

**SITE FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS
FOR
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
CHELSEA, VERMONT**

Chelsea Planning Commission

JULY, 1999

Economic Planning Committee

**Jay Keller
Paul Galdone
Caleb Rick
Phil Mulligan
William Field**

**Prepared By:
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation**



FILE COPY

I BACKGROUND

In October, 1997, the Chelsea Planning Commission was awarded a \$5050 Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. These funds were used to undertake a feasibility study of selected properties or areas in town which might be suitable for industrial use. A primary goal of the project was to evaluate opportunities to channel new manufacturing or service related industries into areas where adequate public services and land might be available to meet the long-term development needs of the community. A secondary goal was to identify properties which, as result of location and character, would not conflict with neighboring uses.

At the outset of the project, a five member Economic Planning Committee was formed to advise the Planning Commission and the Selectboard on the project. Additionally, the Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission and the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation were hired to provide planning and technical support to the Committee.

II COMMUNITY FORUMS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Prior to conducting an evaluation of likely sites, the Committee hosted three community forums at the Chelsea Town Hall. The purpose of these forums was to learn more about how the townspeople felt about economic development and what Chelsea might consider doing to attract or retain jobs in Town. The forums were held in May, June, and October, 1998. The results of these forums are included in the Appendix.

The following is a summary of opinions/suggestions raised by those attending the forums:

- (1) Chelsea's economic planning efforts should seek to employ people who are already residents or employed in town;
- (2) Future economic development needs to respect preservation of small town values, rural character, and scenic values;
- (3) Future job creation needs to balance intellectual labor with physical labor to insure a diverse community and to enable use of the community's natural resources (agriculture and forest) to be utilized;
- (4) To enable economic growth, new investment or capital needs to be imported to Chelsea; and
- (5) Chelsea needs to work on two concepts for industry
 - agricultural business development
 - technological information based development/software

development

III SITE SELECTION

Following completion of the community forums on economic development opportunities, the Committee established site selection criteria to help identify possible sites or areas in Chelsea suitable for possible designation as industrial/service areas. Following this, high ranking sites were investigated in more detail, including in-field investigations. The Committee did not select specific uses or businesses to be included within such industrial/service areas at this time. Rather the focus was to enable a broad mix of uses, provided they met with the overall economic goals for Chelsea as expressed in the Town Plan and at the recent community forums.

Selection Criteria

Primary and secondary criteria were used. Primary criteria were applied to screen potential site. From these sites, secondary criteria were applied, resulting in a listing of three (3) key sites or parcels deemed potentially favorable. See Appendix for details on selection criteria.

Primary criteria consisted of the following factors:

- (1) Traffic Safety and Access – Properties with safe access to good roads were favored over areas remote from major roads.
- (2) Slope Characteristics – Properties with slight to moderate slopes were favored over areas where land was moderate to steep.
- (3) Availability of Water and Sewer – Sites or parcels within or close to Chelsea's water or sewer facilities were favored over areas where on-site conditions (based on soils) were ranked poor.
- (4) Availability of Power – Ease of access to electric power was favored as this was felt to be important to some types of industries, particularly where 3-phase power is necessary.

Secondary criteria consisted of the following factors (applied only to sites ranking best under the primary criteria):

- (1) Parcel Size – Parcels large enough to support two or more uses were favored over small single use parcels.
- (2) Communications Technology – Parcels with relative ease of access to ISDN server lines or similar high speed data communication technologies were favored over sites or areas remote or not likely to be limited to this service.

- (3) Visual Sensitivity – Parcels or properties not visually sensitive or less likely to conflict with neighboring uses were favored.
- (4) Buildings Available – Properties where a building might be available for “fit up” for a service/industrial use were favored factor in site selection.

Resource Mapping

Using GIS data obtained from existing sources, a series of resource maps were prepared by the Regional Commission. The data was then used to evaluate the primary and secondary criteria noted above. The following map information was generated as part of this mapping exercise.

- (1) Special Areas Features
 - wellhead protection areas
 - deer wintering areas
 - hydric (wet) soils
 - primary/secondary agricultural soils
 - 100 year flood hazard areas
 - public lands
 - slope gradients (0-8%, 8-15%, 15-25%, 25-50%)
 - electric transmission lines
 - highways by type/classification
- (2) Current Land Use/Cover
 - forested land
 - open/agricultural lands
 - developed lands
- (3) Future Land Use

(Depicts various future land use designations recommended in the current Chelsea Town Plan.)

 - village
 - historic village
 - rural residential
 - agricultural
 - industrial
 - flood hazard (FEMA/FIRM)
- (4) Additionally, using E-911 site/structure data, existing commercial/industrial buildings were cataloged and indexed to a map.

Site Selection

Using the criteria and the resource mapping data, a Site Selection Map was generated. This exercise analyzed the relative strengths and weaknesses of various sites or areas. Only land in close proximity to paved roads (Route 110, Route 113, and East Randolph Road) were selected. Within this area, only land with slopes ranging generally less than 8% were selected. Additionally, underdeveloped/undeveloped land within the service zone for water and sewer were selected. Following a review and discussion with the Committee, three sites were identified. See Map titled "Potential Sites For Commercial/Industrial Uses". In April, 1994, field investigations of these three sites were conducted.

Site 1 – Kennedy Land

Located north of Chelsea village, on Route 110 easterly of the First Branch, and opposite Bobbin Shop Road this property consists of an undeveloped parcel of approximately 4 acres in size. The area is presently pasture and hayland. Access from Route 110 is over a small privately owned bridge spanning the First Branch. The site is immediate to several residences on Route 110. Visibility of the site is high from Route 110 and other nearby roads. It is estimated that 2.5 acres consists of slopes less than 8%; remaining land area is steep.

Development Opportunities/Constraints

- (a) access from Route 110 requires substantial improvement (bridge replacement); limited turning radius off Route 110;
- (b) sewer services may be readily available;
- (c) water service available from west side of Route 110;
- (d) small size of site limits development to 1 or 2 uses;
- (e) power readily available from east side of Route 110;
- (f) well-drained soils dominate site;
- (g) prime agricultural soils could raise permit issues under Act 250;
- (h) old barn on property may qualify as significant historic site; and
- (i) development of the parcel would need to be aesthetically sensitive.

Site 2 – Ryan (Beebe Estate) Land

This consists of the so-called Creamery building/property located on the southerly end of Chelsea village on the easterly side of Main Street (Route 110) and adjacent to the First Branch of the White River. Parcel size is estimated to be between 10 and 11 acres.

The site contains a 12,000 square foot concrete block building with flat roof construction. The Old Creamery building (circa 1940) has unloading bays, high

ceilings (\pm 12 feet) and is in fair condition. The building is currently used for storage and has not been in active use for several years. The property is accessed directly off Route 110 via Cemetery Road. On the southerly side of Cemetery Road and easterly of the White River is a 7 or 8 Acre open hay field which is in active use. This parcel ranges from slight to moderately steep, a small portion of which may be within the 100 year flood hazard area as mapped by FEMA.

Land uses proximate to the site consists of a few village residences, the Chelsea School, the Highland Cemetery, and forestland.

Development Opportunities/Constraints

- (a) access to and from Cemetery Road onto Route 110 (at the Bridge) is severely restricted for large vehicles due to the short turning radius. Reconfiguration of the road would be necessary to accommodate new uses. Sufficient land appears available to redesign the intersection;
- (b) electric power is available on-site;
- (c) sewer services are available on-site or immediately adjacent to the site;
- (d) the Creamery building could be renovated to house multiple tenants (e.g. machine tool, small equipment repair). The building has limited adaptive reuse potential for office/research uses due to its design configuration and construction type;
- (e) possible planned expansion of the Chelsea School may conflict with potential uses at the Creamery building. Minimal development potential upgradient of this site exists due to steepness of the land and the cemetery;
- (f) the open field south of the Creamery building and Cemetery Road has excellent potential to accommodate several firms or business establishments subject to good site planning/design;
- (g) primary agricultural soils cover a major portion of this site. Design plans will be sensitive to this resource, particularly where Act 250 approvals are required; and
- (h) a Phase 1 Environmental Review of the site may be necessary prior to sale/redevelopment due to the past/current use of the site.

Site 3 – Shirley Hewitt Land

This site has direct access onto the East Randolph Road and is approximately .4 miles distant from Route 110. The parcel consists of approximately 30 acres on the south side of the road. The site is predominately open and is bounded on the east by the First Branch of the White River. The land is gently sloping (0-15%) and is well drained.

An existing gravel drive (14 – 16 feet in width) from East Randolph Road accesses the interior of the parcel and a parcel owned in the Vermont Electric Power Corporation (VELCO) and the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (CVPS). Both VELCO and CVPS maintain sub-station facilities for transmission of electric power throughout central Vermont.

Transmission lines traverse the site, extending from the south and leading to the north and west at this site. Predominant land use of the site is hay land. There are no buildings or structures on the site.

Primary agricultural and deep soils are present at this site. A vast majority of the parcel (\pm 30 acres) is outside of the 100 year flood hazard area as mapped by FEMA.

Development Opportunities/Constraints

- (a) Given the developability and larger size of this parcel, it contains excellent opportunities for multiple industrial/service uses. Subdivision of the parcel to accommodate several owners could be planned for the site.
- (b) Public water and sewer are not available at the site. On-site wastewater disposal capabilities are favorable due to the well-drained soils at the site. Drilled wells would be the most likely water source for this site.
- (c) Electric power supply is readily available at this site.
- (d) Access to the site is excellent from East Randolph Road. Sight distances are excellent, thus safety should not be a concern for the site, if developed.
- (e) The visibility of the site from neighboring properties is low due to tree screening. Accordingly, the site should not be considered a sensitive site for development from an aesthetic standpoint. The existence of the electric substation more or less in the center of the site renders use of the land for residential or non-industrial type uses a low priority.
- (f) Eventual business development of the site would more than likely not conflict with neighboring residential uses/properties as the nearest property is 2000 feet or more from the site.

IV RELATIONSHIP TO CURRENT PLANNING AND ZONING

Background

The Chelsea Municipal Plan (1996) provides for the establishment of several land use categories that future development should follow. These include a Village Area and an Industrial Area. Commercial development is "especially appropriate" within the Village Area and generally discouraged in outlying areas. Small industrial or service establishments are supported within the village, provided they do not conflict with neighboring uses and village character. The Village Area extends north (Upper Village Road) and south (Jenkins Brook Road) along Route 110. Approximately one-third of the area is, however, severely constrained for development due to steep slopes, poor soils, or land within the 100-year floodplain.

Sites 1 and 2 are within the Village Area according to the Future Land Use Map.

The Industrial Area consists of a several hundred-acre area south of the Village Area, westerly of Route 110 in the vicinity of the East Randolph Road. It includes Site 3 lands.

Preferred uses for the area are broad, including manufacturing and service establishments, corporate offices, and assembly firms. Residential development is supported also, subject to buffering these uses from non-residential uses. Finally, the Plan recommends that industrial uses which generate a lot of traffic be restricted to the south part of Town along Route 110.

The Chelsea Zoning Bylaw (1998) regulates all industrial/manufacturing uses. Unlike the Plan, no specific areas or districts specific to these uses are provided. Rather, manufacturing facilities, corporate offices, and business type uses are enabled in all areas of Chelsea subject to Conditional Use Approval. Standards for off-street parking, outdoor storage, on-premise signs, area and dimensional requirements are included. The definition of manufacturing facility is very broad which means that almost any use falls into this category.

Recommendations:

- (1) The Planning Commission should reevaluate the Bylaw and bring it more into conformity with the Town Plan. Possibly an Industrial Zoning District should be established. This district should include the land in Site 3. Larger manufacturing facilities and businesses in need of more space and more likely to conflict with residential type uses should be directed to the Industrial Area.
- (2) The Bylaw should be amended to incorporate the appropriate standards for these uses to follow. These might include provisions for outdoor lighting, outdoor storage, access management, water/sewer services, building design and coverage, etc.
- (3) A Site Plan Review provision could be incorporated into the Bylaw. This would give the Planning Commission the ability to evaluate these types of projects from site/design perspective.
- (4) The zoning provisions for the Village Area should be reviewed to assure that the current policies do not necessarily discourage downtown development. Parking, area, and setbacks, for example, could be reevaluated. Ways and means to enable the village to obtain designation under Vermont's Downtown legislation should be checked out.

V FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

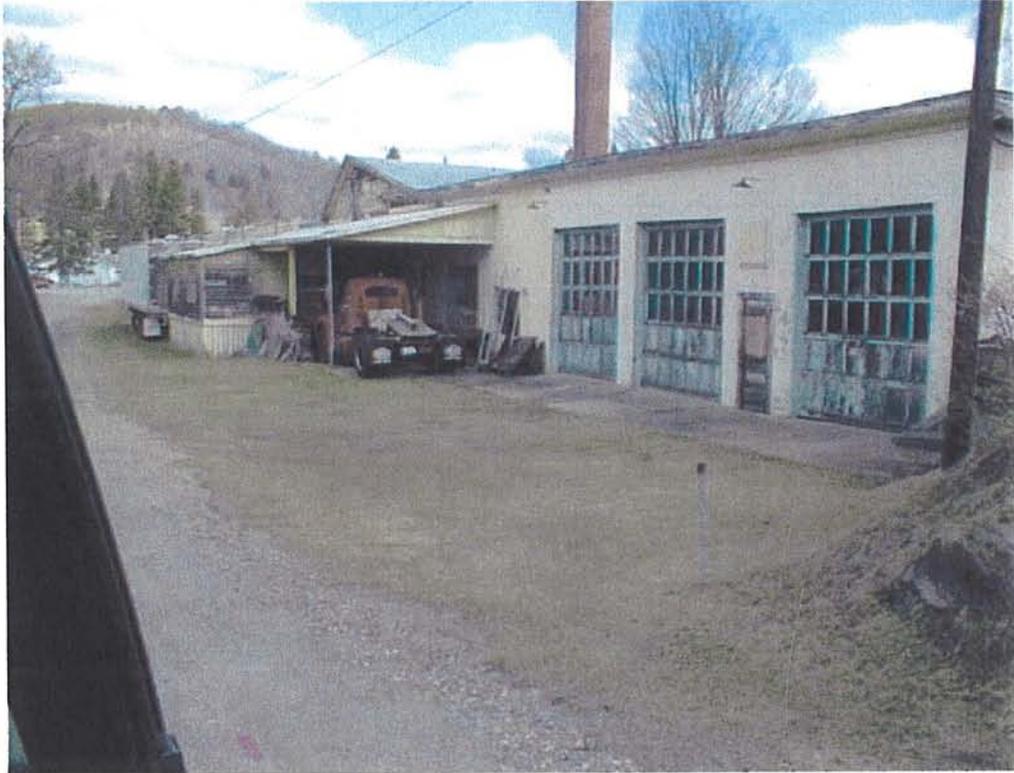
- (1) Based on the site selection criteria and overall community development goals for Chelsea, the analysis finds Site 3 (Hewitt) to be the most favored. Site 3 offers the greatest degree of development potential compared to Sites 1 and 2. Site 2 (Ryan Beebe) offers favorable development potential, subject to overcoming access constraints. The availability of Site 3 for purchase also is a positive factor.

- (2) Given the close proximity of Site 3 of the Tunbridge/Chelsea Town Line, and the common interest in both municipalities for small scale entrepreneurial development, it is recommended that the Planning Commissions of both towns jointly evaluate cooperative actions for Site 3. The regional development corporation (GMEDC) and the regional planning commission (TRORC) could assist in this task. Public/private grants and/or loans may be available for planning and development of this site or alternative sites.
- (3) The Economic Planning Committee should evaluate establishing a local development corporation, limited partnership corporation or similar organization whose purpose would be to promote economic development. Site planning, infrastructure development, and marketing of Site 3 could be a project. The regional planning commission and regional development corporation could be a resource for such endeavor.

VI APPENDIX



Site 1 – East View Of Parcel From Route 110 Over First Branch



Site 2 – View of Creamery Building From Cemetery Road



Site 2 – South View Of Open Land From Cemetery Road



Site 3 – Access Road To Parcel Looking Southeast



Site 3 – Southerly View of Parcel



Site 3 – View From Parcel Looking Northwest

CHELSEA COMMUNITY FORUM ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

May 12, 1998 - Chelsea Town Hall

1. INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Bill Field member of the Chelsea Planning Committee opened the meeting. he explained that the purpose of the forum was to obtain ideas and thoughts for economic development and needs for Chelsea. The forum was to seek out the best ways for Chelsea to grow in the future.

Don Bourdon from the Two Rivers Regional Commission noted that the Commission was working with the Town on the project and how possible local town plan and zoning amendments might result. Two Rivers is a regional organization set-up to help towns in planning for future development. Jim Saudade, Executive Director for the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC), is also assisting the Town. GMEDC provides technical support to towns and businesses interested in jobs and economic development. It provides loans to businesses through a revolving loan fund (RLF) and the Vermont Economic Development Authority. It also assist towns in securing grants to undertake economic development projects under the Vermont Community Development Block Program. Jim also reviewed the region-wide commercial/industrial property inventory which will catalog existing land future buildings and sites used for commercial or industrial purposes. It is anticipated that the project will help towns and businesses identify areas appropriate for future growth.

2. IDEAS/VIEWS/CONCEPTS

Below is a summary of opinions offered by those attending:

- It would be "nice" to have businesses in town where you do not have to be a relative or friend to get a "job". Larger businesses can overcome this problem.
- Training available to local folks would help.
- Is matching "business seekers" to business locations a challenge? Jim Saudade - not necessarily in today's economic due to computer link-up and other technologies.
- Software development is the growth industry for the Region. For example the Upper Valley Computer Association hosts monthly meetings to promote itself. Membership has exploded to over 80 people in just two years.

- Chelsea needs to employ people who are already here and not necessarily import a new work force. The farm ethic prevails in Chelsea, although conditions are changing things.
- We need to be concerned about the preservation of rural character and the scenic beauty of Chelsea. How do we keep the agricultural economy and enable better economic margins? Ideas:
 - agricultural cooperative
 - maple syrup cooperative
 - value added products
 - sheep projects (investigate)
- Chelsea needs to balance future job creation between intellectual labor and physical labor. Development of a beer hops industry could do this.
- Chelsea needs to attract young people from outside of town. There is a need to make the community diverse or the community could die. How can we use young people to our advantage.
- Chelsea needs to import capital and investment. This contributes to an economic benefit for many i.e. multiplier effect.
- This project should identify existing businesses seeking to expand or have immediate needs; technical support for local businesses is a need; this concept needs to be marketed. GMEDC is an excellent source for technical assistance.
- Maps depicting prime agricultural lands or open land would be useful for potential sites analysis.

3. NEXT MEETING

Although the discussion was excellent, the attendance was low. It was agreed to hold an additional forum on June 9th at 7:00 p.m. to give a broader opportunity for others to explore these ideas more.

CHELSEA COMMUNITY FORUM ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

October 15, 1998 - Chelsea Town Hall

1. INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Don Bourdon welcomed the audience to the Forum on Economic Development. Jim Saudade of the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation was introduced. It was explained that the purpose of the Forum was to hear from the group about their ideas for economic development in Chelsea. Don and Jim explained that the Town recently had obtained a \$5,000 grant from the State to help it investigate possible planning and zoning changes to accommodate more readily economic development in Chelsea. Both the Regional Commission and the Development Corporation had been retained by the Town to help it develop a strategy that could eventually be reflected in selecting areas or sites for new growth to be located or more easily accommodated than in other areas in town.

2. IDEAS/VIEWS/CONCEPTS

Below is a summary of opinions offered by those attending (18 people):

- There are two concepts for industry in Chelsea
 - agricultural business development
 - technological/information base development
- Chelsea must have something to offer to maintain itself economically. It needs to bring together people, provide in-house administrative support to remain competitive. This could be good sites, a new concept for marketing or a niche that other areas do not have.
- To attract the information industry, Chelsea must have something big to offer and must keep out the "trash" (Carl Pepperman). Software developers could find Chelsea the place to locate if they want to live here.
- Vermont can be competitive. The GMEDC provides a "location challenge" service to businesses seeking to locate in Vermont or New Hampshire. GMEDC will pay prospective relocating firms the costs of determining the tax consequences of locating to Vermont versus New Hampshire. In many cases, its a tax advantage for business to relocate in Vermont compared to New Hampshire (Jim Saudade).
- A priority for economic development planning should be for job retention-promoting and supporting those existing businesses that fit within the community.
- Chelsea does not have a competitive advantage when it comes to :
 - communications
 - cellular
 - computer server lines
 - transportation (Route 110)
 - skilled employees

- access to training for employees
- proximity to major economic centers

This makes marketing more problematic.

- The concept of establishing a small business incubator makes economic sense for a small town like Chelsea. Business incubators have had real success where the support services have been readily available. Finding a site available for this purpose is essential. Costs for development of a site/building need to be economic to enable a low cost basis for tenants.
- Marketing the incubator into the community is important. Development funds for land/site development may be available from the State.
- Relocation to Vermont from the “silicon valley” can ensure greater employer loyalty and longer tenure with a firm. This is a marketing plus for Chelsea.
- Agriculture and Hay Markets - mulch hay commands a big price down country. A major cost of marketing hay is in transportation. Identifying a mulch hay market is very important to the success of such a scheme. Is there a future for this in Chelsea?
- Dairy farming in Chelsea has no future. Existing farms are being run by local families. No farms are begin sold to “new farmers” from outside. Opportunities for farming are better in other areas.

3. NEXT MEETING

The attendance was excellent and the discussion was directed to Chelsea’s economic needs and limitations. Bourdon and Saudade noted that the Economic Steering Committee would meet December 16th at 7:00 p.m. in Chelsea to set priorities for the next steps of this project.

Members of the Steering Committee are:

Jay Keller
Paul Galdone
Bill Field
Phil Mulligan
David Bradshaw

January 11, 1999

CHELSEA SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Background

The purpose of establishing site selection criteria is to assist the Committee in identifying sites or areas in Chelsea suitable for possible designation as an industrial/service area. Sites deemed to have met these criteria should be investigated in detail. This would involve site investigation and legal research.

Highest ranking sites meeting the criteria below and other factors could be set aside and included in revision to the Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws. It should be noted that such a site or sites designated for these purposes is not intended to preclude or otherwise limit such activities in other areas of Town. Current Zoning Bylaws provide for a variety of uses throughout the Town.

Specific use groups or types within such an industrial/service area has not been determined at this time. Rather, the focus here is to enable a broad mix of uses provided they match well with the overall goals for economic development in Chelsea.

Selection Criteria

In selecting sites, primary and secondary criteria will be used. Primary criteria will result in a map revealing potential sites. Secondary criteria will be applied to those sites resulting from the primary selection process. Finally, a listing of key sites or parcels deemed most favorable will be created.

No industrial/service development will be sited on actively used primary agricultural soils.

Primary Criteria

Traffic Safety and Access

Property with safe access to existing roads that have the capacity to accommodate growth are favored over properties that are remote from major highways.

Direct Access to Route 110	
Route 113, or other paved roads/favorable site distance, etc.	High
Sites Within 1000' of Above	Medium
Sites Over 1000' of Paved Road	Low

Slope Characteristics

Development on Slopes that exceeds 15% gradient is more difficult and expensive to build. Slopes less than 8% are preferred.

Slope Less Than 8%	High
Slope Between 8-15%	Medium
Slope Over 15%	Low

Availability of Water and Sewer

A site or parcel within the service area of Chelsea's public water or sewer facilities can be a positive factor for business. Sites not within reach of public sewer or water, but exhibiting excellent or good on-site conditions based on soils suitability will be ranked high or medium. Poor conditions are obviously not preferred.

Public Water/Sewer Available	High
Favorable On-Site Conditions	High/Medium
Poor On-Site Conditions	Low

Availability of Power

Land that is within close proximity to existing power sources is a desirable criterion. For some uses three phase services is favored over single phase (industry - processing/machine tool).

3 Phase Power Within 1000'	High
Single Phase Power Within 1000'	Medium
No Power Within 1000'	Low

Secondary Criteria

Parcel Size

A site that is of sufficient in size to enable two or more uses to collocate on the tract is favored. Thus, the larger parcel might be considered more important than a small lot as it is less likely to serve the purposes of the designation.

Over 15 Acres	High
Between 5-15 Acres	Medium
Less Than 5 Acres	low

Availability of Up-To-Date Communications Technology

Some industries or service establishment are highly dependent on up-to-date communications systems. For example, direct access to an ISDN computer server line would be a positive factor. Line construction or extension costs could be avoided.

Readily Available	High
Reasonably Available	Medium
Not Likely Available	Low

Visual Sensitivity

Developments that are located in an area deemed highly scenic or visually sensitive or near other existing uses that could conflict with a proposed use should be avoided where possible. Parcels that are not visually sensitive are favored. Conversely, a parcel situated in the foreground of a recognized scenic vista is disfavored. Note, however, that despite the sensitivity of a site, good planning can mitigate the visual impacts of buildings, and other improvements.

No Visual Sensitivity	High
Limited Sensitivity	Medium
Visually Sensitivity	Low

Buildings Available On-Site

Where a building or portion of a building or buildings are available for "fit up" of service/industrial uses(s), they should be considered a positive factor in site selection marketability of the building would be a factor, also.

Building(s) Available On-Site	High
Possible Building On-Site	Medium
Site Clearance Required	Low