

Simsbury Town Center Charrette Report



June 2010



The Vision for the Simsbury Town Center

was created by

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and the hundreds of Simsbury residents that participated in the week-long charrette

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1. Introduction

One of Connecticut's oldest communities, Simsbury was incorporated in May 1670, over a century before the founding of the United States. Simsbury is situated along the Farmington River to the north end of the Farmington Valley, flanked to the east by Talcott Mountain, part of the Metacomet Ridge stretching from Long Island Sound to the Vermont border. Simsbury covers a geographic area of approximately 34.5 square miles, approximately 14.5 miles west of Hartford, and bordered by the Towns of Granby, Bloomfield, Canton and Avon. Simsbury's population grew from 5,000 in 1950 to approximately 24,000 today. While Simsbury has experienced significant growth in recent times, the Town has sought to maintain the rural environment and historic charm that makes Simsbury a quintessential New England Community. In part because of Simsbury's desirable location and prosperity, development pressure has increased par-

ticularly on greenfield sites located on the southern and northern edges of Town. Skeptical of the benefits and wary of new development adjacent to their neighborhoods, many residents requested changes to the proposed site plans and others opposed the development outright. Through this chain of events, it became clear that Simsbury's development approval process was reactive; developers brought in plans, and residents had a chance to react, typically in the spirit of opposition. The genesis of the charrette process was a desire to rework the planning and approval process so that residents of Simsbury could be proactive, broadcasting their intentions to developers and putting their preferences for location and form of new development into the zoning code. Developers would also benefit from this scenario, being able to see the town's expectations in the zoning code from day one. The Town Center was selected as the initial



study area for a public participation design charrette and form-based code. If the process is successful, the process may be repeated for other portions of the community.

What is a Charrette?

A charrette is a several day long intensive working session. Charrettes are inclusive by nature and are designed to build consensus from the outset, providing a collaborative forum to bring all parties together and focus on a common goal. The hands-on nature of the charrette, the opportunity to interact with differing perspectives, and the short feedback loops allow issues to be identified and

resolved early on in the process. In addition, the charrette provides an educational opportunity for all participants. The charrette process not only produces invaluable information for the consultant team but it enables the community to realize how much consensus there really is for key issues in a constructive format. Ultimately, stakeholder involvement and ownership will make the adoption and implementation of new zoning far more feasible.

What is a Form-Based Code?

In today's marketplace, form-based coding is being used in a variety of places, from large scale mixed-use develop-

ments, to small scale infill redevelopment on parcels under multiple ownership, to complex downtowns. Under all scenarios, it is a particularly effective tool for regulating Smart Growth development. A form-based code, produced through a public process and in conjunction with a physical plan, can ensure development that is inherently mixed-use and pedestrian oriented, and can encourage compact building design, while preserving natural areas. Form-based codes are a way to translate the ideals of a plan into regulatory language to create the physical "place"

envisioned by the community.

Form-based codes address building mass, building placement on lots, the form and creation of streets and other public spaces, heights, window and doors—details that directly effect the way a building and street function—to encourage (or discourage) pedestrian activity and mixed-use. They also direct the location and design of parking and the design of the public spaces. In short, form-based codes address the public spaces that private buildings shape. Rather than relying on use and density prescriptions, form-based codes are proactive in specifically describing the form of the desired built environment.

Context Map: Aerial image of the Town Center study area



Overview

The Town retained the services of a nationally recognized team of planning consultants to assist in the preparation of a vision for the Town Center. Code Studio from Austin, Texas, was retained by the Town to facilitate the charrette and develop a form-based code for the Town Center. Code Studio, in turn enlisted a team of specialists to assist with the charrette. The team included Third Coast Design Studio (Nashville, Tennessee), Winter & Company (Boulder, Colorado), Urban Advantage (Berkeley, Colorado), Nelson\Nygaard (Boston, Massachusetts), and W-ZHA (Annapolis, Maryland).

The results of the charrette are intended to represent a consensus vision for the Town Center. The physical plan prepared during the charrette is intended to show one way in which the Town Center might transform over time. Individual buildings shown are less important than consistent implementation of the Town Center guiding principles and conformance with any new zoning recommendations for the area. This report is intended to document the charrette week and refine the vision and illustrative material prepared during the charrette.

Following public reconfirmation of the illustrative plan, the guiding principles, and the related design material contained in this report, new zoning recommendations will be prepared that implements the citizens' endorsed long-term vision for the Simsbury Town Center.

SIMSBURY Town Center CHARRETTE

PUBLIC EVENTS

Sat, September 12

Hands-on Design Session

8:30 am - 12:30 pm

Simsbury Public Library

September 13 - 16

Open Design Studio

8:00 am - 9:00 pm

Simsbury Public Library

Mon, September 14

Drop-in Open House

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Simsbury Public Library

Wed, September 16

Closing Presentation

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Simsbury Public Library

Project funding provided by:

Town of Simsbury

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

CT Department of Environmental Protection

CT Office of Policy and Management

GET INVOLVED! COME JOIN US!

The Simsbury Town Center Charrette will have an important impact on the heart of your community. Please come and participate—your viewpoint is very important. This is your future, come help create it.

Additional Information

Phone: 860-658-3228

www.simsburycenter.blogspot.com

www.simsbury-ct.gov/charrette

Flyer advertising the Town Center charrette.

2. The Charrette

Approximately one month before the charrette, key members of the consultant team conducted a preliminary site visit. The purpose of the trip was to tour the Town (including the Town Center) and meet with key business owners, property owners, local residents, and Town staff, to get a sense of the objectives of the project. A public open house was held at Eno Hall to kick off the project, describe the charrette process, and to offer some initial “food for thought” from the consultant team.

A web site was prepared as a way to provide up-to-date project information and to solicit additional input (simsburycenter.blogspot.com). The web site continues to serve as a way to distribute project documents and photos, including copies of charrette material.

Starting Friday, September 11, through Wednesday September 16, a multi-disciplinary set of professionals participated in a design charrette that included community residents, affected stakeholders, and Town representatives.

The charrette was held at the Simsbury’s Public Library and was an unprecedented success. Throughout the week, over 500 people attended one or more of the public sessions. More than 185 people participated in the Saturday morning hands-on design session, approximately 105 people came to the Monday evening drop-in open house and over 150 attended the closing presentation. Another 90 people dropped by the design studio to offer additional input and check on the status of the planning work.

In spite of some potentially divergent viewpoints, local residents worked through areas of disagreement to produce an illustrative vision and master plan for the Town Center. The charrette concluded with a standing ovation, which should rightfully be shared by the Town’s planning staff for their hard efforts in pulling together the charrette.

Prior to the charrette, the Town staff spread the word about the charrette process by distributing printed brochures and posting public notices. Large signs encouraging residents to stop by were posted advertising the charrette.

DAY 1: FRIDAY



The charrette team arrived in Simsbury Friday afternoon, set up the charrette studio at the Library and toured the study area. The tour focused on the Town Center, photographs were taken and existing conditions documented. The group also toured other parts of Simsbury to gain a better understanding of the Town Center within the larger context of the community. A staff orientation was held and an initial meeting with the Economic Development Commission and Chamber of Commerce was conducted.

Hands-On Design Session

Early on Saturday morning, approximately 185 people gathered at the Simsbury Public Library to roll up their sleeves and play “planners for the day.” Following a

DAY 2: SATURDAY



brief introductory presentation and “food for thought,” participants gathered around tables, divided into 16 groups, each with a facilitator, to discuss their future for the Simsbury Town Center. The groups worked on large maps and drew diagrams and sketches to convey the character of the area today as well as describe what they would like to see in the future (the results from each table are presented at the end of this report). To conclude the session, a spokesperson from each group presented their group’s ideas to the larger group. Ideas and information from the session provided the foundation for the team’s design work through the week. The highlight of the session was Table 16, where students from Simsbury High School offered their enlightening view of the future of the

DAY 3: SUNDAY



Town Center. On Saturday afternoon, the charrette team worked through the maps the hands-on groups generated, consolidating issues and formalizing an initial set of planning principles and a land use plan that could be used to guide future development in the Town Center.

Open Design Studio

From Sunday through Wednesday, the charrette team worked on-site at the Library. The studio was open to the public each day and people were encouraged to drop in to see the work in progress, discuss the project, ask questions, and bring up new ideas for consideration. During the week, members of the charrette team met with stakeholder groups and technical specialists in order to gather

DAY 4: MONDAY



specific information, ask questions, and test applicability of plan concepts and ideas. Stakeholders included local business owners, Town officials, regional consultants, and ConnDOT.

Drop-In Open House

On Monday evening, the general public was invited back to Library for an informal Open House. The preliminary designs and drawings were pinned up around the studio. The purpose of the open house was to receive feedback on initial concepts and ideas before finalizing drawings. Participants toured the studio, met with members of the charrette team, asked questions, and offered additional ideas.

DAY 5: TUESDAY



Final Production

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the charrette team worked to finalize drawings and concepts. Team members finished maps, inked and rendered hand drawings, fine-tuned computer visualizations, and compiled economic data—all to be presented at the closing presentation.

Closing Presentation

On Wednesday evening, more than 150 people squeezed into the program room of the Library to watch the closing presentation of the charrette to see how the team fused the ideas presented at the hands-on session into an achievable vision for the Town Center. The team presented a summary of the week's events and displayed

DAY 6: WEDNESDAY



work products including a large illustrative master plan, and “before” and “after” computer visualizations of proposed changes to Hopmeadow Street, Station Street, and Wilcox Street. After the presentation, participants were encouraged to review the plans and offer further suggestions and input on draft concepts, which were on display throughout the room.

Common Issues

The goal of the charrette was to identify issues and problems with the Town Center today as well as opportunities for the future. Throughout the week, the team paid careful attention to comments and ideas. From this input, the team noted patterns and commonalities which had been brought up frequently. During the week and throughout the various sessions held, the response that participants produced was remarkably consistent. Of the many ideas expressed throughout the week, the most widely shared included:

Housing

- Attract more people to live downtown.
- Provide a greater variety of housing choice downtown.

Crossings & Connections

- Difficult to cross Hopmeadow on foot, need better pedestrian connections between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse.
- Encourage a “park once” environment, make it easier to walk from shopping center to shopping center.
- Provide better connections from downtown to Simsbury Meadows and the Farmington River.
- Improve pedestrian connections between downtown the established adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Activity

- Encourage and foster pedestrian activity downtown, need more foot traffic at street level.
- Allow for more mixed use activity, encourage residential uses above stores and offices throughout downtown.

Pedestrians & Bikes

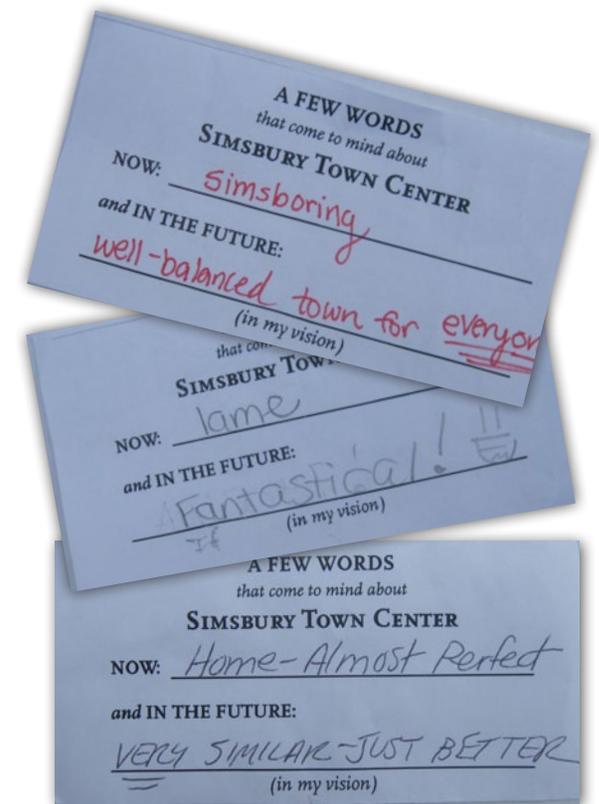
- Change the character of Hopmeadow from a high speed thoroughfare to a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly street.
- Provide a more pedestrian- and bike-friendly environment, wider sidewalks, tree-lined streets, consistent streetscape elements.
- Front development on Iron Horse, no more “back of house” activity facing Iron Horse.

Character & Preservation

- Maintain existing open, green feeling along Hopmeadow.
- Iron Horse can be different in character from Hopmeadow, buildings pulled up closer to the street, contemporary architecture
- Protect existing open space, views, vistas and environmental features.
- Embrace the natural environment, promote and protect Simsbury Meadows and the Farmington River.

Wayfinding

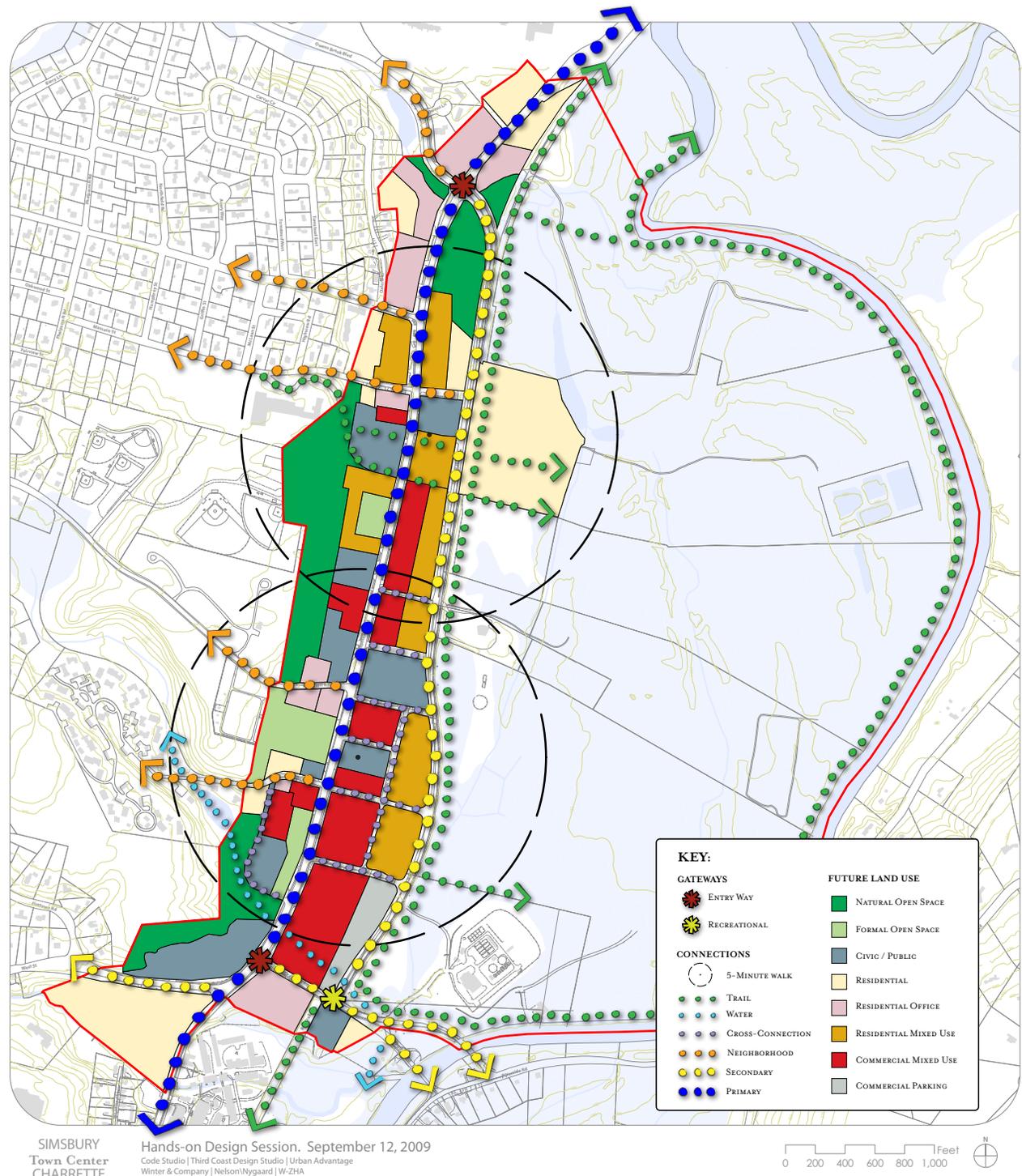
- Improve wayfinding signage to available parking and existing business and services.
- Improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and movement, all one-way streets should become two-way.



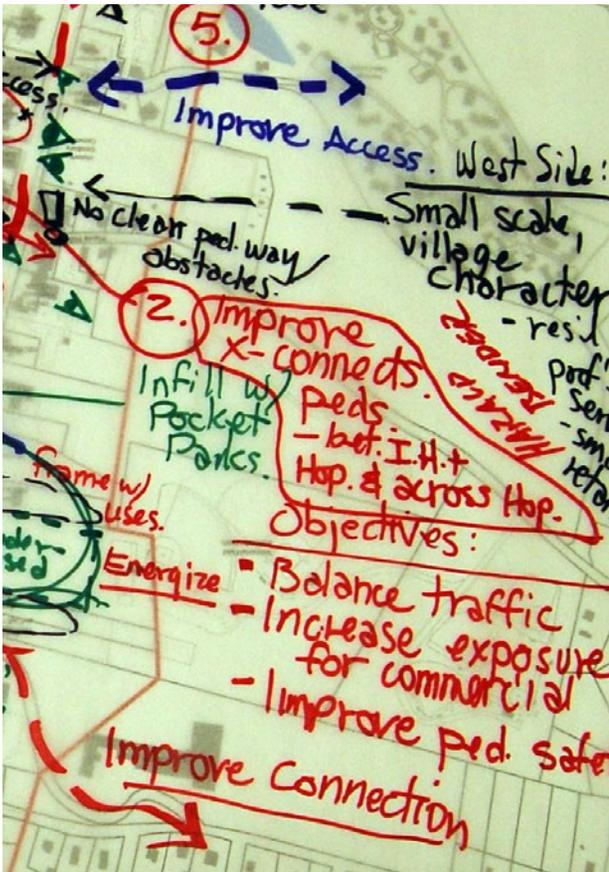
Selection of comment cards filled out by charrette participants.

Conceptual Framework Map

At the conclusion of the hands-on session and before the Monday evening open house, a conceptual framework map was prepared by the charrette team. The map was the first step in establishing parameters for the design work to follow and included a preliminary analysis of appropriate future land uses and connections in and around the Town Center.



Selected photos from the hands-on session.



3. Preliminary Analysis

A preliminary analysis of the Town Center was conducted using GIS data obtained from NewEngland Geosystems (NEGS), AutoCAD files from the Town, and on-the-ground field work. The analysis was used by the consultant team to gain a better understanding of Simsbury and the surrounding area and to inform planning and design decisions as they relate to the future of the Town Center. GIS analysis maps and photographs documenting existing conditions are shown on the following pages. Maps generated include:

- Topography;
- Natural Features;
- Land Use;
- Zoning;
- Building Footprints;
- Block Configuration; and
- Street Network.

During the charrette, the consultant team conducted additional on-site analyses, measuring streets, analyzing pedestrian, bicyclist, and driver behavior and movement patterns, identifying redevelopment opportunities, and examining physical constraints such as steep slopes and un-buildable open space.

Members of the consultant team toured the local area and visited regional examples of walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use areas including Avon, West Hartford, Tariffville, and Weatogue. This first-hand, on-the-ground analysis helped the team gain a stronger understanding of local history and tradition. To gain a true appreciation for the natural environment, team members also canoed the downtown portion of the Farmington River.

Existing Conditions

Photos highlighting some of the existing challenges facing the Town Center.

Traffic



Looking north along Hopmeadow at St. Mary's Catholic Church. Narrow sidewalk, missing street trees.

Walkability



Looking south along Iron Horse at Pent Road. Sidewalk missing along entire west side of Iron Horse.

Visibility



Backside of Andy's Plaza. Under-utilized retail space due to poor visibility from Iron Horse.



Looking north along Hopmeadow at the Cemetery. Informal narrow, asphalt sidewalk abutting street edge, missing street trees.



Looking west along Massaco at Hopmeadow. Sidewalk missing on both sides of the street.



Behind Simsbury Town Shops. Garbage and recycling visible from Iron Horse.

Connections



Look east across parking lot adjacent to ice cream shop. Missing pedestrian connection to Iron Horse.



Drake Hill Mall. Deteriorating pedestrian connection between shopping center and commuter parking lot.

Land Use



Look east at Simscoft-Echo Farms from Iron Horse. Industrial use adjacent to protected natural open space.



Andy's Plaza. Example of a site that lacks a mix of uses, defined by a sea of parking.

Nature



Looking east across Simsbury Meadows. Downtown lacks a "real" connection to this tremendous asset.



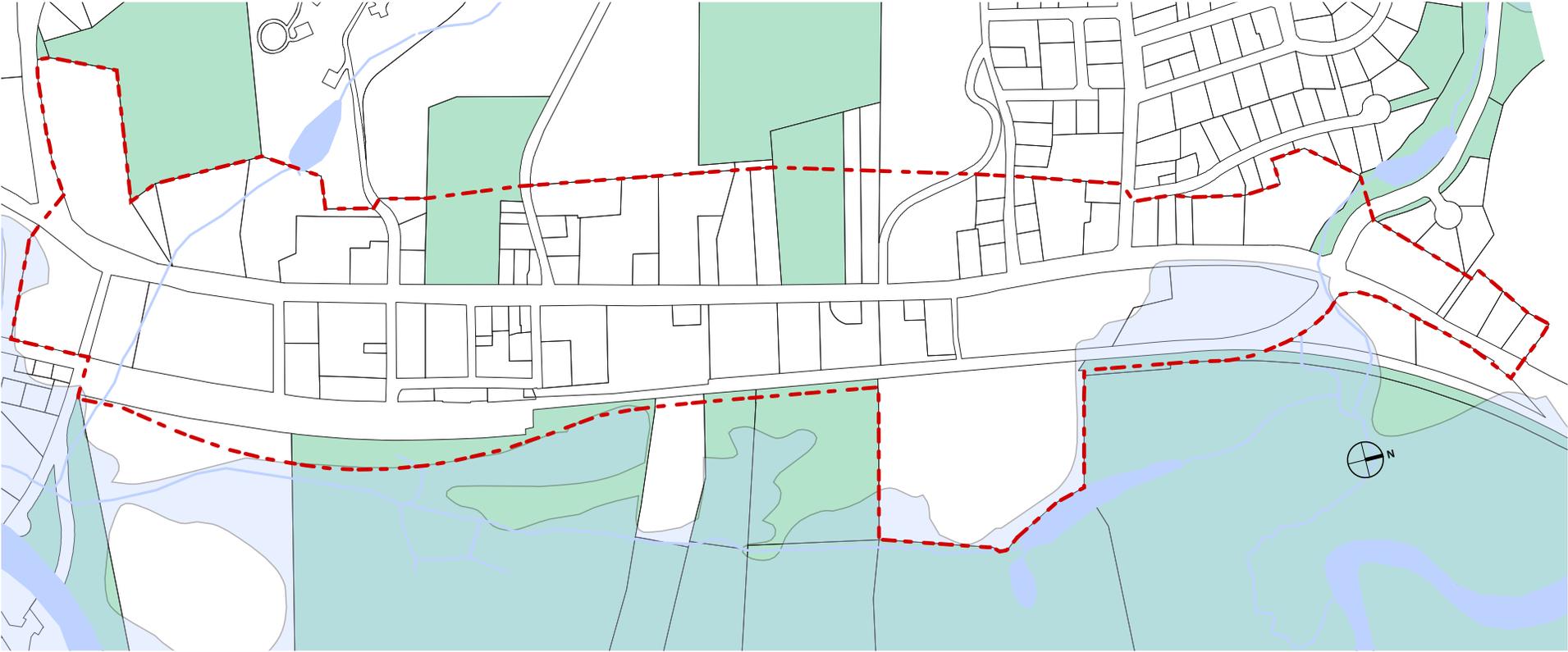
Floating down the Farmington River, an under-appreciated asset with inherent appeal due to its natural beauty.

Topography



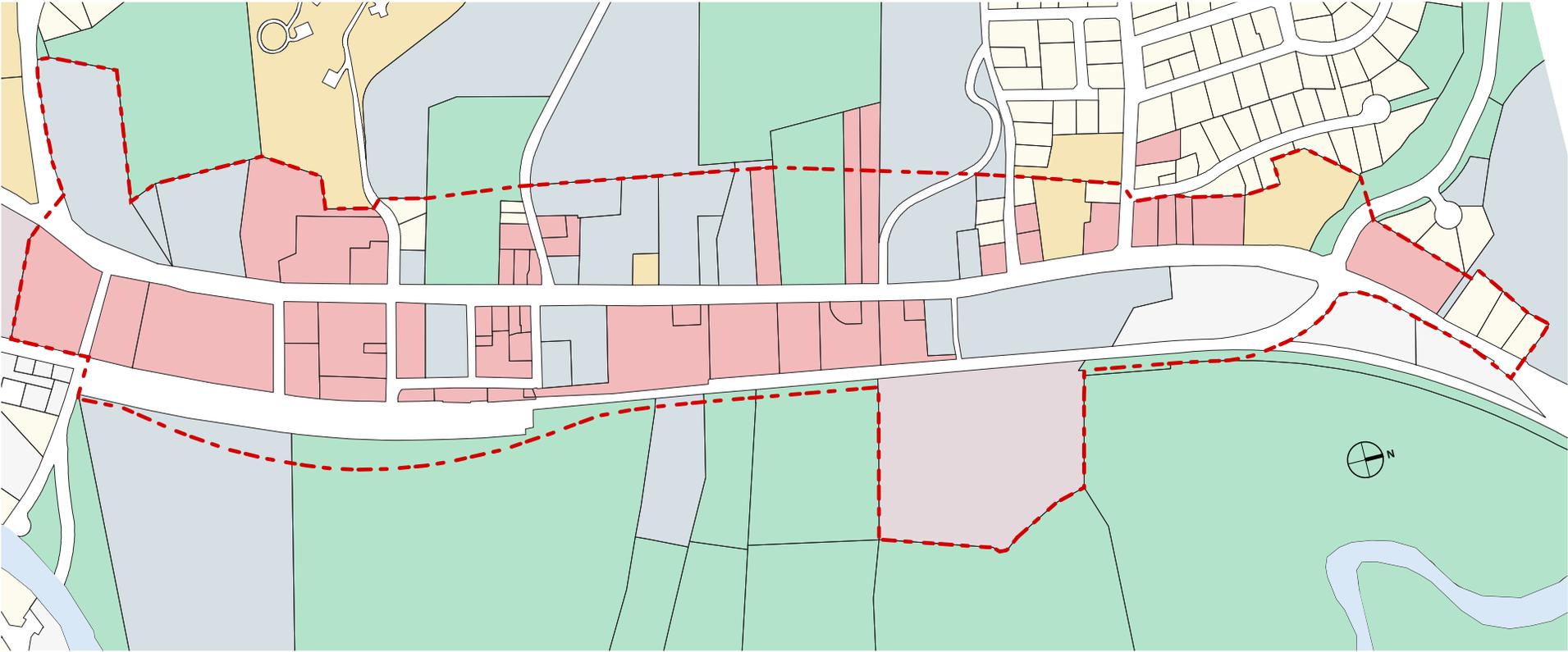
- 10 ft Contour
- - - Study area

Natural Features



- Light blue square: Floodplain
- Dark blue square: Open water
- Green square: Open space
- Red dashed line: Study area

Existing Land Use



- Single-family
- Multifamily
- Business / office
- Industrial
- Government / public
- Open space
- Vacant
- Study area

Current Zoning

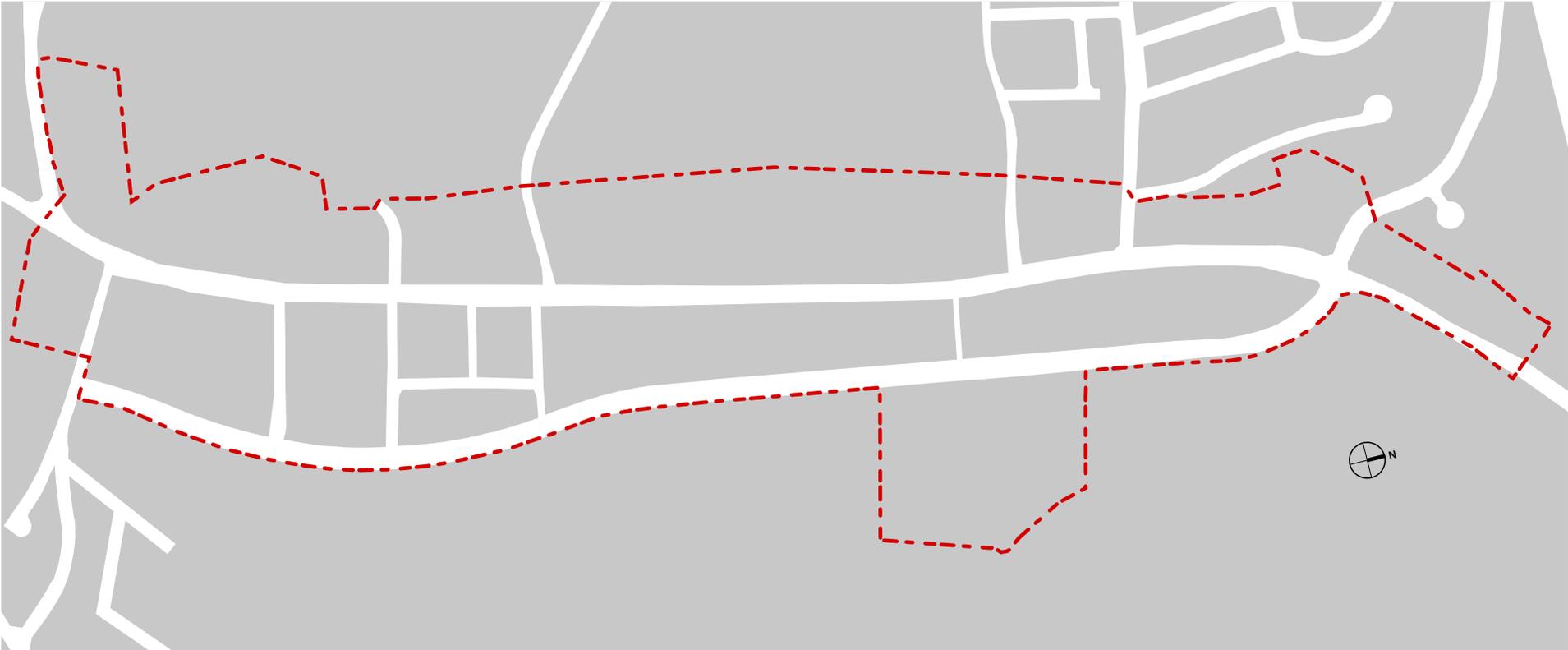


- CZ, R15, R160, R25, R30,
R40, R40 OS, R80, R80 OS
- SCZA, SCZB, SCZC, SCZD
- RD
- B1, B2, B3, PO
- I1, I2, I3
- Study area

Building Footprints

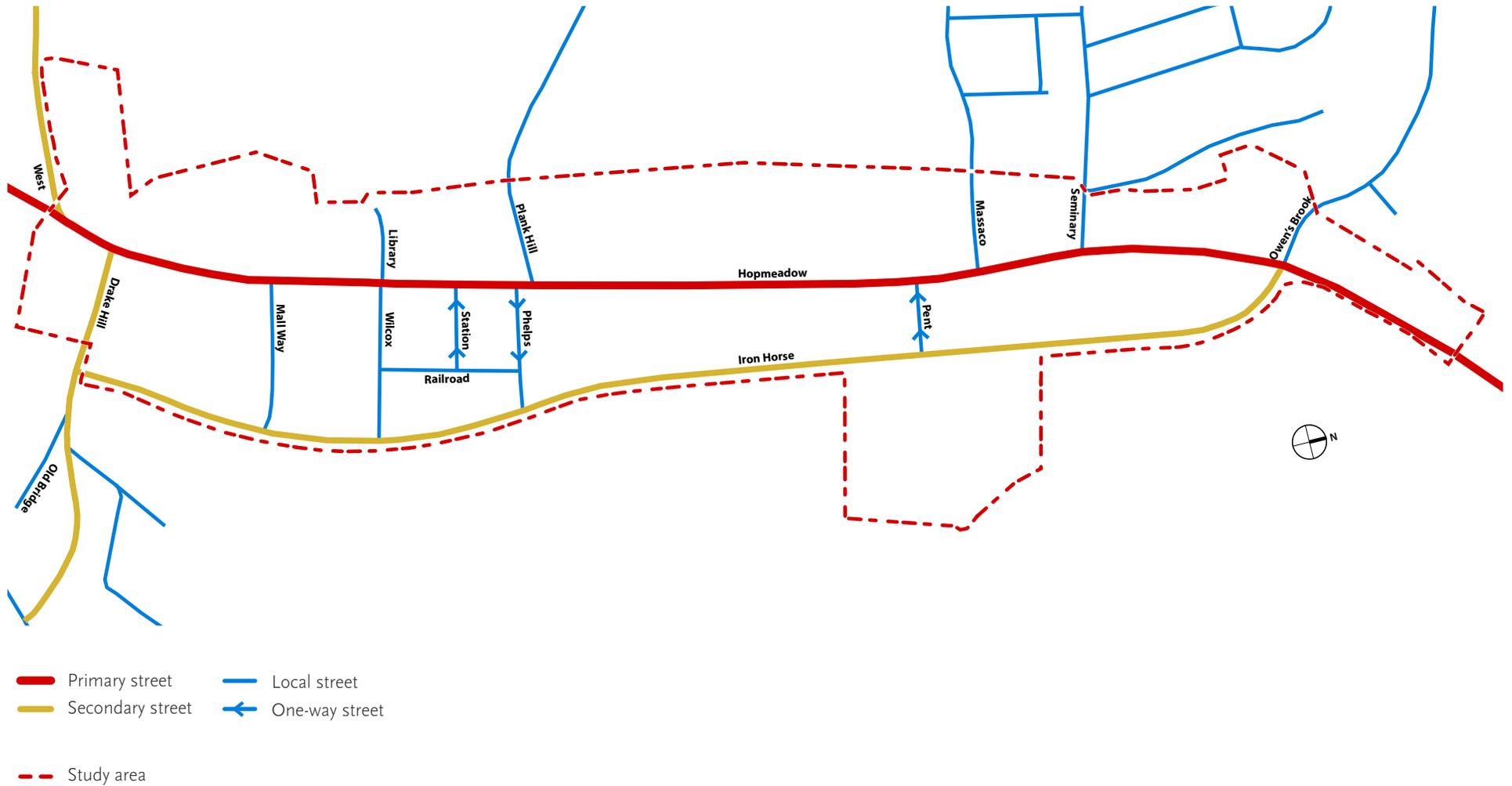


Existing Block Configuration



--- Study area

Existing Street Network



Economic Snapshot

The future development of the Town Center will rely heavily on private market investments. As part of the charrette process, an economist worked to prepare an economic and demographic snapshot to allow the design team to understand what kinds of economic (market) opportunities were feasible.

Demographics

The current population of Simsbury is 23,670, which includes 8,760 households. Simsbury is one-third the size of West Hartford, which has a population of approximately 63,000. This is critical when thinking about the buying power of the surrounding area, and how much residential and retail development it can support. The population of neighboring Avon and Bloomfield is very similar to that of Simsbury's, approximately 17,000 and 19,500 respectively.

Simsbury has a median income of \$98,000, and an average income of \$128,720. Nearby West Hartford has a median income of only \$73,400, leading to greater buying power in Simsbury. Simsbury's median age is 42, which is higher than many communities. This would typically also translate to a more educated and higher earning population.

Simsbury provides a very stable market, with 77% of all households being family households, and 84% homeowners, leaving only a modest population of renters.

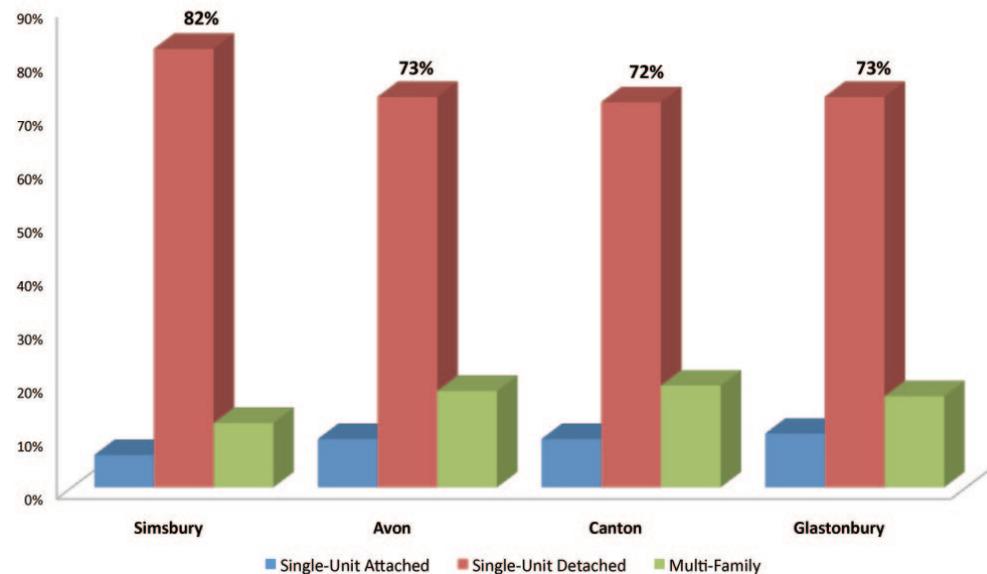
Residential

Although 88% of Simsbury's property value is residential, only one percent of current development in the Town Center is residential and only one percent of Simsbury households are located in the Town Center. Hopmeadow Place, a complex where residents must be over 55, is the only new multifamily complex in the Town. There are 57 units in Hopmeadow Place, and the cost of a recent rental in September 2009 was \$1,400 per month.

Current rental conditions can be understood in a regional context. There are 34,140 households in the Farmington Valley and only 56 rental units are currently available, or 0.16% of the total. In Simsbury, there are 8,760 house-

holds and 12 residential units on the market, or 0.1% of the total. Of the Simsbury rentals, eight are single-family houses, three are townhouses and one is in a multi-family building with four units.

Untapped markets exist for certain housing products including multi-family, townhouse and cottage. Main target markets for these products are young households, single parents and empty nesters. Distinct architectural design can be used to distinguish housing and make it unique. Nearby Avon, Canton and Glastonbury combined currently provide about 73% of their housing units in single-family detached units. This figure is 82% in Sims-



Dominance of Single-Family Detached Residential Units

bury, providing a significant opportunity for multifamily housing. The Town center contains a number of sites appropriate for additional multifamily or mixed housing products, including especially the Simscroft-Echo Farms site.

Owner-occupied product is feasible in this marketplace. However, for renter-occupied units, high costs of development and land costs are a major obstacle. Residents create \$7,500 to \$15,000 per year in retail spending near their homes, a vital reinforcement for commercial uses in the area.

Retail

There are approximately 185,000 square feet of retail space in the Simsbury Town Center. As of the date of the charrette, visible and functional retail space typically commands \$25 per square foot NNN (triple net, including taxes, insurance, and maintenance). Simsbury has mostly Class B/C retail spaces, many of which have strange layouts, poor visibility, and challenging access. Between blocks, there is a poor shopping environment. The linear form of development in the Town Center is an obstacle for walkability.

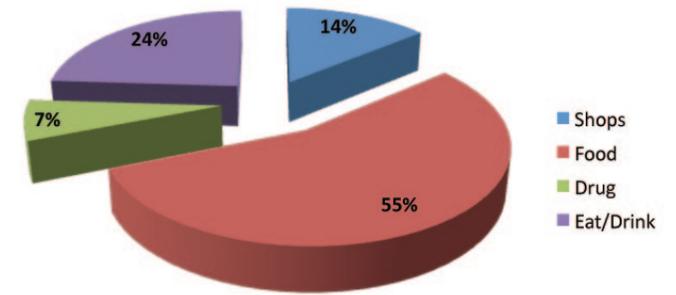
Penetration rates are adequate for a convenience location and there is high degree of patron loyalty. However, there is a lack of quality in the shopping environment and retail

space which is difficult to understand given the community's demographics discussed above. Simsbury Town Center does not compete with Route 44 and occupies a different niche. Instead of chain stores, the Town Center has boutiques with independent, specialty operators. Considering this, there is an untapped market in the specialty shoppers goods market. There is an opportunity for high end boutiques such as arts galleries, cafes, restaurants, florists and toy shops. Concentrating storefronts in pedestrian-friendly environment would significantly improve the retail environment.

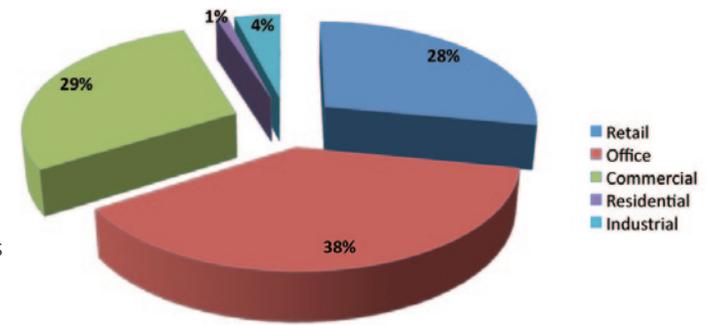
Office

There are currently 125,000 square feet of office space in the Town Center. The price of office space ranges between \$16 and \$18 dollars per square foot. Most offices are full-service, located in quirky spaces. Primary Town Center office occupants are medical and professional service tenants.

Small office condominiums represent an untapped market in the Town Center. Offices can be housed in townhouses of 1,200 square feet. Medical and professional tenants are attracted to mixed-use environments. A total of 20,000-30,000 square feet of office could be built. Anticipated net rent would be in the mid-\$20's, possibly more for resident/owner projects. Due to the Town



Current Distribution of Retail Uses (SF)



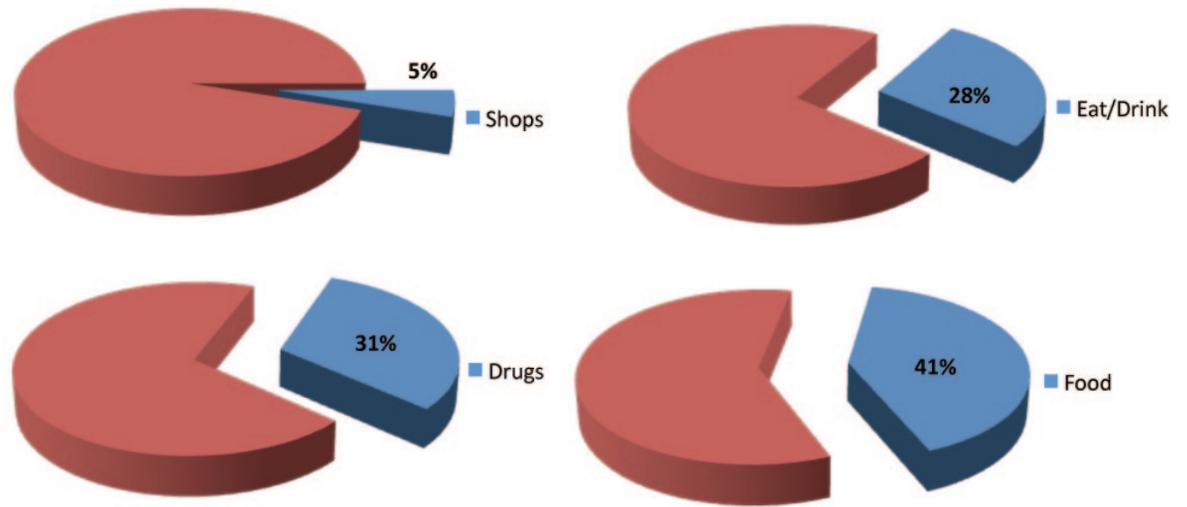
Current Distribution of All Town Center Uses (SF)

Center's unique location, little market competition for the right tenants is expected. Office workers create \$3,500 per year in retail spending near their workplace. This is substantially lower than residents, but does contribute to the overall economy.

The Town Center has a great opportunity to capture a larger percentage of the Town's spending. Only 5% of the estimated average spending on shopping (items such as clothing, for example) is served in the current Town Center. The center's greatest opportunity is to capitalize on the desires of the existing population, targeting needs for which residents currently travel to adjacent communities.

Conclusions

In the Town Center, there is no shortage of demand for housing, retail and office space, but rather a lack of supply. The economic niche is that of an 18-hour, boutique focused, mixed-use area with people living and working in the Town Center. Promote small buildings, distinctive design, upscale positioning, affordability via efficient design (as opposed to low quality materials or space), and higher density. The primary target markets are empty nesters, retirees and young professionals. A pilot project is suggested to aid implementation efforts – a publicly-owned parking lot redevelopment could to establish new standard.



Current Town Center Capture of Estimated Retail Demand

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4. Town Center Vision

The vision for the Simsbury Town Center foresees a transformation from an auto-oriented center into a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use area complemented by street-oriented buildings and tree-lined streets. This chapter provides an overview of the guiding principles and the illustration of one possible physical vision for the Simsbury Town Center.

The following pages include numerous drawings and computer visualizations that were produced by the design team. They represent the work to capture what Simsbury residents said that they wanted for their Town Center. The hope is that these images will inspire individuals (and the Town leadership) with an idea of “what could be” when there is a common vision in hand for an area. The illustrations and visualizations incorporate many of the ideas heard and feedback received during the charrette week. Ideas, insights, input, and feedback was gathered from residents, stakeholders, business

owners, staff, local precedents, and regional influences. The individual placement of buildings and streetscape elements are less important than the concepts that they convey. The vision for the Simsbury Town Center is intended to allow for creative and imaginative implementation by individual property owners. Specific drawings and computer visualizations are for illustrative purposes only, showing one way in which the Town Center could redevelop over an extended period of time.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles promote a vibrant, urban neighborhood—a location where a variety of activities are possible, including living, working, shopping and playing all within close proximity—for people at varied stages in life and of diverse economic means. While the automobile should be accommodated, most of the basic activities of daily life should be available within a safe and comfortable walking distance.

Retain the Historic Character of Hopmeadow

- Maintain and enhance the existing open, green feeling along Hopmeadow.
- New structures and additions should evoke the historic residential character.
- Small footprint infill is preferred over large-scale redevelopment.
- Opportunities for additional height using existing topography.

Slow Traffic Down on Hopmeadow

- Add on-street parking where possible, with bump-outs at key intersections.
- Enhance pedestrian crossings.
- Replant missing street trees.
- Reduce width of travel lanes.
- Provide adequate pedestrian lighting.

Redevelop the West side of Iron Horse

- Iron Horse can differ in character from Hopmeadow.
- Focus on residential development, allow mixed use at corners.
- Build up to the street.
- Add a sidewalk along entire length.

Improve Access between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse

- More cross-streets, enhance pedestrian connections.
- Safer, wider sidewalks on existing streets, in parking areas and between buildings.
- Pull buildings up on east/west streets.
- Not every location in the center can be retail, concentrate retail activity in appropriate locations.
- Make Station and Phelps two-way streets.

Improve Parking Opportunities

- Employ a “park-once” strategy.
- Make it easier to walk between parking areas.
- Improve cross-access between existing businesses.
- Develop new parking in locations screened by buildings.
- Make it easier to share parking between uses.

Provide Wayfinding for Parking Access

- Take advantage of grade change to provide decked parking where feasible.
- Redevelop the under-utilized state parking lots, retain the commuter parking lot.
- Ensure safe parking for special events, look for additional non-pervious ways to accommodate event parking at Simsbury Meadows.

Focus on Form, Not Use

- Ensure the right character of development in the right place.
- Limit heights along Hopmeadow to 2½ stories, allow taller buildings on Iron Horse.
- Continue to limit height near Eno Hall.
- Best walkable (retail) streets will be east/west streets.
- Limit surface parking between buildings and street.
- Screen or wrap parking decks.

Promote & Preserve Diversity: Mix Uses, Mix Incomes

- Designate areas that allow a mix of uses by right.
- Provide opportunities for housing choice and variety: upper-story residential, townhouses, apartments.
- Improve and enhance existing pocket parks and civic space.

New Residential Community

- Redevelop the Simscroft-Echo Farms site.
- Residential development only.
- Maintain vegetated buffer along Iron Horse.
- Park Street along outside of development that protects and enhances views to Simsbury Meadows.
- Promote multiple types of housing; townhouse, courtyards, apartments.

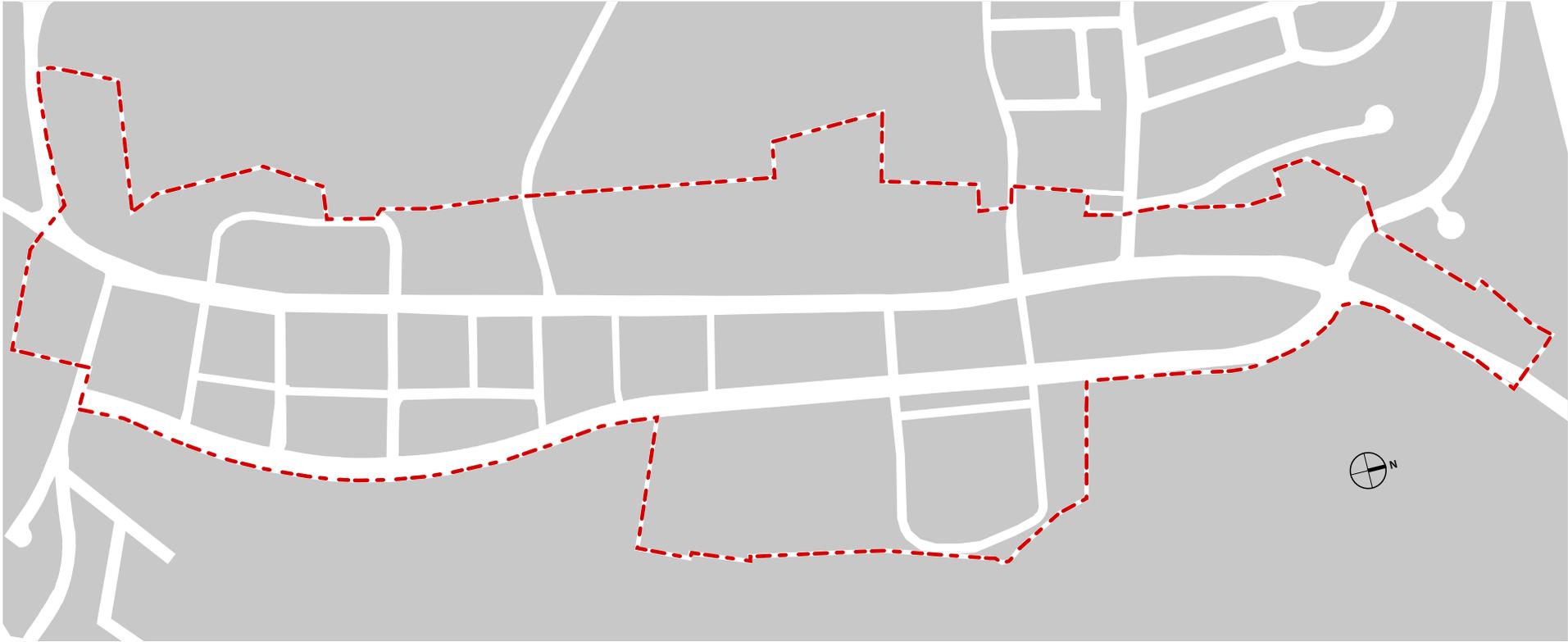
Use Stormwater as an Amenity

- Create planned pond south of the library.
- Clean up pond at the northern end of the study area between Iron Horse and Hopmeadow.
- Avoid piping or otherwise hiding creeks or drainage.
- Use a natural systems approach to managing stormwater.

Embrace the Natural Environment

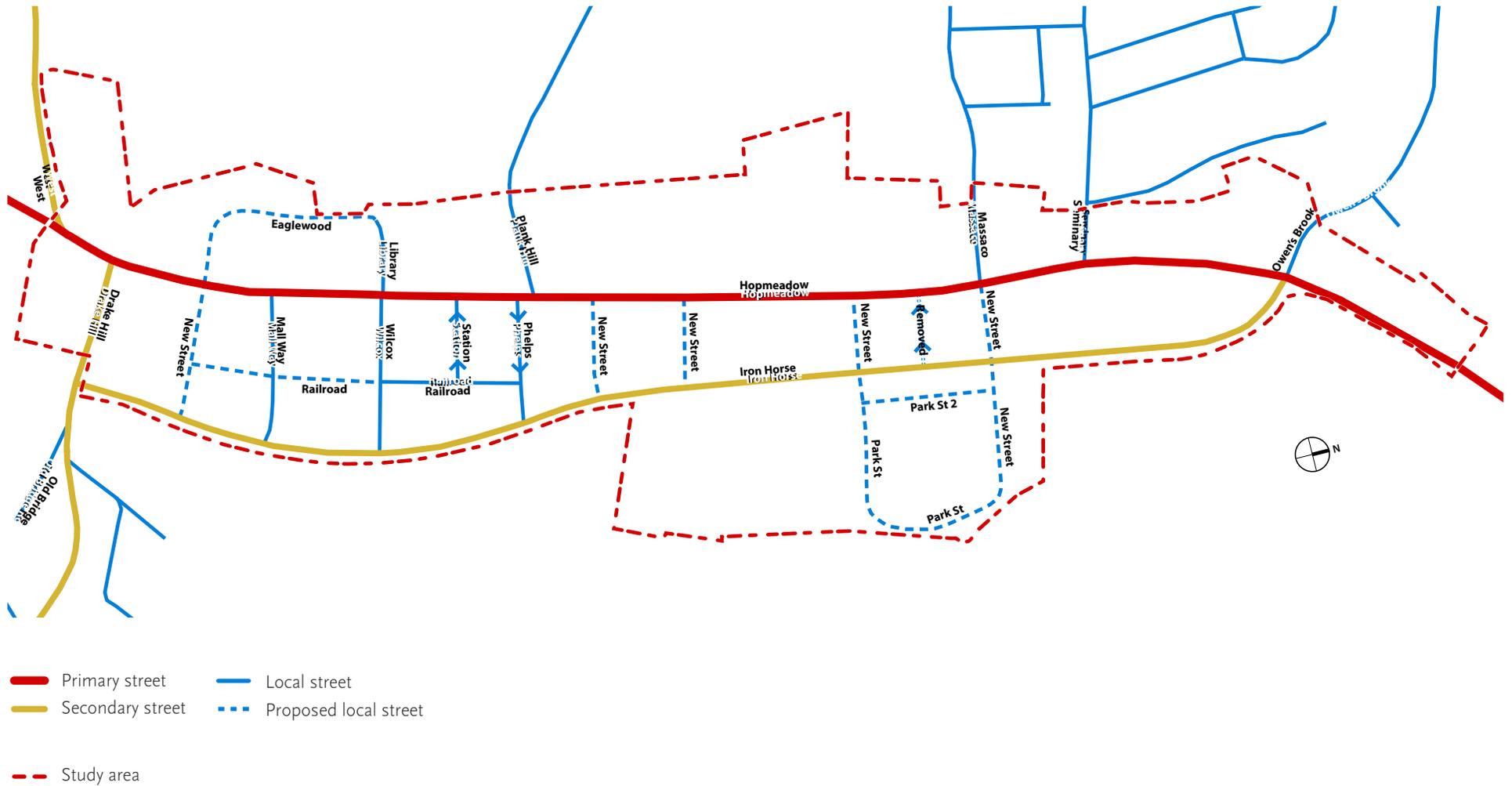
- Protect existing views and vistas.
- Connect the Town Center to Simsbury Meadows and the river.
- Preserve existing open space and natural features.
- Screen active recreational uses.

Proposed Block Configuration

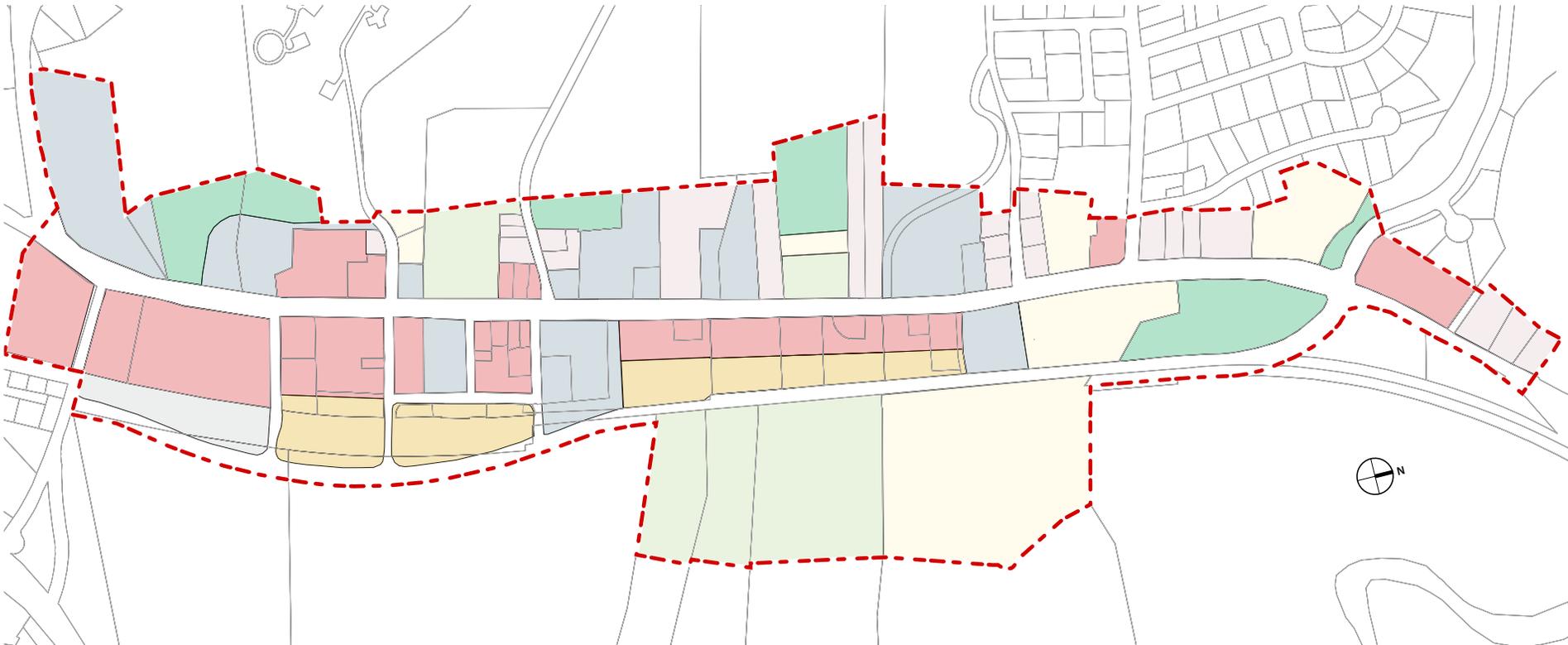


--- Study area

Proposed Street Network

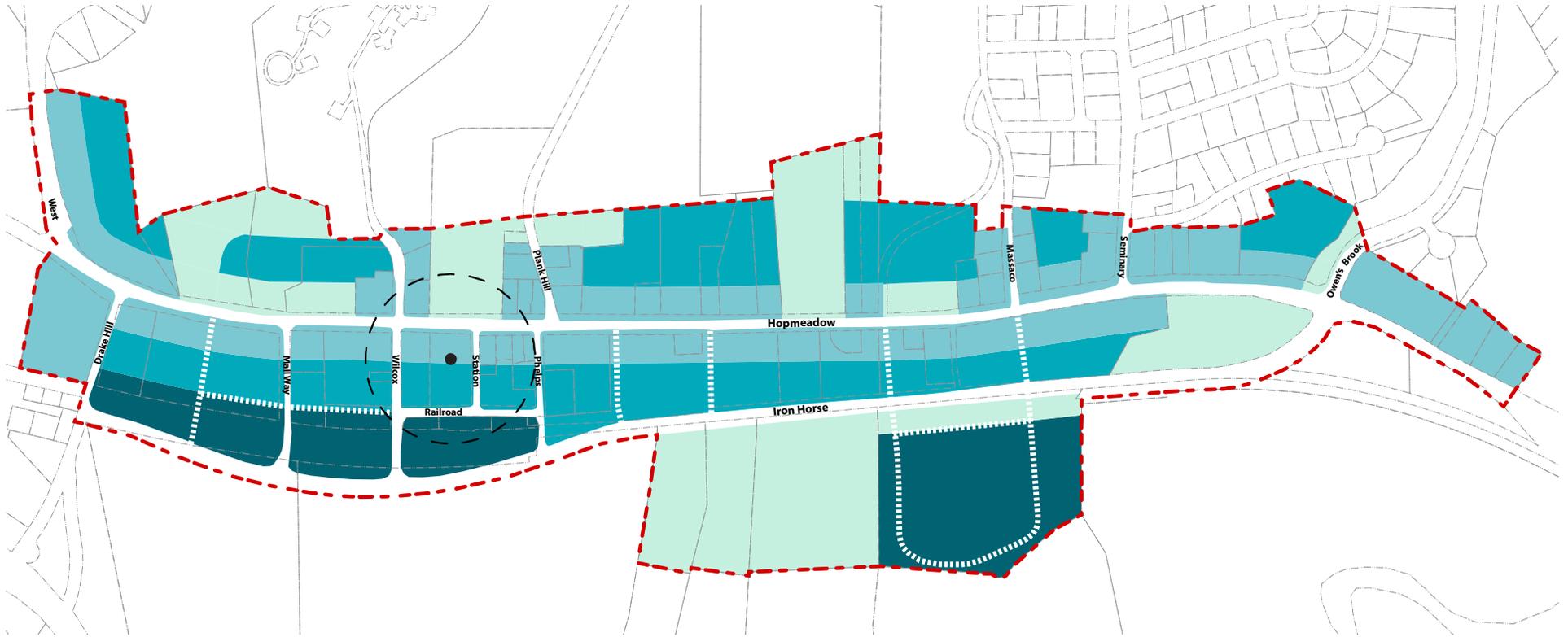


Proposed Land Use



- Natural Open Space
 - Formal Open Space
 - Civic / Public
 - Residential
 - Residential Office
 - Residential Mixed Use
 - Commercial Mixed Use
 - Parking
- Study area

Proposed Height Limits



- Open 0 stories
- Max 2.5 stories
- Max 3.5 stories
- Max 4 stories
- Study area
- No structure within 375 feet of Eno Hall may be taller than the main structure of the Hall.
- Proposed street

Buildings to be Protected



- Protected buildings
- Unprotected building (within study area only)
- Study area

Illustrative Master Plan



Drake Hill to Wilcox



- (A)** New welcome center and tourist information hub.
- (B)** New bank with drive-thru, screened by signature corner building, gateway to downtown.
- (C)** Existing commuter parking lot retained.
- (D)** Stormwater pond based on original library plan. Allows for ice skating in winter. New connection to church.
- (E)** Existing shopping center reconfigured. Opportunity for new grocery with office or residential above. New street connects Hopmeadow to Iron Horse and library.
- (F)** To improve connectivity, formalize driveway as a street.
- (G)** Building setbacks create a consistent street edge along Iron Horse. New sidewalk added on west side of street. Parking screened behind buildings.
- (H)** New extension of Railroad to the south. Opportunity for small office condos or live/work units.
- (I)** Liner building screening parking lots. Deeper building setbacks preserve green, open feeling along Hopmeadow. Parking eliminated between buildings and street.
- (J)** New residential with corner retail wrapping shared parking structure.
- (K)** Wilcox designated as a key retail street.

-  New building
-  Existing building
-  Parking structure

Hopmeadow: Before & After



EXISTING CONDITIONS. Looking south along Hopmeadow across from the fire station.



WALKABILITY. Electric lines buried and poles removed, driveway closed, bump outs added, street trees planted and pedestrian-scaled street lighting installed. On-street parking formalized.

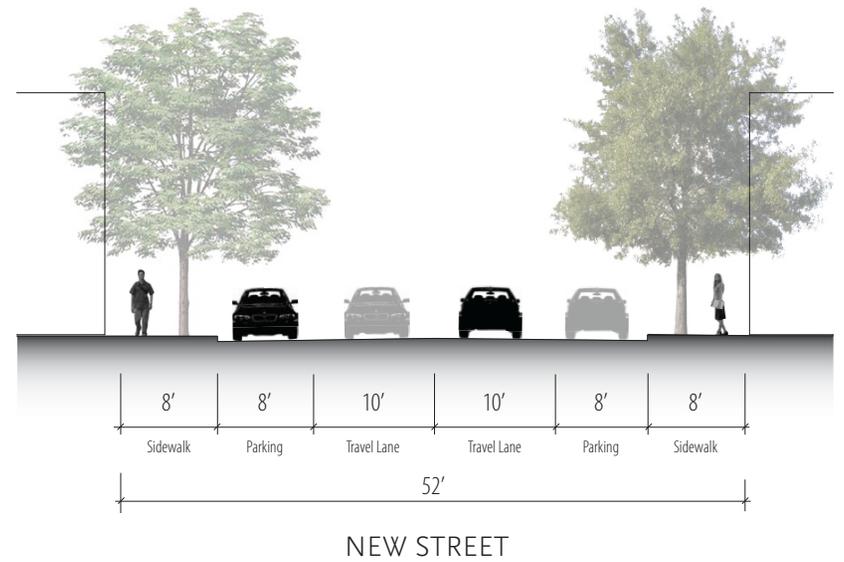
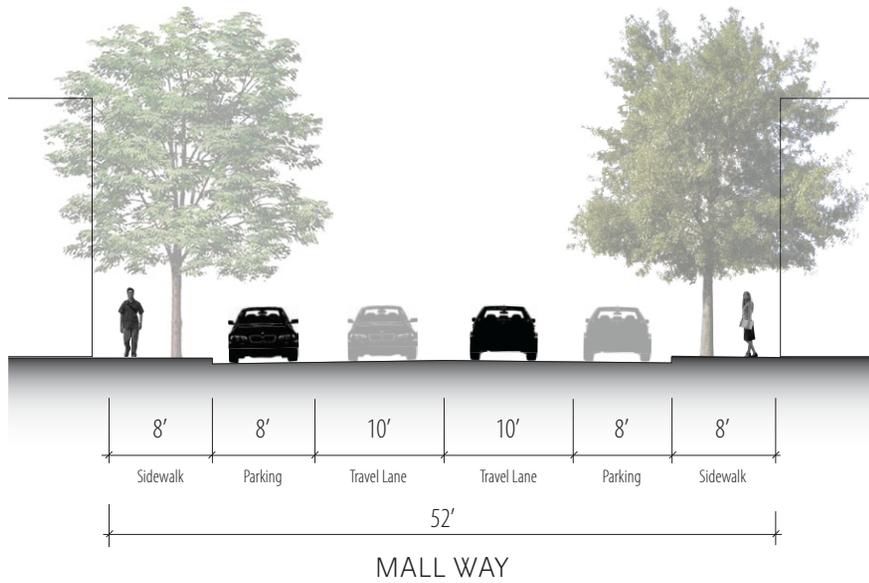
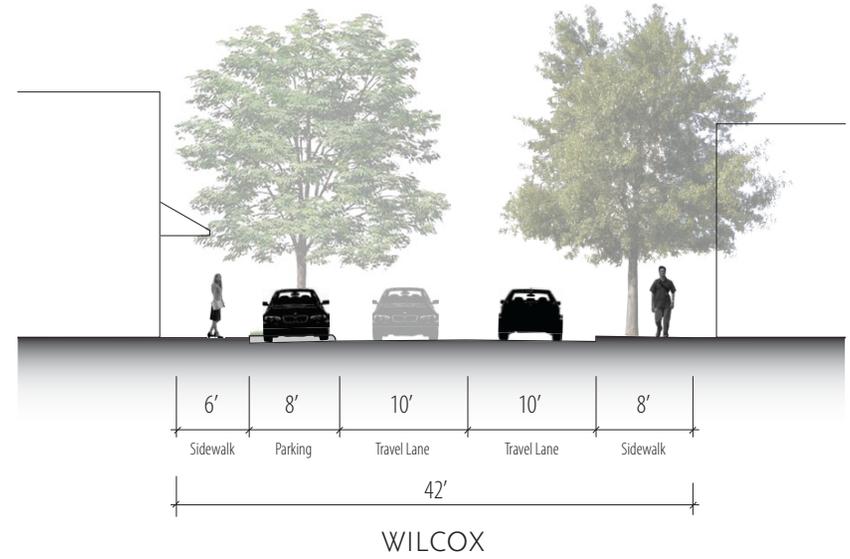
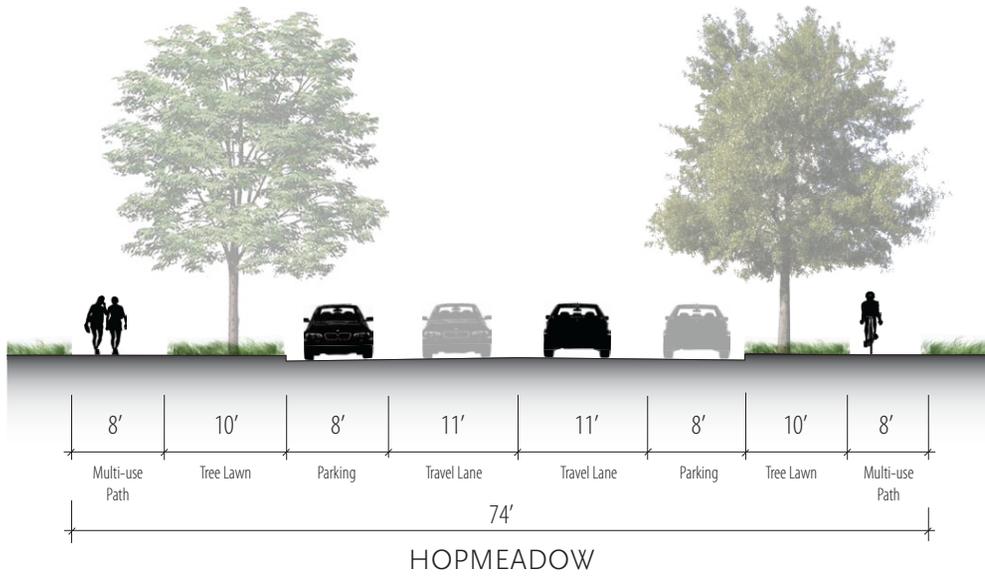


INFILL. Sidewalk widened to allow bicycles. New buildings added that mimic the historic character of Hopmeadow.



COMPATIBILITY. New residential or office building replaces existing AT&T building. Articulation of large building through use of central courtyard improves compatibility of new development.

Proposed Street Cross-Sections



Wilcox: Before & After



EXISTING CONDITIONS. Looking across Iron Horse across towards Wilcox.



WALKABILITY. Sidewalks installed on both sides of all streets, bump outs added, street trees planted and pedestrian-scaled street lighting installed. On-street parking formalized.



INFILL. New residential pulled up to the street, corner anchored with ground floor retail. Outdoor dining and shopfronts extend along Wilcox.



ARCHITECTURE. Architecture on Hopmeadow should respect the existing historic character. Iron Horse provides an opportunity to do something different. This image shows a new building reminiscent of a converted mill.

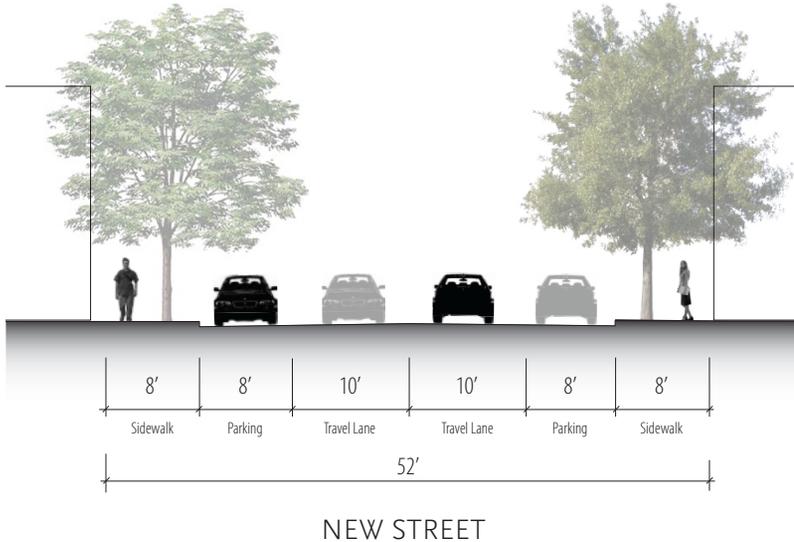
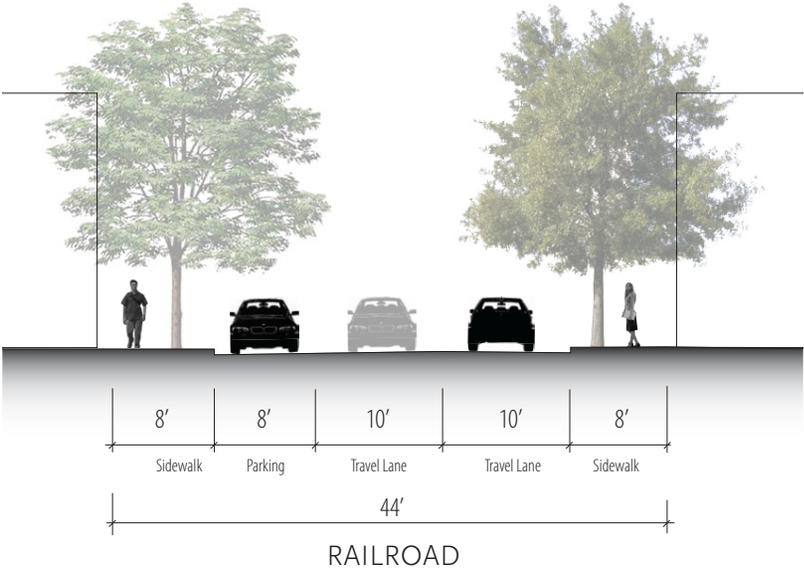
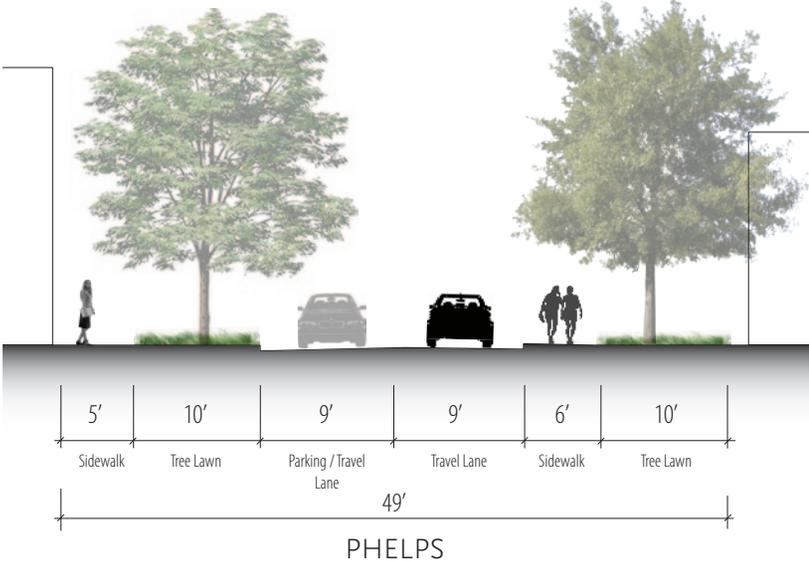
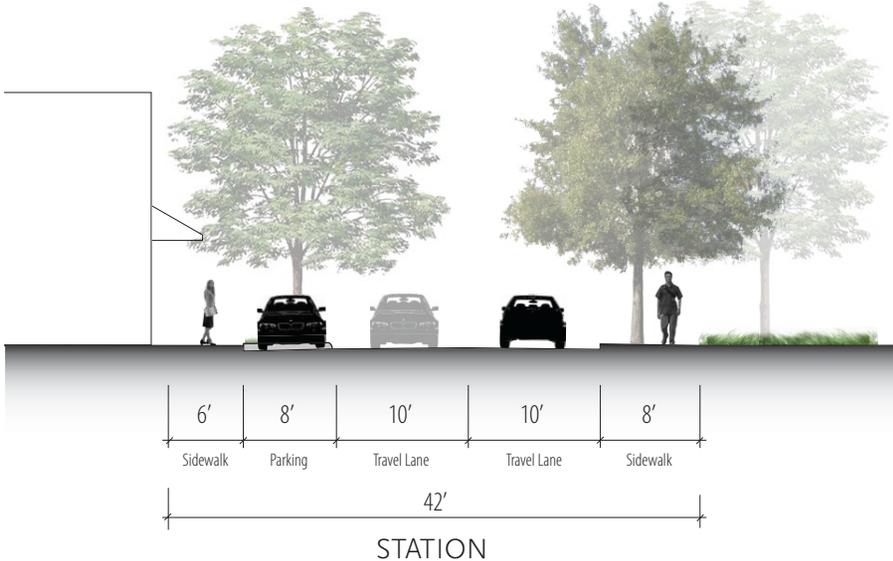
Wilcox to Schultz Park



- (A)** New residential with corner retail. With the exception of corner sites, Iron Horse is primarily residential in character.
- (B)** Parking structure added to rear of Eno Hall, incorporates ground level entrance into building, senior center above.
- (C)** Station becomes two-way, sidewalk widened, on-street parking added and street trees planted.
- (D)** Shared surface parking serves surrounding buildings.
- (E)** Parking eliminated between buildings and street.
- (F)** Phelps becomes a two-way yield street with a shared parking/travel lane.
- (G)** Improve to allow for more frequent parking and to accommodate special events.
- (H)** New street links Iron Horse to Hopmeadow, improves visibility to Phelps Tavern Museum.
- (I)** Reconfigure existing shopping center and replace gas station with mixed use development.
- (J)** Upgrade driveway to a street, improves access between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse.
- (K)** New residential development on vacant land behind funeral home.
- (L)** Townhouses overlooking park, resulting in improved access and visibility. Topography allows for taller buildings tucked into hillside.

-  New building
-  Existing building
-  Parking structure

Proposed Street Cross-Sections



Station: Before & After



EXISTING CONDITIONS. Looking east down Station adjacent to Eno Hall. Station converted to a two-way street.



WALKABILITY. Electric lines buried and poles removed, sidewalk widened on south side of street, bump outs added, street trees planted and pedestrian-scale street lighting installed. On-street parking formalized (one side of the street only).



INFILL. Buildings added to fill in the gaps. Parking structure with senior center added to rear of Eno Hall; incorporates ground level entrance into building.



VISTA. Existing hardware store replaced with building terminating vista

Schultz Park to Seminary



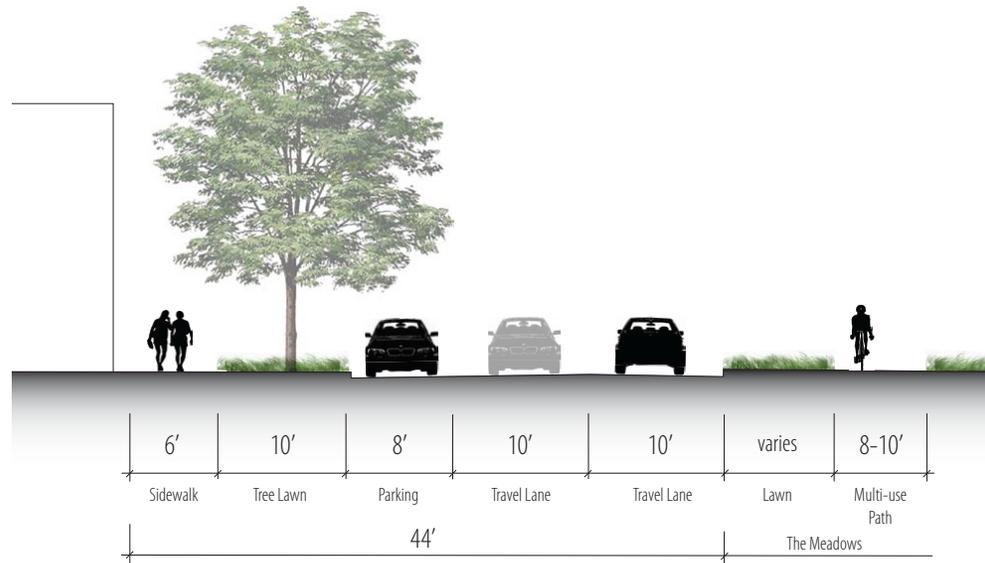
- Ⓐ New residential infill on vacant land behind ice cream shop. Grade change allows for shared structured parking with adjacent center.
- Ⓑ Liner buildings screen parking structure and mimic historic character present along Hopmeadow.
- Ⓒ Shopping center redeveloped to include a mix of higher intensity residential units. New street aligned with park street below, improves connectivity.
- Ⓓ New one-sided park street preserves view to Simsbury Meadows.
- Ⓔ Post office replaced, pedestrian way takes the place of Pent Road, enhances connectivity between elementary school and Simsbury Meadows.
- Ⓕ New mixed residential development replaces Simscroft-Echo Farms. Pedestrian spine runs through development, linking Simsbury Meadows to Town Center.
- Ⓖ Trailhead and parking area. Paths extend through Simsbury Meadows to river.
- Ⓗ Preserve green buffer along Iron Horse
- Ⓘ New civic building provides expansion space for Town Hall. Parking hidden behind.
- ⓵ New street aligned with Massaco, links Iron Horse and Hopmeadow.
- Ⓚ Multifamily residential project replaces St Mary's school.
- Ⓛ New office and residential buildings mimic the scale of original houses.

-  New building
-  Existing building
-  Parking structure

Precedent Images for Simsoft–Echo Farms



Park Street Cross-section



Seminary to Westminster School

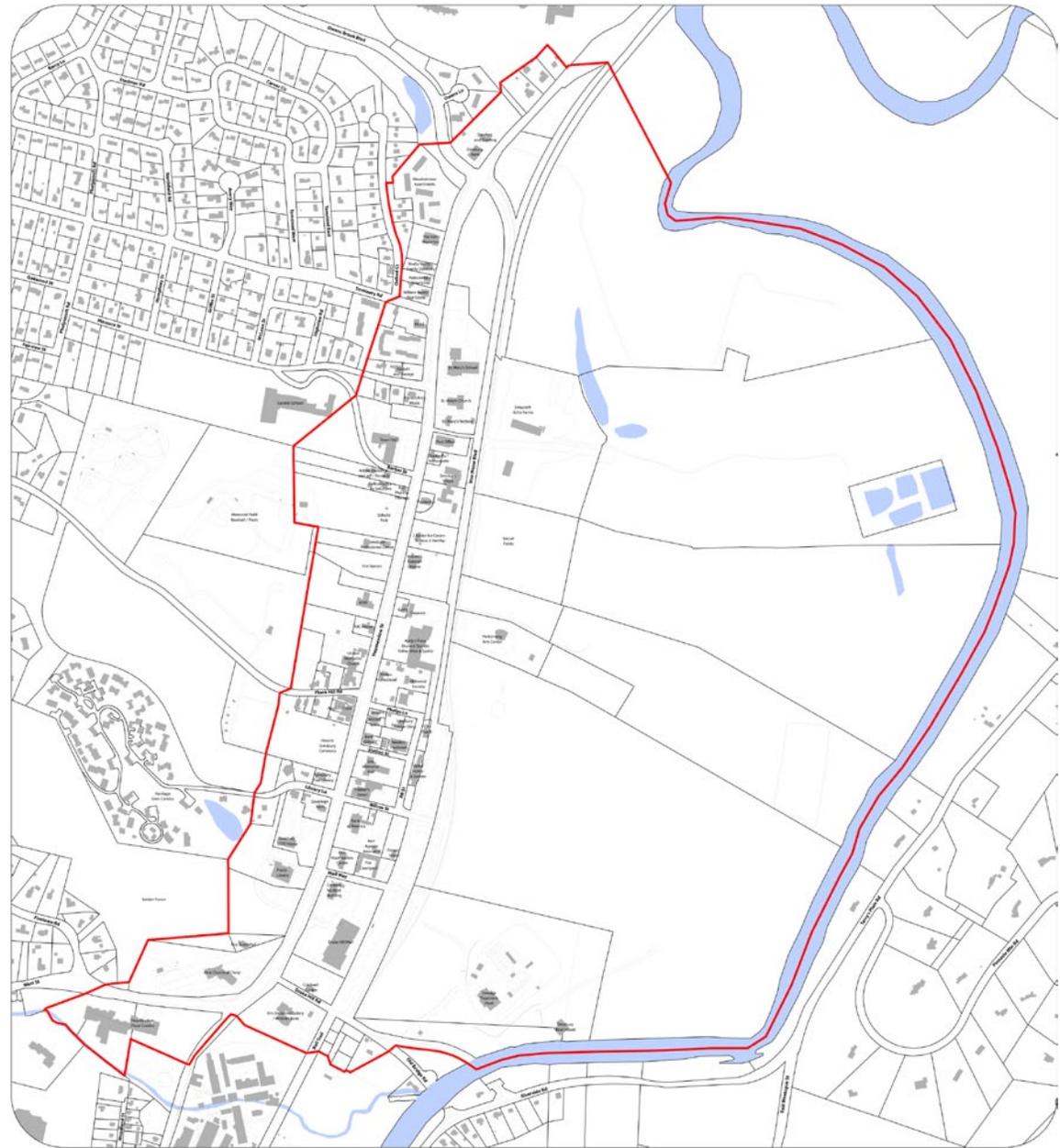


- (A) Storm pond, cleaned up and expanded. Gazebo serves as overlook.
- (B) Picnic shelters with small adjacent parking area.
- (C) New multifamily project serves as a gateway to downtown.
- (D) Potential site for relocation of Masonic Lodge.

	New building
	Existing building

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5. Hands-On Maps



SIMSBURY
Town Center
CHARRETTE

Hands-on Design Session, September 12, 2009
Code Studio | Third Coast Design Studio | Urban Advantage
Winter & Company | Nelson\Nygaard | W-ZHA



Table 1

- Intense development along Iron Horse
- Improve Hopmeadow accessibility by car and on foot
- Look at the connections to the west side of Hopmeadow
- Edge of Iron horse -> Hopmeadow
- Connect to existing neighborhoods
- Mixed use
- Keep scale "smallish," 2½ stories – tuck under parking
- Expand Eno Hall as center
- Improve pedestrian connections

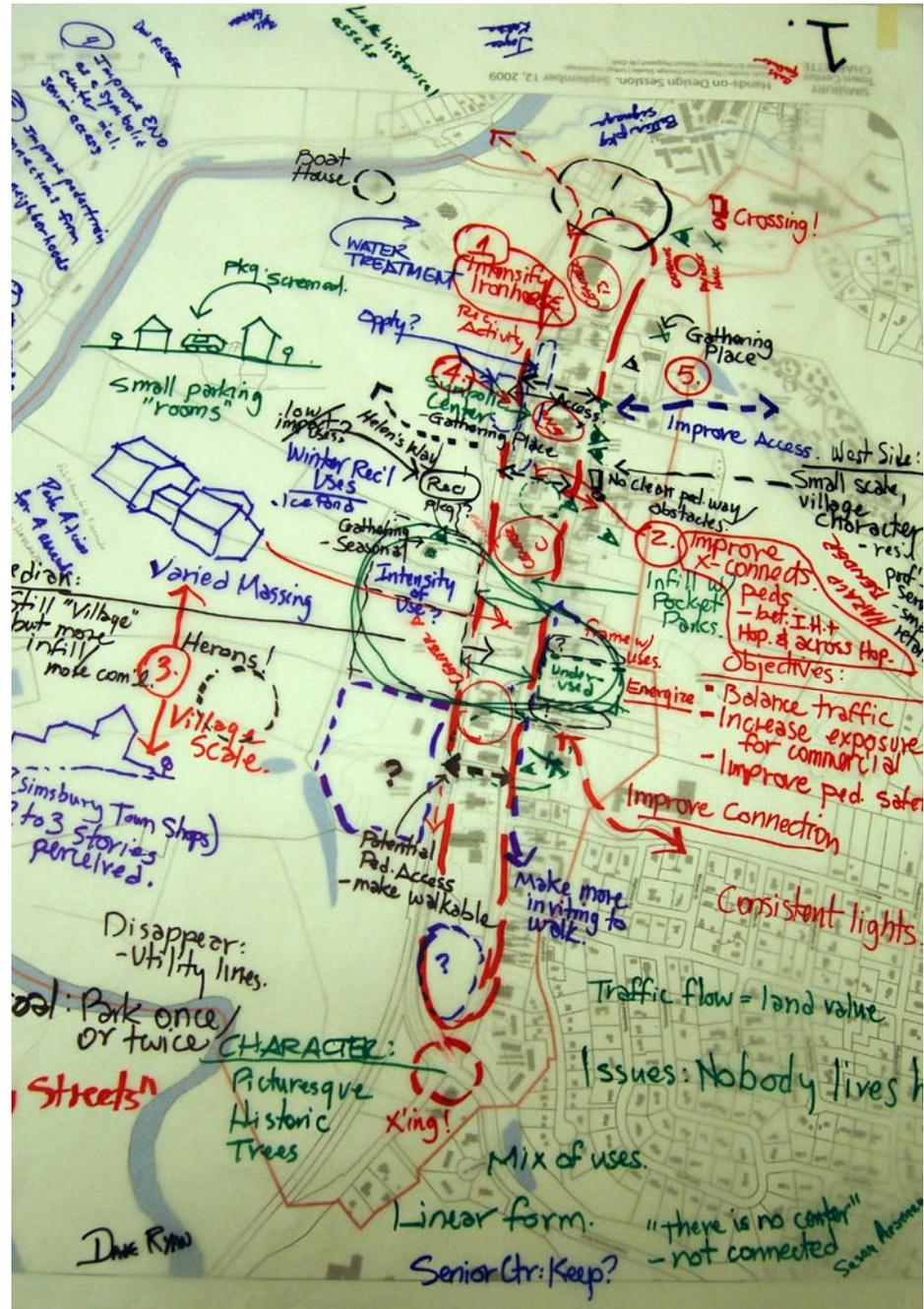


Table 2

- West side – appropriate for more density
- More walking
- Schultz Park provides an opportunity for more height
- Drake Hill as a recreational hub with bathrooms, map, picnic tables

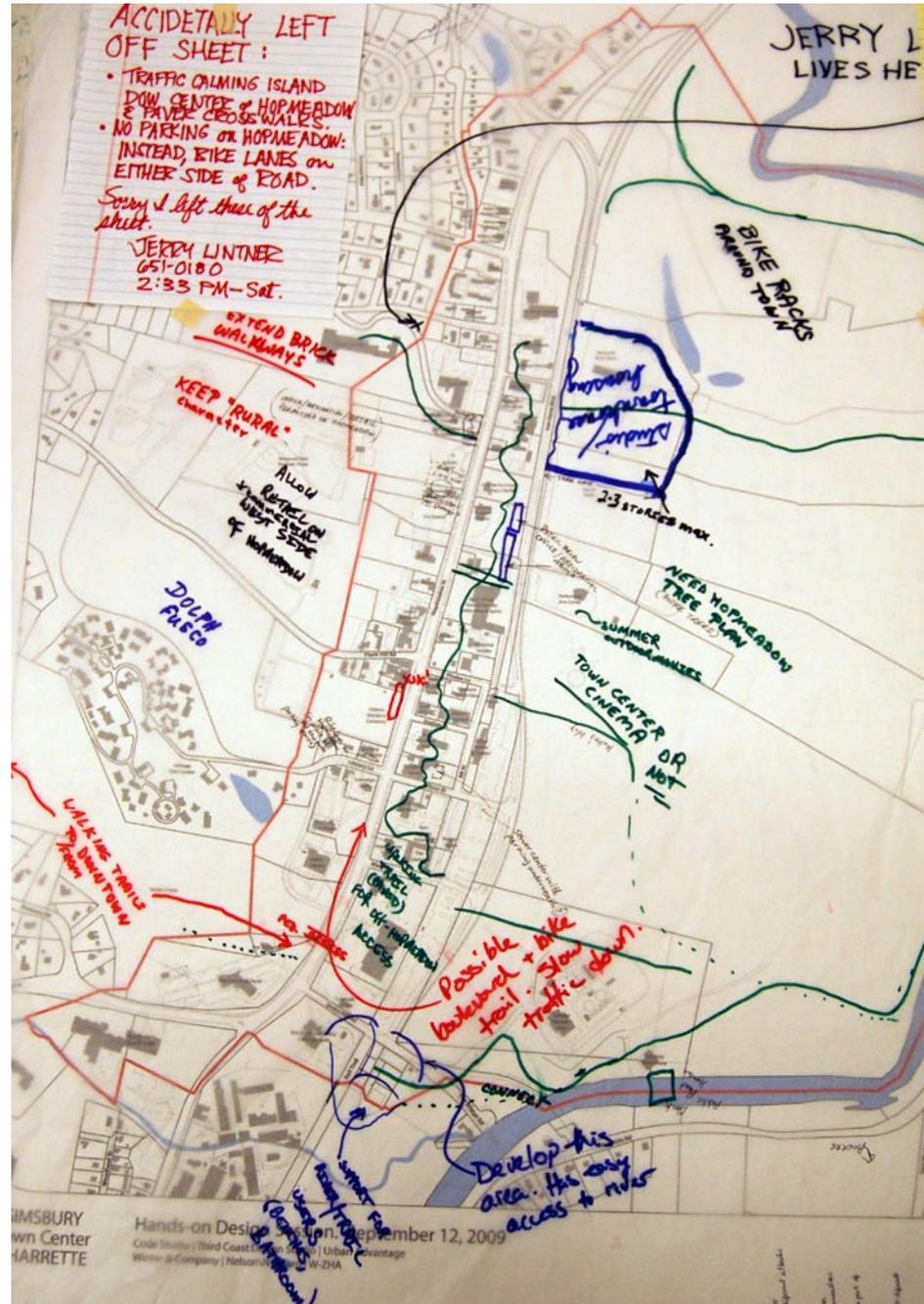


Table 3

- Iron Horse intensify – beautify –
- Southern parking lots – mixed-use housing – not age restricted – 3 stories
- Connect to Iron Horse and Hopmeadow – upper story residential – critical mass – integrity of existing area – small town feel
- Keep new zoning Downtown
- Andy's - redevelop closer to road – parking behind – improved landscaping
- Simscroft – housing – especially courtyard housing
- West Hopmeadow – passive walk – minimal infill – maintain natural feel

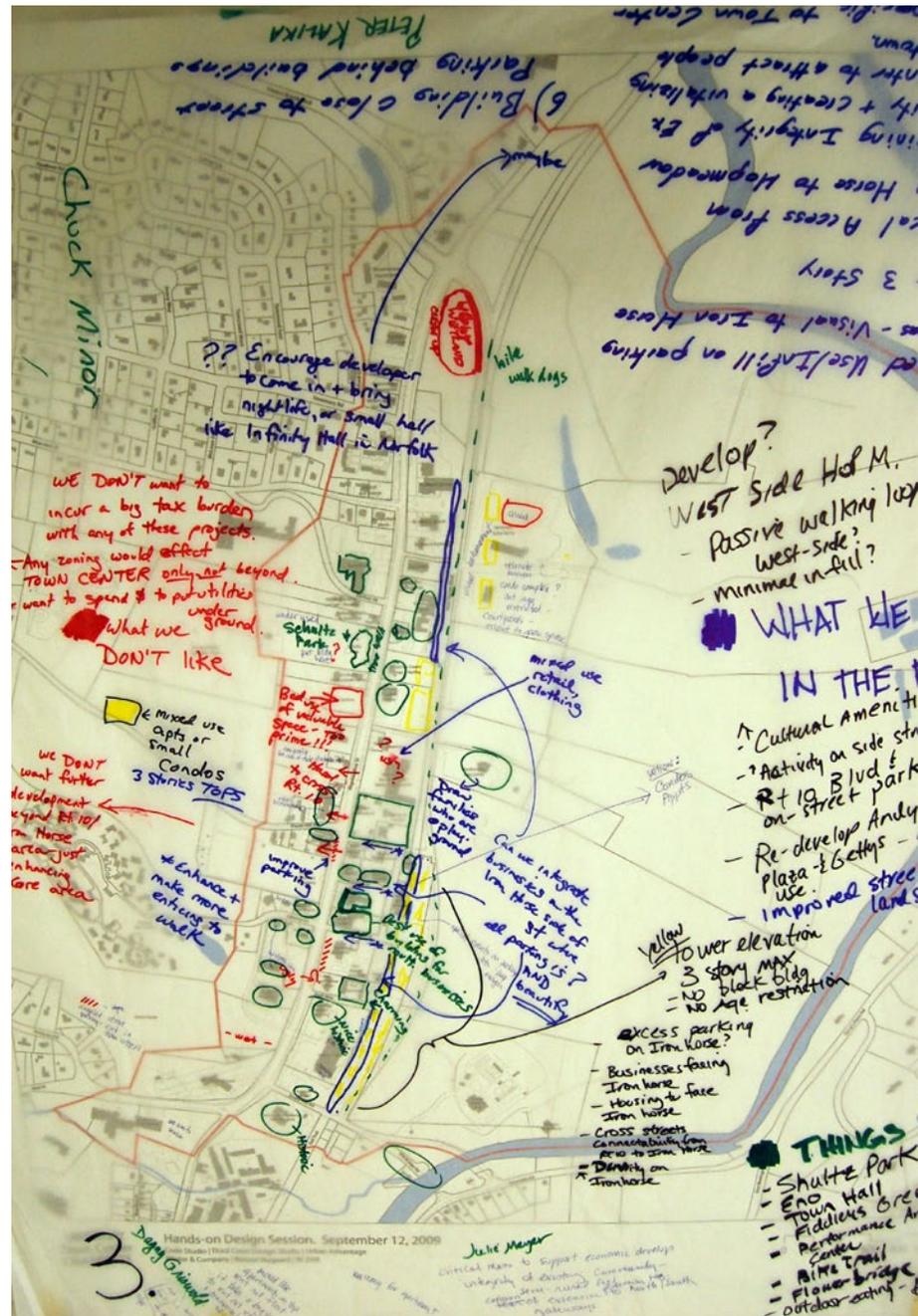


Table 6

- Character of Simsbury – small, agricultural roots – active engaging center – balance
- Multiple centers
- Mixed-use residential street
- Arts
- Residential office
- Connect to bike path
- Nodes
- Wetlands – value green space – access to river
- Our hope – destinations, places to go to
- Accessible – multi-modal – trolley route
- Town that relates to Hartford regionally
- Flexible mixed-use shops, arts emporium
- Quiet downtown
- Possibly residential in nodes



Table 7

- ¼-mile walk
- Create two centers north and south
- Utilize Iron Horse – Don't back to it
- Structured parking – tuck under
- Utilize cross-access between centers
- Main Street character
- Gateways
- Mixed-use housing – fill in parking

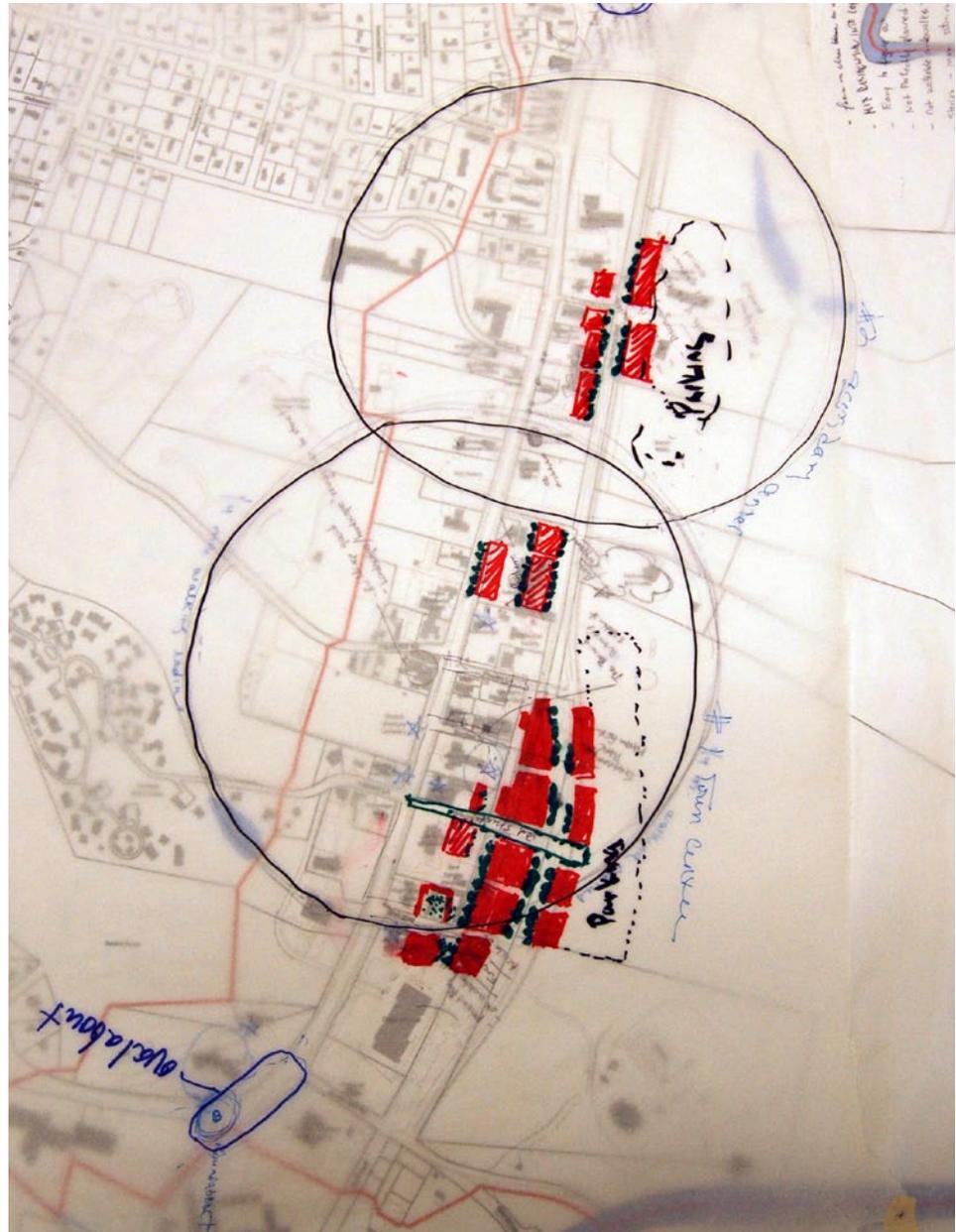


Table 10

- Housing – West – retail and housing –
- Simscroft great place
- Connections: access, parking lots should be connected
- Adaptive reuse -- don't have to get rid of things
- Trolley – transit corridor
- Bike racks
- Use Iron Horse as the focal point for all transit
- Aesthetics – burying utility lines is a huge priority
- Use of Simsbury Meadows – farming, connect to river

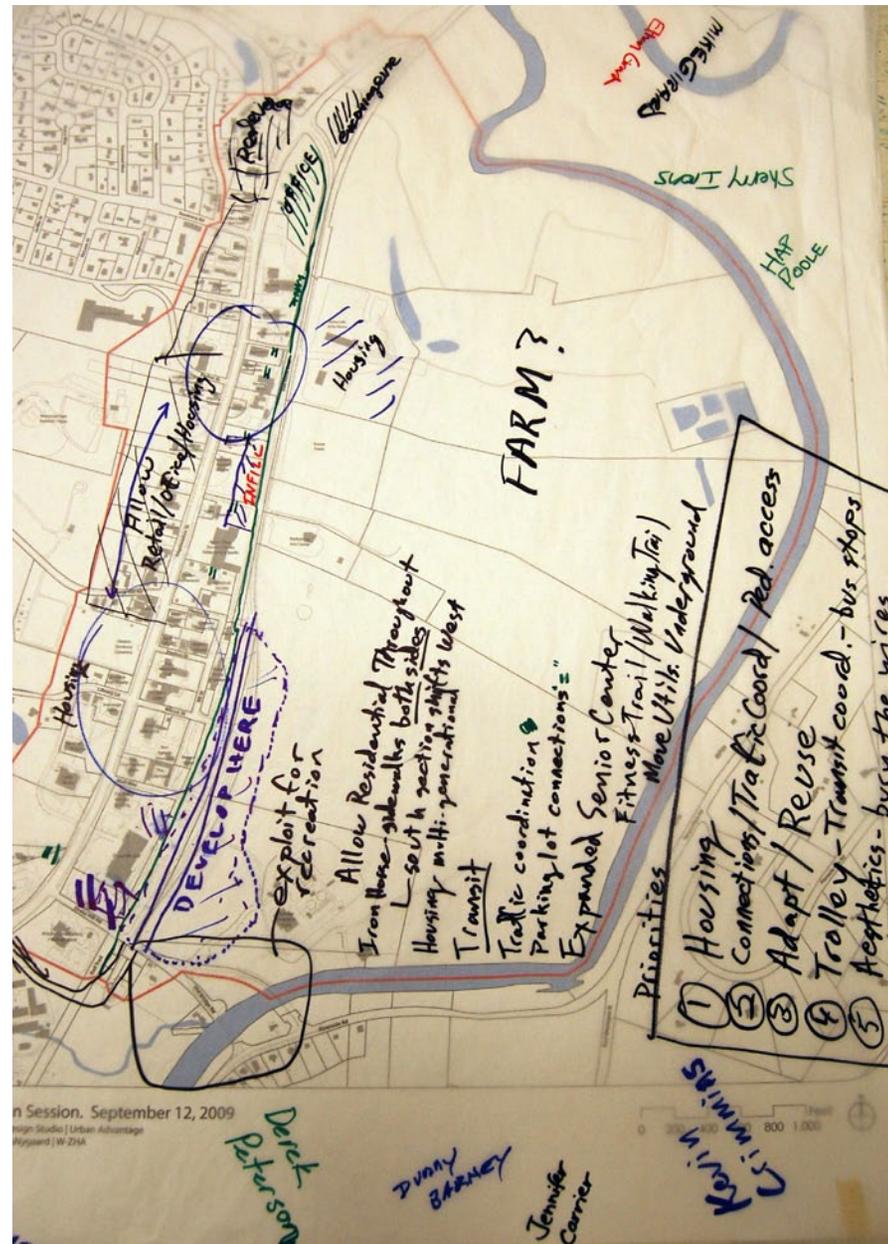


Table 12

- Attract people – retail and services
- Mixed use
- Iron Horse – main post office
- Pedestrian access up and down Iron Horse
- Passive recreation at river – better visual access
- Boat launch
- West of Hopmeadow – mixed use
- Not higher than Eno Hall
- Better traffic flow east and west – one-way is not good
- Better utilization of historic buildings and Phelps area
- No clear-cut town center

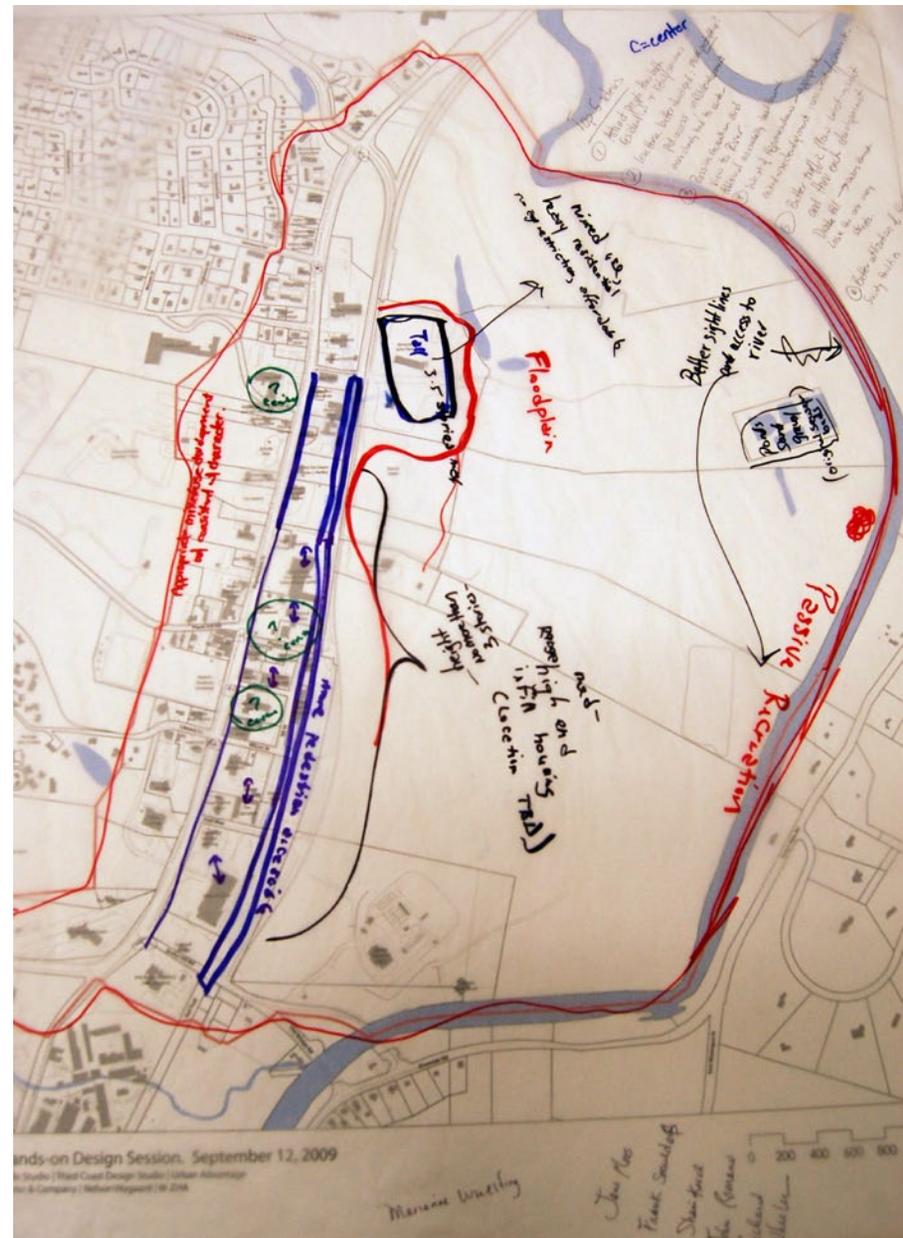


Table 13

- Two town centers – Phelps area
- Eliminate fancy town green
- North/South node
- Northern center - Methodist Church
- Gateways North/South
- Bridge
- Mixed Use Nodes – retail, residential Iron Horse/Hopmeadow
- Community aspects at Simsbury Meadows
- Residential base – located west
- Core – small office, residential, strong edge
- Simscroft -- residential
- Connectivity and access
- Make Railroad pedestrian
- Build in character to Simsbury scale



Table 15

- Walkable connected mixed-use
- Safe
- Between Iron Horse and Route 10 – mixed use
- Pedestrian side streets
- Trolley get people around access to river
- Development on Iron Horse should face the street



Table 16 [continued]

- Stores open later – need better lighting
- Trolley system – not only downtown but up to schools
- Renovations of existing buildings
- Behind Andy's repave parking lot – vacant store – need a skate shop around band shell park
- Bus stop behind Fitzgerald's – fix it up
- Basketball court needs fixing
- Schultz not used – small snack shop, picnic benches
- Internet café
- Fix existing sidewalks



6. Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the following groups and individuals:

Simsbury Chamber of Commerce

Simsbury Board of Finance

Simsbury Library Board and staff

Simsbury Community Television, Inc.

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

Connecticut Main Street Center

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

Boy Scouts and leaders of Troop 76 (charrette registration and parking)

Kane's Market (food)

Metro Bis (food)

Fitzgerald's (food)

Mitchell Auto group (rides around town and to airport)

Simsbury Inn and 1820 House

All town staff who helped and participated

Sue Mazurski, Administrative Assistant, First Selectman's office

Lois Laczko, Administrative Assistant, Planning Department

Simsbury IT staff

Sarah Nielsen, Main Street Partnership

Numerous cookie bakers

Kevin Kowalski, Fire Marshal

CRCOG STAFF (GIS, Aerials photos, facilitators)

New England Geosystems, LLC (GIS)

All the stakeholders who participated in the Aug 10-11 stakeholder discussions. Property owners, business owners, realtors, developers and attorneys and community groups.

All the residents who gave their time and participated.

The kids who participated, for whom this is most important.

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