## Town of Wenham

Iron Rail Best Use Study

Scope of Services

**Project Understanding**

The Town of Wenham seeks an evaluation of the Town owned 91 Grapevine Road/ Iron Rail property’s long term best utilization. The study will evaluate the characteristics of the site and examine potential best use concepts to achieve the community’s vision, municipal use and any potential uses.

**Site Description**

The Iron Rail is a town owned property located at 91 Grapevine Road in Wenham, Massachusetts Assessors Map 031, Lot 0001 made up of approximately 79.5 acres including a large amount of wetlands and unprotected open space. The site has several structures listed below:

* DPW Facility and large garage/salt storage bldg
* Iron Rail Building – leased to several small businesses.
* “the Boy Scout Barn” currently used by the Boy Scouts of America
* Small garage/ storage building used by DPW
* Municipal Water Tank

The site has a large, paved parking area, several acres of open space and wetland areas. No legal restrictions exist on the property that would prevent reuse. The property is currently zoned residential and is municipally owned and managed by the Iron Rail Commission, The Iron Rail building has been leased by the Iron Rail Commission to several small businesses and a portion of the site is used by the Town for municipal services. The buildings on the site are dated and in need of some maintenance. The site is served by municipal water and there are currently 2 existing separate septic systems for the Iron Rail building and the DPW garage. The Boy Scout Barn still uses a cesspool which has been adequate for their needs. The newer small DPW garage/storage has a small septic tank. Recently the Town has explored funding to replace the septic system that serves the Iron Rail building.

The Town has been through 2 series of RFPs for the construction of a cell tower on the northeast section of the property. The possible installation of a cell tower will be held until after this study is complete.

The site also contains soccer and baseball fields as well as the Iron Rail Cemetery.

**Project Scope**

**Site Visit /Field Reconnaissance**

The Project Team will visit the site and surrounding study area to document visible existing site features such as roads, natural resource areas, utilities, traffic conditions, pedestrian activity, circulation patterns, vegetation and surrounding land uses as well as current structures and uses on the site.

**Public Engagement**

The Project Team will conceive a structure and schedule of public participation activities including but not limited to community outreach, public engagement, and collaboration with the Iron Rail Commission, Planning Board, Select Board, Conservation Commission and any current users of the buildings on the site as well as obtaining input from members of the public. There should be time allocated for individual meetings, virtually and also in-person if possible, with department representatives and current users of the site to gather resources and information. The Consultant will use all available digital and social media channels to engage the public when necessary. The final report and plans will be presented to the Iron Rail Commission and the Select Board at a public meeting.

**Existing Conditions Analysis**

Review Existing Plans and Reports - Facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the site and its context as a baseline for future use plans. Compile the existing features of the site using available plans, reports and data sources.

**Prepare a detailed existing conditions plan of the site.** The plan shall locate known improvements, features, approximate property lines, buildings, uses, utility easements, infrastructure and site conditions including but not limited to:

* **Topography/Soils/Subsurface Conditions/Wetlands Verification/Environmental Assessment**

show the site and its regional context in terms of natural resource opportunities and challenges, known hazardous waste sites (MADEP and local records) or cleanup activities, verify wetland resource areas and note any invasive species. Coordinate with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) to evaluate the species that are included in the NHESP polygon.and evaluate each of these items and prepare GIS overlays maps showing opportunities and challenges.

* **Zoning/Regulatory**

Review all current regulatory provisions to evaluate potential regulatory issues that will be associated with future use and show regulatory areas as one of the overlay areas on the base plan.

* **Transportation**

Review and analyze all available transportation system data to gain a clear picture of traffic conditions in the vicinity of the site. Include the documentation of characteristics such as roadway geometry, lane widths, type of traffic controls, including signs and signal equipment, bicycle accommodation, pedestrian amenities and accessibility, and land uses in the vicinity of the site. Include these features on the base plan.

* **Location of all structures including but not limited to:**
  + - * DPW facility/garages and Water Tower
      * Iron Rail Cemetery
      * Soccer Fields
      * Baseball Field
      * Iron Rail Parking Area
      * Iron Rail Building and Boy Scout Barn- include analysis of current tenants and their potential plans for future needs.
      * All other open space

**Historic Nature of Existing Structures**

Coordinate with the Wenham Historic Society, Wenham Museum, local historians and the National Historic Database to determine the historic value of the existing Iron Rail Building and Boy Scout Barn and any other historically significant features including any historic landmarks or burial grounds on the property.

**Market Validation**

Create a complete overview of market conditions and key trends including but not limited to the residential and commercial real estate environment along the Route 128 corridor and Grapevine Road including Gordon College and the property owned by the Sisters of Notre Dame at 74 Grapevine Rd.

**Residential Trends**

Identify demographic trends relative to the demand for housing with an emphasis on core fundamentals of the housing market.

**Opportunities & Challenges Plans**

Prepare plans delineating opportunities and challenges for the site. The plans will build upon the site analysis conducted during site visits, the existing conditions plan and data gathered in the previous tasks. Site challenges such as location of buildings, parking areas, infrastructure, subsurface elements, hazardous materials, regulatory setback requirements, traffic hazards, permanent existing features, topography, legal easements and surrounding land uses will be shown on the plans.

**Summary and Synthesis of Fact Finding**

The findings should be synthesized into a report identifying the current conditions including benefits of the site and options for Town to consider if utility (i.e., total satisfaction or benefit) could be increased further Include risk factors that the Town should consider to be well informed for all options will need to consider and potentially mitigate as it moves forward should be identified.

**Best Use Alternatives**

No fewer than three potential Land Use alternatives should be presented that will consider the community vision and goals; proposed regulatory considerations (setbacks, building height, parking, storm water management); economic utility; environmental challenges (resource areas, flood zone, hazardous material limitations onsite); connectivity and access; integration of sustainable elements; viewsheds; and relationship to the surrounding community. The alternatives should focus on the integration and synthesis of what constitutes the highest and best reuse scenario for the site and how that scenario can best be accommodated. Alternatives should include a financial assessment of each use and the benefits and/or costs to the Town.

**Timeline**

A project timeline will be established by the Consultant in conjunction with the Town Administrator.