

Northeastern University
Dukakis Center *for* Urban & Regional Policy

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL (EDSAT)

**EDSAT REPORT FOR THE TOWN OF
WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS
OCTOBER 2015**



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 issues 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 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 to urban governance.

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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Project Overview	1
Methodology	1
SUMMARY OF RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES	4
Westford’s Strengths and Potential “Deal-Makers”	4
Westford’s Weaknesses and Potential “Deal-Breakers”	5
DETAILED ANALYSIS AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS	6
Section 1: Access to Customers/Markets.....	8
Section 2: Concentration of Businesses (Agglomeration).....	12
Section 3: Cost of Land (Implicit/Explicit)	15
Section 4: Labor.....	18
Section 5: Municipal Process.....	20
Section 6: Quality of Life (Community)	24
Section 7: Quality of Life (Site).....	27
Section 8: Business Incentives.....	28
Section 9: Tax Rates.....	29
Section 10: Access to Information.....	30
NEXT STEPS	34

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

The Dukakis Center will keep the results contained in this report *strictly confidential*.

Project Overview

Since 2005, Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (Dukakis Center) has sought to identify the "deal-breakers" that impede private investment in local municipalities. Based upon research on the resurgence of older industrial cities, the Dukakis Center has identified two crucial elements in economic development. First is a municipality's ability to respond opportunely to ever-changing market forces. Second is local government's skill in working collaboratively with regional agencies, business leaders, and academic institutions to lessen municipal weaknesses and market the city or town's strengths. These conclusions led to the development of EDSAT, an analytical framework for providing practical, actionable feedback to public officials. In its current form, EDSAT resulted from a partnership between the Dukakis Center and the National League of Cities (NLC).

Methodology

The foundation for the 200-plus questions that comprise 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 factors relevant to economic growth and development. Examples include highway access, available workforce, and the timeliness of permit reviews. Based on rankings by these location experts, EDSAT factors are identified as *Very Important*, *Important*, or *Less Important* to businesses and developers. We denote these rankings as follows: A filled circle (●) indicates *Very Important*, a half-filled circle (◐) indicates *Important*, and an unfilled circle (○) indicates *Less Important*.

¹ Jurisdictions are usually categorized as individual towns and/or cities. A "jurisdiction" can also consist of 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.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EDSAT LOCATION FACTORS

<p>Very Important ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Access • Parking • Traffic • Infrastructure • Rents • Workforce Composition • Timeliness of Approvals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • 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 • Proximity to Universities and 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 • Marketing Follow-Up 		

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

The EDSAT analysis compares your jurisdiction’s response with that of Comparison Group Municipalities (CGM)—that is, all of the jurisdictions that have completed the EDSAT questionnaire. With regard to the Permitting Process, for example, 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-increasingly 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 the CGM response; yellow indicates that your jurisdiction is average or typical; and red indicates a relative deficiency.

SAMPLE RESULT, DRAWN FROM SECTION 1: ACCESS TO MARKETS/CUSTOMERS

<input type="radio"/> E. Airports			
Report of [REDACTED] as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	[REDACTED]		<i>Comparison Group</i>
27: Do you have a local (municipal/ general aviation) airport?	yes		no

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 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 location factor. One “deal-breaker” does not mean that your jurisdiction should abandon its economic development efforts. At the same time, your jurisdiction cannot rely solely 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 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 OF RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

This section summarizes Westford'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 create 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 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 could be accomplished without 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.

Westford's Strengths and Potential "Deal-Makers"

The following three lists of Westford's strengths are its powerful economic development assets. The town should build upon these assets and promote them to prospective businesses and developers. Westford 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 each list.

Strengths among *Very Important* Location Factors

HIGHWAY ACCESS: Available retail and office space sites are located within two miles of highway access, and the town does not impose weight restrictions on nearby streets and access roads.

PARKING: Westford offers as many parking advantages as the CGM. The town wisely offers free parking in the central business district, which aligns especially well with the demands of the retail industry, in addition to the office buildings operating in the area.

TRAFFIC: While most traffic-related considerations are on par with the CGM, Westford has less rush hour traffic congestion than its peers.

WORKFORCE COMPOSITION: The proportion of Westford's professional workforce and technically skilled workforce is high.

LABOR AVAILABLE: Outperforming the CGM, the majority of Westford's residents have earned at least a bachelor's degree.

Strengths among *Important* Location Factors

PUBLIC TRANSIT: Westford does relatively well in this category, and has the capacity to expand bus and rail services.

PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS: Relative to the CGM, Westford excels in code enforcement—including mechanisms for monitoring and citizen reporting—in relation to abandoned properties and vehicles, and trash disposal. The town also has a higher percentage of parkland and a relatively low volume of vacant industrial space.

HOUSING: Although homeownership in Westford is relatively pricey, your town has a larger than average homeownership rate, with a relatively low rental vacancy rate—both of which point to such a strong housing market that building more housing might be called for.

CRIME: Across all categories, crime rates for Westford were substantially low.

TAX DELINQUENCY: Relative to the CGM, Westford is on par with the number of properties that are tax defaulted or subject to the power of sale, it does however exceed its peers in both the time it takes to auction such properties (after 1 year vs. 1-5 years), and in its ability to provide special attention to tax delinquent properties that impede development.

SITE AMENITIES: All of Westford's existing development sites are within a mile of amenities important to location specialists, which is rare.

STATE BUSINESS INCENTIVES: Westford does exceptionally well in taking advantage of state tax incentives, and actively works with businesses to secure financing through state programs and commercial lenders.

LOCAL BUSINESS INCENTIVES: Westford offers TIFs for retail development, property tax abatements to existing and new businesses, and grants tax abatement negotiating powers to the executive—which firms prefer because it simplifies the negotiations.

LOCAL TAX RATES: Your town outperforms the CGM by offering a 19.6% lower tax rate for industrial and commercial property, and it varies its sources of public revenue by collecting hotel and meals taxes. The jurisdiction should however take note of its residential property tax, which is 30% higher than the CGM.

PREDICTABLE PERMITS: The town offers guidance on permitting to prospective developers, provides both a flowchart and a development handbook, and has made efforts to streamline its permitting processes.

LABOR COST: Although the town's wage rate for semi-skilled workers is higher than the CGM (complementing the high cost of housing), salaries for public high school teachers are high, and reflect how much the community values a well-educated workforce.

LAND: Your town has a strikingly high proportion of parcels that are available for industrial or large-scale commercial development, many of which are currently zoned for commercial/industrial uses and/or of at least five acres. In addition, your town has a significant amount of vacant and usable office space.

LOCAL SCHOOLS: While Westford Public Schools appear to be slightly lagging on the basis of the level of investment in per-student spending, the town's large portion of high school and four-year college graduates should alleviate resulting concern.

INDUSTRY SENSITIVITY: Westford engages local businesspersons to represent the town to help attract new businesses.

SITES AVAILABLE: Westford maintains an active relationship with commercial real estate brokers, developers, and agents with sites in the jurisdiction. In addition, it implements an active strategy for reclaiming or land banking tax delinquent and tax title properties.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: Location specialists consider it a positive attribute that organized neighborhood groups slow permitting very little in Westford. Town officials could however benefit from the establishment of a clear and concise procedure for abutters in the initial stage of the review process.

Strengths among *Less Important* Location Factors

WEBSITE: With useful information and forms for developers, your town's website is relatively strong.

PERMITTING OMBUDSMAN: The town manager helps to expedite the permitting process, and the town provides assistance to firms requiring state or federal permits or licenses.

UNIONS: Westford fares well compared to the CGM in having no significant labor union presence.

Westford's Weaknesses and Potential "Deal-Breakers"

Despite many advantages, Westford has a number of apparent weaknesses that 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 those the *Less Important* group.

Unlike the above itemization of Westford's strengths, this **three-part list of weaknesses is arranged in order of priority**. We suggest that, while reviewing this prioritized list of challenges, participants keep in mind Westford's economic development objectives and the feasibility (economic and otherwise) of upgrading "deal-breakers" and other weaknesses.

Weaknesses among *Very Important* Location Factors

TIMELINESS OF APPROVALS: The time required from application to completion of the review process for new site plans and zoning variances takes considerably longer than the CGM, although the appeals process for both existing and new structures is noticeably faster.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Although most of the town’s infrastructure capacity (water, gas, and electricity) is sufficient for current demand and future growth, the lack of a public sewer is a major concern, especially given its preference to businesses over septic systems, which threaten water quality and have limited, decentralized capacity.

RENTS: Rents across all three types of industry space, and all three classes of office space, are much higher than the CGM. However, Westford has a large share of Class A and Class B office space, which could be a real advantage for attracting national or regional business headquarters.

Weaknesses among *Important* Location Factors

COMPLEMENTARY BUSINESS SERVICES: Although Westford seems to have a strong, robust, and active volunteer Economic Development Committee, it needs to develop business services that cater specifically to its nearby cluster of technical and scientific firms.

CRITICAL MASS FIRMS: Westford has a relatively weak industrial attraction policy that could serve to unify and direct its various economic development services and initiatives.

Weaknesses among *Less Important* Location Factors

AIRPORTS: Westford’s closest international airport, Logan, is farther from the town center than the CGM average and travel time is much longer, not even taking into account bottlenecking.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The following is a ten-part section-by-section analysis of the EDSAT results comparing Westford’s self-reported responses with the median response among the CGM. Each location factor is ranked with three possible symbols: 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.

This ten-part portion of the report—its heart, really—is presented in the same order as the questions listed on the EDSAT questionnaire, with the tabular printout of Westford’s results appearing first, and our narrative summary and interpretation of the results appearing second. The tabular results are displayed in four primary groupings of information:

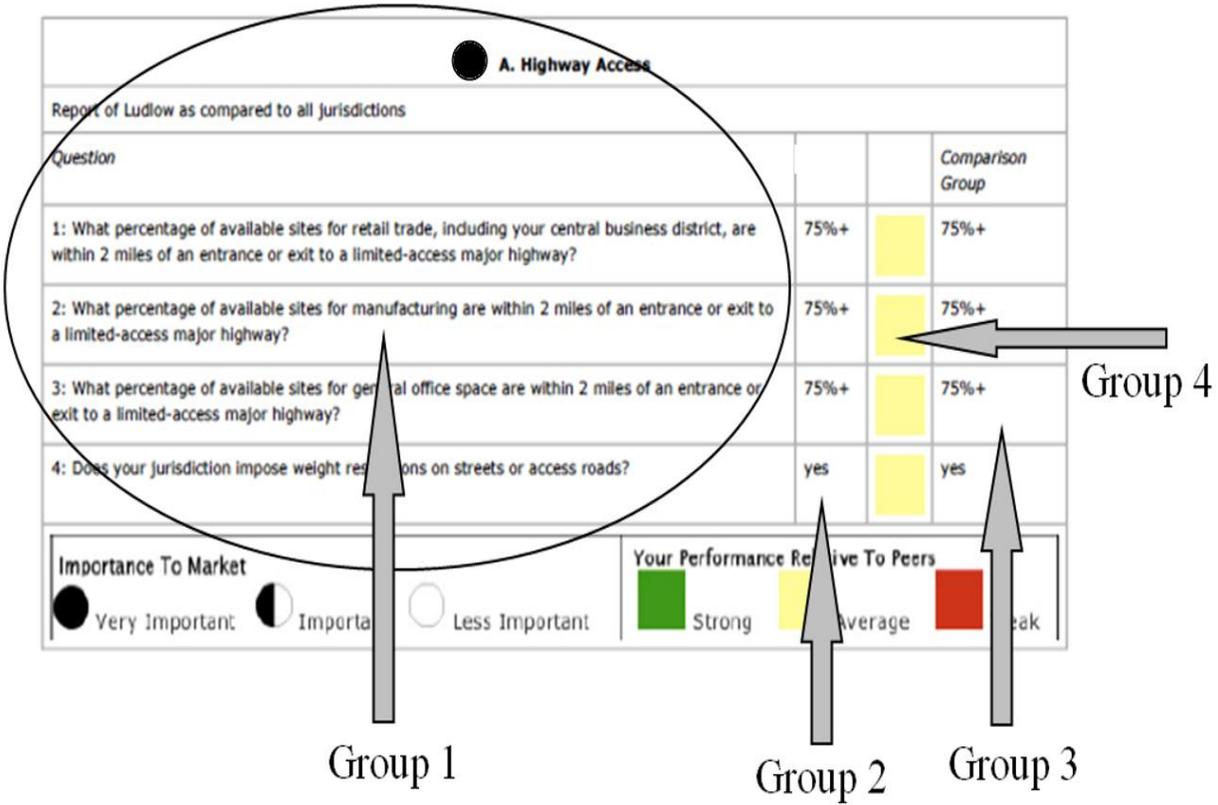
Group 1 identifies a location factor (such as Highway Access), a circle indicating the relative importance of the location factor, and questions related to the factor that your town has already answered.

Group 2 shows Westford’s responses to the EDSAT questions.

Group 3 is the median (or majority, for yes/no questions) response among the “comparison group municipalities” (or CGM) that have completed the EDSAT questionnaire.

Group 4 is a series of green, yellow, or red blocks indicating how Westford compares to the CGM. A built-in function in EDSAT 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, Westford is compared with all the CGM.

Section 1: Access to Customers/Markets



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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	75% or greater		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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
5: What percentage of available sites for retail trade are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	50-74%		50-74%
6: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	50-74%		26-49%
7: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	50-74%		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?	yes		yes

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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C. Parking			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	no		no
16: Have you used state or federal infrastructure grants to improve parking in your jurisdiction?	no		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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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 of which your jurisdiction is a member?	yes		yes
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?	26 - 35 mph		11 - 25 mph
26: Do you require a traffic impact analysis for large-scale development or redevelopment projects?	yes		yes

Importance To Market Very Important Important Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers Strong Average Weak No Comparison
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<input type="radio"/> E. Airports			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	31 miles or more		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 town center?	21 minutes to 60 minutes		21 minutes to 60 minutes

<input type="radio"/> F. Rail			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
32: Do you have rail freight service available?	yes		yes
33: Do you have intercity passenger rail service? Check all that apply.			
- Commuter	no		no
- Intercity/Interstate(Amtrak)	no		no
- None	yes		no

Importance To Market <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
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G. Physical Attractiveness

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
34: To what extent do you enforce codes and regulations on abandoned properties, abandoned vehicles, trash disposal within your jurisdiction?	Very vigorously		Moderately
35: To what extent does your jurisdiction maintain streets, sidewalks, parks, etc., near available development sites?	Very vigorously		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?	yes		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?	11-15%		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)?	11-15%		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

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
45: Do you have water based transportation facilities within your jurisdiction? Check all that apply.	None		None

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Weak

Average

No Comparison

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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	yes		yes
3: Is there an incubator or other form of cooperative space for start-up businesses in your jurisdiction?	no		no
4: Are there CPA, business advisory or financial services firms in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
5: Are there law firms in your jurisdiction specializing in commercial law, intellectual property rights, or 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?	Not capable		Moderately capable

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
8: Does your jurisdiction have an up-to-date development strategy, an overall economic development plan (OEDP), or an economic development plan within your community master plan?	yes		yes
9: Is your jurisdiction part of a county or regional OEDP or Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?	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?	yes		yes
12: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your municipality's development strategy? Other, please specify (Your Municipality)	Defense		
13: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your region/county's development strategy? Other, please specify (Regional/County)	Defense		
14: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your state's development strategy? (State)	Defense		
15: Which of the following jurisdictions have development specialists to assist in interpreting the needs of these clusters? (Choose all that apply)			
- Your Municipality	no		yes
- Regional/County	yes		no
- State	no		no
16: How aggressive is your industrial attraction policy?	Don't have one		Moderate

			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
17: Do you actively enlist the services of firms already resident in your jurisdiction to assist in attracting new firms?	no		no
18: Do you engage local and regional business organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
19: Do you engage regional planning and development organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
20: Do you engage state agencies and organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	yes		yes

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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D. Marketing Follow-Up

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
21: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
22: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose not to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
23: Do you have a formal procedure for contacting existing local firms about their satisfaction with your jurisdiction?	yes		no
24: Do you have a formal procedure for intervening when early news surfaces about firm dissatisfaction with your jurisdiction?	no		no



E. Proximity to Universities & Research

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
25: How many public or private four-year college or universities are located within your jurisdiction?	0		0
26: How many public or private four-year college or universities are located within 10 miles of your jurisdiction?	1		2
27: How many community colleges are located within your jurisdiction?	0		0
28: How many vocational/technical schools are located within your jurisdiction?	1		1

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Weak

Average

No Comparison

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 is costly, and firms do not like to incur these expenses. Therefore, if a municipality does not already have adequate capacity in place, a potential firm could decide to locate somewhere else with stronger capacity. Likewise, 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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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	N/A		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
3: Wastewater Treatment	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		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 retail cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Residential	16.273/kWh		16.23
10: What is the average retail cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Commercial	15.228/kWh		15.20
11: What is the average retail cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Industrial	13.855/kWh		13.03

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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Detailed rates are listed below:²

Electricity Rates (cents per kilowatt hour)

Location	Type of Space		
	Residential	Commercial	Industrial
Westford	16.27	15.23	13.855
Median CGM	16.23	15.20	13.03
Massachusetts	22.12	17.30	14.03
New England	20.83	16.95	13.00
United States	12.53	10.58	6.79

 B. Rents			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
12: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	20.33		12.00
13: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	20.33		14.00
14: What is the current average square foot cost for existing manufacturing space (Triple Net/Lease)?	10.75		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	21.00		16
16: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)? CLASS B	13.06		12
17: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)? CLASS C	12.00		9
18: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)? CLASS A	21.00		16
19: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)? CLASS B	13.06		12.50
20: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)? CLASS C	12.00		between 9.00 and 9.50
21: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS A	67%		15
22: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS B	25%		40
23: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS C	8%		40

² State, Region, and U.S. rates are those available as of March 2015 and were obtained from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Westford rates do not include demand charges, which fluctuate.

C. Quality of Available Space

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
24: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered contaminated or brownfield sites?	0-10%		0-10%
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?	0-10%		11-20%
27: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered unused open land or greenfield sites?	0-10%		21-35%

D. Land (space)

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
28: Approximately how much vacant developable land in your jurisdiction is currently zoned for commercial/industrial uses?	151-300 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?	250,001-500,000 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?	51% or greater		11-20%

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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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 higher labor costs and strong unions negatively affect a firm's location decision. However, if the workforce is adequately skilled, these factors are not as detrimental as the conventional rule of thumb suggests. Workforce training resources is Less Important relative to other location factors. However, having a technically trained workforce whose skills align with the industries a municipality wants to attract is a valuable selling point.

			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
1: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for semi-skilled, blue-collar manufacturing workers?	\$17.26-\$22.25		\$12.26-\$17.25
2: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for mid-level clerical workers?	\$12.26-\$17.25		\$12.26-\$17.25
3: What is the prevailing average annual salary for public high school teachers?	\$60,001-\$70,000		\$50,001-\$60,000
4: Is there a local minimum or living wage statute?	no		no

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

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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<input type="radio"/> C. Unions			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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 three years?	no		no
13: Do labor unions have a significant presence in the labor market of your jurisdiction?	Not at all		Somewhat

<input checked="" type="radio"/> D. Labor (available)			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	51% or greater		21-35%

<input type="radio"/> E. Workforce Training			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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	yes		
- Area High schools	yes		
- Voc-tech schools or community colleges	yes		
- Human service or nonprofit career training centers	yes		
17: Do you support public-private partnerships to provide specific workforce training?	no		yes
18: Is there an adult education program readily available to residents of your jurisdiction?	yes		yes

Importance To Market <input checked="" type="radio"/> Very Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> No Comparison
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Section 5: Municipal Process

The municipal process section covers several themes relating to marketing and permitting. Public officials who aggressively market their jurisdictions strengths and collaborate with firms already located in their town or city may have significant advantages in attracting new investment. Local firms can speak firsthand about their own experiences and market conditions to interested companies and investors. Likewise, they can advise municipal leaders about industries with which they are intimately familiar. Additionally, municipalities that have established transparent and efficient permitting processes, minimizing startup time and costs, are also ahead of the game. Among the factors examined in this section, the timeliness of approvals is *Very Important* to location experts and all but one of the remaining factors (Permitting Ombudsman) are ranked *Important*.

 A. Industry Sensitivity			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
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?	yes		no
4: Do you actively engage local business spokespersons to speak on behalf of your jurisdiction?	yes		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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
6: Does your jurisdiction own sites that it is currently marketing for development?	yes		between yes and no
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

Importance To Market

 Very Important
  Important
  Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong
  Average
 Weak
  No Comparison

 C. Timeliness of Approvals			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
12: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Site plan review	9-12 weeks		5-8 weeks
13: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Zoning variance	9-12 weeks		5-8 weeks
14: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Special permit	9-12 weeks		9-12 weeks
15: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Building permit	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
16: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Appeals process	0-4 weeks		5-8 weeks
17: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Site plan review	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
18: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Zoning variance	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
19: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Special permit	5-8 weeks		9-12 weeks
20: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Building permit	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
21: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Appeals process	0-4 weeks		5-8 weeks

Approximate # Weeks Westford's Permitting Processes Exceed Those in the CGM

Permitting Process	New Project (Time difference in weeks)	Existing Structure (Time difference in weeks)
Site plan review	4 Slower	Same
Zoning variance	4 Slower	4 Slower
Special permit	Same	4 Faster
Building permit	Same	4 Slower
Appeals	4 Faster	4 Faster

 D. Predicable Permits			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
22: Do you provide a checklist of permitting requirements to prospective developers?	yes		yes
23: Do you provide a flowchart of the permitting process to prospective developers?	yes		no
24: Do you provide a development handbook to prospective developers?	yes		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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	no		no
29: Do you market "fast track" permitting to potential developers or firms?	yes		no

 F. Citizen Participation in the Review Process			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	Very little		Somewhat
32: To what extent do elected officials in your jurisdiction expedite development by facilitating dialogue with community groups?	Very little		Very little
33: Do you establish a specific time frame and procedure for abutter or neighborhood response in the initial stage of the process?	no		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?	no		no

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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G. Permitting Ombudsman

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
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: Is your jurisdiction involved in the process for businesses that require state or federal permitting or licensing?	yes		yes
43: Do you provide technical assistance for businesses in the state or federal permit or license application process?	yes		no
44: Does your jurisdiction require any local licenses for specific businesses or industries?			
- General license for all businesses	yes		no
- Auto dealership	yes		no
- Barber shop	no		no
- Bar/Tavern	yes		no
- Beauty salon	no		no
- Child care services	no		no
- Construction contractor	no		no
- Home health care	no		no
- Massage therapist	no		no
- Real estate agent/broker	no		no
- Restaurant	yes		no
- Skilled Trades (electrician, plumber, etc)	no		no
- Other, please specify	yes		no
45: Approximately how long (in weeks) is your local licensing process for businesses?	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
8: What was the residential burglary rate per 100,000 residents last year in your jurisdiction?	126		288
9: What was the auto theft rate per 100,000 residents last year?	22		91
10: What was the robbery rate per 100,000 residents last year?	0		33
11: What was the homicide rate per 100,000 residents last year?	0		2

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 **C. Housing**

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
12: What was the median sale price of a single-family home in your jurisdiction last year?	\$451,000 or greater		\$251,000-\$350,000
13: What was the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in your jurisdiction last year?	\$1251 or greater		\$1001-\$1250
14: What is the homeownership rate?	76% or greater		66-75%
15: What is the vacancy rate for rental housing?	Less than 3%		3-5%
16: What percent of homes are for sale?	Less than 3%		Less than 3%
17: Approximately what proportion of the major officers of firms located in your jurisdiction live in the community?	Few		Some

<p>Importance To Market</p> <p> Very Important  Important  Less Important</p>	<p>Your Performance Relative To Peers</p> <p> Strong  Average</p> <p> Weak  No Comparison</p>
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D. Local Schools

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
18: What is the average K-12 per pupil expenditure in your jurisdiction last year?	\$10,001 - \$12,000		\$12,001 - \$14,000
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?	81% or greater		66-80%
21: If yes, what percent of students in your jurisdiction tested at least "proficient" in Mathematics?	81% or greater		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?	1126 or higher		
25: What was the average composite score (English, math, reading, and science) for the ACT last year?	26.3		
26: What percentage of high school freshmen normally graduate within 5 years?	95% or more		81%-94%
27: What is the high school dropout 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		

<p>Importance To Market</p> <p> Very Important  Important  Less Important</p>	<p>Your Performance Relative To Peers</p> <p> Strong  Average</p> <p> Weak  No Comparison</p>
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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			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
1: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fast food restaurant	Most		Most
2: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fine dining	Most		Some
3: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Day care	Most		Most
4: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Retail shops	Most		Most

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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Section 8: Business Incentives

When companies are evaluating various jurisdictions for site location, business incentives (mainly subsidies and tax credits) are *Important* considerations. However, contrary to conventional wisdom, these incentives are not the first factors on which an investor makes a location decision—nor are they decisive. Factors such as infrastructure, workforce composition, and timeliness of permitting are of the utmost importance and can all too easily become “deal-breakers.” A municipality must be at least adequate in these areas before a company will advance negotiations. While investors value a broad portfolio of business incentives as possible “deal-closers,” they might not initially attract them.

 A. State			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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		no
- Job training tax credits	yes		no
- Research and development (R&D) tax credits	yes		no
- Low (subsidized) interest loans	yes		no
- Loan guarantees	yes		no
- Equity financing	no		no
- Workforce training grants	yes		no
- Other, please specify	yes		no
2: To what extent does your jurisdiction actively take advantage of any special state business incentives?	Very much		Somewhat
3: Does your state allow for priority funding for distressed economic areas?	yes		yes

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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 **B. Local**

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			Comparison Group
4: Does your jurisdiction offer existing or new businesses property tax abatement? Existing businesses	yes		no
5: If yes, what proportion of existing businesses are offered abatements?	1-25%		1-25%
6: Does your jurisdiction offer existing or new businesses property tax abatement? New businesses	yes		no
7: If yes, what proportion of existing businesses are offered abatements?	75% or greater		1-25%
8: Who negotiates the tax abatement?	Executive		Legislative
9: 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	no		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
10: Does your jurisdiction actively pursue federal and/or state programs designed to assist in attracting and retaining businesses?	yes		yes
11: Does your jurisdiction use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or other programs to provide tax breaks to businesses?	yes		yes
12: Does your jurisdiction grant TIFs or similar programs for retail development?	yes		no
13: Does your jurisdiction assist in securing financing for businesses with commercial lenders or state industrial finance mechanisms?	yes		no
14: Do you actively try to attract local, state, and federal facilities to your jurisdiction?	no		no
15: Is any part of your jurisdiction in a designated Enterprise Zone?	no		no
16: Do you participate in a regional brownfield revolving loan fund or offer your own?	No brownfields funds utilized		No brownfields funds utilized

Section 9: Tax Rates

Municipalities often think that if tax rates are too high, they will have a hard time attracting businesses—that high taxes are a “deal-breaker.” Like financial incentives, however, the tax rate is not one of the *Very Important* location factors. If the *Very Important* factors are satisfied, then a business will likely request a more favorable tax rate during later-stage negotiations. Yet negotiations are unlikely to get to that point if the *More Important* location factors have not been satisfied.

 A. Local			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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	yes		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?	yes		yes
4: If yes, what is the tax rate on industrial/commercial property? \$ /\$1,000	16.44		20.48
5: If yes, what is the tax rate on residential property? \$ /\$1,000	16.24		11.38
6: If no, what is the tax rate on all property?	-		13.91
7: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Industrial %	6.1149%		
8: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Commercial %	6.6850%		
9: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Residential %	84.6838%		
10: Does your jurisdiction impose impact fees on new commercial or industrial development?	no		no



B. Tax Delinquency

Report of as compared to all jurisdictions

Question			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?	0-50		0-50
15: When do you choose to auction tax title properties?	After 1 year		1-5 years
16: Do you have an organized and defined process for conducting such auctions and ensuring that they are successful?	no		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

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Average

Weak

No Comparison

Section 10: Access to Information

A town's website could offer a business location expert his or her first impression of what the area has to offer. In today's digital age, a location expert could use a municipality's website to gather initial information, and if it is not available, easy to find, and easy to understand, the researcher may reject the town as a potential location without further consideration. While a town's website may rank *Less Important* as a factor in decision making, it can be this initial source of information that entices a location expert to probe deeper and to contact a municipality to seek additional information. At that point, the municipality's economic development leader or permitting ombudsman has an opportunity to step in and develop one-on-one rapport with the developer or company representative.

<input type="radio"/> A. Website			
Report of as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			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?	Weekly		Weekly
5: Does your website include an explicitly designed economic development tool aimed at businesses and developers?	yes		no
6: Is there a development permit checklist or flow chart on the website?	yes		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)?	yes		no
9: Is it possible to file permit applications 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		no
- Square footage of vacant land	no		no
- Square footage and quality of existing buildings and structures	no		no
- Abutters	no		no
- Zoning	no		no
- Assessed value	no		no
- Tax rate	no		no
- Current tax status (e.g. paid up, delinquent)	no		no
- Contamination	no		no

- Aerial photos	no		no
- GIS links	no		no
- Other, please specify	yes		no
12: Is there a posting of current hearings available on the website?	yes		yes
13: Is there a posting of pending applications available on the website?	yes		no
14: Is there a listing of current members of development review boards and staff contact information?	yes		yes
15: Are there links to other local development resources? (Check all that apply)			
- State finance agencies	yes		no
- State permitting agencies	no		no
- Regional planning agencies	no		no
- Regional development organizations	no		no
- Workforce training organizations	no		no
- Local public or quasi-public financing resources	no		no
- Demographic information	no		no
- Economic development agencies	no		no
- Other, please specify	no		no
16: Are there links to other locally-based private or non-profit organizations?			
- Colleges and universities	no		no
- Chambers of Commerce	yes		no
- Community development corporations	no		no
- Arts and cultural organizations	no		no
- Sports and recreation venues	no		no
- Convention and tourist organization	no		no
- Other, please specify	no		no
17: Is there a designated webmaster or staff person responsible for maintaining the website?	yes		yes

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important		Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison	
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NEXT STEPS

Westford is an affluent suburban community that offers exceptional opportunities to residents and businesses alike. Westford's town manager and Economic Development Committee have recently overseen the implementation of a number of promising planning and development initiatives. Today, the town is the chosen location for many powerhouse high-tech companies along the Littleton Road (Route 110) Corridor, including Juniper Networks, Red Hat, Sonus, Alcatel-Lucent, Netscout Systems, Cynosure, Mack Technologies, and UTC Aerospace Systems. Westford is also home to three prominent medical services complexes, including Emerson Hospital, Lowell General Hospital/Circle Health, and St. Jude Medical. Nearby is the recently established 13-building multi-use Cornerstone Square Shopping Center. Located at the intersection of Route 110 and Route 495, it has supported the local community by bringing in new employment opportunities and delivering much needed consumer services and office space, which are limited near Westford's traditional town common.

The growth and expansion of both innovative technology companies and other businesses is critical not only to Westford but to the regional economy in the Greater Lowell area as a whole. The town's municipal leadership, along with its Economic Development Committee can play a major role in helping businesses grow by creating a collaborative business environment in which public and private partnerships can be forged. A commitment to balancing economic growth and quality of life is equally important to the town's future. Westford has been growing at a steady rate, however its aging population is a cause for concern and the town's leadership must actively look to attract and retain millennials.

Westford's 2009 updated Comprehensive Plan, which includes an economic development component, admirably addresses most of these complexities. It outlines some of the town's major opportunities and threats, provides comprehensive strategic objectives and detailed recommendations, and advocates for a common vision among businesses, residents, and local government.

The Dukakis Center's Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) creates a snapshot of Westford's economic revitalization efforts at a critical moment in the town's development history. The following is an overview of where Westford is getting it right, and where improvements can be made. Outlined below are the top recommendations and their respective priority levels for your economic development efforts.

CORE STRENGTHS

Westford has some powerful strengths that can help persuade firms and developers to locate in the town. One of the most significant, and a potential "deal-maker," is its good management of **traffic** (i.e., less rush hour congestion), which reduces costs for businesses and enhances quality of life. On a related note, your town possesses significant **highway access** and is also attentive to **parking** – among location specialists' most important considerations – and **public transit**. Commuter rail service to Boston is available in the neighboring towns of Littleton and Lowell, which also provides Greater Boston residents access to Westford businesses, while several local companies have established business shuttles to Cambridge.

One of Westford's most dynamic assets is its large proportion of **well-educated and skilled employees**. Location specialists strongly emphasize the importance of the educational attainment level and composition of the workforce, and Westford performs well in both categories. This is of critical importance to the town's as-of-yet undeveloped industrial attraction policy, and also provides a solid foundation to support future economic development services and initiatives. In addition, your town has a **large share of available Class A and Class B office space**, a valuable asset for attracting high quality tenants, including national and regional corporate firms that boost the local economy by creating new jobs and contributing to the tax base.

EDSAT also deems your town very **physically attractive** relative to its peers, with vigorous code enforcement, good maintenance policies, and a large quantity of parkland. Westford's **housing** market is strong, with high homeownership rates in spite of higher than average prices, it also offers excellent **local schools** to prospective employees with children—in part, perhaps, because the town pays its teachers very well relative to the CGM.

The need for a strong and easily navigable **website** is more important than ever, and Westford's is truly outstanding. It provides nearly all the types of information important to businesses, it is well designed, and it is refreshed regularly by a designated staff person. Clearly, the town takes seriously its Web presence as a marketing tool, and even makes it possible to file permit applications electronically on the Doing Business menu on the town's homepage.

State and local business incentives are among location specialists' important factors and Westford has done well in assisting new and existing businesses. Your town has taken advantage of many state tax incentives, and actively assists businesses to secure financing whether through state programs or commercial lenders. It also offers TIFs for retail development and property tax abatements to existing and new businesses, and grants powers of negotiating the tax abatement to the executive—alleviating the potential for political complication. On a related note, Westford's relatively large proportion of available parcels that are five acres or more could benefit from a stronger commercial/industrial attraction policy.

Westford offers **tax rates** that are exceptionally attractive to location specialists. Although your town does not maintain a unified property tax rate, which is much preferred by business concerns, it derives a portion of its base from taxes levied on meals and hotel rooms—taking some of the revenue pressure off of other types of firms. Your jurisdiction's tax rate for industrial and commercial uses is about 20 percent less than that charged by the CGM with similar tax structures—putting Westford way above par. Finally, it is critical that the town's leadership take steps to reduce the high residential property tax rate, which is about 30% higher than the CGM and could discourage future residential growth.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Westford has a number of weaknesses that may dissuade a prospective firm or developer from locating in your town. Perhaps the most pressing area for improvement (and the most feasible to address) lies in the **permitting review process**, which represents the potential for a “deal-breaker” to prospective firms. Despite a faster than the average appeals processes for the review of new projects and for special permits for existing structures, the review process for both new projects and existing structures takes 4 weeks longer than in the median CGM. All other things being equal, a business will usually choose to locate in a municipality with relatively quicker review durations to reduce “time to market.” Your town should appoint a team to investigate all permitting processes for inefficiencies, as well as speak with permitting board members and applicants to learn their perspectives.

Complementary or supplemental business services provide critical tools for interested developers or firms, thereby amplifying the scale of agglomeration in your jurisdiction. Westford does not currently provide business services (e.g. venture capital, business planning, specialized recruiting etc.) that cater specifically to its nearby cluster of technical and scientific firms. The town is, however, in the process of establishing a new incubator space in the Very Fine building, a former food processing site, which will further enhance the capacities of its high-technology corridor. In addition, Westford's Economic Development Committee would be even more effective if they could persuade local business owners and executives to work with local officials to attract targeted industries through cross-marketing efforts, as well as in marketing follow-up to learn why prospective employers chose to settle in Westford—or not.

Rents in your jurisdiction are, on average, much higher than your peers. The average square foot costs of existing retail space in both the central business district and the highway business district is 31% and 41% higher than the CGM respectively. The average square foot cost of manufacturing space is also higher than that of your peers, with the figure close to 45%. Rents are a very important location factor, and can make or break a firm’s decision to locate in your jurisdiction. For this reason the town should do everything it can to bring down commercial rents, including (but not limited to) lowering taxes on such properties.

Westford also has serious **infrastructure** limitations. The town’s limited sewer capacity could pose serious obstacles to certain types of businesses. While many communities invest in sewer facilities to encourage economic growth by facilitating the expansion of existing businesses as well as attracting new ones, the cost of expanding sewer infrastructure is often too expensive for small communities. As a result, we recommend collaboration with civic and business leaders as well as local, state, and national agencies and organizations, to conduct an in-depth study that analyzes the full spectrum of investment options and the direct and indirect impacts of each type of investment. In addition, findings from a marketing-follow up with firms could help identify whether sewer systems were among the reasons why firms decided not to locate in your town.

The decision to rely on sewer or septic systems will have a significant impact on Westford’s land use patterns, growth management, public finance, water quality, and public health. It will also affect the types of industrial and manufacturing businesses that you can attract; processing plants, industrial parks, shopping centers, and commercial/office buildings are some of the most common direct beneficiaries of expanded sewer capacities.

Outlined below are our top recommendations and their respective levels of priority for your economic development efforts.

Recommendations	Priority
Expedite review and permitting approvals processes, appointing a team to oversee improvements	High
Craft a more aggressive commercial/industrial attraction policy and a comprehensive cross-marketing strategy. Conduct follow up with firms that come or remain in town, and those that chose not to locate in Westford after showing initial interest.	High
Develop a strategy for reducing high retail, manufacturing, and office rents. Market Class A and Class B office space to prospective businesses as part of a more direct commercial/industrial attraction policy.	Medium
Conduct a detailed assessment of the financial implications of investing or failing to invest in a sewer system	Medium