



Town of Burlington  
MassDevelopment Site Readiness Program

# Burlington 128 District: Discovery Phase

Community Forum | November 2, 2021

MADDEN PLANNING GROUP | LANDWISE ADVISORS | GAMBLE ASSOCIATES | BUENAS VIBRAS



# BURLINGTON 128 DISTRICT



KATHRYN MADDEN  
Principal



JULIA CARRASQUEL  
Senior Planner

MADDEN  
PLANNING  
w/ BUENAS  
VIBRAS



JON TREMENTOZZI  
Principal



AMY FATER  
Senior Planner



ANJALI KATARE  
Planner/ Econ. Analyst

LANDWISE  
ADVISORS



DAVID GAMBLE  
Principal



JAMES CARRICO  
Architect & Planner



ALEXANDRIA BATISTE  
Designer

GAMBLE  
ASSOCIATES

# ZOOM MEETING PROTOCOLS

- This meeting is being recorded, including all video, audio, and chat messages.
- Participants cannot unmute audio to avoid noise conflicts
- If available, please turn your video on
- We will be asking for input in several ways:
  - We will be asking “polling” questions to check-in with you
  - We will be having breakout rooms for discussion
  - After the presentation, you can use the chat function to ask questions or post comments
  - You may also email comments to [mtintocalis@burlington.org](mailto:mtintocalis@burlington.org)
  - If we have time for general questions, please raise your hand and you will be recognized and asked to unmute.

*This community forum is being held remotely via Zoom in accordance with Section 20 of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, signed into law by Governor Baker on June 16, which extended provisions to the open meeting law.*

# AGENDA

1. Overview of Project
2. The Site
3. The Region
4. The Potential
5. Discussion
6. Next Steps

## BURLINGTON 128 DISTRICT



Past, present and future of  
work: executive parks,  
downtown urbanity, hybrid  
mixed use in suburbs

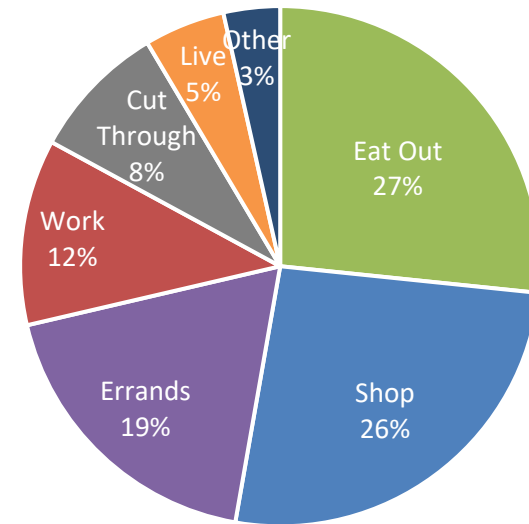


# POLLING QUESTION #1: REASON FOR VISITING

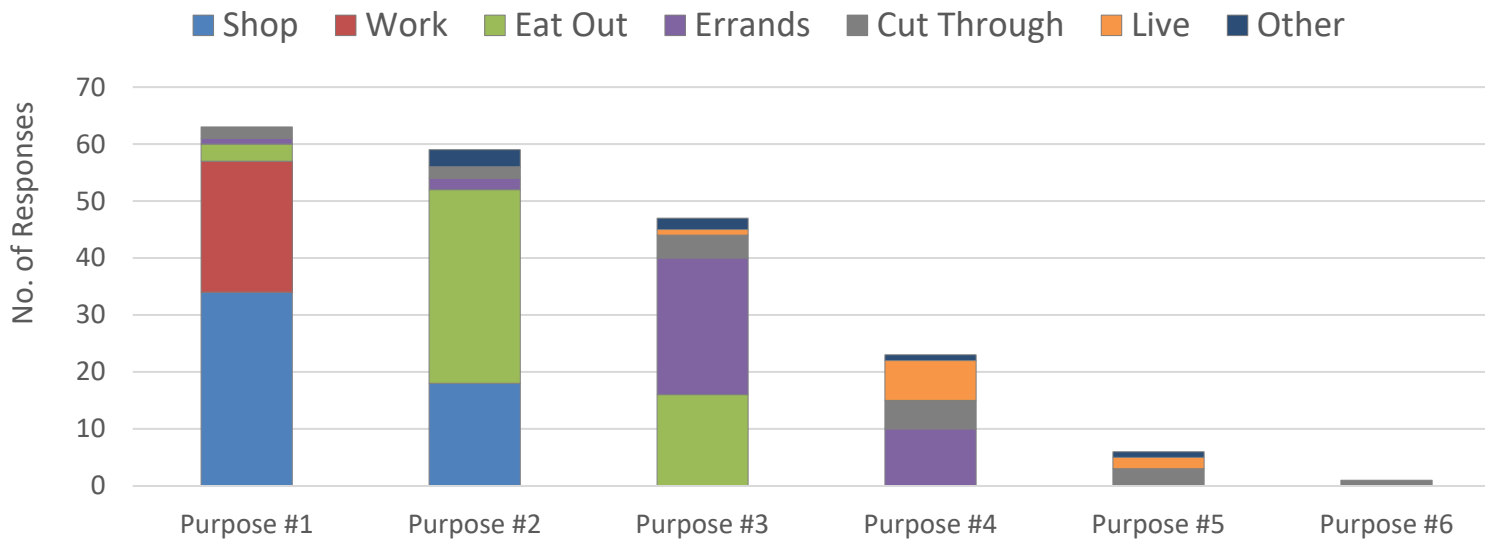
When you go to this part of Burlington, is it to ... *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ Work
- ☐ Shop
- ☐ Go out to eat
- ☐ Run errands
- ☐ Live
- ☐ Cut through to somewhere else
- ☐ Other

Types of Activities



Order of Selection

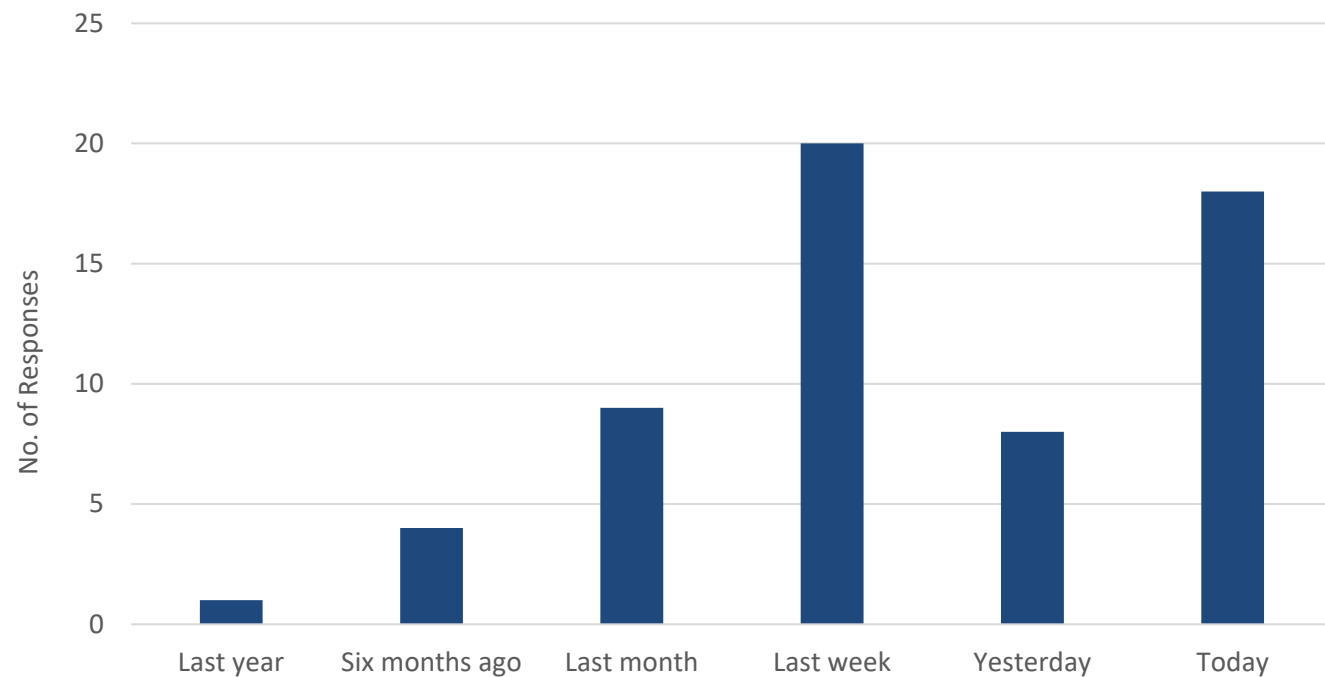


63 responders  
out of 85  
participants;  
199 selections

## POLLING QUESTION #2: TIME OF LAST VISIT

When was the last time that you were in this part of Burlington? (*check one*)

- ☐ Today
- ☐ Yesterday
- ☐ Last week
- ☐ Last month
- ☐ Six months ago
- ☐ Last year
- ☐ Never



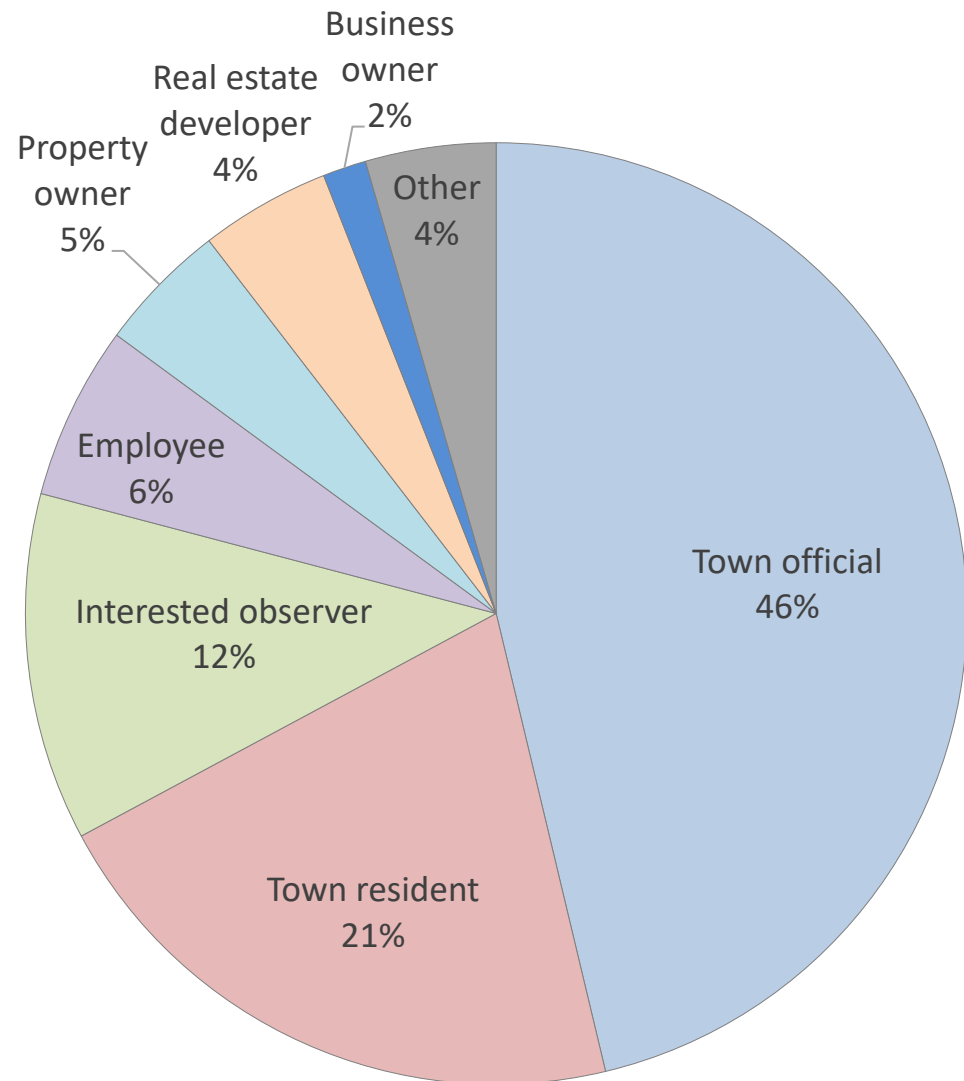
60 responders  
out of 85  
participants



## POLLING QUESTION #3: PRIMARY ROLE

In joining this meeting, which of the following **best** describes your role?  
(choose only one)

- ☐ Town official
- ☐ Town resident
- ☐ Business owner
- ☐ Employee
- ☐ Property owner
- ☐ Real estate developer
- ☐ Interested observer
- ☐ Other



67 responders  
out of 85  
participants

# PRELIMINARY CONVERSATIONS

## Preliminary Themes

- Business location decisions: Burlington brand
- Business life cycles: start-up to mature company
- Trends in work, retail, and leasing
- Workforce recruitment and retention
- Housing: lack of inventory and cost
- Transit challenges
- Desirable amenities: bike lanes, paths, streetscapes, and restaurants
- Industry clusters: established and emerging
- Lab requirements and development timing
- Outdated zoning regulations

# 43

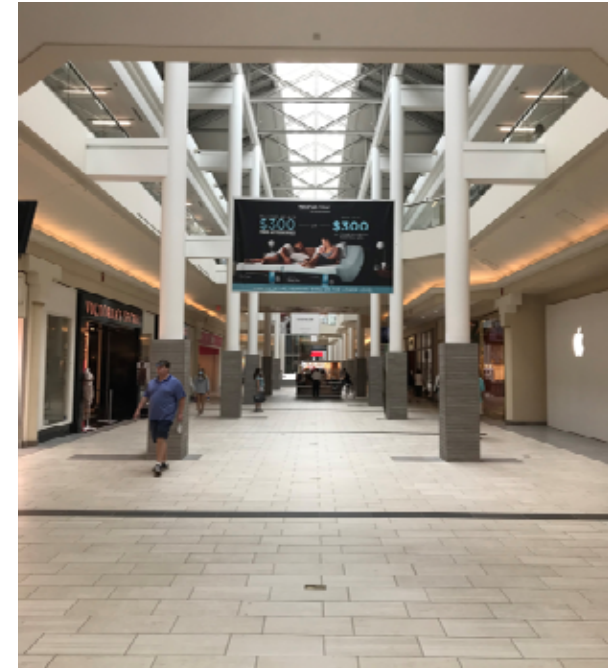
PRELIMINARY CONVERSATIONS  
WITH TOWN LEADERS, ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT LIAISON GROUP,  
REAL ESTATE BROKERS, LARGE AND  
SMALL EMPLOYERS, INSTITUTIONS,  
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS, RETAIL  
MANAGERS, PROPERTY OWNERS



# SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITY/WHY NOW?

1. Future of work
2. Changing reality of retail
3. Demand for pedestrian-friendly environments
4. Intersection of innovation in Burlington
5. Civic goals: climate change, diversity, tax base, regulatory framework, other....

*The suburbs are one of the biggest opportunities of our times – with room for change*



*Ongoing renovations at the Mall*



*Businesses in flux*



*Vine Brook as a hidden resource*



*Research at Northeastern University*



# THE SITE





# STUDY AREA ORIENTATION



Study area is ~600 acres (0.93 sq. mi)

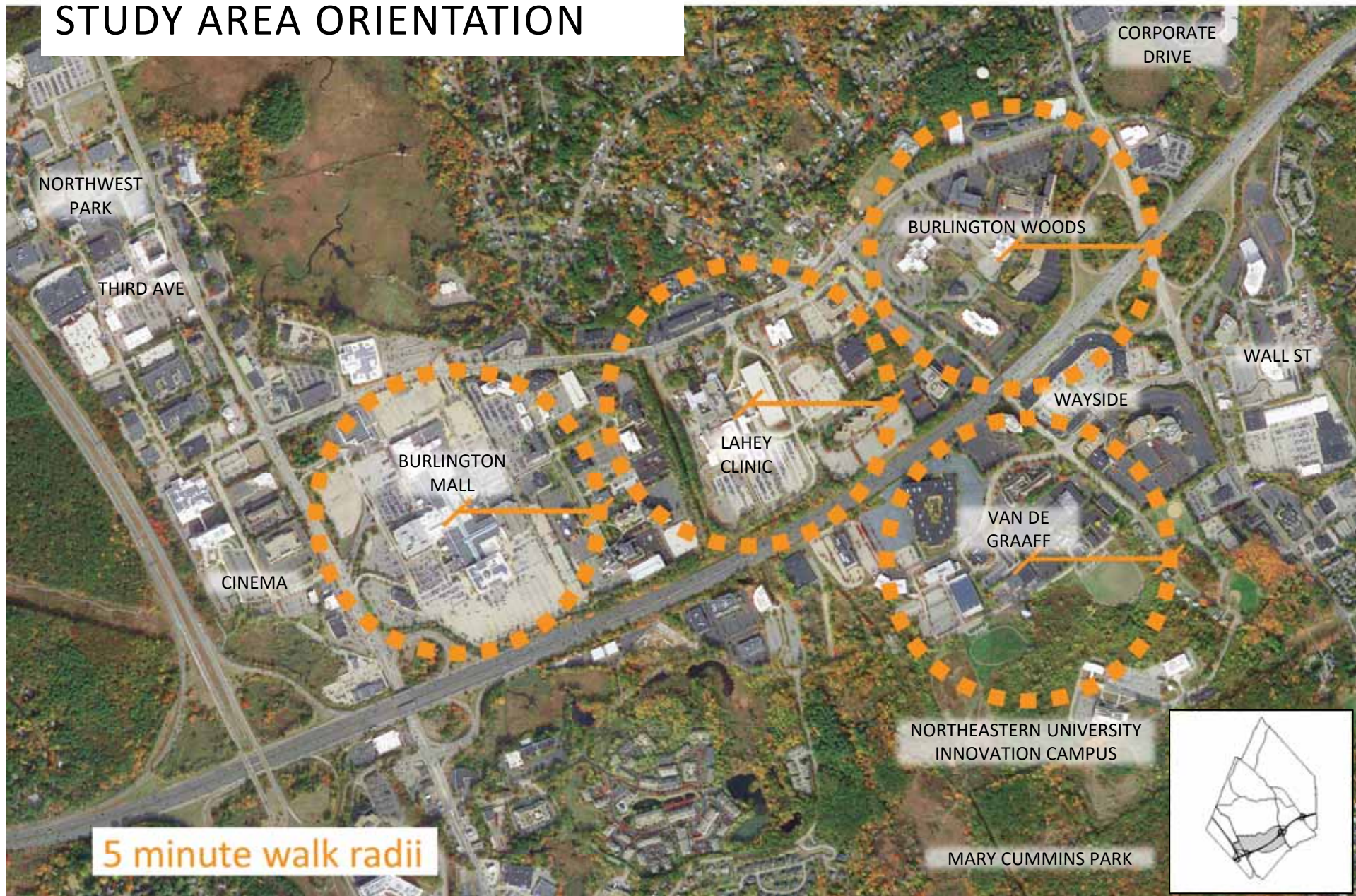


miles 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5





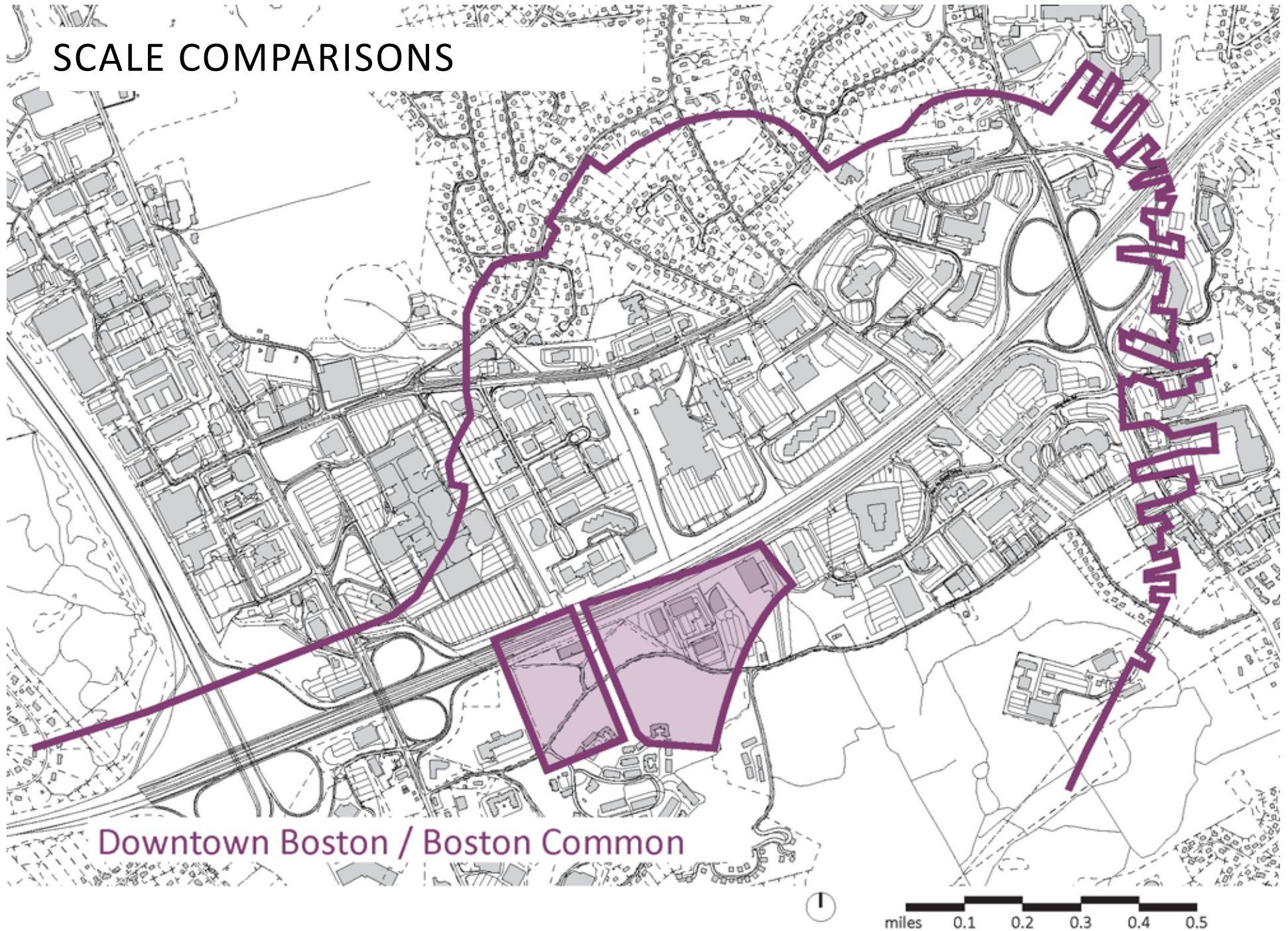
# STUDY AREA ORIENTATION



miles 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5

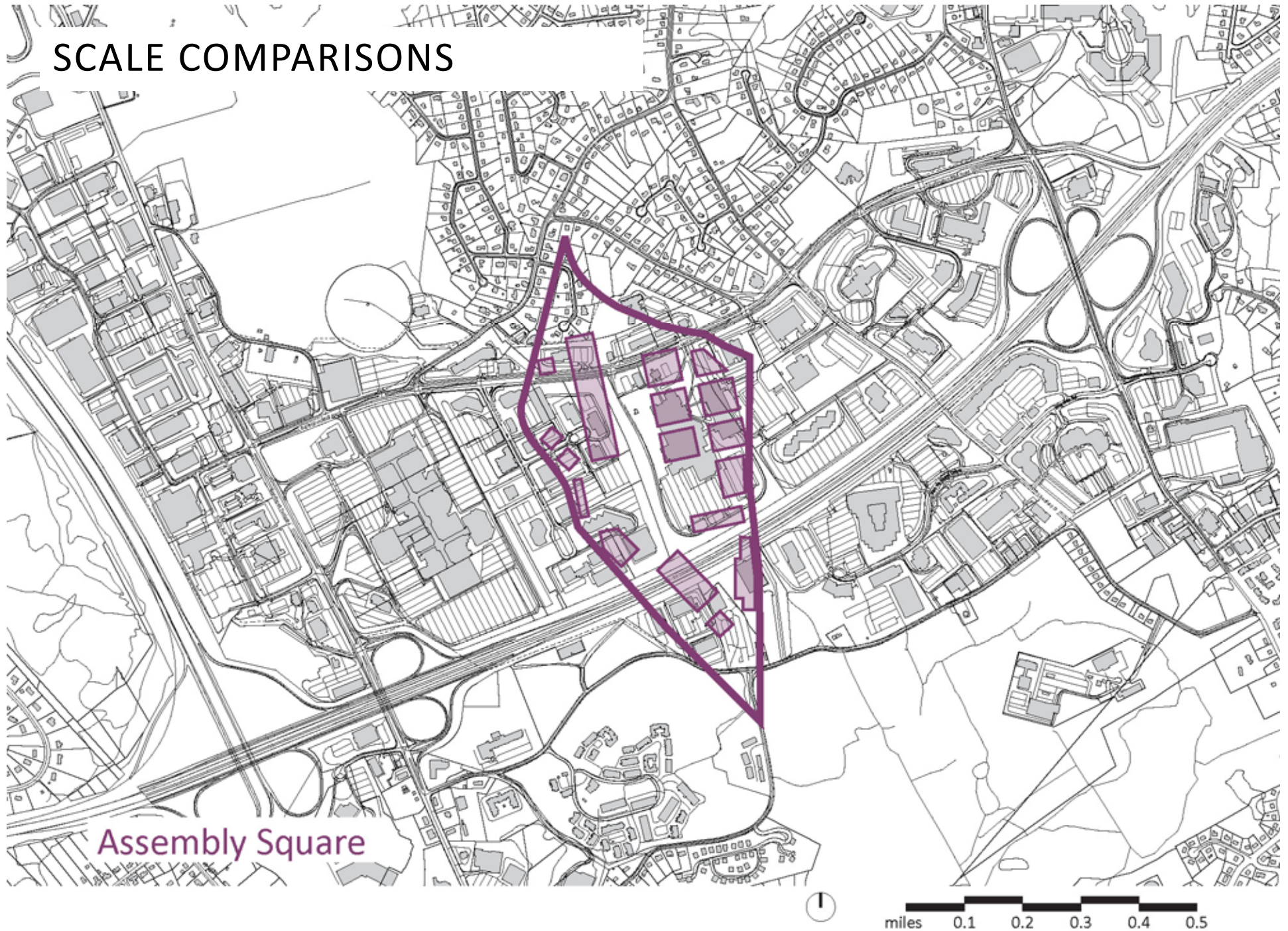


## SCALE COMPARISONS



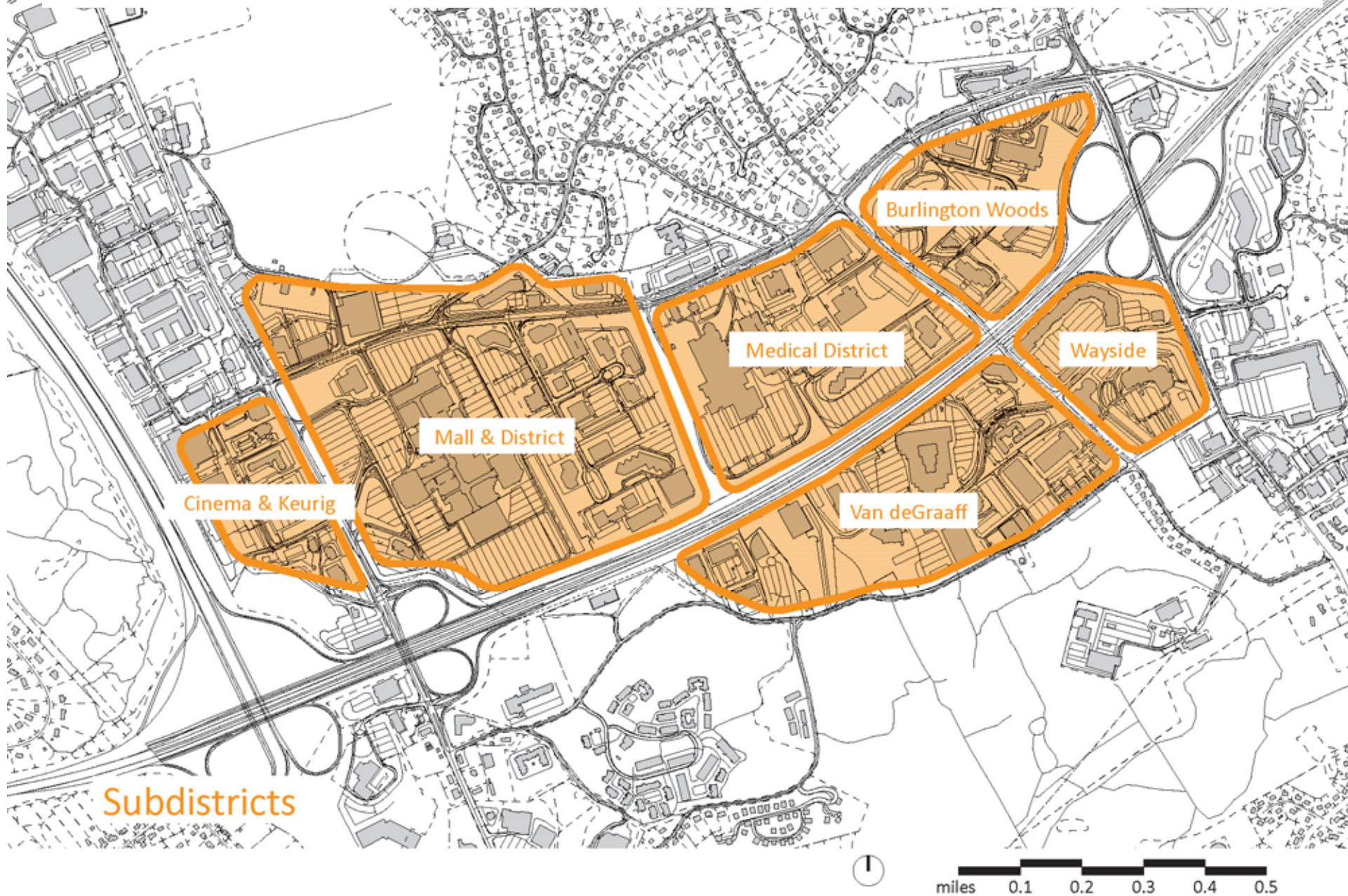


# SCALE COMPARISONS



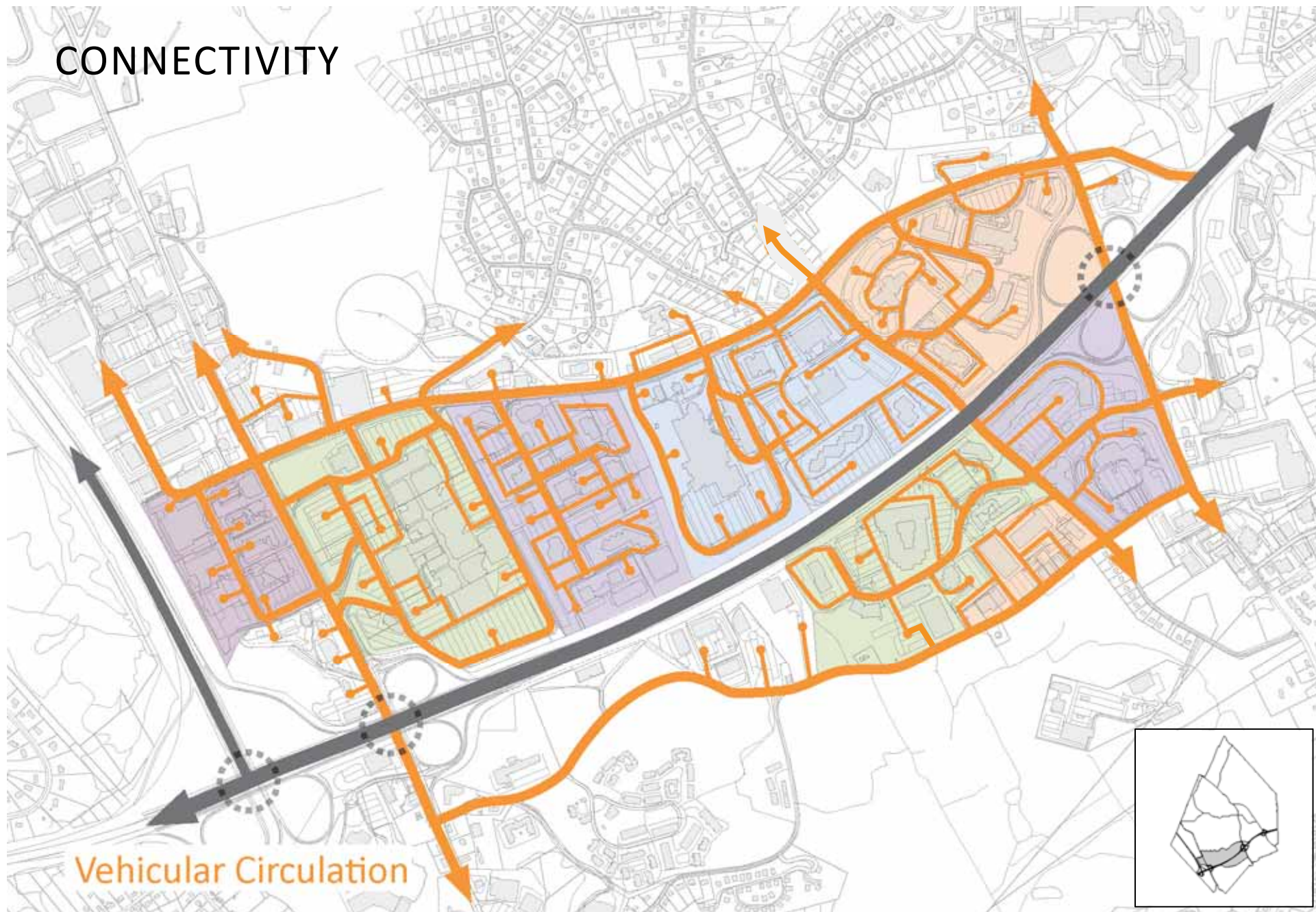


# STUDY AREA ORIENTATION





# CONNECTIVITY



Vehicular Circulation

Today there is little connectivity between the individual developments.



miles 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5



# CONNECTIVITY



Lack of connectivity between individual developments.



Transit amenities



Expectations for pedestrian-oriented, walkable environments have grown.

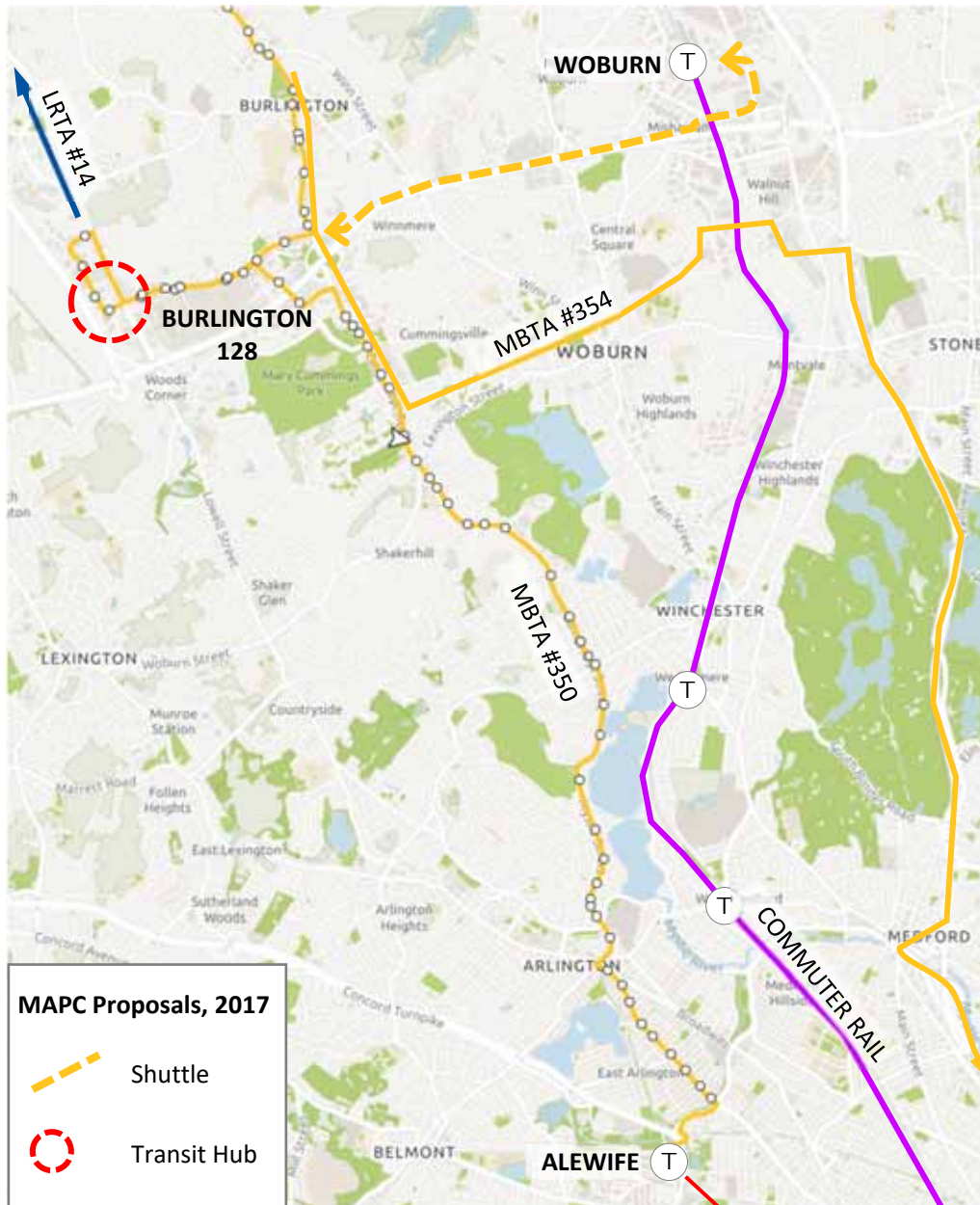
# CONNECTIVITY



Even with sidewalks, Burlington Mall Road does not welcome pedestrians or bicyclists.



# CONNECTIVITY



MAPC (2017). North Suburban Mobility Study. <https://www.mbta.com/schedules/>



Transit service to Burlington 128 District doesn't match the changing needs of the workforce.

## Transit Challenges

- MBTA #350 bus stops 51 times in 51 minutes between Burlington and Alewife (Lowell bus similar)
- Express bus #354 is 29 minutes to Boston but doesn't run past 8 pm
- MAPC proposed shuttle links to the commuter rail, which has higher fares



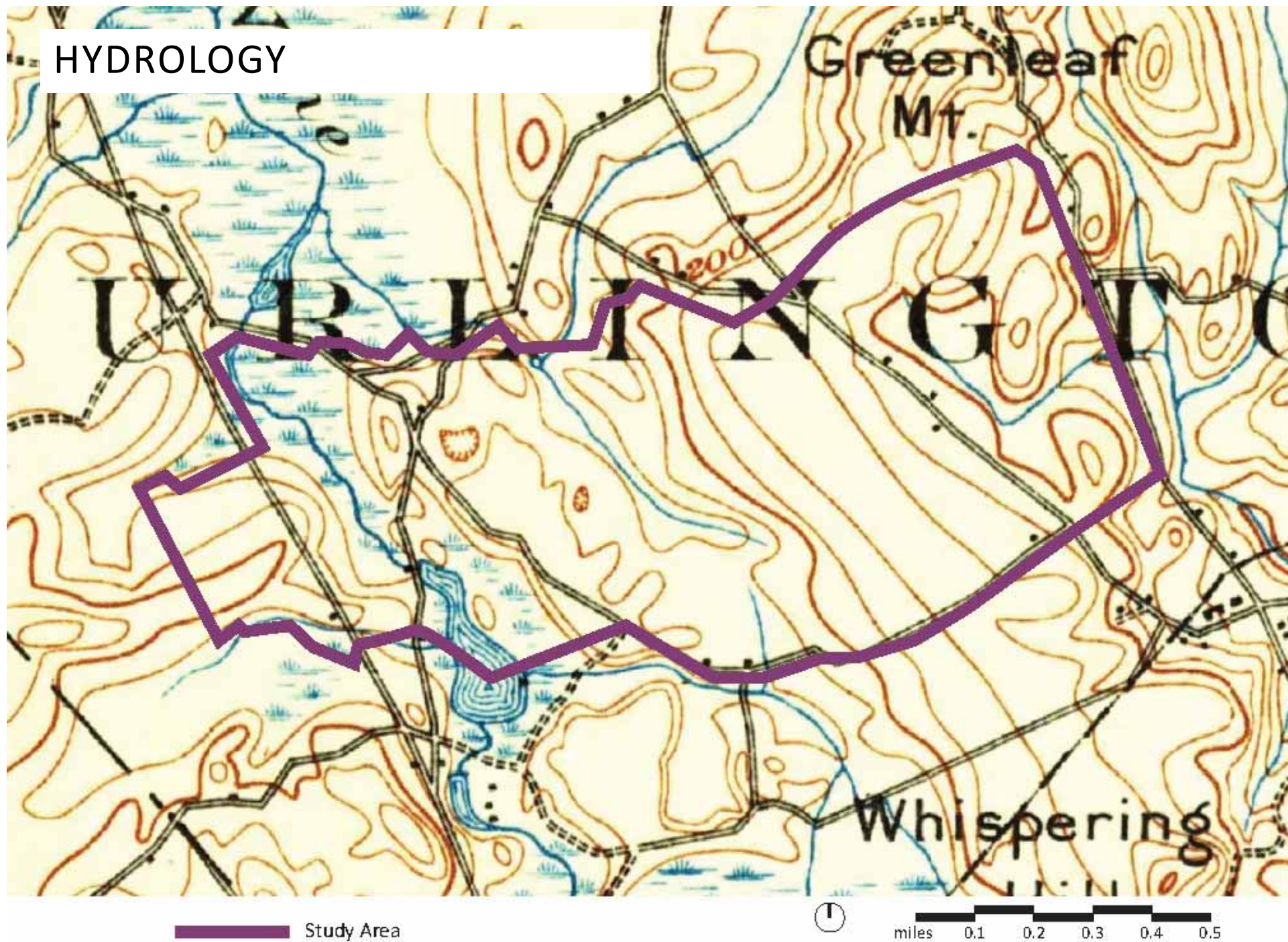
# HYDROLOGY



Vine Brook drains the entire area as it flows north into the Shawsheen River.

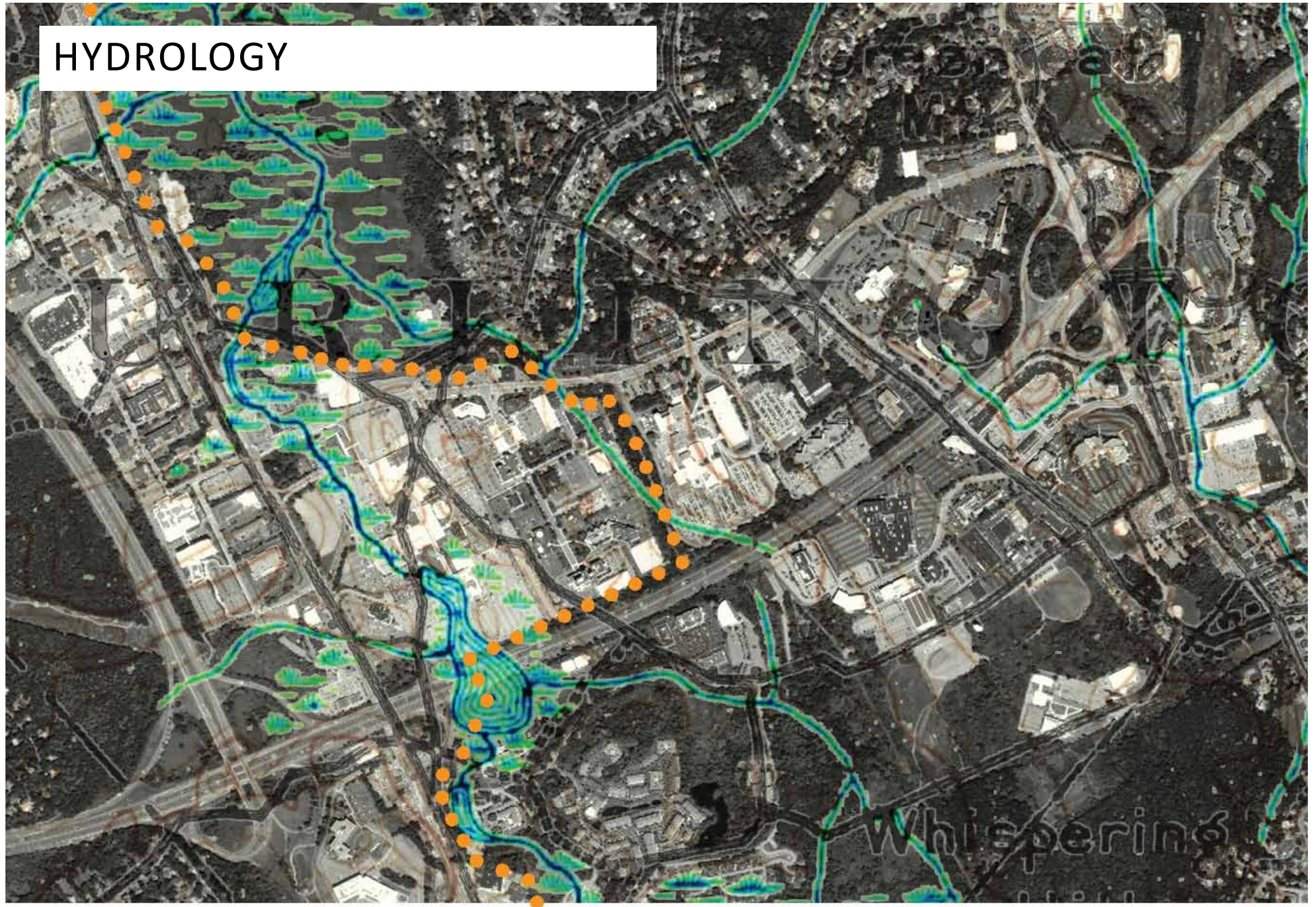


# HYDROLOGY





# HYDROLOGY



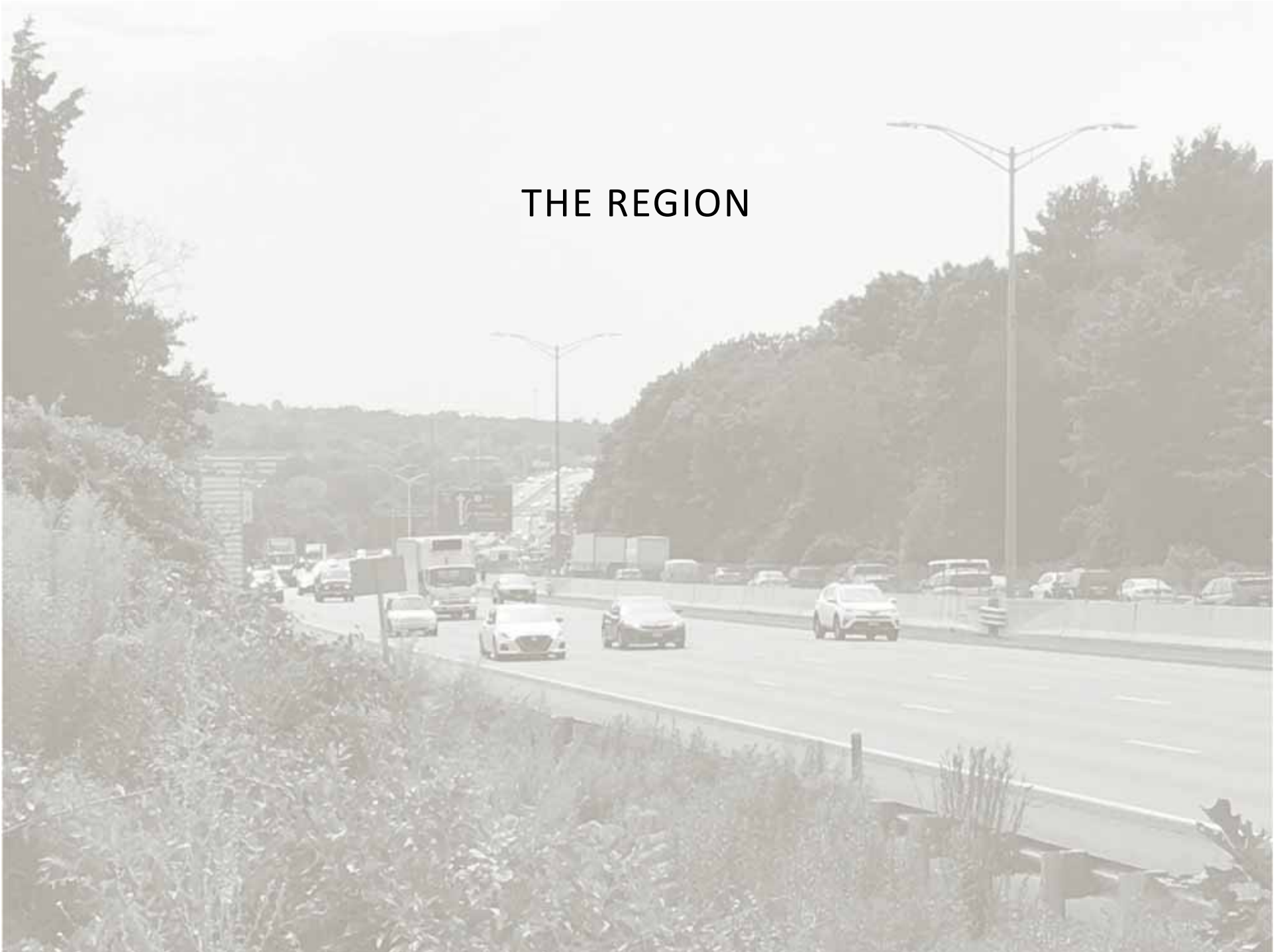
● ● ● ● ● Vine Brook Riverwalk Proposal



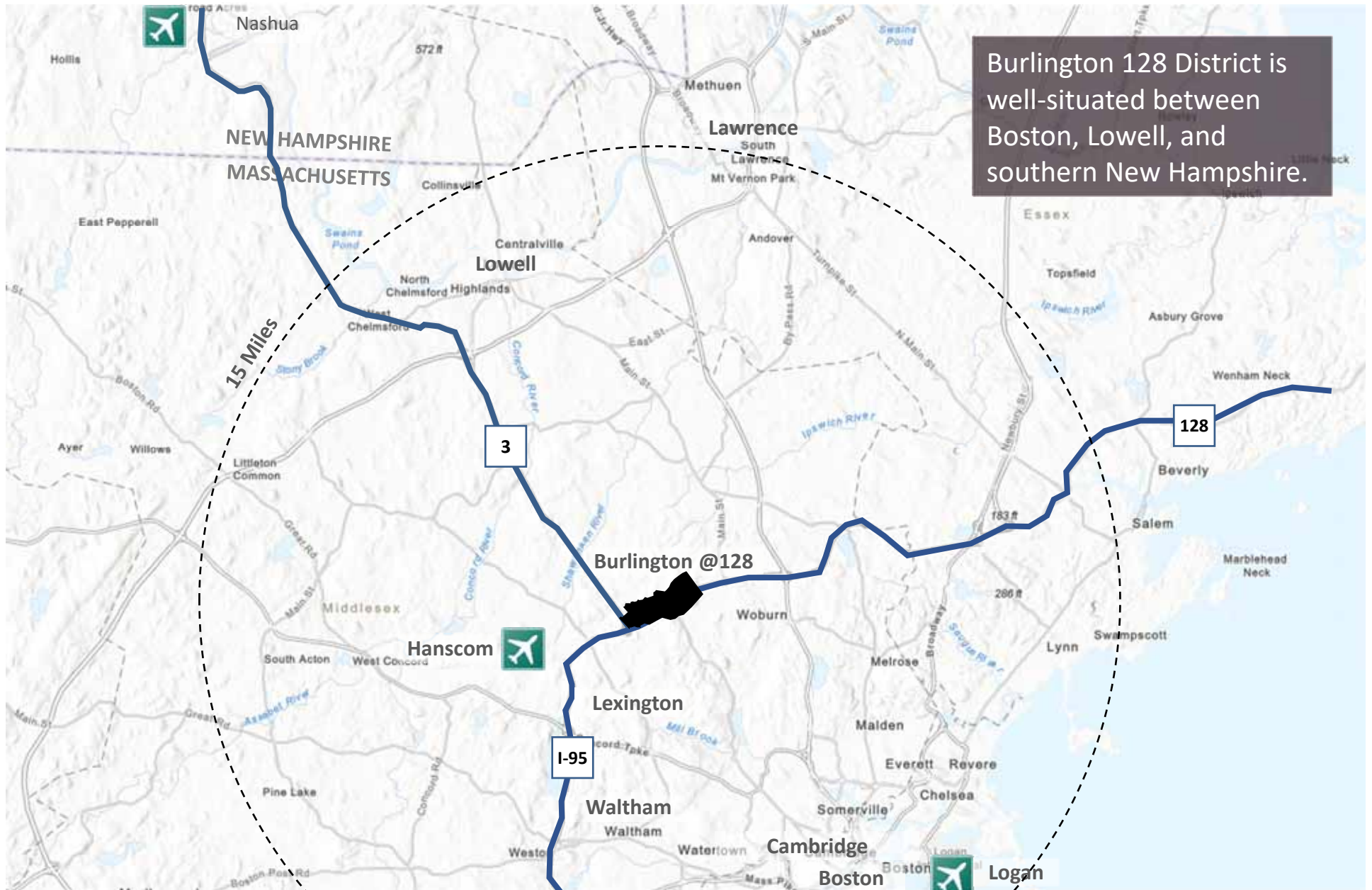
miles 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5



## THE REGION



# REGIONAL CONTEXT

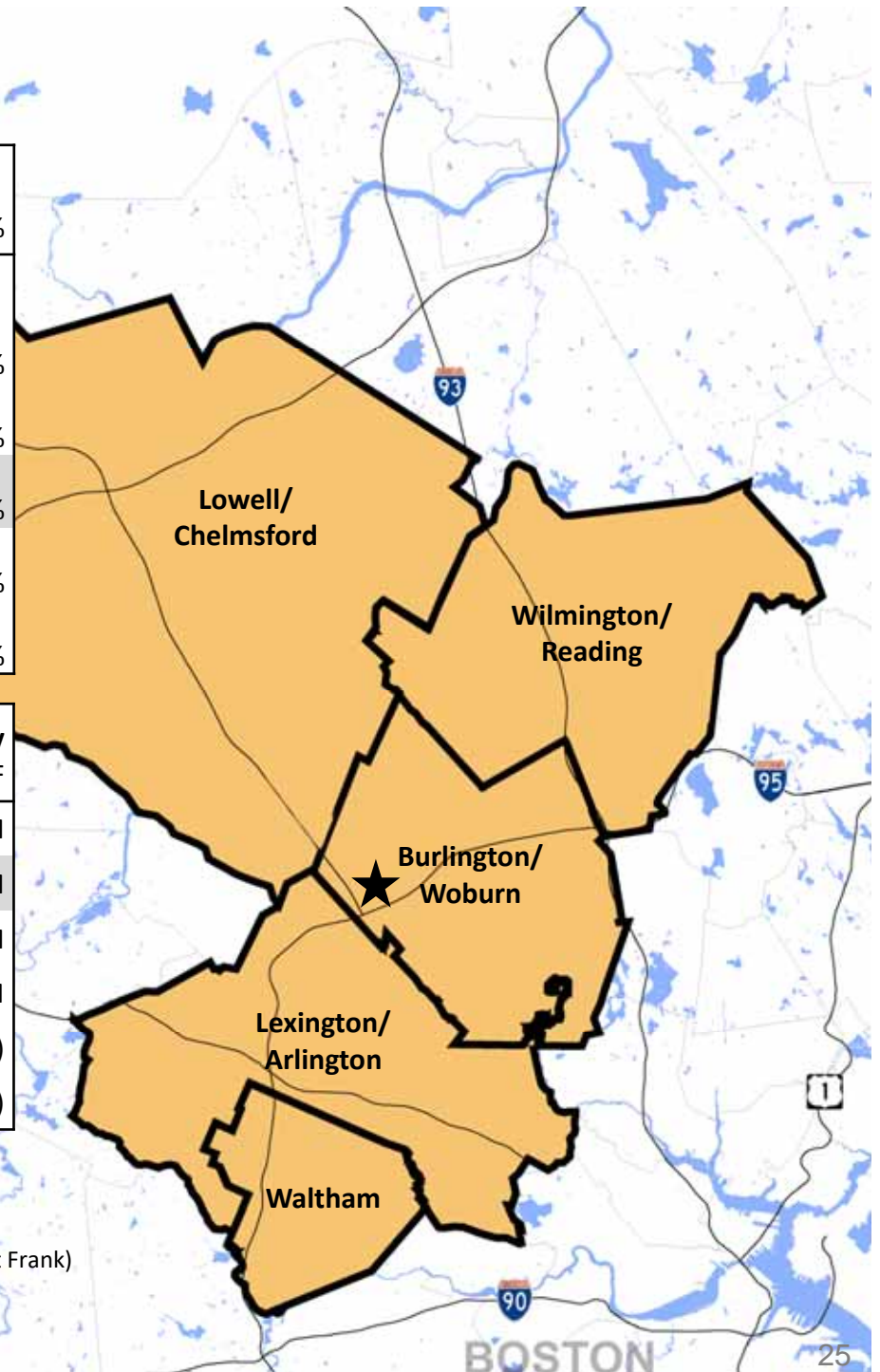




# OFFICE SUBMARKETS

Q4 2020	Rent/SF	Inventory		Vacancy	
Submarket Name		Buildings	SF	SF	%
Boston Overall	\$54.90	1,461	108.6M	10.4M	9.6%
Waltham	\$38.94	233	14.8M	2.0M	13.8%
Lexington/Arlington	\$38.09	238	5.3M	.28M	5.4%
Burlington/Woburn	\$29.89	317	15.1M	1.4M	9.6%
Lowell/Chelmsford	\$21.92	493	19.6M	2.5M	12.8%
Wilmington/Reading	\$23.00	122	2.8M	.24M	8.6%

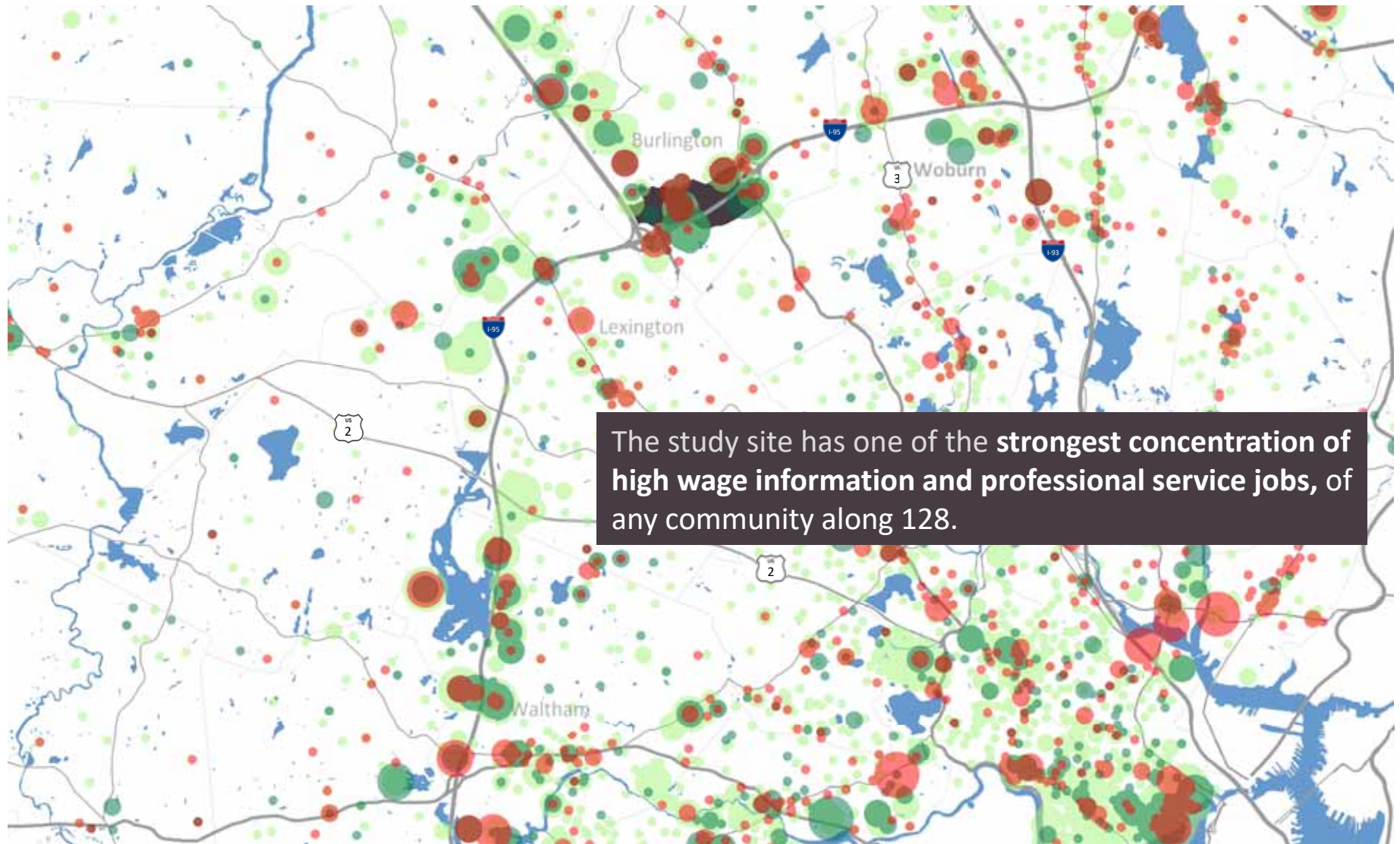
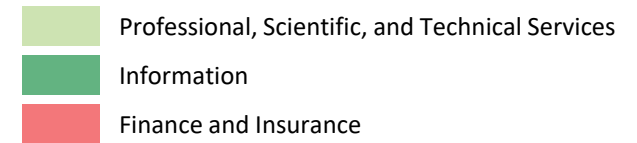
CHANGE 2015-2020	Rent/SF	Inventory		Vacancy	
Submarket Name			SF	SF	
Boston Overall	\$11.15		.45M	2.2M	
Burlington/Woburn	\$8.04		1.2M	.29M	
Waltham	\$6.43		1.8M	.72M	
Wilmington/Reading	\$4.71		.37M	.45M	
Lowell/Chelmsford	\$3.91		.42M	(.18M)	
Lexington/Arlington	\$2.92		.25M	(.18M)	



Source: Various 2020 Q4 Broker Market Reports  
(CoStar, CBRE, Cushman Wakefield, JLL, Lincoln Property Company, Newmark Knight Frank)

# REGIONAL NODES

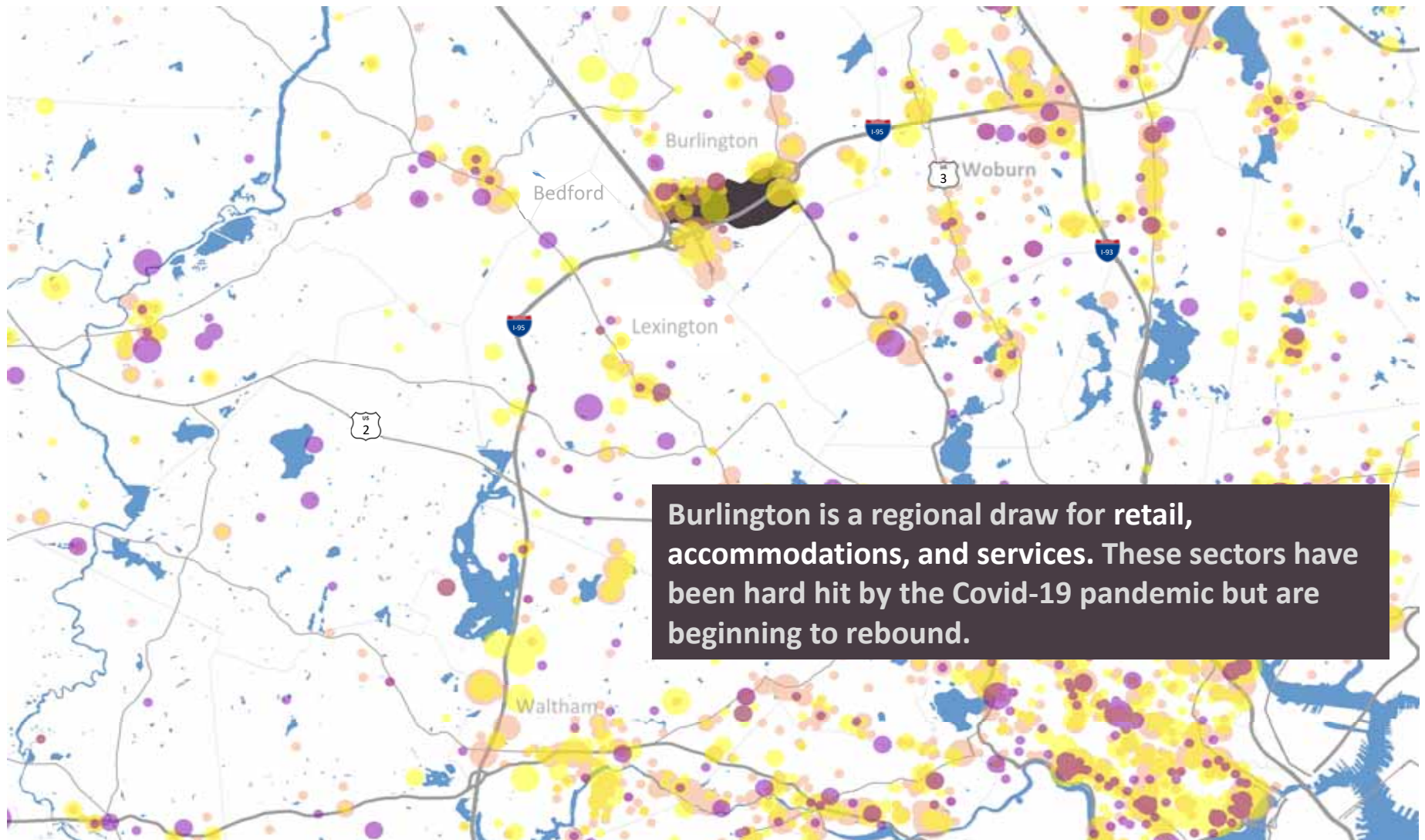
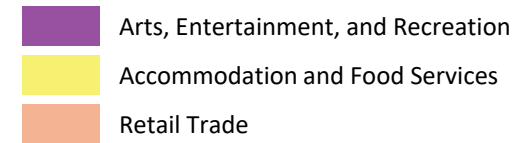
Information, Professional Services, Finance & Insurance





# REGIONAL NODES

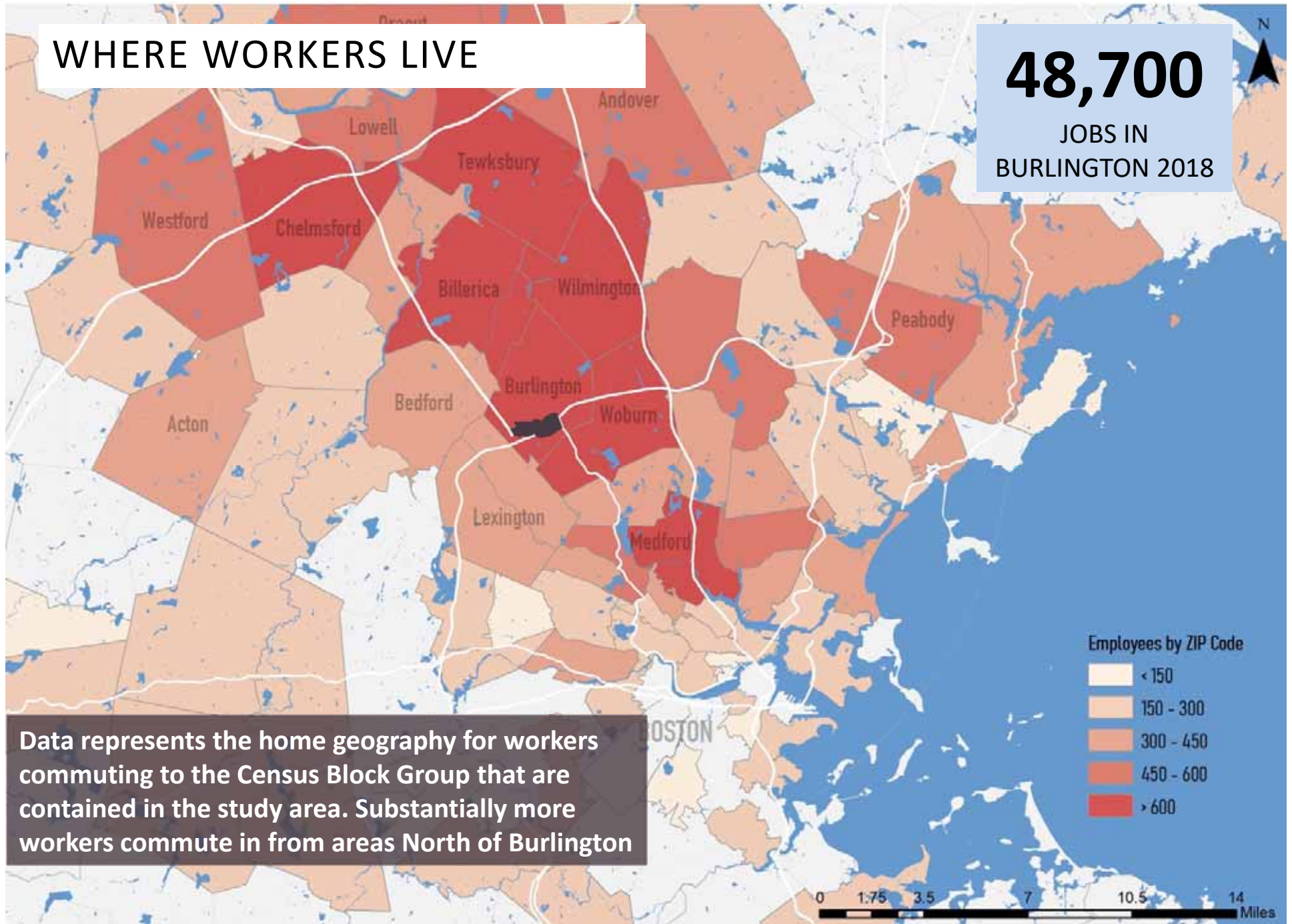
## Retail, Accommodation & Food Services, Recreation



## WHERE WORKERS LIVE

**48,700**

JOBS IN  
BURLINGTON 2018

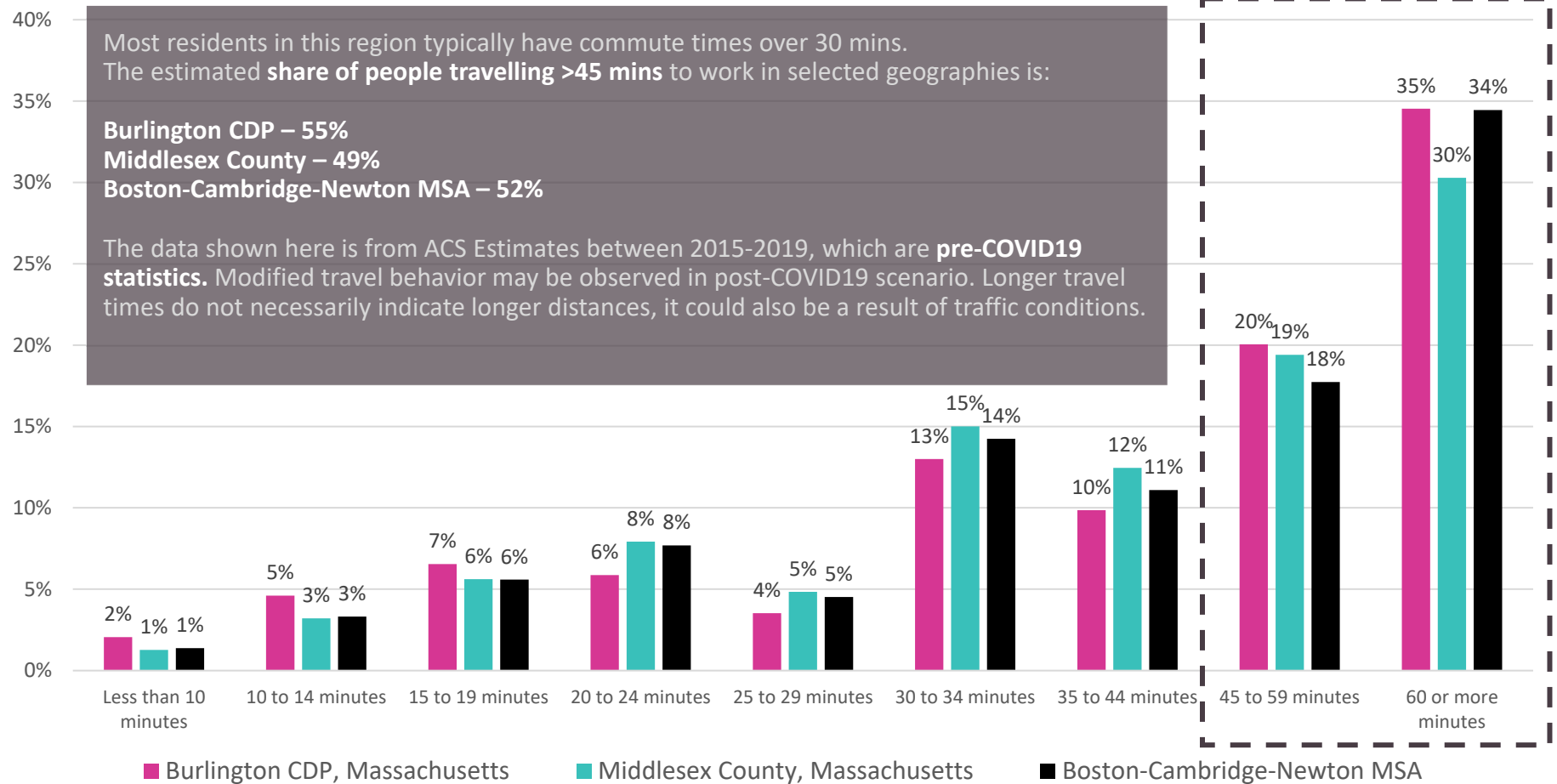


Data represents the home geography for workers commuting to the Census Block Group that are contained in the study area. Substantially more workers commute in from areas North of Burlington



# TRAVEL TIME TO WORK

Travel Time to Work - Workers 16 years and over who did not work at home



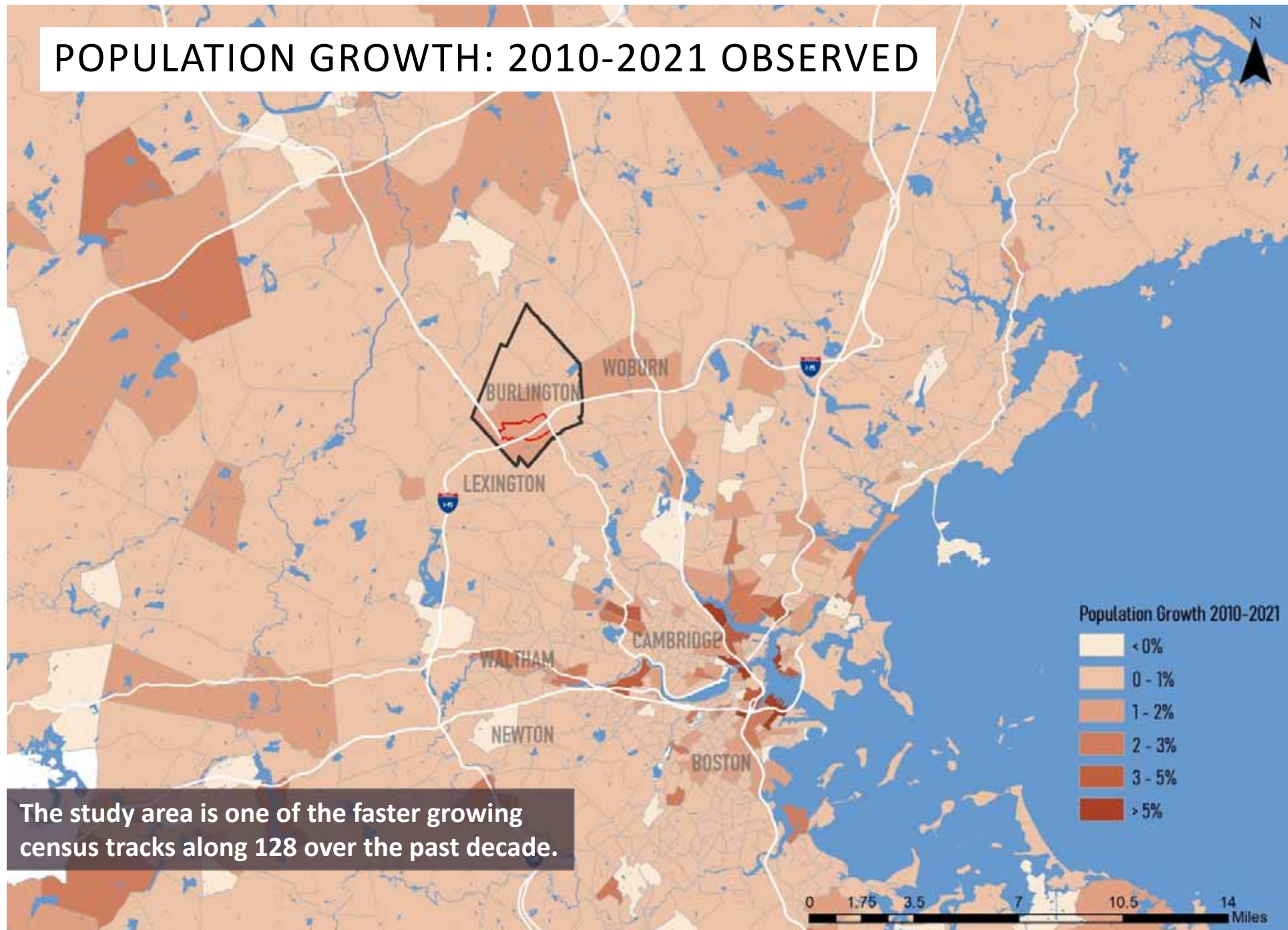
Source: ACS Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

# MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME 2021



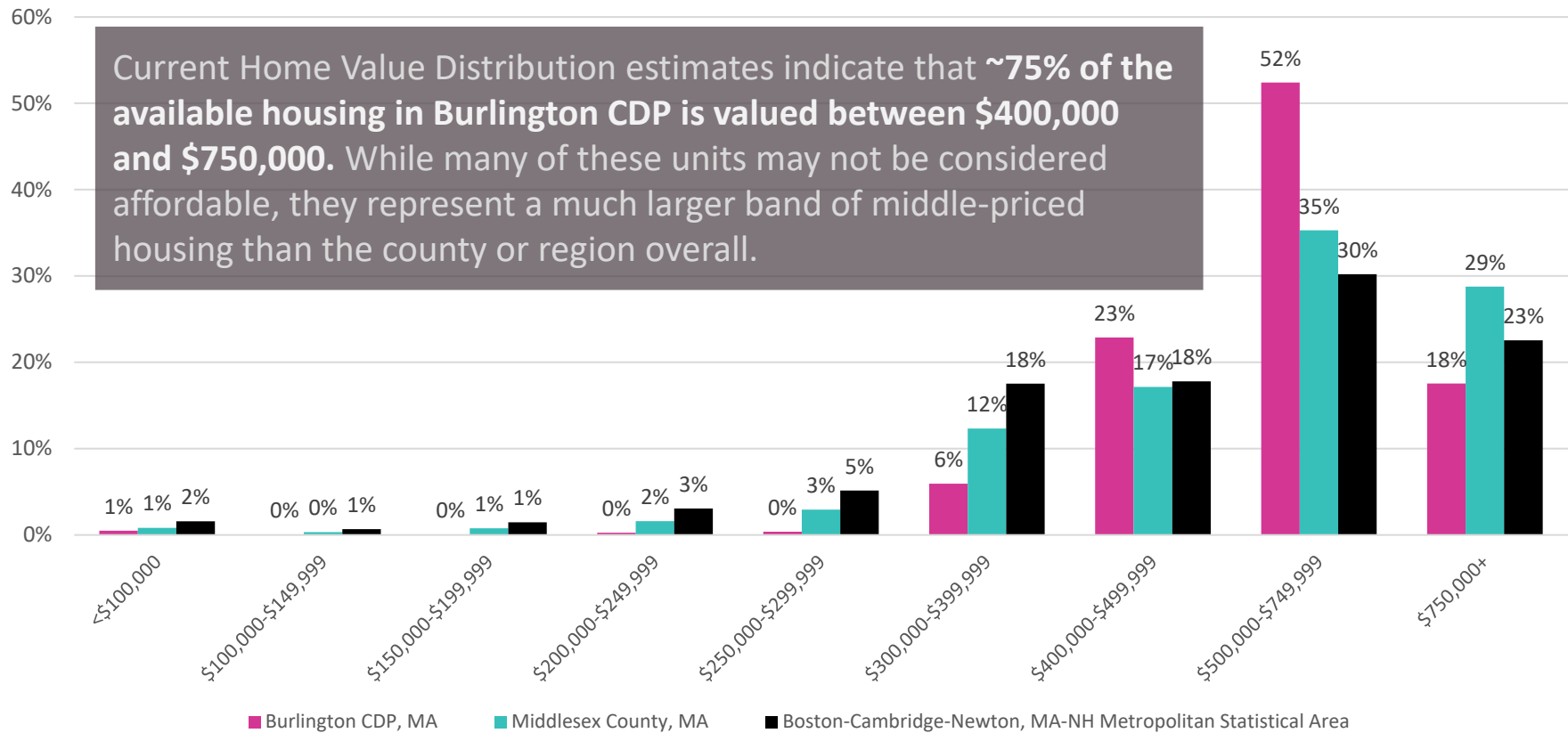


## POPULATION GROWTH: 2010-2021 OBSERVED



# HOUSING MARKET

## 2021 Home Value Distribution



Source: ACS Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



# HOUSING MARKET

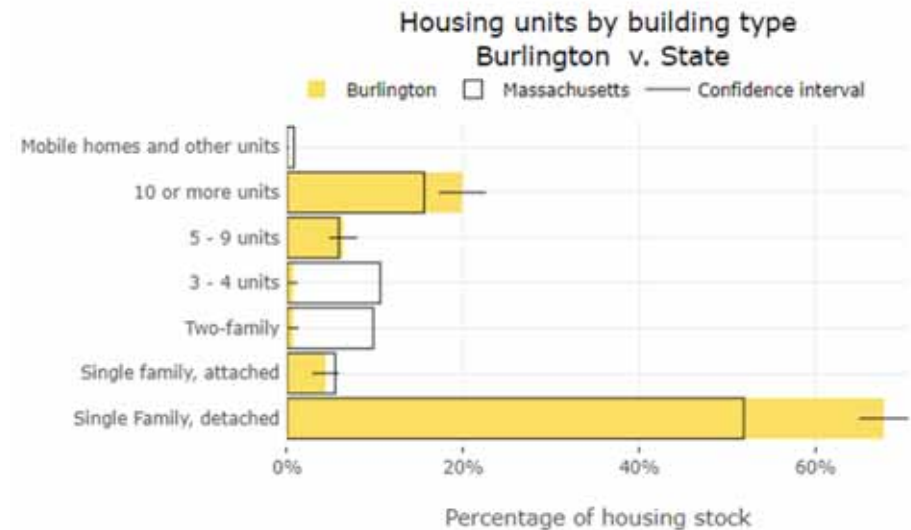


Rental units close to work are in demand especially as companies grow and workstyles change.



There's a worry that moderately priced single-family homes will be replaced with housing at higher price points.

<https://mhpcenterforhousingdata.shinyapps.io/DataTown/#>; <https://www.mass.gov/doc/subsidized-housing-inventory/download>



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-year  
Table S2504: Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units

Most of the housing in Burlington is single family, and 74% is owner occupied. In recent years, most new units have been multi-family housing.

# WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF WORK?

- **Hybrid** work models (e.g., 3 days a week)
- Downsizing **office footprints**
- Increased demand for **suburban locations**
- **15-Minute Neighborhoods**: proximity of work and home, access to local goods and services, robust social infrastructure, redesigned streetscapes
- Transit **ridership decline** / more local traffic
- Continued in person time for **collaboration, hands-on-work, medical practices**







## WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF RETAIL?

- E-commerce has grown and pre-pandemic ***trends have accelerated***
- In-person retailers focused on delivering ***unique experiences***, and becoming destinations
- Increased focused on ***“omni-channel” retailing***, i.e. blend of e-commerce, social media, brick-and-mortar
- Investments made in ***contactless*** ways to shop like curbside pickup
- Virtual brands, ***ghost kitchens & delivery-only concepts*** have thrived and will continue
- Malls with B, C, & D ratings are predicted to be ***at risk for closure*** (Burlington - Class A)



# THE POTENTIAL





# INDUSTRY CLUSTERS: ESTABLISHED

## Software Publishing (Information)



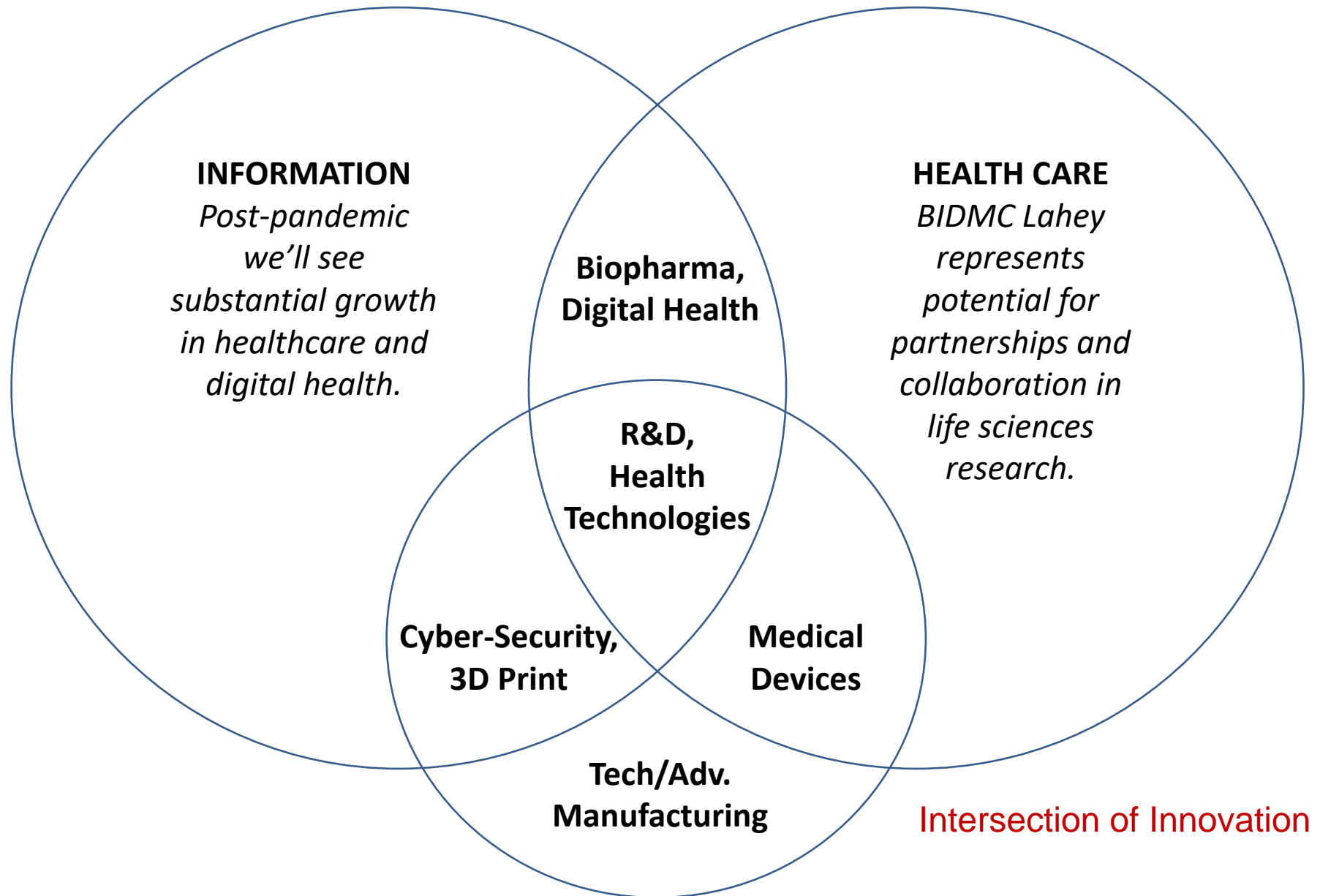
- Boston/Cambridge metro area is one of the largest Software Publishing clusters in U.S.
- Approximately **25%** of Burlington jobs are in information, primarily software publishing
- Mergers and acquisitions are moving at a rapid pace

## Health Care



- Approximately **15%** of Burlington jobs are in Health Care and Social Assistance (2018)
- Post-pandemic, this sector is primed for growth.
- Demand for licensed technologists and nurses has increased by 30 to 50%, with severe labor shortages

# INDUSTRY CLUSTERS: EMERGING





# ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

## Economic Development Role

- Recruit and train a skilled work force
- Attract other businesses that benefit from partnership and proximity
- Drive innovation
- Spin-off new start-up companies in the region



Beth Israel Lahey Health is the second largest employer in MA

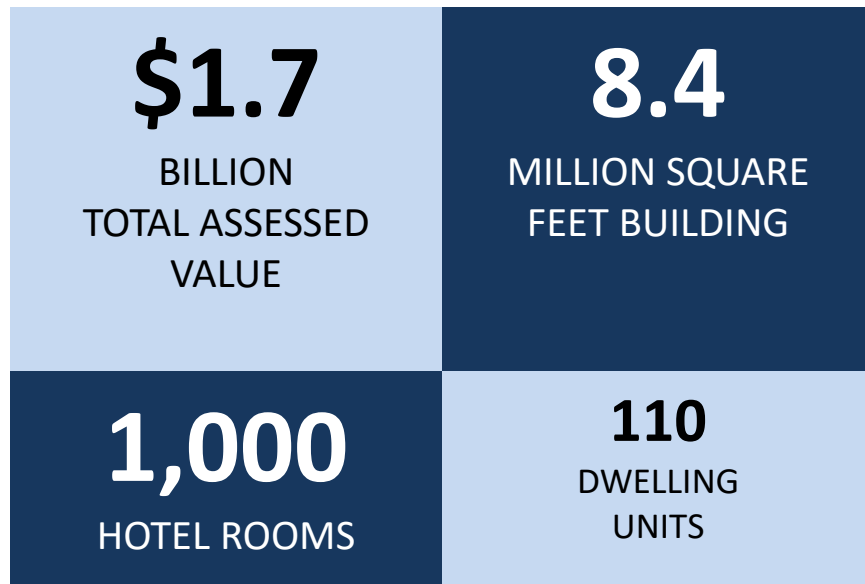


Northeastern's Innovation Campus: Building V opened in 2020 (\$70 million)

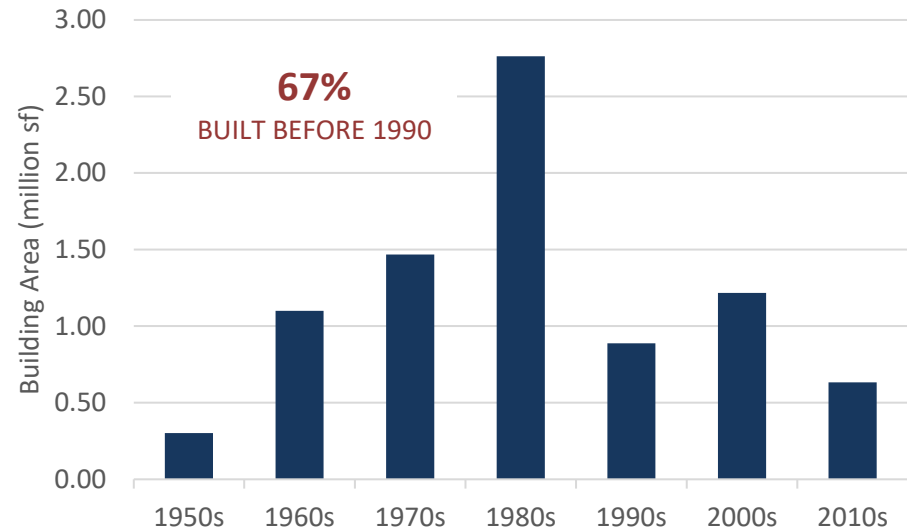


MITRE has attracted high tech firms to the area since the 1960s

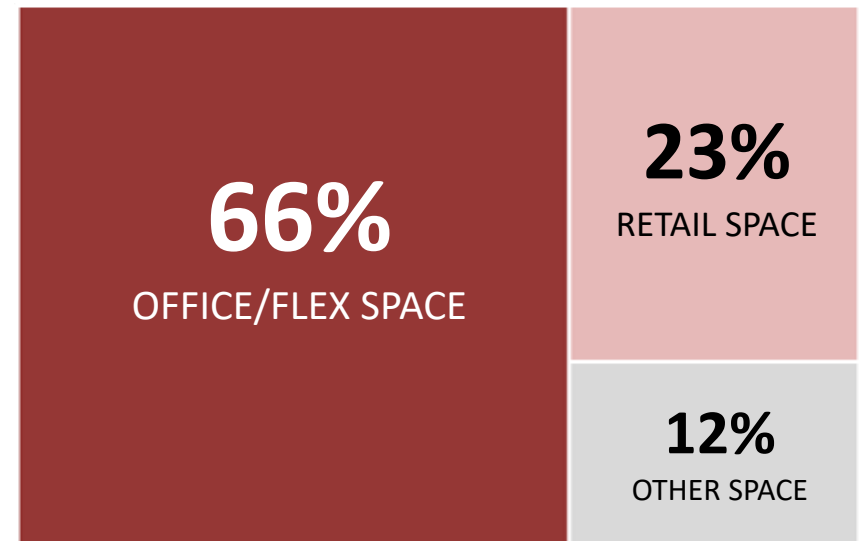
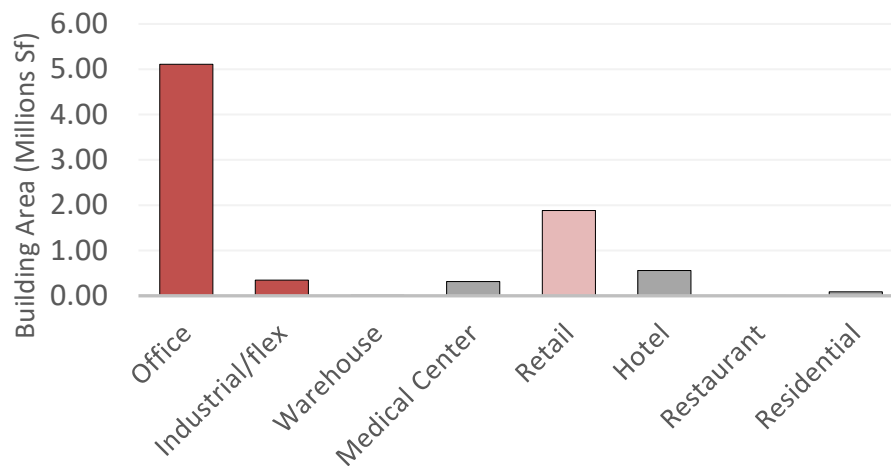
## STUDY AREA: BY THE NUMBERS



Building Area by Year Built (sf)



Building Area by Use





# ECONOMICS ON THE GROUND: BUILDING STOCK



1960s era: low-rise office park buildings in a campus setting



1970s era: one-story, adaptable for flex, R&D, and/or office



1990s-2000s: five-story corporate office headquarters

# ECONOMICS ON THE GROUND: BUILDING STOCK



2010-2020: Higher rise HQ office with structured parking



2010-2020: Infill structures with amenities



# CHANGING REALITY OF RETAIL



1960s malls anchored with department stores and surrounded by parking is changing (Burlington Mall)



The 2000s saw the rise of big box and lifestyle centers (Wayside)



2020s: online shopping has driven retail to be more experiential (former Sears site)



# AMENITIES AS DRIVERS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Proximity of restaurants, shops, hotels, and housing within pedestrian friendly environments.



Recreational paths (Mary Cummings Park)



Social infrastructure: maker spaces, community gardens, cafes (The District)



# CURRENT ZONING

## Uses (selective) in BG, IG, IH

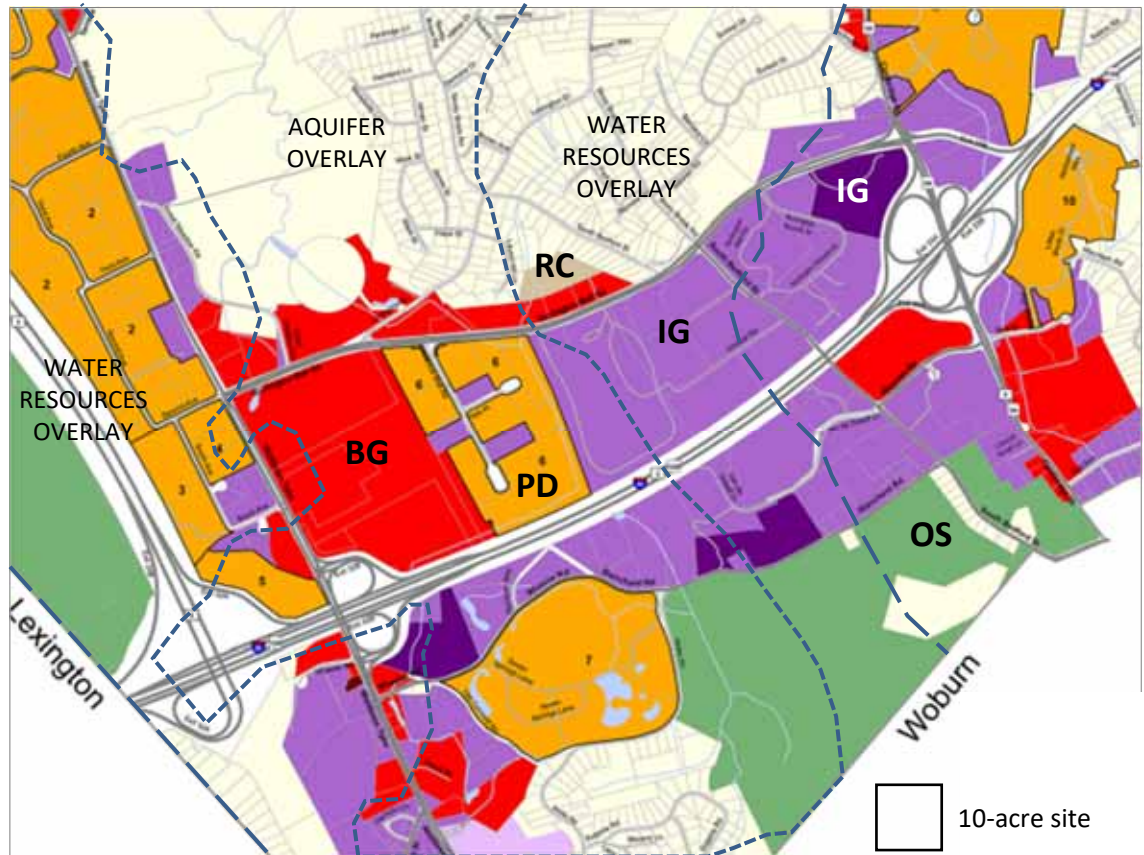
- *Allowed in all:* office, childcare
- *Allowed in none:* housing
- *Permission varies and, in some districts, prohibited:* retail, restaurants, fitness centers, hotels, hospitals, clinics, conference centers, labs, light manufacturing, R&D, parking garages

## Dimensions

- *BG and IG:* 30 feet (~2 stories) and no FAR standard
- *IH:* generally, up to 80 feet; FAR 0.15 up to 0.5 with special permit

## PD Planned Development

- > 10 acres
- Negotiated use and dimensions



**0.4**  
AVERAGE EXISTING FAR  
DISTRICT RANGE  
0.32 – 0.64

### Zoning Districts

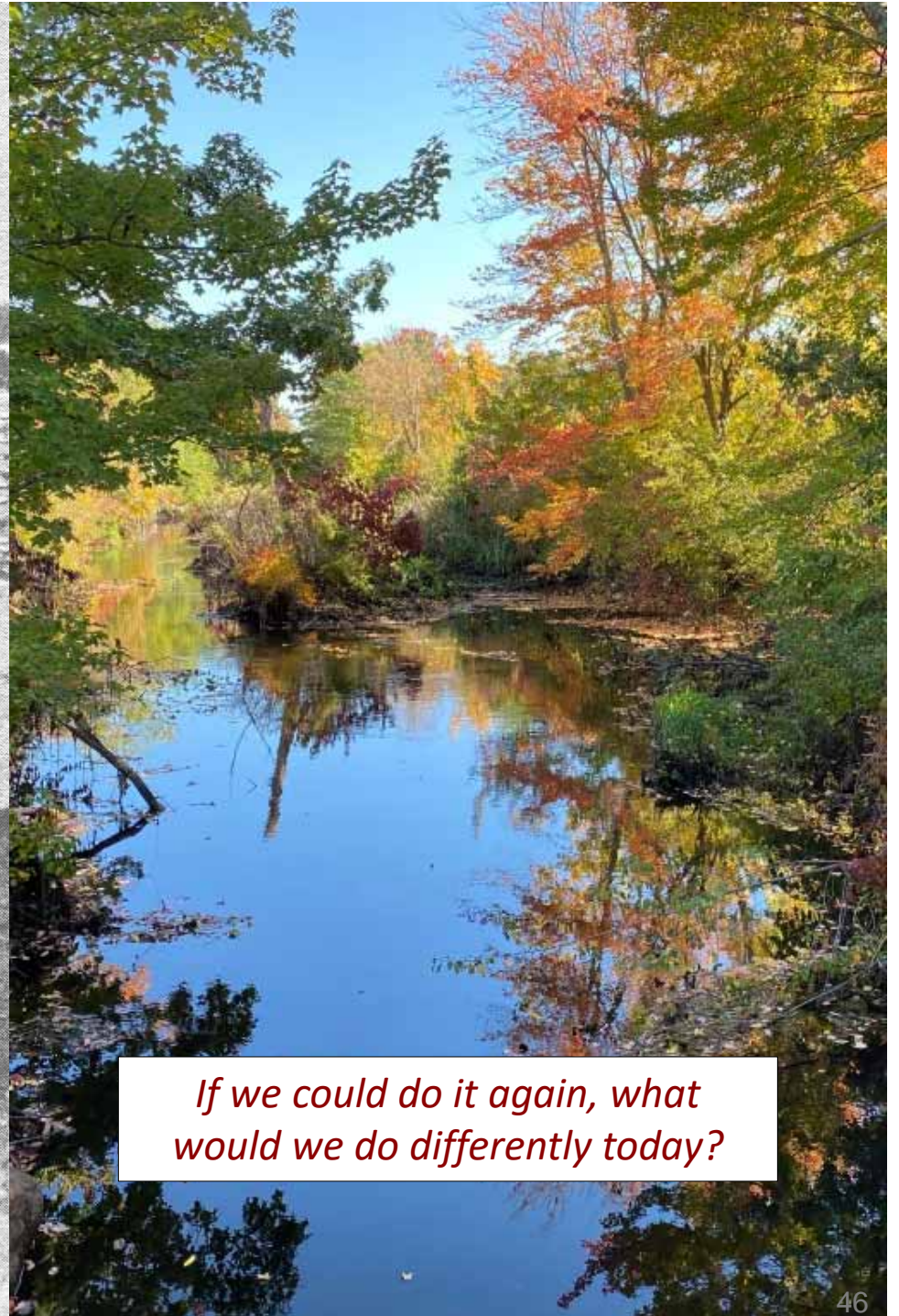
- BG-General Business
- IG – General Industrial
- IH – Innovation
- OS- Open Space
- RO- One-Family Dwelling
- RC-Continuing Care

### Planned Development Sub-Districts

- 1 Network Drive at Northwest Park
- 2 Northwest Park
- 3 South Avenue II
- 4 South Avenue I
- 5 90 Middlesex Turnpike
- 6 New England Executive Park (The District)
- 7 Arborpoint
- 8 Grandview Farm
- 9 Corporate Center
- 10 Wall Street



# INSPIRATIONS



*If we could do it again, what  
would we do differently today?*



# INSPIRATIONS: NATURAL SYSTEMS

Muddy River, Fenway, Boston



<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/>; <https://www.wcvb.com/article/fenway-rally-muddy-river-restoration-project/12270090#>

# INSPIRATIONS: CIVIC SPACES

Suburban Square, Ardmore, PA



<https://www.mahanrykiel.com/landscape-architecture-delivers-hygge-outside-of-philly/>



# INSPIRATIONS: CONNECTIVITY

Assembly Square, Somerville, MA



<https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2019/11/01/major-office-and-lab-space-proposed-for-near-assembly-row/sr1TEBZ0xpLbfN0BArM3H/story.html>

# INSPIRATIONS: MOBILITY

## Bike Paths, Cambridge, MA



<https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2016/01/07/cambridge-best-new-bike-lane/>



# INSPIRATIONS: ADAPTABLE, MULTI-PURPOSE PLACES

Arsenal Yards, Watertown, MA

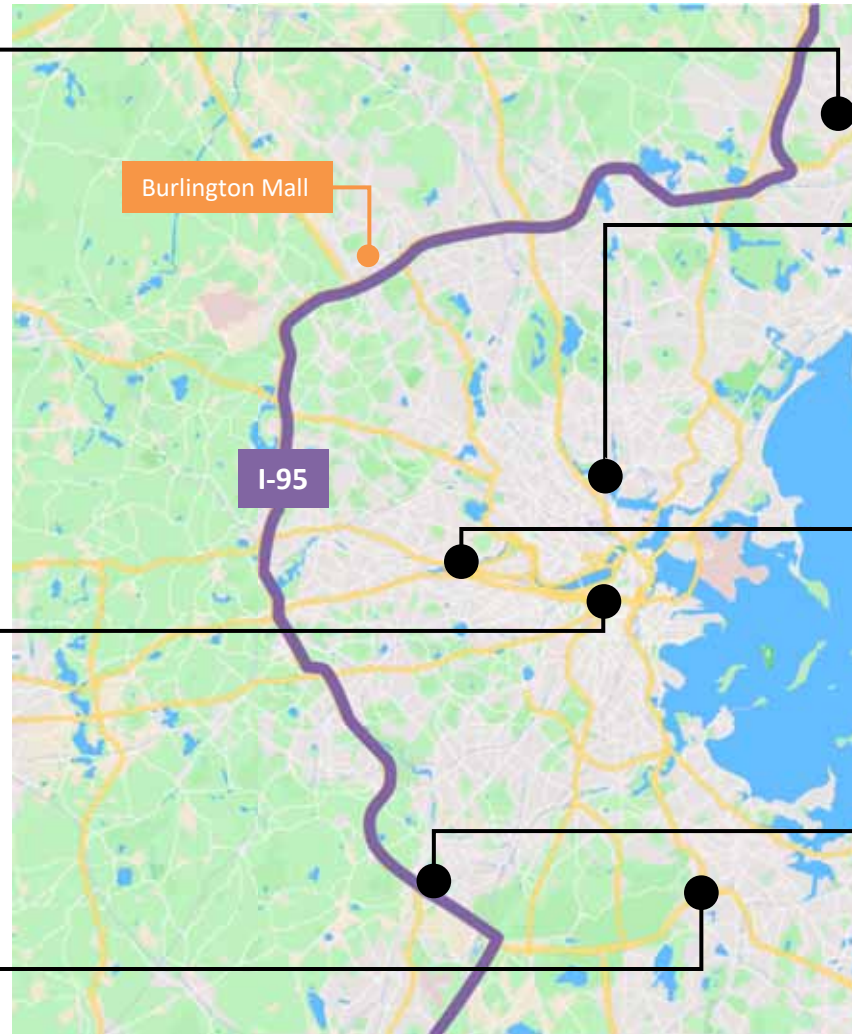
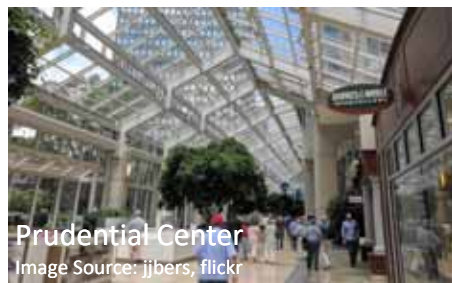




# INSPIRATIONS AND POTENTIAL

## Precedents in the Greater Boston Area

### Traditional Shopping Malls:



### Lifestyle Centers:

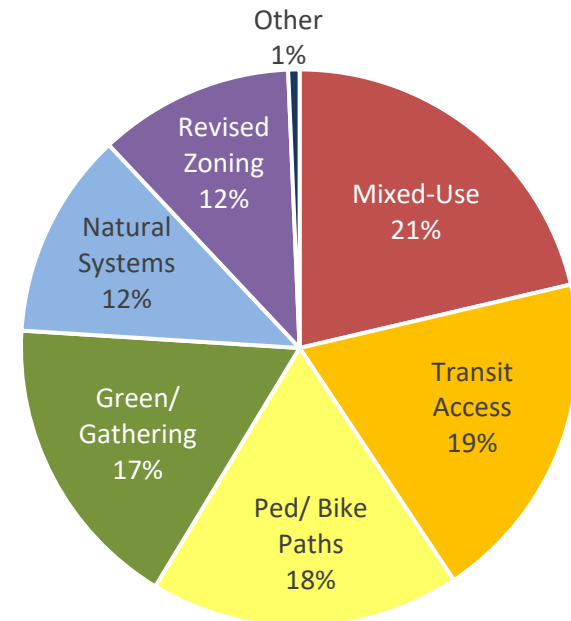




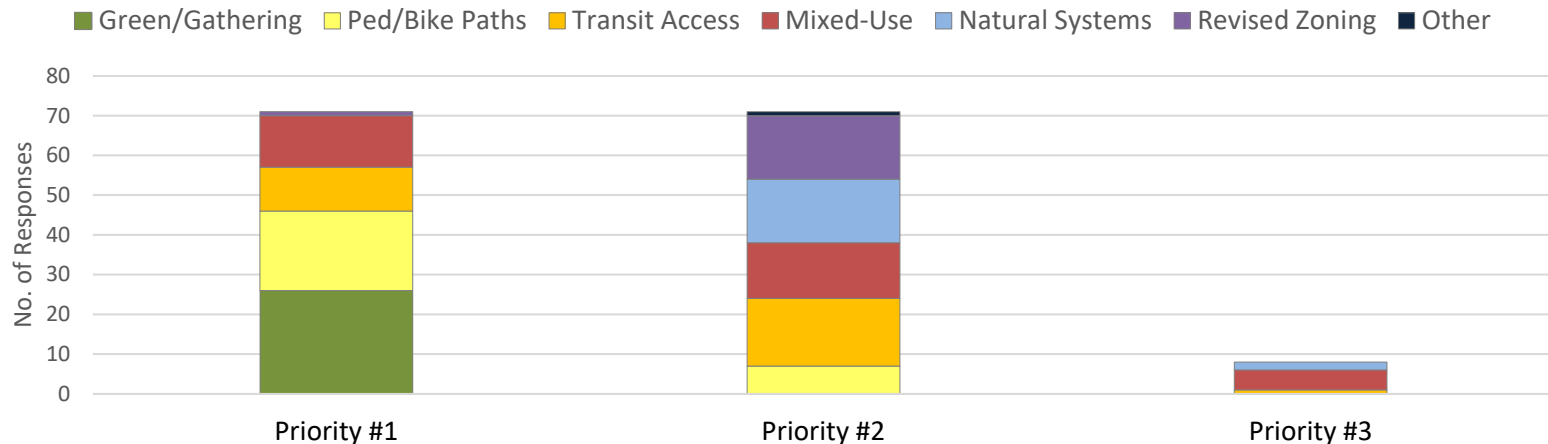
## POLLING QUESTION #4. PRIORITIES

What do you think are the top **TWO** priorities for this area?

- ☐ More green space and public gathering spaces
- ☐ Better connections with pedestrian and bike paths
- ☐ Better access to public transit
- ☐ More mixed-use development
- ☐ Improved water resource and natural systems
- ☐ Revised zoning
- ☐ Other



Priorities in Order of Selection

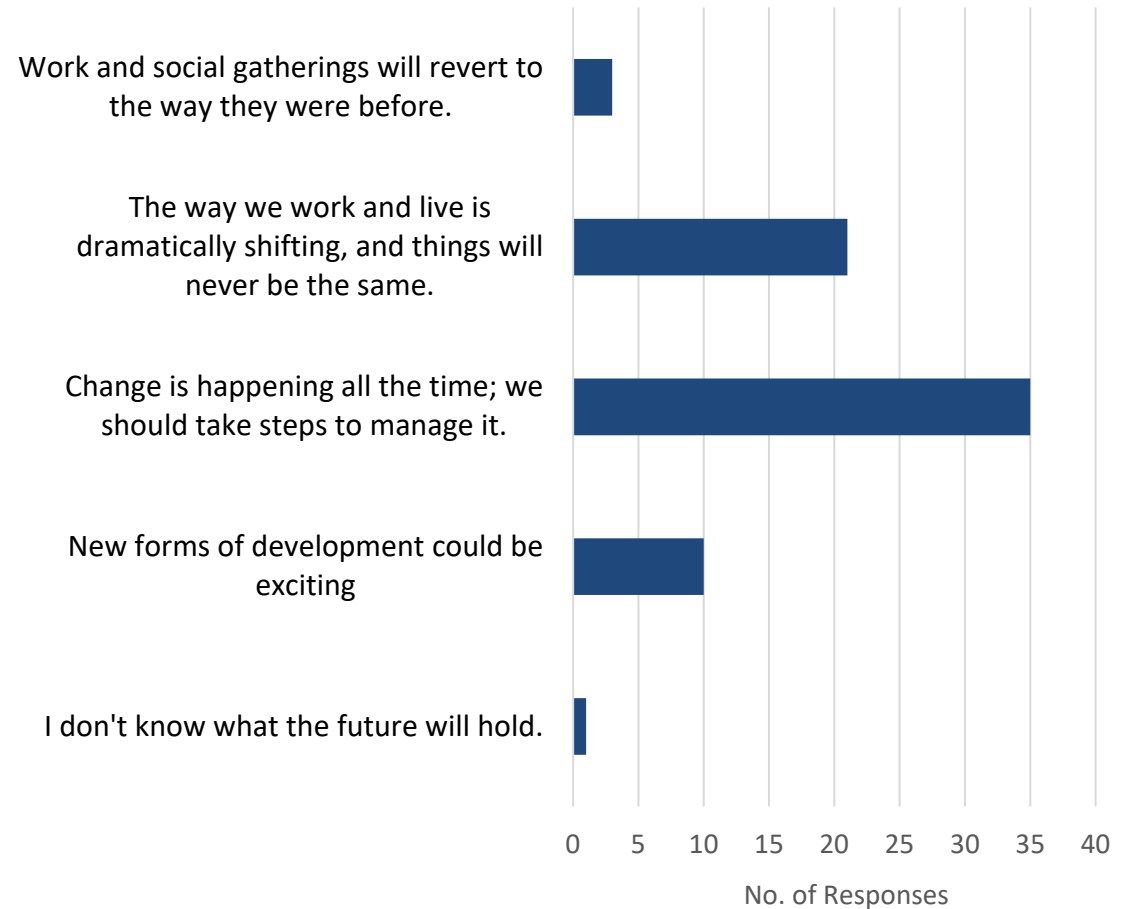


71 responders  
out of 85  
participants;  
150 selections

## POLLING QUESTION #5: THE FUTURE

Looking into the future, post-pandemic, which statement resonates most closely for you? (*choose one*)

- ☐ Work and social gatherings will revert to the way they were before.
- ☐ The way we work and live is dramatically shifting, and things will never be the same.
- ☐ Change is happening all the time; we should take steps to manage it.
- ☐ New forms of development could be exciting.
- ☐ I don't know what the future will hold.



70 responders  
out of 85  
participants



# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## Questions/Prompts

Share ideas and listen. Encourage everyone to speak.

1. What brought you to the meeting tonight?
2. What is one improvement that you would like to see in this area? In what locations would this be?
3. What works well about the Burlington Mall area today?

## MODERATORS



JON TREMENTOZZI



AMY FATER



JULIA CARRASQUEL



DAVID GAMBLE



JAMES CARRICO



ALEXANDRIA BATISTE



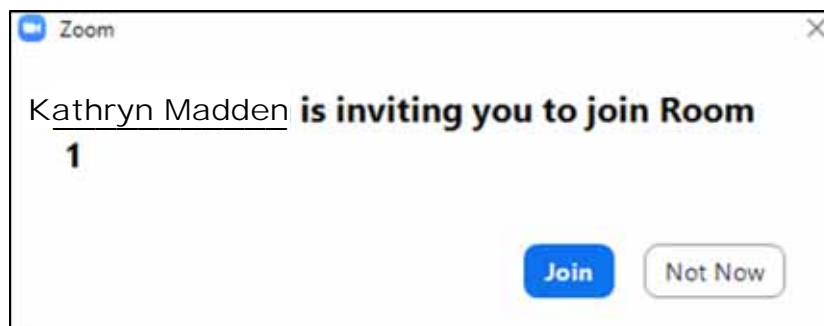
AMANDA GREGOIRE



MELISA TINTOCALIS



KATHRYN MADDEN



# BREAK OUT ROOM REFLECTIONS: ZOOM CHAT

*Is there something that you heard tonight that you hadn't heard before either from someone in your small group or from the presentation, something that is causing you to think differently? Any new ideas?*

- There is too great a disconnect between the general areas of Residents and the developed areas around Mall Road. What is the managed plan for this as well?
- River walks! Awesome!
- Underlying water issues
- Surprised with demographics
- What was the impetus for this whole approach to the future in Burlington?
- Convert much parking lots, impervious surfaces to open/green space and parks/gathering places. Riverwalk is great.
- The visual of the parking and how it divided areas was quite shocking
- Ecology at Burlington mall let's explore more....
- Employment demographics and the housing market
- Dead ends that prevent connection
- Develop strong intra-Burlington transit to complement pedestrian access
- I am concerned about the presentation comments that implied to me that sections of the town would

be focused on specific business types. It will hurt us to be overly restrictive.

- I was surprised how much of a lack there was of mid-density residential space
- Was the Master Plan approved?
- The "downtown" area / town center (overlay district) needs attention...it's an eyesore & we NEED to partner w/ building/land-owners to revive this area & make it better!! Signage would help.
- I don't know if it's possible, but more walkable / cyclable connections across (under?) 128 would be impactful
- Same with mall road - these are currently hard barriers
- Being proactive with a vision will give Burlington the ability to better plan and adjust our zoning to accommodate our changing needs. Thank you, Melisa, Kristin and the planning groups for helping to bring this to the forefront of conversation.
- I found the slide about employees coming from north important as future public transit needs are considered.
- I would love to see an MIT satellite here in town.

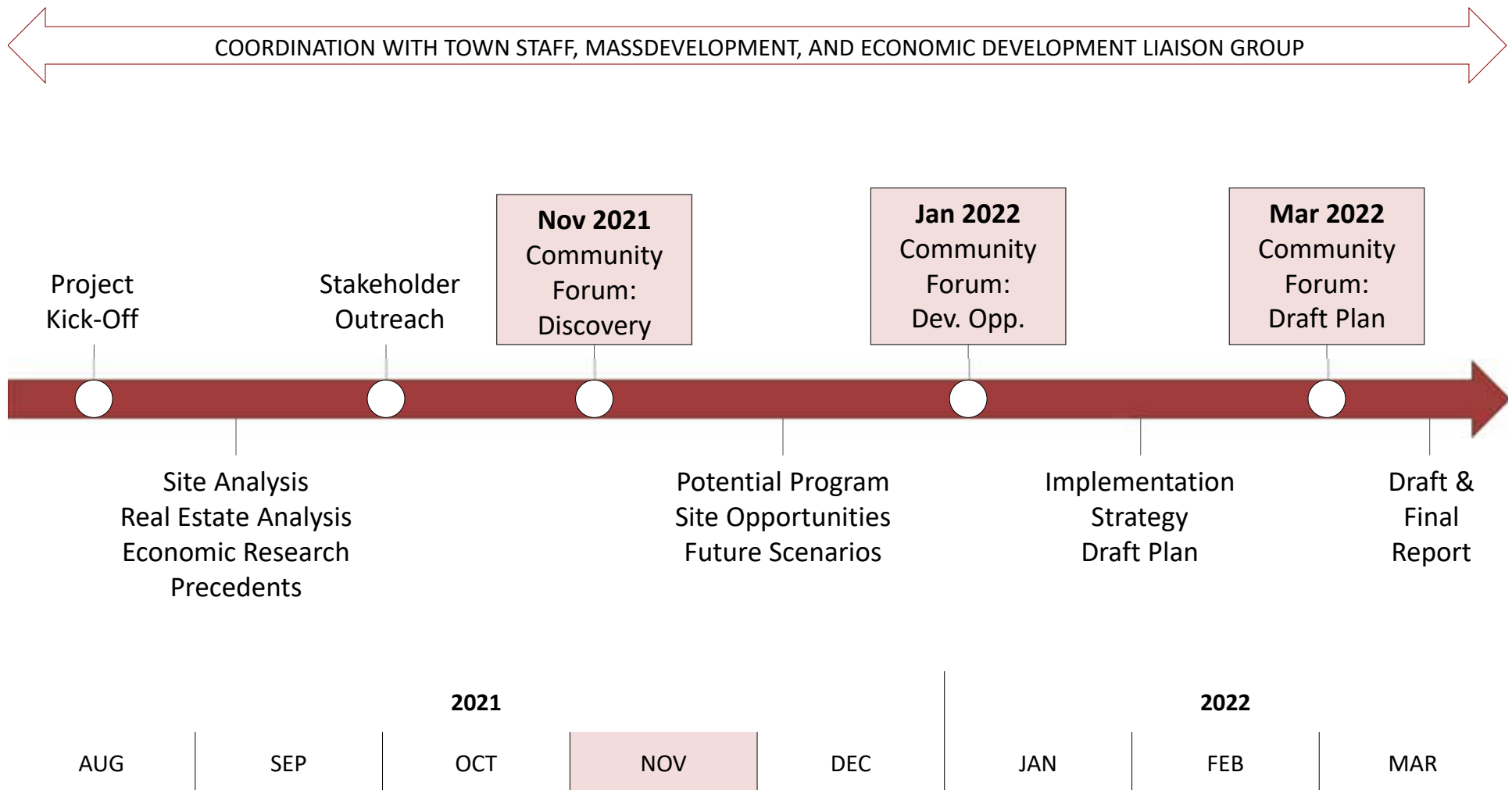
*[Facilitator notes of small group discussions will be forthcoming]*



## QUESTIONS / DISCUSSION



# NEXT STEPS / TIMELINE



<https://bringmetoburlington.com/>