

# East Hampton Village Center Plan



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## 1.0 Introduction

Located geographically in the middle of the East Hampton, the Village Center is known for its historic character and small shops, restaurants, and businesses. It is a priority of the town to highlight the Village Center and all it has to offer. As time has gone on the Village Center has become more auto-oriented following the trends of history throughout the U.S. The goal of this project is to improve the Village Center and create pedestrian and bike friendly connectivity, and overall create an attractive space where residents and commuters alike want to stop and spend time. Some improvement ideas include general streetscape improvements, wayfinding, additional public gathering spaces, and the overall incorporation of cultural and historical elements to add to the aesthetic of the Village Center.

The East Hampton Plan of Conservation and Development has made strides to encourage housing, and mixed uses throughout the Village Center to contribute to the Vitality of the area. The plan also lays out the goal of creating walkable villages. In an effort to progress the improvement of the Village Center, the town of East Hampton implemented a tax increment financing district (TIF) in the Village Center. The town should consider using money from the TIF district to fund this plan.

“Enhancing pedestrian access throughout all of the villages will add to community character and quality of life by reducing dependence on motor vehicles as well as promoting a healthier, more convenient environment for residents and tourists.” (East Hampton POCD pg. 75).

As the population grows larger and municipalities become more developed, quality public spaces as well as bike and pedestrian infrastructure are a necessity in any community. With the recent events and the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that we promote our local and community businesses. Through increased connectivity and bike and pedestrian access, this plan intends to highlight the local business community in the Village Center. In addition to a mix of businesses, the Village Center offers opportunity for recreation and tourism with the Air Line Trail State Park running through the heart of the downtown. All of these elements combined with proposed improvements in this plan presents a great opportunity for the community to strive for a more sustainable future and create long term social, economic and environmental benefits. With all of that in mind, the following plan was initiated as part of the larger goal of creating walkable villages, and overall creating a meaningful space for the public to enjoy. This plan is focused on surveying and inventorying the Village Center and fostering a discussion for the future of the area. The Village Center holds a vast amount of retail, restaurant, and housing space. The Village Center sits in the center of town, along route 196 which connects routes 16 and 66. It also intersects the Air Line Trail State Park bringing in pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Historically the area was the center of town serving the communities needs through shops, and other civic uses, including the church, the school, and the town hall. The Village Center has a few parcels with opportunity for development. The center has sidewalks along most of its streets but maintenance and landscaping are needed throughout the area. Parking in the Village Center is ample but needs to be re-organized and clear for users. Overall the Village Center as it exists has the opportunity to be transformed into a great public space for all to enjoy.



## **2.0 Inventory & Analysis**

### ***2.1 Existing Conditions of the Village Center***

#### ***2.11 Layout of the Village Center***

The East Hampton Village Center spans the area between and along Summit and Skinner Streets and is home to 29 parcels which hold to mix of uses including housing , shops, restaurants, businesses, and some open space owned by the town. Historically the Village Center was a center for bell manufacturers such as William Barton, Bevin Bell, The N. N. Brass, The East Hampton Bell Company, Watrous Manufacturing, and Gong Bell Manufacturing. The remnants of this legacy are left behind in the form of several old mill buildings and warehouses that exist in the Village Center today. The Village Center also includes Center Elementary School, the Congregational Church, and the town library. This area also includes access points to the Air Line Trail State Park, a rails to trail that spans the state of Connecticut from Portland to Thompson. The trail provides the Village Center with pedestrian and bicycle traffic, proving itself to be an important and unique asset to the area. The Village Center has important infrastructure and amenities such as sidewalks, crosswalks, benches, trash cans, and landscaping but it is lacking or aging in certain areas. The map on the next page depicts the Village Center and its existing layout (see figure 1).

#### ***2.12 Existing Pedestrian and Bike Infrastructure***



Side Walks and Crosswalks exist throughout the Village Center but are in poor condition in multiple spots (See figure 2). In the picture to the top left you can see a crosswalk in very poor condition in front of the old town hall.

*Figure 2: Sidewalks and Crosswalks in Various Conditions*

On the bottom left is a sidewalk in front of 101 main street which is in need of maintenance. On the bottom right a drive way on Skinner Street lacks crosswalks giving an uninviting feel. The picture to the right shows a dead end to the side walk on Summit Street. This dead end is hidden by a bush making it very hard to see oncoming traffic for crossing pedestrians.



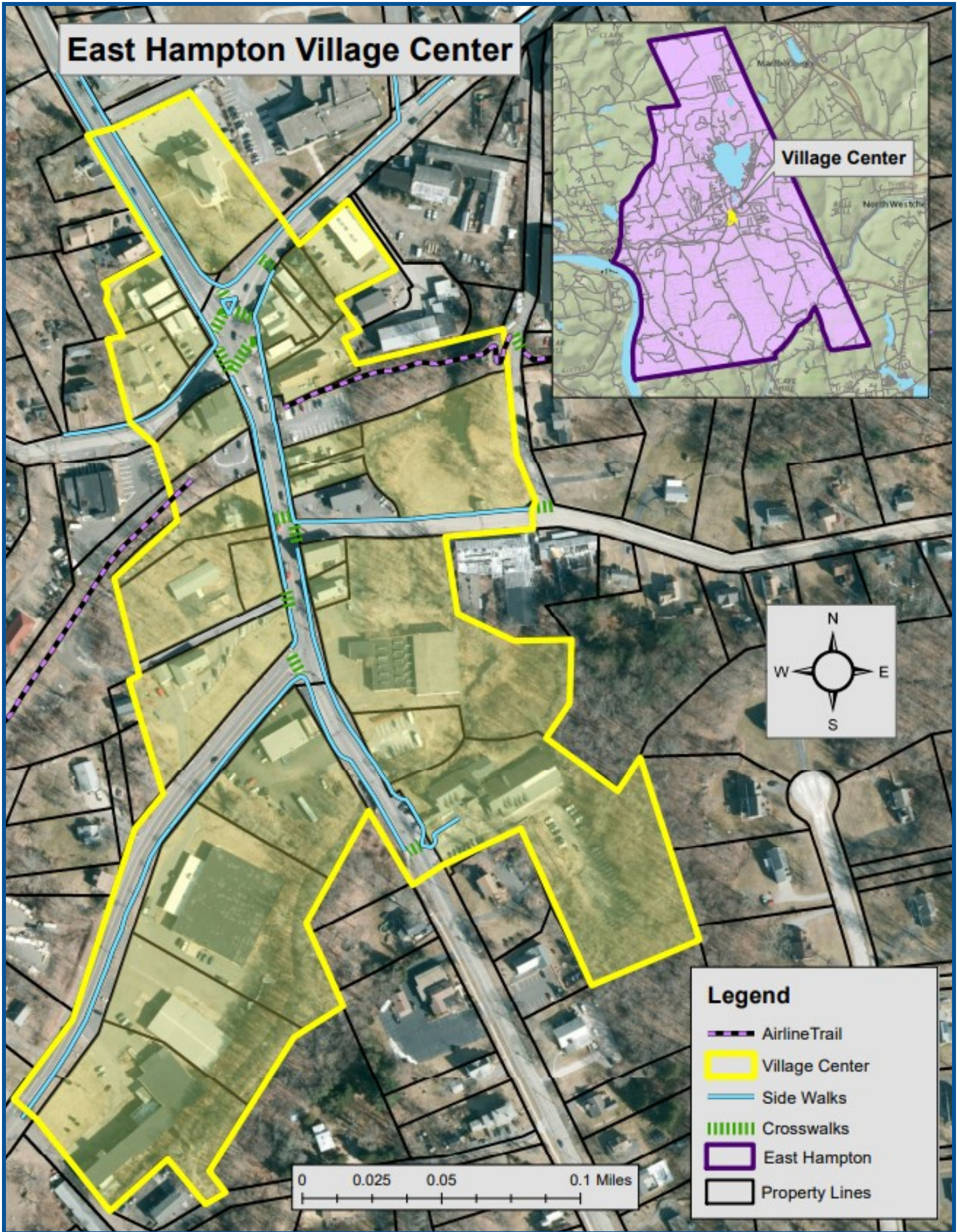


Figure 1: Village Center Map



2.13 Signage, Benches, Trash Cans, Light posts, and Other Amenities.



Figure 3: Benches

Benches are spread throughout the village center although the style is not consistent as some, such as the one seen in the bottom left picture at the library, are outdated and in poor condition.

Signage exists in the Village Center in the form of East Hampton themed signs and Air Line Trail Signs. Some of the East Hampton signage is old and worn as seen in the left most picture for 103 Main Street Parking. As mentioned in the parking section more signage is needed to clearly label public parking. The Air Line trail has markers spray painted on the side walk which are hard to see and can be easily missed.



Figure 4: Signage

Major gate ways into the Village Center such as Summit Street and Skinner Street are missing much needed signage to indicate and highlight the Village Center.

signage to indicate and highlight the Village Center.

Lamp posts exist along the bridge on Main Street near the library and there are others near 82 Main Street, although the styles vary.

Trash cans exist in a few place such as the library and the 103 main street parking lot and the Air Line trail lot.



Figure 5: Light posts and Trash Cans

2.14: Parking

According to a parking analysis done by the East Hampton Land use department, the Village Center meets the minimum parking requirements based on zoning regulations in the town. (see table 1). Although parking is in excess, one issue the Center faces is clearly advertising its public parking to users.

Downtown Parking Inventory			
Parcel	Minimum Requirement	Max Requirement for Parking Spaces	Current Inventory
95 Main	8	20	5
97 Main	3	7	4
101 Main	16	16	16
91 Main	1	2	5
93 Main	7	19	18
89 Main	5	9	7
87 Main	14	31	5
81 main	3	7	4
73 Main	8	18	5
4 Summit	5	11	6
6 Summit	2	4	1
103 Main	N/A	N/A	16
Airline Trail Lot	N/A	N/A	23
10 Summit	10	23	30
59 Main	N/A	N/A	56
66 Main	8	19	6
70 Main	5	11	6
72 Main	5	12	9
2 Barton Hill	4	10	22
82 Main	18	42	9
88 Main	2	4	0
90 Main	3	3	8
94 Main	6	10	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>276</b>

Table 1: Village Center Parking Analysis



Public parking lots such as this one next to 82 Main Street (see figure 6), are not clearly labeled, making it confusing and uninviting for shop users and drivers passing through the Village Center. This was a primary concern voiced by business owners.

Figure 6: Village Center Parking Analysis



2.15: Air Line Trail

The Air Line Trail State Park is a rails to trails that spans twelve towns in CT including East Hampton. The trail runs from Portland to Thompson and extends in to Massachusetts and beyond (See Figure 7). As part of the East Coast Greenway, the trail is a key part of the Village Center and proves itself as a unique asset with the bike and pedestrian traffic it brings into town. Bike and pedestrian infrastructure is a key part of this plan.

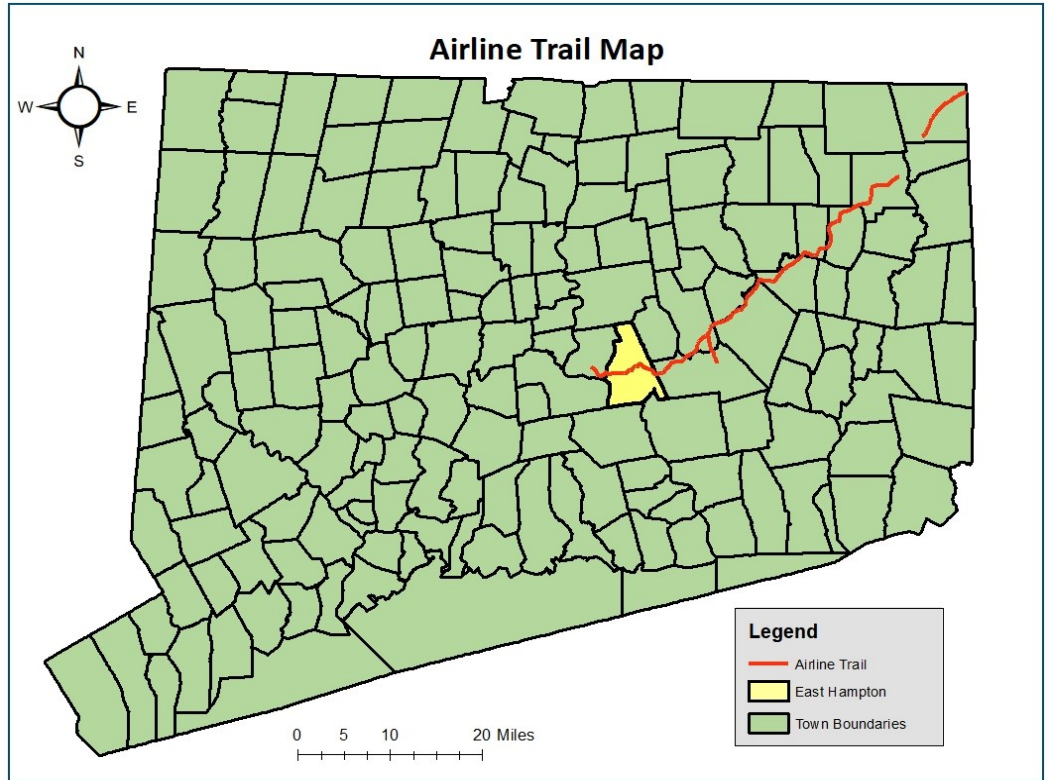


Figure 7: Air Line Trail Map



Figure 8: Air Line Trail Map

The current trail head in the Village Center has a nice frontage consisting of a community garden and some greenery, although beyond the parking lot landscaping begins to dwindle and become overgrown and gives off an uninviting feel to people coming on and more importantly off the trail into the Village Center (see figure 8). In addition, the building adjacent to the entrance has a unsightly side façade that is in need of maintenance. For people coming into East Hampton for the first time this isn't very welcoming.

The trail provides the town and its residents with a great opportunity for passive recreation. Recreation sites are important for any community as they provide numerous benefits to residents as well as the aesthetic of a community. The Air Line Trail is a key component of the Village Center and planning efforts. Currently Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development is working with funding from the CT DEEP Recreational Trails Program to create an Air Line State Park Trail Master Plan. This plan intends to evaluate the economic significance and value of the Air Line Trail.

## 2.16: Gateways

Gateways are an important aspect to a Village Center, town, or any significant location. A gateway is the entrance to an area and is something one must pass through in order to access a geographic area such as the Village Center. Being the first impression an area has on a person whether they be a driver, biker, or pedestrian makes gateways an important aspect and tool in defining the character of an area.

Currently the gateways to the Village Center are underutilized and have potential to be shaped into attractive entrances that reinforce the character of the area. There are six important gateways, Main Street from the North and South, Summit Street, Skinner Street, and the two Air Line Trail Entrances coming in from the East and West. The Village Center is shaped in a unique way that the gateways act as funnels, which push traffic and people in to the Main Street Strip from all sides (See figure 9).

Entry from route 66 down Main Street is in good condition although it lacks signage to signify the Village Center. The gateway coming from the library on Main street is in overall good condition lacks signage.

Approaching the Village Center from Summit Street one is met with old dilapidated mill buildings, and overgrown properties (see figure 10). This does offer an inviting feel for people headed into the center.



Figure 10: Gateways to the Village Center





Figure 9: Gateways to the Village Center



Entering from the west on the Air Line Trail users are met with an outdoor fitness area, which is a great addition to the Village Center and Air Line trail although the area is in need of landscaping and maintenance. Tis trail head is located back behind buildings and trees where it can be confusing to navigate into the Village Center and the other side of the trail (see figure 11).



Figure 11: West Air Line Trail En-

The eastern access point is again in need of maintenance and landscaping. The bridge to cross Pocotopaug Creek has fences on each side which are covered in barbed wire which is not a welcoming look, especially for a heavily trafficked gateway (see figure 12).



Figure 12: East Air Line Trail Entrance



Skinner Street is unique in that that gateway comes in from the Industrial zone. Additions such as landscaping and street trees can be used to improve this gateway and further incorporate it into the Village Center . As seen in the photos below many of the properties bordering the roadway aren't very attractive, such as the lot full of busses (see figure 13). Landscaping and other options like privacy screened fences should be considered as options to make the area more inviting.



Figure 13: Skinner Street Gateway

**2.2 Opportunities for Input.**

Public input is a valuable and important part of any planning process. Several opportunities for input were provided to business owners and residents to identify issues and opportunities for the Village Center.

**2.21 Meeting with Village Center Business Owners**

Two meetings with business owners were conducted in mid July of 2021 to get feedback and insight on existing conditions, and to discuss future plans. The meeting was guided by a set of questions, the business owners were asked to identify what the Village Center is geographically, as well as the customer base.

“What is the “Village Center” geographically in your eyes?” “What is the customer base? Who is here?”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Epoch Arts</li> <li>• Skinner Street</li> <li>• Center School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families w/ Children</li> <li>• Air Line Trail Users</li> <li>• People coming from Eastern CT</li> </ul>
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Answers to the first question helped us create our final map of the Village Center (see figure 1) with the additions of Epoch Arts studios, Center School, as well as a few other parcels, and the general inclusion of Skinner Street to the plan. The answers we received to the second question helped us to identify the customer base in the Village Center. This is an important aspect of the plan because it helps to identify users of the Village Center and cater design to the appropriate needs. These two questions began the conversation about existing conditions in the Village Center. Following these question a SWOT analysis was conducted. SWOT is a common analysis technique that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It is an approach used to highlight and analyze these elements surrounding the current state of the Village Center. In order to gain more insight from the business owners we conducted a SWOT analysis together to find out their ideas on the Village Center. The results were as follows.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business community</li> <li>Diversity of businesses</li> <li>Customer Traffic</li> <li>“Historical” charm.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redevelopment of old mill buildings and “in-between properties”.</li> <li>Bike and pedestrian infrastructure.</li> <li>Popular “Village Center” destination among Connecticut residents.</li> <li>Open space/ Park space, incorporation of stream, Air Line trail, and overall connectivity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructure</li> <li>Customers and users don’t know what parking is available.</li> <li>Lack of signage</li> <li>Lack of awareness of village center among towns people.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic/not pedestrian friendly.</li> <li>Old mill buildings and blighted property</li> </ul>



2.22 Public Workshop

The public workshop was began with a brief presentation of the research the planning team had done so far including some existing conditions, as well as results from the meeting with the business owners. After the presentation the group of about 15 members of the community were broken off into groups and sent to three different interactive activities that were set up to get input on different alternatives and design



elements of the Village Center. These elements included the Walnut Avenue parcel alternatives, the Main Street parcel alternatives, as well as crosswalks, benches, light posts, and overall feel and look of the Village Center. These alternatives can be found in the Future alternatives section. An opportunity for residents to leave their own comments was available as well as another SWOT analysis that was conducted with members of the public. The results were as follows. (All responses can be found in the appendix).

**Strengths**

- Character
- History
- Architectural New England Village
- Invested Community Members
- Air Line trail
- Good mix of commercial activities (Shopping, food, trails, recreation)

**Weaknesses**

- Blight
- Environmental toxins
- Industrial waste/pollution
- Lack of water infrastructure
- Traffic not giving way to pedestrians
- Inadequate marketing
- Lack of buildings on Main Street

**Words from Residents'**

“Improve sidewalks down 196 to connect Epoch to Village Center.”

“More Landscaping and greenery in all areas.”

“More benches and outdoor dining space.”

“Perhaps more seating than just benches – table and chairs for groups to meet and chat.”

“Clean up of old buildings, cut weeds, repair windows and put plan in place for future.”

**Opportunities**

- Retrofit for eco-sustainability
- Environmental remediation
- Bells (tourism, branding, etc.)
- Build on Air Line trail (Make surrounding area accessible and desirable)
- Blighted buildings - Convert to walkable shops (arts focused unique shops)
- Marketing Campaign to rest of CT

**Threats**

- Traffic / not bike and pedestrian friendly
- COVID/ Delta might threaten reopening.
- State Route (Main St.) How much alteration is possible?
- Lack of community interest
- Dilapidated building
- No Air Line Trail advertising (maps, brochures, etc.)
- Lack of events

### **3.0 Goals and Vision for the Village Center**

This section summarizes the goals based on feedback by East Hampton residents through public workshops as well as multiple meetings with Village Center business owners. Goals from the 2016 East Hampton Plan of Conservation and Development were also taken into account as they related to the Village Center. In addition, a Planning Advisory Service report by the American Planning Association is included which outlines a series of 25 high performance public space criteria. These criteria are important to consider when designing sustainable public spaces.

#### *3.1 Community Input*

The following goals were derived from the section of the planning process where business owners and residents were given the opportunity to identify concerns and express their goals for the Village Center. Some of the top issues and goals are as follows.

- **Pedestrian and Bike infrastructure** - Sidewalk improvements and additions where needed and bike paths to connect and improve the feel and safety of the Village Center for our non - automobile users.
- **Traffic** - Implement measures to slow traffic in the Village Center creating a safer environment with users.
- **Parking** - Create a system to label and signal what lots are available for public parking and where they are.
- **Business Development** - Reuse and redevelopment of blighted buildings to add more businesses, shops and attractive spaces to draw more people to the Village Center.
- **Open Space and Recreation** – Make use of open space available and highlight and promote the Air Line Trail to users and townsfolk.
- **Streetscape Improvements** - Tidy up and beautify the streetscape with sidewalk improvements, landscaping, as well as additions of elements such as benches, and light posts to make the Village Center more inviting.
- **Community Events and Branding** - Rebrand and Promote the Village Center to East Hampton as well as the rest of Connecticut to draw in users, and create a tourist economy and destination.

The Village Center as it exists has the potential to easily implement these goals. With a growing mixture of uses such as recreation, commerce, and residential, the Village Center, with the implementation of these goals, has vast amounts of potential for growth and improvements.

### 3.2: Goals from the East Hampton POCD

The plan of Conservation and Development is a community wide plan done every ten years to guide the development and future of a town. In the process of planning for the Village Center the planning team looked at plans past and present to gain perspective on the history and future of the town. The following goals were drawn from the East Hampton POCD as they aligned with this project.

- Attract and Retain Appropriate Businesses
- Meet Residents' Everyday Shopping Needs
- Expand the Local Economy from Within
- Expand the Local Tourist Economy
- Recognize Significant Historic Resources
- Enhance Existing Open Space
- Protect Important Resources
- Recognize Significant Historic Resources
- Enhance Existing Open Space
- Protect Important Resources

**A Vision for  
East Hampton**

**TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON  
Connecticut**

**2016 Plan of Conservation and Development  
July 1, 2016**



### 3.3 Designing for Sustainability

When designing future projects in the Village Center, it is important to factor in sustainable practices. A 2016 Planning Advisory Service (PAS) memo from the American Planning Association outlines a series of 25 High Performance Public Space Criteria. Created by sustainability experts from the University of Florida, the criteria are grouped into three spheres of sustainability (Social, Environmental, and Economic).

#### Social Criteria:

- The space improves the neighborhood
- The space improves social and physical mobility through multimodal connectivity — auto, transit, bike, pedestrian
- The space encourages the health and fitness of residents and visitors
- The space provides relief from urban congestion and stressors such as social confrontation, noise pollution, and air pollution
- The space provides places for formal and informal social gathering, art, performances, and community or civic events
- The space provides opportunities for individual, group, passive, and active recreation
- The space facilitates shared experiences among different groups of people
- The space attracts diverse populations
- The space promotes creative and constructive social interaction

#### Environmental Criteria:

- The space uses energy, water, and material resources efficiently
- The space improves water quality of both surface and ground water
- The space serves as a net carbon sink
- The space enhances, preserves, promotes, or contributes to biological diversity
- Hardscape materials were selected based on longevity of service, social/cultural/historical sustainability, regional availability, low carbon footprint, and/or other related criteria
- The space provides opportunities to enhance environmental awareness and knowledge
- The space serves as an interconnected node within larger-scale ecological corridors and natural habitat

#### Economic Criteria:

- The space creates and facilitates revenue-generating opportunities for the public and/or the private sectors
- The space creates meaningful and desirable employment
- The space indirectly creates or sustains good, living-wage jobs
- The space sustains or increases property values
- The space catalyzes infill development and/or the reuse of obsolete or underused buildings or spaces
- The space attracts new residents
- The space attracts new businesses

## 4.0 Exploring Future Alternatives

The East Hampton Village Center offers an abundance of opportunities for creating a beautiful public space that meets the needs of a variety of different uses. In this section, alternatives for overall layout, different amenities, and infrastructure for the Village Center will be explored. The next chapter will then evaluate the different alternatives based on public input and community goals laid out in earlier chapters.

The core recommendations that should be included if any Village Center improvements are to take place are follows:

- Creation of a unified theme/branding to highlight the Village Center and the shops, services, and amenities it has to offer.
- Existing sidewalks and town-owned right of ways should be maintained, and improved upon.
- Improve safe, comfortable, and ADA compliant pedestrian access to the Village Center and the Air Line Trail through improvements to bike and pedestrian infrastructure (bike “sharrows”, sidewalks and ramps w/ tactile strips, footpaths, pedestrian signage, etc.).
- Creation of a system to clearly organize, and advertise public parking.
- Increased signage and way finding throughout the Village Center and its gateways.

### 4.1 Layout

The existing layout of the Village Center is very auto-oriented. In certain places the layout of the streets, sidewalks, and crosswalks favor cars over pedestrians. For example the four way intersection between Main Street, Summit Street, and Barton Hill Road has an existing layout that can be difficult for

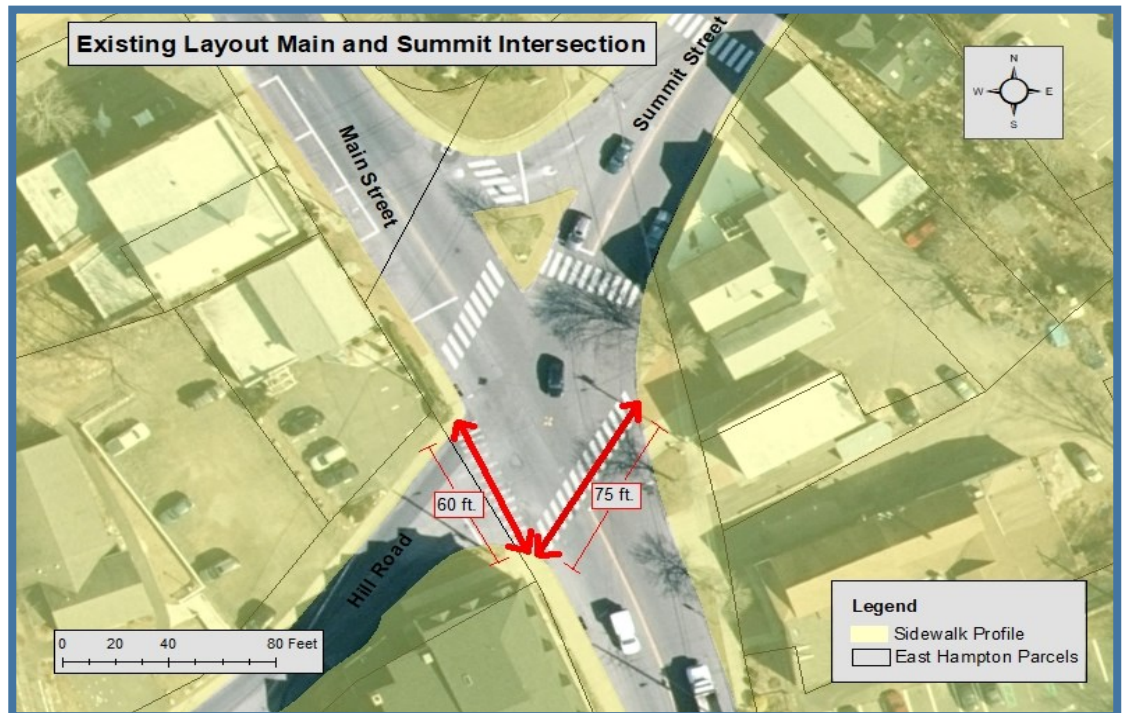


Figure 14: Existing Layout

pedestrians to navigate comfortably. One of the primary concerns is the length of the crosswalks on Barton Hill Road and Main Street. These crosswalks are incredibly long and can yield extended crossing times for pedestrians, leading to increased traffic and other issues (see figure 14). Measuring the crosswalks resulted in the distance of the crossing on Barton Hill Road being 60 feet and the distance of the crossing on Main Street measures in at 75 feet. As well as this the extra space allows for drivers to use the shoulder as a right turn lane making it a dangerous areas for pedestrians.

The proposed layout for the intersection of Main Street , Barton Hill Road, and Summit Street on the north half of the Village Center is depicted below. In order to resolve several concerns, the configuration of the road should be adjusted. The curb on the east side of main street would be pulled out gradually starting from Walnut Avenue, up to the beginning of Summit Street as depicted below. Pulling out the curb on the corner of Barton Hill Road and Main Street is also recommended as well. The stop line in the north bound lane of Main Street should be moved south a few feet allowing for the straightening of the neighboring crosswalk shown in blue (see figure 15). The changes to the curb profile and crosswalks would effectively cut down the distance pedestrians have to travel to cross the road and mitigate resulting traffic. These changes in the profile of the road would effectively act as a traffic slowing feature, and would cause drivers to pay more attention to their surroundings. This would eliminate the ability for drivers to use the excess space when turning right to bypass cars in front of them which endangers pedestrians. As well as this it would create a consistent 11 foot travel lane. The changes seen in the map below are conceptual and a full evaluation of the area and its sightlines is recommended when engineering a redesign for this area.

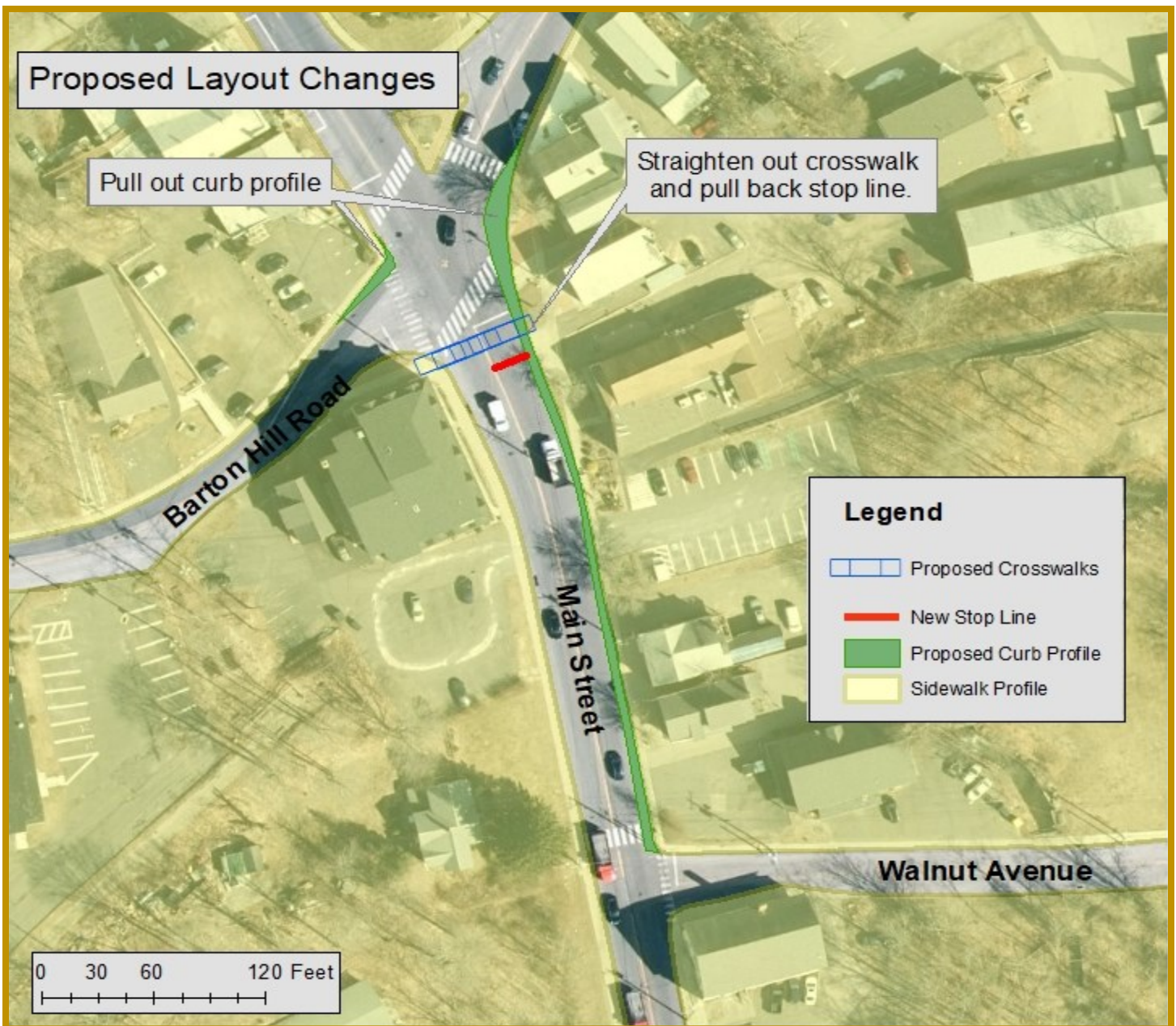


Figure 15: Proposed Layout Changes



The next change recommended for the layout of the Village Center is located in the south end in front of the gas station at 100 Main Street. The section of Main Street in front of the gas station is wider than the rest of the road. It is recommended that this section of road be narrowed, even with the rest of Main Street (see figure 16). The space in between the sidewalk and road should be landscaped appropriately with additional greenery, street trees, etc. This narrowing of the road again will create a consistent 11 foot travel lane, and act as a measure to slow traffic and overall enhance the feel of the Village Center for pedestrians.

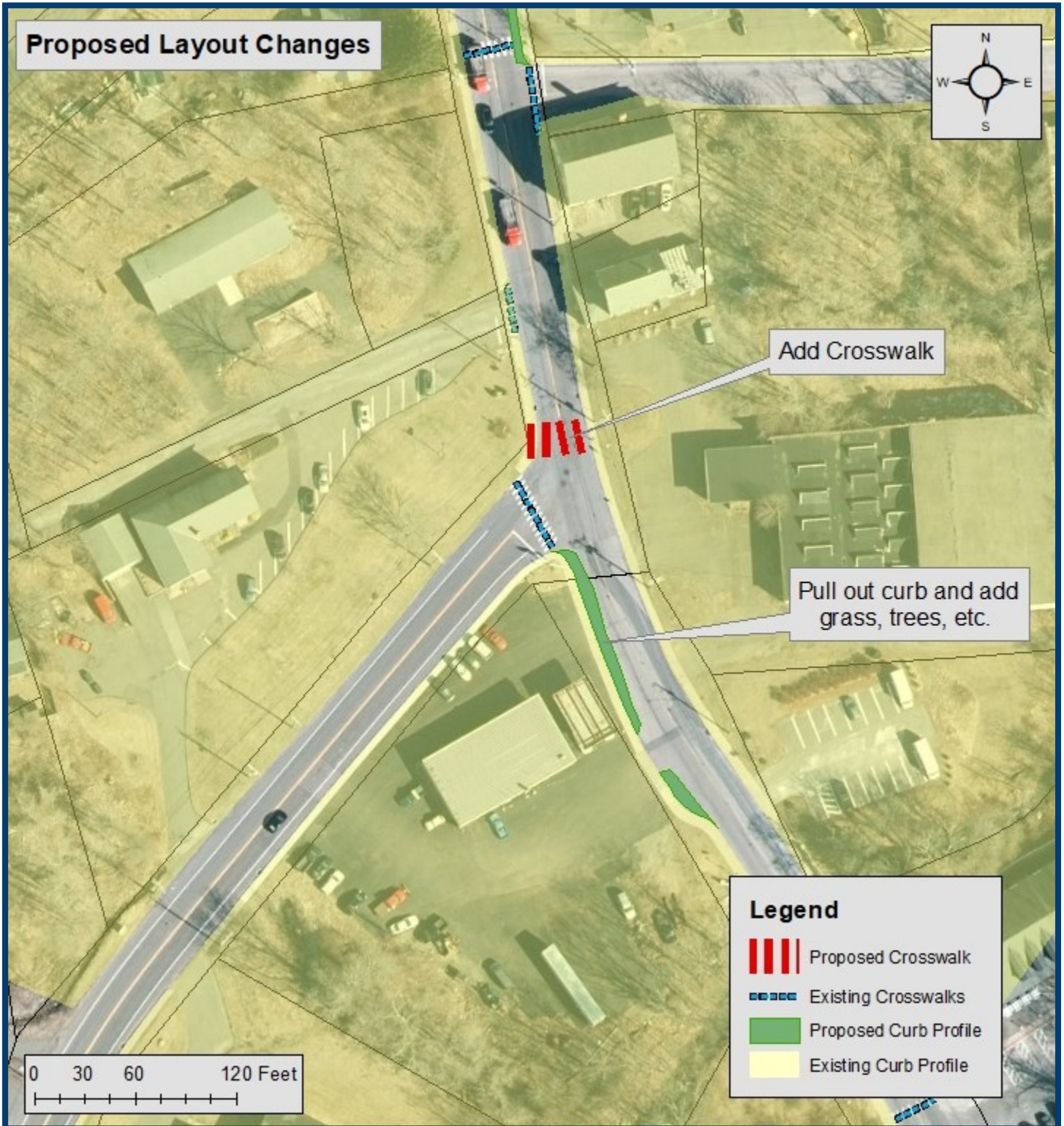


Figure 16: Existing Layout



## 4.2 Amenities

### 4.21 Crosswalks and Sidewalks

Many of the Crosswalks are in poor condition and the paint has faded away. In addition to crosswalk placement and layout changes proposed in the layout section of this chapter, it is recommended that the crosswalks are repainted and maintained. During the public workshop three crosswalk designs were displayed for residents to vote on (See figure 17). A majority of the votes voted for brick/paver style of crosswalks to be implemented in the Village Center (see figure 20).

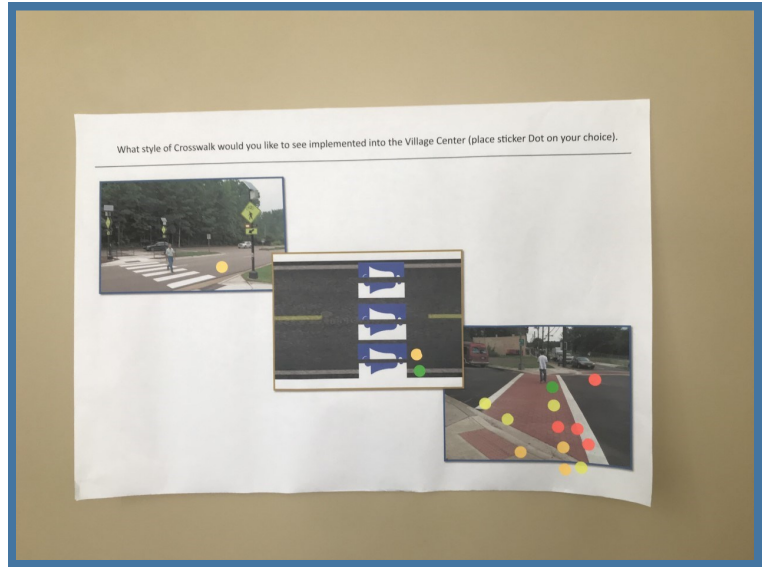


Figure 17: Crosswalk Options

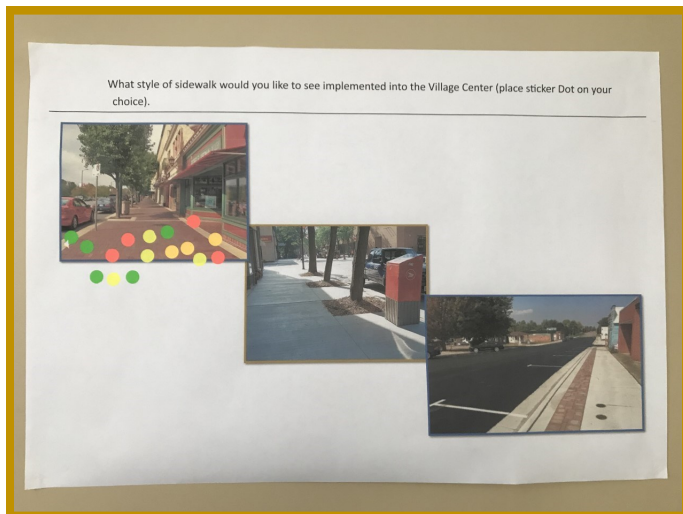


Figure 18: Sidewalk Options

Sidewalk conditions also vary throughout the Village Center and as shown in the existing conditions chapter they are in need of maintenance and replacement in some areas. Three sidewalk options were presented to residents attending the public workshop (see figure 18) and all the votes were for brick/paver sidewalks (see figure 19). It is recommended that the sidewalks be made consistent throughout the center to add to the aesthetic of the area.



Figure 19: Voted for Sidewalk Alternative



Figure 20: Voted for Crosswalk Alternative



Sidewalks exist throughout most of the Village Center, although their conditions vary, and some areas lack sidewalks altogether. One key area that is in need of a sidewalk is the upper half of Summit Street. Along the northbound lane of Summit Street the sidewalk ends abruptly and the view of oncoming traffic is impeded by shrubs (see figure 21). It is recommended that the sidewalk extend up Summit Street, along the businesses that lie past the current end of the sidewalk and the end of Bevin Boulevard (see figure 22). Extending the sidewalk and eliminating the shrub would provide a better line of sight for pedestrians and cars making it safer. It is also suggested that the current crosswalk be removed and replaced by one closer to the school at the end of Bevin Boulevard to facilitate crossing to the extended sidewalk.



Figure 21: Abrupt end to Sidewalk

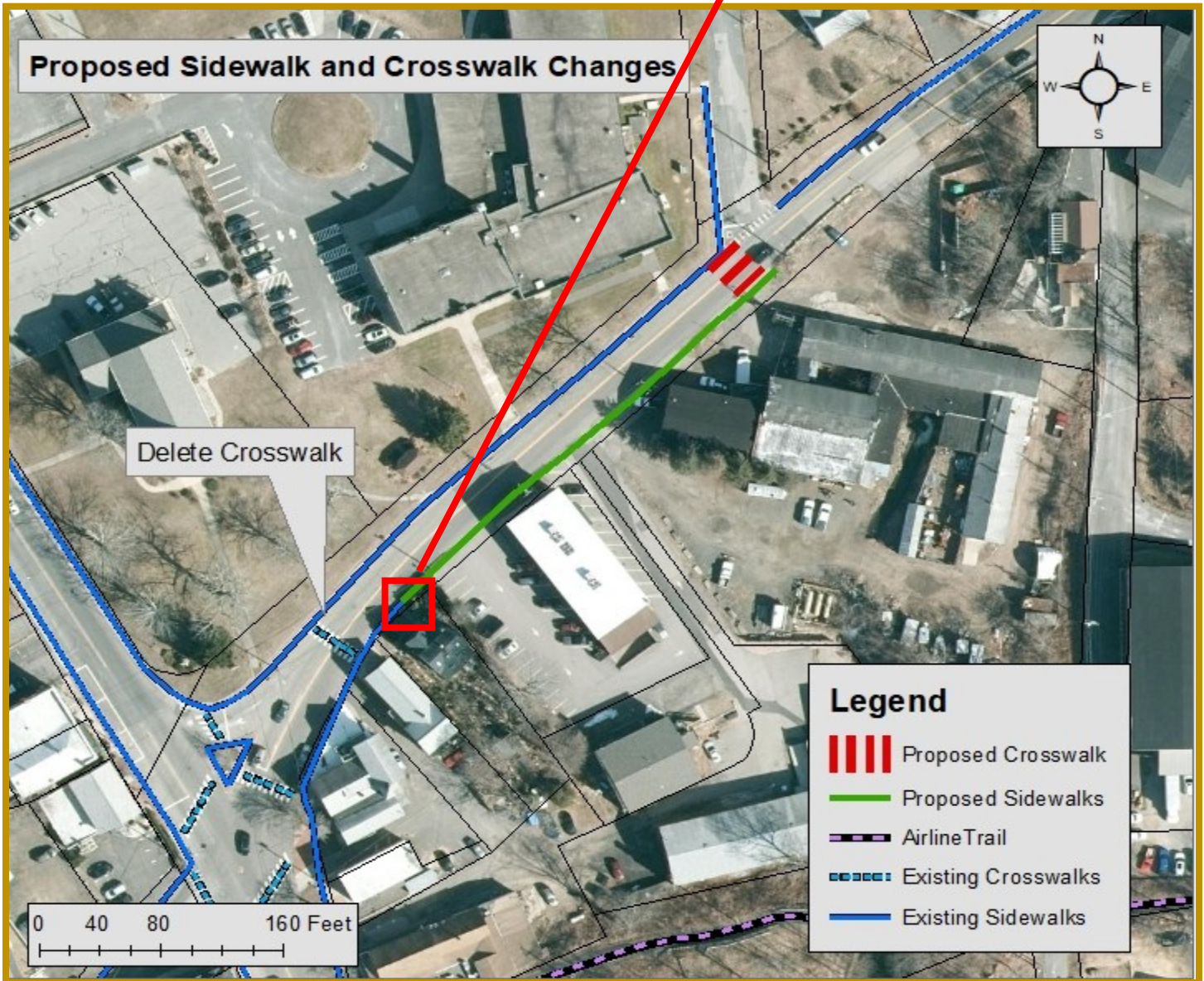
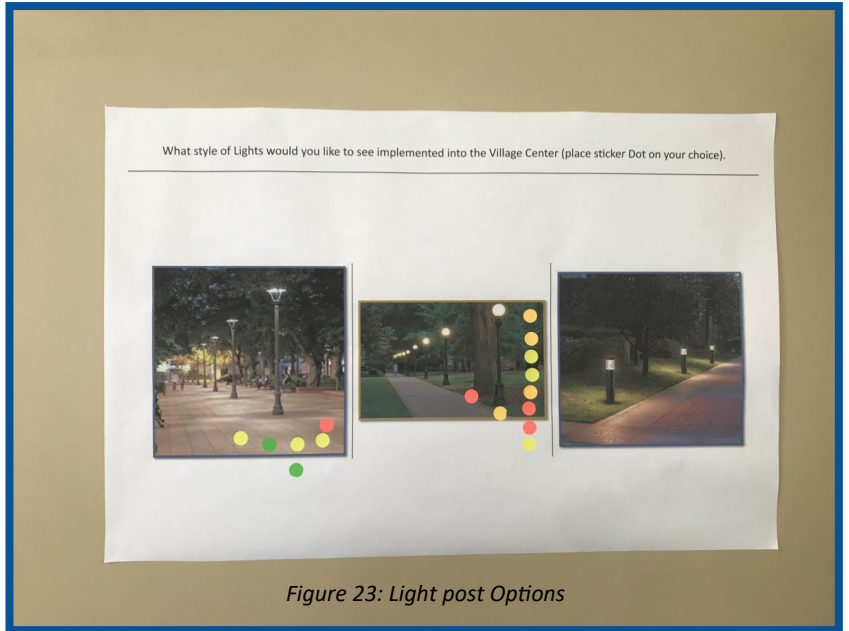


Figure 22: Proposed Sidewalk and Crosswalk Changes



#### 4.22 Light Posts and Benches

When inventoried during the existing conditions report it was found that light posts are present in the village center but not consistently. They are not consistently placed and the styles vary. It is recommended that light posts be evenly spaced throughout the Village Center, allowing the Village Center to remain active for extended hours. During the public workshop residents were shown three styles of light posts to choose from and the majority voted for the spherical shaped light posts. (see figure 23 & 26). It is recommended that implemented light posts be retrofitted with solar panels.



Benches exist in some places but additional benches could add to the aesthetic and attractiveness of the area, especially as it grows. It is recommended that benches be added in areas of high pedestrian traffic such as the Air Line Trail gateways and along Main Street. The older wooden benches at the Library should be updated to match the rest of the Village Center. When put up to a vote in the public meeting a majority voted for the black metal benches similar to what exists currently in the Village Center (see figure 24 & 25).



Figure 25: Voted for Bench Style



Figure 26: Voted for Light Post

### 4.3 Gateway Improvements

As stated in the existing conditions report, gateways are an important element in a Village Center, and a useful tool for defining character. When observed by the planning team, it was found that four of the six Gateways to the Village Center are in need of maintenance, improvements, and additional signage (Skinner Street, Summit Street, and the two Air Line Trail entrances). The two Main Street Gateways are in good condition visually although in need of signage. Recommendations for the gateways are as follows.

#### Summit Street:

- Landscaping and cleanup of overgrowth in town owned properties and right of ways.
- Expansion and maintenance of sidewalks.
- Implement signage (see figure 27)
- Implement Plan for redevelopment and or cleanup of old mill buildings.

#### Skinner Street:

- Landscaping, and clean up of overgrowth.
- Planting of street trees.
- Flower boxes
- Implement Signage.

#### Air Line Trail:

##### West Entrance:

- Create better connectivity to Village Center and east Air Line Trail entrance through signage, footpaths, etc.
- Landscape and cleanup overgrowth in area.
- Resurface, and maintain access road and parking lot.
- Promote outdoor fitness station.
- Implement signage.

##### East Entrance:

- Landscape and Cleanup overgrowth.
- Increased connectivity to Walnut Avenue through footpaths and bridge across Pocopotaug Creek.
- Remove fencing and barbed wire on sides of bridge.
- Facade Improvements between 87 Main Street and Air Line Trail

### Village Center Gateway Signs



Figure 27: Sign on Route 66 in East Hampton.

A Village Center themed sign similar to the sign pictured above (located at a town gateway in East Hampton on Rt. 66) should be implemented at the Village Center Gateways. The sign should include a map complete with the following.

- A map of the Village Center similar to the one featured in this plan.
- Mapped out business, restaurants shops.
- Mapped out parking lots



#### 4.4 Parking

Parking was an issue identified by the existing conditions report and the feedback heard from residents. The issue is not that there is a lack of parking, but rather that public parking is not clearly identified. Some of the public lots are in need of maintenance and resurfacing. The following actions are recommended for Village Center public parking:

##### Create a comprehensive system for public parking in the Village Center

- Map of available public lots available at gateways and lots (see figure 28).
- Signage system to clearly label and identify public parking (see figure 29).

##### Repair, Improve, and Maintain existing public lots.

- Repair, resurface, and restripe lots in poor condition.
- Landscape and maintain overgrowth surrounding lots.
- Add amenities such as benches, trash cans, and lighting to existing lots.

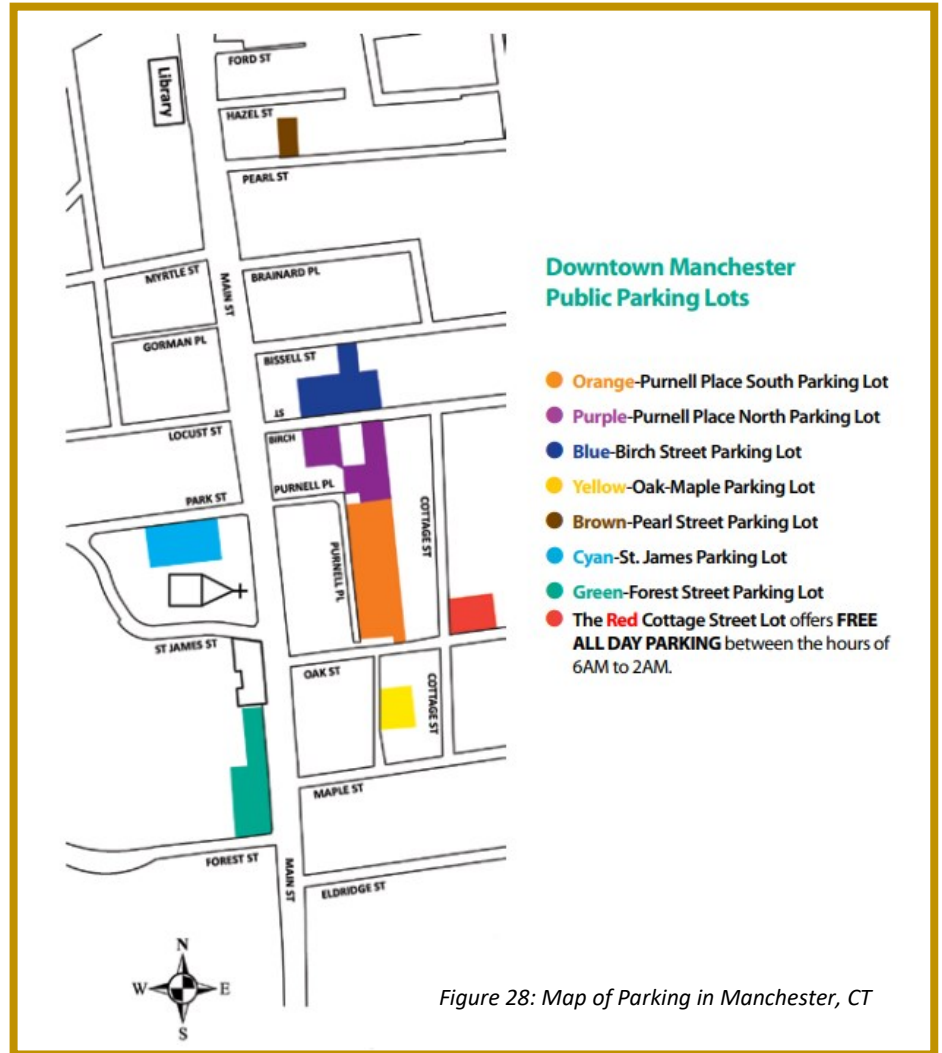


Figure 28: Map of Parking in Manchester, CT

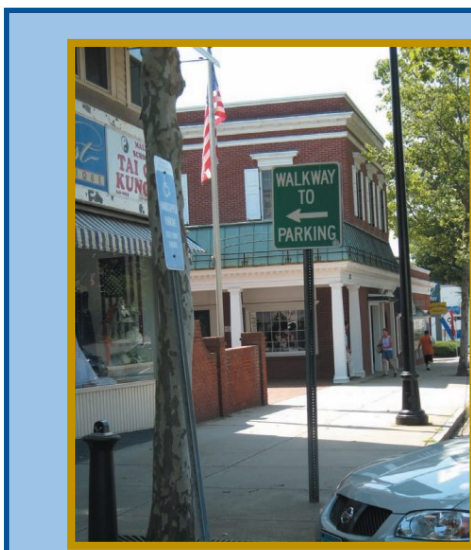


Figure 29: Parking System, Manchester CT.

Downtown Manchester has implemented a public parking system seen in these images. Color coded wayfinding, sign system's have been implemented as well as a corresponding map to make it easy for users to identify available parking.



#### 4.5 Vacant Parcel Alternatives

When taking inventory of existing conditions it was noticed that there are two vacant parcels with potential for development. These parcels were identified and the planning team came up with several alternatives for each parcel. These alternatives were presented in the public meeting, allowing residents to see them and vote on them. These alternatives should be considered when planning for the future of the Village Center.

##### 4.5.1: 3 Walnut Avenue

The parcel located at 3 Walnut Avenue is an open grass area located adjacent to the Air Line Trail property and Pocopotaug Creek (see figure 30). Regardless of the chosen alternative the following core recommendations should take place for this parcel no matter what alternative is chosen.

- Creation of connections to the Air Line Trail, and Air Line Trail lot through footpaths, and a foot bridge.
- Landscaping and maintenance of overgrowth on the property.

##### **No Changes (Alternative “A”)**

The first alternative is to make no changes to the parcel and to maintain it and its facilities as they stand currently. The parcel will remain as is and be maintained as they are (see figure 30 and 31).



Figure 30: Walnut Avenue Parcel



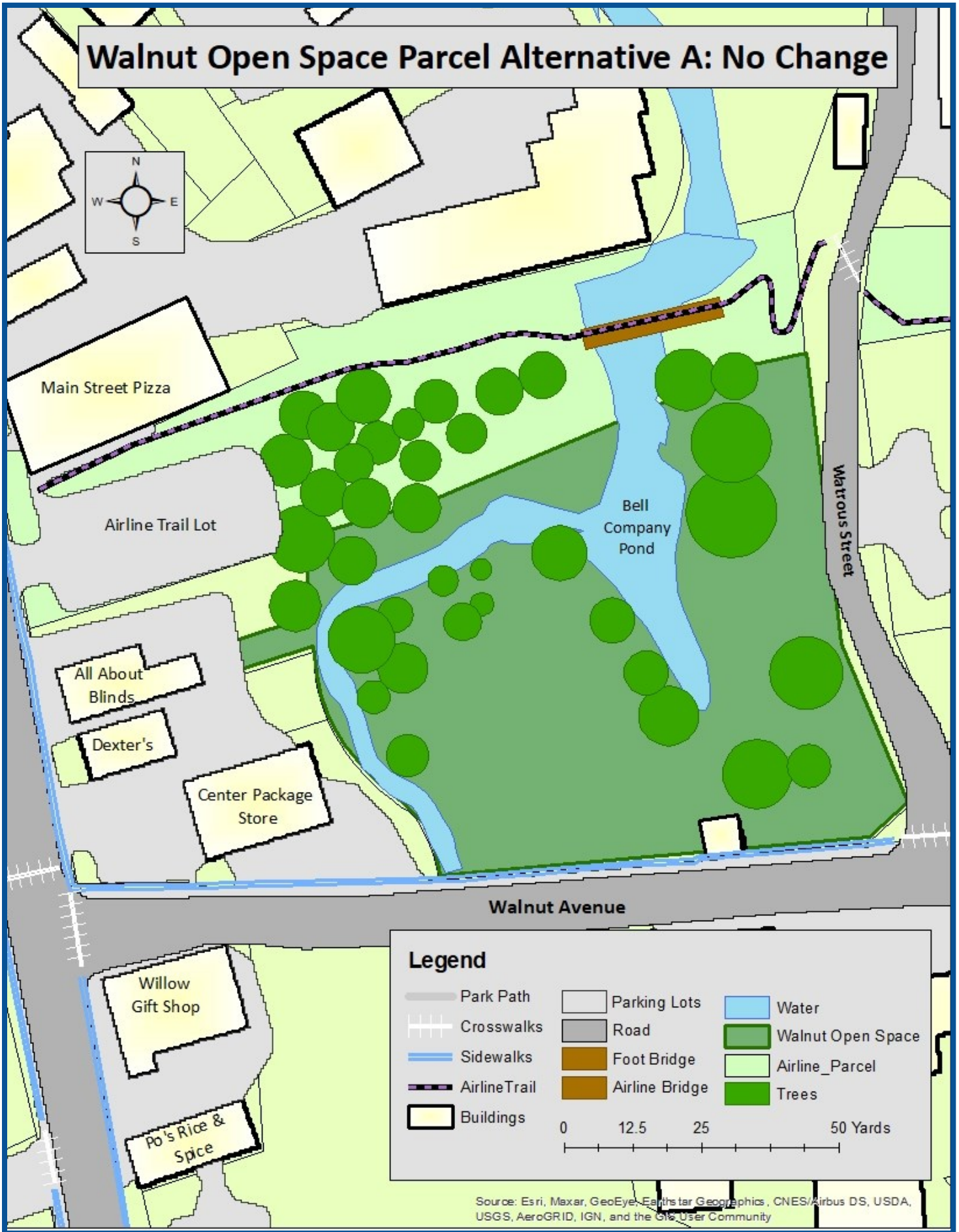


Figure 31: Alternative A "No Change"

**Parking (Alternative “B”)**

The second alternative for the Walnut Avenue parcel is a parking lot. This alternative would provide extra parking for the Village Center and the Air Line Trail. Connections to the Air Line Trail via footpaths and a bridge across the creek are recommended in this alternative to increase overall connectivity (See Figure 32).

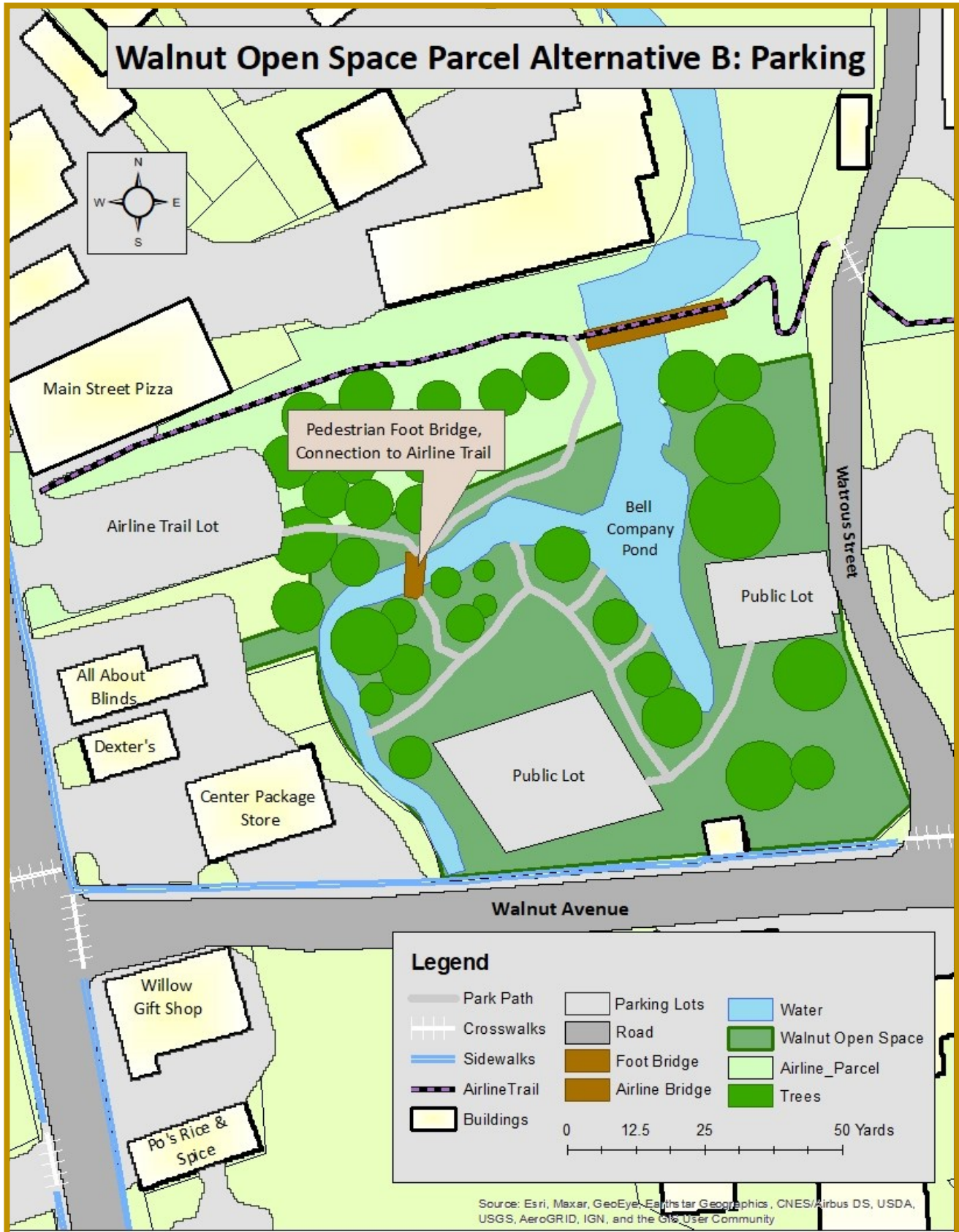


Figure 32: Alternative A “Parking”



### Park Space (Alternative “C”)

Alternative “C” would implement a park into this area (see figure 37). A park would be a great fit as it would be adjacent to the Air Line Trail Property and offer more opportunity for recreation in the Village Center. The park would include the following elements.



Figure 33: Alum Creek State Park, Ohio.

- Implement foot paths and trails through the parcel to encourage passive recreation while creating connectivity to the Air Line trail.
- Maintain and cleanup overgrowth on the parcel and throughout the wooded area in order to create access to and highlight Pocopotaug Creek as a feature of the park and the Village Center.

- Create a center piece such as a gazebo or a fountain to improve the aesthetic of the area and give pedestrians and users a place to relax.



Figure 34: Burnsville North Carolina, Town Square

### Other Park Ideas from Residents

- Skate Park



Figure 35: Skate Park, South Windsor, CT.

- Pump Track (A continuous loop of multi level dirt used by bikers to ride on.)



Figure 36: Pump Track, Madison, CT.



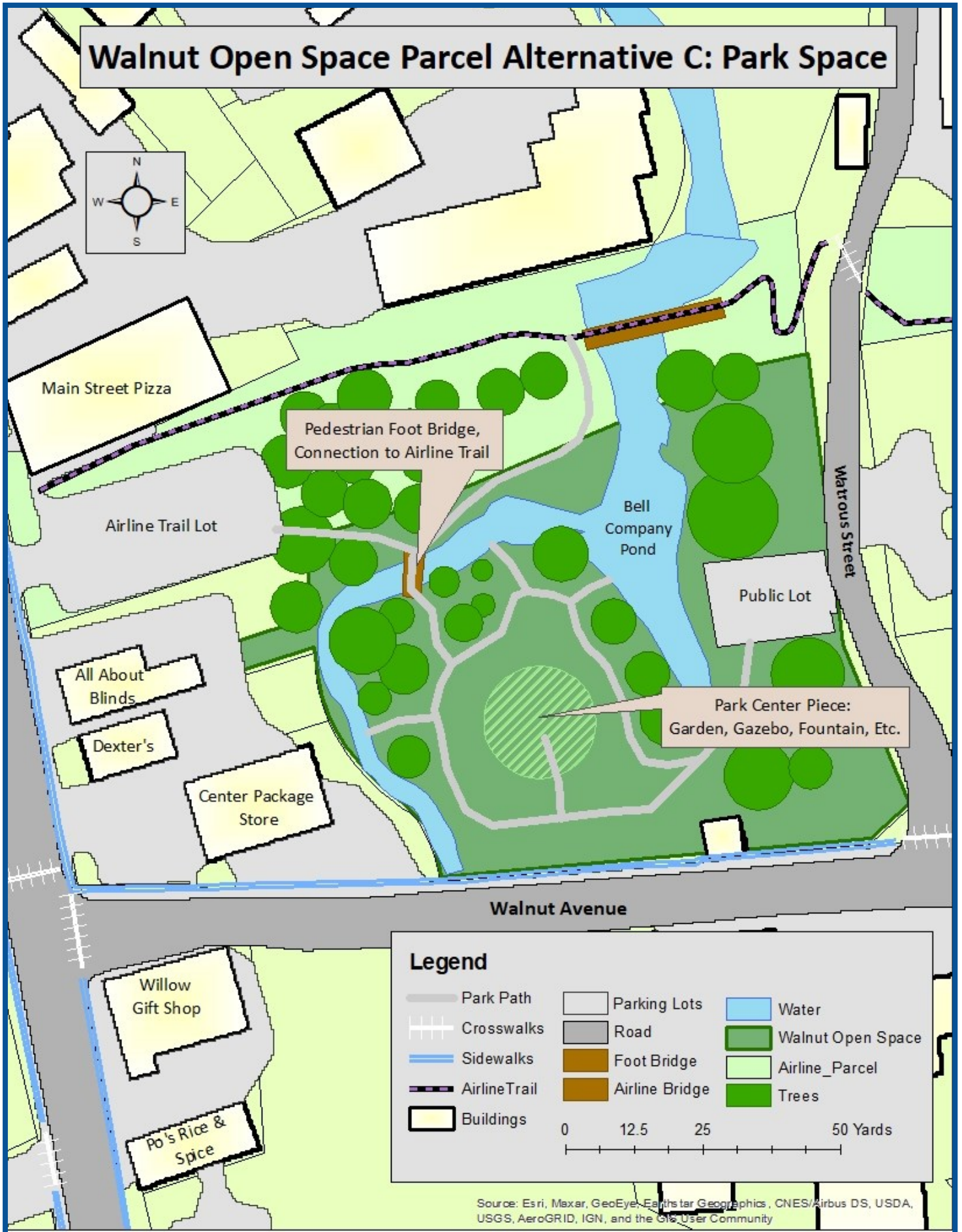


Figure 37: Park Space





### **Park Space (Alternative “D”)**

Alternative “D” would implement a hybrid parking lot and event space into this area. (see figure 40) This alternative would consist of a parking lot made from permeable material such as gravel, or reinforced grass. This would allow the area to be used for parking in times of high traffic, but double as a gathering/ event space when not being used for parking. Key elements of this alternative are as follows.

- Footpaths and Trails connecting the space to the Air Line Trail and Village Center
- Clean up and maintenance of woods to highlight Pocopotaug Creek.
- Permeable Parking Surface— pervious pavement allows for water to infiltrate the ground rather than running offsite and potentially becoming contaminated. It is a sustainable alternative to traditional concrete and asphalt.
- Make power infrastructure for vendors, food trucks, etc.



Figure 38: Grass Surfaced Permeable Foundation

- Grass surfaced permeable parking foundation.

- Concrete grass paver system.



Figure 39: Grass Concrete Pavers



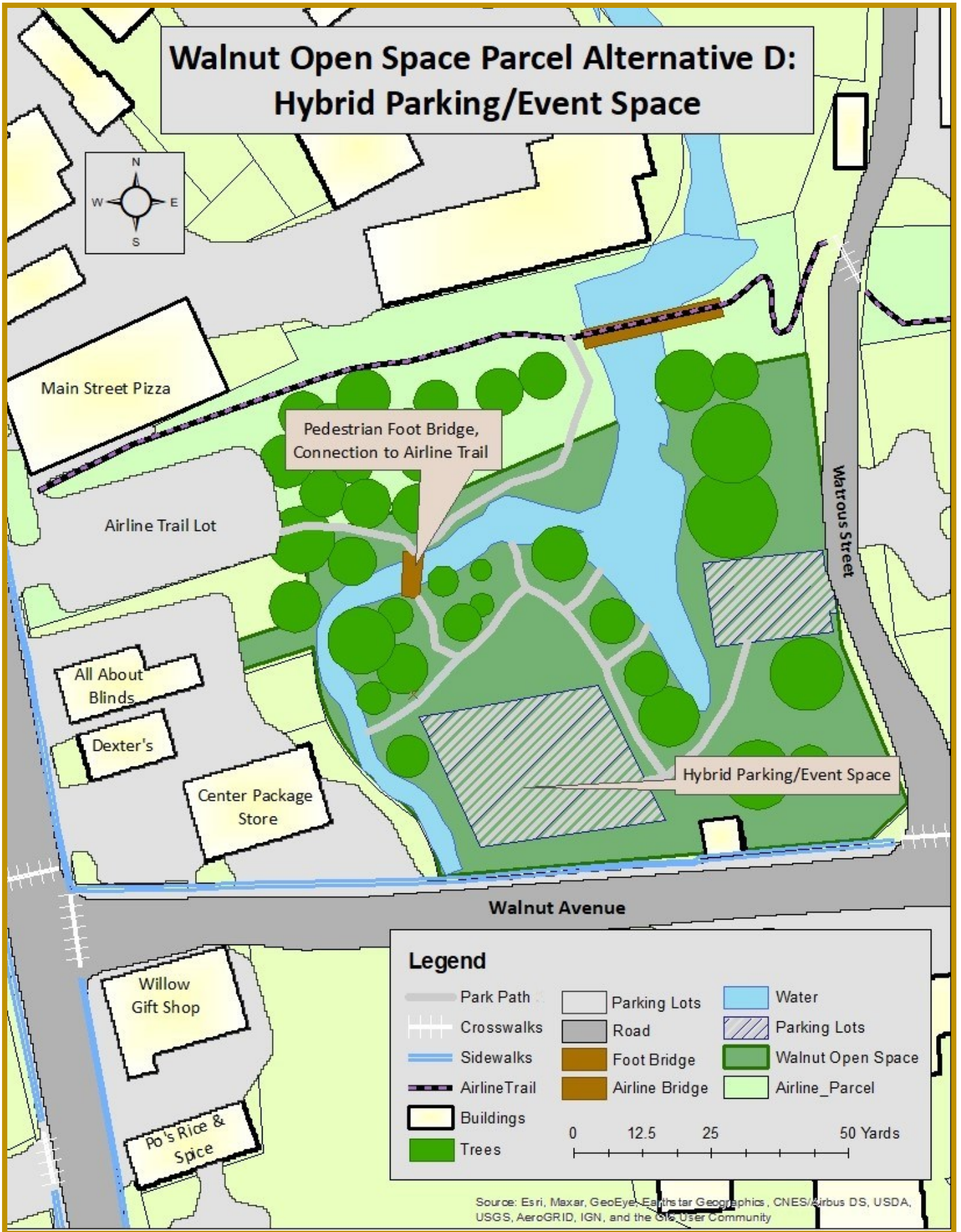


Figure 40: Hybrid Parking/ Event Space





4.52 92 Main Street.

The Property at 92 Main Street lies on the corner of the entrance to 94 Main Street which also serves as the entrance to the west Air Line Trail Entrance (see figure 41). This parcel is undeveloped and overgrown but offers frontage on Main Street. This parcel is not currently owned by the town but its location warrant potential for future development. The alternatives for these parcels are as follows.

Alternative A: No Change (see figure 42)

Alternative “B”: Park Space (see figure 43)

- Cleaning up and cutting down overgrowth and maintaining area to add to the aesthetic of the Village Center.
- Addition of amenities like benches, trash cans and lighting.

Alternative “C” Parking Lot (see figure 44)

- Addition of public parking lot.
- Addition of amenities like lighting and trash cans.

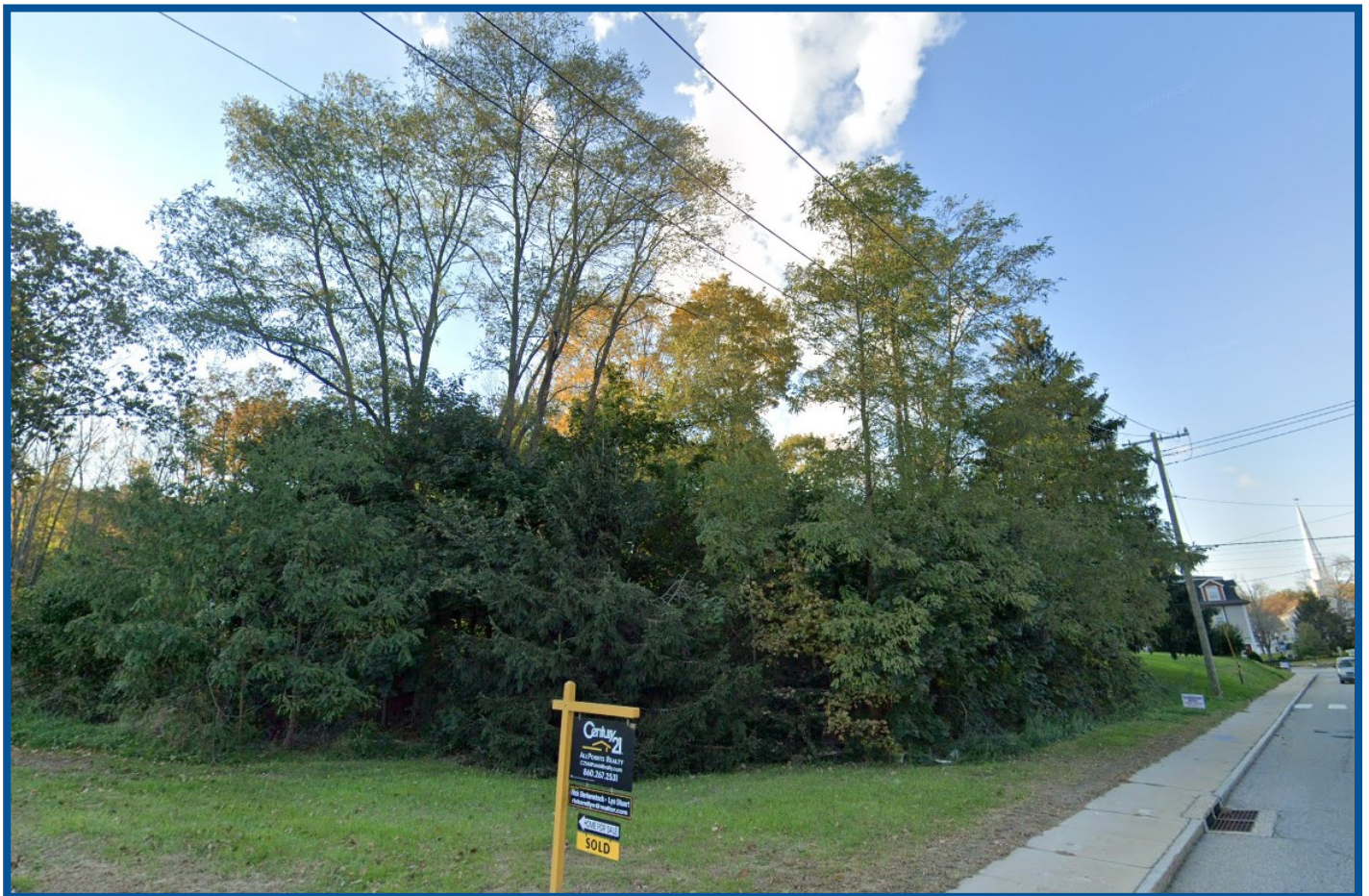


Figure 41: 92 Main

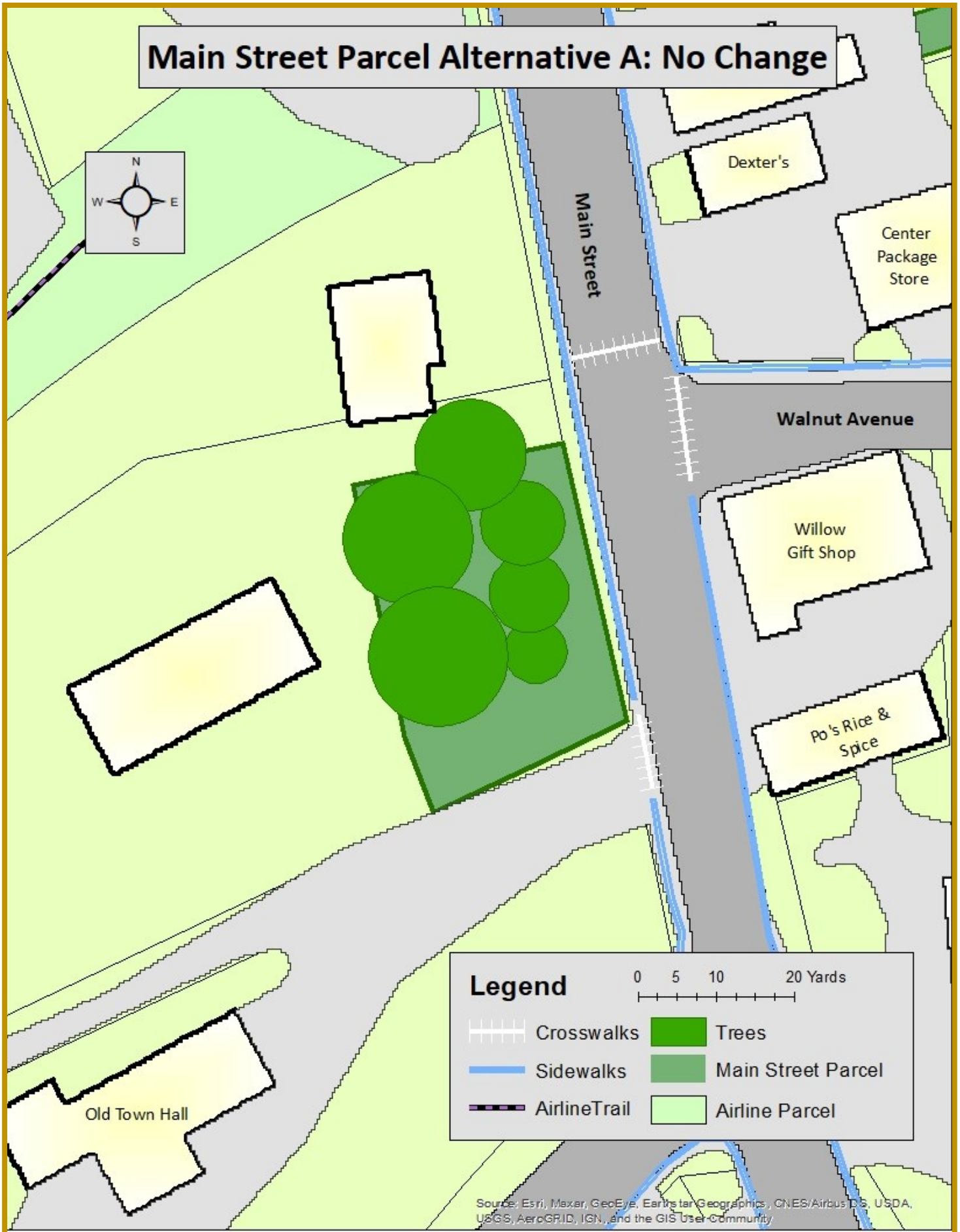
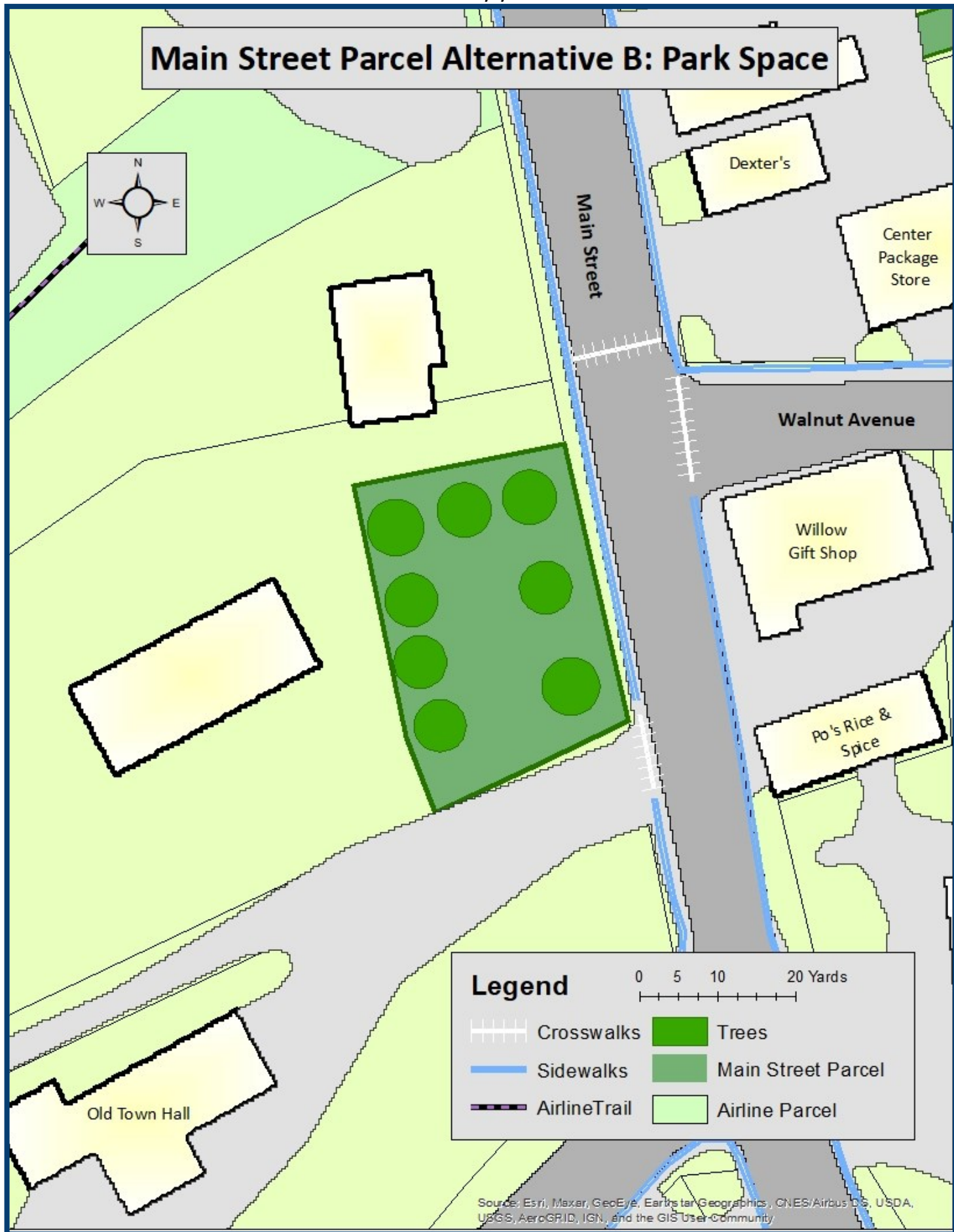


Figure 42: No Change





# Main Street Parcel Alternative B: Park Space



Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 43: Park Space



Figure 44: Parking



## 5.0: Action Item Checklist

During the public input portion of the planning process, residents were asked to rank the importance of the following nine issues in the Village Center on a scale of 1-9, with 1 being the most important, and 9 being least important. Below an action item checklist has been developed and categorized in the order these issues were ranked by the public.

### 1) Blighted Buildings

#### Short term goals:

1. Maintain and clean up overgrowth in town owned properties, and right of ways
2. Maintain and clean up surrounding sidewalks, roads, etc.

#### Long term goals:

Create and implement a plan/strategies addressing these properties and their role in the Village Center moving forward.

### 2) Traffic, Bike, and Pedestrian infrastructure

#### Short term goals:

1. Maintain and clean up surrounding sidewalks, roads, etc.
2. Landscape and plant street trees along sidewalks, and streets
3. Restripe existing crosswalks, road lines, and add sharrows.
4. Additional Signage alerting drivers of pedestrian, crosswalks, etc.

#### Long term goals:

1. Repave existing sidewalks and create new sidewalks according to plan
2. Alter road way layout as seen in plan and implement traffic slowing measures.

### 3) Air Line Trail and Connections

1. Maintain and clean up overgrowth in Air Line Trail Property and surrounding properties (3 Walnut Avenue)
2. Promote the Air Line Trail as an attraction of the Village Center through flyers, signs, marketing, etc.

#### Long term goals:

1. Create connections with footpaths and footbridge across Pocopotaug Creek into 3 Walnut Avenue

#### 4) Signage and Wayfinding

##### Short Term Goals:

1. Fix and maintain existing signs in state of disrepair.

##### Long Term Goals:

1. Design and create more wayfinding signs in key areas. (Gateways)
2. Design and Create Signs for all of the gateways (reference gateway recommendations) and recommended sign design.

#### 5) Public Parking

##### Short Term Goals:

1. Fix and maintain existing lots in state of disrepair.
2. Maintain overgrowth and landscape existing lots
3. Add amenities like trash cans and benches to lots.

##### Long Term Goals:

1. Create and implement a comprehensive parking system complete with maps and color coded/named lots in order to make parking more organized and easy to locate for users.
2. Repave/resurface lots in state of disrepair.
3. Implement lighting into parking lots .

#### 5) Amenities (Benches, Trash Cans, Light posts, Bike Racks)

##### Short Term Goals:

1. Fix and maintain existing light posts.
2. Replace older/dilapidated amenities.

##### Long Term Goals:

1. Replace light posts with recommended design and line the Village Center with lighting.
2. Add trash cans, bike racks, lighting, and benches to all needed areas. (Parking lots, Air Line Trail Entrances, heavily trafficked areas., etc.



**6.0 Appendix:**

*6.1 Public Comments:*

“Antique looking bike stands.”

“Crosswalk from Spencer’s to EH Nursery/Masonic Lodge. Sidewalk from nursery school to library.”

“Signs that stick out from the building that you can see while walking.”

“Improve sidewalks down 196 to connect Epoch to Village Center.”

What is future of oldtown hall/ BOE, Buildings and Grounds? Make Public.”

“New buildings? Build up street +bring in more businesses. Main Street parcel?”

“Mural on the wall of Main Street Pizza building where Air Line trail starts.”

“Look into sidewalks that fit trees.”

“Crosswalk between both sides of Air Line trail, or if footbridge could be built connecting both sides with off ramps to village center.”

“Pump Track w/ some parking walnut ave by pump house, parking on Watrous.

“Can’t see pedestrians and bicycles, improve sightlines for motorists and pedestrians. Mirrors/ clean up brush/ warning signs.”

“Incentivize cleanup of blighted properties!”

“Include NESCI building new management and retail moving in over next six months.”

“Clean up of old buildings, cut weeds, repair windows and put plan in place for future.”

“More Trees and planting to replace old trees that died. Possibly incorporate Witch Hazel being that town is known for its witch hazel.”

“Optical illusion Crosswalks to slow traffic in VC.”

“Make signs on side of main street pizza for Air Line trail.”

“More Landscaping and greenery in all areas.”

“More trees and landscaping along skinner street to beautify. Incorporate witch hazel where possible. Public art installations for Epoch Arts and signage with info and history of historical sites (history of industry etc.)”

“More places to eat.”

“Possibly Traffic light at gas station, can be hard to pull out / turn sometimes.”

“dog potty bags and trash cans near Air Line trail.”

“Park here (Walnut parcel) there’s the water, wide space, would be great for community open space with some landscaping. Incorporate bells + Witch Hazel as tribute to local history.”

“Great Place for a park” (Walnut)

“Main Street pizza Clean up! Park by brook.”

“Seriously address side of main street pizza building leading up to Air Line trail; very visible.”

“Perhaps more setting than just benches – table and chairs for groups to meet and chat.”

“round about in center of roads to slow traffic.”

“more benches/ outdoor dining space.”

“Rotary or light at Barton hill road; intersections hard to navigate while driving through.”

*6.2: SWOT Analysis Responses:*

**Strengths**

Character  
History  
Architectural New England Village  
Invested community members  
Supportive ZBA  
Lots of room for growth, recovery, remediation  
Unique shops  
sidewalk access  
green spaces  
Business community  
Air Line trail  
Smart Cohesive center  
Fresh ideas  
Good mix of commercial activities (Shopping, food, trails, recreation)  
Dedicated business owners  
Art  
Music  
Village  
Tourists  
Good Shops  
Creative events  
Shopping  
food  
music  
Old town feel

**Weaknesses**

Blight  
Environmental toxins  
industrial waste/pollution  
lack of water infrastructure  
Traffic not giving way to pedestrians  
doesn't connect well to other business districts and traffic arteries (word of mouth advertising)  
Too small to offer enough variety  
Inadequate marketing  
Lack of buildings on Main Street  
Lack of clean water and old mill buildings  
Blighted buildings  
Poor traffic control  
Lack of events/ publicity  
Signage for parking  
Speeding  
Lack of crosswalks  
Lack of lights  
Parking  
Not enough restaurants  
Bike stands (not enough).



**Opportunities**

Convert blighted properties  
Retrofit for eco sustainability  
Environmental remediation  
Air Line trail as connections  
Witch Hazel Festival  
Bells (tourism, Branding, etc.)  
Build on Air Line trail (Make surrounding area accessible and desirable  
Blighted buildings - Convert to walkable shops (arts focused unique shops.  
Marketing campaign to rest of CT  
Abandoned mills  
Parking  
Convert old buildings  
Tourism and Recreation  
Attract more people for longer periods of time (concerts, events etc.?)  
More curb appeal  
Family activities

**Threats**

Lack of h2o infrastructure  
Corporate buyout (don't sell out to big business).  
Traffic  
Obstructed views for motorists and pedestrians (Watrous/summit)  
COVID/ Delta might threaten reopening.  
State Route (main st) How much alteration is possible?  
Lack of community interest  
Bad decisions by town, lack of infrastructure  
No water  
Dilapidated building  
not bike/ pedestrian friendly  
No Air Line trail advertising (maps brochures etc.)  
Lack events  
Speeding  
Littering  
repair existing light posts/ switch to solar  
  
Portland increasing restaurants and activities.

## 7.0 Sources:

*East Hampton POCD—2016*

*East Hampton Village Center Tax Increment Financing District Master Plan -2018*

*Manchester, CT Downtown Parking Study—2010*

*Manchester, CT Downtown Wayfinding Program Design—2016*

*East Hampton GIS*

All images were taken by the planning team with the exception of the following:

*Figure 34: Burnsville North Carolina, Town Square—WNC Magazine—2016*

*Figure 38: Grass Surfaced Permeable Foundation—Core Gravel Landscaping Products*

*Figure 35: Skate Park, South Windsor, CT.—Pivot Custom Skate Park*

*Figure 36: Pump Track, Madison, CT.—Town of Madison, CT*

*Figure 33: Alum Creek State Park, Ohio.—MTB Project—2019*

*Figure 28: Map of Parking in Manchester, CT—Town of Manchester.*

*Figure 29: Parking System, Manchester CT.—Town of Manchester Downtown Parking Study*

*Figure 39: Grass Concrete Pavers—ABC&D ARTICLE: Growing Concerns – Urban Design and Landscaping 2016*