



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

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Sherri A. Dalton
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August 28, 2019
Mr. Sean R. Cronin
Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services
PO Box 9569
Boston, Ma 02114
Re: Wakefield Community Compact Application November 2015

Dear Mr. Cronin:

Thank you for contacting me in regard to the Community Compact Application submitted and approved by your office some 4 years ago now. I vividly remember the signing of the compact with Lieutenant Governor Polito. It was an exciting day for the town.

I think we have enjoyed great success on the areas we focused on. Please allow me to enumerate.

Meeting Wakefield's Community Compact Goals

Housing and Economic Development — Preparing for Success:

Wakefield refocused the Town's transit-oriented development strategy to promote housing near Main Street commercial areas in 2011. Working jointly with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the City of Melrose, and the Town of Reading, Wakefield's Town Planner initiated a Main Street Corridor Study to promote housing and new development within the walking distances of the commuter rail stops and bus stops along the transit corridor shared by all three communities. The Main Street Corridor study was completed in January 2012, and informed Wakefield's Housing Production Plan that was begun the following year and adopted February 2015. Subsequently, the consultant, Peg Barringer of FinePoint Associates, worked with a group of downtown merchants and town officials and found that 86,000 residents live within three miles of Wakefield's Main Street and spend over \$1.2 billion per year in retail stores and restaurants. The completed market study cataloged 250 businesses in or near Wakefield's downtown, totaling 900,000 square feet. The database compiled also identified business clusters that could be enhanced as destinations to retain and grow the existing customer base. The study further recommended visioning Wakefield not just as a "shopping place" but a "social place."

From these background reports, it was determined that a greater emphasis should be placed on walkability, enhanced streetscapes, and the advantages of mixed-use development. Wakefield has been a well-known regional destination for walkers; Lake Quannapowitt is a daily adventure for health-conscious fitness walkers. With the construction of Wakefield new middle school and numerous playing fields near the downtown, opportunities to walk and enjoy daily activities in or near the downtown have attracted new residents and families seeking homes in this greener, more pedestrian, active community. Enhancing opportunities to experience Wakefield, whether through recreational programs, life-time learning opportunities or streetscapes that encourage walking and greater physical activity became a primary planning goal. To promote housing that reinforces these planning goals, Wakefield passed a mixed-use housing bylaw at the November 2016 Annual Town Meeting.

The 2015 Walkable Wakefield bylaw promotes new housing/mixed-use developments in business and industrial zones within 2500 feet, a ten-minute walk, from Wakefield's two commuter rail stations. Within months of the bylaw's adoption, a long under-used, one-story warehouse adjacent to Wakefield's downtown commuter rail station was demolished and a five-story, 60-unit condominium project was proposed, 175 North Avenue. By the time the second floor was completed at 175 North Avenue, all the market-rate units were pre-sold. Wakefield has an inclusionary bylaw requiring affordable housing in all mixed-use developments; a lottery agent organized the sale of eight affordable housing units. This project was a \$27 million dollar investment by stakeholders that now own 60 new condominiums and pay in excess of \$364,000 in annual property taxes. This project assured developer's that such projects are possible and very marketable in Wakefield's downtown. Currently, four additional projects are under construction and one, 178 Albion Street, was recently approved. See the chart below.

Projects Approved under the Walkable Wakefield Bylaw, §190-32A & B (Art. 12, Nov. 19, 2015)					
Date Approved	Project	Total Units	Affordable Units	Commercial Retail space	Construction Complete
Sept. 2016	175 North Ave.	60	8	3 sites	Mar. 8, 2018
June 2017	640 Main Street	8	1	1 site	Nov. 2019
July 2017	27 Water Street	46	8	2 sites	Jan. 2020
Aug. 2017	3 Bennett Street	32	4	None	Jan. 2020
Nov. 2017	69 Foundry Street	83	11	None	Aug. 2020
Aug. 2019	178 Albion Street	184	33	None	TBD
		413	73		

Economic Development/Competitiveness

In 2014, Wakefield's Town Administrator, Town Tax Assessor and Town Planner met with Peter Milano, Regional Director from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development and posed the need to offer tax-abatements to attract new employers and investment in Wakefield. Subsequently, with data provided by the Tax Assessor the Town Planner assembled a proposal, submitted by Town Council on June 9, 2014, to the Massachusetts Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC). Twelve areas of Wakefield are either zoned for business or industrial uses and can support reinvestment under M.G.L. Ch. 23A guidelines allowing state and local tax-increment financing. Proposed project would require a Town Meeting vote for such relief. Many innovative companies have headquarters and offices in Wakefield; the Edgewater Office Park and Quannapowitt Parkway are prime locations. Thus far tax incentives have not been needed to attract innovators to Wakefield.

Vistas across Lake Quannapowitt, Wakefield's tree-lined neighborhood streets, and green parks and playing fields belie Wakefield's industrial past. In the nineteenth-century, ice was harvested from Lake Quannapowitt and shipped by rail for export from Boston, coal fired boilers provided steam to bend wicker into furniture, casting furnaces produced piano harp plates, cast-iron wood stoves, fireplace grates, coal furnaces and boilers. The area of Wakefield known as the Junction was a major railyard and coal depot for the Boston & Maine (B&M) Railroad, Newburyport Railroad and Eastern Railroad. The B & M line currently is the Haverhill to Boston Commuter Rail Line. Shoe factories, cotton mills, later an early transistor factory were major Wakefield employers. Fortunately, today, these old industrial sites can be re-purposed through brownfields programs. At the November 2016 Town Meeting, Wakefield's Town Council and Tax Assessor sponsored a general bylaw allowing brownfield tax abatement agreements, General Bylaw Ch. 90, under M.G.L. Ch. 59, §59A. The first agreement signed saved the historic structure at 15 Albion Street and allowed continued occupancy by the first-floor retail tenants and conversion of the upper floors to housing.

Most recently, at the May 2019 Town Meeting, additional funds were approved for the survey, conceptual design, public forums and, now, full design. A total of \$721,500 has been appropriated from the town levy for the streetscape, parking improvements, and roadway reconstruction of Wakefield's Main Street from the Church Street to Nahant Street. The Town is currently seeking inclusion in the TIP funding program.

Information Technology

We are keenly aware of the appetite that the public has for information. In Fiscal year 2018 we implemented Virtual Town Budget. The application is prominently displayed on our Website. We are currently working with OPEN CHECK BOOK and will be implementing that application by the end of the fall 2019. We look forward to the public feedback in these areas.

Again, I am grateful for the Community Compact program and look forward to continued shared success with the state in this regard. I am happy to answer any questions or concerns.

Very truly yours,



Stephen P. Maio
Town Administrator