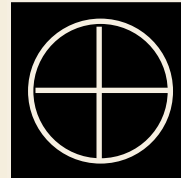


Recommendations for the  
Village Center Study

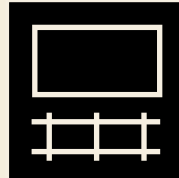
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WEST CONCORD



CONCORD CENTER



THOREAU DEPOT

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Concord Village Centers Committee

*Prepared by:*

Concord Village Centers Committee  
and the Department of Planning and Land Management,  
Town of Concord

December 10, 2007



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Toby Kramer, Chair of the Villages Committee (former Planning Board Chair)

Fred Watriss (Current Chair of the Planning Board) and Jeff Adams for co-chairing the Thoreau/ Depot Task Force

Steve Carr for chairing the Concord Center Task Force

Dorcas Miller and Elise Stone for co-chairing the West Concord Task Force

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## **Steering Committee**

Ashley Galvin, Dan Gainsboro, Fritz Kussin, Jim DiGiovanni, Paul Mahoney, Tim Blancke, Steve Ng and Tom Conway.

Ann Shapiro, Selectmen representative.

## **Concord Center Task Force**

Fritz Kussin, Holly Larner, Jim White, Karle Packard, Kerry Munro, Laurie Cadigan and Lynda Anderson

## **Thoreau Depot Task Force**

Bob Treitman, Cynthia Wood, Steve Feldman and Suzanne Fondriest

## **West Concord Task Force**

Dorrie Kehoe, Jim Craig, Meg Gaudet, Nancy Crowley, Nick Boynton and Paul Mahoney

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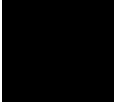


CONCORD VILLAGES

The Cecil Group

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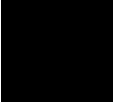


CONCORD VILLAGES

The Cecil Group

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Concord Village Center Committee (Villages Committee), formed under the Planning Board in October 2006, is finishing its initial phase of the Village Study to solicit public input, comments and recommendations on what needs to be preserved and what ideally should change for each of three centers—Concord Center, Thoreau/Depot area and West Concord. This report offers a brief introduction, gives context to the recommendations, summarizes the recommendations and concludes by highlighting common planning themes throughout the centers.

The Villages Committee has the basic mission of looking at how planning can improve the quality of life in and around the centers. The primary goals in undertaking this study are to maintain economic stability and diversity of the centers; provide direction on public investment for Town infrastructure (i.e. parking improvements, pedestrian enhancements, traffic safety and wastewater planning); and to make sure that change in land use is of the kind and degree that is supported and desired by the community.

Lead by the Steering Committee with task forces for each center, the Villages Committee is finishing its initial phase of soliciting public input, comments and recommendations. Over the past year, the public outreach includes newspaper articles, numerous public meetings; questionnaires; interviewing business and property owners; and conducting two interactive workshops. This information has been used to guide initial recommendations regarding land use management in the centers, which has been prepared by The Cecil Group and is provided as an appendix to this report.

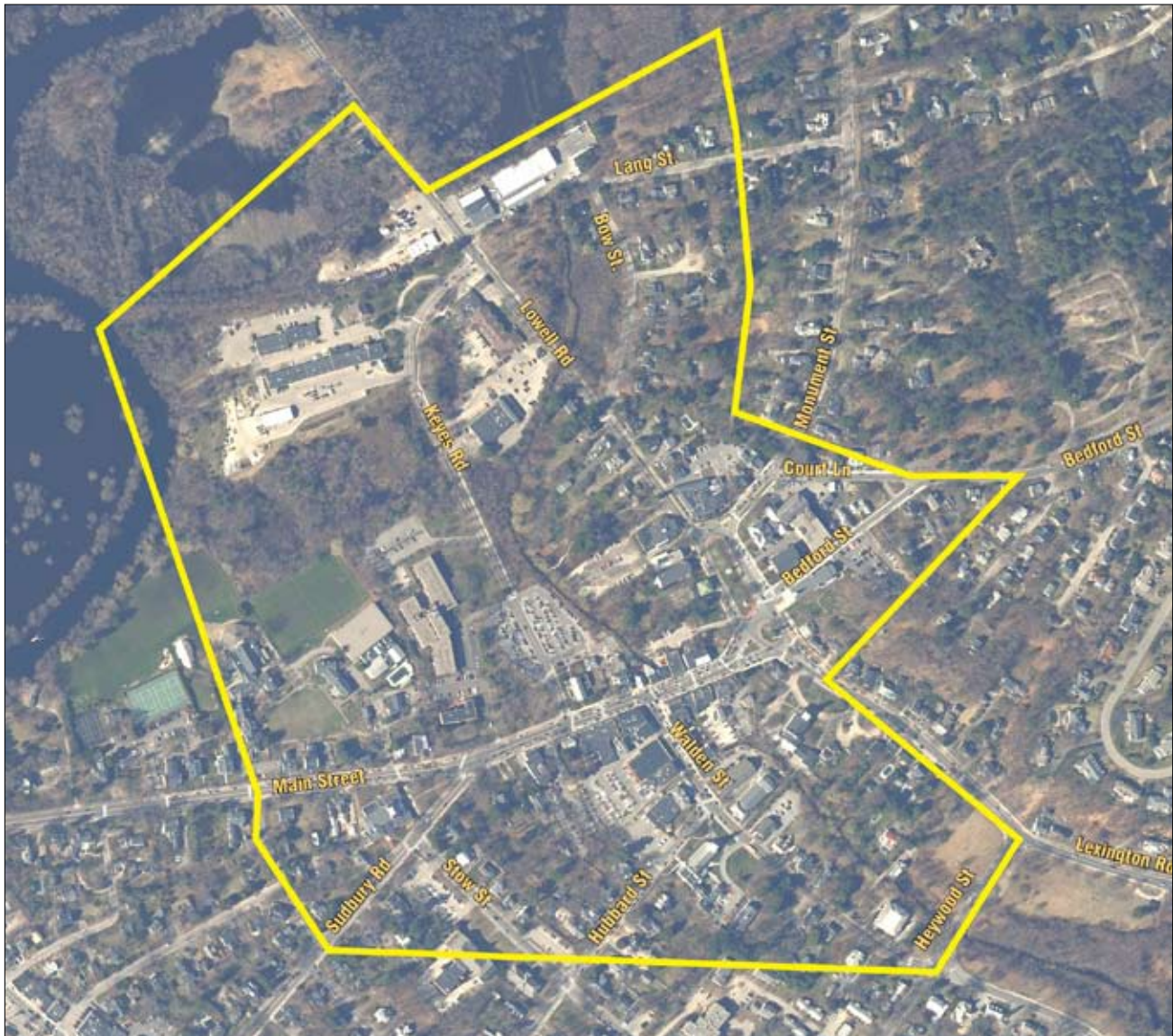
Although unanimous consensus was not reached on every topic, the basic sentiments of the Villages Committee are reflected in these recommendations, which attempt to identify the major planning themes for managing future growth in the centers. A Summary of the major recommendations to the Planning Board is as follows: (recommendations to other boards and committees are included in the report.

The Cecil Group has provided a report considering assess the committees' recommendations and offer guidance on the options of planning tools to accomplish these recommendations. The Villages Committee will hold a final public meeting to receive comments on the Cecil Report, and each task force will prepare a brief summary of these final comments as an appendix to this report. The Planning Board will then assess how to proceed with the recommendations and The Cecil Group's report.

In concluding, the Villages Committee determined that there are common planning themes for all three centers, which are to support and maintain village character of each center; to create design guidelines and a design review process; to recommend possible public works projects for traffic calming and pedestrian enhancements; and to recommend further studies for better understanding how future mixed-use redevelopment might appear and impact the centers.

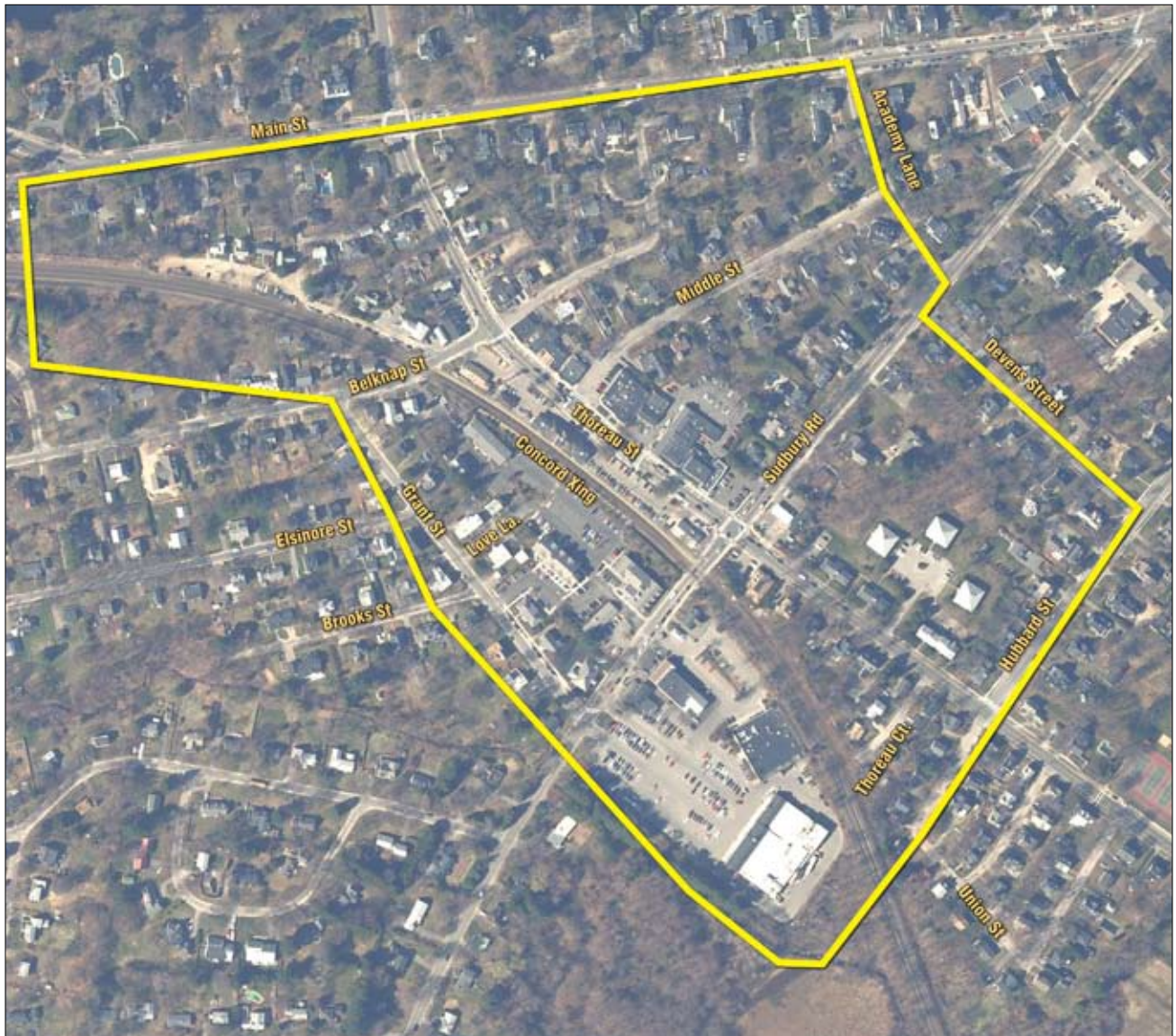
### Concord Center:

- Define design parameters that reflect existing scale and style of Concord Center;
- Encourage more restaurants, while also preserving retail on the ground floor;
- Create incentives for a mix of retail uses appealing to Concord residents;
- Explore parking requirements to allow shared parking and mixed uses;
- Increase access and visibility of the Mill Brook as a feature and amenity for pedestrians; and
- Study further the possibility of new mixed-use area (sub-village) at Keyes Road/Lowell Road intersection.



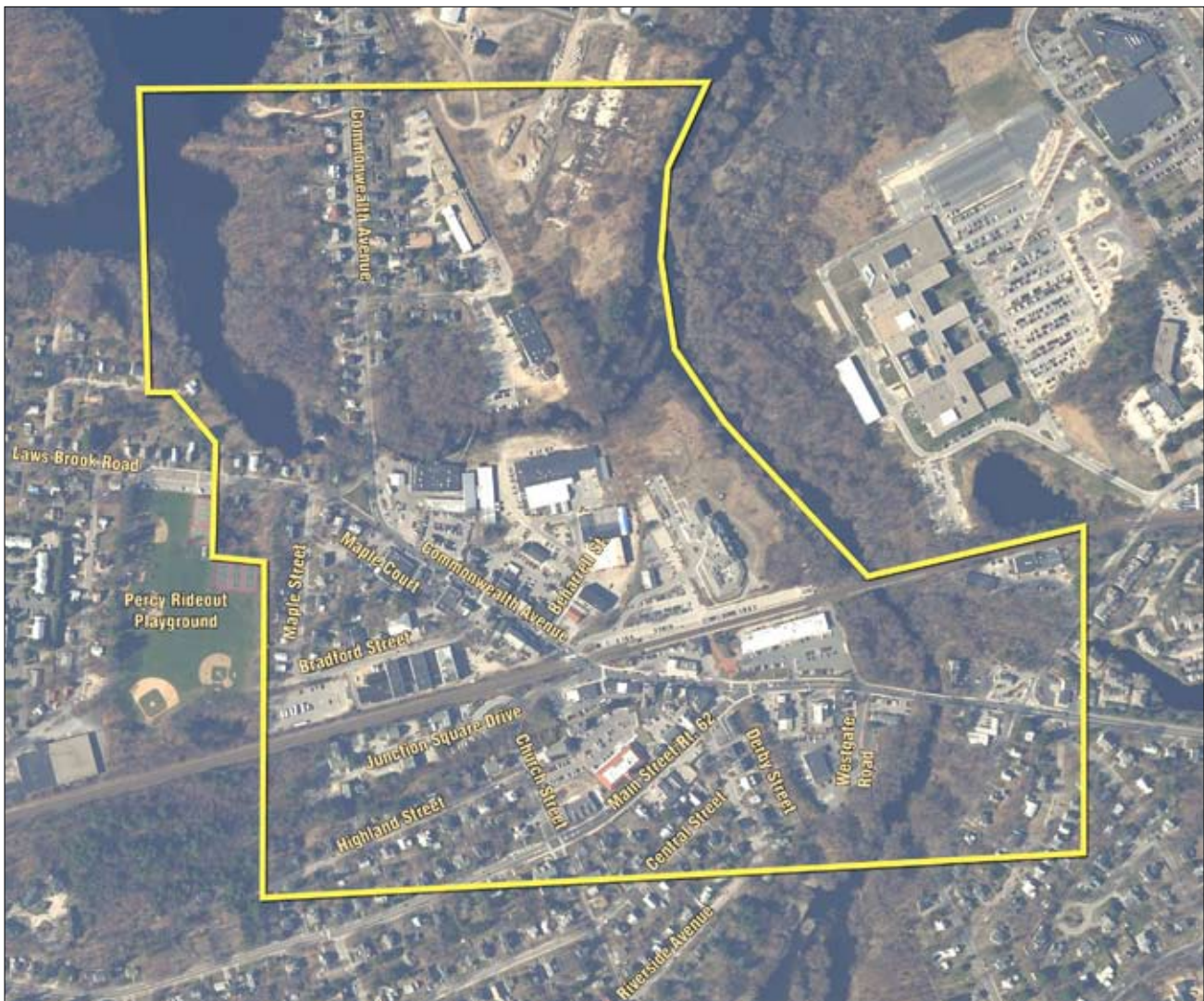
### Thoreau/Depot Area:

- Create design review process to promote building and façade improvements that maintain village scale;
- Improve aesthetics of the commuter and retail parking area with enhanced landscaping;
- Re-examine existing zoning to attract new businesses such as quality restaurants and more diverse businesses;
- Develop informational/directional signage linking Thoreau/Depot area with Concord Center; and
- Study further the redevelopment potential of the area around Crosby's Market located east-erly of Sudbury Road.



### West Concord:

- Create design guidelines and a design review process for both the architecture of the building and the site development plan, which determines the appropriate location of parking, particularly behind storefronts;
- Explore zoning options to continue the village scale and type of uses along Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue;
- Further examine options to maintain affordable rents;
- Assess potential for building a walkway connecting Baker Avenue to West Concord Center;
- Explore ways to strengthen connections between the Center and the waterways (i.e. river, brook) and to create or enhance pedestrian greenways; and
- Study redevelopment potential of large areas by examining ways of creating village-scale redevelopment and mixed-use flexibility in business areas away from Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.



# INTRODUCTION

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The Concord Village Center Committee (Villages Committee), formed under the Planning Board about a year ago, is finishing its initial phase of the Villages Study to solicit public input, comments and recommendations on what needs to be preserved and what ideally should change for each of three centers—Concord Center, Thoreau/Depot area and West Concord. This section provides the overall background of the Villages Study by looking at the purpose of the study, by summarizing the public process and by explaining the benefits and intent of the recommendations.

## **Purpose**

The Villages Committee has the basic mission of looking at how planning can improve the quality of life in and around the centers. The Committee’s specific mission statement is “to protect the unique character of the three centers; enhance the quality of village life; and enhance both the economic and housing opportunities.”

Keeping the Centers economically sustainable is the key underlying mission of the Villages Study. To prevent erosion of the Town’s tax base, it is essential that Concord’s centers maintain their economic vitality. The Villages Study is exploring ways to expand business opportunities such as increasing the allowed height of buildings, which may give property owners an incentive to add a second or third story to their building, allowing outdoor cafés, encouraging new entertainment uses that will provide for expanded evening use of the centers, and encouraging more mixed-use development (i.e. retail, office and housing) to energize the centers.

This Study also reflects the key tenets of the State’s Smart Growth Sustainable Development Principles: concentrate development; make use of existing infrastructure; increase job and business opportunities near existing development. By creatively planning for sustainable growth, the Villages Committee aims to maintain and improve the local economy and the quality of life in and around the Town’s centers.

## **Public Process**

Lead by the Steering Committee with task forces for each center, the Villages Committee is finishing its initial phase of soliciting public input, comments and recommendations, focusing on what needs to be preserved and what ideally should change for each of the centers.

Over the past several months, the Villages Committee and its consultant, The Cecil Group, have conducted public meetings; engaged in a mass mailing campaign; written six articles for the Concord Journal; distributed questionnaires; interviewed business and property owners; and conducted two interactive workshops to solicit public comment on managing future land use in the Town’s centers.

The Cecil Group has provided a report considering the committees’ recommendations and offer guidance on the options of planning tools to accomplish these recommendations. This report is included as Appendix J. The Villages Committee will hold a final public meeting to receive comments on The Cecil Group’s report, and each task force will prepare a brief summary of these final comments as an appendix to this report. The Planning Board will then assess how to proceed with the recommendations and the Cecil Group’s Report. The Planning Board wants to ensure that the community has had an opportunity to provide input on future planning options and is better informed when faced with making decisions about the village centers.



## Benefit and Intent of Recommendations

Proactive planning is essential to influence a positive direction of change in land use. The Villages Committee's recommendations have a broad potential impact on private and public land uses.

The Villages Committee's recommendations attempt to anticipate future change and encourage desirable uses that will enhance long-term community goals such as economic stability and diversity of goods and services. These recommendations will also provide direction to Town government regarding public investment in the Town's infrastructure (such as lighting, parking improvements, pedestrian enhancements, traffic safety and wastewater planning). The Villages Committee wants to make sure that planning and the bylaws in place guide future change in the kind and degree that is supported and desired by the community.

Although unanimous consensus was not reached on every topic, the basic sentiments of the Villages Committee are reflected in these recommendations, which attempt to identify planning themes to manage the future growth in the centers. One issue, which had a range of opinions, involves the basic question of incorporating mixed-uses in the centers, whether it is the ratio of certain uses (retail) to other uses (business offices or residential dwellings), appropriate location of different uses for different parts of each center or visualizing the appearance of different mixed-use developments. For this issue and other complex ideas, the Villages Committee members reached agreement by indicating that further research should be done before definitive recommendations can be made.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONCORD CENTER

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## 2

Concord Center is the historic heart of the town, serving as a commercial, cultural, and government center for the community and visitors from around the world. It was established with a grain mill and ancillary businesses on the Mill Brook over three centuries ago and continues to maintain a design and form that represents the quintessential New England town center. The traditional buildings, with their small retail shops clustered along Main and Walden Streets, have evolved over the centuries with buildings and uses adapting as times and needs change. The extent of the retail center has remained stable due to the well defined edges created by the institutional churches, school and government buildings that surround the center. The limitations of the business area makes for a compact walking environment but a scarce resource for commercial space that has driven up prices and rents resulting in specialty shops, which serve more visitors rather than local residents. The everyday shopping needs of the residents, for groceries and sundries, are better found in other parts of town or in neighboring communities, where rents are lower and those uses can have the necessary space to work economically.

Concord Center has become a tourist center and visitor destination point for those who want to enjoy the historic ambience, the natural attributes of the Mill Brook and the cultural amenities that form the center. Concord Center is under the purview of the Historic Districts Commission (HDC), which has helped to preserve the architectural charm and character of the area. The design and appropriateness review of the HDC is enough to assure continued aesthetic control for new development in the center but there may be some changes needed in zoning to control new uses and address parking concerns.

The area with the most likely potential for significant change is along Keyes Road and at the intersection with Lowell Road. The combination of town-owned parking lot, government buildings, large parcels of privately owned businesses, and the natural setting of the Mill Brook can provide an opportunity for expansion of the village to a new area that could enhance and complement the historic core.

Monument Square is the traffic hub of this center with the historic layout of roads radiating from the Square to the neighboring towns of Carlisle, Bedford, Lexington, Maynard, and points beyond. The convergence of traffic, especially during the peak rush hours, causes delays and frustrations for residents and commuters alike, so solutions for improving traffic flow and safety need further study. Concord Center does not have direct access to public transportation but the short walk to the train station on Thoreau Street could be enhanced with better signage, bicycle parking, or a shuttle service.

### A. GENERAL PLANNING THEMES

- Manage uses to provide a mix of retail appealing to Concord residents and tourists that will attract them on a regular basis to Concord Center.
- Encourage diversity of business uses, particularly to encourage restaurants.
- Maintain store-front retail uses on the ground floor to keep the Concord Center character and vitality.
- Support mixed-use development, particularly with further research to determine options and appropriate balance of uses.



- Improve traffic circulation to calm traffic and improve safety.
- Rationalize and improve parking lots.
- Strengthen pedestrian and bike connections within the Center and to nearby centers.
- Expand open space opportunities by providing access to portions of the Mill Brook in order to make it a more visible and integrated feature of Concord Center.
- Expand pedestrian areas and open space into paved roadways and intersections where they are wider than necessary, and decrease crosswalk width.
- Preserve historic assets.
- Encourage pedestrian/handicapped accessibility within buildings.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Town Program and Regulations

#### a. Business and Use Management:

Recognize that there is very limited opportunity for expansion of retail space in Concord Center due to the well defined edges created by institutional uses and historic buildings along Main and Walden Street that are not suitable for retail conversion. Some suggested revisions to zoning to include:

- Preserve ground floor retail along Main Street and Walden Street by limiting office/financial uses to above ground levels.
- Zone to restrict offices to 2nd floor to free up ground floor space for retail.
- Change Zoning Use Definitions to create a retail category and define it to include only uses desired,
- Consider parameters to discourage national chains, formula stores or other uses that may not be desirable or have a negative economic impact on the existing uses.

#### b. Mixed-Use Redevelopment

A special study is needed to examine the potential for creating a sub-village at Keyes and Lowell Roads using a combination of Town and privately owned land (parcels: municipal lot, Millbrook Tarry lot and other lots to the northwest on Lowell Road). Considerations should include:

- Encouraging uses that support and complement existing Center.
- Mixed-use including retail, restaurant, offices and residential.
- New zoning mechanisms such as Chapter 40R, or form-based zoning that would also control the appearance of new development.
- Town property is a key component to controlling available land. Possibility that some of the Concord Public Works and Department of Planning & Land Management services can be moved to another location to open up the area for other uses such as offices or residential dwellings.

## 2. Physical Improvements

### a. Parking

#### *i. Walden Street Parking Lot*

- Parking consolidation/improvements at the publicly owned Walden Street lot with adjacent privately owned lots should be studied in more detail to improve the surface lot but not add decked parking.
- Concerns that will need to be addressed involve: number of spaces that can be achieved; impact of traffic flow for neighborhood, potential changes to the zoning district delineation.
- Requires property owner cooperation including the post office parking lot and adjacent retail/office use lots.
- Management and liability issues need to be considered along with cost effectiveness and allocation of spaces as may be needed for the existing uses.
- Landscaping (trees) should be integrated in the design of the lot to provide visual relief and reduce heat gain.
- General concern for lack of places for employee parking.

#### *ii. Keyes Road Parking Lot*

- Keyes Road parking lot should be studied in more detail as an opportunity for re-configuration and possible deck parking.
- Consider re-routing Keyes Road along the edge of the parking lot
- Improvements to pedestrian and driver safety and increases in parking spaces are important design considerations.
- Potential for retail or mixed-use development on the ground floor with parking above.
- Potential concerns from nearby condo owners.
- Town ownership provides more control and management potential but the lot could be privately developed and managed.

#### *iii. General Parking*

- Additional parking meters might be useful to encourage turnover of spaces along Main Street near the Concord Free Public Library.
- Concord Academy parking should be more strictly enforced.
- The parking for the Library should be better allocated/ identified.

### b. Traffic/ Pedestrian

#### *i. Monument Square*

- Study ways to improve traffic circulation and pedestrian walkways in the Square as traffic calming measures.
- Eliminate the “short-circuit” left turn from Monument Sq. to Main Street (around the flag pole) and create a plaza or bus drop-off area in front of the Town House.



- Eliminate one or more of the parking spaces near the flag pole if the circle changes.
- Potential concerns include: turning radius for trucks, impact on Bedford Street and Lowell Road, impact on parking at Town House, especially for employees.
- Consider changing the color/surface of the crosswalks to improve safety, upon consultation with Historic District Commission and the Concord Public Works.

#### *ii. Sudbury Road/Main Street*

- Improve pedestrian crossing and corresponding traffic calming at the intersection.
- Narrow Main Street by incorporating one parking space on each side of road into the crosswalk to shorten the pedestrian crosswalk and to improve visibility as well as provide an opportunity for improved streetscape.
- Reconfigure Sudbury Road to enter Main Street closer to ninety degree angle (T-intersection) to shorten the walking distance.
- Add another cross walk between the crosswalk at the Library and the next crosswalk towards Main Street.
- Consider changing the color/surface of the crosswalks to improve safety, upon consultation with Historic District Commission and the Concord Public Works.

#### *iii. Keyes Road*

- Additional sidewalk improvements along Keyes Road are needed.
- Consider removing invasive species in the wetlands and trimming growth along Keyes Road.
- Consider a path along the Mill Brook or connect to existing pathways.

#### *iv. Accessibility for all*

Encourage private owners to work together to identify ways to make 2nd stories accessible.

### c. Open Space

#### *i. Mill Brook Crossing - Main Street/Keyes Road*

- Create opportunities to bring people closer to the open space in the center of town.
- Open the Mill Brook to make a courtyard along the rear of the stores to create pedestrian connections behind Keyes Road parking lot and the rear parking for Main Street and Walden Street.
- May be opportunity for outside cafés.
- Three key issues to study: prevalence of invasive plant species, the acceptability to the HDC and overall clean-up of the area.

#### *ii. Mill Brook Bridge (SE side of Main Street)*

- Add a small bridge to cross from Walden Street and the rear parking behind Cheese Shop and Tuttle's Livery (require coordination with property owners.)



d. Bicycle Connections/Use

- Consider creating a bicycle trail on abandoned railroad R.O.W.
- Bike racks throughout Concord Center are needed to encourage general ridership.

**C. KEY ACTIONS (Planning Board)**

**1. Short-term (0-2 yr)**

- Consider changes to the zoning bylaw through modifications to existing zoning, or creation of new zoning methods such as a zoning overlay district or form-based zoning that will include the following:
- Preserve retail on the ground floor (street level) by limiting less desirable business activities such financial and business offices to the upper or lower stories of a building in the Center.
- Encourage more restaurants by altering zoning and by allowing shared parking arrangements.
- Create incentives for a mix of retail uses appealing to Concord residents.
- Define design parameters that reflect existing scale and style of Concord Center relative to height, setbacks, ground floor windows, and parking location.
- Explore parking requirements to allow shared parking and mixed uses.

**2. Long-term (2 yrs +)**

- Undertake a special study for a new mixed-use area (sub-village) to be created at the Keyes Road/Lowell Road intersection using a combination of Town and privately owned land. Consider zoning under Chapter 40R or form-based zoning.

**D. KEY ACTIONS FOR OTHER BOARDS**

**1. Public Works Commission**

- Study ways to improve traffic circulation and pedestrian walkways in Monument Square through the use of traffic calming measures.
- Study ways to improve traffic circulation and pedestrian crossing on Main Street and Sudbury Road.
- Keyes Road parking lot should be studied in more detail as an opportunity for reconfiguration, deck parking, and ground floor retail uses.
- Coordinate with private parking lot owners to integrate improvements at Walden Street parking lot with these privately-owned lots to increase total parking, add landscaping and improve circulation.
- Study ways to improve the pedestrian walkways along Keyes Road.
- Place more bike racks throughout Concord Center to encourage ridership.
- Study the possibility of a bicycle trail on the abandoned railroad R.O.W. and consider the Mill Brook path as an asset to provide linkage within and to Concord Center (coordinating with the Natural Resources Commission).

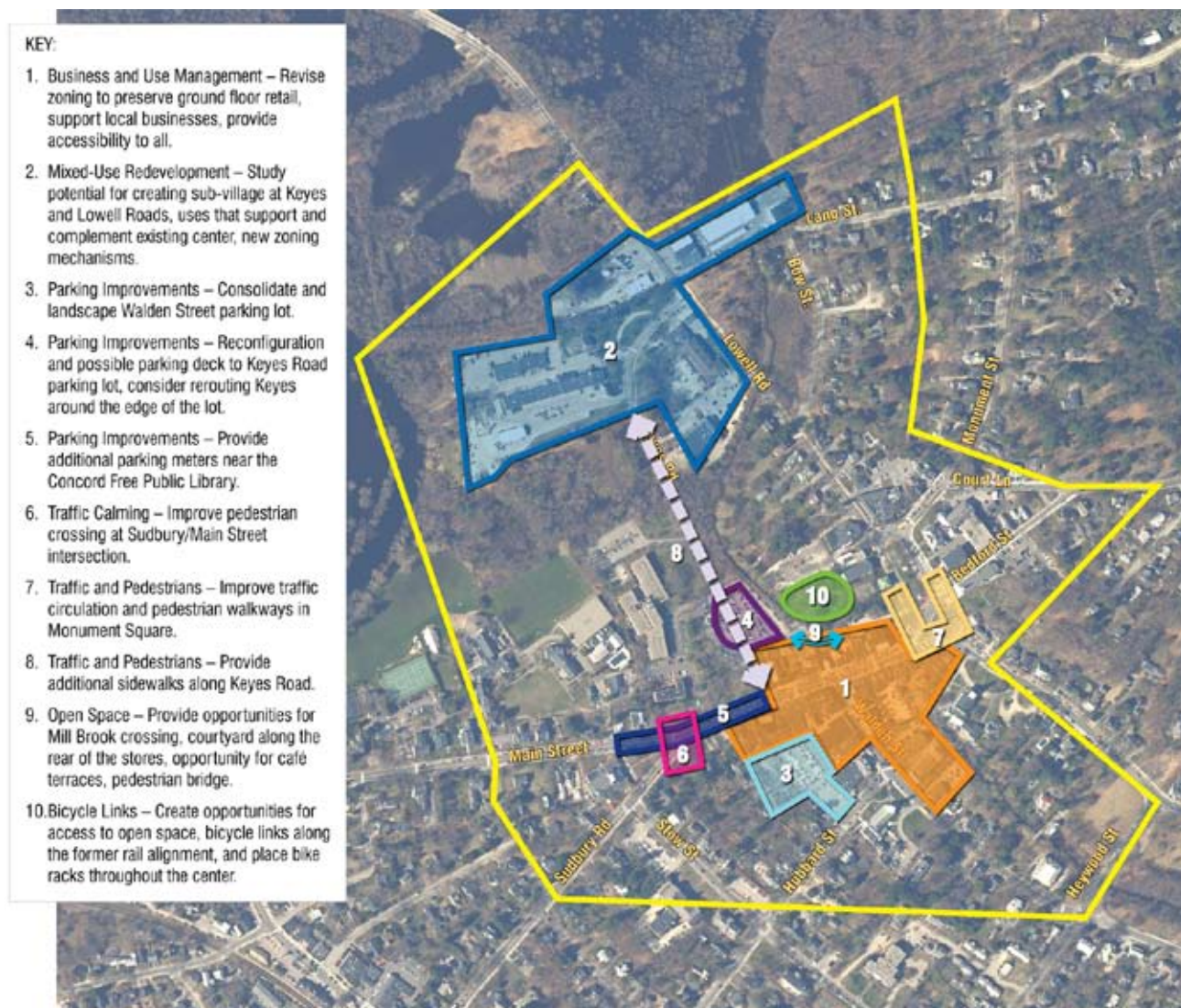


## 2. Natural Resource Commission

- Study ways to enhance the Mill Brook as an open space feature in Concord Center by allowing pedestrian connections and creation of courtyard retail uses to the rear of the Main Street stores and adjoining the Keyes Road parking lot.
- Consider adding a bridge over the Mill Brook to cross from Walden Street to the rear parking lot behind the Cheese Shop and Tuttle's Livery.

## 3. Historic District Commission

- Consider historically appropriate ways to change the color/surface of the crosswalks to improve safety;
- Streetscape improvements; and
- Infrastructure improvements such as bridges, bike racks, parking lot aesthetics, etc.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THOREAU/DEPOT AREA

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## 3

The Thoreau Street/Depot area has been described as a marketplace and a gathering place for families and youth. This area evolved as a commercial center when the railroad was constructed in the second half of the 19th century. The coming of the railroad spawned coal, wood, and grain dealerships and other businesses that depended on freight shipments in nearly every town the railroad passed through, with sidings and loading platforms built adjacent to the buildings so the freight could be unloaded directly from the trains to the buildings. While all of the buildings constructed westerly of the tracks have been lost, there remain four commercial buildings on Thoreau Street (east of the tracks) that date back to the late 1800's and early 1900's, the Depot and its baggage office (now Bedford Farms ice cream shop), the Concord Provisions building at the corner of Middle Street and Thoreau Street and its companion building the Dry Cleaning business (Priest Cleaners) at the corner of Belknap Street and Thoreau Street. It is suggested that the pattern, design and the details of these buildings be used as a gauge for any new construction or redevelopment in this area.

One of the critical aspects of this area is the lack of publicly owned land and the lack of welcoming places to sit and take in the sights – there's a need for shade, for comfortable benches, for more greenery. We would like to enhance the pedestrian experience for this area by improving sidewalks, extending street lights from Thoreau Street down Sudbury Road toward Grant Street, adding street trees and nicely designed street furnishings (benches, trash receptacles, information kiosks, etc.) and by working with private property owners to enhance and improve the open spaces on their land.

Another critical aspect is the need for well-coordinated parking agreements and regulations among residents, business owners and employees. We would like to address the urgency for cooperative efforts within currently available parking in the district. We would also like to explore the best choices that will respond to the area's future parking needs.

### A. GENERAL PLANNING THEMES

- Keep and enhance the village character of the retail shopping area along Thoreau Street.
- Improve pedestrian connections and streetscape throughout the village.
- Encourage mixed use/residential development in the Crosby's area through better site planning and design.
- Create attractive public and private spaces for sitting, especially in front of Depot with outdoor seating for restaurant use.
- Improve coordination between the traffic signals at the Sudbury Road/Thoreau Street intersection and the commuter train.
- Improve traffic flow, access and egress throughout the village center.
- Improve availability of off-street parking, especially for employees and train commuters which will help to eliminate parking spillover onto residential streets.
- Informational/Directional signage between Concord Center and Thoreau Street.



## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Town Programs and Regulations

- a. Business and Use Management—allow and encourage mixed use (retail/office/housing) redevelopment of the existing commercial areas of Thoreau Street and Sudbury Road.
- b. Façade Improvements –promote building, façade improvements and sign design standards in the commercial areas.
- c. Offices in Homes –continue to allow “in home” offices in residential buildings along Sudbury Road. Design, signage and other standards would be provided to preserve neighborhood character and existing structures.
- d. Promote Local Business
  - i. Special events—schedule special events (an “Art Walk”, Farmer’s Market or Depot restaurant tour), perhaps in the evening when people can stroll along Thoreau Street.
  - ii. Connect Centers—make stronger connections between Thoreau Street and Concord Center through directional signs, promotions, etc.
  - iii. New Businesses—attract a variety of new businesses such as quality restaurant, local serving businesses, and businesses serving younger population.
- e. Improved Pedestrian and Traffic Safety, especially for Youth

### 2. Mixed-Use Redevelopment of the Sudbury Road area

Study the potential for redevelopment of the Sudbury Road commercial area, which includes all parcels of land easterly of Sudbury Road between the commuter rail road and Grant Street:

- Consider a parking deck or garage that could be constructed to provide additional or alternative parking for commuters and additional parking for mixed uses through a public/private partnership;
- Consider increasing density of development to encourage mixed-use to support cost of a parking structure;
- Include a grocery store in any redevelopment plan; and
- Improve the design and site plan for some of the buildings directly on Sudbury Road.

### 3. Physical Improvements

- a. Traffic—study ways to improve the flow and safety of traffic on Thoreau Street and Sudbury Road:
  - Reduce speed of vehicles on Thoreau Street (those exiting from Bedford Farms and between the traffic signals at Sudbury Road and Main Street – particularly during the rush hours)—possibly no left turn during rush hours;
  - Eliminate cut-through traffic through residential streets to avoid the train signals;



- Coordinate the traffic signals at the Sudbury Road/Thoreau Street intersection and the commuter train (perhaps a blinking yellow light) that may make traffic move more smoothly.
- Improve traffic flow, access and egress throughout the village center.

#### b. Pedestrian Improvements

- Make district streetscape improvements to enhance pedestrian experience and safety. Such enhancements would include: improving sidewalks, crosswalks (maybe color, texture to stand out better), plantings and amenity upgrades.
- Encourage outdoor seating locations for local businesses such as: the front of the Depot, around the Depot platform, in front of La Provence, and other restaurants. This may require outreach to property and business owners as well as coordination with Concord Public Works.
- Improve crosswalks connecting areas across Sudbury and Thoreau Streets as well as Main Street to Grant Street.

#### c. Parking

- Improve the aesthetics of the commuter and retail parking areas (front and back) with enhanced landscaping and attention to dumpsters and delivery. Consider alternative approaches to the informal commuter parking that occurs along Cottage Lane.
- Support better management of both public and private parking areas, which could be accomplished through cooperative efforts and regulation.

#### d. Open Space

- Work to encourage greening of existing parking lots, sitting areas, streets and back lots.

### **C. KEY ACTIONS (Planning Board)**

#### **1. Short-term (0-2 yr)**

- Create design review process to promote building and façade improvements to maintain village scale.
- Improve aesthetics of the commuter and retail parking area with enhanced landscaping.
- Re-examine existing zoning to attract new businesses such as quality restaurants and more diverse businesses (in coordination with Economic Development Council)
- Develop informational/directional signage linking Thoreau/Depot area with Concord Center.

#### **2. Long-term Issues (2 yrs+)**

- Study redevelopment potential at Crosby's commercial center including- parking deck/garage; adding more density and encourage mixed-use; maintaining a grocery store in any redevelopment plan; and improving the design and site plan to place some buildings along Sudbury Road.



## D. KEY ACTIONS FOR OTHER BOARDS

### 1. Board of Selectmen

- Study the potential for better coordination between the traffic signals at the Sudbury Road/ Thoreau Street intersection and the commuter train (perhaps a blinking yellow light may make traffic move more smoothly).

### 2. Public Works Commission

- Study ways to improve flow of vehicles on Thoreau Street between the traffic signals at Sudbury Road and Main Street – particularly during the rush hours.
- Study ways to eliminate cut-through traffic through side streets to avoid the train signals.
- Study ways to make Village streetscape improvements, especially along Sudbury Road to Grant Street, that will enhance the pedestrian experience and safety and to enhance the landscape by improving sidewalks, crosswalks (maybe color, texture to stand out better), plantings and amenity upgrades. (Coordinating with the Planning Board)
- Improve pedestrian connections to and from the Depot.

### 3. Economic Development Council

- Schedule special events (an “Art Walk”, Farmer’s Market or Depot restaurant tour), perhaps in the evening when people can stroll along Thoreau Street.

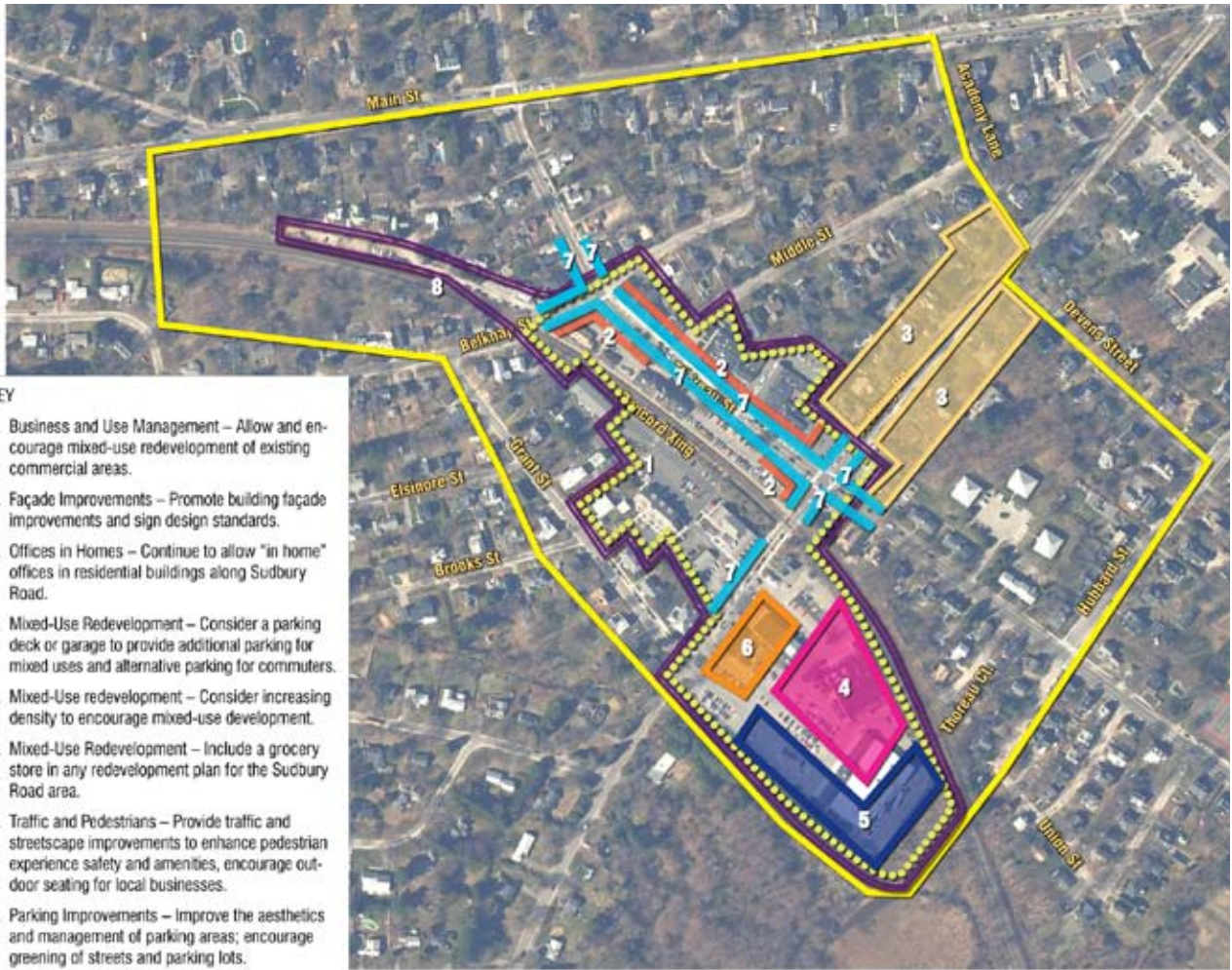
### 4. Police Department

- Improved safety, especially for youth.
- Enforce existing parking regulations

### 5. Other (such as the Board of Appeals)

- Support better management of both public and private parking areas, which could be accomplished through cooperative efforts and regulation.





**KEY**

1. Business and Use Management – Allow and encourage mixed-use redevelopment of existing commercial areas.
2. Façade Improvements – Promote building façade improvements and sign design standards.
3. Offices in Homes – Continue to allow “in home” offices in residential buildings along Sudbury Road.
4. Mixed-Use Redevelopment – Consider a parking deck or garage to provide additional parking for mixed uses and alternative parking for commuters.
5. Mixed-Use redevelopment – Consider increasing density to encourage mixed-use development.
6. Mixed-Use Redevelopment – Include a grocery store in any redevelopment plan for the Sudbury Road area.
7. Traffic and Pedestrians – Provide traffic and streetscape improvements to enhance pedestrian experience safety and amenities, encourage outdoor seating for local businesses.
8. Parking Improvements – Improve the aesthetics and management of parking areas; encourage greening of streets and parking lots.





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WEST CONCORD

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## 4

West Concord is described as “small town, friendly, service oriented, affordable, and a little funky”. It has many owner operated businesses and a sense of community that business people and residents are anxious to preserve. That sense of identify is imbedded in the origins of the village.

West Concord was once considered the industrial heart of the town. As a community West Concord began as a triangle of three closely-linked villages that formed during the 19th century. Westvale, which grew around a succession of mills on the Assabet River upstream of what is now West Concord. Concord Junction, which started out as “Warnerville,” a small hamlet associated with Ralph Warner’s tub and pail factory on Nashoba Brook that then became a junction of two railroads leading to more building east of the pail factory. The third village, the Massachusetts Reformatory built in 1878, has changed and grown over time and continues to have a large influence in the area. West Concord reflects the diversity of the three original villages, which have gradually melded to form a common distinct identity very different from the other two village centers in Concord.

Although we understand that there will be changes in West Concord, we would like to manage future development to maintain the village scale along the main streets and neighborhoods that lead to the retail spine on Main Street to Commonwealth Ave. Many of the retail stores are locally owned and provide unique services and products that are valued by residents. We would like to implement some type of design review for buildings, signs and parking, but do not want to create an historic district which some perceive as too limiting on creative change. We would like to enhance pedestrian movement throughout West Concord Center by improving the streetscape and providing safe levels of lighting. West Concord has a unique setting with many open space amenities including the Nashoba Brook, Assabet River and Warner’s Pond, all of which need to be made more visible and accessible. The Bruce Freeman memorial rail trail will provide another opportunity for recreation and is supported by the community.

West Concord bears the burden of commuter traffic during rush hours from neighboring towns as well as being an access point to the Route 2 rotary and a destination for the commuter rail station (the West Concord Depot). We would like to better understand the effects of possible road changes to improve traffic circulation, such as revisions to Beharrell Street or a redesign of Kenny Dunn Square. Signalization and parking for the train station also requires further examination to find ways to improve the traffic flow.

Of all the villages, the possibility of change is most evident in West Concord. There are many large parcels of older industrial buildings with large parking lots in the Beharrell Street and Bradford Street areas. The buildings have housed a range of creative businesses and many entrepreneurs who have needed low-cost space. We would like to maintain the opportunity of affordable rents for creative or entrepreneurial uses. Further study is needed to examine the implications for mixed-use redevelopment (that may include housing) by increasing the flexibility for business uses, coordinating parking and providing better traffic/pedestrian circulation. There is a sense of urgency, since we believe there are several very important parcels being or soon to be offered for sale, and the sale of these parcels could significantly change West Concord.



## A. GENERAL PLANNING THEMES (in no particular order):

- Preserve character and feel of West Concord Center.
- Manage future development to keep village scale along Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.
- Plan for possible expansion and redevelopment of mixed-use sites (sites where a variety of uses are located that may include appropriate industrial, office, retail and/or residential uses) in the older industrial areas that will continue the scale of the village connecting to Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.
- Alleviate traffic congestion by reconfiguring circulation through the town (for example traffic loops or circles, extending streets or using one-way directions).
- Address location of parking and delivery spaces to discourage “strip mall” look.
- Improve aesthetics by providing design guidelines and implementing design review/control.
- Increase and facilitate (well lit) pedestrian movement throughout West Concord Center.
- Promote open space enhancements and networks, particularly along the river, brooks and ponds.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Town Programs and Regulations

#### a. Business and Use Management

Maintain the village scale in the retail areas along Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue by:

- Managing the size or type of businesses (whether limiting or expanding) throughout the district dependent on “where” in the village center,
- Encouraging new development or redevelopment that maintains village scale and style

#### b. Mixed-use Redevelopment

Study redevelopment potential of large under utilized areas - examine ways of creating village-scale redevelopment and mixed-use flexibility in commercial areas away from Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue—such as:

- Bradford Street area – Consider a mix of retail, office or residential uses that will add to the vitality of West Concord and maintains an historic character similar to the existing buildings, while taking into consideration the impact of new development on the adjoining residential neighborhood on Bradford Street and Maple Street.
- Beharrell Street/Nashoba Brook area – Consider a broad mix of uses including commercial, restaurant, industrial and residential. Preserve rental opportunities for entrepreneurial/creative businesses, specifically identify mechanisms of how to do this and the potential trade-offs. Encourage property owners to work with the town to plan the area as a whole so any new development will be integrated with and complementary to the buildings and uses along Commonwealth Avenue. Include solutions for traffic circulation, access to open space and design guidelines. The planning for the possible extension of Beharrell Street should only be done in the context of the broader planning of the Beharrell Street area.

- Winthrop Street/Foundry area – Consider a mix of uses that includes commercial, industrial and residential, which also takes into account the impact of increased traffic and change in intensity of use on the existing residential neighborhood on Winthrop Street. Consider ways to integrate traffic, parking and pedestrian circulation with the Beharrell Street area to encourage connections with the rest of West Concord.

### c. Design Review Process

- Design Guidelines/Design Review*—Support creation of design guidelines and a design review process—for both the architecture of the building and the site development plan; a new historic district is not recommended.
- Sign Bylaw*—support review of the sign bylaws to determine what changes are possible to address aesthetic concerns.

## 2. Physical Improvements

### a. Traffic/Pedestrian

- Traffic—study options to ease traffic and circulation, specifically:*
  - Possible redesign of Kenny Dunn Square (perhaps a traffic circle).
  - Upgrade traffic and railroad signals where needed.
  - Explore if MBTA will permit stopping the train at a different section of the platform so that there is less impact on vehicular traffic on Commonwealth Avenue.
  - Request MBTA to have only front or rear cart getting on/off the train
  - Explore improving intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Church Street.
  - Explore options to ease congestion along Laws Brook Road.
- Beharrell Street extension—study ways to address the dead-end and lack of circulation on Beharrell Street to improve traffic flow and ease congestion by considering creating a:*
  - “loop”;
  - extension; or
  - other options.
- Pedestrian Improvements—Support exists for the following:*
  - Streetscape enhancements for West Concord Center;
  - Streetscape improvements to redeveloped land—walkways and trees; and
  - Walkways connecting Baker Avenue to West Concord Center.
  - Better lighting (in practice with the current Dark Sky policies) to encourage walking, safety and access in the Beharrell and Bradford Street areas by extending lights down these streets.
- Multi-modal Improvements -- Provide support for multi-modal connections with parking, pedestrian access and signage to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.*



### b. Parking/Deliveries

- Locate parking and delivery space behind buildings so that the streetscape continues the storefront pattern and encourages pedestrian use.
- Consider shared use of parking.

### c. Open Space

Promote open space access and connections such as:

- River walks along the Assabet River and Nashoba Brook;
- Canoe access to Assabet River;
- Opportunities for pocket parks (site near Warner's Pond Dam is under construction) for a network of green spaces;
- Better sidewalk access to the Rideout playground;
- Integrate greenscaping with rail trail; and
- Improve Depot area with more greenscaping, especially Junction Park.

Warner's Pond - Although not part of this report, the West Concord Task Force wants to assess review design standards, explore walking trails and green spaces around the Warner's Pond area and planning tools to accomplish their expressed goals.

### d. Bicycles Connections/Use

Create bicycle links along former rail alignment and placing bike racks throughout West Concord Center, including actions and improvements that support the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

## **C. KEY ACTIONS (Planning Board)**

### **1. Short-term (0-2 yr)**

- Explore zoning options to encourage new and redevelopment to continue the village scale and type of uses along Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.
- Create design review process for aesthetic/architectural design standards.
- Create design review process to determine appropriate location of parking, particularly behind storefronts.
- Assess potential for building a walkway connecting Baker Avenue to West Concord Center.

### **2. Long-term (2 yrs +)**

- Study redevelopment potential of large under utilized areas - examine ways of creating village-scale redevelopment and mixed-use flexibility in commercial areas away from Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue
- Examine planning tools to preserve "affordable rent" spaces for identified locations.



## D. KEY ACTIONS FOR OTHER BOARDS

### 1. Board of Selectmen

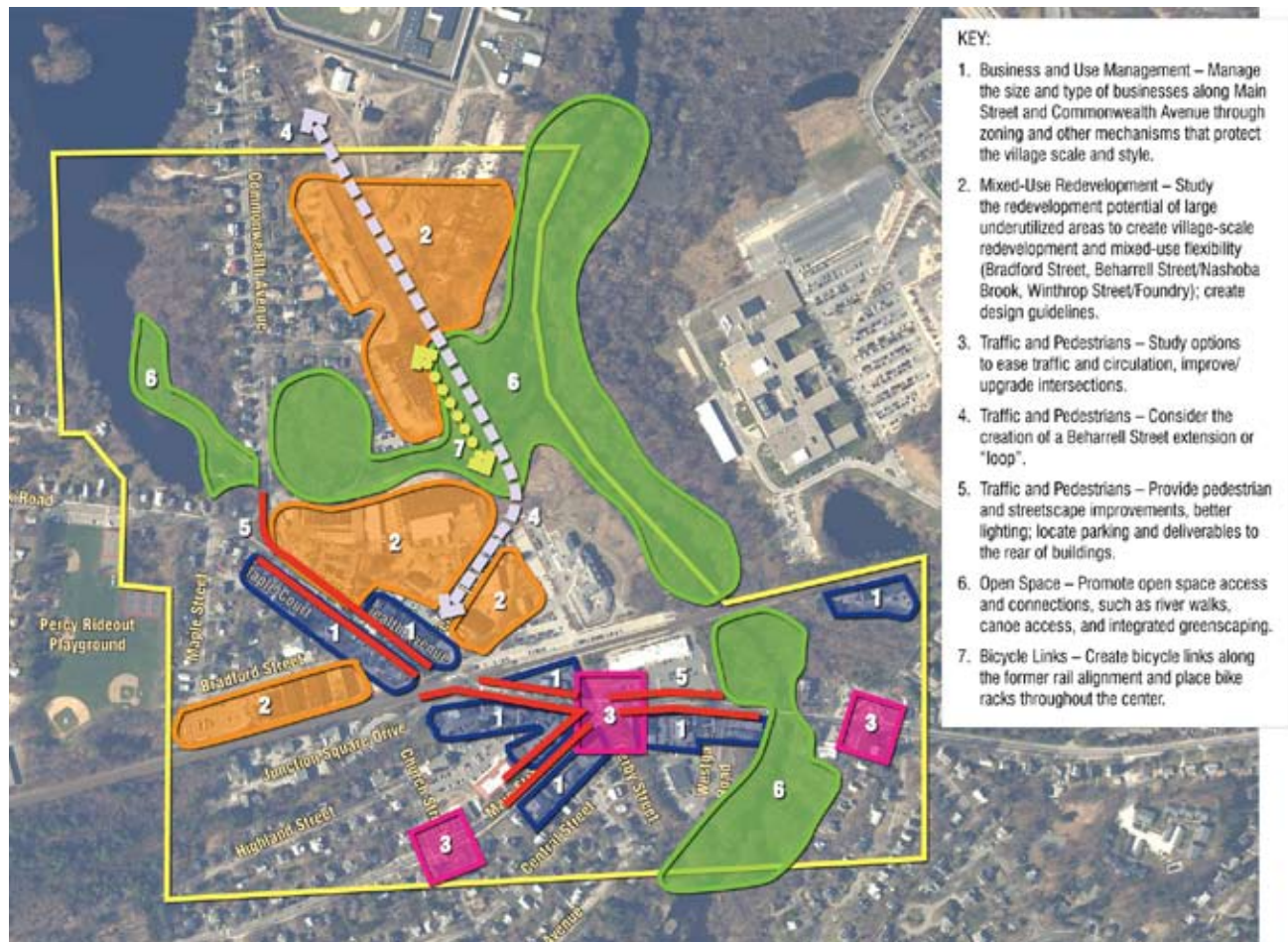
- Discuss with MBTA potential options to lessen commuter train impacts on Commonwealth Avenue.
- Study potential acquisition and use of surplus prison land by the Town

### 2. Public Works Commission

- Improve sidewalk and expanded parking lot for the Rideout playground.
- Streetscape improvements for existing and new development.
- Study the option of redesigning Kenny Dunn Square to improve traffic flow.
- Study the options to extend Beharrell Street. (Coordinating with the Planning Board)

### 3. Natural Resource Commission

- Provide access to open space enhancements and connections as well as better access to the river. (Coordinating with the Planning Board)





# CONCLUSION

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In concluding, the Villages Committee recommendations for all three centers share some similarity, while being tailored to each unique character of the center. In summary here are the shared planning themes:

- The first common recommendation is to support and maintain the village character of each center. All Villages Committee members appreciate the differences between the centers and want to maintain these differences. Many of the specific recommendations to the Planning Board and to the other boards collectively combine to enhance the attributes of each center.
- Another general planning theme is to create design guidelines and a design review process to help maintain the uniqueness of the centers and to keep the village scale for any redevelopment. The committee members are all interested in this idea; however, the concept needs to be studied further so the residents understand the planning tools available to implement design review.
- The prevalent recommendations for all three centers involve public works projects for traffic calming and pedestrian enhancements. The Committee members identify the particular traffic issues, but recognize further traffic studies are needed to see if there are some solutions to these traffic problems. Also, the Villages Committee expresses a strong desire to enhance the walking experience around the centers, whether through sidewalk, cross walk, or greenscape improvements.
- Lastly, the Villages Committee universally recommends further studies to better understand how future mixed-use redevelopment of large-scale properties might occur in the centers. Particularly, the members want to be able to grasp the appearance and potential affect of these redevelopments on the centers.



# APPENDIX I: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

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As part of the planning process, an assessment was made of existing conditions in each of the three villages to establish a shared understanding among the many participants.

Each of the three villages presents distinctive strengths that can serve as foundations for preservation and positive changes. However, each village has special challenges that serve as constraints that may require planned actions in order to be overcome, and unlock beneficial outcomes.

The following lists summarize extensive discussions that occurred during the community workshops and Concord Village Centers Committee meetings. The lists are representative of key issues raised to provide a background for the recommendations contained in this report, and are drawn from hundreds of comments and suggestions gathered through numerous workshops and meetings.

The lists provide three perspectives of the participants. The first category considers those aspects of each village center that should not be changed – or as a practical matter, will not change. The second category focuses upon those characteristics that must be changed because they are in conflict with community goals. The third category describes those characteristics that subject to change and requiring planning to meet community goals.

These categories are very important to the planning process. Aspects that should be preserved require a particular set of planning tools to limit undesirable change. Those aspects that must be changed will need pro-active efforts on the part of the community. Those aspects that are susceptible to change require different types of tools that ensure that the results are consistent with the community's goals.



## CONCORD CENTER

### Characteristics that Must Not or Will Not Change

- The unique composition of historic buildings, historic places and open space features must be preserved.
- This area must have shopping opportunities for Concord residents.
- The civic and religious institutions should and will remain.
- The Colonial Inn must remain as a feature of Concord Center.
- The area must retain an adequate supply of parking to serve Concord's residents
- The character and uses around Monument Square must be preserved.
- The residences adjacent and near the Center must remain.
- The tight pattern of businesses and historic buildings along Main Street and Walden Street provides an essential character.
- The open spaces along the edges of Concord Center must be preserved and protected.
- The Library is an essential element.

### Characteristics that Must Change

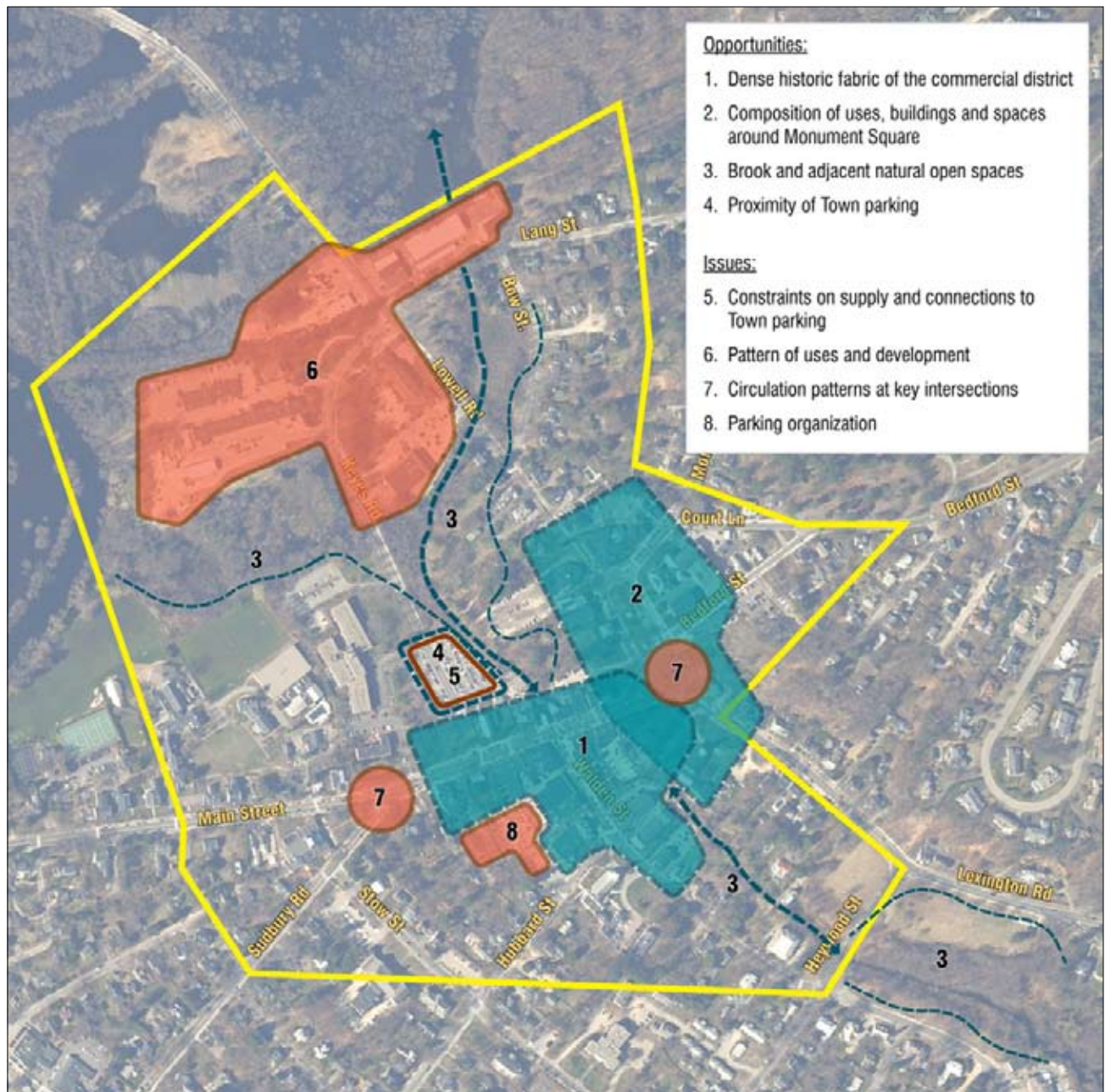
- Excessive pavement for vehicles and unsafe circulation patterns must be reduced.
- The amount of service uses along ground floors in the retail areas must be limited.
- Key streetscape improvements are required in some areas (for example, along Keyes Road and Lowell Road).
- Inefficient and unattractive parking areas must be improved.
- Attractive and safe pedestrian and bicycle connections must be expanded.
- Additional views and access to the brook must be attained.

### Characteristics that May Change, and Require Special Planning

- Use patterns in the retail and commercial spaces could change to be more attractive and useful to residents.
- There should be an ability to expand or rebuild parcels to accommodate additional compatible uses.
- More and better pedestrian connections may be provided to parking in back of the buildings.
- Allowing additional height on some parcels and buildings might be considered, or encouraging appropriate uses within "daylight" basements.
- Provision of commercial space at basement or "daylight basement" levels
- Alternative uses and development patterns at the lumber yard, oil supply yard and nearby parcels near the Keyes Road and Lowell Road intersection may occur.
- Expanded open space and access to the stream that bisects the Center could be considered.
- Provision of additional parking on the Town-owned lots may be an option.



# CONCORD CENTER ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



## THOREAU/DEPOT VILLAGE CENTER

### Characteristics that Must Not or Will Not Change

- The historic Depot Building may change in use, but must be retained.
- The Concord Crossing development provides a desirable mix of uses.
- Traditional buildings and local service uses should remain, like Concord Provisions and Cleaners and the “Ambulance Building”.
- A grocery store serving local needs must be retained as a use.
- This area must continue to serve as a local “convenience” center with food, shops and services attractive to residents, with uses ranging from La Provence to Dunkin’ Donuts
- The traditional relationship between sidewalks, buildings and streets along Thoreau Street must be retained.
- The broad mix of uses in this village center must be maintained.
- Off-street commuter parking must be retained
- The commuter rail station in this location is an essential component of the village center.

### Characteristics that Must Change

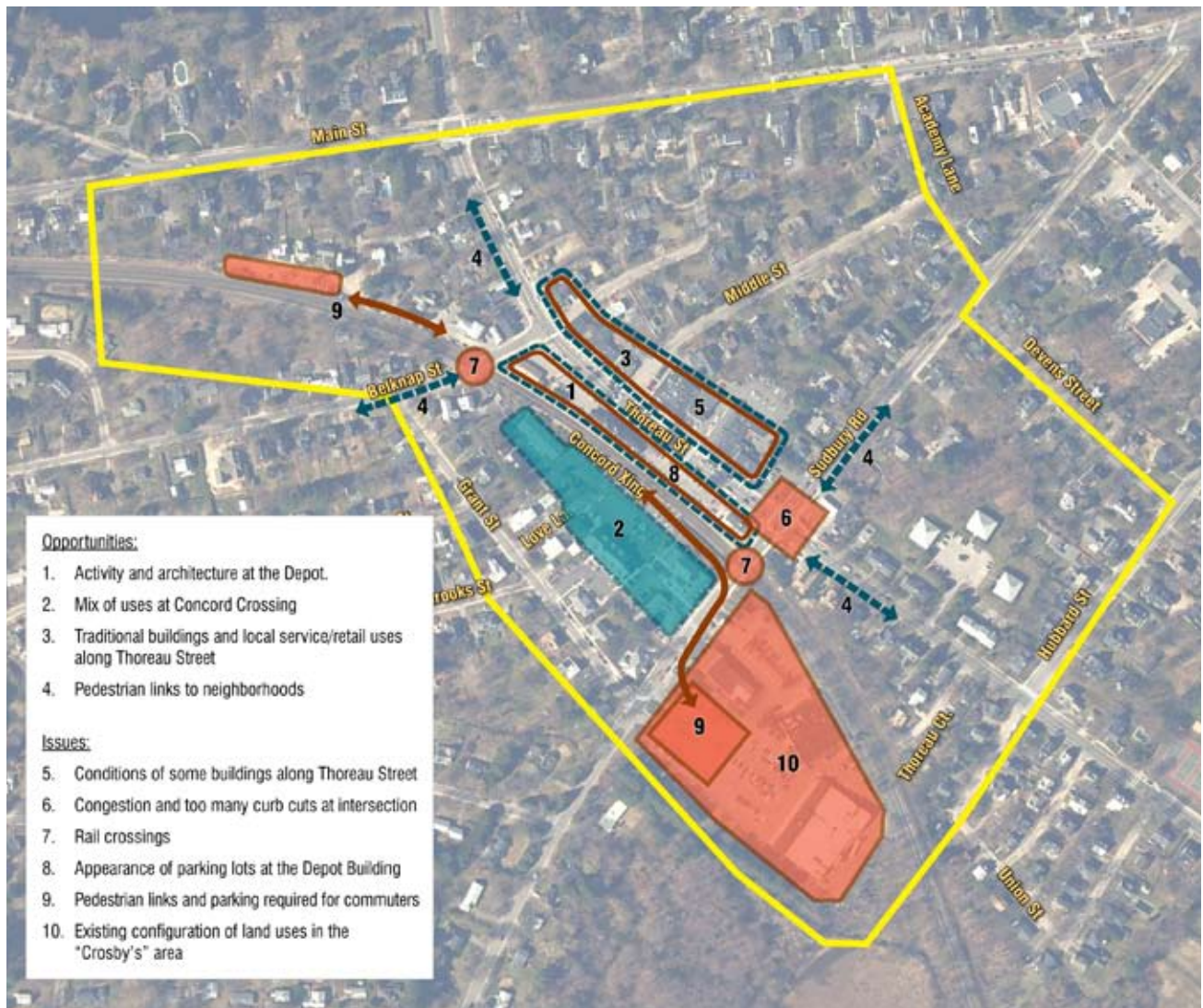
- Congestion should be relieved at the signalized intersection of Sudbury Road and Thoreau Street
- The activity at Starbucks contributes to congestion: it should be relocated as part of congestion relief.
- The land and uses at the old “Crosby’s” area is poorly organized and underutilized; it should be appropriately redeveloped.
- Some of the older buildings need rehabilitation and improvements.
- Parking in certain areas is insufficient – for example, near the funeral home – and parking solutions must be found.
- This village center needs to have more attractions and activities for young people.
- There is a need for more retail shops in the mix of uses along Thoreau Street.
- More appropriate locations need to be found for some of the commuter parking, particularly along residential streets or where it interferes with commerce.
- Provision should be made for compatible commercial uses within second floors above ground floor retail uses
- Pedestrian access and connections must be improved throughout the area.

### Characteristics that May Change, and Require Special Planning

- There should be better use of parking area at Concord Crossing (either by allowing more dense development or providing for “shared” parking with other uses).
- Some of the residential edges of commercial area could provide space for compatible uses, such as professional office.

- The density of development and the range of uses within the “Crosby’s area” might be increased.
- The asphalt paved area in front of Depot Building might be beneficially converted to increase the landscaping and pedestrian-oriented open space.
- Connections between the village centers could be enhanced through small scale transit connections like a shuttle.

## THOREAU/DEPOT VILLAGE CENTER ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



## WEST CONCORD VILLAGE CENTER

### Characteristics that Must Not or Will Not Change

- The existing character and “feel” of the central portions of the Commonwealth Ave. business district must not change.
- The nearby open space and wetland areas must be preserved.
- The area’s recreation fields are necessary and will remain.
- The Community Center is an essential component.
- The historic church properties will remain.
- The historic Depot Building and adjacent public space are essential elements.
- The depot parking lot is central to the area’s activity and function.
- The new senior living project will remain.
- The Post Office is an anchor for the area.

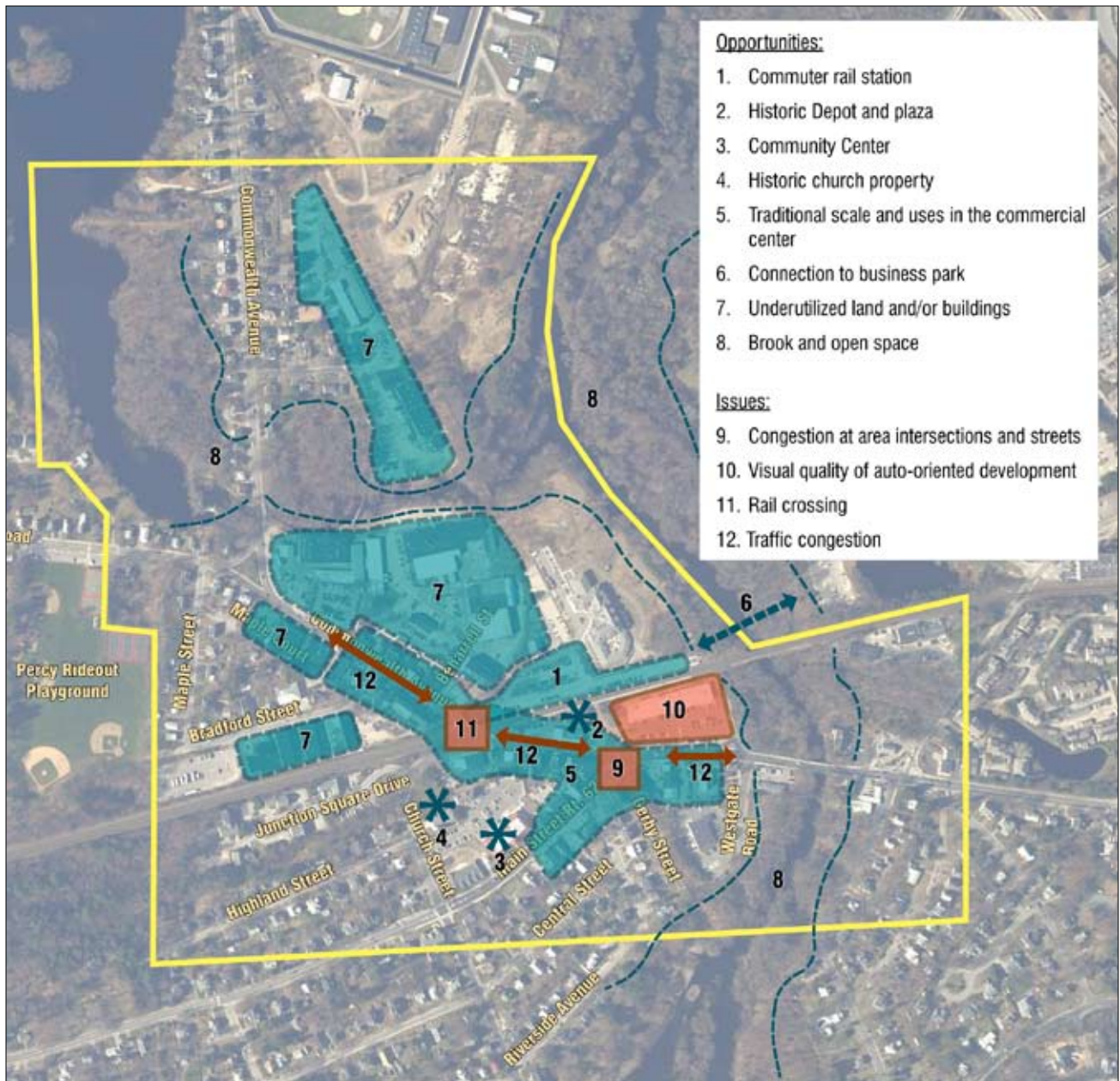
### Characteristics that Must Change

- The open space adjacent to the depot should be improved.
- The visual character of the retail “strip” along north side of Commonwealth Avenue must be improved.
- Some of the existing underutilized parcels along the rail line must be improved or redeveloped.
- Appropriate use of the abandoned rail right-of-way must be determined.
- The open spaces and green spaces must be connected to create an understandable network for pedestrians.
- The visual connection to the brook must be enhanced.
- Traffic conditions along Commonwealth Ave. must be improved.
- Wayfinding and circulation patterns must be improved.
- A better connection must be created to the business park adjacent to Baker Avenue.

### Characteristics that May Change, and Require Special Planning

- Several prominent buildings need to be rehabilitated or redeveloped because of their poor condition.
- The triangle green at the intersection of Laws Brook and Commonwealth could be enhanced.
- The uses along the northern portions of Commonwealth Ave. may be changed and the properties appropriately redeveloped.
- There may be opportunities to appropriately redevelop the industrial properties between the Post Office and abandoned railroad alignment.
- Public open spaces and plazas could be improved and better linked to their surroundings.
- Playground parking could be expanded.

# WEST CONCORD VILLAGE CENTER ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES





# APPENDIX J: TOOLS FOR LAND USE MANAGEMENT

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This appendix provides a collection of land use management tools that may be applied to accomplish the recommendations prepared by the Concord Villages Committee for Concord Center, the Thoreau Depot Area, and West Concord Village Center. This appendix begins with a list of applicable land use management tools that may be applied to one or more of the village centers, as may be appropriate. The next section then suggests how these tools might best be tailored to the distinctive needs of each of the village centers. This evaluation has been prepared by The Cecil Group, which has served as the planning and design consultant to the Committee.

## TOOLS FOR MANAGING THE VILLAGE CENTERS

The list of tools has been provided in alphabetical order, to facilitate reference and discussion relative to each of the village centers.

### Circulation, Sidewalk and Roadway Improvements

The processes for studying, designing and implementing circulation, sidewalk and roadway improvements is generally well established and normally proceeds from early studies and concepts into detailed designs. In the context of the village centers, the processes should incorporate significant public and stakeholder involvement, and ensure that landscape architects, civil and traffic engineers work collaboratively to provide designs that complement the character and the quality of each location. The Town may need to sponsor initial design work in some cases to reach consensus on the extent and type of improvements. Funding for improvements can be sought from a variety of State sources and programs; the Town should consider Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant sources as well as Transit-Oriented Pedestrian Network funding, along with Chapter 90 or other sources.

### Design Awards

Design award programs are one of the simplest, effective and positive methods leading to appropriate and improved designs. This can be accomplished through a small appointed committee that provides awards on a regular (perhaps annual) basis, and in relevant categories (best historic restoration, best new façade, best outdoor dining area).

### Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines establish reasonable expectations regarding the character and quality of site and exterior building design in meeting clear public goals for a district. Design Guidelines are often established for site planning and landscape design, urban design (composition of buildings and spaces), for architectural design or for signage design. They should be clear and serve to inform proponents and their designers about what is expected of them in advance, so that the review and approval processes can be most productive.



## Design Review

Design review processes provide the ability to tailor the character and qualities of a development or renovation project through informed discussion.

Design Reviews can be advisory reviews required as part of various types of review and approvals process. So, for example, an advisory review of a project's design could be required for projects needing a special permit, variance or zoning change within an historic district or overlay zone. Such reviews could require submittal of documents to a designated agency or committee, and allow for a consultation session and/or written recommendations. Such use relies on good faith responses to the advice that is received, but they are not binding upon the applicant – often this process is surprisingly effective.

The Town might alternatively consider requiring mandatory reviews, using Design Guidelines as a basis for project approvals. This approach may be very appropriate, for example, for projects in buildings with historic status. The Town could make issuance of a special permit, variance or other zoning relief contingent upon the proponent participating in a review process. Mandatory reviews should accompany any signage and façade grant program. Mandatory design review requirements should have clear directions regarding the number and content of submittal documents, and restrict the review to a designated time period.

In all cases, Design Review processes are enormously aided by Design Guidelines.

## Development RFP and Land Disposition

In some instances, the Town can promote (and control) desirable development as a participant in the development process through a Development Request for Proposals and associated Land Disposition. If the Town has assets that are not needed for municipal purposes but that could contribute to desirable development solutions, it can offer that land through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, and attach many reasonable conditions that will guide where, what and how development will occur. In cases where this land contributes to productively re-organized parcels, this tool can unlock many positive changes.

## District Increment Financing (DIF)

District Increment Financing is a form of tax increment financing recently enabled by the Massachusetts legislature; it allows future tax proceeds from development within a district to be employed as the revenue stream to support bonded debt that is then used to provide key public infrastructure investments needed to support the planned, coordinated future of the district. DIF financing is a very useful way to create public or shared public/private parking in locations and amounts to support a vital local commercial district, or provide key roadway and intersection improvements, for example.



## **Feasibility Study**

In the context of land use management, a feasibility study is normally a technical planning study to determine whether the economic, legal, regulatory, financial and other factors can be pragmatically organized to affect the desired planning outcome. Feasibility studies should lay the groundwork for actions.

## **Parking: Agreements**

Parking agreements allow participants to rationalize and improve shared parking opportunities – access for cars or pedestrians, shared use that allows for more efficient layouts, and the like. Participants can be any combination of private property owners, institutions or the municipality.

## **Parking: Exemptions**

Traditional village centers with small, densely packed sites and shops need relief from typical on-site parking. Parking exemptions can be provided to qualifying uses (such as ground level retail) so that they are not required to provide on-site spaces, if the Town finds that an adequate supply of public parking exists within a reasonable distance.

## **Parking: Management Associations**

Parking Management Associations are formalized organizations of stakeholders with shared interests in the supply and management of parking. Such associations can be established with Town sponsorship. Through regular meetings and funded studies, the association would be in a position to explore many methods to improve access, signage, shared use, and supply of parking. The association would report regularly to the Town regarding the results of their efforts.

## **Parking: Publicly –Financed Structures and Lots**

There are many techniques that can be employed to publicly finance parking structures and lots. Direct expenditures and bonding using parking revenues or tax increment resources are common. The provision of adequate and strategically located parking is critical to the ability of village centers to be economically successful and still have the tightly-knit density that distinguishes them.

## **Parking: Shared Parking**

One of the secrets to success for commercial districts is the ability for parking spaces to be shared among different users at different times. Not only does this promote the efficient use of the land, it supports the type of active pedestrian district that is critical to supporting vital mixed-use centers. Shared parking accommodations can be accomplished through zoning and agreements, but need to be planned and managed.



## **Streetscape Improvements**

“Streetscape improvements” refers to the physical enhancements in paving, lighting, street furniture and landscaping that can transform the quality and value of the villages along its sidewalks, crosswalks and streets. Traffic calming techniques are often employed as part of the palette of streetscape improvements. Funding is most often incorporated within coordinated street and circulation improvement programs.

## **Stewardship Groups**

Each of the village centers will enormously benefit from formalized stewardship groups with active leadership and participation among key stakeholders – this may be considered not simply as an important tool, it may well be essential to success. The Town can help initiate these groups, which should be provided a regular forum and format for reporting their activities and needs to the Town (annual presentations to the Board of Selectmen) as well as opportunities to share experiences and tips with the other village centers.

## **Zoning: Amendments**

Zoning amendments should be used to “fine tune” the existing bylaw to better accord with the public purposes that have been established through this and other planning processes.

## **Zoning: Chapter 40R**

Massachusetts has enabled towns to implement special Smart Growth Zoning Districts commonly called “Chapter 40R” zones, referring to the section of the Massachusetts General Laws that recently established this new tool. This mechanism effectively promotes “as of right” development with certain densities and use mixes geared to transit-oriented town and village center scales. Uses within a 40R zone include a significant proportion of housing and affordable units within that housing mix, and require a minimum density of units per acre. This mechanism can be accompanied with very complete and strict design standards to ensure that the development is appropriate within its surroundings. The state has offered financial incentives to defray costs associated with such development. Concord will need to decide whether the housing amounts, mix, density standards and other requirements are consistent with its goals for the villages, and the extent to which the prospect of state funding is an incentive. It should be noted that the Town has the capacity to accomplish any of the zoning requirements associated with Chapter 40R, anyway – it just would not have access to the funding incentives unless it meets all of the requirements.

## **Zoning: Overlays**

Overlay zones should be used to promote special types of development within the villages. Only some properties will qualify for consideration of the special rules within an overlay zone – typically, parcel size is used as qualifying criteria. In this manner, larger projects can be screened for special



consideration, so that smaller, incremental projects that meet the underlying zoning can proceed using different rules. The overlay zone can modify the underlying zoning and provide for contingent approvals, often through a special permit procedure. Approvals can be conditioned upon meeting special performance standards, site plan and design reviews, or other criteria. The overlay zoning recommendations should provide advantages associated with well-planned, coordinated development rather than incremental development that could be accomplished as-of-right. Overlay zones are often crafted to be applied to specific locations, such as the villages.

### **Access Easements and Agreements**

Pedestrian circulation through and around a village center is critically important in order to support the businesses, civic and institutional uses. Reasonable pathways often pass across non-public land. Communities and property owners can establish access easements and other forms of legal agreements that ensure that property rights are protected, but allow for pedestrian passageways and associated improvements.

### **Façade and Signage Improvement Programs**

Funded grant or low cost loan programs support private sector reinvestments in the aesthetics of storefronts and business signs. There are many models for these programs, with a range of publicly and privately funded resources. Often relatively small amounts unlock decisions to undertake long-needed improvements. Such programs can be administered by the Town directly or through consultant assistance, but should include Design Guidelines and mandatory Design Review of projects receiving subsidies.



## IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

### Concord Center

Many of the implementation tools required to accomplish the Committee’s recommendations for Concord Center focus upon the need to carefully manage a valued historic district so that it will retain an appropriate balance of active retail and service uses that will serve the residents of the Town. There are some important zoning recommendations that will guide the appropriate development of the limited locations where significant changes may occur. The recommendations offer some tools to provide more efficient parking solutions. Targeted investments in circulation and associated landscape improvements will enhance the environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, and better complement the unique historic setting of Concord Center.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Application</i>
Business and Use Management	Village Overlay Zone	Create a Village Overlay Zone to promote mixed-use development that is appropriately scaled, with mandatory design review through a special permit for lots large enough to qualify. These would consist of the parcels clustered near the intersection of Keyes and Lowell Roads. Performance standards would be applied to encourage shared parking, provision of complementary retail and services, moderate amounts of residential uses, provision of public access to nearby open space amenities and trails. The standards for this Overlay Zone may be the same or very similar to that suggested for Thoreau Depot Area.
	Zoning Amendment	Change permitted uses to include a restriction of ground floor uses along key streets to retail restaurant and consumer services, allocating professional offices and services to non-ground floor locations. Review and refine zoning in regards to Parking Exemptions and shared parking provisions to allow dense, adjacent frontages of retail shops and restaurants to thrive.
Mixed-Use Redevelopment	Feasibility Study	A professional feasibility study should be undertaken to see if the existing uses, land values, demand for desirable uses and the inclusion of excess town-owned land could lead to mutually beneficial redevelopment of underutilized parcels near the intersection of Keyes and Lowell Roads. This feasibility study can check whether the Chapter 40R zoning requirements are needed or desirable, providing feedback to the Village Overlay Zoning process described above.
	Development RFP and Land Disposition	If the feasibility study for redevelopment involving some Town-owned land yields positive results, then the Town may issue a development RFP with conditions on redevelopment that could provide incentives for productive land assembly, provision of public amenities, and other public interest conditions. Design guidelines and design review tools would accompany such an approach, which would need to be coordinated with any zoning tools such as a village overlay district.



Parking	Parking Management Association	There are many parking management issues that might be best advanced through a formalized Parking Management Association among stakeholders, including both private and town participants. The role of this association would be to explore physical improvements, possible agreements to improve signage, access and efficiency, and make recommendations regarding managing and enforcing the parking supply.
	Parking Agreements	Formalized agreements among property owners (including the Town) may lead to more efficient, shared layouts and access for pedestrians and vehicles at the Walden Street lot.
	Feasibility Study	A feasibility study for expansion and/or re-organization of the Keyes Road lot should be undertaken, in concert with a new Parking Management Association. This feasibility study should measure demand and use patterns, and provide cost and benefit evaluations for various approaches to expanding parking supply and a configuration that will provide better pedestrian access and an attractive facility.
	Publicly Financed Parking	Various methods may be used to publicly finance parking expansion and re-organization at the Keyes lot or other locations identified over time.
Traffic/ Pedestrian Improvements	Circulation, Sidewalk and Roadway Improvements	A combination of Town funding and State grants should be sought to complete the initial planning and design studies, leading to designs and funding for the types of improvements envisioned by the Committee.
	Streetscape Improvements	Streetscape and traffic calming must be directly incorporated into the planning, design and implementation of the circulation, sidewalk and roadway improvements.
Open Space	Stewardship Group Access Easements and Agreements	Most of the open space recommendations require the good will and shared cooperation of multiple property owners and the Town. The agendas for positive change might best be advanced as a responsibility of a formalized stewardship group to convene the stakeholders, request Town assistance in the professional or technical studies, and pursue agreements and funding. Access easements and other agreements will necessarily accompany successful implementation of the open space ideas.
Bicycle Connections and Use	Circulation, Sidewalk and Roadway Improvements	The bicycle-related recommendations should be incorporated directly into the scope and processes for other circulation, sidewalk and roadway improvements.



## Thoreau Depot Area

Most of the implementation tools required to accomplish the Committee’s recommendations for the Thoreau Depot Area focus on reinforcing the traditional village character along the commercial streets. In addition, special tools are needed to unlock the full potential of the Sudbury Road commercial area to be successfully redeveloped in a manner that will retain desirable uses, provide a better solution for commuter parking, and enhance the value of the sites, and be designed with a character more consistent with the village scale and qualities.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Application</i>
Business and Use Management	Stewardship Group	The stewardship group in the Thoreau Depot area could include in their agenda the active marketing of village center sites and spaces for desirable uses, through a simple promotional effort and advocacy. They would also be the ringleaders for the promotional, signage, traffic and safety improvements, special events and other programs recommended by the Committee.
	Façade and Signage Improvement Programs	A focused grant program could be administered and accompanied by design guidelines, advisory design reviews and a pro-active design awards program to enhance the character and quality of storefronts and commercial buildings, along with their adjacent landscapes and small parking areas.
	Design Guidelines, Design Review, Design Awards	Design guidelines and design reviews will help ensure that the blending of commercial, professional offices and residential uses is accomplished in a high quality, compatible manner.
Mixed-Use Redevelopment	Feasibility Study	A professional feasibility study should be undertaken to see if imaginative redevelopment can expand the existing and desirable new uses, ownership patterns, land values, density of development and commuter parking solutions.
	Development RFP and Land Disposition, DIF, Publicly Financed Parking	If the feasibility study for redevelopment involving some Town-owned land yields positive results, then the Town may issue a development RFP with conditions on redevelopment that could provide incentives for productive land assembly, provision of public amenities, and other public interest conditions. Design guidelines and design review tools would accompany such an approach, which would need to be coordinated with any zoning tools such as a village overlay district. Public contributions to a joint development solution could be funding of infrastructure and shared parking. The MBTA should be sought as an active partner and funder of some of the parking.



	Village Overlay Zone	Create a Village Overlay Zone to promote mixed-use development that is appropriately scaled, with mandatory design review through a special permit for lots large enough to qualify. Performance standards would be applied to encourage shared parking, provision of complementary retail and services, moderate amounts of residential uses, provision of public access to nearby open space amenities and trails. The standards for this Overlay Zone may be the same or very similar to that suggested for portions of Concord Center.
Parking	Parking Management Association	There are many parking management issues that might be best advanced through a formalized Parking Management Association among stakeholders, including both private and town participants. The role of this association would be to explore physical improvements, possible agreements to improve signage, access and efficiency, and make recommendations regarding managing and enforcing the parking supply.
	Publicly Financed Parking	Various methods may be used to publicly finance parking expansion and re-organization of commuter and other public parking needs in the Sudbury Road area.
Traffic/ Pedestrian Improvements	Circulation, Sidewalk and Roadway Improvements	A combination of Town funding and State grants should be sought to complete the initial planning and design studies, leading to designs and funding for the types of improvements envisioned by the Committee.
	Streetscape Improvements	Streetscape and traffic calming must be directly incorporated into the planning, design and implementation of the circulation, sidewalk and roadway improvements.
Open Space	Stewardship Group	Most of the open space recommendations require the good will and shared cooperation of multiple property owners and the Town. The agendas for positive change might best be advanced as a responsibility of the stewardship group to convene the stakeholders, request Town assistance in the professional or technical studies, and pursue agreements and funding.

## West Concord Village Center

Because the local commercial character of West Concord Center is so highly valued by the community, many of the implementation tools focus on ensuring stewardship and providing a high level of control over new development. There are also some special tools that could serve the Town very well in encouraging appropriate redevelopment initiatives that would unlock the promise of an expanded village center environment through redevelopment of underutilized land.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Application</i>
Business and Use Management	Design Guidelines Design Review	A program of advisory guidelines and reviews may help communicate and promote the “look and feel” of a locally-oriented, traditional center that is sought.
	Zoning Amendment	Amendments to the signage bylaw can be accomplished that may be specifically needed for this area.  Review and refine zoning in regards to Parking Exemptions and shared parking provisions to allow dense, adjacent frontages of retail shops and restaurants to thrive.
	Stewardship Group	An active stewardship group is required to help guide the planning, design and implementation processes that will accompany change in West Concord. This group should embrace promotional programs, design awards and other pro-active steps to attract and promote the “right” types of developments and improvements that retain the unique qualities of the area.
Mixed-Use Redevelopment	Feasibility Study	A professional feasibility study should be undertaken to see if the existing uses, land values, demand for desirable uses could lead to mutually beneficial redevelopment of underutilized parcels. This feasibility study can help guide the composition of an Overlay Zone, and whether the Chapter 40R zoning requirements are either needed or desirable.
	Village Overlay Zone, Design Guidelines, Design Review	Create a Village Overlay Zone to promote mixed-use development that is appropriately scaled, with mandatory design review through a special permit for lots large enough to qualify. These would consist of the parcels indicated in the Committees recommendations. Performance standards would be applied to encourage shared parking, provision of complementary retail and services, moderate amounts of residential uses, provision of public access to nearby open space amenities and trails. Design guidelines, mandatory design reviews should be incorporated into new zoning mechanisms. The standards for this Overlay Zone is likely to be very different from those that may be considered for the other villages because of the scale, location and development issues likely to be encountered.



	DIF	The provision of appropriate public financing of supporting infrastructure can provide the Town with important leverage, control and promotion of appropriate redevelopment options in the area.
Parking	Parking Management Association	There are many parking management issues that might be best advanced through a formalized Parking Management Association among stakeholders, including both private and town participants. The role of this association would be to explore physical improvements, possible agreements to improve signage, access and efficiency, and make recommendations regarding managing and enforcing the parking supply.
	Parking Agreements	Formalized agreements among property owners (including the Town) may lead to more efficient, shared layouts and access for pedestrians and vehicles at the Walden Street lot.
Traffic/ Pedestrian Improvements	Circulation, Sidewalk and Roadway Improvements	A combination of Town funding and State grants should be sought to complete the initial planning and design studies, leading to designs and funding for the types of improvements envisioned by the Committee.
	Streetscape Improvements	Streetscape and traffic calming must be directly incorporated into the planning, design and implementation of the circulation, sidewalk and roadway improvements.
Open Space	Stewardship Group, Access Easements and Agreements	Most of the open space recommendations require the good will and shared cooperation of multiple property owners and the Town. The agendas for positive change might best be advanced as a responsibility of a formalized stewardship group to convene the stakeholders, request Town assistance in the professional or technical studies, and pursue agreements and funding. Access easements and other agreements will necessarily accompany successful implementation of the open space ideas.
Bicycle Connections and Use	Circulation, Sidewalk and Roadway Improvements	The bicycle-related recommendations should be incorporated directly into the scope and processes for other circulation, sidewalk and roadway improvements.



