



Westborough Public Library

Geography to Somewhere; Westborough's Place in History

Guides:

R. Christopher Noonan, Historic Preservationist / Historic Real Estate Specialist

Luanne Crosby, Troubadour/Songwriter/Singer

Guest Speaker:

Sean McDonald, Ph.D. Professor of Economic Geography, Bentley University

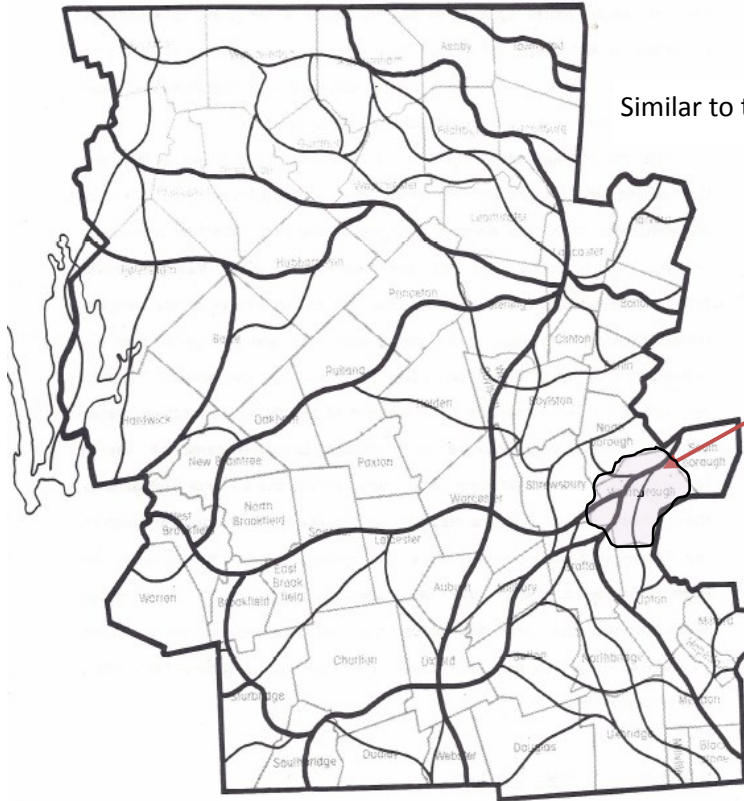
Pop-up Visit! Elsie Kaye Glassworks, 3 Union St. w/ Artist-Owner Holly Kenny

October 2018



For further or follow-up information regarding this tour, contact rcn@preserve-inc.com / 508-473-4884

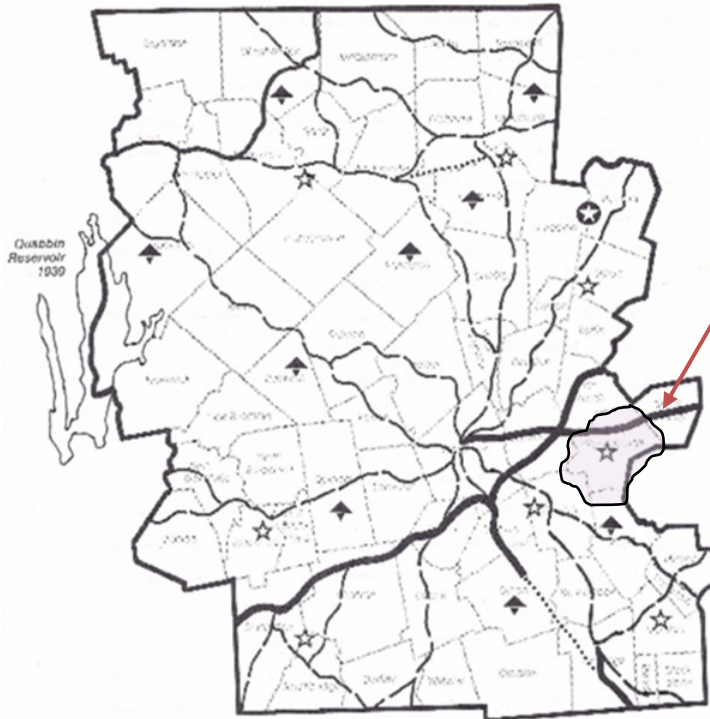
Contact and Plantation Period Trails



Similar to the Colonial Period Road Network

Route 30 today

Early Modern Period Highways, Airfields and Recreation Areas

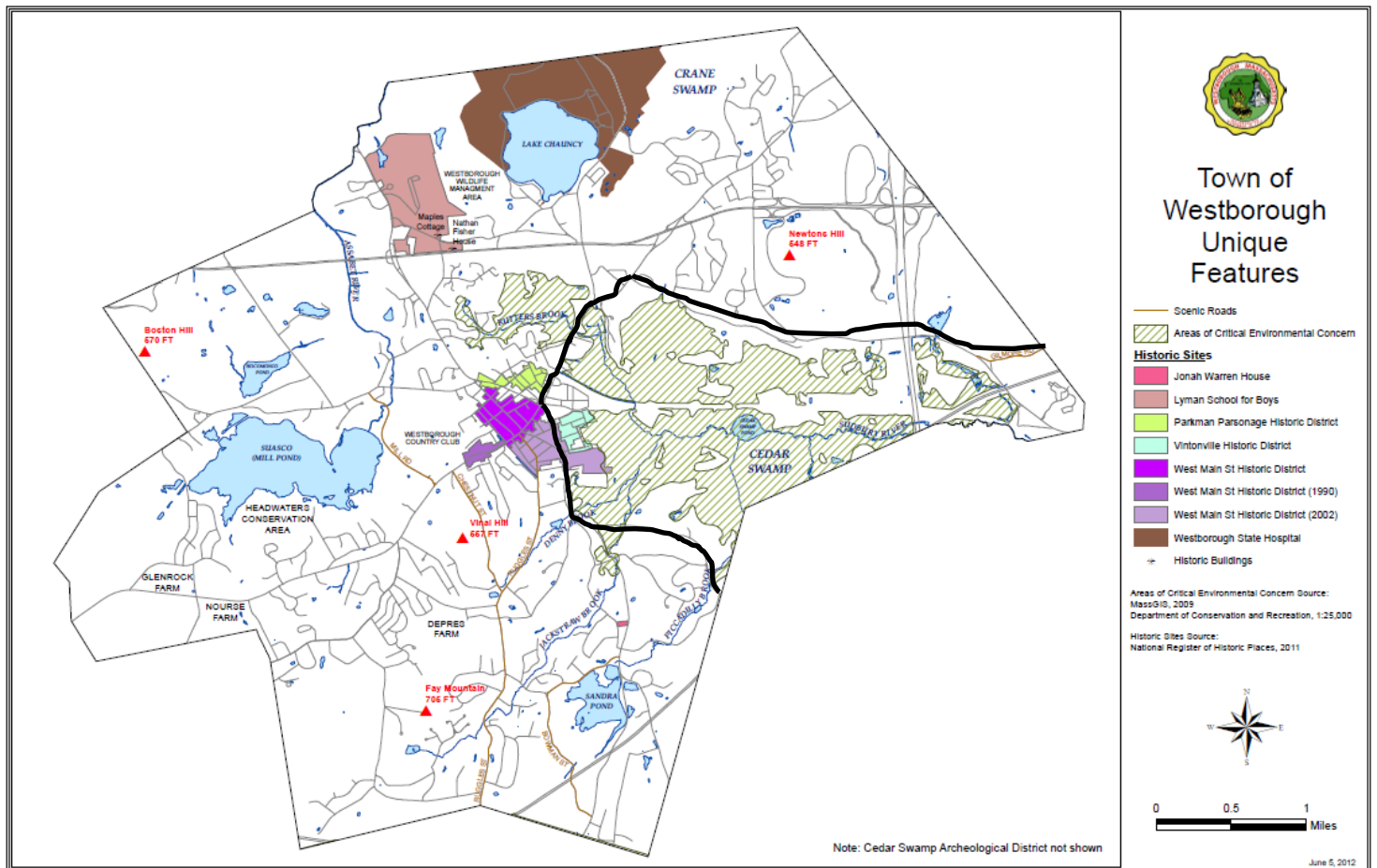


Route 9 "Express Highway" 1940

- Federal highway
- - - State highway
- Express highway
- projected route
- ☆ Airfield
- ◆ State forest or reservation
- ⊛ Military base

Economic Geography—Physical Environment

Cedar Swamp



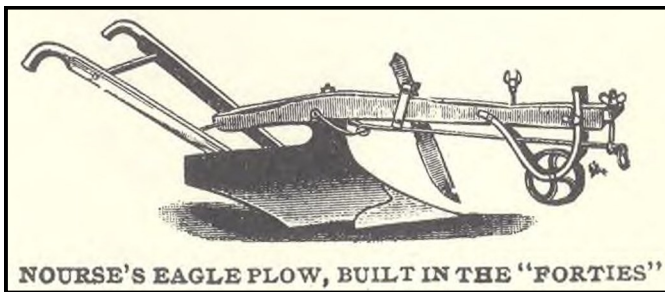


Map: 1830 Nahum Fisher



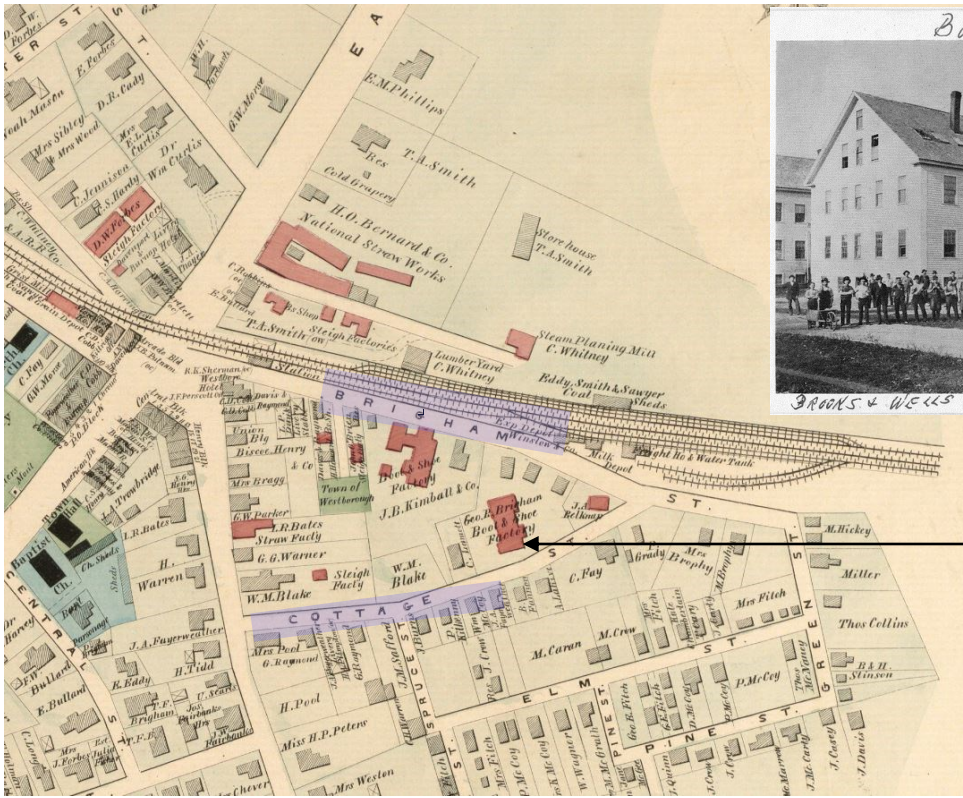
Map: 1857 Henry F. Walling

Economic Geography—Cultural Environment

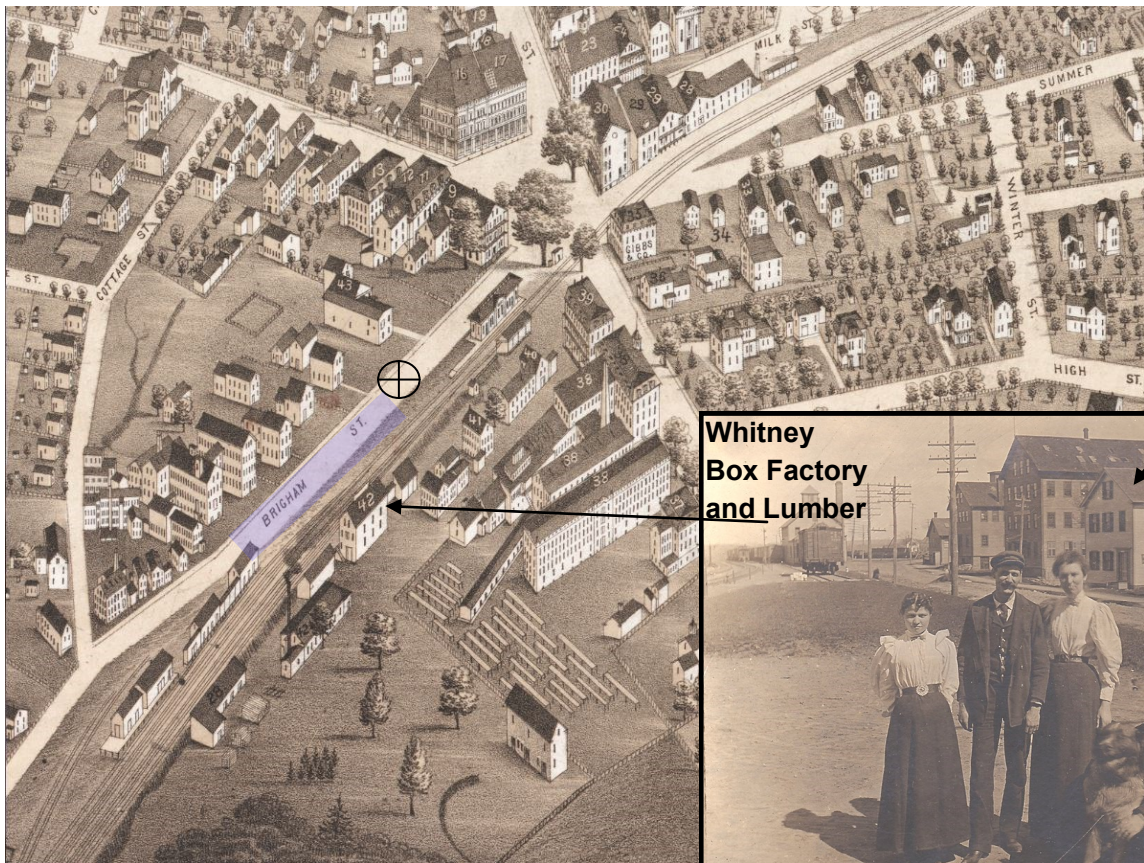


**Plow invented at Nourse Farm
and can be seen in the
Smithsonian Institute
in Washington D.C.**

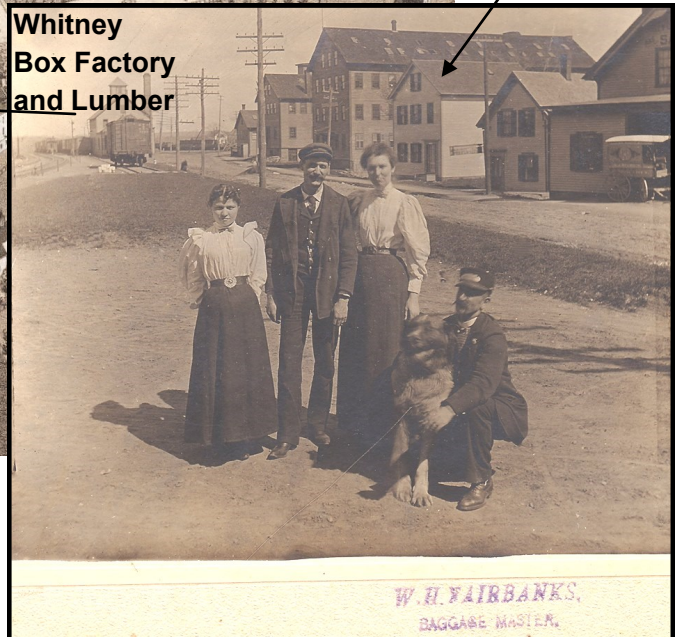




Map: 1878 George H. Walker

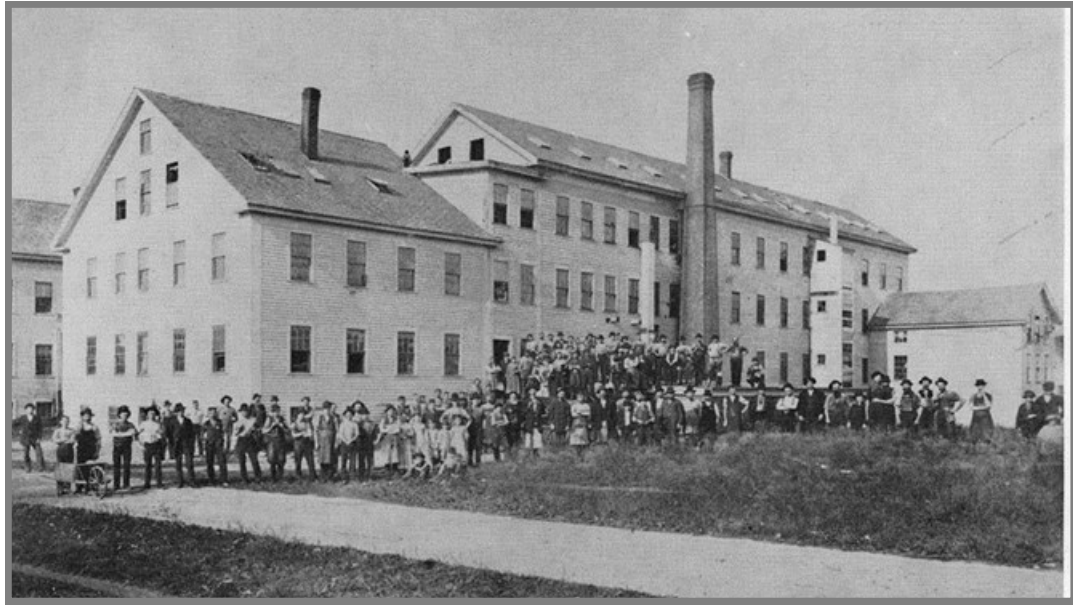


17 Brigham St.



Map: 1880 O. H. Bigelow

19th Century Manufacturing District



George E. Brigham Factory Boot and Shoe factory, 1860—1900
adjacent to J.B. Kimball and Company Boot and Shoe shop (see 1878 George H Walker Map)

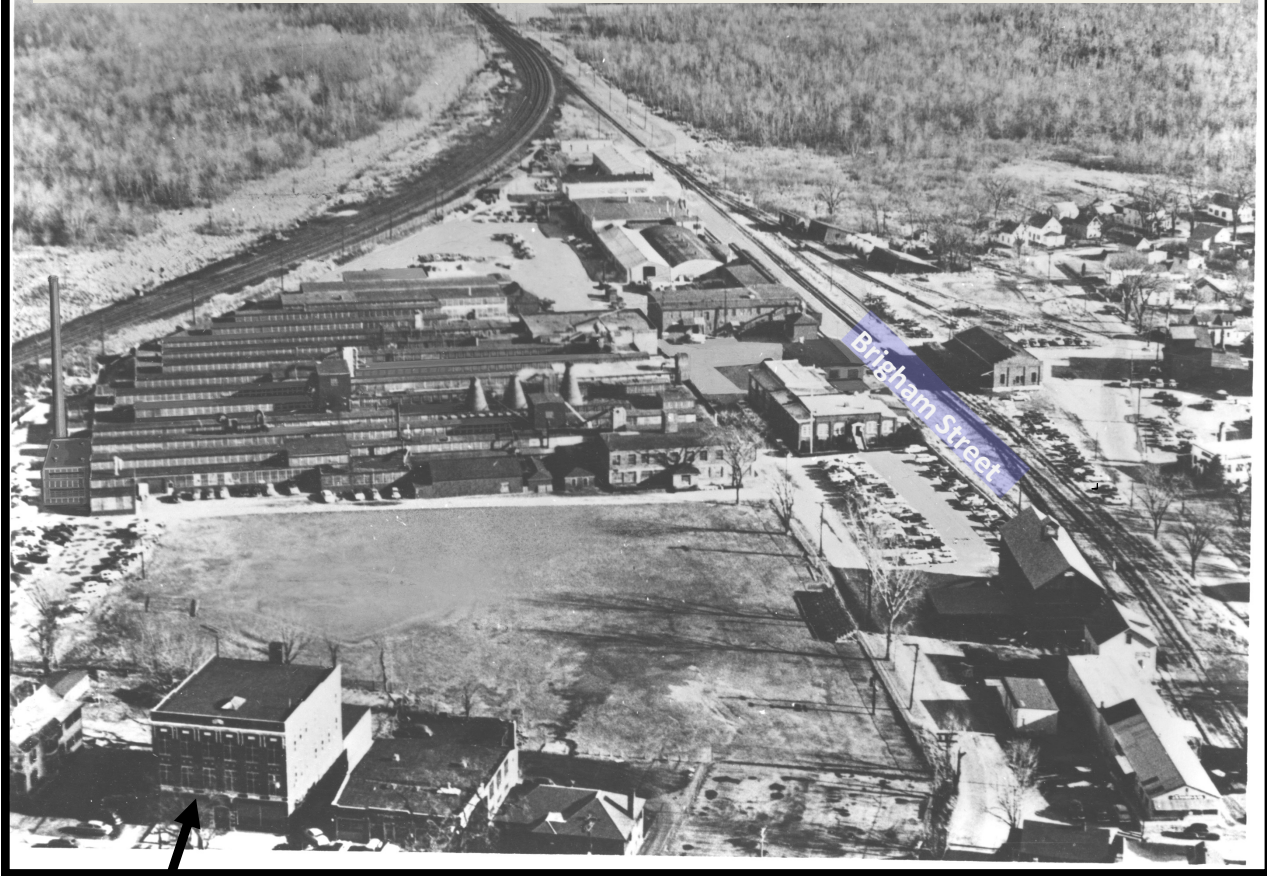


Bartlett Box and Lumber Factory, 1870's (Whitney/Bartlett family)
Clapboards, shingles, lathe for building construction
(absorbed by Bay State Abrasives in the 1920s)



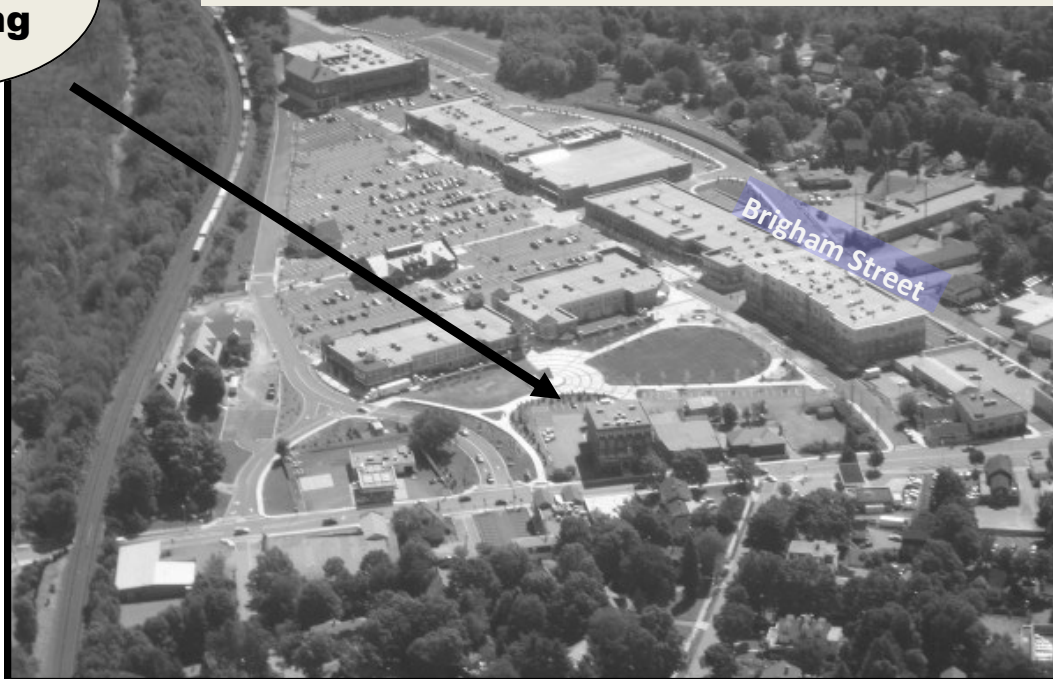
Bartlett Box and Lumber
Factory Workers, 1890's

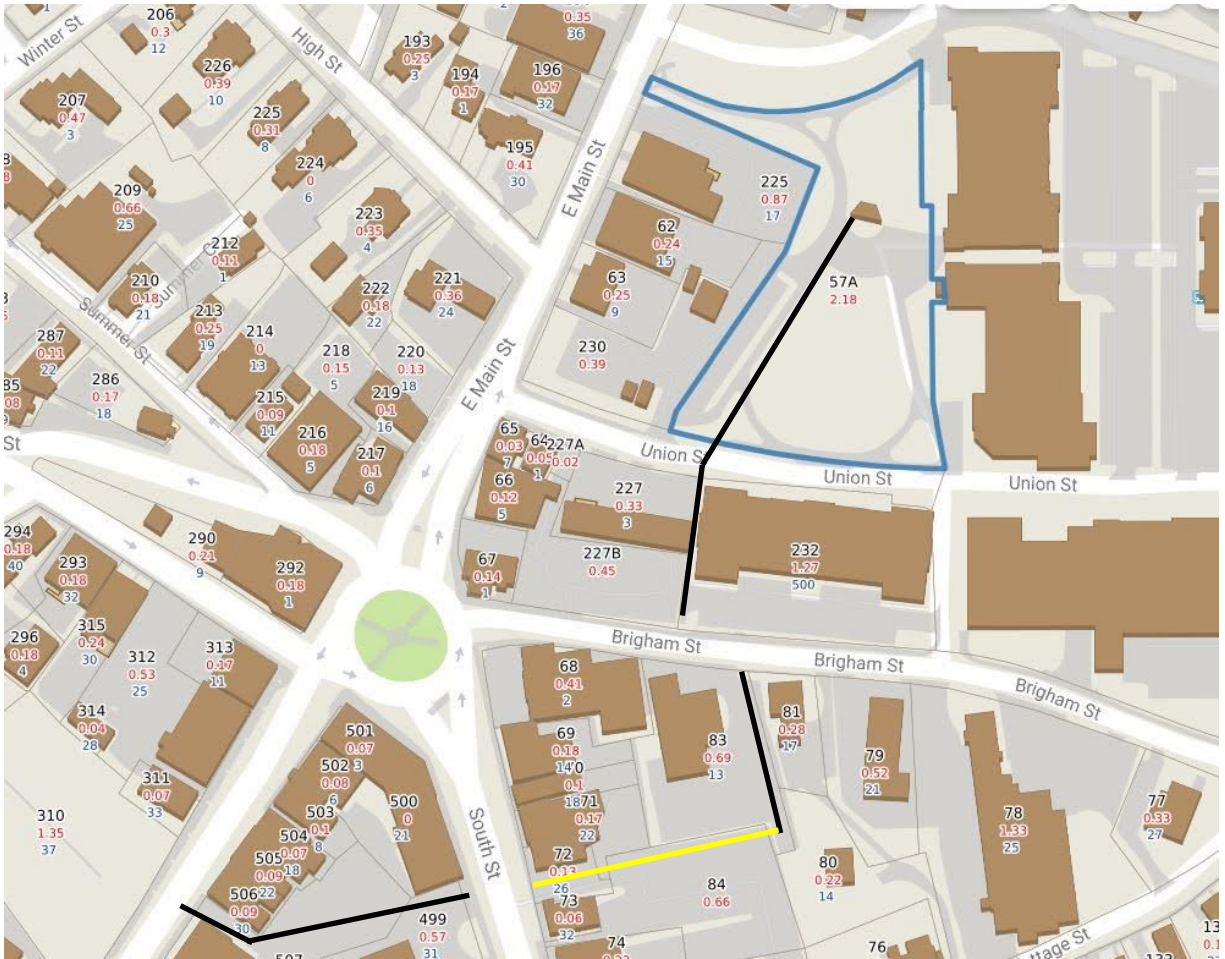
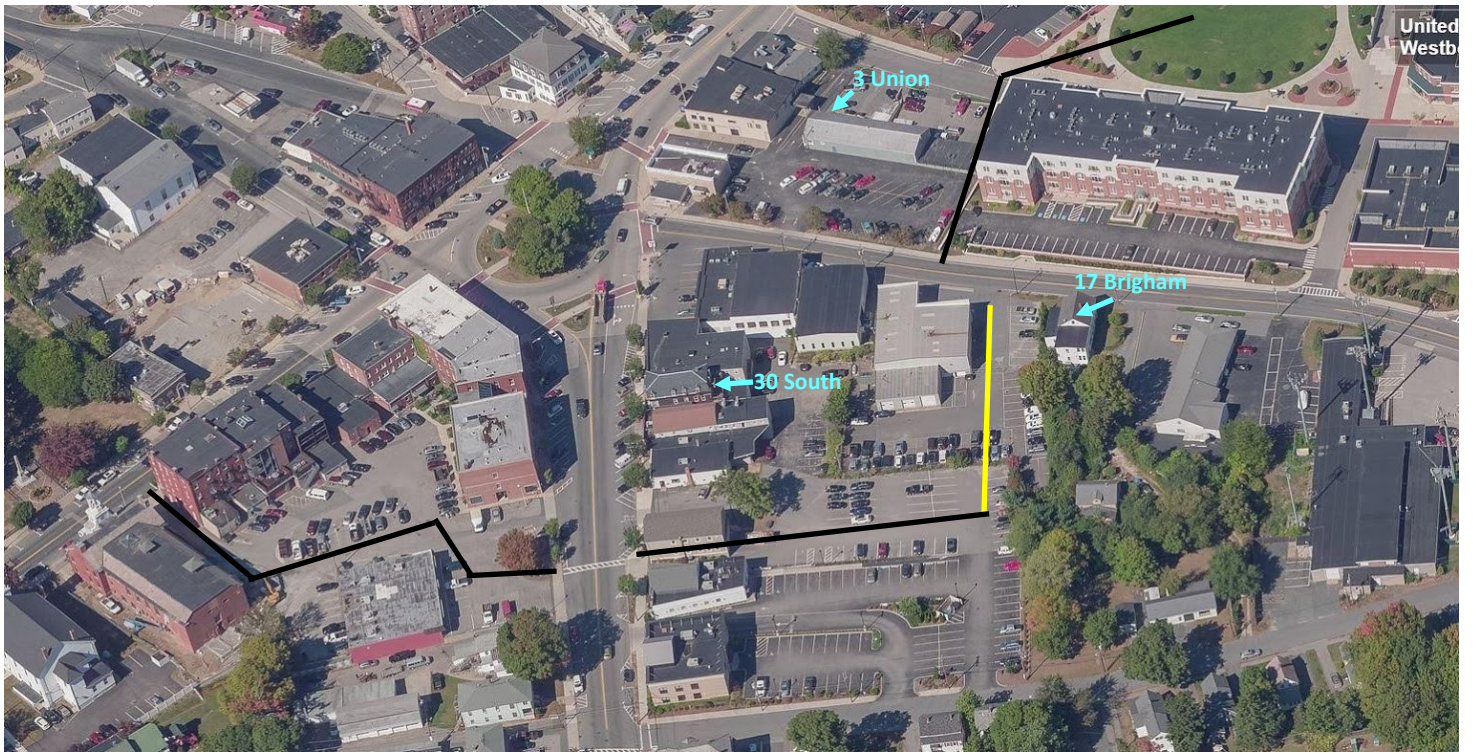
Bay State Abrasives Company—Founded 1922

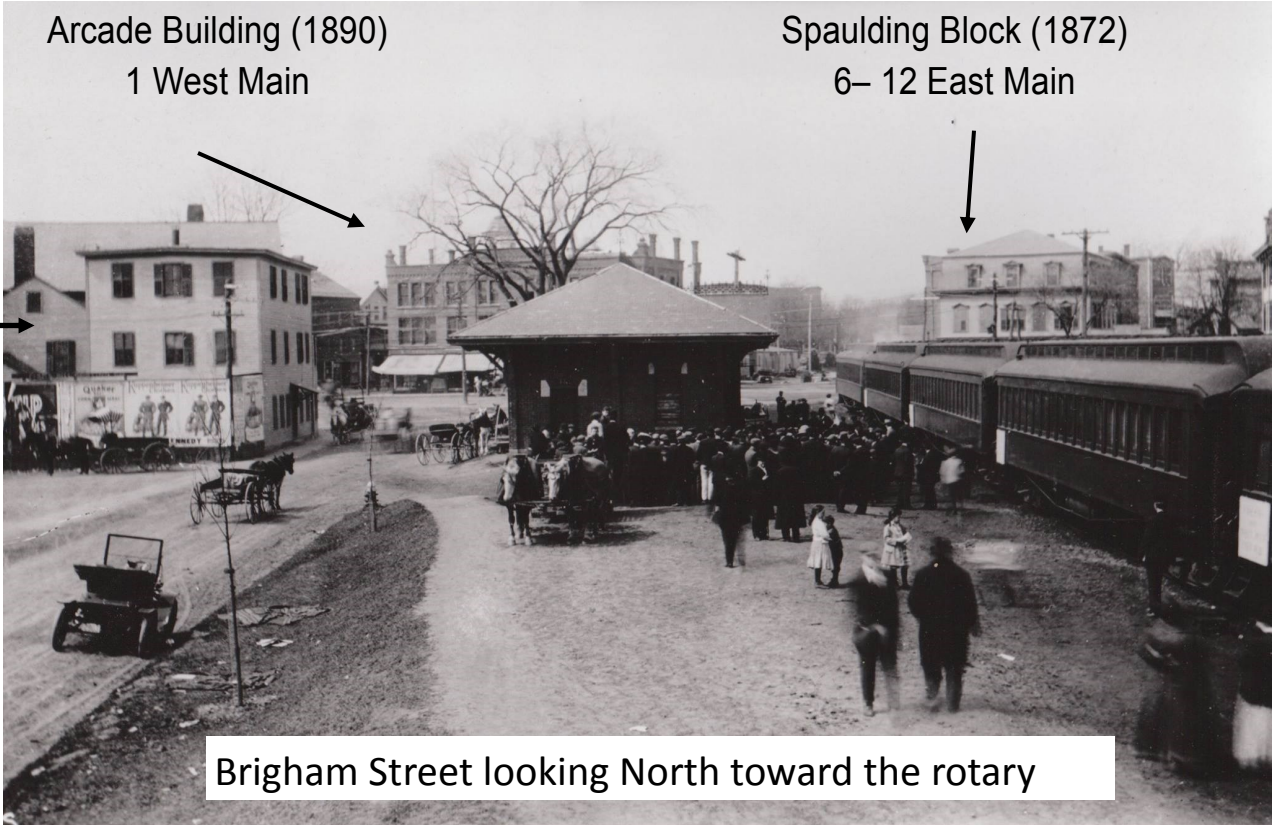


**Keating
Building**

Bay State Commons— opened 2007







Arcade Building (1890)
1 West Main

Spaulding Block (1872)
6- 12 East Main

Brigham Street looking North toward the rotary



Memorial Circle and Post Office, Westborough, Mass.

1 E. Main (old Post Office)
circa 1928

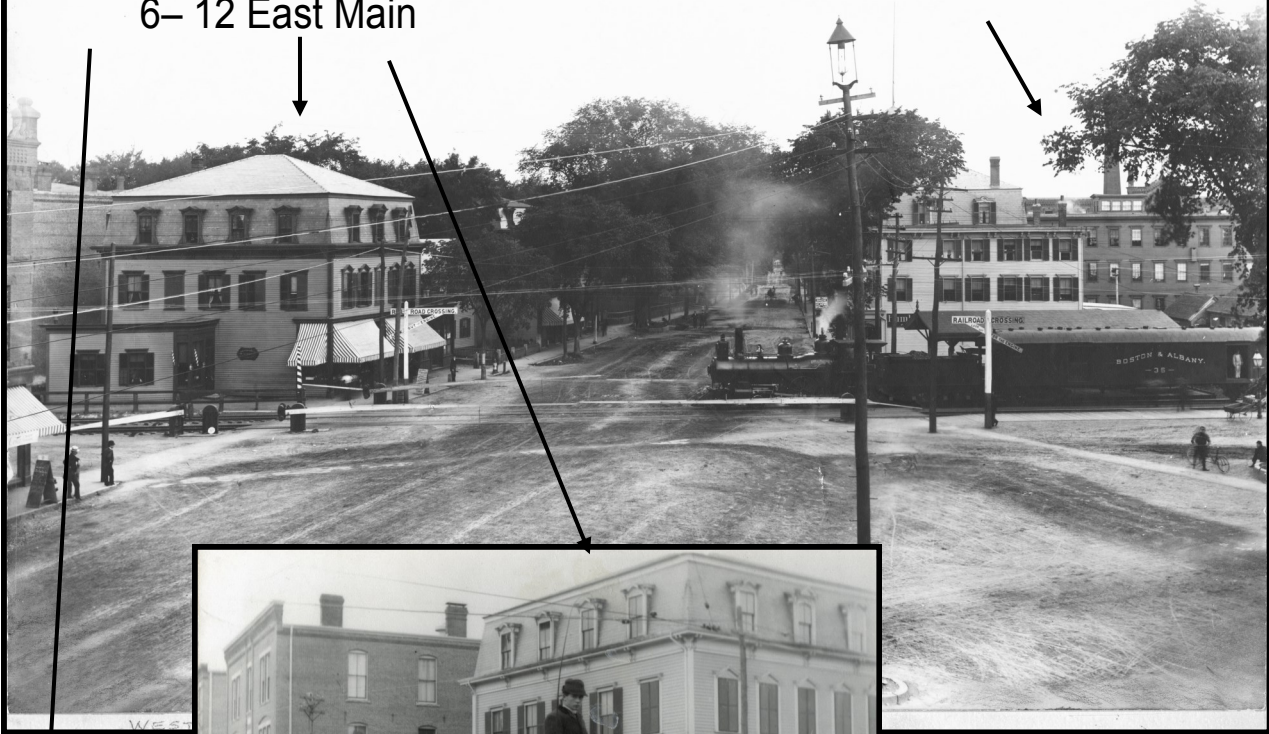
20 South Street (Structure
Still Exists)

2 South Street
(Westborough Hotel)



Spaulding Block (1872)
6- 12 East Main

National Straw Works



Boston/Worcester RR

24 East Main
Now the Mobil Station

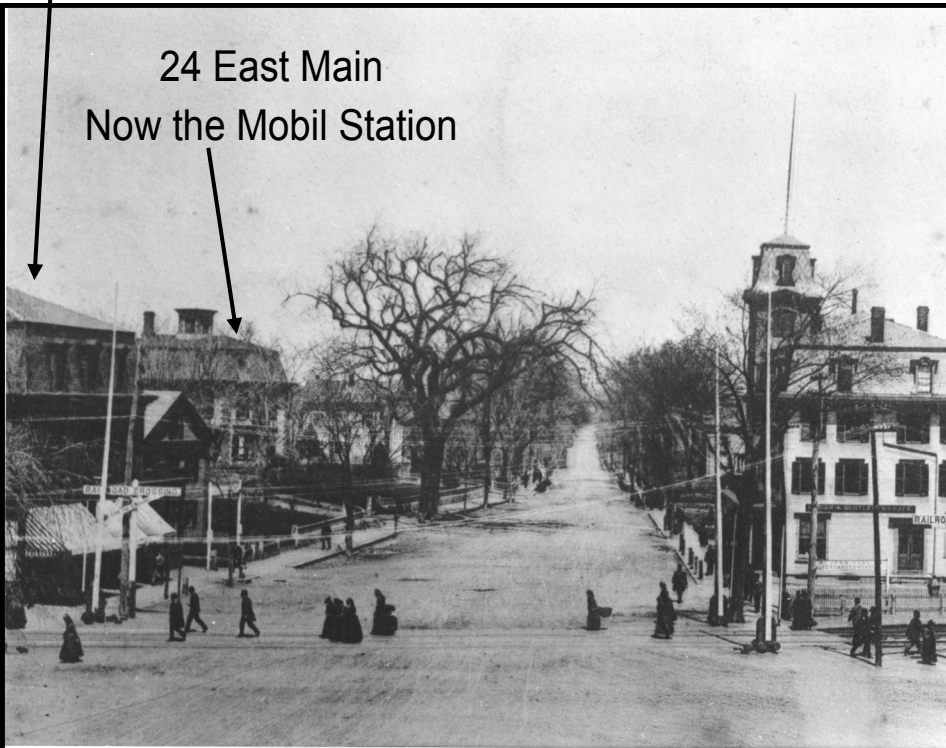
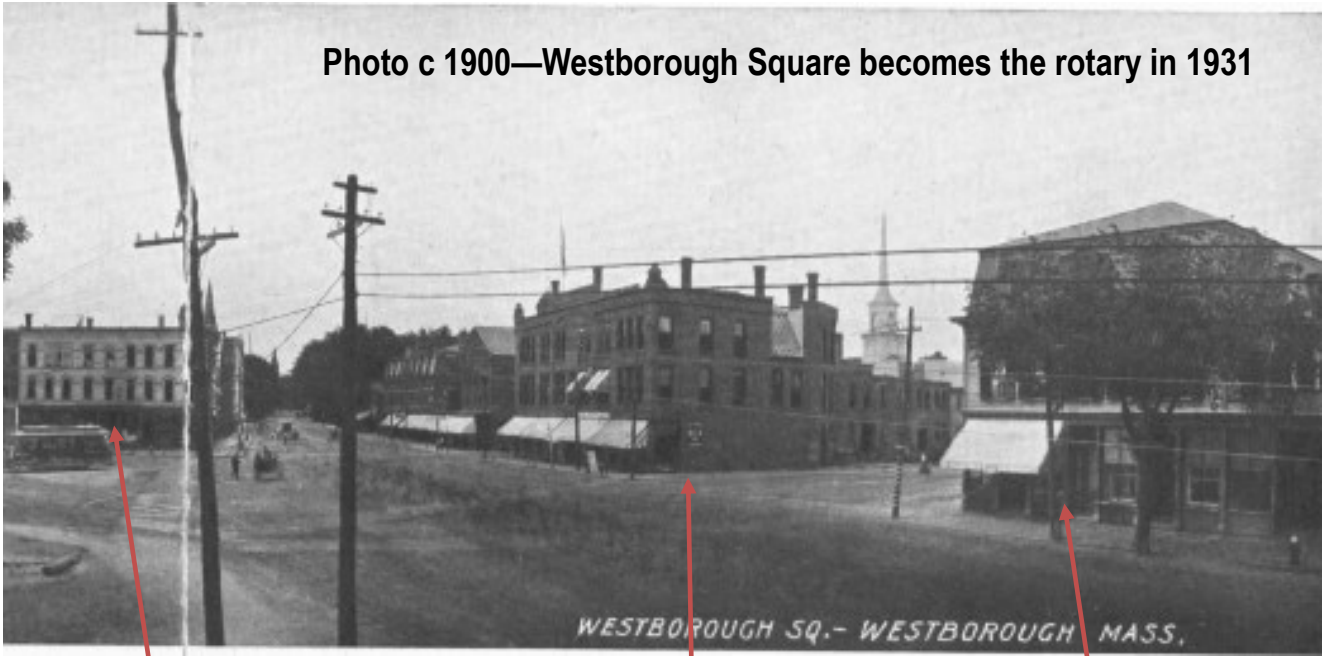


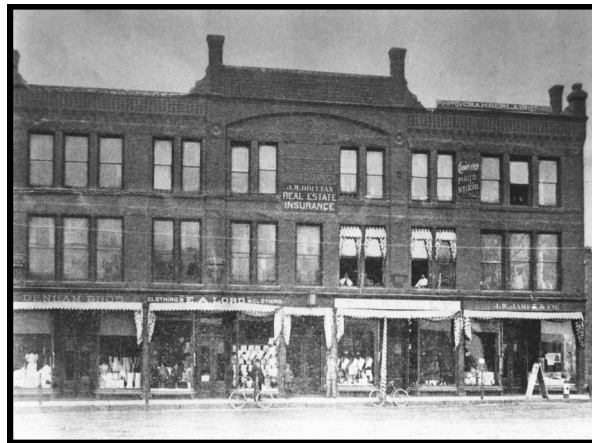
Photo c 1900—Westborough Square becomes the rotary in 1931



Henry Block (21 South) — Central Block (1-3 South)



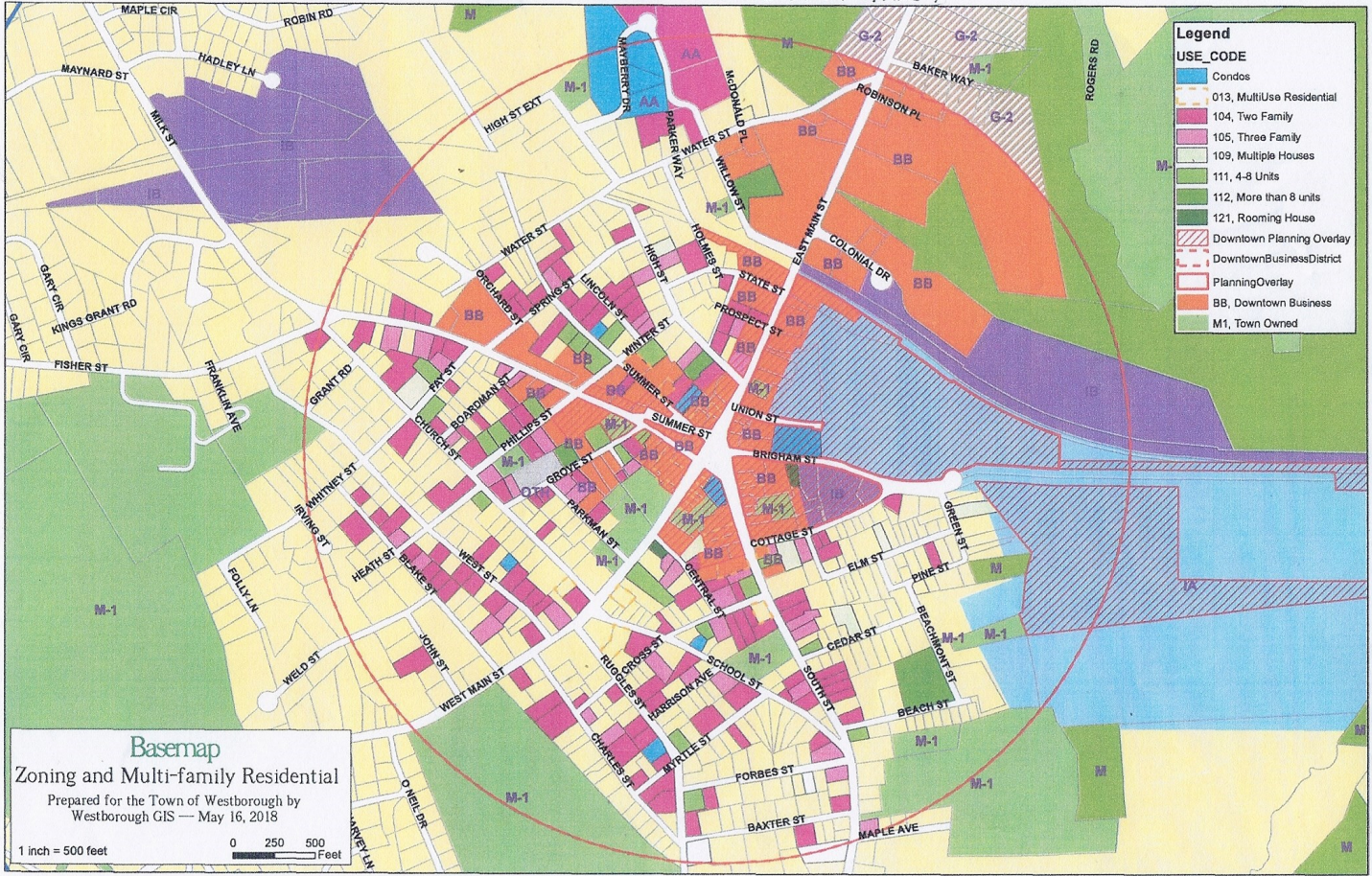
Spaulding Block— 6 to 10 E. Main



Arcade Building—1 W. Main with parapet

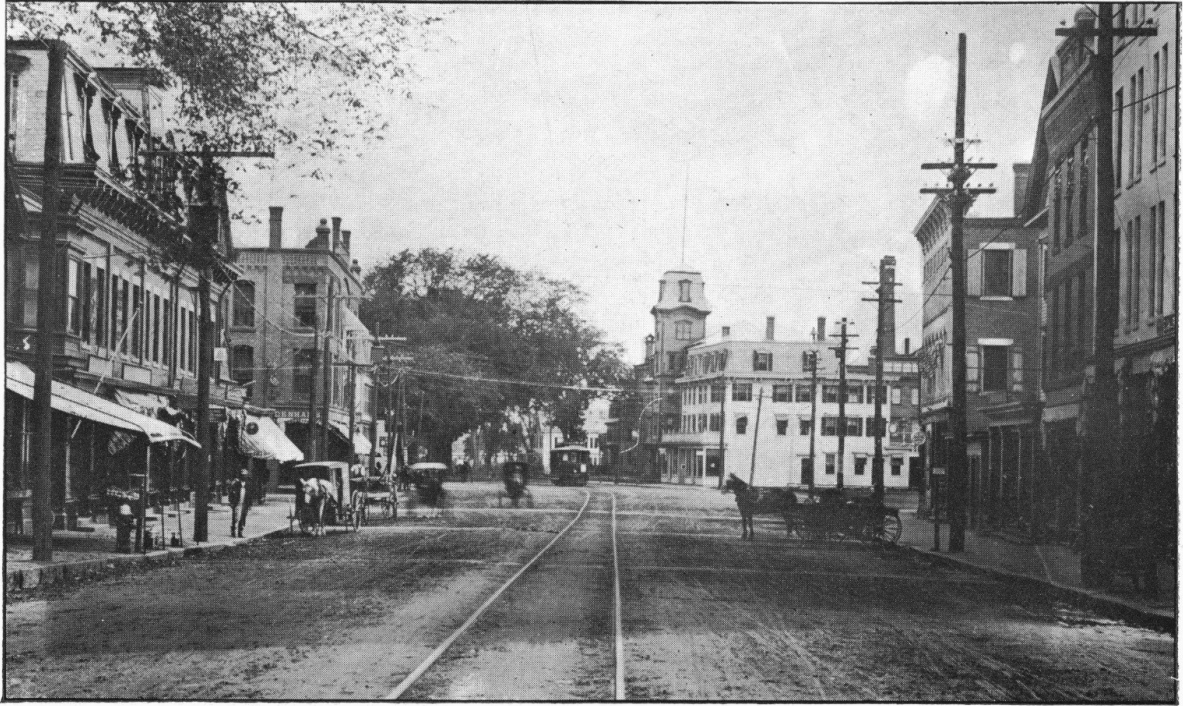
Westborough's Historic Downtown (within circle shown) has definable edges creating an opportunity, through design and marketing, to be a destination.

2018 TOWN MANAGERS DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY AREA



Looking East toward the Rotary—down West Main

Economic Geography—Technical Advancement



Looking East on West Main Street
Horse and Wagon and Trolley—Early 20th Century



H.H. Richardson Railroad Station, c1899 East Main Street
Commuter and Freight Train, Early Automobile, Horse and Wagon



Rise of the Motorized Vehicle

Route 9 development intensified around 1910 with the popularity of the automobile.

Mass Pike was constructed in the 1950's

495 was constructed in the 60's

Passenger R.R. service ended in the 1960s, until the new Commuter Rail station on Smith Street, constructed in 2002.

Construction of the Interstate highway System began in 1955 under President Eisenhower and took 35 years to complete

At \$459 Billion, connecting over 47,000 miles of highway, it is still the most expensive construction project to date in the world



1Brigham Street— DCS Auto



Westborough Airport Site of Astra Zeneca, Otis Street



Smith Parkway MBTA Station (2002)

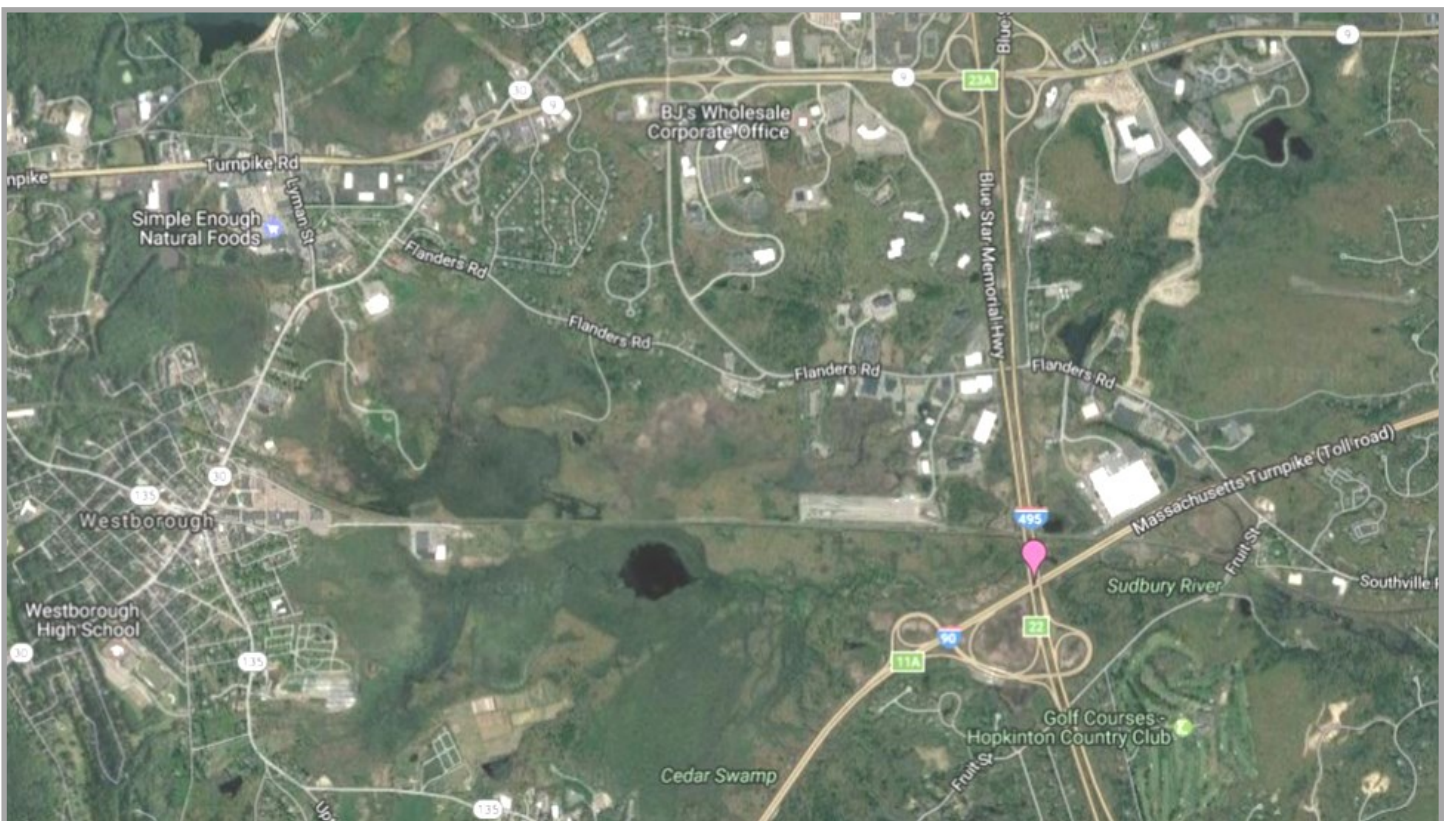


Astra Zeneca site, Otis Street

Otis Street Industrial Parks / Route 9 Retail Corridor



Westborough's Regional Vehicle Transportation System

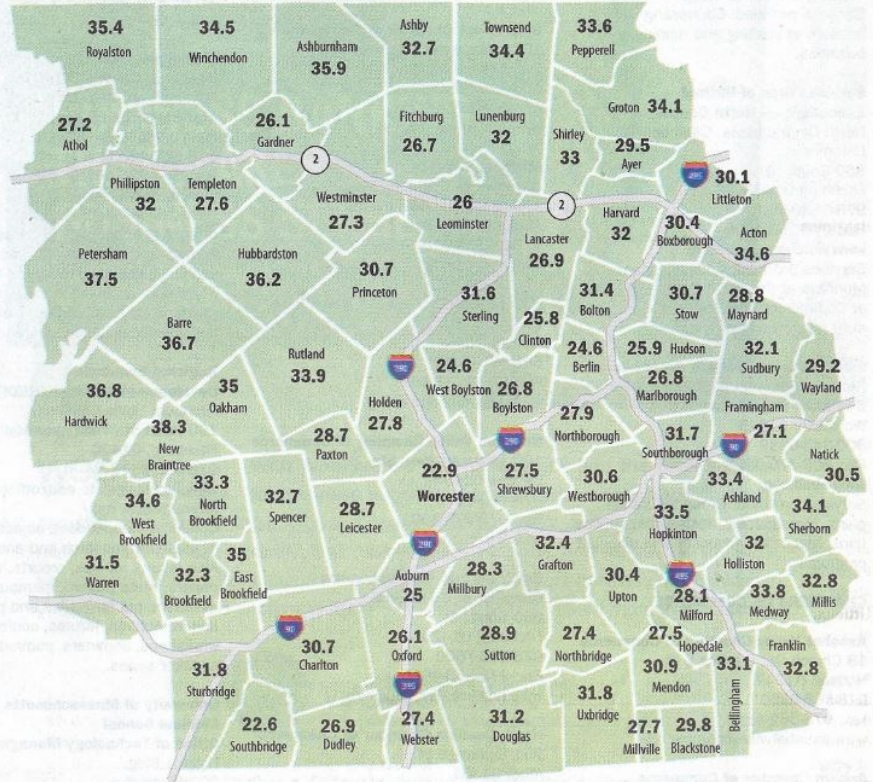


Economic Geography—Geographic Location

Average travel time to work

Mean commuting times are around a half hour for most Central Massachusetts cities and towns. Worcester, Southbridge and Berlin have the shortest average times; New Braintree, Petersham and Hardwick the longest.

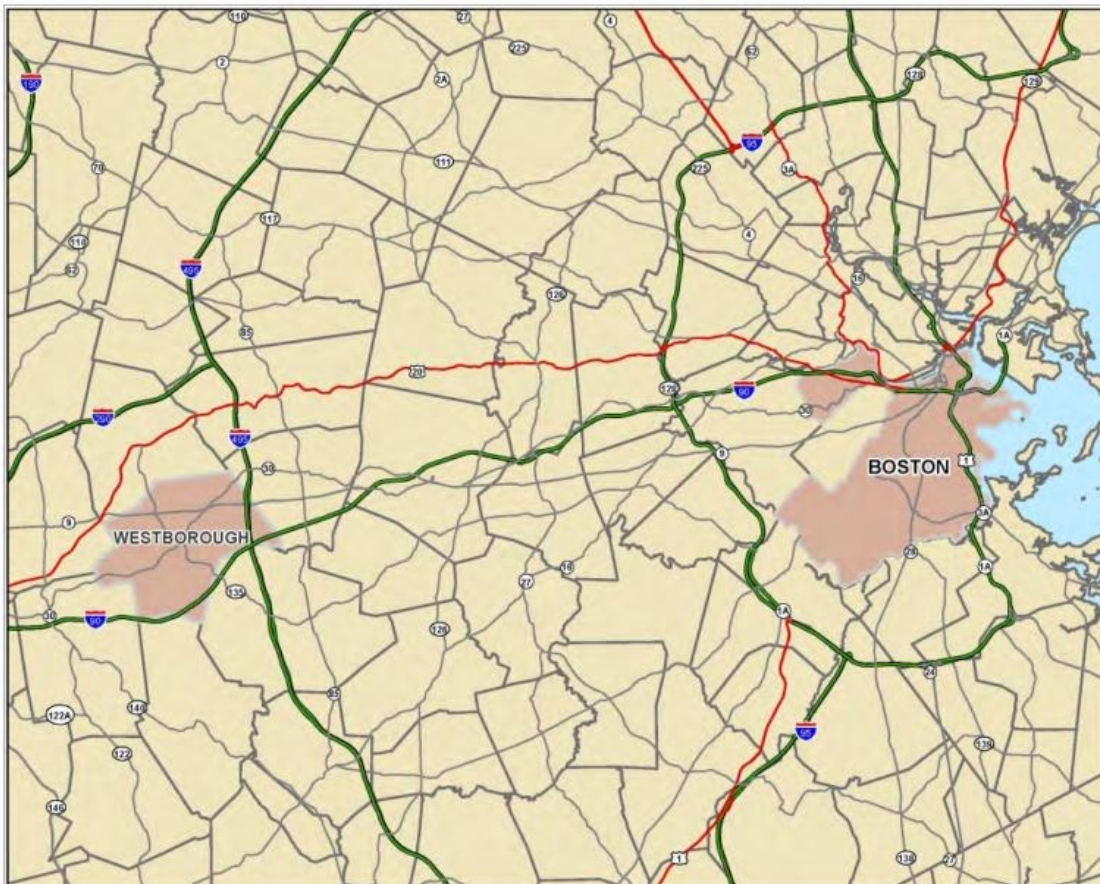
This map shows the mean commuting times by community, in minutes.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

www.wbjournal.com

Worcester Business Journal • 2014 Central Mass By The Numbers 51



Town of Westborough Regional Contacts Map



0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

January 11, 2017

Economic Geography—Political Decisions



Italian Railroad Workers, c 1900 - Vintonville



Economic Geography—Public Investment



**Forbes Municipal Building c 1925 former High School
(~47,000 sf on 1 Acre)**



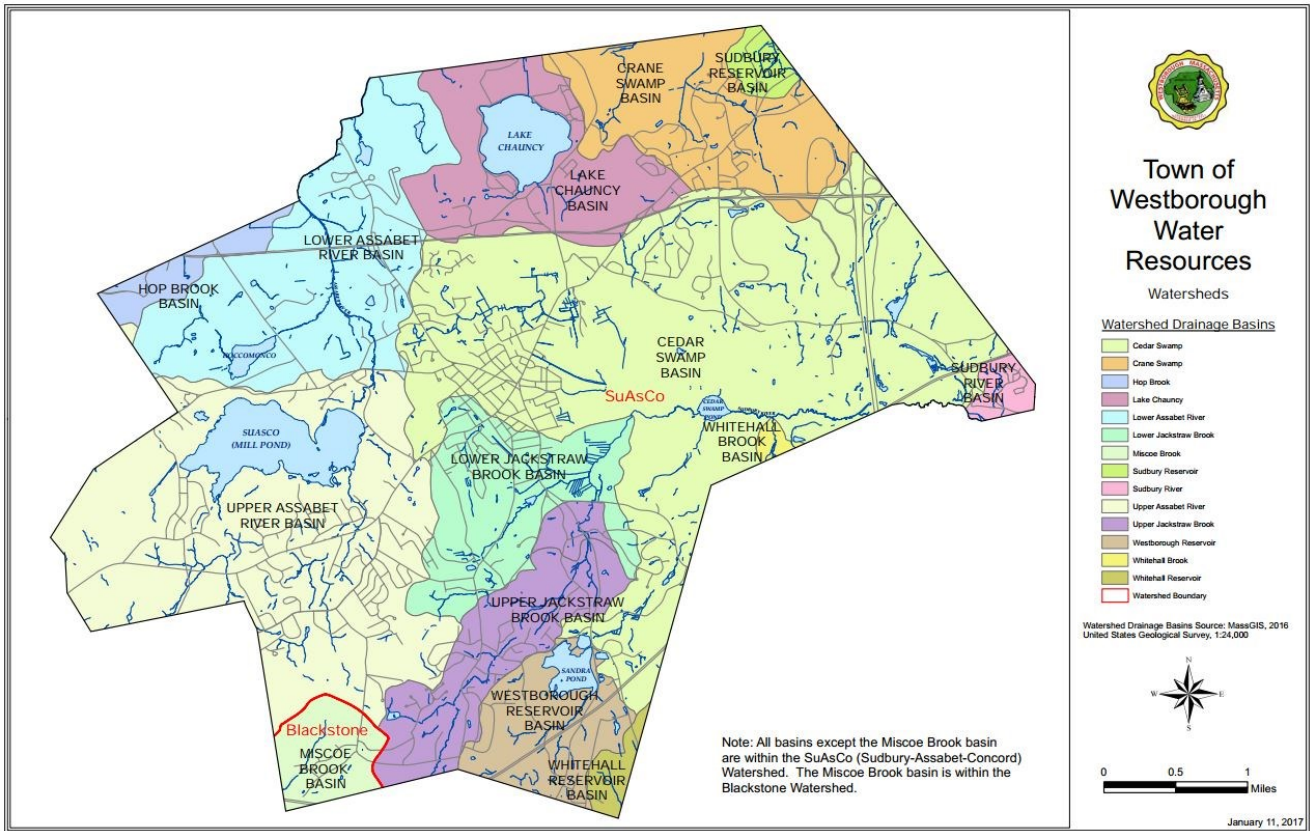
**Current Westborough High School—c 1968
(~274,000 sf on 32 Acres)**

Public Water System—1878, mostly for fire hydrants

Public Sewer System—1880, in downtown village

Public Electric System—1887

Economic Geography—Physical Environment

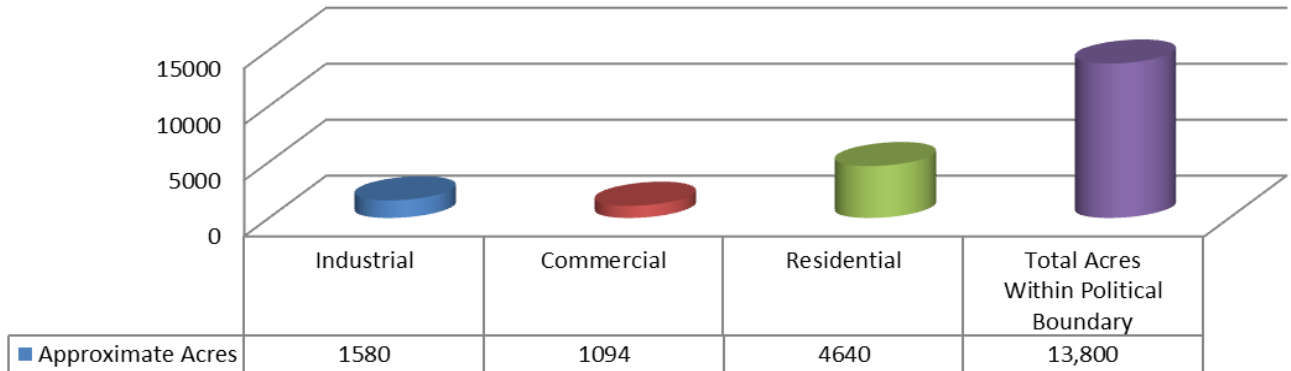


SuAsCo (Sudbury-Assabet-Concord) Watershed Westborough Floodplain (Mill Pond) 1968-70



Economic Geography—Economic Factors

Westborough Taxable Acreage



**Astra Zeneca (former Westborough Airport)
bought 1970's—built early 1980's**

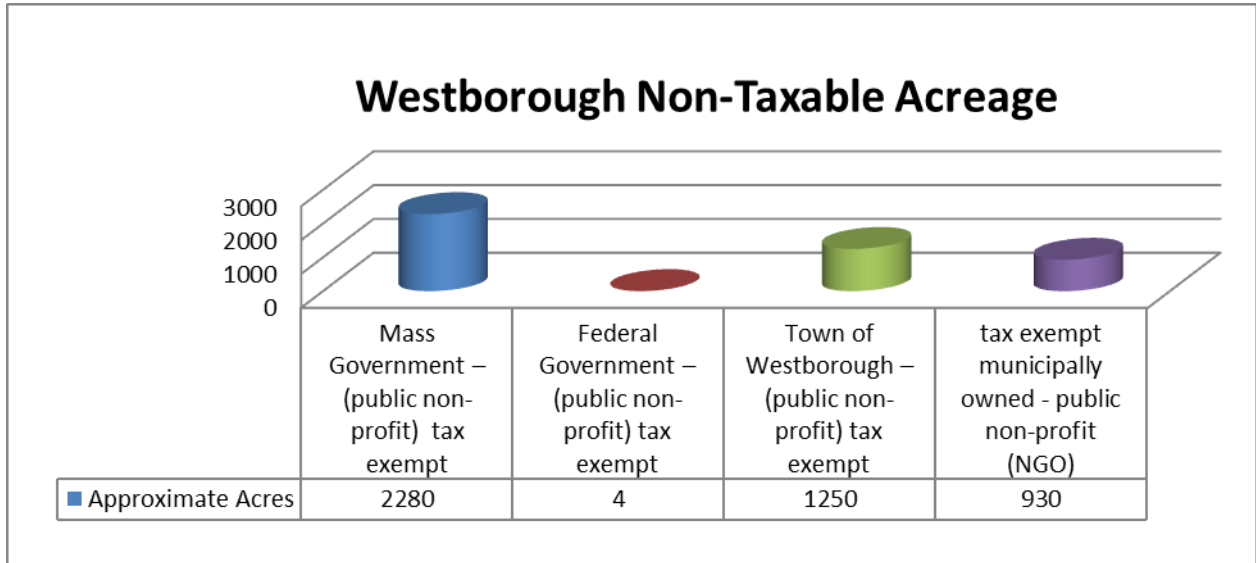


**Data General Late 1970's
15,000 Employees
~830 Million Gross Sales**



**Speedway Plaza
Former Westborough Speedway (1947)**

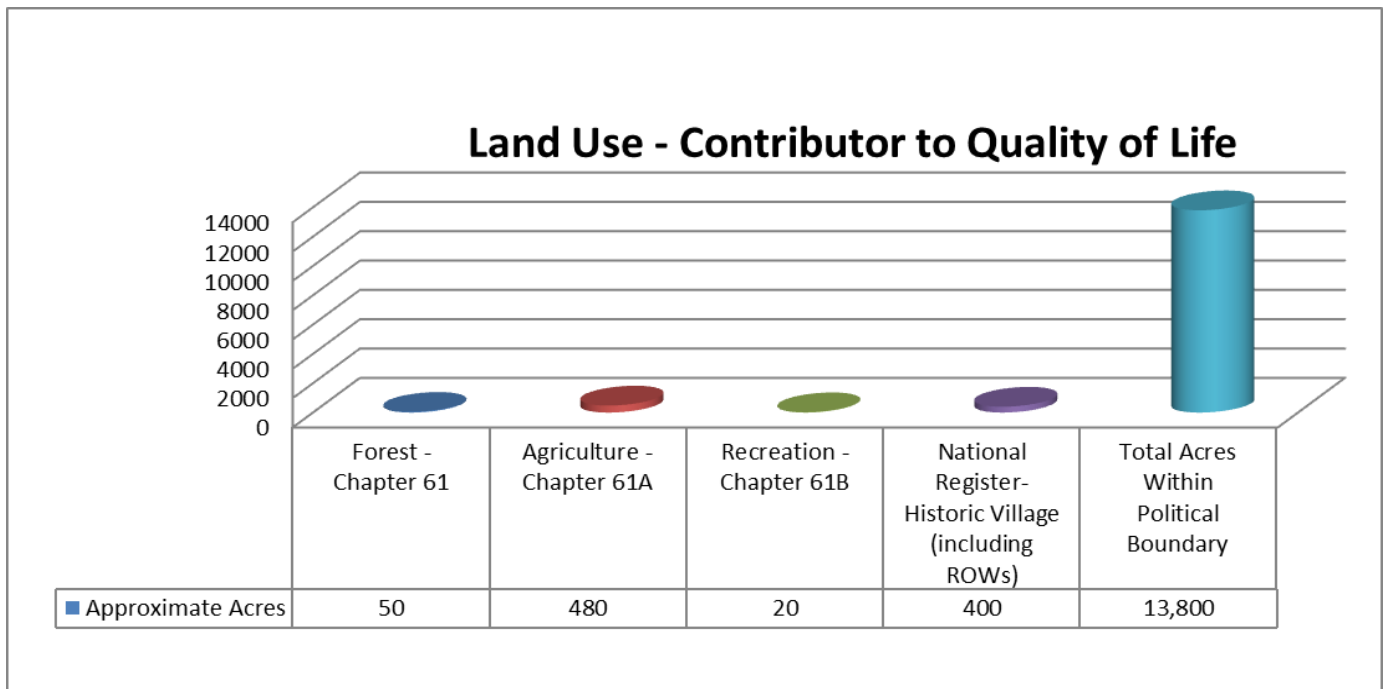
Economic Geography—Economic Factors

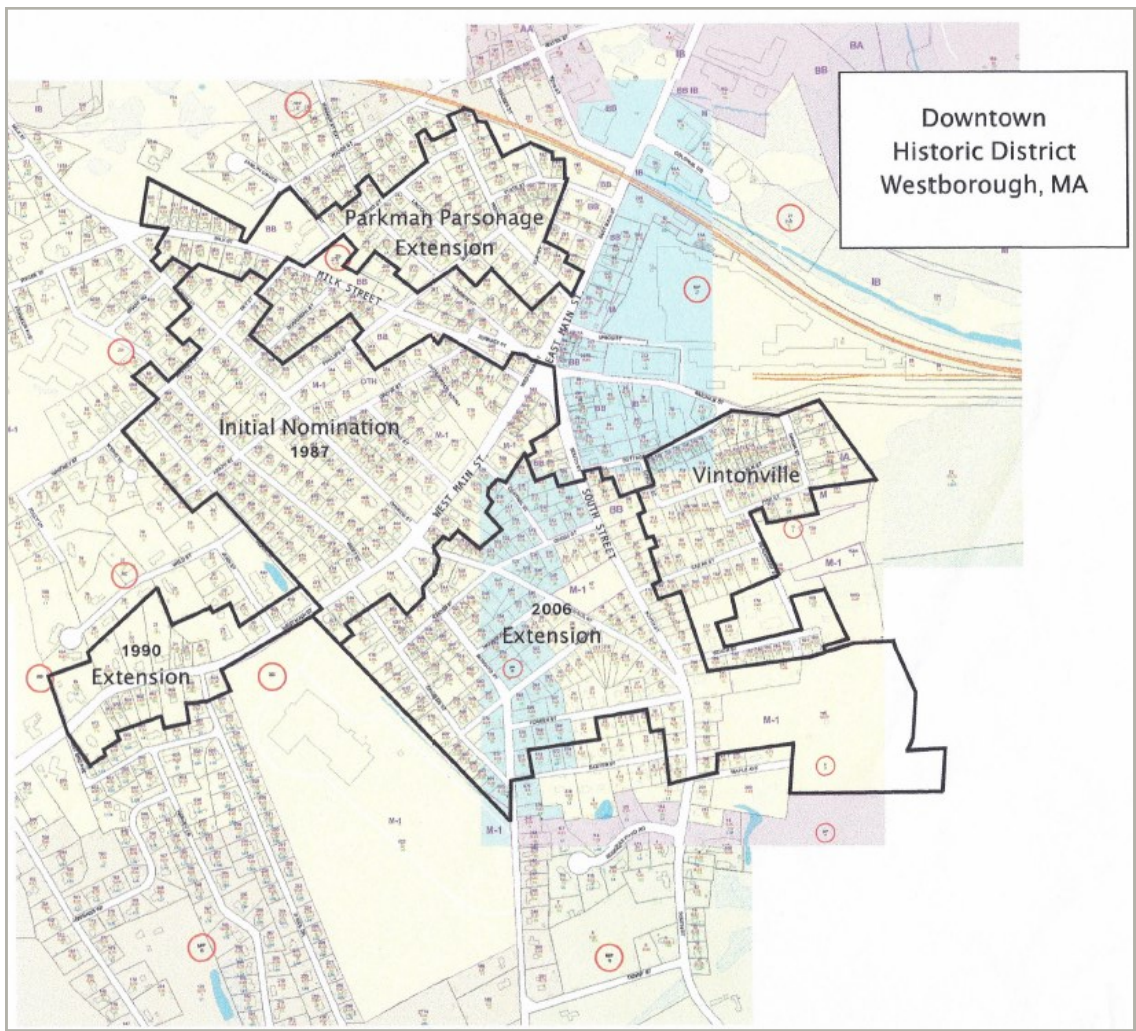


Treetop Park, Park St.



Fountainhead—Route 9





There is a difference...

There are substantial differences between a Local Historic District and a National Register District. This brochure has been prepared by the Massachusetts Historical Commission to help clarify these differences.

National Register Districts

A National Register District is part of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the list of individual buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts, deemed important in American history, culture, architecture, or archaeology. It is a federal designation and is administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Massachusetts Historical Commission as the State Historic Preservation Office.

Listing in the National Register:

- recognizes that the area is important to the history of the community, state, or nation.
- allows the owners of income-producing properties certain federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.
- provides limited protection from adverse effects by federal or state involved projects.

If there is no state or federal involvement in a project (such as federal licenses, permits, or funding) and no pertinent local or regional regulations (such as a local historic district), then listing in the National Register of Historic Places does not in any way limit an owner's handling of the property.

There are over 900 National Register Districts in Massachusetts.

The National Register of Historic Places, begun in 1966, promotes an appreciation of our diverse cultural heritage. Communities with National Register Districts take great pride in this federal designation.



Fire Station, Melrose Town Center Historic District, both a Local and National Register Historic District

Note: A National Register District cannot be listed if a majority of the property owners submit notarized objections. Every owner of record of private property has the opportunity to comment and/or object to the nomination, and has one vote regardless of whether they own a single property, multiple properties, or a portion of a property.

Local Historic Districts

In general, local historic districts are far more effective at preventing inappropriate changes than a National Register District. In a local historic district, a locally appointed Historic District Commission reviews proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public way. For instance, if a building addition is proposed in a local historic district, the property owner must submit an application to the Historic District Commission. The Historic District Commission holds a public hearing and makes a determination on whether the new addition is appropriate. If the addition is deemed appropriate, the Historic District Commission issues a Certificate, allowing the work to progress. Many Historic District Commissions have prepared *Historic District Design Guidelines* that clarify how proposed projects should respect the existing historic character.

Local Historic Districts in Massachusetts were first established on Beacon Hill and Nantucket in 1955. There are now over 200 local historic districts in Massachusetts. Local Historic Districts have been very effective at saving historic structures, neighborhoods, and villages from inappropriate alteration and demolition.

Following the steps outlined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, Local Historic Districts are established by a two-thirds majority city council or town meeting vote.

By establishing a local historic district, a community recognizes the importance of its architectural heritage and how vulnerable it is to inappropriate alterations without this local regulation.

Many proposed changes are exempt from review. In a local historic district, there is no review of interior features. In addition, a variety of exterior features are often exempt such as air conditioning units, storm doors, storm windows, paint color, and temporary structures. The decision on which features are exempt from review depends on how the local bylaw or ordinance is written and passed by your city council or town meeting vote.

This brochure has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. The U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, or disability in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

The population of Westborough is about 18,400. The overall median age is 43.6 years. The median income for households in Westborough, Massachusetts is \$80,179, while the mean household income is \$105,216. The per capita income is \$46,360. Westborough has a significant Indian-American Community making up 11.5% of the population, as well as large immigrant community with nearly 4,000 residents of non-U.S. origins (21.3%)

Economic geography is the study of the location, distribution and spatial organization of economic activities. Economic geography includes the location of industries, economies of agglomeration (also known as "linkages"), transportation, international trade, development, real estate, gentrification, ethnic economies, gendered economies, core-periphery theory, the economics of urban form, the relationship between the environment and the economy, and globalization.

Looking at a map today one can immediately grasp Westborough's advantageous location. At the intersection of Route 9, I90 and I495 with proximity to Worcester, Boston and Providence, Westborough has the critical advantage of access. This has been Westborough's singular advantage since before the colonial period.

Westborough has always enjoyed a crossroads location. The headwaters of the Sudbury and Assabet rivers rise in Westborough. This crossroads location brought the Nipmuc Tribe (who called the region Quinsigamond) to hunt, fish and migrate through Westborough. Using Fay Mountain as a landmark, the Nipmuc traversed through Westborough - The Old Connecticut Path (Route 9) ran east-west and the Narragansett Trail led north-south (Milk Street) all the way to Canada.

These trails were the only access points through the swamp and ponds on the region. These paths attracted early colonial settlers out to the region. Today, the terrain remains a serious obstacle for Westborough as it funnels all vehicles through the Rotary or through Route 9!

For economic growth to occur, Westborough needed transportation options. In 1810, the Boston-Worcester turnpike (Route 9) was improved. In 1835, a new train line was constructed downtown to accommodate the advent of the steam train to Boston. No town enjoys economic success on its own, being situated within a dynamic regional framework, like Westborough, is imperative.

Westborough is only 12 miles from Worcester and the two have been economically linked since the colonial period. During the turn of the 19th century, Worcester's economy moved into manufacturing. Factories producing textiles, shoes and clothing opened along the nearby Blackstone River. However, the manufacturing industry in Worcester would not begin to thrive until the opening of the Blackstone Canal in 1828 to Providence – a commercial seaport. The canal opened on October 7, 1828 when the packet boat *Lady Carrington* arrived in Worcester, the first vessel to make the trip. It was a two-day trip for the canal boats from Worcester to Providence and another two-day trip to return to Worcester. The overnight stopping point was in Uxbridge. In 1831, the Washburn & Moen Company became the largest wire manufacturing in the country and Worcester would become a center of machinery. The city transformed into a transportation hub and the manufacturing industry flourished. The city's industries soon attracted immigrants of primarily Irish, French, German, and Swedish descent and later many immigrants of Lithuanian, Polish, Italian, Greek, Turkish and Armenian descent.

Boston merchants moved to recapture the trade moving down the canal to Providence, opening a rail line to Worcester in 1835. (Boston merchants opened three railroads in 1835, one to Lowell, one to Worcester, and one to Providence, RI.) In 1847, the parallel Providence and Worcester Railroad began operation, and the canal closed in 1848. This linked Westborough even closer into Boston's economic orbit and allowed local factories to produce and ship boots and shoes, straw hats, sleighs, textiles, bicycles, and eventually abrasive products throughout the USA.

Today, here at Downtown crossing, we can see both the good and the bad of our town's economic development and potential. Westborough has three major development opportunities:

1. Route 9;
2. Mental Hospital/Reform School redevelopment;
3. Downtown.

Downtown is the one that interests us today. The others focus on attracting jobs and expanding the tax base. Downtown, however, is vital for attracting people. Economic Geography includes understanding the different economic, social and culture dimensions that go into establishing an attractive location.

Historic downtowns were cultural and social spaces built on a small scale. Downtowns, when done correctly, become an "attraction" themselves and drive economic growth to non-chain/franchise establishments in the historic core area. The idea in Economic Geography is to create a Central Social District to counterbalance the Central Business District (Route 9).

Traditional downtown construction usually proceeded right up to the sidewalk, providing a sense of security and visual appeal now considered "quaint" in modern design terms. Zoning regulations, too, encouraged sprawl instead of clustered development by preventing mixed residential/business use.

To maintain and grow a population in the historic district of any small town, strong quality-of-life assets are required. Scenic locations, outdoor parks, dining, entertainment, civic & community institutions (library, historical society), and an overall look of prosperity. This in turn encourages corporate relocation, new residents and other knock-on-effects.

Westborough's Economic Geography provides a tremendous opportunity. A high income, well-located town with a distinct Historic Downtown linked to a business corridor (Route 9) and corporate tax base to help support the quality of life initiatives.

So – looking around us – on the remains of the old heavy-industry abrasives factory – how do the citizens of Westborough envision revitalizing this historic district?

- Resources needed
- Pedestrian access
- Outside cafes
- Parking/Access
- Zoning Changes
- What would you do???

Linking location and economic growth is as old as time – Westborough is well positioned but needs to ensure that it remains linked to the foundational aspects of its past and geography.



WESTBOROUGH DOWNTOWN QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: See Page 14 of the report for the Westborough's Historic Downtown study area (within red circle).

DIG (Downtown Improvement Group) is made up of people who "Dig" Westborough but think it can be even better. Visit our Facebook page and become a member!

Approximately how many times a week do you visit downtown Westborough?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 or more
How do you get into town?	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk <input type="checkbox"/> Drive <input type="checkbox"/> Bike <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
What is your primary reason for going downtown	<input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Retail <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Approximately how many time do you drive through the rotary in a week?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 or more
Do you take alternate routes to avoid the rotary?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Parking: Does downtown Westborough have:	<input type="checkbox"/> Too much <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough <input type="checkbox"/> Poorly designed <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
What does downtown Westborough need more of? (Check all that applies)	<input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Retail <input type="checkbox"/> Services <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
How should downtown Westborough become a "destination?" (Check all that applies)	<input type="checkbox"/> Events <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants/food <input type="checkbox"/> Parks/Recreation <input type="checkbox"/> Historical <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ _____ _____
Share three minor changes you would like to see in downtown	

Share your vision of a “perfect downtown” for Westborough

What would you like to share with the Economic Development Committee consultant?

What type of small business support should Westborough encourage or provide?

Does historic, walkable downtown Westborough have the right mix of housing (single family, apartments, rooms, condo’s, multi families, etc.). If not, what would you like to see different?

How might we brand the downtown and create methods of wayfinding (getting to and getting around)

Share any other relevant thoughts you have about the town:

Return Completed forms to the Westborough Center for History and Culture (formerly the Westborough Room) at the Westborough Public Library, or scan and send to DIGwestborough@mail.com

