

# WEST UPTON VISIONING PROJECT

## Tonight's Agenda

- Workshop Debrief
- Vision for West Upton
- Group Discussion



# Project Schedule

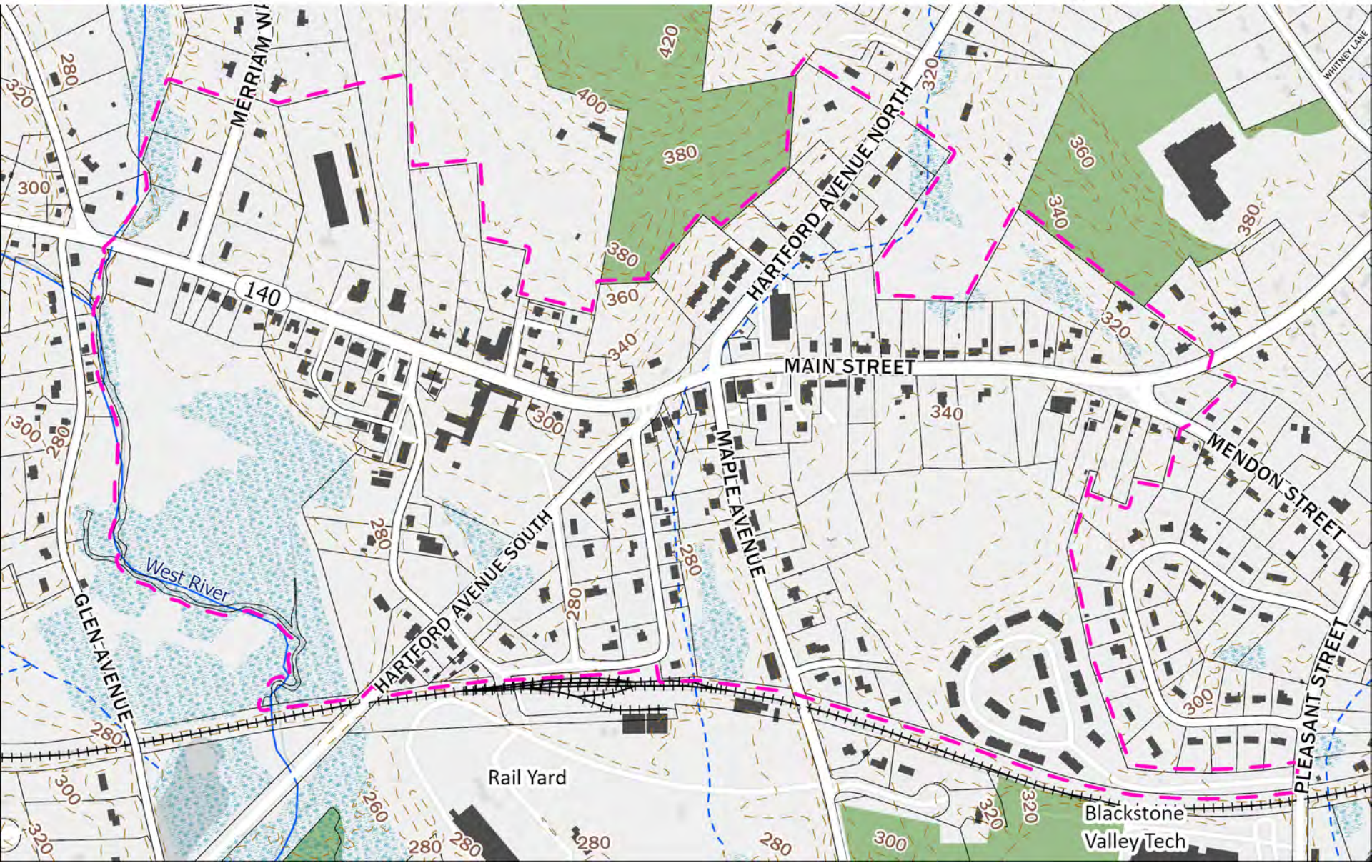
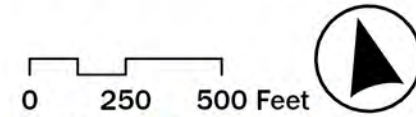
<b>May</b>	<b>Kick-off Meeting</b>	<b>Nov.</b>	<b>Working Group #3: Vision &amp; Values, Alternatives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review ideas from public workshop</li><li>• Discuss alternatives</li></ul>
<b>June</b>	<b>Working Group #1: Shared Fact-Finding, SWOT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: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

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<b>Other Community Input</b>	<b>September: Public Visioning Workshop</b>
	<b>Jan-Feb: Focus Groups</b>
	<b>April: Final Public Forum</b>



Parcels  
Study Area







# 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,  
(types of residents, businesses, or organizations) ice cream parlor,

When walking down the street, you notice

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

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

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

to the BP gas station, liquor store & strip mall, and added  
(aspect(s) that the community wanted to improve) a large designated parking lot.

As a result,

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

Built on a foundation of community values such as

openness to all ideology and respect  
(value) (value)

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

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, side-  
(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  
(positive impact or outcome) move here + love to visit

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

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# 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*





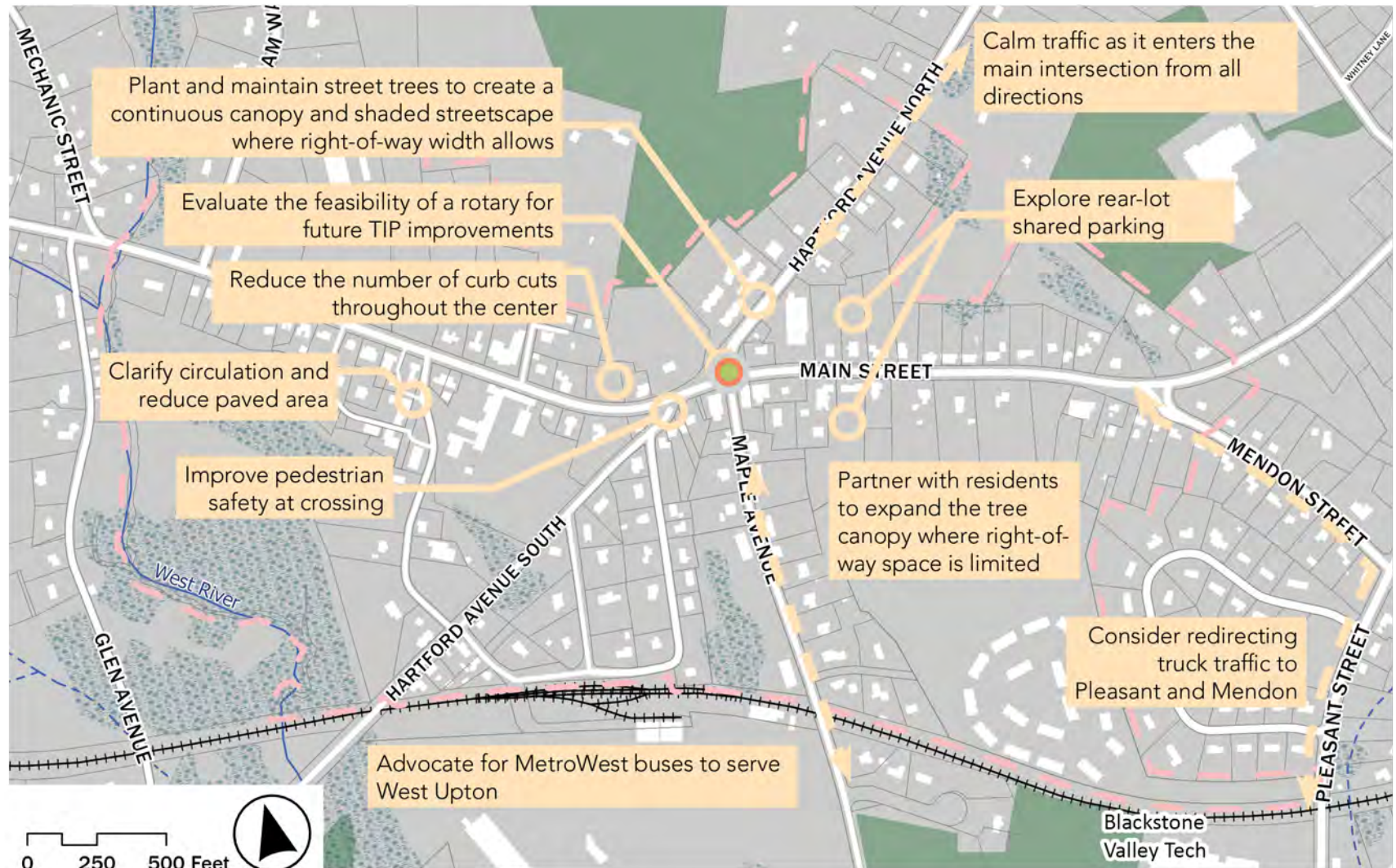
# Traffic, Parking, and Streetscape

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.



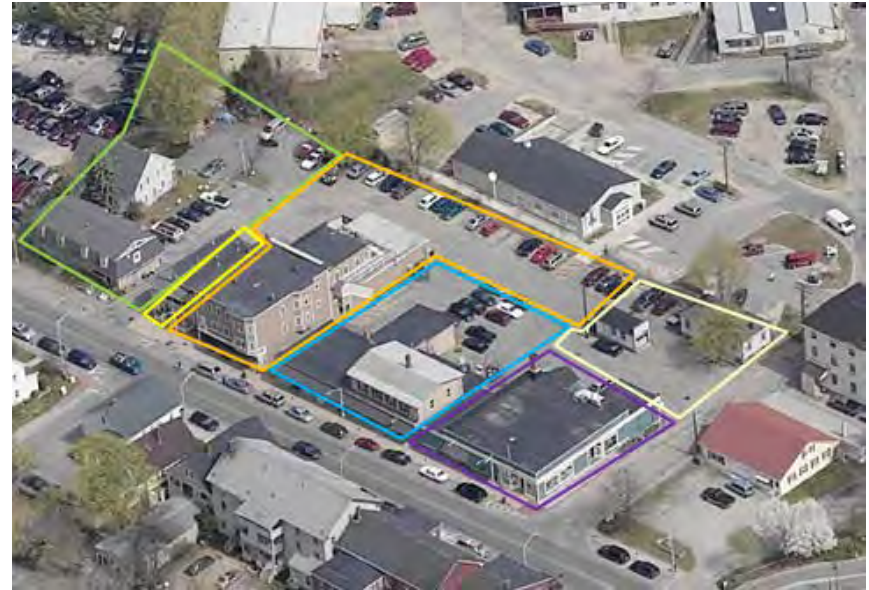
# PRECEDENT: SHARED REAR PARKING

## **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*



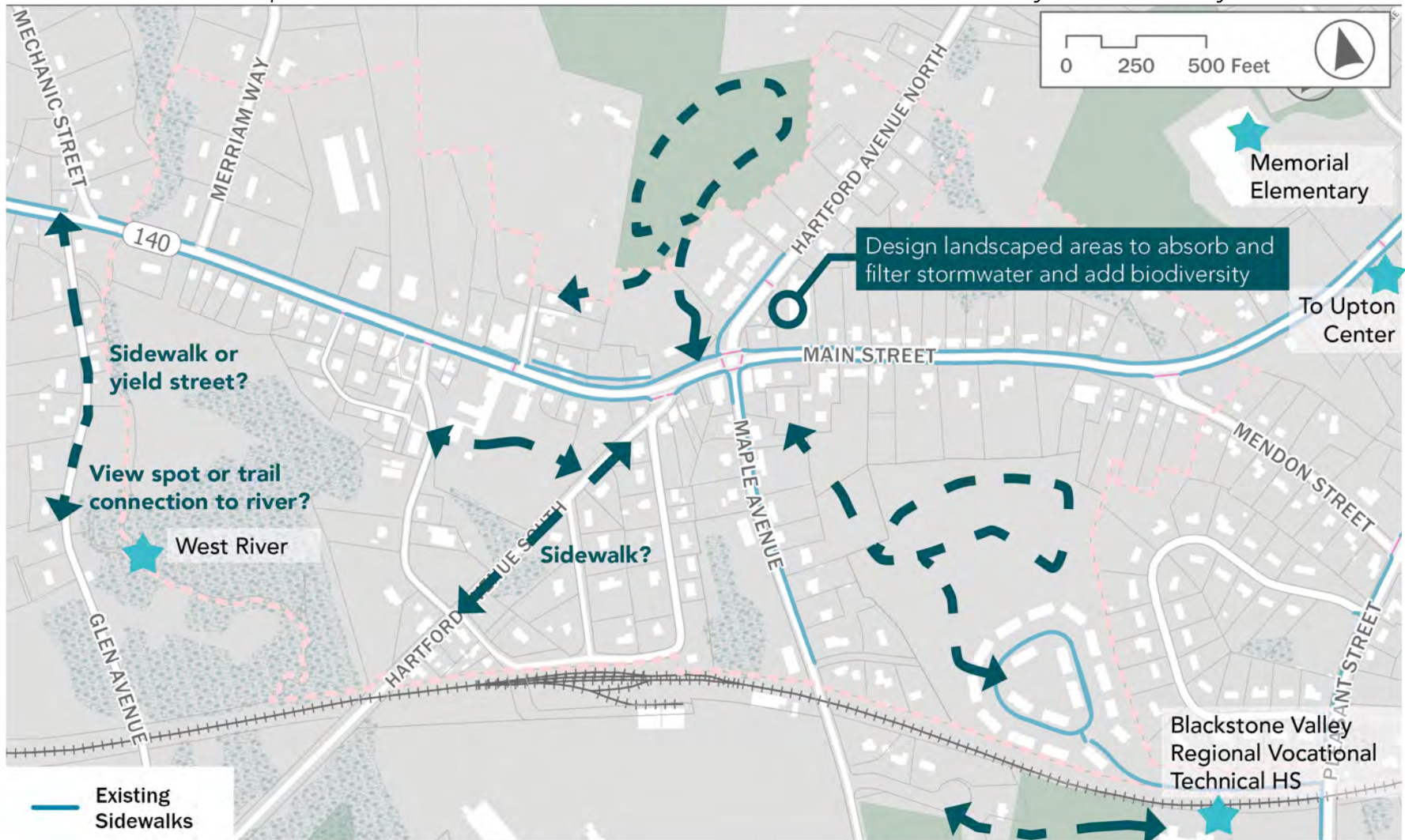
# Open Space and Connectivity

*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.*



### Existing Sidewalks



# Placemaking

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





# What is Placemaking?



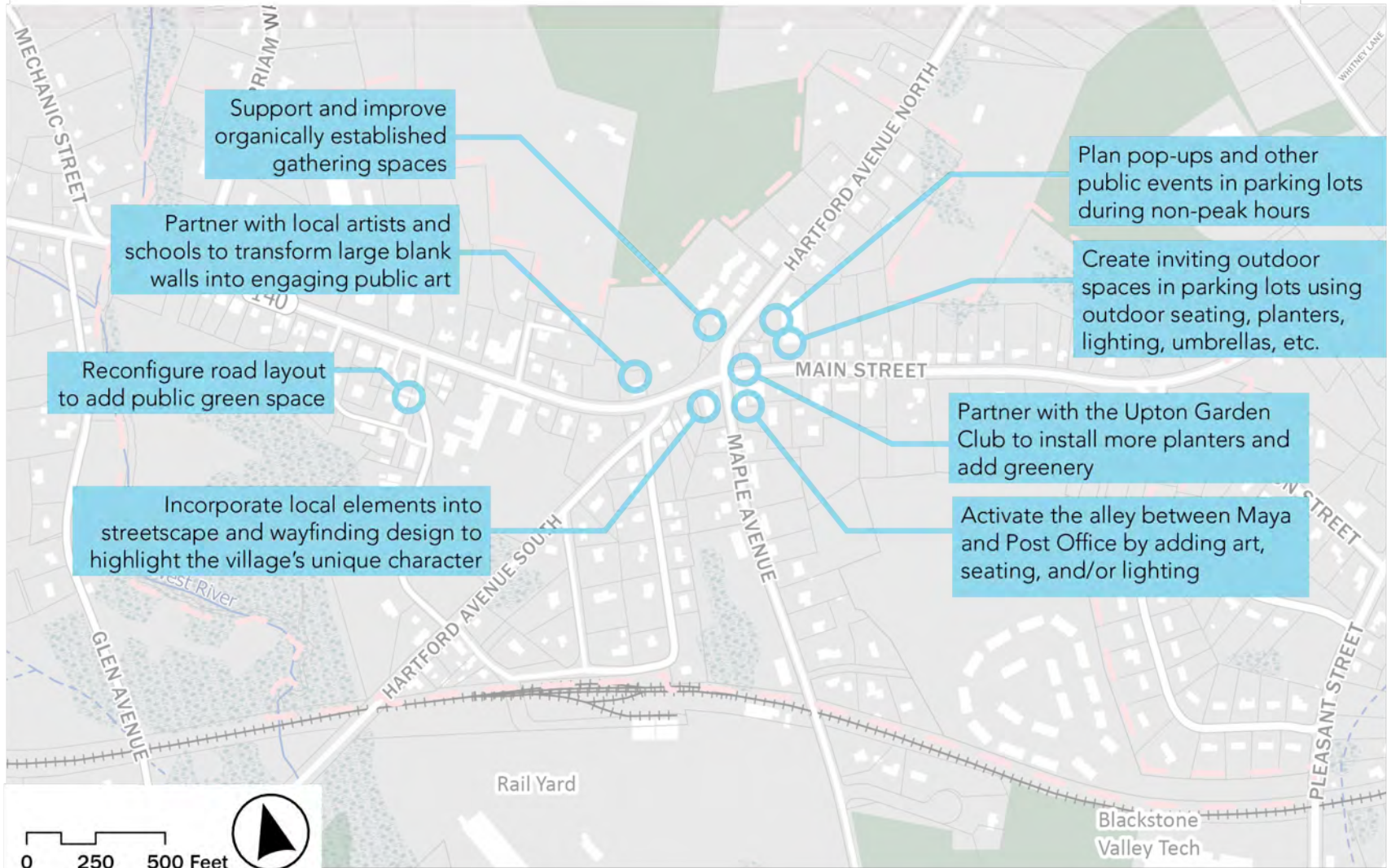






# Placemaking

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

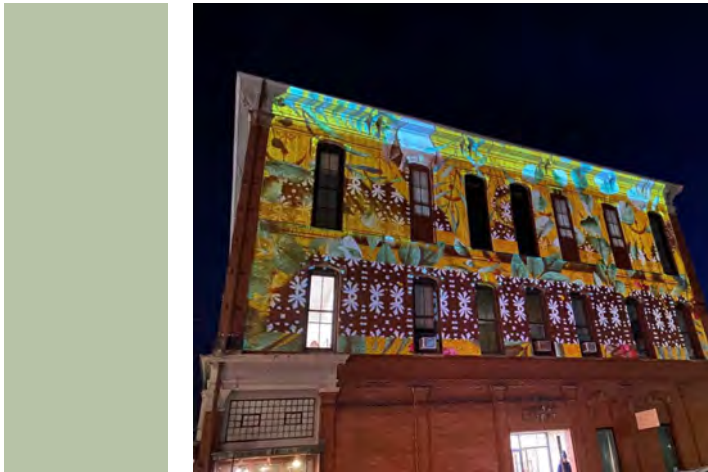






# PRECEDENT: NATICK CENTER

- 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](http://www.natickcenter.org)



#### Criteria

The artwork should be bold, bright and respectful



#### Materials

Acrylic spray paint and markers, mural paint



#### Site dimensions

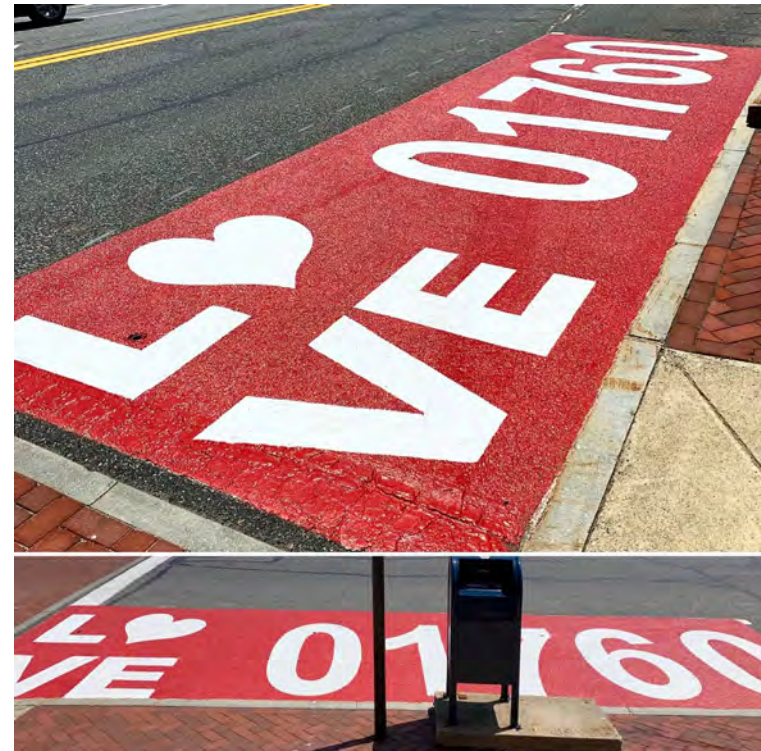
- A - 16' x 72' = \$ 1,700
- B - 7' x 20' = \$ 1,000
- C - 7' x 35' = \$ 1,000
- D - 10' x 30' = \$ 1,000
- E - 24' x 7' = \$ 1,000
- F - 10' x 30' = \$ 1,000





# 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





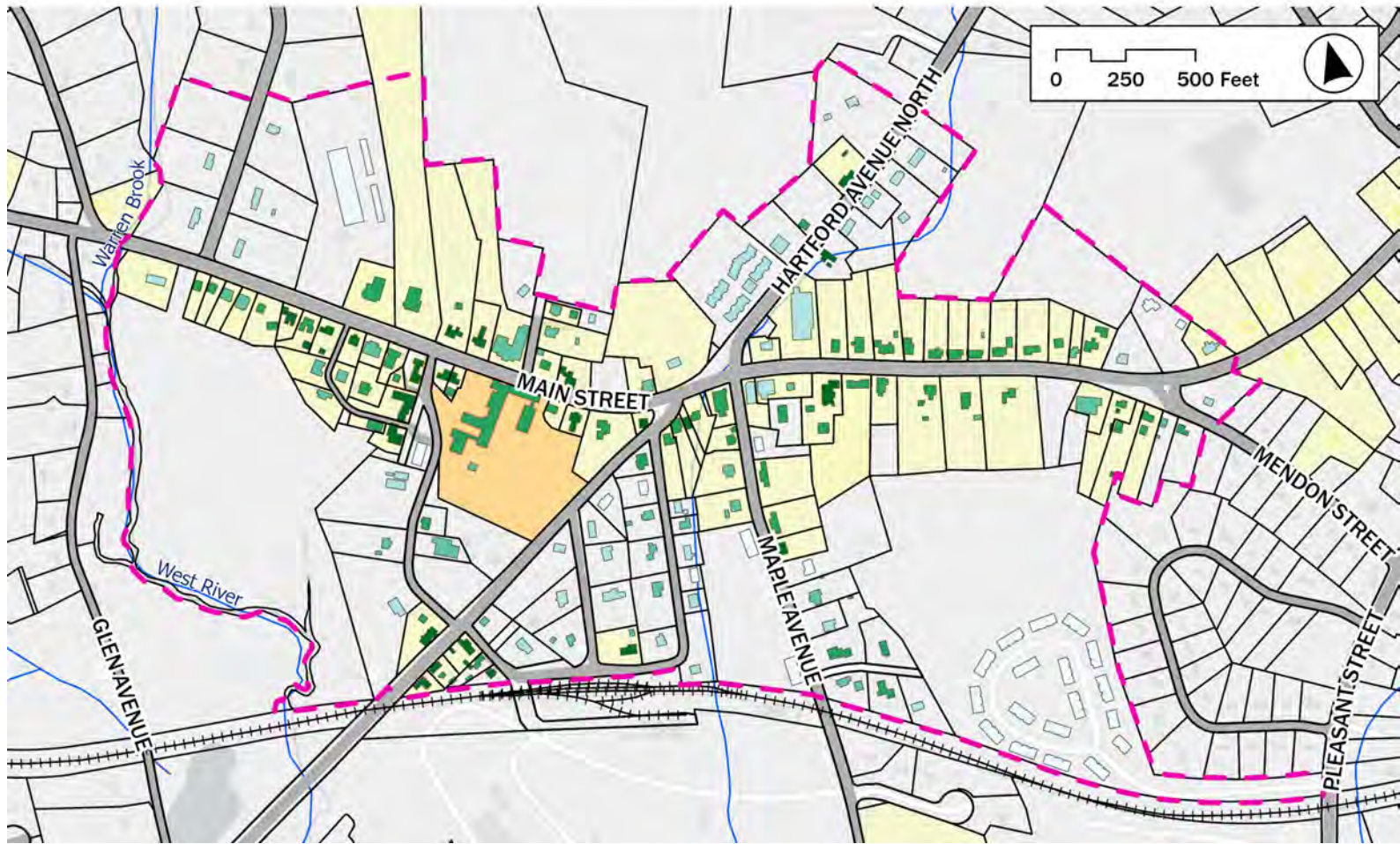
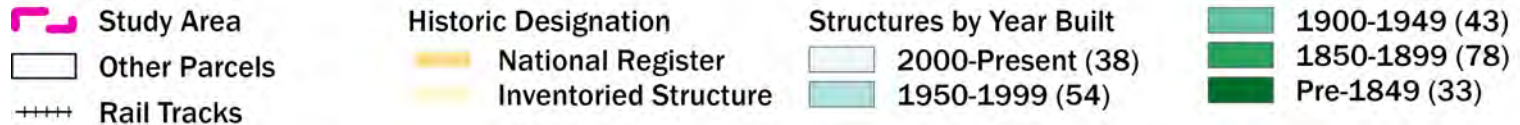
## PRECEDENT: ITERATIVE PLACEMAKING APPROACH HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA



# Historic Preservation

*Celebrate and preserve West Upton's rich history*

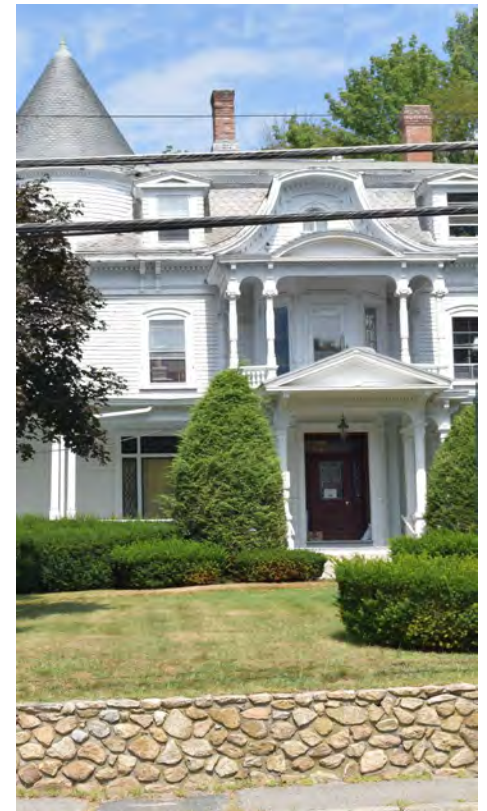
## Historic Resources



# 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





Additions  
behind historic  
houses

# Infill, Northampton, MA

-72.625699, 42.322899 LON LAT

MassMapper

Leaflet | MassC



# Before

Aug 2017

Share

X



Google

+

-

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After





After

Aug 2023

Share

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# Land Use, Design and Character

*Clarify and codify the desired village character*

## Zoning

Non-conforming by frontage



Non-conforming by lot size



## Zoning Boundaries

C&I: Commercial and Industrial



GB: General Business



SRA: Single Residential A



SRC: Single Residential C



SRB: Single Residential B



Study Area





## Opportunity Parcels



## Structures by Year Built





# 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

## **Dodson & Flinker**

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