

WEST UPTON VISIONING PROJECT

Tonight's Agenda

- Workshop Debrief
- Vision for West Upton
- Group Discussion



Project Schedule

May	Kick-off Meeting	Nov.	Working Group #3: Vision & Values, Alternatives
June	Working Group #1: Shared Fact-Finding, SWOT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intro to Working Group• Review information about the study area and project context• Discuss strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities	Jan.	Working Group #4: Deliberation & Decision-Making <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review revised master plan• Discuss implementation strategies
July	Working Group #2: Shared Fact-Finding, Issues & Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to review information about study area• Discuss key problems and opportunities• Plan for public workshop	Feb.	Working Group #5: Final Review <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review final report and discuss implementation

Other Community Input

September: Public Visioning Workshop
Jan-Feb: Focus Groups
April: Final Public Forum

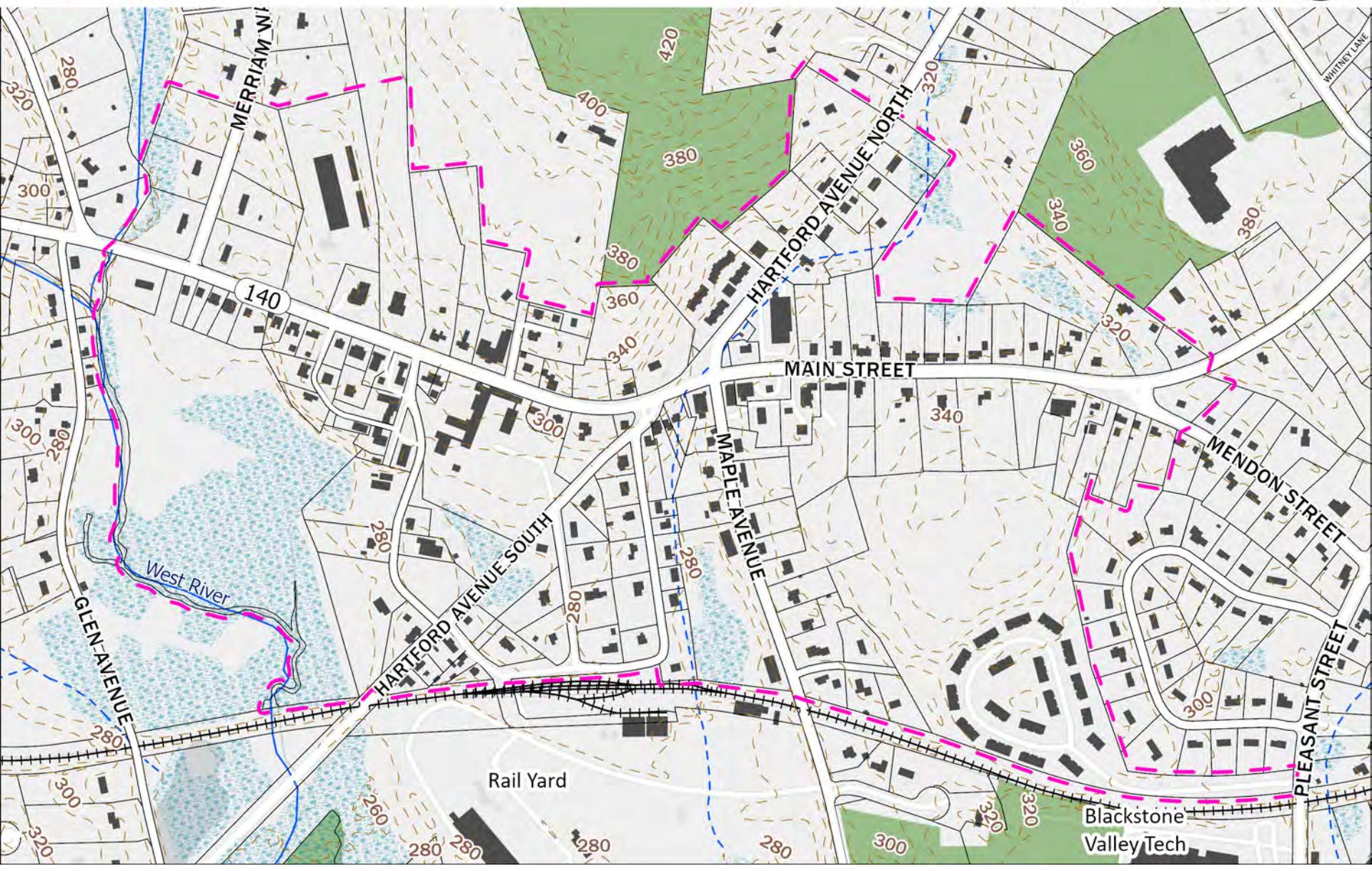


Parcels



Study Area

0 250 500 Feet



WORKSHOP SUMMARY



Walking Tour

Circulation & Safety

- Area feels congested and unsafe for pedestrians
- Too many curb cuts and unclear circulation
- Noise from traffic detracts from the pedestrian experience.

Parking

- Parking is a major concern. Interest in more efficient, shared parking solutions.

Public Realm

- Support for burying utilities, improving signage

Buildings

- Support for encouraging New England-style design. Historic buildings are well liked.
- BP gas station seen as unattractive; strong interest in converting it to open space or another use.



Green spaces

- Too much paved area; interest in more native plantings and more street trees.
- Landscaped areas, like those near Bank of America, could be put to higher use.
- Outdoor areas at Coach Homes are appreciated and could be made more durable and consistent (new furniture, shade structure, shade trees, plantings).



Station 1: Activating Place

Main Take-aways:

- The Little Coffee Bean is a beloved hub; participants want more cafes, restaurants, and services, but don't want rent increases to threaten existing small businesses.
- Desire to strengthen local businesses and create more of a commercial hub
- Strong interest in murals, hanging planters, street trees, and lamp posts to create a distinctive village character.
- Support for outdoor seating, planters, and umbrellas to enhance the social environment.
- The alley between Maya and the Post Office could be activated for community use.
- Interest in one larger, shared parking area to consolidate scattered lots, increase efficiency, and reduce pavement.
- Trail access from Samreen Villas could/should be public.
- Potential pop-up markets or sponsored events by local banks.

Precedents:

Participants liked the Grafton and Concord town centers for their walkability, shared parking, and inviting storefronts.

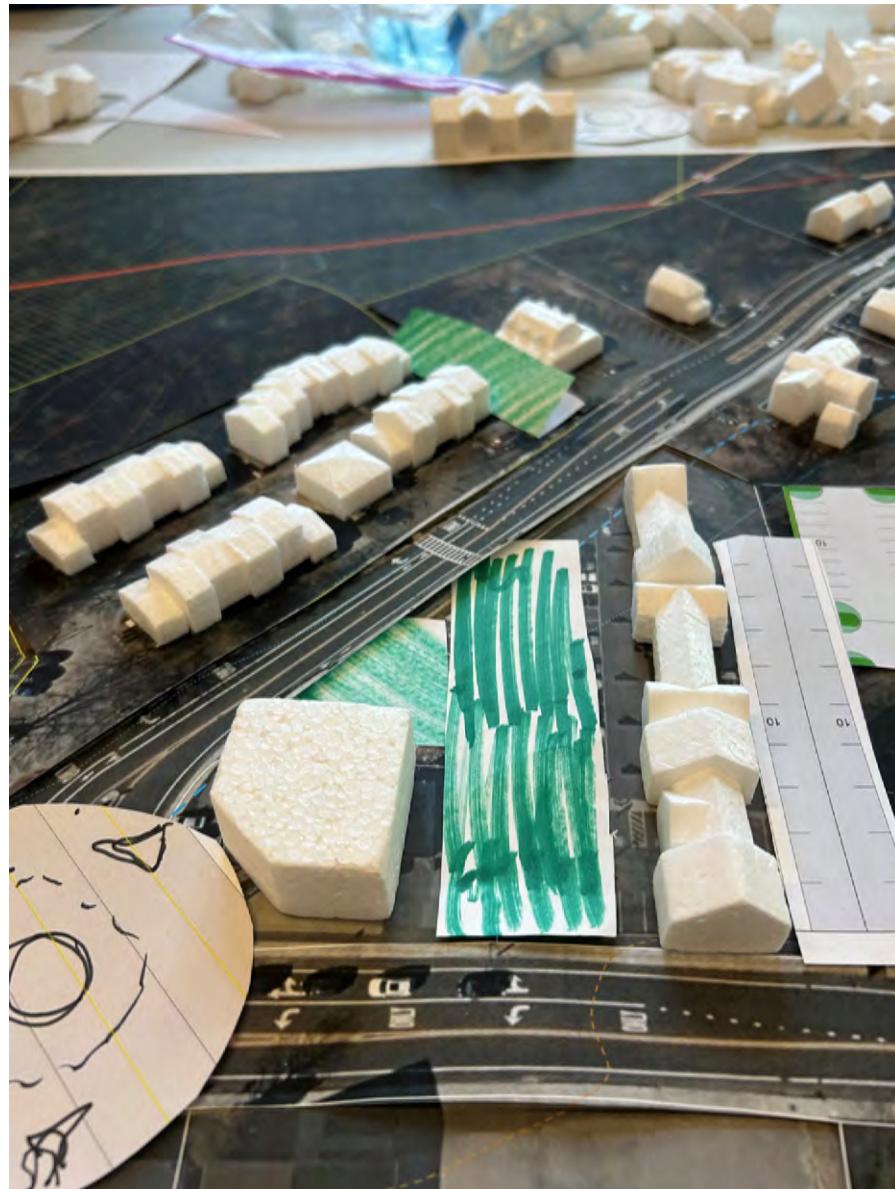
Station 2: Modeling a Vision for West Upton



Mixed-use buildings lining Hartford and Main with parking to the rear; rotary intersection



Common green space at Centennial and Farm;
additional units behind Milhaus apartments



A prominent corner building with open space and
additional mixed-use in rear. Parking behind
neighboring residential properties.

MADLIB VISIONS

Julie Joncas

Vision for West Upton

In 2045, people describe West Upton as Charming and full of character (adjectives).

It has become the town's main center for:

Small businesses like a boutique market, antique shop, ice cream parlor, (types of residents, businesses, or organizations)

When walking down the street, you notice

colorful & well-maintained murals, planters, granite seating, ornamental trees, circular benches w/ round tables, 8 lots of sidewalk planters (features, characteristics, design aspects)

and people interacting in a cohesive, communal atmosphere where all feel welcome + friendly attitudes prevail. (people, activities, community interactions, or atmosphere)

in small common areas

Over the past 20 years, the community succeeded in making improvements to to the BP gas station, liquor store & strip mall, and added a large designated parking lot. (aspect(s) that the community wanted to improve)

As a result,

people shop this area more, linger longer, & have positive social interactions with one another. (positive impact or outcome)

Built on a foundation of community values such as

openness to all ideologies and respect, (value) (value)

West Upton is a place where people love to visit & connect w/people (characteristic)

less asphalt, more green space

Vision for West Upton

In 2045, people describe West Upton as cute, charming and inviting (adjectives).

It has become the town's main center for:

small shops, non-chain restaurants, meeting with friends (types of residents, businesses, or organizations) + neighbors, enjoying time shopping + outdoors, green areas, activities

When walking down the street, you notice

awnings, planters, benches, gas-lamp style streetlights, sidewalk (features, characteristics, design aspects) walks (clean + in good condition), + happy people.

and musical + artistic events

(people, activities, community interactions, or atmosphere)

Over the past 20 years, the community succeeded in making improvements to

organized parking, flow of foot + car traffic, upkeep. (aspect(s) that the community wanted to improve) cleanliness, + overall appeal

As a result,

people love to spend time there, others want to move here + love to visit (positive impact or outcome)

Built on a foundation of community values such as

friendliness and desire to build community (value) (value)

West Upton is a place where people love to be (characteristic)

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT WEST UPTON CENTER

West Upton has a critical mass of businesses that provide basic services.

The area is not functioning as a park-once destination, and is not comfortable to walk around or spend time in.

Strong historic character mixed with auto-oriented design. Some unattractive properties and lack of maintenance.

Relatively constrained by physical features (slope, wetlands, bedrock).

Parking is a significant constraint.

The state highway presents challenges (noise and traffic) but also opportunities (connectivity, customer base).

Opportunities to improve streets are limited: very narrow rights-of-way, adjacent wetlands, Main St and key intersections were recently completed or are underway.

Streetscape and placemaking improvements are “low-hanging fruit” to draw more people into the center and improve pedestrian safety.

Limited, but significant opportunities, for new development can improve the character of the center, add housing, customers, and space for businesses.

Zoning does not reflect existing character and hinders positive change

Area provides diverse housing options

Residents value West Upton Center and want it to enhance its role as a business and community hub.

VISION FOR WEST UPTON

By 2045, West Upton Center will be a walkable and welcoming village hub that reflects the town's historic character and community values. Distinct from the nearby civic core, it will serve as Upton's lively commercial center: a place where residents and visitors gather to enjoy shops, cafés, services, public spaces, and events.

An attractive, art-filled streetscape will invite people to linger, supporting a thriving local economy and a strong sense of place. Redevelopment will bring buildings closer to the street, introduce mixed-use buildings, and transform underutilized sites into community assets, while preserving the historic structures that define West Upton's identity. Green infrastructure, shared parking, and thoughtful landscaping will manage stormwater, enhance visual appeal, and reduce impervious surfaces. Trails extending from the village will connect people to nearby natural areas.

West Upton will remain a place where small-town charm, local commerce, and housing come together to create a vibrant and enduring heart of community life.

VISION ELEMENTS

Traffic, Streetscape & Parking

Improve the streetscape through tree planting, seating, and signage

Calm traffic passing through West Upton

Create safer conditions for all road users

Improve Parking efficiency



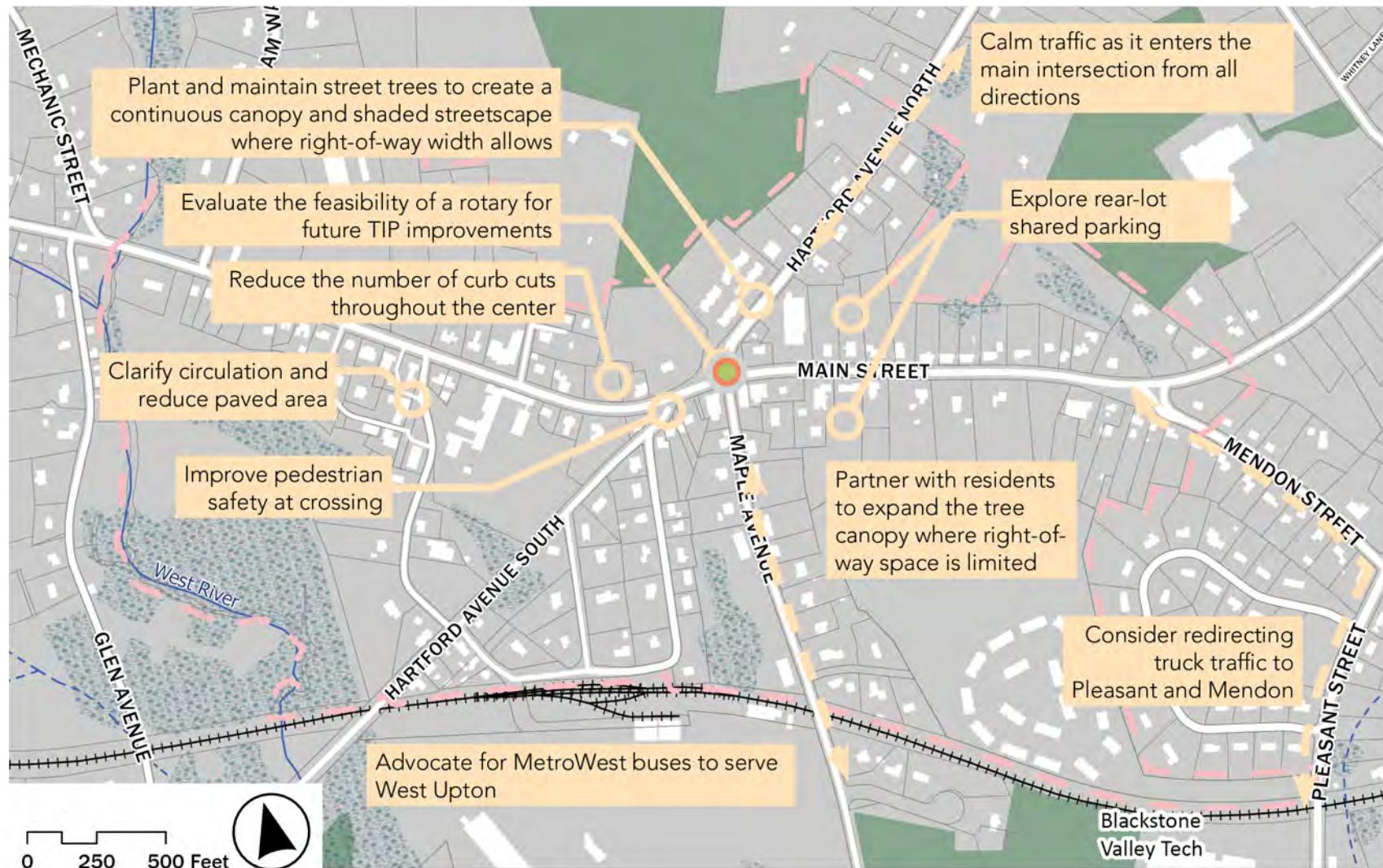
Traffic, Parking, and Streetscape

Improve the streetscape through tree planting, seating, and signage.

Calm traffic speeds through West Upton.

Create safer conditions for all road users.

Improve parking efficiency.



PRECEDENT: SHARED REAR PARKING

West Concord, MA

In 1999, four neighboring retail landowners on Commonwealth Ave approached the Town for a special permit to share their respective parking lots, previously managed independently

Operating the lots as a single parking area saved on management costs and allowed customers to “park once”

Changes include improved signage and drainage, removing one driveway and adding a brick pedestrian pathway to the lot





PRECEDENT: STREET TREE PLANTING PROGRAMS

**Northampton, South Hadley, Needham,
Lexington, Brookline, Framingham,
Melrose, Waltham, and others**

Front setback trees

- Public shade trees can be planted within 20' of the right-of-way line if property owner gives permission
- Front setback trees often are healthier and better maintained than those between sidewalks and streets



Open Space & Connectivity

Expand Pedestrian access to nearby open space

Build off-street pedestrian connections to provide safe ways to get around

Continue to improve sidewalk infrastructure

Enhance landscaped areas to filter stormwater & add biodiversity & beauty



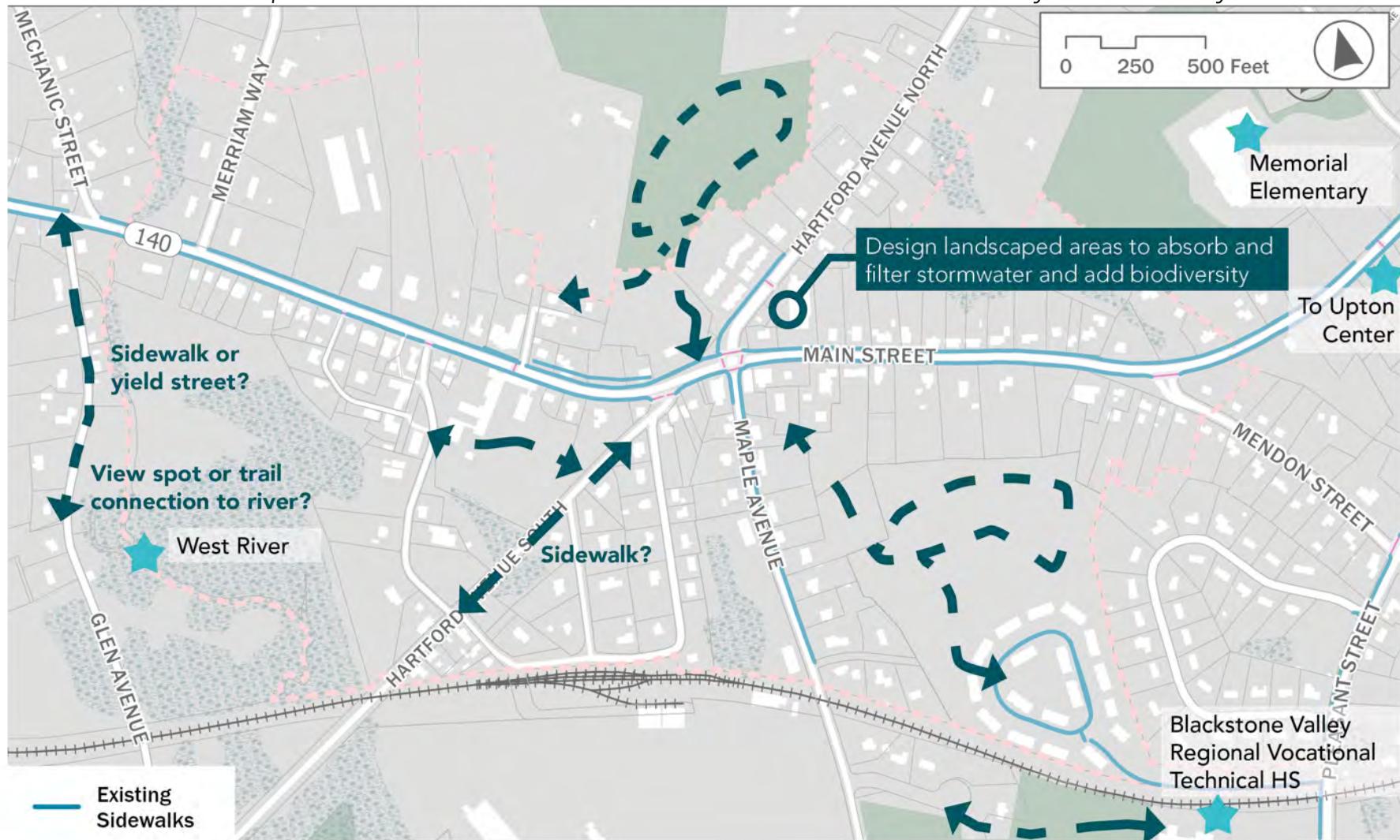
Open Space and Connectivity

Expand pedestrian access to nearby open spaces.

Build off-street pedestrian connections to provide safe ways to get around.

Continue improving sidewalk infrastructure.

Enhance landscaped areas to filter stormwater and add biodiversity and beauty.



Placemaking

Utilize low-cost placemaking tactics to grow community engagement, test ideas, and enhance West Upton's sense of place.



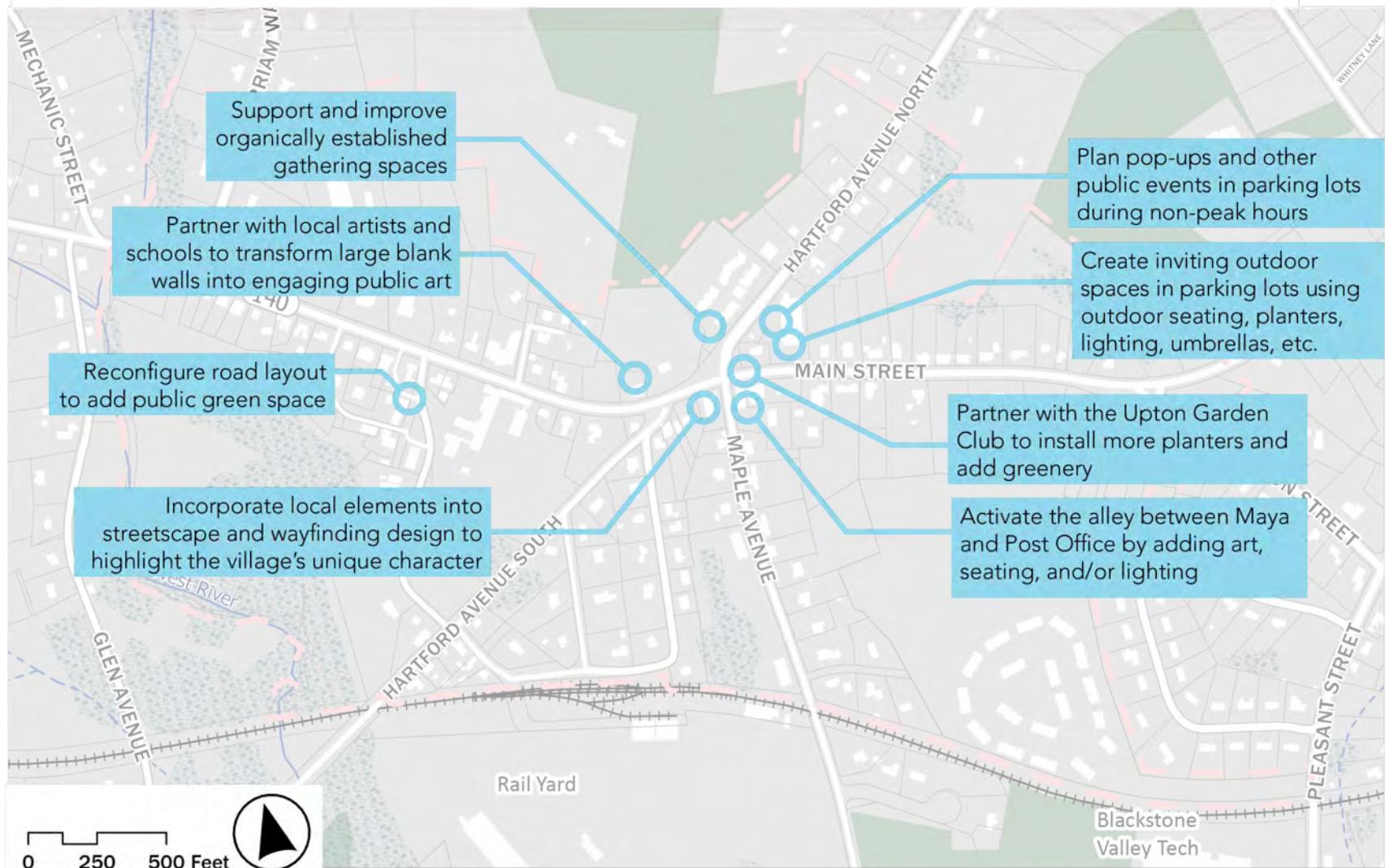
What is Placemaking?





Placemaking

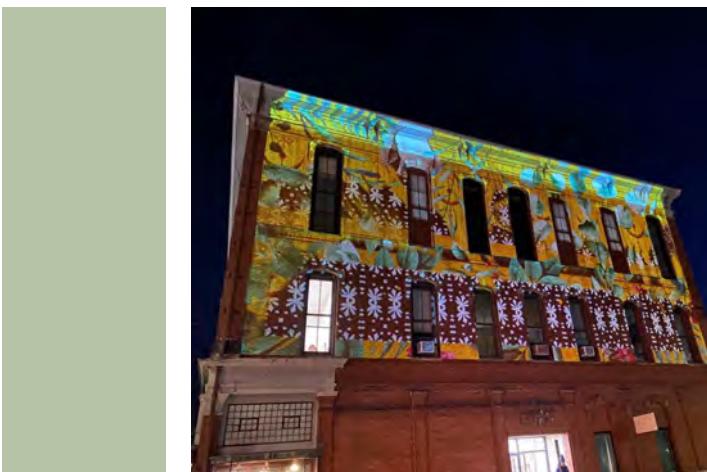
Utilize low-cost placemaking tactics to grow community engagement, test ideas, and enhance West Upton's sense of place.





PRECEDENT: NATICK CENTER

- Led by MAPC and local partners
- Put out a call for artist-led demonstrations to help reinforce the town center's identity and economic vitality





FOR THE LOVE OF NATICK

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING CALL FOR CREATIVES - 2020

Natick Center Cultural District and the Public Art Committee seek proposals for Traffic Calming Public Art (TCPA) projects at the intersection of Rt. 27 and Rt. 135 for \$1,000 - \$1,700 stipends.

Apply by January 15, 2021. Find more details at www.natickcenter.org



Criteria

The artwork should be bold, bright and respectful



Materials

Acrylic spray paint and markers, mural paint



Site dimensions

- A - 16' x 72' = \$ 1,700
- B - 7' x 20' = \$ 1,000
- C - 7' x 35' = \$ 1,000
- D - 10' x 30' = \$ 1,000
- E - 24' x 7' = \$ 1,000
- F - 10' x 30' = \$ 1,000

NATICK CENTER CONT.

- Included Main Street traffic calming, safety and wayfinding improvements
- Benefits:
 - Roadway art has calmed automobile traffic and increased foot traffic
 - Temporary prototypes were translated into plan recommendations that guide mixed-use reinvestment and streetscape improvements





PRECEDENT: SOLE OF ROCKLAND

- Used the town's shoemaking heritage as a theme for public art and interactive installations
- Local students, artists, and volunteers painted sidewalk "shoeprints" and prototyped sculptural seating
- Benefits:
 - Encouraged resident participation in wayfinding through the area
 - Strengthened local buy-in for public-art interventions
 - Provided prototypes and lessons that informed later downtown activation and planning efforts



PRECEDENT: PITTSFIELD, MA

In 2017, Better Block, working with MassDevelopment and local partners, staged a temporary streetscape and alleyway activation on Tyler Street in Pittsfield to demonstrate how interventions could improve safety, walkability, and business activity.

Benefits:

- Resulted in an increase in foot traffic in the area and helped slow down traffic along Tyler St
- Was a catalyst for longer-term revitalization in the area



PRECEDENT: ITERATIVE PLACEMAKING APPROACH HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Historic Preservation

Celebrate and preserve West Upton's rich history

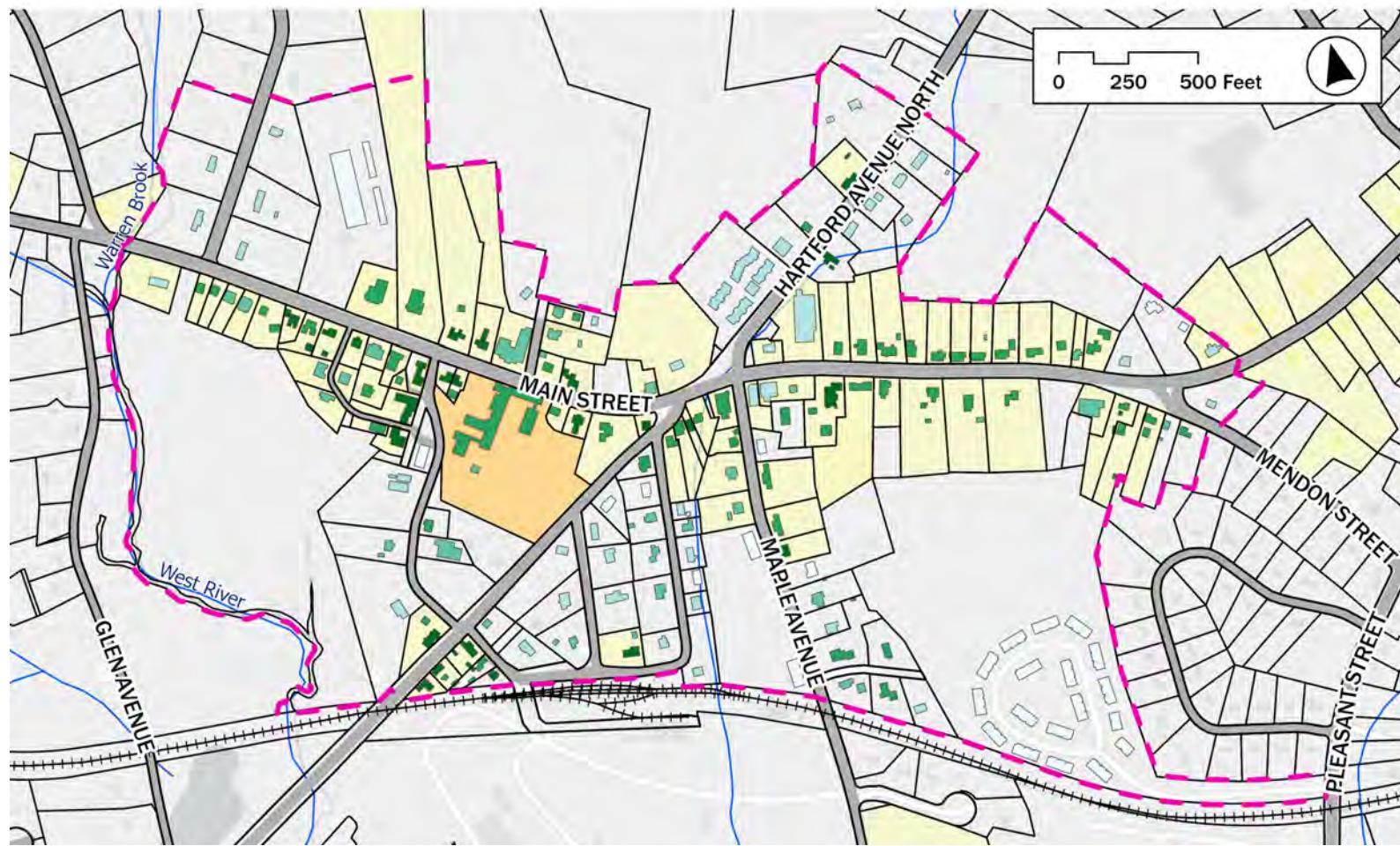
Historic Resources

- Study Area
- Other Parcels
- Rail Tracks

- Historic Designation
- National Register
- Inventoried Structure

- Structures by Year Built
- 2000-Present (38)
- 1950-1999 (54)

- 1900-1949 (43)
- 1850-1899 (78)
- Pre-1849 (33)



Historic Preservation

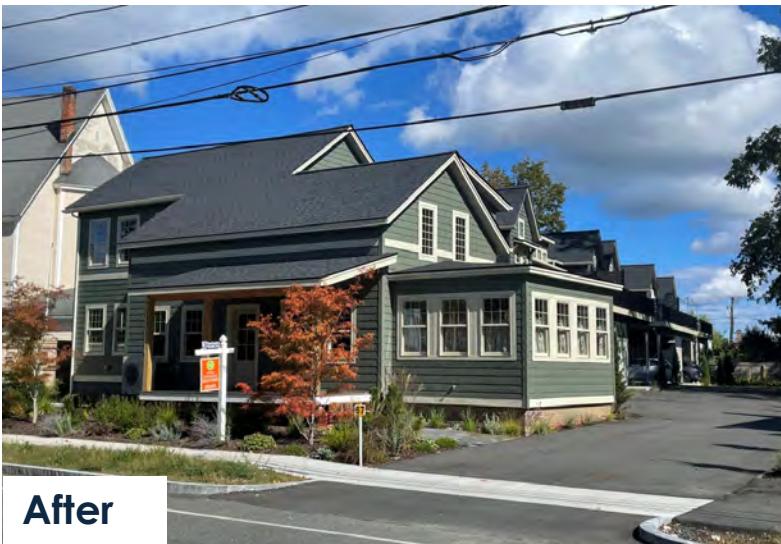
Celebrate and preserve West Upton's rich history

- Establish a Local Historic District
- Embrace adaptive reuse
- Design new streetscapes and buildings to reflect local history





Before



After

Townhouses behind Historic House Florence, MA



Extensive renovation of historic house into two units with addition of 6 townhouses hidden behind. Recently built in Northampton, MA



Enter a location...

Infill, Northampton, MA

Additions
behind historic
houses



-72.625699, 42.322899 LON LAT

MassMapper

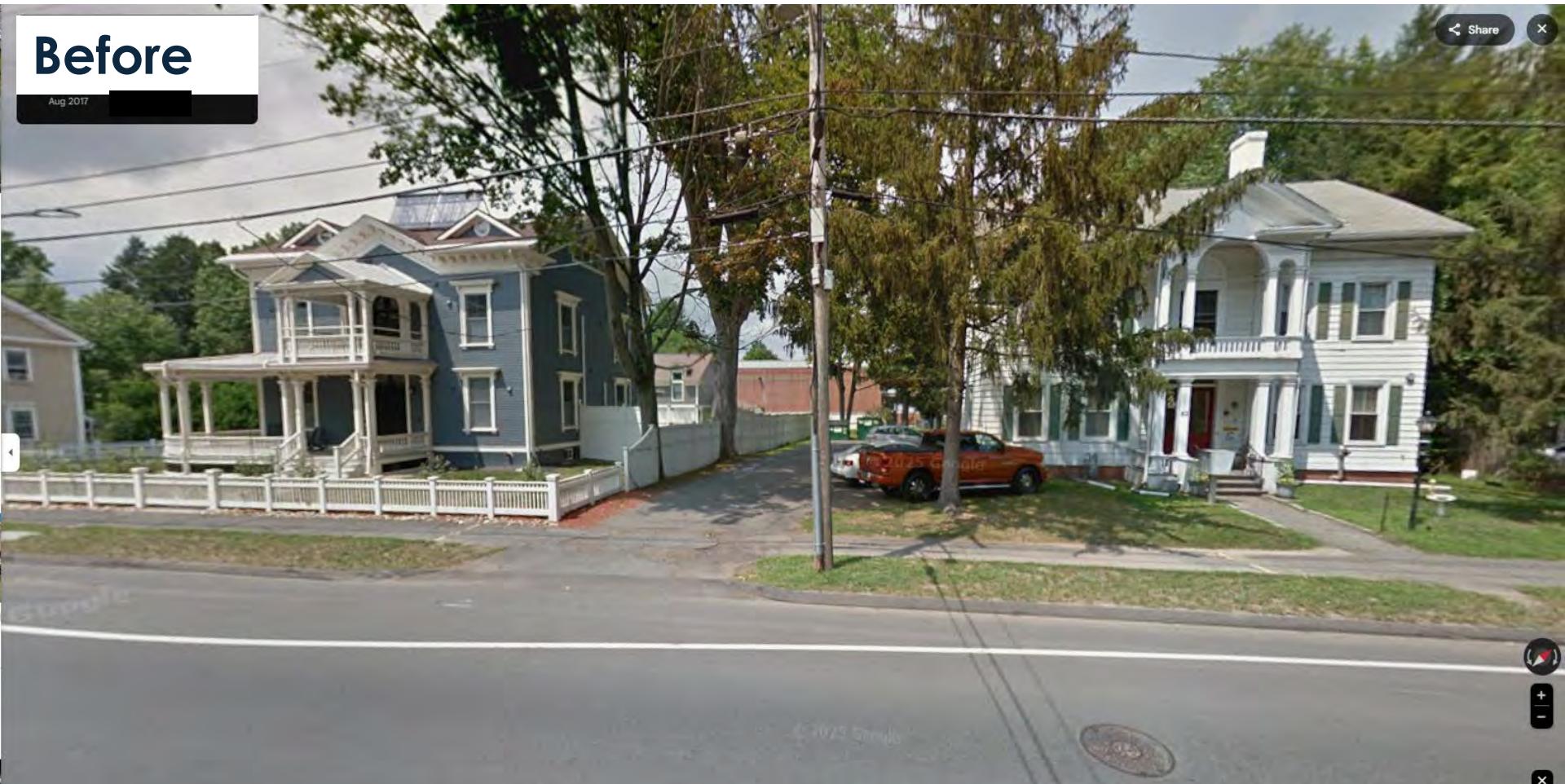
Leaflet | MassMapper

Before

Aug 2017

Share

X



After



After

Aug 2023

Share





Land Use, Design and Character

Clarify and codify the desired village character

Zoning

 Non-conforming by frontage	Zoning Boundaries	 SRA: Single Residential A	 SRB: Single Residential B
 Non-conforming by lot size	 C&I: Commercial and Industrial	 SRC: Single Residential C	 Study Area
	 GB: General Business		



Opportunity Parcels

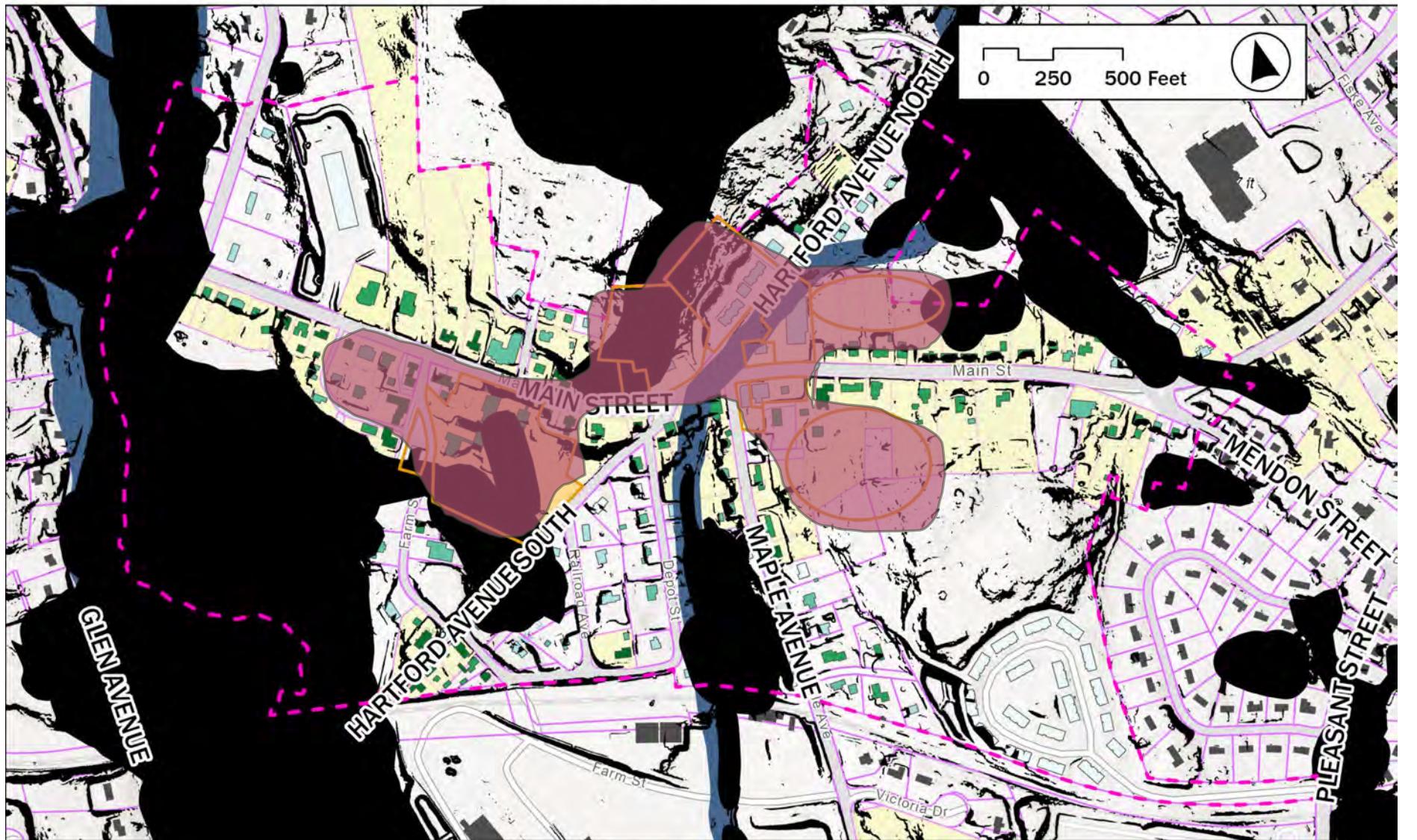
- Parcels
- Study Area
- Opportunity Parcels

- Constraints to Development
- National Register
- Inventoried Property

Structures by Year Built

- 2000-Present
- 1950-1999

- 1900-1949
- 1850-1899
- Pre-1849



Land Use, Design and Character

Clarify and codify the desired village character

- Revise the zoning to implement the vision for West Upton Center
 - Revise zoning district boundaries to follow lot lines and align with vision's intent
 - Revise use and dimensional standards to reflect historic development patterns and desired future
 - Reduce parking requirements for commercial uses, encourage shared parking and cross access
 - Encourage adaptive reuse and infill behind historic structures
 - Allow taller mixed-use buildings in the center
- Develop and adopt Design Guidelines to guide the look and feel of future development and streetscape enhancements



Economic Development

Reinforce West Upton as the primary hub for local services and businesses

- Create additional commercial space through redevelopment around intersection of Main St/Maple Ave/Hartford Ave N
- Use creative programming and placemaking to attract visitors and support local commerce
- Improve pedestrian and bike connectivity to the center
- Improve parking availability and convenience
- Capture and convert pass-through traffic into customers through improved signage, streetscape design, and business visibility
- Grow the customer base through additional housing in the center
- Promote opportunities for redevelopment

PRECEDENT: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

WEST ACTON VILLAGE CENTER









West Upton Visioning Project

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