



# Devens Housing Production Working Group Meeting #3

April 1, 2025

## Agenda (1 Hour)

- **Welcome (5 mins)**
- **Presentation of Draft Report and Comments (45 mins)**
- **Next Steps and Closing Comments (10 mins)**

# Devens Working Group Goal and Charge



Per Section 298 of Chapter 238 of the Acts of 2024)

**Provide a vision for increasing housing production within Devens.**

**Charge:** Submit a report to the legislature that will determine a strategy and plan to provide for increased housing production within the Innovation and Technology Center zoning district in Devens.

The report is due **May 18, 2025.**

# Public Engagement to Date



## 1. The Devens Working Group held meetings on January 21 and February 25, 2025

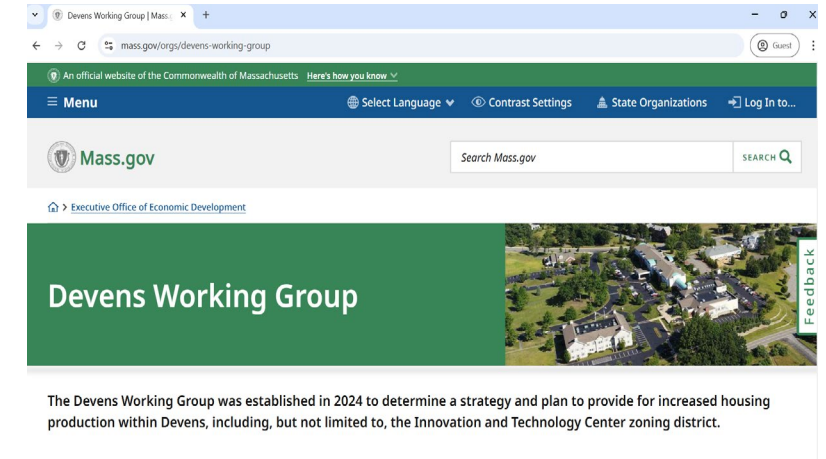
- Meeting Notices are being posted on Mass.gov
- Open to the public

## 2. Devens Working Group Webpage

- Can be accessed at: [www.mass.gov/orgs/devens-working-group](https://www.mass.gov/orgs/devens-working-group)
- Contains resources on Mass Leads, links to the Devens Enterprise Commission website, and hosts our public meeting notices for this group.

## 3. Public Comment Form

- The DWG webpage contains a public comment collection form.
- We are asking members of the public – especially residents of Devens, Ayer, Harvard, and Shirley – to share their thoughts.



### Public Meeting Notices

Feb  
25

**Devens Working Group Meeting - February 25, 2025** →  
33 Andrews Parkway, Devens, MA 01434  
1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Basic Information - Individual Submission \*

Required field

First Name Last Name

Do you reside or work in Ayer, Harvard, Shirley, or Devens?\*

If yes, where do you reside?\*

If yes, where do you work? \*

## Agenda (1 Hour)

- **Welcome (5 mins)**
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- **Adaptive Reuse where feasible**
- **Historic preservation and compatibility**
- **Special attention to existing businesses and residences**
- **New housing is compatible with surrounding land uses and densities**
- **Connect new housing districts to open space – creating and maintaining the network of recreational trails and green infrastructure.**
- **Importance of public education about zoning for additional housing types**
- **Public education about the unique situation with MassDev as the property owner and DEC regulations is different from other zoning and development processes**
- **Green and complete streets**
- **Healthy buildings, social and active neighborhood design**
- **Build off of existing success of Innovative Residential District (IRD) regulations but recognizing the different location and context.**
- **Careful not to let parking dictate design – design neighborhoods for people first**
- **Jurisdiction will not be accelerated – can accommodate additional housing if properly planned.**
- **Ensure the existing Levels of Service that Devens residents, businesses and organizations have come to expect are maintained**

# Community Needs



- Increase **Senior housing** by zoning for a range of housing types and densities. Smaller units work well for seniors and downsizers. Do not need to restrict zoning for seniors.
- Maintain or increase **green spaces**, walking trails, and wildlife habitat.
- Consider how towns' **Councils on Aging** work with Devens residents
- Public education about existing **public transportation** – shuttles to Commuter Rail, MRTA services that are available.
- Concern about increase in **traffic**
- Desire to phase housing over time so that there is **no “glut” of new housing units.**
- Availability of **healthcare** system to support additional residents.
- Ability of regional **education** system to support additional residents.
- Importance of design so that community character reflects Devens **historic traditional designs**
- **Rogers field** and existing recreational demands considered in design and location of new residential areas
- **Playground** within the ITC

# Community Opportunities



- Existing infrastructure in place to serve new residential development (roads, sewer, water, and utilities)
- Municipal services provided by MassDevelopment
- More customers for local businesses
- New connections / trails to adjacent municipalities
- Increase in affordable housing
- Additional users of new amenities in Devens
- Economic growth, increased revenue and job opportunities for the region



1. Amend the existing Innovation and Technology Center (ITC) zoning district to permit a range of housing types within certain areas of the district.
2. Frame the ITC district area as a Village Center to capitalize on the classic neo-traditional neighborhood design, recognizing existing opportunities and constraints within the District.
3. Devens Enterprise Commission to Draft new regulations.
4. Framework and Guiding Principles for a Zoning Amendment. Prior to issuing its final report and recommendations, the working group should consider drafting a zoning amendment that can be brought for approval at super town meeting





Clear Path for  
Veterans New England

Verbeck Field

Vicksburg Square

State Police Devens

Segens

Fort Devens  
Memorial Wall

Rogers Field

FedEx Drop Box

Transitions At Devens

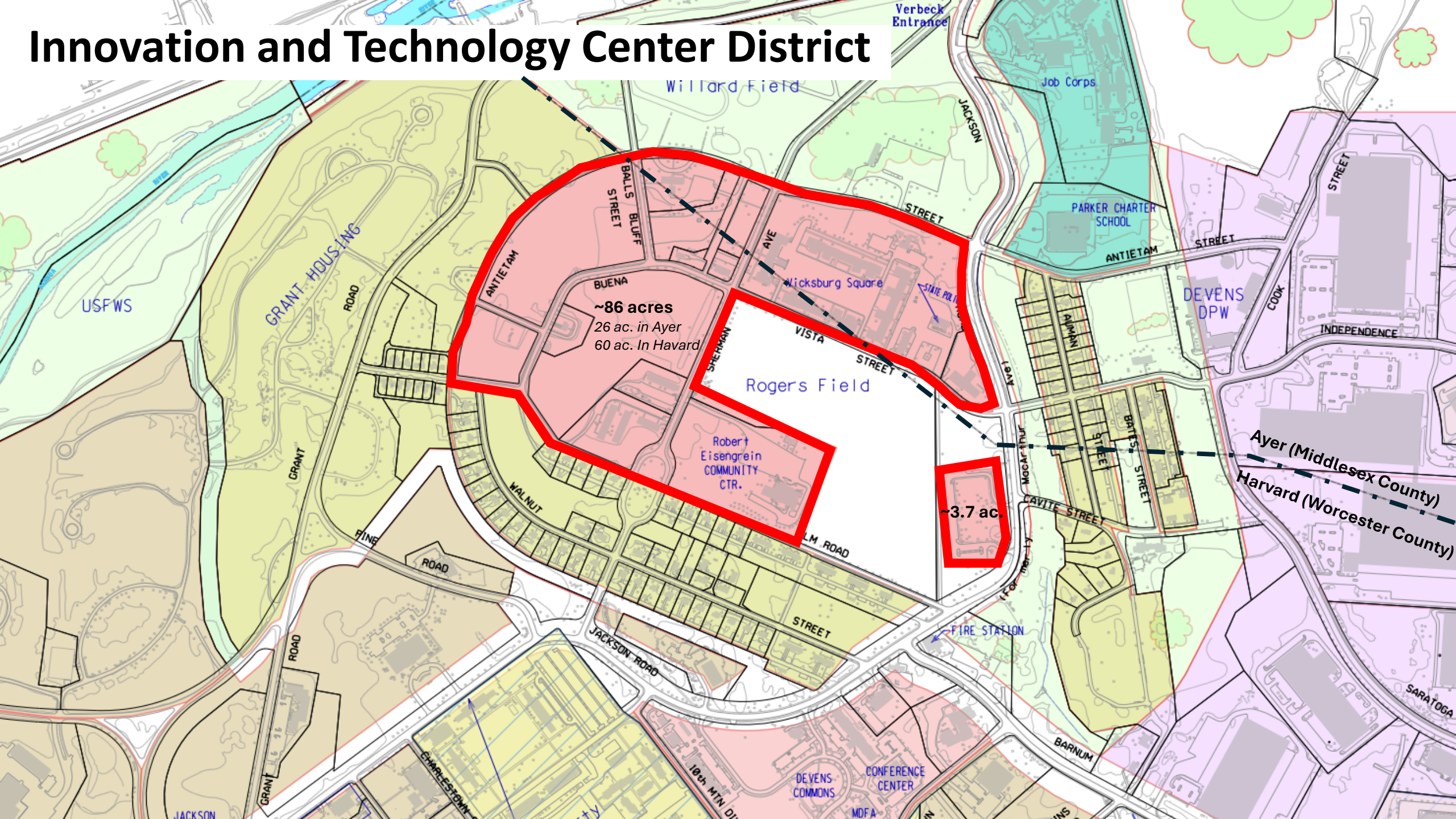
Comrex Corporation

Diversified  
Business Advisors

Google



# Innovation and Technology Center District



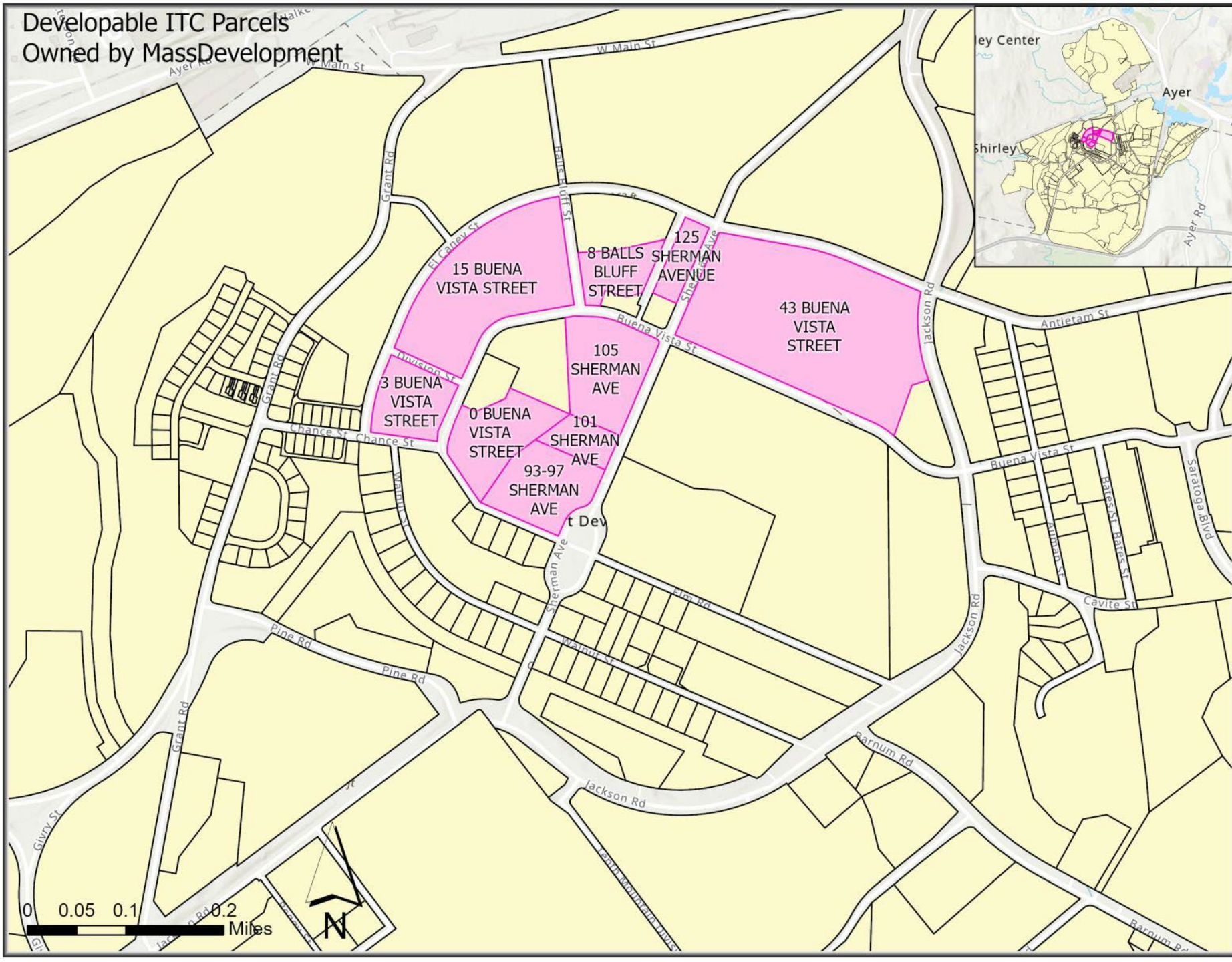
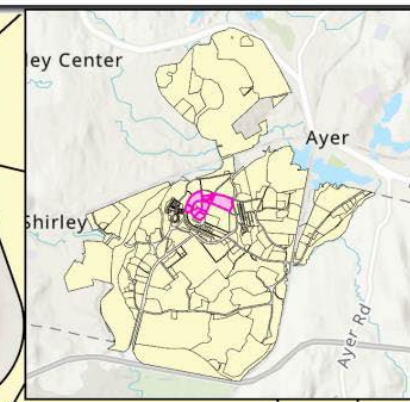


**Developable ITC Parcels  
Owned by MassDevelopment**

Map showing developable ITC parcels owned by MassDevelopment in Shirley, MA. The parcels are highlighted in pink and labeled with their addresses:

- 15 BUENA VISTA STREET
- 8 BALLS BLUFF STREET
- 125 SHERMAN AVENUE
- 43 BUENA VISTA STREET
- 3 BUENA VISTA STREET
- 10 BUENA VISTA STREET
- 105 SHERMAN AVE
- 101 SHERMAN AVE
- 93-97 SHERMAN AVE

The map includes a scale bar (0 to 0.2 miles) and a north arrow. An inset map shows the location within Shirley, MA. Surrounding streets include Grant Rd, Pine Rd, Jackson Rd, Barnum Rd, and Antietam St.



Amend the existing Innovation and Technology Center (ITC) zoning district to permit a range of housing types within certain areas of the district.

- Reuse of Vicksburg – number of units to be determined by structural study
- 100-200 units over remaining 40+ developable acres (with a range of densities)
- The fine tuning of densities will need to rely on design and compatibility
- Densities - mixed– but generally higher near Rogers and reduce as we move away from Rogers - Maintain max building heights of 52'-62' and 45-56 further out (Devens Utilities can likely accommodate higher densities)
- Combination of market-rate and deed restricted affordable units to maintain Devens 25% affordable requirement (diversity of housing types will provide more diverse market-rate affordability)
- Concern that specifying any number will lead to expectations. We really don't know how many buildings will be redevelopable yet.

## Frame the ITC district area as a Village Center to capitalize on the classic neo-traditional neighborhood design, recognizing existing opportunities and constraints within the District

- Require innovative, low-carbon neighborhood and building designs in exchange for higher densities that respect location and context (continuing to Lead by Example)
- Missing middle housing types – smaller footprint, mix of housing types, universal accessibility, age-in place (life-cycle housing)
- Consider existing development and vacant parcel development opportunities and constraints when considering density and building typologies.
- Mix of rental and for-sale units (flexibility to meet market demand). MassDevelopment may be able to control this through land sales.
- Mixed use zoning (commercial that can be changed to res and vice versa)

## Draft Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC) regulations

- Facilitate innovative residential development in the ITC District
- Input from a new working group to be created by DEC and MassDevelopment

## 4. Framework and Guiding Principles for a Zoning Amendment

Prior to issuing its final report and recommendations, the working group should consider drafting a zoning amendment that can be brought for approval at super town meeting, following the process noted above, or enacted by the Legislature. Such a zoning amendment would need to, at minimum:

- Add Residential Uses (Single or Two Family Dwelling, Multi Family Dwelling, Senior Housing) as Permitted Uses in the Innovation Technology Center District in the Table of Permitted Uses under Exhibit D of the Devens Bylaws. (note: small-scale -retail is already permitted as an accessory use so mixed use would be feasible)
- Add new Multi-Family/Apartment category in Article VI.A1.k. General Land Use Categories: Residential, of the Devens By-Laws to allow for multi-family apartment buildings with more than 3-8 units
- Set forth the applicable density limitations and height and other dimensional limitations or requirements.
- For clarity, the zoning amendment might also modify Article IX. E.1. of the Devens Bylaws to strike the reference to the 282 unit housing cap, making the bylaw consistent with the special act that eliminated the housing cap.
- Consistent with the working group's consensus to achieve an outcome that is practical and feasible, we recommend that a zoning amendment not be overly prescriptive or detailed. For example, the zoning amendment should permit but not require specific housing types. Affordability requirements should likewise be reasonable, *i.e.*, not make actual development financially unfeasible.



There are two options to implement the plan and its strategies and action items to change the Devens Bylaws to allow residential as an allowed use in the ITC District.

1. Super Town Meeting
2. Legislative Amendment to Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993

# Next Steps



To promote local understanding of the benefits of new housing production at Devens, and to ensure that MassDevelopment, the DEC and the Towns take appropriate action to prepare for new housing development, the working group recommends that the MassDevelopment and the Towns engage a planning consultant to undertake the following studies:

1. School Needs assessment – for region. MBTA zoning impacts to surrounding towns. Existing enrollment levels in region and capacity. Link between new housing starts and school enrollment.
2. Update assessments of existing buildings to determine adaptive reuse feasibility
3. Traffic and Parking study, including Transit and Transportation Demand Management initiatives
4. Identify Social Service needs for the region
5. Engage the community. Consider approaches such as design Charette to identify opportunities and constraints (utilities, topo). Identify effects of additional residential units within the ITC district and create a plan to address through design and permitting.

The working group has been informed that state funding is available for these kinds of planning studies, through a grant from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to the Town of Ayer acting as fiscal agent for the other Towns.

# Working Group and Public feedback on this DRAFT



Working Group feedback

Public feedback

More information about submitting public feedback in next slides

## Agenda

- **Welcome (5 mins)**
- **Presentation of Draft Report and Comments (45 mins)**
- **Next Steps & Closing Comments (10 mins)**

## Remaining Meetings:

- May 8<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm
- May 14<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm

## Public Comments

- We ***strongly encourage*** the public to submit comments by April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025
- Comments should be made through Devens Housing Production Working Group web page: [mass.gov/orgs/devens-working-group](https://mass.gov/orgs/devens-working-group)

[Devens Working Group | Mass.gov](https://mass.gov/orgs/devens-working-group)