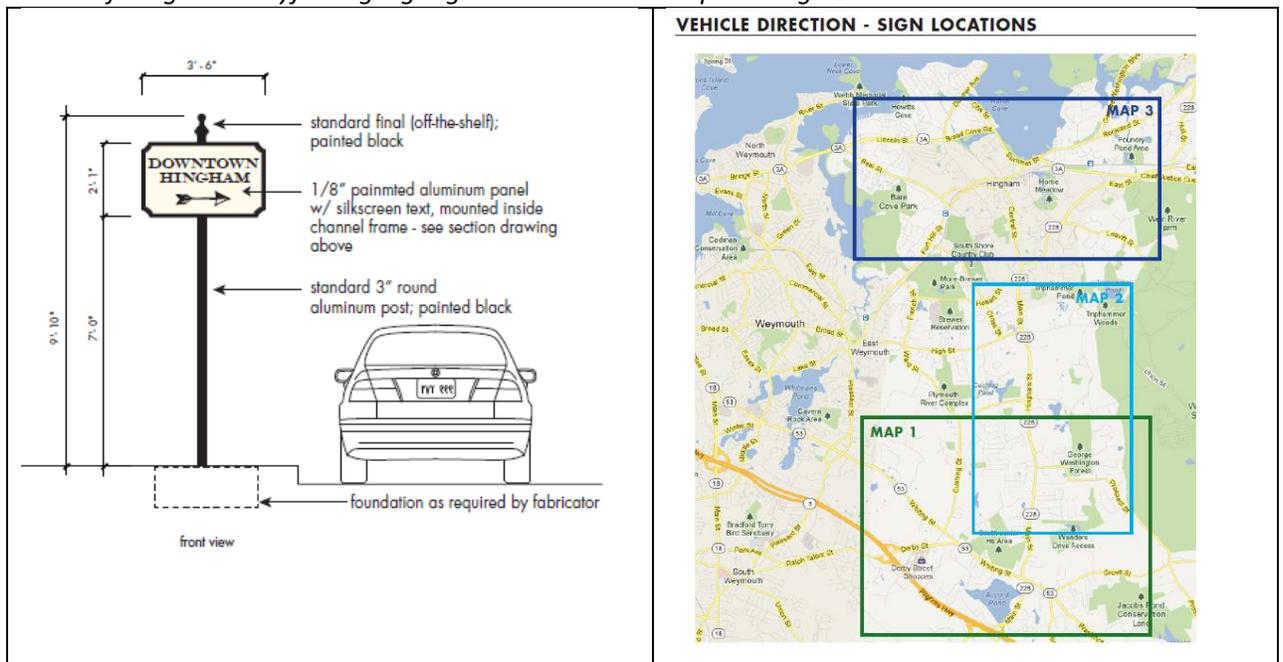
Downtown from the surrounding state numbered routes (Route 117, Route 62 and Route 27) and ultimately to the Town’s public parking areas.

*Town of Maynard’s Wayfinding Signage Plans*

*Maynard’s Wayfinding Implementation*



*Town of Hingham Wayfinding Signage Schematic and Proposed Sign Locations*



**Placemaking:** Another economic development tool that the Town can make use of for planning in the Village District is a tool known as placemaking. *“Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.”*<sup>4</sup> An important consideration to the Charlton Village Center area is the fact that *“Mixed-use compact, walkable neighborhoods are fundamental building blocks of communities with a strong sense of place”*<sup>5</sup> Development of mixed-use neighborhoods does

<sup>4</sup> Mark Wyckoff, Michigan State University  
<sup>5</sup> Robert Steuteville, Better Cities and Towns

represent an economic development opportunity for Charlton Village. There are existing placemaking elements in place: the Charlton Arts and Activities Center (CAAAC), the Town Library, Athletic Fields, and the Senior Center.

*Streetscape:* Along with walkability that is met with a continuous sidewalk network, participants in the October 2015 workshop identified streetscape issues as an important component for a welcoming, attractive Charlton Village Center. These elements include bike racks, street lights and benches. Peter Starkus, Chairman of the Planning Board, noted that the owner of Charlton Optical had installed a bench in 2014, observing it was being used all the time. Therefore there does appear to be a demand for these streetscape elements within Charlton's Village Center.

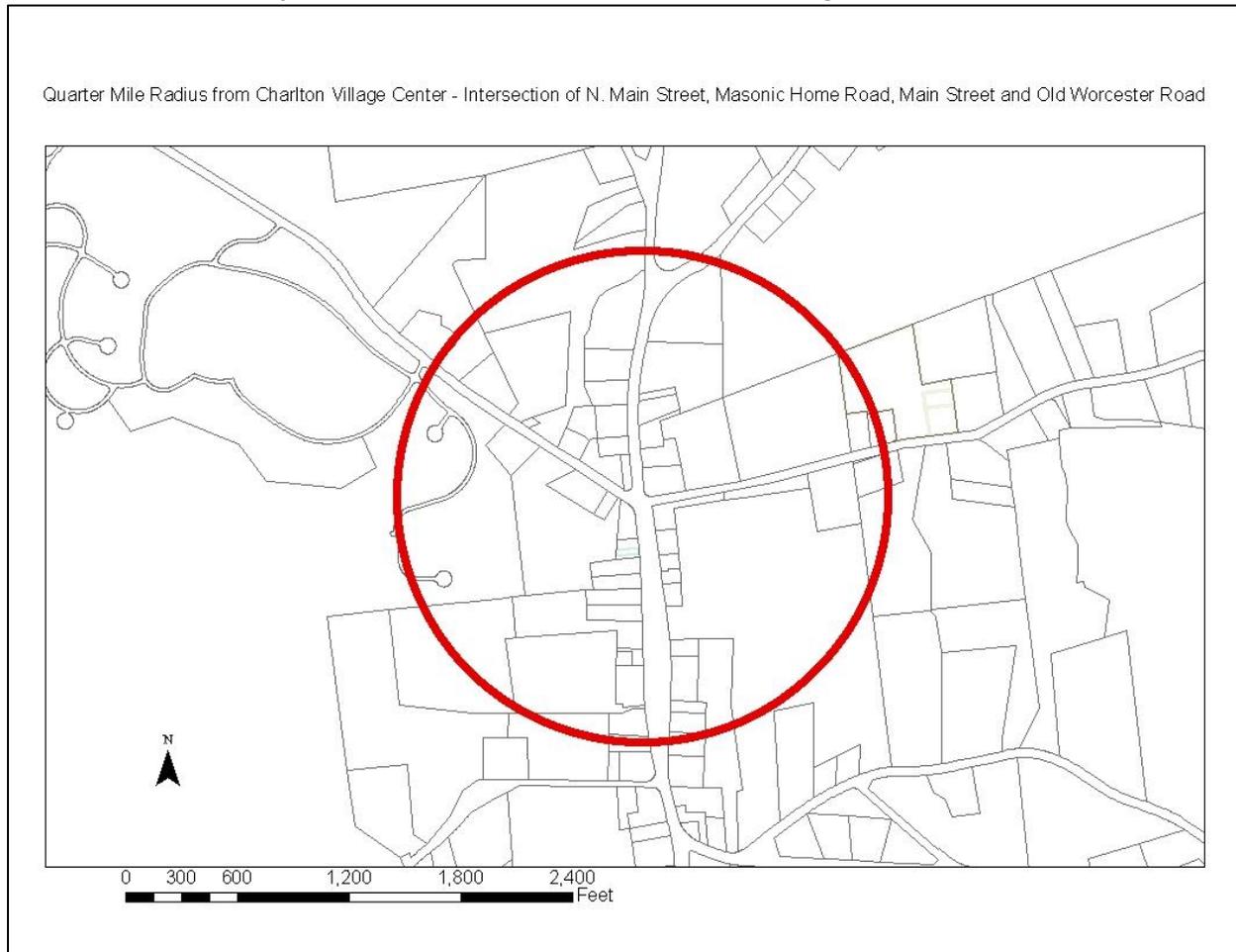
CMRPC Staff noted that streetscape elements were an important element to improve the Main Street (Route 9) corridor of the Leicester Town Center during our work on a PDA Project in 2014. We found that the Town of Leicester would need to have a more detailed Main Street (Route 9) Streetscape Plan prepared. Similar studies were done for Sturbridge's Commercial Tourist District (Route 20), which did cost in the \$100K range and the Luther's Corners Parking and Traffic Circulation Study,<sup>6</sup> which was more in the \$16K range. A detailed study in the Charlton Village area would also be able to assess where additional crosswalks could be sited. MDI does represent a potential source of funding for planning in this area as well.

Finally, CMRPC Staff note the Charlton Village district is a walkable area, notwithstanding issues we have identified in this Report. Map 15 on page 25 provides the quarter mile radius from the intersection of the intersection of North Main Street, Masonic Home Road, Main Street and Old Worcester Road. A quarter-mile equates to a five-minute walk, which is the distance most people will walk without having to resort to using their car. Note that a portion of the Miller property, the existing Overlook property and the entire vacant Carpentier parcel area all within this quarter-mile radius. The existing Overlook Hotel and Williams/Davenport buildings are just outside.

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<sup>6</sup> CMRPC Staff notes the Luther's Corners area of Seekonk was identified by a member of the Leicester Economic Development Committee during the Public Workshop. For more information, see page 13 of the Leicester Town Center Report, which is posted on CMRPC's website at: <http://www.cmrpc.org/sites/default/files/Documents/CDAP/Leicester%20Town%20Center%20PDA%20Report.pdf>

### Map 15: Quarter Mile Radius from Charlton Village Center Core



#### ***Case Studies:***

CMRPC Staff prepared three (3) mixed-use development Case Studies from other Massachusetts communities. These three (3) case studies were presented at the October 15, 2014 Public Workshop, as part of highlighting examples of Village-scale mixed use developments.

#### **Town of Rutland**

The Town of Rutland has two small scale mixed use developments within the Rutland Center Village. They were developed under the Town's Village Center and Town Center Zoning Provisions. CMRPC Staff believes these two developments, which are provided below, illustrates how development of mixed use zoning could ultimately be implemented in Charlton's Village District.

The first mixed use development in Rutland is on Route 56 (Pommogussett Road) across from the Rutland DPW and is called Colonial Village. It was built in 2004. One floor is occupied with commercial tenants such as Rutland Marketplace and GFA Federal Credit Union with condominiums located on the upper floors (access to the condo units is provided to the rear of the site). This development is located on 1.54 acres (66,908 square feet).



*Colonial Village, Route 56, Rutland*

The second mixed use development is Rutland Commons, which is located on Route 122A. This development is on 0.91 acres (39635.24 square feet). This development is just a little older, having been constructed in 2003. There is a gas station/convenience store as the anchor commercial tenant. Other commercial enterprises on the first floor are a Chinese Restaurant and a Barber Shop. The residential units are located on the upper floors. There is shared parking found on the sides of the building.



*Rutland Commons, Route 122A, Rutland*

Both of the Rutland projects are at a comparable scale to how the Carpentier and LeBlanc properties could be developed.

Berlin: Riverbridge Mixed-Use Development

Located north of the Solomon Pond Mall, the Town of Berlin permitted a large scale mixed-use development known as Riverbridge. Today the site remains mostly undeveloped but the concept could provide a model for some of the larger vacant parcels in the Charlton Village District, such as the vacant Overlook and Miller parcels. A gas station with a pizza parlor and Dunkin Donuts has been built as well as a small retail building (see below). In 2015, construction of a hotel is anticipated. But the mixed use residential portion development has not proceeded.



*Riverbridge Site Plan*



*Design is an important component to the Riverbridge development; Existing view of River Road*

Shelburne Falls

At the September 2015 Project Kick-off Session held at the Charlton Planning Board meeting, the Board members noted the example of Shelburne Falls as an attractive community that displays a walkable Village Center environment. Shelburne Falls has been able to draw people from well outside their region with attractions such as The Bridge of Flowers and Glacial Potholes. A community closer to home Putnam, CT, has also been successful in redeveloping their downtown area and CMRPC Staff has recently learned that their efforts have paid off so well that parking availability has now become a challenge in Downtown Putnam.



*Images of Downtown Shelburne Falls in Western Massachusetts*

Recommendations and Next Steps

General

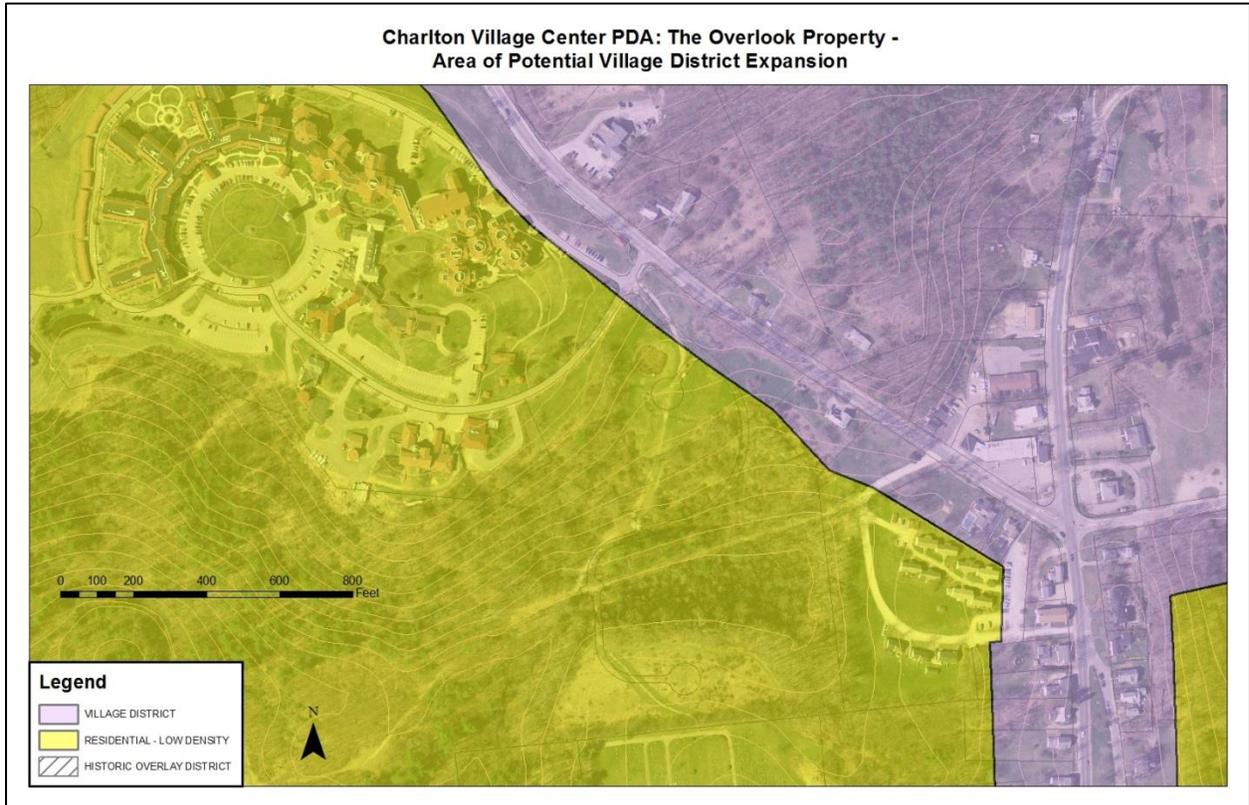
- The Charlton Planning Board should submit a formal request to CMRPC to have the Village District PDA boundaries coincide with the Village District Zoning District boundary as opposed to the Historic District boundaries.

Zoning-Related

Zoning change options for expansion of the Village District:

- Rezone all or a portion of the Miller property that is now Agricultural zoned into the Village District. This rezoning effort would not rezone that portion of the property along Route 20 that is included in the Community Business Zoning District.
- Rezone all or a portion of the St. Joseph’s Church property, which abuts the vacant Overlook property located across the street from Masonic home, into the Village District. The St. Joseph’s Church property is currently R-40 (Low Density Residential). CMRPC’s assessment of the vacant Overlook property indicated that there is a buildable area of the Overlook property that goes right onto the Church parcel.
- Rezone all or a portion of The Overlook Charlton Masonic Home property that includes the Overlook Hotel and the Davenport and Williams Buildings. Representatives of Overlook/Masonic Healthcare had indicated their support of the Village District expansion on that portion of the Overlook property. By having the Williams and Davenport Buildings and the existing hotel building in the Village District, Overlook believes there would be better re-use opportunities and would give them more flexibility. A restaurant at the old hotel was one potential idea discussed during a December 2014 Site Visit. Map 16 below shows this location and the current zoning compared to location of the Village District.
- When the Town works on the rezoning of the Village Center to include the above parcels, it should also include the Town-owned Charlton Arts and Activities Center (CAAAC) Property (see photo below). Currently on the west side of Main Street, south of Burlingame Road, the zoning is R-40.

**Map 16: The Overlook Property in Area of Potential Village District Expansion**



*The Charlton Arts and Activities Center, located at 4 Dresser Hill Road, which is Town-owned property.*



Zoning bylaw revision options for the Planning Board's consideration:

- Amend the agricultural greenhouse-related use in the Village District to be allowed subject to site plan review and approval versus by-right (The Town should also review that by-right accessory structure provision that includes greenhouse in it).
- Change the “dry cleaning and laundromat use” to be allowed subject to site plan review and approval. Currently such use is lumped into the larger “Personal and consumer services establishments” category, which allows the following set of related uses by-right: “barber shops, shoe and leather repair, beauty shops, and laundry or dry cleaning establishments and laundromats.” CMRPC Staff recommends that the Planning Board consider moving the “*laundry or dry cleaning establishments and laundromats*” use into its own use category. Our rationale for this approach is to provide for this use to be allowed in the Village District subject to a site plan review and approval in order for the Planning Board to review design and scale considerations of this use in the Village District.
- Currently a prohibited use, CMRPC Staff recommends the Planning Board amend the use provision of “Auction Houses” changing this use to be allowed subject to Planning Board Special Permit in the Village District. Having the use allowed subject to Special Permit would allow auction houses to be tastefully designed and to help make the Village District a destination. Such use can be related to art galleries and the various cultural activities offered at the Charlton Arts and Activities Center (CAAAC).
- CMRPC Staff recommends the Planning Board change the zoning bylaw to allow Flexible Developments in the Village District with appropriate based dimensional requirements. The Miller property and perhaps also the Overlook’s vacant parcel are candidates for this type of development.

As part of CMRPC Staff’s assessment looking at expansion of the Village District, CMRPC had assessed the land behind Town Hall to be included within the Village District. Currently such lands are zoned R-40 in the back of Town Hall, as the Village District depth is not as deep on this side of Main Street as initially thought at the beginning of this Project. The Town-owned parcel behind Town Hall is a 3.25-acre parcel listed as owned by “Town of Charlton - Recreation Soccer.” Behind that parcel is larger 29.33 acre parcel, owned by “Fennessey Francis B.” with property address of 27 Main Street (Fennessey has a dwelling unit on the Main Street frontage); Access to that rear Town-owned parcel is from corner of Old Muggett Hill Road and the Muggett Hill Road intersection.

There are wetland issues potentially with such access, or at least be located in the wetlands buffer. Therefore, CMRPC does not recommend zoning change of this area to the Village District at this time. However, the idea of having a Mid-State Trail connection to the Charlton Village District could explore potential routing in this area.

***Potential grant and funding resources to assist with implementation***

Below are a number of state, federal, non-profit, and regional potential grant and funding sources that could assist with implementation. CMRPC Staff provides these as they represent tools in a “planning toolbox” that can be utilized for further planning and/or implementation of the opportunities and recommendations provided in this Village District PDA Report.

CMRPC-related Resources

DLTA funds will be available in 2015, which can offer the opportunity for CMRPC Staff to build on the work in this Charlton Village District PDA Assessment. CMRPC could also assist the Planning Board with

an analysis of the Town's other PDAs. The Planning Board can also make use of its LPA funds in FY 2016 to fund work in any of these areas.

CMRPC Transportation Staff may be able to help with some of the Complete Streets and/or streetscape-related planning components along roadways within the Charlton Village Center District PDA. Contact Mary Ellen Blunt, Program Manager, at (p) 508-459-3337 or email @ [mblunt@cmrpc.org](mailto:mblunt@cmrpc.org).

#### State-related Resources:

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

The deadline has passed for the FY '15 round of funding (December 4, 2014 was the deadline). Hopefully the program will continue as it represents a potential funding source for assistance of the wayfinding initiative needed to help direct folks to the Charlton Center Village. The State makes use of Selbert Perkins Design Collaborative, a consulting firm experienced in wayfinding programming and signage design. Other eligible projects of interest, based on results of this assessment would include assistance on concepts for streetscape design and also parking management.

For more information: <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html>. DHCD Staff Contact: Emmy Hahn, Program Coordinator/MDI, at 617-573-1364 or [elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us](mailto:elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us)

- MassDevelopment: MassDevelopment offers a commercial loan program, which could assist residents and developers looking to develop and/or redevelop property within the Village District. Information about the program as a whole can be found at: <http://www.massdevelopment.com/financing/loans-guarantees/>

Two particular programs of interest include predevelopment loans and real estate loans:

- Predevelopment loans can be used to finance early stage project costs, such as architectural and engineering work or traffic and feasibility studies, which are necessary to advance a project to the construction stage. MassDevelopment's predevelopment loan program offers loans up to \$100,000 and deferred interest payments. The borrower is required to provide a 50% match for MassDevelopment loan funds.  
For more information: <http://www.massdevelopment.com/financing/loans-guarantees/predevelopment-loans/>
- Real estate loans can be used to fund facility acquisition, renovation, construction, and permanent financing. MassDevelopment real estate loan program offers: loans or bank loan participations up to \$5,000,000; construction loans, usually made in partnership with another lender, and permanent financing loans. Project types can be multi-tenant, mixed use, commercial, or industrial.

For more information: <http://www.massdevelopment.com/financing/loans-guarantees/real-estate-loans/>

- **Transportation-related resources for sidewalk improvements:**

- Chapter 90 funds. Most communities and their residents are familiar with Chapter 90 funds that are provided by the Commonwealth to communities for road improvements. According to the MassDOT website: “The Chapter 90 Program was enacted on March 23, 1973, by vote of the Public Works Commission to entitle Municipalities to reimbursement of documented expenditures under the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 34, Clause 2(a) on approved Projects. The Funds provided from Transportation Bond Issues authorizes such Capital Improvement Projects for Highway Construction, Preservation and Improvement Projects that create or extend the life of Capital Facilities and is a 100% reimbursable program.”

Given the conditions of many local roads, many Massachusetts cities and towns have hard time keeping up with local road maintenance, even with their annual Chapter 90 allotment (according to the Chapter 90 program website, the Town of Charlton allotment of Chapter 90 funds in FY 2015 is \$956,403), so funding for sidewalks is something they have not either thought of or just have not considered a priority versus the existing roadway construction and maintenance needs.

CMRPC Staff has learned that the Town can make use of its own Chapter 90 funds for sidewalk construction and repairs, as sidewalks are an eligible use of Chapter 90 funds (Two examples of communities that do are: the Town of Ashburnham, which has had a sidewalk account to help with sidewalk maintenance in Ashburnham Village Center and South Ashburnham Village; The City of Worcester does something similar).

For more information about the Chapter 90 program visit the following website: <http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/stateaid01a&sid=about>

- The new Complete Streets Certification Program. The 2014 Transportation Bond Bill (Chapter 79 of the Acts of 2014) included a new program entitled the “Complete Streets Certification Program.” The program was established to encourage municipalities to regularly and routinely include complete streets design elements and infrastructure in locally-funded roads. The Certification Program is codified within MGL Chapter 90I. Pursuant to Chapter 90I, based on \$50 million in funding authorization from the 2014 Bond Bill, there shall be funding disbursed in the form of grants to certified cities and towns for infrastructure and planning.

There are five (5) eligibility criteria that make up the requirements for a community to be certified:

1. Local Policy: The Town would need to adopt a Complete Streets Policy, which maybe a by-law or administrative policy. CMRPC Staff can provide the Town with sample policies upon request.
2. Baseline inventory: The Town will need to coordinate with MassDOT to confirm baseline inventory of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in order to identify priority projects. The sidewalk inventory and pedestrian counts that were included within this Report could be utilized

in this step. The Town can also utilize the information contained in this PDA Report to assist in prioritizing needs.

3. Procedures to incorporate into routine road work. The Town would need to develop procedures to follow when conducting municipal road repairs, upgrades or expansion projects in order to incorporate complete street elements.
4. Review process for private development. This step requires communities to establish a review process for private development proposals in order to ensure provisions of complete streets. The Town's sidewalk requirements as part the Pedestrian Amenities required for projects in the Village District (See Section 5.17.3.2 of the Zoning Bylaw) is an example of such a process.
5. Mode Share Goal: The Town would need to set a five-year municipal mode shift goal.

It is expected there will be an initial application and then annual progress reports. A draft timeline for this new program was prepared in November 2014. The official funding eligibility criteria were expected to be available around March 1, 2015. Program guidance and application materials scheduled for Spring 2015. The first round of new projects would have an application deadline over the Summer of 2015 with subsequent selection of the first round of projects. CMRPC Staff could be a resource for the Town of Charlton in the planning phase of this program.

**Housing development related:** The Chapter 40R program. According to the Chapter 40R website: *"The Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act, Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004, codified as M.G.L. chapter 40R (the Act), encourages communities to create dense residential or mixed-use smart growth zoning districts, including a high percentage of affordable housing units, to be located near transit stations, in areas of concentrated development such as existing city and town centers, and in other highly suitable locations. Projects must be developable under the community's smart growth zoning adopted under Chapter 40R, either as-of-right or through a limited plan review process akin to site plan review. Upon state review and approval of a local overlay district, communities become eligible for payments from a Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund, as well as other financial incentives."* For more information visit the Chapter 40R program website: <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/chapter-40-r.html> . Staff contact: William Reyelt at 617-573-1355, or [William.Reyelt@State.MA.US](mailto:William.Reyelt@State.MA.US).

#### **Federal Resources:**

Historic District Tax Credits: Given that most of the Charlton Village District PDA is included in within the Charlton Village National Register Historic District, property owners can get a financial benefit in the form of tax credits for property rehabilitation (see the following link for additional information: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>).

Quinebaug & Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor: The Corridor program could provide assistance in the marketing of Charlton Village Center. The National Heritage Corridor program occasionally has grant programs that could assist in implementation of wayfinding signage. See the following link for additional information: <http://www.nps.gov/qush/index.htm>.

Related to the Quinebaug & Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor is "The Last Green Valley". The Last Green Valley is a member-supported, non-profit stewardship organization and could assist the Town of Charlton in promotion of Charlton Village Center and help build heritage tourism. See the following link for additional information: <http://thelastgreenvalley.org/>

*Private Resources:*

Southbridge Savings Bank: For commercial property rehabilitation and development/redevelopment within the Charlton Village Center, the Southbridge Savings Bank represents a second funding and financing source. Representatives of Southbridge Savings Bank have participated in this Village District planning project and have expressed an interest in the bank making available financing resources to District property owners and development entities interested in implementing Village District development opportunities. No specific program has been created at the moment. They could design a project upon further discussions with the Town of Charlton; but the Bank has offered to help Village in any way. Such assistance could include financing proposals, expanding existing businesses and construction loans.

See the following link for additional information: <http://www.southbridgesavingsbank.com/> Contact persons: Ronald H. Cooper, Vice President, Commercial Lending & Services Officer; Sabrina Webb, Charlton Branch Manager, 508-248-7323.