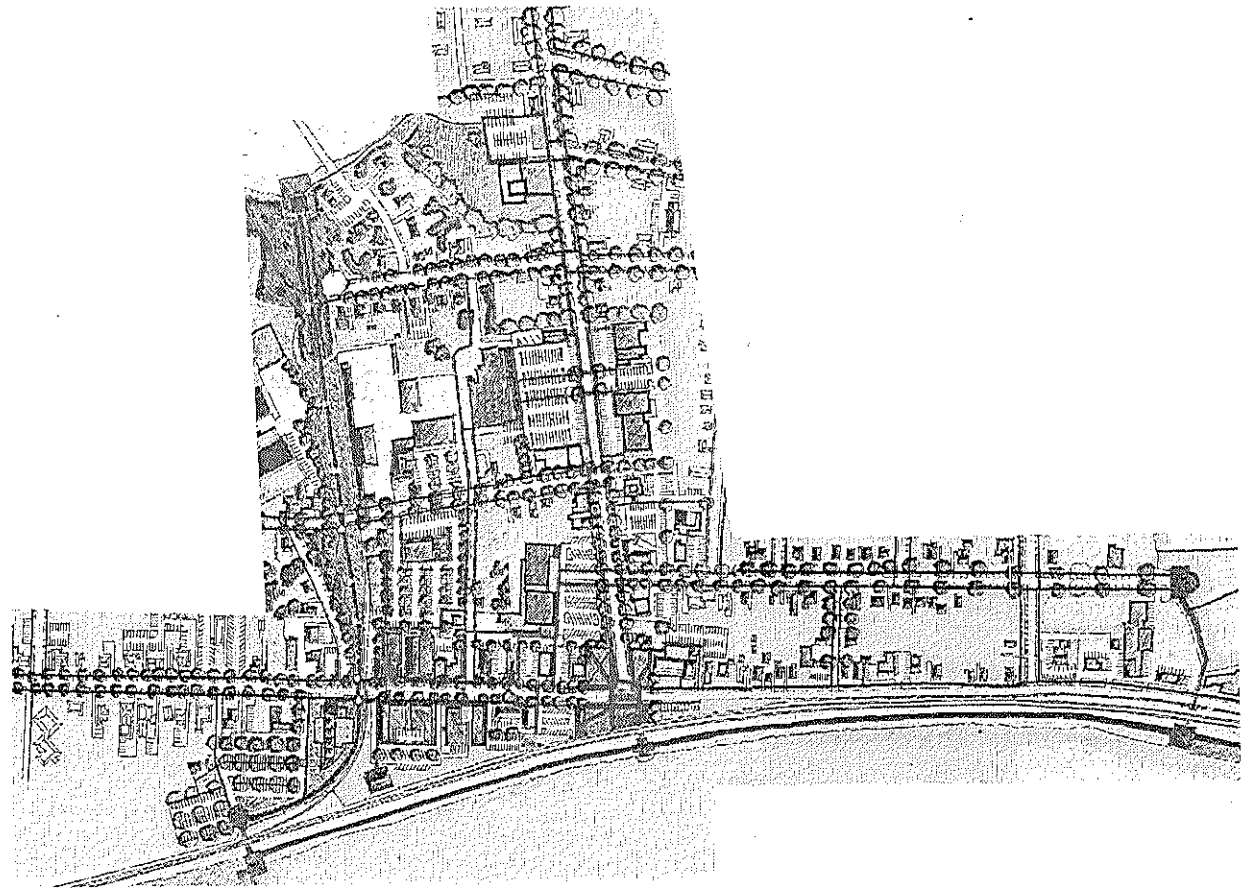
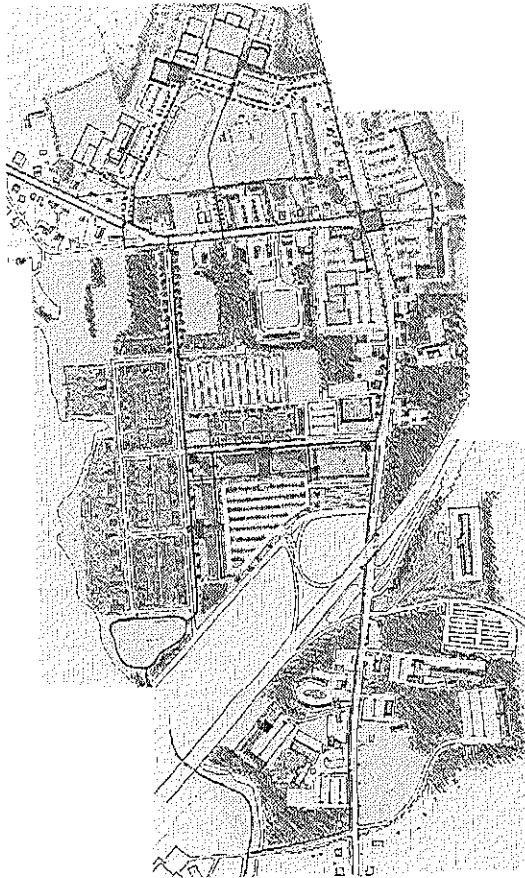


The East Lyme Charrette Report

Yale Urban Design Workshop
April 5-6, 1997



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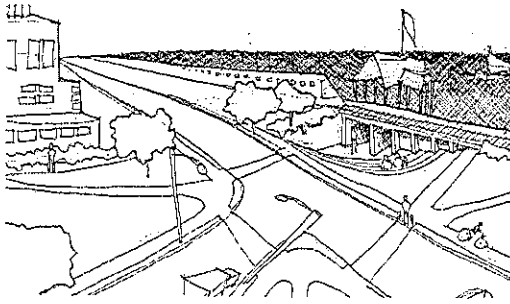
Introduction



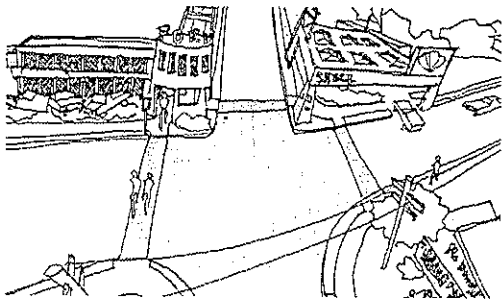
Introduction

Executive Summary

- A summary of the design principles that underlay each area of study in Niantic and Flanders. All design proposals and recommended next steps are based on these principles.



Aerial view of proposed Niantic Center Green with underpass to the Niantic Bay Overlook boardwalk.



View of the proposed Flanders Four Corners intersection with paved square and buildings up to the corner giving it a sense of place.

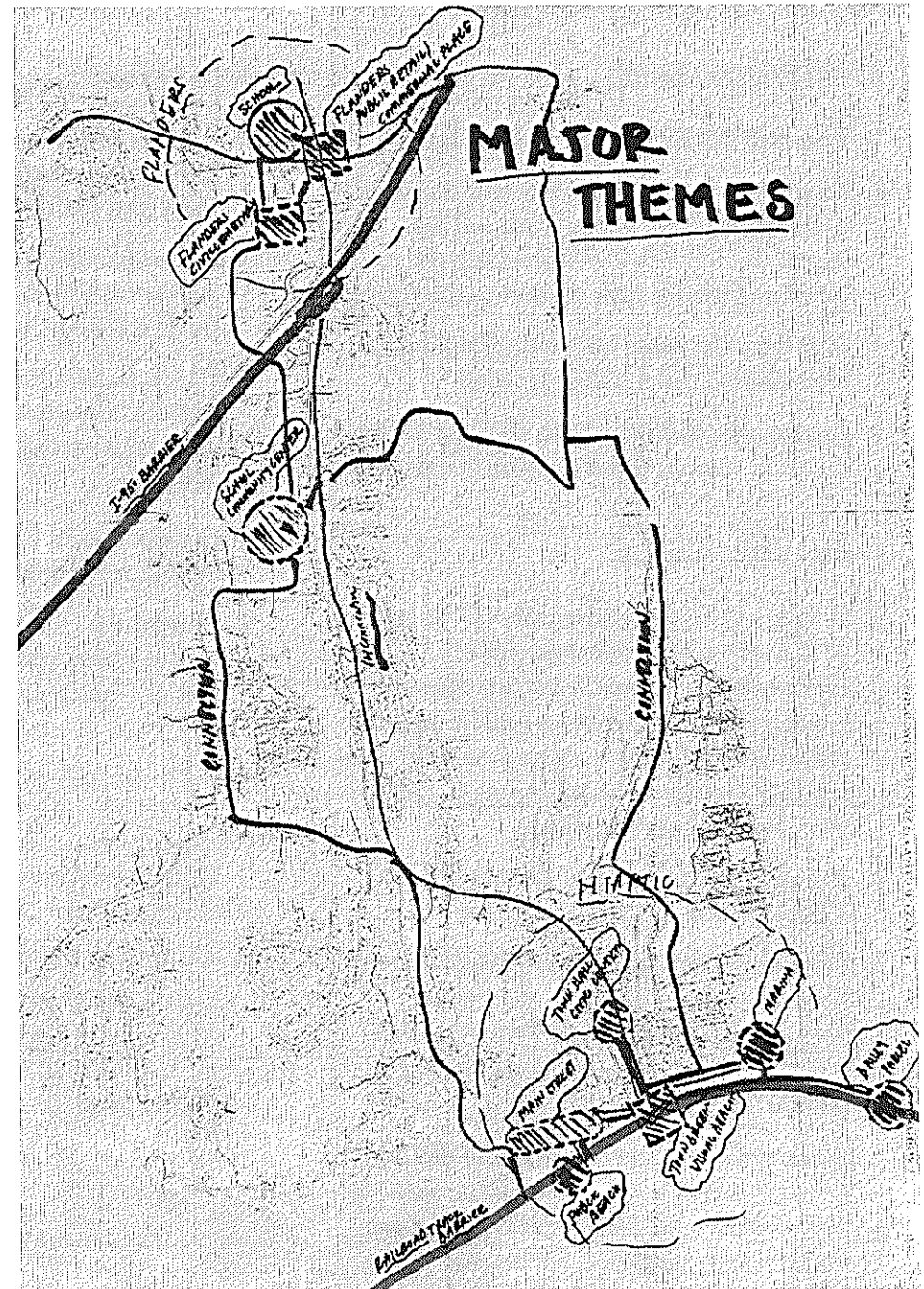
Introduction

The single most important result of the charrette process is a list of general principles to guide future development in the town of East Lyme. This list of principles was generated collectively through the weekend long charrette event by combining the comments, concerns, experiences, and ideas of East Lyme residents—who contributed their knowledge of specific issues regarding East Lyme—with the broader urban design experience of the Yale Team members. There emerged a consensus of the most salient issues facing the town of East Lyme, which is evident from the residents' comments recorded in Part III: Discussion Table Notes.

Because the Town of East Lyme comprises two distinct villages, Niantic and Flanders, each with their own characteristics and development issues, for purposes of analysis and exploration, the Charrette Report accordingly examines the two villages as separate areas of study. Likewise, the Economic Development study prepared for this report outlines the different market conditions in each village. However, what the Economic Development report also finds is that the market differences complement each other, making for a stronger Town as a whole. This important lesson was then incorporated into the general principles.

Each village itself comprises smaller areas of study—a street, a neighborhood, or an important intersection—that merit individual attention. These area studies were guided by their own sets of principles established at the charrette, and out of those principles were developed specific proposals for improvement. Each section also contains specific economic development recommendations and a list of short-term and long-term next steps and implementation strategies.

Following the Flanders and Niantic study areas a third chapter examines the relationship of the villages to the broader context of the town.



Major Themes Diagram.

This diagram illustrates the major ideas and area studies that came up during the charrette. These ideas were then further developed and used as the base for this report.

Niantic design principles

Niantic Village Green

1. Establish the civic center of Niantic.
2. Expand Green to encompass the intersection, the Morton House lawn, and the waterfront land; this will provide both a visual and physical connection to the shore.
3. Reinforce the space with special paving, landscaping, and building facades.
4. Locate civic identities here: the Post Office, the train station, and the veteran's memorial.

Pennsylvania Avenue

1. Change the highway character of "Route 161" to the residential character of "Pennsylvania Avenue"—calm traffic, increase the prominence and safety of pedestrians, line the street with trees, and improve building facades and landscaping to complement the surrounding village.
2. Expand the size and significance of the Village Green.
3. Distinguish open areas along Pennsylvania Avenue—Town Hall Park, the Niantic Shopping Center, and the Village Green—as major public places connected by the corridor of the street.
4. Support the commercial nature of the lower Pennsylvania Avenue—concentrate services for residents, and clarify traffic flow to ease navigation by both automobiles and pedestrians.

Central Blocks

1. Visually and physically connect the Niantic Bay shore to the Dodge Pond waterfront and Town Hall Park beyond.
2. Reclaim unused land along the railroad siding for recreational use while preserving a single track for commercial use.
3. Create an alley between Main Street and Lincoln Street to service both Pennsylvania Avenue commercial areas and mid-block parking lots.
4. Reclaim vacant commercial sites for new infill development.
5. Change the character of Hope Street from that of a wide-open industrial park road to that of a quiet village street.

Main Street West

1. Expand the presence and significance of Main Street's two civic anchors—the Village Green and the Children's Museum.
2. Nurture the "seaside village" character of Main Street—promote restaurants, specialty shops, and unique tourist attraction; encourage nightlife; and clearly demarcate the central blocks as a pedestrian area.

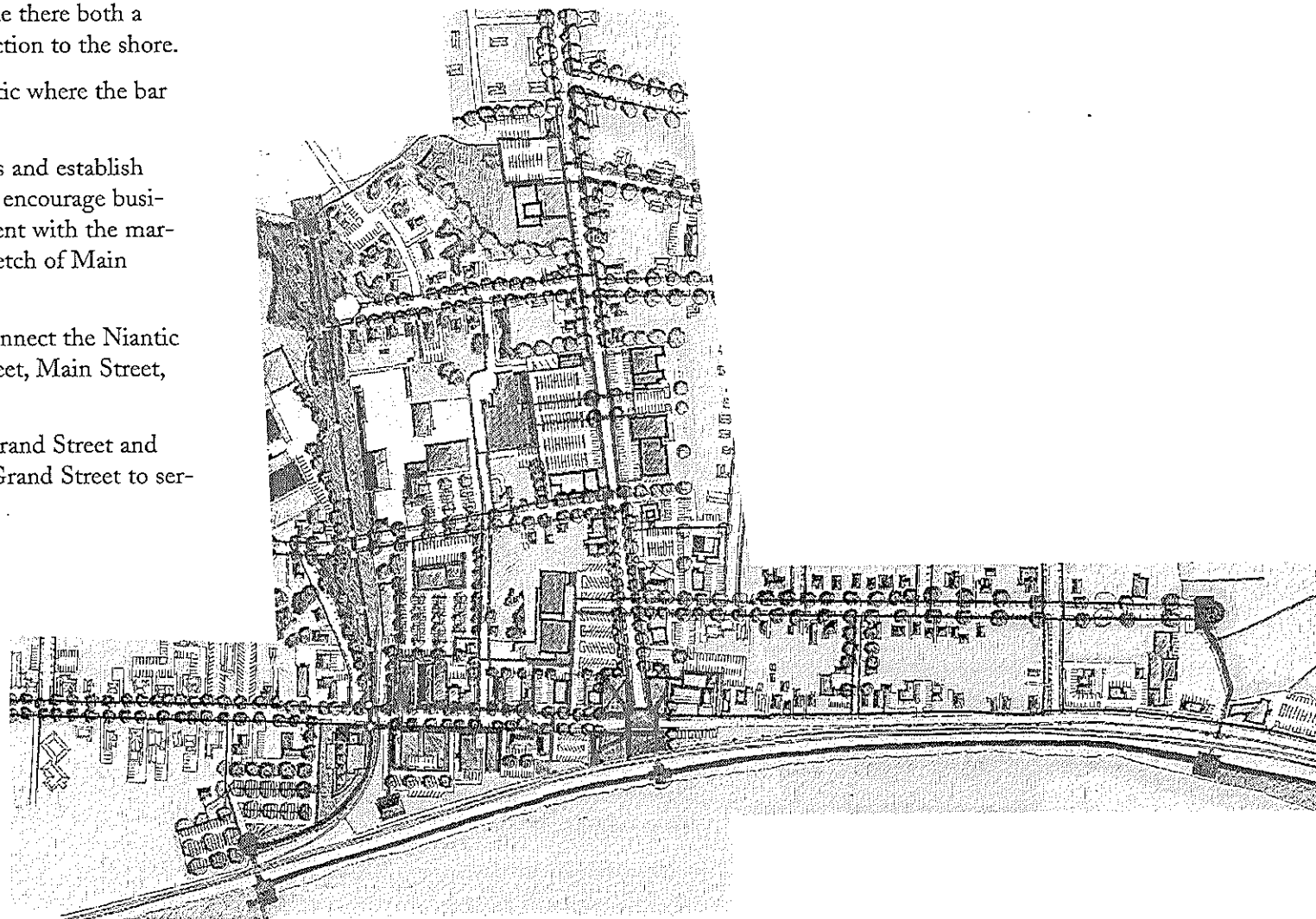
3. Change the highway character of "Route 156" to the small town character of "Main Street"—calm traffic, increase the prominence and safety of pedestrians, consolidate and relocate parking behind buildings, and fill the open lots along Main Street.
4. Preserve historic buildings and establish basic design guidelines and zoning incentives to encourage business development consistent with the seaside village character of Main Street.

Children's Museum

1. Coordinate existing civic groups and business associations to provide the support necessary to keep the Children's Museum in East Lyme.
2. Provide long term community support for the Children's Museum by coordinating marketing and special event planning between local merchants, civic groups, the town government, and the museum itself.
3. Locate the new Children's Museum building where it can serve as a civic anchor for downtown Niantic—preferably along Main Street, at either the railroad siding or the Village Green.

Main Street East

1. Expand the size and significance of the Village Green, and provide there both a visual and physical connection to the shore.
2. Create a gateway to Niantic where the bar meets the mainland.
3. Preserve historic buildings and establish basic design guidelines to encourage business development consistent with the maritime character of this stretch of Main Street.
4. Visually and physically connect the Niantic River shore to Grand Street, Main Street, and Amtrak Beach.
5. Open an alley between Grand Street and Main Street that allows Grand Street to service Main Street.



Flanders design principles

Flanders Four Corners

1. Develop Flanders Four Corners as a retail and service center that serves all of East Lyme and attracts some regional traffic.
2. Create a sense of “place” and a safe pedestrian zone at the Four Corners.

Flanders Main Street

1. Improve sidewalks to make pedestrian and bicycle traffic safe for school kids.
2. Preserve the historic buildings and implement design guidelines to encourage business development with a character and density consistent to the existing buildings.
3. Develop the Flanders Elementary School and East Lyme High School as a campus with its own defined space and clear connections and access to Flanders Village, Flanders Four Corners, and the north-south bike/pedestrian trail.

Flanders Village

1. Provide basic infrastructure to plan for desired development.
2. Implement guidelines to control the character of development.
3. Allow flexibility for a variety of development strategies.
4. Use the existing cemetery as a civic space and expand the amount of open space as an amenity.

Exit 74 North: Flanders Road

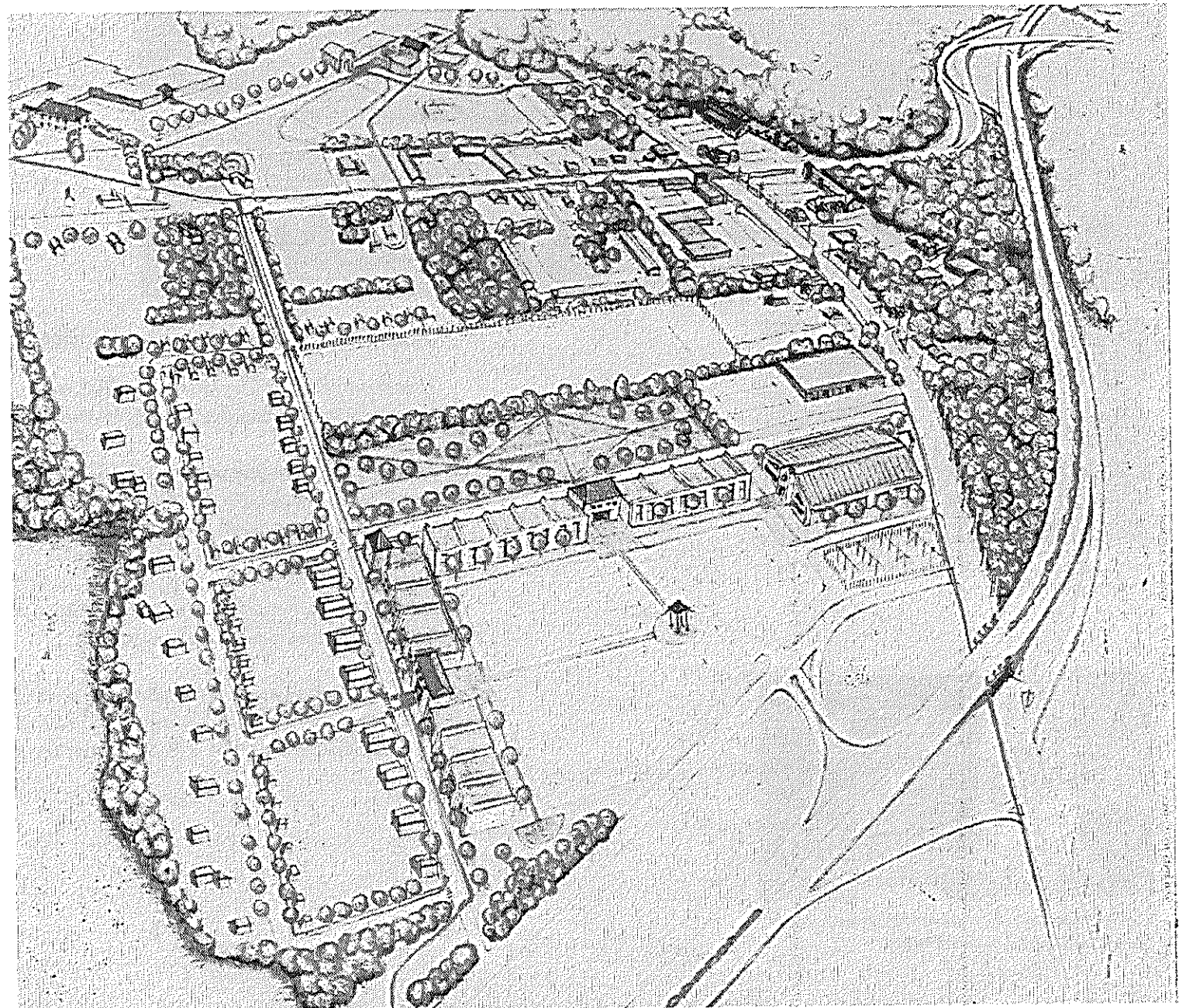
1. Reinforce the local business character.
2. Organize random parking by encouraging rear-yard parking.
3. Increase density by developing large buildings behind small houses-turned-commercial on the street.

Exit 74 South: Motel Row

1. Concentrate motel development in this area.
2. Encourage a cooperative landscaping effort to unify the motel district and give it a large scale, inviting identity consistent with East Lyme and visibility from I-95.

Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway

1. Mark Exit 74 as the gateway to East Lyme and the region.
2. Connect Flanders and Niantic symbolically and visually.



Aerial perspective of proposed
20 Year Plan for Flanders.

Introduction

The Charrette Process

- This planning process is unique. It is a bottom-up strategy; ownership of the plan belongs to the residents and concerned citizens who contributed ideas and goals for East Lyme during the Workshop process.
- All citizens of East Lyme were encouraged to participate, including students at the East Lyme schools who drew and wrote about their ideas.



East Lyme residents discuss ideas about the future of the town.



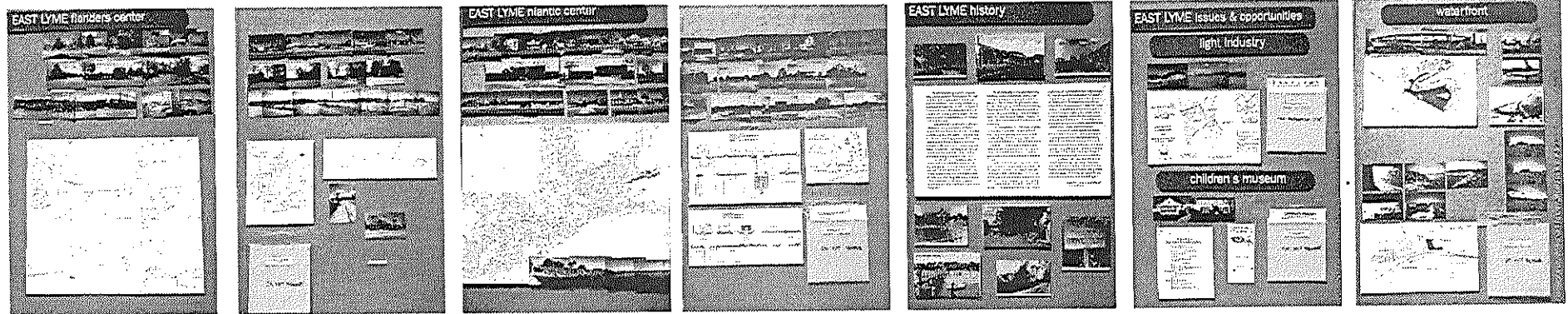
The Yale team and RISD students brainstorm design ideas around a base map of Niantic.

The Yale Urban Design Workshop Process

This event, the East Lyme Design Workshop, is based on the Charrette process of participatory urban design used by the Yale Urban Design Workshop.

The goal of the highly participatory Charrette/Workshop is to engage public interest in a “conversation” about common goals and thereby to empower the citizens of a neighborhood, town or city to shape their own environment. By forging a community of interest, the Workshop process maximizes input, education and coordination for a synergy of ideas and proposals leading not only toward a realizable plan, but a mechanism for refining the plan and continuing the conversation beyond the Workshop event.

The East Lyme Design Workshop was more than just a two-day event; it involved multiple phases, each essential to mobilizing the community to create new dialogue and interest over the importance of planning issues.



Resource Boards are prepared for the charrette which include all the research leading up to the charrette for quick reference.

Preparation Phase

The Economic Development Commission, the Yale Steering Committee, and the Planning Commission worked closely with the Yale Urban Design Workshop team to establish a relationship with the community and collect relevant site data for background resource boards for the Workshop; describing in detail existing proposals, zoning regulations, images of the town, land use and more. This phase is represented graphically above and throughout this report.

Programming Phase

The Yale Steering Committee with the Yale Urban Design Workshop established initial programming parameters through a series of meetings with interested parties (residents, merchants, property owners, community leaders). Important issues to explore were identified such as zoning, parking, development, and streetscape. The notes from these meetings are in Part II: Design Charrette ideas/issues/concerns/synthesis.



Seminars on Saturday attracted people to discuss zoning, Main Street Connecticut, economic development, and traffic.



East Lyme residents gathered at discussion tables to share their ideas and concerns about the town.

The East Lyme Charrette

The Charrette took place on Saturday, April 5 through Sunday, April 6, 1997 at the East Lyme Town Hall on Pennsylvania Avenue. It concluded with a public meeting presenting the results of the Workshop on Sunday afternoon.

Saturday was an open house comprised of a series of seminars and meetings with consultants. The Yale team and consultants were also joined by a group of architecture students from RISD who helped in research and design.

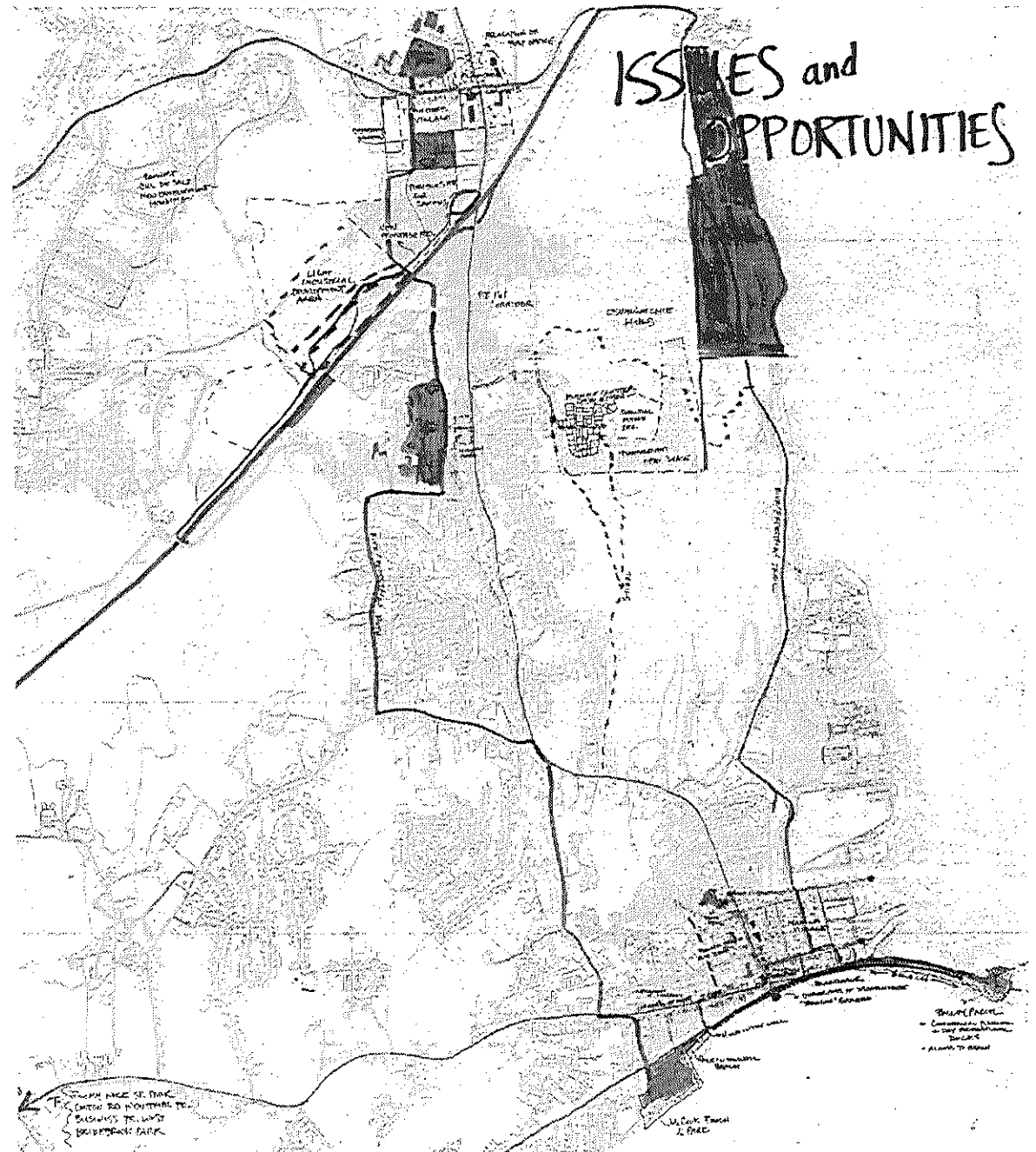
Discussion tables were set up in the lobby for residents to share and record their ideas for East Lyme. A large number of East Lyme residents turned out to express their ideas and participate in the meetings. Notes from the charrette are in Part III, transcribed and organized by Study Areas: Niantic, Flanders and Context.

Follow-Up

During this time the Yale team further elaborated on the plans and proposals that were begun during the charrette. Further meetings were held with the Yale Steering Committee to clarify the ideas and focus of the study areas which was then translated into more complete design proposals and base plans for this report.

Specific study areas were examined in detail, and urban design proposals are illustrated in the following pages. These proposals are informed by and respond to Economic Development and Zoning recommendations from the UDW's collaborative consultants.

The East Lyme Charrette is, however, an on going process. This report records this process and should be seen as a working document.

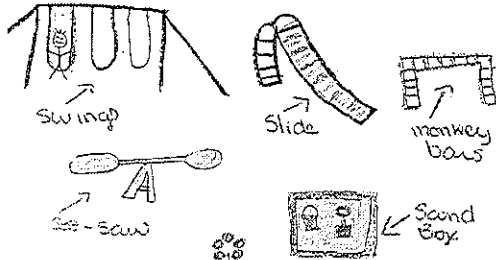


Issues and Opportunities diagram illustrating all the major proposals for East Lyme made at the conclusion of the charrette. These issues formed the core ideas from which this report was generated.

Introduction

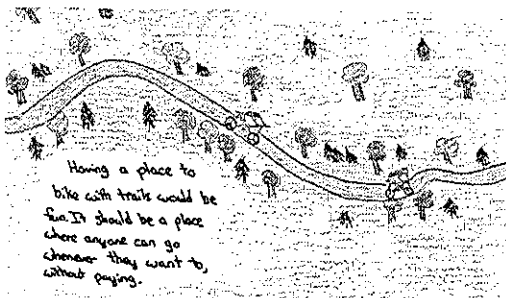
Work in the Schools

- As part of the preparation phase, the Yale Team visits local schools to work with students and discover what they would like to see in their town.



"In our town I would like to see a playground that is safe for everyone."

Elizabeth Frydryk, East Lyme Middle School



Many students expressed a wish for bike trails and safe ways to get around town.

Heather Stevenson, East Lyme Middle School.

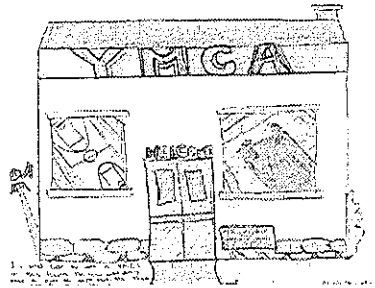
School Visits

Children are a great source for creative ideas about their living environment and usually reveal important considerations or features that do not always come up in committee meetings and research. Therefore, working with the students in schools before the charrette has become an integral part of the preparation phase at the Yale Urban Design Workshop.

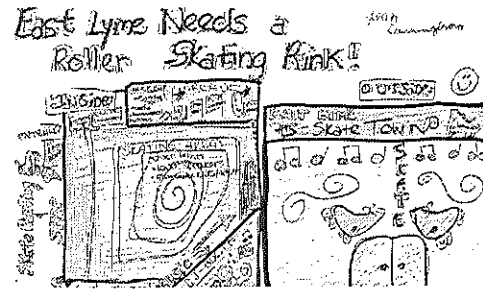
Graduate students from the Yale Urban Design Workshop worked with students and teachers at East Lyme Middle School, Flanders Elementary School, East Lyme High School, and (Niantic Elementary School).

The students were introduced to basic architectural drawing types such as plans, perspective drawing, and elevations. Students were then asked to brainstorm about what they would like to see in East Lyme.

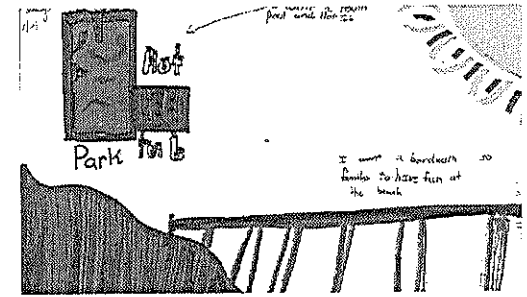
They then drew up their ideas or wrote brief essays. Their ideas covered a wide range including a public swimming pool, bike trails, a sports center, a community college, a zoo, and a hockey rink.



Nicole Saingster, Flanders Elementary School.



Leah Cunningham, Flanders Elementary School.



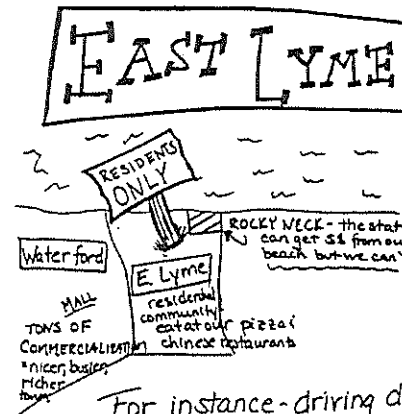
Proposal for a boardwalk and hot tub by a Fourth Grade student at Flanders Elementary School.

If I could change the architecture of East Lyme how would I change it

In the following paragraphs I will tell you what I would build or add to this town. I will also tell you why I would do that and what the use of it will be.

the first thing I would do is add a college because I think this town needs a College to keep the kids of East Lyme into getting a better education. I also think the town of East Lyme wants a College because then we will have education right around the corner and that means we don't have to go far to find education or to get educate. Many people go to Yale but if we make a College that is cheaper but they still teach you the same and better I think the College would be a success. I think it would be wise for the town of East Lyme to have a College because if the town of East Lyme is educated then I think there would be no violence and it would be a better town.

Fourth grade students at Flanders Elementary School wrote essays outlining what they would like to see in town.
Chris Gaito.



I feel that this town is one of the nicest communities in the area- generally people who live here are generally pleased with it, however I don't think the town is very inviting to outside visitors.

For instance- driving down I-95, at the Niantic exit it looks at 1st like a large tourist town because of all the hotel chains, ect, but that isn't the case. The town has nothing to offer visitors - except maybe for restaurants - we don't offer much- We don't even have a public beach- the one available is only for residents! Rocky Neck is a STATE park- here we are a beautiful coastal location; we can't take advantage of it w/ visitors - We almost depend on money solely from our own residents.

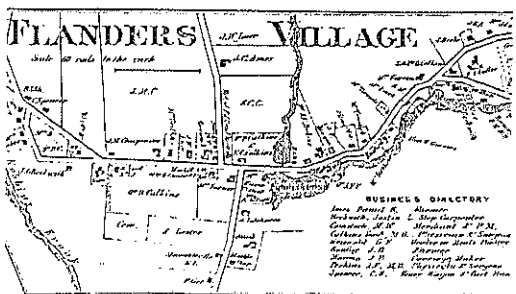
East Lyme High School students in the Current Issues class have been studying the town's government and are well informed on the local issues.

East Lyme: Town History

• Adapted from “Development of East Lyme” written by Olive Tibbs Chendali, January 25, 1997.



1868 map of the Niantic business district. Note that all the businesses are concentrated along Route 156. Pennsylvania Avenue had not yet developed as a commercial center.



1868 map of the Flanders business district. Note that Four Corners has not yet been aligned into a regular intersection, and that the district follows Route 1 to the east (where it now meets with I-95.)

The Town of East Lyme

Early settlement in East Lyme mostly paralleled “the Country Road to Lyme”—a stretch of the colonial road between New York and Boston—along which were later set at least two of Benjamin Franklin’s postal route milestones. Because the mid point of the journey between Saybrook and New London lay in the area of Flanders, the Caulkins Tavern (today the site the Flanders McDonald’s) established itself there in the years before the American Revolution as a place for Post Road travelers to stop for meals or evening lodging.

By 1839, the area population had increased to the point that, upon petition, the state legislature granted Township to East Lyme, formed from the eastern part of Lyme and the western area of New London and centered around the Post Road. With the arrival in 1851 of the shoreline railroad, the village of Niantic grew up where the railroad met Niantic Bay. This area hitherto had been sparsely settled by the families of fishermen, who engaged in halibut

and cod fishing in the North Atlantic. They quickly became the neighbors of merchants, millworkers, and all the other characters that populated the thriving seaside village and established it as the center of activity in East Lyme.

The railroad also served to introduce out-of-town travelers to the beauty of East Lyme’s coastline, and by the 1880’s several shore resorts were thriving. Resort and summer house construction continued unabated until it filled almost all of East Lyme’s 11 miles of coastline along both Long Island Sound and Niantic Bay. The annual influx of summer residents permanently marked Niantic as something of a resort community, with a thriving local economy buoyed by seasonal residents and by visitors from surrounding towns attracted by the many shops and restaurants in the village.

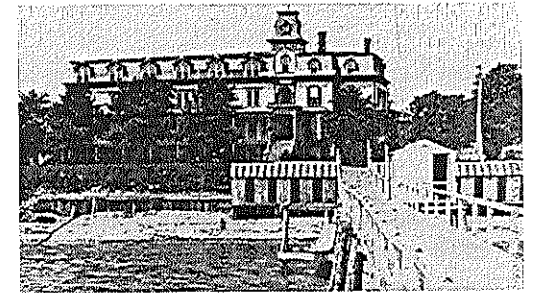
East Lyme continued to grow during the early twentieth century as the State of Connecticut established in the town a military campground,

a state prison, and a National Guard center. Also during this time the state established in the northern reaches of the town the vast acreage comprising Nehantic State Forest, and along the shoreline, it developed Rocky Neck State Park.

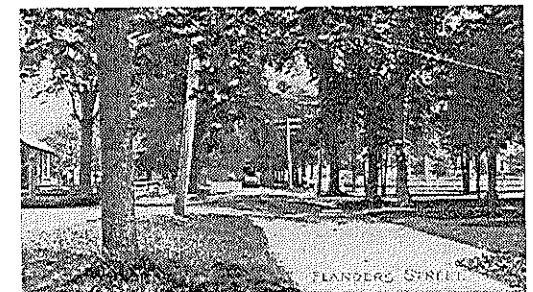
Following World War II and the rapid industrial and military growth of nearby Groton and New London, East Lyme began to attract more and more residents from those cities who sought the small town character that East Lyme offered. The completion of Interstate 95 through East Lyme in the later 1960s accelerated this residential growth. As importantly, the arrival of this new transportation corridor just to the south of Flanders Four Corners marked yet another fundamental shift in the town's growth: just as the arrival of the railroad a century earlier had drawn most new houses and businesses to Niantic where they would have easy access to trains, the arrival of I-95 attracted most of the new postwar residential and com-

mercial development to the Flanders area, where it would be easily accessible to cars.

The past few decades have seen one other important shift in the character of East Lyme. During the same years that the traditional local tourist base of summer residents declined (many of them have settled in East Lyme year-round), the number of tourists visiting the region of southeastern Connecticut has skyrocketed. Now neighboring malls, casinos, and attractions like Mystic Seaport annually draw to the area millions of visitors—many of whom pass right through East Lyme on the Interstate. The challenge to East Lyme posed by this new tourist industry remains the same as that posed to the town earlier by the arrival of the interstate, by postwar residential growth, by the late nineteenth century development of the Niantic shore, and by the arrival of the railroad in 1851: can the town transform the pressures of development into the opportunity for healthy growth? History indicates that East Lyme can do just that.



The Morton House and pier in Niantic. Originally, Niantic had a much closer relationship to the waterfront.



Post Road in Flanders. Flanders developed like many New England towns along the Boston Post Road.

East Lyme: Economic Development

- Economic Development Report prepared by consultant John Shapiro.

East Lyme offers diverse economic development opportunities: retail, hotels, offices/warehousing/industry, and commercial recreation. These uses are important not just as a source of tax revenue, but also as a source of jobs. In 1990, approximately 1,800 people both lived and found their employment in East Lyme; this is equivalent to half of the 3,800 people working in the town, and one-fourth of the 7,600 employed town residents. In addition to commercial and industrial uses, estate, retirement and vacation housing can be viewed as a source of economic development, as they generate more in real estate taxes than they generate in tax expenditures (since school taxes are the major portion of the Town's expenditures). The market support for retail uses is discussed briefly below; greater detail is provided, as relevant, later in this report in each area study chapter.

East Lyme enjoys significant advantages for retail development. It is one of the most affluent municipalities in its region, and the town has excellent highway and arterial access. Retail development tends to gravitate to the points of greatest convenience to the greatest number of people and amounts of expendable income.

Yet East Lyme's retail establishments (as of 1992) were generating only \$8,500 per adult (defined as 16 years or older), compared to \$10,100 per adult for New London county as a whole. There is therefore an outflow—not inflow—of retail dollars. This represents a latent market opportunity for additional retail development in the town.

Furthermore, as the town's and region's population and visitor base expands, the demand for retail will increase. Trends are working in East Lyme's favor. Both the town's and the region's populations are growing at approximately 1.5 percent per year—no mean amount given the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

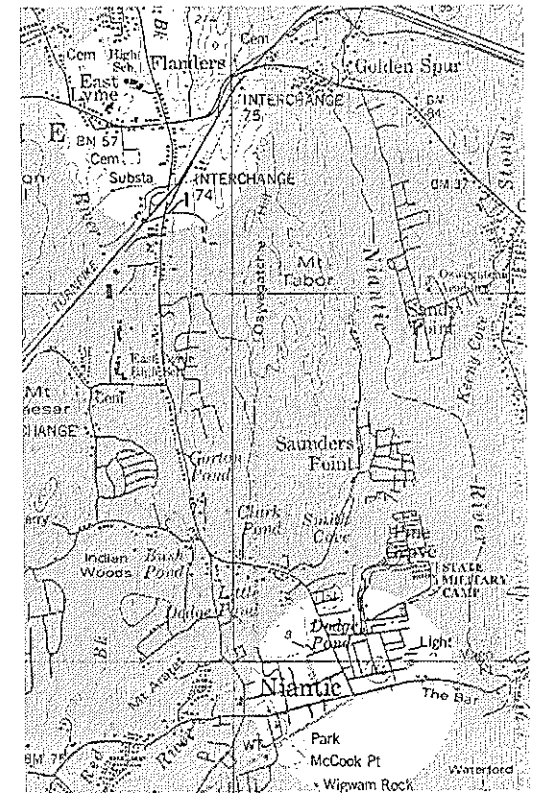
In this market demand context, East Lyme offers two very different retail centers, each with its own opportunities. There is no reason to view Flanders/Four Corners and Niantic as competitive, but every reason to promote very different types of retail development in each. Most of the recommendations in this report relate to this goal.

The basic strategy is to better position Flanders/Four Corners as a town-wide, regional center for conventional auto-oriented shopping, including large format stores; and to better position Niantic as a town-wide, regional center

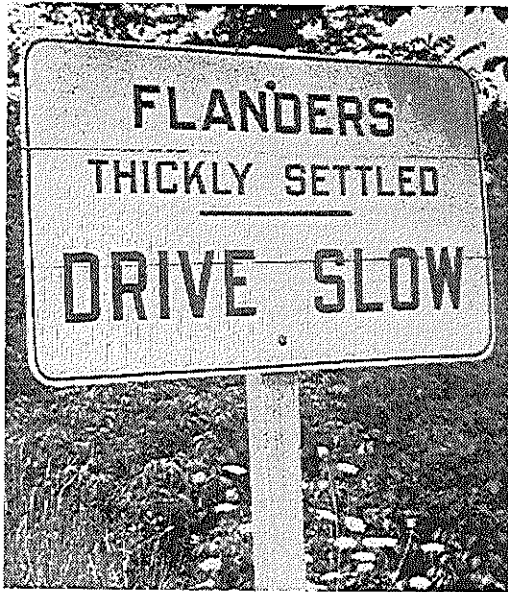
for specialty shopping, including eateries and boutiques. This bifurcation responds to the national trend in favor of large format stores offering no frills and plenty of discounts for bulk shopping, and at the same time in favor of “old fashioned” downtowns offering “recreational shopping” during the weekend, at the expense of traditional shopping centers and malls.

Flanders is located in the geographic center of the town, at the intersection of two major arterials (Route 161 and Post Road) and two interstate highways (I-95 and I-395). It is a “central place” in the region. It clearly has potential for filling a convenience and comparison shopping niche, with townwide and regional appeal, oriented to people preferring to conduct their shopping by car. In particular, large format retailers and outlet retailers would find a Flanders location attractive.

Niantic is located at the southern edge of the town on Niantic Bay, and therefore enjoys a trade area of half the land area of Flanders, even though the bulk of the town’s population is in its vicinity. It does not have nearly the same vehicular accessibility; it is, however, en route to Waterford and New London. Marinas, beaches, and other tourist/recreational attractions are located in this area. It clearly has the potential for filling a specialty shopping niche, with an equal though different townwide and regional appeal, oriented to people preferring to conduct their shopping in a setting conducive to socializing, people-watching, and leisure.



1/2 mile walking radius from Flanders Four Corners and Niantic Center Green.



"Many years ago, East Lyme."

Overall Policies

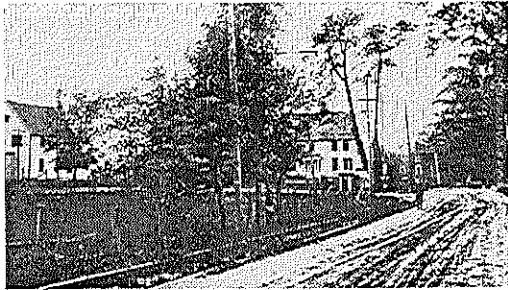
1. The Town should strictly enforce high performance standards with regard to open space preservation, view corridor protection, environmental protection, and landscaping and building design treatments consistent with East Lyme's New England setting and resort image. A number of the uses suggested in this report—higher-end hotels, inns, B&Bs, specialty retail, life care housing, recreation facilities, second-home development, high-value housing—are somewhat or totally dependent on the town's image as a desirable place to be or pass through. It should especially be remembered that 80 percent of the tax base is generated by the town's residences: protecting their value is essential. In this context, sound planning is not just a nicety, it is fiscally prudent.

2. The Town should therefore adopt design guidelines, landscape criteria, environmental protections and other regulatory standards based on this plan as a point of departure to assure a high quality of development. The high value of land in those portions of the town where such uses will generally gravitate (e.g., near the highway interchanges, along the commercial corridors) means that there is sufficient value to absorb the costs imposed by such standards, which are incremental in most every case. The rising value of land as the region emerges out of its real estate development slump means that the timing to impose these standards is now, when their (again, generally incremental) costs are less than the added value of the land. The principles outlined in each of the study areas that follow ensure the value of the physical environment as an asset in East Lyme.

3. Tax incentives are of dubious benefit in promoting economic development in East Lyme, nor are they necessary. Real estate tax cuts generally represent a windfall for the property owners—who are able to raise the price of the land if the tax cuts are assured (much as the cost of housing goes up when mortgage rates go down). The town can, in the long run, attract uses without tax incentives, by virtue of its relative affluence and resort image, in addition to its highway accessibility and central location in the New York City/Boston corridor. Finally, in a town with low unemployment rates, economic development is largely pursued in order to increase the tax base. Tax cuts certainly counter this public purpose.

The one exception with regard to tax breaks has to do with promoting recreation in the town. These are eclectic business operations, frequently operating on the margin. Yet they are of significant benefit in terms of promoting other,

higher-value uses and the overall value of the town as a residential address. There are, therefore, both financial and policy reasons to consider tax incentives for additional marinas, tennis centers, golf facilities, canoeing/kayaking facilities, swim clubs, etc. The Town could also reasonably tie such tax incentives to certain public benefits, such as lower fees for town residents, if the State enabling legislation so permits.



Historic view of Flanders Road at Boston Post Road.

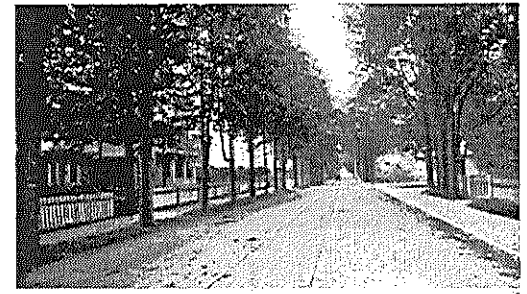
4. The Town should make its land use regulations more predictable. Although tax breaks are a boon to property owners, and although a freer hand to do what they want is a boon to developers, ultimately a predictable and fair regulatory process is of greater value than either. The former two provide opportunity for windfall profits, but the latter is make-or-break. If the zoning and regulatory process is, for example, protracted or uncertain in its outcome, it is difficult to calculate the value of the land: it is even possible to start the approval process at one point of the real estate cycle only to end it in another.

Predictability with regard to land use regulations has two components: the clarity of the regulations and policies, and the timeliness and consistency of approvals.

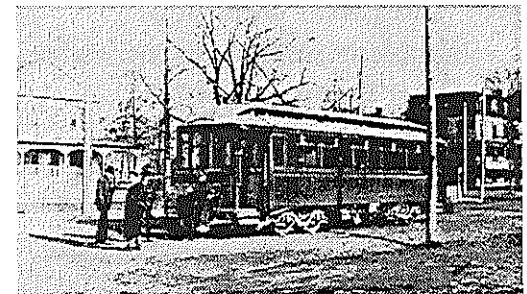
East Lyme's zoning regulations—like those of most municipalities—reflect a layering of regulations superimposed on a foundation that is several decades old. If nothing else a modernization is in order, to reflect current zoning practices and market conditions.

East Lyme's land use authorities have overlapping concerns and purviews that reflect certain traditions that are antiquated. Greater coordination is in order through more defined authority for each of the Boards, and/or shared staff for all of the Boards. The Economic Development Commission can play a role here, for example, by bringing together representatives of the business community, civic community and each of the reviewing boards to discuss common approaches to the challenges presented in this report.

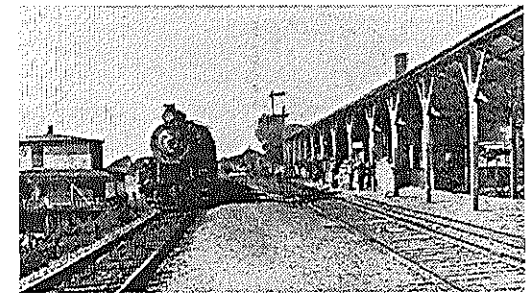
5. The Town and Economic Development Commission can also “get the word out” with regard to changes for the better in East Lyme’s regulatory profile. A manual on how to wend through the review process may be in order, for instance.



Historic view of Pennsylvania Avenue from Main Street, Niantic.



Trolley car in downtown Niantic.



Historic view of Niantic railroad station.

Next Steps

Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

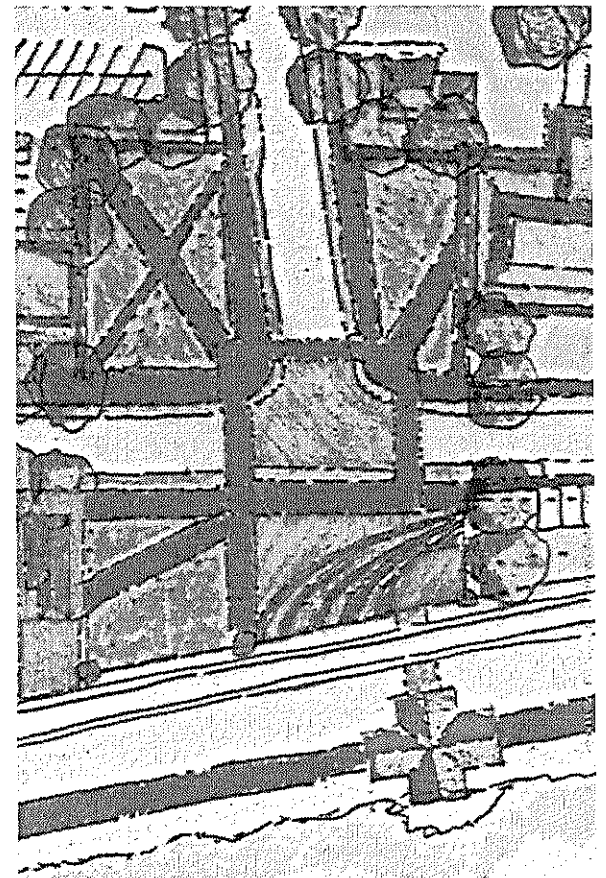
- General Short-Term and Long-Term Next Steps and Implementation Strategies for East Lyme as a whole.
- Next Steps for specific Area Studies appear at the end of each each Area Study section.

1. Define an *action-directed organization*, based on the energetic group of people already involved in the EDC and the Yale Steering Committee. It will need a small cadre of dedicated leaders willing to sustain, push, lobby, listen, and suffer on behalf of the projects over at least the next five years.
2. Don't be afraid of self-interest as a motive. Idealism and community spirit are very important, but they will be more durable if some key people have material stakes in the project outcomes.
3. Define the organization's relationship to municipal government. One possibility is a "public-private partnership" with town government as half the partnership. It is important, however, that the organization belong to the community and not become part of a partisan political agenda.
4. Choose a few projects to do right away. They should be chosen for low cost, simplicity, independence of difficult entitlement work, visibility to a broad public, and strategic relationship to more costly, long-term projects. The Next Steps section of each Area Study lists potential projects.
5. Include all sorts of people in the initial projects and share the credit widely to begin to build a broader base for longer, more difficult projects.

Long-Term Next Steps and Implementation Strategies

1. Establish greater collaborations between Planning, Zoning, and the EDC.
2. Hire or share with another town a marketing or economic development consultant coordinator.
3. Research state funding opportunities:
 - MDF for municipal development.
 - ISTEA for infrastructure improvements.

Chapter 1: Niantic



Niantic

Introduction

Analysis

Economic Development

Study Areas:

- Plan and Proposals
- Next Steps

1. Niantic Green
2. Pennsylvania Avenue
3. Central Blocks
4. Main Street West
5. Children's Museum
6. Main Street East

Introduction

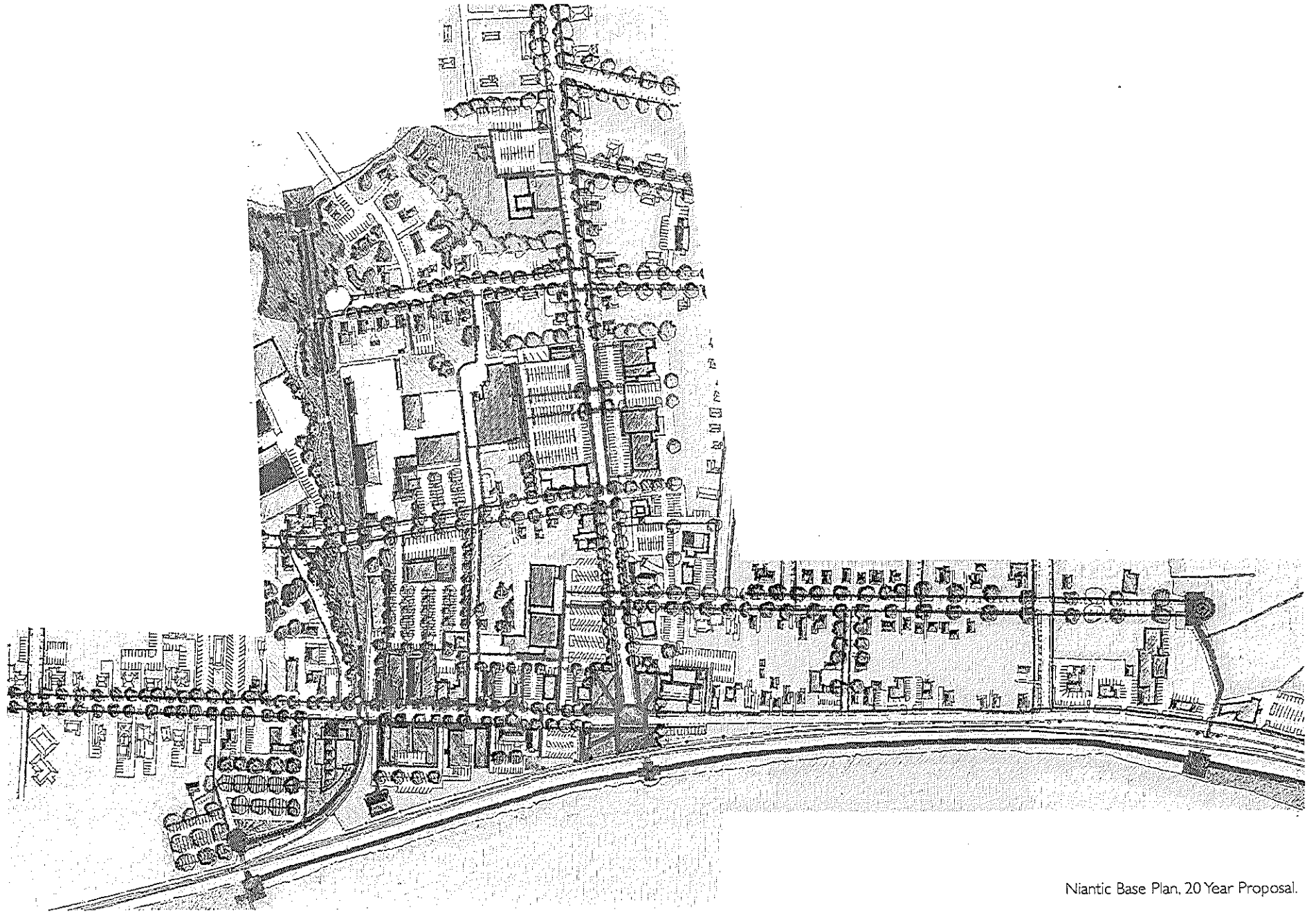
Niantic has evolved over the past decades from a predominantly seasonal resort village to a community of mostly permanent residents. With the loss of the summer influx of vacationers, the once-thriving retail economy has quieted too. Yet despite this recent economic lull and its toll on the downtown's character, Niantic has managed to hold onto its identity as a seaside village—people still come to Niantic to swim at the Hole-in-the-Wall Beach, go boating in the Bay, and to stroll along Main Street after dinner and a movie.

Because of Niantic's extraordinary location directly on the shore—a siting only strengthened by additional frontages along the Niantic River and Dodge Pond—the village can once again attract and sustain a healthy mix of commercial and retail development. For evidence of the village's economic potential, one need look no further than the unprecedented success of the Children's Museum, and the attendant success of the Doll Hospital and of local candy and ice cream stores. As importantly, it is clear that Niantic has the potential to attract *people*, both visitors and, if the village wishes, new residents.

To a large degree, Niantic's intimate village character has survived through benign neglect; little new construction meant no damaging changes to the village. As the addition of more recent strip malls and fast food chains demonstrates, however, that precedent no longer holds.

To nurture the character of Niantic, it is important that any new development be guided in a way that complements the village's distinct character. In other words, development in the village should be gauged not only by its immediate financial contributions to the town, but more importantly by its contributions both to a sense of *community* and to a sense of *place* in Niantic.

East Lyme must plan for the future and decide how successful it wants Niantic to be. By establishing plans and guidelines that nurture healthy development but allow for flexibility and a variety of development options, Niantic can attract the type of development that residents want and grow into a livable, attractive, healthy town center.



Niantic Base Plan, 20 Year Proposal.

Niantic Study Areas

Pennsylvania Avenue

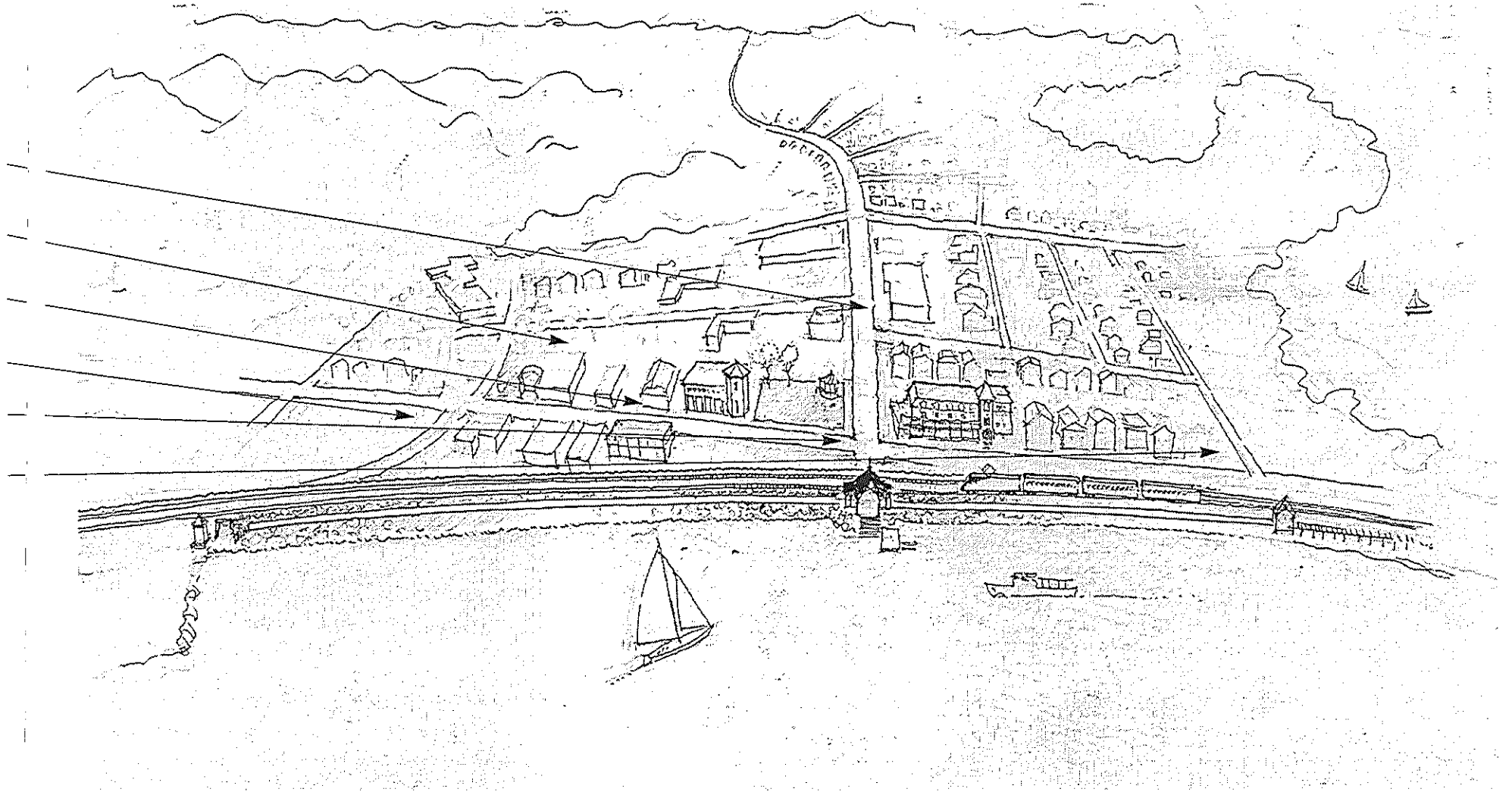
Central Blocks

Main Street West

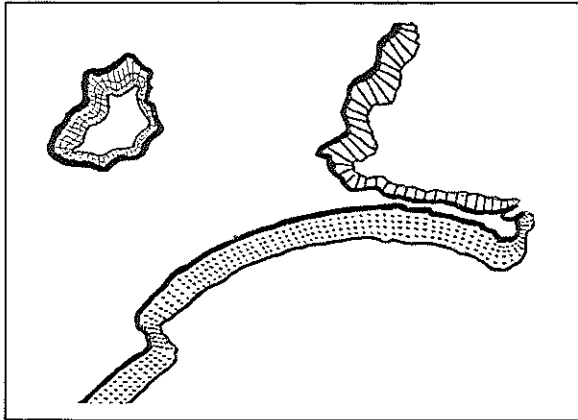
Children's Museum

Village Green

Main Street East



An aerial view of Niantic, with proposed boardwalk and pavilions, that captures Niantic's character as a small, closely-knit seaside village.



Three distinct waterfronts—the bay, the river, and the pond.

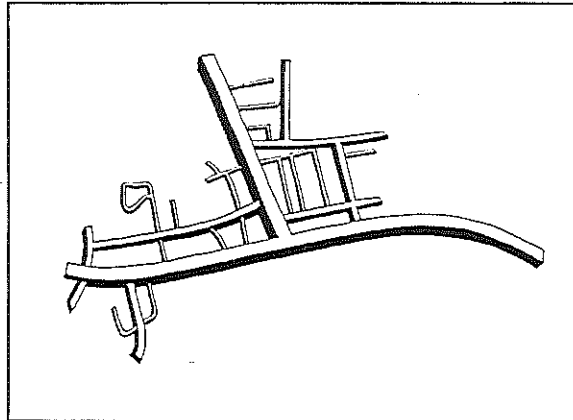
Existing village structure

Three Waterfronts

Niantic enjoys a spectacular location along Niantic Bay, which forms the village's southern border. Moreover, Niantic nestles between two other scenic bodies of water: the broad estuary of the Niantic River to the east, and Dodge Pond to the northwest.

Since few Connecticut towns enjoy a village center directly along the shore, let alone along two other bodies of water, Niantic's unique site could become one of its great assets.

Yet, none of these three waterfronts are readily connected to the town center. The proposed Niantic Bay Overlook boardwalk offers a potentially fantastic connection to the shore—especially if a new underpass is constructed at the Village Green. Similarly, public walkways along the River and along Dodge Pond could provide access to those waterfronts. Ideally, all three shore walks would be connected together to create one great waterfronts walking loop.



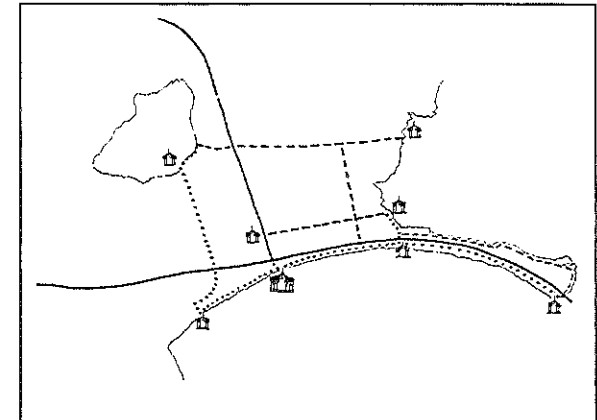
A diagram of the relative importance of streets in Niantic.

Street Hierarchy

There is a clear hierarchy of major and minor streets in Niantic. Pennsylvania Avenue and Main Street, which are also state highways, provide the only routes in and out of the village. The resulting high traffic flow on these streets supports the adjacent commercial and retail centers. These routes also provide the main view corridors—straight streets that offer a glimpse of a destination at their end—from the village out to Niantic Bay.

The next rank of streets consists of Grand Street, Hope Street, Smith Street, and Smith Avenue. Besides providing circulation routes through residential areas, these streets provide the main view corridors out to the Niantic River. These streets also support the major thoroughfares by providing nearby street-side parking and access to rear parking lots.

Finally, residential streets convey local traffic and provide walking paths through town.



Thick solid lines represent major streets; dashed lines are view corridors; dotted lines indicate proposed recreational paths; the small buildings are where beacons could mark important connections from the town to the water.

Promenades and Destinations

The presence throughout the village of distinct view corridors helps connect the physical structure of the village to its natural landscape by providing visual linkages and by providing walking routes from town out to the waterfronts. The major view corridors in Niantic are along Pennsylvania Avenue out over Niantic Bay; down Grand and Smith Streets out over the Niantic River; and up the railroad siding toward Dodge Pond.

By increasing the visual presence of a view corridor destination—perhaps by incorporating a beacon such as a waterside pavilion, flagpole, or clock tower—and by making the street itself pedestrian friendly, people are enticed to walk to the destination. And when linked together, view corridors can become the primary pedestrian networks that encourage daily connections by the town residents with their natural environment.



An aerial photograph of Niantic that shows clearly the village's structure, particularly its unique location between three waterfronts.



A diagram of surface parking lot coverage in Niantic. This diagram does not include streets and other automobile-oriented surfaces.



A diagram of tree coverage in Niantic.

Landscape

As the upper diagram shows, the ground level surface of downtown Niantic is covered primarily by surface parking lots for automobiles (parking lots are the black areas on the map). Asphalt, gravel, and concrete currently dominate the landscape, while grass and foliage are mostly reduced to narrow decorative bands and patches that separate parking lots.

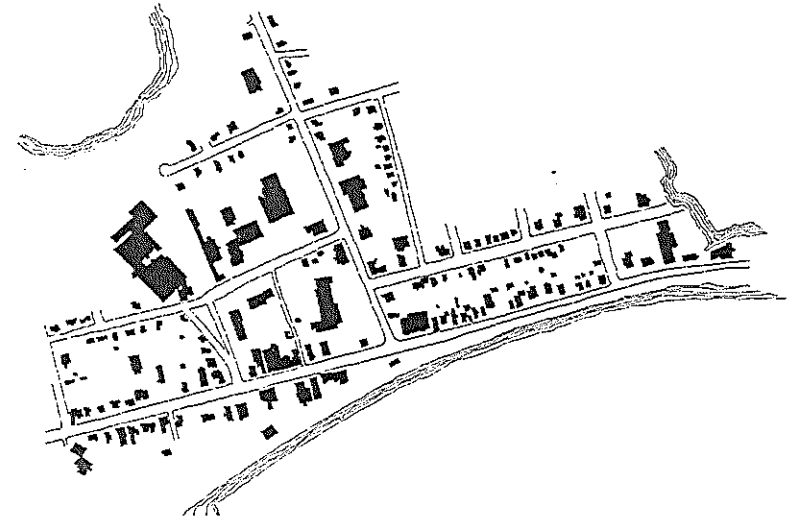
The net effect is one of a gritty downtown, and also of a poor downtown business district: large, mostly empty parking lots imply unsuccessful businesses. Large areas of parking also tie up land that might otherwise be parks, gardens, lawns, commercial or retail space, or residential lots. And as one final point, parking lots generate little property tax.

An almost exact reverse of the parking map is the diagram of Niantic tree coverage. While there are plenty of trees and foliage in the residential neighborhoods, in the downtown areas (the large white space in mid-map) there are almost no trees to shade buildings, sidewalks, parking lots, or people. If more trees were planted—especially along Main Street—they will provide even summer shade, and further lend the streetscapes a natural sense of rhythm and order.

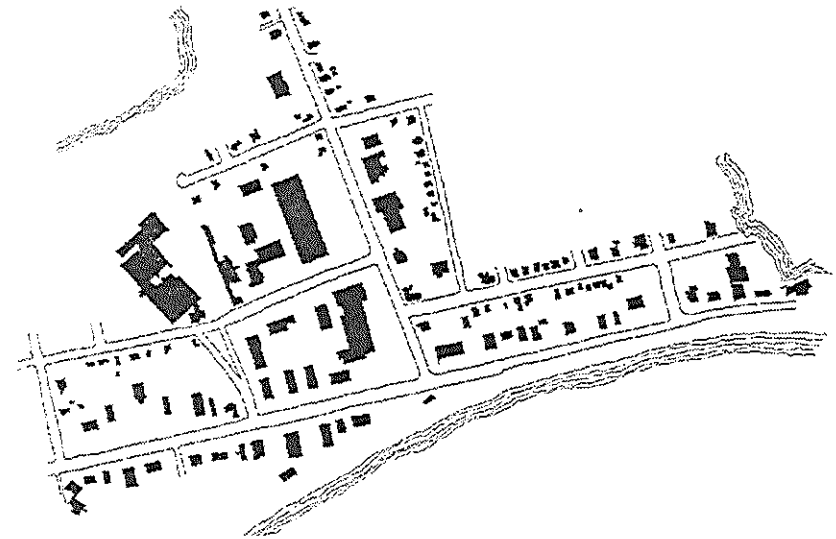
Building Patterns

The existing urban fabric of Niantic is a fairly healthy one. Traditionally, buildings have been located close to the street and close to each other. As a result, they collectively form a sort of wall to the street, one which then helps create a sense of place in the streets. This sense of place helps distinguish Main Street, with its small town feel, from Pennsylvania Avenue, which has a suburban strip feel to it because the buildings are set apart from each other and are located back behind parking lots.

It is important to realize that the current zoning regulations in East Lyme prohibit exactly that sort of small, street-hugging building that makes Main Street so appealing. Instead, the current regulations mandate that a high number of on-site parking spaces be provided with any building, which forces new construction to consolidate lots and give over most of the resulting site to parking. Accordingly, the building migrates behind the parking, which then creates an unappealing suburban streetscape of parking lots and driveways. This current state of Niantic regulations is explored in the diagram to the right.



Existing buildings in Niantic. Notice how commercial buildings on Main Street form a tight block that neatly lines the street, and how other buildings throughout the village also are sited close to the street and to each other.



A map of how Niantic might change if new buildings are built according to parking regulations in the existing zoning code. Rather than replicate the existing row of smaller street-hugging buildings, new structures—like the McDonald's—would sit back from the street, isolated amidst large parking lots.

Niantic: Economic Development

- An outline of the retail possibilities for Niantic by consultant John Shapiro.

Introduction

Niantic is the traditional center of East Lyme, with the town's major supermarket, town hall, and town beach all in close proximity. It is a tourist center, as well, with Niantic Bay and Long Island Sound to the south, and the Niantic River harbor to the east. What it lacks in highway access it makes up for in intrinsic character, with a traditional main street, bay views, a children's museum, etc.

Niantic's future therefore lies not in trying to compete with shopping centers and highway sites on their own basis, but on creating an identity for itself that prompts residents and tourists to travel out of their way to go there.

Analysis

Market Principles

Conventional retail with a regional draw—e.g., large supermarket-anchored shopping centers, superstores, malls, etc.—will prefer Flanders to Niantic. However, Niantic is ideally suited to capture a niche market made up of local and regional residents and tourists seeking a “small town” waterside ambiance in which to conduct “recreational shopping.”

Niantic is centrally located in terms of the older and higher-density portions of the town. It is also conveniently located at the intersection of Routes 161 and 158. Route 161 connects to Interchange 74 of I-95 and with Route 11 to Hartford (both to the north). Route 158 connects to Interchange 72 of I-95 (to the west) and Waterford and New London (to the east). It is also a shortcut for some Waterford residents going westward. Approximately 22,000 vehicles travel Route 161 each day on average;

another 11,000 vehicles travel Route 158.

While substantially less than the vehicle count in Flanders, these are still quite high figures. These traffic figures and proximity to the more populated portion of town substantiate the support for convenience retail in Flanders, i.e., for groceries, dry cleaning, and other goods and services that people seek on a frequent basis.

Niantic also benefits from a significant tourist and seasonal market population, owing to its waterfront location and proximity to Niantic River marinas. Reportedly, traffic along Routes 161 and 158 doubles in summer. This tourist population confers both advantages and disadvantages on retail in Niantic. On the one hand, it generates added support for convenience stores but especially specialty stores, such as antique stores, cafes, boutiques, etc. On the other hand, it creates expectations of higher

profits than can be realized, such that property owners ask unrealistic rents and/or enterprises open and close in rapid succession. It also generates such traffic in the center that many year-round residents prefer to do their shopping elsewhere.

The challenge is how to weld these two market populations together, such that the sum is greater than the parts. To some extent this has to do with store mix, with stores that have both year-round and seasonal appeal doing especially well. Examples include the movie theater and a quality sit-down restaurant. To a greater extent it has to do with creating an ambiance in which regional residents will come to Niantic year-round, because of the store mix and ambiance created by Niantic in the summer.

The timing for such an approach is ideal. The superstore phenomenon of the early 1990s has undercut conventional shopping centers and

malls, creating new opportunities for traditional downtowns (just as the giant supermarkets in the 1980s undercut the moderate sized supermarkets, creating new opportunities for gourmet and specialty food stores). The baby boom generation has also become more conservative and interested in traditional shopping districts, even as they have become more jealous of their free time and interested in ways to conduct errands that is fun and with family and friends. Niantic benefits from being one of the few downtowns in the region that abuts the waterfront.

Civic and Recreational Uses

Niantic also benefits from being the civic and cultural center of its community.

Town Hall is located just to the north of downtown. The library and community center are located just to the north of the village. There is a town beach to the southwest of the village center.

There is also a movie theater in the downtown. Typically, there is market support for one screen per 10,000 people. This multi-screen movie theater therefore calls upon a trade area that is larger than East Lyme; i.e., it is a magnet store.

There are six marinas and docking facilities—with 550 slips—to the immediate east of downtown, along the Niantic River. Curiously, there is a paucity of other boating activities, with only one fishing boat for rent, and no dinner cruise, ocean kayaking, etc., despite the suitability of the river and harbor for small craft and lack of

wave action for dining on board. This apparently has to do with the lack of available upland. In any event, these marinas bring, albeit on a seasonal basis, droves of relatively affluent people intent on spending money on particular conveniences and on eating out.

Finally, there is a children's museum at the western edge of the Niantic business district. The museum is relatively new, yet has already achieved an annual attendance in excess of 40,000 people. Based on comparables, half of these people are adults, since buses of school-children during the week are generally offset by two parents escorting their one young child on the weekends. Like the movie theater, it has a regional appeal.

These uses are significant in a number of ways. Of course they help to bring shoppers to downtown. More significantly, most of these uses bring shoppers to downtown at a variety of

times and occasions. For example, the town beach and marinas bring people to Niantic early morning and late afternoon on the weekends. The town hall and library bring people to Niantic on weekdays. The movie theater brings people to Niantic on weekend evenings. The children's museum brings people to Niantic in winter and on rainy days in summer.

Finally, the regional attractions—namely the movie theater and children's museum—also bring regional residents to downtown. They are “magnets” that help to establish recognition for Niantic among the region's residents.

Retail Mix

After describing the basic market position of Niantic and the diversity of its non-retail draws, it is useful to return to its retail mix. There are approximately 150 businesses in Niantic, with a wide diversity of retail categories, as follows:

- Convenience stores (e.g., groceries) and convenience services (e.g., banks), providing goods and services purchased on a weekly or daily basis. These stores are concentrated on Pennsylvania Avenue—on the main road in and out of Niantic for most residents. Also, the larger sites accommodating medium sized stores are located in this area.
- Comparison stores (e.g., clothing, gifts, housewares), providing goods purchased on a less frequent basis, usually after consideration of the relative price and quality of the merchandise. In Niantic, these are mostly small “boutique” style stores, generally located along Main Street.

- Automotive stores (e.g., gas stations). These too are generally located along Main Street.
- Eating and drinking establishments (e.g., restaurants, cafes) and entertainment (e.g., the movie theater). These too are generally located along Main Street.

The proximity to a solid residential base explains the range of convenience stores and services, notwithstanding the general drift of such stores and services to conventional shopping centers and strip development.

The summertime peaks in demand for shopping and the high disposable income of summer visitors explain the diversity and “boutique” character of many of the comparison stores. Thus, year-round residents benefit from a wider diversity of shopping than is generally the case in older downtowns.

The presence of automotive uses—and also Friendly’s and McDonald’s—bespeaks the volume of traffic passing by. It is a good sign in terms of the viability of the district that such national chains apparently are prospering there. However, it should be warned, such national chains detract from the downtown’s sense of uniqueness and walkability, and thus from its ultimate market value.

The fact that there are relatively few restaurants is, from a market perspective, odd. Restaurants generally require lunch and dinner trade, weekdays and weekends, to amortize the costs of kitchens, bathrooms, spoilage, etc. The diversity of uses in Niantic guarantees such patronage, yet there are relatively few restaurants. It seems that the current regulations regarding distancing of establishments with liquor licenses are thwarting the inclination of the marketplace.

The diversity of retail in Niantic is healthy—and helps to explain why residents do not think of the business district as “belonging” to tourists, even though it is quite crowded in summer; and to explain why visitors still think of Niantic as a “real” place, not just another touristy center.

Recommendations

Land Use

The Town should encourage both the intensification and continued diversification of commercial, retail, cultural and civic uses in the Niantic business district. Niantic's marketability is directly tied to its "recreational retail" character. This requires a walkable center. The walkability of Niantic is partly tied to urban design and circulation considerations discussed later, but its basic element starts with the intensity of uses. Niantic's year-round marketability is directly tied to the multiplicity of uses that bring people to the business district.

In particular, the Children's Museum should be bolstered as an anchor for downtown. This museum has outgrown its space, and despite the very favorable terms it obtained with regard to its current location, it is inevitable that the Museum will seek larger quarters. These quarters could even be outside of Niantic, if not East Lyme altogether.

This would be a serious loss. As noted, the Museum brings tens of thousands of people to downtown. It does not have a restaurant or cafe on site, so all of the visiting families are likely to seek out snacks, meals and then souvenirs in Niantic. The museum—like the movie theater—also helps to establish a regional reputation for Niantic that it would not otherwise enjoy.

Similarly, every effort should be made to assist the movie theater to expand, should it so desire. This might involve adjustments to the ownership or arrangement of the parking lot behind the theater.

Recreational activities—especially water-related sports and activities—should be encouraged. A bowling alley, outdoor tennis courts, and rollerblading court are some examples. So are fishing vessels for rent, dinner cruises, sailing school, ocean kayaking, river kayaking and

canoeing, and fishing pier. The Town recently purchased waterfront land just off of Route 158 and along the Niantic River harbor. The Town is currently pursuing plans to build a boardwalk along the Niantic Bay. Both of these actions are to very good purpose. The Town should actively seek out water-related activities at these two locations that would bring people to Niantic as well as reinforce the association of Niantic with the water, and hence the downtown's identity as a "recreational shopping" place.

It should be noted that the converse of intensifying uses in downtown is that they should not be allowed outside of the area. Clearly, recreational uses such as boating must be located where the land and water conditions are conducive. But civic and retail uses should not be allowed to disperse along Routes 161 and 158, lest they compete with downtown, and/or diminish its sense of identity.

Retail

As indicated earlier, the diversity of stores in East Lyme is both healthy and to be encouraged. The paucity of restaurants, relative to the variety of reasons and occasions to come downtown, is due to regulatory, not market considerations. This policy should be reversed.

One of the oddities of American shoppers is that while they are quite regimented in where they shop for clothes, food, etc., they are quite eclectic in where they go out to dine. People will drive in every which direction in order to get a good Italian meal, Chinese meal, steak or fish dinner, etc. Given this pattern, a single major restaurant (such as Constantine's) can be a major draw for a downtown. So can a general reputation as a "restaurant row." The two can even work in tandem. Thus, restaurants should be actively encouraged, as a means to promote the visitation and visibility of other stores. They also contribute the sociability of a downtown.

Promoting restaurants would be relatively easy in East Lyme: the regulations impeding their opening can simply be removed or amended. Clearly, other safeguards would be needed to assure that neighboring residences are not imposed upon, and that the area does not only become a "restaurant row", but "bar row." Such safeguards could take the form of performance standards, relating to hours of operation, hours during which drinks may be served, and ambient noise.

The Town should also promote stores and retail activities. These include farmers' markets, antique markets, outdoor dining under tents, etc. A regular schedule of such uses will help to bring more regional residents to downtown, as they contribute to Niantic's "recreational shopping" identity. People watching and socializing are two of the reasons people go to downtowns (and even malls). But these uses also make market sense, in that they help to absorb some

of the peak demand that coincides with the warmer months of the year.

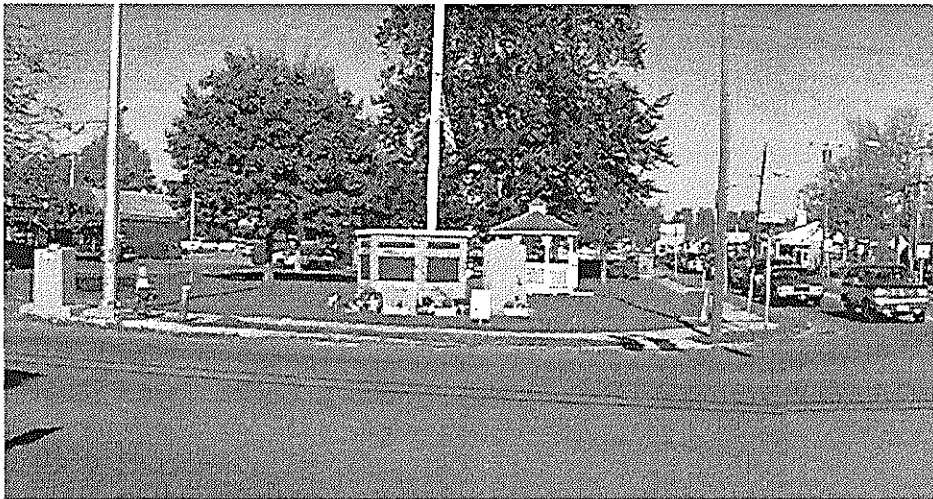
Merchants are often concerned about being undercut by outdoor markets. This need not be a concern if the proper precautions are taken. First, existing merchants should be invited to participate in the markets at discounted rates. Second, the revenue from the outdoor markets can be used to help pay for beautification projects that merchants would like to see but prefer not to pay for. Third, markets tend to draw tourists and regional residents much more so than local residents. As regional/tourist draws, they bring more spending to Niantic than would otherwise be the case. (This can be easily demonstrated through shopper surveys on days with and without the outdoor markets.)

Area Study

Niantic Village Green

Principles

1. Establish the civic center of Niantic: locate along the Green the Post Office, the veteran's memorial, and a new the railroad station.
2. Expand the Green to an appropriately civic size by incorporating the Morton House side lawn and the land along the waterfront into the Green precinct.
3. Reinforce the sense of the Green as a special place by means of distinct paving, unique plantings, and building facades and landscaping that create strong edges.
4. Visually and physically connect the expanded Green to the shore beyond the tracks.



The existing Niantic Village Green,

Located at the geographic center of Niantic where the village's two major streets cross, the Niantic Green has the potential to become a true center for the village. In its present configuration, however, the small Green is overwhelmed by surrounding pavement and thus feels more like a vestpocket park than a village center.

If the Green were to expand across the intersection and command this central space, rather than retreat into a corner as it presently does, the park would much more clearly read as the civic center of Niantic. The relocation here of civic institutions—the Post Office, a rail stop—will further contribute to its civic status. When enlivened with an amphitheater and an underpass to the Niantic Bay Overlook boardwalk, the Green can become a central gathering place for villagers and visitors alike who wish to take advantage of both village and shore.

Niantic Green Base Plan

Pennsylvania Avenue

Morton House

Sidewalks

Niantic Green Pedestrian Zone

Amphitheater and Railroad
Underpass Access

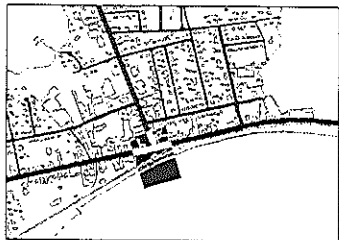
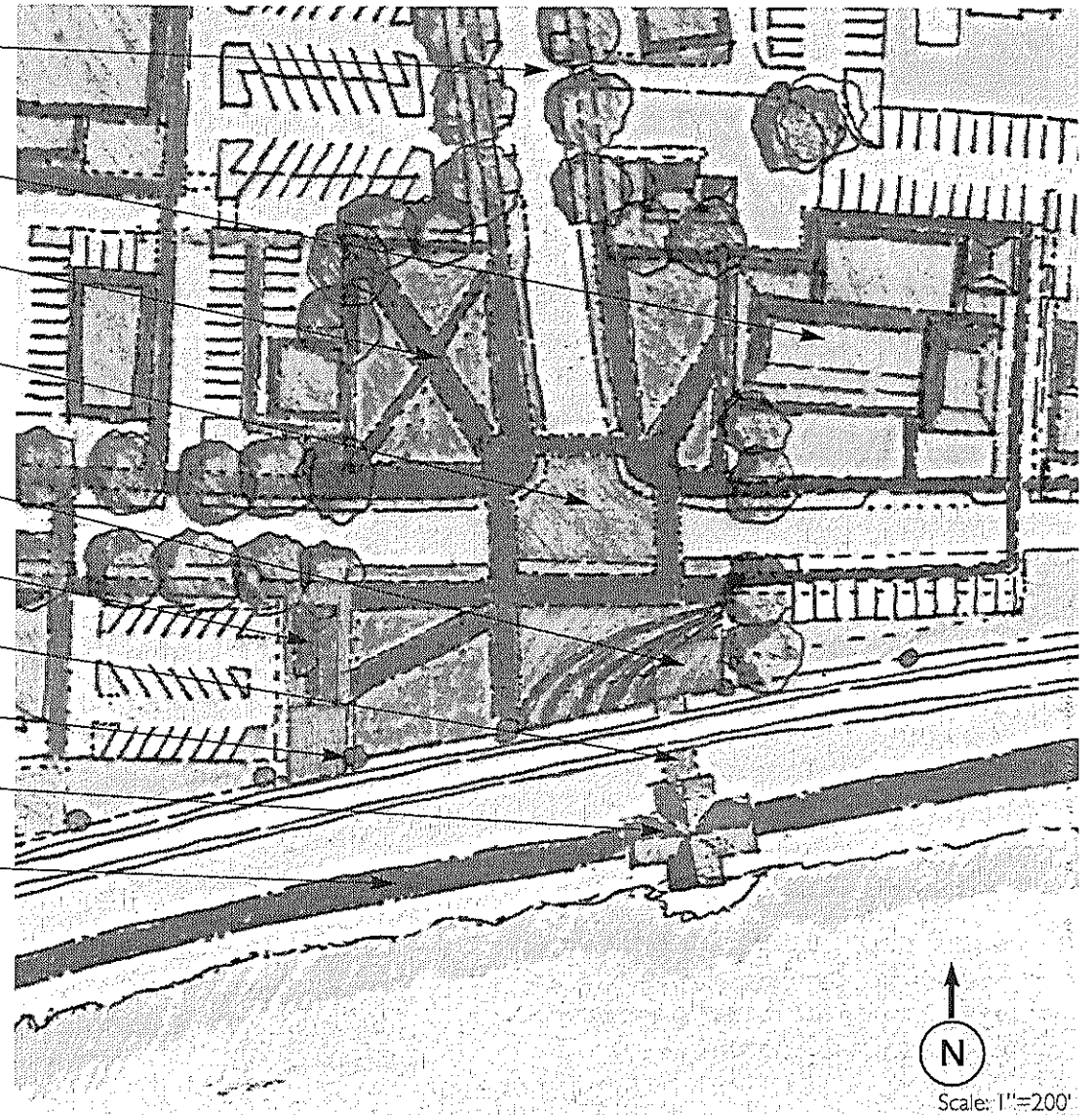
Post Office and Railroad Stop

Pedestrian Underpass

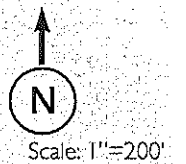
Decorative Fence

Boardwalk Pavilion

Niantic Bay Overlook Boardwalk



Niantic Locator Map





The current view from Pennsylvania Avenue over the shore. The Mobil gas station building, its signs, and the vast expanse of continuous pavement all detract from the view of waterfront behind. This is one of the most important lots in Niantic, but currently it is not being put to its highest or its best use.

A Sense of Place

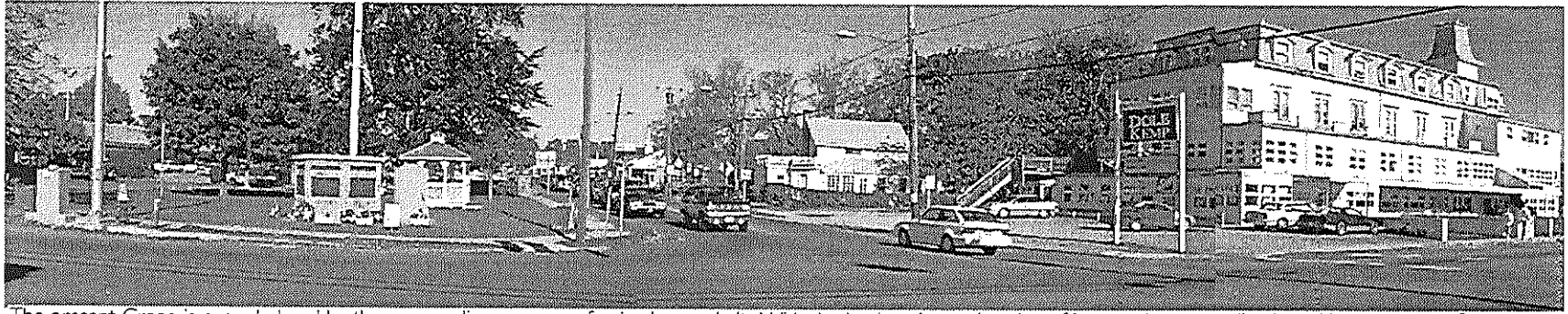
- Expand the current corner-lot Green by linking it to the Morton House side lawn and the shoreline land at the end of Rte. 161. By encompassing this central intersection with one distinct open space, the Green precinct will become the clear center of the village.
- Build along or plant trees along all but the shoreline edges of the Green in order to define a space distinct from the rest of the village.
- Designate the intersection of Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue as special with the square of colored pavement.
- Move the Post Office to the edge of the Green to enhance the area's civic identity.
- Establish design guidelines along the sides of the Green that encourage civic scaled facades with pedestrian scale elements that maintain the character of the precinct.

Niantic Green Pedestrian Zone

- Specially pave the entire intersection of Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue—this visually marks Green as a center. This square will serve not only to make the intersection safer for pedestrians and children on bicycles, moreover it will serve as a landmark or signal that one has arrived in the center of Niantic.
- This square of pavement should be of a different material and color than the street (concrete pavers, bricks, etc).
- Carry the special paving material through the sidewalks in the Green to clearly mark the three quadrants of the Green as one distinct and important place.
- The square is part of a larger system as the culmination of the link between Flanders and Niantic—two paved squares at the main intersection of each village linked by painted telephone poles. (See Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway).

Village Green Expansion

- Relocate the Mobil station at the terminus of Pennsylvania Avenue to another site.
- Open the view down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Sound by moving the gas station building—which is actually the old railroad station—to the west edge of the site.
- Acquire the gas station land, and expand the Village Green precinct to include the shoreline site.
- Expand the Village Green precinct to include the west lawn of the Morton House. The town need not buy the land, but rather encourage that the Morton house landscaping be a part of that of the larger Green precinct.



The present Green is overwhelmed by the surrounding expanse of unbroken asphalt. With the landscaping and paving of its west lawn coordinating with the existing Green, and with a new sign more in scale with its context, the Morton House could help form part of a larger and more appealing village Green. In return, the Morton House would benefit from its immediacy with this more compelling public place.

Village Green Edges

The Green will feel much more like a distinguished public place if it becomes a distinct space with strong edges and a clear center.

- Line the open edges of the Green—in particular the north and southeast edges—with tall trees and with plantings dense enough to separate the space of the Green from that of surrounding areas.
- Keep the interior of the Green relatively open—avoid planting trees and tall landscaping that might obstruct the view of Niantic Bay.
- Encourage buildings fronting the Green (Morton House, Pizzeria, and the relocated gas station building) to maintain aligned facades that abut and define the Green edges.
- Line the waterfront edge of the Green—along the tracks—with decorative fencing. The fence should not be overly dense, though, to preserve the view through to the Sound.

Sidewalks

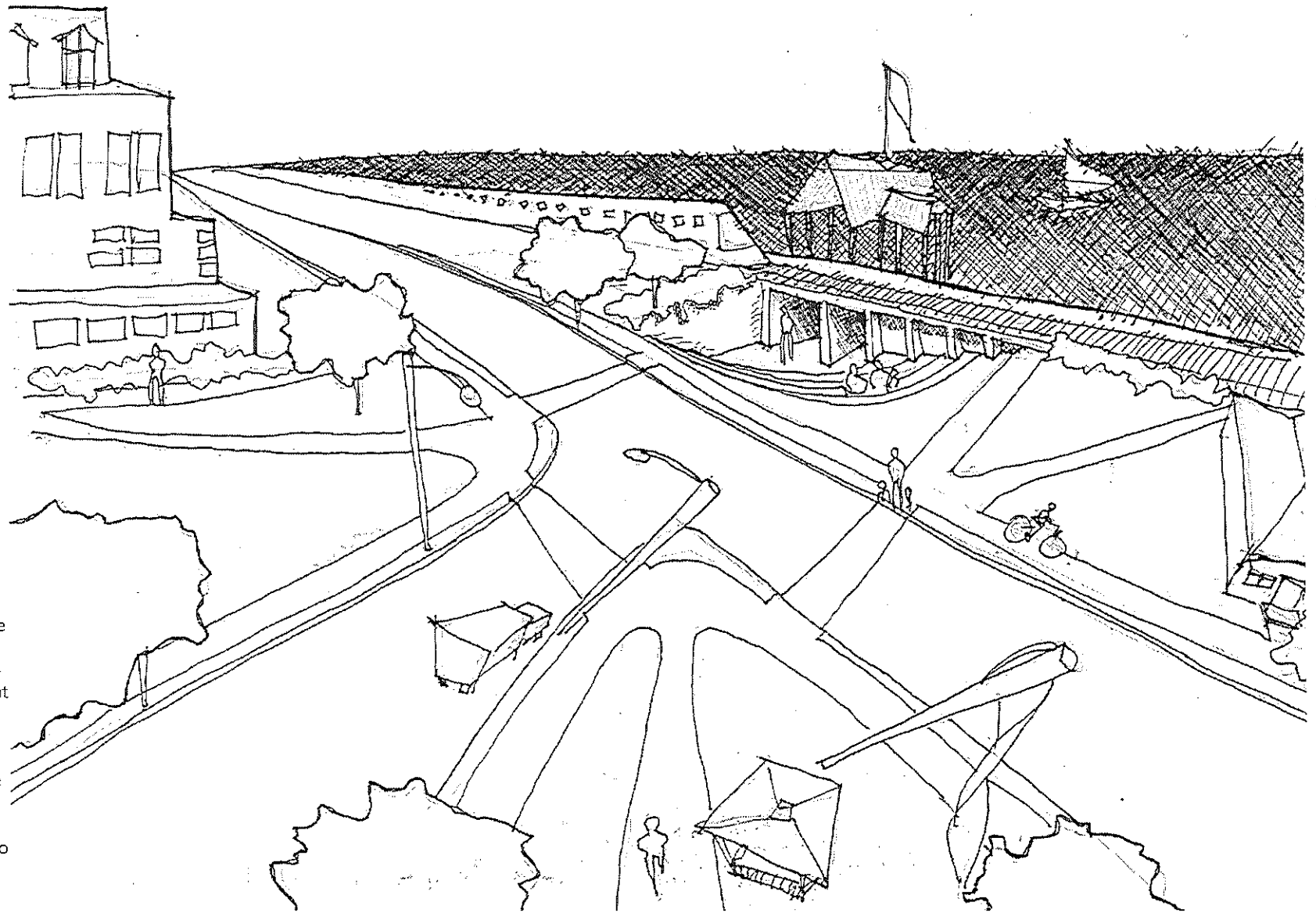
- Expand the pedestrian street crossings at the intersection of Main Street/Pennsylvania Avenue and repave the entire intersection with brick or pavers. This will both increase the safety of pedestrians crossing between different parts of the Village Green, and it will establish that this intersection, like its counterpart at Flanders Four Corners, is the center of Niantic village.
- Widen primary sidewalks throughout the Green to distinguish them from those along Main Street.
- Relocate the Veteran's Memorial and flagpole from the northwest quarter of the Village Green to a more prominent location in the new shoreline quarter of the Green, where it will be in full view down Pennsylvania Avenue.
- At this location, the Veteran's Memorial will further serve with the trees to the southeast side of the Green to reframe the view of the

boardwalk pavilion for drivers on the southernmost stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue.

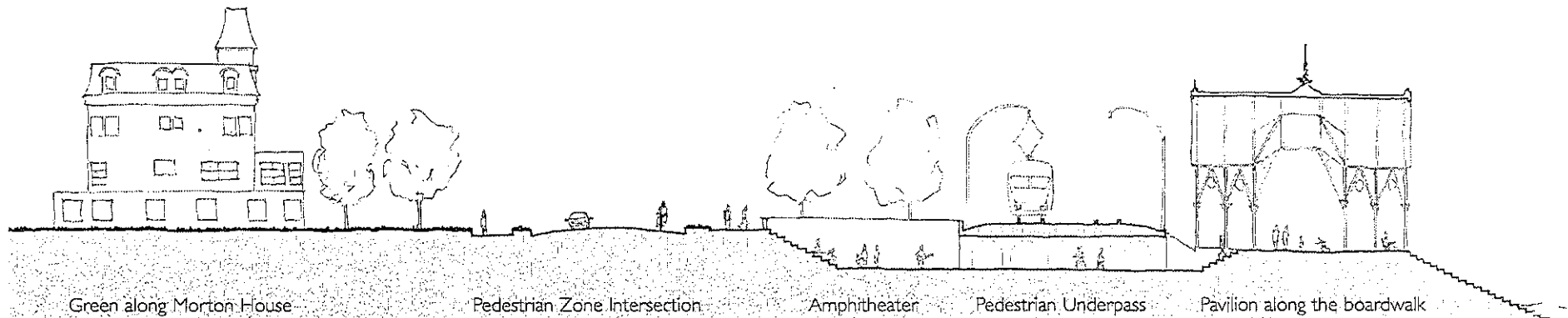
- Install pedestrian scaled street lighting at intervals of 30 feet or less along the paths and sidewalks in the Village Green.
- Install a limited number of park benches along the edges of the Green where they can provide seating and help demarcate the park edge.

Depot

- Relocate the old depot (currently the Mobil station building) to the west side of its site, along the edge of Constantine's parking lot and in line with the pizzeria across Main Street, where it will help create a strong western edge to the expanded Green.
- In this site, the depot will also buffer the green from Constantine's parking lot, and with the pizza house the depot will help form a gateway to Main Street.
- Relocate the post office to the Main Street side of the resited depot building, where it can anchor Main Street and where it will reinforce the civic nature of the Green.
- Create a station stop for forthcoming commuter rail by locating a limited-access paved waiting platform between the resited depot and the train tracks.
- Use the south end of the old depot as a waiting room and for controlling access to the train platform.
- Parking for commuter rail could be provided by the town on the other side of the expanded Green, or along Pennsylvania and Grand Avenues.
- Parking might also be shared with Constantine's on a paid-use basis, since the parking demands for commuter rail and for restaurant parking fall at different times of the day.

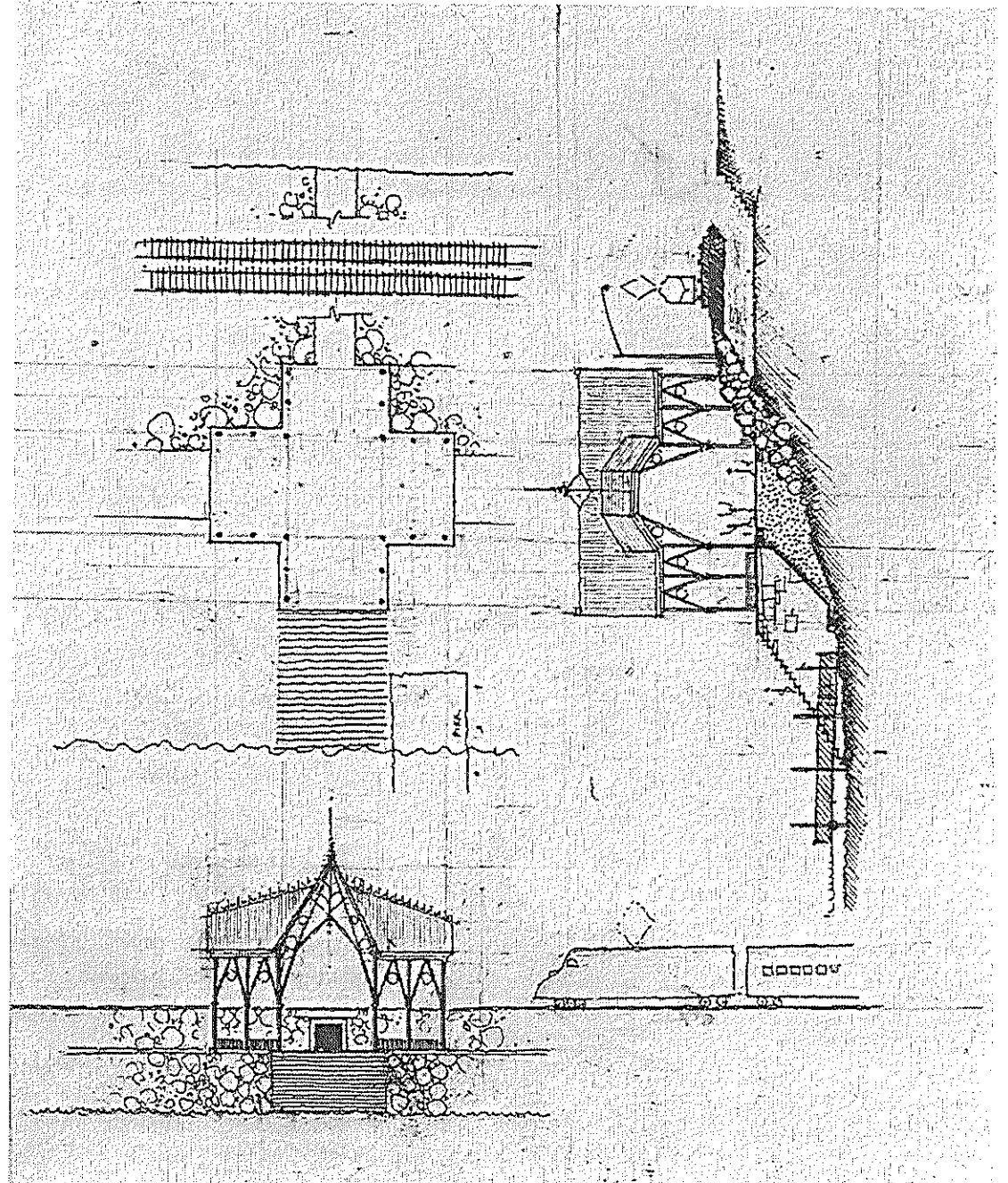


An aerial view of the expanded Green, showing the relocated depot to the right in the picture. This view also shows the sidewalks of Pennsylvania Avenue feeding directly into the amphitheater and the underpass to the pavilion and boardwalk beyond.



Niantic Bay Overlook Pavilion

- Create a visible and physical linkage from the town to the water by locating a large, open pavilion along the shore where the axis of Pennsylvania Avenue crosses the proposed Niantic Bay Overlook boardwalk.
- Visible down the entire length of Pennsylvania Avenue in Niantic, the pavilion will function as a beacon marking both the center of Niantic Village, and marking the presence of the boardwalk on the other side of the railroad tracks.
- Set the Pavilion back only the minimum required distance from the railroad tracks to give it the presence from passing trains of an old railroad platform.
- Should track realignment make it possible, open a pedestrian passage under the tracks connecting the Green to the pavilion, and thus to the boardwalk and shore beyond.
- Create an amphitheater in the southern half of the green that will also serve to access an underpass to the Pavilion and boardwalk beyond.
- * The amphitheater should reinforce the notion that the Green is the central gathering place for Niantic by serving as an outdoor performance venue for both the town and the Children's Museum.
- Make the underpass below the tracks to the boardwalk as inviting as possible. By making it wider than the usual pedestrian tunnel, more light air will get in and the underpass will seem shorter.
- By adding an architectural or artistic decorative elements to the underpass, the tunnel itself can become an event within the Green.
- Decorative schemes for the underpass might be coordinated with those for the pedestrian passage under I-95 along Rte. 161, which would reemphasize the linkages between the two villages.
- Apply now for ISTEAs funding for underpass, and begin working with Amtrak representatives on incorporating the underpass into their track realignment plans.
- Apply to Amtrak for High Speed Rail compensation funds to cover some of the underpass costs.



A proposal for the pavilion along the Niantic Bay Overlook boardwalk, to be located adjacent to the Green. Even if a physical link cannot be made under the tracks, the striking presence of a structure like this will establish an important visual connection between the landlocked Green and the shore beyond.

The Industrial Gothic look of this pavilion is meant to relate the structure to the industrial vernacular architecture throughout Connecticut, and to relate it to similarly styled railroad structures all along the shore line. The openness and airiness of the shelter also allows views through from the Green to the water.

Niantic Village Green

Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Begin negotiations to acquire the Mobil gas station property at the south end of Pennsylvania Avenue. This is the most significant civic property in Niantic and should be acquired by the town.
- Begin negotiations with Amtrak to have them construct an underpass at the terminus of Pennsylvania Avenue when they realign the tracks in the next few years.
- Apply now for ISTEA funding for the underpass, and begin working with state representatives on funding sources for beach access at the Green.
- Apply to Amtrak for High Speed Rail compensation funds to cover some of the underpass costs, and costs of decorative fencing to separate the Green from the rail corridor.
- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.
- Begin working with state representatives to establish a Shore Line East rail stop at the Green.
- Coordinate with boardwalk planners to allow for the eventual construction of a large pavilion where the boardwalk passes the Green.
- Work with the Morton House owners to coordinate landscaping and paving of their western lawn, currently a parking lot along Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Build along or plant trees along all but the shoreline edges of the Green in order to define the space as distinct from the rest of the village.
- Designate the intersection of Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue as special by rebuilding the square with colored pavement.
- Apply for ISTEA funds for sidewalk and crosswalk improvements.
- Review Green expansion strategies with State DOT representative.
- Establish design guidelines along the sides of the Green that encourage civic scaled facades with pedestrian scale elements that maintain the character of the precinct.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Relocate the gas station building (the old railroad depot) to the west side of its shoreline site.
- Move the Post Office to the relocated gas station building so that it enhances the civic nature of the Green.
- Construct a large pavilion along the boardwalk, on axis with the east sidewalk along Pennsylvania Avenue, that will physically and visually link the shoreline to the Green and the village beyond.
- Excavate the amphitheater to provide a ceremonial access to the shoreline underpass as well as a village gathering place.



Area Study

Pennsylvania Avenue

Principles

1. Change the highway character of "Route 161" to the residential character of "Pennsylvania Avenue"—calm traffic, regularize intersections, increase the prominence and safety of pedestrians, line the street with trees, and improve building facades and landscaping to complement the surrounding village.
2. Expand the size and significance of the Village Green, and provide there both a visual and physical connection to the shore.
3. Distinguish open areas along Pennsylvania Avenue—Town Hall Park, the Niantic Shopping Center, and the Village Green—as major public places connected by the narrow corridor of the street.
4. Support the commercial nature of the lower Pennsylvania Avenue—concentrate services for residents, and regularize traffic intersections to ease navigation by both automobiles and pedestrians.



The view down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the shore.

Pennsylvania Avenue, the southernmost stretch of Route 161, is the primary conduit into Niantic from the rest of East Lyme. As such, it serves as a gateway to both the village and the shore. Pennsylvania Avenue can also be understood as Niantic's commercial strip, where goods and services provided by larger retailers are conveniently located for Niantic residents. The workaday character of the current commercial strips, compounded by the street's current termination at a gas station, belies the potential grandeur of this avenue.

Pennsylvania Avenue Base Plan

Pennsylvania Avenue

Smith Street Intersection

Town Hall Park

Town Hall
Police station
Dodge Pond pavilion (off to left of map)

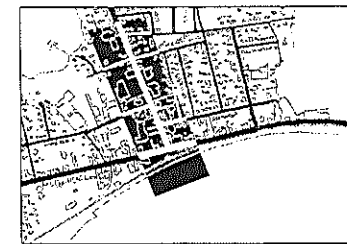
Sidewalks

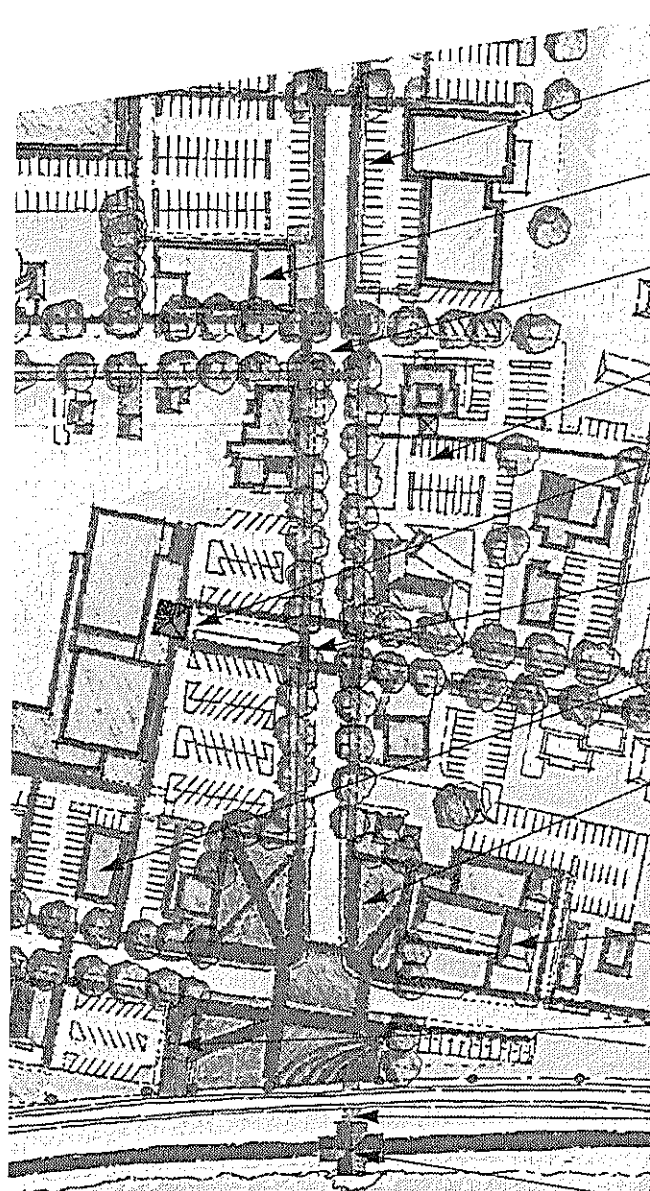
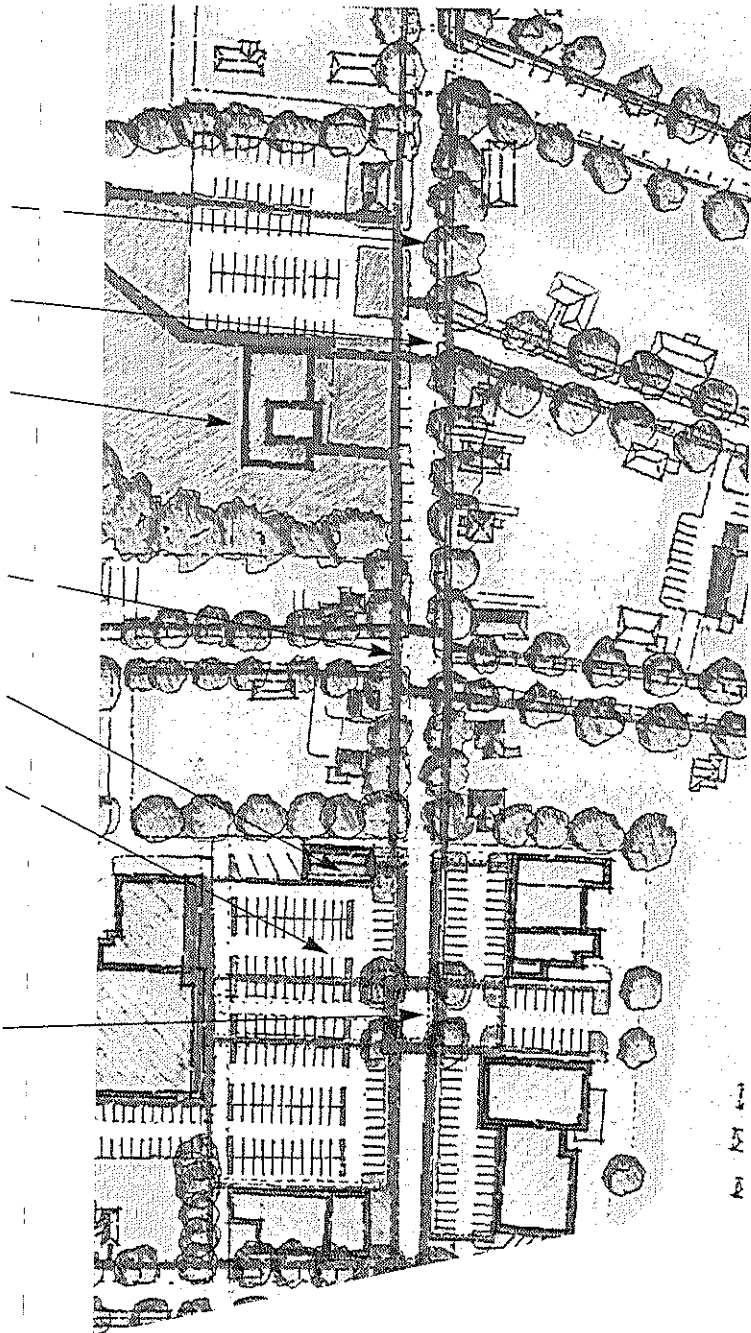
Farmers' Market

Niantic Shopping Center

Edwards Super Food Store/CVS Pharmacy
Carmine's Package Store
Dairy Queen Plaza
Flea Market
Shared parking

Shopping Center Intersection





Niantic Shopping Center

Build-out of Carmine's

Hope Street Intersection

Shared Bank Parking

Niantic Village Plaza
Hope Street beacon

Grand Street Intersection

New Infill Building

Village Green
Existing Village Green
Morton House expansion
Niantic Bay Amphitheater

Morton House

Post Office and Rail Stop

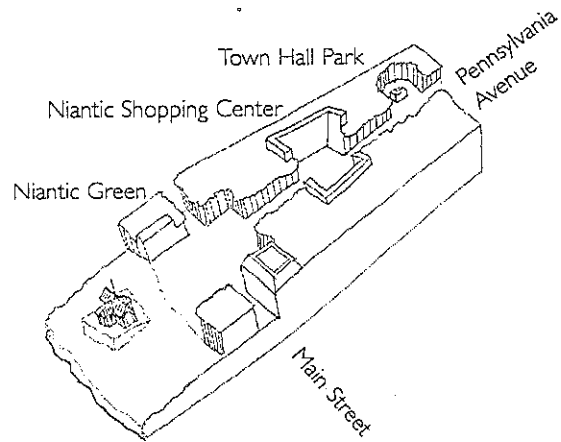
Underpass

Boardwalk Pavilion

Niantic Bay



Scale: 1"=400'



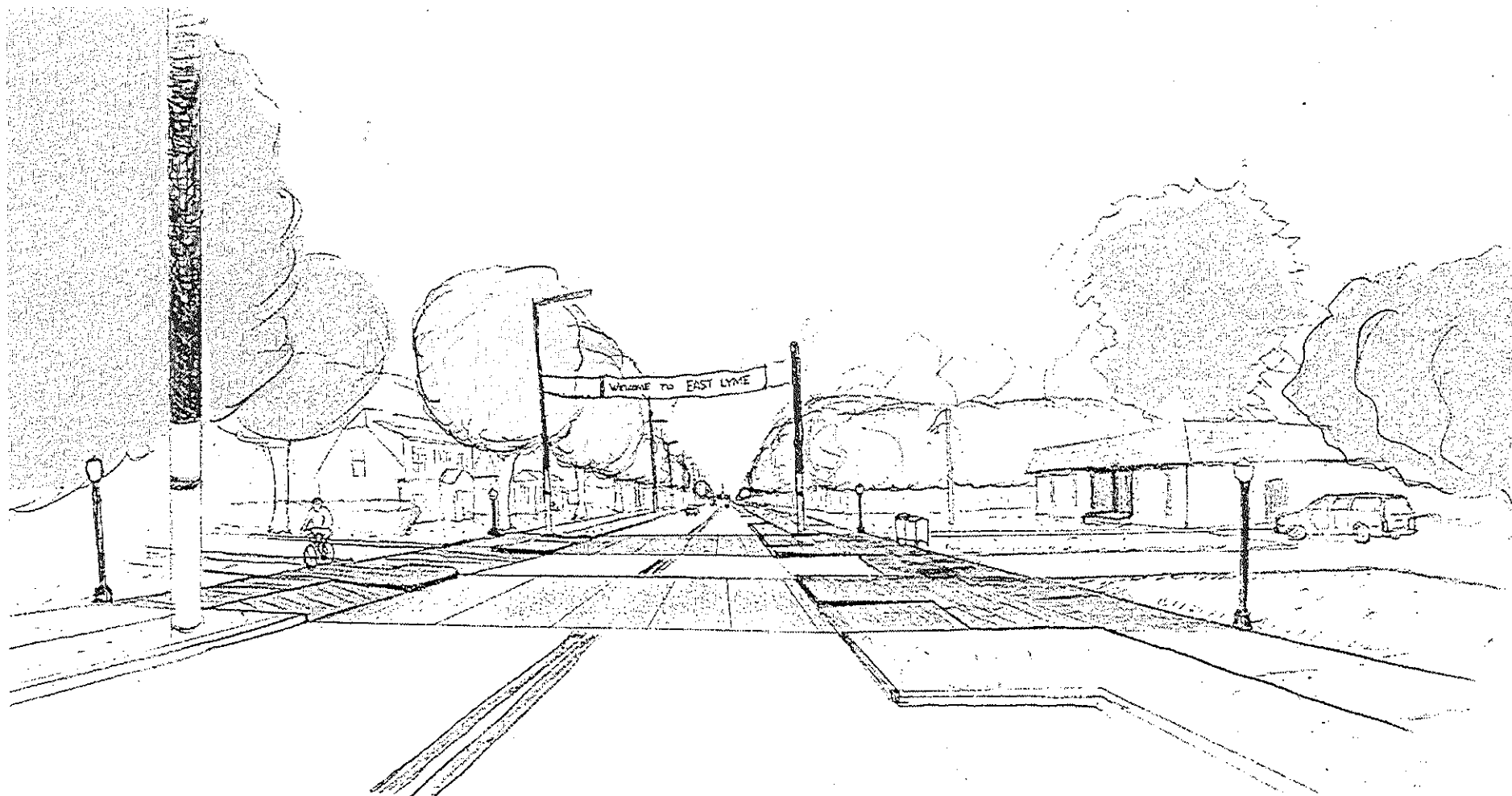
Pennsylvania Avenue Structure

The underlying structure of Pennsylvania Avenue is that of a narrow street spine connecting three wide open public spaces—Town Hall Park, Niantic Shopping Center, and the Village Green. Decisions about landscaping and building placement along Pennsylvania Avenue should work to strengthen these contrasting conditions.

- Emphasize the street corridor of Pennsylvania Avenue by lining those parts of the street in between the open areas with high canopy shade trees. Space the trees closely but evenly (no more than thirty feet apart) so that the trunks maintain a street wall when viewed obliquely down the street.
- Keep all new building construction along corridor parts of Pennsylvania Avenue close to the sidewalk, and allow only limited parking behind.

- Where Pennsylvania Avenue passes in front of the Niantic Village Plaza parking lot, continue the line of closely spaced streetside shade trees. Here, they are necessary to frame the view down Pennsylvania Avenue over the Sound. Be sure these trees have a high canopy to allow clear views of the stores.
- Where Pennsylvania Avenue passes through the open spaces—Town Hall Park, Niantic Shopping Center, and the Village Green—emphasize their expansiveness by keeping all streetside landscaping low and close to the sidewalk. Do not here line the street with trees.
- Better define the open spaces as distinct places by closing their edges. Encourage continuous building facades around their side and rear edges, and in between buildings continue the facade lines with closely spaced trees or covered walkways.

- If planting shade trees in open space parking areas like that of the Niantic Shopping Center, choose low, colorful trees and space them generously to keep them visually distinct from the street and edge condition shade trees. Ideally, such trees would look from the street to be one continuous colored canopy over the open space.
- Continue the utility pole art (painted poles or banners) up to the north edge of the Village Green to emphasize the connection from the Niantic Green back to Flanders Four Corners. The line of decorated poles also will help visually define Pennsylvania Avenue as a single corridor connecting several open spaces.
- Concentrate any new pedestrian scaled street lighting at intersections with pedestrian crossings; the concentration of light serves at night to alert drivers to these special pedestrian zones.



Perspective view down Pennsylvania Avenue in front of Town Hall Park, with repaved intersections and trees lining the street. Notice how the line of trees beyond the Town Hall contains the space of the park and directs the view back toward the boardwalk pavilion and Niantic Bay beyond.

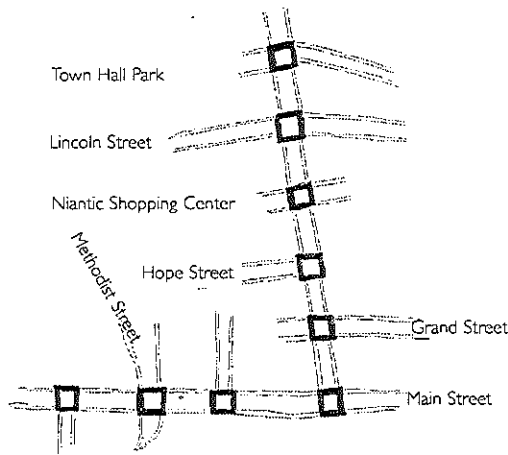


Diagram of sidewalks, street crossings, and traffic intersections in Niantic. After encountering one or two of the regularly spaced crossings, drivers will quickly anticipate following intersections and slow down automatically.

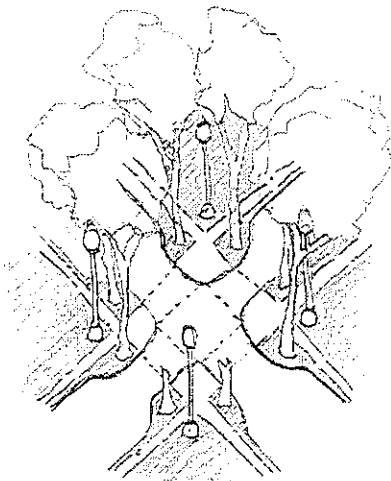


Diagram of an intersection reconfigured to calm traffic: "dogbone" indents mark parallel parking zones; crosswalks are widened, and shade trees are moved slightly toward the intersection. To hold down automobile speeds, dimensions of traffic lanes in intersection are minimized.

Traffic Calming

- Narrow driving lanes along Pennsylvania Avenue to 12 feet, which will signal the change from state highway to a village avenue and encourage automobiles to drive slowly.
- Formalize parallel parking on both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue to slow traffic and buffer pedestrians from moving automobiles.
- Install paved "dog bones" to mark the end of parallel parking areas and the beginning of pedestrian crossing zones and traffic intersections.
- Limit parking lot entrances and realign them either with terminating streets—Hope Street and Grand Street—or with other parking lot entrances; this will reduce the number of cross-traffic turning areas, and should make proper parking lot entrances clearer to drivers.
- Concentrate new street lighting at intersections with pedestrian crossings; the concentration of light serves at night to alert drivers to upcoming intersections and pedestrians.

Pedestrian Amenities

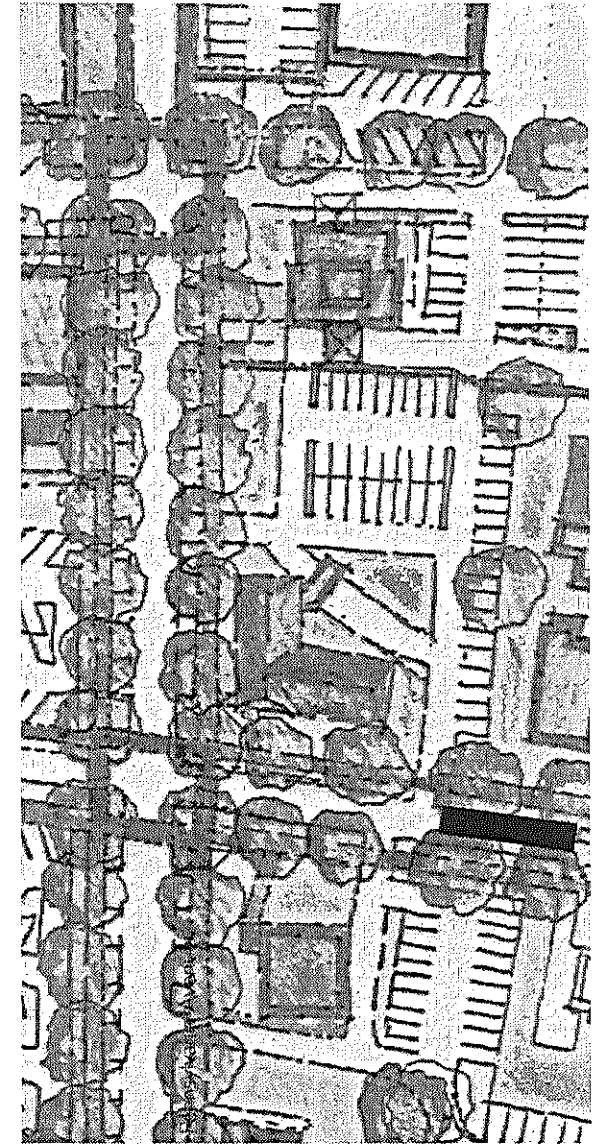
Make street edges of Pennsylvania Avenue more pleasant for pedestrians and more appealing visually to drivers.

- Install parallel parking along both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue to shield pedestrians from moving cars.
- Widen sidewalks and pave consistently with a material different than that of the street—preferably with brick or some other paver. A change in material from street to sidewalk will help differentiate pedestrian areas from automobile areas.
- Establish evenly spaced pedestrian crossing areas traffic intersections.
- Make pedestrian crossing areas more prominent to automobile traffic by changed crosswalk paving to that of sidewalks, installing special pedestrian scaled sidewalk lighting, and by planting trees in projecting "dog bones."

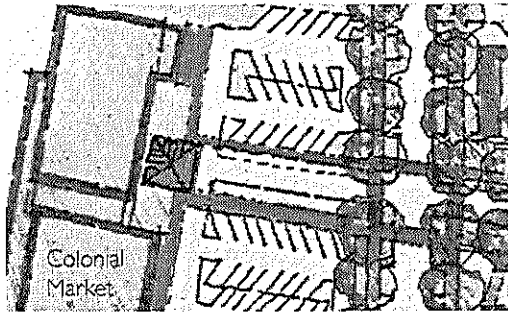
Parking Lots

Reduce the presence of parking lots from the street, where they detract from the streetscape, by making the lots as efficient as possible.

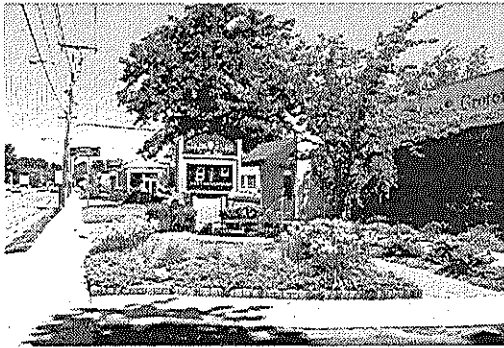
- Promote on-street parking wherever possible, which decreases the need for off-street lots and which increases the vitality of the streetscape.
- Combine and share parking areas so that lots can be more efficiently arranged, redundant access drives can be eliminated, and unused areas can be converted to green space.
- Change zoning regulations to allow flexibility in meeting parking needs. Not all buildings need lots, and those that do should be able to share lot space with neighboring buildings.
- Move all parking lots behind setback line of buildings.
- Screen parking lots from street with low landscaping, low fences, or trees.
- Minimize the number of lot entrances and exits to reduce confusion for drivers, to reduce sidewalk crossings, and to minimize visual disruptions along the street.
- Align rear parking lots to create an alley that will enable access to all lots from side streets.
- Plant high canopy shade trees along the perimeters and in the medians of parking lots to improve their appearance, and to keep the lots and the surrounding buildings cooler in the summer.
- Use one way entrance and exit drives if needed to guide efficient traffic flow through lots.
- Promote the use of permeable lot paving materials that will reduce surface water runoff into the municipal waste water treatment system.



A plan of reconfigured parking lots along the east side of Pennsylvania Avenue. By combining and sharing lots and entrance drives, off-street parking becomes much more efficient and the number of curb cuts along Pennsylvania Avenue is reduced. Moving one bank drive-through allows a shared lot entrance to be aligned with Hope Street.



A tower at the Niantic Village Plaza on axis with Grand Avenue will both increase the presence of the shopping center, and will serve as a beacon when seen from the marinas along the Niantic River.



Successful landscaping along Pennsylvania Avenue



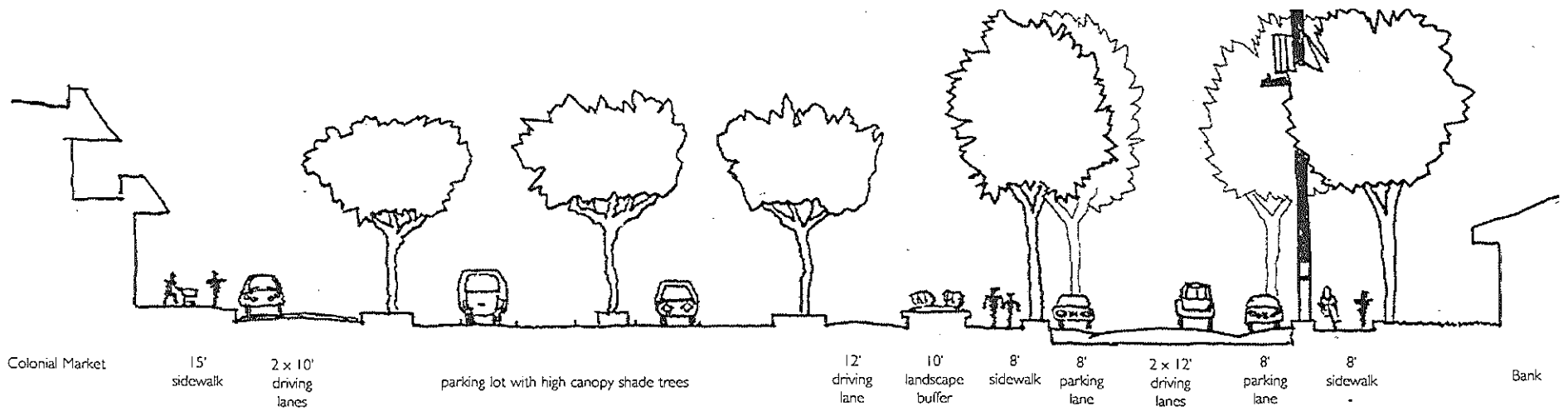
Continuous pavement, a lack of buffer space between sidewalk and street or parking lot, haphazard signage, and isolated shade trees all make this stretch of sidewalk unappealing.

Streetscape

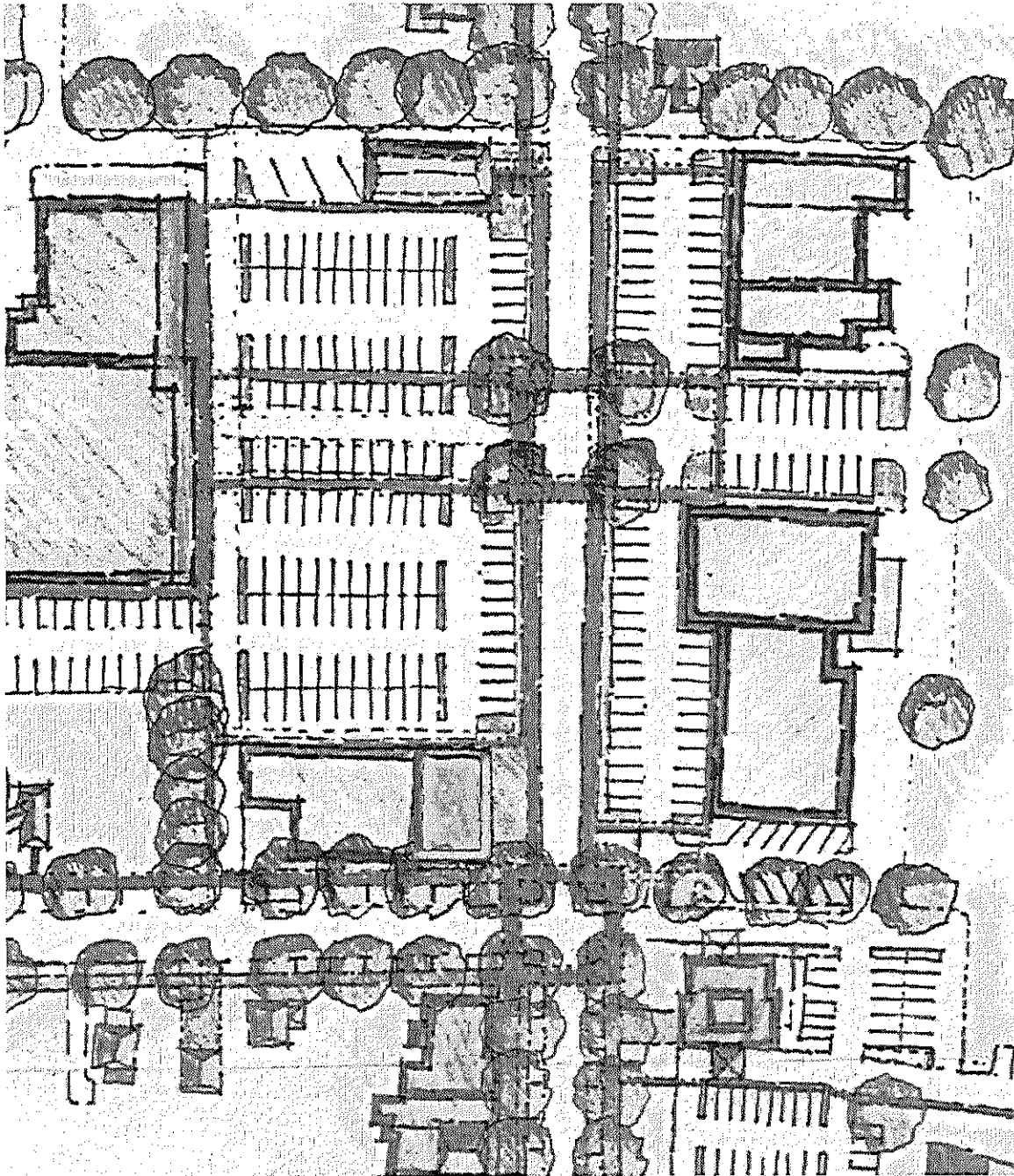
- Reinforce the area of “front lawns” between Citizen’s Bank and the Morton House by moving parking lots behind the building setback line, and preferably behind a landscaping screen.
- Relocate and consolidate shopping center signage to the main entrance of each shopping area. This will clarify store access for drivers and reduce visual clutter along the street.
- Simplify and clarify signage design guidelines.
- Line Pennsylvania Avenue with high canopy shade trees spaced no more than thirty feet apart. The trees will shade the streets and sidewalks, and the regular spacing of the trunks will lend the street a natural rhythm and order.
- Locate a tower along the front of the Niantic Village Plaza, on axis with Hope Street, to increase the presence of the building behind the Pennsylvania Avenue street trees. The tower will also serve as a beacon to demarcate

the presence of the village center when glimpsed from the marinas along the Niantic River.

- Plant lower and more colorful trees in the parking lot behind to distinguish the precinct of the shopping center from that of the street and the Village Green.
- Make the north edge of the Village Green an opaque wall of trees to better frame the view down Pennsylvania Avenue of the boardwalk pavilion and Niantic Bay beyond.
- Encourage the use of indigenous plants and grasses in landscaping; native species do not require special water and care, and a mix of native species will provide color and blooms throughout much of the year.
- Establish design guidelines to ensure that new buildings follow established setbacks, reasonable heights, and massings that are sympathetic to the character of Pennsylvania Avenue.



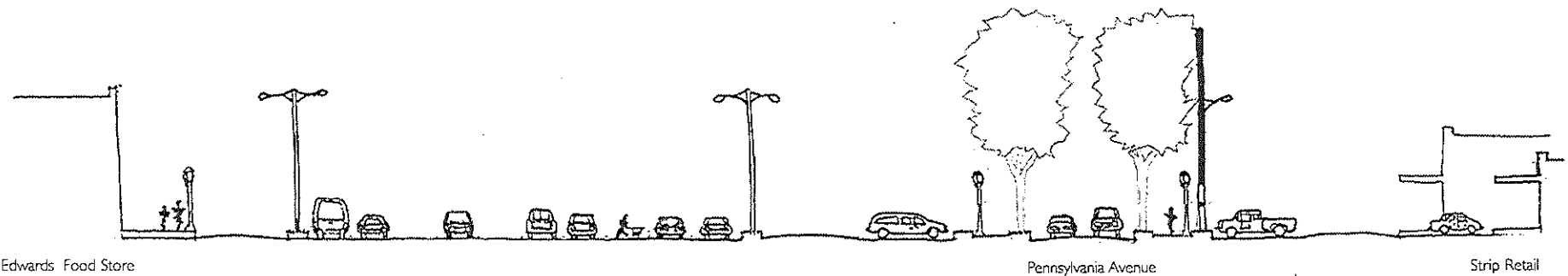
A section through Pennsylvania Avenue, taken from Colonial Market on the left to the Groton Bank on the right. The dimensions given here illustrate not only relative widths of various traffic lanes, but they also illustrate an approach to calming traffic by narrowing lane widths and increasing the number of buffers between pedestrians and moving automobiles.



Niantic Shopping Center Renovation

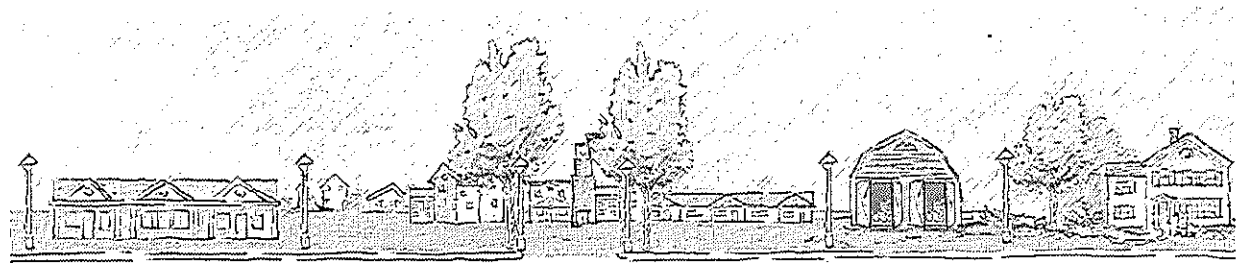
The overriding goal in improving the shopping strips along Pennsylvania Avenue is to organize the random collection of shopping strips into one coherent retail center. This plan does so by encouraging linked building fronts that better define a shared central parking space.

- Consolidate parking lot access into one central intersection; this intersection will establish the center of the entire precinct.
- Link all retail buildings to the sidewalk system and to the new central intersection. Pave these sidewalks in a material distinct from that of the parking lot surface.
- surround the precinct with tightly spaced trees that will enclose the entire space.
- Extend the front of Carmine's out to the set-back line established by the stores just to the south of Hope Street; this will more firmly anchor the southern edge of the parking lot.

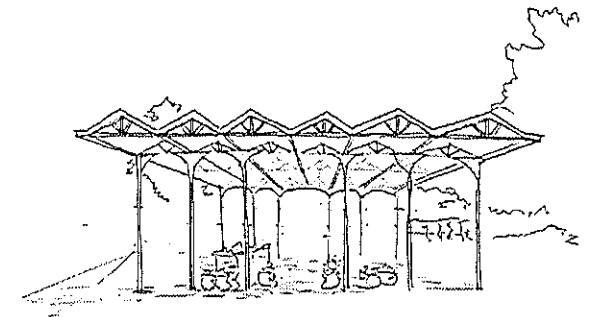


A section through Pennsylvania Avenue, taken across the Niantic Shopping Center. Pedestrian scaled street lighting and a group of four trees at the central intersection help maintain a human scale in this otherwise automobile scaled district.

- Locate a market building on the north side of the shopping center, and organize a biweekly farmer's market there.
- Encourage facade improvements that work to link the buildings to each other both physically—by means of covered walkways and low connecting walls—and visually, by means of common materials, window sizes, ornament, signage, and other details.
- Encourage fun and playful facade improvements; the facades and walkways should appeal both to automobiles passing by on Pennsylvania Avenue, and to pedestrians walking up close to the buildings.
- Keep all landscaping along Pennsylvania Avenue low and close to the sidewalk so that it does not detract from the attempt to unify the entire space as one retail center.



A study of possible facade redesign on the west side of the Niantic Shopping Center. From the left, the study shows: a build-out of Carmine's forward to the setback line; a new facade with tower on the Edwards Super Food Store; a facade improvement for CVS that echoes that of Carmine's; and a new farmer's market building on the north side of the site. The study further shows regular pedestrian scaled street lighting and new trees to signal the entrance to the parking lot.



Another scheme for the farm market pavilion. This scheme offers a more open, airy, and sun-filled market structure.

Pennsylvania Avenue

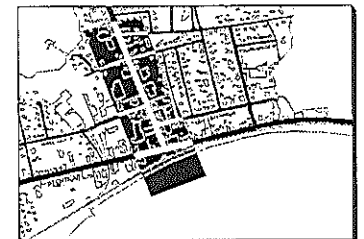
Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.
- Apply for ISTEA funds for sidewalk and crosswalk improvements.
- Review Pennsylvania Avenue traffic calming strategies with State DOT representative.
- Undertake a tree planting initiative and line the street—except for the three designated open areas at Town Hall Park, the Niantic Shopping Center, and the village Green—with closely spaced, high canopy shade trees.
- Require new building massing and siting to be sympathetic to those of the existing buildings.
- Widen and repave sidewalks down both sides of the street from Town Hall Park to the Green.
- Encourage the consolidation and relocation of parking lots behind setback lines.
- Revise zoning parking codes to reduce parking requirements and to actively encourage shared lots.
- Limit the number and size of curb-cuts.
- Landscape along the street edge of parking lots.
- Encourage landscaping with native plant species.
- Encourage the establishment of a weekly farmers' market in one of the large under-used parking lots.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Construct a system of regularized intersections with dogbones, pedestrian crossings, and pedestrian scaled street lighting.
- Encourage or require that parking lot driveways be realigned with regularized intersection system.
- Encourage the buildout of Carmine's to the setback line established by buildings across Hope Street.
- Encourage a facade improvement and unification program for buildings comprising the Niantic Shopping Center.
- Construct a farmers' market pavilion along the north side of the Niantic Shopping Center parking lot and support the establishment of a regular farmers' market.



Area Study

Central Blocks

Principles

1. Visually and physically connect the Niantic Bay shore along the railroad siding to the Dodge Pond waterfront and Town Hall Park beyond.
2. Reclaim unused land along the railroad siding for recreational use while preserving a single track for commercial use.
3. Create an alley between Main Street and Lincoln Street to service both Pennsylvania Avenue commercial areas and mid-block parking lots.
4. Reclaim vacant commercial sites for new infill development.
5. Change the character of Hope Street from that of an industrial park to that of a quiet village street.



An existing driveway along Main Street that could become a new alley, thus providing better access to rear parking lots.

The central blocks study area in Niantic encompasses the Providence & Wooster railroad siding and adjacent lands. Currently defined by continuous service areas—parking lots, the railroad sidings, and supply yards for local businesses—this area has the potential to both retain those service areas and provide as well new connections between Main Street and the municipal lands along Dodge Pond. This area also has the potential to provide a recreational buffer between the commercial center of Niantic and the residential neighborhoods to the west.

Central Blocks Base Plan

Dodge Pond

Town Hall Park

Pondside Walkway

Dodge Pond Park

Dodge Pond overlook
Dodge Pond pavilion
Dodge Pond woods
Recreational trail terminus

Naval Research Center

Lincoln Street

New Infill Housing

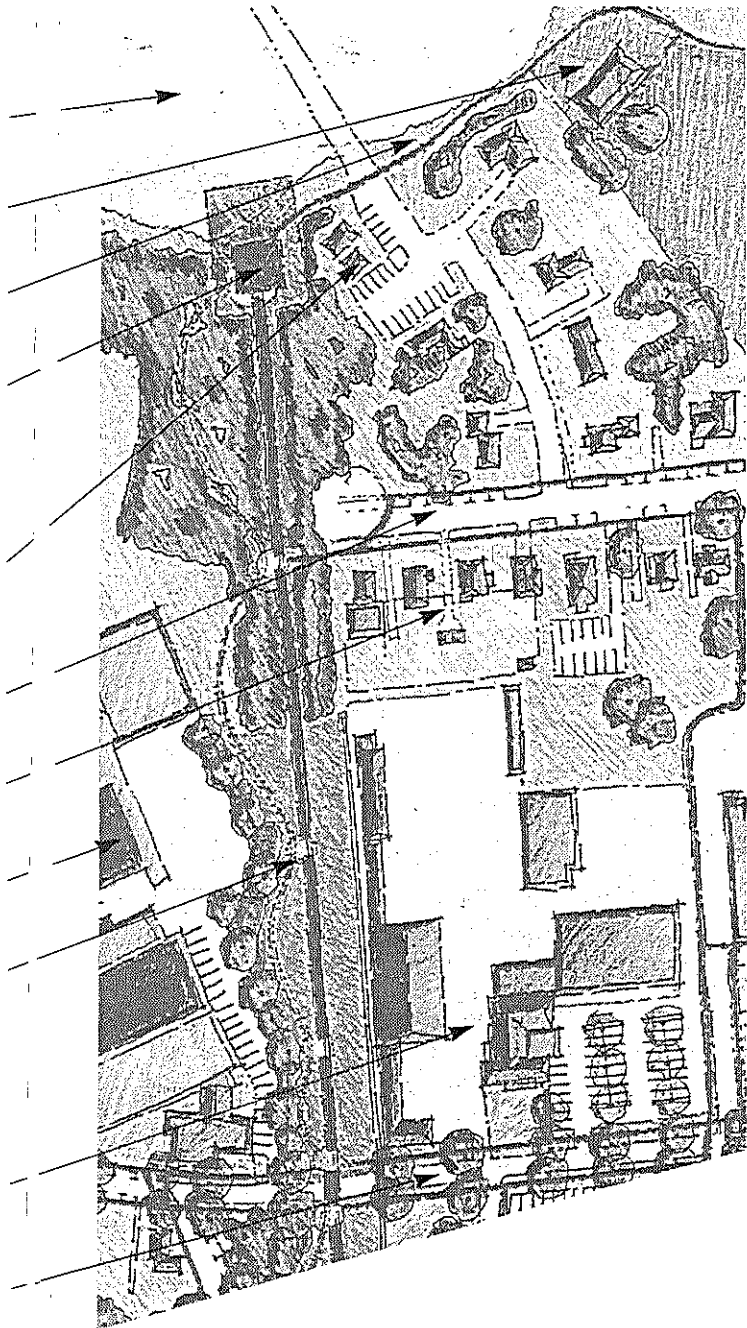
Hermitage Company

Recreational Trail

Dodge Pond pavilion
Bicycle path
Footpath
Adventure areas

Niantic Lumber

Hope Street



Hope Street

Midblock Alley

Municipal Parking Lot

Recreational Trail

- Dodge Pond Park
- Bicycle and foot paths
- Adventure areas
- Children's Museum
- Hole-in-the-Wall Beach

Children's Museum

Main Street

New Infill Building

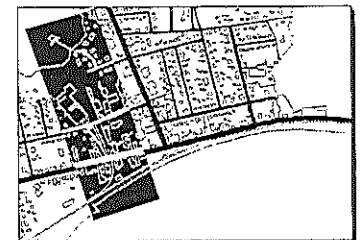
Shared Parking Lot

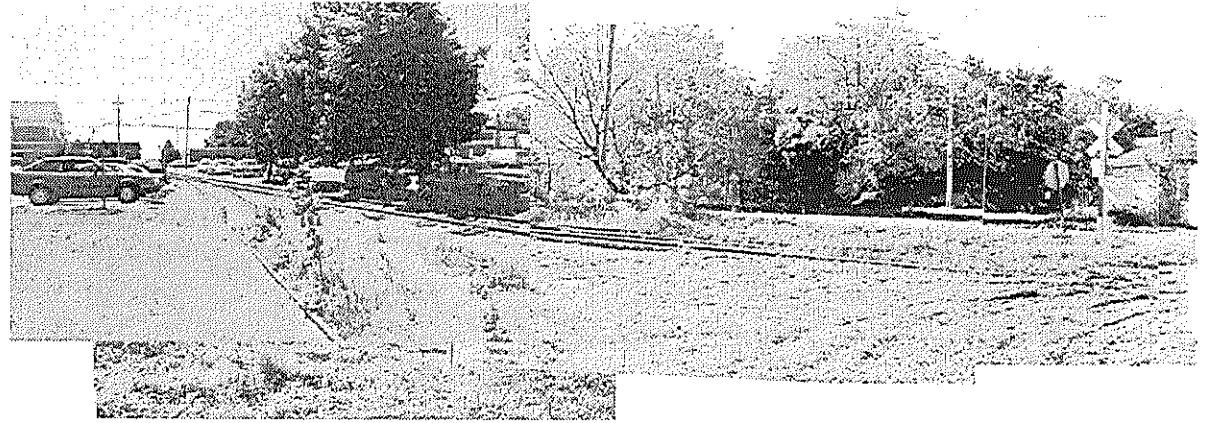
Boardwalk

Niantic Bay



Scale: 1"=400'

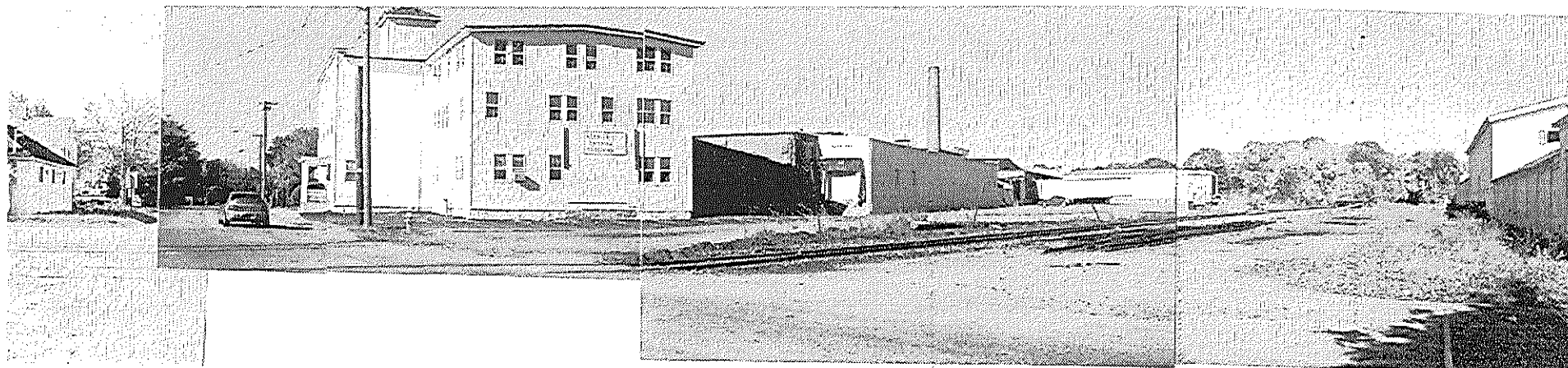




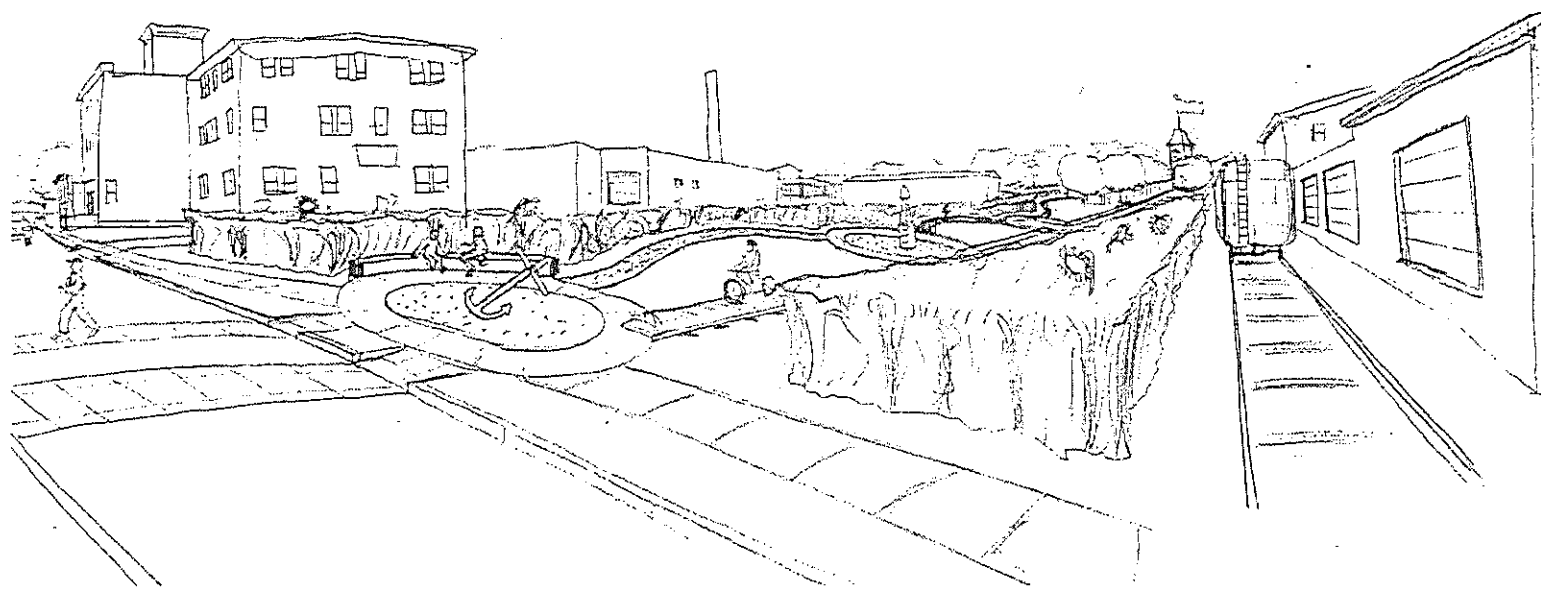
Recreational Corridor Structure

Define Niantic's recreational corridor by creating a recreational trail along the railroad siding to link three of Niantic's major public amenities: Hole-in-the-Wall Beach, the Children's Museum, and Dodge Pond.

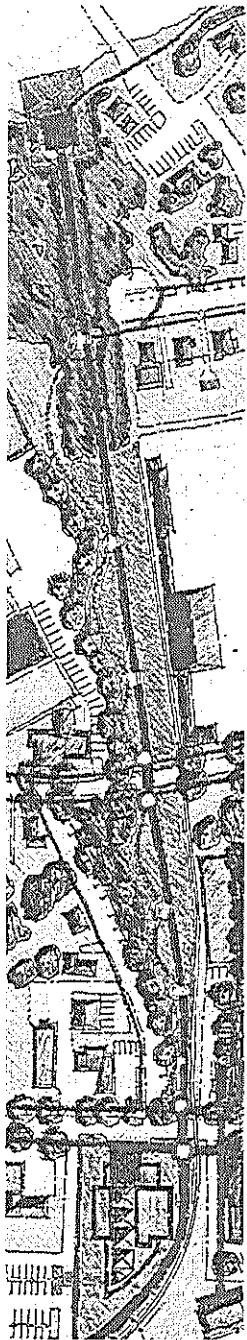
- Free up land for a recreational trail by removing the redundant "No Name Street" and relocating that parallel parking to a slightly widened Methodist Street.
- Acquire development rights for the western two tracks of the railroad siding and the surrounding land. Leave intact the eastern track along Niantic lumber, where it can continue to service downtown Niantic and provide some activity alongside the recreational trail.
- Create a park with frontage along Dodge Pond on the municipal land to the north of the railroad siding corridor.
- Further connect Dodge Pond to the town by connecting the proposed "Dodge Pond Park" along the shore to the existing Town Hall park.
- Visually connect the three major public places along the trail with vertical markers or beacons so that the trail is understood as the connection between them. Examples of possible beacons include a gazebo or pavilion at the beach, a tower or large sign atop the Children's Museum, and a tall pavilion or flag pole at Dodge Pond.



The existing Providence & Wooster railroad siding, seen from Hope Street.

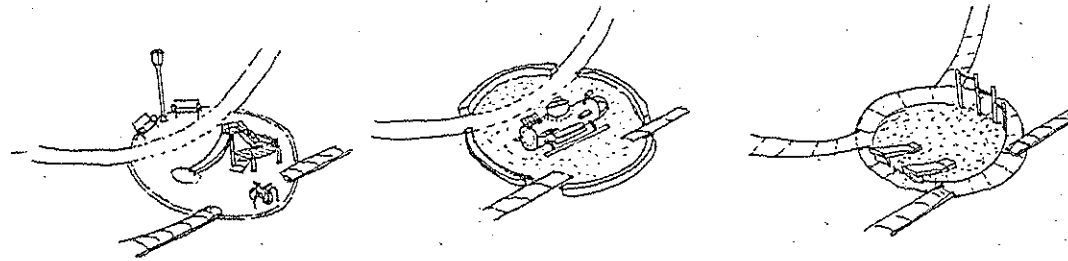


The railroad siding, seen from Hope Street, as it might look if developed to include a recreational corridor.



Recreational trail connecting the Children's Museum and Hole-in-the-Wall Beach beyond, with Dodge Pond to the north.

Separate paths are provided for walkers and bicycles or rollerbladers, and the two trails converge at activity nodes.



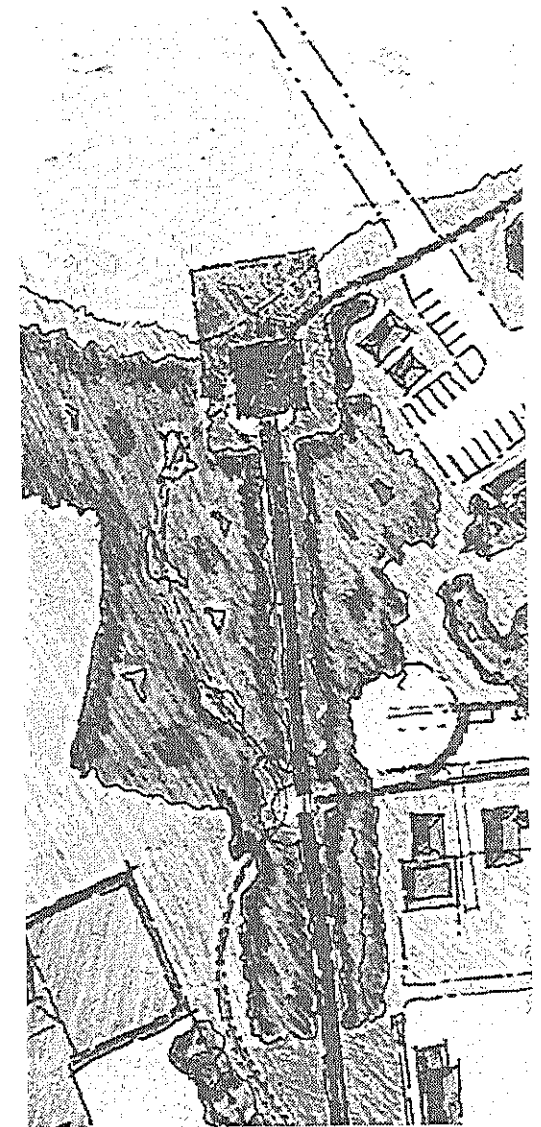
Possible activities along nodes of the recreational trail include: children's play areas, Children's Museum outdoor display stations, or outdoor fitness equipment areas.

Recreational Trail

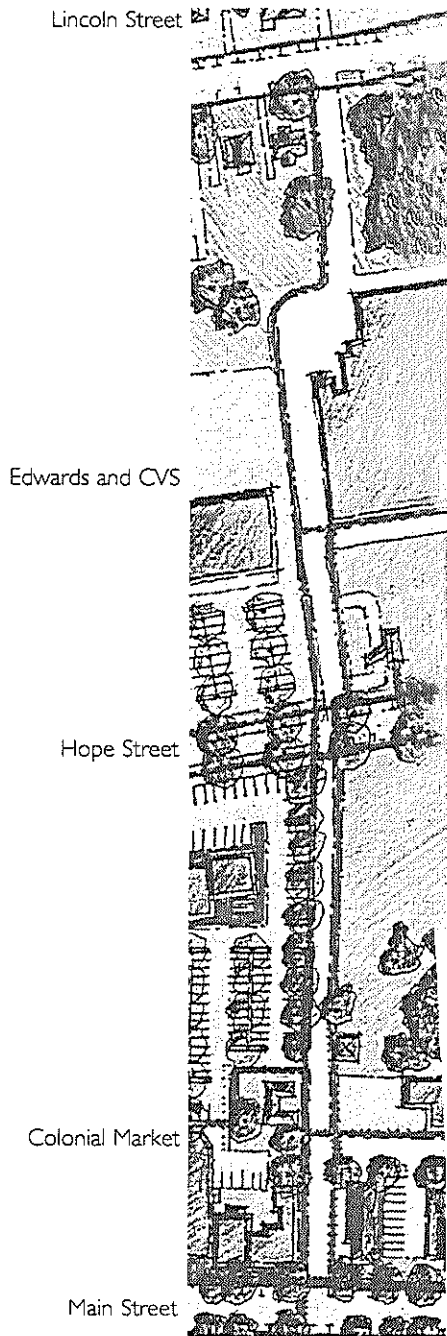
- Comfortably accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and rollerbladers on the recreational trail by allowing adequate room for simultaneous passage of both pedestrian and wheeled traffic.
- Two separated paths, each four to six foot wide, would provide the best separation and the most comfort to trail users. Where a single path is needed, it should be at least eight feet wide to allow faster-moving wheeled traffic to easily pass slower moving pedestrians.
- Occupy the breadth of the unused railroad siding by splitting the proposed dual recreational pathway north of Main Street into a linear bicycle/rollerblade path along the central track of the old siding, and into a serpentine pedestrian path, which would wind back and forth to the west side of the bicycle path.
- Create activity spaces at points where the two paths of the recreational trail converge. Outdoor exercise equipment, playground equipment, or outdoor museum exhibits might provide a system of activities or attractions along the route, a sequence that would help draw pedestrians toward Dodge Pond, a nearly inaccessible community asset, and then on into the underused Town Hall Park.
- Buffer the recreational area from the adjacent factory with shade trees planted along the far western edge of corridor.
- By planting the edges of the recreational area with tall grasses, the paths and mowed area between the paths will appear to carve out a more intimate space within the broad expanse of the corridor.

Dodge Pond Park

- Build a low deck out over the water to serve for recreational fishing, museum activities, and town events.
- A pavilion in the park, on axis with the recreational trail, should have a beacon element tall enough to be seen from the proposed Children's museum.
- The foliage around the pavilion should be left dense enough that the open area with the pavilion can be seen as having been carved out of the woods.
- Connect the park to the adjacent Town Hall park and picnic shelter with a short path along the pond edge.
- Acquire the Navy property if it becomes available and use it to expand the park and public access to Dodge Pond.

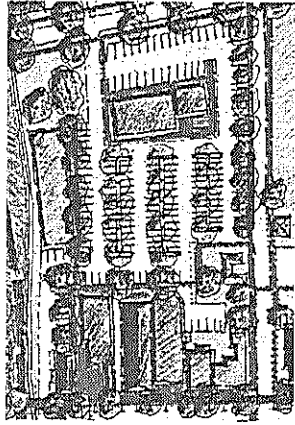


Dodge Pond Park, located on land already owned by the town.



Midblock Alley

- Formalize the existing driveway connections between Main Street and Lincoln Street into one uniform alley.
- Relocate to the alley the entrances to adjoining parking lots, thus limiting street curb cuts.
- Line west side of alley with curbs and a sidewalk to make it pedestrian friendly.
- Line alley with trees to help distinguish it from adjoining parking lots.
- Regularize and limit access from alley to adjoining parking lots to assist traffic flow.
- Provide sufficient space behind the major commercial buildings—Colonial Market, Edwards, and CVS—for truck access to loading docks.



Parking Lots

- Consolidate and share parking lots in mid-block between Main Street and Hope Street.
- Relocate parking lot access from the streets to the midblock alley.
- Regularize parking layout and minimize lane widths to make the lot as efficient as possible.
- Plant shade trees in lot medians to cool the cars, pedestrians, and neighboring buildings.
- Install clear and visible parking signage along Main Street so that drivers know where to find conveniently located parking.



Infill Housing

- Locate open sites or vacant properties in the middle of the village and, where possible, convert them into developable lots.
- Determine what sort of development would be appropriate for different lots. The site above, formerly a propane gas business, could be filled with houses that would nicely complete this otherwise residential street.
- Encourage mixed use development on new sites along streets with commercial activity. For example, in new office or retail buildings along Main Street or Pennsylvania Avenue, encourage or even require residences above.
- Encourage the development of small scale residential units that can be purchased by first time home buyers or by seniors looking for smaller homes.
- Encourage the development of elderly housing in downtown Niantic, where people with limited mobility can still easily walk to local goods and services.

Central Blocks

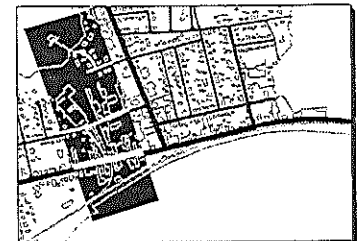
Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.
- Begin negotiations for the development rights to, or the outright purchase of the western portion of Providence & Wooster railroad siding.
- Apply for state waterfront funding to develop a park on the town land along Dodge Pond.
- Begin negotiating or verifying easements that will be necessary to build an alley from Main Street to Lincoln Street.
- Encourage the consolidation and relocation of parking lots in mid block.
- Revise zoning parking codes to reduce parking requirements and to actively encourage shared lots.
- Encourage or actively subsidize the cost of planting of shade trees throughout mid block parking lots.
- Revise zoning codes to encourage higher density infill development on vacant sites throughout downtown Niantic, and to encourage mixed-use buildings along commercial streets.
- Begin negotiating with the Navy and with congressional representatives for eventual purchase of the Navy Underwater Laboratory, should it ever become available.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Construct a recreational trail along the railroad siding, connecting Hole-in-the-Wall beach with Dodge Pond.
- Construct a park with a pavilion along Dodge Pond, and link that park by pathway to Town Hall Park.
- Build a full alley through the middle of the blocks between Main Street and Lincoln Street.
- Use native grasses and plant species when landscaping the recreational trail and the alley.
- Develop the Navy land into an extension of Dodge Pond Park, and link both to Town Hall Park.

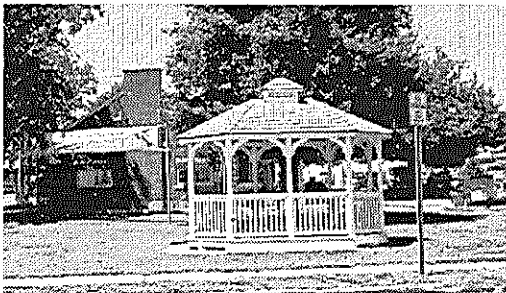


Area Study

Main Street West

Principles

1. Expand the presence and significance of Main Street's two civic anchors—the Village Green and the Children's Museum.
2. Nurture the "seaside village" character of Main Street—promote restaurants, specialty shops, and unique tourist attractions; encourage nightlife; and clearly demarcate the central blocks as a pedestrian area.
3. Change the highway character of "Route 156" to the small town character of "Main Street"—calm traffic, increase the prominence and safety of pedestrians, consolidate and relocate parking behind buildings, and fill the open lots along Main Street.
4. Preserve historic buildings and establish basic design guidelines and zoning incentives to encourage business development consistent with the seaside village character of Main Street.



The gazebo in the Village Green, which forms a civic anchor at one end of the Main Street West study area.

Main Street West as defined in this report is the stretch of Main Street between the Niantic Green and Lake Place. These blocks embody the symbolic and commercial center of Niantic, where the Children's Museum, specialty shops, and glimpses of the shore cater to both town residents and visitors from throughout Connecticut. The character of this area is one of a pedestrian shopping street, where a mix of attractions—commercial, civic, and natural—contribute to an unusually vibrant small town streetscape.

Main Street West Base Plan

Main Street

Boardwalk Pavilion



Municipal Parking

- Parking for Hole-in-the-Wall Beach
- Access to Hole-in-the-Wall Beach
- Parking for Children's Museum
- Terminus of recreational trail
- Underpass to boardwalk

Recreational Trail

- Bicycle path
- Footpath
- Adventure areas
- Children's Museum
- Hole-in-the-Wall Beach

Shared Parking

Infill Building

Alley to Hope Street

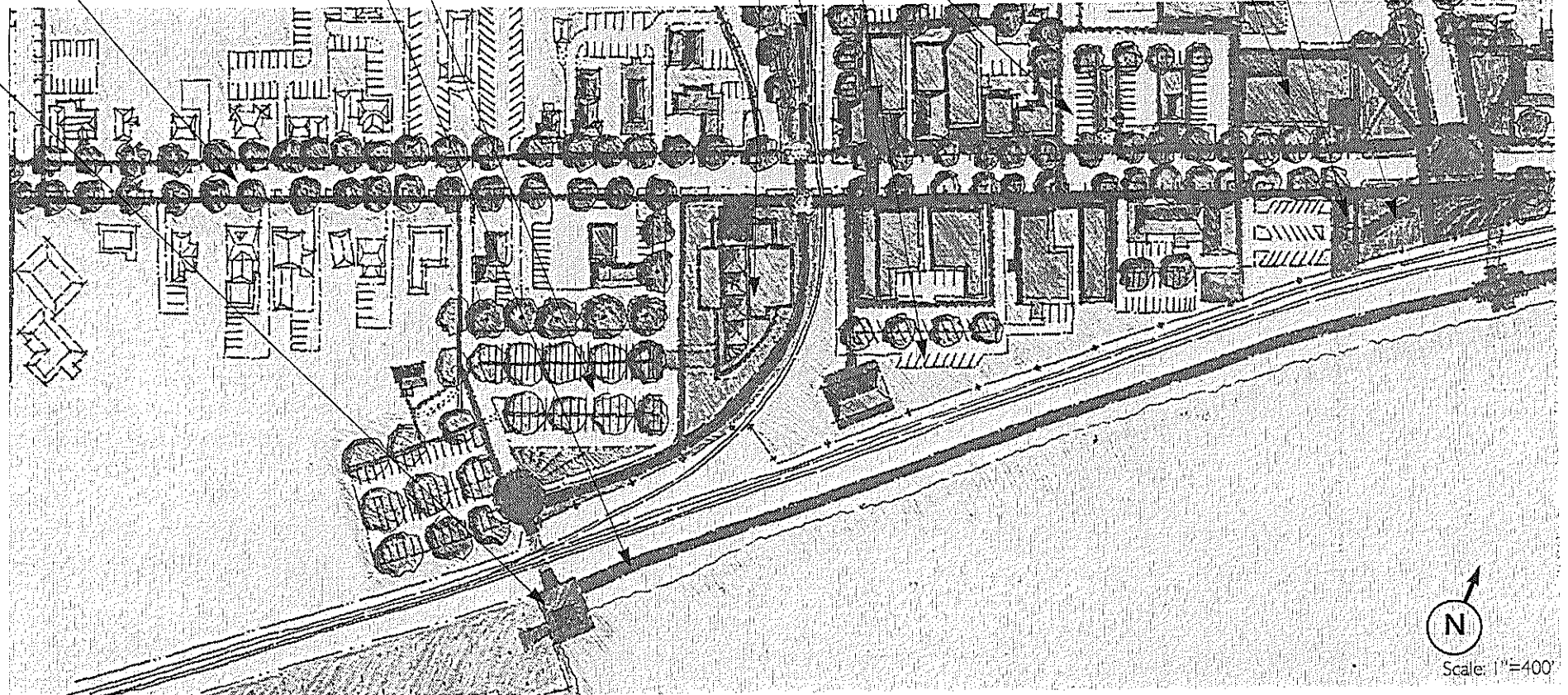
Post Office and Rail Stop

Village Green

- Existing corner Green
- Addition along Morton House
- Addition along Niantic Bay
- Amphitheater with underpass
- Boardwalk pavilion

Boardwalk

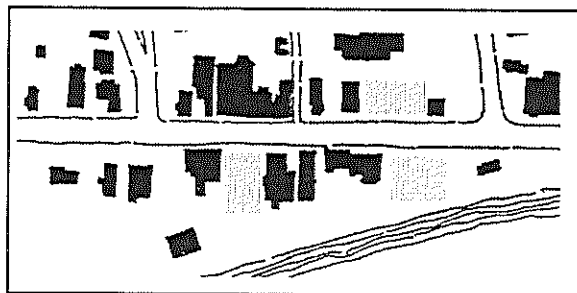
Children's Museum



Scale: 1"=400'



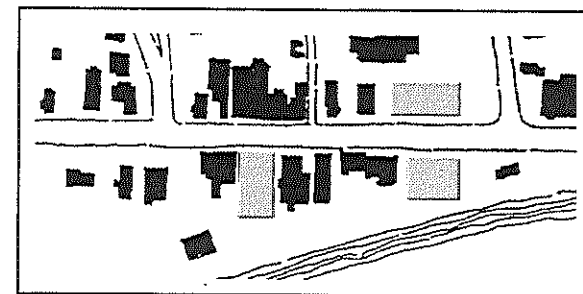
A pedestrian's view of Main Street in front of the Colonial Market, where the parking lot runs right over the sidewalk.



Streetscape

Main Street's Missing Teeth

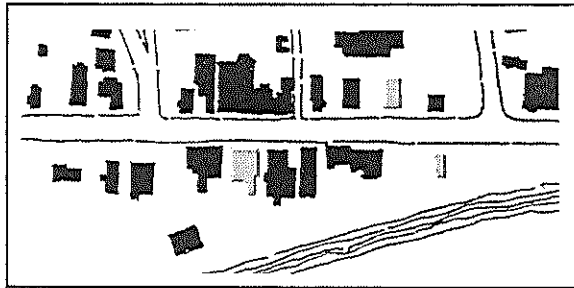
Downtown Niantic, the block of Main Street between the green and the railroad siding, offers a healthy collection of tightly-knit commercial buildings. Where the buildings stand shoulder to shoulder in one row, the street scene appears trim and tidy; where there are parking lots running up to the curb—shown to the left—the street scene appears ragged and haphazard. These open areas of parking are analogous to missing teeth—they are conspicuous gaps in an otherwise continuous row.



A Build-Out Solution

One way to alleviate the problem of missing teeth is to fill the gaps along the street with new buildings. Scheme I above shows a plan where open spaces along Main Street are fully occupied with new buildings. The great advantage of this action is that the large new buildings form strong, continuous edges to both Main Street and to the Green. Two new facades both fronting the green also have the potential to work together to form a new, cohesive gateway to Main Street.

Furthermore, the degree of infill is such that the central commercial blocks of Main Street will boast a continuous street wall, which makes for a well-defined street space and thus a stronger streetscape. This degree of infill is also the chief drawback of this scheme, however. The southern end of the Niantic Village mall would be virtually sealed off of Main Street and forced to reorient toward Pennsylvania Avenue. moreover, the rhythm of smaller building fronts along the northeast side of Main Street is lost.



A Selective Infill Solution

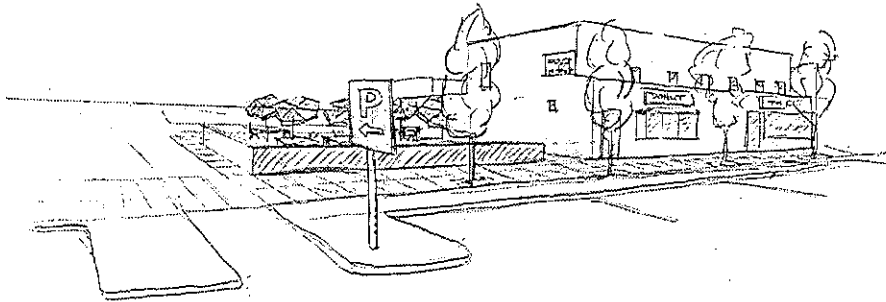
In lieu of completely filling the gaps along Main Street, the scheme above employs smaller buildings that imply completeness along the street by mimicking the spacing of neighboring buildings to fill out the streetscape.

For example, the new building between Grandpa's Donuts and the Millstone Science Center follows the lead of its neighbors and closes the street almost completely, leaving only room for a driveway to pass. Yet just across the street, a new building in front of Colonial Market respects the narrower building fronts and wider lots of its neighbors. By maintaining the building and parking lot sizes of its neighbors, it makes consistent the rhythm of closed and open spaces along Main Street and thus implies completeness. This building also works with Smith Pharmacy to frame, not obscure, Colonial Market behind.

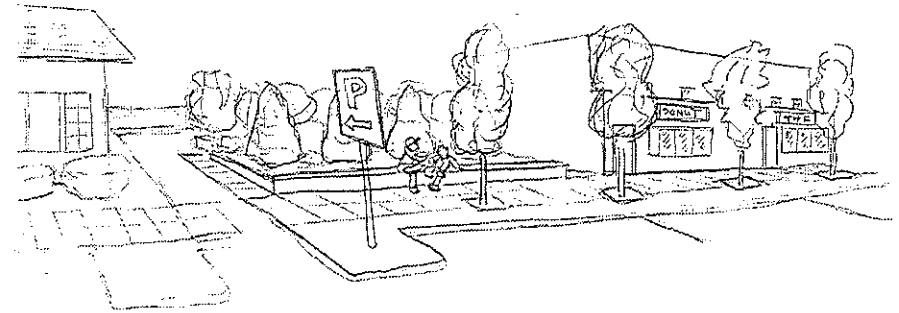


A conspicuous gap in the texture of Main Street which should be targeted for infill development.

The third building, at the end of Constantine's parking lot, is the old train depot (currently a gas station) relocated to a place where it can frame the Green and Main Street, and where it can break up the uninterrupted parking along the south side of Main Street. By careful placement, smaller separated buildings can imply the streetscape closure associated with larger, tighter buildings.



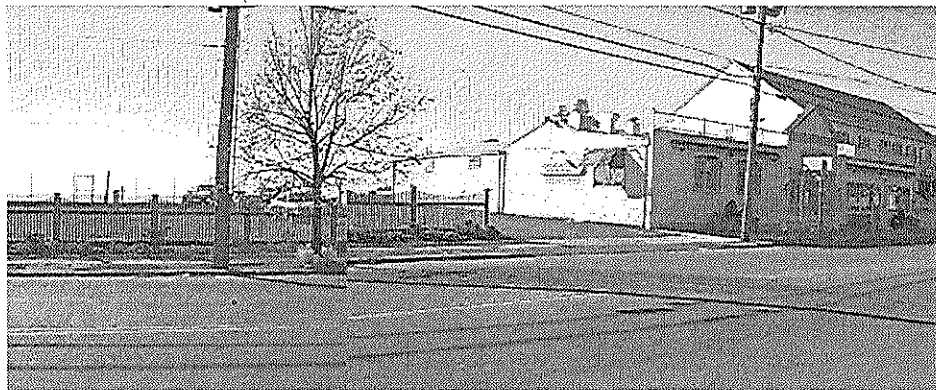
Scheme I: a permanent outdoor patio with a low wall to hold the street edge. Use only for businesses with many customers; the patio will look conspicuously empty when not in use.



Scheme II: a landscape retaining wall both holds the building line and provides impromptu seating for patrons of neighboring stores.



Grandpa's Donuts and parking lot, where landscaping and street furniture could enliven the scene.

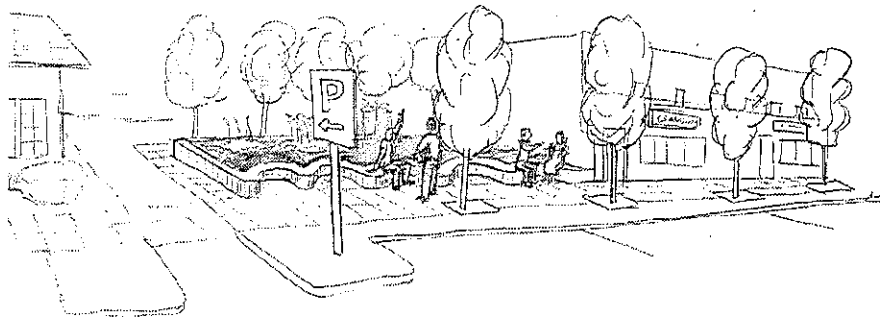


A simple and effective use of low fencing helps screen Constantine's parking lot from the street.

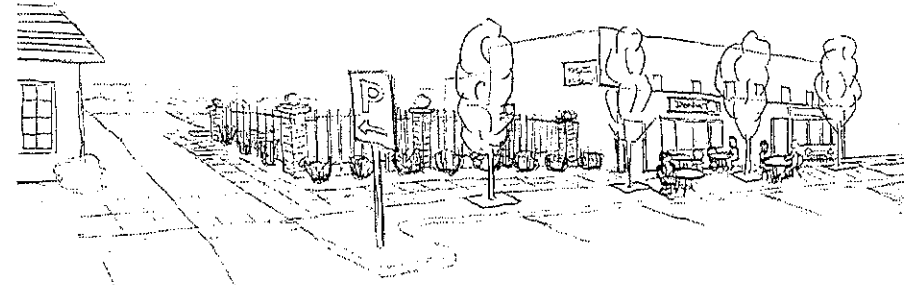
Landscape Treatments of Open Lots

The open lot to the east of Grandpa's Donuts offers a good case study for how limited landscaping can both fill missing teeth along Main Street and screen the parking lot behind.

- Install landscaping at the sidewalk edge to maintain the building setback line, thus implying that the site is filled.
- Emphasize the horizontal line of the landscaping; a row of shrubs, a low wall, or a fence all imply a wall-like continuous surface.
- Use a mix of plantings that bloom throughout the seasons, but support them with constructed elements like walls or fences that won't look barren in winter.
- Keep the landscaping transparent enough to allow drivers and pedestrians a discrete view through to parking or views of the sound behind. Use low walls and fences, lower plantings, or trees with high canopies.



Scheme III: a curved landscape retaining wall both holds building line and also forms small impromptu seating alcoves. Movable tables in the alcoves could further enhance the seating.



Scheme IV: a landscaped fence holds the building line and screens parking behind, while movable seating in front of the stores contributes to the vibrancy of the sidewalk scene.

Street Furniture

Street furniture is a vital part of any healthy streetscape. By offering people a variety of places to linger and rest, street furniture helps to keep the sidewalks full of people, which makes for an active, prosperous street.

- Install park benches, the most traditional form of street furniture, only in highly trafficked areas where people expect to linger: along paths in the Green or in front of busy pedestrian-oriented businesses like Friendly's.
- Avoid installing park benches in areas of passage; unused park benches look conspicuously empty and can detract from the impression of a healthy street.
- Park benches can improve the appearance of out-of-the-way areas—along paths to rear parking, for example—without detracting from Main Street when unused.

- Use infill landscaping elements to provide the majority of pedestrian seating areas. Large steps, low fences, and especially low walls can all double as seating areas, and have the advantage of never looking empty when not used as seating.
- To facilitate seating, landscape walls should stand between one and three feet high (seventeen inches is ideal), and be at least twelve inches deep. Fences should be of similar height, and should have a flat top rail.
- Use landscape seating elements in areas where park benches and movable furniture might be overwhelmed at peak times; in front of Friendly's, or near the Children's Museum.
- Install or encourage the installation of small clusters of seasonal outdoor tables and chairs in front of or adjacent to Main Street restaurants and cafes. Avoid fences or railings around seating to allow movement of tables and chairs for increased comfort.

- Mobile street furniture should allow movement into and out of the sun; if the adjacent building does not provide shade, extend window awnings to cover tables, or provide table umbrellas.



An example of successful outdoor seating in front of Subway and the neighboring coffee shop along Main Street. This seating could be further enhanced by removing the railing that crowds tables against building wall, and by adding umbrellas, awnings, or street trees to shade the tables.

A Pedestrian Friendly Main Street

- Repave sidewalks along both sides of Main Street with a consistent material, preferably one different than that used for the street and parking surfaces. Carry that material across Main Street at pedestrian crosswalks to better alert drivers to the crossing.
- Install or encourage small clusters of seasonal outdoor tables and chairs in front of or adjacent to Main Street restaurants and cafes. Possible locations include the sidewalks in front of Subway and Grandpa's Donuts, and the walkway and lawn area in front of Friendly's. This seating should be mobile to allow movement into and out of sunny and shady areas.
- Install a limited amount of permanent outdoor seating along Main Street in areas between buildings or along walkways to rear parking areas. Wherever possible, use retaining walls or low fences instead of benches; walls and fences don't look conspicuously empty when not used.
- Because the north side of Main Street receives more sunlight in cooler seasons but remains tree shaded in summer, it is the side that will naturally attract more pedestrians and therefore should be the side to receive any extra area gained from street narrowing.
- Frame attractive views of Niantic Bay between buildings: remove poorly maintained or overly large vegetation, neatly pave or landscape the ground surfaces, and tidy up visible building walls.
- To keep parking lots from overwhelming sidewalks, screen parking lots by means of landscaping like low walls, planter retaining walls, or low fences, any of which also can double as public seating. The landscaping should maintain the setback line between separated buildings, like Friendly's and Smith Pharmacy.
- To facilitate seating, all landscaped walls should stand between one and three feet high (seventeen inches is ideal), and be at least twelve inches deep. Fences should be of similar height, and should have a flat top rail.
- Main Street should be lit at night for pedestrians to encourage a safe evening street life, which will further encourage restaurants to locate in the village. While lighting can come from new pedestrian scaled street lamps, an equally effective and more vibrant lighting could be provided by Main Street businesses that light their shop windows and building fronts at night.



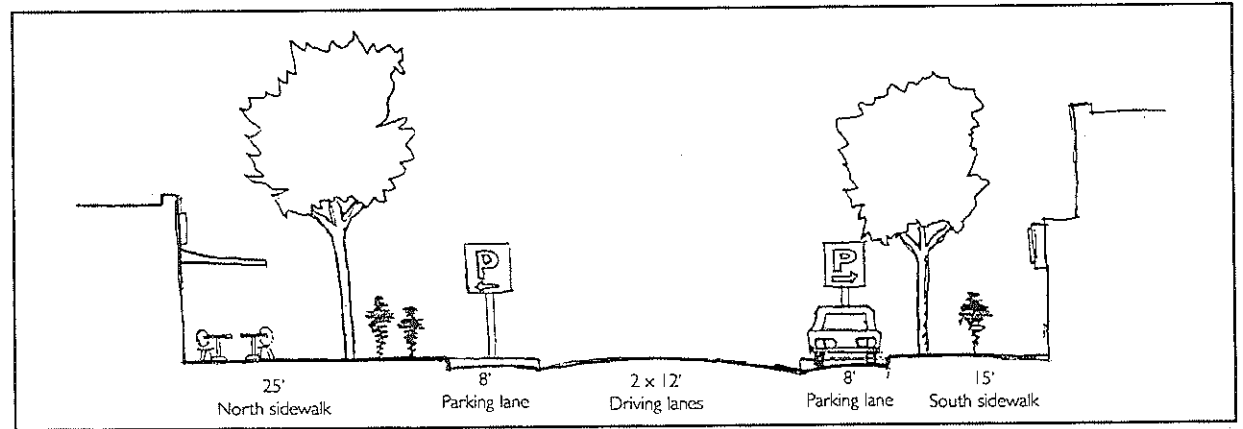
A view of Main Street in front of the Millstone Science Center, showing enlarged and specially paved crosswalks, repaved sidewalks, street furniture, pedestrian scaled lighting, and continuous shade trees.



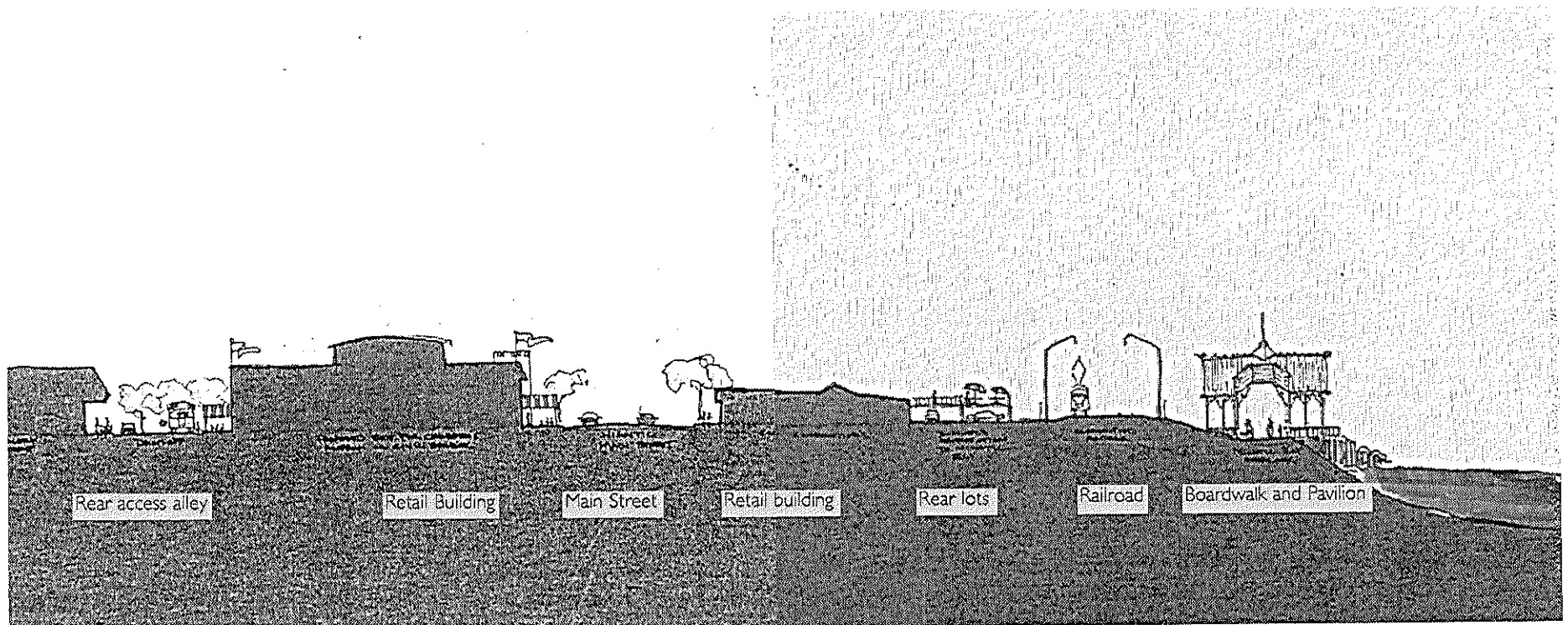
A pleasant outdoor space along Main Street that could become significantly more pedestrian friendly—and thus more frequently used—with the addition of street furniture and streetside shade trees.

Streetscape

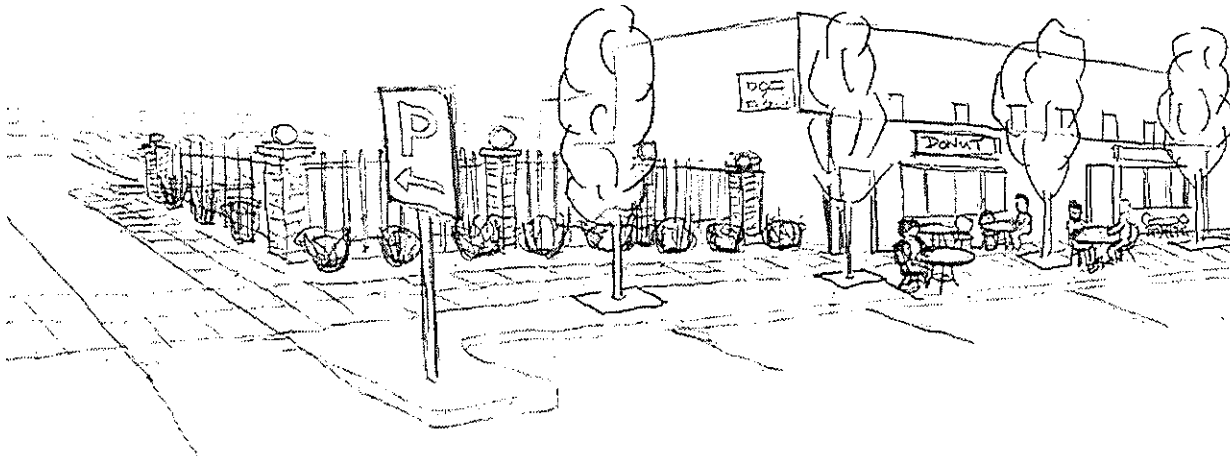
- Bury or relocate behind the buildings all utility poles and lines, which currently mar the appearance of Main Street.
- Maintain the setback line between separated buildings—like Friendly’s and the Pharmacy—by screening parking lots with landscaping. Low walls, fences, or retaining walls also can double as seating.
- Continue planting shade trees in a regular rhythm along Main Street in those places where they are missing. The trees should be no further than 30 feet apart to insure continuity. Extend the regular tree planting all the way to the west end of downtown at the Niantic Center School.
- Better light the sidewalks at night either by means of new pedestrian scaled street lighting installed at close intervals along the sidewalks, or by lighting buildings and shop windows along the street.
- Encourage all new and rennovated buildings along Main Street to provide large windows onto the street. Open facades with large windows contribute to the vitality of the streetscape by revealing activity within buildings, and by reinforcing the fact that the street and neighborhood are safe places watched over by building occupants.
- Encourage the painting of building facades in light colors, particularly those facades on the south side of Main Street that receive no direct sunlight and are prone to looking overly dark and shadowed.
- Institute basic design guidelines to encourage new buildings to contribute responsibly to Main Street. Priorities should include consistent setbacks from the curb to prevent ragged street edges, uniform heights (two or three stories on the north side of Main Street, but only one or two stories on the south side to insure that the street stays well lit in all seasons), relatively tall ground stories, and open facades with large areas of glazing. Avoid overly-proscriptive style codes; the vitality of Niantic’s Main Street comes from its healthy mix of different architectural forms and styles.



A section through Main Street, with narrower traffic lanes, parallel parking, improved parking signage, and widened sidewalks.



A section across Main Street showing the relationship between Main Street retailers, Main Street, rear parking lots, the railroad main line, the boardwalk,



The parking lot of Grandpa's Donuts, after landscaping and signage improvements.

Parking Lots

Location

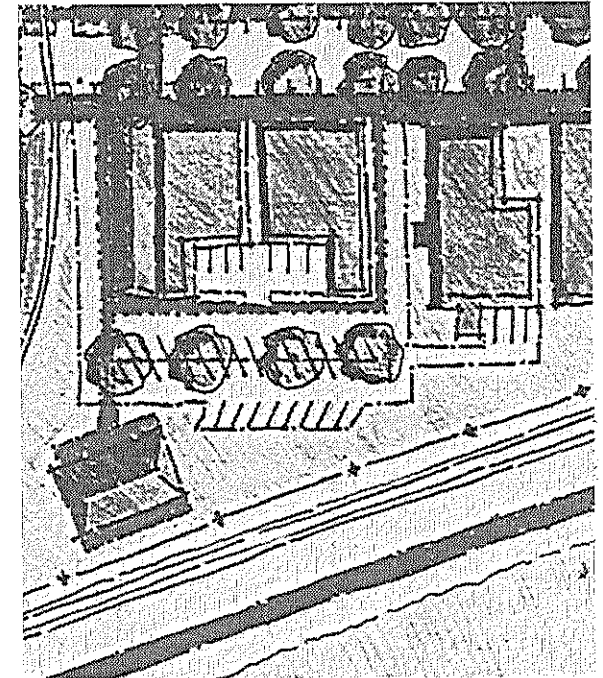
- Move all parking lots at least behind the building setback lines, and preferably behind the buildings themselves so that they don't overwhelm the sidewalk and distract from the streetscape.
- Consolidate the inefficient multiple parking lots on the south side of Main Street into three efficient municipal or shared lots.
- Consolidate the inefficient parking areas to the north of Main Street, behind the movie theater, into one or shared lot that can provide parking for all surrounding buildings.
- Regularize the municipal south side parking lots as much as possible by squaring them to the line of the building backs; the triangular spaces resulting between the lots and the railroad tracks beyond can become green spaces for the nearby buildings, outdoor shore view seating areas for adjacent restaurants, or a greenway with a sidewalk linking the different parking lots.

Landscaping

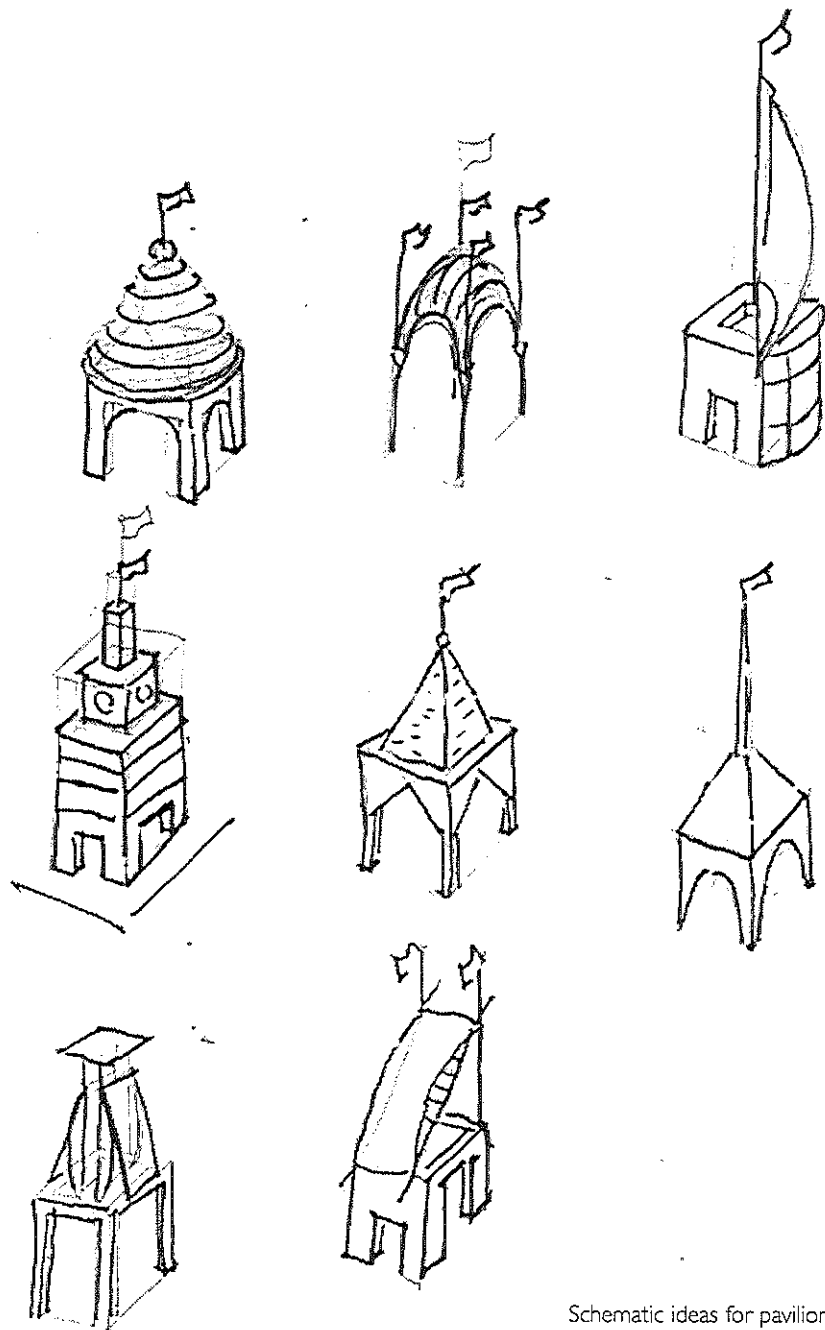
- Install well lit and attractive walkways—shaded with trees and paved with brick or pavers if possible— between rear parking lots and Main Street so that the walkways to the back parking lots are perceived as extensions of the Main Street sidewalks.
- Convert areas between parking lots into lawns or green spaces to be used by adjacent buildings.
- Plant shade trees along the perimeters and in the medians of parking lots to improve their appearance, and to keep the lots and the surrounding buildings cooler in the summer.
- Screen side parking lots from the street by means of landscaping, low walls, simple fences, and low plantings affectively remove parking lots from the streetscape without blocking them from the view of drivers in need of parking.

Access

- Minimize the number of parking lot entrances and locate them at regular intervals along Main Street.
- Make parking lot entrance and exit drives one way to ease access and egress and to minimize curb cuts along Main Street.
- Install clear and visible parking signage along Main Street so that drivers know where to find conveniently located parking.



A plan showing how the parking lots for Grandpa's Donuts, the Millstone Science Center, and the shoreline apartment building might be combined to make a single, more efficient and more attractive lot.



Schematic ideas for pavilion forms.

Hole-in-the-Wall Beach

Beach Access

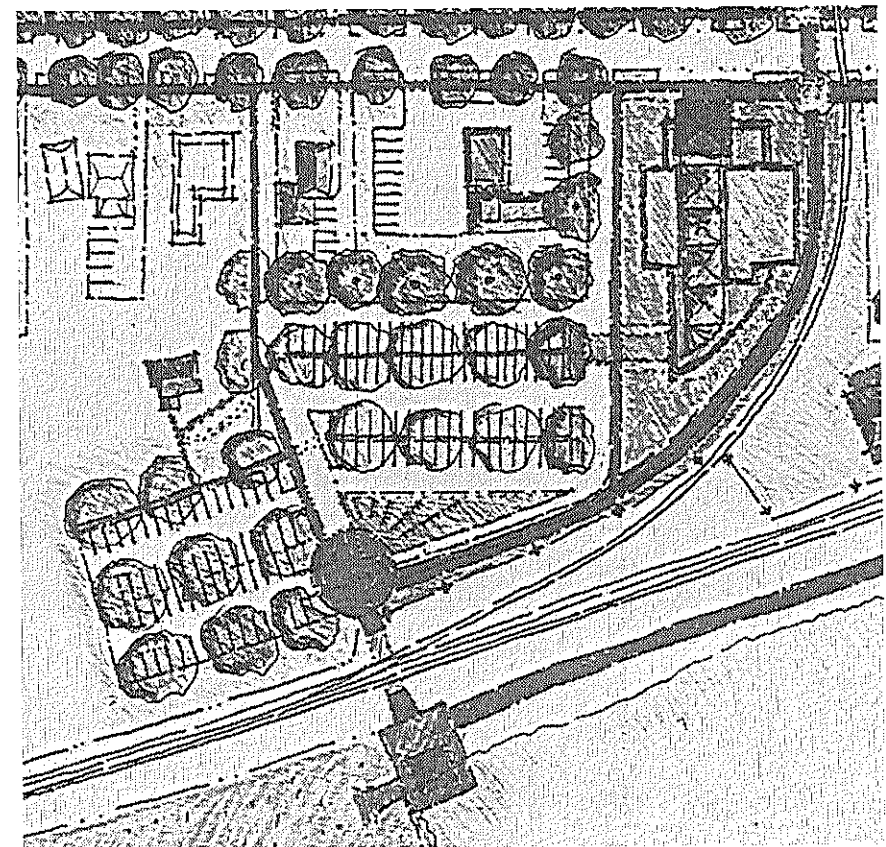
- Create a larger entrance area to the Hole-in-the-Wall Beach underpass, one that encompasses a beachgoer drop-off area and that serves as a ceremonial termination to the Discovery Trail.
- Locate plenty of bicycle parking adjacent to the beach drop-off area.
- On the beach side of the underpass, locate a pavilion or open shelter building of similar design to the Village Green pavilion along the boardwalk.
- The pavilion at Hole-in-the-Wall can serve as the checkpoint for access to the town beach, and as an anchor for the western end of the Niantic Bay Overlook boardwalk.
- The pavilion should be tall enough to be clearly visible from the beach parking lot, as well as from the far end of the boardwalk.



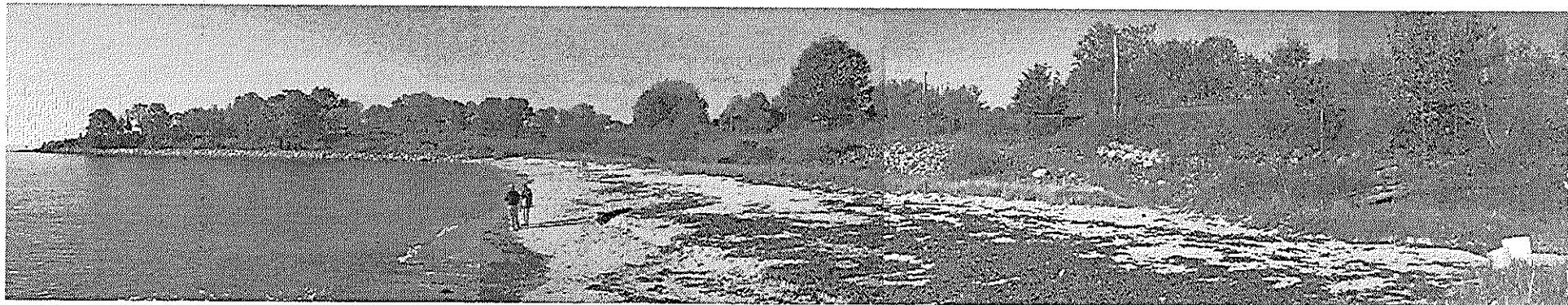
The current condition of the Hole-in-the-Wall Beach parking lot. With improvements, this site could provide parking for both the beach and a nearby Children's Museum.

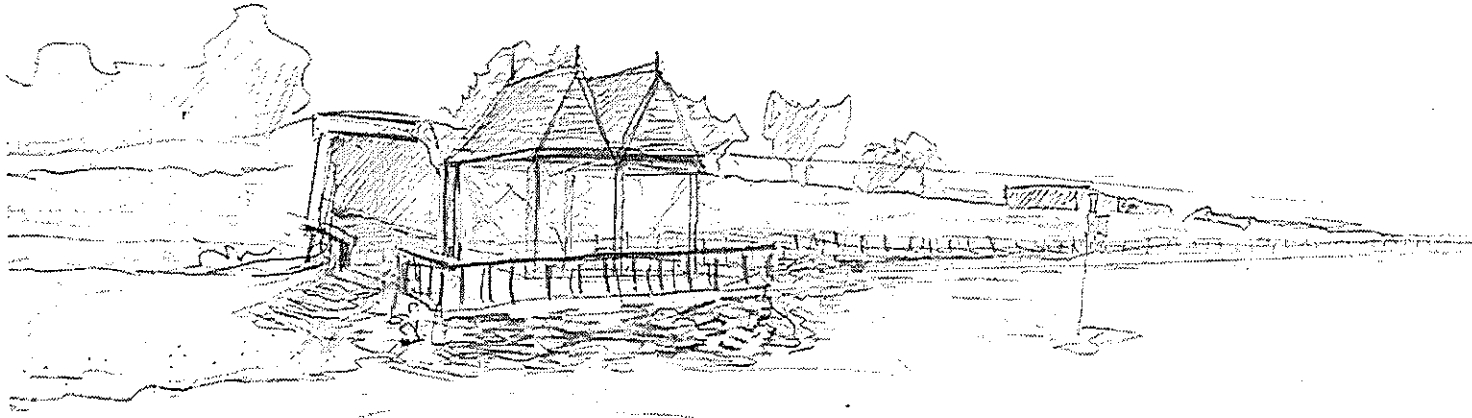
Parking

- Fill out and improve the Hole-in-the-Wall parking lot so that it can serve both the beach and the Children's Museum. Regularize parking layouts, pave the lot (with water-permeable pavers if possible), shade the lot with trees in parking medians, and provide attractive walking paths into the lot along the entrance and exit drives.
- Make the access drives to the parking lot one-way to simplify traffic flow.
- Locate the parking entrance drive adjacent to the children's museum so that it can double as a drop-off drive for the museum. The exit drive is logically Baptist Lane, which is difficult to spot from Main Street.
- If parking must be separated between beach and museum goers, use one lot with movable partitions that allow parking allocations to change with demands. Museum traffic can exit out a two-way Baptist Lane with the rest of the beach traffic.

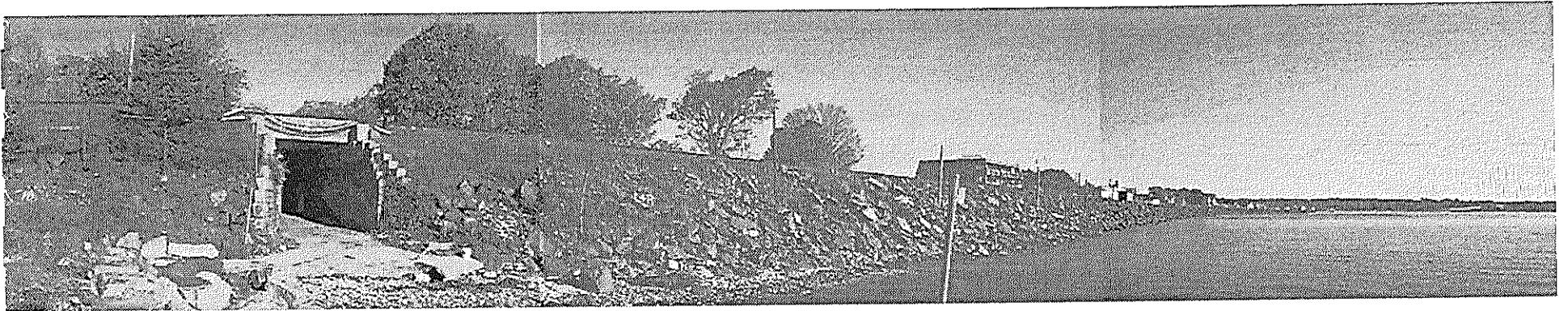


Proposed municipal parking lot for Hole-in-the-Wall Beach and for the Children's Museum. Bicycle parking adjoins the beach underpass and the Discovery Trail terminus.





Hole-in-the-Wall Beach with the boardwalk and with a proposed pavilion to separate beach and boardwalk access.



Hole-in-the-Wall Beach.

Main Street West

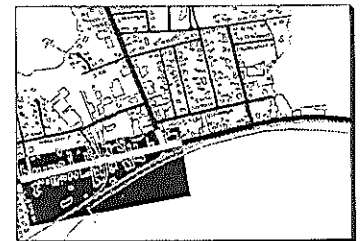
Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.
- Apply for ISTEA funds for sidewalk, crosswalk, and Hole-in-the-Wall Beach access improvements.
- Review Main Street traffic calming strategies with State DOT representative.
- Undertake a tree planting initiative and line Main Street with closely spaced, high canopy shade trees.
- Encourage immediate and inexpensive facade improvements like painting, opening larger windows, and installing window awnings or porch canopies.
- Repave sidewalks down both sides of the Main Street from Niantic Center School to the Green.
- Encourage the consolidation and relocation of parking behind buildings, and improve parking signs.
- Encourage the use of mobile street furniture by Main Street merchants.
- Revise zoning parking codes to reduce parking requirements and to actively encourage shared lots.
- Require new building massing and siting to be sympathetic to those of the existing buildings.
- Preserve historic buildings and establish basic design guidelines and zoning incentives to encourage business development in Niantic consistent with the seaside village character of Main Street.
- Revise zoning and regulatory codes to encourage more restaurant and nightlife development along Main Street.
- Coordinate with boardwalk planners to allow for the eventual construction of a pavilion at the Hole-in-the-Wall Beach terminus of the Niantic Bay Overlook.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Construct a system along Main Street of regularized intersections that include dogbones, pedestrian crossings, and pedestrian scaled street lighting.
- Consolidate and relocate parking in shared lots behind buildings or behind landscaping screens.
- Encourage infill building to plug gaps along Main Street.
- Fully develop the parking lot at Hole-in-the-Wall Beach.
- Construct a pavilion at the Hole-in-the-Wall Beach terminus of the boardwalk.
- Support extensive building improvements and investments like increasing glazing onto Main Street, daylighting, and natural ventilation.
- Institute a street improvement program that brings together in one project all aspects of a street improvement: repaving, new sidewalks, burying utilities, installing new street lighting, and replanting trees.



Area Study

Children's Museum

Principles

1. Coordinate existing civic groups and business associations to provide the support necessary to keep the Children's Museum in East Lyme.
2. Provide long term community support for the Children's Museum by coordinating marketing and special event planning between local merchants, civic groups, the town government, and the museum itself.
3. Locate the new Children's Museum building where it can serve as a civic anchor for downtown Niantic—preferably along Main Street, at either the railroad siding or the Village Green.



A group of mothers and children on their way from one of the village's many destinations for children. A missing section of sidewalk has forced this group out into the street.

The Children's Museum of Southeastern Connecticut is the single greatest civic asset in Niantic, not only providing the community with a wonderful educational setting, but further serving the community as a regional tourist draw. It is clear that the museum has significantly assisted local businesses in Niantic—without the crowds of children and their parents that are drawn to Niantic by the Children's Museum, it is unlikely that the village could support other child oriented businesses like the Doll Hospital and the candy store.

Because the highly successful Museum has rapidly outgrown its current quarters and needs to move, East Lyme has the opportunity to assist the Children's Museum relocate within the village. It is important to keep in mind that the Town will benefit immediately from the relocation of the Museum if the museum can secure a downtown Niantic site. There, the museum will continue to bring visitors into Niantic, and as importantly, the Children's Museum will serve as a civic anchor to the village center. East Lyme should make every available effort to assist the Children's Museum create a new home in Niantic, and it should act promptly, before the Museum is lured to a more responsive town.

One particularly compelling Museum siting strategy is explored here. By locating the Museum on a site comprised of the current Post Office (which is looking to relocate) and the adjacent vacant commercial building, the Museum gains a site with shore proximity, adjacent outdoor space, Main Street visibility, readily available parking, and a connection to the proposed recreational corridor to Dodge Pond. In turn, the village gains a strong civic anchor for Main Street.

Children's Museum Base Plan

Recreational Trail

- Pedestrian path
- Bicycle and rollerblade path
- Activity areas

Main Street

Children's Museum

- Reused Post Office and commercial buildings
- New Main Street entrance pavilion and beacon
- New front addition, infill atrium, and rear sun porch.

Bus Drop-Off Area

Museum Lawn and Parking Entrance

Municipal Parking Lot

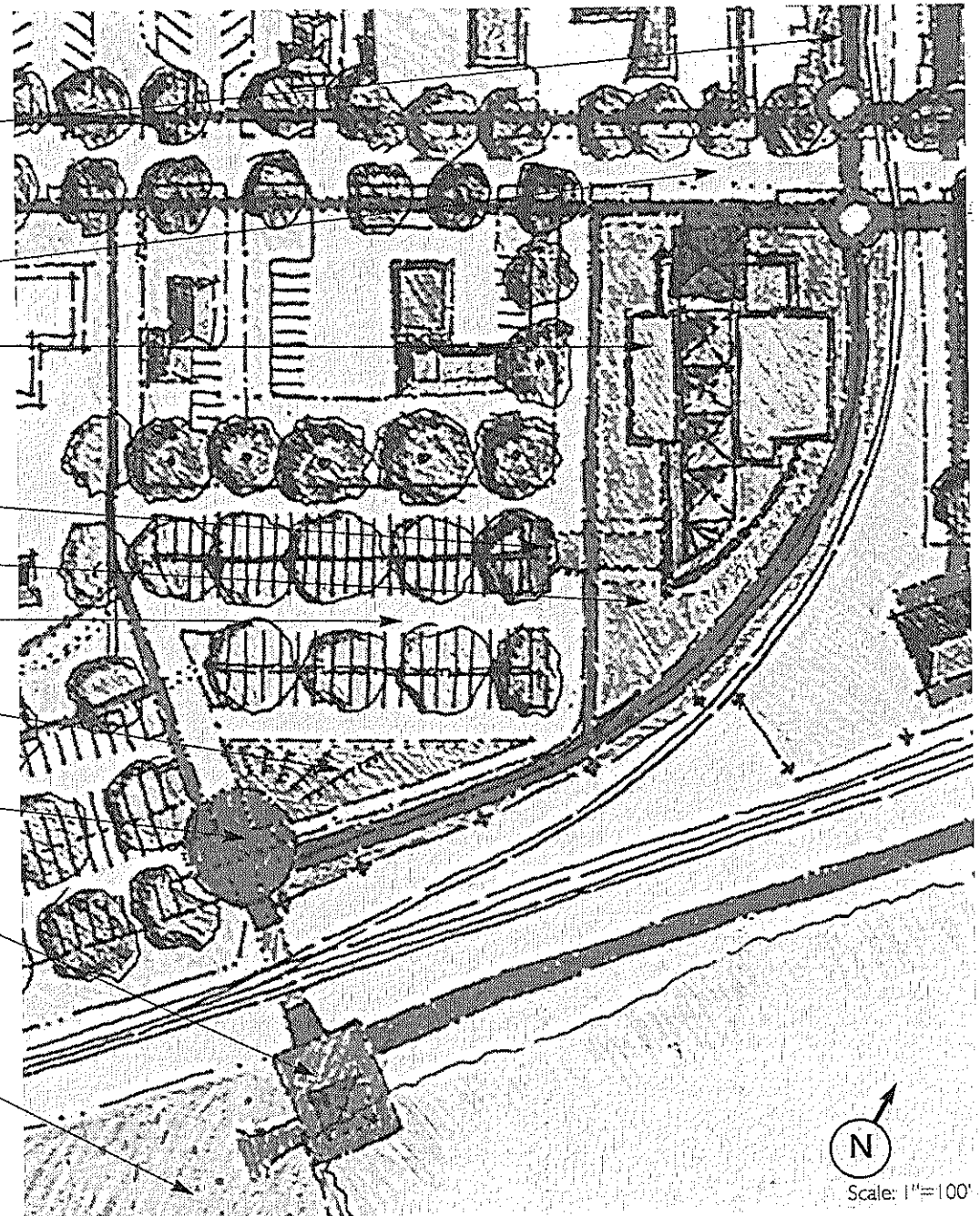
Bicycle Parking

Hole-in-the-Wall Beach Entrance and Recreational Trail Terminus

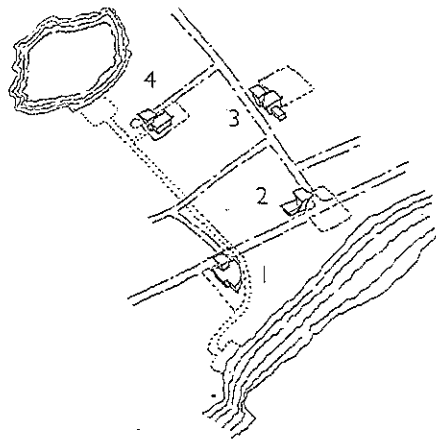
Hole-In-The-Wall Beach Pavilion

- Boardwalk terminus
- Beach gateway
- Shoreline beacon

Hole-in-the-Wall Beach



Scale: 1"=100'



Possible locations for the Children's Museum:

1. The proposed site at the junction of the railroad corridor and Main Street West can reuse two readily available existing buildings, and it will anchor the west end of Niantic's main commercial block. This site also offers close proximity to Hole-in-the-Wall beach, the proposed recreational trail to Dodge Pond, and to parking in the municipal beach lot.
2. A possible site along the northwestern edge of the Village Green where the pizzeria now sits. This site would reinforce the Green as the civic center of town, but would offer the museum little outdoor space of its own. Parking is available behind Main Street.
3. A site in one of the strip malls to the East of Pennsylvania Avenue offers a strong street presence, but not much else. A modicum of parking and outdoor space could be provided behind the strip mall.
4. A possible site alongside the recreational trail on land once occupied by a propane company offers a quieter, more residential site to the museum. In this position the museum will contribute least to the greater streetscape and street life of the village.

Siting Strategies

If the Children's Museum relocates within Niantic, the location of their new building will greatly affect the village. A building of this size and prominence can greatly enhance the character of its surroundings, so the specific location of the Children's Museum should be evaluated in terms of its civic contributions as well as in the usual financial terms. A few dollars wisely invested by the town in attracting the museum to a desirable site will be repaid quickly by the museum's physical and iconic contributions back to the town.

- Any museum site should remain in the village center, where it can contribute to the vitality of Niantic.
- Locate the museum where it can lend its civic presence to a major public place—ideally, either the Village Green or the proposed recreational trail to Dodge Pond.

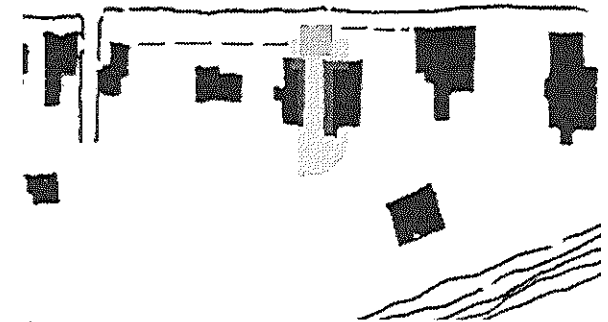
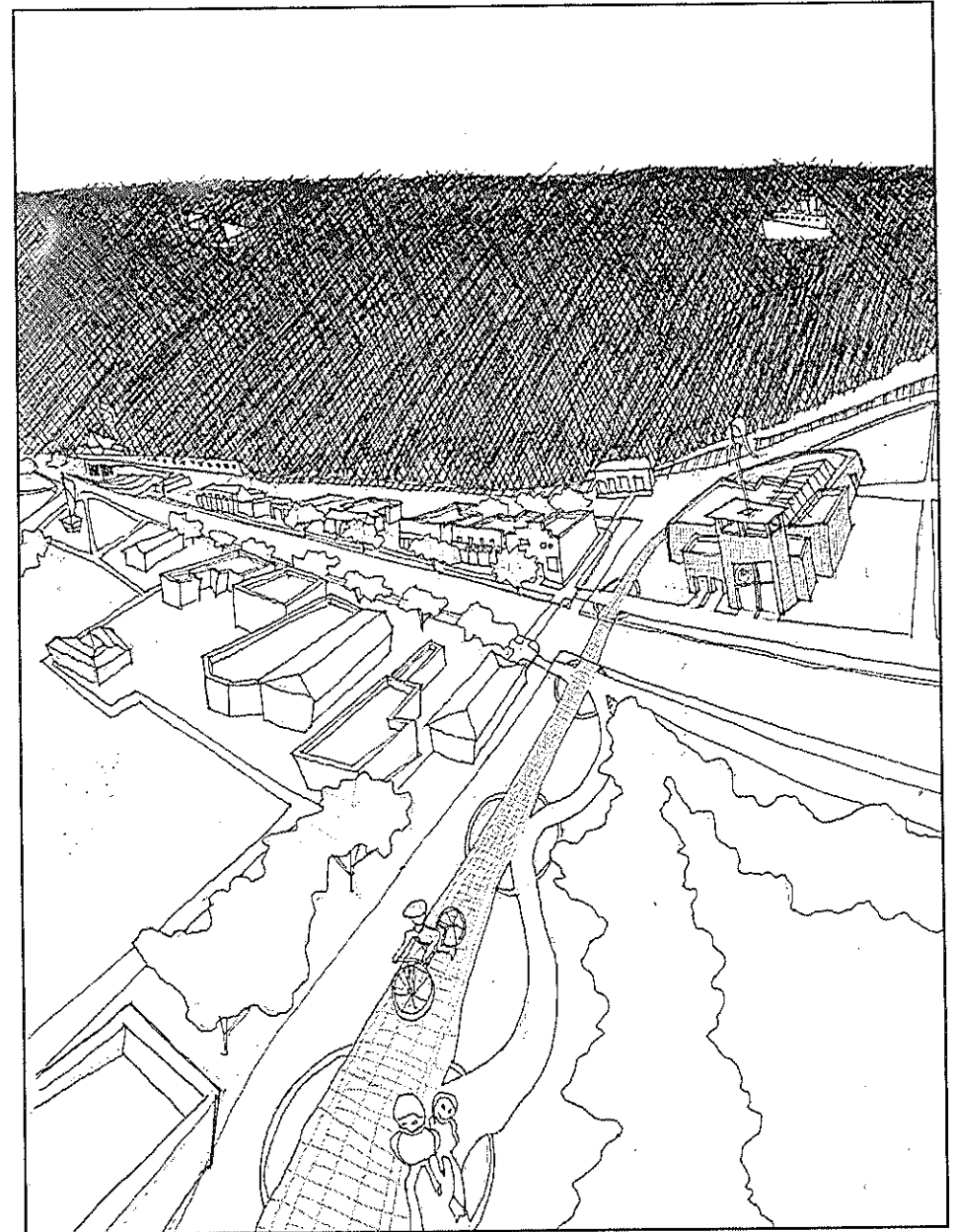


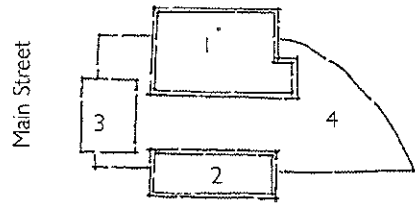
Diagram showing how museum front can maintain two setback lines.

- Locate the museum where it can act as a civic anchor to one end of Niantic's commercial core. If located along the railroad siding the museum would complement nicely the Morton House at the block's other end. If located on the Green, the museum in combination with a relocated train depot could form a civic gateway to downtown Niantic.
- Provide a site spacious enough for both adjacent outdoor activity space and room future expansion.
- The front of the Children's museum can help transition Main Street from a residential to a commercial scale by maintaining the setback lines of both areas; the bulk of the facade should follow the more generous setback line of the residential area to the west, while an entrance pavilion or porch should step forward to the line of the dense commercial block just to the east.

- Space should be left between the east side of the museum building and the railroad siding to accommodate the passing of the recreational trail to the beach just beyond. This trail would then serve as the primary link from the museum to the beach, and also from the museum north to Dodge Pond.
- The majority of the area behind the museum building should become a terrace or lawn for outdoor displays or activities.
- Parking for the museum can be provided by filling out and improving the existing municipal lot in front of Hole-in-the-Wall beach.
- Bus traffic and west-bound automobile traffic should be routed alongside the museum to a rear drop-off, and then on into the adjacent municipal parking lot. Overflow parking would be available along neighboring streets and in the lot just across Main Street.
- Wherever possible, reuse existing building and material resources within the new museum.

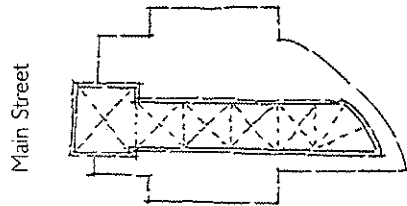


An aerial view of the Children's Museum, showing the proximity of the post office site to the shore, Dodge Pond (via the recreational trail) and downtown Niantic and the Green beyond.

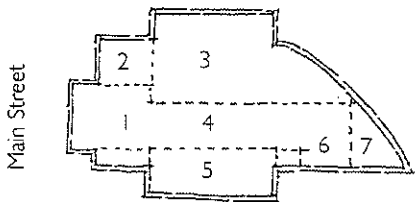


Elements of the new Children's Museum Building:

1. Existing post office building
2. Existing commercial building
3. New entrance pavilion and beacon
4. New infill construction.



Entrance pavilion and atrium can serve as both exhibit space and as a central circulation area.



A schematic plan of the new Children's Museum:
 1) main entrance pavilion; 2) museum shop; 3) primary exhibit space; 4) atrium; 5) offices; 6) rear entrance; 7) sheltered outdoor sun space.

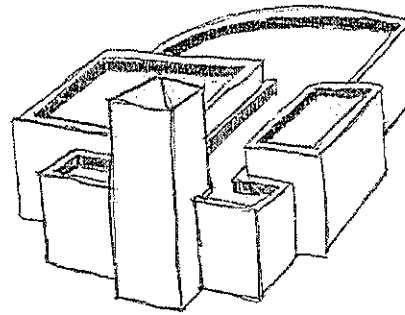
Design Strategies

Because the Children's Museum will be relocating to a new building within the next five years, East Lyme is in the fortunate position of possibly acquiring a major new civic building, one which could ultimately become as important an image of Niantic as the Morton House.

While the design strategies listed below are illustrated with schematic diagrams of a museum building to be located along the railroad siding, the principles are broad enough to be applied to a museum building at any of the possible Children's Museum sites.

- If practical, reuse existing post office building and neighboring commercial building withing the new Children's Museum building.
- The entrance area of the museum should offer an inviting covered area near the sidewalk for groups to gather out of the inclement weather and for people to rest in the shade.

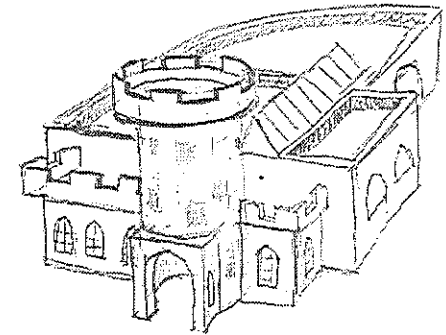
- An entrance canopy or pavilion for the museum should support a tall element to serve as a beacon that announces the museum's presence. A tower, spire, tall sign or flagpole—any of these would mark the museum from a distance, and any would contribute to the vitality of Niantic's Main Street.
- A museum shop should be located at the front of the building, preferable with large windows and a separate entrance to the sidewalk, so that it will continue both the architectural and commercial pattern of Niantic's Main Street.
- The space within the museum between the existing buildings could be glazed over and form a central day lit atrium, off of which all main museum spaces could open. By extending this atrium to the front and rear entrances, it would allow an unobstructed view through the museum to the shore beyond.



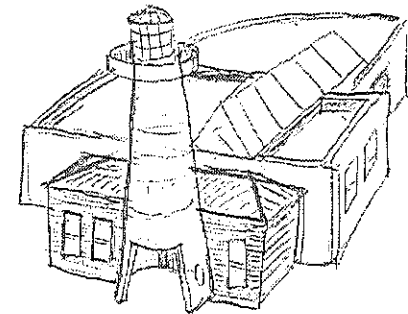
Basic museum massing that can be developed into any number of architectural designs.

- By following the curve of the railroad siding, a rear addition to the museum would allow sufficient space for the recreational path to pass by and continue on to the Hole-in-the-Wall beach.
- A large covered porch or canopy area on south side of the museum would extend use of outdoor space to rainy days and cooler seasons. If this sheltered area is designed as a sun space, it will remain warm enough to be used from early spring through late fall.
- The architecture of the new museum building might itself become educational by emphasizing the original construction and the current reuse of the existing post office and retail buildings.

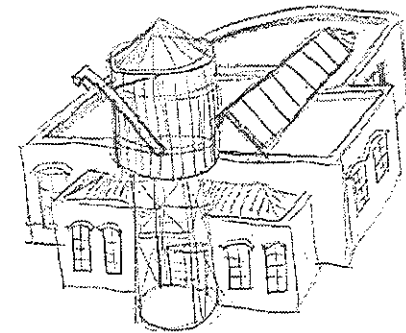
- Abundant natural light and a steady coastal breeze, if brought into the building for natural ventilation and daylighting purposes, can become an educational component of the building as well as an enriching element of the architecture.
- The basic building configuration of beacon/front block/rear blocks outlined above can support a variety of architectural intentions, from a thematic or stylistic solution to a more interpretive and unique architectural invention. Either tendency will work within the eclectic architectural context of Niantic.



Basic museum massing developed with a castle theme.



Basic museum massing developed with a nautical theme.



Basic museum massing developed with a railroad theme.

Next Steps

Children's Museum

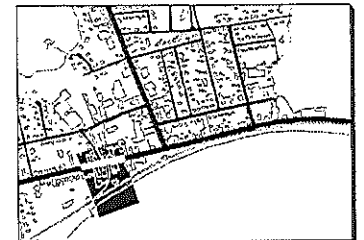
Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Organize a Children's Museum support committee consisting of local merchants and civic group representatives; this group should spearhead immediate efforts to assist the Children's Museum in remaining in downtown Niantic.
- Begin negotiations immediately with the Post Office for the purchase of their Main Street property by the Town for the resale or gift to the Children's Museum.
- Begin negotiations to secure the purchase by the Town or by the Museum of the vacant commercial building just to the west of the Post Office.
- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.
- Apply for ISTEA funds for sidewalk, crosswalk, and Hole-in-the-Wall Beach access improvements.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Fully improve the Hole-in-the-Wall parking for both beach and museum traffic.
- Encourage that the architecture of the Children's Museum support larger urban design goals of downtown Niantic by maintaining setback lines, offering beacons, and allowing for the passage of the Recreational Trail alongside of it.
- Review all landscape improvements throughout Niantic—like the Green amphitheater, the Recreational Trail activity nodes, or Dodge Pond park facilities—for accessibility and enjoyment by children visiting the Museum.
- Establish a permanent civic group to promote activities and events designed for Children and their families; this group should consist at least of merchants, museum representatives, town government representatives, and school district representatives.
- Establish regular relationships between existing civic groups and the Children's Museum, such that each group can volunteer or assist with particular events or activities at the museum.



Area Study

Main Street East

Principles

1. Expand the size and significance of the Village Green, and provide there both a visual and physical connection to the shore.
2. Create a gateway to Niantic where the bar meets the mainland.
3. Preserve historic buildings and establish basic design guidelines to encourage business development consistent with the maritime character of this stretch of Main Street.
4. Visually and physically connect the Niantic River shore to Grand Street, Main Street, and Amtrak Beach.
5. Open an alley between Grand Street and Main Street that allows Grand Street to service Main Street.



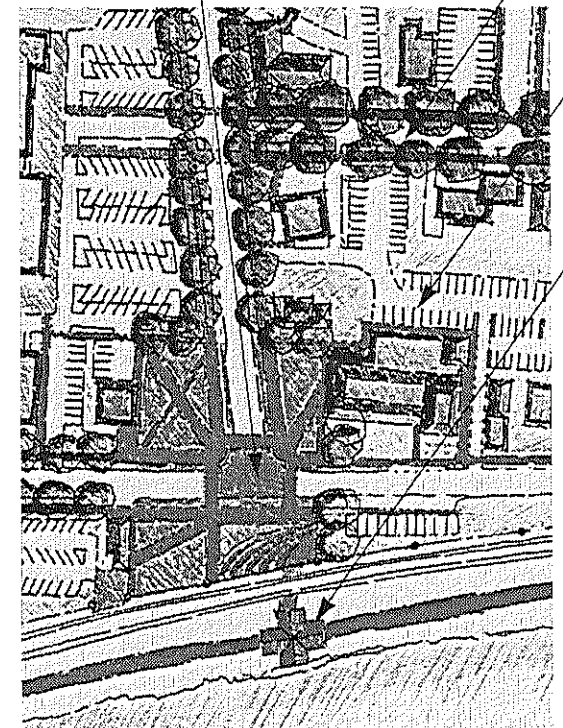
View along Main Street towards the village center: looming power lines, front yard parking lots, untrimmed bushes along the rail line, and lack of a grass median between sidewalk and road all detract from the charm of the street.

Main Street East as defined in this report is the stretch of Main Street between the Niantic Green and the beginning of the Niantic River. These blocks embody the maritime center of Niantic, where marinas, boat yards, and boat supply businesses lend the street a commercial character very different from that on the far side of the iconic Morton House. Because a large numbers of boating visitors are already drawn to this end of town, it has the potential to develop as a gateway to Niantic.

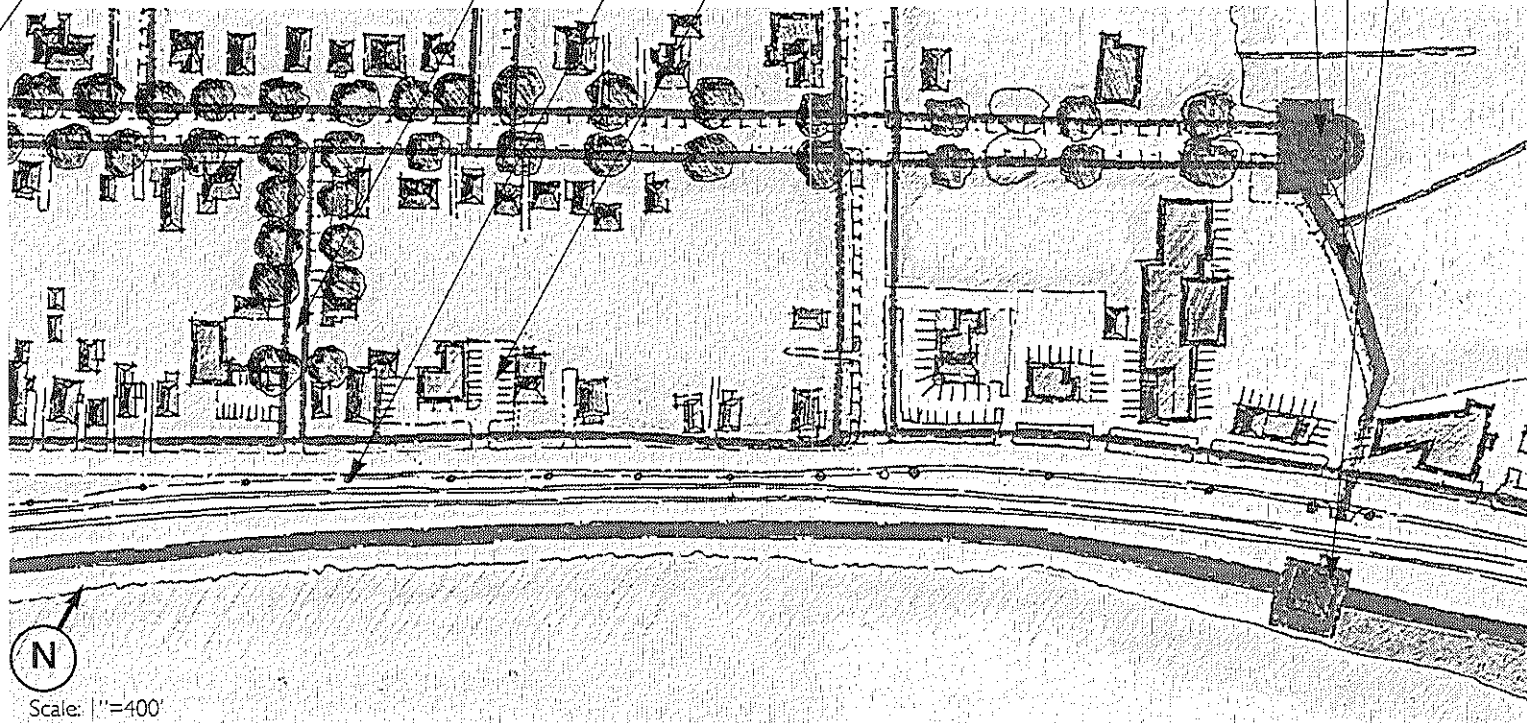
Main Street East Base Plan

Village Green

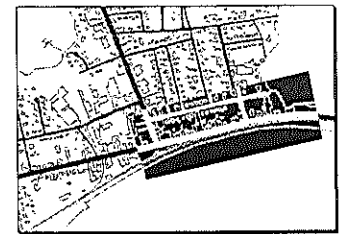
- Existing corner Green
- Addition along Morton House
- Addition along Niantic Bay
- Amphitheater and underpass

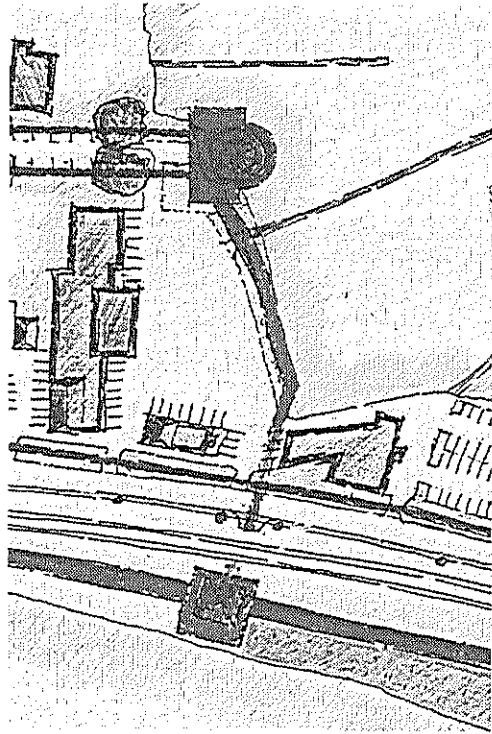


Grand Street
Alley
Niantic River Pavilion
Shared parking
Railroad fence
Niantic River Walk
Boardwalk pavilion
Shared parking
Amtrak Beach pavilion



Scale: 1"=400'



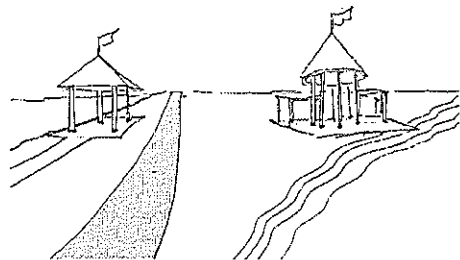


Proposed pavilions on the Niantic River and on Niantic Bay, connected by a river walk path.

Main Street

Eastern Gateway

There is currently no distinctive gateway or entrance marker for Niantic along the eastern approach to the village from Waterford. Yet, pavilions already proposed for other purposes—at the terminus of Grand Street and along the Niantic Bay Overlook boardwalk at the western end of Amtrak Beach—would also work in tandem to form an eastern gateway to Niantic. The closely located pavilions would also draw attention to Niantic's location along two distinct waterfronts.

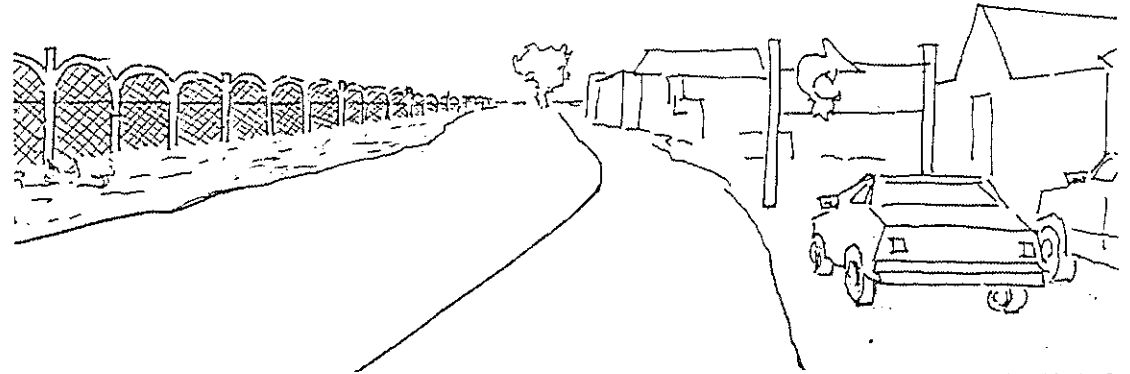


A diagram of how Amtrak Beach and Grand Street pavilions would together form an eastern gateway to Niantic.

Parking Lots

The north side of Main Street, which is home to many successful businesses, suffers from the visual clutter and discontinuity that results from front yard parking lots. Wherever possible, these front parking areas should be relocated or eliminated to make for a more attractive and less confusing streetscape.

- Promote on-street parking along Grand Street wherever possible, which decreases the need for off-street lots along Main Street.
- Move all parking lots behind setback line of buildings.
- Screen parking lots from street with low landscaping or low fences.
- Combine and share parking areas so that lots can be more efficiently arranged, redundant access drives can be eliminated, and unused lot areas can be converted to green space.
- Share parking access drives wherever possible.



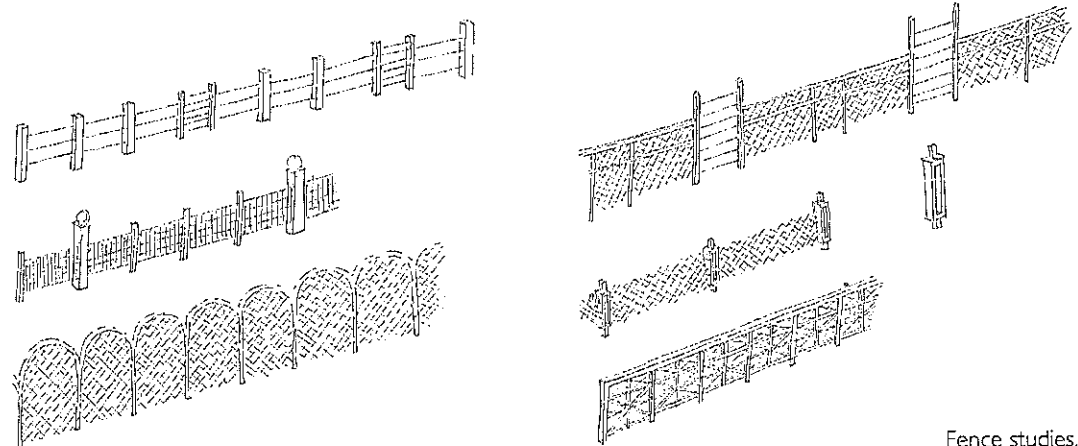
Main Street east, with a decorative fence between street and track. Niantic has the option to choose what kind of fencing will be installed as part of the Shore Line high speed rail improvements. In the option above, a single inexpensive decorative fencing unit is repeated along the entire length of track.

Another fence strategy could be locating more expensive and attractive fence sections only along high visibility areas—along the Green and along the Hole-in-the-Wall beach—and fencing the rest with a low-visibility, inexpensive fence like one made of black chain link.

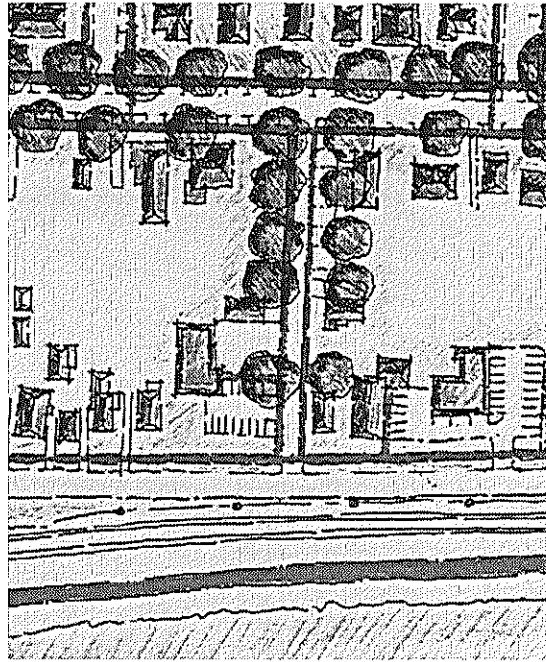
A third strategy might be to install an inexpensive fence material everywhere, like the black chain link, but to invest in decorative brick fence posts or decorative segments that repeat between every ten or so fence panels.

Regardless of strategy, the important task is to somehow bring a decorative and unique touch to this fence, which without town action will be installed as appealing chain-link.

- Minimize the number of lot entrances and exits to reduce confusion for drivers, to reduce curb cuts, and to minimize visual disruptions along the street.
- Use one way entrance drives off of Main Street to minimize side of curb cuts; where possible, exit exit drives should feed onto side streets or alleys.
- Wherever possible, entirely relocate secondary parking to side streets or alleys.
- Promote the use of permeable lot paving materials that will reduce surface water runoff into the municipal waste water treatment system.
- Change zoning regulations to allow flexibility in meeting parking needs. Not all buildings need lots, and those that do should be able to share lot space with neighboring buildings.



Fence studies.



The proposed alley from Grand Street to Main Street.

Grand Street

Streetscape

Grand Street can serve two roles in the structure of Niantic. Currently, it provides a direct connection between Pennsylvania Avenue and Niantic Bay. With improvements, it can serve as a support street—providing parking and rear access—to the eastern stretch of Main Street.

- Narrow Grand Street to minimum width driving lanes and parallel parking lanes.
- Use extra land from street narrowing to widen and consistently pave sidewalks along Grand Street to make them more inviting.
- Line sidewalks with pedestrian scaled street lighting to indicate that Grand Street, like Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, is a street intended for pedestrians.
- Visually connect the Niantic River shore and Pennsylvania Avenue with beacons located at the Niantic Bay terminus of Grand Street and on the east side of the Niantic Village Plaza.



Grand Street, looking from Pennsylvania Avenue toward Niantic Bay. The unusual width of the paved street would allow for much more generous and attractive sidewalks if the street were narrowed to a normal width. Also notice that Niantic Bay is just visible at the end of the street; a beacon or pavilion located at the Bay terminus of the street would call attention to this second Niantic waterfront.

Parking

- Regularize and clearly indicate parallel parking along the entire stretch of Grand Street.
- Locate signage at either end of Grand Street indicating what lies at the other end of the street. Signage should be designed to be read by pedestrians, not by drivers of automobiles.
- Open an alley from Grand Street to Main Street, located in mid block between North Washington Avenue and York Avenue along Grand Street.
- Line alley with sidewalks to make it attractive for pedestrians. This will encourage customers and visitors to Main Street businesses to park nearby on Grand Street, helping stave off the need for expanding parking lots along Main Street.

Main Street East

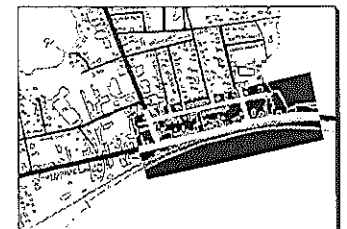
Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

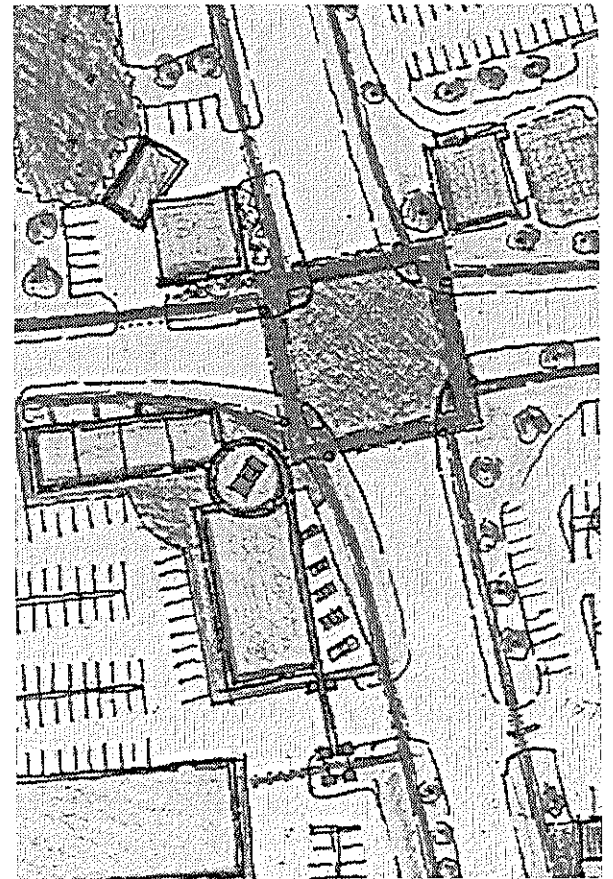
- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.
- Apply for ISTEA funds for sidewalk, crosswalk, and Amtrak Beach access improvements.
- Begin negotiations with Amtrak to have them construct an underpass at the west end of Amtrak Beach when new bridge construction brings about track realignment in the next few years.
- Apply now for ISTEA funding for the underpass, and begin working with state representatives on funding sources for an Amtrak Beach access underpass.
- Apply to Amtrak for High Speed Rail compensation funds to cover some of the underpass costs, and to cover the costs of decorative fencing to separate Main Street from the rail corridor.
- Determine a design for any decorative fencing to be installed along the railroad corridor.
- Coordinate with boardwalk planners to allow for the eventual construction of a pavilion at the west end of Amtrak Beach.
- Begin negotiations with property owners along the Niantic River for easements to or the outright purchase of land along the Niantic River for the construction of a riverwalk.
- Begin negotiations with property owners in the middle of the long Main Street block for the eventual construction of an alley between Grand and Main Streets.
- Encourage the consolidation and relocation of parking behind setback lines.
- Change the area's zoning to encourage the growth of restaurants and nautical business along Main Street, and to allow for more flexible parking options for all businesses in the area.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Erect decorative fencing along the railroad corridor.
- Build a full alley between Grand Street and Main Street.
- Narrow Grand Street and repave sidewalks on both sides.
- Construct pavilions at the Niantic River terminus of Grand Street, and at the west end of Amtrak Beach.
- Construct a Niantic River shore walk to connect the pavilions.
- Examine the extension of a River walk north through Camp Rowland and on into other areas of Niantic village.



Chapter 2: Flanders



Flanders

Introduction

Analysis

Economic Development

Study Areas:

- Plan and Proposals
- Economic Development
- Next Steps

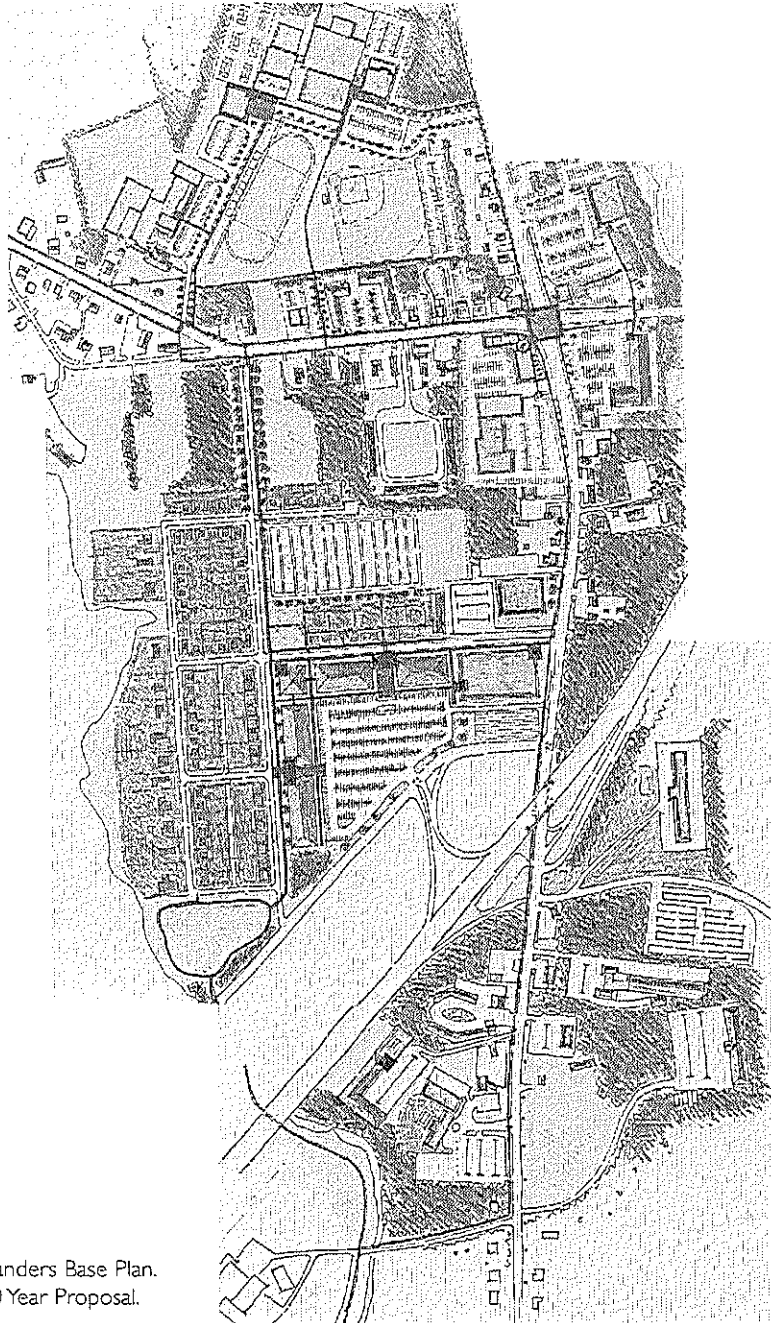
1. Flanders Four Corners
2. Flanders Main Street
3. Flanders Village
4. Exit 74 North: Flanders Road
5. Exit 74 South: Motel Campus
6. Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway

Introduction

Flanders has developed quickly in recent years from a traditional, New England hamlet along Route 1 into the town center of East Lyme. It is where families go to run their errands—grocery shop, buy trucks or lumber, or visit the doctor. Two of East Lyme's schools are also located in the center of Flanders—Flanders Elementary School and East Lyme High School—bringing in daily students and families from all of East Lyme.

Due to Flanders' proximity to Exit 74 off I-95, which is the last exit before the interstate highway splits, Flanders is attractive to developers. It will continue to grow. But it is important that Flanders develops in a way that contributes to a sense of *place*.

East Lyme must plan for the future and decide what kind of place it wants Flanders to be. By establishing plans and guidelines that outline basic growth principles, but allow for flexibility and a variety of development options, Flanders can attract the type of development it wants and grow into a livable, attractive, healthy town center.



Flanders Base Plan.
20 Year Proposal.



Aerial map of Flanders

Flanders Area Studies: 20 Year Plan

Flanders Four Corners

West Side of Four Corners

East Side of Four Corners

Flanders Main Street

The School Zone

Flanders Village

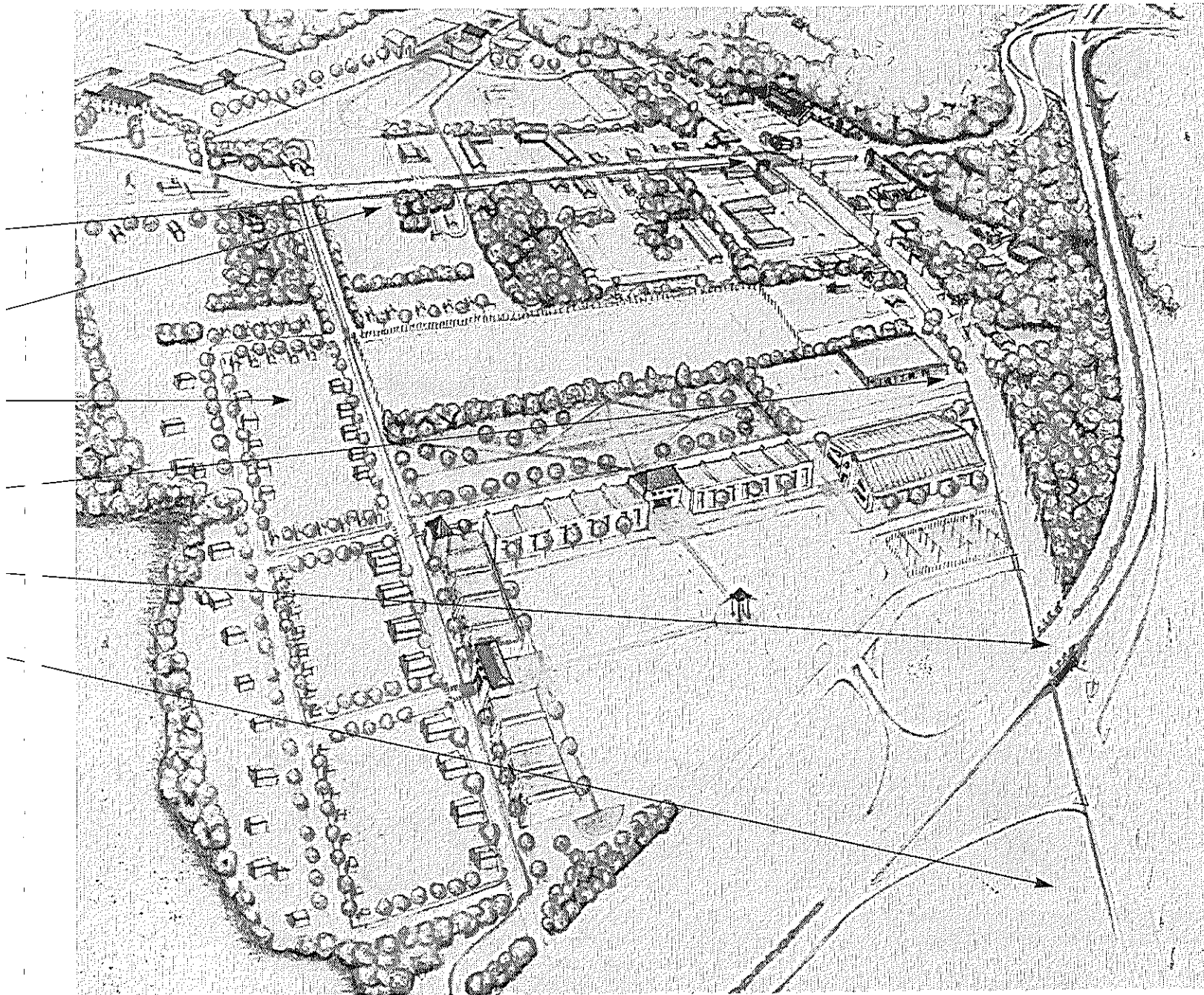
Scheme I: Campus

Reconfigured Exit 74

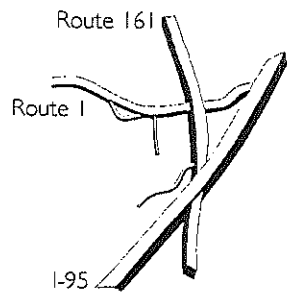
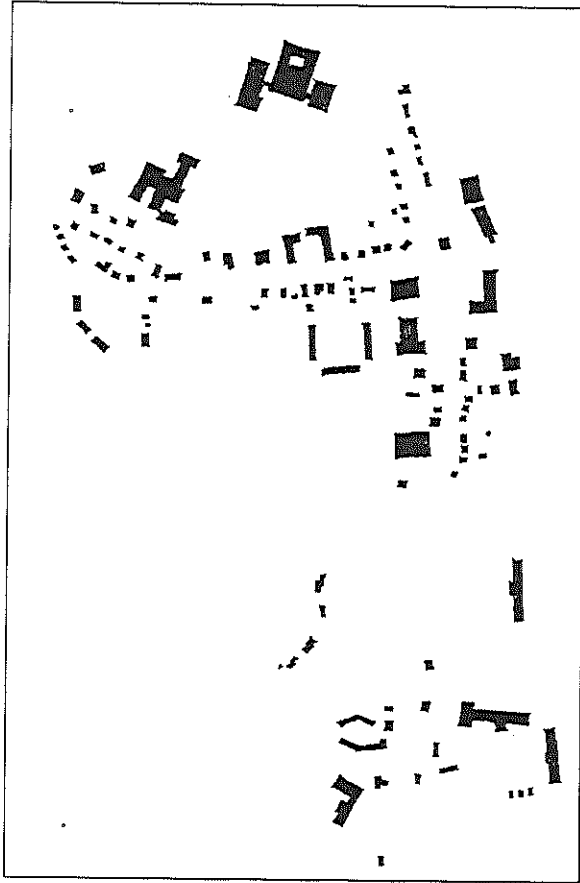
Exit 74 North: Flanders Road

Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway

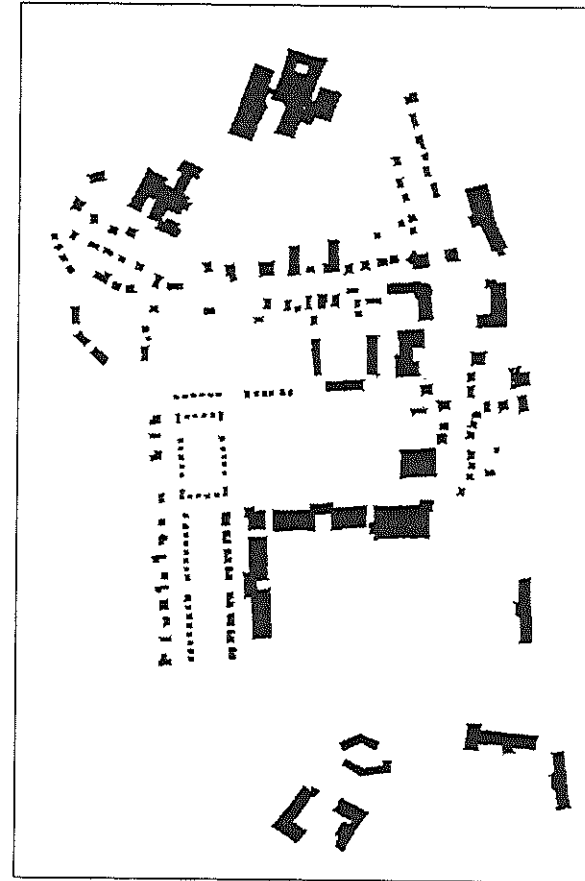
Exit 74 South: Motel Row



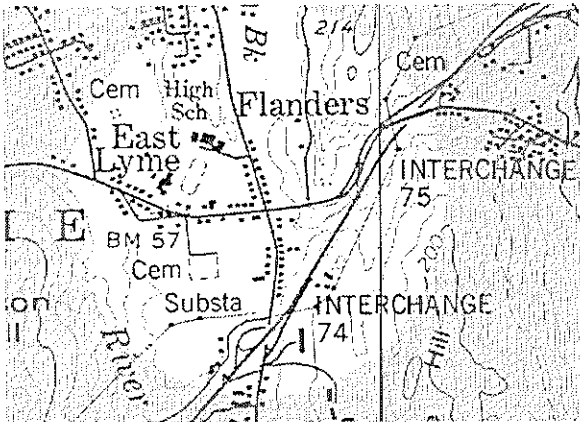
Aerial perspective of the Flanders Study Area illustrating the 20 Year Plan.



Existing figure-ground diagram of buildings in Flanders area study and street hierarchy diagrams of the major arteries.



Proposed figure-ground and street hierarchy diagrams. The addition of streets and a new frontage road gives Flanders greater depth and density, as well as flexible growth options.



1/2 mile Walking Radius from Flanders Four Corners. A quarter to a half mile is considered the distance an average person will walk to run an errand.

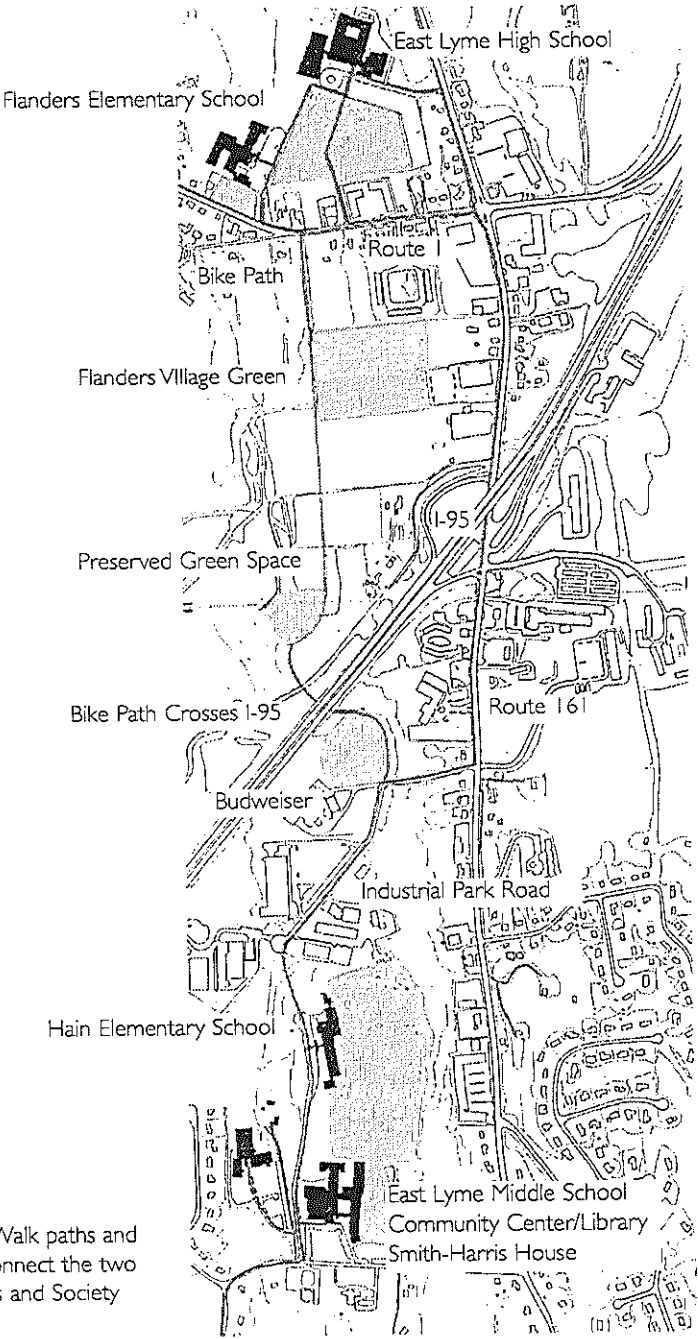


Diagram of proposed Bike/Walk paths and Green Spaces. The paths connect the two school campuses at Flanders and Society Road.

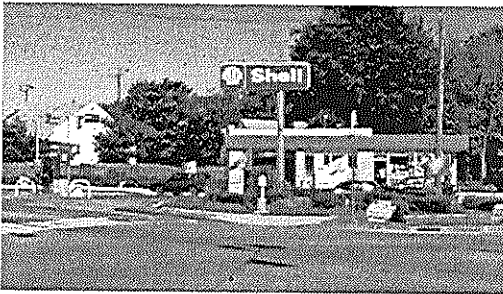
Flanders: Economic Development

- An outline of the retail possibilities for Flanders by consultant John Shapiro.

Introduction

Flanders is one of the central places of its region. It is located just to the west of the fork in two highways—I-95 and I-395—leading to New Haven to the west, New London and the Rhode Island coast to the east, and Providence and the new Foxwood casinos to the northeast. It is served by two highway exits; Interchanges 74 and 75. It is further at the intersection of the state's principal coastal arterial—Boston Post Road (Route 1)—and one of the region's principal north/south roadways, Route 161, which provides access to a limited access highway, Route 11 leading to Hartford. Approximately 40,000 vehicles pass by on I-95 on average each day; another 15,000 vehicles pass by on Boston Post Road; and 17,000 vehicles pass by on Route 161 in Flanders. Few locations enjoy such accessibility and visibility.

Flanders' long-term real estate value is therefore assured—notwithstanding the ups and downs of economic and real estate cycles. The challenge is how to properly exploit Flanders' full market potential.



The Shell Station at Flanders Four Corners.

Retail

Flanders' highway and arterial access provides it with tremendous value for retail development. Flanders is at the approximate center of the town, with somewhat more land area to the north, and somewhat more population to the south. Based on national norms, the town's population of 15,000 generates demand for approximately 200,000 square feet of retail space, both in and outside of the town, including 30,000 square feet of supermarket space. There are an additional 34,000 people living within five miles of Flanders; 130,000 people living within ten miles; and 240,000 people living in the Southeastern Connecticut Region.

Population is growing. During the 1980s there was a 13 percent increase in the number of housing units in the town, and a 16 percent increase in the number in the region. From 1990 to 1994, notwithstanding the recession, there was a 6 percent increase in the number of housing units in town, and a 4 percent increase

in the number in the region. As the latter period corresponds to the recession, and as the annualized increase in the number of units is approximately the same as during the boom of the 1980s, it is fair to say that the number of housing units built during the next five to ten years is likely to be at a comparable or higher level. The historic annualized growth rate of 1.5 percent (rounding) translates into a similar growth rate in expenditures on retail goods and services.

There is, nonetheless, significant competition for these expenditures. The Crystal Mall and additional superstore developments are located at highway exits just to the east. There is evidence of leakage of spending out of the town: per-capita sales are somewhat lower for East Lyme than for the Southeastern Connecticut Region as a whole



The road into Flanders Cemetery.

Presumably, in the region, the amount of retail is in approximate equilibrium with demand, especially in light of the national building binge for retail during the past ten years. This would imply that any new retail would have to confine itself to accommodating the increased levels of spending power alluded to above.

Retail is, however, in a constant state of flux. Competition since the recession has been particularly cutthroat, as people have gotten in the habit of fragmenting their shopping between any number of shopping centers, malls and superstores in order maximize their spending power. The presence of sufficient retail space no longer holds competitors at bay, as major national chains and franchises vie for better sites or marketing. In this context, Flanders would still appeal to any number of existing or emerging retail giants not represented in the region already. With 40,000 passing vehicles along I-95 per day on average, and, as noted,

130,000 people within ten miles, Flanders offers sufficient traffic volumes and population base to meet the site location criteria for any number of superstores and category killers. The issue is how does the Flanders area accommodate this scale of development in a way that does not compromise its image or sense of place. (Please see “Flanders Village” study area).

The major constraint on retail development in Flanders is not location or market support—but land availability. The critical area for major retail development relates to the “Four Corners” intersection of Post Road and Route 161, as these two roads intersect with two I-95 interchanges located less than a half-mile to the south and east. Looking at the four quadrangles circumventing the Four Corners, the quadrangle to the northwest (“Flanders Main Street”) is constrained by school property; the quadrangle to the northeast is constrained by steep hills; the quadrangle to the southeast is

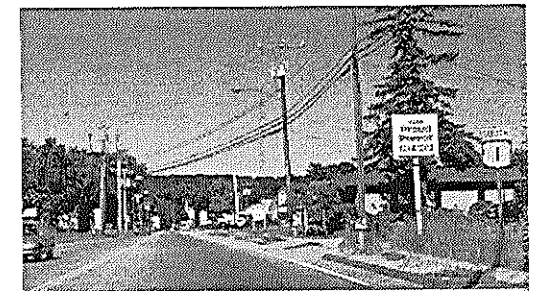
constrained by hills and a water body; and only the quadrangle to the southwest (“Flanders Village”) is potentially available for large-scale development.

However, its development is also encumbered. While the southwest quadrangle consists mainly of flat land unconstrained by wetlands or steep slopes, the frontages along Post Road and Route 161 have developed piecemeal over time, meaning that there would be a significant assemblage cost in this area. Had, for example, there been appropriately sized assemblages, it would be fair to say that something on the scale of the Crystal Mall would have been built in Flanders already.

In this physical context, the market, left to its own devices, would probably lead to continued piecemeal commercial development too small to have significant regional appeal and therefore primarily oriented to a townwide market.

Flanders’ businesses are heavily weighted towards services such as contractors and medical offices that require significant visibility and accessibility to a townwide clientele, but not high-image development. This commercial mix would likely continue and traffic conditions would likely worsen, owing to the frequent curb cuts associated with the existing and new developments. The area would not maximize its regional market potential; nor would it fully reflect the relatively high value of East Lyme as a residential community.

On the other hand, the market could be channeled in such a manner as to lead to major commercial development and retenanting of marginally-used space. The challenge is to create the appropriate circulation patterns, visibility and assemblages. Please see the following Flanders Study Areas for design and economic development recommendations.



Existing condition along Route 1.

Flanders Four Corners

Principles

1. Develop Flanders Four Corners as a retail and service center that serves all of East Lyme and attracts some regional traffic.
2. Create a sense of “place” and a safe pedestrian zone at the Four Corners.



Existing Flanders Four Corners on Route 1 looking west.



Flanders Fish Market, typifying Flanders' traditional character.

Introduction

“Flanders Four Corners” is the town center for residents and home owners of East Lyme. It is where practical goods and services can be bought or obtained—lumber, trucks, groceries, daycare, dentistry. Flanders Four Corners is formed at the intersection of Routes 1 and 161 and accessed by exits 74 and 75 from I-95. At this intersection, strip commercial and retail development has occurred over time, displacing the village center to the west.

This is an area that clearly caters to the automobile. Yet with two schools, Flanders Elementary and East Lyme High School, located in the near vicinity and condominiums in the shopping centers, it is crucial to provide for the safe passage of pedestrians and bicyclists as well.

The identity of Flanders Four Corners can develop as a significant place around the intersection for shopping and commercial activity, with a reference to the image of Flanders Village and Niantic Village, but primarily with its own visible commercial character.

Flanders Four Corners Base Plan

Sidewalks

East Side of Four Corners

- IGA Colonial Market
- Flanders Plaza
- McDonald's
- Latimer Brook Commons

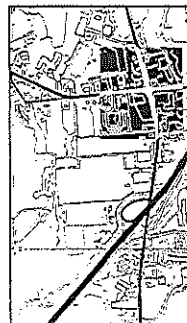
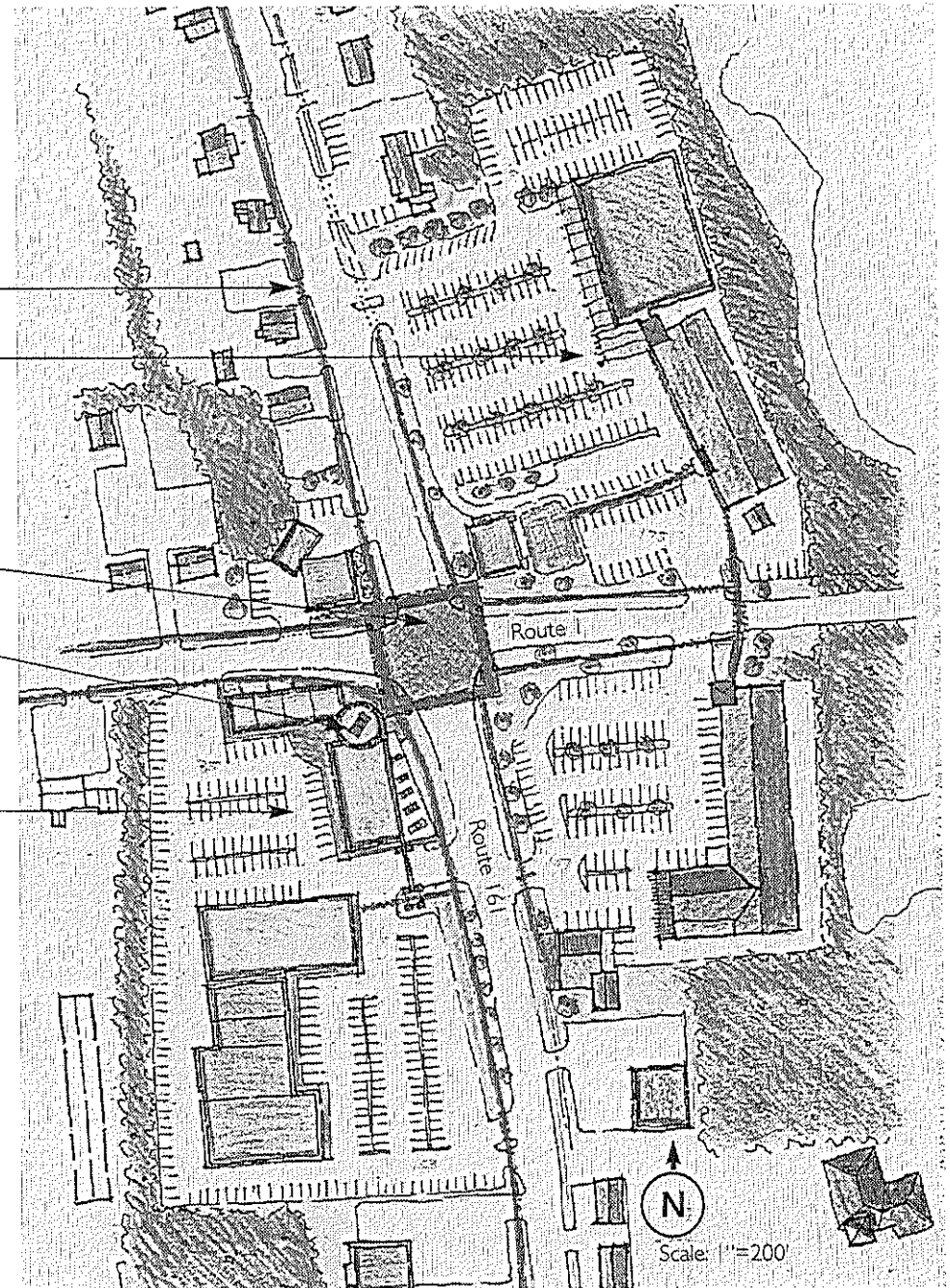
Four Corners Pedestrian Zone

Beacons

- Colonial Market entry
- Flanders Plaza facade
- Latimer Brook Commons, NW corner
- Ford Dealership
- Shell Canopy

West Side of Four Corners

- Shell Station
- Ford Plaza
- Brooks Plaza

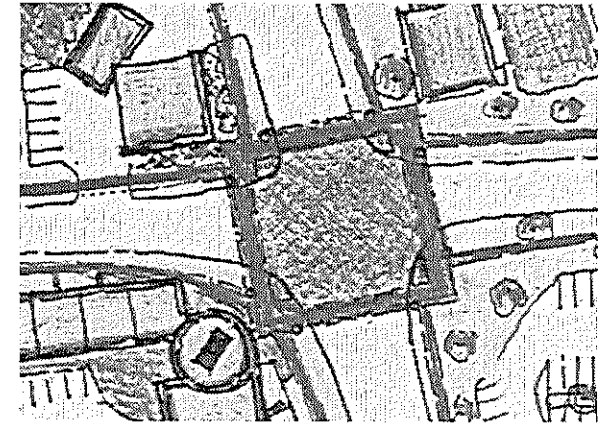


Flanders Locator Map

Proposals

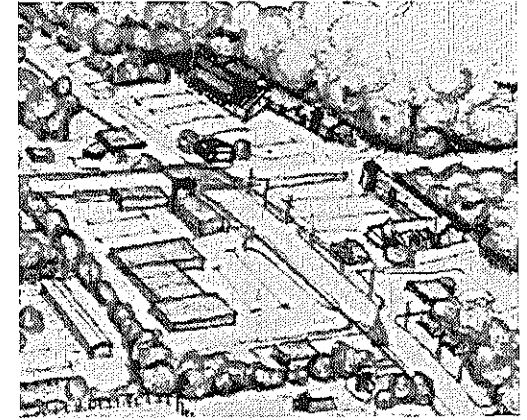
A Sense of Place

- Build on all four corners to the edge of the street in order to define a space at the intersection.
- The square of colored pavement designates the place at the intersection as special.
- Move the Post Office to Four Corners to enhance the area's civic identity.
- Establish design guidelines that encourage large scale facades with pedestrian scale elements for a relationship to the street and the proposed sidewalks.
- Establish design guidelines that encourage a commercial image that is reactive and fun, not typical with only reference to New England vernacular architecture.



Four Corners Pedestrian Zone

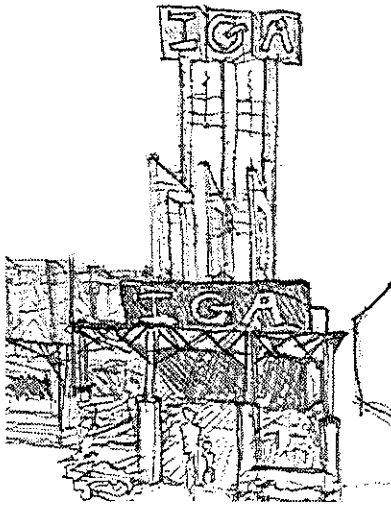
- Install a square marking the entire intersection of the Four Corners—this makes it a place. This area will serve not only as a safer pedestrian zone, but as a landmark or signal that one has arrived in the center of Flanders.
- This square of pavement should be of a different material and color than the street (concrete pavers, bricks, etc.).
- Carry the paving material through in the sidewalks in the area to clearly mark them as pedestrian territory and unify Flanders Four Corners.
- Further delineate the square with plantings at its corners and edges.
- The square is part of a larger system as the culmination of the link between Flanders and Niantic—two paved squares at the main intersection of each village linked by painted telephone poles. (See Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway).



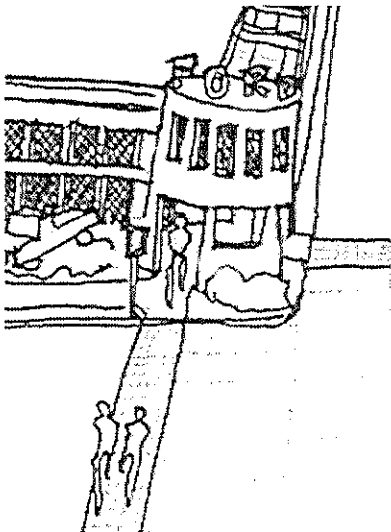
Detail of Flanders Four Corners aerial perspective.

Sidewalks

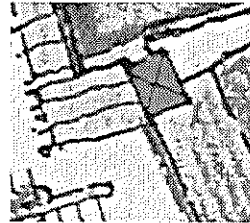
- Install crossing lights and crosswalks that connect to sidewalks at the intersection.
- Install well maintained sidewalks on all sides of the streets leading to and from the crosswalks.
- Widen or develop walkways in front of shopping centers and connect them to street sidewalks.
- Sidewalks should be of a consistent material and extend across curb-cuts to maintain continuity and establish safe crossing zones in key locations, most importantly the intersections indicated in the Base Plan.
- On the east side of the Four Corners intersection, 5 foot wide sidewalks are adequate, with walks extending only along the busiest stretches of Route 161.
- On the west side of the intersection, which is more heavily traveled by students and cyclists, 8 foot wide sidewalks are desirable.
- The sidewalk on the west side of Rt. 161 should extend south under I-95 to Industrial Park Road. At present this is the only way to get through the barrier of I-95, therefore it needs to be upgraded and made safe. (Please see Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway).
- Safe and well-marked pedestrian paths are needed within the parking lots to organize these large spaces.



A prominent entry and sign serves as a beacon visible from the road with smaller elements that relate to the pedestrian up close.



Architectural detail and bold graphics can act as beacons, as at the proposed Ford dealership on the SW corner of Flanders Four Corners.



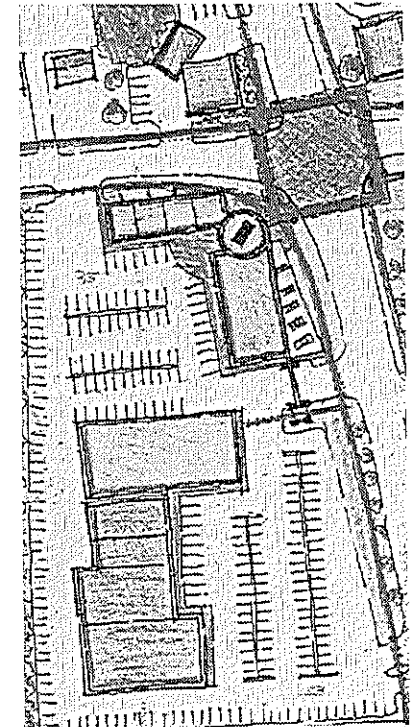
Beacons

- Beacons unify the area, make it visible from the road, and encourage pedestrians to venture across the open spaces by giving them destinations.
- Physical markers that stand out from the rest of building facades, beacons can take the form of a clock tower, a bold sign, or an enhanced entry.
- Visual links need to be established both between the buildings on the east side of Four Corners as well as across the intersection to the west side buildings indicated in the plan.
- The four primary beacons (listed in the base plan) form the corners of a square that reinforces the space of the square at the intersection.
- Enlarge the entry for the IGA. A taller, larger entry would make the store more visible from the road, and it could serve further as an outdoor retail space.
- Build a beacon on the facade of Flanders Plaza on axis with a pedestrian path through the parking lot to McDonald's and the intersection beyond.
- Connect the shopping centers north-south across Rt. 1 with a pedestrian path and crosswalk; a beacon at the northwest corner of Latimer Brook Commons will visually reinforce the improved connection.
- Strengthen the west facing end of Latimer Brook Commons to visually link it with the Ford Dealership across the way and to better define the southern border of the Four Corners space.

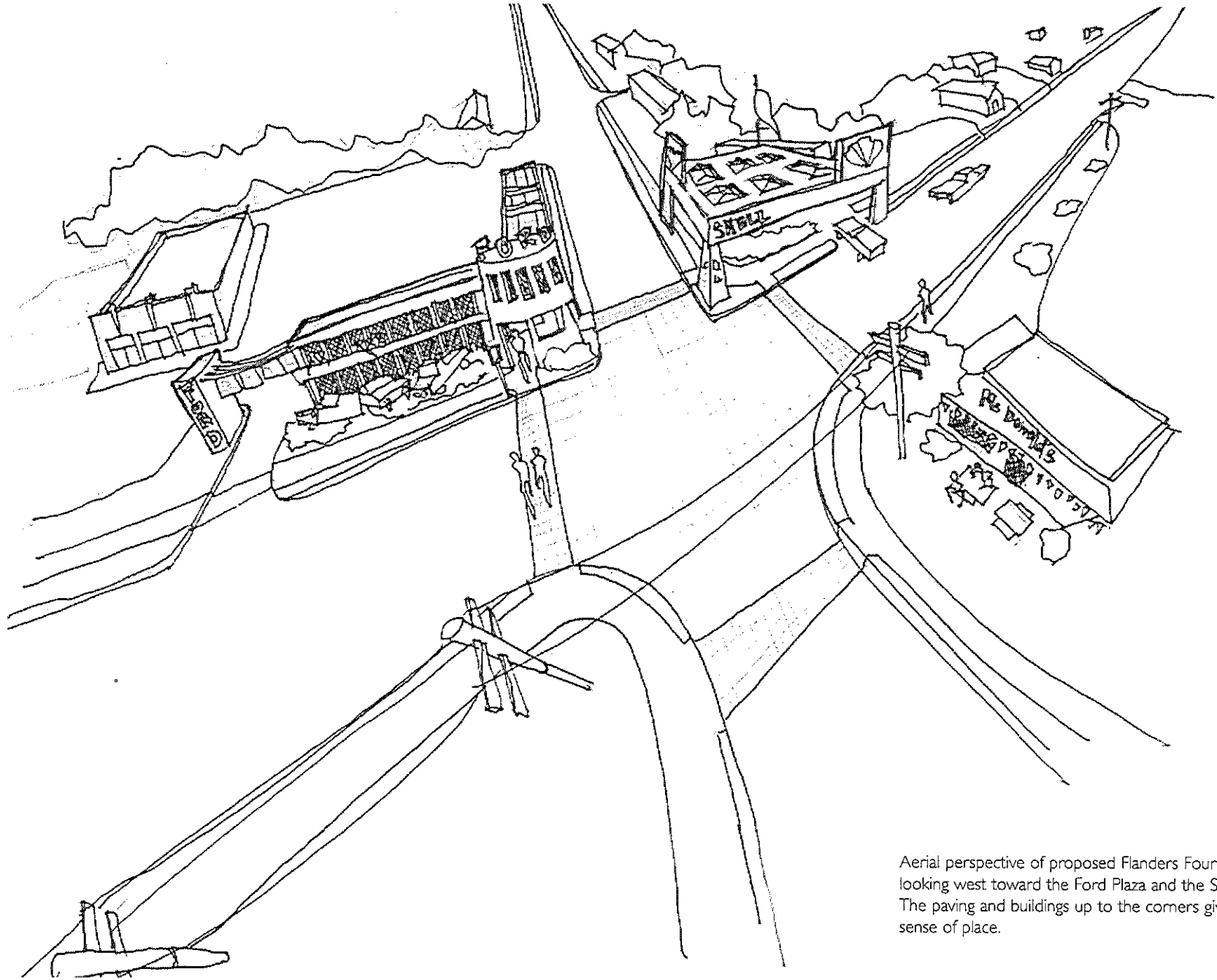
West Side of Four Corners

The west side of the intersection forms not only half of the Four Corners, but also the gateway to Flanders Main Street (Route 1). The anchors on this side are Brooks Plaza, the Ford dealership, and the Shell station.

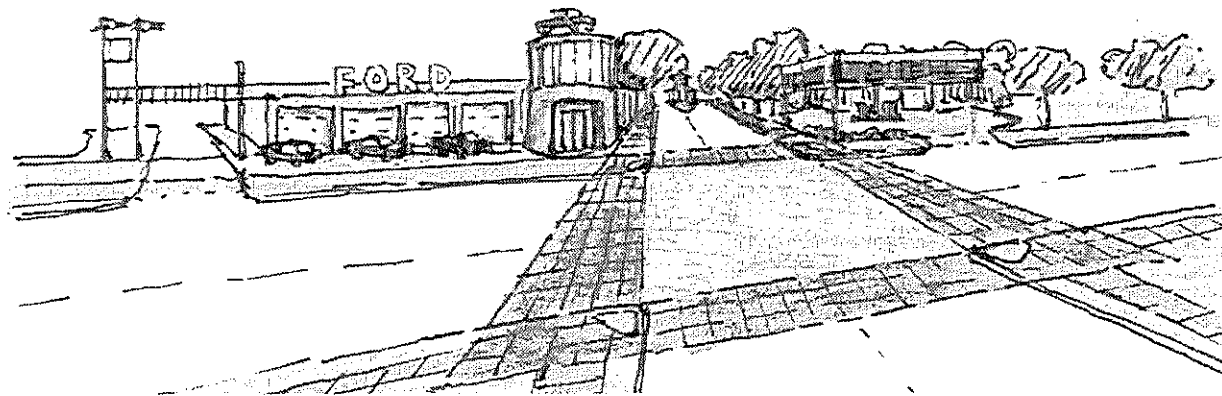
- The buildings should be close to the road where they can form a strong edge to Route 161 and Main Street, and where they can better anchor the corners of the intersection.
- Locate parking primarily behind buildings, but make sure it is visible between buildings from the street to encourage use.
- Define the space and the street edges of the Shell Station—which currently floats amidst a large, open lot—with a canopy covering the pump area at the corner intersection.
- The canopy parapet is an ideal place for a large, colorful sign or trademark.
- Move the Ford Dealership up towards Rt. 161, preserving enough space in front for a wide sidewalk and an area for the display of featured vehicles.
- Parking and inventory should be accommodated in back of the Ford dealership, save for a few cars and trucks in front as signs and symbols of the dealership.
- Build new smaller-scale retail spaces on Rt.1 adjacent to the Ford dealership to complete the corner.
- Limit the number and size of curb-cuts and continue sidewalk paving material across the cuts.



West Side of Four Corners—Brooks Plaza, the Ford dealership, the Shell Station, and the pedestrian zone.



Aerial perspective of proposed Flanders Four Corners looking west toward the Ford Plaza and the Shell station. The paving and buildings up to the corners gives it a sense of place.



Ford Dealership

There is an opportunity to redefine Flanders Four Corners by rebuilding the Ford dealership with certain urban design principles in mind.

This would first include creating an exciting attraction through architecture and a more judicious use of display vehicles. A beacon at the intersection would act as a hinge between the dealership on Rt. 161 and additional retail space on Rt. 1. It would also serve as a landmark for the Four Corners.

This could be a playful building with a truck prominently displayed on top, an entry drive-thru marked by the Ford logo, and large, open windows that reveal the vehicles inside and behind the building. The building could be bright and bold and vigorously self promoting while at the same time adding to the cohesion of the intersection and character of Flanders.

Shell Canopy

A canopy covering the pumps and extending to the corner would anchor the Shell Station and give it a larger presence at the Four Corners.

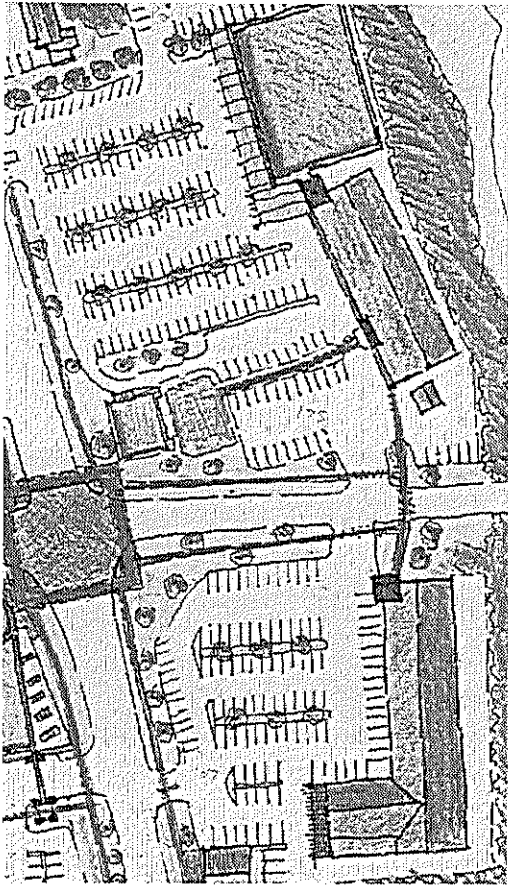
The canopy would cover directly to the corner property line, using a much more vertical sign and canopy fascia as an image corner anchor to the intersection.



Existing conditions at the Ford Plaza. Trucks are parked out to the street edge on the green strip.



Existing conditions of the Shell Station.



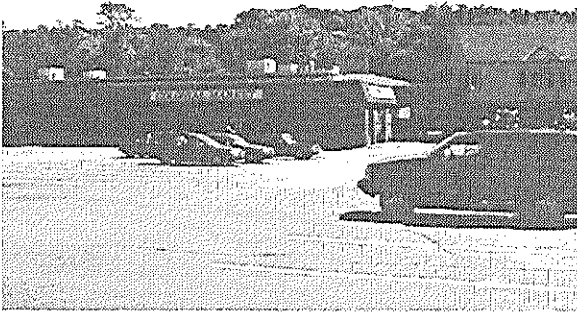
East Side of Four Corners

Presently, the east side of the Four Corners intersection is characterized by two retail centers, Latimer Brook Commons and Flanders Plaza/IGA Colonial Market, set back behind large parking lots (except for the McDonald's which is on the northeast corner). This is an appropriate model for this side given the prominence of the automobile and parking demand.

- Strengthen the definition of the parking as open space bordered by buildings.
- Unify the north and south shopping centers through connecting sidewalks and related facade strategies.
- Define the northern edge of the space by planting trees along the north side of the IGA parking lot.
- Landscape the Flanders Plaza parking lot similar to Latimer Brook Commons with islands planted with trees and shrubs. This would help visually and physically unite the open space across Route 1.
- Anchor the corner of the intersection square with denser plantings.



IGA Colonial Market, Flanders Plaza, and McDonald's on the east side of Flanders Four Corners. Currently there is no landscaping or sidewalks in the parking lot, and the IGA is barely visible from the road.



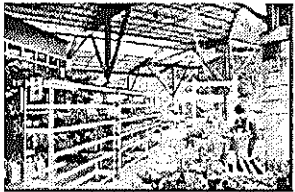
IGA facade—existing conditions



a



b



c

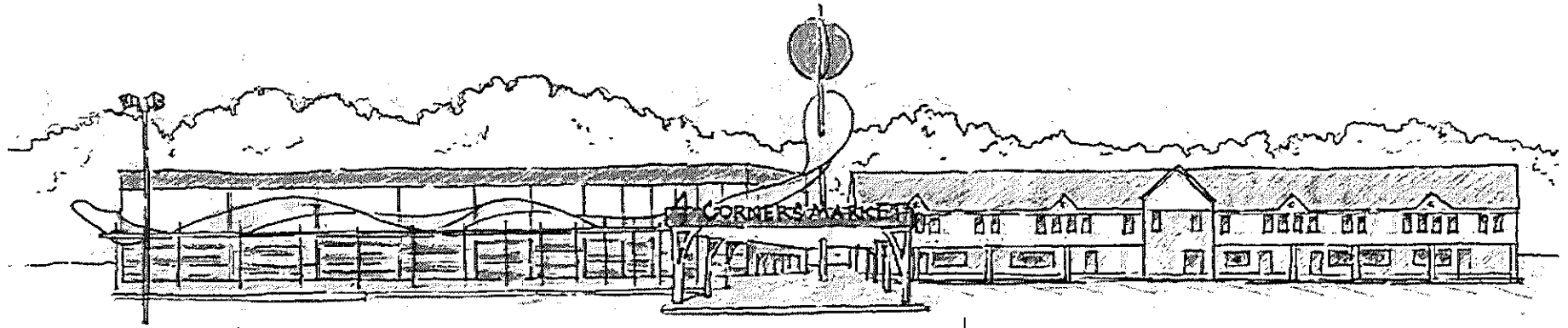
This grocery store in Washington demonstrates the proposed principles:

- a. A clock-tower beacon is easily visible from the road.
- b. The entry is prominent and enticing.
- c. Outdoor seasonal sales area attracts customers year-round.

IGA Colonial Market

The IGA Colonial Market is a much shorter building than the adjacent shopping centers and disappears behind the parked cars. Therefore:

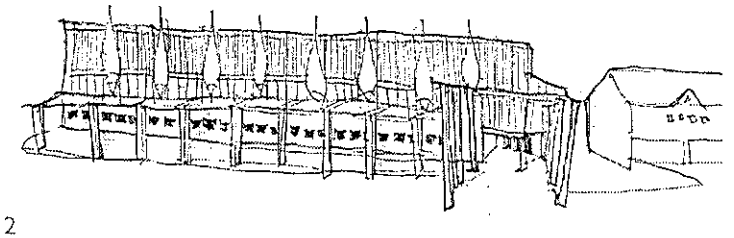
- A taller “billboard” type facade would help the store stand out from a distance and complete its edge of the east side space.
- Conceal the unappealing HVAC equipment on the roof with this extended facade.
- Install larger signage visible from the road.
- The entry area should be emphasized as a beacon and as the hinge that connects the IGA to Flanders Plaza.
- Use the larger IGA entry as a space for an outdoor market or a seasonal sales area, which will add much activity to this beacon.



IGA Facade Studies

Scheme 1

- Color and pattern are used to decorate and enliven the facade. The scale reads both from a distance and up close to the pedestrian. A sculptural sign and ribbon suggest a sense of whimsy and playfulness.



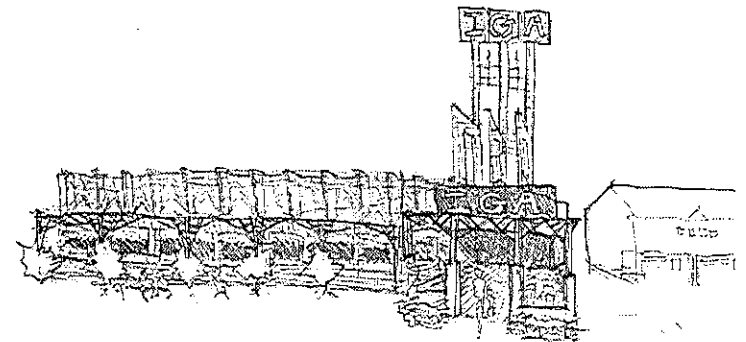
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Scheme 2

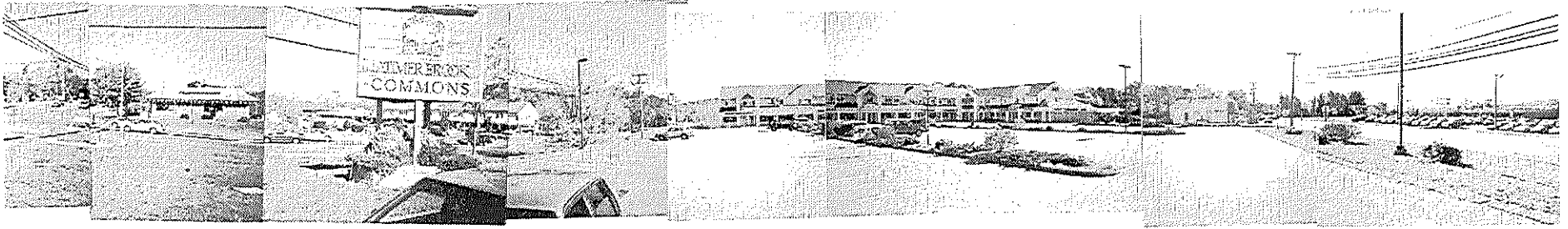
- A covered walkway both protects customers coming from the parking lot and gives a sense of scale to the facade.

Scheme 3

- The tall sculptural sign acts as a beacon and gives the store a sense of scale and prominence in the large parking lot. A covered entry acts as a hinge connecting the IGA to the adjacent shopping center and provides an outdoor area for seasonal sales.



3



Economic Development John Shapiro

This intersection is the “100 percent corner” of the Flanders business district: It is the busiest intersection and the place where the image of the entire business district is set. At present, it suffers from lack of a retail anchor. Thus, a gas station and a McDonald’s—typically requiring enormous traffic volumes—occupy two corners; while services and an auto dealer—typically settling for sub-optimal locations—occupy the others. It also suffers from a lack of visual interest and identity. Its location is that of a central place, but Four Corners does not “read” as the town center for an upscale residential community.



Photo-strip panorama of existing Flanders Four Corners.

Market Principles

1. Recruit an anchor tenant or upgrade an existing tenant.

The logical anchor tenant given highway access and Flanders' centrality, is a major supermarket. The IGA Colonial Market does not fill this roll presently, but could be upgraded.

The post office is a smaller footprint alternative. So is a large drugstore, such as CVS, or enlarging the existing Brooks Pharmacy. These uses should be promoted at or adjacent to one of the corner properties.

2. Upgrade the area's visual quality.

The upgrade of the area's visual quality would enhance the value of all of the Four Corners properties. This upgrade should be done mindful of how the area is perceived by the passing automobile driver.

Pedestrian-scaled improvements (historic lights, storefronts, etc.) are less important than vehicular-scaled improvements (amount and size of signage, landscaping of parking areas, etc.).

Furthermore, any upgrade of the area's visual quality should be done in such a way as to not compete with Niantic. An historic or resort image would thus be less preferable than an upscale suburban or rustic image. This is also another reason to upgrade the area with the automobile—not the pedestrian—held paramount.

Flanders Four Corners

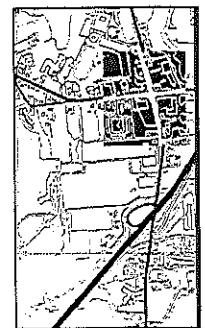
Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Install a paved square marking the entire intersection of the Four Corners—this makes it a place. This area will serve not only as a safer pedestrian zone, but as a landmark or signal that one has arrived in the center of Flanders.
- Install crossing lights and crosswalks that connect to sidewalks at the intersection.
- Install well maintained sidewalks on all sides of the streets leading to and from the crosswalks.
- Landscape the Flanders Plaza parking lot similar to Latimer Brook Commons with islands planted with trees and shrubs. This would help visually and physically unite the open space across Rt. 1.
- Apply for ISTEA funds for sidewalk improvements and curbcut revisions.
- Review strategy with State DOT representative.
- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.
- Recruit an anchor tenant or upgrade an existing tenant.
- Upgrade the area's visual quality.
- Establish design guidelines that encourage large scale facades with pedestrian scale elements for a relationship to the street and the proposed sidewalks.
- Establish design guidelines that encourage a commercial image that is reactive and fun, not typical with only reference to New England vernacular architecture.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Move the Post Office to Four Corners to enhance the area's civic identity.
- The sidewalk on the west side of Rt. 161 should extend south under I-95 to Industrial Park Road. At present this is the only way to get through the barrier of I-95, therefore it needs to be upgraded and made safe. (Please see Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway).
- Locate parking, on the west side of Four Corners primarily behind buildings, but make sure it is visible between buildings from the street to encourage use.
- Enlarge the entry and facade of the IGA. A taller, larger entry would be more visible from the road for marketing and could serve as outdoor retail space.
- Define the space and the street edge at the Shell Station with a canopy covering the pump area at the corner intersection. It currently floats in a large, open space.
- Work with the owners of the Ford Dealership to assess the possibility of moving up towards Rt. 161 preserving enough space in front for a wide sidewalk and a few vehicles for display.
- Build new smaller-scale retail on Rt.1 next to the Ford dealership to complete the corner.



Study Area

Flanders Main Street

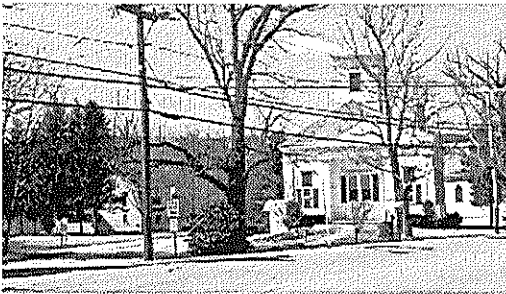
Principles

1. Improve sidewalks to make pedestrian and bicycle traffic safe for school kids.
2. Preserve the historic buildings and implement design guidelines to encourage business development with a character and density consistent to the existing buildings.
3. Develop the Flanders Elementary School and East Lyme High School as a campus with its own defined space and clear connections and access to Flanders Village, Flanders Four Corners, and the north-south bike/pedestrian trail.

Introduction

Flanders Main Street is the stretch of Route 1 from Flanders Four Corners to the end of Church Lane. For the purposes of this report, it also includes the school zone on the north side of Route 1 where Flanders Elementary School and East Lyme High School are located.

This is a special area of Flanders comprised of historic farm houses and smaller, local businesses. It is the area that makes Flanders a village in its own right with more of an historic, New England feel characterized by the prominent view down Boston Post Road towards the church in the middle.



Historic farm houses and churches along Main Street (Route 1) give Flanders an identity as a New England town.

Flanders Main Street Base Plan

East Lyme High School

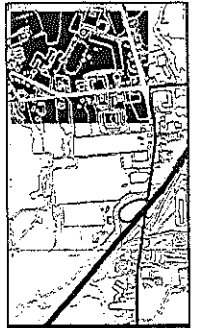
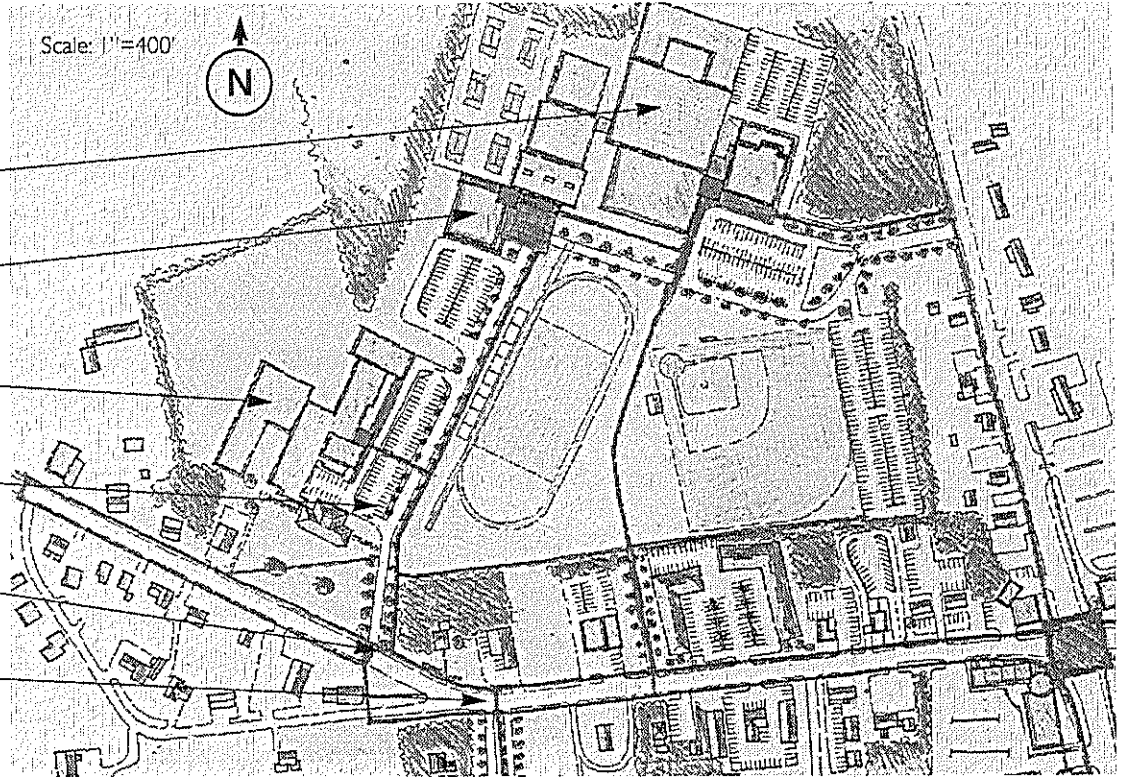
Proposed Pool and High School Addition

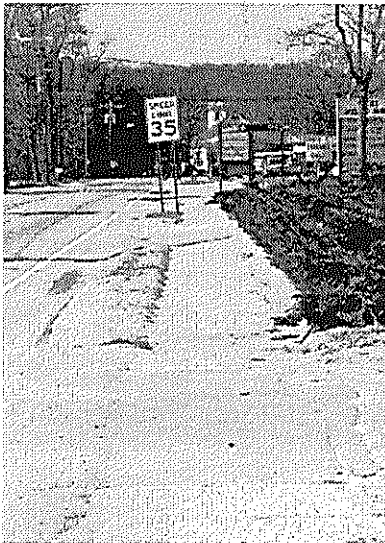
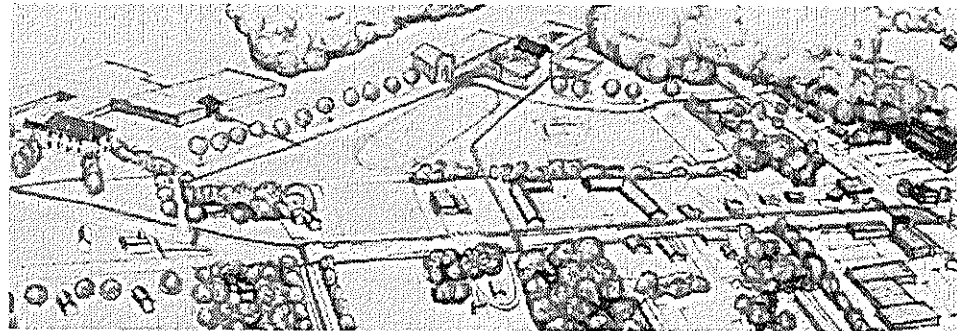
Flanders Elementary School

Proposed Tree-lined Boulevard

Sidewalks

Crosswalk to Flanders Village and Bike Trail





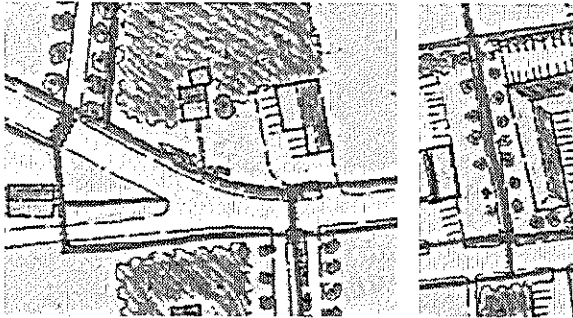
Existing condition of the sidewalk on the north side of Route 1. Paving material is inconsistent and poorly maintained. It is interrupted by numerous curb-cuts, and signage is inconsistent and too close to the sidewalk.

Design Principles

- Designate the area an Historic District to preserve the few remaining historic buildings that remain.
- Discourage strip-type development from spreading to the area.
- Encourage infill construction between existing buildings if area density needs to be increased.
- Encourage a consistent building set back.
- Require new building massing to respect the scale of existing buildings.
- Keep parking concealed in the rear.
- Lower limits on parking requirements.
- Allow for and encourage shared parking.

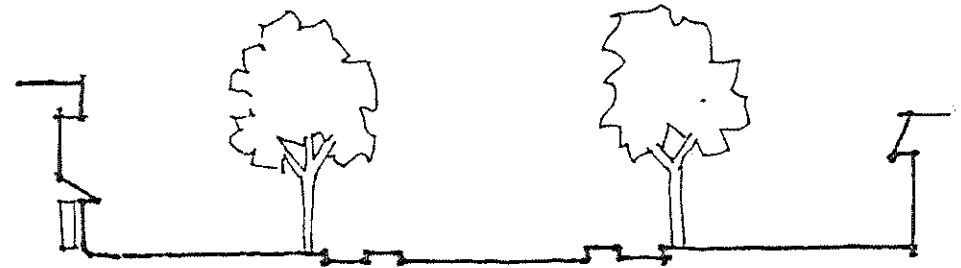
Parking and Curb Cuts

- Limit the number and size of curb-cuts.
- Where possible consolidate parking lots, combine lot entries, and move parking to the back.
- Landscape along the front edge of parking lots along Route 1; low plantings and fences provide a visual and physical buffer to the sidewalk and road beyond.

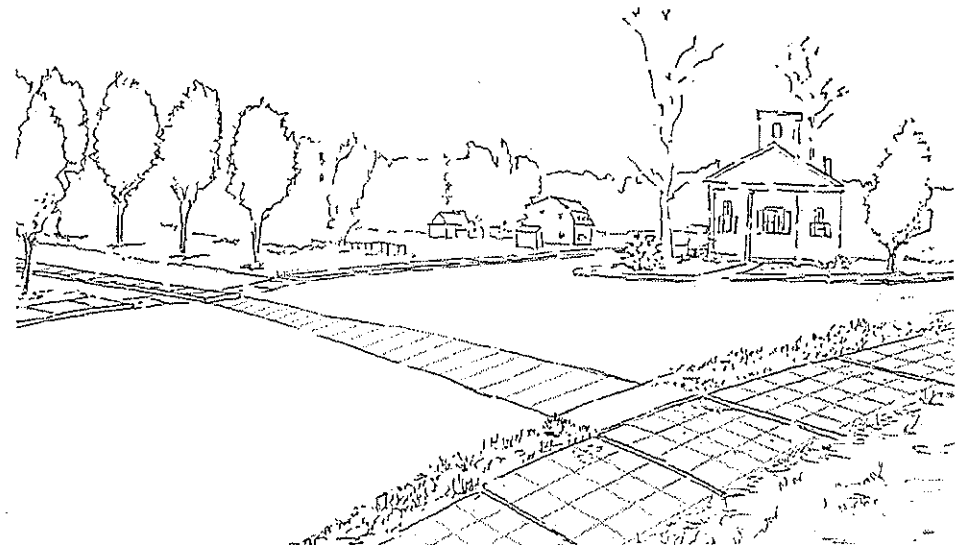


Sidewalks

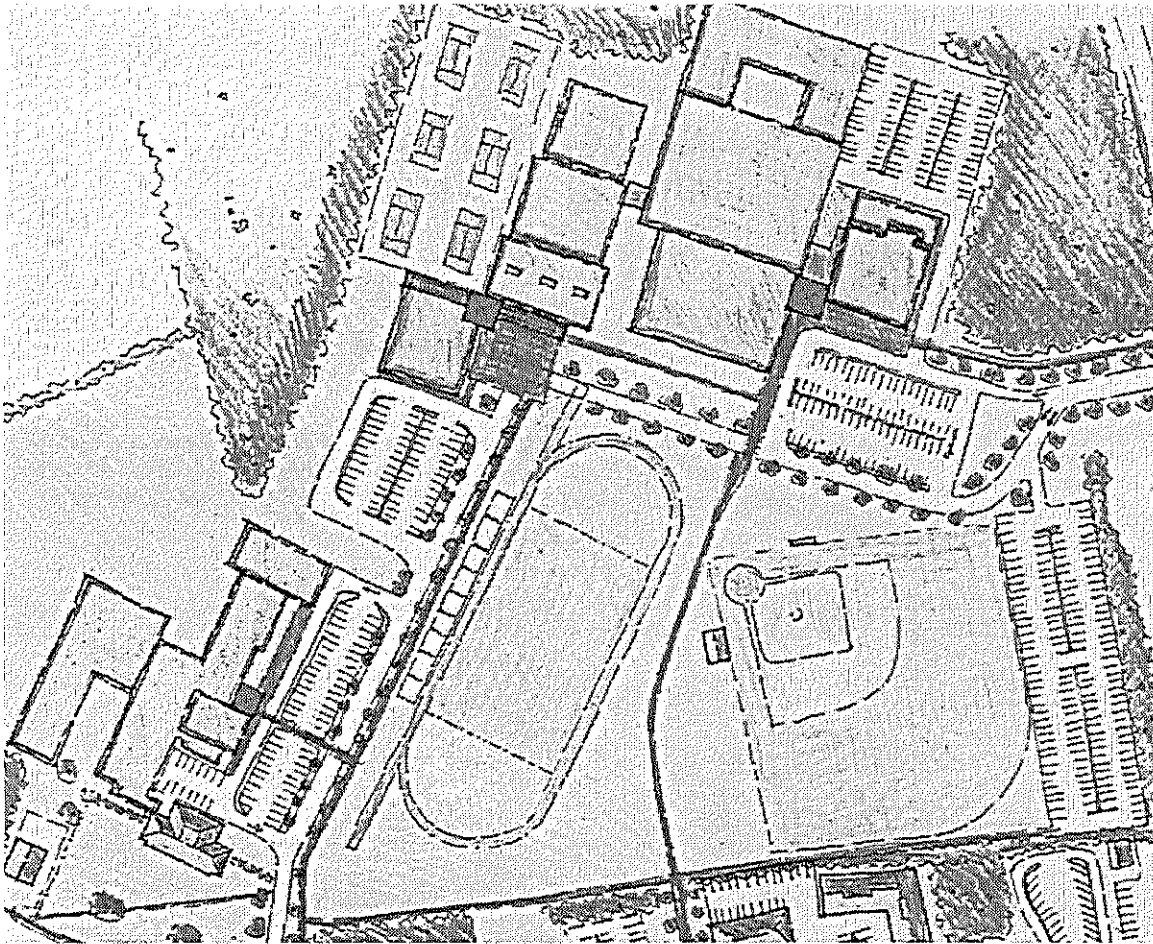
- Widen sidewalks and extend down both sides of Main Street from Four Corners to the end of Church Road.
- Sidewalks should be of a uniform, pedestrian scaled material along their length and remain consistent across curb-cuts. The same material used for the square at the Four Corners would be appropriate.
- The walk on the north side is also the main extension of the bike path and most closely linked to the schools, so it should be at least 8' wide for safety.



Section across Route 1. Buildings, on average, are one to two stories in height and set back 50' from the road. There is plenty of room for sidewalks and landscaping on each side. This section with setbacks should remain consistent along the length of Main Street to promote a sense of continuity.



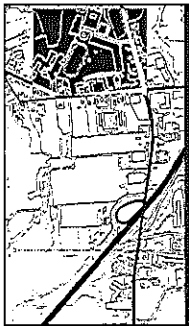
Designating Main Street a Historic District will help preserve the remaining farm houses and churches which give Flanders its character. Adding or widening sidewalks with pedestrian scale paving throughout would strengthen the village character and unify the district.



The School Zone

Principles

- Develop the Flanders Elementary School and East Lyme High School as a unified campus with its own defined space.
- Plan new building in the school zone to unite the campus and provide for future growth.
- Provide clear connections and access from the school campus to Flanders Village, Flanders Four Corners, and the north-south bike/pedestrian trail that will link the campus with the schools along Society Road.





Existing entrance to the Flanders Elementary School

Proposals

Flanders Elementary School and East Lyme High School are located on a large parcel of land on the north side of Main Street. In addition, a swimming pool which will have public access is planned adjacent to the High School. A large number of children access the schools everyday from two main entry points: Route 1 and Route 161. At present there are no obvious or easy routes for children to reach the schools by either walking or bicycling.

- Consider uniting the schools into more of a campus facing the central shared playing fields.
- Locate the pool between the two schools and begin to fill in the edges between buildings to create more of a campus feel.
- Link the schools with a tree-lined boulevard bordering the fields. On a daily basis, the traffic for each school would remain separated, but the visual and ceremonial link would be apparent.
- Convert the existing campus access right-of-way from Main Street into an allee (tree-lined drive) for daily use by children on foot or bicycle; for special events, the drive could serve as parking lot access or egress.
- Build more prominent entrances to each school; visible as beacons from surrounding streets, they would help relate the school buildings to each other.
- Move the main entry for the elementary school road to the land adjacent to the fire station where there is better visibility. (see next page).
- Install a traffic light and crossing signal at the new entry which would also control Cemetery Road (which leads to “Flanders Village”).
- Clearly mark key crosswalks.
- Align parking lots off of the new school boulevard.
- Create direct pedestrian access from the sports buildings and tennis courts to the playing fields.
- A plaza of contrasting material at the pool drop-off would discourage overuse of the boulevard by emphasizing its pedestrian prominence.
- Provide space for parking bikes and gathering.
- The green lawn and historic school (School Board Building) facing Main Street currently provide a gracious front for the elementary school. This could be reinforced with some additional landscaping to screen the view of the parking lot behind.

School Zone Road Plan

Existing Entry to Elementary School

This is an attractive, formal, tree-lined entry to the school, but due to poor visibility at the intersection, is inappropriate for increased traffic.

Proposed Entry Road

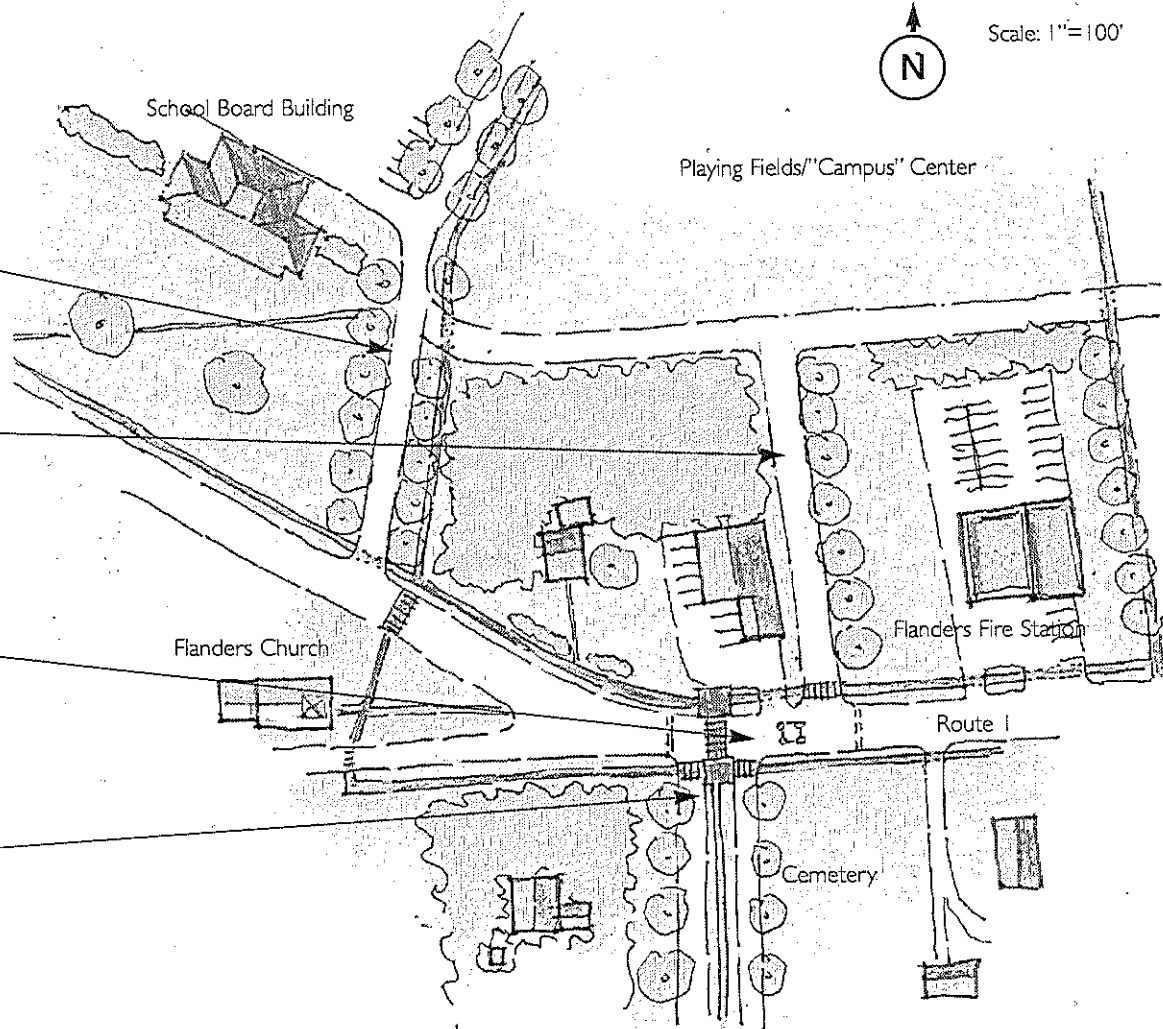
A new main entry from Route 1/Main Street is proposed on the vacant lot west of the fire station. This road would feed into the proposed Tree-lined Boulevard which rings the campus.

Proposed Controlled Intersection

A traffic light is proposed at the intersection of Route 1 and the two new roads: the school boulevard and the road to Flanders Village. This would control rush-hour and school traffic as well as making the crossing safe for children.

Bike/Pedestrian Trail

The Bike trail begins at the schools and continues south along Cemetery Road. (See Analysis diagram)



Next Steps

Flanders Main Street

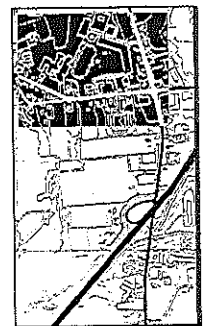
Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Designate the area an Historic District to preserve the few remaining historic buildings that remain.
- Require new building massing sympathetic to the scale of the existing buildings.
- Extend and widen sidewalks down both sides of the street from Four Corners to the end of Church Road.
- Clearly mark key crosswalks.
- Keep parking concealed in the rear.
- Lower limits on parking requirements.
- Allow for shared parking.
- Limit the number and size of curb-cuts.
- Landscape along the street edge of parking lots.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Encourage infill construction between buildings if the density needs to be increased.
- Build more prominent entrances to each school that would be visible as beacons and would relate the schools to each other.
- Link the schools with a tree-lined boulevard bordering the playing fields. On a day to day basis, the schools and traffic would be separate, but the visual and ceremonial link would be apparent.
- Install a traffic light and crossing signal at the school entry on Route 1 which would also control Cemetery Road (which leads to “Flanders Village”).



Area Study

Flanders Village

Principles

1. Provide basic infrastructure to plan for desired development.
2. Implement guidelines to control the character of development.
3. Allow flexibility for a variety of development strategies.
4. Use the existing cemetery as a civic space and expand the amount of open space as a public amenity.



Existing Cemetery Road. A road running parallel to this with a bike path down the middle would provide local access to new development. The cemetery would become a central civic place.



Flanders Cemetery. An added park on the south side would create a new Village Green and provide a buffer to the cemetery.

Introduction

“Flanders Village” is a largely undeveloped region that extends north-south from Flanders Main Street (Route 1) to I-95 and west-east from the Pattagansett River to Route 161. The Flanders Cemetery occupies the center of the area.

Valuable sites have not been developed here because of a lack of road access. The proposal for this area is to provide a basic street and block infrastructure that would provide access and create parcels which would be flexible for a variety of development strategies over time. Such an infrastructure will allow the site to be marketed to a wide range of developers based on the needs of Flanders at any given time. All of the parcels created by a flexible infrastructure system are large enough to support many types of development.

Several strategies are illustrated for developing the resulting parcels. Housing is emphasized for a portion of each strategy. This would be an ideal location for elderly housing, first-time home buyers, mixed-use housing, single family housing, or a mixture of all these types. Increasing housing strengthens Flanders Village and puts people on the sidewalks at Flanders Four Corners.

The preserved open space and park provide an amenity for future residents and ultimately add value to the land.

Basic Infrastructure Plan

Residential Road

A residential secondary road begins at Main Street and parallels the cemetery road continuing down to intersect the Frontage Road. A traffic light at the intersection with Main Street, in conjunction with other traffic calming techniques along the road, would discourage rush-hour traffic and provide safe crossing for students.

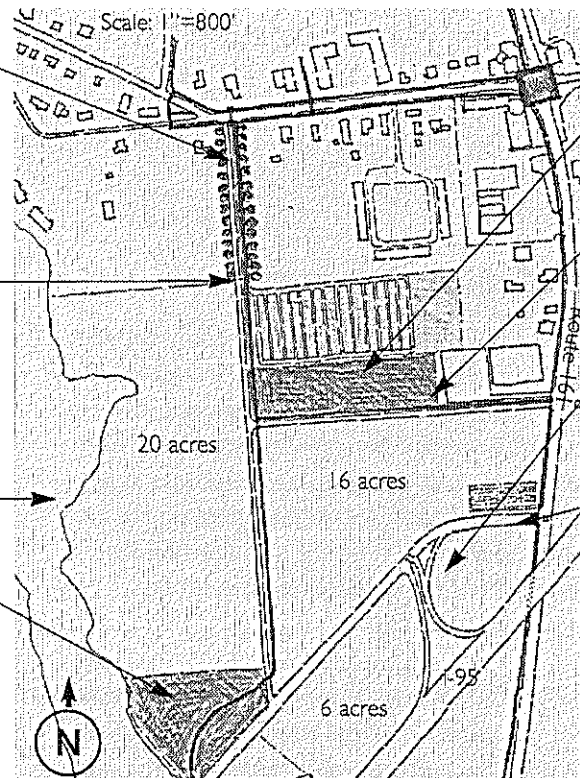
Bike Trail

An alternate (to Rt. 161) bike/pedestrian path begins at the school campus, runs along the residential road and cemetery, and crosses under I-95 to continue along Industrial Park Road to the schools and Community Center on Society Road.

Pattagansett River

Preserved Green Space

A green space is set aside where the Frontage Road meets the Pattagansett River. It buffers the residential blocks from the Frontage Road and provides additional public park space.



Village Green

A park is designed as a public green space and to act as a buffer to the cemetery on the south side.

Secondary Road

A secondary road runs perpendicular from the Residential Road to intersect Rt. 161 just south of the lumber yard.

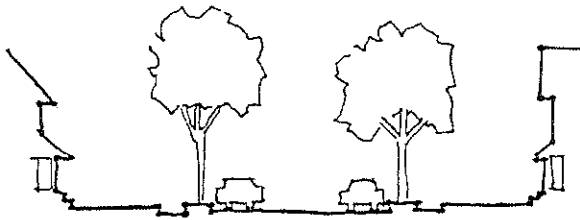
Reconfigured Exit 74

Exit 74 is reconfigured to feed onto and off of a frontage road. There is still a lane which feeds directly to Route 161 for exiting cars. Traffic lights are added at the frontage road, and at Route 161.

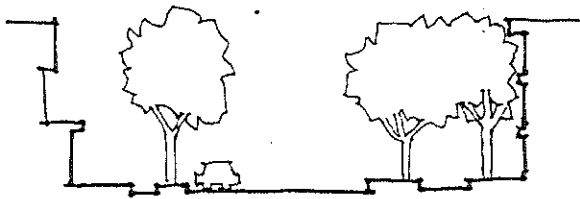
Frontage Road

A new frontage road is created which intersects with Rt. 161 to the east and provides easy access to developable commercial sites along I-95 to the west.

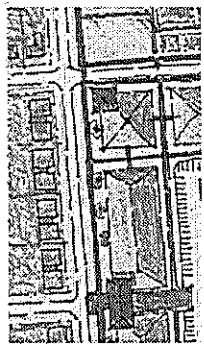




Section across a proposed residential street with single-family houses on both sides and on-street parking.



Section across the main proposed residential street showing slightly taller duplexes on the left and the technical college on the right. The bike trail runs through a wide green strip in front of the campus.



The campus forms an edge for the residential neighborhood and acts as a screen for the parking.

Strategy I: Campus

A campus strategy would allow for a variety of uses on the most commercially desirable site. One option, a technical/trade school, was proposed for the site during the charrette. This idea came up as a way to develop land that would be safe and non-toxic, increase the tax base, and provide training and job support which would potentially, in turn, attract employers to the area.

The school campus fronts the park and provides a strong edge along the residential roads while all cars and parking would access via the larger Frontage Road keeping traffic off the smaller streets. Vistas and walking paths lead through the campus integrating it with the neighborhood.

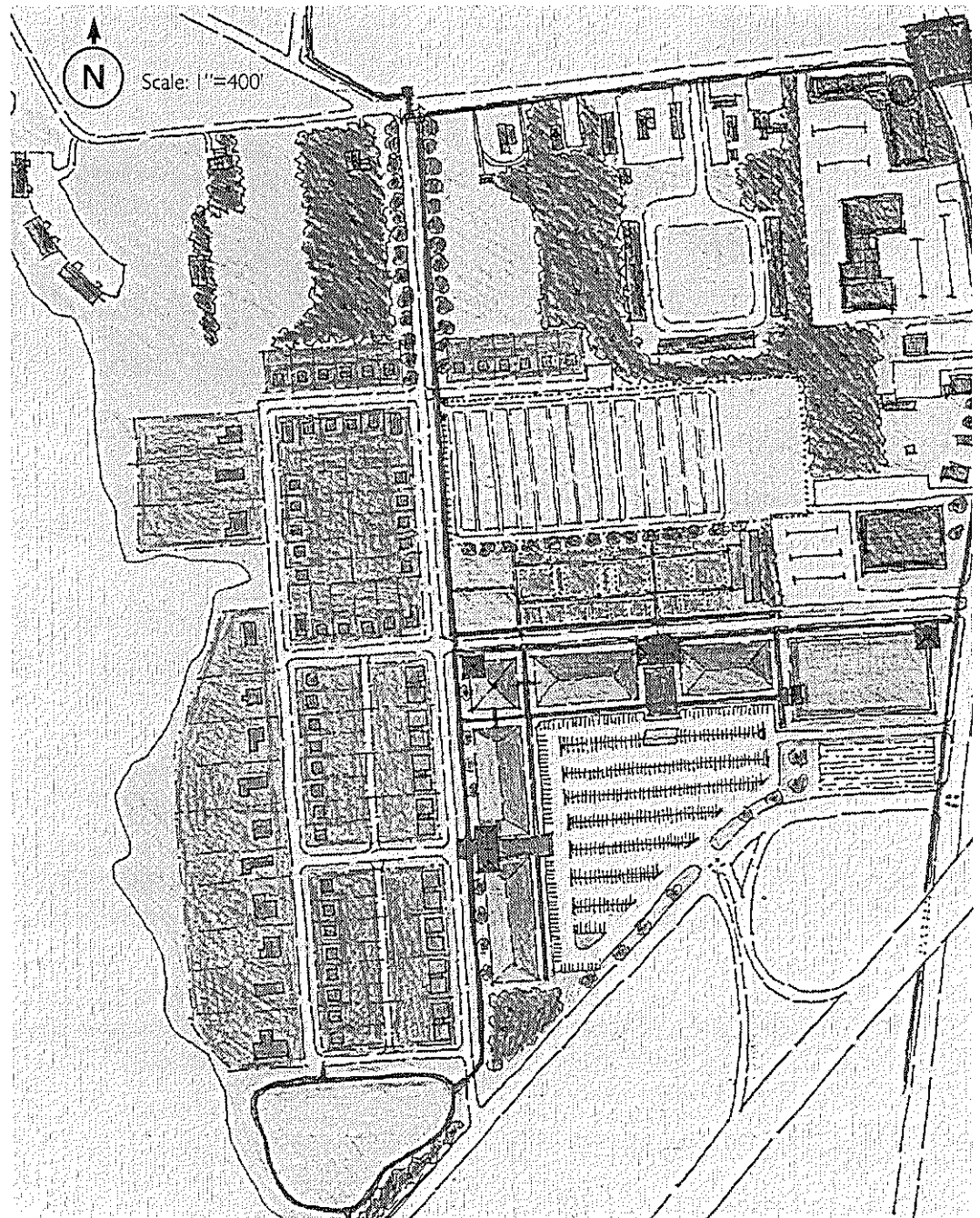
The campus itself defines a place. This along with the Cemetery/Green become components of making Flanders a more desirable place with a stronger image.

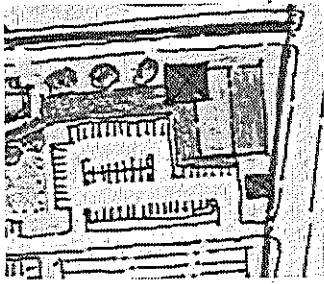
Campus

- The buildings form a strong edge to the residential street and to the park.
- The buildings buffer the residential neighborhood from the campus parking lots behind.
- The campus facades facing the neighborhood should be of a residential scale and material.
- Facades facing the parking and highway should be more open and relate to the larger scale of the road and open space.
- Vistas through the campus, along paths and axes, provide visual connections to the neighborhood and park.
- Beacons anchor the edges of the campus and link it with both the large scale of the nearby commercial area and the residential scale across the street.
- Flexible zoning could allow for a variety of uses such as an office park, a healthcare facility, assisted living units, a technical college, etc.

Housing

- Single-family houses for first time home buyers. The average lot is 50'x100'.
- Single family houses with larger lots (approximately 100'x100') backing Pattagansett River.
- Duplexes face the campus on 100'x100' lots. Their slightly higher density and massing establishes a stronger edge to the residential zone.
- Develop the park on the south side of the cemetery as a neighborhood park serving the housing; a playground, picnic area, landscaped flower beds, and green house would benefit all of Flanders.



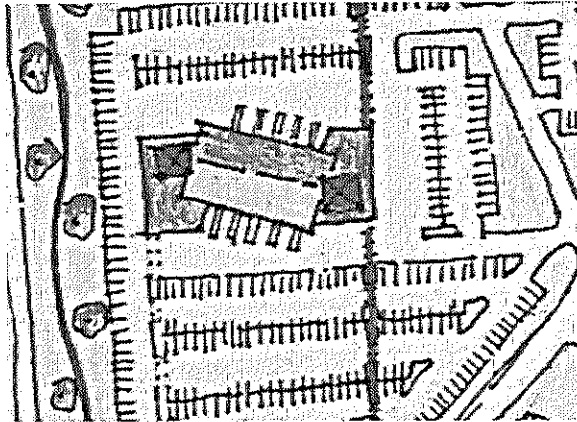


Strategy II: Tourist Center

Tourist Information

East Lyme is in need of a tourist information center near Exit 74 to both inform the tourists passing on to other regional attractions, such as the casinos, and also to direct tourists to destinations within East Lyme itself.

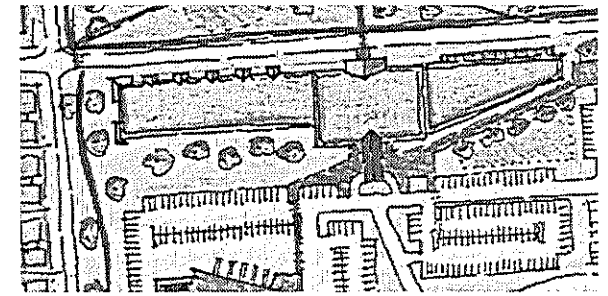
- A tourist center with its own parking is located at the entrance from Rt. 161.



Regional Transit Center

A transit center for the commercial site which could be utilized as a SEAT regional hub and a Park 'n Ride for the casinos.

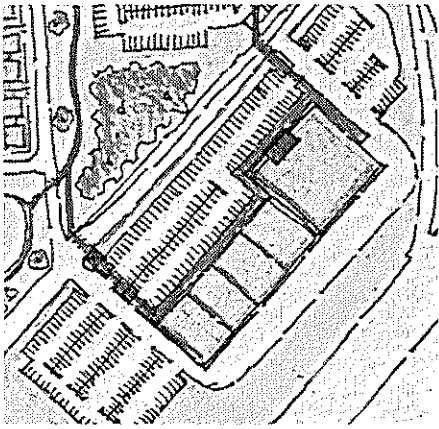
- Access is from Rt. 161 and the Frontage Road. The complex would be highly visible from 161, linking it to Flanders Four Corners and the intersection.
- The center would provide parking for commuters or tourists going to the casinos.
- The terminal would house the ticketing and information offices for SEAT and the casinos as well as kiosks for refreshments and conveniences.
- A bermed buffer with trees and a fence separates the transit center from the adjacent residential neighborhood.



Major Hotel

East Lyme has several modest sized motels at Exit 74 which have high occupancy rates, but no facilities over 100 beds. The market is open for a larger hotel development such as a Marriot with accompanying recreational facilities and condos, or a health center and life-care community. (See Exit 74 South Economic Development).

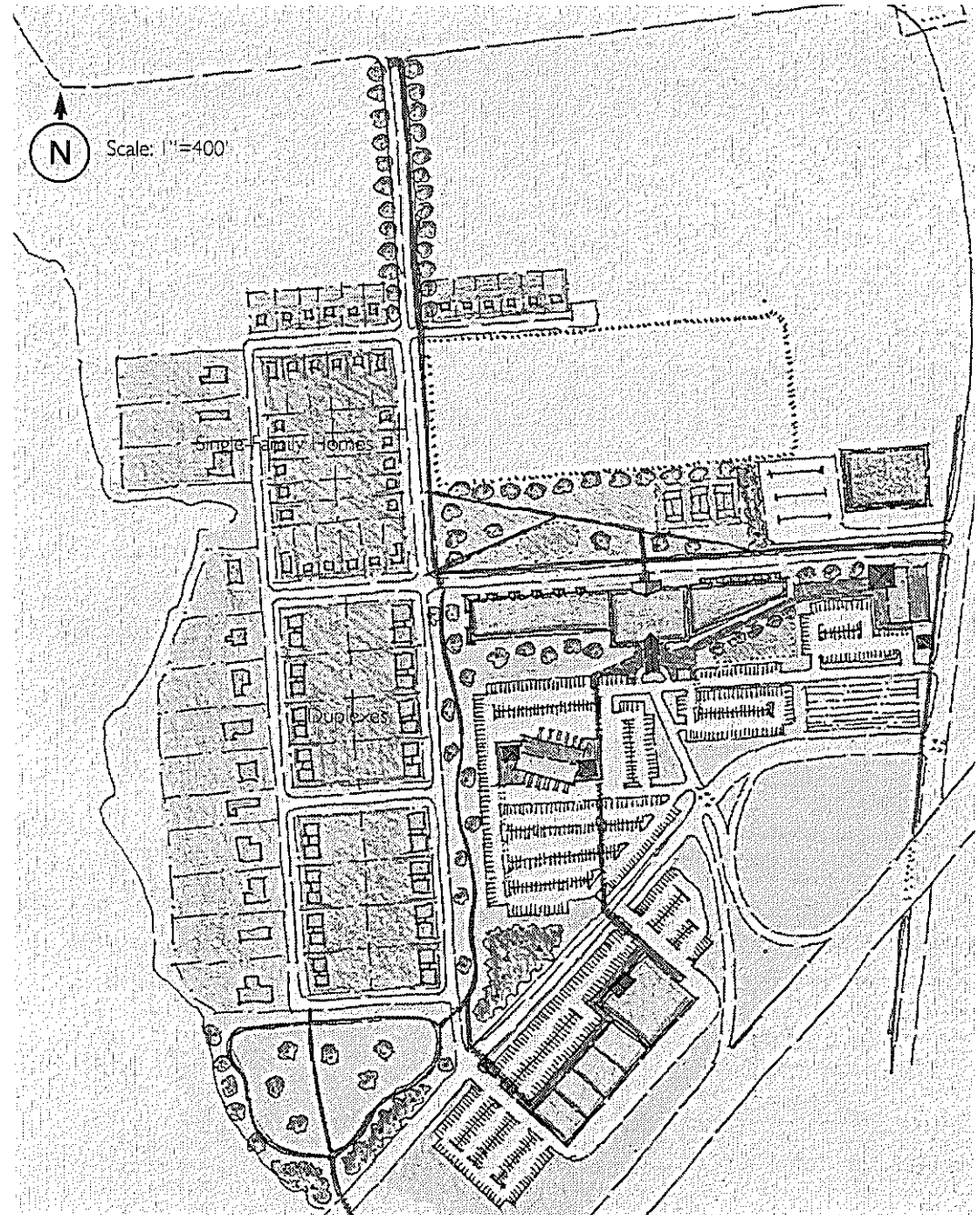
- The basic principles that hold true for the Campus proposal also hold true for a hotel development.
- The site and parking is easily visible from I-95.

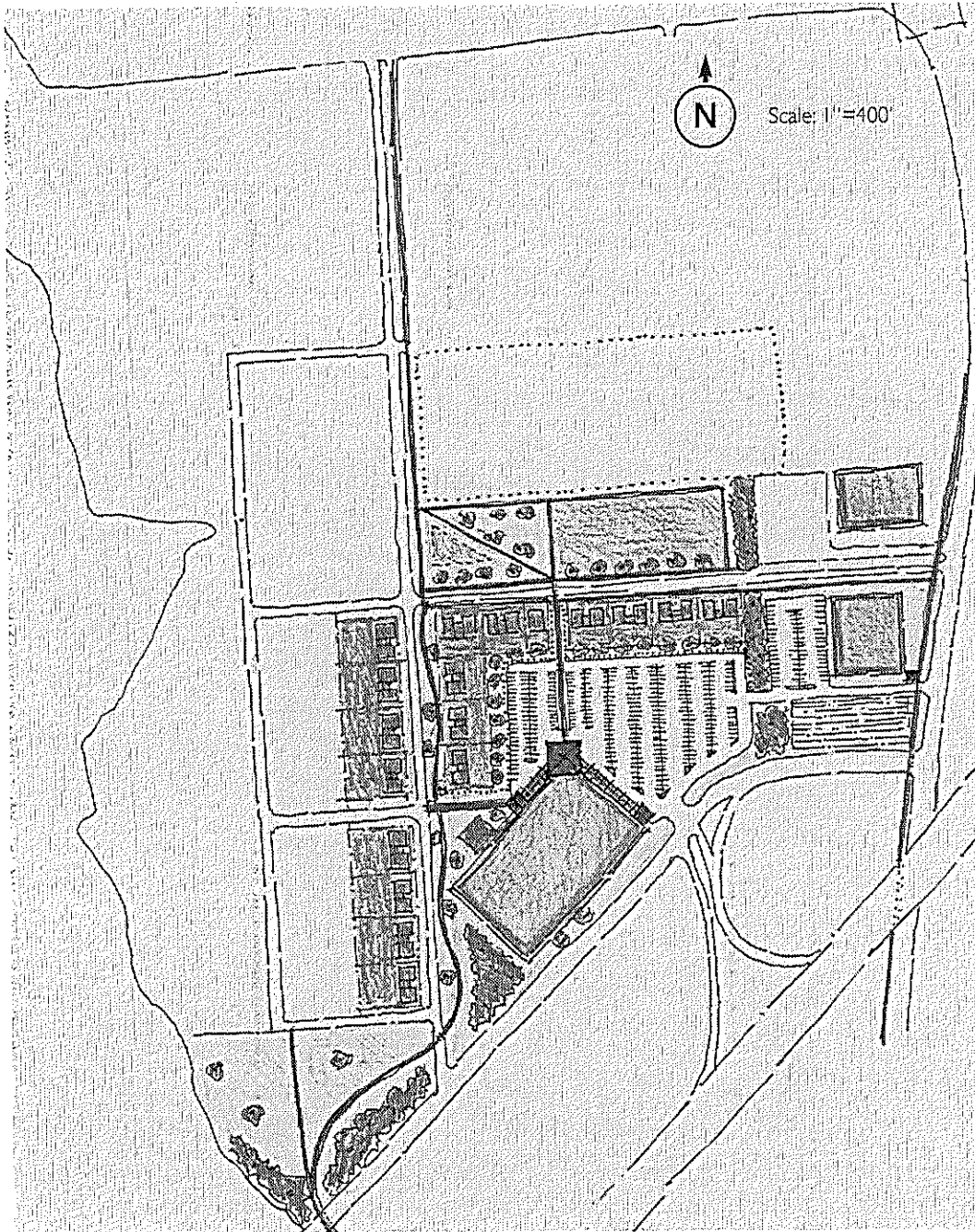


Shopping Center

The parcel between I-95 and the new Frontage Road is approximately 6 acres and large enough to accommodate a small shopping center or a mid-size retailer such as Staples or Toys 'R Us.

- The location offers high visibility from I-95 for advertising purposes.
- The residential zone is buffered from the site by the preserved green space and the frontage road.
- The site can still be linked to Flanders Village with sidewalks and beacons to attract local shoppers.
- The retail buildings should be decorated to appear attractive from the highway.





Strategy III: “Big Box” Retail

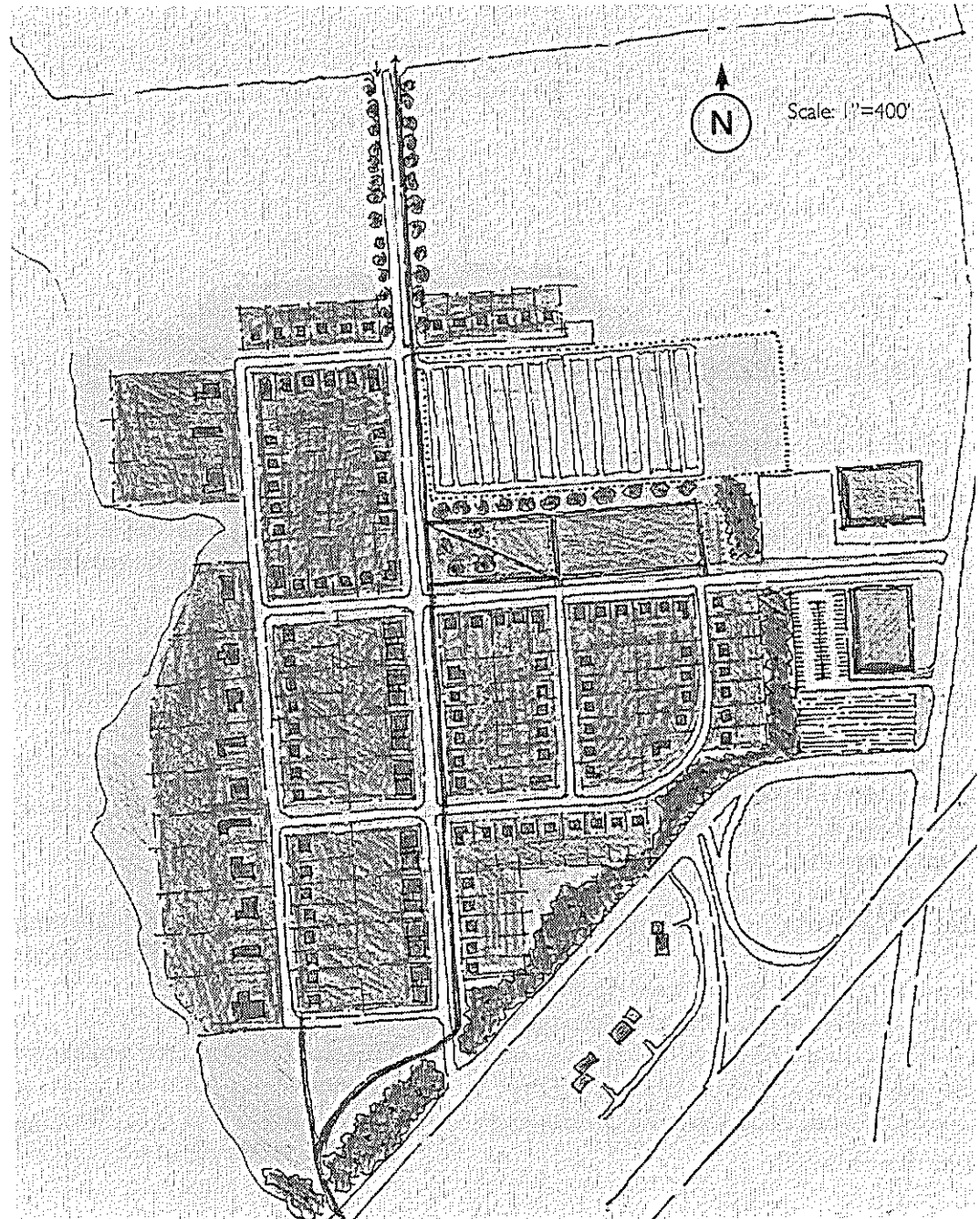
A legitimate and perhaps financially attractive use of the commercial site is for a larger scale retail store or group of smaller stores.

- The mass of the “Big Box” is located near the edge of the Frontage Road where it is clearly visible from the highway, far from the green and the cemetery.
- Parking lies behind and to the side of the store, and should include islands landscaped with trees to provide shade and a gentler transition to the residential zone.
- Pedestrians access the store via a landscaped walkway that enters from the park side. This helps connect the store to the neighborhood while avoiding an influx of traffic or noise.
- A beacon on axis with the landscape of the park connects the commercial area to the Cemetery and Green.
- A covered canopy along the store front provides shelter for pedestrians and further increases the scale of the entrance beacon.
- The retail building should be decorated to present an interesting and attractive facade—not just service entry—to passersby on the interstate. Any store here will serve as one of the images of the gateway to East Lyme.

Strategy IV: Residential

Another alternative is to develop Flanders Village as an entirely residential neighborhood. Creating a new grid of streets and blocks will make Flanders into more of a town, providing residences within easy walking distance of the businesses and services along Flanders Main Street and at Flanders Four Corners.

- Streets are lined with sidewalks and trees. (See section drawing on pg. 34).
- Employ street lights, speed bumps, and other traffic calming techniques to insure that Cemetery Road will not become a shortcut for through traffic off of the interstate.
- Encourage on-street parking or back alleys with parking to avoid multiple curb-cuts and garages facing the street.
- Any of the previously mentioned housing types are appropriate here, especially elderly housing and affordable housing.
- Avoid cul-de-sacs in favor of roads that connect and have more than one outlet; this allows for a flexible system and encourages interaction and pedestrian links.
- Berm and landscape the neighborhood edge bordering the Frontage Road to buffer the area from the noise and traffic of I-95.



Economic Development John Shapiro

Flanders Village Infrastructure

Flanders can expect to be subject to continued pressure for substantial development of all manner and type. Left to its own devices, this development would be fragmented, with sprawl along the major arterials, and underutilization of larger parcels behind the arterial frontage. The real estate value—hence tax revenue potential—of the area would not be maximized.

Alternatively, it is possible to use infrastructure investments, zoning stipulations and zoning incentives so as to, (1) create more development potential, and to (2) upgrade the image, hence value, of the area as a regional center.

Flanders is the best—though not the only—location for a number of uses. These include small-scale offices, large-scale offices, warehousing, recreation facilities, nursing homes/life care, and high- or moderate-density housing aimed at more modest income categories.

“Flanders Village” emerges as the prime development site, owing to the size of some of the parcels located there, as well as the suitability of the land for development.

This area represents 100 acres of prime development land, provided:

- (1) access and visibility can be enhanced, and
- (2) development of adjoining parcels can be coordinated.

The access and visibility improvements should focus on creating more direct access to Interchange 74.

This could involve a reconfiguration of the exit and entry ramps to feed directly into a service road parallel to I-95. (An alternative configuration feeding directly onto a north/south road

into the quadrangle is far less preferable as it would syphon off traffic and value from Route 161 and Four Corners.)

Additional access improvements should focus on connections to Route 161 and Boston Post Road. (However, the Boston Post Road connection should discourage northbound traffic from the exit, for the same reason indicated earlier regarding a negative impact on Route 161 businesses.)

The Route 161/service road intersection would probably require a traffic light.

With this access improvement in place, the entire quadrangle takes on extraordinary value.

Flanders Village Development

Most likely, retail, hotel and office development would prefer sites along the service road and especially its intersection with Route 161.

Industrial/warehousing and recreation development would prefer sites anywhere else in the quadrangle.

Housing would prefer sites along the Pattagansett River/Wilson Hill and proximate to Boston Post Road, which can have a less commercial ambiance thanks to river/hill views and adjoining residences.

The ability to provide schools and shopping within walking distance, as well as highway accessibility, would make Flanders Village a suitable location for housing (especially rentals) aimed at more moderate income groups, first time home-buyers, or seniors looking for a smaller residence.

It is not, however, a desirable area for high-value housing. The prevailing strip development is simply not attractive.

A life care housing development would require the entire area. There is potential demand for and reason to promote life-care housing and/or other forms of retirement housing, with a concern with regard to protecting neighboring residences and environmentally-sensitive land. Frequently such housing development will be joined to recreational facilities. The same performance standards and/or PDD method of zoning should be employed.

In general, retail and hotel would generate the highest land value; followed by specialized housing such as nursing home/life care; followed by industry; with conventional housing last.

But much depends on site location and absorption questions; for example, whether a hotelier, major office tenant, life care housing provider, etc. is searching the regional market at a given moment, and what is the availability of comparable sites in the region.

There are two problems in terms of forwarding this plan. The first has to do with finding a way to pay for the roadway improvements noted. The second has to do with finding a way to coordinate development of properties under multiple ownership.

As any number of uses are possible and desirable, the challenge is to provide maximum flexibility as to use but with safeguards that one or another early development does not jeopardize build-out.

It would be disastrous, for example, if the critical Route 161 frontage was blocked by a gas station; or if a mini-storage facility were built in the eventually highest value southeast corner of the quadrangle; or if a large warehouse development were sited where the access road should eventually connect to an adjoining parcel.

(Please see Next Steps)

Planned Development Districts

The solution to both the infrastructure and coordinated development issues is to take advantage of a zoning tool commonly used in California and other growth areas: Planned Development Districts (PDD).

The PDD concept is to provide an overlay district in which a greater range of uses and densities is allowed than that otherwise permitted by the underlying zoning.

The added flexibility as to use and density is then tied to a requirement to arrive at a detailed plan, specifying rights-of-way for roads, restrictions on design and density by lots, etc. The plan can (and should) be backed up by mutual agreements, covenants or easements.

The added flexibility is further tied to a requirement to provide or share in the cost of the infrastructure improvements called for.

Depending on state enabling legislation and precedents, the required improvements may even be off-site, provided that there is sufficient nexus—e.g., that the improvements address the otherwise negative traffic or safety impacts of the proposed development.

Ostensibly, the PDD zoning would impose greater uncertainty, time for approvals, and costs upon property owners within the quadrangle. These costs are, however, far compensated by the enhanced value of the properties with the infrastructure and zoning enhancements contemplated.

To illustrate, reportedly, asking land prices for land in the quadrangle vary as follows:

- \$500,000 per acre proximate to Interchange 74 and Route 116.
- \$150,000 per acre for land proximate to Route 116.
- \$75,000 per acre for land proximate to Boston Post Road.
- \$20,000 per acre for land with no immediate prospect of access to any of these roadways.

Flanders Village

Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Plan infrastructure and developable sites to prepare for future development proposals.
- Establish a PDD (Planned Development District) for the village area. (See previous page.)
- Review strategies with State DOT representative.
- Preapply and apply for state MDF (Municipal Development Funds) for all projects in the plan that involve economic development or infrastructure.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- The access and visibility improvements should focus on creating more direct access to Interchange 74.
- Coordinate development of properties under multiple ownership.
- Set aside the park on the south side of the cemetery.
- Set aside preserved green space as an amenity for future development.
- Install the bike path connecting the schools in Flanders to the schools on Society Road.



Exit 74 North: Flanders Road

Principles

1. Reinforce the local business character.
2. Organize random parking by encouraging rear-yard parking.
3. Increase density by developing large buildings behind small houses-turned-commercial on the street.



Existing view north on Route 161 with the True Value on the left.

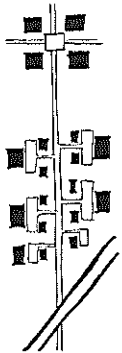


Diagram of Route 161 north of Exit 74. The area is characterized by small buildings close to the road and larger buildings behind.

Introduction

The stretch of Rt. 161 from Exit 74 north to Flanders Four Corners is characterized by smaller buildings—many are houses converted to businesses—along the road with larger buildings behind surrounded by parking. Most of these businesses provide goods and services needed by the residents of East Lyme, a pattern consistent with the overall character of Flanders.

Proposals

- New commercial development in this area should follow the present model with smaller buildings along the street and larger ones behind accessed by a driveway. (See diagram).
- Continue the sidewalk from Four Corners through the I-95 underpass on the west side of Rt. 161.
- Pave the sidewalk in a consistent material.
- Buffer the sidewalk with trees or landscaping where ever possible.
- Limit curb-cuts and consolidate parking behind existing buildings.
- New or reconfigured parking should be kept behind buildings or landscaped.

Exit 74 North Base Plan

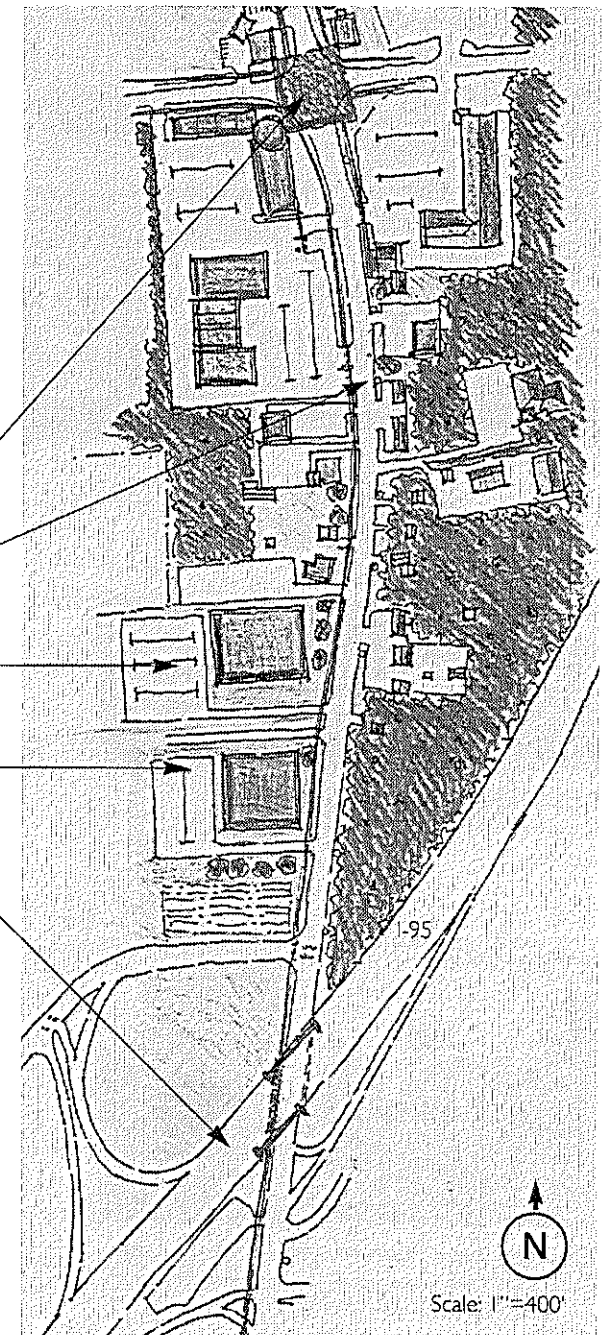
Flanders Four Corners

Route 161

True Value Lumber

Proposed New Retail

Proposed East Lyme Gateway Project



Area Study

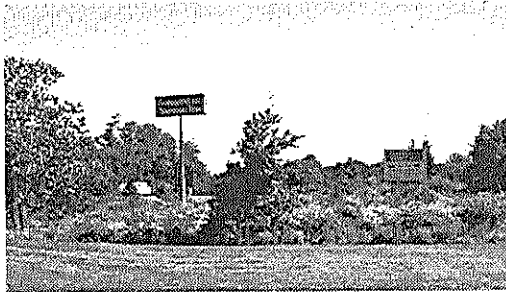
Exit 74 South: Motel Row

Principles

1. Concentrate motel development in this area.
2. Encourage a cooperative landscaping effort to unify the motel district and give it a large scale, inviting identity consistent with East Lyme and visibility from I-95.



The Budweiser distribution center is a good example of landscaping and visibility from the highway.



Motel signs visible from I-95. The mixture of open space and dense trees could be coordinated into an overall landscape scheme for the area to better promote the motels and improve the area's identity.

Introduction

The stretch of Rt. 161 from I-95 south to Industrial Park Road is the tourist service center and gateway to East Lyme, and it contains the gas stations, motels, and convenience marts that flock to highway interchanges. The area is characterized by smaller buildings (mostly restaurants and services) closer to Route 161 with larger structures (mainly motels) as more distant objects adjacent to parking lots. The view of this commercial node from the northbound interstate exit, though, is one of thick trees with tall signs sticking up above.

Because this area provides travelers off the highway with their first glimpse of East Lyme, its image is integral to the commercial success of the entire town. Accordingly, a coordinated landscaping plan supported by both the town and the motels and businesses here would improve the marketability of this area and the image of all of East Lyme.

Motel Campus Base Plan



I-95, Exit 74

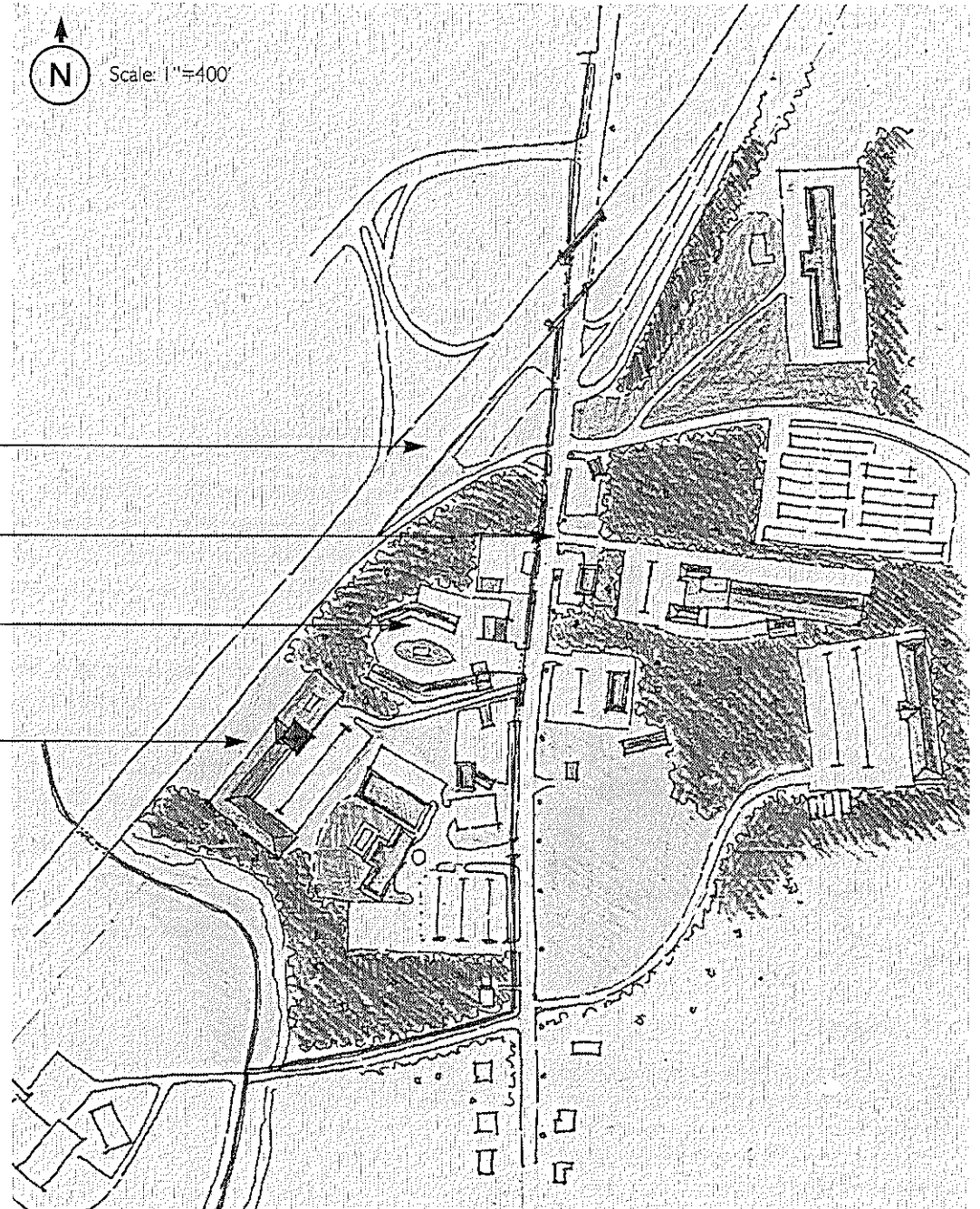
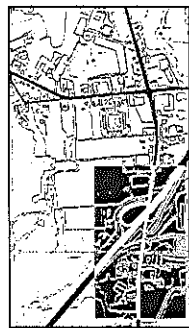
Route 161

Motels

There are currently five modest-sized motels located at the exit. Most have swimming pools.

Proposed New Motel Site

A motel or addition in this area would be easily visible from the highway and act as a beacon for the area.



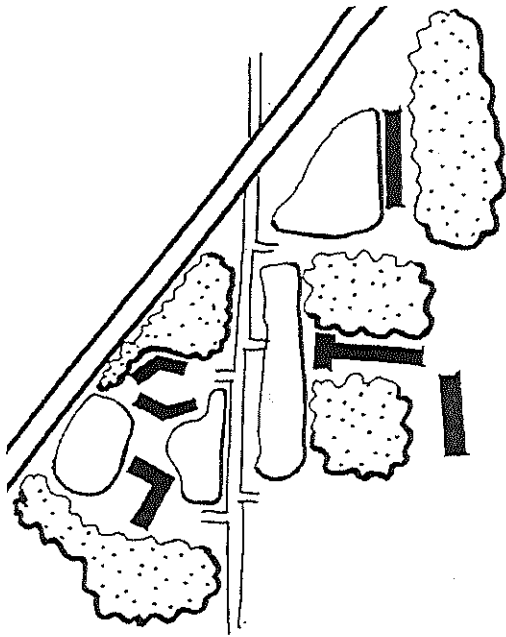


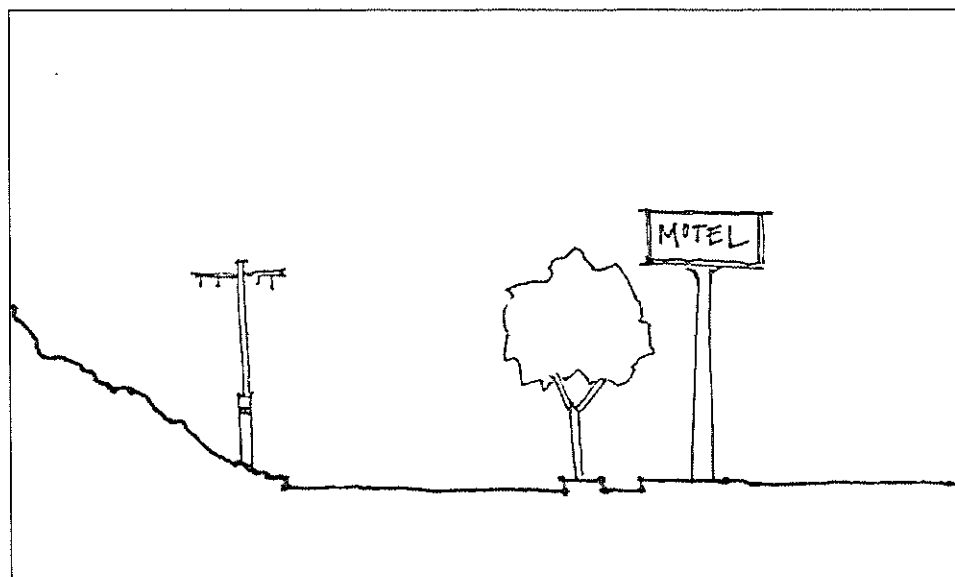
Diagram of the Motel Campus. The area is composed of open, green spaces, and closed, dense foliage areas. This clustering should be strengthened. The motels are visible and advertise with tall signs that stick up above the trees.

Proposals

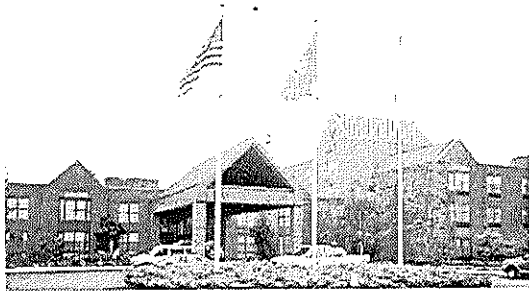
- Consolidate and coordinate the open space and landscaping that surround each motel so that open areas can serve each motel but contribute to a larger sense of designed common space.
- The sidewalk should continue along the west side of Rt. 161 to Industrial Park Road where it can join the alternate bike trail and continue down to the schools and Community Center on Society Road. (See Analysis diagram).
- Limit curb-cuts and consolidate parking.
- Plant trees along the west side of the street to create a buffer for the sidewalk and parking.
- New smaller businesses such as restaurants, a tourist center, or gas stations should be located close to the road with parking to the side or behind.
- New larger businesses (i.e. motels) located along I-95 should preserve the thick trees and advertise with tall signs visible from the highway.
- As older buildings are recycled, larger motels (over 100 rooms) could be sited to create edges to larger common green space.
- Services catering to tourist convenience should be concentrated in this area.



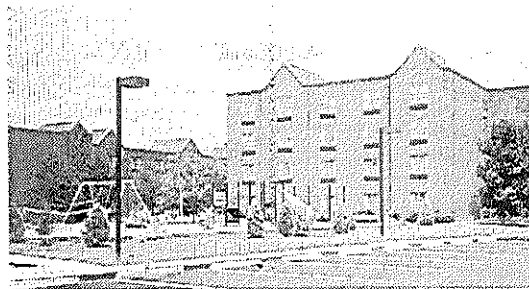
Existing view south on Route 161.



Section of Route 161 looking south.
On the left, the painted telephone poles lead to Niantic. On the right, the edge is planted with trees to buffer the bike path. Motel signs stick up above the canopy. The topography can be exploited for motel signs that would rise above the tree-line and be visible from I-95.



A well landscaped drive and prominent entry make this hotel elsewhere in Connecticut easily visible from the road, while its varied roof line and facades help it relate to adjacent historic or residential architecture.



The massing and materials of the hotel are consistent with residential architecture. It could easily fit into an area like Flanders Village.

Economic Development John Shapiro

This area is at a critical “fork.” Either it can continue to have a marginal quality, with as many vacancies as healthy businesses; or it can become a high value “Motel Row.”

The difficulty for strip development at this location is the narrow depth of lots, constrained by wetlands/the river, hills and ownership patterns. The difficulty for the motels is the necessity of building behind often unseemly development. A further difficulty for both is the lack of consistent value from establishment to establishment.

The market priorities are therefore to reduce the negative externalities by:

- reducing the amount of strip development.
- increasing the amount of coordinated image-making for the area.

East Lyme already has approximately five motels in a strip located along Route 161, just south of I-95’s Interchange 74. These motels are as follows:

- Connecticut Yankee Inn—50 rooms.
- Days Inn Hotel—93 rooms.
- East Lyme Inn (soon to be Best Western)—89 rooms.
- Motel 6—93 rooms.
- Starlight Inn—48 rooms.

This concentration of motels is no accident. For all practical purposes, Interchange 74 is the last exit before the fork of the highways leading either to Providence/Boston or the Rhode Island coast (coming from the west), or the first exit after the highways join (coming from the east). (While there is one more interchange to the immediate east, development there is fore-

stalled by steep hills and water bodies.) The cluster of motels on Route 161 on the south side of I-95 is also no accident. This is the area enjoying the greatest visibility for people traveling east on I-95—including New York and Connecticut residents en route to their vacations, looking for places to stay.

The motels are all relatively small: three have approximately 90 rooms, and one approximately 50 rooms. Historically, there has been a frequent turnover of motel ownership and management. The small size is prompted by the diseconomies of scale associated with seasonal fluctuations in room demand.

The high turnover is created by the lure to entrepreneurs of peak seasons but disappointment of finding that the 65 percent average room occupancy needed to support hotel development simply is not possible.

The sell-out business during spring/fall weekends and all summer long cannot compensate for the slow midweek business during spring/fall weekdays and all winter long.

Yet two factors are leading to significant improvements in the potential of East Lyme's hospitality businesses. The first has been the gradual increase in business travel, as suburban and exurban office/industrial centers have been built in the region, and as a result of a diversification in the local economy. Most of the motels report some reliance on Millstone as a generator of demand for overnight accommodations, for instance.

The second has been the sudden introduction of an all-season tourist population, comprised of people headed to the casinos. Reportedly, 75 percent of the casinos' patrons are senior citizens, further assuring a year-round clientele since seniors are not tied to traditional summer or school vacation schedules.



This motel has been made attractive with landscaping and trees to soften the edge with the road. In this area, crosswalks and sidewalks also allow for safe pedestrian passage.

It should be remembered that while Flanders is not directly associated with the casinos, it is only 15 minutes or so away. All of the motels report that they rely on casino-bound tourists, especially in winter. The motels now report room occupancy rates of 65 percent or better—the threshold for successful operations.

The casinos have also the benefit of having put the region “on the map” as far as hotel chains, franchises and entrepreneurs are concerned: the region is no longer simply en route, it is a destination.

The town can expect a round of recycling of the motels, more often than not with national chains and franchises. This trend is already evident, as Holiday Inn, Days Inn, Ramada and Best Western have bought East Lyme and other nearby motels.

There is the further probability that with the higher room occupancies, other types of overnight accommodations can be supported. Niantic is the logical place for inns, B&B's and boatels.

However, Flanders is the logical place for a 150+ room motel, and/or 300-room hotel—all operated by a national chain or franchise. (It should be noted that a new conference center hotel now under construction in Waterford may preclude that option for some time.)

National operations would not limit themselves to East Lyme as a possible location: their site location criteria are very particular, and they will scout out the entire region as they weigh the relative importance to their niche of coastal traffic, long-distance travelers, tourists, business people, and casino visitors. However, East Lyme—particularly in the Flanders vicinity—will be considered.

Two obvious options present themselves: either to enlarge one of the existing motels, or to build anew in the Flanders Village area.

The enlargement option works best for a motel chain seeking to achieve a facility size of 150 rooms, which is typically considered the minimum to achieve certain economies of scale.

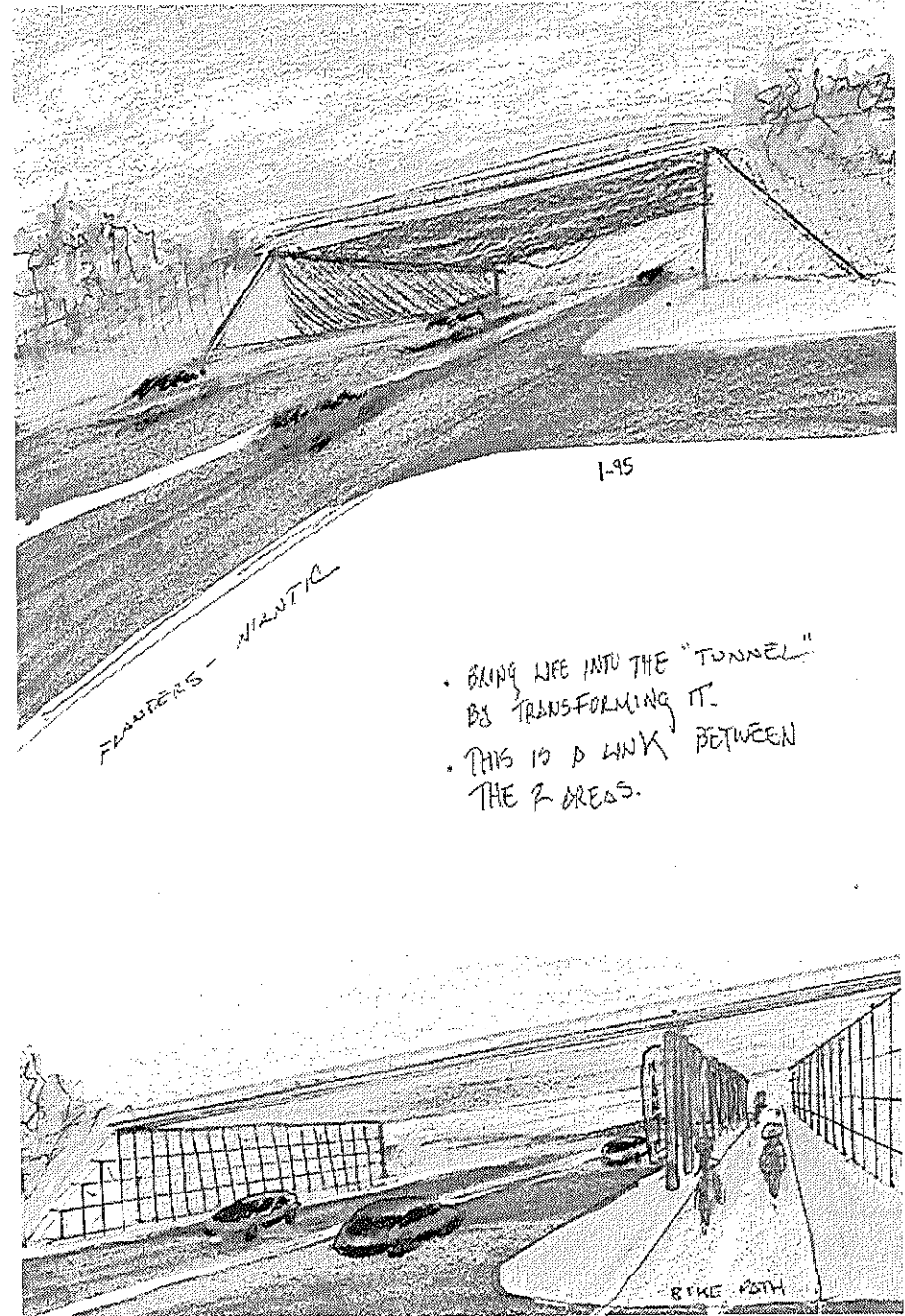
The Village site works best for a hotel chain seeking to create a more upscale image for itself. But both are also contingent on a general upgrade of the overall image of Interchange 74 and Route 161.

It should be noted that this diversification and upgrade of overnight accommodation venues is to nearly everyone's benefit. Establishing an area's reputation as a place in which to find accommodations is dependent on the variety of such accommodations; people who prefer budget motels (such as now provided) are of a dif-

ferent ilk than those who prefer upscale hotels, who are also different from those who prefer inns, etc.

While people will “settle” sometimes, most times they will push on to other destinations. However, knowing that East Lyme has “something for everyone” would mean that people would be more likely to make East Lyme their destination. In other words, while one or another of the motels might be negatively effected by the incremental loss of business to its new competition, in general, all of the motels would benefit from the additional business generated by East Lyme’s greater prominence in the hospitality marketplace.

Illustration of the Exit 74 underpass. As it exists, it is dark and low, feeling like a barrier. Colorful decoration and a widened bike path would contribute to the gateway



Exit 74 South: Motel Row

Short-Term

Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Ameliorate the poor image generated by motels and strip development of varying quality by applying a common approach to landscaping and presentation.
- Establish zoning mandates guiding landscaping and signage for all of the motels. Ideally, such mandates would be designed with the motels' active participation so that the mandates dovetail with their marketing images.
- Encourage the motels to develop common themes with regard to foliage, size and style of signage, curb cut treatments.
- Install signs before the exit ramp of Interchange 74 that list all of the motels, large inns and B&B's in the town.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Increase the amount of coordinated image-making for the area.
- Consider a Special Improvement District for only the motel area, with SID funds devoted only to landscape improvements.
- Promote shared marketing by the motels and other Town overnight accommodations.
- Reduce the amount of strip development.



Area Study

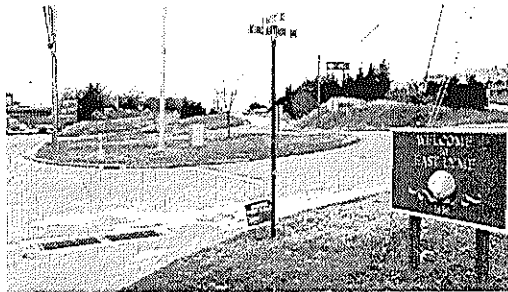
Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway

Principles

1. Build upon the image of East Lyme as the "Gateway to the Region" by physically upgrading Exit 74 and providing there services and information for tourists.
2. Connect Flanders and Niantic symbolically and visually.



Existing condition of Exit 74. There are no distinguishing features on the bridge to mark East Lyme to travelers along I-95, and pedestrian access below the bridge is marred by the dark underpass.



Besides a small sign, there are no welcoming gestures at Exit 74 to give East Lyme an identity or sense of place.

Introduction

East Lyme can become the gateway to southeastern Connecticut due to its position as the last exit on I-95 north before the highway splits and heads to a variety of attractions. As such, local businesses could benefit by attracting the many tourists that pass by on their way to other destinations in the region, just as those merchants would benefit from more tourists making East Lyme and the Niantic waterfront their travel destination. One way for the town to tap into the regional tourist base would be for it to participate much more actively in existing regional planning and marketing efforts, both at the governmental level (SEAT, for example) and at the promotional level (Mystic Coast and Country or other tourist organizations).

Within East Lyme itself, Exit 74 offers the town a great opportunity to promote itself and the entire region. By remaking the exit into a "Gateway to Southeastern Connecticut," East Lyme could attract regional scale development—large hotels, restaurants, or major commercial development. Likewise, improving Exit 74 offers the opportunity to better connect the two villages of East Lyme, Flanders and Niantic, that lie to either side of the interstate underpass. A public art project to emphasize East Lyme's role as a "Gateway to the Region" can also help to create better links—both visual and physical—between Flanders and Niantic.

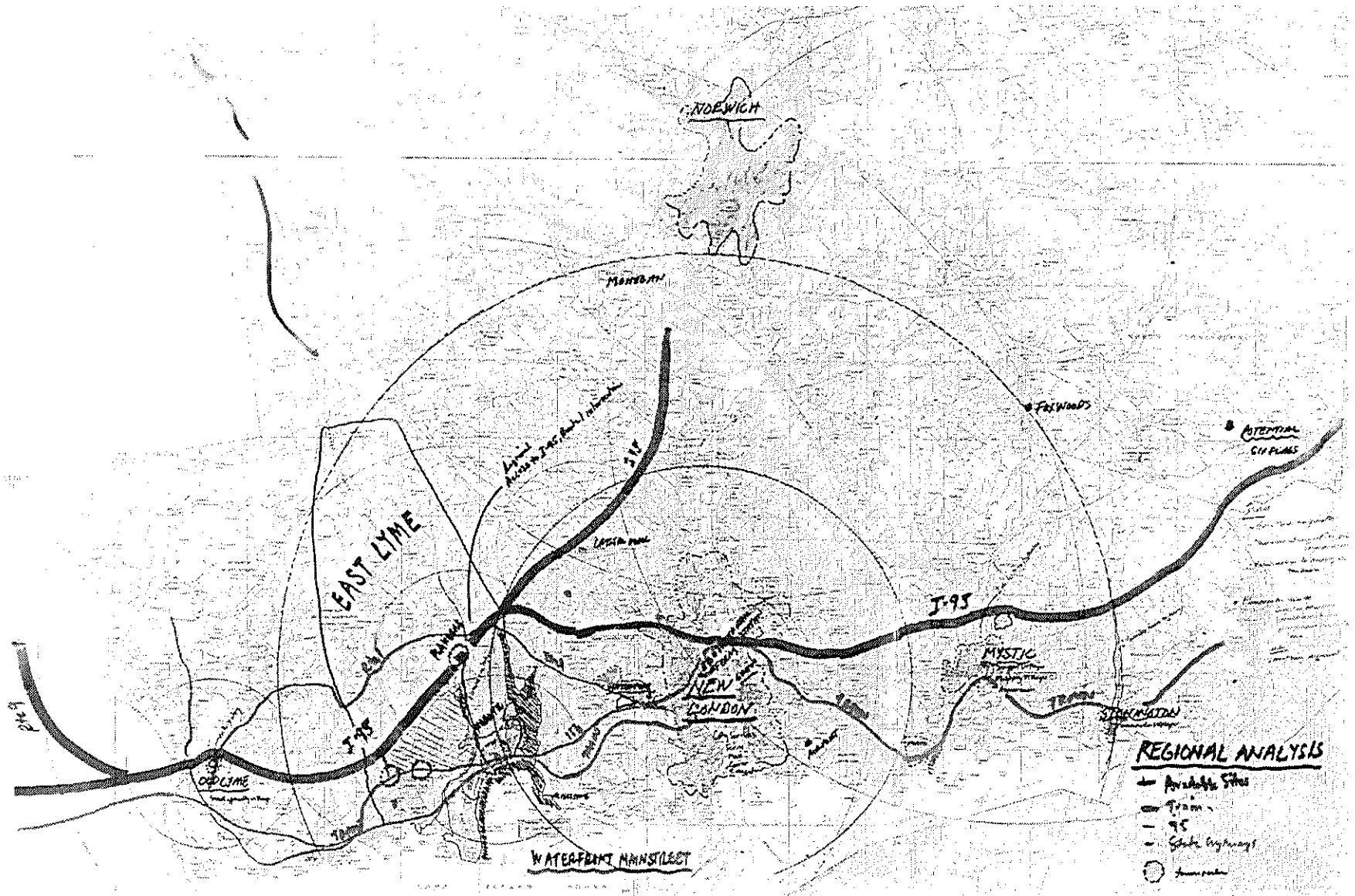


Diagram of the region surrounding East Lyme prepared during the charrette. It is clear that East Lyme is well situated in the region with its proximity to major arterial roads and to the waterfront.

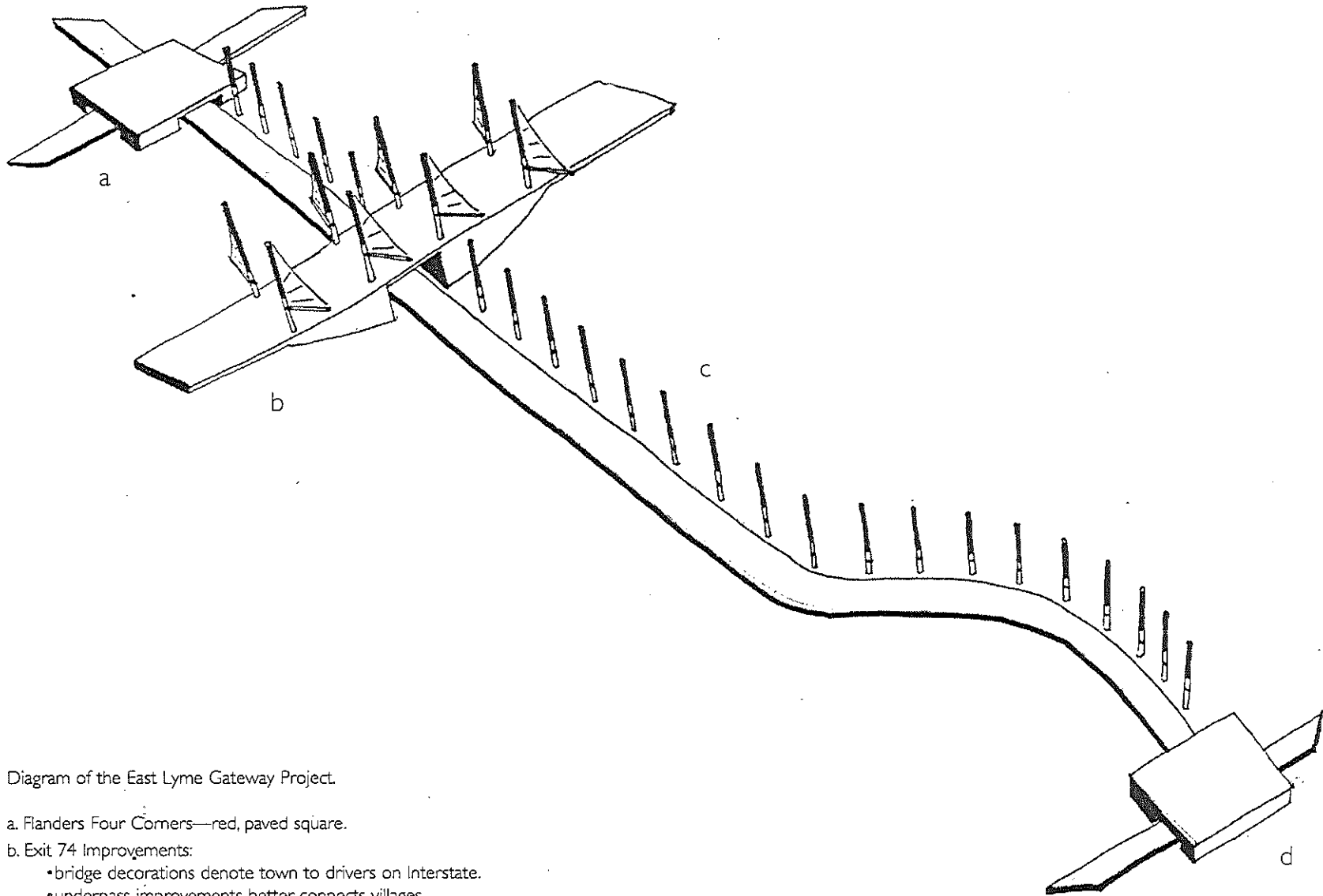
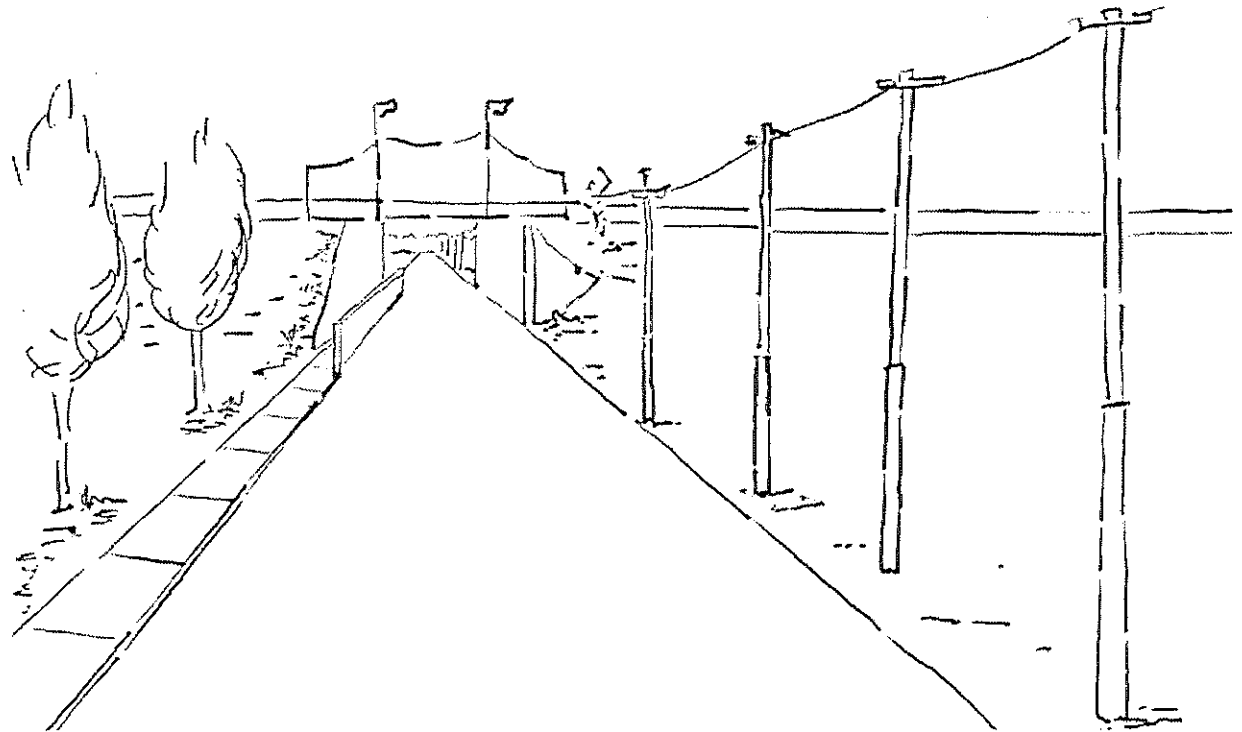


Diagram of the East Lyme Gateway Project.

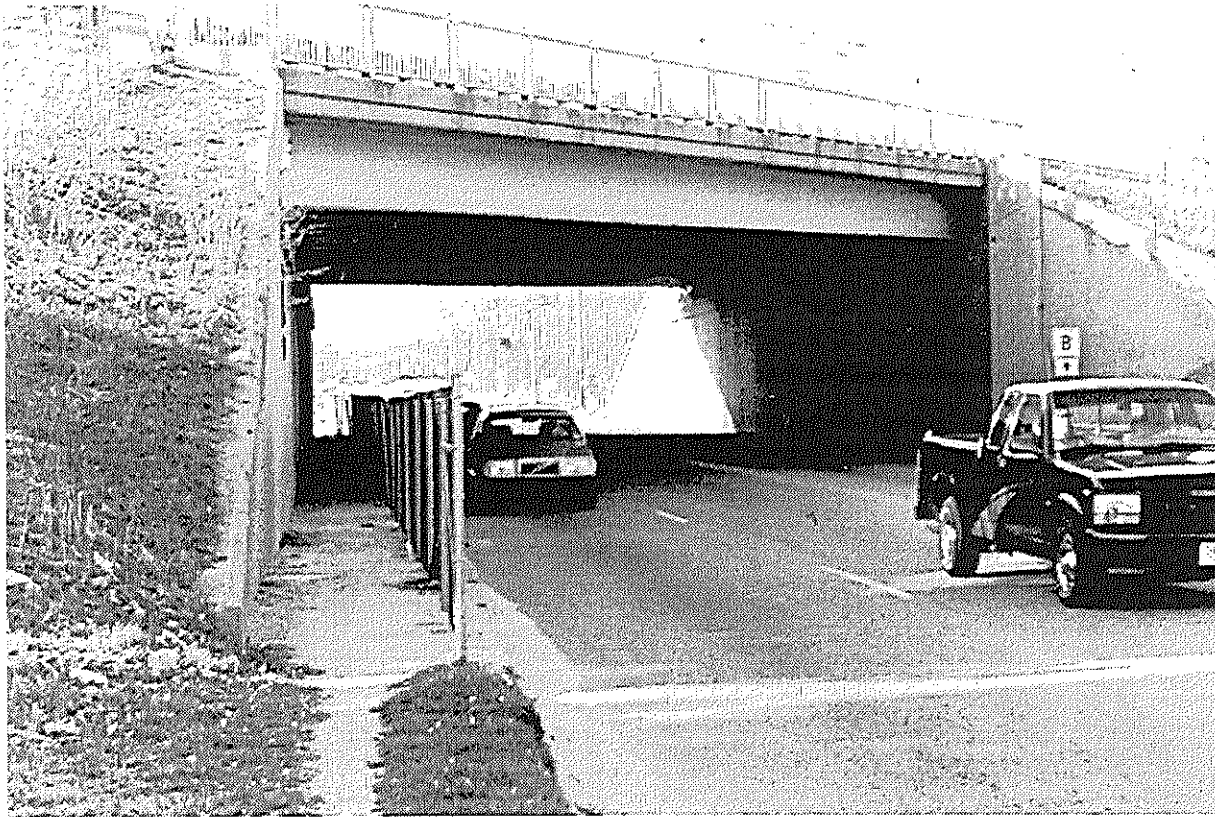
- a. Flanders Four Corners—red, paved square.
- b. Exit 74 Improvements:
 - bridge decorations denote town to drivers on Interstate.
 - underpass improvements better connects villages.
- c. Painted telephone poles connect the two town centers.
- d. Niantic Village Green—red, paved square.

Proposals

- Squares paved in colored material mark the main intersections of the two villages at Flanders Four Corners and at the Niantic Green. These squares signal arrival in the village as well as designating pedestrian zones.
- Telephone poles currently run on the east side of Rt. 161 from Flanders to Niantic. By painting the bottom 10' of each pole white with a blue band at the top, the nautical colors will suggest the seaside nature of the town. Likewise, the rhythm and pacing of these poles will emphasize the connections between the two villages.
- The I-95 underpass and bridge serves as the official “gateway” to East Lyme, since it is visible by everyone approaching the town. Various schemes for the improving the underpass and bridge are illustrated on the next page.



Perspective view of the proposed East Lyme Gateway Project looking north.



Existing condition of underpass sidewalk: narrow, dark, disconnected from other sidewalks.

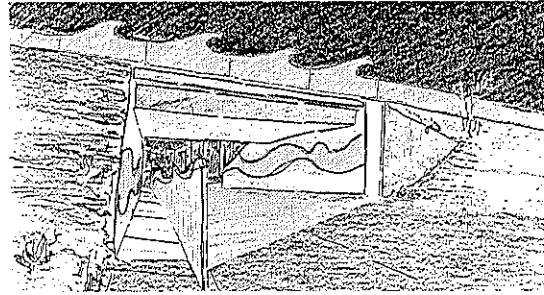
Exit 74 Improvements

As the central physical feature of the East Lyme Gateway area, the I-95 bridge over Route 161 offers the opportunity to bolster the image of the town to drivers passing by on the interstate. At the same time, the bridge underpass—a major conduit of north-south traffic in town—can become a major public work of art, one celebrating the attractions of the town.

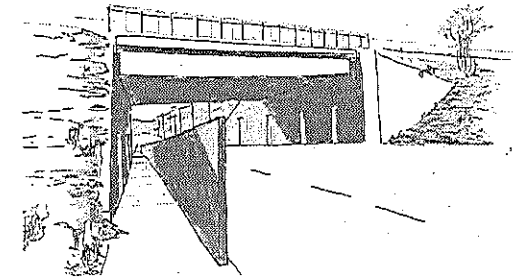
Currently, though, the underpass is narrow, dark, and constricted; it presents an uncomfortable passage to pedestrians and children bicycling back and forth to the schools in the area.

Improvements to the underpass should address both the physical conditions and the symbolic nature of this East Lyme Gateway.

- Install 24 hour lighting along sidewalk.
- Paint underpass light colors to brighten the space.

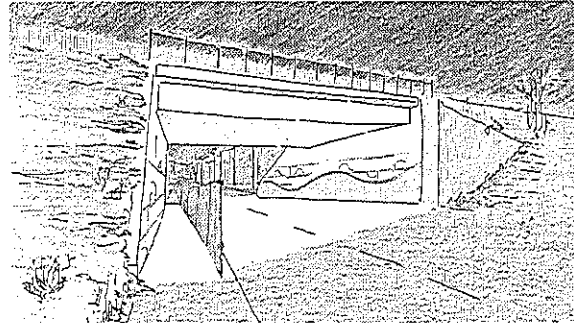


Scheme I: The Wave
Sculpted waves decorate the overpass signalling East Lyme's connection to the Sound.

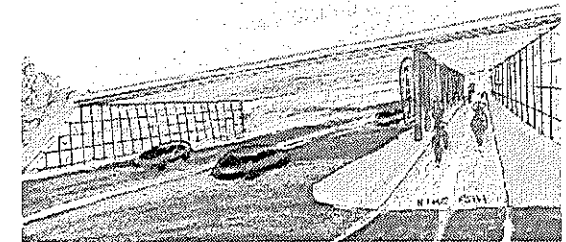


Scheme II: Sail Fence
A fence of sails lines the overpass. The underpass is given a smooth, monochromatic surface which reads as a plane connecting the two sides.

- Connect underpass walkway to existing sidewalks both north and south along Route 161.
- Install a decorative and playful fence between the sidewalk and the road.
- Extend decorative scheme out from underpass into the surrounding area to make improvements more visible.
- Extend underpass improvements up above the bridge railing to mark the presence of East Lyme to drivers along the interstate.
- Coordinate with East Lyme Gateway Project to ensure that underpass improvements contribute to the larger Gateway Project.
- Work with state transportation department to explore widening the underpass to provide a separated pedestrian and bicycle pathway.



Scheme III: Neon
Bright neon lights and colorful painting decorate the walls of the underpass. The fence separating the sidewalk is a bright material.



Scheme IV: Widened Underpass
The underpass is extended on one side to allow for a widened pedestrian and bicycle path separate from automobile traffic. Colorful panels and lighting keep the underpass bright at all hours of the day.

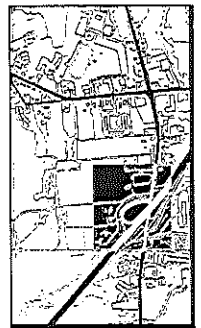
Exit 74: East Lyme Gateway

Short-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

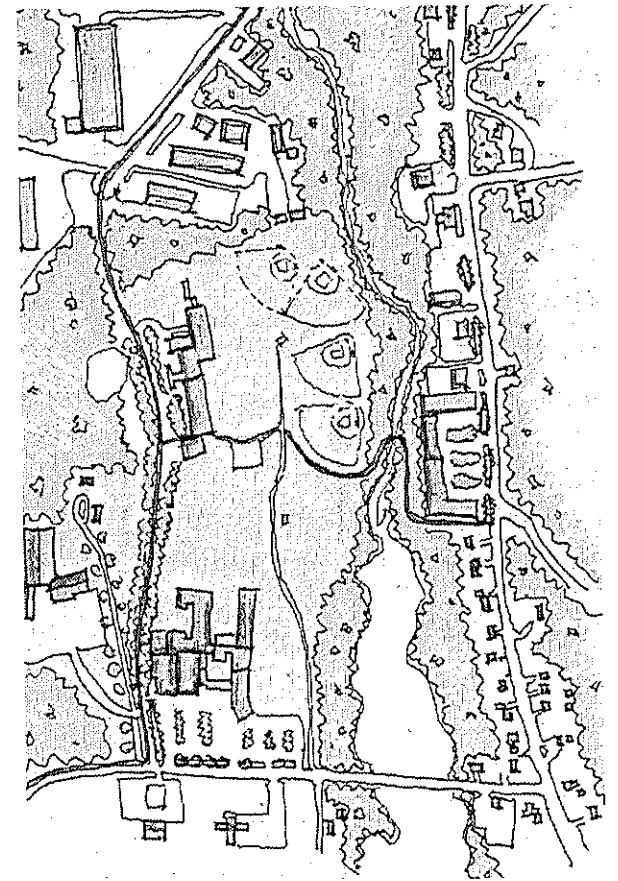
- Improve Exit 74 underpass with improved lighting and better walkway.
- Carry Exit 74 improvements above bridge so that decoration marks East Lyme to passers by on the interstate.
- Paint utility poles or carry out a similar high-visibility East Lyme Gateway project to connect village centers.
- Relocate East Lyme tourist information center immediately adjacent to Exit 74.
- Install signs before the exit ramp of Interchange 74 that list all of the motels, large inns and B&B's in the town.
- More fully participate in regional planning strategies for both regional governance and regional marketing.
- Establish a special fund to ensure regular maintenance and upkeep of Exit 74 area.

Long-Term Next Steps & Implementation Strategies

- Increase the amount of coordinated commercial image-making for the Exit 74 area.
- Locate a regional tourist information center adjacent to the northbound off-ramp of Exit 74.
- Widen the Exit 74 underpass to provide for a sidewalk and a full bike lane separated from Rt 161.
- Install at the end of the interstate off ramps automobile-scale signage listing East Lyme attractions.



Chapter 3: Context



Context

Route 161 at Society Road

Connections and Open Space

The Waterfront

Industrial Parks

Housing

Introduction

This chapter looks at areas or issues more related to East Lyme as a whole. They form part of the broader context within which Niantic and Flanders operate. Although they are only touched on briefly here, the issues of housing development and the future of the industrial parks are part of the larger picture of East Lyme's economic and commercial health. Improvements to the Society Road area, the creation of new bicycle and pedestrian routes parallel to Route 161, and the creation of open space both along the shore and inland, all stand to benefit the quality of life for town residents.



The East Lyme Community Center and Public Library located on Society Road.



Existing condition at Midway Plaza on Route 161. Minor facade and sign improvements along with landscaping the parking lot would greatly improve the image of this stretch of the road.

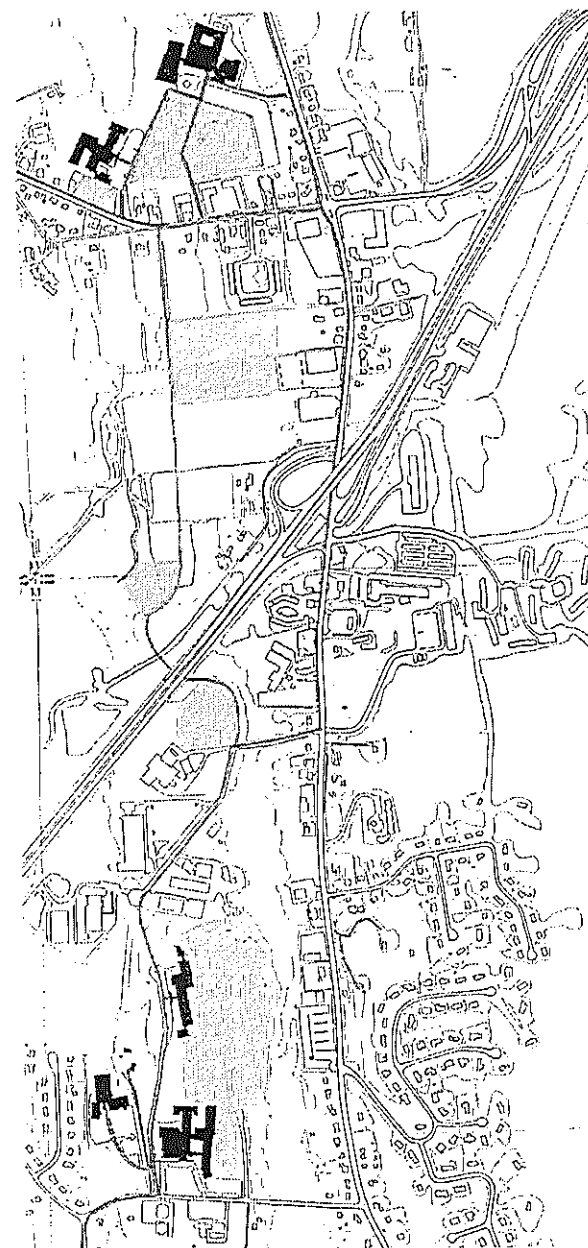


Diagram of proposed biking/walking trails that connect the school campus on Route 1 in Flanders with the school campus on Society Road.

Chapter 3

Context: Route 161 at Society Road

Principles

- Increase accessibility to the schools and community services at Society Road with bike/walking trails.
- Use plantings along Route 161 and in school parking lots to create buffers between paved, car areas and pedestrians.



Existing condition of Sunoco Station on Route 161. An unwelcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists.



Landscaping, a sidewalk, and a prominent canopy help this service station relate both to the street and pedestrians.

Route 161 at Society Road

Route 161

Plant trees on the west side to buffer parking lots.

Industrial Park

Bike/Hike Trail from Flanders High School

The trail begins at the Flanders' schools campus and continues to the schools and community center on Society Road. (See Flanders Analysis).

Hayne Elementary School

Midway Plaza

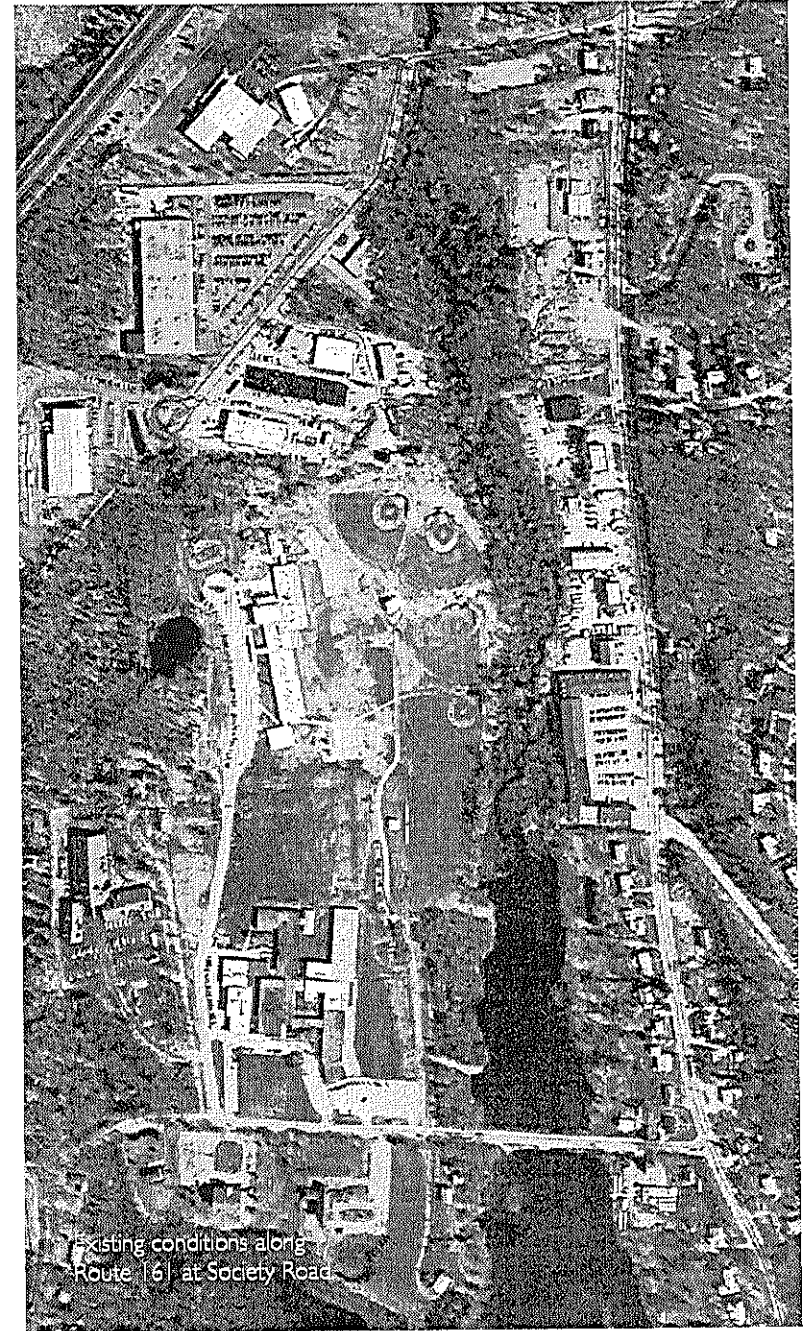
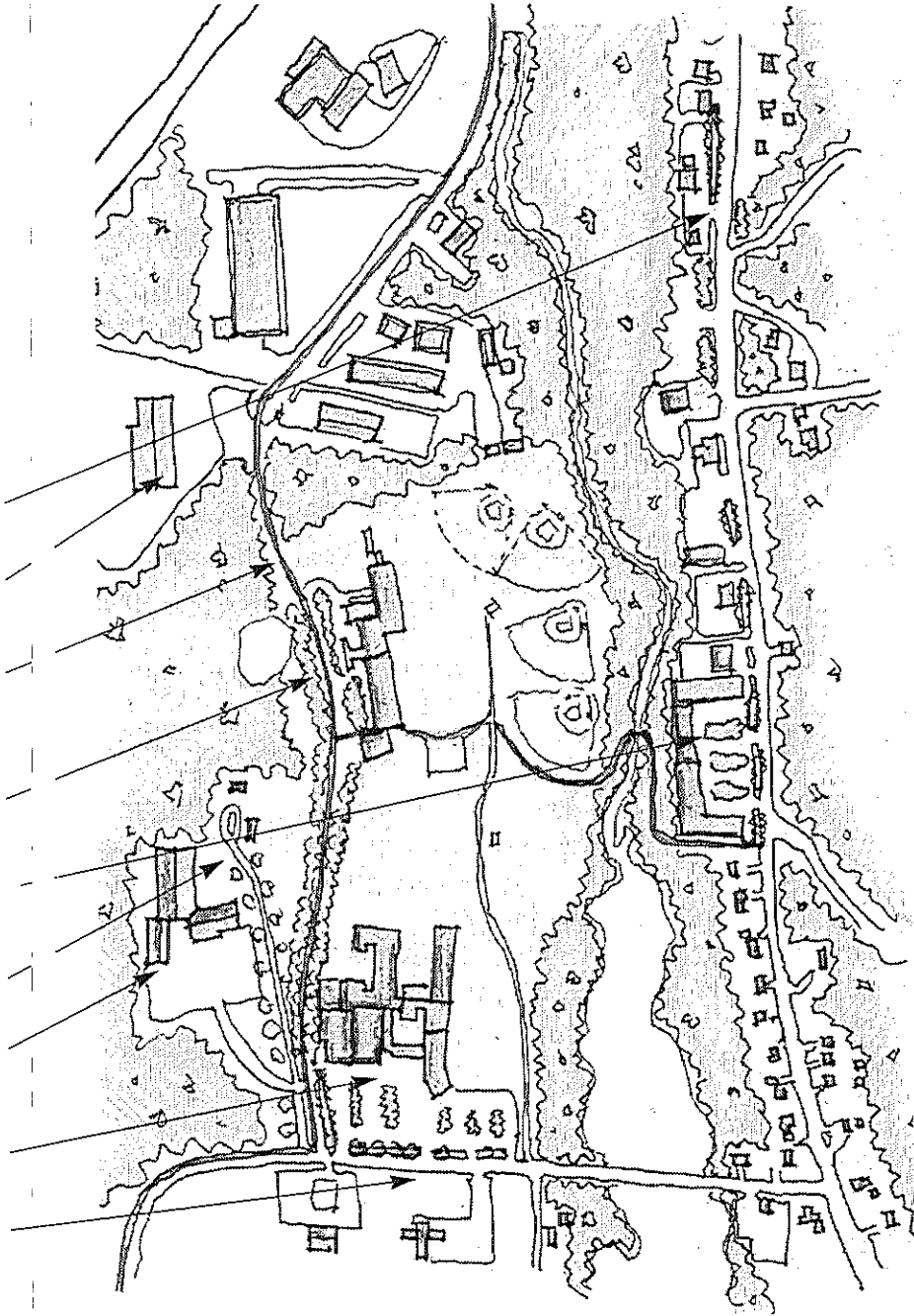
Plant trees in the parking lot to provide shade and more attractive landscaping. Unify the facade and signs to upgrade the image of the shopping center.

Smith-Harris House

East Lyme Community Center and Library

East Lyme Middle School

Society Road



Existing conditions along
Route 161 at Society Road

Context: Connections and Open Space

Principles

1. Provide more north-south connections as alternatives to Route 161.
2. Provide Bike/Hike trails to enable children to access the schools and community services safely.

Recreation John Shapiro

With regard to recreation, East Lyme offers significant advantages for commercial ventures. It has a relatively affluent year-round population, with a surge of summer residents just when most types of recreation facilities are in full swing. The highways make East Lyme convenient to a regional population as well.

Boating is already a significant industry in the town. The limitation with regard to additional waterborne recreation probably has more to do with the availability of large and accessible sites, since most of the waterfront is precluded for recreational uses by a combination of the following: environmentally-sensitive land, narrow roadways or low railroad underpasses, and high-value housing.

The town's interior lakes and hills provide potential for added recreational resources, especially given the nation's astronomical growth rate for golf, now that the sport is no longer the

purview of wealthy middle- and older-aged men, but also women, youth, and most income groups. The Flanders area has particular value for recreation requiring high accessibility and visibility, such as tennis centers, ice skating, etc.







Recreation facilities are entrepreneur-driven; i.e., they do not readily lend themselves to replication (such as fast-food establishments); nor do they lend themselves to conventional financing (such as build-to-suit offices). As such, there is little ability to predict or prescribe what types of recreation facilities will be built, where, how and by whom.

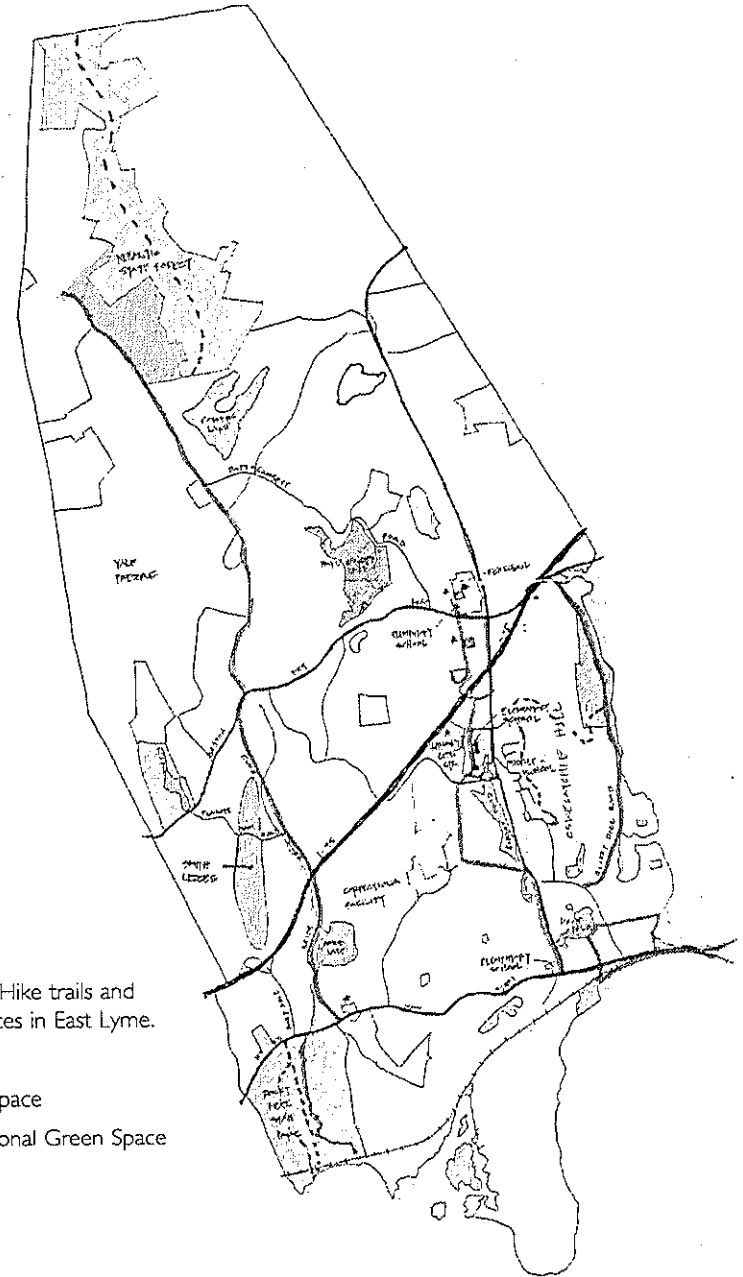
There will be intermittent call for recreation facilities as sites become available and as entrepreneurs come forward. These uses should be encouraged, as they will support the Town's resort image, further boosting hotel, second-home and retirement housing. Since these uses are eclectic, the best strategy is to allow them in

as many districts as possible, with performance standards to assure that neighboring residential uses or environmentally-sensitive land is protected.

For example, the strategy might be to allow these uses in connection with a “Planned Development District” (PDD) designation, in which approval by special permit is made conditional on (1) preservation of wetlands, steep slopes, aquifer protection, preservation of old-growth trees and natural vegetation to the maximum extent practicable; (2) a strategy for dealing with additional traffic; etc.

Diagram of proposed Bike/Hike trails and new preserved Green Spaces in East Lyme.

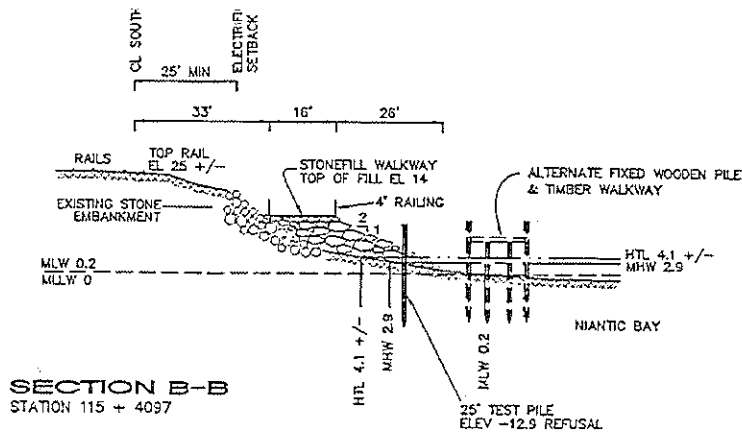
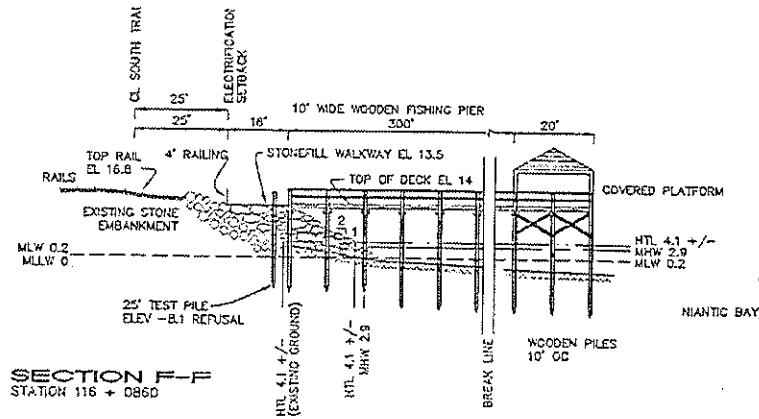
-  Existing Green Space
-  Proposed Additional Green Space
-  *
-  Existing Trails
-  Roads
-  Proposed Trails



Chapter 3

Context: The Waterfront

1. The Niantic Bay Overlook
2. The Bailey Parcel



Example sections of the Niantic Bay Overlook from a preliminary proposal prepared by the Public Trust Foundation, Inc..

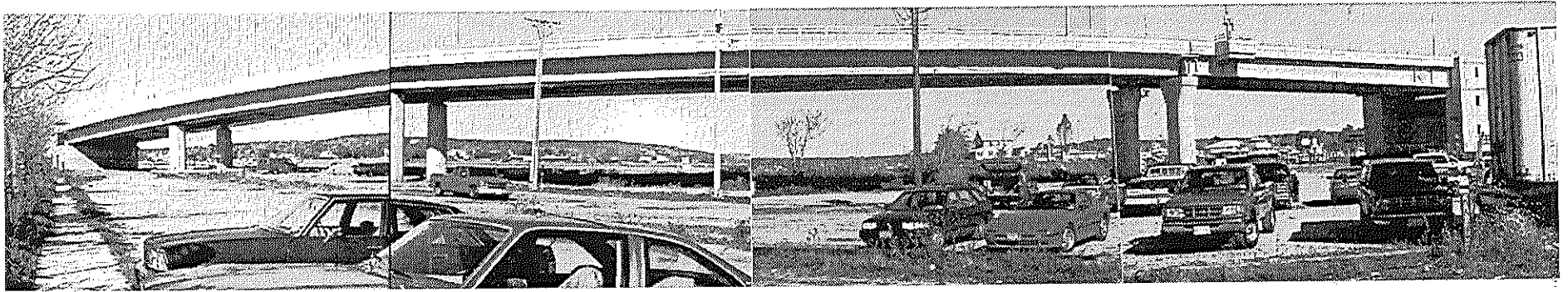
Niantic Bay Overlook

Niantic is currently cut off from the waterfront by the shore line railroad corridor—a separation which will only be heightened as the rail line is improved for high speed trains, which will require more secure track side fencing.

The opportunity to restore access beyond the tracks to the town's shoreline has been offered by the Niantic Bay Overlook, a project to build a boardwalk and fishing pier along the waterfront. This project has great potential to help restore Niantic's character as a seaside village.

While already well designed, the project could offer even more to the town in several ways:

- Include an over or underpass access to the boardwalk at the Niantic Green, and build there a large gazebo visible from Main Street.
- Provide a secondary means of security for the boardwalk; vendors, for instance, would provide watchful eyes.
- Negotiate with Amtrak for a desirable fence.



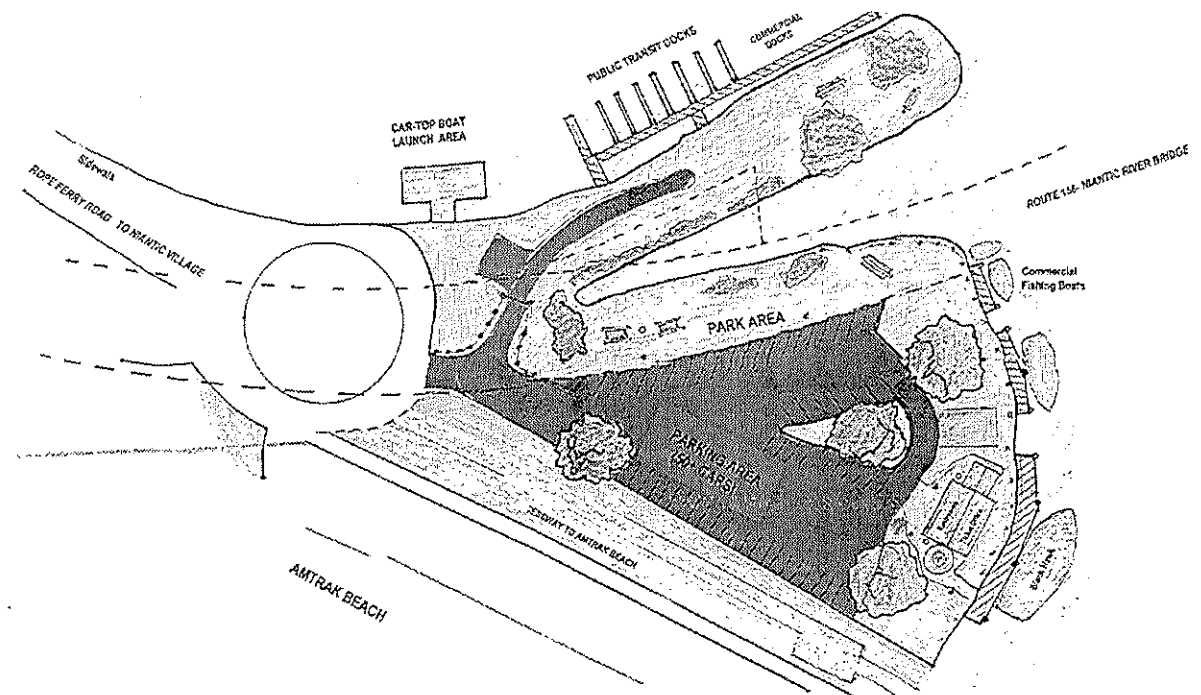
Existing view of the Bailey Parcel area.

Bailey Parcel

The Town recently bought the Bailey Parcel, a parcel of land at the tip of the bar at the entrance to the Niantic River. Plans to landscape the parcel and turn it into a recreational area include commercial fishing docks and parking.

This is another opportunity for Niantic to connect to the waterfront, and this area could be used to commercial advantage in a variety of ways including boat rentals, a floating restaurant, and commercial docks.

The Bailey Parcel is also located at the terminus for one end of the Niantic Bay Overlook and is close to the Amtrak beach. As such, it provides the town a shoreline of destination, and offers residents the possibility for greatly improved access to both the Bay and the River.



East Lyme's schematic drawing of a plan for the Bailey Parcel.

Context: Industrial Parks

Principles

1. Provide sewer and water to the existing industrial parks so they are developable.
2. Write zoning that allows for flexible usage of the industrial parks.
3. Attract quality businesses and jobs to the Town through planning of commercial development areas and zoning which allows for flexible usages.



Existing Bride Brook Industrial Park.
The industrial parks are currently under
utilized.

Industrial Parks John Shapiro

The region is strategically located halfway between Boston and New York City, and East Lyme is strategically located at the intersection of the region's two interstate highways. The regional "absorption rate" (rate of construction) of offices, warehousing and industry is, however, low—reflecting the general movement of industry out of the northeast United States to the south and the Third World.

The East Lyme absorption rate may be even lower—reflecting the availability of land with lower tax rates in nearby municipalities. Prevailing industry rents of \$3 to \$5 per square foot per year are far too low to support spec development except by the hardy; even office rents of \$8 to \$14 per square foot are marginal for spec development.

This means that development will tend to be "to suit," i.e., for pre-identified tenants or by owner-occupants like Budweiser.

Alternatively, public subsidies for infrastructure improvements are in order. However, from a site-suitability perspective, the long-term value of East Lyme for such uses is assured.

Within the town, about half of the acreage available for such uses has been developed to date. Flanders has the highest value for these uses. Like retail, small-scale offices (doctors' offices, etc.) and small-scale industry/warehousing (e.g., contractors) with a town-wide or regional market base will logically gravitate to Flanders. Large-scale offices and warehousing/industrial facilities would be attracted to larger sites with highway visibility—which, in addition to Flanders, Interchange 72 property also offers.

Context: Housing

Principles

1. Allow for Cluster Housing in new housing developments to preserve green corridors and lower initial infrastructure costs.

Housing

John Shapiro

With regard to housing, East Lyme's reputation as offering the best schools in the region assures its residential value for families; its central regional location and resort image assure its value for retirement housing; and its waterfront, hills and lakes assure that some second-home development will be retained or built anew, even as other second homes are converted to year-round residences. Within the Southeastern Connecticut Planning Region, East Lyme registers the highest housing values (with a 1990 median contract rent over \$600, and 1990 median housing value of \$173,000). It had the greatest numerical increase in the number of units (400 units from 1990 to 1994). It also had the highest absolute number of second homes (1,000 units in 1990).

In time, East Lyme will be built out for housing; the question is simply for what types of populations. In this regard, it should be noted that estate, retirement and second-home housing—unlike housing for families—generate more tax revenue than expenditures.

Promoting one type of housing over the other is not easy, especially given the ease by which seasonal homes can be converted to year-round residences, or the ease with which estates can be subdivided for smaller lots aimed at a family market. Promoting a recreational or retirement image for the town may nonetheless encourage development or purchase of existing homes by retired people or second-home buyers.

Certain types of housing are, however, intrinsically directed to certain populations, such as age-restricted developments. As the baby boom ages, the general industry expectation is that there will be a building boom in such housing

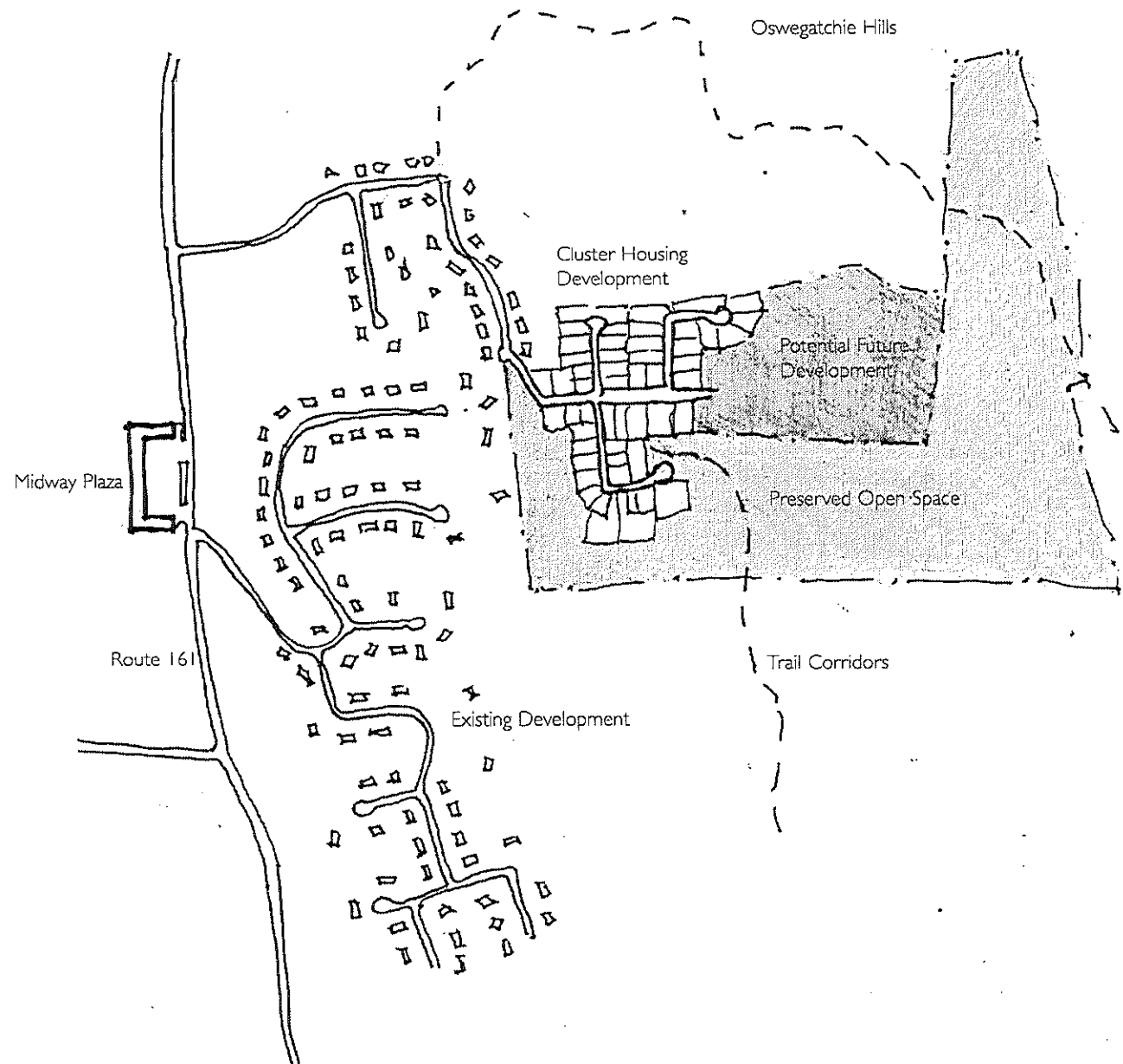
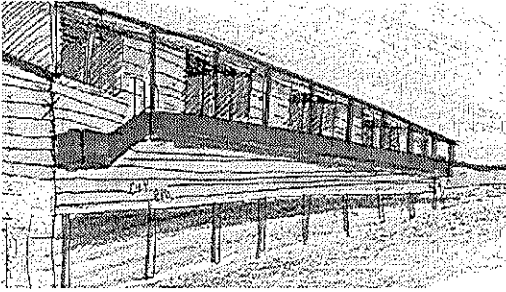


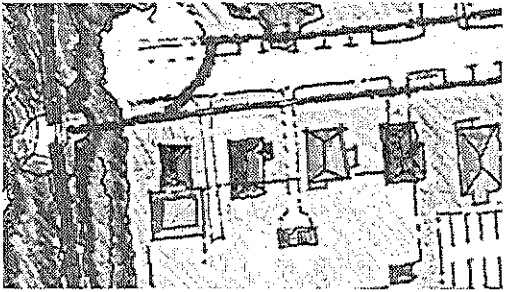
Diagram of proposed Cluster Housing development in the Oswegatchie Hills area.

Building houses on smaller lots closer to the access road reduces the initial outlay for infrastructure costs making homes more affordable.

Clustering also allows for preserving green space that can be linked between developments to provide a green corridor with hiking trails.



A rare opportunity for mixed-use housing exists at the back of Midway Plaza where vacant apartments already exist. The view over Groton Pond could be taken advantage of.



Proposed infill housing at the end of Lincoln Street in Niantic, an example of a vacant commercial site that might be more successful if divided into residential lots.

Housing (continued)

developments, including “life-care housing.” Life-care housing (a.k.a. “Continuing Care Housing”) generally involves a combination of independent living units (usually townhouses), shared services (e.g., meals on wheels), shared amenities (e.g., tennis, golf, swimming, community house), congregate care (studios with dining room) and nursing care (i.e., nursing home)—with residents changing their abode and level of service utilization to match their evolving health and life stage.

Generally, sites large enough to accommodate several hundred housing units, a 150-unit congregate care and 150-room nursing home are needed; sites should also be convenient to highways, in an upscale or resort area, proximate to major population centers. Other locations in the region—such as Mystic or Lyme—may be more attractive for the first generation of life care housing built in the region, because of their added prestige, name recognition, medical

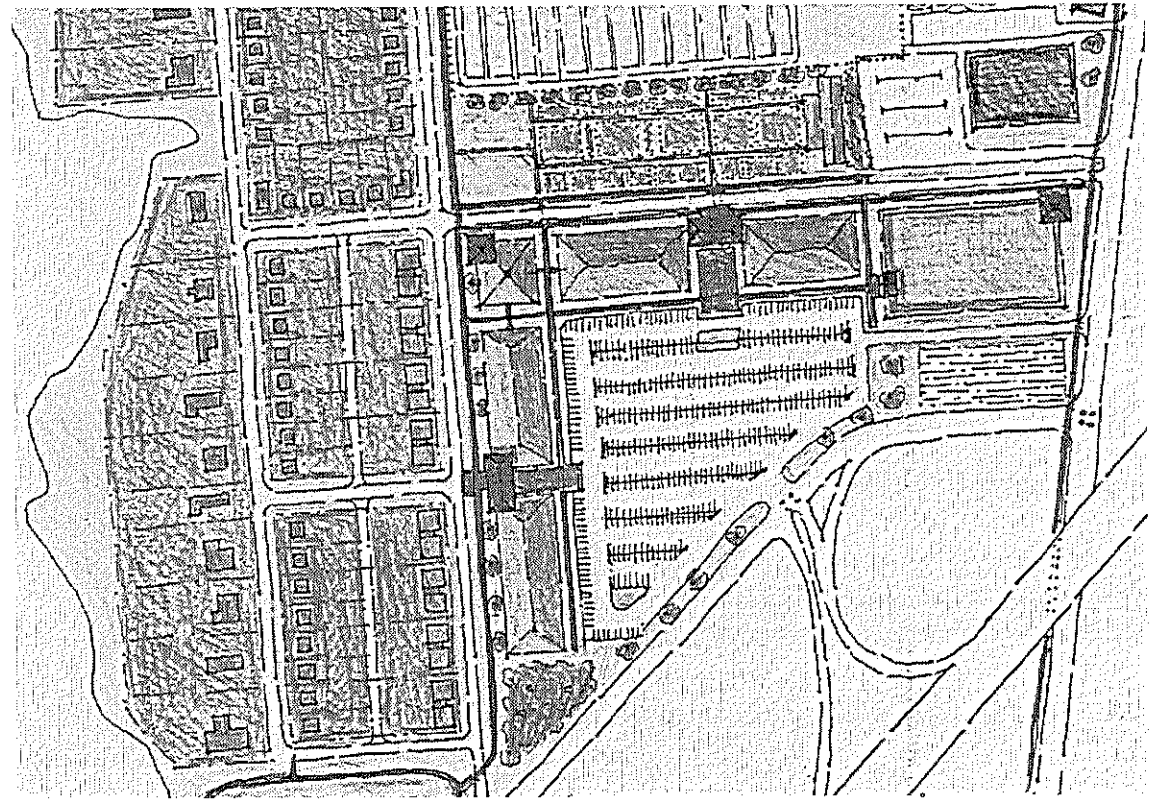
facilities, amenities, etc. But as such facilities increase in number, East Lyme is a likely candidate location.

The Town’s emerging policy of rezoning large portions of the town for large-lot residential development is, however, consistent with promoting second-home development and “estates.” A cluster incentive is another way to assure open space preservation. Other exurban waterside resort towns—Southampton in New York State, for instance—have found that the preservation of open space in their inlands has increased the range of high-value second-home development, especially in light of the unavailability of lots with waterfront views.

One nuance on the combination of large-lot and cluster zoning is to promote “estate” clusters. This involves shared driveways leading to large houses on large lots, with no public or shared open space (i.e., all the land remains under private ownership), though easements or

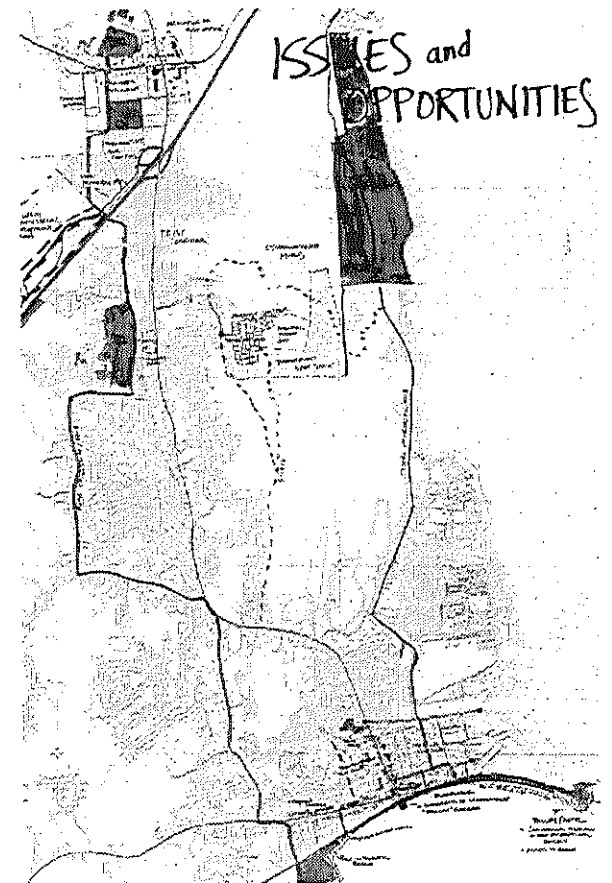
covenants can assure the same amount of open space preservation as would otherwise be required under a cluster plan.

Another nuance is to provide an incentive for developers to build cluster developments. This incentive may even be keyed to the residential density previously allowed. For instance, in a two-acre zone that is changed to a three-acre zone, the cluster could involve a bonus to one home per two acres (instead of one home per three acres), provided certain public benefits are achieved. These could involve, in addition to the preservation of open space and environmentally-sensitive land, preservation of key view corridors, provision of publicly-accessible trails or recreation facilities, etc.



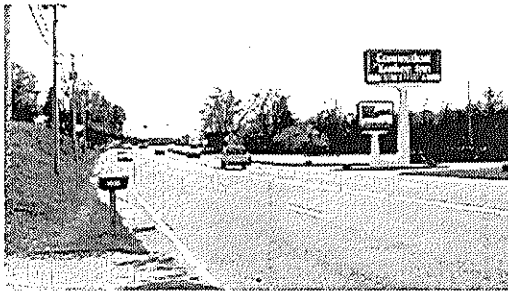
Continuing care housing could locate into a campus setting in the proposed Flanders Village, and might make use of both larger campus buildings and smaller individual living units.

Part II: Design Charrette

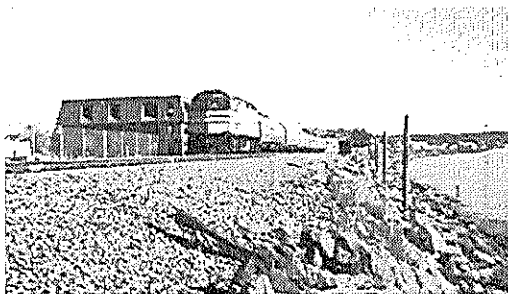


Design Charrette: Issues and Concerns

- A summary of the research completed before the charrette in no special order based on the list of priorities from the Yale Steering Committee and given for reference to each of the consultants and team leaders who participated in the workshop.



Existing conditions on Route 161.



Existing condition along the waterfront.

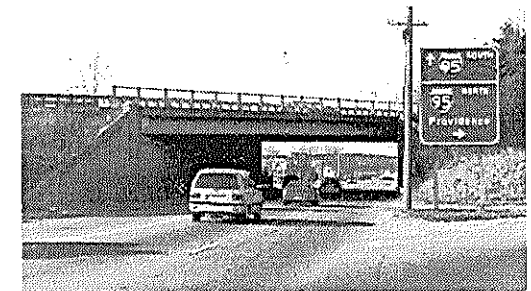
East Lyme Issues

- What are the effects of the high speed rail coming through? Would a commuter rail stop in East Lyme benefit the community?
- The Children's Museum needs a new site and wants to expand. Where are possible sites for it in East Lyme, and in what ways can the town help finance the museum's expansion?
- Light industry is an important part of the town's economy that residents want to support and enhance. Currently there is a light industry park off of Rt. 161 that is fully occupied. At Exit 72 there is another park that is partially occupied, but lacks visibility from the highway. There is also a site ready for development that lacks water and sewer. What are ways to finance needed infrastructure improvements?
- People are interested in a new sports complex/community center. Where should it be located, what should it provide, how could it be financed?
- While the community center, middle school, and library on Society Road are centrally located, they offer few connections back to town.
- Youth are disinterested in the town—there is little to interest or attract them at this age. Yet many still find the town an appealing place to live and could imagine returning at some later time.
- The planning and zoning commissions are separate entities that do not collaborate. Is there a better way for the two commissions to communicate? A steering committee?
- There seems to be a general distrust of town government by the residents.

- Commercial business is dwindling.
- East Lyme is considering a Main Street Connecticut application.
- What is the relationship between Niantic and Flanders? Can or should they be more closely linked?
- Which community groups are proactive and function well, and which are reactive? What are the goals and visions of these groups?
- There are redundant/multiple civic groups (i.e. 2-3 Chambers of Commerce in addition to an Economic Development Commission). Can these be brought together to work more effectively?
- As the regional economy grows and changes, what is East Lyme's role and how does it respond? Who represents East Lyme in regional development meetings?



Existing signal Exit 74.



Existing condition of Exit 74 underpass.



Existing condition along Pennsylvania avenue.



Gazebo at the Village Green in Niantic.

Niantic Issues

- The Bailey Parcel has been purchased by the town and there is a proposal for its development which includes docks for commercial fishing boats, recreational fishing docks, and parking. Are there ways this property could be further utilized? How can it be better tied back to the village center?
- The plan for a boardwalk, the Niantic Bay Overlook, has approval and permits and is waiting for funding. This is planned to run from the “Hole in the Wall” to the railroad bridge along a narrow strip between the train and the water. Is this the best proposal for water access? If so, how might it be better connected to Main Street and to the marina?
- The marina is at maximum capacity and constitutes an important part of the town’s economy. How can it be further developed, helped, and supported? Can it be better connected to Main Street?
- Streetscape improvements have been recommended, but not implemented. These should be further developed.
- Despite a perceived shortage of parking in Niantic, the recent Parking Study indicated that plenty of parking exists there. Look at ways to improve the existing parking and its signage to make it more readily accessible.
- Main St. is lined with parking along the back sides of buildings.
- Main St. as it approaches Pennsylvania Ave. is all parking. Likewise, Pennsylvania Avenue as it approaches Main Street is largely fronted with parking lots. Look at ways to continue existing street fronts and make the 156/161 intersection area more attractive and more pedestrian friendly.

- The railroad siding property (abandoned tracks) offers potential for other uses—bike path, green-way, new development, or something else?

- The Morton house is in a prime location. It has been purchased, but no development has been started. What are possible appropriate uses for the building?

- The current zoning in Niantic requires large setbacks and strip-like parking lots. This is counter to the atmosphere the town wants to preserve and enhance.

- Niantic center currently has many pizza shops and scattered retail. Some see the town's role as a restaurant row—drawing tourists and visitors from New London and all of southeastern Connecticut. Zoning does not allow for this. What should be the character of Niantic village? What sort of town character will keep property and tax values up?

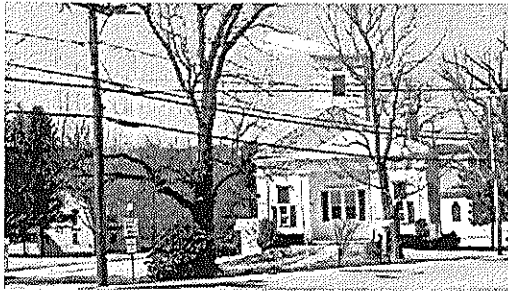
- The old Niantic train depot survives in a prime location at the end of Pennsylvania Ave. where it overlooks Niantic Bay. It is currently occupied by a Mobil station and is surrounded by a parking lot. How else can the property be sited and landscaped to take advantage of this location?



Downtown Niantic.



Existing conditions along Main Street.



View of the church on Boston Post Road.



Existing condition of the Shell station at Flanders Four Corners.

Flanders Issues

- Flanders Four Corners and village area is heavily traveled with little accommodation for pedestrians. Existing sidewalks are in poor repair and crossed by many curb-cuts.
- The Four Corners has a strip mall feel with no identity as a village center. Parking and traffic are the area's most visible elements.
- The historic houses and buildings in the area are threatened by haphazard development.
- There is a proposal to reconfigure Exit 74 and add a frontage road along the north side of I-95. Potentially, a road could connect this back to Rte. 1 in Flanders village and offer new opportunities for development.
- There are several large undeveloped sites along I-95 on the north side that are offered for sale. They are accessible from Rte. 161 and zoned for commercial and residential.
- The property next to the Ford dealership at the Four Corners is up for lease.
- There are condominiums above the Latimer Brook Commons shopping center. This is an unusual mixed-use development for the region.
- Flanders would like to establish itself as the gateway to the region. It is in a unique position because it is the first exit after/before the junction of I-395—which leads to the casinos—with I-95, which continues on to other major regional attractions.
- The signage on the freeway and at the exits is non-existent or insufficient.
- The Flanders Post Office is a retail outlet, but is located down Rte. 1 out of the village center. It might be more appropriate located at the Four Corners.

- There is potential for more residential development in the north. The town is moving towards R40 zoning (3 acre min. lot size) to keep down both residential density and the number of students in the schools. Is this a wise strategy? Are there other strategies that might achieve the same ends without spreading the town infrastructure any further?

Route 161 Issues

- Traffic congestion is a big problem in the summer and increasingly, year-round.

- Motel and gas station development is increasing along the strip. But other types of businesses (i.e. KFC, Taco Bell, etc.) are interested as well. Town residents want to keep the property values up by keeping out any more “honky-tank” strip development.

- The Oswegatchie Hill area between the Niantic River and Rte. 161 is a potential development site, although the steep topography might limit development options. One idea is to build a green-way road through the area which would offer a second north-south route for both motorists and pedestrians. New residential development could be clustered off of this route.

- There is a proposal for a sidewalk to run along the west side of 161 from Niantic to Flanders, which would provide a needed bike/walking path for students going to school or to the library. The sidewalk would also constitute a symbolic link between different areas within the town. However, because there is very little right of way along 161 and because there are numerous curb cuts along the highway, such a sidewalk would be expensive, dangerous, and would cause erosion along the pond where all the trees would be removed to make the necessary room. The 1994 Pedestrian Study update offers suggestions to alleviate some of these problems.

- The school properties in Flanders and on Society Rd. are both prime commercially developable land. Is there any possibility of capitalizing on this?

Design Charrette: Ideas and Synthesis

- A summary of the initial Issues and Opportunities presented to the town of East Lyme at the end of the workshop weekend based on input from residents and the work of the design team.
- Maps and diagrams produced during the weekend. The final design recommendations are based on these initial diagrams.

East Lyme—Town-wide

Development Issues & Opportunities

Economic development is dependent on
Character/Image/Place

1. Image/Assets:

- The People—active citizen interest/participation
- A Sense of Community—activities and events that bring people together.
- Family/Youth—schools and children's lives and futures.
- Place—the identity and beauty of the natural landscape, open space, waterfront, residential enclaves, and New England vernacular architecture with a small town scale.

Both the physical assets (image) and the programmatic assets (community, people, family) can be represented through the physical architecture and building of the town.

2. Connections:

- Between Assets and Services—they strengthen each other.
- Access: Parking.
- High Speed Rail.
- Housing for commuters to Providence or New Haven.
- Tourist market from NY to Boston.

3. Recreation

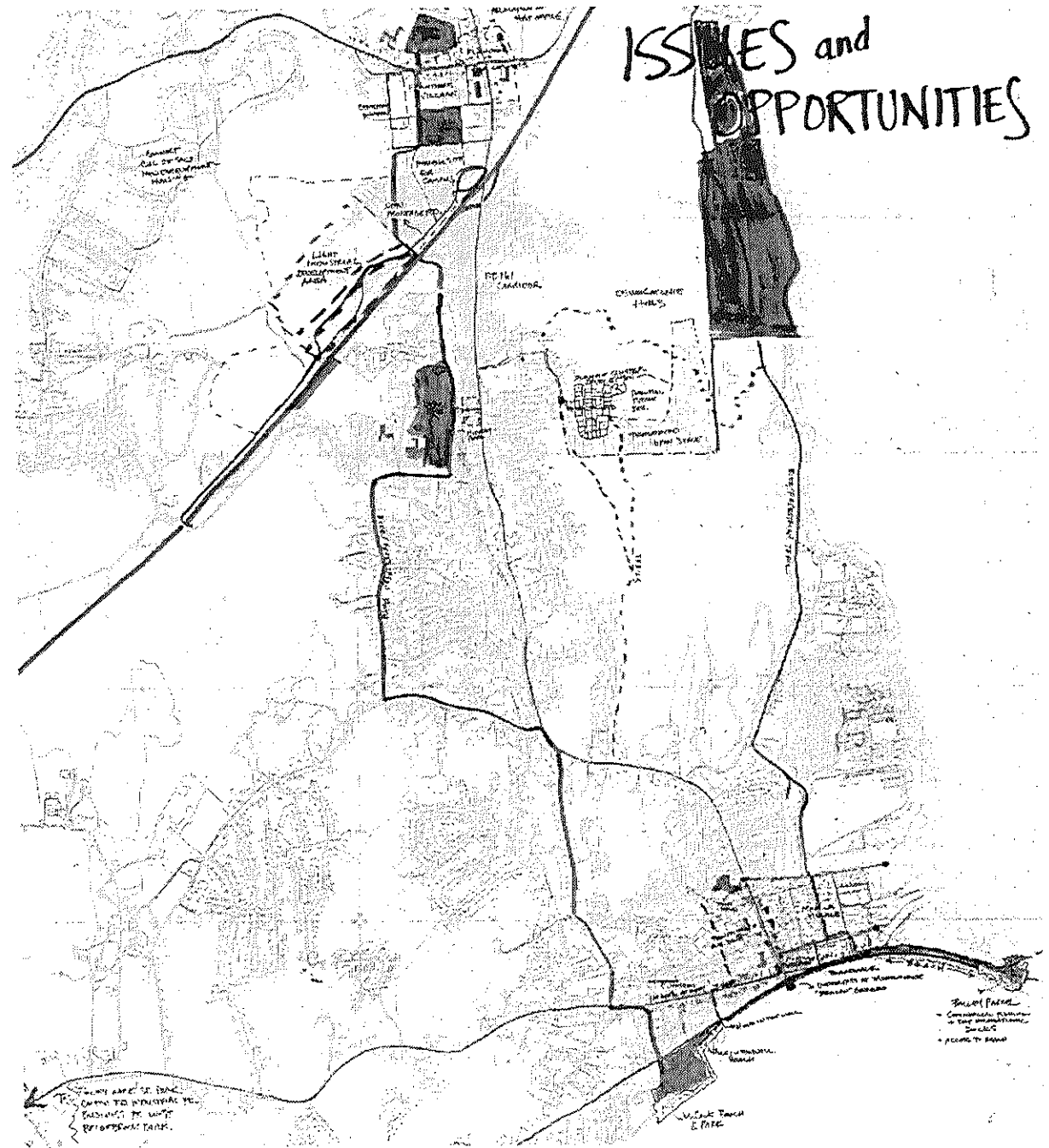
- Open Space: preserve, organize, access.
- Waterfront: increase access, image, and development.
- Additional regional recreation.

4. Sewer/Services

- Develop existing industrial sites first.

5. Regional

- Growth vs. no growth
- “Business at any cost” vs. don't change town character.
- Relationship of density to tax base.
- Flanders is too close to Crystal Mall—it has to have identity as something else.



Issues and Opportunities diagram illustrating all the major proposals for East Lyme made at the conclusion of the charrette. These issues formed the core ideas from which this report was generated.

Implementation

1. Urban Design Guidelines

- Economic development is dependent on character, place, and image of the business district and their marketability
- Historic Designations—priority ranking of key contributing buildings to village character.
- Control design of signs and simplify regulation: materials, proportions, illumination, size.

2. Marketing Strategy—based on desired uses.

3. Incentives

- Loan Funds
- Tax abatements
- Zoning incentives

4. Business Assistance

- Economic Development consultant should meet with EDC.
- Main Street Connecticut Program.

5. Make procedures and zoning text more user-friendly, without compromising the quality of development:

- Simpler, predictable procedures.
- Improved zoning text.

6. Allow more flexible uses

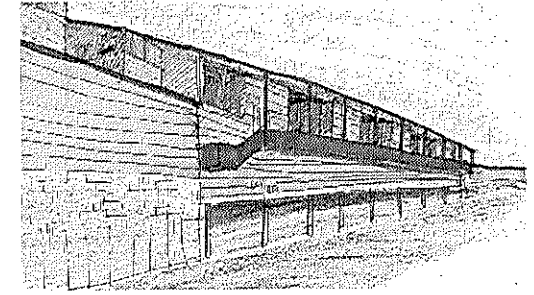
- In areas zoned for light industry.
- Improve Special Permit Criteria.

7. Protect open spaces via:

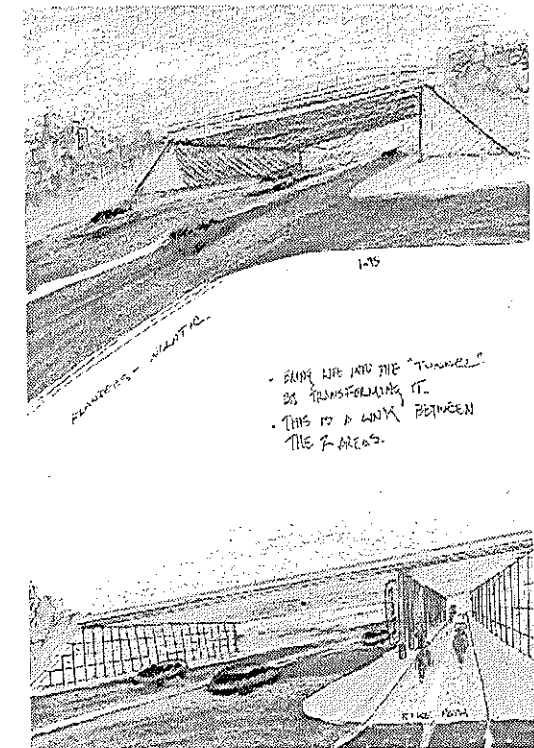
- a. Buffering
- b. Clustering: Revise cluster development regulations
 - To allow for tighter clusters with more open space preservation.
 - To encourage some very large parcels (25+ acres).
 - To reserve corridors for trails, wildlife, and bike paths.
 - To allow smaller scale roads for low-density development.

8. Consider as special uses:

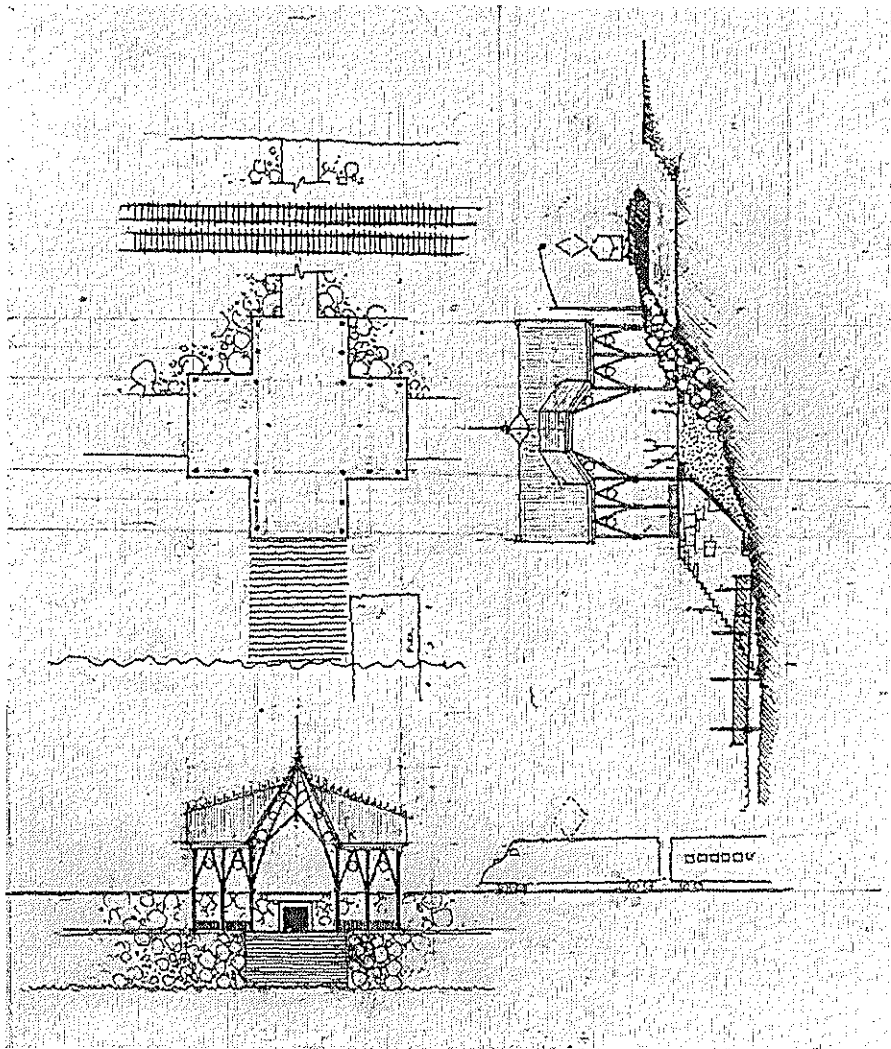
- Tourism-related facilities and recreation accessible to highways but compatible with rural area.
- Require large open space set-asides



Drawing depicting the apartments on the back side of Midway Plaza.



Proposal for improving the Exit 74 underpass.



Proposed Gazebo for the Niantic Bay Overlook drawn at the charrette by Kent Bloomer.

Niantic

Places and Major Themes

1. Main Street
 - Morton House
 - Children's Museum
 - Water/tracks side of street
2. Town Hall/Civic Center
3. Pennsylvania Avenue
4. Town Green—visual beacon
5. Marina Village (between Pennsylvania Avenue and Niantic River)
6. RR track—barrier

Development Issues & Opportunities

Niantic's draw is its village character for visitors and locals alike. Need to bring people downtown to develop it as a place.

Potential Markets/Development:

1 Capitalize on cultural activity to strengthen retail/commercial.

- Children's Museum—expansion.
- Movie Theater—keep, support.
- Art galleries to draw from Old Lyme Art Academy and New London schools.
- Encourage other non-profits (like ballet in Flanders).

2. Night Life—restaurants, pubs, coffee shops, ice cream for evening community.

3. Restaurants

- Revise zoning restrictions (re: liquor license limitations).
- Need more quality places to eat.
- Additions reinforce downtown district.

4. Commercial: Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue

- Fill vacant buildings first (ie Morton House).
- Implement design guidelines.
- Improve access to parking.
- Connecticut Main Street Program

5. Train Stop—encourage commuters.

6. Housing

- Encourage more mixed-use, providing lower cost housing above shops.
- Senior citizen housing in village for character and walkable access to services.

7. Magnet Schools—funded by state.

Implementation/Zoning

Strengthen Village character of Niantic

1. Lot size

- Allow lots as small as those in historic center.

2. Parking

- Make requirements more flexible.
- Do not require on-site parking for small parcels.
- Create “free in lieu” and build municipal lots.
- Use reduced parking as design incentive.
- Provide density incentive for dedicating land to public parking.
- Prohibit front-yard parking: use on street spaces and block interiors.

3. Setbacks

- Allow buildings to front directly on sidewalks.
- Required “build to line”.

4. Uses

- Allow more residential to support local retail.
- Main Street and surrounding area: Reduce scale and amount of commercial zoning, but continue to allow multi-family housing and some neighborhood commercial uses.
- More mixed use.
- Taller buildings.
- Allow more restaurants with full liquor license, but not bars.
- Replace boat storage with viable mixed-use.

5. Design

- Develop design guidelines for site plan review.
- Set up “advisory” architectural guidelines.

Some examples of design guidelines:

- Interconnecting street grid.
- Put buildings at street line—create a continuous “street wall” in Niantic.
- Allow articulation for plazas, sidewalk cafes, etc.
- Connect parking lots.
- Allow convenient and pleasant passageways from parking lots to streets.
- Screen parking lots along the street front with trees.
- Limit curb cuts.
- Allow porches, awnings, and signs to project into setbacks areas where front setbacks exist.
- Traditional roof pitch and roof massing.
- Vertically proportioned windows.
- Frequent door and window openings in downtown.
- Prohibit blank walls.
- Limit total building footprint to scale of surrounding area (Niantic), with limited exceptions for civic buildings and essential commercial uses.
- Encourage multi-story buildings to frame street space.
- Residential and office uses on upper floors.
- Plant street trees.

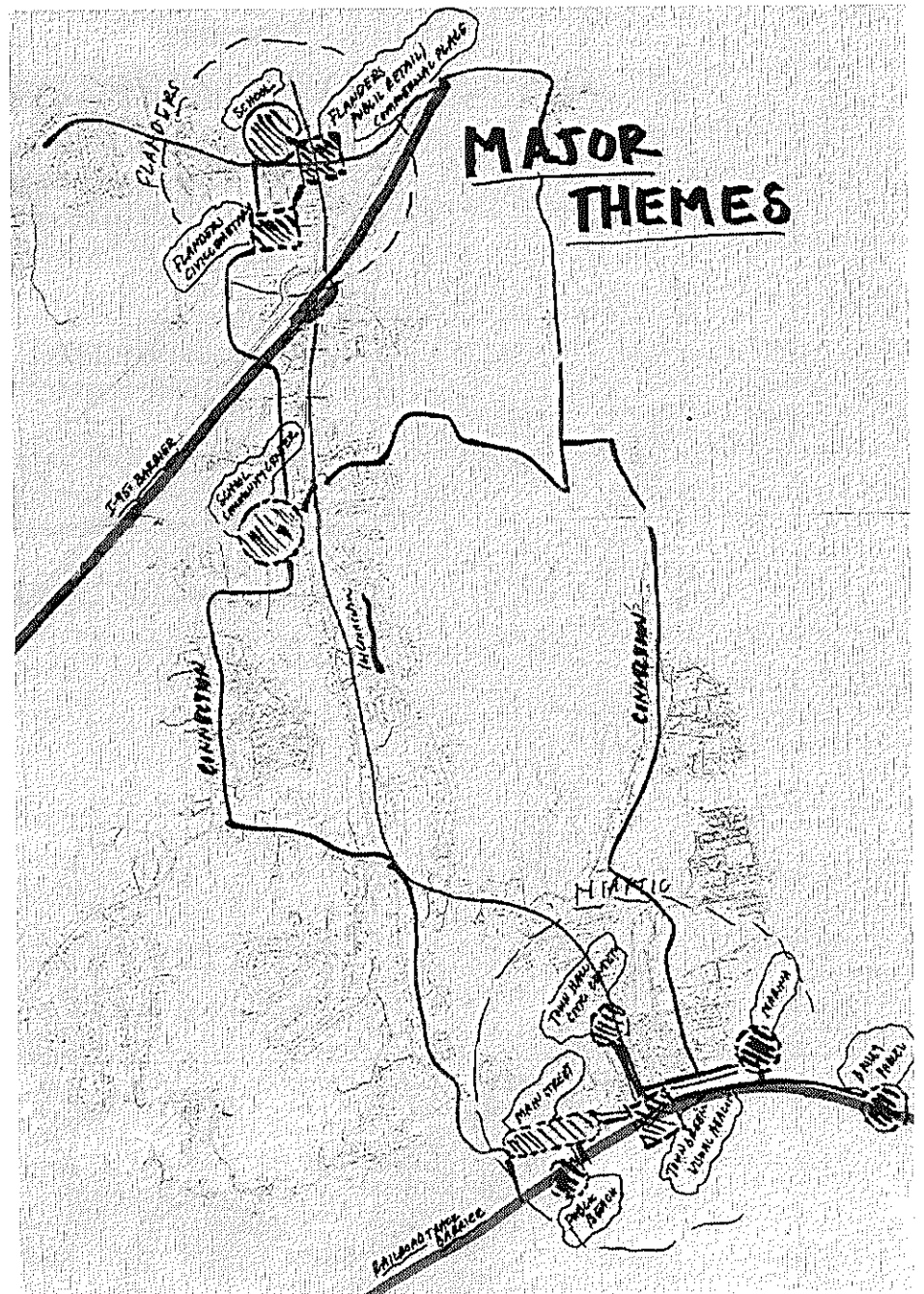
- Encourage low hedges and picket fences along sidewalk and street.
- Prohibit tall hedges and stockade or chainlink fences.
- Encourage planted buffers on commercial strips.

6. Transit-Oriented Development

- Have tunnels under tracks.
- Allow higher-density.
- Mixed-use near train station (if train stop can be arranged).
- Have docks and piers for boat access.

7. Landscaping

- Street trees and ornamental landscaping (vs. landscape as buffer).
- Use landscape features to make connections.



Major Themes Diagram.

This diagram illustrates the major ideas and area studies that came up during the charrette. These ideas were then further developed and used as the base for the report.

Flanders

Places and Major Themes

1. Flanders Four Corners
 - Public retail and commercial place.
 - Mixed-use/Residential
 - Relocation of Post Office.
2. School Area
 - Flanders High School
 - Flanders Elementary School
3. Flanders Civic Cemetery
 - Possible site for a new center or green.
 - Possibilities for campus, for-profit schools.
4. Exit 74—Gateway/Commercial Zone.

Development Issues & Opportunities

Flanders will grow—the region is growing. What does East Lyme want? What does it not want? It must develop as a place.

Potential Development:

1. Commercial: Flanders Four Corners
 - Done in a way that contributes to a sense of place.
 - Pedestrian access.
 - Appropriate scale.
 - Appropriate image.
 - Per design guidelines and alternative site plans.
 - Move Post Office to Flanders Four Corners.
 - Limit extent of commercial zones to concentrate at Four Corners and at I-95 interchange.
 - Control commercial expansion west of Church Lane along Boston Post Road.
2. Continue Professional Offices
 - Concentrate in Flanders at Rte 1/161 intersection.
 - Prevent from spreading too thin along Rte. 1.
3. Recreation Center/Public Swimming Pool
 - Serving local and regional needs.
 - Located at Flanders High School—who runs it?

4. Flanders Civic Cemetery

- Site for new Center/Green.
- Create a grid connecting I-95 and Route 1.

5. New Frontage Road at Exit 74

- To access potential development zones.
- Increase connections to Flanders.

6. Educational Campus:

- Private, for profit school (as alternative to more light industry).
- Increase skilled job pool.
- Attract higher paying jobs to area.
- Build on East Lyme's reputation for good schools.

7. High Tech Industrial Development Site

- Clean, non-polluting.
- Skilled jobs.

8. Gateway to the Region

The Route 161 Corridor is the main connection between Flanders and Niantic. It is the first view/impression of East Lyme from I-95 at Exit 74. It is developing as the "strip" of East Lyme with motels, gas stations, and fast food stores.

- Image
- Tourist Information Center
- Parking and transportation to casinos.
- Direct tourists to attractions in Flanders and Niantic

9. Connect cul de sacs (west on Rte. 1)

- New sites for housing development.
- Better circulation.

10. Route 161 At Exit 74

- Do not permit single-use surface parking lot (for casinos).
- Consider structured underground parking with intermodal bus transfer.
- Mixed-use on deck
- Satellite parking for Niantic and other tourist destinations

Context

Places and Major Themes

1. Route 161 at Society Road
 - East Lyme Middle School and Hayne Elementary School.
 - Community Center and library.
 - Smith-Harris House.
 - Midway Plaza.
2. Connections/Barriers:
 - I-95
 - Railroad
 - Routes 1, 156, 161.
3. Greenways and Open Space
 - Bike/pedestrian trails.
 - Preserved Open Space (Oswegatchie Hills).
4. Paths parallel to Rte. 161 (alternatives)
 - Bike/pedestrian paths connecting Flanders and Niantic Village.
 - Connections between housing and community infrastructure.
5. Waterfront
 - Hole in the Wall Beach.
 - McCook Beach and Park.
 - Niantic Bay Overlook.
 - Underpass and Gazebo at Morton House.
6. Bailey Parcel
 - Commercial fishing and day recreational docks.
 - Access to beach.

7. Exit 72-73: Route 156 West
 - Alternate entrance to Niantic.
 - Colton Road Industrial Park—needs sewer and water.
 - Business Park West—under occupied.
 - Bride Brook Park.
 - Rocky Neck State Park.
 - Prison (name? influence?).
8. Housing—Cluster Development.
9. Regional
 - Casinos
 - New London
 - Crystal Mall/Waterford
 - Millstone

Development Issues & Opportunities

1. Society Hill Road
 - Further develop/utilize site with Middle School campus, Library, Historical Society.
 - Potential connection to Midway Plaza
2. Commercial
 - Tourist conveniences and accommodations.
 - Midway Plaza.
3. Greenways and Open Space
 - Bike/pedestrian trail along Niantic River boundary.
 - Preserved open space.
4. Alternative Connections
 - Bike/pedestrian paths connecting Flanders and Niantic Village from McCook Beach Park to Flanders High School via East Lyme Library and Community Center.
 - Bike/Hiking trails in Oswegatchie Hills.
 - Pedestrian connections between housing and community infrastructure.
5. Cluster development housing
 - To increase density and lower infrastructure costs.
 - To preserve open space and buffers.

6. Waterfront

- Niantic Bay Overlook
- Tunnel under tracks at Morton House for increased access.
- Hole in the Wall Beach
- McCook Beach and Park

7. Bailey Parcel

- Commercial fishing docks
- Day recreational docks
- Access to beach and Niantic Bay Overlook

Implementation/Zoning

1. Route 161 Corridor

What should the corridor between Niantic Village and Flanders Village be?

- Limit curb cuts.
- Institute effective landscape buffers, especially: Street trees, trees in parking lots.
- Gradually pull buildings forward and put parking in rear.
- Encourage mixed use through density incentives.
- Limit commercial development within currently zoned areas—no additional development outside existing commercial areas.

2. Parcel Between Exit 74 & Society Hill Rd. (1987 zoning for industrial use)

Allow flexible zoning for regional uses:

- Light industry
- Technical education
- Large-scale retail
- Sports complex

3. CA strip between I-95 and Gurley Road

- Steep topography, limited access

4. CA parcel between King Arthur Drive and I-95

- Topography and access problems.
- Rezone for low residential and/ or office use.

5. Colton Road Industrial Park

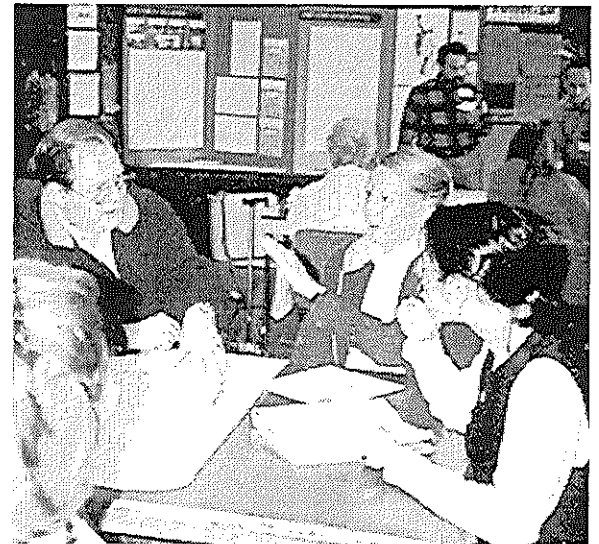
- Bring water and sewer infrastructure.

6. Consider “lapse” provision for SU zones.

7. Rural Areas

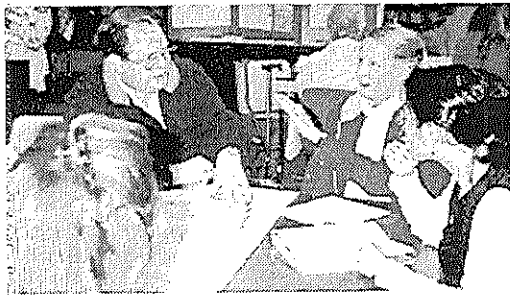
- Lower density, with mandatory clustering.
- Open space set-asides.
- Flexibility of small-scale uses.
- Reduce road standards for low density.

Part III: Discussion Table Notes

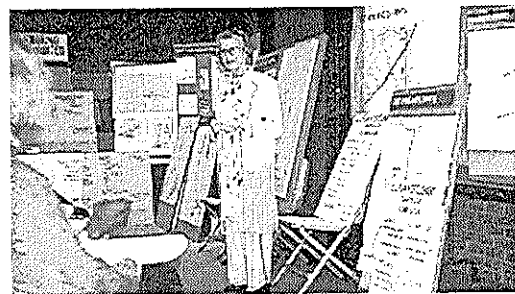


Discussion Table Notes

- During the workshop, tables were set up in the Town Hall lobby as a place for residents to gather and share their ideas about East Lyme. The consenses found on a number of issues were instrumental in shaping the structure and proposals in this report.
- The notes from these discussions follow organized by Study Area.



Residents and students at the Discussion Table.



Catherine Irwin speaking at the conclusion of the charrette.

Town Wide

Character/Identity

What's the advantage of having 2 villages?
Can we just become East Lyme?
How do we connect with each other?
That's our history—East Lyme is two villages and that makes it distinctive.
The friction between the two villages is a myth.
But the friction always comes up with funding requests.
The village atmosphere is important and it is our strength.
If there is unfairness then it should be addressed.
More of a village concept is important.
Flanders and Niantic
Linkages between Flanders and Niantic.
Uniting Flanders and Niantic.
Sharing of spaces: sense of community.
Forget differences and think about entire town.
Isolation of Flanders, Niantic.
Combine the fire departments of the two villages.
Connecting the two communities with a sidewalk will help.
Events make one community instead of two separate.

Volunteer projects that think beyond the way things are typically done.
Used to work together in this town.
Better coordination of town hall and local organizations.

Leaders should get out of the way.
What don't we have in town that we need?
Impetus or zeal should come from working together.
One word I would like to have: hope.
Lack of communication.
Feeling that they were well-cared for downtown.
Bottom line: get all ideas together.
Don't need antagonism.
Need ideas to be accepted.
Didn't even bother to ask whether I could own a bed and breakfast.
Intangible, invisible quality.
Hopefulness that ideas will be listened to.
Changeable: the attitude of people; love of neighbor.
Town is typically short-sighted and egotistical; no one likes to support a good idea; all of it is petty.
Want to see a small-town atmosphere here again.
Town has no philosophy or direction.
Tunnel vision among town leaders; we knew it would "take forever" to get anything done
Bug stuck up your behind about being a "New Englander".
Town has to learn how to smile.
One person leads volunteers and sparks them into working.
Town does not have a sense of community.
Need more support from town; more input from Flanders.

Town Hall should do more rather than reaping benefits twice from merchants.

The town presently isn't "new small business friendly". Seems to be hard on legit type businesses however lets "non attractive" things occur (i.e. sheets in window).

Spark to make things happen beyond just the holidays, special events.

Town parades give a sense of community.

East Lyme really has something for almost everyone.

East Lyme holiday light award: families get together to drive during Christmas holiday with walkie-talkies, discuss which houses are best, give a certificate to the owner, and sing Christmas carols.

Concerts on green.

Children's museum.

Much could be done here.

Light Parade.

Carnival.

Parking is tough for events, and is done where there is no parking.

Use facilities for soccer.

Nice area there, but good if it were a centerpiece for town.

Festival parking.

Storefront of Bayside Coffee: would like to see other storefronts that are like that.

Outdoor cafes.

Functions in town: Light Parade, Halloween: all sponsored by merchants.

Farmers market is held across from the Children's museum in July/August.

Street fairs and street block dances: blocks cut off temporarily

Boat rides and trolley rides.

Caricaturist available in summer.

Old time ice cream parlor.

Street entertainers: jugglers, comedians, at different venues throughout town.

Culmination of fireworks.

Bike parade or baby parade.

Dig for treasure with a pirate.

Boat parade decorations and judges.

Set aside weekend.

Sidewalk sale at the end of summer.

Town picnic at Fourth of July: frog jump, festival.

Lobster fest.

Horse and carriage rides.

Halloween parade: open space to give out prizes.

Fireworks have been eliminated from the town.

During time, make all traffic one way.

More things for kids.

Band concerts, but too small for any real use.

Small toy store.



Discussion Table.



Residents and students worked together to identify key issues.

Teenager hang out besides woods...sell food, not a place for adults only, music, games, BOWLING, mini golf. Nothing theatrical or performance spaces for East Lyme — there are theatrical groups, but no rehearsal or performance spaces.
 Coordinate special events to include more businesses
 Make more of Christmas — light, parade.
 Summer concerts
 Holiday events.
 Playgrounds.

Town has no direction or theme—no vision to what town wants to be.
 Is it Niantic by the Atlantic or the town that time forgot?
 Establish town gateways—designate them clearly.
 Establish gateways to town.
 Where does it start and end?
 Comparison of East Lyme to a waterfront community.
 Make an area that is a great walking area.
 Enticing to someone instead of someplace to pass by.
 Should be connecting with Waterford.
 Restaurants on other side are in Waterford.
 Diversity of restaurants.
 Used to come here every weekend if we could every weekend.
 We would: go to stores, get dinner, go to movies, get a drink later
 Residents love and hate the summer residents.
 Town has no theme.
 Hodge podge.
 Where is it going?
 Doesn't quite have a direction.
 Improve historic district.

This is an automobile community; too many gas stations.
 Used to be neighborhood store and a butcher.
 Used to be a place where non-drivers could live; no longer.
 Our society is based on an automobile.
 Senior citizens: where do they put development? as far away as possible, so that they can't use the center of town.
 Should be some housing put downtown.
 Town is 99% handicap accessible.
 Emphasis on senior citizens and children and teens.

Businesses should be put downtown.
 Older people can look forward to longer lives if we walk to places.
 So many people want to move into downtown.
 Parking “complaints” have refused the conversion of spaces downtown for apartments..
 Young people AND senior citizens have no places in this town.
 Rather pay more taxes and have a village town.
 Long Hill Road in Groton: we don't want that.

It is a beach community, but you can come and go and never realize it is on the water.
 It does not capitalize on the location.
 Make use of beach, but there needs to be more there.
 Pier should be out there.
 Pier as a place to sit.
 Area around boat launch is not currently useable.
 The area does not have that quaint “beach” feeling.
 Town isn't taking advantage of physical resources.
 There are no coastal restaurants.
 There are no sports events (marathons, triathlons, etc.) take advantage of natural resources.
 Need more water access programs — sailing center, etc.
 What does the town WANT to promote?
 How can the town pursue growth?

Streetscape

Beautification HAS to occur; plantings HAVE to be done.
 Schwartz's on Lake Landing (off East Pataguanset).
 Area that welcomes people to East Lyme: plantings, etc.
 Can't get town to help us with work, even behind senior center (member of garden club).
 Litter: there are no bins on streets, in neighborhoods.
 Town must be willing to work with garden club, other existing groups in town support streetscape improvements — will benefit entire community.
 Make more unique.
 Stone walls and large trees.
 Placed with a certain budget every year.
 Repair of old or placement of new.
 Money from building permits and new development could go to this fund.
 Everyone needs to pick up trash.
 General clean up E. Lyme.
 Fire hydrant - paint - face lift.
 Street signs - awful.
 Remove old trees - plant new - residents “Donate a Tree “ group.
 State land along Roxbury Road a mess! Old and abandoned houses - remove or ??
 Post office - CLEAN UP STREET.
 Town need to look more affluent and attract better class of people.
 Beautification has to be kept up.
 Not just done ONCE.
 Do it consistently.
 Competition can cause beautification to spread.
 Starting beautification.
 Cobblestone strips between pedestrian and bike parts of walkways and sidewalks.
 Stone Wall program—and program for large trees.
 Use % of permit fees to immediately build walls or plant trees.
 MUST be acted upon quickly to prevent its acquisition by other programs in need.

Zoning

Get the impression zoning committee tries to stop you.
 There doesn't seem to be real definite rules.
 Attitude toward development.
 Conservation commission — savvy.
 Architecture guidelines needed
 Green buffers needed
 Maintain character — if business moves into old home,
 can't tear it down.

Signage

Signs at both ends of Rocky Neck.
 Rocky Neck connector and the exit off 95.
 Mall in there: don't know what's downtown.
 Sign codes.
 Signs to explain what's downtown: no one knows what's in
 Niantic.
 Advertise.
 Signage rules are easily exempted — set stronger and better
 standards — make it UNIFORM.

Economic Development

Town in transition.
 • Sleepy bedroom community 10-15 yr. ago.
 • Lack of tax dollars is hurting.
 • Families w/ kids don't cover the costs — deficit.
 • Must make up gap w/ commercial taxes.
 • Fill industrial parks — Bridal Mall is a mistake.
 • How to expand commercial district w/out sacrificing res-
 idents in Niantic.
 • Town Hall obstructs, doesn't help.
 • Commerce should be concentrated in one area w/ basi-
 cally no regulations fast track.

East Lyme has always been a quiet bedroom town — we
 need to change outlook.
 Increase commercial tax base to offset senior citizens who
 can't pay.
 80% of residents don't have kids.
 East Lyme has historically made it difficult to open busi-
 nesses.
 Business people should be able to work WITH town offi-
 cials.
 UPS left town because town wouldn't work with them.
 McCook's park fireworks canceled because of too much
 traffic.
 Extend sewer lines to business park on Colton Road.
 Area behind the Niantic Gun Club: lead in the ground
 (affects wildlife and ecosystems).
 Closed landfill in town; now have to buy bags to haul
 trash to Putnam.

Greatest anger on Main Street who foisted a second
 McDonald's on town; in other cities and towns.
 Magnificent trees on Main Street were destroyed.
 Town has never looked beyond the year.
 Moved from New York because of a Main Street on water.
 99 percent accessible for people in wheelchairs; no longer
 that way for many Main Street businesses (Inn behind
 McDonald's).
 Old Lyme has a plan, Old Saybrook is the same.
 50 or 60 years ago this was a beautiful town.
 Now this town tries to be "service friendly".
 Surveys reveal that this is not a "business town".
 This place has more beauty parlors than beauty.

When we moved here, stores were not empty; place had
 stores where things could be bought.

People have changed their patterns of buying.
 Caring and thoughtfulness of people.
 Comfortable place to come to.
 Ways to lure businesses and keep businesses.
 Make water and sewer available at industrial sites, some
 industry doesn't come.
 Get people away from the development areas outside
 town.
 Tax abatement (ten year, cut after five) for industry: most
 other towns around here give it.
 In towns where there are plenty of businesses: sometimes
 the tax base does not improve.
 Use land near the highway.
 Increase the tax base is important to the town.
 Town has not done enough to bring in retail, industry.

People in motels and hotels: passes for Rocky Neck and
 McCook's (businesses probably pay for them).
 Walking passes are free, but costs.
 Knights of Columbus: good theater space.
 East Lyme arts council.
 Rocky Neck Casino: Dinner; Victorian Ball at the tennis
 center

Don't believe in malls—they're the downfall of suburban
 areas.
 Publication which lists services in town.
 What draws people to browse in town? Not much.
 Needs to be a magnet to bring in residents.

Pine Grove is an eye sore—marginalized.
 Add more lights at Niantic and Flanders.
 Tourists bring money.
 Create a healthy environment.
 Most people drive to Waterford rather than local stores.
 Wouldn't like to see kind of big box retail (in Waterford).

Attitude of East Lyme towards kids is very healthy.
 Could town be focused as place for kids?
 Enlarge museum.

Business for youth.
 Place for kids.
 Something for kids - bookstore.
 Wants to do things for the children.
 Enhance their lives.
 Attitude positive.
 More things for teenagers and young adults.
 Skating areas.
 Organized events.,
 East Lyme should be made a destination for children—
 younger and older.
 economic development should focus on this.
 Nowhere for high school; just for middle school.
 Many kids go to Dunkin Donuts.
 Pool tables and bigger restaurant with more seating.
 Little expensive supermarkets needs chain supermarket w/
 better prices.
 Place to rollerblade.
 Reenact history (Niantic Week).
 Upscale retail and shops.
 An area for kids, bowling or rec area.
 Outdoor plays, other cultural.
 Movie theaters.
 No theatrical facilities.
 Community choral group: there is one for adults, would
 like one for younger people.
 Outdoor plays and concert.
 Create volunteer commission of arts.

Enterprise zones:
 • Incentives
 • Take advantage of Niantic Center.
 • Restaurants
 • Outlet malls - D.T. Niantic.

Why is there empty office space?
 Much area is still undeveloped.
 Businesses are moving to other areas.
 Main Street and Pataganset — coop commercial.
 Crystal Mall has driven unique shops out.
 If Niantic was attractive, they would return.
 Attract businesses that have a specific clientele.
 Hotel: higher class hotel (unlike ones on the highway

Ministry - non-profit looking for space — training center
 Rents too high.
 Don't know town's position on non-profits.
 Owners/ landlords prefer to leave it empty - want top dol-
 lar
 Don't want to tie up more spaces for taxes.
 Absentee commercial landlords - OK to remodel.
 Too much focus on the Main Street areas; plenty of room
 for a Six Flags, other development: industries, professional
 complexes.
 Technologically-based industries should be emphasized;
 many who were laid off from Electric Boat need jobs, are
 highly trained.
 Tourist attractions: public beach (near downtown).
 Business I would like to see: light manufacturing.

Bailey Parcel: piers, commercial enterprise (visitors: boat
 trips and excursions).

How come Millstone has afforded Waterford so much in
 public improvements?
 Economic development - if one wants these things and is
 into industrial parks.
 Should work with banks to help businesses.
 Should make a better effort and then more public ameni-
 ties are available to be funded.

What do we do with under used town-owned property?
 Fairly large property now being rented for a small amount
 of money.
 Building near McCook's point beach, used by VFW; rent-
 ing for \$1 per year.
 Only about 30-40 people use it and only occasionally.

Is there any way to capitalize on the state land that is con-
 tained in East Lyme?
 Can idle state property be utilized?
 State property needs to be negotiated.

State and Yale owned properties should be compensated.
 Ideas that should be implemented from that plan:
 • Important to keep eye on what Yale does with their
 property - improper use would devastate town.

State owns about 20% of town land - pays low amount in
 lieu of taxes
 Gov. wants to get rid of town lands now — can East
 Lyme reclaim any?

3 industrial parks.
 Need people who know how to bring businesses in.
 Tax breaks ? yes and no.
 Provide water and sewer to all industrial areas.

Comparative analysis - Mill Rate
 Waterford — lowest mill rate in the state — eventually
 boost retail to make up for.
 Mill rate:
 • Most other towns have lower rates.
 • How can we offset this problem?
 • What can we offer - good education.
 • Location - water.
 • Makes it more difficult to set up a business.

Town OWES \$80 million — needs to get tax base to pay
 off debts.
 Yet town annual budget is \$33.5 million.
 Anything this town does needs to be self-supporting —
 concern that expenditures will overwhelm town.
 East Lyme is a tough town in a tough state to do business
 in.
 Town mil rate is 25 - surrounding towns have much lower
 mil rates.
 High mil rate makes it hard to attract new businesses.
 What are added benefits to being in East Lyme that justi-
 fy higher mil rate?
 Are there any sorts of appropriate tax abatements?
 Give the new businesses a temporary tax abatement.
 Agrees 100% that businesses are struggling under tax
 rates, etc.
 East Lyme will become a magnet to SE Connecticut
 because town has lived on a tight budget.
 Long-term investors won't settle in Waterford because
 Millstone is about to go out and their tax base will col-
 lapse.
 Is more encouraged about business prospects now than has
 been in 20 years.

Waterford is in \$\$ trouble, Old Lyme and Stonington are shutting out business.

2 stacks against us: poor business climate and high tax dollars.

Privatize town services to reduce lost.

Solve trash problem.

Fragmented business promotion in town - no central business promotion.

Need a central information booth — how does it relate to highway access?

EDC Strategies

Goals — annual preparation of work program and budget.

1. Economic Development Awareness

Community-wide needs and priority.

Economic Development Public Information Page.

Business Development Consortium.

Business Roundtable — Bring local businesses together.

Appreciation Day — awards to local businesses.

2. Economic Development Preparation

Economic Development Coordinator — someone on staff.

Liaison with Economic Development allies.

Prospects tracking system and team.

Permit and approval process brochure.

Site inventory and analysis.

Town needs a manager: not someone who is a politician.

Where does all the financing for all the changes come from?

Downtown Merchant's Association — active.

Chamber of commerce — runs info. center.

Vision 2000 — Public Trust.

Clean up.

Unsophisticated approach to advertisement.

No one will know without advertisement.

Budget your business.

Local papers are needed.

Business closing in E. Lyme is not larger than anywhere else.

Raise consciousness

Difficult to get businesses going.

Difficult to get Town Hall going.

Planning - What are the steps?

Vision 2000

Put together information

Merchants group should be active.

Spruce up downtown and improve lighting : New England theme.

Coordinate a "look" so all businesses present a united effect— flowers, colors of facade.

Information Center for locals and tourists.

This is struggling for lack of financial support from business and the town.

I feel it can serve a very useful purpose and should be supported.

Support businesses in town

How do we all benefit? Taxpayer.

Government

Structure of town government is not conducive to timely and effective processing and issuing of permits for businesses.

The climate of Town Hall is negative.

The many hurdles and impediments are discouraging to would-be tenants.

The structure of town government is antiquated and inefficient.

We need a professional administrator to directly administer and be responsible for all depts and agencies.

Need townwide support.

Change of government.

Governmental process - "We know what is best for you"

- Hostile toward small business.

- Mindless enforcement of zoning.

- Signage - inflexible - can't have anything protrude out door, enforcement rigorous.

- Inconsistency in the way people get variances - unclear.

- Overzealous on one hand and favoritism on the other.

Attentive to other agencies in the system.

Non-rushed, non-legal procedure that encourages better decisions.

System that is based on pushing or fighting different projects.

East Lyme appreciation week should come back: shouldn't be a big rivalry.

Let's get rid of confrontational system.

Get people more included in town decisions.

Public works should not be broken down (as proposed).

Should care for all the roads and buildings of the school system (instead of applying the cost to a Board of Education budget).

Asphalt sidewalks; all the way to Society Road, from 95 all the way to town, like in Waterford.

Commissions in town have been very helpful and do a good job.

BUT — once you enter town hall to work with a town paid official, they are confrontational, town employees are NOT HELPFUL.

Except — tax collector, probate official, etc.

Community — overlay information and Planning and economic offices.
 Merge fire and police department.
 Change zoning offices — town manager form of government.
 Too much govt. on private enterprises.
 Now — in East Lyme — developing land costs 3 years and \$300,000.
 Much time and money wasted in legal costs and repetitious meetings.
 Town is going to be blind-sided when development pressure picks up — won't be able to cope with pressure.

Team East Lyme

Get facts on the table.
 "Wish list": public discussions about order of priorities.
 Leadership should step back and encourage dialogue and decision-making.
 Projects around town survey: every ten years.
 Problem with 10 year plan: often not reviewed in various committees after the plan is put together
 out of this plan: how to manage the plan.
 To accomplish capital improvements committee and plan: working list of improvements needed and ways.
 Catch basin with all the good ideas.
 Binder or a catalogue of things that need to be done in town: encourage communication.
 Look for methods for closer communication between town and state government.

Tax base is non-existent.
 Keep people (Families) out.
 Can't handle more kids in schools.
 Tax base is non-existent.
 Lots of grumbling about new people coming in.
 Real estate agents want there to be lots more residential but don't understand the expenses.
 Commercial establishments aren't fighting to get into empty storefront: what is town doing to support or fix this?
 Why didn't town hire a professional group of planners — are they too cheap?

The summer people who used to float town with their taxes and spending money are GONE.

Use our resources: our resources are our people.
 Money that the garden club makes goes back into town
 Town wouldn't cut grass around the visitor center.
 Merchants put on events.
 Town need to put more back to the people.
 Merchants and town people need to work hand in hand.

Why aren't there professionals working on town planning?
 Some people in town want change, others don't.
 Town should have a town manager and a more professional town leader.

Phased sewers- overpriced.
 Taxes higher.

East Lyme Public trust - not for profit.
 List of Gems of Town of East Lyme.

Continue consideration of privatization and/ or regionalization of schools, police, trash disposal, road maintenance, sewer and building maintenance.

Schools

Schools top quality and not overcrowded.
 Good education system.
 Attract families.
 Negative tax base.
 More classrooms need to be built.
 Improving the school system: overcrowding, especially with so many young families moving in.
 \$14 million expansion.
 Common space, classroom space: all are limited.
 Tutors working in hallways, closets are being used as offices and extra space; jeopardizes the quality of education.
 Supplies at school are limited.
 Could not fit parents in the Flanders School.
 Few teachers in East Lyme public schools actually live in East Lyme.
 3 highest-paid officials in East Lyme are school officials - Nonc live in East Lyme.

Need more space- affects school's reputation and jeopardizes school quality.

- cafeteria.
- auditorium.
- parking.
- music room.
- class rooms.
- health services.

Supplies — not enough books, students have to share.

Spend money on improving school system:

- need space
- keep schools alive to keep town growing.

Expand schools to accommodate growth rate of students.
 Middle schools and high schools use the same buses.
 Town bus system: bus route shared between both schools.

Education — NESDEC recommendations — expand high school.
 Salem kids come to high school —cooperation = state funding.
 Open up schools for longer hours.

Recreation

Reading hour, computer hookup: tie together with the high schoolers.
 Information center.
 Satellite Library.
 W.W. Web hook - up.
 Classes on computer use.
 T- grant vs. T-line - \$47,000 grant for lines to hook town to Net.
 Existing library can only be accessed by car.
 Near community center that area is — Under utilized.
 Library at high school — books are old.
 Computers v. books
 Reading times
 Merge public library with schools.
 Youth Center and Library Complex- Paint walls!

Town needs indoor pool or sports complex.
 I support community pool idea.
 Pools at school — programs for H.S., families, older people.
 Swimming pool for town.
 Allows for swimming year round (indoor).
 State will not pay for this in full.
 Olympic size.
 Swim teams, high school use community use.
 Lifeguarding.
 Existing pools are too crowded.
 Add a municipal pool (tie it with high school addition).
 Town pool (indoor and useable all year).
 Planetarium or pool? choice was for planetarium.
 Pool at the high school part of addition.
 Pool would be nice; other recreation for young people.
 Outdoor/indoor pool.
 No pool — cost too much - better use for funds.
 East Lyme needs a swimming pool!
 I would also like an Olympic size pool in an open space.
 Next to the pool there could be a game room.
 The game room itself would bring in a lot of money.
 The game room could be placed in the Morton House with the pool close by.
 Sports complex
 swim pool: float bonds, etc.
 Community Pool and recreation center.
 Would like to see this after living in other towns that had outdoor (summer use)pools and an indoor pool.
 Could be near high school (for sports team).
 But could be community oriented— for community use.
 Bowling alley? maybe a good place.
 Open up the schools and all the facilities.
 Skating rink.
 Recreation facility that includes a pool, physical fitness center, similar to YMCA (part of new high school) facility in Waterford is used all the time.
 Where will the kids hang out? in the right facility.
 Should have been money spent on substantive facilities in the community center rather than glitz.
 State will not pay for a swimming pool; this is a taxpayer burden (lower reimbursement).

Waterford pool is already over utilized with physical therapy, lifeguard training.

Additional recreation facilities managed by town:

- Ice skating area (winter).
- More basketball / indoor gym facilities.
- Bike trails developed and maintained.

A more active program schedule could arrange for use of existing areas.
 More youth programs - community center is inaccessible because there is no way for kids to get there on their own — too far to bike safely.
 Existing programs aren't advertised enough — mothers don't know about them.
 Programs aren't very appealing to kids.
 Programs should be at McCook's park in the summer so beach kids could take part.
 Most community center programs aren't well enough publicized.
 Fitness instructor wants quality maintained with seniors.
 Recreation sports for adults.

Feel bad for our kids: nothing to do in the summer especially.
 Youth center is a total waste.
 No basketball court there or a real place to play sports.
 Do not provide for teenagers in this town—we just chase them.
 Young people here are polite, but have to be treated better (older resident).
 Whole attitude toward disabled here has been positive.
 Opened a pool hall down the street where there's an Adam's Market.
 Provide something for young people today.

Base ball field needs work
 Golf course
 Playgrounds organized activities for children.
 Paddle boats and jet skis on ponds.
 Rafts allowed on beaches.
 Mini golf.
 Bike rentals.

Beach area from railroad bridge down.
 Crew and rowing more affordable.
 Basketball access, soccer.
 Volleyball association.
 Volleyball teams at school.
 Recreational league.
 Town needs a volleyball association.
 Youth center is used almost exclusively by middle school students.
 Town needs recreational sports leagues beyond baseball.
 Proposed golf course was a private venture - perhaps it could be developed as a municipal course?
 Recreation park for walker, joggers, bladders, bikers.
 An example of a tremendously successful rec. path (6 mi long) in Stowe VT.
 It is an attraction for locals and tourists.
 Merge park and recreation — youth and senior.
 Create trails — walking, biking.
 Athletic Facilities for off-season (fall to spring) we (i.e. gym/racquet ball, etc.) (tie in with schools?)
 Parks - Tennis Courts with gardens.
 Basketball area: Bride Brook is not enough

Lake Pataguanset: Boat launch: picnicking area would be great.
 Beach with walking to a convenience store on Boston Post Road.
 Hiking paths around lake, near the Girl Scout Camp.
 Should be rules on Lake Pataguanset: boat wakes and motors are ruining the environment (noise pollution, damage to shoreline).
 Small boats, fishing boats, canoes should be encouraged.
 Supposed to be no power boats whatsoever.

Bike paths around town away from street.
 Place the public can go to use equivalent of the running track at the high school.

Rather see development of McCook's.
 Development of skate park.
 McCook Park - Possible site for skate park
 Expand municipal (parks and recreation).

McCook's: truck with ice cream, but more concessions than are there.
 Umbrellas, rafts on beach, fudge samples (candy stores).
 Dances at the beach.
 No good park for kids McCook Park at the beach, very inadequate for kids.
 Not enough equipment.
 Need pool tennis courts, big facility for children at beach lots of land there, or anywhere there is enough land.
 Fix bathrooms (and have them open) at McCook's park.
 Improvements to the playground.

Learn to invite people into town; scouts for different events (children's events at beaches, canoe trips and outings, coordinate with the children's museum)
 Learn to start sharing and communicating with each other: PTA's, churches, etc.
 redundant
 Example: pig and chicken roast coordinated between scouts and historical society.
 Town may need to hire community organizer for events: fun, exciting, interesting, charming events (talks, seminars, etc.)
 Boardwalk on Gorton Pond.

Land near Black Hawk Docks: Would like to see as town land for park and recreational use.
 Making town more aware of open spaces available owned by Land Trust.
 100 acres of space for hiking, natural resource appreciation; trails and such.
 Rose Cliff area: large parcel.
 Laurel Hill area.
 Tanglewood area.
 Yale Outdoor Education Center.

Waterfront/Beaches

Waterfront— Develop for use by locals and tourists.
 Town beaches—better facilities for beach use (compare to clean water beaches).
 Nice sidewalks to drinking fountains.
 "Shower towers" for rinsing off.
 Dare we dream? nice changing houses and bath houses?
 Open up more beach to the public — particularly downtown
 Consider charging for parking.
 Add public facilities.
 Give them a beach pass for a few hours — problem to get access even for residents.
 Children's museum should be able to give out beach passes.
 Resident lives on Main street and is constantly being asked by people how to get to beach — has to tell them they CAN'T get to beach because town beaches are private or restricted to residents.

Niantic Beach, stones in front of Morton House.
 Access beach should be there.
 Three available access points.
 Picnic facilities.
 Walking on rocks and shells.
 Keeping up the beach sand.
 Great swimming for the kids.
 Beaches: should be maintained.
 Way to piddle around in bay.
 Resident all my life: beaches from Hole in the Wall on are not utilized.
 Public access to waterfront should be a constant goal.
 Town beaches should be kept private for residents.
 Does town want to bring people in— but what to do with them?
 Hole in the wall as a means to draw people into town.
 Cheap beach for out-of-towners: under the bridge needs to be publicized.
 Build groins off Niantic Beach to bring in sand and connect Hole in the Wall Beach with the Niantic Beach (or Railroad Beach).
 Allow access to the beach through Niantic Businesses' distribution of tokens.

Water sports activity off the beach with limited vending on the beach— sailboat rentals, etc.
 Promotion— beach access from hotels.
 Clean up area.
 Not a lot of public beaches.
 Passes req'd or private.
 AMTRAK beach is undeveloped land.
 Remove fence along RR track.
 Improve beach and beach access.
 Doesn't take advantage of the beach.
 Bridge higher— allows access to beach.

Protect marine zone in Niantic at all costs - increases tax base.
 Scallops in river are gone — jobs lost with them— what happened with seeded scallops?
 Environmental concerns: beach erosion a concern.

Bailey Parcel

- Positive
- Should be for fishing
- Commercial docks pay for property taxes
- Should be far enough away from boardwalk to avoid smells, etc.

Smith Cove - old fishing/ clamming.
 Closed for twenty years.
 Packet of letters about dredging Cove.
 Sidewalks by Smith Cove - Street lights.

Crew: Old Lyme rowing association.
 Adult rowing league in summertime.
 Head of the Charles and Head of Connecticut; why not here? open on weekend
 Talk of competition, but hasn't happened yet.
 Those who live at shore: should utilize the river.
 Make greater use of our river, which is particularly scenic.
 Boating: short rides up and down our river
 Kcency Cove, Smith Cove.

Boardwalk

Boardwalk: largest in the state
 Use waterfront more not just for businesses.
 Stone Harbor in New Jersey: walking distance from town.
 Boardwalk: like the one that's already been built: board that explains it.
 Beach needs to be developed before the boardwalk is built; will be trouble with kids at night.
 Time constraints for when the boardwalk gets used.
 Must be careful not to obstruct views of water with boardwalks.
 New boardwalk should be commercialized.
 Provide something other towns can't.
 Stores on it: similar to Newport
 Just a walking area.
 Plan in '70's was voted down.
 Breakwater out in front; hotel and marina out in front.
 Boardwalk will not do much for the town; only two entrances.
 \$40,000 per year for upkeep of boardwalk after it's done.
 Federal money—open to public.
 Boardwalk would be good place if it has stores and such.

Raising the bridges for the purposes of Amtrak; won't be able to see the water if the bridge is raised
 Main concern: waterfront maintained in spite of 4 feet higher bed through the town.
 Wooden boardwalk? should be done in concrete, make them stronger and more stable.
 Bike paths, roller blade paths, joggers: everyone uses them in other areas of the country.
 Wood is slippery; can't ride bike across it when it's wet.
 Wood will be destroyed by storms.
 Water park theme park in this area; family entertainment; hotels, restaurants would follow; something more than a boardwalk to draw people; seaport and aquarium in Mystic are draws; beaches are private.
 Boardwalk — center point of community.
 Community of great walkers.
 Beach with water access — not exploited.
 Tourist magnet.
 Boardwalk — good idea.
 Main St. with boardwalk as focal point — critical, natural access.

Public spaces in relation to the boardwalk.
 Town needs a gateway at the Mobil station at 156/161 intersection to increase views.
 Boardwalk — loop
 Old idea to add commercial w/ public access - top priority.
 Fence choice along boardwalk - 8' high.

DEP Art Rock

- 1.2 m public access.
- Build on rocks- crushed stones- environment safe.
- beach preserved.
- benches, rest area.
- emergency access.
- modify boardwalk proposal.

Only run from hole-in wall to where the sand beach.
 Boardwalk would spoil effect of walking on the sand beach.
 Maintenance costs of full boardwalk are underestimated.
 Consider rock walkway instead of boardwalk.
 Proposed boardwalk is too narrow for bikes.
 Should be racks at each end of boardwalk to park bikes — keep bikes off walkway.
 Concern about attracting people from New London — people who don't spend \$.
 Some support, some concern.
 Taxpayer concern about supporting park that others use.
 Boardwalks can obstruct view from cars.
 Need police patrols of the new boardwalk.
 Boardwalk or a beach? must be a choice.

Community Center

East Lyme community center: voting machines and storage there in the center (shouldn't be stored in schools).
 Meal site: more people should use the facility; better publication of what's available.
 Do not have needs that made a demand for the community center.
 Offer high school classes there; kitchen is currently inadequate for extensive use; beautiful space but is not adequate.
 Library is difficult, and not convenient.
 Rooms like community rooms.
 Better utility of space.
 Community center: wasted use of space.
 Books are there, but they're not put on shelves.
 People who work there do not like it there.
 Community center: must be staff to clean up.
 Community Center: a waste of money
 Not used, architecture is bad, not easy to get to.
 Library should be downtown.
 Place accessible for readers downtown.
 Put a questionnaire in Day or do a direct mail to find out what community is interested in.
 Community center was supposed to compliment the Smith Harris house; it doesn't.
 "It's functional," but that's all the good one can say.
 Now the Smith Harris house is covered up by community center.
 Road in: more attractive sign, welcoming way to come in.
 Olde Mystic Village: complements the existing Mystic center
 Design did not provide what it promised.
 Monstrosity does not match the needs of the town.
 Ways to change design to make it better.
 Landscaping?
 Wasted space; stark looking.
 Community Center— put in a larger dishwasher so large meals can be served.
 Have use of the facilities be cost free for town's people organization and groups 7 days a week.
 Something for seniors; literacy program.
 Community Center: Taj Mahal.
 Other towns have programs for seniors, families, children, co-ed activity for adults.
 High schoolers need something to do after school.

Mystic Community center should be a model:

- variety of sports and cultural programs.
- serves as a meeting place for all sorts of groups and meetings.
- place for adult education and training (First Aid, computers, etc.)

Black Point

Black Point — 2nd home to some.
 Western border of Black Point — along Old Black Point Road is Pataguansett marshes—bird watching, etc.
 Marshwalk —would like walk and bike path along Main Road for everyone to exercise.
 Black Point — along marsh—Dangerous road but popular place to walk.
 Black Point attractive to people from Hartford, etc.
 Old Black Point Road now 2 lanes - also recreational uses - dangerous.
 Proposed boat launch by Point.
 Point used by "outsiders".

Transportation/accessibility

It would be much nicer to walk to community center
 Sidewalk from Flanders to Niantic.
 Good for two villages and for safety.
 West Main Street to 156: taking a walk is dangerous.
 Tourists can't access town - no sidewalk- not available.
 Who uses existing walkway- everyone.
 Combined use- 2 separate bike/ walkway - widened for both is needed.
 Need access.
 Connect people with each other- more interaction - public spaces- sidewalk would connect people without cars.
 A sidewalk along 161 should be FIRST priority.
 Portions of 161 have sidewalk, but not all.
 Rights of way — access for walking.
 Dangerous for pedestrians — all over 156, 161, Black Point Road.
 Establish a footpath (strictly for walking) from Rocky Neck to north end of town.
 Would traverse public land.
 Rocky Neck, state farm, smith ledges, plants dam, state forest.
 Not enough sidewalks.
 Would be nice if kids could walk to school.
 Can't walk to community center
 There should be sidewalks to the downtown area.
 Town roads, infrastructures inadequate senior citizens complex there, too: needs to be safer.
 Connection between youth and senior citizens
 Connect for bike routes: get to library.
 School Buses on 161 - they slow traffic down and block up traffic.
 If kids could walk to school there might be fewer busses -
BUILD SIDEWALKS
 Can't even walk to community center because there are no sidewalks.
 Center of town would be pedestrian friendly.

 Reconnect to the waterfront.
 Reason to stay here in town while you're here.
 Make it difficult for cars in the center of town
 Sewers—thought it would be impetus for sidewalks.
 Understand that there is need for safe paths for walking and biking; swept of sand and debris.

Sidewalks: in Pine Grove, there is none
 Smith Street: much pedestrian traffic and needs to be good for kids.
 Lake Gate Farm to Hathaway gardens: no way to get around. Need sidewalks (especially at corners).

Route 11 extended from Salem to Waterford.
 Route 85 is dangerous, two lanes.
 Proposal to continue 11 has been going on for years

Create a utility bikeway from Flanders to Niantic along 161
 Not a walkway — would exist in a widened road shoulder.
 In-Road bike lanes are inherently unsafe.
 Could access high school, library, middle school.
 Bike route from Flanders to Niantic.
 There are LOTS of bicycle riders in this town — people DRIVE here with bikes, park, and bike around.
 Bike routes through town.
 Bike path from Niantic to Rocky Neck
 Bridebrook athletic fields is VERY Busy, but there is no safe way to bike there.
 Bridebrook is near Rocky Neck, which is also inaccessible from Niantic by bike.
 Designate some cycle routes - off the beaten path Bike path - trails - 8'to10' wide.
 Riding on bikes around Patt. Lake.
 Patt. Lake needs to be more accessible.

Chapman Farms area too constrained - too steep for stonewall side.
 Nobody listens to painted lines.
 Pataguanset Lake no public access from the road.

Trolley should be here, and year round.
 Town wouldn't support info center, trolley.
 Info. center: needs repair.
 Transportation provided by town for kids to get from north to beach, even only in summer.
 Trolley route from Rocky Neck to town to campground and back
 Trolley as a tourist type of thing
 Trolley from one end of town to the other.

Flanders to the waterfront: see what's here (for tourism).
 Improve public transportation for elderly and disabled;
 town subsidized cabs in other towns.
 Trolley in spring, summer and fall.
 Good for residents and tourists.
 Trolley - from Flanders to Niantic to Rocky Neck tried one summer.
 Worked well but to expensive.
 Unreliable.
 4 to 6 yrs ago for 2 mos.
 Circular route through downtown Niantic.
 trolley system around town? not unless there's more to draw someone downtown.
 Flanders summer bus service for the kids: from Flanders to the Hole in the Wall, McCook's.
 Trolley cars in Plymouth MA were nice - should have them here to move people around.

Public transportation
 SEAT bus help out transportation around town.
 SEAT bring in a miniature bus from Flanders to Niantic?
 Is this like an elderly bus? Can one bus serve both?
 Buses for elderly have different needs than regularly scheduled busses?
 Is there really a demand? Can demand in hotels at exit 74 be tapped by buses?
 Make it easier to ride public transportation.
 SEAT buses: state-run business.

Wants a monorail to run from Flanders to Niantic to move people from one end of town to the other along river.
 Light rail transportation to Groton, New London.
 Transportation: information center and wanted to get downtown.
 Something should be supported by town.
 Van from hotels.
 No good public transportation to Groton, New London.
 Bus system occurs for seniors: goes to Coast Guard concerts, Crystal Mall, etc.
 Widening of major roads to allow walkers and riders is critical.

The continued governance and management of our available waterfront should continue as well as the ability to connect most downtown and Flanders via sidewalks, etc. for bike, wheelchairs, etc.
 Shoreline East needs to be reinstated - real need for train stop.
 Very important - takes stress off highway.
 Bus rides are much longer.
 All traffic @ festivals one way to prevent problems.
 Boardwalk at Wildwood bikes at certain times.
 Connect to Waterford in effort.

Railroad

Residents that would like to see Amtrak stop here; revise train stops.
 Shore Line East should have a stop.
 Train station for Shoreline East here.
 Reason to have a stop here.
 Don't want it to go in front of the Morton House.
 R.R. cutting off ocean.
 Maybe possibility of regaining AMTRAK owned land.
 New Amtrak bridge might make possible a new tunnel to Amtrak beach.
 Underpass at Morton House.
 Underpass covered up years ago.
 Existing underpass will be part of plans for boardwalk.
 Concerned w/ R.R bridge and access given electric trains.
 Don't want a wall or fence as a result of electrifying train.
 Move the railroad to I-95
 Would have to be an act of God!
 At railway abandoned trucks — owned by AMTRAK
 The bridge area would be lonely, however the booyard there is ugly as is the fence along the tracks and the overgrown vegetation on the fence.
 Railroad right in front of it (wires, stations, etc.) will detract from the area.
 Limit the access across the tracks
 Halfway between Boston and New York—would be a good market to tap into.
 Shared parking — downtown.
 Area behind shops on Amtrak side have available space.

Traffic

From Flanders to at least Midway Plaza Mall Route 161 could not be widened.

Left turns are a real problem and I'm sure a cause of a few traffic accidents.

A middle turn lane would be helpful.

School buses on 161 slow down traffic.

Traffic problem w/ 161 corridor.

St. Mathias Church - building new out 161 N.

Corner of 161 and Rocky Neck extension needs marking to prevent or allow 2 lane left turns onto the 2-lane 161. I have seen several near collisions due to lack of specific marking.

Rt 161 is fast approaching Groton's "magic mile".

Concern about Roxbury Road intersection.

Exit 72 - no signs for Niantic — no signs at Rocky Neck to direct traffic to Niantic.

Traffic control

Lake Avenue, Main Street

Walk light and walkway - one crosswalk

Double light - pataguanset Creek

Going north - left on Roxbury Rd

No left lane - need left turn lane

At northern - left turns need a place to wait

Cars going straight go on grass

Other

ATM's

- Safety
- Continuity
- One in Flanders looks like a coffin.

ATM machines: Are they signs? Are they storefronts?

How are they designed?

They should be safe and secure, but appealing - not big and ugly like in Flanders.

Acquifer

- @ intersection of I-95 and 161 and between south of Society Rd. and 161.
- Red tape for developers because of protection concerns.
- Have to prove no impact— extensive studies.

Concerned about Millstone.

Do not have an evacuation plan for the town, which doesn't exist.

What are we going to do with garbage?

Environmental point of view: eel grass died because of sanitation devices (high nutrients).

Money and attention should go into environmental care: sewage treatment that can't overflow, better drainage, etc.

pavilion that Lion's Club built: no screen, so insects a problem in the summer.

Camp Rollin:

- Beautiful land and good fields.
- Good neighbors.
- Maybe open use for public.
- Open house at Camp Roland (arsenals for kids).

Two houses that could be an historic district:

Smith Harris: good asset for the town; open up to make it more visible; easy access from the community center.

Problem: Junior High is right near; vandalism is prevalent. Cigarette butts and such are common.

Most don't know: Smith Harris House is town museum

one sees advertising, promotion; needs to be promoted. Figure out long range plans to meet needs for the future. In plan, should consider "opening up" access to the house. Fences, defined as a yard; welcome into the lane. Town should fund Smith Harris house.

Procure the Dr. Utley House from the state and refurbish it to become a part of a historical House.

Trail or the years 1660-1845 in combination with the Thomas Lee House and Smith Harris House.

The East Lyme Historical Society could become involved with administering the Dr. Utley House as it does the Thomas Lee House.

Niantic

Character

Niantic—Tourist village, waterfront.

Niantic—Older residents.

Public spaces—boardwalk.

Gateway to town.

Expand upon town green.

Increase size and space of green.

Expand the town green.

Take gas station at end of Pennsylvania Avenue and replace it with park — extension of green.

Town green successful: attracts concerts, but many senior citizens, etc.

Niantic Town Center could be more “unified” visually.

Whole area is one of our greatest resources: the ocean.

Work something out which takes advantage of entire resource.

Visually see the ocean, appreciate it.

Upgrade the appearance of Downtown Niantic.

Niantic center is currently run down.

Town should be better organized to serve tourists.

Tourist —would like to see it encouraged for Niantic’s beautiful attractions.

People would want to visit and enjoy the atmosphere.

Biggest assets in village:

- Theater
- 2 restaurants - Beerks (music), Constantine’s
- Children’s Museum

Streetscape

Mixing residential and commercial in the downtown area breaks up uniformity of presentation.

Don’t necessarily want it all to look alike but can’t “control” street presentation.

Establish guidelines for setbacks — keep parking lots to building sides.

Put wide sidewalks with trees and benches between streets and commercial buildings.

Rather than keep people out, make downtown better to support more people.

Trees and lampposts on Main Street; make it more inviting.

Improve Main Street streetscape - uniformity of facades.

Underground utilities with nice street lighting and organized plantings.

Even some nice flowering tree.

Bury power lines on main street to enhance beauty of main street.

Get rid of the sheets covering the windows at the Beffe Bldg.

Make more of details.

Hope Street could be much more fully developed, West Main could be filled in.

Whole area behind main street (Niantic Lumber, etc.) should be redone for nice parking.

Chesterfield Road — many buildings need something to give it some “town” atmosphere.

Flowering trees which were taken down to widen the road should be replaced.

All the small garden areas in the streets (E. Pataguanset and Penn Ave) need to be changed so that traffic cannot ruin plantings—trucks travel right over it.

Streetscape improvement will draw businesses to downtown.

Town SHOULD use opportunities to draw people—cater more to tourists.

Can’t have a whole town of matching buildings—each store and bldg. should have its own personality.

Each building should put its own face forward.

Let each store be itself.

Pockets of attractiveness, but some is ugly.

Physical aspects of town have deteriorated.

Unattractive stores.

Only pockets of charm, pockets of good architecture and design.

Make downtown more like Mystic: nice curbing, sidewalks—not much there now to see or do.

When family comes, we go to Mystic.

East Lyme should NOT become Mystic — it should be its own small town.

Wants town to have a theme - maritime? A Mystic type of theme? A more attractive downtown would help? Or decide it is a sleepy little town that wants only residential and just pay more taxes for more schools and shut up.

Like the small town atmosphere; don’t turn it into an Essex or a Mystic.

I don’t want to lose the scruffy atmosphere.

Pallor: something “wrong” with the town.

Tacky town is somehow lovely: I liked the tackiness in this small town.

Make area desirable.

Don’t want to become a town like Mystic.

Not enough buildings in downtown to have the draw of Mystic.

Likes the little town atmosphere.

Get downtown to be cute and desirable.

Main street needs a lot of work.

Aesthetic value of town is necessary to build businesses — stop ugly buildings.

Ugliness of buildings in town is a problem.

Would like similarity among storefronts.

Store owners don’t have to foot the entire bill.

Community can help.

Suggestions

- Wash store windows.
- Sweep sidewalks.
- Pick up trash off premises.
- Benches on Main St.
- Plant flowers and shrubs.
- Window boxes.
- Paint.
- Shutters.
- Attractive signs for stores.
- Flags for products tourist center.
- Farmer’s market

Signage

Heights established and maintained.
 Neon open sign NOT allowed.
 If business puts one up and didn't ask, they can get away with it.
 Overcome sign problem.
 Same signs every 10 feet.
 Sign Ordinance.
 Control garishness of signs.
 Small signs won't be popular among business owners unless all signs are small and uniform.
 Figure out how to overcome the sign problem.
 Green metal poles that say the same thing; big effort.
 Sign Craft is a local signmaker.

Children's Museum

People come into town to see museum, but they currently have no where else to go!
 Other museums in the town to broaden the draw of the children's museum.
 The museum must be kept in town.
 Draws people.
 Needs parking.
 Children's Museum— build on youth related businesses and attraction near present site.
 Children's Museum relocate to a more spacious plot of land in the town for local and tourist convenience.
 Children's Center: should be a museum without walls.

Needs:
 Room - parties - live shows.
 Parking - 150, 000 people per year.
 Better buildings.
 One floor.
 15, 000 S.F.
 9 exhibition, rest rooms, storage.
 Room to grow.
 Outdoor space.
 Wide open space.
 Make spending of \$ make sense to donors.
 Access to beach.

Morton House

What is town letting happen to the Morton House?
 Morton House: beautiful building that needs to be refurbished.
 Destinations: restoration of Morton House.
 Hall associated with the Morton House: good place for weddings.
 Help the Morton House, create and follow a theme, beautify, etc.
 Morton House development— overwalk to the boardwalk?
 How can the Morton house be developed? No Casinos! A family resort.
 Morton House needs to be saved and be better used.
 Restaurant, microbrewery, banquet hall.
 Tax incentives or loans (maybe state loans) to encourage development.
 Morton House— do something!
 Sign on the Morton House to explain its history.
 Morton House may have to come down.
 Maintenance alone would be astronomical.
 Woman who owned it managed to afford her mortgage at first, but now it is horrible disrepair.
 Parking lot at Morton House? Downtown needs places to park.
 Morton Home—problem zoning, need more parking.

Morton House:
 • Can't be restored.
 • No parking.
 • Indians should take it.
 • Zoning change.
 • TEAR DOWN.

Economic Development

Economic Development and tourism—tax advantages for new and expanded:
 • Magnet for downtown— i.e. boardwalk.
 • Magnet—Children's Museum: safety issue—move outside of downtown.
 • Niantic Development zone?

Shopping in Westerly and Newport.
 Specialty shops and restaurants in Rhode Island.
 Stores open to 10:00 PM in the summer, 8:00 during the rest of the year.
 Need commercial organizations to stay open later and COORDINATE their hours.
 Encourage new businesses.
 Good fish here, should take advantage.
 Develop fishing area: where town has advantage.
 Each store should have its own personality.
 Like town the way it is.
 Stores keep New England type town.
 Bring in upscale shopping.
 Some people stopped shopping here - food store not high quality.
 Need book store, etc.
 Clothing shops have not worked.
 Extend tourism season to Christmas.
 Expand tax base by filling in retail.
 Bookstore is a godsend.
 Too many little stores.
 No fabric store here; nothing here sold for practical uses.
 Don't want to see the businesses go.
 Mystic and Essex are wonderful towns.
 Businesses that are here should cater more to the public.
 Stay open later, especially during holidays.
 Shops that are here don't cater to this area.
 Variety store.
 Lower rent in downtown apartments, businesses.
 Information center: purchased by someone from Waterford.
 Residents want to be able to buy things in main street; mall is just a hodge podge where people don't want to go anymore.
 People who live here WANT to shop here.

People want shops open later but there is a security problem.

People want to WALK around town, shop casually and enjoy the town center (esp. retired people).

No real spot in town where people can get out to water and walk around shops.

Parking hard for events.

No community parking

All consumers/store owned parking.

Free to taxpayers/public.

Parking at Children's Museum.

Parking behind movie theater not used much at all.

Maintain what we could have, with vision.

Hold hands with the businesses.

Niantic doesn't cater to tourists

Newport or Mystic draws tourists

How do they do this?

More stores where specialties are emphasized—like Old Lyme.

Make more of Children's Museum clientele:

- Antique toys
- Ice cream
- Auxiliary parking which would draw people to other businesses.
- Signage advertising free parking

Antiques business could help bring people to our area.

East Lyme becomes a major antique center - business will spread to other merchants.

One key dealer is needed, and that will draw others.

Could this be a theme for Niantic?

Encourage businesses other than hair dressers and pizza places.

Pizzerias a problem—more people would bring a greater diversity of businesses

Pizza and Chinese: more variety in town.

Upscale restaurant in center of town.

Get rid of 1500 foot liquor license

Get more people into town.

Restaurants could move in.

Zoning—liquor license.

More is better.

Lots of restaurants is good business.

High class meals in town; only one in town is

Constantine's.

More restaurants: Constantine's is only standout.

Restaurants with tables and umbrellas over the water.

Mystic has good restaurants.

Cafe type dining.

No more pizza, Chinese.

Bring in Pizzeria Uno, TGIF, Bertucci's.

Restaurant in the Morton House; view of water and good to market.

Are there ordinances against doing things outside? cafes?

Competition is only among coffee shops and pizza places.

Family Pizza was a bank.

Like to see town grow with more businesses; no more

pizza and Chinese food.

Too many pizzerias in town - limit permits.

Downtown main St., area underdeveloped needs good restaurants, better stores, children's clothing boutiques, stationary, jewelry.

Second-hand shop: waste of an area.

Prime real estate, privately owned would bring in thousands of dollars in taxes used for something different.

Beachfront view property; public entertainment, restaurant (respecting the residential character), those using it now may be expanded to use of others.

Main Street: fill it with more businesses; incentives for more businesses; lower rents.

For each dollar invested in the Main Street program, generates \$11.

Events:

- Concert on Green on Thurs. night.
- Light Parade
- Halloween Parade

Theater and water - not exploited for E. Lyme

Niantic — Businesses that attract browsers.

"Browsing" attractions for yearlong and summer residents (i.e. Boardwalks, Children's Museum, Concerts on Green).

Businesses shouldn't "turn their backs" to the waterfront.

Emphasize marine businesses - boat rentals, etc.

Scallop industry may return.

Marina in the Bay would attract more businesses and

focus town more on water

Large sandbar offers some protection

Fishing and marine businesses.

Small fish that sold fish and rented boats.

Area around movie theater:

Parking problems.

Nicer for pedestrians—used as a cutthrough.

Major property owners—12 or so in Niantic.

Lots of renters.

Upkeep difficult.

Need incentives.

Realities are that Flanders will be a commerce center and

Niantic will always have a secondary role in commerce.

Flanders

Character

Flanders—Baby Boomers.

Flanders is a bedroom community.

Parents work for Millstone and other large industries in area.

Nice place to raise a family.

Lots of young families in area.

Streetscape

Side walks.

Better protection for pedestrian

No way for Flanders and walkers/bike riders.

Route 161 North of Flanders Four Corners needs to be widened for pedestrians and bikes.

Very little room.

Dangerous for bikes and joggers.

Trolley connection or walking.

Quality of life has been lost.

Transportation for kids: trolleys to town.

161 is a terrible road: biking to town is too dangerous.

Has to be widened north of Flanders 4 corners.

Widened for a bike route.

Four Corner area crosswalks/sidewalks can't do it with stroller.

Sign for Flanders, community notices.

Suggestion: Flanders Center Historic District with the four houses that are in a row.

Form a historic district in these pre-1850's buildings

Beautiful flowering crab trees lined the perimeter of the Ford dealership on Flanders Road and Boston Post Road. Trees were removed when road widened and was never replaced. Ford dealership says it is the town's responsibility. We never wanted the road widened in the first place. But we definitely need trees on the Four Corners — flowering and long lasting varieties like Copper Beech — not the cheap and quick growing variety. Only McDonald's has a tree.

So stark and bare — not welcoming.

Do not destroy lovely churches on Boston Post Road.

Economic Development

Need a 5 and 10 down in Flanders.

Barbell — Flanders — architects, doctors, planners, etc.

Flanders Road corridor is main developable business corridor.

Big sites available to be developed are all in Flanders.

By exit 74 - prime site for big hotels etc.

No place to draw in large conventions and tourists.

No nearby town has big convention center.

Exit 74 - Mohegans want to help develop a pkg lot w/shuttle bus there—good for them but bad for land, not to good for East Lyme.

Money available for magnet schools, charter schools, etc.

Exit 74 had an information center.

Get light industrial in to boost commercial tax base

Offices, high technology ventures, transportation industries - non-polluting.

Light manufacturing would be an asset to town.

East Lyme ought to seek out private schools — TCI business schools, charter schools, etc.

Make Exit 74 a campus of schools — an “educational park” of private for-profit schools.

Put in upscale daycare.

Schools at Exit 74 would be at a logical transportation hub, would be non-polluting.

Main Street Niantic could also attract private schools of all sorts.

Each big charter/private school would bring in 200+ jobs, plus tax revenue.

Development in Flanders should be encouraged among Flanders residents, not out-of-town big-money developers who are currently making all of the money.

Flanders 4 Corners

- Retail small scale.
- Need businesses to broaden tax base.
- Sidewalk helps.
- Design zoning to foster village identity.
- Trees outline Four Corners—Maples.
- Islands with trees in parking lots—Maples.

Also, Flanders Fish is great.

Need lovely restaurants for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Moosehopper not successful in location of strip mall.

No more fast food places—Yuck!

Zoning

Zoning—keep out strip malls.
No billboards or huge commercial signs.

1-2 acre zoning — need to provide more modest homes (state requirement).

Go to three or even six acre zoning — keeps development low to prevent school kids from coming in.

5-6 acre zoning even further removes development opportunity from local citizens because they can't afford the costs to develop.

Limit sewer development in residential.

Don't want to encourage more residential development.

Chapman Farms — 65 condos

Tax w/out kid liability.

But owners moved from bigger houses in town, opening them up to families with kids.

Golf Course owner pays \$36,000 in taxes - if he goes under, only way to make money is to sell off land for residential.

Elderly housing development is one alternative to getting development \$ w/out kids.

Continuation of '87 Senior Citizens Housing.

Senior citizens are perfect residents.

Elderly Housing is BAD — person lived in Meriden for a long time.

Experience in elderly housing was bad — ran out of control w/violence.

Undeveloped Land in East Lyme.

Elderly Housing should be encouraged.

Get rid of special use permits.

Bring in sewer and water to Flanders to allow high-density elderly housing.

Should be a fast-track for elderly housing developments to get around red tape.

Promote safety and conservation of stream wetlands behind Citizen's Bank and Flanders Plaza.



East Lyme residents viewing the results of the charrette weekend.



Discussion Table.



Many residents attended forums over the weekend.

Thank You

- The success of any community project depends on the participation of the citizens. We thank all the residents of East Lyme who turned out to share their input in the future of East Lyme.
- We also would like to acknowledge the following people whose time and effort made the charrette and this report possible.

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Smith Insurance

In Respectful Remembrance of

David L.. Cini, First Selectman (1936-1997)

*His vision for improving the quality of life in
East Lyme helped make this effort possible.*

Yale Urban Design Workshop

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