

The background image shows a winter scene in a village center. On the left is a two-story house with a snow-covered roof and a small porch. To the right is a white church with a tall, multi-tiered steeple. The ground is covered in snow, and bare trees are visible in the background under a clear blue sky.

Village Center Revitalization Plan

Otis, MA

Final Report

June 2026

RKG



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Acknowledgements

Revitalization Committee

Stacey Schultze, Chair
Members of the Committee

Town of Otis

Brandi Page, Town Administrator
Larry Gould, Building Commissioner

Mass Development

Ben Murphy, Vice President of Real Estate

Consultant Team

RKG Associates, Inc.



Study Background and Purpose

The Town of Otis was given a grant by Mass Development to assist with revitalization efforts in the Village Center. RKG Associates was brought on to engage with the Town and their Revitalization Committee to focus on the reuse and redevelopment of two areas that currently contains vacant and underutilized properties. The two sites, chosen in conjunction with town and resident input, were Harmony Hall and the adjacent Catholic church as well as the former Fratelli's Restaurant and adjacent Terra Nova's Market.

Harmony Hall and Catholic Church

These buildings are located at the northerly end of the Village Center along North Main Road at the intersection of Route 23. The two properties are a combined 2.75 acres in size. Harmony Hall is one of the oldest buildings in the Village Center but is vacant and fallen into disrepair over time. The building currently faces a small privately owned central green and is adjacent to the Town's library building. The Catholic church is a single-story building on a 2.6-acre parcel of land backing up to the west branch of the Farmington River. The church's congregation is currently active but shrinking which could signal an opportunity for the Town to work with the church on redevelopment options if combined with the Harmony Hall site. Nearby civic institutions like the Town's library and the planned cultural center on the west side of North Main Street create a small hub of civic and cultural activity.

Fratelli's and Terra Nova

These two buildings are located along Route 8 at the intersection with Route 23, a key gateway into the Village Center. The two properties are a combined 1.28 acres each containing two-story buildings with parking to the front and rear of the buildings. The former Fratelli's restaurant is a mixed-use building with a commercial first floor and upper story residential combined for a total of 6,300 square feet of floor area. The Terra Nova building is a 7,000 square foot mixed use building with residential over first floor commercial. Both buildings are currently vacant. If combined, the two sites could offer an opportunity for a signature redevelopment at a prominent gateway into the Village Center.

The plan identifies opportunities to support economic development, strengthen the local tax base, and enhance overall vitality within the Village Center, while exploring partnerships and implementation strategies to advance redevelopment.

Harmony Hall



Fratelli's and Terra Nova

The Case for Revitalization



The Case for Revitalization

Otis is a small town located in Berkshire County, with a year-round population of 1,624 residents. The town's identity is closely tied to its natural resources, scenic landscape, and access to lakes, forests, and wildlife habitat. These assets attract a strong seasonal population, which is reflected in the town's housing stock. An estimated 51% of all housing units in Otis are seasonal homes that increase the Town's population during certain times of the year to around 7,000.

The seasonal population increases demand for dining, shopping, and local services. Otis is currently served by two business districts: East Otis and the Village Center. Both have a small business base but overall are limited in terms of the number and variety, so much of this demand is met outside the town. Today, residents must drive to places like Lee, Westfield, or Great Barrington for groceries and other shopping needs. From an economic standpoint, strengthening the Village Center would help Otis better serve residents, support local businesses, and retain more visitor spending.

According to the MA Department of Economic Research, Otis has an average of 53 establishments supporting about 313 jobs. The town's economy is anchored by a mix of service-oriented and goods-producing industries. Within the service economy, leisure and hospitality jobs have increased, reflecting demand from seasonal residents and visitors. However, these jobs tend to offer lower wages than the townwide average and are often seasonal in nature. This creates challenges for year-round economic stability and may make it more difficult for workers in these sectors to afford housing locally. At the same time, specialty trade contractors also remain an important part of the economy because they support construction and seasonal home improvements. Having a greater variety of housing choices at different price points in Otis could allow more residents to live year-round in the community improving options for younger and older adults, as well as those wanting to both live and work in Otis.

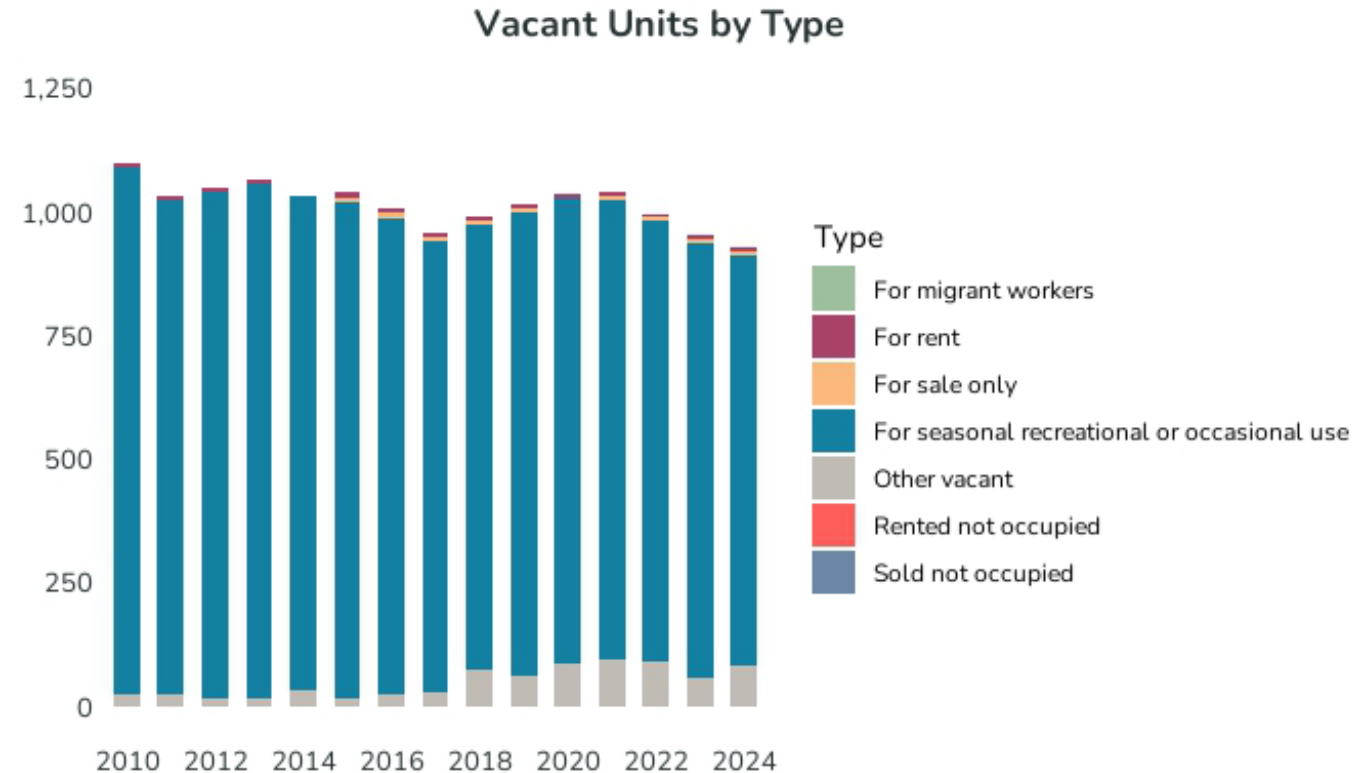


The Case for Revitalization – Housing as a Catalyst

Otis's housing market is characterized by a very limited range of housing choices and a high concentration of seasonal ownership. About 97% of the town's housing stock is comprised of single-family homes.

Of the homes in Otis, 90% are owner-occupied and 57% are considered vacant. This is largely due to the seasonal nature of the housing stock. This pattern highlights the town's identity as both a rural and seasonal community, but it also limits options for year-round residents, workers, older adults seeking to downsize, and households that may not want or cannot afford a traditional single-family home.

The Town's year-round population is the highest it's been in over a decade thanks to a post-COVID bump in those that became permanent residents. As more housing is taken off the year-round market by seasonal owners, availability will continue to decline, and prices are likely to escalate even further. This market pressure could be a benefit to new residential or mixed-use development in the Village Center by driving demand from year-round residents looking for other housing options.

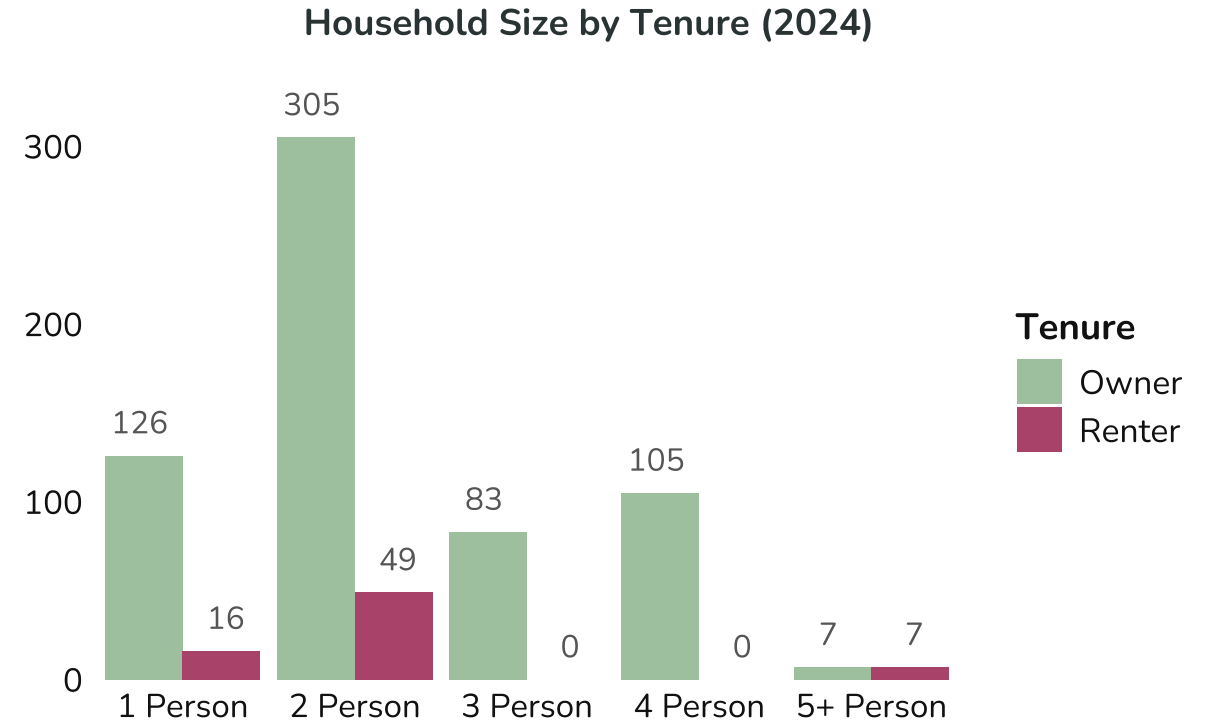


The Case for Revitalization – Housing as a Catalyst

Although Otis is a small community with a majority of its housing stock comprised of large single-family homes, 71% of households are either single person or two-person households. This is true for both owners and renters in Otis.

This is certainly a function of the age of most residents in Otis where 60% of all households in the town are headed by a person over the age of 55. With very little new year-round residents moving to Otis, it is likely that the current population will age in place with more older adults living in Otis as each year passes.

Smaller housing units with less maintenance and modern designs and accessibility features could serve a segment of the population that may be looking to move out of single-family homes as they age. The Village Center location would also put new housing in close proximity to many of the town's civic uses.



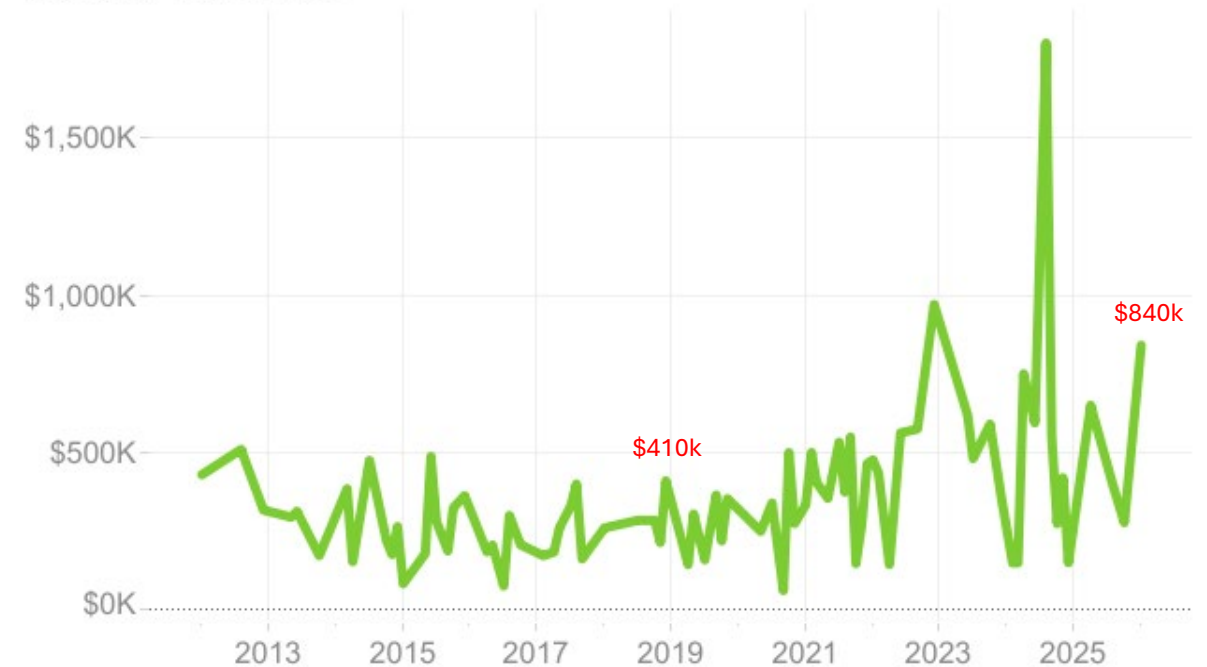
The Case for Revitalization – Housing as a Catalyst

Rising home values add further pressure to the local housing market. Although sale prices fluctuate due to the town's small number of transactions, the overall trend shows a significant increase over the past decade, with median sale prices rising from about \$410,000 in 2019 to about \$840,000 by 2025. Much of this was driven by seasonal housing transactions following the pandemic as people looked for housing in rural and scenic locations.

The town also has very few rental housing options. The Census reports a total of 72 rental units in Otis with 60 of those being single family homes. There are very few, if any, multifamily rental options in Otis for individuals or families looking for a smaller home or a lower entry price into Otis' housing market.

In a community where many service-sector jobs are seasonal or lower-wage, this can make it increasingly difficult for workers and younger households to live locally. These conditions point to a need for smaller, affordable housing types, particularly in locations that are proximate to existing infrastructure, services, and Village Center activity.

Median Sale Price

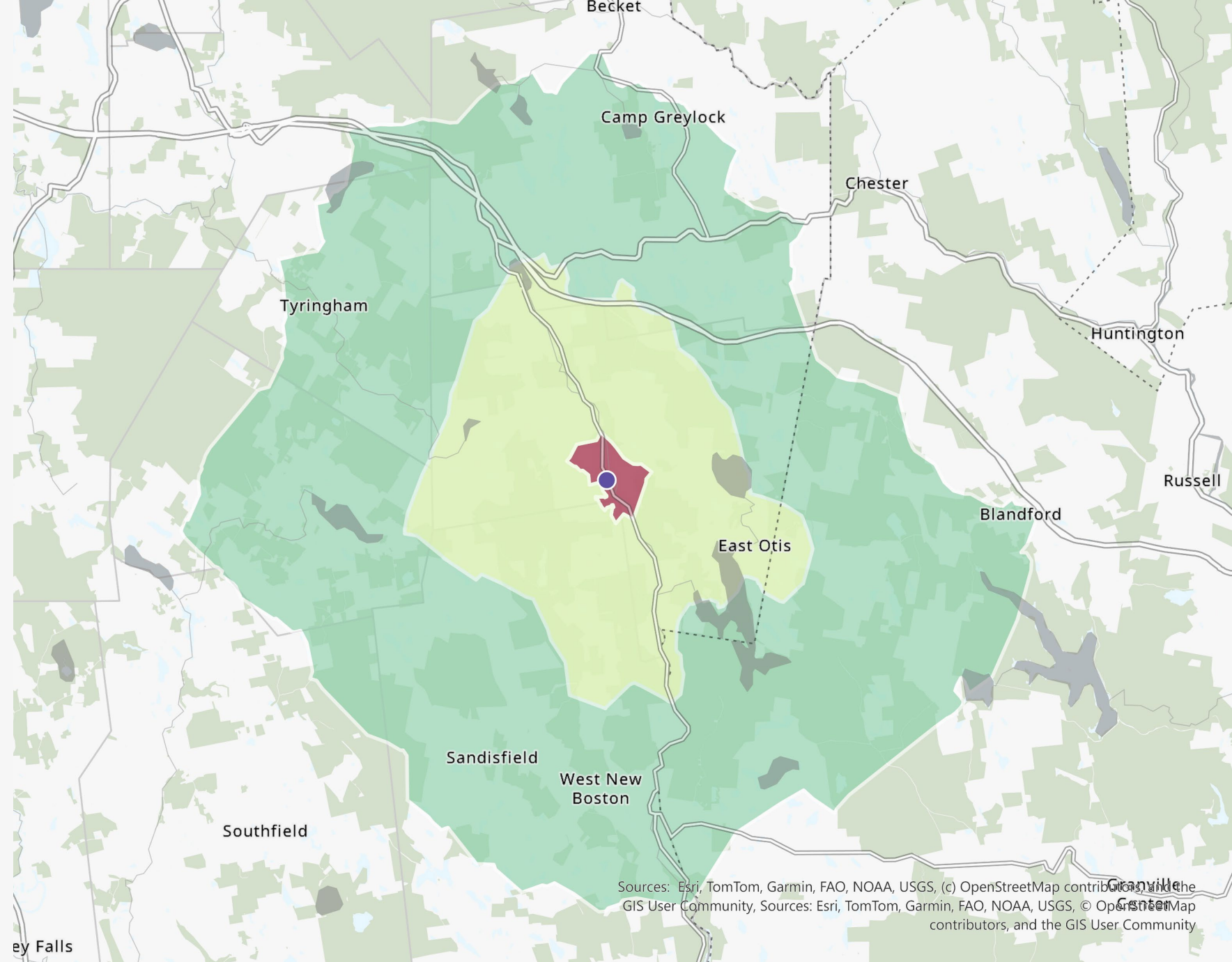


Commercial Opportunities

Key to a dynamic Village Center are opportunities to eat, gather, and socialize in a walkable and active environment. The presence of street facing businesses can be the difference between a Village Center that is oriented to the car versus those oriented toward the pedestrian. Today, Otis' Village Center is not an active, pedestrian-focused environment but there are opportunities to market the area to businesses that are missing.

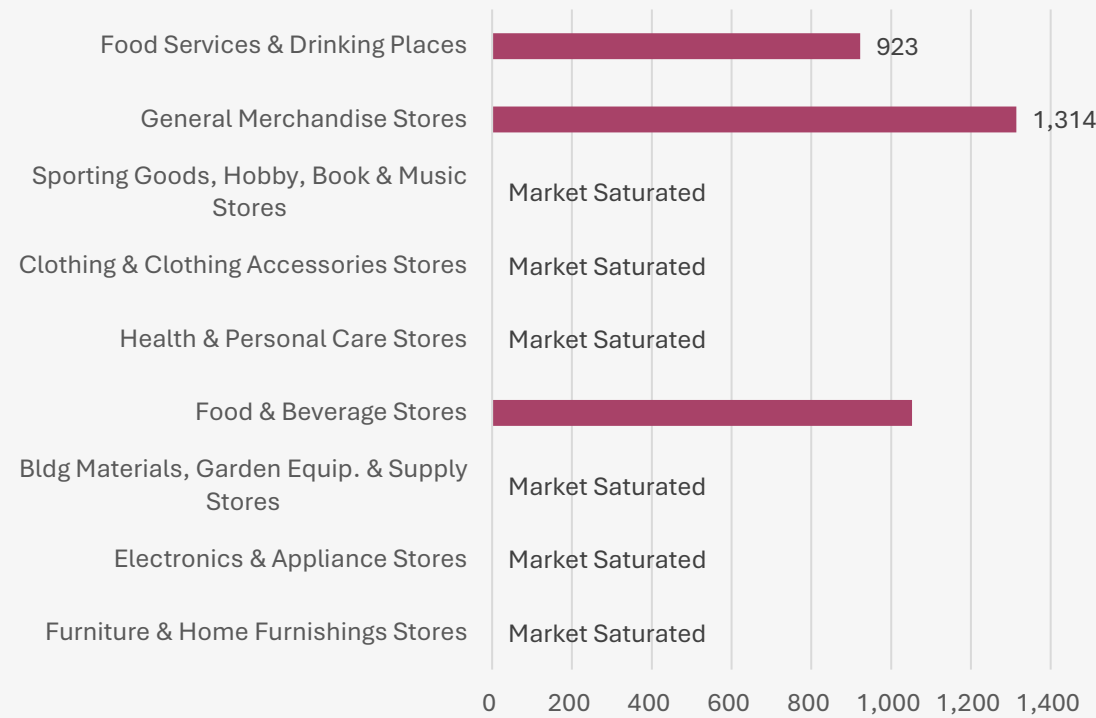
To quantify what opportunities there are to bring additional active uses to the Village Center, RKG analyzed retail sales and consumer spending data within three trade areas around Downtown Otis. This allows us to understand what residents are spending money on and where they are traveling to purchase goods and services.

The analysis covers three trade areas to help us understand supply and demand: the 1-mile trade area captures spending closest to the Village Center, a 5-mile trade area captures Otis and nearby portions of surrounding communities, and a 10-mile trade area captures a larger market area, generally representing communities within a 15- to 20-minute drive of Downtown Otis.

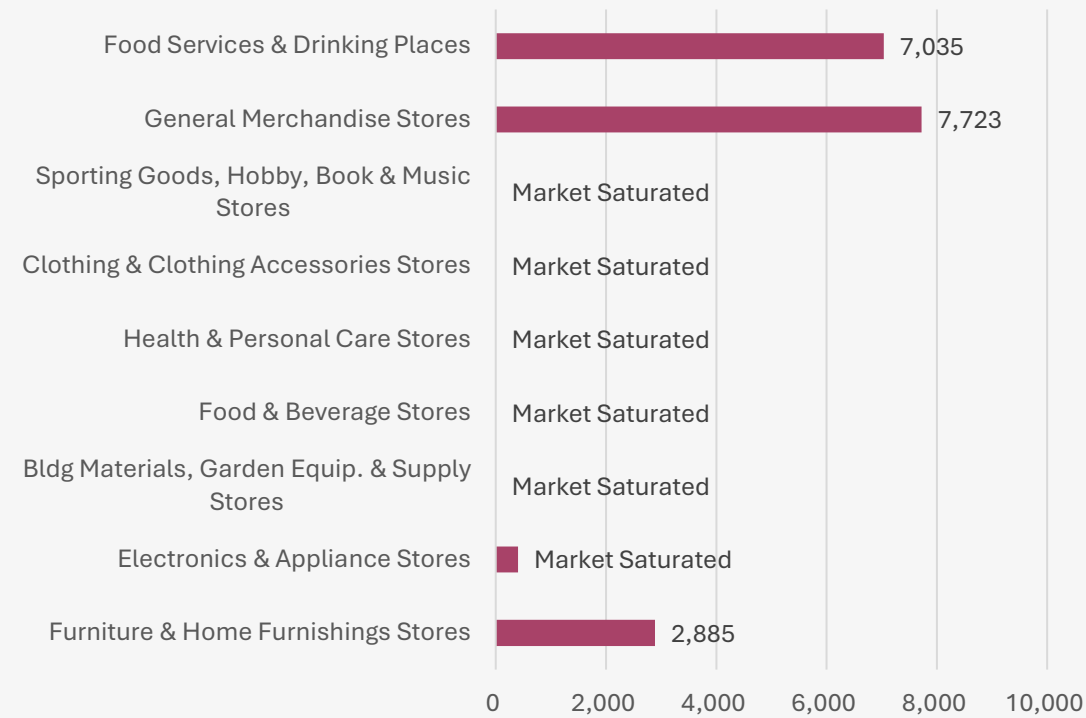


Commercial Opportunities

Estimated Supportable SF within 5 Miles



Estimated Supportable SF within 10 Miles



From a market perspective, the retail analysis suggests that Otis has selective, but meaningful, opportunities for commercial uses that would fit well within a Village Center concept. Within a 5-mile radius, market demand is concentrated in food services and drinking places, general merchandise, and food and beverage stores. When the trade area is expanded to 10 miles, there is continued demand for these businesses and additional potential for furniture/home furnishing stores.

This indicates that the Village Center is best positioned for targeted, small-scale commercial activity rather than broad retail expansion. Restaurants, cafés, small food and beverage shops, convenience-oriented retail, and specialty goods are likely to be the most appropriate uses because they align with local needs, seasonal demand, and visitor activity. It is important to note that this data does not reflect visitation and tourism that may be coming to Otis during the peak season which only adds to the potential demand for retail, goods, and services.

Flexible Zoning

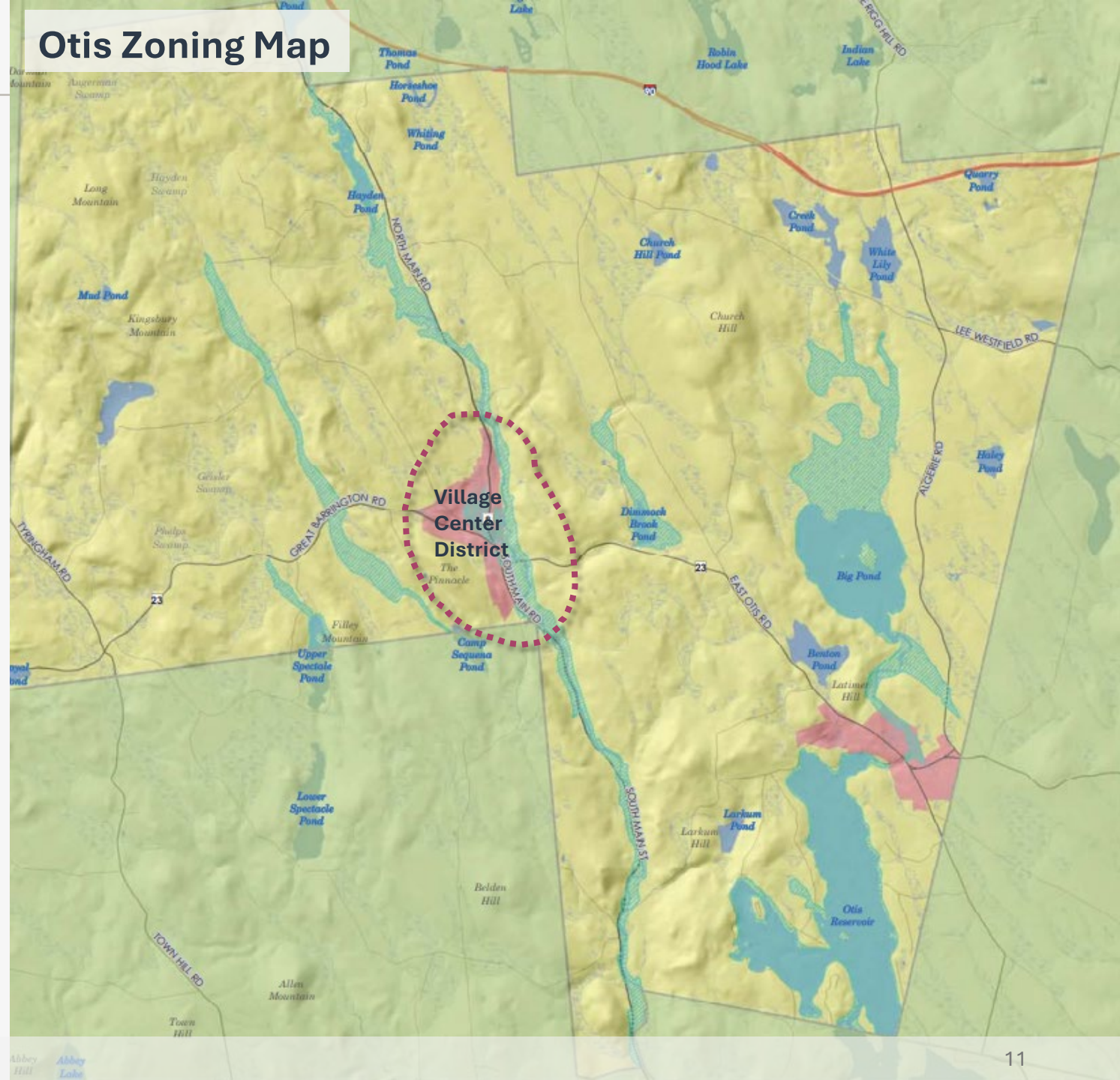
In order to accommodate the enhancement of the Village Center, Otis has already established a Village Center zoning district that allows for a range of uses with flexible dimensional requirements. This will help the Town and future developers respond to market demand for small-scale mixed-use development on underutilized parcels

Activating ground-floor commercial space in a stand-alone building or as part of a multi-story mixed-use building can accommodate restaurants, cafés, or other local-serving businesses. Residential units above commercial can add modest housing supply and create a built-in customer base. When scaled correctly, this type of development is especially appropriate in a rural Village Center because it uses land efficiently, reinforces traditional main street character, and adds activity without requiring large-scale development.

Although the Town's Zoning Bylaw is flexible in terms of uses and dimensions in the Village District, there are some elements that may be restrictive when it comes to creating this vision for the Village Center. Recommendations the Town may wish to consider for zoning changes include:

- Clearly defining mixed-use development in a definitions section of the Bylaw and in the use table.
- Update Section 150-4.4 to allow more than one multifamily dwelling unit per lot in the Village District.
- Consider reducing the 35-foot front setback for residential structures in the Village District or specify which type of residential use this applies to. For example, the Town may want to consider reducing setbacks for a mixed-use but not a single-family home.
- Clarify whether the restriction that no business use may exceed 10,000 square feet of gross floor area applies to an individual business or the entire building.

Otis Zoning Map



Market Opportunities for the Village Center

Residential



- Population has steadily grown over the past 15 years.
- Household income has risen over the past 10 years.
- Increasing number of one- and two-person households.
- Vacancy for available year-round units is extremely low.



Smaller-scale residential and mixed-use development could add year-round units that would appeal to younger and older cohorts who want to live in the Village Center.

Retail

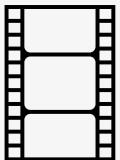


- Incomes are growing.
- New households would bring more local spending power.
- There is spending demand that could be recaptured within the town.



Retail potential is focused on food and beverage and other local-serving, smaller-format uses that support spending recapture rather than broad expansion.

Civic and Cultural Uses



- Existing and planned civic and cultural uses could serve as an anchor for Village Center activity.
- These uses, in addition to Otis' natural resources, could draw more visitors to support Village Center activity.



Identify opportunities for a few smaller events in the Village Center that could build on the larger annual Community Day event.

Vision Plan



Key Themes of the Vision Plan

The vision plan translates the opportunities for the Village Center to a set of key priorities that could help catalyze revitalization efforts. These four big ideas can help move the vision to reality:

- **Strengthen commercial activity in the Village Center**
The Village Center has limited commercial activity despite seasonal and local resident demand. Coupling residential and commercial development could help bring more people to the Town Center but also allows residential uses to help offset higher construction costs in today's market.
- **Create a more coordinated civic core**
The Library, Harmony Hall, church buildings, and nearby Town-owned parcels are located close to one another, but do not function as a coordinate civic core. Tying these places and spaces creates reasons to come to the Village Center that could work in tandem with new commercial and cultural spaces.
- **Address feasibility constraints on key redevelopment sites**
The Old Otis Inn, Terranova Market, Harmony Hall, and adjacent church properties are located along Route 8, making them important to the image and function of the Village Center. However, several of these properties are constrained by feasibility issues such as building age and structural condition, site contamination, water supply limitations, lack of owner participation, and uncertainty about future investment.
- **Improve the public realm**
Route 8 is the primary roadway connecting the Village Center, but the roadway design, travel speeds, and streetscape is not consistent with a walkable village center feel. Designing the roadway to reduce speed alongside a more comfortable pedestrian environment would improve walkability and increase the time visitors spend in the Village Center.



Vision Plan

The map to the right illustrates the locations of some of the core revitalization themes for the Village Center.

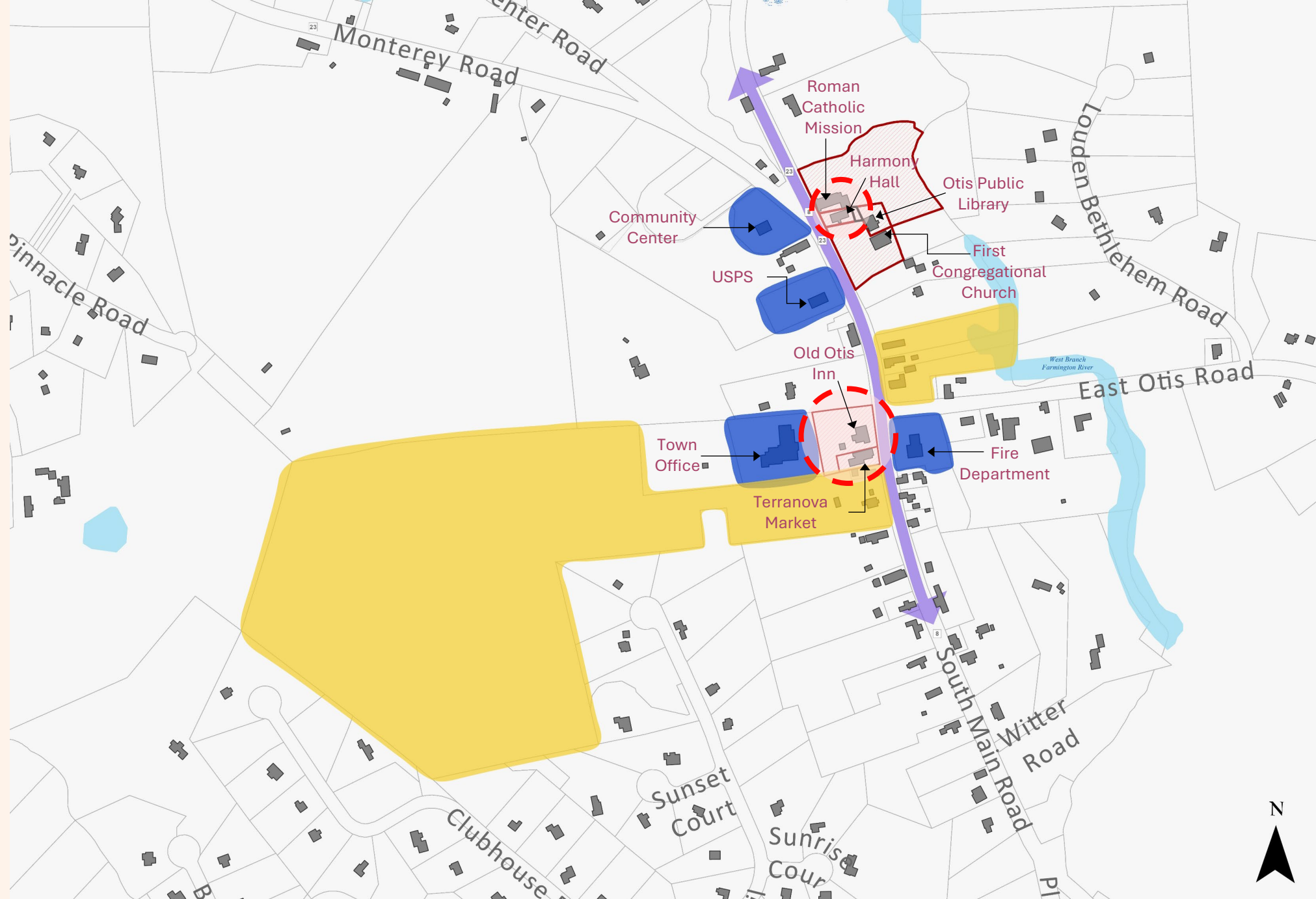
Strengthen Commercial Activity

Create a Coordinate Civic Core

Future Redevelopment Opportunities

Future Redevelopment Opportunities

Improve the Public Realm





Strengthen Commercial Activity in the Village Center

Strengthen Commercial Activity in the Village Center

For towns as small as Otis, but with potential to leverage both year-round and seasonal populations, it can be difficult to make the case for revitalization. As noted earlier in the report, we believe there is latent demand from those who are already here in Otis in addition to those who might be attracted to spend their money in a revitalized Village Center. We also recognize the path forward is not easy. Many smaller, rural communities are grappling with similar issues of how to keep their towns active and attractive.

The following strategies are potential ways Otis can strengthen commercial activity in the Village Center without relying on attracting outside investors or larger regional/national chains.

Activate the Building Owners, Not Just the Buildings

The biggest hidden barrier in towns like Otis may not be the absence of entrepreneurs, but vacant building owners who may not know what to do. They often have unrealistic rent expectations or sale prices, may not know how to do basic improvements, and are afraid of liability. A targeted effort to work directly with 2-3 key building owners, show them the market is here, and try to get them to understand the impact their vacant building is having on the Town's revitalization effort could help. No building owner outreach = no storefronts = no businesses, regardless of other efforts.

Lower Every Barrier to Entry

A town with limited resources can still offer the most valuable thing a small business needs: ease and predictability. This means eliminating or deferring permitting fees for new businesses, streamlining the licensing process to days not weeks, explicitly allowing home-based businesses and cottage food operations, tolerating temporary and informal uses (food trucks, pop-up markets, seasonal vendors), and making it clear publicly that the town wants businesses and will make it easy.



Strengthen Commercial Activity in the Village Center

Build Foot Traffic First, Businesses Second

Businesses follow people. Before a business owner may be willing to take a chance on opening a coffee shop, you need a reason for 50 people to show up in the Village Center. This likely means temporary events, pop-ups, markets, and community events to draw people to the Village Center and make them aware that this is a center of activity in Otis. Ensure that local entrepreneurs and small businesses are invited to participate as those could be potential targets for an eventual brick and mortar location.

Look Internally for Capital Resources

Otis not only benefits from a dedicated year-round resident base, but also from a significant second home/seasonal population. These folks purchased homes in Otis and are financially invested in the community and its success even if they are not full-time residents of the town. They likely want the same things that year-round residents want for the Village Center – more activity, businesses, and things to do. To help revitalize the Village Center, the Town may want to first look to its citizens for funding through a crowd sourced real estate model. This has been successfully deployed in small towns and rural centers across the country and serve as a more risk adjusted capital source compared to traditional banks and lenders.

Façade Improvements

To illustrate Otis is serious about revitalizing the Village Center, it may have to come to the table and begin investing first. This does not have to mean big dollars spent on a complicated façade improvement program. Small towns across the US have invested through sweat equity creating Community Build Days where volunteers take on small, manageable projects that improve the visual or physical aesthetic of a building. This could be paint, landscaping, cleaning, or small repairs. Programs like the Home Depot Foundation or Lowe's Hometowns program provide paint, materials, and tools if matched with volunteer effort.

Case Study: [Main Street LLC Model](#) Perry, New York

Rick Hauser, the Mayor of Perry, NY (a small upstate New York village), created a community-based for-profit development corporation called Main Street LLC. He asked local residents to invest whatever they "could afford not to see for a while" and pooled that money to purchase and renovate vacant downtown buildings.

In Perry, \$580,000 was raised to purchase two downtown buildings. The acquired buildings were repurposed for local entrepreneurs at affordable rents, eventually became profitable, and returned investors' money. The model has since been replicated in other small towns.

This is not a grant program or a government initiative, but a community organizing and legal structure that a town can stand up with a local attorney and some community will.



Create a More Coordinated Civic Core

Create a More Coordinate Civic Core

In small towns, civic buildings often do more than providing services. It is where residents come for public services, community events, meetings, worship, learning, and informal gathering. Unlike commercial revitalization, which depends heavily on private property owners and business demand, a civic core can be strengthened through coordinated public action, partnerships, programming, and site improvements.

A strong civic core should not function as a set of separate buildings. It should operate as a shared public destination. Otis already has the basic elements of a civic core. The Library, Harmony Hall, Town Office, Fire Department, post office, churches, and open spaces are located close to one another. However, there is an opportunity to activate the area and make it more accessible to both residents and visitors.

The following strategies are potential ways Otis can create a more coordinated civic core:

Use public investment to support private activity

Public investment in the civic core can help reduce perceived market risk for nearby private investment. Events, open space/plaza, and pedestrian improvements can bring people to the Village Center and activate the area. If these activities are located near existing or future businesses, they can increase foot traffic, local spending, and indicate that the Town is committed to revitalization. Over time, this can make nearby properties more attractive for reinvestment and redevelopment.

Use open space more smartly

Open space in the Village Center should not be treated as leftover land. Open spaces should be designed and programmed for year-round and all ages activities, creating places that are more inviting, accessible, and functional.



Create a More Coordinate Civic Core

Program before building

Otis does not need to wait for major redevelopment to activate the civic core. Small events can help test what people respond to and build support for future improvements. Examples could include outdoor library programs, seasonal craft markets, food trucks, local history walks, small performances, community dinners, or recreation-related events tied to the town's lakes, trails, and seasonal population.

The [Renton Downtown Civic Core Vision and Action Plan](#) provides a strong example of how a community can organize civic revitalization around phased, place-based actions. Rather than treating downtown improvements as one large project, the plan establishes three organizing themes: Sustain, Activate, and Create. These themes help distinguish between actions that can improve existing conditions, actions that can bring more activity to underused spaces, and larger investments that can create new public spaces, stronger connections, and future development opportunities.

The “Sustain” approach focuses on supporting what is already working. This includes smaller improvements such as storefront upgrades, seating, shade, trees, food carts, pop-up retail, and better use of sidewalks.

The “Activate” element focuses on bringing new energy to underused places. This includes renovating existing buildings, improving public spaces, and encouraging redevelopment where it can enhance the streetscape.

The “Create” approach focuses on larger public investments that can change the overall function. This includes improving parks, trails, infrastructure, and publicly owned facilities.





Addressing Feasibility Constraints on Key Redevelopment Sites

Addressing Village-Wide Water Availability

One of the central challenges to existing buildings and future development in the Village Center is the availability of a clean and reliable water source. Buildings in the Village Center are not currently connected to a public water source like they are for sanitary sewers. Each parcel of land is responsible for its own local water source, typically through an onsite well. Over time, these wells have dried up or become contaminated to the point where parcels like the Catholic Church do not currently have a water source for the building.

This challenge is critical to solve, as without safe and reliable water to a building there is no possibility of occupying the building with new residents nor commercial uses. It was not the intent nor scope of this plan to solve the Village Center’s water issues, but there are steps the Town can take in conjunction with property owners to begin to understand the breadth of the issues and ways to solve this intractable problem.

Rural communities across the United States are often faced with this problem due to a lack of resources to establish public water systems as well as funding to ensure proper maintenance over time. Fortunately, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is one of the few funding sources that provides grants and loans for rural communities to conduct water system studies as well as the actual infrastructure once a solution is identified.

A first step for Otis to consider may be applying for a [USDA Rural Development Predevelopment Planning Grant](#). The Town should contact the USDA local office covering Massachusetts to check on eligibility first to ensure this program is available and would be a viable first step. At the state level, Otis may be able to pursue grant opportunities through MassWork’s small community set aside for a planning level study if it’s directly supporting the revitalization of the Town Center. This program comes with a \$1M cap per project.

Potential Sources of Funding

Program	Eligible Use	Amount / Terms	Notes
USDA RD — Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program	New water systems, treatment plants, distribution mains, storage tanks, source development	Grants up to 75% for low-income communities; low-interest loans (as low as 1.375%) for remainder	Primary federal program for rural water. Communities ≤10,000 pop. Only federal program exclusively for rural water/waste.
USDA RD — Predevelopment Planning Grant	Feasibility studies, engineering reports, environmental reviews before major project application	Up to \$60,000 grant	Best first step. No local match required. Apply through USDA state office.
USDA RD — Emergency Community Water Assistance Grant	Emergency water supply situations where existing source is contaminated or inadequate	Up to \$500,000	For communities where public health is at risk from contamination. Fast-track available.
EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)	Treatment, transmission, distribution, source development, storage, system creation	Low-interest loans; some grant subsidies for disadvantaged communities	States must direct ≥15% of annual DWSRF allotment to systems ≤10,000 pop. Apply through state drinking water agency.
EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)	Nonpoint source, water quality, decentralized systems	Low-interest loans	Less directly applicable but can support water quality aspects of projects.

Addressing Building Water Systems

While the town is working toward addressing a larger solution for the Village Center, there are water systems that can help address needs at the building level. If individual or shared well systems can be put in place to bring water to the building itself for sinks, toilets, showers, etc. there are other systems that can help with fire suppression in multistory buildings. Similar to the overall water system, there are individual solutions as well as larger systems that can address multiple properties at the same time. Some examples include:

Underground Cisterns

Pre-cast concrete, fiberglass, or corrugated steel tanks buried underground, filled by tanker truck or well, with a dry hydrant connection. Common sizes range from 10,000 to 30,000+ gallons. Cisterns are required by local fire departments when no other adequate water source exists. Multiple cisterns can be distributed throughout a town center to address broader areas.

Dry Hydrants

A dry hydrant is a non-pressurized pipe system installed in a static water source like a pond, lake, cistern, or purpose-built tank that allows fire apparatus to connect and draft water. Where a year-round pond or lake exists on or near the property, a dry hydrant can serve as a cost-effective alternative to a cistern.

Elevated Storage Tanks (Standpipes)

Once a community well or treated supply exists, an elevated storage tank (water tower) can be an effective way to simultaneously provide system pressure, equalize daily demand fluctuations, and maintain a large fire flow reserve.



Potential Redevelopment Sites: Old Otis Inn and Terranova Market

Recognizing there are larger issues at hand in the Village Center that may limit significant progress on redevelopment sites in the near-term, this plan outlines steps the Town could take to continue to advance its revitalization goals. For both redevelopment sites, the plan offers a set of short-term and long-term strategies.

The Old Otis Inn/former Fratelli's and Terranova Market properties, located at the intersection of Route 8 and Route 23, are well-positioned for future redevelopment. Their visibility from Route 8 provides an opportunity to strengthen the Village Center while supporting outdoor dining, housing, and a more attractive public realm.

Both properties already reflect a mixed-use development pattern, with commercial space on the ground floor and residential space above. The buildings are located close to the road, which helps frame the street. However, the current site layout is largely defined by surface parking, limited pedestrian amenities, and aging building conditions. As a result, the properties do not contribute to the visual quality to the Village Center as their location would suggest.

This creates an opportunity to build on the existing building form while keeping future development consistent with the scale and look of the Village Center. Redevelopment of these sites could provide higher-quality commercial spaces that accommodate the types of businesses most supported by the market, including restaurants, cafés, small food and beverage stores, and convenience-oriented retail. This approach would leverage existing demand rather than relying on speculative future growth.



Existing Challenges: Old Otis Inn and Terranova Market

Although these two properties offer an excellent opportunity at a key location in the Village Center, there are several constraints that currently limit near-term redevelopment feasibility. The Town has not been able to establish consistent communication with the property owners, which limits the ability to confirm future investment plans, interest in redevelopment, or willingness to sell. Because the properties are privately owned, the Town cannot directly implement building or site improvements without owner participation.

There are site contamination concerns on at least one of the properties due to a fuel tank leak, and the Town is working with the property owners on testing and remediation. This process could take 2-3 years and may affect the timing, cost, and type of development that can occur.

As noted earlier, water supply is also a critical constraint. Although there is an existing well on the Old Otis Inn site, current capacity may not be sufficient to support more intensive uses such as restaurants or multifamily housing. These uses typically require more reliable water service for restrooms, food preparation, cleaning, and potential fire protecting needs.

RKG was not able to determine the location of the existing wellhead on the Old Otis Inn site. This will need to be verified before advancing any formal redevelopment scenario. Its location may affect building layout, parking, outdoor dining areas, utility placement, and required protection buffers. Water quality and yield should also be evaluated to determine whether the existing source can support future uses or whether improvements such as a new well, shared well, treatment system, storage tank, or fire protection storage may be needed.



Short-term Strategy: Old Otis Inn and Terranova Market

The short-term strategy for the Old Otis Inn and Terranova Market sites focuses on reducing uncertainty and positioning the properties for reuse instead of redevelopment. Although the buildings may remain largely as they are today, the Town can still make progress by addressing the technical, regulatory, and ownership questions that currently limit redevelopment feasibility through the following steps:

- **Continue property owner outreach**

The Town should continue outreach to property owners to understand their long-term plans, interest in reinvestment or sale, and willingness to participate in a future redevelopment partnership.

- **Advance environmental testing and remediation**

The Town should continue working with the property owner and other stakeholders to complete environmental assessment and remediation. A clear understanding of site contamination conditions will be necessary before acquisition, financing, reuse, or redevelopment can move forward.

- **Identify and verify water supply constraints**

The Town should confirm the location, condition, quality, and yield of any existing wells serving the properties. This information will help determine whether the sites can support more intensive uses or whether additional water infrastructure will be needed.

- **Coordinate with MassDOT on Route 8 improvements**

The Town should work with MassDOT to evaluate streetscape, crosswalk, traffic calming, signage, and gateway improvements adjacent to the study area. These improvements could strengthen the public realm while longer-term redevelopment issues are resolved.

- **Explore the potential for acquisition or redevelopment partnership**

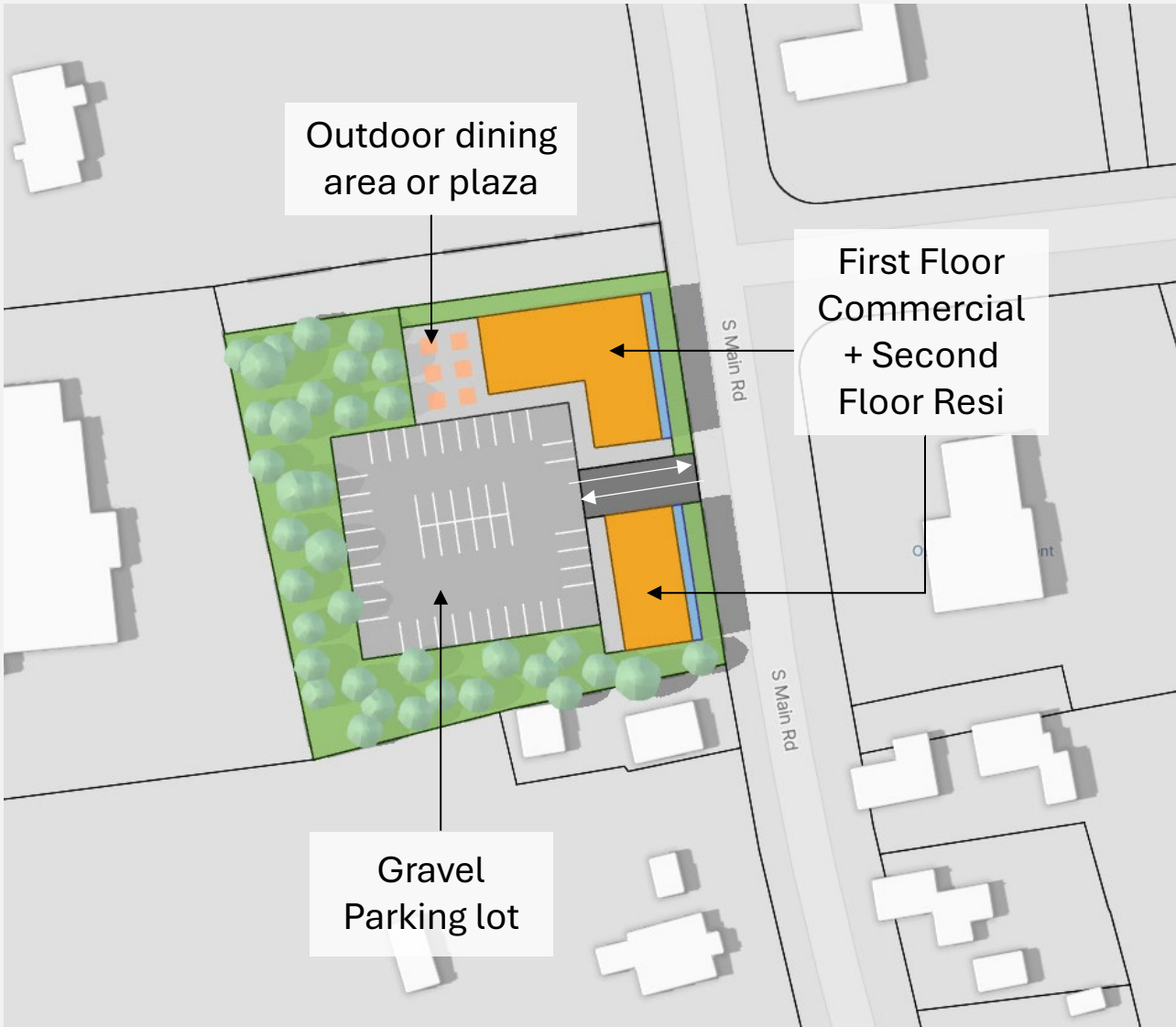
If the owners become interested in selling or redeveloping, the Town could further explore the potential for acquisition directly, work with a development partner, or issue a redevelopment solicitation that reflects the Town's vision for a mixed-use gateway site. The Town should evaluate the risk involved if the contamination on the property(ies) has not been fully remediated. Although there are grants and funding available to municipalities for environmental clean up, the Town will need to determine if it is willing to take on that risk.

Long-term Strategy: Old Otis Inn and Terranova Market

The long-term strategy for the Old Otis Inn and Terranova Market sites envisions how the two parcels could function as one mixed-use site. The intent is not simply to add new buildings, but to organize the site in a way that makes better use of frontage, improves circulation, supports market-tested commercial uses, and introduces a modest amount of housing in a central location.

The concept builds on the existing mixed-use character of the properties by placing commercial space on the ground floor and residential units above. It includes approximately 10 residential units across the two sites, with a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units. This scale is intentionally limited and responds to the opportunity to add smaller housing options.

Terranova Market Site	
Unit Type	Count
1 Bed	2
2 Bed	1
Old Otis Inn Site	
Studio	2
1 Bed	3
2 Bed	2
Total	10



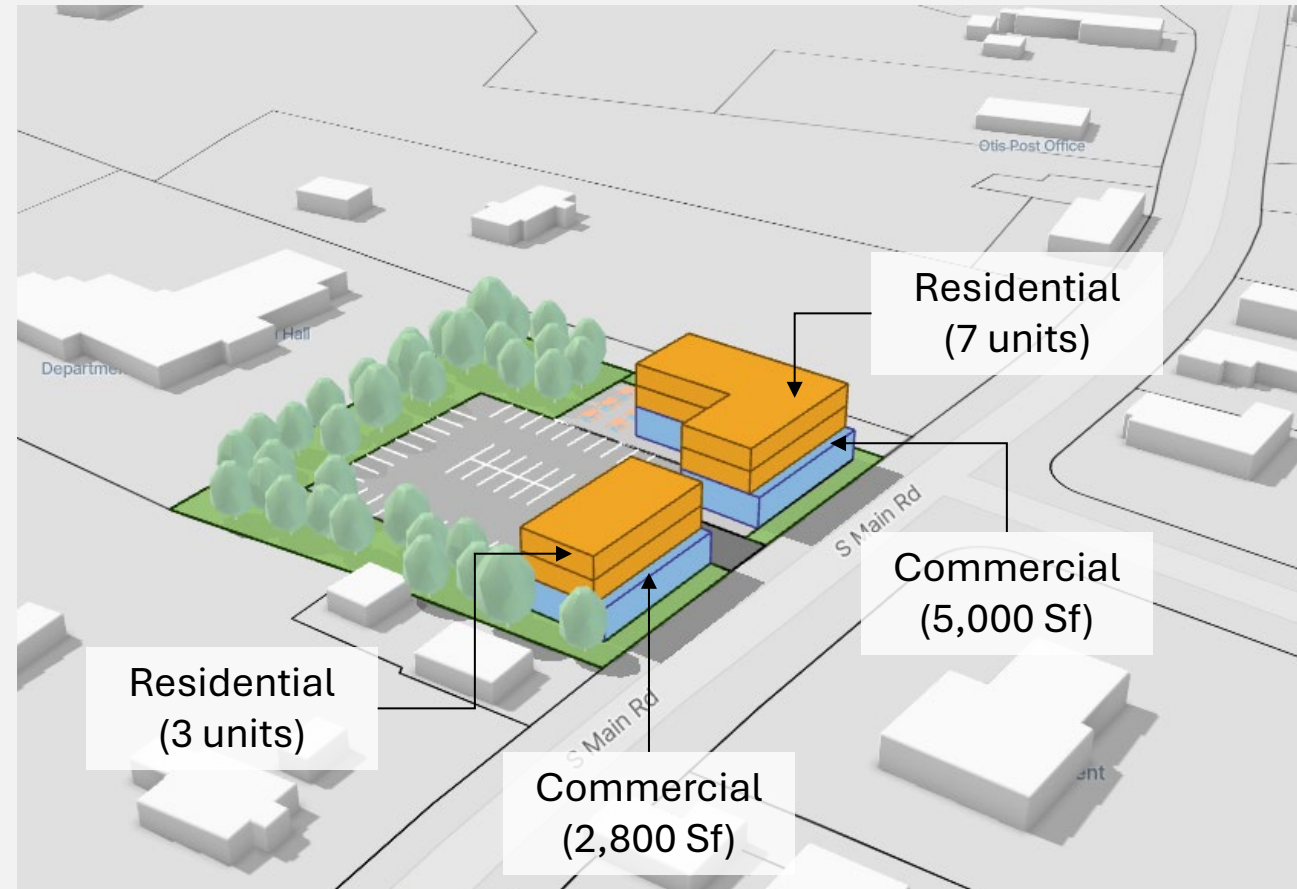
Long-term Strategy: Old Otis Inn and Terranova Market

Combining the two parcels would allow the site to function as one coordinated property rather than as separate sites with independent parking and access arrangements.

Shared parking could reduce the amount of land dedicated to vehicles and allow the site to be organized more intentionally. Locating buildings closer to North Main Road would strengthen the street frontage, while outdoor dining and small gathering areas could be placed where they directly support the businesses. Landscaping along the corridor could improve the appearance of the site and help screen parking from public view.

Ground-floor commercial space could be used for market-supported businesses. These businesses would benefit from the site's visibility, and proximity to other Village Center destinations. Upper-floor housing would add a modest number of year-round units and help support activity on the site beyond business hours. From a financial standpoint, the residential component may also make the redevelopment more realistic by adding another revenue source to help support construction costs, site improvements, and commercial uses.

This concept also relies on a consistent water source with enough flow and pressure to support residential and commercial uses. It also requires full clean up of any contamination to avoid any residential use restrictions in the future.

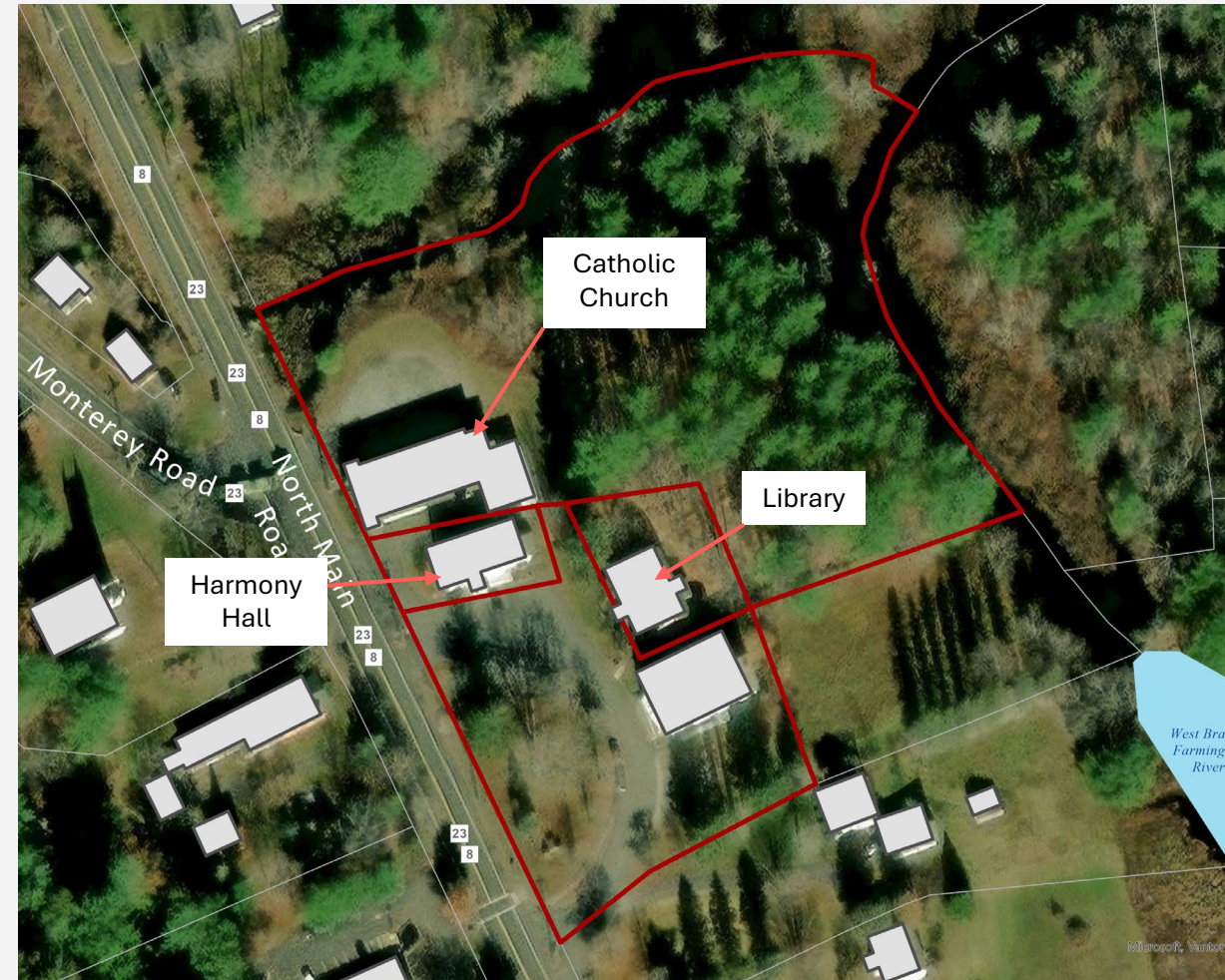


Potential Redevelopment Sites: Harmony Hall and Catholic Church

Harmony Hall is located along Route 8 and sits next to the Otis Public Library, First Congregational Church, Roman Catholic Church, and a privately owned open green space. These properties are well-positioned to become a stronger civic area within the Village Center.

Harmony Hall is an important historic building that contributes to the existing character and identity of Otis. However, the building is aging and no longer appears to support the level of activity, accessibility, or flexibility that the Town may need in the future. Redeveloping the Harmony Hall site would allow the Town to preserve its civic role while creating a more functional building that could support commercial, community, or residential uses.

The surrounding site also presents a broader investment opportunity. Future redevelopment could improve pedestrian connections, organize parking more efficiently, create a usable central green or plaza, and strengthen the relationship between buildings and Route 8.



Existing Challenges: Harmony Hall and Catholic Church

Several challenges affect the redevelopment potential of the second set of properties at Harmony Hall and the Catholic church. Harmony Hall has rapidly deteriorated and should be demolished to make way for new development. The current building is outdated and the cost to bring the building up to code is likely to far outpace what a private owner could recuperate from rental rates. While a new building could better support a mix of uses, including commercial, residential, or community space, construction costs may be higher if the design is expected to mimic the current Harmony Hall building. Flexibility in the design would likely benefit the overall cost structure for the redevelopment.

A second challenge is the Town has yet to fully coordinate with the owners of the church property, limiting the Town's ability to understand future plans, shared parking opportunities, or potential redevelopment partnerships. This includes a shared approach to solving the water supply issues.

The existing well serving Harmony Hall, the Library, and the church is contaminated. The Town has been investigating the feasibility of drilling a new well on the Catholic church's property but has not yet reached an agreement. The location of the new well will affect where buildings, parking, open space, pedestrian connections, and utilities can be placed. Until a water source and location are confirmed, the site's redevelopment capacity will remain uncertain.

The area is also fragmented by parcel boundaries, parking areas, and open space ownership. Although the parcels are located close to one another, they do not currently function as one connected civic core. Addressing these conditions will be important if the Town is to move from concept planning to implementation.



Short-term Strategy: Harmony Hall and Catholic Church

The short-term strategy for the Harmony Hall and surrounding sites focuses on reducing uncertainty and positioning the properties for future investment.

- **Continue coordination with church representatives**

The Town should continue outreach to the Roman Catholic church to understand their long-term plans and interest in shared parking, open space, events, or redevelopment coordination.

- **Finalize the new well location**

The Town should continue working with the church and other stakeholders to finalize the location and installation of the new well. The Town should confirm any required setbacks or protection areas, as it will influence future building layout, parking, and utility planning. Water quality and yield should also be evaluated to determine the level of future use the site can support.

- **Merge the parcel between Harmony Hall and the Library**

The narrow parcel area between Harmony Hall and the Library is currently part of the First Congregational Church property and has limited practical use because of its size and shape. Working with the First Congregational Church to subdivide this piece and purchase it from the church create more flexibility for future site planning if combined with the Harmony Hall property.

- **Coordinate with MassDOT on Route 8 improvements**

The Town should work with MassDOT to evaluate streetscape, crosswalk, traffic calming, signage, and gateway improvements adjacent to the sites. These improvements could strengthen the public realm while longer-term redevelopment issues are resolved.

- **Explore the potential for acquisition or redevelopment partnership**

If the Roman Catholic church remains inactive or the parcel becomes available for sale, the Town could further explore the potential for acquisition. Any future acquisition or partnership should be guided by the Town's vision for a stronger civic core, shared open space, and small-scale mixed-use or community-serving development.



Long-term Strategy: Harmony Hall and Catholic Church

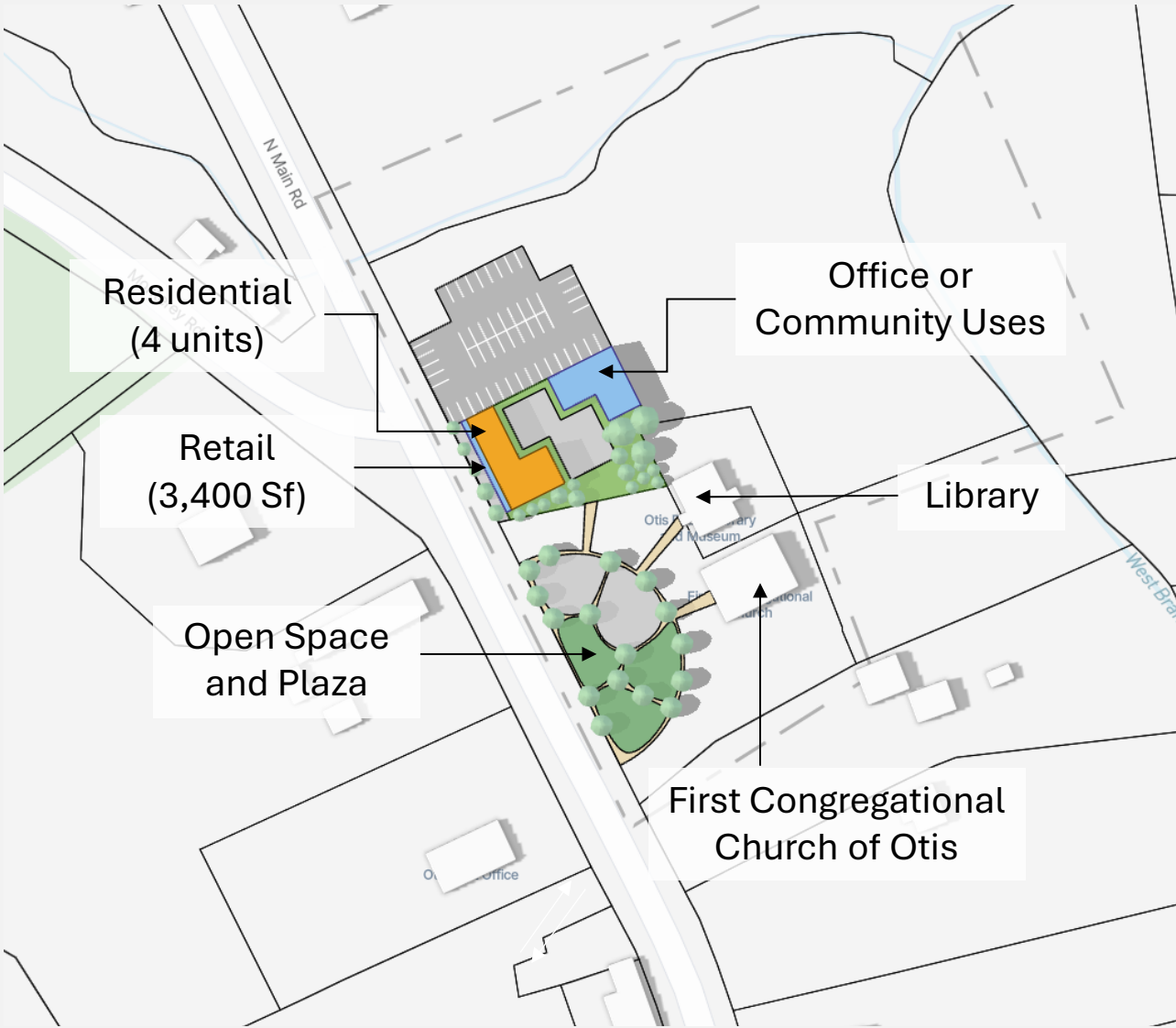
The long-term strategy for the Harmony Hall and surrounding sites is to create a more functional civic and mixed-use area within the Village Center.

The proposed concept preserves the Library and First Congregational Church as civic and religious anchors, while combining the Harmony Hall and Roman Catholic church sites for redevelopment.

The concept recommends a new building on the Harmony Hall site with ground-floor commercial space and four residential units above. Locating this building closer to Route 8 would create a more active street frontage and strengthen the site's relationship to the Village Center. A rear building could provide office, community, or flexible civic space. This arrangement allows the more public-facing uses to frame the street, while placing less intensive uses toward the back of the site.

Harmony Hall + Church Site	
Unit Type	Count
Studio	1
1 Bed	2
2 Bed	1

Total = 4
Units



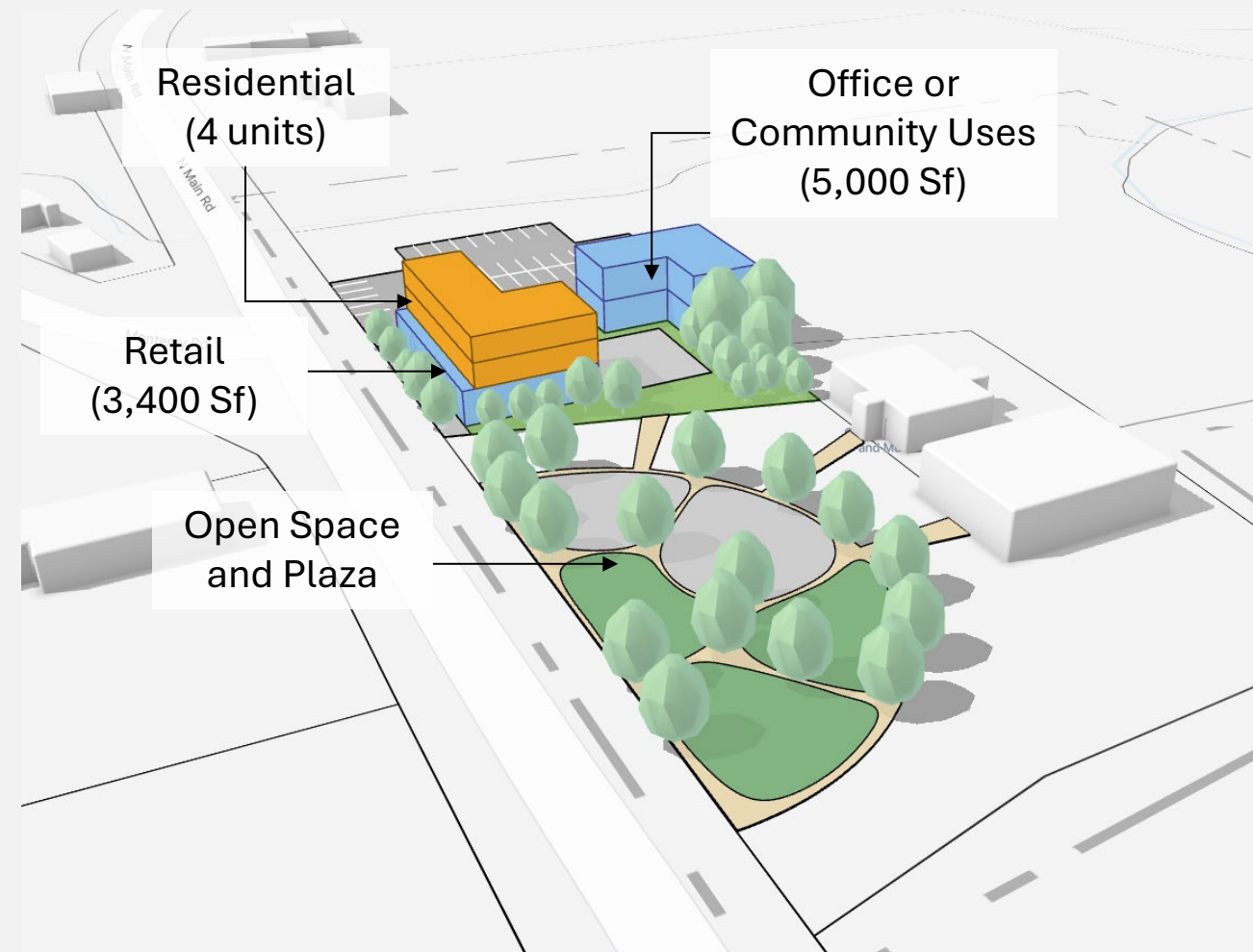
Long-term Strategy: Harmony Hall and Catholic Church

The existing civic uses already bring people to this part of the Village Center, but the proposed layout would create a stronger and more active public destination.

Commercial uses would help increase foot traffic, support local spending, and bring more activity to the Village Center throughout the day and year. As noted earlier, the residential units could also provide an additional revenue source to help support redevelopment costs. This is especially important in a small rural market where commercial rents alone may not be enough to make redevelopment feasible.

The open space is a key part of the concept. A re-envisioned central green or plaza would give the Village Center a gathering place for seasonal markets, outdoor seating, informal recreation, and community programming. It would also create a more cohesive civic area.

Shared parking and improved pedestrian connections would allow visitors to park once and walk between nearby destinations. This would make the area easier to use, reduce the need for separate parking areas on each parcel, and support a more walkable Village Center.





Improve the Public Realm

Improve the Public Realm

The two-lane roadway design of Route 8/North Main Road lends itself to higher speed traffic due to the lack of sidewalks on both sides of the road and any streetscape elements which visually and physically indicate you have entered a slower speed location. Buildings pushed further back from the street do not provide visual cues that a driver has now entered a more thickly settled Village Center. The gateway intersection to the Village Center at Route 23 and Route 8 can also be difficult to navigate as a pedestrian with low visibility crosswalks and a lack of any crossing assistance devices to slow or stop traffic traveling east/west on Route 8.

Investment in the redevelopment of buildings in the Village Center need to be coupled with transportation and streetscape improvements to slow traffic through physical design elements. If this is to truly be the civic, cultural, and economic hub of Otis we need to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists.



Improve the Public Realm

Case Study: Route 6A improvements, Village Center, Yarmouth, MA

The Route 6A Village Center improvements in Yarmouth Port provide a useful precedent for Otis because they show how a main roadway through a village center can be improved while preserving local character. The project focuses on practical public realm improvements, including clearer sidewalks, ADA-accessible crossings, defined parking areas, pedestrian lighting, improved signage, and better driveway organization. For Otis, the key lesson is that small changes can make Route 8 feel safer, more welcoming, and connected to nearby uses.





Bringing It All Together

Path to Implementation – A Sequenced Framework

This plan's success depends on resolving three foundational uncertainties before major redevelopment can proceed. Every action in the roadmap flows from one of these core dependencies.

1 Resolve Water Supply

It is unlikely that any new development will be permitted or financed without a solution to the water supply issue. Seeking state or federal funding through sources like the USDA may be most important first step.

2 Engage Property Owners

Both study sites are privately held. The Town must continue outreach to property owners as acquisition and development agreements cannot happen without owner cooperation or a clear contingency plan.

3 Activate the Public Realm

Route 8 streetscape, crosswalks, and parking improvements signal investment confidence and can attract businesses independently of private site redevelopment on a faster timeline.

Looking Ahead: Actions and Implementation

Action / Step	Focus	Timeline	Responsible Party	Funding Source
Apply for USDA (or similar) funding for water supply feasibility study	Village Center	Near-Term	Revitalization Committee, Town Administrator, Selectboard	USDA Rural Development, USDA Water and Waste Disposal Program, MA Rural Development Fund, MassDEP
Continue outreach to Old Otis Inn / Fratelli's owners; gauge acquisition interest	Site 1	Near-Term	Revitalization Committee, Town Administrator	N/A
Coordinate with Catholic Church on shared well location and parcel options	Site 2	Near-Term	Revitalization Committee, Town Administrator, Church Leadership	N/A
Complete water supply feasibility study; select preferred alternative	Village Center	Mid-Term	Town / Engineer	USDA WEP; EPA
Complete any remaining environmental assessment and necessary clean-up at the Terra Nova site	Site 1	Mid-Term	Town / Environmental Consultant	EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant; MassDevelopment
If Town secures site control on first-mover site; issue mixed-use developer RFP	Both	Mid-Term	Town Administrator, Select Board, Property Owner	MassDevelopment Tech. Assistance for RFP Assistance
Implement individual site or Village Center water system improvements	Sites or Village Center	Long-Term	Property Owners, Developer, Town	USDA Funds, MassWorks, Village bonding
Complete Route 8 streetscape, crosswalk, and parking improvements	Village Center	Long-Term	Revitalization Committee, Town Highway Department, MassDOT	MassWorks; MassDOT; Complete Streets
Redevelop Site 2: 10 residential units + ~7,800 SF commercial, shared plaza	Site 1	Long-Term	Select Board, Planning Board, Developer	MassDevelopment Lending, MassWorks for public infrastructure, Housing Works
Redevelop Site 1: 4 units + 8,400 SF civic, retail & office space	Site 2	Long-Term	Developer, Town, Church Leadership	MassDevelopment Lending, MassWorks for public infrastructure, Housing Works
Recruit anchor commercial tenants; activate ground-floor retail spaces	Village Center	Long-Term	Property Owners/Developer	N/A

Site Action Summary

SITE 1

Old Otis Inn + Terra Nova Market

VISION: 10 residential units · ~7,800 SF commercial · outdoor plaza · shared parking

NEAR-TERM STEPS (1-2 Years)

- Continue outreach to property owners; gauge acquisition interest
- Continue with environmental assessment to determine what remediation is needed
- Confirm MassDOT access requirements for Route 8 frontage
- Seek any predevelopment technical assistance through state or federal grants

LONG-TERM STEPS (3-10+ Years)

- Complete Phase II environmental assessment + remediation plan
- Explore site acquisition or negotiate long-term development agreement
- Issue developer RFP; select development partner
- Construct 10-unit building + 7,800 SF commercial + plaza

IF/THEN: If owner does not engage: Prioritize Site 2 resources; revisit Site 1 as ownership or market conditions change.

SITE 2

Harmony Hall + Catholic Church

VISION: 4 residential units · 3,400 SF retail · 5,000 SF office/civic · open space plaza

NEAR-TERM STEPS (1-2 Years)

- Engage Catholic Church on shared well and parcel coordination
- Implement a shared water solution for all sites in this civic area
- Explore parcel subdivision and merger with adjacent Harmony Hall lot
- Identify funding for Catholic Church parcel acquisition if needed

LONG-TERM STEPS (3-10+ Years)

- Demolish Harmony Hall and negotiate sale with Catholic Church
- Issue developer RFP for mixed-use project
- Construct 4-unit building + 8,400 SF of commercial space
- Improve open space plaza fronting Route 8 / village green

IF/THEN: If Church does not cooperate on well: look to advance a village-wide water supply study independently.



Village Center Revitalization Plan
Otis, Massachusetts
June 2026