

# 1. Economic Development<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Brookfield is a rural community of approximately 3,000 residents, with a commuter-oriented work force. The commercial sector makes up less than 5% of the town's total tax base. Agriculture is a small part of the economy. Businesses are overwhelmingly small, independent firms. As of 2008, there were 26 businesses registered in Brookfield, including a number of service-related businesses: automotive repair shops and dealerships, restaurants, hair stylists, home-based building contractors, landscapers and greenhouses, as well as computer related services. The industrial base is quite limited. Many businesses are located on Route 9, however other prominent locations include Mill Street, Central Street and River Street. The town does not have its own business association, but is part of the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce and the Central Mass South Chamber of Commerce. There is also a private business group, "Browse the Brookfields", which is made up of small retail businesses in the four Brookfields and surrounding towns.

## Economic Sector's Contribution to the Local Tax Base

In Fiscal Year 2008, Brookfield levied a total of \$3,925,242 in taxes, based on a local tax rate of \$12.80 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Brookfield homeowners accounted for 94.2% of the total 2008 tax base (\$3,698,305), while the businesses and industries accounted for approximately 4.1% and the personal property tax took up the remaining 1.7%. Tables 1 and 2 show how Brookfield compares to its six adjacent communities on the amount and proportion of commercial and industrial taxes levied.

**Table 1**  
**Commercial Tax Base Comparison**

<i>Community</i>	<i>FY 2008 Tax Rate</i>	<i>Commercial Taxes Levied</i>	<i>Assessed Valuation</i>	<i>% of Total Tax Levy</i>
Warren	\$12.72	\$155,601	\$12,232,776	3.1%
<b>Brookfield</b>	<b>\$12.80</b>	<b>\$136,438</b>	<b>\$10,659,217</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
North Brookfield	\$9.94	\$155,932	\$15,687,325	3.5%
West Brookfield	\$9.69	\$148,578	\$15,333,121	3.7%
Brimfield	\$11.84	\$298,317	\$25,195,664	5.9%
East Brookfield	\$10.57	\$161,473	\$15,276,505	6.1%
Sturbridge*	\$14.74	\$2,449,691	\$166,193,431	14.3%

\*Sturbridge has a split tax rate of \$14.74/\$1,000 for Commercial and Industrial and \$12.66/\$1,000 for Residential. (Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Revenue)

<sup>1</sup> This Economic Development Chapter was written in 2008-early 2009. Due to its timing, figures from the 2010 US Census were not yet available and 2000 census figures had to be used when more recent local, regional or state figures were not available. Unfortunately, because a severe economic downturn began in 2008, the economic picture for Brookfield presented in this report is already out of date. It does provide a benchmark of historical data but it will be important to revise the chapter as part of the work of the proposed Local Economic Development Committee. (See Recommendation #1 at the end of this chapter.)

**Table 2**  
**Industrial Tax Base Comparison**

<i><b>Community</b></i>	<i><b>FY 2008 Tax Rate</b></i>	<i><b>Industrial Taxes Levied</b></i>	<i><b>Assessed Valuation</b></i>	<i><b>% of Total Tax Levy</b></i>
<b>Brookfield</b>	<b>\$12.80</b>	<b>\$24,115</b>	<b>\$1,883,977</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
East Brookfield	\$10.57	\$25,613	\$3,810,911	0.9%
Brimfield	\$11.84	\$54,775	\$10,198,350	1.1%
North Brookfield	\$9.94	\$55,474	\$5,580,885	1.3%
West Brookfield	\$9.69	\$63,651	\$6,568,727	1.6%
Sturbridge*	\$14.74	\$453,794	\$47,676,400	2.6%
Warren	\$12.72	\$172,301	\$13,545,700	3.4%

\*Sturbridge has a split tax rate of \$14.74/\$1,000 for Commercial and Industrial and \$12.66/\$1,000 for Residential. (Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Revenue)

Brookfield collected the smallest amount of commercial and industrial taxes when compared to its surrounding communities. The proportion of commercial and industrial taxes that Brookfield collects as compared to the entire tax base (3.5% and 0.6% respectively) exceeds only the Town of Warren's commercial taxes collected by 0.4%. It should be noted that at the current tax rate, residential taxes will not necessarily decrease with an increase in commercial and industrial taxes collected.

While the number of businesses in Brookfield increased by 18% between 2001 and 2007 (see Table #5), the economic sector's contribution to the Town's tax base steadily decreased from a high of 6.2% in 2001 to 4.1% in 2008. This is a region-wide phenomenon.

For a summary of regional economic trends, as projected by Central Mass Regional Planning, please see Appendix A.

### **Brookfield's Labor Force**

The number of employed Brookfield residents has increased steadily since the 1980s, however Brookfield's unemployment rate has historically been higher than the state's rate. As shown in Table #3 below, the total number of employed Brookfield residents has fluctuated in small increments over the last 10 years, with the 2008 total number being about 9% higher than the 1999 number. The town's unemployment rate was at 3.6% at the start of the ten years shown, dropped to a low of 2.5 % in 2000, and rose to a high of 6.2% in 2007. It was at 5.7% for the period January-October 2008. For eight of the ten years shown, Brookfield's unemployment rate was higher than the state's average unemployment rate. The table shows employment rates that have not been seasonally adjusted. This means that the effects of seasonal employment patterns have not been removed from the data.

**Table 3**  
**Employment Status of Brookfield Residents**  
**Not seasonally adjusted**

\*2008 is calculated using January to October data  
 (Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD))

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Residents in Labor Force</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Town rate of Unemployment</b>	<b>State rate of Unemployment</b>
2008*	1,676	1,579	96	5.7%	5.0%
2007	1,698	1,593	105	6.2%	4.5%
2006	1,698	1,594	104	6.1%	4.8%
2005	1,696	1,598	98	5.8%	4.9%
2004	1,709	1,610	99	5.8%	5.2%
2003	1,729	1,620	109	6.3%	5.8%
2002	1,730	1,631	99	5.7%	5.3%
2001	1,698	1,644	54	3.2%	3.7%
2000	1,684	1,642	42	2.5%	2.7%
1999	1,487	1,433	54	3.6%	3.3%

#### Where Brookfield Residents Work

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Journey to Work data, there were some noticeable changes in commuting patterns between 1990 and 2000. As shown in Table 4, the number of residents working in town decreased from 227 persons to 204 persons, however, the number of Brookfield residents commuting to jobs in Worcester increased from 265 persons to 332 persons. Brookfield residents also commuted to other communities within Southern Worcester County (an increase from 337 persons to 394 persons) and to jobs outside of Southern Worcester County (including out of state) with an increase from 148 persons to 299 persons. Not surprisingly, the average commuting time for Brookfield residents increased 17% during this period, from 27 to 32 minutes. This is close to the 19% increase in the average commuting time experienced by the state's residents for the same period (MassINC).

**Table 4**  
**Where Brookfield Residents Work**

<b><i>Place of Work</i></b>	<b><i>1990</i></b>		<b><i>2000</i></b>	
Brookfield	227	16%	204	13%
<b>Worcester</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>21%</b>
Spencer	150	11%	165	10%
Sturbridge	144	10%	116	7%
Southbridge	70	5%	81	5%
West Brookfield	47	3%	51	3%
Elsewhere Worc. Cty	337	24%	394	24%
<b>Outside of Worc.Cty, includes out of state</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,388</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,642</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Source: 2000 CENSUS/CMRPC Journey to Work by Residence & Place of Work)

### Number & Types of Jobs in Brookfield

Due to the change from SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) to NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) codes, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Massachusetts Office of Labor and Workforce Development do not have comparable data available prior to 2001. As a result, only the years of 2001 to 2006/2007 were used while analyzing Brookfield's employment data for this report. See Appendix B of this Chapter for an explanation of the jobs included in selected North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) categories

Table 5 below shows the changes that have transpired in the various sectors of Brookfield's local economy between 2001 and 2007 according to the Massachusetts Office of Labor & Workforce Development. While the number of establishments in the town increased by 18% over that period, the number of jobs in town has decreased by 2.5%, an indication that the number of employees per business in Brookfield has decreased.

Three sectors lost jobs during this period -- Trade, Transportation, and Warehousing lost the largest number (20) of total jobs in Brookfield. The Leisure and Hospitality industry was not categorized in 2007, however Education and Health Services was, showing a change in industry categories in town.

Several sectors saw gains, with manufacturing sector increasing its number of jobs by a total of 11, or 12.5%. This was the largest gain of any sector during this period. The Professional Business Services sector gained five jobs for a 29.4% increase and Construction increased by nearly 27%. The sector with the most in-town jobs in 2001 and 2007 was Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, with 34% in 2001 and 33% in 2007 of the town's jobs.

**Table 5**  
**Analysis of Resident and Non-Resident**  
**Employment and Wages in Brookfield**

<i>Description</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Annual Payroll	\$12,125,146	\$18,092,086	+32%
Avg wkly wages	\$491	\$751	+35%
Total # of businesses	59	71	+18%
# of Workers	475	463	-2.5%
Construction	11	15	+27%
Manufacturing	77	88	+12.5%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	157	137	-12.7%
Professional & Business Services	12	17	+29.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	37	0	-100%
Education & Health Services	0	93	+100%
Other Services	31	23	-26%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

### In-Town Job Projections

Central Mass Regional Planning (CMRPC) provides employment projections (along with population and households) for the 40 communities in its region, which are periodically updated. Originally completed in 2000, and last updated in 2006, using the numbers from the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA -- the precursor to the Massachusetts Division of Employment & Training – Mass. DET), regional forecasts by the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT – precursor to the Executive office of Transportation and Public Works – EOTPW), and reviewing historical trends in employment. Some data is withheld by DUA/Mass. DET to prevent disclosure of confidential information; therefore the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) was used by CMRPC to fill in the gaps. Input was also solicited directly from the region's 40 communities to assist in the accuracy of these projections.

In 2000, CMRPC projected 570 jobs in Brookfield for 2005, however the Massachusetts DET counted 463 jobs for 2007 (as shown in Table 3). This may be partly due to this agency withholding some data as explained in the previous paragraph. CMRPC's projections for 2010 is 590 jobs (a 21.5% increase from the actual number for 2007) and 600 by the year 2015 (a 1.6% increase), a more modest increase.

### Brookfield's Largest Employers

*Note: The majority of the information below was provided by the businesses in question and has not been independently verified by the Master Plan Committee.*

#### **The Town of Brookfield, Town Hall 6 Central Street**

The largest employer in Brookfield is town government. Within the government, the elementary school makes up the majority of the employees. The Brookfield Elementary School, located at 37 Central Street, employs 46 part-time and full time employees, including teachers, teacher's aides, cafeteria staff, custodians, administrative assistants, a psychologist and a principal. There are approximately 300 students enrolled at Brookfield Elementary School in Pre-Kindergarten to Sixth grades. The 85,000 square foot structure has several specialized features of which we are proud including a computer lab, science lab, gymnasium, and library/media center after a relatively recent renovation.

Other town employees include Police, Fire, Highway, Library, Water and General Government. There are paid elected officials as well as appointed employees. In addition, there are many volunteer workers that serve on town boards, commissions and committees such as Planning, Recreation, Conservation, Cultural and Historical.

#### **Gavitt Wire & Cable Company, Inc., 20 Central Street**

Started in 1923, Gavitt Wire and Cable began manufacturing mundane items like shoestrings and buggy whips in a small building in nearby West Brookfield. Mr. Gavitt had the vision to see a new radio industry need for specialty wire and cable which he could make then on his braiding machines. In 1928, Gavitt Wire moved to Brookfield to a much larger building on Central Street where the company is still located. Gavitt Wire has a business niche in the custom coated wire industry where they provide customers with high quality and high reliability electrical wire and cable. Except for a short period of time starting in the 1950's, Gavitt wire has been wholly locally owned and run with the attention that only a dedicated local management can provide. As of 2008, the company employed 49 full time people and was the second largest employer in Brookfield. Gavitt Wire is in the process of moving most of its manufacturing to a building in West Brookfield which is all on one floor and is 10 years old. The manufacturing building in Brookfield is about 100 years old and is on multiple floors.

**Carmella's Italian Kitchen, 55 S. Maple Street (Route 9)**

Carmella's employs between 25 and 50 people, depending upon the time of year and this number is split between full and part-time employees. Carmella's is a family-owned restaurant that specializes in Italian cuisine and delicacies and has been located on South Maple Street since 1987.

**The Clam Box, 53 S. Maple Street (Route 9)**

The Clam Box has been serving seafood, burgers, and french fries to residents of Brookfield since 1951 and is especially known for its homemade recipes and award winning chowder. Today, the restaurant has a dining room and a full bar, but still retains the flavor and atmosphere of a drive-in restaurant. Until recently, the Clam Box closed during the winter months. At the time of publication of this document, the restaurant was open year round and employed 2 full-time and 20 part-time employees.

**Brookfield Motors, Post Road (Route 9)**

Brookfield Motors is the only franchised automobile dealership in Brookfield. They have been a Dodge dealership since 1958 when Alfred DeAngelis bought a small Esso gas station and car dealership on the current site on Route 9. This is a family owned, local business. In 1967, the business expanded with a new building and in early 70's added a body shop. Brookfield Motors sells new and used cars and trucks, has a full service department, parts department and body shop. As of 2008, it employed 15 people.

**Custom Pallets Inc., Mill Street**

Custom Pallets, located on Mill Street in Brookfield, has been actively in business since 1973. The company focuses on the manufacture of both pallets and boxes. Custom Pallets works with several of the area's large companies and includes a long-term relationship with FlexCon Inc. in Spencer. The company is Brookfield family owned and operated and currently employs approximately 15 people.

**Cumberland Farms, Post Road (Route 9)**

Cumberland Farms is part of a chain of New England based convenience stores. Cumberland Farms has been in Brookfield for over 30 years and is both a convenience store and gas station. As of 2008, it employed 3 full-time and 5 part-time employees.

**TipTop Country Store, 8 Central Street**

Opened in 2004, TipTop is a Brookfield family owned and operated natural foods general store. The store actively promotes local products, including local crafts and artisan products. They feature local honey, maple syrup, cheese, eggs, meat and produce. In addition, they offer groceries, natural supplements and personal care items, eco-friendly cleaning supplies and fair-trade gifts. TipTop donates 1% of sales to local non-profits. It employs 5 people, all Brookfield residents.

**Dave's Appliance, Post Road (Route 9)**

Dave's Appliance is a family owned and operated business serving the central Massachusetts area for over 35 years. They recently opened a brand new building on Route 9. They offer a selection of new and used name brand appliances.

## Brookfield Preferences for Economic Development

### Master Plan Survey Results

During the summer of 2008, the Brookfield Master Plan and Open Space Committee conducted a survey of all residents in town to ask them what they liked and disliked about Brookfield, what changes (if any) would they make and additional demographic information. Of the 1,642 surveys sent out, 239 surveys were completed and returned. Regarding economic development initiatives in Brookfield, the follow preferences were given by the survey respondents:

*1) Would you Support the rezoning of land in Brookfield currently zoned as residential for the following purposes?*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
Preserving Open Space	55%	3%	42%
Office and Professional use	42%	4%	54%
Retail/Commercial	38%	5%	57%
Light Industry	31%	5%	64%
Manufacturing	17%	8%	75%
Would not support any rezoning	17%	6%	77%

*2) What kinds of businesses and services do you think Brookfield needs or needs more of?*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
Small-scale Retail	49%	3%	48%
Small Convenience Market	45%	4%	51%
Professional services (Doctors, etc.)	41%	5%	54%
Ecotourism (hiking/boating)	37%	5%	58%
Sit-down restaurants	36%	5%	59%
Restaurants	32%	5%	63%
Full service banking	23%	6%	71%
Services (Dry Cleaners, Printers, etc.)	21%	7%	72%
Movie Theater	20%	8%	72%
Industry/manufacturing	18%	7%	75%
Home-based Businesses	17%	7%	76%
Agriculture/Nursery	16%	7%	77%
Hardware/Home Improvement	16%	6%	77%
Research and Development (high tech)	15%	7%	77%
Office Buildings	15%	8%	78%
Large Grocery Chain	14%	8%	79%
Shopping center/mall	11%	8%	81%
Clothing stores	11%	8%	75%
Fast food establishments	8%	8%	84%
Large-scale Retail	6%	8%	86%

*3) Of the choices in the previous question, where do you think the type of businesses should be located?*

Route 9 (43%), Town Center (37%), Route 148 (13%), Pleasant and/or Mill Streets (3%), Anywhere in Town (3%), Home-based (1%)

4) *What do you see as the major benefit(s) of encouraging business/industrial development in Brookfield?*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
Tax Revenues to Maintain Services	69%	3%	28%
More Jobs in Town	52%	3%	45%
More Services	38%	5%	57%
More Retail Stores	23%	6%	71%
No Benefits	9%	7%	84%

5) *What do you see as the major disadvantage(s) of encouraging economic development in Brookfield?*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
More Automobile Traffic	49%	3%	48%
Changing the character of Brookfield	46%	5%	49%
Loss of Open Space	44%	5%	51%
More Truck Traffic	38%	4%	58%
Damage to environment	29%	6%	65%
Disruption of Neighborhoods	28%	6%	66%
No Disadvantages	18%	7%	75%

### Public Forum Summary

An Economic Development Public Forum was held on December 10, 2008 at 6:30 PM at the Brookfield Town Hall. Below is a summary of the feedback received on concerns, opportunities and solutions for improving economic development in Town:

#### Concerns:

1. Physical appearance of property in town:

- Downtown area (Lack of sidewalks and walkways, particularly to the Elm Hill Farm, Route 9, the biggest restaurant in town, and/or to the Quaboag River; public parking downtown is difficult ; lack of trees in Downtown area)
- Bypass and other roads entering Brookfield (particularly Mill Street which is not attractive aesthetically and used by “cut through” traffic)
- The large yellow sign on Route 9
- Deteriorating and/or abandoned properties (e.g. chain linked fence properties) discourage businesses and residents to upkeep properties.
- Lack of way finding signs from Route 9 to direct visitors to the Downtown area

2. Lack of “streamlined” system to set up Business in Town Hall

- Different answers from different departments
- Unclear who is in charge of what and who reports to who
- Businesses need organized packets of information of how to proceed with permits and what the local regulations are.

3. Deteriorating natural resources

- Contamination of the Quaboag River and local ponds from runoff or wastewater treatment plants
- Lack of communication between towns about river water quality
- Swimming area unmaintained
- Boat ramps?



4. General difficulties w/being a landlord
  - Tenants rights allow for destruction of property w/out accountability
5. Disconnect between different areas of town
  - Lack of community identity (e.g. “North” and “South” Brookfield)
  - Lack of water infrastructure south of Quaboag River
6. No public sewer system
  - Center of town having continual difficulties with private septic systems
7. The tax rate is high.
8. No faith by residents in local boards, particularly the ZBA, regarding allowed businesses

Opportunities:

1. Ecotourism
  - Rivers/Lakes • Boat access • Trails • Farms • Hunting/Fishing
2. Medical Center in Downtown/Housing for Elderly? Or other anchor for other businesses
3. Downtown Improvements
4. Creation of local business association
5. Become a more sustainable community

Solutions:

1. Construction/installation of sidewalks
2. Enforcement of Building Codes and Zoning Regulations
3. Creation of a bike path/trail to Tanstasqua Regional High School
4. Improved parking configurations in the Downtown area
5. Installation of street trees in the Downtown area
6. Creation of a local streamlined permitting guide for Town Hall
7. Creation of a local business association and listing businesses (with a descriptor, location, etc.) on the Town's website.
8. New or innovative Zoning regulations (e.g. Inclusionary Zoning, Open Space Residential Design, etc.)

As for preferences for Retail/Service business locations, the participants clustered their selections along Route 9 at South Maple Street. A few participants expressed preferences for these businesses to be located in Downtown Brookfield.

## Opportunities for Economic Development

After reviewing the information gathered by Central Mass Regional Planning, the town-wide survey and the public forum, the following opportunities for economic development have been identified as meriting further study:

1. **Target re-use of existing commercial structures that are currently not being used.** There are a number of vacant buildings in town. It would be beneficial to both the town and the buildings' owners to have the buildings in use. Grants and university programs could be used to encourage this activity.

**2. Work on improving the transportation network.** At a time when mass transit is gaining favor, Brookfield has the potential to become a passenger transportation hub. The following conditions put Brookfield in a favorable position :

- Brookfield is located at the intersection of two state-numbered highways: Route 9 is a major East-West road and Route 148 is an important North-South road.
- Brookfield is on the Worcester Regional Transit Authority's (WRTA) bus route. It is the last stop on Route 33 which travels Rt. 9 between Brookfield and Worcester. The end of Route 33 in Brookfield is only 10 miles from the first stop of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) system in Ware. There is potential to connect to the two regions and tie into a bus network that extends to the Amherst and Springfield areas in the West and the Worcester to the East. Worcester, in turn, connects to Boston and the rest of the continent with daily rail service to Boston's South Station.
- Brookfield borders the Town of Sturbridge, which is the intersection to two main arteries: the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90), East-West and I-84, North-South.
- The Worcester Regional Airport is located on the Worcester/Leicester town line and is owned by the City of Worcester. Re-use of the airport is planned, however specific plans have yet to be determined.
- There is an Amtrak/CSX railroad track that runs through the town. While it will be difficult politically to add a stop, there is a great deal of interest among the public to have a passenger rail stop somewhere in Central Massachusetts.

**3. Develop Eco and Historical Tourism.** Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. The Quaboag River is a major river in the region and attracts a number of canoers, birdwatchers, and other naturalists to the area. With Old Sturbridge Village nearby, historical tourism is already an important economic force in the region. Brookfield is one of the oldest towns in the Commonwealth and significant historical events took place here. Combining Eco and Historical Tourism would be good way to preserve the New England small town character of the town with economic development.

**4. Look at Vacant, Developable Commercial & Industrial Zoned Land** in Brookfield. See Appendix C for a list of programs and organizations that could be used as tools for development.

During the public meeting held in December 2008 on economic development, there was some interest by those in attendance to look at options for new commercial development along Route 148 south of the Quaboag River. There was interest in redeveloping and/or reusing existing commercial structures such as former mills, into new commercial or industrial uses in the Village (V) and Business (BA and BB) districts.

In February 2009, CMRPC updated a Build-Out Analysis<sup>2</sup> for the town. As shown in Table 6, Brookfield has enough vacant developable land in these three districts to potentially build 1,966,925 square feet of new floor space, yielding a very sizable amount of new jobs and tax revenues. What follows is a closer examination of these three districts and their development potential:

- *Business A (BA):* This district, located along Route 9, has a fair amount of vacant land left within it (63 acres), which could accommodate 241,038 square feet of floor space. The BA district is zoned primarily for retail and service establishments, however certain other uses may be allowed by the Planning Board

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<sup>2</sup> Central Mass Regional Planning completed a buildout analysis for Brookfield in 2001 as part of statewide project through the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA). A build-out analysis is a planning tool that determines the amount of vacant, developable land in town and assesses the potential impacts if this land were fully developed under the town's existing zoning standards. A buildout analysis does not attempt to determine *when* a community will reach full buildout; rather, it simply attempts to determine what the community would look like if it were fully built out according to the town's current zoning policies.

under Special Permit. The BA district is fully served by a public water supply, however municipal sewer does not exist here, nor anywhere else in town.

- *Business B (BB)*: The district is divided into four sections. Three of the sections are located on or near Route 9. The fourth is located along Route 148 just north of the Quaboag River. Combined there are 74 acres of developable land remaining in these sections with section BB\_4 having the majority of developable land (see map). All land zoned BB could accommodate 253,245 square feet of floor space and two of the four sections are served by public water supply.
- *Village (V)*: The Village has the largest amount of buildable vacant land (247 acres) which could yield 1,472,642 square feet of commercial or industrial floor space. The district is zoned primarily for residential uses, however a number of commercial, industrial, institutional and municipal uses exist in the district prior to when zoning was enacted. The district lacks municipal sewer, however it is the district with the largest amount of municipal water infrastructure. If the remaining 247 acres are developed for commercial use, the district would change dramatically in character. This, however, is highly unlikely given that the town has prioritized maintaining the village character and would likely balance development with a mix of uses.

In addition to these districts, the Rural Residential (RR) district, which is zoned primarily for residential and agricultural uses, has potential to allow some business development if granted by special permit by the Planning Board.

The Town of Brookfield cannot reasonably expect to accommodate the total amount of new floor space calculated in this analysis. However, the town does have excellent development potential in the Business B (BB) and Village (V) districts as that developable land could accommodate various types of commercial and/or industrial development.

**Table 6**  
**CMRPC Commercial Buildout Analysis**

<u>District</u>	<u>Size of District</u>	<u>Raw Developable Land</u>	<u>Potential Floor Space*</u>	<u>Potential New Jobs**</u>	<u>Estimated Tax Revenue***</u>
Business A (BA)	187 acres	63 acres	241,038 s.f.	964	\$316,242
Business B (BB)	98 acres	74 acres	253,245 s.f.	506	\$265,806
Village (V)	7,744 acres	247 acres	1,472,642 s.f.	4,418	\$1,545,685

\* The Potential Floor Space is based on the number of buildable lots (which is calculated by deducting the acres of land deemed undevelopable due to constraints such as: steep slopes, wetlands and the River Protection Act regulations) multiplied by the building square feet per minimum lot size.

\*\* The new jobs figure is based on 4 employees per 1,000 square feet of commercial floor space and 2 employees per 1,000 square feet of industrial floor space (multiplier supplied as part of the EOEa build-out methodology). For districts that allow both business and industrial uses, the figure is based on 3 employees per 1000 square feet of space.

\*\*\* The estimated tax revenue is based on the 2009 tax rate (\$13.12 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) and the average assessed value of new floor space (\$60/sq. ft. for warehouse/industrial and \$100/sq. ft. for retail/commercial) from the Town Assessor's office.

## Impediments to Economic Development

Water/Sewer Issues: Water infrastructure is available in Brookfield within the Downtown Area and along Route 9 north of the Quaboag River. Town water infrastructure is non-existent in Brookfield south of the Quaboag River. This puts the onus on a developer to install a water infrastructure and/or other equipment to meet the water requirements for fire suppression and daily needs. In addition, the lack of sewer infrastructure throughout the entire town hinders commercial development.

Lack of Town-controlled Industrial Land: Brookfield does not have any town-controlled land that is zoned, or provides the necessary infrastructure, to offer new business and industrial opportunities. Many Massachusetts communities create industrial parks on town-owned land to attract the types of businesses/industries they want and offer them a coordinated delivery of municipal services. In Brookfield, it is up to a new business to identify a suitable property and work with the various Town departments to obtain the necessary municipal services as best as it can.

Lack of a Business Association: Brookfield does not have a local business association. Such an association could assist in the coordination of various elements of an economic development strategy as there is currently no municipal entity whose sole purpose is to plan for and act as an advocate for new economic development.

Wayfinding Signs: Business owners who attended the December 2008 public meeting stated that existing businesses in the Town Center are difficult for visitors to find as Route 9 does not pass through it. Signage to businesses in the Town Center is therefore left up to each individual owner to post in order to have its patrons find where it is located.

Non-Streamlined Permitting and Licensing Processes: Business owners who attended the public meeting also stated that it has been difficult to work with Town Boards and Departments due to a lack of communication and process for filing permits and licenses. Creation of streamlined processes for permits and licenses will encourage more entrepreneurs and other businesses to consider Brookfield by providing an upfront, clear and expected process.

## Economic Development Goal

The goal of Brookfield's economic strategy is to encourage entrepreneurial activity that maintains a sustainable local economy. There should be a balance between residents' preferences for limited commercial and industrial growth and expanding local opportunities for meeting the needs of Brookfield's residents.

## Economic Development Objectives

1. Create a program to market the town's local economy.
2. Encourage the use of facilities, existing structures and vacant properties within Brookfield for the purpose of local entrepreneurial business activity.
3. Review Town zoning to foster economic development in keeping with Brookfield's rural character and where appropriate infrastructure exists.
4. Review and streamline business licensing and permitting processes to foster new economic development.
5. Explore the possibility of establishing a local Tax Increment Financing Program (TIF) (*See Appendix C, item 8*).

## Economic Development Recommendations

1. **Establish a local Economic Development Committee:** The Town should establish a local economic development committee to coordinate and market all the various elements of an economic development strategy for Brookfield. Currently, there is no municipal entity whose sole purpose is to plan for and act as an advocate for new economic development. The committee would start by reviewing such items as the Town's zoning scheme, tax policies, road improvement plans and water expansion plans as they relate to the Town's ability to attract new business. The committee would then work with the various municipal boards and departments to develop an economic development strategy for Brookfield. As part of an economic development strategy, the Town should designate a single point of contact person to handle economic development issues. A single point of contact is essential for business development as it gives companies and industries a conduit for direct answers. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen*
2. **Develop a streamlined permitting process for new business:** In an effort to provide a clearer permitting process for businesses looking to locate in Brookfield and building upon the single point of contact described in the previous recommendation, the Town should develop a "streamlined permitting" process to assist municipal officials and permit applicants through the permit process by offering ways in which applications may be analyzed and considered more efficiently and effectively. Some of these include developing clear submittal requirements, combining public hearings, permitting flow charts and checklists, electronic permit tracking systems and maximization of the municipality's website. Additional recommendations for developing a streamlined permitting process can be found in the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies' "A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting" handbook. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Building Inspector, Town Assessors and proposed Economic Development Committee*
3. **Increase Economic Development in the Town's Center:** Because the Village Center is the traditional, mixed-use district where economic development occurred in the Town's history, the Town should continue to focus new economic development within the Village zoning district. The edge of the Village Center has some land located along Route 9 (Post Road) that abuts Business A and Business B zoning districts. Promotion of a continued dense mixture of commercial enterprises and new or rehabilitated housing within the Village will continue to maintain the Town's existing character as well as enhance the vitality of the center. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and the proposed Economic Development Committee.*
4. **Promote a sustainable economy:** The Town should be active in promoting the local economy. The Selectmen should have as a town policy the promotion of a sustainable local economy. All departments will be charged with finding ways to buy local and promote local businesses. The Selectmen will include in their charges to all future town committees this goal.

There are a number of outside organizations dedicated to this cause. The Economic Development Committee should investigate these groups and join those that are appropriate. For example, the New England Local Business Forum (NELBF) promotes the purchasing of local goods to strengthen the local economy. Another buy local organization is the Western Mass "Local Hero" group. The town should consider passing by-laws promoting local. For example, require the local school and other town departments to purchase 1% of their budget locally. Part of the school's 1% could be designated for purchase of local food. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and the proposed Economic Development Committee and town Agricultural Commission.*

### 5. **Organize an Agricultural Commission**

An Agricultural Commission was established by Town Meeting Vote. The Commission should promote local agriculture and sustainable agricultural practices. The Commission should consider a "right to farm" bylaw and joining the American Farmland Trust. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen*

6. **Review and Revise the Town's Zoning Bylaws related to Commercial and Industrial Development:** The Master Plan Committee, in cooperation with the Planning Board, should review the Zoning Bylaw provisions for commercial and industrial zoning (Business A and B districts) and revise as necessary. This review and revision effort could include development of design standards for new economic development such as access/egress, lighting, landscaping, signage, building and parking location, building façade appearance, snow removal, fencing and screening. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Planning Board and proposed Economic Development Committee.*
7. **Develop a Computerized Database of Available Commercial Properties:** As part of its streamlined permitting process, the Town should develop a computerized database of its available business zoned properties (both commercial and industrial) as a service for new industries investigating Brookfield as a potential location. The database should be searchable by parcel size, availability of water, proximity to major roadways, easements in place and any other information that a potential developer may find useful. Not only would such a database be very useful to potential developers, it would also show that Brookfield is business-friendly and willing to provide resources in support of new economic development. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Proposed Economic Development Committee and the Board of Assessors.*
8. **Consider Tax Increment Financing:** The Town should investigate the possibility of establishing a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program to create and retain jobs in Town and stimulate the local economy. A local TIF program should insist that new businesses reserve a certain percentage of jobs for Brookfield residents, local contractors are used for building construction/rehabilitation and that local businesses are used as service providers. Although it would take a few years before Brookfield could reap the tax benefits from any TIF-created projects, the benefits to the local economy would be felt immediately. If Brookfield would like to maintain or lower its tax rate while still providing quality municipal services, then it has to grow its non-residential tax base, even if the tax benefits get pushed ten years into the future. Since the Town cannot offer new businesses much in the way of infrastructure (e.g. municipal sewer), a local TIF program would be a significant draw for new economic development. *Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Proposed Economic Development Committee.*

*See Appendix IV of this Master Plan for Economic Development Resources.*