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Massachusetts
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Land Use Laws and Policies Impacts of Non-Conforming Industrial Sites on Residential Neighborhoods in Select Massachusetts Cities

Item Type	article;article
Download date	2024-09-16 20:55:55
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/4717

**LAND USE LAWS AND POLICIES
IMPACTS OF NON-CONFORMING INDUSTRIAL
SITES ON RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS
IN SELECT MASSACHUSETTS CITIES**

SPRING, 1991

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The Center for Economic Development would like to thank
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The Center for Economic Development at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst, is part of the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department, and is funded by the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the University of Massachusetts.

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INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted in order to evaluate how effectively non-conforming industrial sites have adapted to their surrounding residential neighborhood. It is the objective of this report to discuss various aspects of these buildings, such as their operation, size, age and appearance in relation to nearby homes. An evaluation of potential impacts on both the business and the neighborhood will follow. Finally, recommendations will be made to remedy possible problem areas. Photographs of all the non-conforming sites accompany the written site description to better illustrate these issues.

The study area includes the Massachusetts cities of Leominster, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Chicopee and Westfield . Site locations for the study were provided after meeting with each of the city's chief planners.

There are some interesting facts to note about the study areas. Leominster, known primarily for plastics production, was the only city in the study that historically did not rely on a waterway for its major source of power production. Coincidentally, Leominster also had the most extensive list of non-conforming uses, all of which are plastics companies. It can be hypothesized that many of these operations literally began in the "basement" of residential homes, experienced sufficient growth to require expansion and either moved next door or the house grew into the company . (Superior Comb). There are also examples in Leominster of companies which were built and, in turn, housing for the workers were built around them. (Key Plastics , Banner Mold).

In contrast, the city of Chicopee had difficulty in identifying its non-conforming industrial sites. The reason, as explained by the Community Development Director, is that these non-conforming industrial sites have been re-zoned industrial to allow for those particular uses. Despite these zoning changes, there were a few examples of industrial sites that appeared to have an impact on the surrounding residential neighborhoods . These sites have been included in the study results.

LEOMINSTER

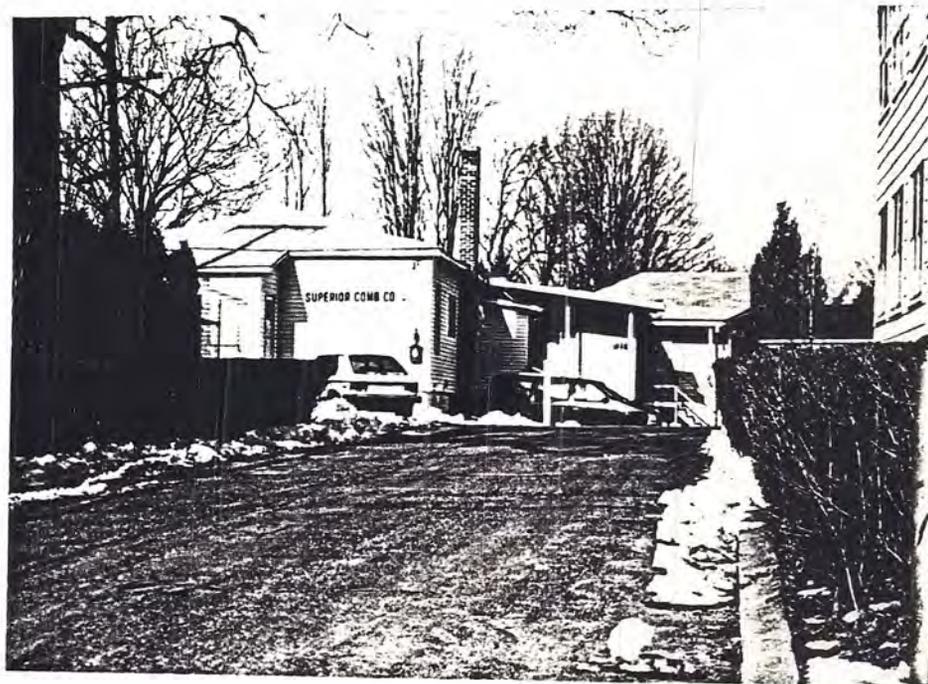
#1 Company: Victory Button 106 Carter Street
Zoning : Residence B
Business :Molding

The Victory Button Company building is approximately 15,000 s/f. Carter Street is a short cut-over street that links 6th and Johnson Streets. While there are no homes directly abutting the factory, there are approximately three residences across the street. South-East Elementary School is located across Johnson Street and situated atop a steep hill on Viscoloid Ave. The school is visible in the picture of the factory. The landscape surrounding the building is barren, but due to the amount of pavement surrounding it, planting would be difficult, making beautification efforts dubious. The building is located on the outskirts of the neighborhood and any truck traffic can empty out onto street running parallel to the right of the building. Truck traffic and its impact on the neighboring school seem to be the greatest issues of concern.



#2 Company : Superior Comb 301 Sixth Street
Zoning : Residence C
Business : Combs

The Superior Comb Building was the most difficult company to locate, due to its compatibility with surrounding homes. From the road, the building shares a driveway with the abutting home and looks residential itself. Because of the proximity of the two buildings, it appears that this was possibly a company that started in the basement of the house and slowly encroached upon the remaining property. There were no large trucks stored in the driveway and heavy traffic does not seem to be a concern for the abutting neighbors. For this non-conforming use the prospect of expansion by the company seems to be limited.



#3 Company : R.P Plastics Corp. 40 River Street
Zoning : Residence D
Business : Molding

River Street is a short "cut-over street" which runs one way into the heavily travelled North Main Street. A traffic light stands at the exit of the street. From the front, the building resembles a ranch style home and sits up very close to the road and is enclosed by a chain link fence. From the side view of the building, it extends back a few hundred feet and is multi-level. Although it abuts several residences, it is also located next to several other businesses (ie : Gas stations, car parts store). It appears that the commercial activities towards North Main Street are more of a detriment to the aesthetics of the neighborhood than the actual non-conforming use. In other words this building, without looking at the zoning appears to be in conformance with a majority of the surroundings.



#4 J&M Plastics 85 Pleasant Street
Zoning : Business B
Business: Molding

J&M Plastics is located on Pleasant Street approximately 1/2 mile from the center of the city. The downtown and this portion of Pleasant Street is heavily travelled. J&M abuts a three decker home and is across the street from a doctors office and a small coffee shop/deli. A river also runs along the side of the building. The building outside is very well maintained and blends nicely with the surrounding homes. There are no large trucks stored at the facility and it can be inferred that heavy traffic is not an issue. The building is rather close to the road and with its proximity of the river, any future expansion would appear difficult



#5 Key Plastic 233 Florence Street
Zoning : Residence B
Business: Molding

The Key Plastics building is approximately 10,000 s/f, abuts a duplex and is located in a large residential single family neighborhood. Banner Mold and Die is located on the left of Key with both concrete buildings separated by a common driveway. They are located toward the end of the neighborhood and are easily accessible by Mechanic Street, a busy main street that leads directly to Routes. 2 & I190. This is yet another example of the neighborhood being constructed to provide housing for the factory workers. All of the homes, with the exception of the duplex, are identical cape style homes.



#6 Banner Mold & Die 251 Florence Street
Zoning : Residence B
Business: Steel Molding

Banner Mold is next door to Key and is located in the same neighborhood. Banner though, is abutted on the right by St. Cecilia's Cemetery. See description above.



#7 F&M Tool & Die 63 Lakeview Street

Zoning : Residence A

Business : Molds

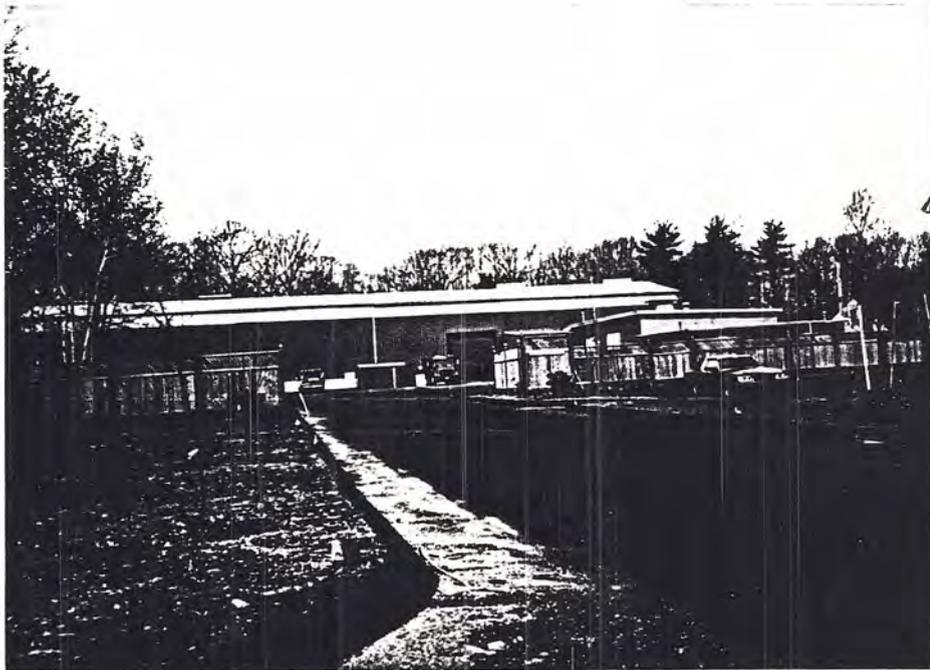
Though F&M appears to be located in a manufacturing district due to the presence of other manufacturing buildings such as Bordens Chemical Plant, the area is zoned residential . Both the back and side of the building, where the trucks dock, are facing residential areas. Across the street on the side of the buildings is a two family home, while the rear of the building is separated from a two family and single family home by only a small fence. A short cut over road located on the side of the company exits to both a busy main street and a narrow residential street. Though there is a fence separating the rear of the building from the home on the neighboring street, it still does not provide a suitable screen. There is very limited room, if any for this company to expand at its present location.



FITCHBURG

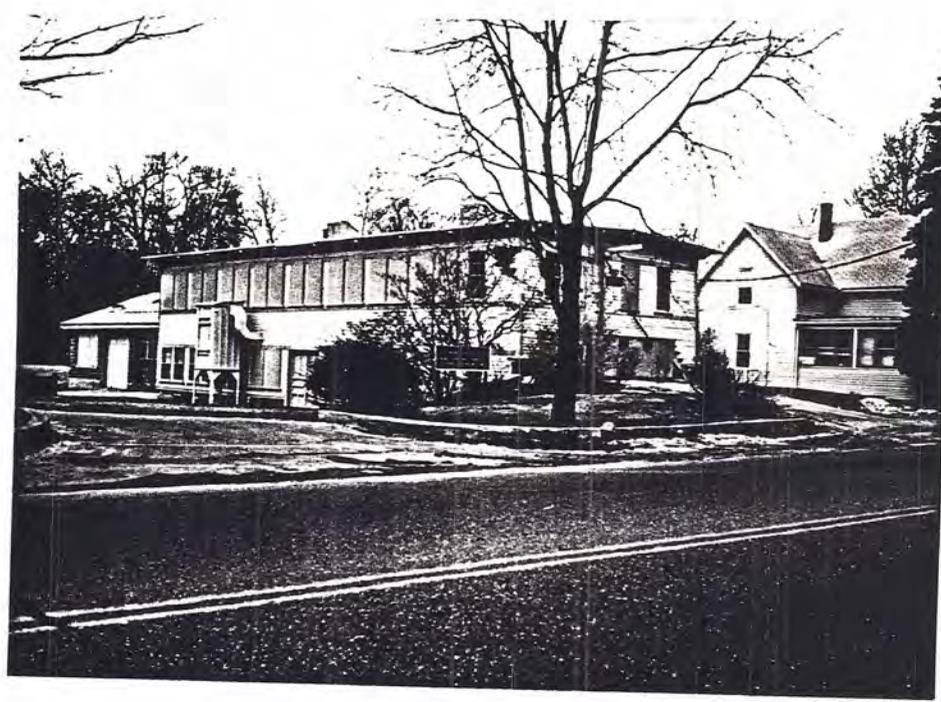
#1. J. Pelletier 552 Oak Hill Road
Zoning : Residence A2
Business: Contracting

J. Pelletier is a large, aluminum sided building of approximately 10,000 s/f. It is well maintained and the color of the siding ,slate blue blends nicely with the surrounding homes. Set back from the road, a large, wooden fence blocks the majority of the building from the road. One home is located to the right of the entrance, which may be affected by business-generated traffic. In addition there is a row of residential homes to the right of the building. It appears as though the business was built during or after construction of the surrounding homes Less than a mile from the company is the Oak Hill Country Club & Golf Club. This site is a mismatched pocket of industrial land in the midst of a residential neighborhood. However, J. Pelletier has made successful efforts to provide adequate screening and landscaping.



**#2 Fitchburg Screen Plate Co.
Morey Paper Mill Supply Co.
National Perforating Co. South Street
Zoning: Residence A2
Business: Screen Plating, Paper supply**

South Street is a steep, busy street, leading into the center of downtown Fitchburg, with Fitchburg Pattern located at the top of the hill. This wooden industrial building appears to be significantly older than the surrounding residential homes. Because of the wooden siding, it blends in nicely with the large, single family homes of this residential area. This non-conforming use at the time of this study did not have any trucks parked in the large lot to the left of the building and all of the loading takes place on the left side of the building on the opposite side of the homes. The structure, though noticeably aged, is well maintained. The sign in the front of the building is small but legible.



#3 Cleghorn Oil Pratt Road
Zoning : Residence B
Business: Oil Suppliers

Cleghorn Oil has recently moved to an area of the city that is zoned for business and can withstand the amount of traffic generated by this oil transporting company. However, there are still trucks located at this facility on Pratt Road. The Cleghorn Oil building is located on a small, residential block with all of the buildings set closely together, leaving little backyard space for homes. It appears that trucks can exit the facility from both the front and the rear of the building. The main garage area is located in the front, closer to the road. In the picture showing the rear of the building, it is evident how these homes would be impacted from the entering and exiting of the trucks. There is also the potential for danger in the event of an unforeseen oil spill.



HOLYOKE

#1 New England Archive Hampden Street

Zoning: Residence 2

Business: Archive storage

The New England Archive Building is located at the corner of a busy intersection with a Super Stop & Shop across the street and an apartment building and two-family homes located on either side. The brick building is very well maintained and the signage is attractive and neatly painted. The company does not appear to generate much traffic in this already congested intersection, as the Stop&Shop building is more of an impediment than the Archive building.



**#2 Plymouth Paper (Unity Press) Suffolk Street
Zoning : Residence 2
Business: Abandoned building**

Plymouth Paper, a well maintained brick building, is presently abandoned and is located on a busy residential road directly across from a funeral parlor. The business is very close to the road and access to the side dock from the road would be a difficult for any type of large truck. With a funeral parlor immediately across the street, noise is a significant issue of concern. For any business interested in locating in this site, it should be noted that the funeral parlor has acquired much of the property abutting the Paper building for parking purposes. The landscaping surrounding the building has been well maintained Future use to this site would have to exclude heavy industry or manufacturing uses.



#3 Springdale Machinery Temple Street
Zoning: Residence 2
Business: Machine

The Springdale Machinery building is located on a narrow residential street, abutted by several single family homes. The building has been newly painted and is well maintained. There are no trucks currently stored at this facility and traffic does not seem to be aggravated by its existence in a residential area. In addition this building blends nicely with the surrounding homes.



4 King Trucking Temple Street
Zoning : Residence 2
Business: Trucking

This facility is directly down the street from the Springdale Machinery building and, unlike the preceding company, it does not conform with the residential neighborhood it is located within. The white- painted cement garage abuts a newly constructed apartment building and is across the street from several single family homes. This building poses a concern because of the number and size of trucks that come and go from this location. Noise may also be a nuisance to surrounding residences. Fortunately this building is not located in the center of the neighborhood and has direct access down a short road to a main, heavily travelled road for trucks entering and exiting the building site.



CHICOPEE

#1 The Chicopee Mills Front Street

Zoning: Industrial

Business: Light Manufacturing, Small Business Incubator

Because Chicopee has historically been a mill-oriented industrial city, housing for mill workers was built within walking distance of the work place. In Chicopee, examples of this type of living arrangement still exists. The Chicopee Mill is very well restored and the homes and the factory compliment each other. This is due in large part to the fact that these mills are engaged in light manufacturing and are relatively " clean" . Also the Mill did not appear to be operating at full capacity, alleviating possible traffic concerns.



**#2. Spaulding Corp. World Headquarters, Meadow St.
Zoning: Industrial
Business: Sports & Sportswear manufacturer**

Meadow Street is a very heavily travelled road with several signals regulating traffic. Though this is zoned for industrial use across the street from the plant are several apartment buildings that are located close to the heavily travelled road. The Spaulding Corporation site is occupied by two buildings-- an outlet and a factory. The outlet is an old, one story facility, approximately one block in length. The a manufacturing building is a large, modern facility, with trucks entering and exiting the plant with great frequency. The homes appear to have been built at approximately the same time as the newer Spaulding facility.



#3 Uniroyal Oak Street

Zoning : Industrial

Business: 1/3 office, the remainder abandoned

The Uniroyal Building is approximately 1 million square feet, with the majority of the building abandoned and a small section remaining productive for office space. Since 1979 when the Uniroyal operation closed in 1979, several new condominiums have been built on a plot of land across the street from the factory. Future uses of the Uniroyal facility should take into consideration this residential area, even though this section is zoned for industry.



WESTFIELD

#1 H. B Smith Co. 57 Main Street
Zoning: Commercial Office Retail Enterprise Zone
Business: Boilers

The H.B Smith Company is a large, brick factory covering several blocks close to the downtown in Westfield. The Company is comprised of several well maintained buildings covering the site and the facility itself appears to be at least 100 years old. Most of the uses that have located around the Smith Company are commercial and service-oriented. An apartment complex, though located across the street from the facility, is far enough away not to be negatively impacted by the daily operation.

