



CONNECT THE **JUNCTION**

Transit Oriented Development Master Plan

Planning Commission Presentation

November 7, 2024



RECAP:

PROJECT BACKGROUND



Charrette Team



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Framework Cultural Placemaking: Planners, designers, placemakers

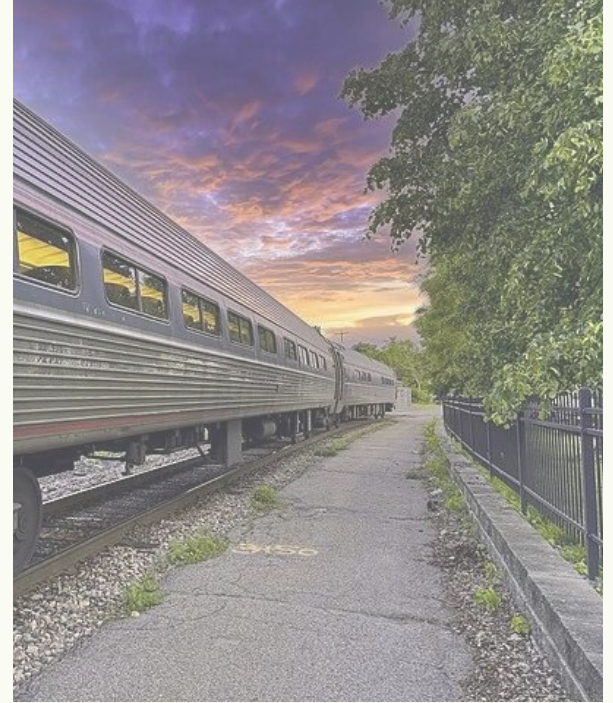


Project Background

- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan
- Federally funded: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program
 - 10 communities throughout Northwest Vermont to develop TOD Plans

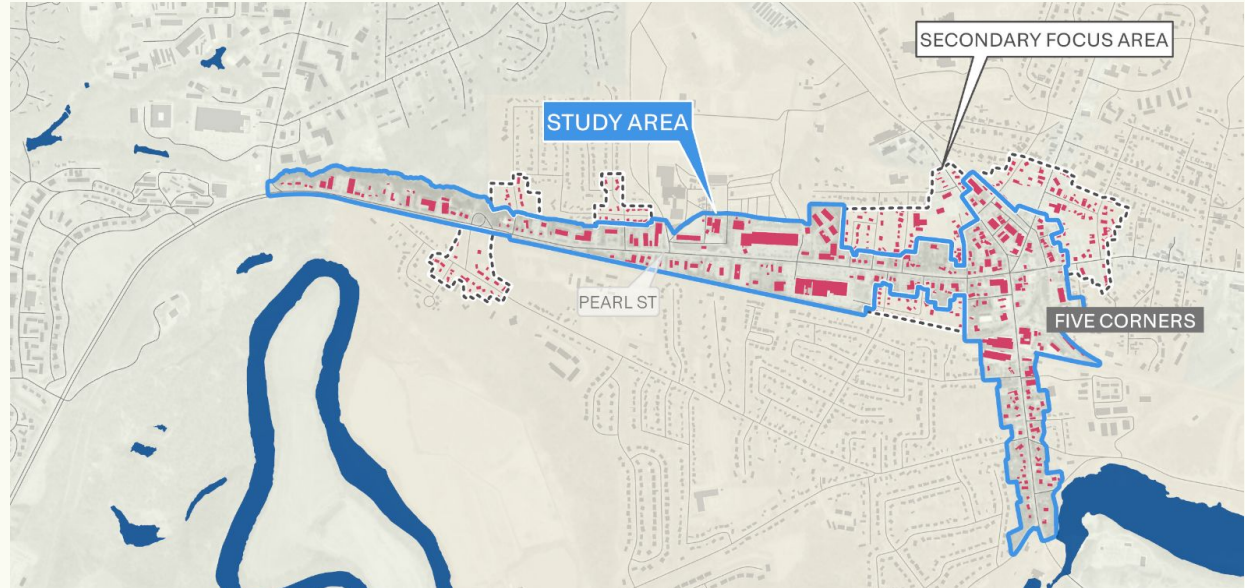
What is transit-oriented development (TOD)?

TOD focuses on creating dense, walkable, mixed-use development near transit, creating vibrant, connected communities that enjoy easy access to jobs and services.



Project Area

- Primary Focus Area:
City Center, Park Street, Pearl Street Corridor
- Secondary Focus Areas:
Potential transition zones (within short walk to transit but not planned for significant growth)



0 0.25 0.5 MILES



framework

DESIGN CHARRETTE



Charrette Overview

- 4 days of events and activities
- Remote and in-person options
- Interfaced with kids, parents, Councilmembers, developers, bicycle enthusiasts, seniors, and more.



Homecoming Game

- Table at Essex High School Homecoming Game
- Poster asks about “assets, challenges, opportunities for transformation, and connections”
- Kids explained what they like about the area and what they would like to see added



Kick-off presentation

- Opening presentation streamed online
- Responses via live polling

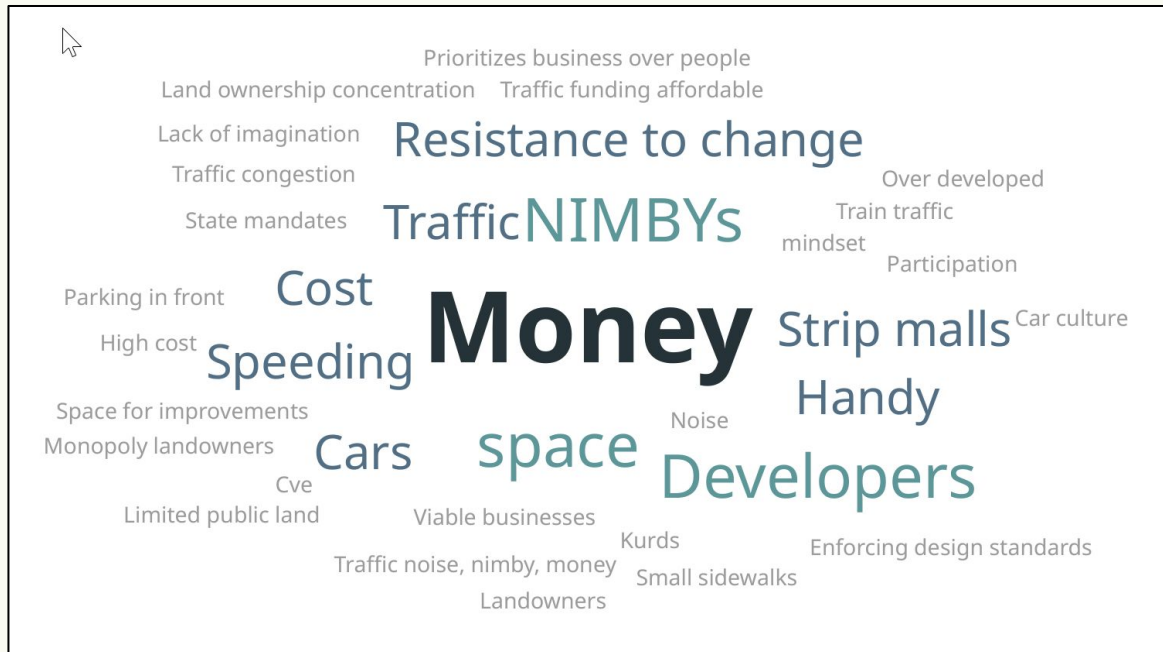


In up to three words, describe your vision for the study area?



framework

In up to three words, describe what you see as the biggest challenges in the study area?



Describe the #1 thing you'd like to see changed in the study area?

- Segregated bike and walking paths bordered by green space to reduce traffic noise and increase walkability and access to businesses by non-car transportation methods
- More trees, with separation between sidewalks & road
- Turn 5 corners to 4 corners
- Historical aesthetic matching
- Traffic control during CVE events, add crosswalk lights
- Traffic calming everywhere Keep main street open because traffic will be forced to side streets.
- Focus on safety and good use of density Pedestrian railroad crossings
- Close Main Street
- Protected bike lanes everywhere
- Mandate green space communal space in new development Less parking out front Infill parking lots
- Learn from past planning mistakes Add two stories to every building in the study area
- More Affordable housing



Describe the #1 thing you'd like to see changed in the study area?

- Bike lanes on Pearl west street to Susie Wilson
- Return of Amtrak to Montreal
- Crosswalks near every bus stop Design control Less traffic
- Not sure yet
- No strip malls Crosswalks on pearl
- Continuous bike lanes
- Traffic calming strategies
- Better stakeholder involvement
- Close Main Street



Describe the #1 asset you'd like to see preserved in the study area?

- Balance robust businesses, community spaces and safety
- Diversity of businesses
- Community connections thru coffee shops
- Walkability
- Nothing it would be ideal to overhaul the entire space and replace it with easy and quiet access paths for the younger generations to encourage civic engagement and community
- Historical character
- More restaurants
- Maintain the vibe.
- Historical buildings and compatible new growth
- Ensure accessibility for diverse (in all ways) residents
- Diversity of businesses

Bus Service

Walking culture and
human interaction



framework

Describe the #1 asset you'd like to see preserved in the study area?

- Town character
- Viable local businesses serving residents
- Green space including river access
- Boxcar Bakery
- Open space for healthy activity
- Public transportation
- Safety
- Our historical character
- Nature
- Business vitality

Local businesses

Sense of Community

Historic Preservation
and Character



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Kick-off Workshop

- Broke into groups to discuss existing conditions and opportunities for street improvements, infill, and redevelopment



CONNECT THE JUNCTION

[illegible]

ASSETS:
Places to protect

CHALLENGES:
Places to improve

OPPORTUNITIES:
Places to transform

 **CONNECTIONS:**
New or existing



framework

Themes

1. Prioritizing pedestrians, cyclists, and calming traffic
2. Mitigating or reducing sound from traffic and the fairgrounds
3. Reducing pedestrian and bike barriers, such as ensuring that crosswalks and bus stops are paired
4. Incorporating green space into new development
5. Increasing housing supply within the project area with mid to high rise mixed use prioritized in the 5 corners extending to the strip malls on Pearl St, and middle housing or mid rise apartments along Pearl St.
6. Prioritizing connections to parks and other amenities outside of the project area such as Hiawatha and State owned land adjacent to Pearl St.

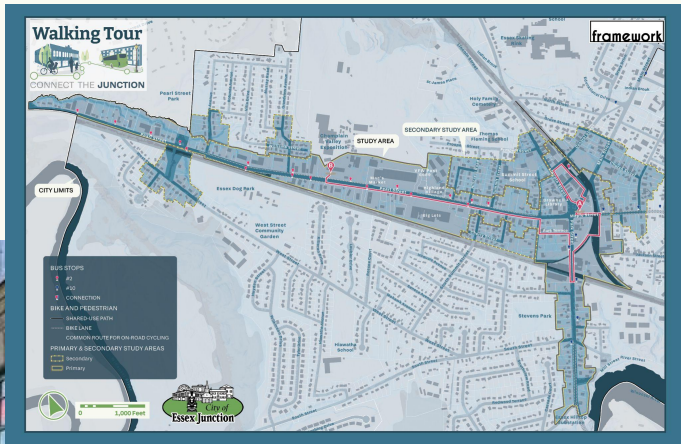


Key Takeaways

- Pearl Street right of way:
 - The city needs to pair crosswalks and bus stops
 - Traffic calming measures should be implemented to slow down through traffic
 - There are fewer southbound transit stops
 - Bike lanes are dangerous and discontinuous - opportunity to road diet to create safer bike paths.
- Pearl Street development
 - Existing strip mall developments could be redeveloped as mixed use without setbacks, and with parking behind.
 - Denser housing including middle housing and lower density multifamily is desired along the northwest edge of Pearl.
 - Challenge with sound mitigation if housing is proposed near the CVE
- 5 Corners right of way:
 - Possibility of shutting down Main Street or reducing a lane of traffic
 - Possibility of shutting down Railroad Way
- 5 Corners development:
 - Desire to integrate green space into future development
 - Residents like the mix of retail and restaurants within the Five Corners
 - Desire for mid to high density mixed use development
- Park Street
 - Desire to create contiguous bike and pedestrian paths to access the river

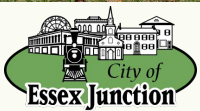


Sunday Site Tour



Crescent Connector

Ribbon cutting + site tour



Themes

- Reduce impacts from traffic on pedestrians and bicyclists
- Railroad Avenue presents unique opportunity
- Capitalize on the connector
- Crosswalks at desire lines
- Expanded and improve public space will support new development
- Focus on community needs versus accommodating regional traffic
- Right-of-Way constraints make bike facilities challenging



VISION + BIG IDEAS



framework

Vision + Big Ideas

1. Prioritize People
2. Capitalize on the Connector by making more “people space”
3. Add activity and amenities with new development
4. Add housing thoughtfully
5. Make more connections
6. Make the assets shine
7. Essex Junction for Essex Junction



1. Prioritize People: walking, rolling, and enjoying the junction

- Road diet to slow traffic and free up ROW space
- Reallocate right-of-way space so that walking and biking are pleasant and safe

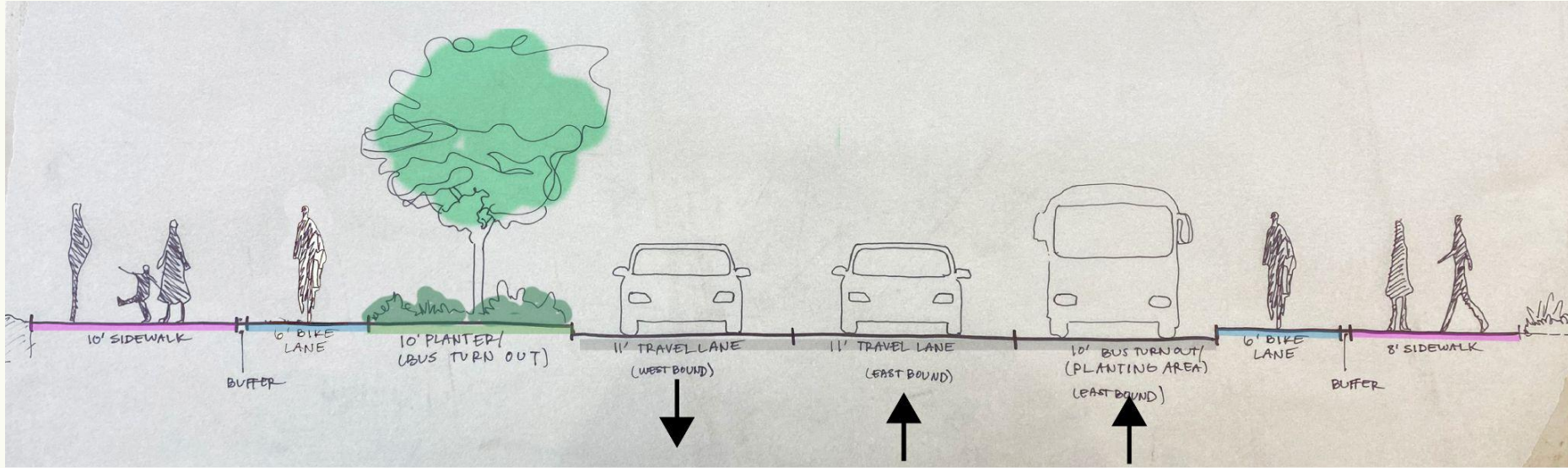
Pearl Street Sections



Section 1: Temporary Intervention



Section 1: Long-Term

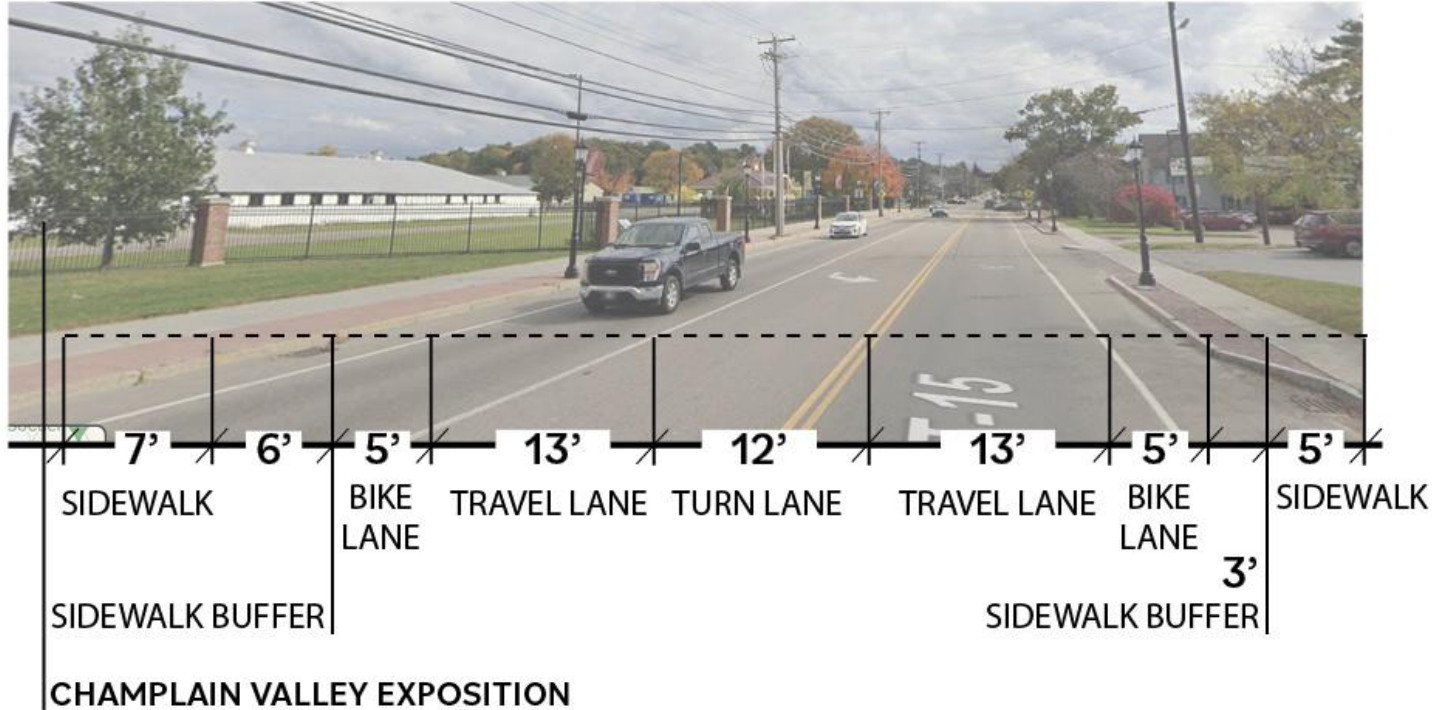


- Connect with Colchester Shared-Use Path
- Alternate planting strips with bus turn ours

Section 2: Existing

Pearl Street x Weston Way (Southeast)

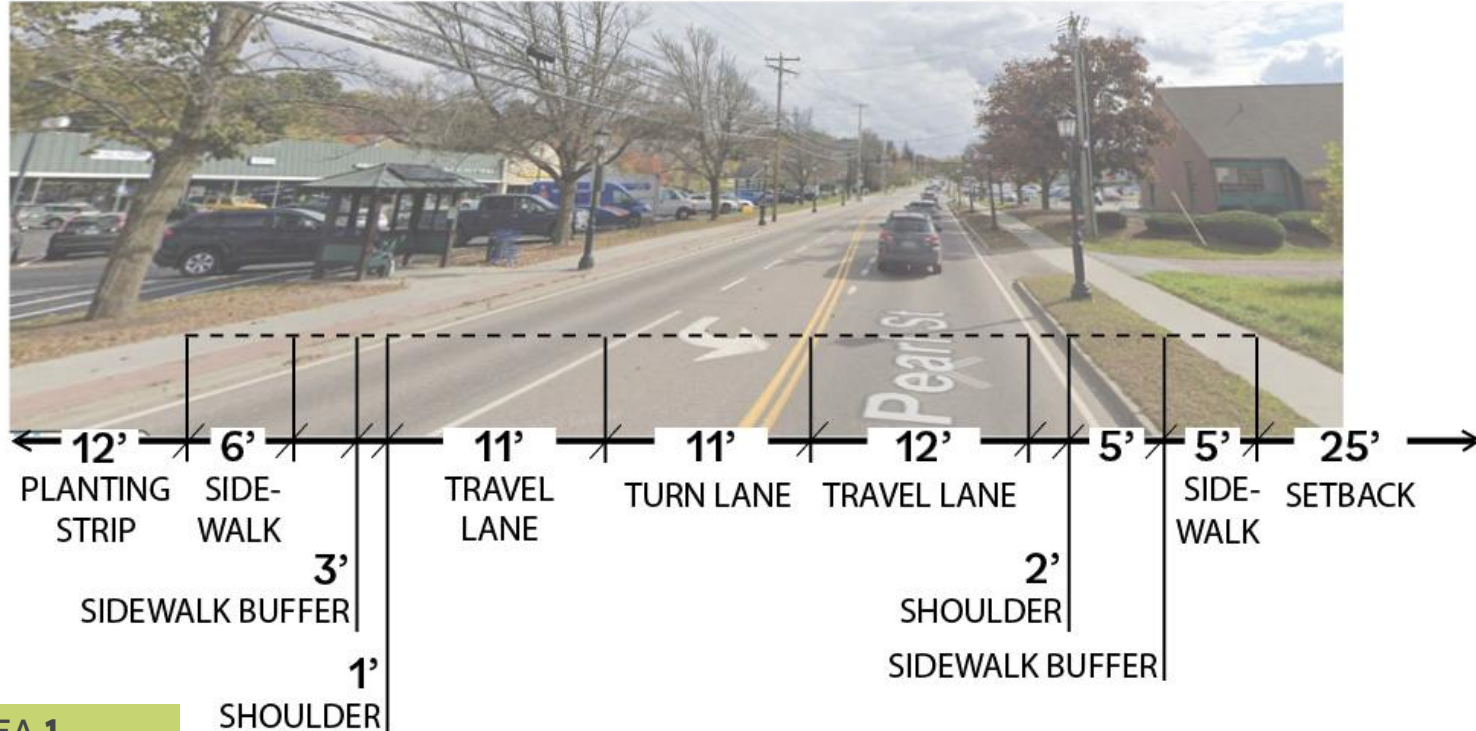
69' R.O.W.



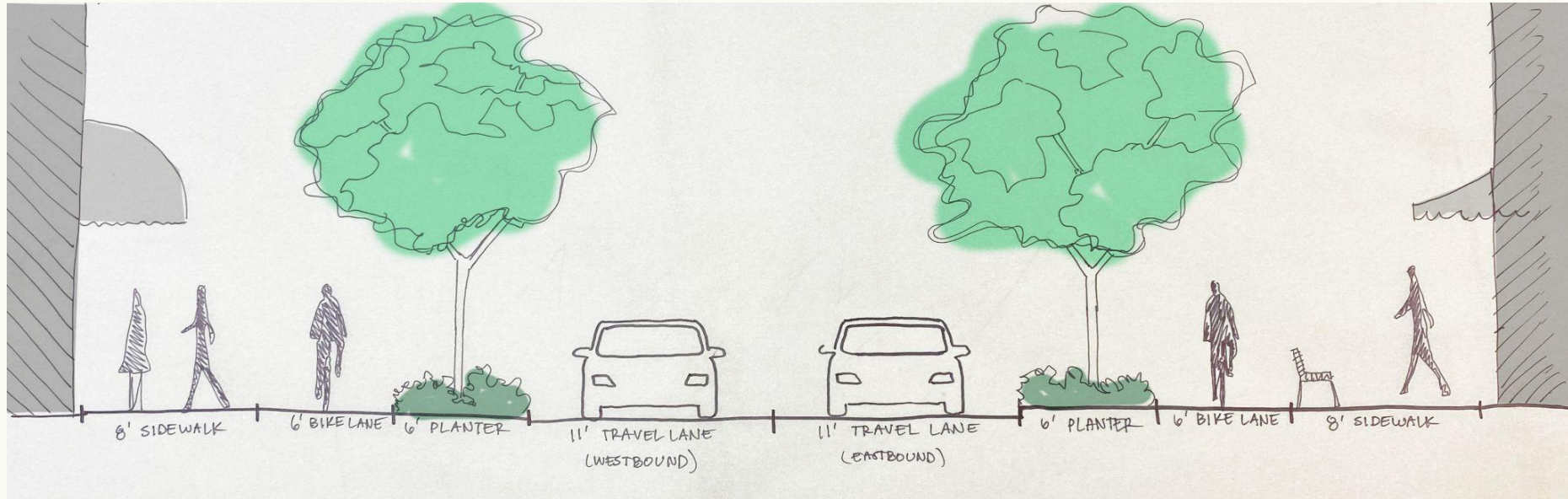
Section 2: Existing

Pearl Street x Essex Junction Shopping Center (Southeast)

62' R.O.W.

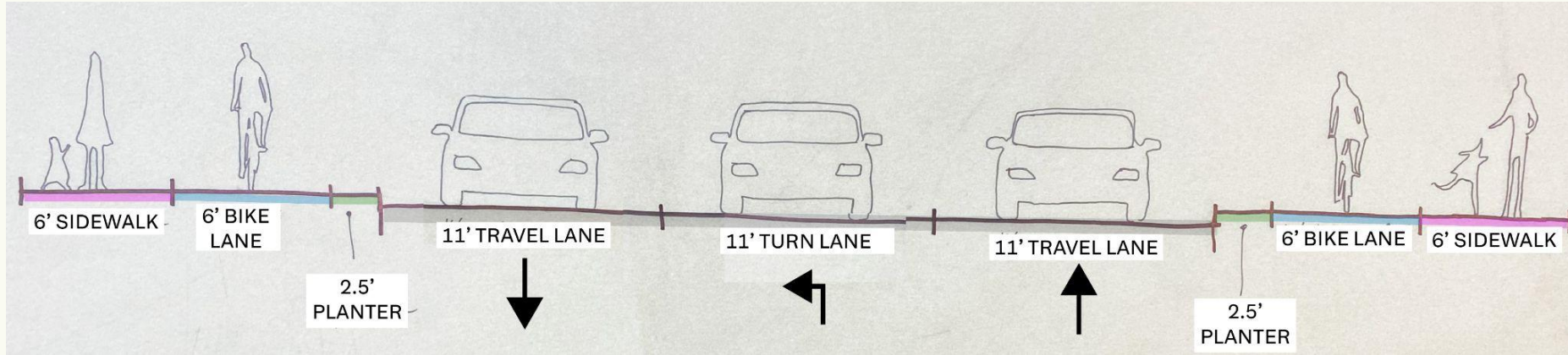


Section 2: Long Term



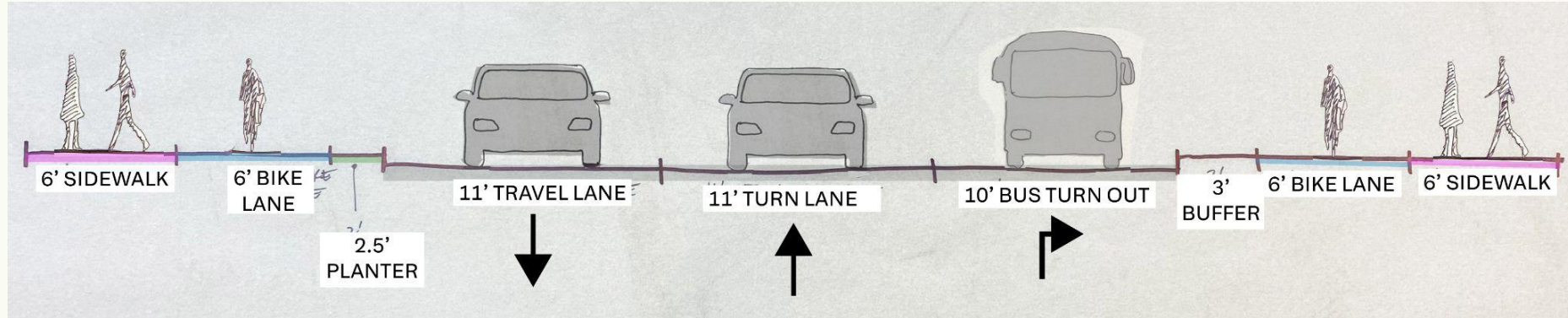
- Raised bike lanes are separated from traffic with planters
- Two lane road calms traffic

Section 2: Turn Lanes



- Raised bike lanes are separated from traffic with planters
- Two lane road calms traffic

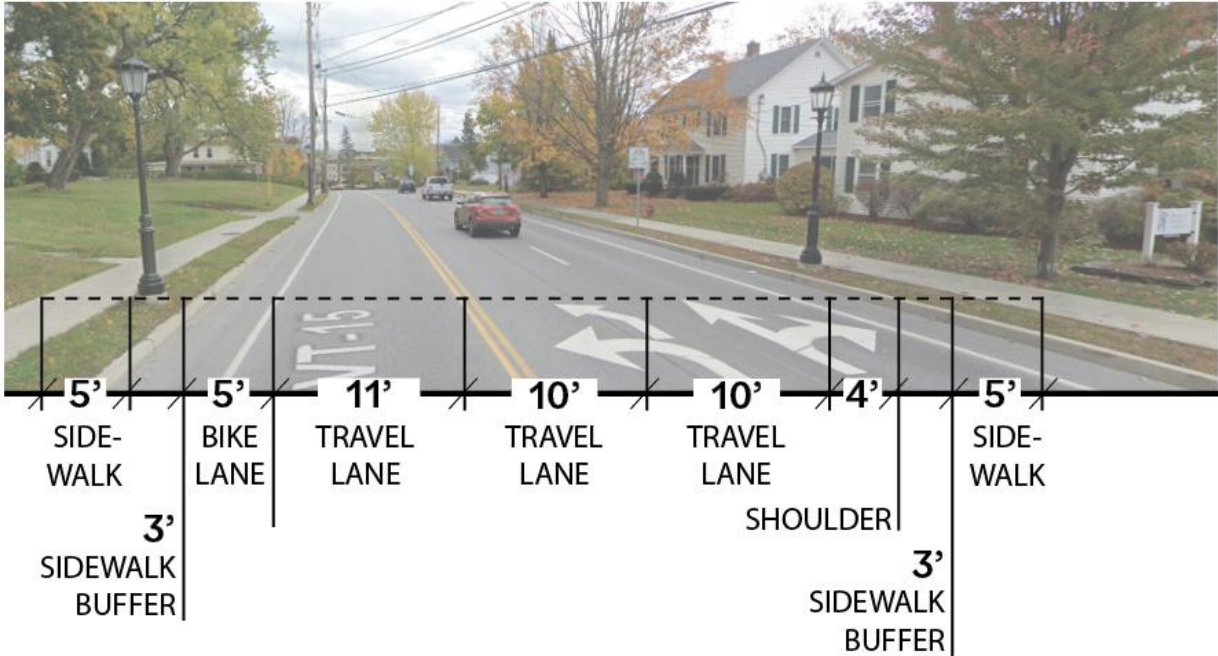
Section 2: Bus Turn Out



Section 3: Existing

Pearl Street x Curtis Street (Southeast)

56' R.O.W.



IDEA 1



framework

2. Capitalize on the Connector

- Tie the “pocket places” of open space together in an inner and outer ring



Five Corners Concept Diagram



- Look at phased lane reductions and targeted street closure
- Main Street to 2-lanes
- Pedestrianized Railroad Ave (whole or part)
- Lincoln Place as a festival street
- Pedestrian space in Park Street, remove a lane

Five Corners Concept Diagram



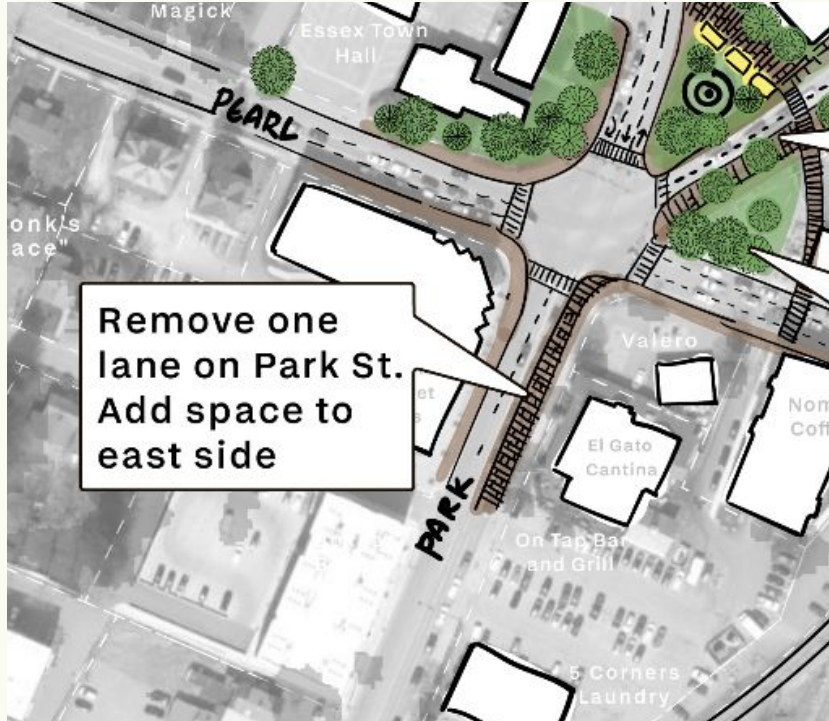
- Emphasize good pedestrian connections at the inner ring
- Test concepts before capital expenditures
- Take advantage of short term impact and gather insights into long-term design
- Keep flexibility to open and close streets for events, seasons (i.e. summer), and other community priorities

Main Street



- Expand the pocket park and public space on east side of Main Street
- Green loop connecting pedestrians to Civic Campus
- Close and program the slip lane between Main and Lincoln Streets to activate Veterans Memorial Park
- Opportunities for public art

Park Street



- Expand public space on east side of Park Street by removing lane from Park Street to Route 15
- Support infill development and traffic calming
- Add trees and green stormwater treatment

Railroad Avenue

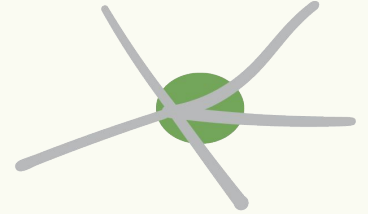


- Railroad Avenue as a festival street
- Add covered areas for markets and community events; create an edge on the north side of the street
- Integrate with improvements to the train station

Five Corners Development Concept



IDEA 2



Five Corners Development Concept



IDEA 2



Five Corners Development Concept



IDEA 2



Five Corners Development Concept



IDEA 2



Five Corners Development Concept



IDEA 2



3. New development should add activity and amenities



- Make Pearl Street a pleasant corridor for walking and living

Diagram level thoughts on major redevelopment areas with Pearl Street frontage, activities, housing and open space



Pearl Street

Temporary "liner" buildings along Pearl in one parking bay

Existing Post Office Square

Diagram level thoughts
on major redevelopment
areas with Pearl Street
frontage, activities,
housing and open space

Parking and buffer

Open space

6-story with open space

2-story low retail

3-story mixed use
with active double edge

Pearl Street

Plaza space

6-story with open space

Access road with parking

Trail and green buffer

IDEA 3

0 100 200 400 Feet



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4. Add Housing Thoughtfully



- Needed housing should be a positive addition that considers its relation to neighborhood and transit-friendly options for mobility
- Mixed-use and commercial buildings should include an amenity zone especially along Pearl Street
- Consider the ways that the City can play a role in encouraging desired development
- Reconsider design standards, building height and neighborhood fit

Use strategies to add housing and mitigate perceived height

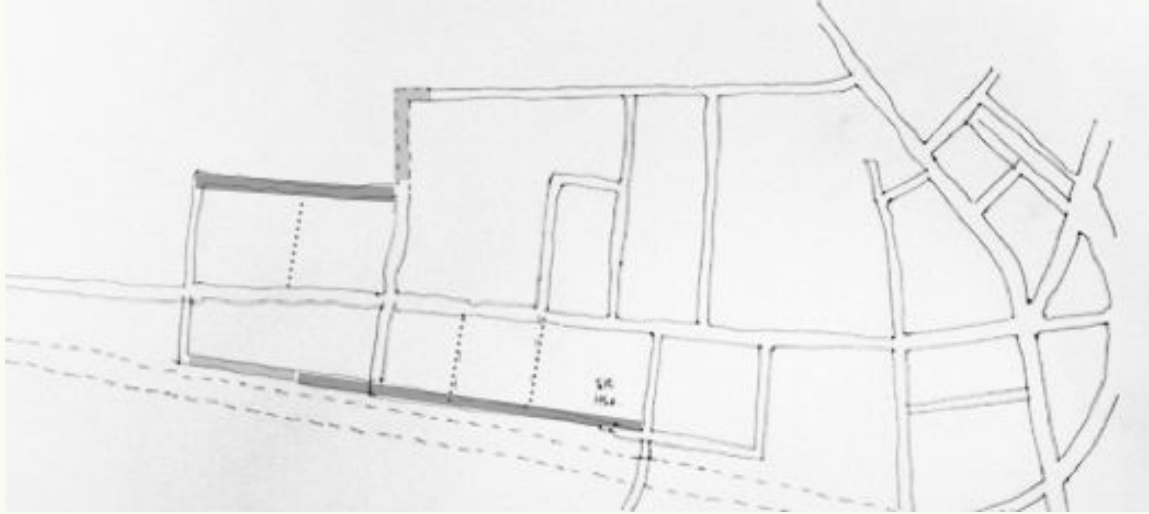


Lower portion of building at street edge



Upper level setback

5. Make more connections



- Develop for pedestrian permeability
- Move towards a walkable district with “park once”
- Routes through CVE
- Add crosswalks to support bus stops

6. Make the assets shine

- Keep historic buildings and support them with good adjacent public space
- Encourage your local businesses by supporting them with good public space
- Add personality and character through public art, murals
- Consider opportunities for more year-round economic and community use of CVE and long-term uses



IDEA 6





The fire house is a good place for a mural



Shared parking

Go Karts (kid activities)

Housing

More uses off season

Better pedestrian connections

Food trucks

Wedding venue

IDEA 6



0 375 750 1,500 Feet



framework

7. Essex Junction for Essex Junction

- Look for opportunities to foster activities that are for the local community so that people don't need to go elsewhere for arts and culture, dining, or recreation
- Strengthen community organizations to accomplish desired local activities (maintaining open spaces, community markets, arts organizations, etc.)



NEXT STEPS



What comes out of this?

1. Master Plan

- a. Vision + Big Ideas
- b. Concept Development + Graphics
- c. Recommendations

2. Code Updates

- a. Implement the master plan concepts

3. Implementation Strategy

- a. Specifics to include responsibilities, planning-level cost estimates, timeline, priorities
- b. Monitoring



Schedule

- November:
 - Incorporate Planning Commission feedback into updated vision and big ideas
 - Develop Master Plan concept
 - 3D model of major redevelopment sites
 - Updated Street Sections
 - Phasing plan
- January:
 - Master Plan concepts are posted online for public feedback
- February
 - Present Master Plan to Planning Commission for adoption
- Next steps:
 - Implement code updates





CONNECT THE **JUNCTION**
a transit-oriented development plan for responsible growth

THANK YOU ESSEX JUNCTION!



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BACKGROUND SLIDES



Project Schedule

2024

OCT 4-7

Community Design Charrette!

JULY - SEPT

- Current Conditions report
- Website launch
- *Junction City News* segment
- Focus group meetings

2025

JAN

Post master plan scenarios to Konveio for community feedback

FEB

FEB 1: Presentation to City Council for final plan adoption

OCT - NOV

- Charrette debrief, review and incorporation of community feedback
- Design concept development
- NOV 7: presentation to Planning Commission of community feedback and master plan concepts



framework

Goals & Strategies: Draft

- Develop land use and transportation strategies to improve walking, biking, and transit access
- Strengthen the community's proximity to housing, jobs, and services
- Improve connectivity and vibrancy of community spaces and local economy
- Build upon previous planning efforts, including community vision for “thoughtful growth”
- Prioritize community engagement on multiple levels



Community Design

- “Neighborhood village” character
 - Historic buildings, diverse landscaping and lighting elements, local businesses
- Lack of “town center” type public space
- Car-oriented urban fabric: numerous parking opportunities and car-related services
- Opportunities to add space for public gathering and landscape, emphasize and add to neighborhood character



LAND COVER

BARE SOIL

RAILROAD

IMPERVIOUS
SURFACE

GRASS/SHRUBS

TREE COVER














BUILDINGS

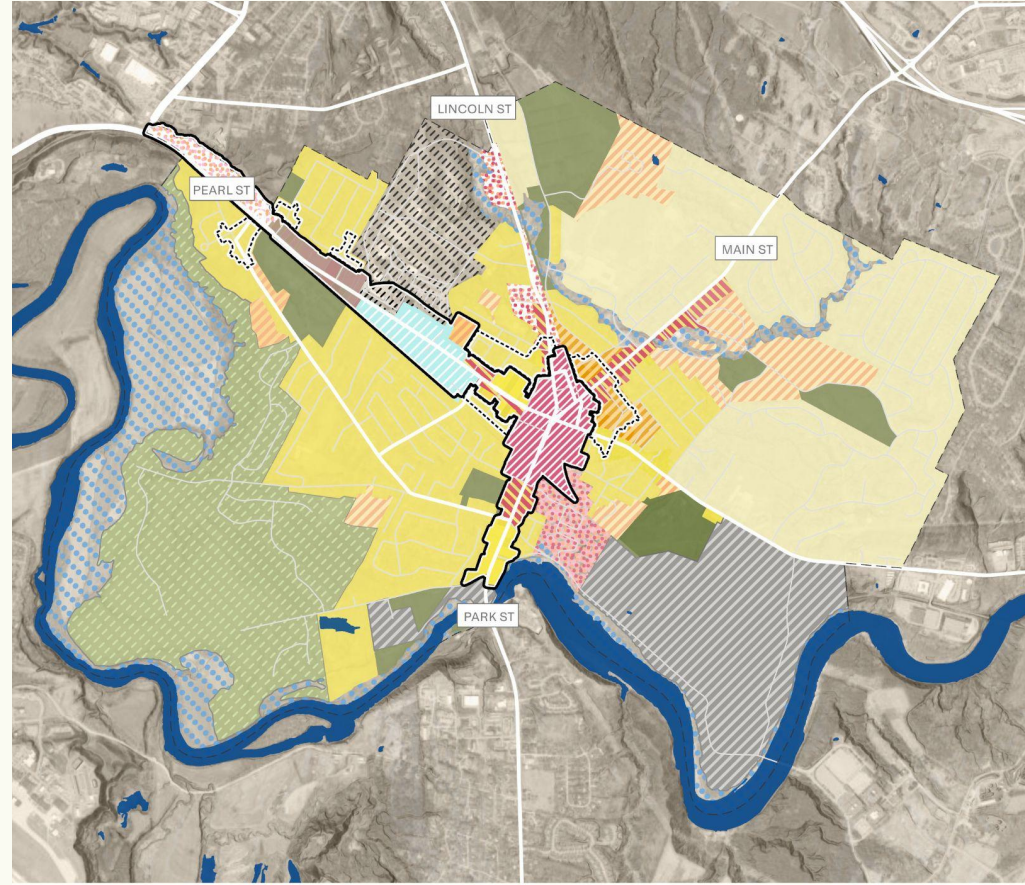


framework

Land Use: Zoning

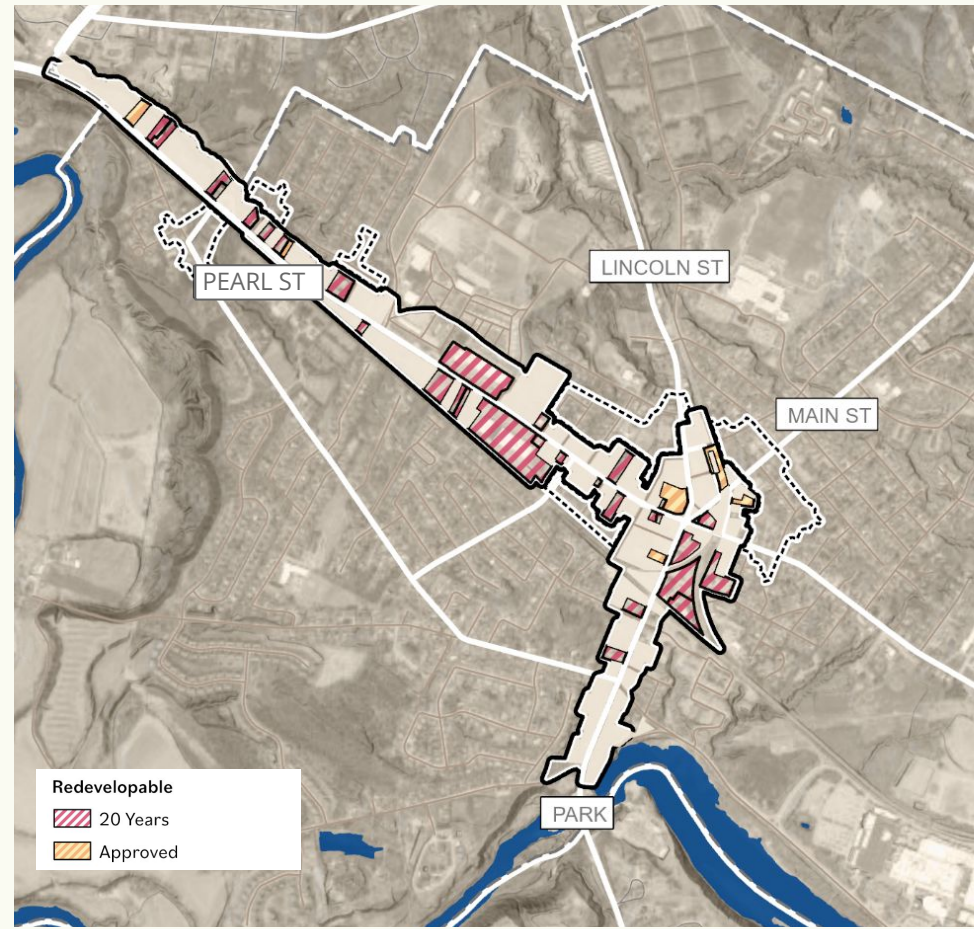
- The study area contains a mix of zones: residential, commercial, civic, and mixed use developments
- Most uses within the study area are along major transportation corridors and state highways
 - Impacted by traffic that may not have an origin or destination in EJ

Zones within Study Area		Zones outside of Study Area	
 RESIDENTIAL-OFFICE	 TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT	 RESIDENTIAL 1	 MIXED COMMERCIAL USE
 RESIDENTIAL 2	 PLANNED EXPOSITION	 MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL 2	 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
 MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL 1	 HIGHWAY-ARTERIAL	 MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL 3	 OPEN SPACE
 MULTI-FAMILY/ MIXED USE-1	 VILLAGE CENTER	 MULTI-FAMILY/ MIXED USE-2	 PLANNED AGRICULTURE
			 FLOOD PLAIN



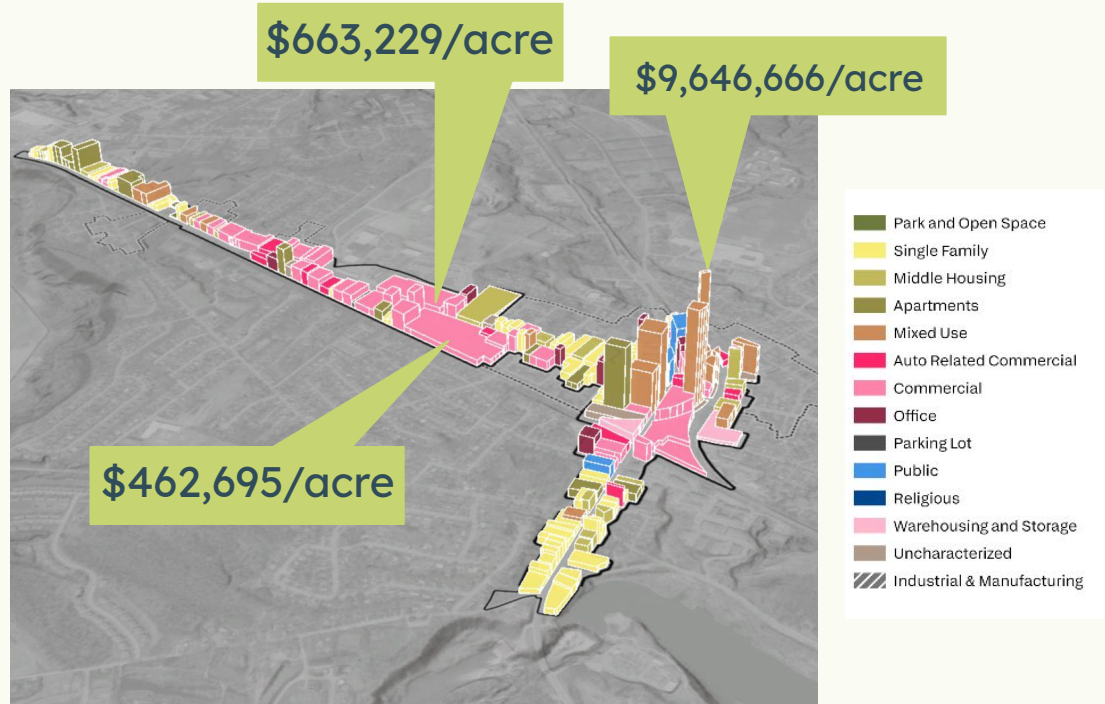
Redevelopable Land

- Many opportunities to fulfill need for more housing options and mixed-use buildings
- Opportunity to have close proximity of diverse uses support more walking and biking, and facilitate improved transit service



Land Value per acre

- Highest value per acre: Village Center, due to its compact mixed-use development
 - Also the most walkable area within the study area despite the impact of traffic flow along state highways



Land Development Code

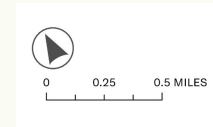
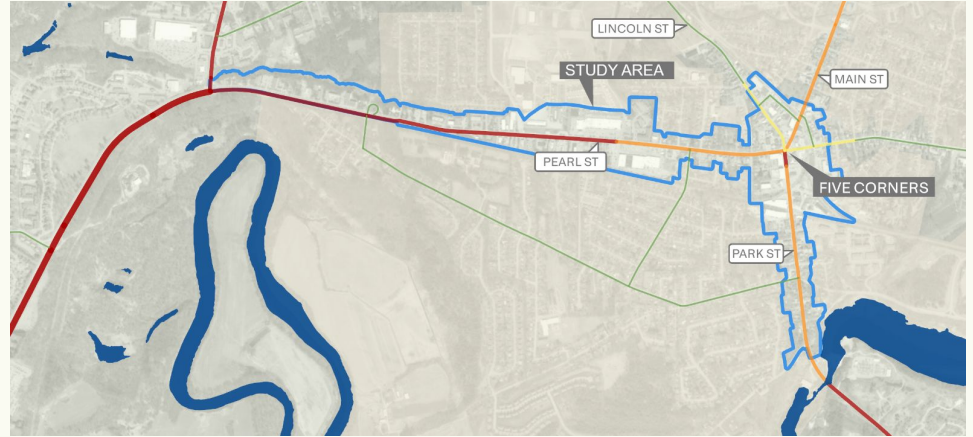
- Current standards are generally supportive of TOD
 - Though building heights and parking requirements may limit flexibility
- R-2 allows 1 principal structure per lot, which is a barrier to middle housing
- Additional height and density allowances for affordable housing in many zones supports TOD objectives

	Zoning District	Minimum lot size	Max # Units per lot (as planned development)	Affordability bonus density	Max lot coverage	Affordability coverage bonus	Min. Front Setback	Min. Side Setback	Min. Rear Setback	Maximum Height	Affordability height bonus
RO	****	19 units per acre; 4 per lot max.		40%		*20'	8'		35'		
R2	7500	4		40%, 30% per unit		*15'	8'	25' *****	35'		
MF2	7500	3	+40%	50%		*15'	10'	10'	35'	48'	
MFU1	15,000	N/A		65%	80%	20' min, 30' max	10'	10'	58'	72'	
TOD	5,000	N/A		100%		no min, 20' max	N/A	N/A	58'	72'	
HA	10,000	N/A	+40%	65%	80% ***	20'	10'	10'	58'	72'	
PE	100 acres	N/A		40%		****	****	****	35'		
VC	5,000	N/A		**					58'	72'	



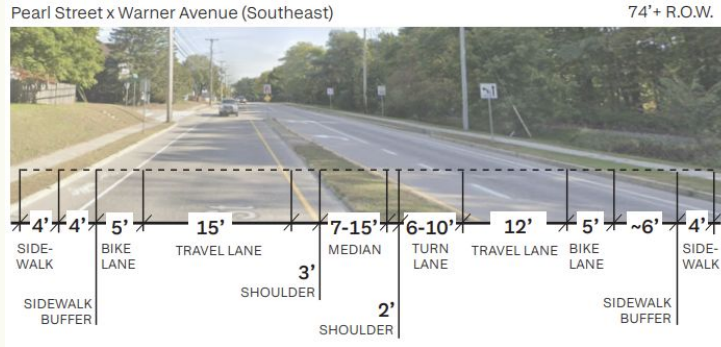
Streetscapes, Transit, & Mobility - Vehicles

- Traffic counts have increased in recent years, with highest counts on Pearl Street
 - (Susie Wilson Road to Post Office Square) and on Park Street at the Five Corners
- There are a variety of streetscape typologies, but an overall design focused on vehicles
- The Crescent Connector will relieve traffic from Park Street and the Five Corners, allowing for greater focus on pedestrian and cyclist movement

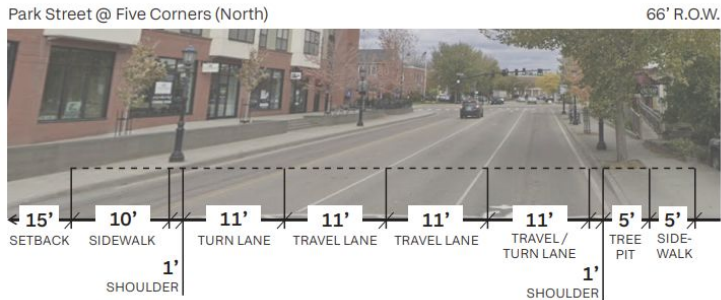
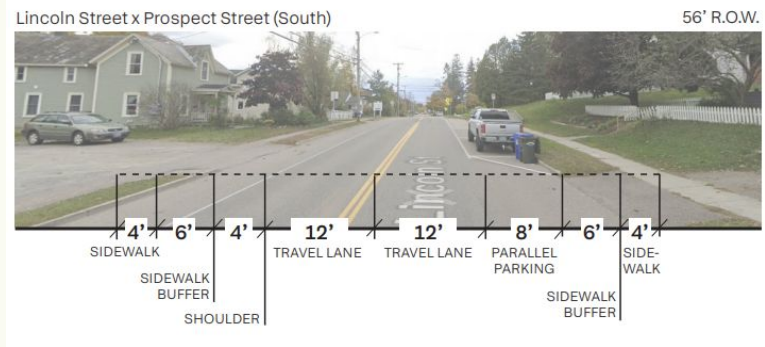


Streetscapes, Transit, & Mobility - Street Sections

High vehicle traffic:



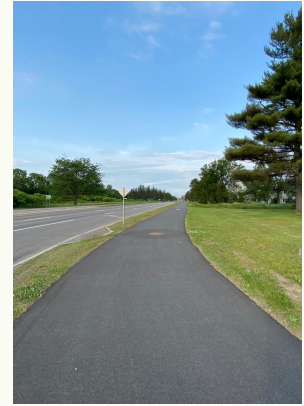
Low vehicle traffic:



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Streetscapes, Transit, & Mobility - Transit

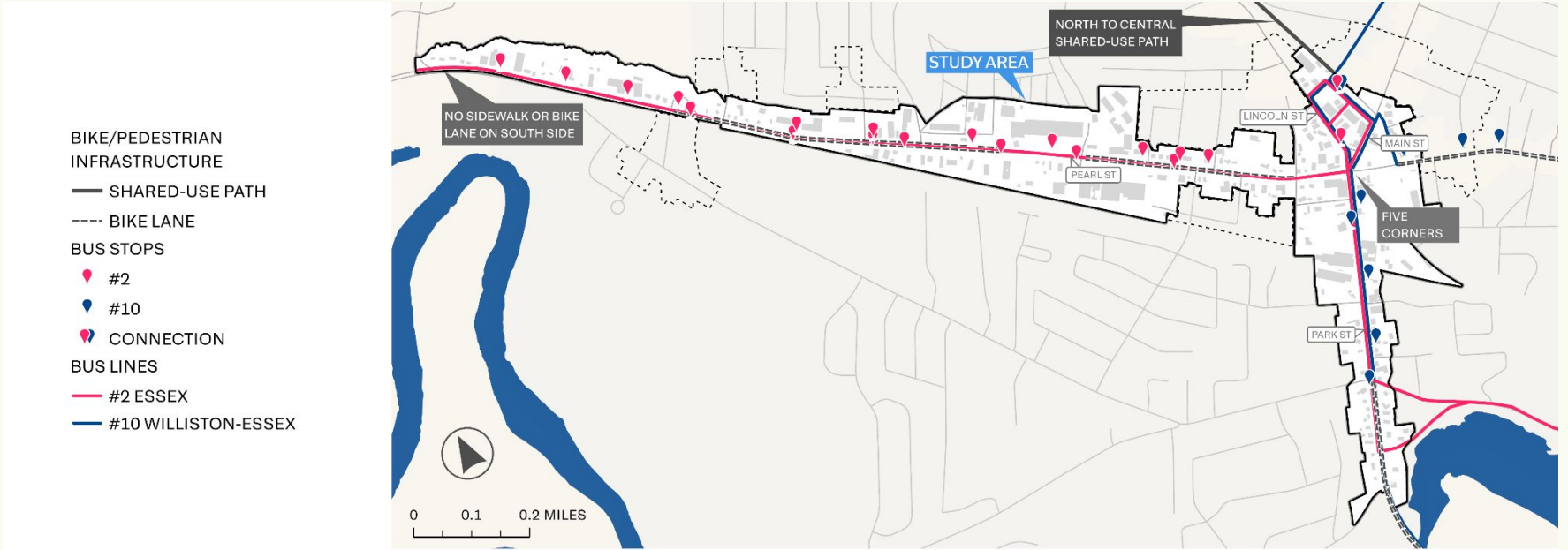
- Transit serviced by Green Mountain Transit: two bus lines in study area
 - Connections to Burlington and Williston
 - Running every ~20-30 min, >1hr on weekends and nights
 - #2 Essex bus line has second highest ridership of all GMT lines, highest weekend ridership



Colchester/Essex Path

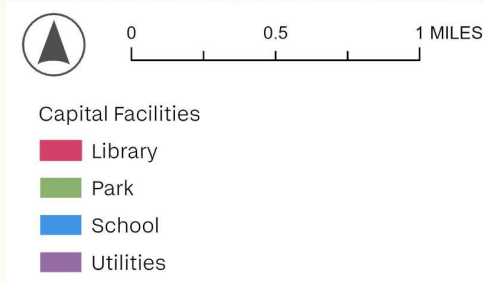


Bike Facilities and Transit Routes



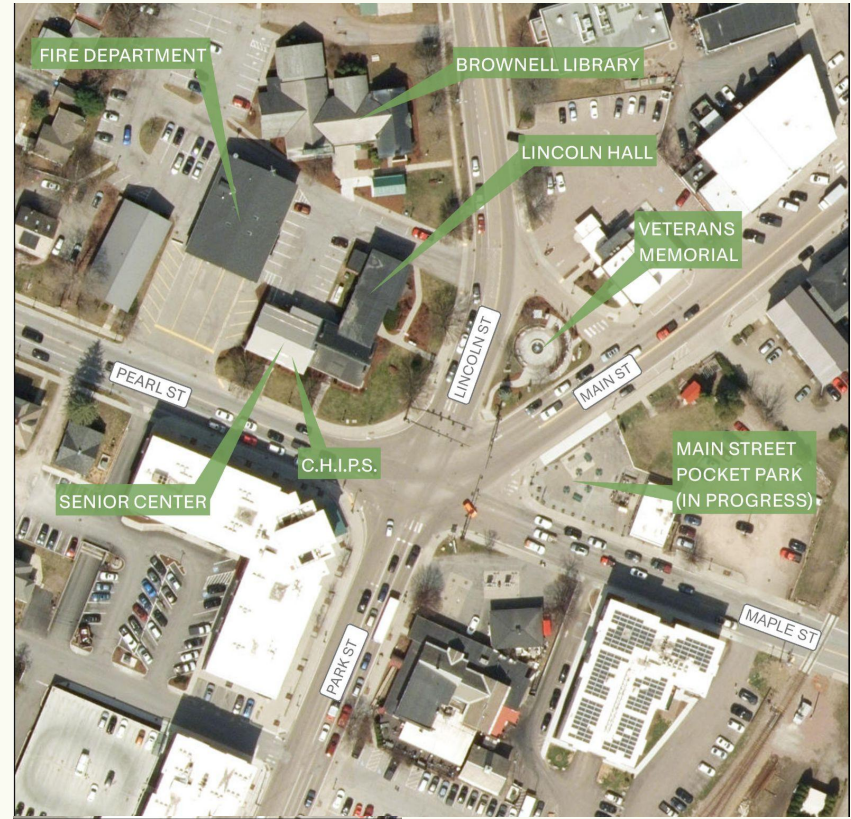
Community & Capital Facilities

- Changes to multi-modal facilities will affect how people access several parks and schools
- Parks adjacent but not within study area
- Lack of public plaza space in study area and park system in general



Community & Capital Facilities

- Several facilities clustered at Five Corners
- Opportunities to support these community uses through multi-modal transportation and public space design



0 50 100 200 Feet



Design Mapping Exercise



MAPPING: ASSETS, CHALLENGES, + OPPORTUNITIES





ASSETS/
Places to protect



Challenges/
Places to improve



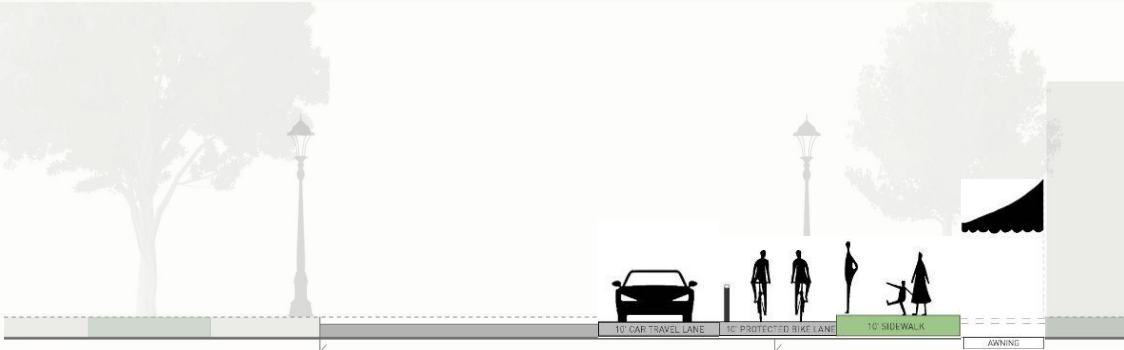
OPPORTUNITIES:
Places to transform



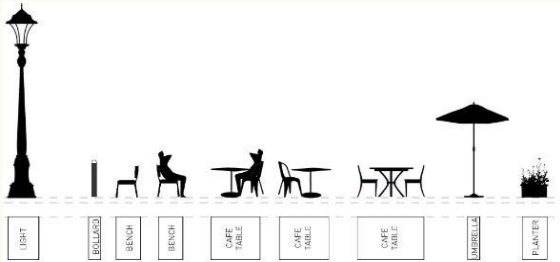
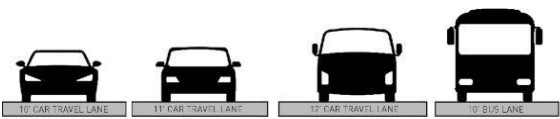
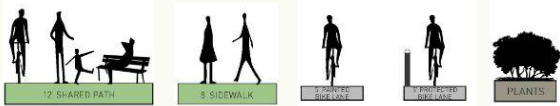
REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIO: WHAT GOES WHERE?




Design Your Street Section



Pearl Street @ EJ Shopping Center (62' Right-Of-Way)



Walking Tours

Join members of the design team to walk around the project area – explore existing conditions and discuss opportunities for growth and improvement.

Sunday Oct. 6 @ 1PM



Site Walk around the City Center + along Pearl Street

Monday Oct. 7 @ 10AM



Crescent Connector Walk



Crescent Connector Ribbon Cutting

Attend the **official Crescent Connector Ribbon Cutting Ceremony @ 10AM on Monday Oct.7** in the new parking lot on Railroad Street

Ceremony will be followed by a site walk focused on the areas around the new road – share your thoughts and visions for the City Center:

- How can the connector support new and infill development along the corridor?
- How should the investment in the connector best support further changes to downtown?



Online Engagement during Charrette



bit.ly/ctj-feedback



Questions/comments?



CONNECT THE **JUNCTION**

a transit-oriented development plan for responsible growth



framework