

Northeastern University
Dukakis Center *for* Urban & Regional Policy

REPORT
FEBRUARY 2014

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL (EDSAT)

RESULTS FOR THE TOWN OF
EASTON, MASSACHUSETTS
FEBRUARY 2014



The Partners

About the Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy

The Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University conducts interdisciplinary research, in collaboration with civic leaders and scholars both within and beyond Northeastern University, to identify and implement real solutions to the critical challenges facing urban areas throughout Greater Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the nation. Founded in 1999 as a “think and do” tank, the Dukakis Center’s collaborative research and problem-solving model applies powerful data analysis, a bevy of multidisciplinary research and evaluation techniques, and a policy-driven perspective to address a wide range of issues facing cities and towns. These include affordable housing, local economic development, workforce development, transportation, public finance, and environmental sustainability. The staff of the Dukakis Center works to catalyze broad-based efforts to solve urban problems, acting as both a convener and a trusted and committed partner to local, state, and national agencies and organizations. The Dukakis Center is housed within Northeastern University’s innovative School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs.

About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities is the nation’s oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for more than 1,600 member cities and the 49 state municipal leagues, representing 19,000 cities and towns and more than 218 million Americans. Through its Center for Research and Innovation, NLC provides research and analysis on key topics and trends important to cities, creative solutions to improve the quality of life in communities, inspiration and ideas for local officials to use in tackling tough issues and opportunities for city leaders to connect with peers, share experiences, and learn about innovative approaches in cities.

For additional information about the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT), please visit <http://www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter/econdev/edsat> or contact:

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INTRODUCTION

A robust, sustainable, and adaptable local economy heavily depends on officials who can lead in the formulation and implementation of an economic development strategy. A thorough strategy is developed with an understanding of local business interests, regional resource availability, and a careful assessment of the community's ability to attract new business investment and jobs.¹ The *Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool* (EDSAT) is an important step that public officials can take to assess their jurisdictions' strengths and weaknesses with respect to expanding and sustaining economic growth. Through EDSAT, public officials and business leaders collaborate as a team, assessing each of their roles in creating a business-friendly climate.

By participating in this self-assessment, Easton will not simply better understand its economic development assets and challenges, but learn to build upon strengths and overcome weaknesses. This report contains a thorough analysis of the responses provided by Easton to the EDSAT questionnaire.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Since 2005, the Dukakis Center has sought to identify the “deal-breakers” impeding private investment in local municipalities. Based upon research on the resurgence of older industrial cities, the Dukakis Center has identified two of the crucial factors in economic development. First is a municipality's capability in responding to ever-changing market forces. Second is the ability of local government to work with regional agencies, business leaders, and academic institutions to work collaboratively to solve municipal weaknesses and market the city or town's strengths. These conclusions led to the development of EDSAT as well as the creation of an analytical framework for providing practical and actionable feedback to public officials. EDSAT is the first tool that resulted from the partnership between Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy (Dukakis Center) and the National League of Cities (NLC).

Methodology

The foundation for the 200-plus questions that make up the EDSAT questionnaire was established when the Dukakis Center surveyed more than 240 members of the *National Association of Industrial and Office Properties*, now known as *NAIOP* and *CoreNet Global*. These leading professional associations represent site and location experts, whose members research new sites for businesses and other institutions. Members were asked to identify those factors that are most important to businesses and developers when evaluating locations. This process generated a set of 38 broad themes relevant to economic growth and development. Examples of themes include highway access, available workforce, and the timeliness of permit reviews. Based on rankings by these location experts, EDSAT themes are identified as “*Very Important*,” “*Important*,” or “*Less Important*” to businesses and developers.

¹ Jurisdictions are usually categorized as individual towns and/or cities. Each can be several small municipalities, a geographic region, or a county—as long as each plans and strategizes as a single entity in its economic development efforts.

EDSAT Themes

<p>Very Important ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highway Access Parking Traffic Infrastructure Rents Workforce Composition Labor Timeliness of Approvals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Follow-Up Quality of Available Space Land Labor Cost Industry Sensitivity Sites Available Predictable Permits Fast Track Permits Citizen Participation in the Review Process Cultural and Recreational Amenities Crime Housing Local Schools Amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Business Incentives Local Business Incentives Local Tax Rates Tax Delinquency <p>Less Important ○</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airports Rail Water Transportation Proximities to Universities & Research Unions Workforce Training Permitting Ombudsman Jurisdiction's Website
<p>Important ◐</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Transit Physical Attractiveness Complementary/ Supplemental Business Services Critical Mass Firms Cross Marketing 		

Each question in EDSAT addresses a particular location factor and provides three ways to interpret that factor relative to the response in your own community:

1. The level of importance businesses and developers place on that location factor
2. How other jurisdictions participating in EDSAT have typically responded to that question
3. How your jurisdiction's response compares to the typical response and the importance of the location factor



FIGURE 1: IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE LEVELS

For example, through the EDSAT analysis, officials may discover that the efficiency of the municipal permitting process is both *Very Important* to businesses and developers and that their jurisdiction is taking several months to review a permit application, rather than a few weeks as in the case of other jurisdictions. According to our location experts, this can be a serious weakness or potential “deal-breaker.” Knowing this, municipal officials may choose to hone in on the permitting process to understand where the inefficiencies lie and how the process could be improved and/or simplified. Even if a jurisdiction is quite efficient in reviewing permits, it may be worth the effort to further improve the process, as the timeliness of the process is of such significance to businesses and developers. Staff, review boards, or commissions could streamline their work or provide more technical support to applicants to streamline the process. This permitting example outlines the degree to which the EDSAT analysis provides an opportunity for revisiting and redeveloping a jurisdiction's economic development strategies and processes.


E. Proximity to Universities & Research			
Report of Easton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Easton		Comparison Group
28: How many major public or private four-year college or universities are located within your jurisdiction?	1		0

FIGURE 2: SAMPLE RESPONSE

The EDSAT analysis compares your jurisdiction’s response to that of Comparison Group Municipalities (CGM).² With regard to the aforementioned permitting process, your jurisdiction may offer significantly shorter review times than the CGM. In this case, the EDSAT analysis suggests that on this measure your jurisdiction may possess a relative advantage in what is a *Very Important* location factor. However, if permit reviews take significantly longer, then your jurisdiction may be at a disadvantage. While local and regional regulations or processes affect the review process, businesses are interested in “time-to-market” – the time it takes to get up and running in an ever-increasing competitive environment.

EDSAT assigns a color code to highlight the results of your jurisdiction compared to the median response among the CGM. Colors—green, yellow, and red—indicate a municipality’s relative strength on each specific location factor. Green indicates that your jurisdiction is quantitatively or qualitatively stronger than CGM response; yellow indicates that your jurisdiction is average or typical; and red indicates a relative deficiency.

The interaction between the importance of a location factor and your jurisdiction’s relative strength yields powerful information. With respect to businesses and developers, a comparison yielding “red” for a *Very Important* factor represents the potential for a “deal-breaker,” while a comparison resulting in “green” for a *Very Important* factor represents the likelihood of a “deal-maker.” There are several important considerations to keep in mind when reviewing a jurisdiction’s EDSAT results:

1. If your jurisdiction is at a disadvantage in certain *Very Important* location factors, such as possessing a slow permitting process, a workforce that lacks the necessary skills, and infrastructure that lacks the capacity to support growth, it is considered to have three distinct “deal-breakers,” regardless of its geographic location.
2. Your jurisdiction should look at its EDSAT results as an overview, and not focus on a particular factor. One “deal-breaker” does not mean that your jurisdiction should abandon its economic development efforts. At the same time, your jurisdiction cannot solely rely on one or two “deal-makers.” Economic development is a dynamic process and should be managed in such a way that a community continually responds to the changing needs of local and prospective businesses.
3. The interpretation of comparisons and color assignments depends on your jurisdiction’s context in answering the question and its objectives for economic development. For example, if there are significantly more square feet of vacant commercial space than the CGM median, EDSAT assigns “red” because large

² The term Comparison Group Municipalities (CGM) is used in this report to represent jurisdictions that have completed the EDSAT.

amounts of space may indicate outdated facilities in a stagnant local economy. However, the empty space may actually be an asset if your jurisdiction is focusing on attracting businesses that would benefit from large spaces, such as a creative mixed-use complex. Thus, your jurisdiction's context is important in understanding EDSAT results.

For some questions, the red and green color assignments serve to highlight the response for further consideration within the context of your jurisdiction's objectives and circumstances. Several questions have no comparison at all. They tend to be lists of potential incentives, resources, or regulations associated with the municipality and will be discussed in corresponding sections of the report.

SUMMARY AND ORGANIZATION OF RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

This section highlights Easton's primary strengths and weaknesses in the realm of economic development. EDSAT does not provide an overall grade for a jurisdiction, but rather assesses a jurisdiction's unique set of strengths, weaknesses, and economic development objectives.

The Dukakis Center staff creates a list of significant or notable responses for each of the *Very Important*, *Important*, and *Less Important* location factors, emphasizing strengths and "deal-makers," which are not organized in any particular order of importance. Dukakis Center staff suggests that your municipality review these lists and use them to highlight, enhance, and market your city or town's strengths.

Tasks on the weakness and "deal-breaker" lists, however, are prioritized to emphasize the importance of their mitigation. The Dukakis Center staff arranges the tasks according to feasibility, with consideration of the latitude and abilities of local, county, or regional levels of government. For example, in a jurisdiction with limited highway access, building a new highway interchange or connector would likely be cost-prohibitive, time-consuming, and an inefficient use of local resources. However, other tasks are more feasible with modest investments in time and resources. For example, streamlining the permitting process and making related development information readily accessible to both location experts and businesses can be accomplished with no significant capital investments. Although location experts rank both highway access and the timeliness of permitting as *Very Important* location factors, in the prioritized list of potential "deal-breakers," the permitting process is given a higher priority due to its feasibility in implementation.

Easton's Strengths or Potential "Deal-Makers"

The following lists of Easton's strengths are its powerful economic development assets. The town should build upon these assets and promote them to prospective businesses and developers. Easton should first consider those in the *Very Important* group, then the *Important*, and finally the *Less Important* group. Please note that strengths are **not listed in any particular order** within the three lists.

Strengths among Very Important Location Factors

- **Parking:** Easton is at an advantage over the CGM in that it offers parking facilities near development sites and has used state or federal infrastructure grants to improve parking.

- **Traffic:** Unlike the CGM, Easton has regular access to a traffic engineer or transportation planner.
- **Rents:** Manufacturing space rent in Easton is less expensive than the CGM (\$5 vs. \$6 per square foot).
- **Workforce Composition:** Easton has a higher proportion of professionals in the workforce than does the CGM.
- **Labor (available):** Easton's labor force is slightly more educated, with more bachelor's degrees per person, than the CGM.

Strengths among Important Location Factors

- **Physical Attractiveness:** More of Easton's land is reserved for parks than the CGM, and unlike the CGM, the town features a hotline for reporting code violations and maintenance needs.
- **Quality of Available Space:** Compared to the CGM, Easton has a lower percentage of both contaminated or brownfield sites and vacant or severely underutilized shopping centers.
- **Sites Available:** Easton has an active strategy, unlike the CGM, for reclaiming or land banking tax delinquent and tax title properties.
- **Fast Track Permits:** Easton has an advantage over the CGM in that the town features an "overlay" district that allows expedited permitting for certain uses.
- **Citizen Participation in the Review Process:** Abutters and organized neighborhood groups slow the permitting process only *very little*, while among the CGM, they slow the process *somewhat*. Additionally, not only do elected officials *somewhat* expedite development by facilitating dialogue, compared to the CGM's *very little* facilitation, but unlike the CGM, officials have intervened to save a project endangered by abutter or neighborhood opposition within the last five years.
- **Crime:** Compared to the CGM, crime in Easton is significantly lower per person in terms of auto theft, robbery, and homicides, and the town has a slightly lower rate of residential burglaries.
- **Local Schools:** More of Easton's public high school graduates go on to attend four-year colleges after graduation than do graduates of CGM public high schools.
- **Amenities:** All of Easton's existing development sites are within one mile from fast food restaurants, day care, and retail shops, compared to most of the CGM's sites.
- **State Business Incentives:** Easton's businesses are eligible for more special state tax incentives than those in CGM's jurisdictions.
- **Local Business Incentives:** Easton is at an advantage over the CGM in that it actively tries to attract local, state, and federal facilities to its jurisdiction.
- **Tax Delinquency:** Paying special attention to tax delinquent or tax title properties that are impeding development puts Easton at an advantage over the CGM.

Strengths among Less Important Location Factors

- **Proximity to Universities and Research:** Unlike the CGM, Easton features a major four-year college, Stonehill College, within ten miles of the jurisdiction, and has double the number of public or private four-year colleges or universities than does the CGM.
- **Permitting Ombudsman:** Easton's chief executive officer, the town administrator, plays a significant role in ensuring the efficiency of the local permitting process, giving the town an advantage over the CGM.

- **Website:** Easton's website lists all local development policies and procedures, allows for the submission of some permit applications, both unlike the CGM, and the town features a few links the CGM websites do not typically contain.

Easton's Weaknesses or Potential "Deal-Breakers"

Despite sizable advantages, Easton has a number of apparent weaknesses which can pose a challenge to successful development. The factors in the *Very Important* group are the ones that the town should consider addressing first because they are the most critical potential "deal-breakers." Again, the town should next consider those in the *Important* group, and finally the *Less Important* group.

Unlike the strengths or deal-makers, the list of weaknesses is **arranged in order of priority**. It is suggested that Easton review the prioritized lists and the detailed narrative about all location factors, while keeping in mind its economic development objectives and the resources available for addressing "deal-breakers" and other weaknesses. This report is an opportunity for an informed dialogue among colleagues and for establishing a roadmap to turn "deal-breakers" into "deal-makers."

Weaknesses among Very Important Location Factors

1. **Timeliness of Approvals:** Although Easton's permitting process is generally on par with the CGM, the town takes longer to complete the Appeals Process.
2. **Infrastructure:** Public sewer and wastewater treatment capacities are inadequate for current needs, representing a possible "deal-breaker" to potential businesses and developers considering Easton.
3. **Rents:** Rents in Easton for retail space and general office space in both the central business and highway business districts are significantly higher than the CGM, except for Class A in the highway business district. These rents are also potential "deal-breakers" for potential businesses and developers considering Easton.
4. **Highway Access:** A smaller percentage of available manufacturing sites are within two miles of a highway, compared to the CGM, putting Easton at a disadvantage.

Weaknesses among Important Location Factors

5. **Critical Mass Firms:** Easton currently does not have an up-to-date development strategy, overall economic development plan, or economic development plan within the current master plan. The jurisdiction also does not target specific sectors that are targeted in the county or state development strategy, nor does it have an industrial attraction policy. However, Easton is currently crafting their master plan with assistance from this report, which will alleviate these disadvantages and put the town on par with the CGM.
6. **Predictable Permits:** Unlike the CGM, Easton does not provide a checklist of permitting requirements to prospective developers, although the town is currently developing such a tool.
7. **Local Business Incentives:** Although the CGM actively pursues federal and/or state programs designed to assist in attracting and retaining businesses, utilizes Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or other programs to provide tax breaks for businesses, and assists firms in securing financing with commercial lenders or state industrial finance mechanisms, Easton does not, leaving the town at a disadvantage.
8. **Cross Marketing:** Unlike the CGM, Easton does not engage local and regional business organizations to participate in marketing the town.

9. **Tax Delinquency:** Easton has significantly more properties that are tax defaulted or subject to the power of sale than the CGM, and the town chooses to auction properties off after 5-10 years, longer than the CGM's 1-5 years.
10. **Local Tax Rates:** Although Easton does offer a single tax, which is advantageous, that rate is higher than both commercial/industrial and residential rates in the CGM, putting the town at a disadvantage.
11. **Quality of Available Space:** Easton has a significantly smaller proportion of unused open land or greenfield sites than in the CGM.
12. **Housing:** Both median home sale prices and median rents for two bedroom apartments are higher in Easton than among the CGM.
13. **Public Transit:** Compared to the CGM, a significantly smaller proportion of Easton's available sites for retail trade, manufacturing, and general office space are within a quarter mile of a public bus or rapid transit stop. Additionally, unlike the CGM, public transit is unavailable on nights and weekends.
14. **Land (space):** Easton has a smaller proportion than the CGM of parcels available for industrial development or large scale commercial development on five acres or more.

Weaknesses among Less Important Location Factors

15. **Workforce Training:** Unlike the CGM, Easton does not support public-private partnerships to provide specific workforce training.
16. **Airports:** Easton is further from its closest regional airport than is the CGM, and Logan Airport, the nearest major airport, is inaccessible via public transportation.

These weaknesses that surfaced in the EDSAT analysis provide guidelines to where Easton could exert more effort to improve its ability to attract business and build its tax base.

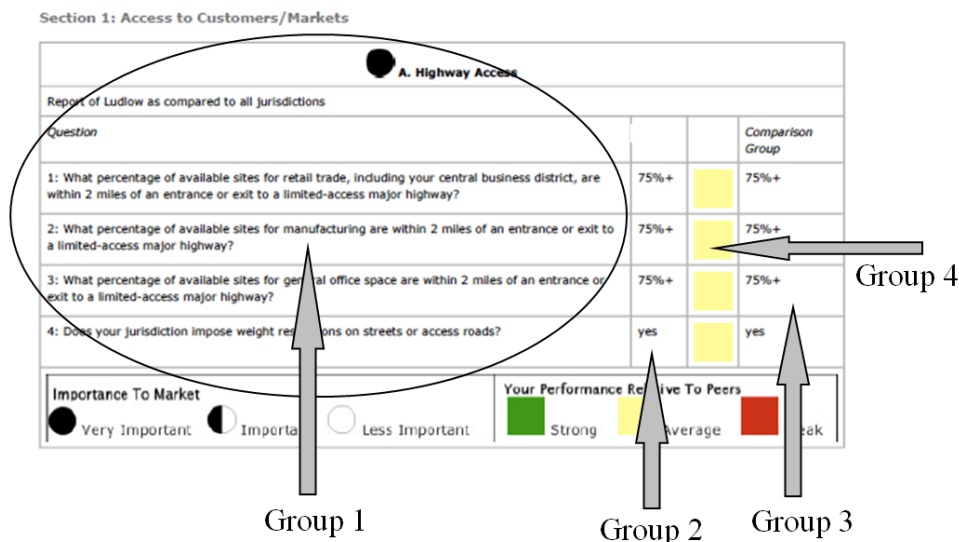
DETAILED ANALYSIS AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The following is a section-by-section analysis of the EDSAT results comparing Easton's self-reported responses to both the overall importance of each location factor and the median response among the CGM. Within each section are several related themes, where the symbols ●, ◐, and ○ indicate the relative importance of the theme to developers and businesses, as ranked by NAIOP and CoreNet Global location experts. The shaded circle (●) denotes a *Very Important* factor, the half-shaded circle (◐) denotes an *Important* factor, and the unshaded circle (○) denotes a *Less Important* factor.

Importance To Market ● Very Important ◐ Important ○ Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers Strong Average Weak No Comparison
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This section of the report presents a tabular printout from the EDSAT. The results are displayed in four primary groupings of information:

- **Group 1** identifies location themes, such as Highway Access, and questions about specific location factors related to that theme. At the top of each table is a circle that represents the relative importance of a theme to location experts and businesses. A filled circle (●) indicates "Very Important," a half-filled circle (◐) indicates "Important," and an unfilled circle (○) indicates "Less Important."
- **Group 2** shows Easton's responses to the EDSAT questions.
- **Group 3** is the median or majority (for yes/no questions) response among the municipalities that have completed the EDSAT questionnaire (the comparison group or CGM).
- **Group 4** is a series of green, yellow, or red blocks indicating how Easton compares to the CGM. There is a built-in function in EDSAT that allows a municipality to compare itself against a subset of the CGM by other criteria such as population, median income, or size of operating budget. For purposes of this analysis, however, Easton is compared with all the CGM.







Section 1. Access to Customers/Markets

In order to minimize transportation costs and time-to-market, businesses want adequate access to uncongested transportation corridors for their shipping needs, customers, and employees. Highway access, congestion, and parking are *Very Important* factors in location decisions. Public transportation is *Important*, while proximity to airports, rail, and water transport are *Less Important*. The overall physical attractiveness of public spaces, enforcement of codes, and condition of housing and commercial real estate are *Important*, as they are indications of general economic health and quality of life in a community.




A. Highway Access ●





Routes 123, 138 and 106 all run through Easton, Routes 24, 27, and 495 are all within about one mile of town borders, and Route 95 is less than ten miles away, making the town extremely accessible. The jurisdiction is on par with the CGM for highway access to retail trade and office space, making it easy to access these facilities. However, a smaller percentage of your jurisdiction's manufacturing sites are within two miles from a major highway than the CGM, making it more costly for manufacturing firms to run truck routes from highways to sites. Your town does not impose weight restrictions on roads, though, helping particular types of firms save time and transport costs by not requiring them to use only specific and possibly longer routes.

Report of Easton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: What percentage of available sites for retail trade, including your central business district, are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75% or greater		75% or greater
2: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	50-74%		75% or greater
3: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75% or greater		75% or greater
4: Does your jurisdiction impose weight restrictions on streets or access roads?	no		no

B. Public Transit ◀

Compared to the CGM, Easton is at a heavy disadvantage in terms of public transit. Your town offers significantly fewer public transportation options than the CGM. Although the 1-25% option is selected for proximity to public transit from available retail, manufacturing, and general office space, EDSAT meeting attendees agreed that around only 1% of all sites are near public transit. Additionally, your jurisdiction does have public transit service on nights and weekends. Similar to the CGM, Easton does not follow a Transit Oriented Development strategy.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
5: What percentage of available sites for retail trade are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	1-25%		between 50-74% and 75% or greater
6: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	1-25%		50-74%
7: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	1-25%		50-74%

8: Is there a transit-oriented development strategy in your plans for attracting new firms?	no		no
9: Is there a commuter rail or bus stop within 5 miles of your jurisdiction's boundaries?	yes		yes
10: Do you offer any shuttle services to other public commuting stations?	no		no
11: Is public transit service available on nights and weekends?	no		yes










C. Parking ●

Easton is on par with the CGM on all parking considerations, and better on some. Just like the CGM, on-site parking is available at three quarters or more of all available retail, manufacturing, and office space sites, allowing customers, business owners, employees the peace of mind that parking will be available. Giving Easton an advantage over the CGM, your town offers parking facilities near development sites as well as leverages state or federal infrastructure grants to improve parking in your jurisdiction.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
12: What percentage of available sites for retail trade have on-site parking?	75% or greater		75% or greater
13: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing have on-site parking?	75% or greater		75% or greater
14: What percentage of available sites for general office space have on-site parking?	75% or greater		75% or greater
15: Does your jurisdiction offer parking facilities near development sites?	yes		no
16: Have you used state or federal infrastructure grants to improve parking in your jurisdiction?	yes		no
17: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$ Hourly	0		0
18: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$ Daily	0		0
19: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$ Monthly	0		0






D. Traffic ●

Having regular access to a traffic expert puts your town at an advantage over the CGM. This expert helps to ensure that traffic is managed while the town grows. Easton mirrors the CGM for all other traffic considerations, including a moderate level road congestion levels during rush hours, average rush hour speed, and the requirement of developers to provide traffic mitigation and traffic impact analyses.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
20: Do you have regular access to a traffic engineer or transportation planner, such as one who is on staff or with a regional organization to which your jurisdiction is a member?	yes		no
21: Do you routinely use the services of a transportation consultant?	yes		yes
22: Do you have access to traffic count data for the major roadways in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
23: Do you require firms or developers to provide traffic mitigation beyond the streets adjacent to the site? (e.g. installing traffic signals, metering flow)	yes		yes
24: How would you rate traffic into and out of your jurisdiction during a typical weekday rush hour?	Moderately congested		Moderately congested
25: What is the average speed of automobile commuter traffic during a typical weekday rush hour?	36  44 mph		36  44 mph
26: Do you require a traffic impact analysis for large-scale development or redevelopment projects?	yes		yes

E. Airport

As air transportation is a *Less Important* location factor, not having a local airport and being slightly further than the CGM from the nearest regional airport, New Bedford Regional Airport, and nearest major airport, Logan Airport, is not such a large issue in whether a developer or business decides to locate in town. Only a few types of businesses that produce extremely time-sensitive goods or perishables require proximity to airports. Although Easton is further from Logan than is the CGM to their respective major airports, it takes the same time to drive the distance. Last, major airports are accessible via public transit from the CGM, and Logan Airport is not, putting Easton at a slight disadvantage.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
27: Do you have a local (municipal/ general aviation) airport?	no		no
28: The closest regional airport is how many miles away?	20-30 miles		11-20 miles
29: The closest major/international airport is how many miles away?	20-30 miles		20-30 miles
30: Is the major/international airport accessible by public transportation?	no		yes
31: How long does it take to drive to the major/international airport from your downtown?	21 minutes to 60 minutes		21 minutes to 60 minutes

F. Rail

Unlike the CGM, Easton does not offer rail freight service. However, unless a manufacturer requires transport of heavy or bulky materials or assembled goods, this lack of service does not necessarily put Easton at a disadvantage.

Although the CGM does offer rail freight access, not offering does not necessarily put Easton at a disadvantage. Unless a manufacturer needs to transport heavy or bulky materials or assembled goods, rail freight may not be necessary.

Similar to the CGM, Easton does not offer Amtrak nor MBTA commuter rail services, although commuter rail service to Boston is available less than ten minutes away in neighboring Mansfield, as well as in the adjacent towns of Brockton and Stoughton. With this service so close by, your jurisdiction may want to consider establishing shuttle service during peak hours in the morning and afternoon.

There are talks, however, of building commuter rail stations by the Roche Brothers Plaza and North Easton Village as part of the South Coast Rail project. Doing so would enhance Easton’s appeal, making it much more accessible. As financial constraints are currently slowing the process, looking for funding through federal and state grants may be a first step.












Question	Easton		Comparison Group
32: Do you have rail freight service available?	no	 	yes
33: Do you have intercity passenger rail service? Check all that apply.			
- Commuter	no	 	no
- Intercity/Interstate(Amtrak)	no	 	no
- no	yes	 	yes

G. Physical Attractiveness 🔊

Easton is a clean, desirable community with more land reserved for parks than the CGM. Matching the CGM, it both moderately enforces codes and regulations on abandoned properties and vehicles and disposes of trash. Your jurisdiction maintains streets, sidewalks, parks, etc. near available development sites at a slightly lower level than the CGM, putting the town at a disadvantage. As physical attractiveness is an *Important* location factor, Easton may want to consider increasing enforcement efforts and maintenance levels, making your town even more desirable and attractive to businesses and developers. Similar to the CGM, Easton has a very low proportion of dilapidated, boarded-up, closed-down, and vacant properties within its borders.


Your jurisdiction may want to engage the local arts community to help boost the town’s aesthetic appeal and help build community cohesiveness. At little or no cost, they can help design both open spaces and high traffic areas through public art, creative landscaping, street furniture, and other enhancements.

Unlike the CGM, not only does your town offer an online submission form for residents to report code violations and maintenance needs, but your town collaborated with the City of Boston to do so. This partnership shows the willingness of your town to learn from the success of others, and represents a strength that helps put your town at an advantage over the CGM. Your town may want to consider developing a system for monitoring the timeliness and effectiveness of your responses to these reports, as well as collecting feedback, to better serve your residents and motivate them to continue utilizing this valuable service.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
34: To what extent do you enforce codes and regulations on abandoned properties / abandoned vehicles / trash and rubbish disposal within your jurisdiction?	Moderately		Moderately
35: To what extent does your jurisdiction maintain streets, sidewalks, parks, etc., near available development sites?	Moderately		between Vigorously and Moderately
36: Is there a hotline available for reporting code violations and maintenance needs within your jurisdiction?	yes		no
37: Is there a system for monitoring the timeliness and quality of responses to reported violations within your jurisdiction?	no		no
38: Do you involve the arts community in the design of open space (street furniture, murals, etc.)?	no		no
39: What percentage of the acreage within your jurisdiction is reserved for parks?	16-20%		6-10%
40: What percentage of your housing stock is considered dilapidated?	0-5%		0-5%
41: What percentage of your commercial buildings are boarded up or closed down and would need renovations to reopen?	0-5%		0-5%
42: What percentage of commercial space is presently vacant (not currently occupied)?	6-10%		6-10%
43: What percentage of your industrial buildings are boarded up or closed down and would need renovations to reopen?	0-5%		0-5%
44: What percentage of industrial space is presently vacant (not currently occupied)?	6-10%		6-10%

H. Water Transportation

Easton is on par with the CGM in that it does not have water-based transportation.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
45: Do you have water based transportation facilities within your jurisdiction? Check all that apply.			

Section 2. Concentration of Businesses (Agglomeration)

Agglomeration refers to the number of complementary and supplemental services and related firms—including academic institutions—that are available within a jurisdiction to support new or existing companies. A concentration of similar or supporting companies creates a critical mass of businesses within an industry, making it easier for that industry to thrive in the local community, regionally, or on the state level. The scale of agglomeration within a jurisdiction can be enhanced by the intensity of its efforts to attract companies, its coordination of marketing plans with regional or state efforts, cross marketing among stakeholder organizations, and follow-up with existing and potential businesses.

A. Complementary/Supplemental Business Services ◀

Easton has two Chambers of Commerce, the Easton and Metro-South Chambers, which are moderately involved, just like the CGM. At the EDSAT meeting, an economic development team member of one of the Chambers mentioned that she would like to be more involved in town affairs. An engaged Chamber of Commerce can be quite advantageous for any town, and your jurisdiction may want to take advantage of their proactive willingness to collaborate. Easton does not have an active volunteer economic development committee or nonprofit center for economic development, which the CGM does have, so to compensate, Easton may want to combine resources and collaborate more with the Chambers of Commerce.

Similar to the CGM, there are CPA, business advisory, and financial services firms in Easton, as well as law firms specializing in commercial law, intellectual property rights, and patents. Having these services in-town allows residents and business owners to do more business in Easton, keeping more economic activity within the town's borders.

Unlike the CGM, Easton does not have business services in the form of venture capital, business planning, specialized recruiting, etc. for emerging technical and scientific firms. To encourage business attraction, your town may want to promote that these resources are all abundantly available regionally in the Greater Boston area.

After your jurisdiction chooses which industries to target (See Section 2B), establishing a collaborative space (if targeted industries are scientific, biological, or technological) or business incubator (if targeted industries are local artists, entrepreneurs, or specialized law firms) may be advantageous to bolster certain industries and help build critical mass. These types of spaces will help make Easton even more desirable to businesses and developers conducting site research.

Last, there is a branch of a major commercial bank in Easton.















Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: Is your local chamber of commerce or business association actively involved in the economic development activities of your jurisdiction?	Moderately		Moderately
2: Does your jurisdiction have an active volunteer economic development committee or nonprofit center for economic development?	no		yes
3: Is there an incubator or other form of cooperative and supportive space for start-up businesses in your jurisdiction?	no		no
4: Are there CPA, business advisory and financial services firms in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
5: Are there law firms in your jurisdiction specializing in commercial law, intellectual property rights, and patents?	yes		yes
6: Are there branches of major commercial banks in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
7: To what extent are the business services (e.g. venture capital, business planning, specialized recruiting, etc.) in your jurisdiction capable of working with emerging technical and scientific firms?	No such business services exist		Moderately capable

B. Critical Mass Firms ◀

Easton is part of a county or regional Overall Economic Development Plan (OEDP) or Comprehensive Economic Development Plan (CEDP), similar to the CGM. Although the town does not have an up-to-date economic

development strategy, OEDP, or economic development plan within the town's master plan, it is making this EDSAT tool its first step in crafting a master plan. Creating a detailed guiding economic development strategy, which the CGM do tend to have, will help Easton shape a commercial and industrial attraction policy and collaborate more comprehensively with stakeholders, including businesses, developers, and local and regional chambers of commerce, that can collaborate or bolster development efforts. Also, with a plan, Easton will better be able to both select relevant state and federal grants and leverage regional and state business recruiting endeavors.

Municipalities in the CGM that target particular industries are at an advantage because they are consequently better able to focus their economic development activities. Easton may want to strongly consider learning which industries would be best to target for development. To begin the search for industries and how to bolster them, your jurisdiction may want to look for clusters already in Easton, take advantage of county, state, and regional development specialists, and collaborate with resident businesses. While conducting this research, it would be advantageous to consider regional and state targets (Manufacturing, Alternative Energy, Information Technology, Life Sciences/Biotechnology, and Travel and Tourism) and the town's many strengths highlighted throughout this report. An effective commercial and industrial policy that attracts and bolsters industry will help diversify the economy and tax base, putting Easton in a stronger position to weather economic downturns.




Question	Easton		Comparison Group
8: Does your jurisdiction have an up-to-date development strategy, overall economic development plan (OEDP), or an economic development plan within your community master plan?	no		yes
9: Is your jurisdiction part of a county or regional OEDP or Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDP)?	yes		yes
10: Does your state have a development strategy or economic development plan?	yes		yes
11: If yes, are there firms within specific industry types or sectors that are targeted in your jurisdiction's, your county's or your state's development strategy?	no		yes
12: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your municipality's development strategy? (Your Municipality)			
13: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your municipality's development strategy? Other, please specify (Your Municipality)			
14: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your region/county's development strategy? (Regional/County)			
15: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your region/county's development strategy? Other, please specify (Regional/County)			
16: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your state's development strategy? (State)			

17: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your state's development strategy? (State)			
18: Which of the following jurisdictions have development specialists to assist in interpreting the needs of these clusters? (Choose all that apply)	State; Regional/County		State::::Regional/County
19: How aggressive is your industrial attraction policy?	Don't have one		Moderate

C. Cross Marketing ◀

Similar to the CGM, Easton engages state agencies and organizations as well as regional planning and development organizations to participate in marketing the town. However, unlike the CGM, your jurisdiction does not engage local and regional business organizations to do so. Involving these organizations, as well as local firms, would be advantageous, widening both Easton's pool of resources and reach of potential investors.

If your jurisdiction begins to actively enlist the services of firms *already* resident in your jurisdiction to attract *new* firms, it would give Easton an advantage over the CGM, which does not do so. Resident businesses are a generally untapped resource that can truly help a town flourish from within. They are invested and experienced in the community, and thus can share methods to best capitalize on market needs and the local business climate, effectively utilize local and regional resources, and overcome and streamline regulatory and technical issues with the town. They also can convey ideas to help attract new and grow existing firms, recommend approaches for new firms to fit in with the community, and help craft and promote a new town brand or image.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
20: Do you actively enlist the services of firms already resident in your jurisdiction to assist in attracting new firms?	no		no
21: Do you engage local and regional business organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	no		yes
22: Do you engage regional planning and development organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
23: Do you engage state agencies and organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	yes		yes

D. Marketing Follow-up ◀

Easton mirrors the CGM for all marketing follow-up considerations. Creating a formal de-briefing process for all firms, where the town learns reasons why a firm decided to locate in Easton or elsewhere, will provide valuable, first-hand information to Easton that can be used to improve development, recruiting, marketing, and other related efforts. Additionally, developing a formal outreach method to both contact resident firms about their satisfaction with the town and intervene when early news surfaces about dissatisfaction is recommended. These firms are invested in the town, and as they are a valuable informational resource, cultivating relationships with them would be beneficial to Easton. Through formally and consistently engaging them and hearing about their satisfaction level and difficulties they encounter with municipal operations, then addressing issues quickly and efficiently, Easton will convey its open, business-friendly perspective to prospective businesses, entrepreneurs, and developers. Developing

these processes and procedures are highly recommended, and doing so would put Easton at more of a competitive advantage over the CGM.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
24: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
25: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose <u>not</u> to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
26: Do you have a formal procedure for contacting existing local firms about their satisfaction with your jurisdiction?	no		no
27: Do you have a formal procedure for intervening when early news surfaces about firm dissatisfaction with your jurisdiction?	no		no

E. Proximity to Universities and Research ○

Easton has an advantage over the CGM in that it is home to major four-year college, Stonehill College, which is recognized by U.S. News & World Report as the 115th best liberal arts school in the nation. A college or university is considered an economic anchor for a town, helping insulate it through economic downturns. Further, Easton features three other four-year major colleges or universities, Curry College, Wheaton College, and Bridgewater State University, within ten miles, which including Stonehill is twice as many as the CGM. Easton is also home to Southeastern Regional Vocational-Technical High School, and residents of Easton may also attend Bristol County Agricultural High School in Dighton. With these advantages, as well Massasoit Community College about six miles away, businesses may be more likely to locate in Easton to capitalize on a young, highly educated and skilled workforce, and therefore, it would be advantageous to consider these strengths when crafting an economic development strategy.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
28: How many major public or private four-year college or universities are located within your jurisdiction?	1		0
29: How many major public or private four-year college or universities are located within 10 miles of your jurisdiction?	4		2
30: How many community colleges are located within your jurisdiction?	0		0
31: How many vocational/technical schools are located within your jurisdiction?	1		1






Section 3. Cost of Land (Implicit/Explicit)







The cost of land to a firm includes two *Very Important* factors: Infrastructure and Rent. Updating civil, utility, and telecommunications infrastructure represents significant expenses for a firm to incur. Therefore, if a municipality does not already have adequate capacity in place, a potential firm could decide to locate in another municipality with adequate capacity. Rents are *Very Important* as they contribute heavily to operating expenses. Location experts consider the quality of available space and amount of available land for development *Important* factors.

A. Infrastructure ●

Much of Easton's infrastructure is conducive to growth and development. Comparable to the CGM, the town has sufficient capacity for growth and reliable service in its water supply, natural gas, electric power, phone lines, cellular, and fiber optic/cable/DSL capacities. However, unlike the CGM, Easton has two major infrastructure constraints, public sewers and wastewater treatment, which both have capacity that is inadequate for current needs and represent potential "deal-breakers" for firms looking to locate in Easton, since all firms need these services. All properties in Easton on are Title 5, requiring all new developments to build their own septic systems, which can be cost-prohibitive investments for businesses and developments. Additionally, manufacturing firms producing certain types of waste cannot drain that waste into septic systems. Since firms and developments will simply locate in a town with infrastructure that has sufficient capacity for growth, it is strongly recommended that, as soon as possible, your administrators meet with town engineers to learn necessary upgrades as well as begin brainstorming ways to fund the upgrading of these infrastructure systems, such as leveraging state and federal grants. Your town may want to consider first bringing public sewers to the town's industrial park, which will help encourage new business and development there.








Electricity rates in New England are typically higher than in the rest of the country due to electricity chokepoints and the necessity to import fuel from other regions. Average rates (cents per kilowatt-hour) in Massachusetts in September 2013 were 15.44 for residential users, 14.45 for commercial users, and 13.22 for industrial users, while New England rates were 16.03, 14.03, and 12.27, and nationally rates were 12.15, 10.34 for commercial, and 6.86, respectively. To help compensate for these relatively higher rates, Easton may want to foster an even more business-friendly environment, cultivate relationships with firms considering Easton, and capitalizing on the town's many advantages outlined throughout this report.






Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: Are there significant limitations to any of your existing infrastructure systems? - Water Supply	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
2: Public Sewer	Inadequate capacity for current needs		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
3: Wastewater Treatment	Inadequate capacity for current needs		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
4: Natural Gas	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
5: Electric Power	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service

6: Data/Telecommunications - Land Lines	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
7: Data/Telecommunications - Cellular	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
8: Data/Telecommunications - Fiber optic / Cable / DSL	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
9: What is the average cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Residential			16.23
10: What is the average cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Commercial			15.20
11: What is the average cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Industrial			13.03

B. Rents ●

Easton has a strong advantage, representing a possible “deal-maker,” in that existing manufacturing space costs \$1/square foot less than in the CGM. Easton is more costly in regards to other rents, however, with much space representing possible “deal-breakers.” Existing retail space in the central and highway business districts are \$5 and \$11 more per square foot, respectively, and Classes A, B, and C general office space in the central business district are \$9, \$3, and \$3.50 higher per square foot, respectively. Class A general office space in the highway business district matches the CGM, while Class B is \$3.50 and Class C is \$5 more per square foot than the CGM. The proportions of the three qualities of available office space are on par with the CGM.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Easton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
12: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	17		12
13: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	22		11
14: What is the current average square foot cost for existing manufacturing space (Triple Net/Lease)?	5		6
15: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)??: CLASS A	22		13
16: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)??: CLASS B	15		12.00
17: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)??: CLASS C	12		8.50
18: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)??: CLASS A	22		22

19: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS B	15		8.50
20: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS C	12		7
21: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS A	15		15
22: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS B	40		40
23: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS C	35-40		40

C. Quality of Available Space

In this category, Easton has an advantage over the CGM. The town features a significantly smaller proportion of vacant or underutilized shopping centers as well as a smaller portion of contaminated or brownfield sites, which reduces uncertainty, risks, and costs for developers. Easton's limited experience in brownfield redevelopment is on par with the CGM, but should your jurisdiction need guidance in the future with redevelopment of these sites, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) are available for assistance.

Easton is at a disadvantage in that the CGM has a much higher proportion of available sites that are unused open land or greenfield sites. This weakness, however, can actually help Easton direct its economic development efforts towards redevelopment of current properties rather than building anew.





Question	Easton		Comparison Group
24: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered contaminated or brownfield sites?	1-10%		21-35%
25: What experience does your jurisdiction have with the redevelopment of contaminated or brownfield sites?	Limited		Limited
26: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered vacant or severely underutilized shopping centers?	1-10%		11-20%
27: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered unused open land or greenfield sites?	1-10%		21-35%

D. Land (space)

Easton is on par with the CGM in that it has similar amounts of developable land zoned for commercial/industrial uses, as well as usable industrial or warehouse and office space in commercial/industrial buildings. However, Easton is has a smaller proportion of five-acre or larger parcels available for industrial development or large-scale commercial development. This disadvantage, due to a heavily built-out town, conservation restrictions, and the town's appreciation for open space and nature, limits the large-scale developments possible within the town. However, your town can use this weakness to focus its economic development strategy on redevelopment, infill, smaller developments, and creative, mixed-use projects.

Further, compiling Easton's available properties into a list made available on the town website and to economic development staff will help marketing efforts and strategic planning. When prospective developers contact the

town's office with a potential project, administrators will be able to match developers' and entrepreneurs' ideas with an available, suitable property.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
28: Approximately how much vacant developable land in your jurisdiction is currently zoned for commercial/industrial uses?	1-150 acres		1-150 acres
29: Approximately how much vacant useable industrial or warehouse space exists in commercial/industrial buildings in your jurisdiction?	1-250,000 sq. feet		1-250,000 sq. feet
30: Approximately how much vacant useable office space exists in commercial/industrial buildings in your jurisdiction?	1-250,000 sq. feet		1-250,000 sq. feet
31: What proportion of the parcels available for industrial development or large scale commercial development are of 5 acres or more?	0-10%		11-20%





Section 4. Labor

The effect of labor factors on location decisions runs somewhat contrary to popular belief. An available labor force that is adequately trained (Workforce Composition) is a *Very Important* factor, while the cost of labor is *Important* and the presence of strong unions is *Less Important*. Conventional wisdom often holds that municipalities with higher labor costs and stronger unions negatively impact a firm's location decision. However, if the workforce is adequately skilled, these factors are not as strong "deal-breakers" as the general belief holds.

Employers are willing to pay for the necessary skills. Workforce training resources is *Less Important* relative to other location factors. However, having a technically trained workforce whose skills align with industries a municipality wants to attract is a valuable selling point.

A. Labor Costs

Easton is on par with the CGM for all labor costs, including hourly wages for semi-skilled workers and mid-level clerical workers, salaries for public high school teachers, and lack of a living wage

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for semi-skilled, blue-collar manufacturing workers?	\$17.26 - \$22.25		\$17.26 - \$22.25
2: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for mid-level clerical workers?	\$17.26 - \$22.25		\$17.26 - \$22.25
3: What is the prevailing average annual salary for public high school teachers?	\$60,001-\$70,000		\$60,001-\$70,000
4: Is there a local minimum or living wage statute?	no		no

B. Workforce Composition

The workforce composition of Easton's residents mirrors the CGM, although Easton has a larger proportion of professionals such as teachers, lawyers, and doctors (50% or greater, compared to the CGM's 1-25%). This higher

percentage can help guide Easton in its selection of industries to target, while the composition of the town and surrounding communities should help shape the economic development strategy in general.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
5: What percentage of your workforce is Unskilled?	1-25%		1-25%
6: What percentage of your workforce is Semi-skilled	26-49%		26-49%
7: What percentage of your workforce is Technically skilled	26-49%		26-49%
8: What percentage of your workforce is Managerial	1-25%		1-25%
9: What percentage of your workforce is Professional	50% or greater		1-25%
10: What percentage of your workforce are current English language learners?	0-10%		0-10%

C. Unions ○

There has not been a major strike or union organizing drive in Easton within the last three years. The labor unions have a presence in the town that aligns with the CGM. Overall, union activity is one of the least important location factors for businesses. In the last three years, there have not been any major union strikes or organized drives among any workers, and unions are only “somewhat” active in the Easton labor market, all on par with the CGM.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
11: Have any employers in your jurisdiction had a major strike or work stoppage within the last three years?	no		no
12: Has there been a major union organizing drive among public or private workers in the last 3 years?	no		no
13: Do labor unions have a significant presence in the labor market of your jurisdiction?	Somewhat		Somewhat

D. Labor (Available) ●

Easton has a comparative advantage over the CGM of having a higher proportion of residents age 25 or older with at least a bachelor’s degree. It may be beneficial to publicize this advantage since an educated workforce is attractive to several industries and types of businesses. Your jurisdiction may also want to consider targeting the scientific, technical, professional, or other sectors that hire educated employees. Additionally, over 85 percent of Easton’s residents age 25 or older have at least a high school diploma, matching the CGM.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
14: What percentage of residents age 25 or older have earned at least a high school diploma?	85% or greater		85% or greater
15: What percentage of residents age 25 or older have earned at least a bachelor’s degree?	36-50%		21-35%

E. Workforce Training ○

Similar to the CGM, Easton features a readily available adult education program for town residents and does not offer any other workforce training services. Unlike the CGM, however, Easton does not support-private public partnerships to provide specific workforce training.

Once Easton crafts an industrial/commercial attraction strategy, coordinating with local resources, such as employment boards and services, high schools, vocational/technical schools, community colleges, and training centers, to develop training curriculums and programs to meet targeted firm needs would be beneficial. With this type of collaboration, residents will gain knowledge in new technologies and procedures, credentials, and skills. Then, not only will the skillset of Easton’s workforce allow for industry growth, but the workforce will be much stronger and more competitive.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
16: Which of the following workforce training resources do you interact with to respond to skill development needs of firms?			
- Regional employment board or state employment services department	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Area High schools	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Voc-tech schools or community colleges	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Human service or nonprofit career training centers	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17: Do you support public-private partnerships to provide specific workforce training?	no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes
18: Is there an adult education program readily available to residents of your jurisdiction?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes

Section 5. Municipal Process

The municipal process section covers several themes of marketing and permitting. When it comes to marketing themselves, jurisdictions that are aggressive and collaborate with local firms may be at an advantage in attracting new investment. Those firms can speak to interested companies and investors about first-hand experiences and market conditions, and advise municipal leaders about industries with which they are intimately familiar. Additionally, a municipality needs to establish a transparent and efficient permitting process to minimize business startup time and costs. Among the factors examined in this theme, timeliness of approvals is *Very Important* to location experts, and the remaining themes are *Important* with the exception of the Permitting Ombudsman, which is *Less Important*.

A. Industrial Sensitivity ●

Easton mirrors the CGM in all industrial sensitivity areas. However, as the CGM does not follow any processes in this category, doing so would put Easton at an advantage. Your jurisdiction may want to create a marketing plan based on a commercial/industrial attraction strategy that incorporates firm and market needs, industry clusters, and core strengths, such as a professionally-skilled workforce, quality of land, and proximity to higher educational

institutions. Additionally, it would be beneficial to also consider recruiting local business spokespeople to speak on town behalf, developing a strategy to engage town’s racial or ethnic populations, and forming a quick response team.

The marketing plan can also help rebrand the town as well as revise the “mental/cognitive maps” (i.e. preconceived image or reputation) of Easton held by business owners, residents, location experts, and developers. These “maps” may portray Easton inaccurately or in an outdated way. The marketing plan can address this “map” on a more macro level, while a quick response team can address it on a more micro level, proactively responding when negative stories or incidents occur.




<i>Question</i>	<i>Easton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
1: Does your jurisdiction have a marketing program based on the needs identified by industrial or office location specialists?	no		no
2: Does your jurisdiction have a marketing program based on existing core strengths, identified opportunities, or industry concentrations?	no		no
3: Do you have a quick response team available when negative data, stories, or incidents about your jurisdiction make the news?	no		no
4: Do you actively engage local business spokespersons to speak on behalf of your jurisdiction?	no		no
5: Do you have a strategy for engaging your jurisdiction’s racial or ethnic populations in unique businesses, festivals, etc., as a way to attract regional niche shopping?	no		no

B. Sites Available

Maintaining a readily accessible, updated, and complete list of available development sites would put Easton at an advantage over the CGM. Not only would officials be able to quickly reference it to match prospective businesses with appropriate properties, but if posted online, location experts and prospective businesses will easily be able to browse them, increasing the chances that they will not simply begin researching another municipality with more readily available information. Additionally, making this information available conveys the message that Easton welcomes new business.

Easton has an advantage over the CGM in that it has an active strategy for reclaiming or land banking tax delinquent and tax title properties. This proactive strategy helps put properties back on the market, giving businesses and developers more options when considering a site in Easton. Also, industrial-zoned land is protected from encroachment by incompatible uses through the town’s land use regulations, which lends certain stability to developments through ensuring that their projects will not be bordered by incongruous or damaging developments.




Lastly, Easton does not have an active strategy for reclaiming vacant or underutilized shopping centers, but with so few of them, this lack of strategy may not prove to be much of a disadvantage.



Question	Easton		Comparison Group
6: Does your jurisdiction own sites that it is currently marketing for development?	no		yes
7: Is there a readily accessible, up-to-date, complete list of sites that are available for development in your jurisdiction?	no		no
8: Do you maintain an active relationship with commercial real estate brokers, developers, or agents with sites in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
9: Do your land use regulations protect land currently zoned industrial from encroachment by residential or other incompatible uses?	yes		yes
10: Do you have an active strategy for reclaiming or land banking tax delinquent and tax title properties?	yes		no
11: Do you have an active strategy for reclaiming vacant or underutilized shopping plazas?	no		no

C. Timeliness of Approvals ●

For all permitting processes, except the Appeals Process, which can take up to 4 weeks longer, Easton is on par with the CGM. Although this efficiency is not technically an advantage, it is still a “deal-maker” for businesses and developers, who would rather hear a quick “no” response to their permit application than wait a long time for a “yes”. Thus, they tend to apply for business permits in towns that have fast permitting processes. As word spreads among entrepreneurs and developers about the ease of starting a business in various towns, Easton’s quick permitting processes effectively sends the message that the town desires new business and is efficient in facilitating a new business opening its doors. Even with the town’s additional Conservation Approval requirement, which runs concomitantly with the other processes, overall process duration is not extended. However, providing technical advice for this permit would be helpful to businesses and developers, who generally do not have experience in this area.

As permitting is a *Very Important* location factor, your town may want to strongly consider streamlining the Appeals Process, which, for the CGM communities includes every type of appeal heard by Zoning Boards of Appeals. As that process is slower than in the CGM, Easton is at a disadvantage, although the process may occasionally be hindered by certain large projects and applicants prolonging the process. To help address those issues, Easton may want to utilize its development cabinet or team to review major development before application, as outlined in Section 5G, to help applicants with the process and ensure all paperwork is in order before application submission. In general, to make the review process more efficient, your town may want to begin identifying congestion areas. Doing the same for all permits would help give Easton a heavy advantage in this category, putting the town in an even stronger competitive position in this *Very Important* location factor.





Question	Easton		Comparison Group
12: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Site plan review	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
13: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Zoning variance	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
14: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Special permit	9-12 weeks		9-12 weeks

15: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Building permit	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
16: What is the average time from application to completion of the review process for the following?: Appeals process	9-12 weeks		5-8 weeks

D. Predictable Permits





Easton is at a disadvantage in that the town does not provide a checklist of permitting requirements for prospective developers, which would greatly ease the permitting procedure for them. However, your town is in the process of developing such a checklist, which will alleviate this weakness. Although it is not a relative weakness, designing both a flowchart of the permitting process and a development handbook, then posting it online, will help meet the needs of prospective developers and businesses. As permitting is typically a daunting task for developers and businesses, especially small ones, technical and informational tools such as these would greatly ease the process by making it more transparent and manageable. The permitting liaison/ambassador, as outlined in Section 5G, can help develop these tools, which convey the message the Easton's government is business-friendly.

Matching the CGM, Easton does not offer a single presentation format where permit applicants present their applications to all relevant boards simultaneously. However, this format saves businesses and developers time, money, and resources, and makes the process of starting a business much simpler and more efficient, and thus, Easton may want to consider developing such a format. The first step to a single presentation format may be to review town bylaws regarding meetings, then to bring all boards, or at least similar boards such as planning and conservation, together to review applications. Integrating a full single presentation format into the town's permitting framework would make Easton even more business-friendly. Your town may also want to consider facilitating pre-meetings between businesses and boards to ensure all necessary paperwork and information is in order before actual submission of applications and subsequent hearings.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
22: Do you provide a checklist of permitting requirements to prospective developers?	no		yes
23: Do you provide a flowchart of the permitting process to prospective developers?	no		no
24: Do you provide a development handbook to prospective developers?	no		no
25: Do you allow for a single presentation of a development proposal to all review boards and commissions with relevant permit authority?	no		no

E. Fast Track Permits








Having an 'overlay' district such as 40R and other similar areas that allow expedited permitting of certain uses puts Easton at an advantage over the CGM. It shows that the town is serious about smartgrowth, building the town, and securing new business. Your jurisdiction may want to consider further utilizing its expedited permitting process capabilities, 43D, for targeted industries, which are outlined in Section 2B. Additionally, doing the same for simpler permits, such as commercial tenant improvements, and promoting this fast track option in marketing materials would be advantageous and give Easton an even greater advantage over the CGM.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
26: Do you pre-permit development in certain districts?	no		no
27: Are there any publicly or cooperatively owned industrial parks in your jurisdiction that have their own expedited permitting authority?	no		no
28: Do you have an "overlay" district that allows expedited permitting of certain uses?	yes		no
29: Do you market "fast track" permitting to potential developers or firms?	no		no

F. Citizen Participation in the Review Process ◀

Easton has an advantage over the CGM in that abutters and organized neighborhood groups slow the permitting process only *very little* compared to the CGM's *somewhat* level. This strength gives potential businesses and developers confidence that their venture will not be postponed, and thus more expensive, by the community. Additionally, unlike the CGM and giving Easton an even bigger advantage, town elected officials expedite development by facilitating dialogue with community groups and have even intervened to rescue an endangered proposal, which in addition to saving businesses time and money, effectively sends the message that town leaders will fight for new business.

Like the CGM, Easton establishes a specific timeframe for opposing response to developments, and gives multiple opportunities to interested parties for review and comment, but a development proposal has been stopped by opposition within the past five years. Although your town is at an advantage in terms of citizen participation, if Easton begins collaborating with community stakeholders, including residents, neighborhood groups, business owners, and developers in crafting the town's economic development plan, it will help shape an even more cohesive town. This collaboration can help create a shared town vision, encourage less community opposition and more community buy-in, and help build backing for new developments. These outcomes convey the message to prospective businesses and investors that Easton is a business-friendly town, which these parties do take into account when choosing a location.






Question	Easton		Comparison Group
30: To what extent do abutters slow the permitting process in your jurisdiction?	Very little		Somewhat
31: To what extent do organized neighborhood groups slow the permitting process?	Very little		Somewhat
32: To what extent do elected officials in your jurisdiction expedite development by facilitating dialogue with community groups?	Somewhat		Very little
33: Do you establish a specific time frame and procedure for abutter or neighborhood response in the initial stage of the process?	yes		yes
34: Do interested parties get multiple opportunities for review and comment during the various development review processes?	yes		yes
35: Has a development proposal in your jurisdiction been stopped by abutter or neighborhood opposition in the past 5 years?	yes		yes
36: Have officials from your jurisdiction intervened to rescue a development proposal that was endangered by abutter or neighborhood opposition in the last 5 years?	yes		no

G. Permitting Ombudsman ○

Unlike the CGM, Easton's town administrator plays a significant role in ensuring the permitting process is efficient, giving rise to the same advantages of having a town leader involved in the review process from Section 5F. Having a town leader involved sends the message that Easton is business-friendly, desires new business, and that town leadership is invested in the success of businesses. For all other factors, Easton is on par with the CGM. Your jurisdiction empowers local officials to ensure efficiency of the permitting process, has a cabinet or team to review major developments, and assists businesses trying to obtain state and federal permits.

To improve economic development efforts even further, your town may want to consider appointing a town leader as a liaison/ambassador and sole point of contact for developers. This liaison can help in many ways, including: fostering smoother and more efficient communications; providing personal technical support; building a rapport and relationship with applicants; and letting them know they are being recruited.

Easton town officials, members of boards and committees, and development staff have significant experience and expertise in regards to economic development and permitting. However, businesses both increasingly face new challenges and operate in markets on local, regional, national, and global scales, and so to most effectively approach economic development, town representatives may be best served by gaining a business perspective. Frequently updating the handbook with respect to a shifting business climate and expanded markets as well as creating training to help town representation understand the business perspective would help Easton's businesses succeed. As mentioned in other sections, collaboration is essential, so working with businesses, developers, investors, and other stakeholders to help develop training programs would make it more effective. Engaging and collecting feedback from the very population that the town is trying to help, the ones who have direct experience with permitting and other processes, would yield valuable information about process weaknesses and shortcomings. Easton may also want to take advantage of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) training programs.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Easton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
37: Does the chief executive officer of your jurisdiction play a significant role in ensuring the efficiency of your local permitting process?	yes		no
38: Are there other local officials empowered to ensure the efficiency of your local permitting process?	yes		yes
39: Is there a "development cabinet" or "development team" that is convened to review major developments?	yes		yes
40: Do you have an established training program for development staff that regularly identifies critical adjustments in policy or regulation to accommodate changing needs of firms?	no		no
41: Do you have an established training program for boards, commissions, authorities, districts, and elected officials that regularly identifies critical adjustments in policy or regulation to accommodate changing needs of firms?	no		no

42: If yes, approximately how long (in weeks) is your local licensing process for businesses?	0-4 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	0-4 weeks
43: Is your jurisdiction involved in the process for businesses that require state or federal permitting or licensing?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
44: Do you provide technical assistance for businesses in the state or federal permit or license application process?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
45: Does your jurisdiction require any local licenses for specific businesses or industries?			
- General license for all businesses	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Auto dealership	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Barber shop	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Bar/Tavern	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Beauty salon	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Child care services	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Construction contractor	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Home health care	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Massage therapist	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Real estate agent/broker	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Restaurant	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Skilled Trades (electrician, plumber, etc)	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Other, please specify	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
46: other:	Entertainment, Taxi, Auctioneer, Junk Dealer, Club	<input type="checkbox"/>	Entertainment, Taxi, Auctioneer, Junk Dealer, Club

Section 6. Quality of Life (Community)

The quality of life within the community is an *Important* location factor because companies want to be able to offer employees a safe community with affordable housing, good schools, and a rich selection of cultural and recreational opportunities.

A. Cultural and Recreational Amenities

Easton mirrors the CGM in regards to cultural and recreational amenities. Although the town does not feature a professional sports team, major museum, repertory theater, civic center, or arts company, these amenities are plentiful in the Greater Boston region, of which Easton is part. Therefore, the town may want to publicize that these amenities are all nearby. Easton does, however, feature several of its own outdoor and natural amenities, such as the

historic Borderland State Park, the Sheep Pasture, Wheaton farm Conservation Area, a horseback riding stable, and two golf courses. Additionally, Easton is home to an award-winning children’s museum, the Trinity Church, and the Hockomock Film Festival. With so many natural and outdoor advantages, Easton may want to consider targeting the Travel and Tourism industry, which also happens to be an industry target for the state.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: Is there a professional sports team resident within your jurisdiction?	no		no
2: Is there a major art, science or historical museum?	no		no
3: Is there a professional repertory theater company?	no		no
4: Is there a civic center, arena or major concert hall?	no		no
5: Is there a golf course within your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
6: Is there a symphony orchestra, opera, or ballet company?	no		no
7: Are there public beaches or boating activities within 5 miles of your jurisdiction?	yes		yes

B. Crime

In all categories of crime, Easton performed better than the CGM last year. Rates for robbery and auto theft were 35% and nearly 40% lower, respectively, residential burglary rates were slightly lower, and there were zero homicides last year.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
8: What was the residential burglary rate per 100,000 last year in your jurisdiction?	295		313
9: What was the auto theft rate per 100,000 last year?	69		113
10: What was the robbery rate per 100,000 last year?	26		40
11: What was the homicide rate per 100,000 last year?	0		3

C. Housing








Housing costs in Easton are typically higher than among the CGM. Both median home sale price and median rent for two bedroom apartments are higher, making it more difficult for lower wage earners to live in Easton. A smaller percentage of the homes for sale in the town may be contributing to higher prices. Homeownership rates, rental vacancy rates, and the proportion of the town’s major firms’ officers that live in the town are all on par with the CGM. To compensate for the town’s high housing costs and to make the town more appealing for potential businesses and developers, Easton may want to highlight the town’s other benefits and advantages as well as build on the recommendations throughout this report.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
12: What was the median sale price of a single family home in your jurisdiction last year?	\$351,000-\$450,000		\$251,000-\$350,000
13: What was the median rent for a two bedroom apartment in your jurisdiction last year?	\$1251 or greater		\$801-\$1000
14: What is the home ownership rate?	66-75%		66-75%
15: What is the vacancy rate for rental housing?	3-5%		3-5%
16: What percent of homes are for sale?	3-5%		Less than 3%
17: Approximately what proportion of the major officers of firms located in your jurisdiction live in the community?	Some		Some

D. Local Schools

Easton is on par or better than the CGM in regards to all local education factors. Without spending more per pupil than the CGM, Easton public high school graduates attend four-year colleges at higher rates (75% or more vs. 50-74%) and SAT scores quite higher. Average scores at 1601 are 74 points than Massachusetts' average of 1527, and 103 points higher than the country's average of 1498.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
18: What is the average K-12 per pupil expenditure in your jurisdiction last year?	\$10,001-\$12,000		\$10,001-\$12,000
19: Does your state mandate an assessment or proficiency test as a prerequisite for high school graduation?	yes		yes
20: If yes, what percent of students in your jurisdiction tested at least proficient in English?	66-80%		66-80%
21: If yes, what percent of students in your jurisdiction tested at least proficient in Mathematics?	66-80%		66-80%
22: If yes, are the tests used as a measure of performance within your local school district for teacher assessments or teacher evaluations?	no		no
23: What percentage of your jurisdiction's K-12 students are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch last year?	1-25%		1-25%
24: What was the average combined (reading, math, and writing) SAT score last year?	1601		
25: What was the average composite score (English, math, reading, and science) for the ACT last year?			
26: What percentage of high school freshmen normally graduate within 5 years?	95% or more		95% or more
27: What is the high school drop out rate last year?	1-25%		1-25%
28: Are there any schools in your jurisdiction that are currently deemed underperforming.	no		no
29: What percentage of high school graduates from last year's class went on to a four-year college?	75% or greater		50-74%

30: Are there any charter schools in your jurisdiction?	no		no
31: What types of private schools are there in your jurisdiction?			
- Parochial	no		
- Non-sectarian	no		
- Boarding	no		

Section 7. Quality of Life (Site)

This section reviews the amenities and services available within one mile of existing development sites. Having a variety of amenities, restaurants, stores, and services near employment centers enhances the location, adds convenience, and allows employees more social opportunities.

A. Amenities

Easton has an advantage over the CGM in that all development sites have fast food restaurants, day care, and retail shops within one mile. This strength, especially the day care option, improves the quality of life for employees by facilitating a healthier work-life balance.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fast food restaurant	All		Most
2: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fine dining	Some		Some
3: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Day care	All		Most
4: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Retail shops	All		Most

Section 8. Business Incentives

Business incentives (e.g. tax and financial) are *Important* factors when companies are evaluating jurisdictions for location. However, contrary to conventional wisdom, these incentives are not the first factors on which an investor makes a location decision. Factors such as infrastructure, workforce composition, and timeliness of permitting have the highest levels of importance, representing “deal-breakers”. A municipality must be at least adequate in these areas before a business will advance negotiations. Therefore, investors value a broader portfolio of business incentives as possible “deal-closers”, but might not be initially attracted by them.

A. State

The businesses in Easton are eligible for more state tax incentives than those in the CGM, but they only *somewhat* take advantage of them, which matches the CGM. It would be beneficial to capitalize on, assist businesses with securing, and publicize the availability of these benefits and incentives. Small businesses and entrepreneurs generally

have few resources and employees to research and submit applications for these incentives, so support from Easton in this regard would help them succeed and send a message that the town welcomes new and small businesses. Last, when crafting an economic development strategy, Easton may want to consider incorporating this variety of incentives.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: Are businesses in your jurisdiction eligible for any of the following special state tax incentives? Check all that apply.			
- Investment tax credits	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Job training tax credits	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Research and development (R&D) tax credits	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Low (subsidized) interest loans	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Loan guarantees	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Equity financing	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Workforce training grants	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Other, please specify	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
2: Are businesses in your jurisdiction eligible for any of the following special state tax incentives? Other, please specify	Historical Tax Credits, Film Tax Credits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Historical Tax Credits, Film Tax Credits
3: To what extent does your jurisdiction actively take advantage of any special state business incentives?	Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat
4: Does your state allow for priority funding for distressed economic areas?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes

B. Local




Easton is at an advantage over the CGM in that the town actively tries to recruit local, state, and federal facilities to its jurisdiction. These facilities can become economic anchors for the town, helping insulate it against economic downturns, so their active pursuit is quite advantageous.

Like the CGM, Easton does not offer any local businesses incentives, tax increment financing (TIF), or property tax abatements to new or existing businesses. Although these incentives require significant start-up capital and are expensive in the long-run and have administrative costs, their benefits may outweigh costs, especially when utilized effectively to compliment Easton's economic development strategy.

As regional, state, and federal entities offer programs that assist municipalities with business attraction and retention, Easton may want to take advantage of such services to compete with the CGM, which does take part in them. These services are less costly than if Easton were to manage them itself, and they can be quite beneficial, increasing a towns' visibility and promoting the jurisdiction to a more targeted market.

To enhance Easton's business-friendly atmosphere and save money, time, and difficulties for firms, Easton may want to help businesses secure financing from commercial lenders and state industrial finance mechanisms. Offering this type of assistance is viewed favorably by business owners, as shown in economic development studies.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
5: Does your jurisdiction offer existing or new businesses property tax abatement? Existing businesses	no		no
6: If yes, what proportion of existing businesses are offered abatements?			
7: Does your jurisdiction offer existing or new businesses property tax abatement? New businesses	no		no
8: If yes, what proportion of existing businesses are offered abatements?	1-25%		1-25%
9: Who negotiates the tax abatement?	Legislative		Legislative
10: Does your jurisdiction offer any of the following incentives for businesses to locate in your jurisdiction? (Check all that apply)			
- Revolving loan fund	no		no
- Loan guarantees	no		no
- Revenue bonds	no		no
- Equity participation	no		no
- Business district group loans	no		no
- None	yes		no
- Investment tax credits	no		no
- Job training tax credits	no		no
- Research and development (R&D) tax credits	no		no
- Low (subsidized) interest loans	no		no
- Workforce training grants	no		no
- Other, please specify	no		no
11: other:			
12: Does your jurisdiction actively pursue federal and/or state programs designed to assist in attracting and retaining businesses?	no		yes
13: Does your jurisdiction use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or other programs to provide tax breaks to businesses?	no		yes
14: Does your jurisdiction grant TIFs or similar programs for retail development?	no		no
15: Does your jurisdiction assist in securing financing for businesses with commercial lenders or state industrial finance mechanisms?	no		yes

16: Do you actively try to attract local, state, and federal facilities, including post offices, to your jurisdiction?	yes		no
17: Is any part of your jurisdiction in a designated Enterprise Zone?	no		no
18: Do you participate in a regional brownfield revolving loan fund or offer your own?	No brownfields funds utilized		Regional










Section 9. Tax Rates


A tax rate is another cost factor that has traditionally been considered a business “deal-breaker”. Municipalities often thought that if tax rates were too high, then it would have difficulty attracting businesses. However, like business incentives, the tax rate is not one of the *Very Important* location factors. If the *Very Important* factors are satisfied, a business will likely ask for a more favorable tax rate during later stage negotiations. However, negotiations are unlikely to get to that point if the *More Important* location factors have not been satisfied.

A. Local

Besides the meals tax, Easton is on par with the CGM in terms of taxes it collects to fund local services. In regards to tax rate, Easton’s single tax property rate puts the town at an advantage over the CGM. This type of rate is typically preferable to businesses since it is usually lower than commercial and industrial rates in the split tax method. However, Easton’s tax rate is actually higher than the CGM, putting the town at a disadvantage. Since a high tax rate is not a “deal-breaker,” though, this disadvantage is only slight.

As 85% of Easton’s taxes are collected from residential properties, the town may want to target new industries (see Section 2B) to diversify the tax base, which will help protect the town against economic recessions, draw more state and federal funds, bring in steady streams of new tax revenue, and broaden the breadth of public services offered by Easton.











Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: What types of taxes are collected by your jurisdiction to pay for local services?			
- Property tax	yes		yes
- Local sales tax	no		no
- Local income tax	no		no
- Hotel room tax	no		no
- Meals tax	yes		no
2: Of the potential commercial and industrial property tax revenue your jurisdiction could collect, what percent is currently abated?	1-10%		1-10%
3: Does your jurisdiction tax property in industrial or commercial uses at a different rate than residential properties?	no		yes
4: If yes, what is the tax rate on industrial/commercial property? \$ /\$1,000	na		between 15.22 and 15.47
5: If yes, what is the tax rate on residential property? \$ /\$1,000	na		between 7.80 and 8.21

6: If no, what is the tax rate on all property?	15.8		15.8
7: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Industrial %	3.55		
8: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Commercial %	8.9		
9: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Residential %	85		
10: Does your jurisdiction impose impact fees on new commercial or industrial development?	no		no

B. Tax Delinquency

Easton is on par with the CGM in terms of tax delinquent property numbers. However, the town is at a relative disadvantage in that there are more tax defaulted or subject to the power of sale properties as well as in that the town chooses to auction off tax title properties later than does CGM. These weaknesses can dissuade potential developers and businesses from settling in Easton if they have to clear the lien, or if they must wait for the town to do so. However, it deserves mention that Easton does not quickly auction off properties in favor of working with delinquent homeowners to create a payment plan that helps them clear the delinquencies and helps the town collect the owed tax revenue.

Easton is at an advantage over the CGM in that the town does give special attention to tax delinquent or tax title properties that impede development. It would be quite advantageous to address these properties when your town is first notified of them so that potential investors will not immediately look to another town when they notice a desired, yet unavailable, property.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
11: What proportion of residential property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
12: What proportion of commercial property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
13: What proportion of industrial property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
14: How many properties are tax defaulted or subject to the power of sale?	100-200		50-100
15: When do you choose to auction tax title properties?	5-10 years		1-5 years
16: Do you have an organized and defined process for conducting such auctions and ensuring that they are successful?	yes		yes
17: Do you auction the "right to foreclose" on tax delinquent properties?	no		no
18: Do you seek tax abatement on tax title properties to allow the liens to clear for new owners?	no		no
19: If a tax delinquent or tax title property serves as an impediment to development, does the property receive special attention?	yes		no

Section 10. Access to Information









While a town's website may rank as *Less Important* in terms of decision making, it can be the initial source of information that entices a location expert to probe deeper and contact a municipality's economic development department for further information. At that point, an appropriate town staff member has an opportunity to step in and develop a personal relationship with the developer or company representative. If the necessary data are not easily accessible and understandable, the researcher may reject the town as a candidate, opting instead to consider towns with easily accessible data.

A. Website ○

In regards to nearly all website factors, Easton is either better than or on par with the CGM. Unlike the CGM, the town updates the website on a daily basis, and the website lists all local development policies and procedures, allows for online filing of some permits, and features state permitting agencies as well as links to educational institutions and sports and recreation venues. To improve the site and gain an even larger advantage over the CGM, Easton may want to add economic development-related information, such as the list of available sites (See Section 5B), demographic information, and associated assessor's data such as size, zoning, photographs, and GIS files. Also, including links to regional planning and economic development agencies, state financing agencies and other funding sources, local development resources, would be advantageous. The more readily accessible data posted on the town's website, the easier it is for prospective businesses, developers, and location experts to learn about the town.

Question	Easton		Comparison Group
1: Does your jurisdiction's website list all local development policies and procedures?	yes		no
2: Does your website have contact information for key officials?	yes		yes
3: Does your website have general information about your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
4: How frequently is your website updated?	Daily		Weekly
5: Does your website include an explicitly designed economic development tool aimed at businesses and developers?	no		no
6: Is there a development permit checklist or flow chart on the website?	no		no
7: Are permit applications available for downloading on the website?	yes		yes
8: Are applications and other forms date certified to ensure that they are the most recent versions (i.e. the same versions that you would get in person)?	no		no
9: Is it possible to file a permit application electronically?	yes		no
10: Is there a list of available land and building sites on the website?	no		no

11: If yes, check the types of information available about each site. (Check all that apply)			
- :Owner	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Square footage of vacant land	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Square footage and quality of existing buildings and structures	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Abutters	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Zoning	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Assessed value	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Tax rate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Current tax status (e.g. paid up, delinquent)	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Contamination	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Aerial photos	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- GIS links	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
12: Other, please specify			
13: Is there a posting of current hearings available on the website?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
14: Is there a posting of pending applications available on the website?	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
15: Is there a listing of current members of development review boards and staff contact information?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
16: Are there links to other local development resources? (Check all that apply)			
- State finance agencies	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- State permitting agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Regional planning agencies	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Regional development organizations	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Workforce training organizations	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Local public or quasi-public financing resources	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Demographic information	no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes
- Economic development agencies	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
17: Other, please specify			

18: Are there links to other locally-based private or non-profit organizations?			
- Colleges and universities	yes		no
- Chambers of Commerce	yes		yes
- Community development corporations	no		no
- Arts and cultural organizations	yes		yes
- Sports and recreation venues	yes		no
- Convention and tourist organization	no		no
19: Other, please specify	civic groups, athletic organizations		between Municipal utility and
20: Is there a designated webmaster or staff person responsible for maintaining the website?	yes		yes

NEXT STEPS

Easton is a safe, and clean community that appreciates its natural resources and outdoor advantages. The town is home to Borderland State Park, the Wheaton Farm Conservation Area, the Sheep Pasture, a horseback riding stable, and two golf courses. Additionally, the town features an award-winning children's museum, the Trinity Church, and the Hockomock Film Festival. Easton has the advantage over the CGM with a more professional, educated workforce and higher rates of college attendance for high school graduates. The town also benefits from Routes 106, 123, and 138 running through it, proximity to routes 24, 27, 95, and 495, regular access to a traffic engineer/transportation planner, much parking availability, and low manufacturing space rents.

Although Easton features several advantages that bolster economic development, there are also some disadvantages. **The most serious potential "deal-breakers" are: public sewer and wastewater treatment capacity constraints; the duration of the Appeals Process; high rents for retail and general office space; and highway access to available manufacturing sites.** Beginning the process to upgrade the town's public sewer and wastewater treatment infrastructure as well as identifying inefficiencies in and streamlining the Appeals Process would greatly enhance Easton's economic development efforts.

Other disadvantages include a high tax rate and lack of a guiding economic development strategy, identification of industries to target, and engagement of local and regional business organizations or regional planning and development agencies in marketing the town. Easton is planning to incorporate this report's recommendations, which addresses those disadvantages, in its nascent master plan. **Utilizing an economic development team to craft the town's economic development strategy with input from businesses and residents, will build community buy-in and cohesiveness, and will give the community a voice in Easton's economic development goals and direction.** After developing such a strategy with a focus on particular industries, **Easton may more easily secure and take advantage of appropriate regional, state, and federal grants, incentives, and recruiting and marketing efforts.** Your jurisdiction may also want to **consider addressing properties that are tax delinquent or subject to the power of sale.**

Easton collaborated with the City of Boston to develop an online submission tool to report code violations and maintenance needs. **This partnership shows the willingness of your town to learn from the success of others, and represents a strength that helps put Easton at an advantage over the CGM.**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We advise the following high-priority strategies for Easton to bolster its economic development efforts: Researching and implementing best practices and effective solutions to address infrastructure constraints, streamlining the Appeals Process, creating a thorough and collaborative economic development plan, and designing a marketing and branding plan with input from resident businesses. We highly recommend beginning research to resolve the infrastructure capacity issue since resolution will take a number of years to implement. While forming these strategies and addressing priorities, Easton may want to focus on certain sectors, like Travel and Tourism, which, at least initially, are less distressed by infrastructure capacity constraints.

These four priorities can be addressed concurrently, but forming different teams for each may be advantageous. As they are all linked, however, sharing information across teams and departments would be beneficial to ensure that approaches to these priorities build on each other and are in line with Easton’s economic development strategy and commercial/industrial attraction policy.

Recommendation	Priority
Resolve infrastructure capacity constraints through research and implementation of best practices and effective solutions	High
Identify inefficiencies and streamline the Appeals Process	High
Using the EDSAT recommendations, continue collaborating with stakeholders to craft an economic development strategy with targeted industries	High
Collaborate with resident businesses to form a comprehensive marketing and branding plan	High