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## Land Use and Community Design

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### Introduction

The Town of Hudson is a vibrant and growing community with many assets, including a historic Downtown, diverse recreational facilities, a multi-use trail running through the heart of the Town, scenic lakes and rivers, and available land that can be developed for new residential, commercial and industrial businesses. Over the past decade, the Town has made strategic decisions about where and how development should occur. The Land Use element of this Master Plan provides additional focus on the Town's overall land use policies. Land use refers to the development character within a municipality after consideration of the amount, type, and intensity of commercial, industrial, residential and institution development, as well as open space, and key natural resources features. This chapter provides an analysis of overall land use within the Town of Hudson as well as land use recommendations for three focus areas within the Town of Hudson: the Downtown, the Route 85 corridor, and the Old Mill complexes.

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## Land Use and Community Design Goals

- Transform the Route 85 Corridor into a vibrant and thriving commercial area with smaller scale commercial, office, and light industrial uses along with selective mixed use developments.
- Facilitate the rehabilitation of abandoned and under-utilized mill complexes for flexible use, whether for new light industrial or commercial or mixed use development including residential.
- Develop an identity and sense of place for the Downtown that focuses on balancing the needs of the residents of Hudson, the businesses, and the need for continued economic development at an appropriate scale.
- Encourage new upper-story residential and commercial development within the Downtown that is consistent with its historic character.
- Encourage the development of clustered single family and townhouse development in areas where there is existing available and residentially zoned land.
- Develop buffers and transitions from the more intensive uses in Hudson's Downtown, industrial and commercial areas to protect its single family neighborhoods.
- Steer new development away from areas that could compromise Hudson's water resources and critical habitat, or in areas that currently lack appropriate infrastructure such as sewer service.

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## Hudson

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### Land Use and Community Design Issues and Opportunities

Hudson's residents pride themselves for their community spirit and neighborliness. This sentiment is echoed in the community's attention and strong support for the Town's schools and parks as well as its well-kept and close-knit residential neighborhoods. However, there are still opportunities that Hudson can capitalize on which can further support maintaining this sense of community. This includes developing strategies to revitalize its historic Downtown, encouraging well-designed commercial and industrial development along the southern section of Route 85 that adds to instead of takes away from the existing community character, and revitalizing the older under-utilized mill complexes to encourage the creation of new businesses and create more housing choices for residents. These focus areas are further explored below in greater detail.

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## Downtown

Hudson's Downtown comprises about 50 acres within the heart of Hudson. The Downtown area lies mainly to the west of the intersection of several streets (a rotary) located at the intersection of River Street, Central Street, Washington Street (Route 85), and Main Street. The frontage along Main Street is the heart of



Downtown which extends one to two blocks to the north to the Pleasant Street/Pearl Street neighborhood and to the south along South Street and the Assabet River. Main Street is primarily composed of two to three-story historic buildings, which house a mix of restaurants, boutiques, and offices. The newer buildings on Main Street house a large second-hand store, and convenience stores.



Over the last several years, new restaurants as well as new retail and offices have opened in a large new developed area along South Street, one block south of Main Street. Around the rotary and to the east of Main Street, another small area of Downtown includes auto services and eating establishments including an old-fashioned diner.

Hudson is fortunate to have a Downtown with “good bones.” Stately three-story brick buildings front Main Street and the historic Town Hall includes an attractively landscaped lawn creating an appealing overall vision of a quintessential New England town. The rotary also helps to serve a visual “gateway” to the Downtown for travelers arriving via Washington Street (Route 85), River Street, and Central Street.

The Downtown does have some challenges, however, some of which were expressed by residents during the Master Planning outreach process:

- **Parking.** While the Downtown has on-street parking, there is a public perception that it is inadequate to serve those wishing to frequent the Downtown's shops and restaurants. Additionally, there are parking lots located along South Street just south of Main Street, and these are primarily private parking lots and are not open to the general public. There is also a large public parking lot serving the new South Street businesses.

- **Inconsistent signage.** The signs displayed on many of the Downtown’s businesses and restaurants are inconsistent in style and create a disjointed appearance to the otherwise architecturally consistent Downtown.
- **Building façade maintenance.** While some of the historic buildings have been recently renovated, some of the buildings are badly maintained.
- **Lack of night-life.** While Main Street is often bustling with activity during the day, the public noted during the community input sessions that Downtown closes down at night with little activity.
- **Sidewalk maintenance.** Many of the Downtown’s sidewalks are cracked, and in need of repair.

Some strategies that Hudson can consider for the Downtown include:

- **Develop Downtown Wayfinding signage program.** A wayfinding program can be as simple or extensive as the Town desires. Hudson has many assets and a simple wayfinding signage program can help to highlight many of these features. Signs indicating the direction of public



parking, restaurants, the Assabet Rail Trail, the Historic District, and other key historic landmarks will help visitors to Hudson negotiate its streets and encourage patronage at Hudson’s restaurants and stores. South Street has many new businesses and restaurants that may go unnoticed by visitors because of the “tucked away” aspect to South Street.

- **Provide streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities.** To improve the quality of the sidewalks for residents of all ages and abilities and to encourage pedestrian traffic Downtown, the Town can consider funding streetscape improvements. The Town can develop consistent walk and common paving treatment in Downtown from the rotary to the edge of the Downtown area at Grove Street. This could be further enhanced with pedestrian scaled lighting near the ground.
- **Create Downtown design guidelines for major building renovations, new construction, and new signage.** The Town can explore the development of design guidelines for the Historic Downtown to create consistent signage for new signs and to ensure that major renovations and additions to the Downtown are consistent with its historic character.
- **Improve gateway at the Rotary.** The rotary is attractively landscaped with an old-fashioned lantern. The Town can further embellish the rotary with clear signage or stone monument marking the entrance to the Hudson’s Historic Downtown.

- **Conduct a study of downtown parking.** Since this issue has been raised by members of the public and businesses in the past, it should be addressed by conducting a comprehensive study and the implementation of a parking management system to address any identified problems. The Town has already allocated some money to fund a parking management study for the downtown area. The business sector has committed to supplementing that funding from the private sector to ensure that it moves forward. The study could explore augmenting parking where the supply of spaces is tight or look for ways to increase access to available parking.
- **Improve pedestrian connections from Downtown to other key features** such as Cherry Street and the Assabet River Rail Trail. This strategy is further detailed in the Transportation and Open Space chapters.
- **Farmers market.** The Town can explore ways to host a regularly occurring farmers market in the Downtown area. One potential location for a farmer's market could be located at one of the private parking lots along South Street, which are not generally used outside of business hours Monday through Friday.
- **Encourage residential development in the Downtown.** In addition to some of the Downtown's design challenges, many residents have voiced a preference for encouraging more mixed use development in the Downtown area by converting the upper stories of Downtown buildings into mixed use where appropriate. The Town could also explore the use of special permit to allow appropriate cluster residential development on the first-story of building in the Downtown. Encouraging residential uses Downtown can help enliven the area at night since more people living Downtown will want to frequent the area's shops and restaurants in the evening hours.




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## Route 85 Corridor (Washington Street)

Route 85 is a major North-South route through Hudson connecting Marlborough, Berlin, Bolton, Stow and Maynard. Berlin and Bolton currently have no commercial or retail centers and this corridor serves as a shopping destination for neighboring communities. Route 85 (Washington Street in Hudson) is a primary artery feeding Hudson's other main retail area, Main Street (Route 62). The Route 85 corridor is currently undergoing construction to improve a 1.5 mile segment from the Town line with Marlborough to the Washington Street Bridge. This project includes widening Route 85 to include two travel lanes for each side, 4-foot bike shoulders, and 5.5-foot wide ADA

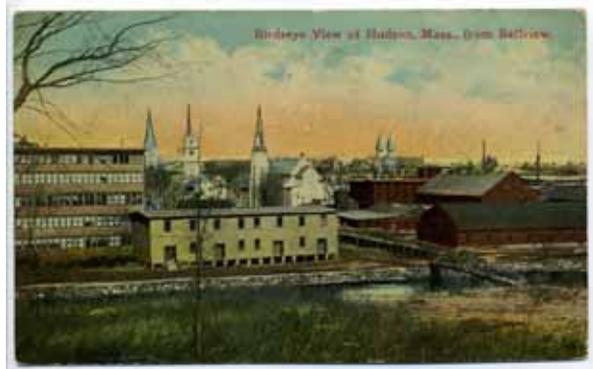
compliant sidewalks, and short turn lanes where needed. The reconstruction of Route 85 represents a great opportunity for Hudson to adopt land use policies that ensure new development in the area is compatible with surrounding land uses and reflects the desires and needs of the community.

The area in the vicinity of the corridor has seen ample development in the past decade. A total of 78 building permits have been issued to commercial and residential developments within proximity to this segment of the Route 85 corridor since 2001.

The Route 85 corridor at the entrance to Hudson from Marlborough currently has low density residential, forestland and wetlands to the west of the corridor and commercial development to the east. Commercial development continues in discrete segments along Route 85 to Houghton Street.

The construction of a two-way, four lane roadway will considerably improve traffic conditions along this heavily used corridor. The new road, sidewalks, and bike lanes will also help to create a cohesive look. The entrance to Route 85 from Marlborough is zoned primarily single family residential (SA-8 and SA-7) to the west and manufacturing (M-6) to the east of the roadway. Between Technology Drive and the Washington Street bridge, the corridor at either side is zoned Commercial (C-11, C-5, C-6, and C-2), and single-family residential (SB and SA-8). Residents have expressed the desire to retain some residential uses within the Route 85 corridor alongside small-scale commercial. Some land use recommendations for the Route 85 Corridor include:

- Reassess zoning along the Route 85 corridor to establish mixed use standards where appropriate.
- Develop a master corridor plan for the Route 85 that would address uses within the corridor block by block to ensure there is adequate transition between the single family residential and the commercial areas. In addition, some blocks within the corridor may be appropriate for mixed use development, perhaps as a transition zone between the purely residential and commercial zones.



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## Old Mill Reuse

Two areas totaling approximately 25 acres have former industrial mill

buildings that are the remnants of Hudson's historic past as a mill town. Hudson can learn from the success that many communities in Massachusetts have had converting former mill buildings to a variety of uses, including repurposing the buildings to house light industrial and high tech businesses and the conversion

of these buildings into condo loft apartments and artists' studios. Based on the recommendation of the Hudson *Community Development Plan* in 2004, Hudson amended its zoning bylaw to include an Adaptive Reuse Overlay District (AROD) for the two large mill complexes. This zoning allows upper stories of the existing former buildings to be converted to residential units and new construction of residential units by right meeting certain criteria. The zoning also allows first floor uses of retail, restaurant, offices, bank, health club, music, art or craft studio in addition to uses customarily allowed in multi-family residential zoning districts.

As the zoning changes occurred just before the Economic Recession of 2008/2009, little development activity has been spurred on by the changes in zoning to support mixed re-use of the mill building. However, with the improving New England economy, the Town is poised to receive new development proposals in these under-utilized areas.

Both AROD areas have the underlying zoning for Manufacturing uses (M-2 and M-3), which allows for manufacturing and agricultural uses in addition to all the uses allowed in commercial and light industrial districts. To further spur and support commercial and residential development in the AROD areas, the Town could consider the following:

- Design pedestrian linkages between the mill buildings and the Assabet Rail Trail, the Assabet River, and Downtown.
- Create and maintain a comprehensive inventory of buildings, occupancy status, tax title status, and other pertinent information within the AROD.
- Explore innovative techniques to encourage smart energy including green technologies.
- Identify all the infrastructure improvements that may be required to revitalize the district and attempt to fund through existing state level grant programs.
- Consider revision of AROD zoning to allow for increased residential density within the AROD.
- Explore financial tools to encourage new development in old mill buildings, such as tax abatements, tax increment financing (TIF) or District Improvement Financing (DIF) Districts, long-term leases, and grants. Both DIF and TIF are tools that Massachusetts municipalities can use to fund district improvements or grant property tax exemptions to landowners respectively. Both tools are based on the tax increment, as calculated by the local Assessor, which is the difference in property tax between the unimproved property and the improved property (including the value of any new construction, rehabilitation or new equipment or machinery). “Using DIF, municipalities can pledge all or a portion of tax increments to fund district improvements over time. With TIF, municipalities may grant

property tax exemptions to landowners of up to 100% of the tax increment for a fixed period.”<sup>1</sup>

The reuse of former mill buildings can help reclaim underused industrial space and locate new growth in areas where basic infrastructure is already available. Through careful site design, the reuse of these former mill buildings will increase pedestrian traffic through the nearby Downtown and increase access to the Assabet Trail helping to open up this important riverfront for public use. The re-use of these buildings for high-density residential also has the potential to help augment Hudson’s stock of high-density affordable housing that could be included in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) to help meet the Town’s 40B requirements, as discussed in more detail in the Housing chapter of this Plan.

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## Land Use Patterns

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### Historic Land Use

Hudson began as a home to Native American communities until the middle 1600s when European settlers were granted land in the area now known as Hudson. Early Hudson was destroyed but rebuilt after 1675 when Hudson was firmly in the control



of the immigrants. The earliest homes that remain today were associated with farming activities from that early. Some of both the homes and the farming activities still exist in Hudson. However, a fire in 1894 destroyed many of the buildings downtown. The reconstruction of the entire downtown shortly after the 1894 fire has resulted in a downtown that is architecturally from one period. Recognition of this historical uniformity led the town to designate much of its downtown as a State Registered Historic District known as the Silas Felton Historic District which the town passed unanimously at its in November 1988. Significant renovations and building alterations within the historic district

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<sup>1</sup> State of Massachusetts Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit. [http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/pages/mod-ditif.html](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-ditif.html). Accessed December 2012.

require design review by the Silas Felton Historic District Commission. This has assisted the downtown in preserving its architectural integrity.<sup>2</sup>

The Town of Hudson, like many other communities in the area, was founded around the water power provided by the Assabet River and Tannery Brook. There are two dams and mill ponds in the community, and numerous mill buildings that developed because of the economic opportunity the water provided. Since the downtown arose to serve mill employees and owners, the older mill buildings are at the periphery of the downtown area. Much of the housing in Hudson is also clustered around the downtown and the mills and originally housed mill workers and managers. Once Hudson distinguished itself as a population and employment center, other economic facilities were located in different areas of Town not necessarily adjacent to the river.<sup>3</sup>

Hudson's Downtown today still maintains much of its historic character and boasts specialty boutiques, eating establishments, and smaller retail establishments.

Like many cities and towns, the development character of the Hudson in the twentieth century has been shaped by the construction of major highway projects. The construction of Interstate-495 in the 1960s, changed development patterns in Hudson by spurring on significant commercial, residential, industrial and retail development. The relative affordability of land, and more modest homes, coupled with the ideal highway access, retail and commercial facilities, encouraged new residential development. Further supporting this, almost half of Hudson's housing stock was built between 1960 and 1989 according to U.S. Census data.

Figure 1.1 shows land uses within Hudson in 1985. According to data from MassGIS, between 1971 and 1985, Hudson lost about 176 acres of agricultural land (Table 2.1). This loss continued from 1985 to 1999, when Hudson lost an additional 155 acres of farmland representing a total decline of 66 percent in agricultural land between 1971 and 1999 (see Table 2.2). In contrast, the acreage of industrial/transportation/mining uses between 1971 and 1999 has increased by almost 65 percent and commercial acreage by 32 percent. In total, 53 acres of land was converted to commercial and almost 200 acres of land was converted to industrial land between 1971 and 1999, likely from the conversion of former farmland and forestland to these uses.

In terms of housing, residential development has occurred across the board but mostly concentrated in high and low density residential development. Higher density residential (housing with lots smaller than ¼ acre) from 1971 and 1985 almost doubled by 70 acres. The pace of high-density housing development

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<sup>2</sup> Hudson Community Development Plan, June 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Hudson Community Development Plan, June 2004.

slowed somewhat between 1985 and 1999, when 24 acres converted to high-density development (a 19 percent increase). Low density residential development (lots larger than ½ acre) also showed an increase with the largest increase occurring between 1985 and 1999 when approximately 350 acres of low density residential development occurred, a 64 percent increase.

In terms of natural resources, forestland and wooded perennial land have shown the sharpest decrease between 1971 and 1999; approximately 900 acres of forestland was lost during this time period, about a 25 percent decrease over this time period.

**Table 2-1 Historic Land Use in Hudson**

Land Use: 1971, 1985, 1999						
Land Use	1971		1985		1999	
	Size (acres)	Percent of Total	Size (acres)	Percent of Total	Size (acres)	Percent of Total
Agriculture	503.7	6.6%	327.2	4.3%	172.5	2.3%
Open Space	271.5	3.6%	275.9	3.6%	482.6	6.4%
Commercial	166.7	2.2%	210.0	2.8%	219.3	2.9%
Industrial/Transportation/Mining	304.0	4.0%	416.0	5.5%	501.4	6.6%
Higher Density Residential*	65.1	0.9%	132.3	1.7%	156.8	2.1%
Medium Density Residential	1,584.4	20.9%	1,674.9	22.1%	1,804.3	23.8%
Low Density Residential	451.5	5.9%	558.2	7.3%	912.8	12.0%
Recreation	63.4	0.8%	63.4	0.8%	68.8	0.9%
Forest/Wooded Perennial	3,648.0	48.0%	3,406.1	44.8%	2,748.0	36.2%
Waste Disposal	53.4	0.7%	54.4	0.7%	54.4	0.7%
Non-forested Wetland	327.6	4.3%	320.9	4.2%	318.4	4.2%
Water	155.7	2.1%	155.7	2.1%	155.7	2.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,594.9</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,594.9</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,594.9</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: MassGIS

Note: Higher Density Residential includes multi-family housing and housing with lots smaller than 1/4 acre. Medium Density is 1/4 to 1/2 acre lots. Low Density is lots larger than 1/2 acre.

**Table 2-2 Land Use Changes in Hudson**

Land Use Changes: 1971, 1985, 1999			
Land Use	Percent Change		
	1971-1985	1985-1999	1971-1999
Agriculture	-35.0%	-47.3%	-65.8%
Open Undeveloped Land	1.6%	74.9%	77.7%
Commercial	25.9%	4.4%	31.5%
Industrial/Transportation/Mining	36.8%	20.5%	64.9%
Higher Density Residential	103.2%	18.6%	140.9%
Medium Density Residential	5.7%	7.7%	13.9%
Low Density Residential	23.6%	63.5%	102.2%
Recreation/Urban Open	0.0%	8.5%	8.5%
Forest/Wooded Perennial	-6.6%	-19.3%	-24.7%
Waste Disposal	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%
Wetland	-2.0%	-0.8%	-2.8%
Water	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: MassGIS

Note: Higher Density Residential includes multi-family housing and housing with lots smaller than 1/4 acre. Medium Density is 1/4 to 1/2 acre lots. Low Density is lots larger than 1/2 acre.

**Figure 2-1 1985 Land Use**



Source: MassGIS, 1985.

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## Current Land Use

Hudson covers approximately 7,600 acres and is located within the Boston metropolitan area. Most residents find the location of Hudson ideal for its accessibility to urban centers, such as Boston and Worcester, while still retaining a small town feel. Hudson is bordered by the Towns of Berlin to the west, Bolton to the north, Sudbury to the east, and Marlborough to the south. Hudson has two entrances to Interstate 495, one of which also connects directly to I-290 providing a direct route to Worcester. The proximity to 495 allows residents and workers to have easy access to East-West routes (I-90 and Route 2), both within a ten minute drive.

The Town's historic downtown is located within a block to two block radius of Main Street. The other primary commercial area is located along the southern portion of the Route 85 corridor, which connects to I-290. The corridor has been developed to include major shopping centers, strip retail development, big-box stores, office parks, large residential developments, and multinational corporations. The Route 62 access to I-495 has not been as intensely developed, having attracted some larger housing developments, but little new business development.

While the regional transportation network has made an impact on land uses, the rivers, lakes and ponds of Hudson have also impacted the development character of Hudson. The Assabet River runs through the center of the Town and along major features. Because of the presence of the many water bodies (the Assabet River for example), many of the town's roads have bridges, which has proved to be a constraint to some industrial development because of the adequacy of bridges for heavier truck loads.

The Town's lack of sewer capacity currently limits residential development in the western area of town particularly in the vicinity of Lake Boone. There is currently no sewer service for the houses that circle the Lake Boone. Many of the homes on the lake were former seasonal vacation homes that have been converted to year-round use in addition to newer large homes.

One of the major new developments in Town is now under construction. Highland Commons is a large shopping center on the south side of Route 62 in close proximity to the 495 entrance. The shopping center will have a large grocery store, a chain big box home repair store, as well as several large retail stores. Working closely with the developer, the Town ensured that the site was carefully designed with landscaping and sidewalks linking the development to the Route 62.

Over the last two decades, a series of factors have been affecting the quantity and character of residential land development. As noted earlier, the majority of Hudson's housing was built between the 1960's and the 1990s and was relatively modest, consisting of smaller, ranch and cape style homes. Because of the availability of affordable land with the ideal highway access, retail and commercial facilities, the early 2000s saw residential development of a range of housing types including more expensive single family homes, large senior "over-55" housing developments, and affordable apartment developments.

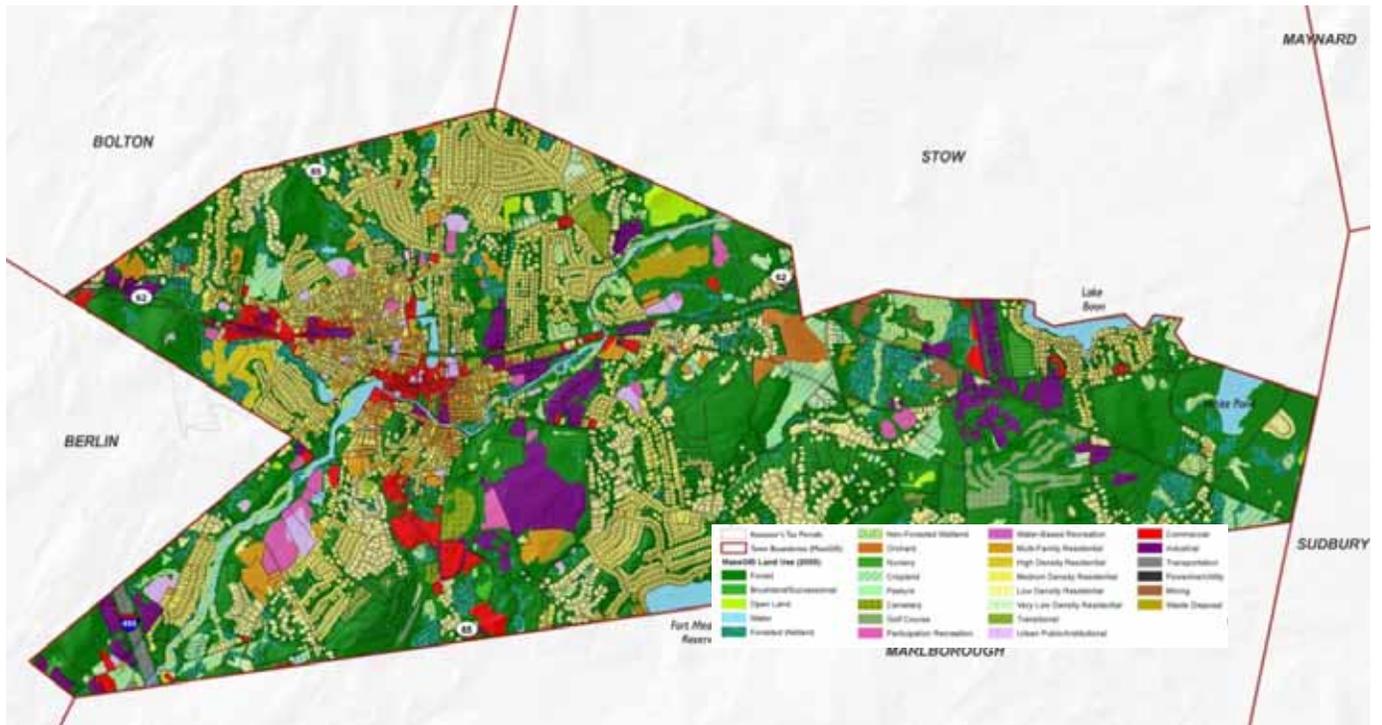
Hudson now has less developable land, although it is considered to be somewhat more affordable than its neighbors. Some constraints with regard to infrastructure capacity (sewer, road and bridge capacity) will be key considerations the kind of development that should occur and in what location.

**Table 2-3 Current Land Use in Hudson**

Land Use Description	Acreage	Percent of Total
Agriculture	181.8	2%
Open Space	105.2	1%
Commercial	228.6	3%
Industrial/Transportation/Mining	419.3	6%
Higher Density Residential*	316.5	4%
Medium Density Residential	1,295.9	17%
Low Density Residential	678.0	9%
Recreation	186.4	2%
Forest/Wooded Perennial	3,544.5	47%
Waste Disposal	39.0	1%
Non-forested Wetland	268.5	4%
Water	194.4	3%
Powerline/utility	0.3	0%
Transitional	47.7	1%
Public Institutional	86.5	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,592.6</b>	<b>100</b>

Because of some of the changes in the how MassGIS land use data is defined between 1999 and 2005, it is difficult to make comparisons between 2005 and prior years.

Figure 2-2 Existing Land Use



Source: MassGIS, 2005.

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## Build-out Analysis

As part of the land use analyses, a detailed build-out analysis for the Town of Hudson was prepared. This build out is a more detailed, and updated version of the build-out analysis that was completed in 2004.

The build-out study is a means by which planners can approximate the extent of future development. Different scenarios and assumptions are applied that yield data allowing one to compare the results and assess the effects of the current land use regulations and available land capacity in Hudson:

- The base build-out shows the maximum growth that is likely to occur pursuant to current zoning. This scenario estimates the total level of development (the number of residential dwelling units and the amount of nonresidential square footage) that will occur over time if the zoning remains the same over time. It is important to understand that this is not a prediction of what will happen, but what the **maximum** build-out potential could be in the future. Economics, market factors, and infrastructure capacity will likely influence the intensity and location of future development.
- The base build-out took into account several assumptions regarding the future development of two study areas within the Town including the reuse of former mill buildings, within the Adaptive Reuse Overlay District and reuse/redevelopment of buildings within the Downtown (C1 District).
  - The build-out of the Adaptive Reuse Overlay District, consisting of nine different parcels and five property owners was based on a redevelopment of 80 percent of the lot area and a 4-story building.
  - The build-out of the Downtown was based on maximum build-out of up to three stories, and 50/50 split of residential and commercial development.
- The base build-out considered a number of development constraints including Massachusetts-designated, wetlands, existing conservation land or Town-owned property, and slopes of greater than 12 percent within the Watershed Protection District.

In summary, the build-out showed the following results as shown in Table 2.4. It is important to understand that these numbers are for illustrative purposes only. There are a number of other factors to be taken into account when attempting to assess build-out primarily that the extent of development is market-driven and the timing and ultimate level of build-out cannot be predicted with certainty.

**Table 2-4 Future Build-out of Hudson**

	New Residential Units	New Commercial/Industrial Square footage
Residential Build-out	1,497	n/a
Commercial/Industrial	n/a	33,364,630
Adaptive Reuse Overlay District	236	1,701,062
Downtown	1,303	663,159
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,036</b>	<b>35,728,851</b>

Note: Detailed assumptions listed in Appendix X.

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## Land Development Regulations

This section discusses the important role zoning plays in guiding future land use decisions and thereby shaping the community. It analyzes the Town's Zoning Bylaws, providing descriptions of each of the districts in Hudson.

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### Overview of the Hudson Zoning Districts

The Town of Hudson Zoning Bylaws were first adopted in 1957. Numerous additions and amendments have been made over the years, with the latest revisions having occurred at the 2010 Annual Town Meeting. In 2007, the Town undertook major additions to the Zoning Bylaws including a new Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw, an Adaptive Re-Use Overlay District, and an Open Space Residential District.

The Zoning Bylaws establish nine districts and three overlay districts. See Figure 3.3 for a map of the zoning districts. Table 2.5 provides each zoning designation with the land use intensity and sizes for each district. District boundaries have not been changed since November 2010.

**Table 2-5 Hudson Current Zoning and Acreages**

Zoning Designation	Minimum Lot Sizes	Acres	Percent of Total
Single Residential (SA5)	60,000 square feet	1,060.0	14%
Single Family Residential (SA7)	30,000 square feet	660.2	9%
Single Family Residential (SA-8)	40,000 square feet	2,505.7	33%
General Residence/Single Family (SB and SB1)	15,000 square feet	1,252.7	17%
Multi-family (SB-3)	none stated	2.5	0%
Mobile Home District (SB 2 and 4)	5,000 square feet	69.2	1%
Commercial (C-1) Downtown	Allows conversion of upper floors to residential = 500 square feet of floor area per unit	47.7	1%
Commercial II (C2 through C13)	15,000 square feet	169.0	2%
Limited Commercial and Light Industrial District (LCI)	30,000 square feet	105.8	1%
Industrial (M1 through M5, and M-7)	30,000 to 60,000 square feet	1,611.3	22%
Total	n/a	7,484.0	100%

**Residential**

The residential zoning districts in Hudson consist of SA-5, SA-7, SA-8, SB, SB -1, SB – 2 uses. These are identified on Table 1 – Intensity Schedule. However, Hudson’s current zoning map contains more residential zoning districts than are referenced in the current zoning bylaw. For example, SB-3 (Multi-family) and SB-4 (Mobile Home) is not specifically referenced in the zoning bylaw although it is referenced on the official zoning map. SB-3 does not appear to have intensity or dimensional requirements. An overview by district is provided below.

*Single Residential (SA5, SA7, and SA-8)*

Most land in Hudson lies within this residential zoning district, which allows single-family dwellings. The main difference between these single family residential district (SA5, SA7, and SA8) is how densely developed the properties can be. Specifically, the minimum lot sizes which range from almost 1 and ½ acres (60,000 square feet) for SA5 to just under an acre (40,000 square feet) for SA-8, and ¾ of an acre for SA7 (30,000 square feet). These districts also allow municipal buildings, farm, poultry, or nurseries, offices and home occupations, and small family daycares caring for fewer than 7 children. In addition, bed and breakfasts and accessory dwelling units by special permit.



**What is zoning?**

Modern zoning began in the early 1900's in response to the location of potentially incompatible and noxious land uses next to commercial and residential areas. The zoning bylaw has evolved over the years as a means to limit the types of land uses that could locate in a particular area of the municipality, resulting in a separation of uses. Ideally, the Master Plan is the blueprint for the Town and the zoning bylaw is the regulation that implements the plan. Typically, a zoning bylaw regulates land use by:

- Specifying and distinguishing different land use types;
- Creating development standards for the size and shape of lots and the buildings erected on those lots;
- Addressing lots, buildings and uses that pre-dated the adoption of the zoning bylaw (non-conformities);
- Establishing criteria for the evaluation of permit applications for new buildings;
- Establishing procedures for permitting uses not specifically allowed by right;
- Defining terms that have specific meanings under the bylaw; and,
- Creating a map that displays the geographic extent of each zoning district.



*General Residence (SB)*

This large district allows single family housing on very small lots (a minimum of 15,000 square-foot lots) within three primary areas of Hudson, including a large area in the center of Town, a small area near southwest corner of Town, and a small area near the northeastern corner of Town.

*General Residence (SB-1)*

This district allows apartment style housing up to 4 stories tall by special permit in the SB-1, a small area within the southwest corner of Town. Specifically, the minimum lot size in this district is 15,000 square feet with a minimum of 6,000 feet for each dwelling unit.

*Mobile Home District (SB-2 and 4)*

This district allows mobile homes by special permit on lots a minimum of 5,000 square feet in size, the smallest size allowed for any zoning district within the Town. Only a few properties are zoned this district near the western border with Berlin (SB-2 and SB-4).

*Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)*

In 2007, the Town revised its zoning bylaw to allow for attached accessory units by special permit within or attached to single family homes so long as the additional unit maintains the appearance of a single family house. The units must have complete kitchen and baths in addition to meeting other dimensional and access requirements. The permits are administered and enforced by the Town's Building Commissioner as Zoning Enforcement Officer.

*Retirement Community Overlay District*

In 1997, the Town adopted an overlay district specifically for residential communities for seniors 55 and over. These planned communities, allowed by special permit only, have amenities specifically geared for seniors within close proximity to shopping and services. They must be at least 30 acres in size, at least 5,000 square feet per unit, and no more than one and a half stories tall.

*Bed and Breakfast*

The Town adopted a new bylaw in 2010 to allow bed and breakfasts by special permit within single family homes to encourage tourism and the preservation of the historic character of the Town's large and more significant properties.

*Open Space Residential Development (OSRD)*

In 2007, the Town adopted an Open Space Residential Development bylaw intended to preserve open space, encourage flexibility in the

design of residential developments, promote less sprawl and help maintain Hudson's traditional New England character. It requires a minimum of 50 percent of a parcel be provided as open space. The district reverts to the underlying zoning in terms of density. However, a limited number of additional units are allowed when the subdivision preserves additional open space beyond the minimum of what is required, or for the preservation of historic structures, and/or affordable housing units.

### **Commercial/Industrial**

#### *Commercial (C-1)*

This district allows a variety of commercial uses and allows the conversion of upper floors for residential use where the first floor is devoted to commercial uses. The C-1 district does not permit certain uses that are not compatible with the existing Downtown, such as commercial garages, junk yards, and drive-ins. The C-1 district includes the Downtown area along Main Street and near the rotary. Multi-family housing is not allowed in the C-1 district. The C-1 district allows additional floors to be added to a structure provided that the design is compatible with the character of the area, and that it is no higher than the lowest abutting building.

#### *Commercial II (C2 through C13)*

This district is nearly identical to the C-1 District, with the exception of allowing a commercial garages, junkyards and drive-ins. Only a few areas in Town are zoned this district and are scattered primarily within the central area of Town. The C2 through C10, and C13 commercial districts allow for multi-family housing.

#### *Limited Commercial and Light Industrial District (LCI)*

Located along Route 62 and Coolidge Street, this district allows for a variety of uses from retail sales, commercial garages, warehouses, hotels, and limited manufacturing. Adult entertainment is also allowed by special permit only.

#### *Industrial (M1 through M5, and M-7)*

This district allows for manufacturing and agricultural uses, with the only difference between the districts being minimum lot size. The M1 through 5 districts have a 30,000 minimum lot size while the M7 district has a 60,000 minimum lot size. The M-6 district includes the Intel manufacturing plant and offices as well as other industrial uses.

#### *Adaptive Reuse Overlay District (AROD)*

Adopted in 2007, the overlay district applies to a two clusters totaling about 53 acres within the center of Town to allow for mixed-use new development or mill redevelopment for residential and commercial uses. The bylaw includes site design standards that incorporate parking in the rear or side streets, low-maintenance landscaping, and pedestrian access. The first area includes five properties located near the intersection of School Street and Houghton Street along the Assabet River. The second area includes four properties with access from Tower Street.

*Wireless Communication Overlay (WC)*

This is an overlay district that regulates where and how wireless communication facilities can be installed. In general these facilities are allowed in the Limited Commercial and Industrial (LCI) and Industrial District (M1-M7) districts, as well as a limited number of Town-owned properties such as water towers.

**Natural Resources**

*Flood Plain/Wetland District*

This overlay district is largely designed to protect land from flooding. Development of new buildings is not allowed except for specific uses, such as recreation. There is a process for special permit.

*Watershed Protection District*

This overlay district allows residential development, as permitted in the underlying district, with a maximum density of one unit per acre, provided that the average slope of each lot shall not exceed 12 percent. It specifically prohibits any building, structure, land-disturbing activities, or excavations within 25 feet from the normal highwater line of all water bodies and courses within the watershed protection district.

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## Zoning Regulations

The Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) act as the special permit granting authority (SPGA) for different types of uses, though in most cases, the ZBA is the SPGA. The ZBA also has the authority to grant variances.

The Planning Board administers site plan review in Hudson. Site plan approval is required for wireless communication facilities, major additions, new parking, subdivision and changes of use from commercial to industrial uses. The main exception is that it is not required for single-family or two-family dwellings. In reviewing site plan applications, the Planning Board considers a number of

issues, including vehicular and pedestrian circulation, lighting and waste disposal.

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## Projects in the Pipeline

The following information about residential projects has been provided by the Town Planning Department, and is current as of December 2012.

- Brigham Hill III – 41 lot subdivision off Forbes Road under construction
- Westridge Retirement Community – 147 units under construction
- Northridge Apartments – 33 apartments on Broad Street under review
- Old North Greene – a 17 lot OSRD preparing to submit a preliminary plan
- Cabot Ridge Apartments (40B project) – 176 apartments, approved
- Bush Road Extension – 2 lot subdivision approved

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## Recommendations

As land use and zoning are intimately tied to a community's growth and development, many land use recommendations have been made throughout this Master Plan. See the Housing, Economic Development, and Transportation chapters for additional detailed recommendations.

### *Land Use Recommendations:*

- LU 1. Inventory all under-utilized properties of 2 acres or more and assess how the property can be developed or redeveloped to maximize its potential land use particularly for commercial, industrial, and mixed-uses.
- LU 2. Consider establishing zoning incentives to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of existing properties. Such incentives could include density bonuses.

### *General Zoning Recommendations*

- LU 3. Create one comprehensive table of uses to replace some of the existing narrative listing of uses allowed by right or special permit in each zoning district. This would make the zoning bylaw easier to read for residents and prospective developers.
- LU 4. Consolidate all of the definitions in the bylaw into one section, *Chapter 2, Definitions*. Currently, definitions are included in several different sections of the bylaw.
- LU 5. Review Table 1 – Intensity Schedule and the Town's official Zoning Map to ensure the zoning districts are consistent.

- LU 6. Update the parking standards and include both minimum and maximum parking standards to avoid areas that are over-parked and to establish a mechanism for reducing impervious coverage for new development. Consider allowing shared parking in certain areas such as Downtown Hudson.

***Residential District Recommendations:***

- LU 7. Review the SB district and its purpose, and consider allowing duplexes in this district by special permit if they meet certain design standards.

***Commercial District Recommendations:***

- LU 8. To encourage redevelopment and reuse of buildings within the C1 Downtown District, consider allowing buildings to add stories up to a maximum of three stories as of right, instead of only to the highest of the lowest abutting building.
- LU 9. Consider allowing small multi-family residential dwellings of 8 units or less whereby residential units on the first floor level are regulated by special permit and residential units above the first floor level are permitted by right within the C-1 District to encourage multi-family housing development in the Downtown. This would be an additional supplement to the bylaw's current provisions allowing residential on the upper stories within the C-1 District provided that the first floor is a commercial use.
- LU 10. Consider combining the C2 through C13 districts since these districts are virtually the same in terms of allowed uses and dimensional requirements. If this change is made, the Zoning Map would also need to be updated.

***Manufacturing District Recommendations***

- LU 11. Consider combining M-1 through 5, and 7, since these districts are virtually the same in terms of allowed uses and dimensional requirements. If this change is made, the Zoning Map would also need to be updated.

***Downtown Recommendations***

- LU 12. Develop a Downtown Wayfinding signage program.
- LU 13. Create Downtown design guidelines for major building renovations, new construction, and new signage.
- LU 14. Explore additional public parking on South Street.
- LU 15. Renovate Downtown sidewalks and streetscape improvements.
- LU 16. Improve pedestrian connections from Downtown to other key features such as Cherry Street and the Assabet River Rail Trail.
- LU 17. Host a regularly occurring farmers market in the Downtown area.

LU 18. Encourage streetscape improvements that create gateways to Hudson along Route 62 near the rotary and Downtown.

***Route 85 Recommendations***

LU 19. Develop a master plan for the Route 85 corridor that would address uses within the corridor to ensure there is adequate transition between the single family residential and the commercial areas, and that appropriate, possibly mixed use development is allowed.

LU 20. Reassess zoning along the Route 85 corridor to establish mixed use standards where appropriate.

***Adaptive Reuse of Former Mills***

LU 21. Design pedestrian linkages between the mill buildings and the Assabet Rail Trail, the Assabet River, and Downtown.

LU 22. Create and maintain a comprehensive inventory of buildings, occupancy status, tax title status, and other pertinent information within the AROD.

LU 23. Explore innovative techniques to encourage smart energy including green technologies.

LU 24. Identify all the infrastructure improvements that may be required to revitalize the district and attempt to fund through existing state level grant programs.

LU 25. Consider revision of AROD zoning to allow for increased residential density within the AROD.

LU 26. Explore financial tools to encourage new development in old mill buildings, such as tax abatements, Tax increment financing (TIF) or District Improvement Districts (DIF) Districts, long-term leases, and grants.

***Procedural Recommendations***

LU 27. For major development proposals, consider having monthly or regular cross-department review meetings with representatives from the Planning Department, Housing, Fire Department and Department of Public Works to review issues and make recommendations regarding developer proposals.

### *Farmland Preservation*

- LU 28. Educate agricultural landowners about the state's voluntary Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program, which provides an alternative to selling or developing their land. The program pays farmland owners the difference between the fair market value and agricultural value of their land, and in return, a deed restriction is placed on the land that prohibits uses that would negatively impact the property's agricultural viability.<sup>4</sup>
- LU 29. Encourage local agriculture through the development of farmers' markets. The state Department of Agricultural Resources provides technical assistance to people interested in starting farmers' markets.<sup>5</sup> The Town should also consider establishing additional community gardens on town-owned land. This could be done on a seasonal basis.
- LU 30. Encourage preservation through conservation easements of Hudson's actively used farmland.
- LU 31. Continue to support Hudson's community garden program and explore additional areas for gardens, such as educational gardens at public schools.

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<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program, <http://www.mass.gov/agr/landuse/APR/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Farmers' Markets, <http://www.mass.gov/agr/markets/farmersmarkets/index.htm>



Victor's 50s Diner, Hudson, MA