

July 29, 2026

Dear Selectboard Members,

We are passing along the final Village Center Plan created by RKG Associates and funded through MassDevelopment that we began together on January 14, 2026. The plan looks at two areas of shared concern in the Village Center. The first is Harmony Hall and the adjacent Catholic church. The second is the old Fratelli's building and the Terranova Market. All of these buildings sit empty or are underutilized and were identified collectively as priority locations for review at the initial walk-through.

What the study found

About 1,624 people live in Otis all year. In the summer, that number grows to about 7,000. Half the homes in town are summer homes. Almost every home is a single-family house, and there are only 72 rental units. Homes have also gotten much more costly, jumping from a median price of \$410,000 in 2019 to \$840,000 in 2025. The majority of homes here hold just one or two people, and in most, the oldest person is over 55. Otis has a lot of big houses and not many small ones. That leaves few choices for young people, older people who want less to care for, and workers who want to live where they work.

The study also looked at what people spend money on. It found room for a few small businesses. Places to eat, a small food store, or a general store fit best. Otis is not big enough for large stores or chains.

What the plan suggests

The plan has four main ideas: bring more shops and food to the Village Center, tie our public buildings together to feel like one place, fix the problems that block new building, and make Route 8 safer and nicer to walk. It also draws two pictures of what could be built someday. At the old Fratelli's and Terranova site: about 10 homes plus shop space and a small outdoor spot to sit. At the Harmony Hall site: about 4 homes plus space for shops, offices, town use, and a green. Three things stand in the way. Water comes first. The well that serves Harmony Hall, the Library, and the church is contaminated. No one can live or work in a building without safe water. Until we fix this, nothing else can move ahead. Second, both sites are mainly privately owned. Town leadership needs to keep talking with them. Third, Route 8 needs safer crossings, sidewalks, and better parking.

Suggested actions are to ask the USDA for money to study the water problem, keep talking with the building owners, await final soil test results at the Terranova site, and work with MassDOT on Route 8.

This plan does not spend any money. It does not buy any land. It does not approve any building. The drawings show ideas, not decisions.

Revitalization Committee Comments

Although the plan reviews information that is largely common knowledge, there are a few items that we feel most relevant to ongoing discussions and revitalization work. Infrastructure, such as a town water supply and sewer system size, is limiting development opportunities, suggesting further investigation into expansion and installation options. Communication with private owners remains difficult, and developer attraction is limited. Incentives for reuse should be considered to address this issue. The need for more diversified housing options is pressing and warrants the formation of a town housing committee or trust.

When our committee was formed, we all agreed that abandoned and derelict properties left unaddressed are not in the town's best interest. In sharing this report, we would like to hear your thoughts and receive your guidance for next steps as we enter our engagement with BRPC funded through the DLTA grant. We respectfully request a response or a joint meeting to discuss before our next meeting on August 24, 2026 at 10:00 am.

Sincerely,

Stacey Schultze

Chair, Town of Otis Revitalization Committee

*As of 8/24/26, the Selectboard has not responded to the report or cover letter.