

# ULI Boston Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

**John Fitch Highway– Fitchburg, MA**

**ULI Boston Urban Visionary TAPs Sponsor**



**MASSDEVELOPMENT**  
Build. Create. Innovate.

## **Mission**

To provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI is a research and education institution with over 35,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service.

## **ULI at the local level**

- Boston District Council covers nearly all of New England
- 1,100 Members—developers, architects, planners, public officials, financiers, students, etc.

## **Emphasis on sharing best practices and providing outreach to community**

- Over 2,000 attendees last year
- UrbanPlan High School Program
- Technical Assistance Panels
- Trends in Real Estate Conference

## City of Fitchburg, MA

ULI Boston is committed to supporting the communities of New England in making sound land use decisions and creating better places. A Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) brings together a group of ULI members with a range of professional expertise to provide focused, collaborative consultation to a local government or qualifying non-profit organization.

### **This TAP**

- Sponsored by the City of Fitchburg and MassDevelopment
- This panel looked at the full range of options from an unbiased perspective.
- Panelists include experts in the fields of architecture, development, engineering, landscape architecture, and planning.
- Panelists have donated their time
- Final Deliverable – Written report (within 6 weeks) will be available at <http://boston.uli.org>

## TAP Panelists

### **TAP Co-Chairs**

Victor Karen

Scott Payette, Fletcher Thompson

### **TAP Panelists**

David Bartsch, DB Landscape Architecture

Ted Carman, Concord Square Development

Todd Finard, Finard Properties

Anthi Frangiadis, AIA, Archit8

Mossik Hacobian, Boston's Higher Ground

Ryan D Pace, Anderson & Kreiger

John Schmid, Nitsch Engineering

Craig Seymour, RKG Associates

Ed Starzec, MassDevelopment

Victoria Wolff, Urban Ecology Institute

Barry Abramson, Abramson & Associates

Caitlin Bowler – ICON architecture, report writer

Michelle Landers – ULI Boston Manager

## The Panel's Assignment

### Address the following questions:

Concerning market issues, **what is the best use of the John Fitch area?** Considering that markets have changed and less people are frequenting businesses in the plazas on John Fitch, is there a more feasible use for the area (i.e. business office park)? Is there a way to link John Fitch Highway with Fitchburg State University without causing a negative impact on efforts to link the university with downtown Fitchburg?

Concerning planning and design, **what is the best configuration for John Fitch Highway for traffic, pedestrians and bicycles?** What type of streetscape would contribute to the betterment of John Fitch for business and residents?

Concerning feasibility and finance, **what are the potential sources of finance based upon the recommendations discussed?** The City has identified three potential sources of funding which could go a way to partially addressing some issues including: Water/sewer rate increases, MassDOT traffic signal funding, and paving as part of the state Transportation Improvement Plan (T.I.P.) How can the City attract private investment, and are there any programs that will help to finance potential businesses?

## The Process

### Site Visit:

- John Fitch Highway
  - Wallace Plaza (Market Basket)
  - John Fitch Plaza
  - Walgreens Plaza



### Panel interviewed stakeholders today including:

- Town Officials
- Town Staff
- Property Abutters
- Local Business People
- Residents
- Fitchburg State Students and Faculty



## Key Points

### **25,000 Vehicles/day**

- Not connected to FSU
- Rollstone bank does more business on highway than downtown

This could be a problem, but in fact is the Opportunity

# Issues

1. Flooding
2. Run down buildings / Unrelieved asphalt
3. Many vacancies
4. Vehicle accidents (third lane)
5. Lack of sidewalks



## Conclusions

Accept that the highway will be auto-oriented

- The uses will remain auto-oriented commercial
- Not housing
- FSU remains disconnected

## Opportunities to:

- Improve function
- Improve appearance
- More sustainable – “Green”

## **1. Short term:**

- Fill vacancies
- Reduce flooding
- Improve appearance

## **2. Long term:**

- Higher density
- Double land value
- Improve appearance

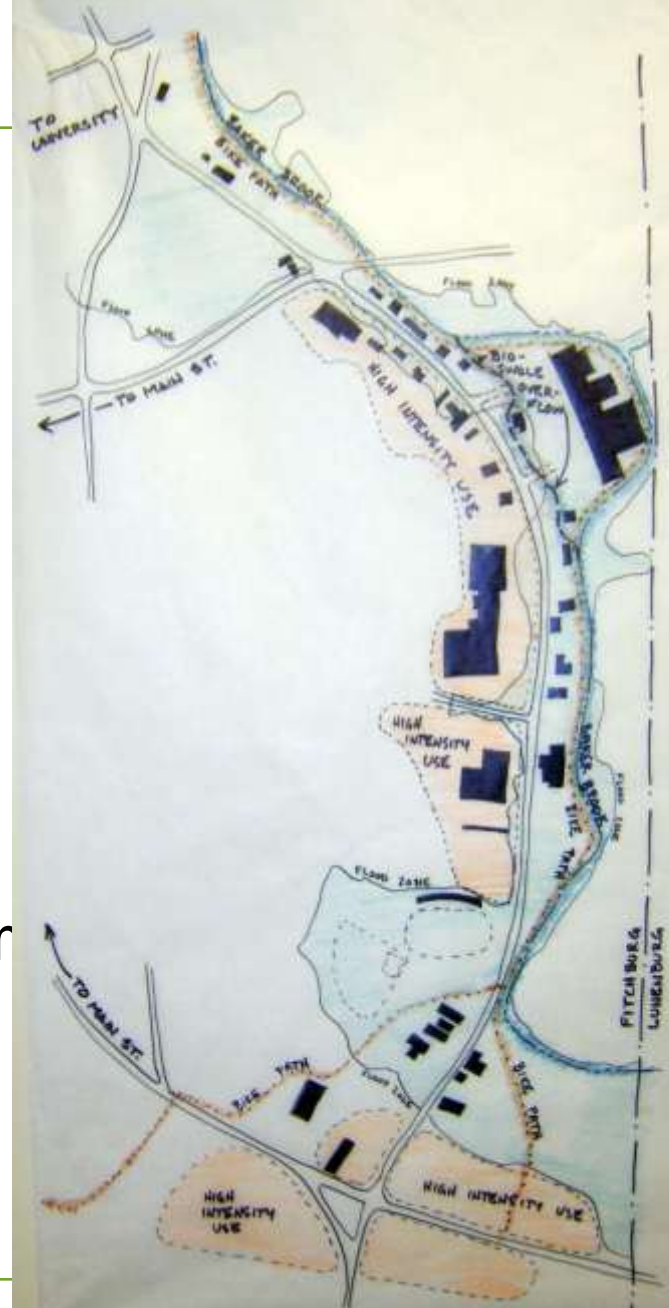
## **3. Improve tax base**

## 1. Stormwater Management

- Bioswale bypass
- Sandlot development
- John Fitch Highway Infrastructure

## 2. Site Redevelopment

- Create/Enforce site plan regulations
- Pre-existing “green sites” consideration
- Meet/exceed DEP regulations

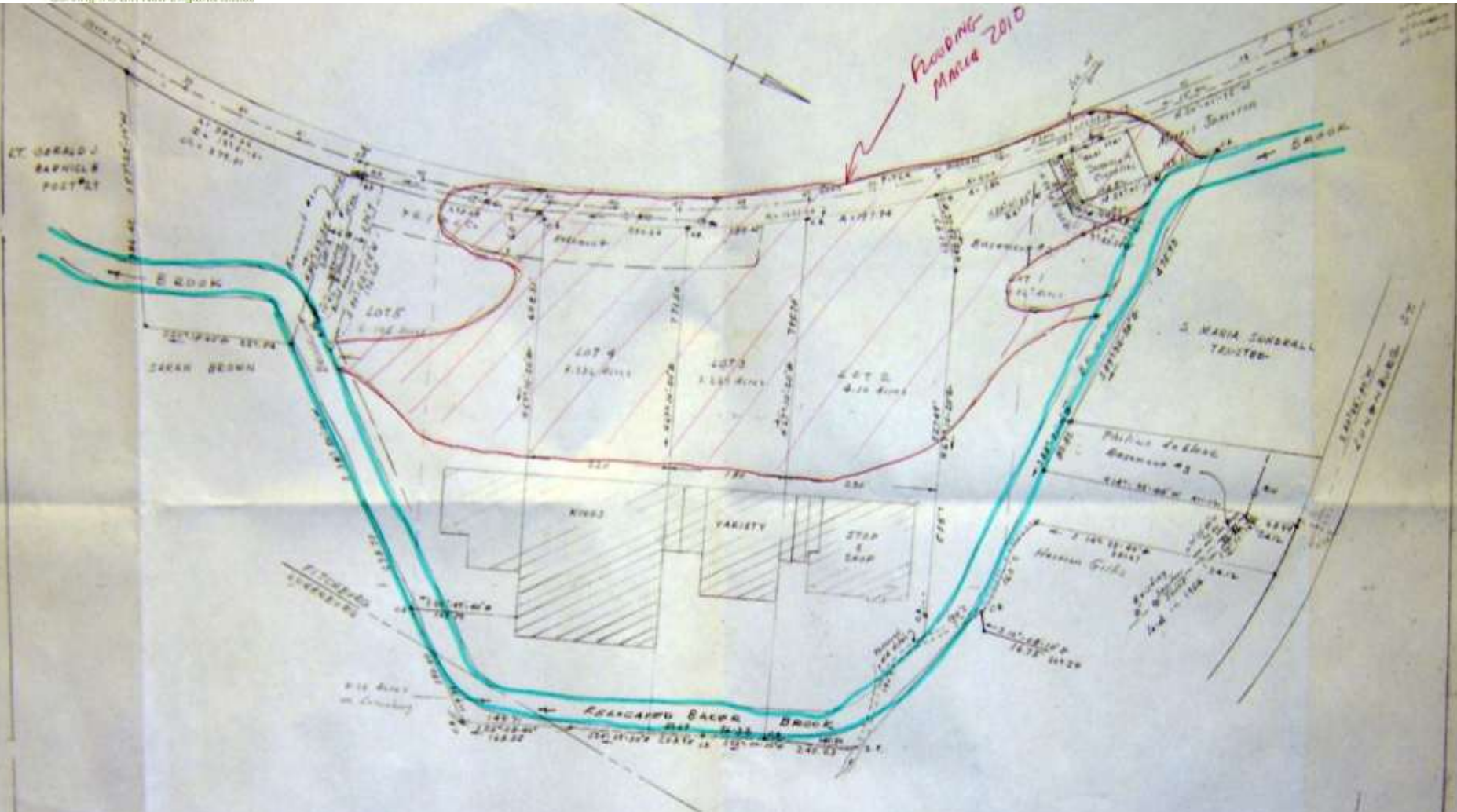


# Engineering / Flood Plain





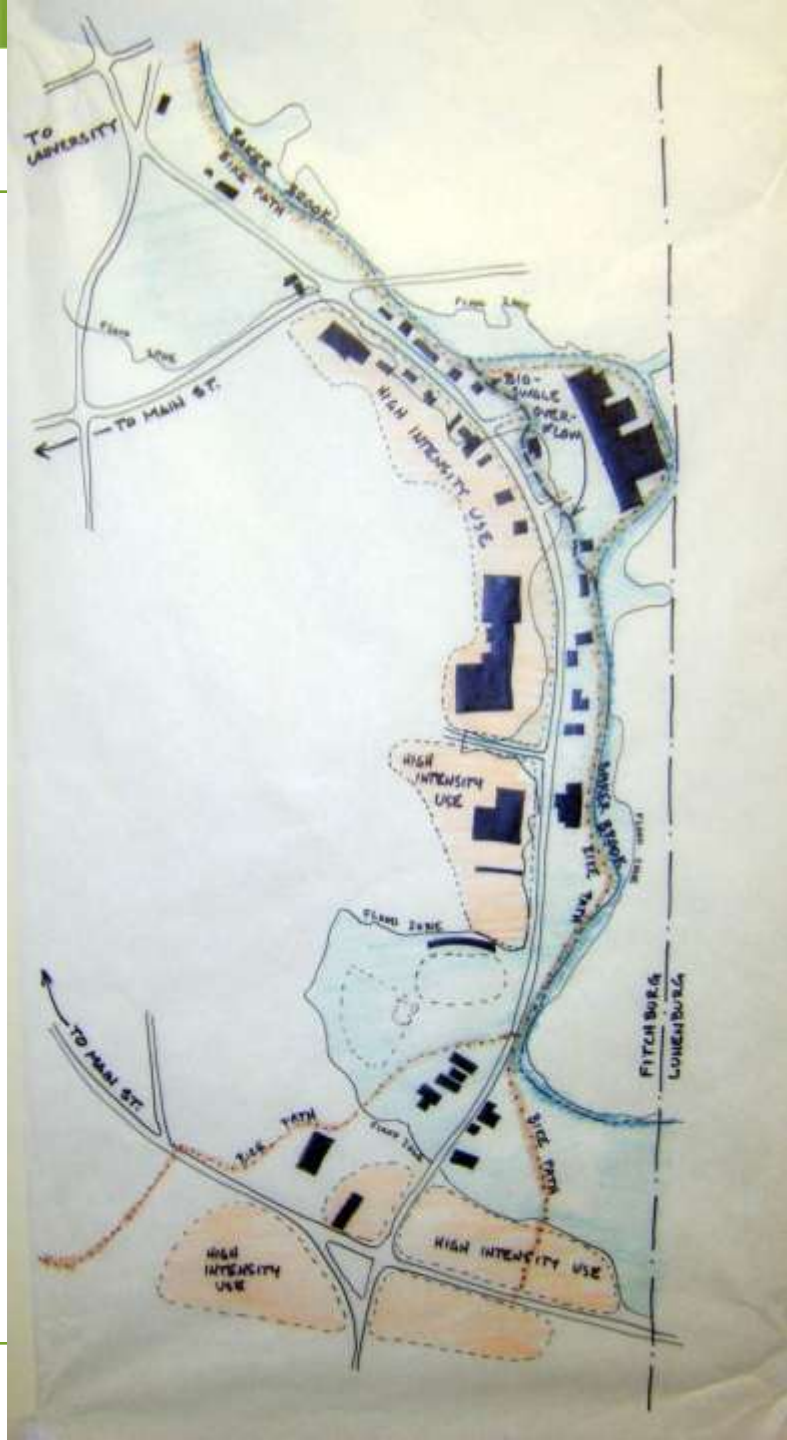
# Engineering / Flood Plain



CITY OF FITCHBURG  
 DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS  
 ENGINEERING DIVISION  
 SEWER & WATERWORKS  
 ON LAND OF  
 EVA J. TERNA  
 JOHN FITCH HIGHWAY  
 SCALE 1"=40' (PART 27, 176)  
 MAY 7, 1944



# Site



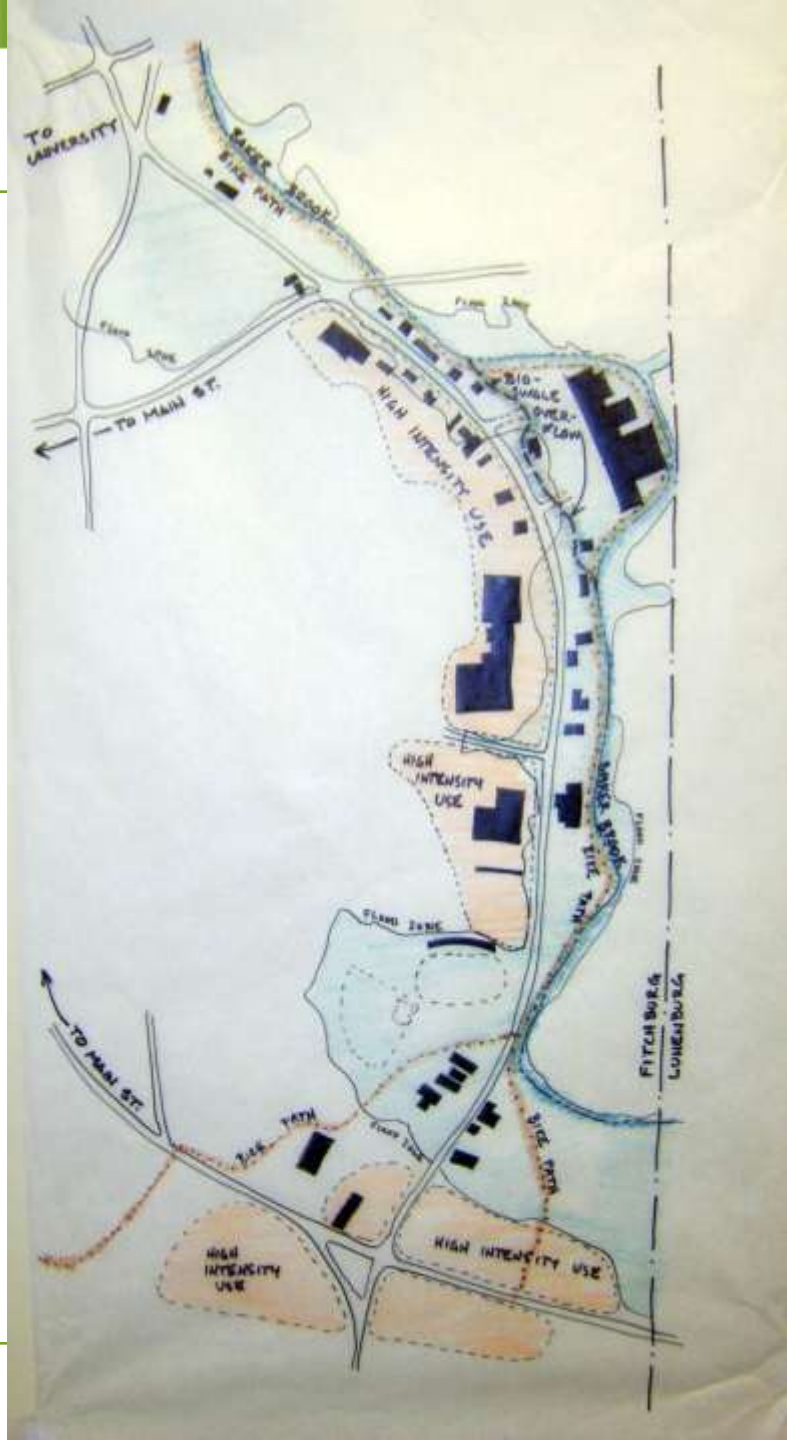


# Overall Vision





# Site





**Urban Land  
Institute**

**Boston**  
Serving the Six New England States

# Landscape

# Recommendations



# Recommendations



# Sustainable Approach



# Economic Development Strategy



# Responds to Market



# Fiscal/Jobs Impacts





# Next Steps

1. Property Rights
2. Entitlements
3. Owner Involvement

Questions?

Questions?