

# *Winchester Town Center Initiative Development Concepts*



*The development concepts outlined in this document are for discussion only.  
They are not adopted policies or approved plans.*

December 11, 2010



## ***Town Center Initiative***

- **Winchester has a compact and successful town center that functions as the heart of the community and is consistently identified as one of Winchester’s most important assets.**
- **However, the Master Plan Phase I interviews identified limited parking, inadequate pedestrian circulation paths, weak business recruitment and marketing, small lots, fragmented ownership, out-of-date zoning and building codes, and flooding as problems threatening the vibrancy and economic health of the center.**
- **The Master Plan Report concluded that Winchester must maintain the town center’s vibrancy by –**
  - Supporting local business owners and encouraging the diversification of businesses, and
  - Bringing more residential housing into the town center to take advantage of the higher density of development that can be supported by commuter rail and transit services.
- **The Master Plan Report recommended that the Town –**
  - Plan for mixed-use redevelopment in the town center.
  - Revise existing zoning bylaws and develop new overlay zoning districts to enable and guide development in the town center.
  - Develop a parking management plan.
  - Create a town center business development council, and
  - Explore formation of local historic districts for appropriate areas of the town center.



## ***Town Center Initiative (continued)***

- **The Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen sponsored a series of “Community Conversations” in the Fall 2009 to explore issues and opportunities in the town center. The series covered –**
  - Preserving and strengthening the center’s **retail, office, business and housing markets**.
  - Expanding the center’s **cultural and educational activities**.
  - Shaping the **built environment** to maintain a unique sense of place.
  - Protecting the **natural environment**.
  - Accessing Winchester center’s **transportation** hub, and
  - Managing town center **parking**.
- **The development concepts outlined in this document are an initial step toward addressing the issues and opportunities voiced during community conversations.**
- **The development concepts in this document assume that commercial development (retail, housing, and office buildings) will be led by the private sector, but that a town center development plan and appropriate zoning and building regulations are necessary to catalyze, facilitate, and steer development.**
- **The Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen are sponsoring a second series of “Community Conversations” during January 2011 to revise and refine the development concepts outlined in this document and build consensus on a plan for the future of the town center.**
- **The intent is to bring initial recommendations for a town center development plan and related zoning bylaw changes before Town Meeting in 2011 and 2012.**



## ***Town Center Planning Process***

### **Identify issues and opportunities**

*Conversations, market study, parking study*

*Fall 2009 - Winter 2010*

### **Develop vision and guiding principles**

*Town Center Initiative Subcommittee*

*Spring 2010 – Fall 2010*

### **Develop concepts and zoning strategies**

*Case studies, workshops, conversations*

*Winter 2010 – Spring 2010*

### **Prepare planning and rezoning proposals**

*Initial plan and zoning bylaw articles to Town Meeting*

*Spring 2011 – Fall 2011...*



## ***Town Center Development Plan***

- **To revitalize Winchester’s town center by –**
  - **Building on the possibilities for**
    - Retail development
    - Housing
    - Cultural activities, and
    - Educational programs
  - **Shaping and preserving the built and natural environments**
    - Buildings and public ways
    - Transportation facilities, and
    - Aberjona River, greenway, and parks
  - **Updating the rules and regulations governing development in the center**
    - Zoning bylaws
    - Building requirements, and
    - Permitting and review procedures



## Development Plan Elements

	Elements	Concepts	Implementation Tools
Economic Development	Businesses	Develop complementary retail shopping clusters	Business recruiting program
	Housing	Develop additional housing	By-right zoning for mixed-use development
	Marketing	Create destination image for retail, restaurants, and cultural and educational activities	Marketing program
Cultural Development	Performance and visual arts	Provide performance areas and coordinated programming	Private sector/ not-for-profit initiative
	Education	Make Winchester a regional “continuing education” center	Joint Winchester Public Schools and not-for-profit initiatives
Image	Urban design	Reinforce physical structure and identity of the town center	Master plan, town center development plan
Commuter Rail Line	Center railroad station	Reconstruct and reorganize as an integrated transport hub	MBTA station reconstruction plans
	Railroad viaduct	Add passageways and walkways	MBTA/town reconstruction plans
Greenways	Center greenwalks	Create east-west green walks	Town center development plan
	Aberjona River	Restore greenway	Overlay district zoning bylaw
Buildings	Neighborhoods	Define and encourage appropriate development of “neighborhoods”	Town center development plan, Zoning bylaws
	Building vocabulary	Establish design guidelines	Architectural design guidelines
	Historical buildings/ context	Preserve key buildings and “look and feel” of center	Historic districts, preservation grants
	Energy conservation	Encourage energy efficient development and operation	LEEDS guidelines, Green Communities grants
Parking	Capacity and utilization	Improve availability and accessibility	Parking management plan
Infrastructure	Stormwater management	Create watershed and block stormwater management systems	Overlay district zoning bylaw
Governance	Town center management	Establish business improvement district; update permitting process	State statutes and grants



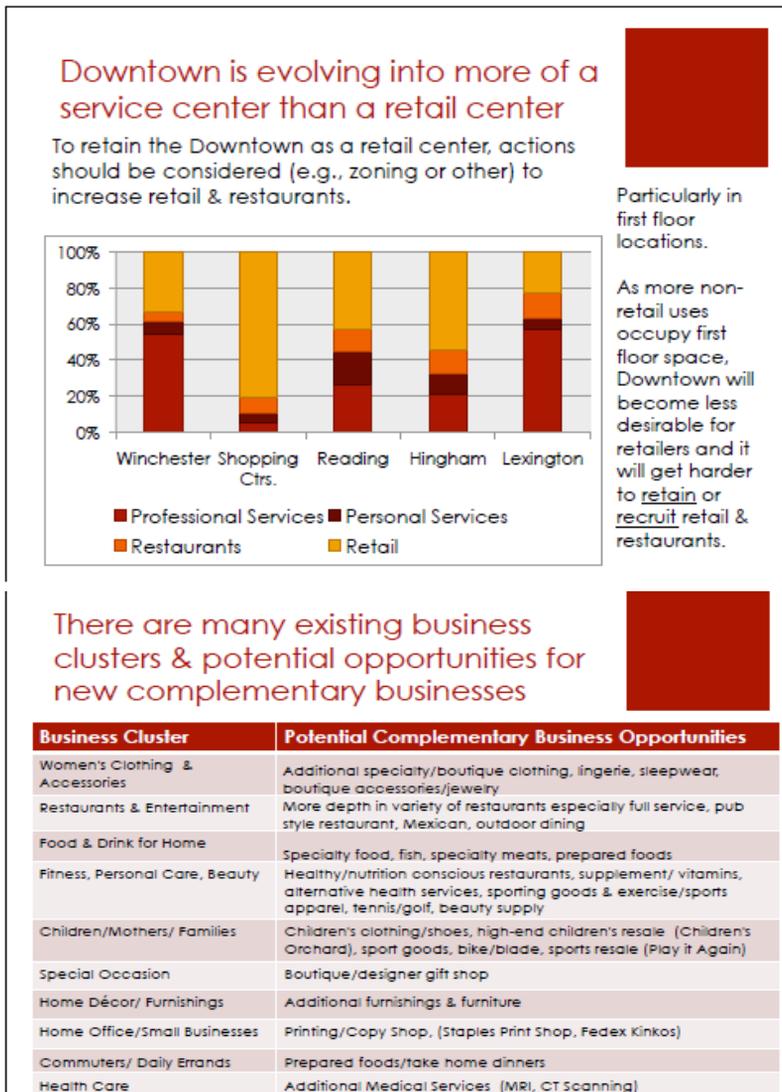
## Anticipated Benefits

Elements	Concepts	Benefits
Businesses	Develop complementary retail shopping clusters	More diversified shopping experience and increased sales
Housing	Develop additional housing	Increased property values and tax revenue; more local spending
Marketing	Create destination image for retail, restaurants, and cultural and educational activities	Larger market share
Performance and visual arts	Provide performance areas and coordinated programming	Larger audience market; more local spending
Education	Make Winchester a regional “continuing education” center	Growth industry; more local spending
Urban design	Reinforce physical structure and identity of the town center	Vibrant town retail, office, cultural and government center
Center railroad station	Reconstruct and reorganize as an integrated transport hub	Safer and more accessible public transit services
Railroad viaduct	Add passageways and walkways	More walkable retail areas; better shopper/ employee access
Center greenwalks	Create east-west green walks	Less visible “Great Wall;” better shopper/ employee access
Aberjona River	Restore greenway	More attractive waterway/ greenway
Neighborhoods	Define and encourage appropriate development of “neighborhoods”	More opportunities for development in character with town center neighborhoods; less risk and cost for town and developers
Building vocabulary	Establish design guidelines	
Historical buildings/ context	Preserve key buildings and “look and feel” of center	
Energy conservation	Encourage energy efficient development and operation	Lower energy costs
Parking capacity and utilization	Improve availability and accessibility	More predictable and reliable access to parking for shoppers, employees
Stormwater management	Create watershed and block stormwater management systems	Reduced risk of flooding
Town center management	Establish business improvement district; update permitting process	Direct management of center improvements and maintenance by business and property owners



## Town Center Businesses

- **Create destination image and marketing program to recapture lost sales revenue (“sales leakage”)**
  - Residents spend \$371M/year on retail and restaurants, but of that total, \$264M/year is spent **outside** the town
- **Expand existing and attract new retail businesses**
  - Develop complementary retail shopping clusters



Source: *Finepoint, Winchester Town Center Economic Development Study, 2009*



## Town Center Housing

- **Develop additional residences in and near the town center**
  - Center might support several hundred more housing units

<p><b>Trends Supporting Housing in Downtown</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Growing number of 1-2 person households                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Winchester - 55% of hhs ≤ 2 people</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Growing number of Empty nesters looking to scale down                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Winchester - just over 1/3 hhs contain children, large % heading toward empty nest</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ People work long hours - seek short commutes                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Proximity to train station makes DT desirable residence for commuters, also desirable for people that work in DT</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Increased desire for maintenance-free homes</li> <li>■ Desire for pedestrian neighborhoods, access to amenities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amenities Needed to Attract Residents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Shopping &amp; dining</li> <li>■ Grocery stores and Restaurants are most important **</li> <li>■ Younger segment requires less amenities; older segment requires more services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Residential Development could have many benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <u>Direct effect</u> on sales                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Residents that live in close proximity more likely to patronize</li> <li>■ More residents can help attract more of the types of businesses desired in DT.</li> <li>■ 100 housing units = approx. \$3.2 mil. expenditures on retail &amp; restaurants, capable of supporting 11,000 s.f. of commercial space (*DT would not capture 100%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <u>Indirect effect</u> on sales                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Residents bring vitality to the area – 24-hour activity presence</li> <li>■ Encourages social gathering, can help to attract more customers</li> <li>■ More people on the street – area is perceived safer, livelier and more inviting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Consistent with "Smart Growth" planning principles – concentrating residents in areas where services already exist</li> <li>■ Potential viable use for underutilized buildings and land</li> </ul>	

Source: *Finepoint, Winchester Town Center Economic Development Study, 2009*



## ***Performance and Visual Arts***

- **Make Winchester center a destination for performance and visual arts events**
  - Provide performance areas and coordinated programming among program providers such as KidStock, Winchester Community Music School, Winchester Historical Society, Griffin Museum, and other non-profit organizations
  - Provide a central kiosk or “sign board” to better publicize cultural events
  - Revise pricing and use policies to insure full utilization of municipal and school performance spaces and other facilities
  - Provide venue for larger events (more than 200)
  - Coordinate websites and media to keep the community informed of upcoming events of all cultural events providers

## ***Education***

- **Make Winchester center a destination for “continuing education” programs**
  - Encourage the Winchester Public Schools, the Recreation Department, the Library, and not-for-profit educational groups to promote and provide educational opportunities, especially adult continuing education programs that will draw residents and visitors to the town center
  - Promote awareness—through websites, banners, and other means—of opportunities to expand educational opportunities
  - Continue to support the Town’s Library programs



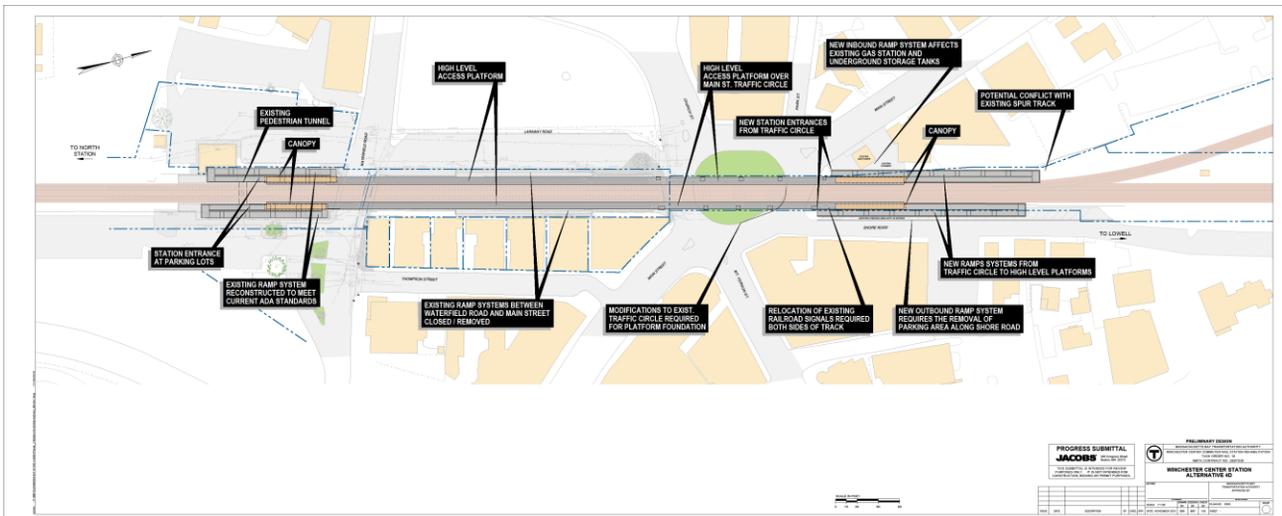
## Image of the Town Center

- Reinforce the center's urban design structure and identity
  - Blue ribbon of the Aberjona
  - Greenway of parks and public and cultural buildings
  - Railroad viaduct
  - Commercial core and corridors
  - Residential neighborhoods



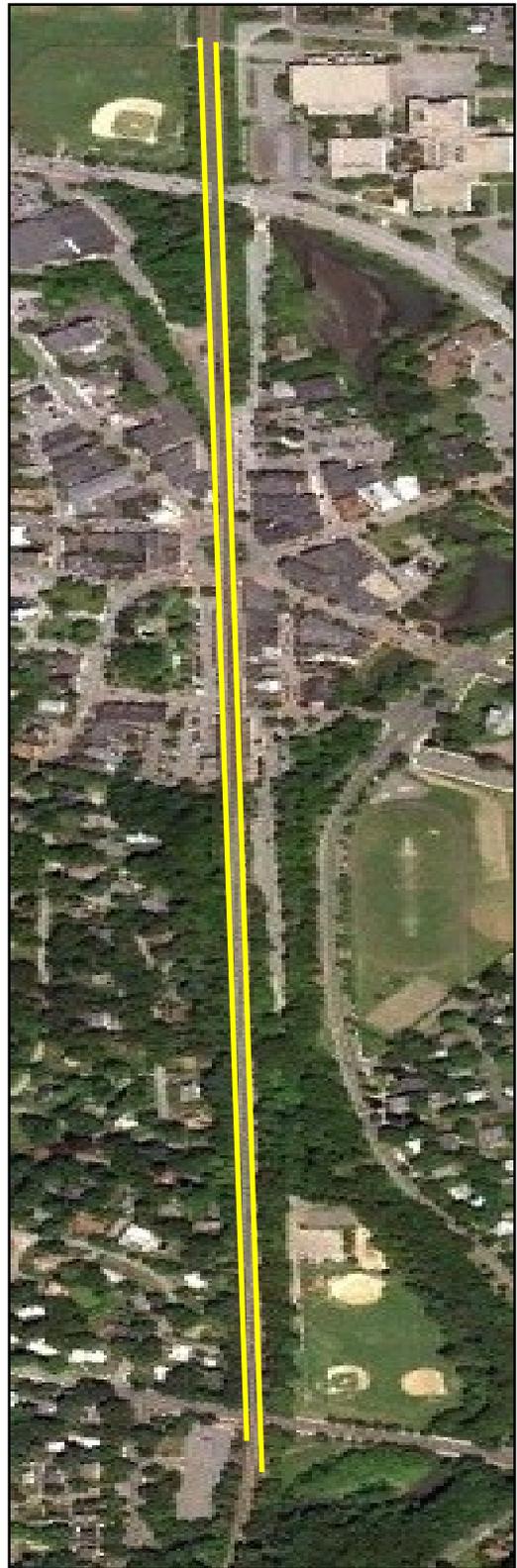
# Winchester Center Commuter Rail Station

- Rebuild the existing Winchester Center train station
- Extend the platforms to accommodate longer trains
- Provide high platforms for ADA access
- Create an intermodal transit hub by better integrating commuter rail, bus, taxi, Zipcar, and bike-parking services
- Reposition the ramps to provide better access to and from north of the rotary



## ***Railroad Viaduct***

- **Extend platform-level pedestrian walkways (with safety railings and fencing as appropriate) north and south to link Skillings/WHS, the town center/Quill Rotary, Ginn Field, and the Bacon/Wedgemere station**
- **Install solar units on walkway canopies to reduce Town’s energy costs**
- **Apply for state and federal grants under the Green Communities program to support design and construction**



## *Railroad Viaduct (continued)*

- **Create new pedestrian passageways through the “Great Wall”**
  - Add a passageway between the Griffin Museum and Main Street
  - Add a pedestrian passageway from Thompson St. to the Common, framing the view of the great oak tree
  - Expand the Waterfield station pedestrian passageway



## *Railroad Viaduct (continued)*

- Enliven and light the “Great Wall” passageways with retail space, advertising displays, cultural events bulletin boards, video monitors, etc.



## Town Center Greenwalks

- **Create east-west greenways within the center**
  - From the existing **Thompson Street arcade** to the **Town Common** with a new passageway under the railroad viaduct into Laraway Road, and ...



## Town Center Greenwalks (continued)

- **Create east-west greenways within the center**
  - From the **Jenks Center to Wedge Pond** with a new footbridge across Judkins Pond and new passageway under the railroad viaduct near the Griffin Museum to Main Street and the Elmwood neighborhood



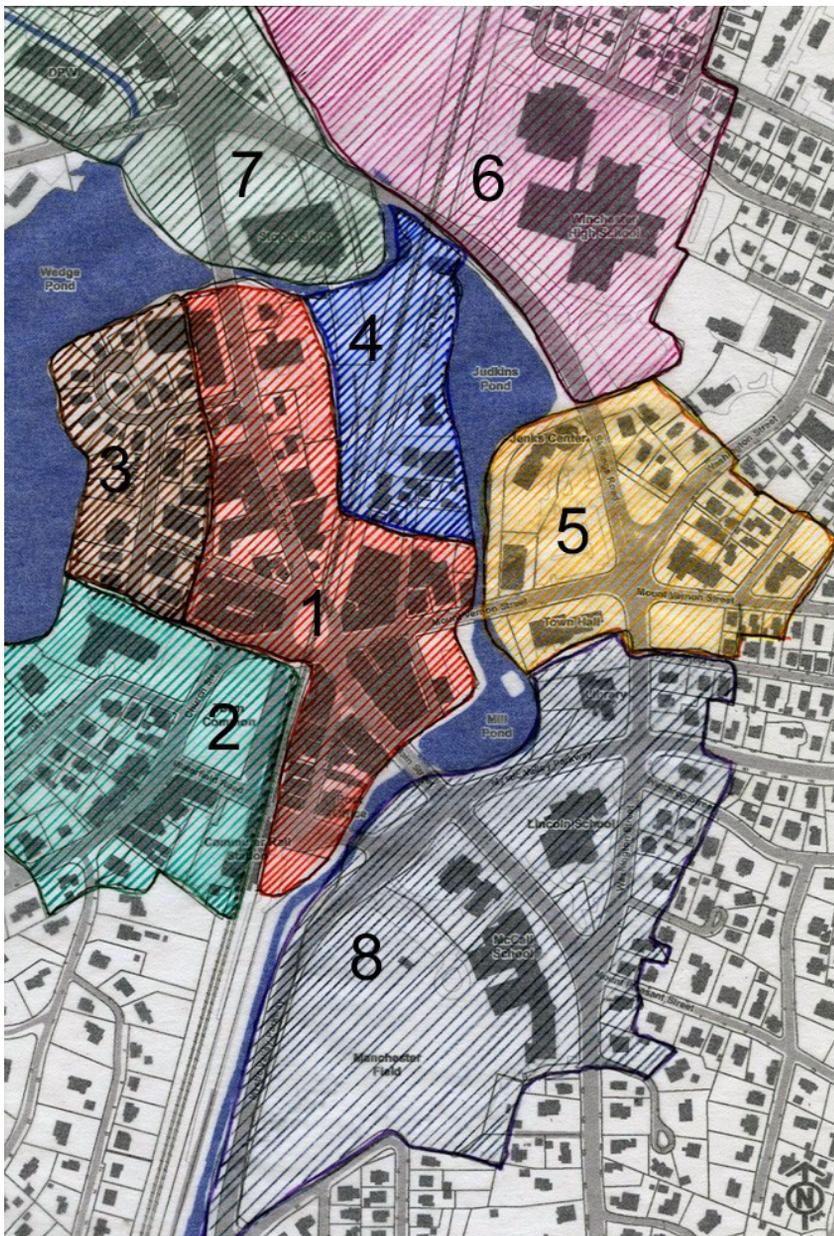
## Aberjona Greenway

- Restore and strengthen the river banks
- Enhance the greenway bordering the river and ponds
- Create an cultural greenway overlay district to protect the greenway and promote the arts, education, and recreation along the greenway
- Use the overlay district to qualify for grants and matching funds



## Town Center Core and Neighborhoods

- Identify town center core and neighborhoods
- Document unique features
- Develop zoning bylaws and design guidelines tailored to each area



- 1 Commercial and Business Core
- 2 Town Common Area
- 3 Wedge Pond Hill
- 4 Museum District
- 5 Town Hall Square
- 6 High School Campus
- 7 Eliot Square
- 8 Library/ Lincoln/ McCall Area



## Historical Buildings and Context

- Preserve and restore the center’s historically significant buildings
- Encourage new development compatible with the historic context of the town center



□ Existing Buildings (EB)

□ EB: Town owned property (TOP). Future development

□ EB: Private owned property (POP). Future development

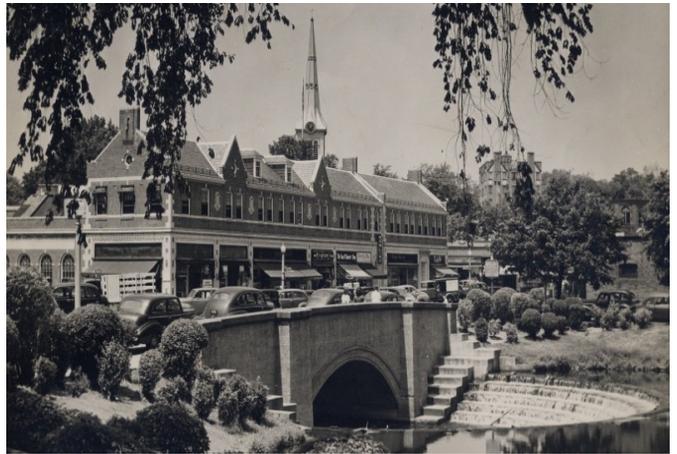
□ TOP: Land future development

□ POP: Land future development



## *Building Vocabulary*

- Establish architectural guidelines
- Allow “by right” development of projects following development plan and architectural guidelines
- Provide for special permit development for innovative design projects



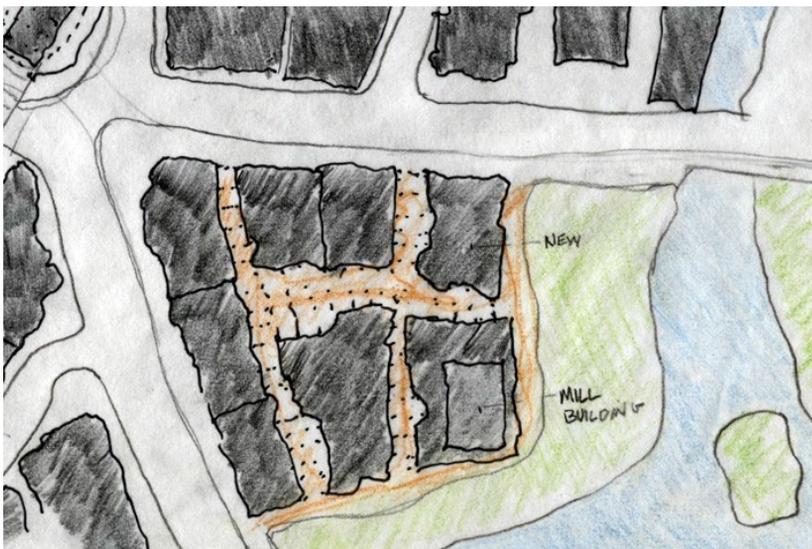
## Neighborhood 1. Quill Rotary

- **Create an information center kiosk/cafe under the bridge**
  - Use floor-to-ceiling glass to maximize transparency
  - Redesign crosswalks to improve pedestrian access and safety
  - Provide stairways (or elevators) to the new train platforms



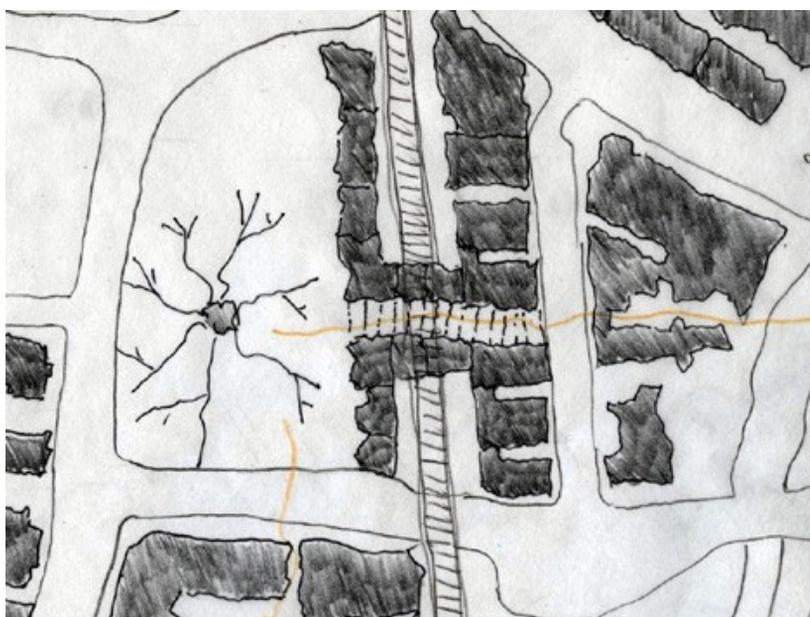
## Neighborhood 1. Converse Mill Block

- Close Converse Street (or enable air-rights development over Converse Street) to provide more developable space away from the protected river bank
- Create an interior courtyard and passageways for pedestrians and service vehicle access



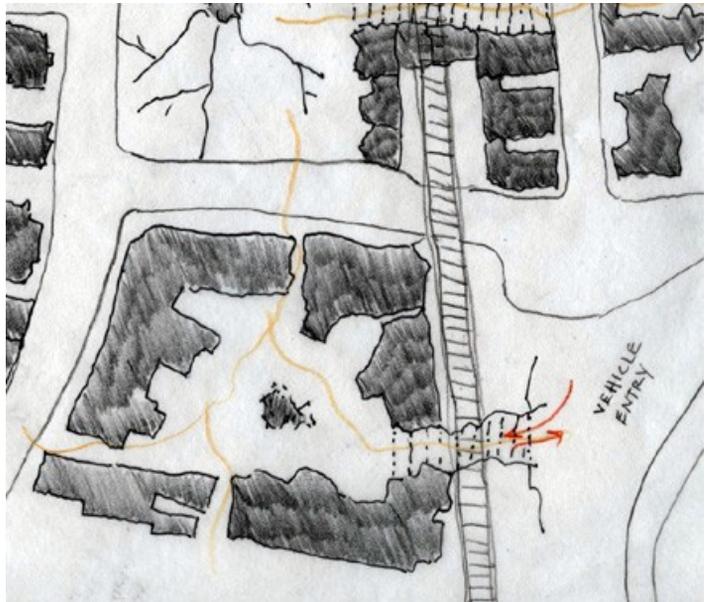
## ***Neighborhood 2. The Town Common/ Laraway***

- **Locate a year-round, farmer's and crafts market along Laraway Street with areas to sit, eat, drink and enjoy the Common, enhancing its role as the town center's outdoor living room**
  - Build high-ceiling market stalls with retractable glass fronts (e.g., overhead garage-style doors) to ensure emergency access to the MWRA lines
  
- **Create a view-corridor framing the great oak tree on the Common by opening up a new pedestrian passageway through the rail viaduct and creating a pedestrian path linking the Aberjona River, the Locatelli Building courtyard, and the Common**

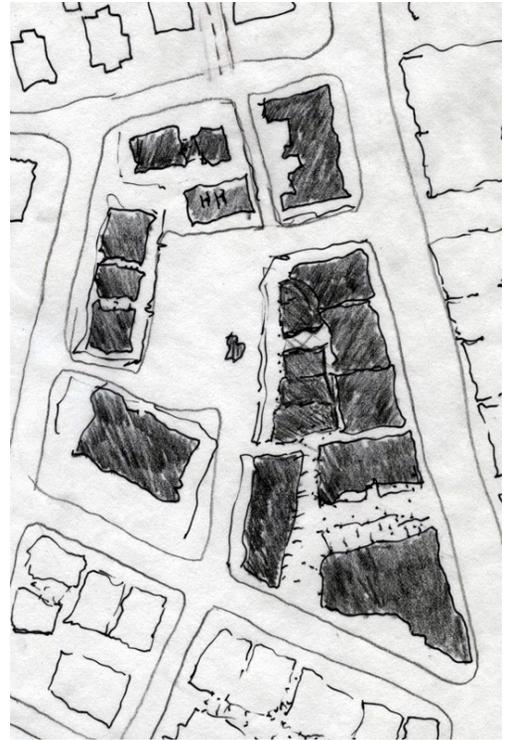


## Neighborhood 2. Waterfield Block

- **Redevelop the Waterfield block with a winter market (closing the NE corner), an interior parking court, and upper-level housing/office space**
  - Build high-ceiling market space with retractable glass fronts (e.g., overhead garage-style doors) to ensure emergency access to the MWRA lines
- **Provide tenant and service vehicle access into the Waterfield block by expanding the existing station passageway**
- **Incorporate a storm-water collection and infiltration unit under the center of the interior courtyard**



## Neighborhood 3. Elmwood Neighborhood



- **Maintain retail uses along Main Street with housing and/or office in upper floors.**
- **Develop higher-density condominiums and/or apartments along Elmwood centered around a new courtyard.**
- **Use the courtyard to house a common stormwater collection and infiltration unit**

## ***Neighborhood 4. Museum District (Option A)***

- **Create a new passageway/ roadway through the railroad viaduct linking Shore Road to Main Street**
- **Remove the old Woburn loop junction embankment to create building and parking space**
- **Expand the Griffin Museum (or other cultural/education facilities) along the east and west sides of the rail viaduct**
- **Close and remove the north end of Shore Road to create new parkland and sculpture gardens**
- **Add new pedestrian paths and a footbridge connecting the Jenks to the Griffin and Main Street**



## Neighborhood 4. Museum District (Option B)

- **Redevelop the Stop and Shop site to provide:**
  - Ground floor parking in the center with Stop & Shop space and complementary retail shops facing Main and Skillings
  - Expanded second floor space for Stop & Shop by providing air-rights development space over Skillings Road
  - Second/third floor space for the Griffin Museum (or other cultural/ educational facilities)
  
- **Reuse the current museum and reclaimed shore Road for a park, café, center for the history of Winchester and the Aberjona valley, and a continuing education center**



## ***Neighborhood 4. Museum District (Option C)***



- **Develop a new “east of Main” pocket neighborhood in the area of old Woburn Loop junction**
- **Redevelop the Winchester Place/ Judkins Green pocket neighborhood to create additional housing space**

## Neighborhood 5. Town Hall Square

- Build a new outdoor stage in between the Jenks Center and Hope Church
- Remove or redesign the interior islands to create an a dual-use space: a municipal parking area during the day and open-seating plaza in the evenings (“bring your own folding chair”)
- Host concerts, small theater productions, lectures, summer movies, etc.
- Build housing units on the Winchester High School east parking lot (WHS/resident parking at grade, housing on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors)

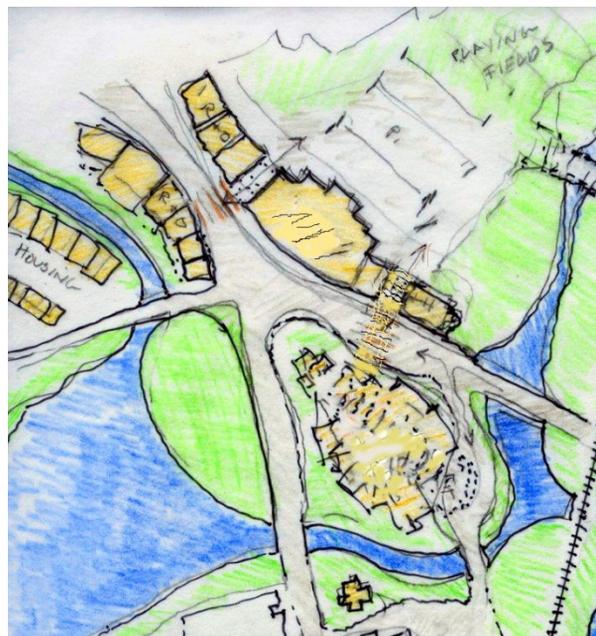


## Neighborhood 6. High School Campus



- **If the WHS feasibility study recommends reconstruction of the high school, construct a new LEED-compliant (energy-efficient high school along the east and north edge of the current site bordering Nelson Street; this would –**
  - Remove the high school building from the flood plain
  - Create a street wall of aggregate buildings more compatible with the scale of the neighborhood
- **Relocate and/or provide additional playing field space on current location of the high school and on the roof of the new high school**
- **Provide stormwater retention and infiltration units under the new fields**
- **Restore the Aberjona channel and wetlands west of the rail viaduct**

## Neighborhood 7. Eliot Square



- **Redevelop the Stop & Shop block**
  - Provide interior parking at ground level, screened by Stop & Shop and/or complementary retail stores on the street sides
  - Expand Stop & Shop to the second floor and consider providing air-rights development space over Skillings Road
  - Create retail and/or Stop & Shop space on the north side of Skillings
  - Provide space on the upper levels (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>?) for cultural, educational or housing use (e.g., Griffin Museum, high school classroom space, elderly housing...)
- **Restore the greenway and wetlands along the Horn Pond Brook/Wedge Pond outlet to the Aberjona River**
- **Redevelop the blocks along Main Street immediately north of Skillings and Lake to provide for mixed retail, office, or housing**
- **Provide a focal point within the square (public sculpture, garden, water feature...)**

## ***Energy Conservation\****

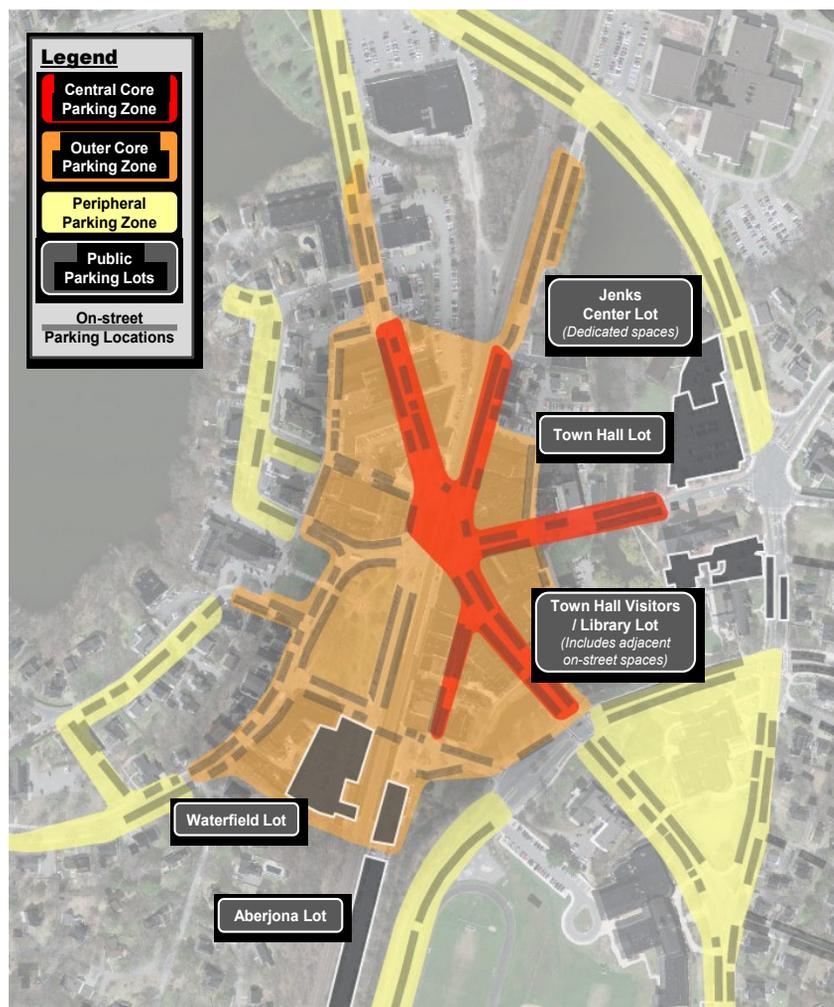
- **Develop an “Energy Conservation Toolkit for Winchester Businesses” that summarizes best practices, resources, and ROI estimation tools for retailers, restaurant owners, and office building managers**
- **Offer educational workshops on energy use and conservation, promoted through the Chamber of Commerce and other town center groups, and create a “Green Business Leaders” recognition program**
- **Use Winchester’s designation as a Green Community to apply for energy conservation grants, loans, and technical assistance that would benefit town center businesses and property owners**
- **Provide expedited/streamlined permitting and review procedures for businesses and property owners who retrofit or newly equip town center buildings with energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction equipment**
- **Explore bulk purchasing opportunities (energy, HVAC equipment, building insulation materials, etc.) through a town center business improvement district or similar pooled-purchasing enterprise**

\* Source: “Town of Winchester Climate Action Plan,” Climate Action Task Force, draft October 16, 2010.



## Parking Management Program

- Provide convenient parking for customers/clients
- Establish clear Town and private employee parking areas
- Accommodate commuter parking appropriately
- Protect residential neighborhoods from spillover parking



- Establish four tiers of parking (central core, outer core, Town lots, and peripheral parking areas)
- Make initial time period free (~15 mins in central, ~30 mins others)
- Price heavily used and convenient central core spaces higher to encourage use for short-term parking and ensure availability of spaces near retail stores and restaurants; price other tiers lower to encourage use for longer-term parking
- Install pay stations that accept cash and credit/debit cards to allow parkers buy as much time as needed
- Selectively restripe parking areas to create more spaces

## Stormwater Management

- **Adopt a stormwater management bylaw to control the impact of increasingly rapid stormwater runoff on Aberjona River flooding, residential and commercial properties, public buildings, and streets**
  - Provide for shared stormwater management facilities (e.g., holding tanks and infiltration units) within watersheds as well as within town center blocks
- **Create a town-wide stormwater management district to coordinate and cost-effectively regulate, design, fund, and maintain stormwater management systems**
- **Explore legislation to allow for special treatment of development within 100' and 200' riverfront protection areas of the town center**



Wetland Buffer, Riverfront Protection Area, and Floodplain

## Governance

- **Establish a town center business improvement district (BID)**
  - BIDs are authorized by state legislation (MGL 40 O) and are established through petition and vote of the property owners
  - BIDs typically provide focused marketing, business recruiting, streetscape improvement, and maintenance services
  - BIDs are funded through property assessments, grants, etc.
    - Fees cannot exceed one half of one percent of assessed property value; fees are often matched by public and not-for-profit grants, in-kind services, etc.
  - Usually set up and managed as not-for-profits in public-private partnership with town
  - Staffing ranges from volunteers to part-time contract staff to full time managers
  
- **Examples –**

### Hackettstown, NJ

- Established 2006
- Not-for-profit organization managed by business community
- Annual budget \$144K
- Manages –
  - Visioning for commercial areas
  - Beautification
  - Business recruiting
  - Marketing
  - Soliciting grants and federal and state funding to finance streetscape improvements

### Northampton, MA

- Established 2007-2009
- Not-for-profit organization managed by property owners
- Annual budget \$755K (incl. \$150K in-kind)
  - Fees, cash grants, donations
- Manages downtown –
  - Landscaping, tree planting, snow removal, and general maintenance
  - Downtown branding and marketing
  - Parking operations, signage; bike, cab, valet, and trolley services



## Next Steps

- **Conduct Town Center Community Conversations**
  - Workshop, Wednesday, January 12, Jenks Center, 7-9PM
  - Workshop, Wednesday, January 19, Jenks Center, 7-9PM
  - Workshop, Saturday, January 22, Jenks Center, 9AM to Noon
- **Summarize findings and conclusions of workshops**
- **Draft town center development plan and identify next steps**
- **Brief town center community and town boards on draft plan**
- **Prepare formal town center development plan and draft necessary zoning and other bylaws changes**
- **Hold public hearings**

