

## IX

### Economic Development

#### A. Tax Base Issues

Communities seek economic development in order to gain crucial non-residential property tax base, to increase local employment opportunities, and to fill gaps in the local retail and service sectors. The first local priority is usually to get a larger non-residential property tax base in order to support local services without over-burdening residences. In most local suburban and rural communities there is little concern with the number and type of jobs created since with present commuting patterns, relatively few people work within their own community and what jobs exist are predominantly filled by people from other communities. Thus, seeking a balance between employment and population is more of a regional concern than a local one. However recruiting specific types of firms can be appropriate to complement existing industries or to strengthen the local retail and service sectors, thereby offering more to residents and to shoppers from other communities.

#### Recent Trends

As of FY 2000, the town's tax base was 86.9% residential and open space, exceeded among contiguous communities only by Hanson at 89.91%, and well beyond the regional average of 78.02%. The residential proportion of the tax base in the other contiguous communities was comparable; 83.7% in Pembroke, 85.9% in East Bridgewater, and 86.2% in Plympton. In contrast, some highway-oriented communities with more retail trade or industry relied on the residential tax base for no more than 50.10% in Avon and 61.18% in West Bridgewater.

The non-residential portion of Halifax's tax base fluctuated between 10.90% and 12.40% from 1989 to 1999 and is now at its highest at 13.06%, presumably reflecting recent commercial development such as the Wal\*Mart store, but the basic imbalance remains.

Table VIII-1 below shows Halifax's valuations from FY1989 to FY 2000

#### B. Labor Force and Employment

As noted in Chapter II, the majority of the town's employed population work in professional, managerial, sales and service or executive jobs. In terms of industries, the town slightly exceeds the OCPC region in the proportion of jobs in government (primarily education), Agriculture; Transportation, Communication and Utilities; Trade; and Finance Insurance and Real Estate.

Most Halifax residents commute out for employment and few of the town's jobs are held by local residents as noted earlier. According to the 1990 US Census Trip Table, 3250 residents worked in the town or elsewhere, while 1116 people from the town and elsewhere worked in Halifax. Of the employed residents, 411 (12.6%) worked in the town and filled 36.8% of its

Table XI-1

Trends in Property Halifax's Property Tax Base 1989 to 2000  
In Thousands

FY	Residential	Open Space	Commercial	Industrial	Personal Property	Total	1-2 % of total
1989	\$310.6	\$3,176.0	\$30,409.6	\$2,615.9	\$5,434.6	\$352,230.0	89.1
1990	\$311.9	\$2,629.3	\$30,783.1	\$3,192.1	\$7,107.5	\$355,522.2	88.5
1991	\$316.0	\$2,126.9	\$33,237.4	\$3,122.1	\$7,363.8	\$361,804.2	87.9
1992	\$285.3	\$1,413.4	\$29,554.0	\$2,812.4	\$7,555.4	\$326,658.0	87.8
1993	\$269.0	\$1,387.4	\$25,533.0	\$2,671.9	\$7,507.9	\$306,085.2	88.3
1994	\$271.4	\$1,228.1	\$23,410.7	\$2,304.5	\$7,742.4	\$306,047.9	89.1
1995	\$271.3		\$25,640.9	\$3,571.0	\$7,190.9	\$307,683.0	88.2
1996	\$277.9		\$25,321.7	\$3,571.0	\$7,497.4	\$314,282.0	88.4
1997	\$285.5		\$25,927.7	\$3,571.0	\$7,811.0	\$322,822.4	88.4
1998	\$299.1		\$26,701.4	\$6,746.6	\$9,056.9	\$341,607.9	87.6
1999	\$322.9		\$27,047.0	\$7,110.9	\$8,924.1	\$366,031.3	88.2
2000	\$339.8		\$34,509.0	\$7,110.4	\$9,412.3	\$309,787.9	86.9

jobs, while 2839 (81.4%) commuted out. At the same time, 705 local jobs were filled by people commuting in from other communities.\* This is a common pattern; even when there is a rough balance in numbers and between skills needed and those of the labor force, many people will commute.

As of a recent (1995) count there were 106 businesses in Halifax including some grand-fathered activities or home businesses.

**C. Commercial Uses**

The Buildout analysis in the First Phase Community Development Plan report found 191 acres of Commercial/Business-zoned land, or about 1.75% of the town's total of 11,111.6 acres reported by the UMASS Department of Forestry and Wildlife Management's MacConnell Remote Sensing Program in 1985. (This has since been expanded to 203 acres by the rezoning of 12 acres west of the Wal\*Mart store for a proposed supermarket.) Of these, 49.6 acres (26%) or .46% of the town were actually in commercial use and 141 were vacant and privately-owned. Subsequent development of the Wal\*Mart store on 28.6 acres, the Bow and Arrow bldg. on 1.2 acres, the All Seasons Restaurant on 1.1 acres, the Tedeschi's store on 1.2 acres, and the Mutual Federal bank on an acre, have increased the total to approximately 83 acres (40.8% of the expanded CB-zoned area ) or .75% of the town.

\* (As noted earlier there is a discrepancy; the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training reported 714 jobs (including government) in the town for 1996, while the 1990 Census trip table reported 1116 people working within the community. However the basic pattern of out-commuting remains.

In all, less than 2% of the town's total land area is in commercial and industrial uses. However, the visual prominence of such development along major routes such as Rtes. 106 and 58 gives these uses a major impact on the town's visual character.

These businesses primarily serve the local population's day-to-day needs. Most of Halifax's commercial activity is along Plymouth St. (Rte. 106). See the Land Use Map, Fig. II-3.

The pattern of business uses reflects market demand within the present zoning. As shown on the Zoning map (Fig.XII-1), the Commercial and Business District is mapped:

- Around the Rtes. 58/106 intersection – essentially the town's commercial center
- Along Rte. 106 at the intersection with Rte. 58; roughly between South and Thompson Sts., and at the East Bridgewater town line.
- On Rte. 58 at the Hanson Town Line

Since only a 40.8% of the Commercial and Business zoned land is in such use, there is the potential for far more strip development along Plymouth St. This offers opportunities to prevent further strip development and to develop a stronger center. So doing would require re-zoning land along Rte. 106 to direct further commercial development into areas such as that around the Rtes.58/106 intersection.

About nineteen businesses and 5 vacant stores are found in three strip malls and several freestanding buildings around the intersection of Rtes. 58 and 106. This 20% vacancy rate is in relatively small stores across from the Wal\*Mart. It conflicts with the assumption that the Wal\*Mart would attract spillover customers for small complementary operations.

Another 35 firms are located on Rte. 106, west of Rte 58. Some of these are in the Commercial / Business zoned land immediately west of this intersection, while others are in a separate concentration further along Plymouth St, and at scattered points between Thompson and South Sts., and west of Elm St. The last includes a discretely-located auto parts operation on CB-zoned back land south of Plymouth St. A third grouping of businesses is on Monponsett St., just north of the intersection of Rtes. 106 and 58, and on the northern end near the Hanson town line. In all there are nine businesses on Monponsett St.

Other businesses, predominantly home occupations, are scattered throughout the rest of the town. There are three or more businesses on South St., Hudson St., and Elm St. and two or more on Holmes St., East Street, River Street, Twin Lakes Drive, and Lake St.

Halifax has no major comprehensive shopping center (except for the diversity within the Wal\*Mart itself), and no large contemporary supermarket. Until recently there was a supermarket of about 4500 sq. ft. in a 15,620 sq. ft. strip mall on Plymouth St. next to the Library and Elementary School. Since half of that store was used for video rentals and a liquor department, the actual store was about a tenth the size of most present supermarkets and about 1/20 that of a new superstore.

This small market has since been replaced by the new Jordan Hospital Wellness Center, leaving only the town's 2 convenience stores. Such limited local retail services reflects Halifax's moderate growth and its continued reliance on Brockton and elsewhere for major shopping. The closest supermarkets are in Hanson to the north, Carver to the South, Kingston to the East, and Bridgewater and Whitman to the west. A large supermarket is now proposed just west of the Wal\*Mart.

A 1995 feasibility study\* explained that supermarkets are expected to do \$500 business/sq. ft./year with consumers spending about 11% of their gross income on supermarket items. With a contemporary 40,000 sq ft. store, and a (1989) regional median household income of \$38, 606, it would take a population of about 12,245 (4,710 households at 2.6 persons each) to support a supermarket, assuming no competition. Since this is well beyond the 2000 population of 7500, any supermarket will have to draw customers from other communities. It is assumed that both the needed sales/sq. ft. and household incomes have increased, keeping this analysis valid. The presence of the Wal\*Mart attracting out of town customers makes such a supermarket increasingly feasible, particularly near the Rtes. 58/106 commercial center, and one is proposed.

There appears to be sufficient vacant commercial land for a supermarket in Halifax. Ideally it would be close to the Wal\*Mart sharing curb cuts and parking, and be integrated into the emerging town commercial center discussed below. Unfortunately, the proposed site is set back from Rte. 106 behind a row of houses and stores, though it is just west of the Wal\*Mart. It abuts the Wal\* Mart site but is at a lower elevation past the store's long, slender linear detention basin.

This layout would make it difficult to fully integrate the stores and their traffic circulation patterns. However town regulatory staff have observed that the narrowness of the detention pond could allow a bridge and a carefully-graded connecting road. This could make it possible to link the stores, thereby reducing the needed curb cuts and lowering the number of turns on and off of Plymouth St. To make the most of these remaining opportunities, the town must effectively and purposefully review and guide such proposals as it did with the many aspects of the Wal\*Mart store.

#### The Rtes. 58/106 Commercial Center Area

Despite its relative concentration of stores, restaurants, banks and other business, the Plymouth St./ Monponsett St. area does not function as a continuous, pedestrian downtown. Its layout remains more that of three highway-oriented strip malls and one big box store with people rarely walking between the quadrants. New growth is in small multi-tenant buildings or free-standing businesses to the west along Plymouth St. The strip malls are preferable to freestanding businesses since they are compact with stores abutting each other as on a traditional street. However their setbacks behind parking areas

\*Brockton Supermarket/Economic Development Center/Business Incubator Feasibility Study, Karl Seidman Consulting Services, 11/24/1995, supported by the US Economic Dev. Admin.

Halifax's very diffuse, auto-oriented commercial center. The new Wal\*Mart store is at #1, the Tedeschi's is at #2 and a supermarket is proposed at #3. Only the two strip malls facilitate parking at one spot while visiting several destinations.

keeps the ensemble from functioning as such a pedestrian-friendly street. In addition the stores in the southeastern quadrant are behind a gas station/convenience store. This may have advantages for sharing parking and accessways, but it further weakens the sense of a center.

Similarly, the Wal\*Mart store is highway-oriented and stands behind most of its parking. At the time it was observed that “if built close to the corner with minimal parking in front and some façade variation, multiple entrances, and well-designed pedestrian connections to the other stores it could strengthen the area’s visual and functional character as a small commercial center.” The developers objected to integrating the store with other activities and said that customers wanted to see all of the parking at once. Site conditions did lead to some of the reserve parking being behind the store, but the applicable standards still led to the store being built behind a large parking lot rather than being pulled in close to the other stores. The Planning Board and other town bodies required some valuable major façade improvements and circulation improvements through the site plan review process, but the store’s relationship to its surroundings changed little.

### Discussion

Like many communities Halifax has zoned land for commercial use far in excess of probable demand. This gives firms many areas where they can function due the easy access along these roads and it preserves the speculative value of the land for some owners. However it does these at the cost of undermining the neighborhood’s remaining residential character, degrading the town’s visual quality with commercial clutter, and scattering commercial uses which might function better in a group.

At the same time there is a need for small, strategically-placed areas of Commercial - Business zoning to accommodate neighborhood convenience shopping. These should be just large enough to accommodate one or two stores with minimum off-street parking and sufficient screening to protect adjacent residences.

### **D. Industrial Uses**

The 1964 Halifax Master Plan observed that “Halifax’s location with respect to major urban centers coupled with its relative inaccessibility on major transportation routes, both highway and rail, deem it unlikely that industry of any magnitude will ...locate in the town.” This has been proven true over the past 36 years. The town has about 922 acres of industrially-zoned land of which only 50 acres or 4.6% are in industrial use.

At the time of the First Phase Report Build-out analysis there were about 1,153 acres of Industrially-zoned land of which 50 acres (4.6%, or .04% of the town’s area) were in use, leaving about 1103 vacant privately-owned acres. Even these industrial uses were over-stated since they reflect the BFI landfill and support facilities, and since many of the uses in the Industrial Park to the north of Rte. 106 are more like heavy commercial uses.

A subsequent owner-initiated residential rezoning of approximately 226 of 273 Industrially-zoned acres west of Thompson St. and south of the landfill reduced this site to approximately 46.8 acres and reduced the total vacant, privately-owned Industrial land to 877 acres.. Development of about 25 acres at the MBTA station site and of 10.4 acres in the Industrial Park further reduced this to 841.86 vacant acres.

The 273 acres had been essentially landlocked between the landfill, the Bridgewater town line, and residentially-zoned land to the west and south along Thompson and Summit Streets. This study had earlier recommended continued industrial zoning if appropriate access could be developed, perhaps alongside the landfill, but otherwise acknowledged the appropriateness of housing.

Halifax's industrially-zoned land is generally on the outskirts of town. It consists of:

- Land on both sides of Rte. 106 at the East Bridgewater line, including 25 acres in the 15-lot partially-developed 35.4 acre Halifax Industrial Park (described below) and 25.5 acres largely occupied by gas-handling, electricity-generating support facilities for the closed BFI landfill. The Park is essentially a peninsula of open upland surrounded on three sides by emergent wetlands, open water and cranberry bogs. Though the upland is clearly developable, the Park obstructs the scenic open vista at the gateway to the town.
- The 46.8 acres south of the landfill, noted above. This is landlocked between new housing in the subsequent Highland Woods subdivision off of Thompson St., a powerline, the closed landfill, and the Bridgewater line. About 30% of this is mapped as wooded swamp on the Mass. GIS wetland's inventory maps, but the rest is shown as wooded uplands. As noted before, industrial use of this land will require appropriate access. This suggests reconsidering a potential access road along the alignment of the powerline from Rte. 106 or Thompson St.
- An irregularly-shaped approximately 32-acre area on the railroad track west of Rte. 36. This abuts 3 sides of the MBTA Rail station, partly surrounds a small residential cul de sac, and is close to the Twin Lakes Condominium development. The area between the houses and Holmes St. is largely wooded swamp and a portion is open marsh. The potentially usable upland is irregular and the largest portion west of the station is between wooded swamp and the railroad tracks. The MBTA's parking area has been expanded as much as possible within the present holdings. No expansion is planned until passenger capacity is increased. In all, the remaining industrially-zoned land is more suitable for MBTA expansion; limited station-related retail and housing; and open space / wildlife protection rather than for Industry.
- Approximately 503 acres of low-lying cornfields and wetlands south of River, Wood and Fuller Streets at the Middleboro line. See picture below. This is the former National Fireworks Co.'s munitions testing range, later owned and farmed by Cumberland Farms.

The setting of Industrially Zoned Land on the Bridgewater Line.

1= Industrial Park ; 2=Landfill service area and vacant; 3=Closed landfill;

4 =Remaining I-zoned land; 5= Highland Woods/Kestral Dr. subdivisions.

This includes 132 acres in USGS-mapped wetlands and 386.1 acres in mapped flood plain. The northern fringe has experienced recent housing development along the residentially-zoned Wood Street frontage. It has been proposed for donation to a public or non-profit open space protection agency.

- About 148 acres east of Rte. 58 on the Plympton line and 59 acres west of the road. The land to the West is largely open present or former farmland. The land to the East is a 1000' deep strip along Rte. 58, and an extensive curved area defined by the 50' contour below which adjacent land is in the Conservancy District. About 30 acres are in wooded swamp and 3.5 acres are in cranberry bogs. The most extensive upland areas are about 10 acres at the corner of Rte. 58 and the power line, 11 acres south of the cranberry bogs, about 5 acres of other upland frontage, and 34 acres about 900' back from Rte.58, north of the power line. This land may have increased potential due to its accessibility via Rte. 58 to the forthcoming relocated east-west Rte. 44 in Plympton.

Unused Industrially-Zoned Wetland (to the front), Upland, and Cranberry Bogs on Plympton Line.



Industrially-Zoned Cornfields Sloping to Wetlands South of Wood and River Streets, with New Form A housing on AR-zoned Wood St. Frontage.

The Industrially-zoned areas have site limitations and limited utilities. There is gas and water at the former munitions testing range and at the land Rte. 36, but these sites are largely wetlands and floodplain (see Wood St. land above) and the second has little useable land around the MBTA Commuter rail station. Only water is available to the Industrial Park on Rte. 106 at the East Bridgewater line and neither gas nor water is available at the largely low-lying land off of Monponsett St. at the Plympton town line.

Halifax's one industrial park is the 35.4-acre Halifax Industrial Park on Plymouth St. at the East Bridgewater line and across from the closed BFI landfill. Two of its occupants, a truck company and a distributor, are better classified as heavy commercial than as industrial, and the town's Recycling Center is an important public facility. Initially a local real estate firm reported difficulty marketing the site despite its good access off of Rte. 106, and its water service. While the prices were reasonable (\$80,000 to \$120,00 for one to four-acre parcels), some land closer to Rtes. 24 or 44 was reportedly less expensive. The perception was that the limited response did not reflect the closed landfill so much as the location "along way from anywhere."

The developer confirms that the lots are taking much longer to sell than originally anticipated. None-the-less, three new buildings are under construction. These are reportedly for a mix of industrial and heavy commercial firms ranging from steel fabrication to equipment rental.



New Construction at the Halifax Industrial Park, December 2000.

The town's only nominal industrial use of any size is the closed landfill and its support facilities. As discussed in the Phase I report, there may be room for some compact, well-sited light industry between the landfill and Rte. 106. Such use of that land would add useful space with less impact on the landscape than comes from the present park which blocks the view of open wetlands at the entrance to the town. Some very small industrial uses (e.g., a small machine shop and a roofing company) exist as grand-fathered non-conforming uses in residential areas along Elm St.

### Discussion

Like many communities, Halifax has more industrially-zoned land than is likely to be absorbed in the foreseeable future. Some of it is inappropriate for industry due to environmental limitations or limited accessibility, but may be appropriate for other uses. Thus the extensive wetlands south of Wood St. shown on Page X-33 in the Open Space Chapter (the aforementioned former munitions testing area) is more appropriate to a mix of residential, agricultural and open space uses than to industrial uses. The same is true for some the industrially-zoned land on Rte. 58 at the Plympton line.

Similarly, the remaining industrially-zoned land on Rte.36 beyond the train station has more potential for well-designed housing, limited station-oriented local retail uses, and protected open space than for industry.

On the other hand, the CB (Commercial-Business) District may allow Special Permits for any of the "Industrial" uses allowed as-of-right in the Industrial District. Thus it can allow "Light Industrial uses, including manufacturing, storage, processing, fabrication, packaging and assembly" by Special Permit. It can also allow "Public Utility structures and appurtenances" and "transportation companies" by special permit just as is required

for them in the Industrial District. In addition the C-B District allows related activities such as sales, storage and repair of vehicles, farm equipment, and machinery, and boat repair and sales as-of-right; and can allow wholesaling and warehousing; and auto body repair, welding, and soldering by Special Permit.

Thus there are more opportunities for these uses than the Industrial District alone provides. Many of these require Special Permits to prevent or minimize conflict with nearby residences and institutions. This range of allowable uses in the C-B District lessens the need for more Industrial areas. However, the same range of potentially allowable uses also increases the need to closely review the present extensive C-B zoning in existing residential areas, especially along Plymouth St.

This situation suggests encouraging light industrial rather than retail use of the C-B zoned land southeast of the intersection of Rtes. 106 and 58 and of the C-B zoned land behind the Jordan Hospital Wellness Center. A further step would be to rezone selected areas to a light industrial district with extensive buffering requirements and/or Special Permit guidelines. Without such protections these uses could be poor neighbors to continuing residential areas such as those along Plymouth St. and Country Club Drive.

#### E. Recommendations

1. Make the commercial center as compact as possible by locating the proposed supermarket as nearly contiguous with the Wal\*Mart store as possible and sharing parking and access ways.
2. Improve pedestrian connections between the Wal\*Mart and the grocery store, and with the rest of the commercial center.
3. Revise the zoning along Rte. 106 to direct most retail growth to the Rtes. 106/58 area (the Commercial Center) rather than scattering it along Rte. 106, thereby strengthening the Commercial Center and protecting existing residential and civic areas.
4. Consider enacting a downtown-oriented district minimizing yard requirements and encouraging rear parking or shared parking.
5. Analyze the four (4) quadrants for opportunities to concentrate growth in one or two quadrants; thereby reducing the need to cross streets.
6. Develop zoning provisions requiring special permits for developments above a certain size, perhaps 40,000 sq. ft. and draft related special permit guidelines.
7. Identify area suitable for small walkable neighborhood-serving retail areas and map them CB on areas of 1-2 acres (or retain small amounts of existing CB zoning) at sites such as the intersections of Thompson and

Summit Sts., South and Hayward Sts., Plymouth and Carver Sts., and Plymouth St. and Redwood Rd., along with the present store site on Holmes St. near Annawon Drive, and a spot on Rte. 105 near Highland Drive.

8. Closely study housing and commercial uses of the remaining Industrial and Commercial/Business-zoned land adjacent to the rail station, and consider re-mapping the land around the station to AR or CB.
9. Re-map the Cumberland Farms land south of Wood St. to AR or Conservancy, and acquire/protect much of it as combined open space/habitat and leased crop land.
10. Closely examine the estimated 149 acres of Industrially-zoned land north of Monponsett St. at the Plympton line for buildability and examine its potential, drawing on the experience of the firm marketing the present Halifax Industrial Park.
11. Revisit the idea of running an access road to the remaining estimated 46.8 acres of Industrial land south of the BFI landfill via a route between the closed landfill and the adjacent powerline.
12. Encourage displays within the Wal\*Mart store indicating the other stores and services in the surrounding commercial center.
13. Examine ways to discourage retail/service uses and to encourage light industrial uses of the less central C-B zoned areas, while protecting residential uses.