

# THREE VILLAGES & A FARM BELCHERTOWN BEYOND

Design & Resiliency Team: American Institute of Architects and  
The New England Municipal Sustainability Network



# DESIGN AND RESILIENCY TEAM

A public service program of the American Institute of Architects and the  
New England Municipal Sustainability Network

**Sponsors:**

New England Municipal Sustainability Network (NEMSN) and American Institute of Architects (AIA)

**Funders:**

Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) and American Institute of Architects

**Cosponsor:**

Boston Society of Architects (BSA): providing exposure and volunteer architects for each team

Cities of Northampton MA (lead), Boston, and Burlington VT: grant applicants and sponsors for USDN funding.

**Purpose:** Help develop a strategic vision and framework with a focus on any social, environmental and economic issue to make a resilient, stable and healthy community.

**Eligibility:** Any community in New England and New York's Capital Region.

**What is it:** Five-person multidisciplinary teams of experts (e.g., from sustainability, climate change, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, economic development, finance, artists, and other fields, depending on local needs). Team members are from both the public and the private sector in New England and beyond. Each team is custom-built to serve local needs and opportunities.

**Process:** Afternoon concurrent stakeholder focus groups, an evening town-hall style public workshop, team intense charrette work time and tours, and a final evening community presentation on the team's findings and recommendations.

**Cost:** There is no cost to communities to participate. Communities must, however, demonstrate the capacity and commitment to convene diverse community leaders and stakeholders for an intensive, collaborative resiliency planning process. Communities also need to provide appropriate venues for two evening public workshops, afternoon concurrent stakeholder meetings and DART working space with access to a copier, internet access and, if possible, a scanner.

**Eligible:** Any project with a resiliency component or that can benefit from thinking about resiliency is eligible. The focus of each DART will vary depending on community needs and opportunities. Regardless of the issue, a DART will work with community decision-makers and stakeholders during an intensive three day planning process that can be comparable to a planning study that would otherwise cost tens of thousands of dollars.

**Questions:** Feel free to contact Wayne Feiden, FAICP, with questions at [WFeiden@NorthamptonMA.gov](mailto:WFeiden@NorthamptonMA.gov).

**Precedent-** AIA Design Assessment Teams: DARTs build on AIA's five decades of experience fielding over 220 Design Assessment Teams, focusing on a range of challenges. These programs create design, resiliency and sustainability opportunities. They build on **three pillars:**

- 1) multidisciplinary team approach,
- 2) objectivity of the team members, and
- 3) broad, inclusive public participation and support.

AIA DAT Projects in New England have included: Northampton (two teams, 2005 and 2015), Pittsfield, Portland, South Hadley, Woodbury, and others.

**Presentation and Report Viewable at:** [designresiliency.org](http://designresiliency.org) & [www.aia.org/liv\\_sdat](http://www.aia.org/liv_sdat)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Three Villages and a Farm

Belchertown has a unique context in terms of history, culture, and physical characteristics. The community has seen its population rise at substantial rates over the past thirty years. What began as a farming community in rural western Massachusetts has since shifted to a suburban community, in large part due to the expansion of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. When thinking spatially about the layout of the town there are some clearly differentiated yet interconnected nodes making up much of Belchertown's communal grounds. There is the Town Center, the Four Corners Area, the State School, Lampson Brook Farm, NESFI, and Foley Field. The majority of remaining land is residential.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## Community input during the DART Process

"Belchertown has lots of amenities, but they are spread out."

"[We] grew without a lot of forethought."

"We need a hub."

"...Development IF its good development."

"we tend to plan piecemeal"

# Belchertown Beyond: A Vision for a Lasting Community

Public Workshops on February 22 & 24

## MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

Join us for 2 community meetings to help plan Belchertown's future — with a special focus on how to develop and maintain the area from the Town Common to the Courthouse. We've also invited a group of national experts in architecture, design, and town planning who will help guide our discussion.

How can we make Belchertown better? And how can we preserve what we love about it?

### Monday, February 22

**Community Meeting: Share Your Ideas**  
5pm to 7pm  
Belchertown High School Cafeteria  
142 Springfield Rd  
Dinner and Childcare Provided  
Belchertown Town Meeting will follow at 7pm

### Wednesday, February 24

**Community Meeting: Discuss What We've Learned**  
7pm to 9pm  
Belchertown High School Cafeteria  
142 Springfield Rd  
Childcare Provided

For more information contact Doug Albertson, Town Planner, 413-323-0407 ext. 320, dalbertson@belchertown.org



Comments, sized based on community emphasis, collected from the DART public forums

## What We Heard

During the DART community meetings citizens shared their concerns and hopes. Most participants expressed concern about random growth, but pushed for responsible, resilient development that creates a sense of place and benefits those living in the town. Generally, citizens are enthusiastic about development, but only if it is done right and guided by some kind of clear vision.

# PLANNING

There are already a number of plans, studies, and initiatives which have assessed the current state of the town, proposed and incentivized responsible development, and supplied data for future development. Planning can help to anticipate changes and work to create healthy ways of moving forward. Combining existing information with the information contained in this report, Belchertown will have a good basis for considering the impacts of future development and ensuring the most practical conclusions are being drawn when looking for next steps.

## Site Development Feasibility Assessment Belchertown State School Priority Development Site Belchertown, Massachusetts

Prepared for  
**Town of Belchertown**

## Belchertown State School Tree Inventory



Prepared by



78 Interstate Drive  
West Springfield, MA 01089

In Association with  
**Massachusetts Development  
Finance Agency**  
Boston, Massachusetts

20071650.A20



## Belchertown Regulatory Assessment for Healthy Community Design

Prepared by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 2015  
With funding support from the  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health



## Belchertown Housing Needs Assessment & Action Plan

### Available Property

### Belchertown State School Redevelopment

State Street, Belchertown, MA



### Route 202 Traffic Study



Final Report

February 2008

Prepared for:  
Town of Belchertown  
Under the Direction of the Pioneer Valley MPO

Prepared by:  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
26 Central Street  
West Springfield, MA 01089

Prepared in cooperation with the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, the Massachusetts  
Highways Department and the U.S. Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration and the  
Federal Transit Administration



# CULTURAL STORY

When it comes to culture, the most important thing to remember is that Belchertown has a story to tell. The story of agricultural history and the State School is a story worth telling. Whether or not a community's history is something to be exceptionally memorable of, it is still responsible for making the community what it is today and that in itself is worth celebrating. This can be done in a number of ways but the most important thing is to create a dialogue that speaks to what Belchertown was and what it is today.





# CONNECTIVITY

With the different nodes of Belchertown sitting in a state of discontinuity the question becomes; how do we connect and what do we connect? Connection can occur on a physical level as in a roadway, bike path, or pedestrian corridor but, it can also occur on a temporal level. Through things like visual cues in the form of signage, plantings, or way finding, connections can become more apparent. Identifying these connections as well as identifying the tools that will be used to create them is the first step in unifying Belchertown as a community. As many residents of Belchertown commute to work outside of the town and therefore do much of their shopping elsewhere, a social disconnect is created as well. This is when reaching out and getting people to take part in community activities becomes all the more impactful.

The DART was charged with looking at the Town Center, the former Belchertown State School, the Lampson Brook Farm and the connections between them. It was clear, however, that the third economic engine, the Four Corners shopping area, is one of the three main economic nodes and four cultural nodes of Belchertown, hence the title **Three Villages and a Farm**. All Belchertown planning should consider all four of these primary nodes and how to better connect them and the adjacent and surrounding neighborhoods.

In considering strategic opportunities to strengthen these areas, the team used three overlapping lenses.

1. **Cultural strengths and opportunities of the four nodes;** How can Belchertown build on these to strengthen and better connect the nodes and the community?
2. **Physical attributes and opportunities of the four nodes:** How can Belchertown build on these attributes to better connect the nodes and the community?
3. **Economic opportunities of the four nodes:** How can Belchertown think holistically about economic opportunities to better connect the community.



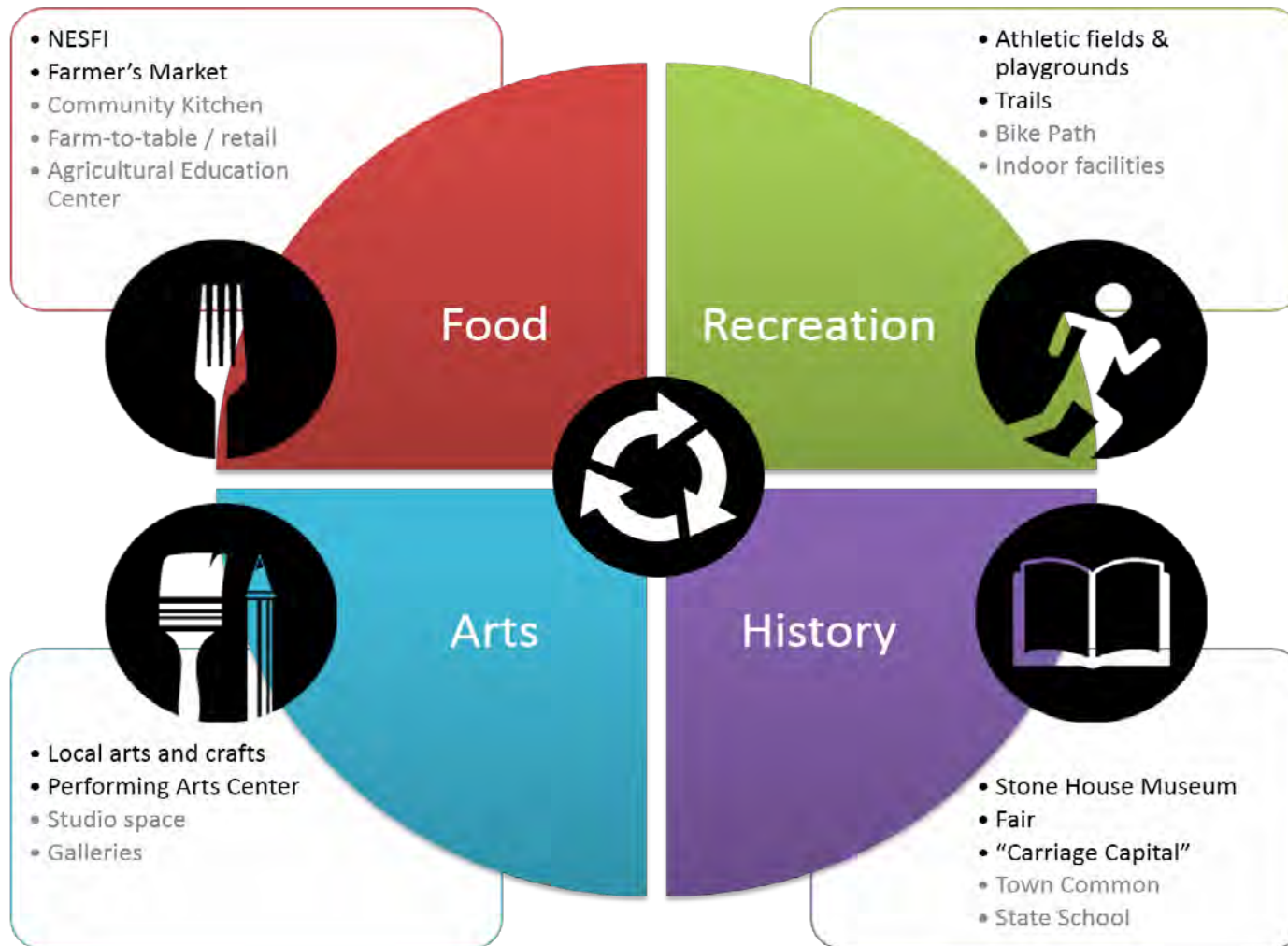
# CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Locate the physical nodes for connectivity and activities that can bring a sense of connection between these nodes



# CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

## Pieces of the Belchertown Story



Connecting Belchertown culturally means deciding on the story the town is trying to tell. The strongest and most compelling community story comes from building on the pillars of arts, food, recreation, and history. These make up the present day story, showing where Belchertown has come and what is important to the community as it stands today. There is also the historical aspect to culture. History needs to be worked in to the current condition in a way that explains where Belchertown began and how far it has come.

# CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

## Major Nodes



To begin making connections, there needs to be a link made between physical nodes and the temporal role that the node plays in the community. The Town Center is linked to gathering and bringing the community together to buy and sell goods and market the town to visitors passing through. The Town Center is also the most iconic and historically and culturally important part of Belchertown, even as its economic role is less important than it was historically. The Lampson Brook Farm poses a great opportunity to restore a landscape rich in heritage and begin to once again cultivate the land, learn about agriculture, and explore a forgotten landscape. The historic buildings and campus of the State School with its upcoming redevelopment offer a unique opportunity to inspire and bring about new opportunities.

# FOOD



In terms of community development, food can be used to have much farther reaching positive effects than just sustenance. Food is a great catalyst for bringing people together. In a place like Belchertown where land is fertile and there is a cultural heritage embedded in agriculture, food can also be used to teach and learn from. Using the three previously marked nodes, there are a number of possibilities. The Lampson Brook Farm can produce fresh and local produce for schools, restaurants, and assisted living facilities in the town of Belchertown. It could also become a site for anaerobic digestion or composting and serve as an educator for waste renewal practices. The State School could become home to an agricultural learning center, community kitchen, have food incubation space, have light food processing facilities, or be home to a brewery or distillery. The Town Center could benefit by instating an NEFSI store, farm-to-table restaurants, and B & B's providing fresh local food.

# RECREATION



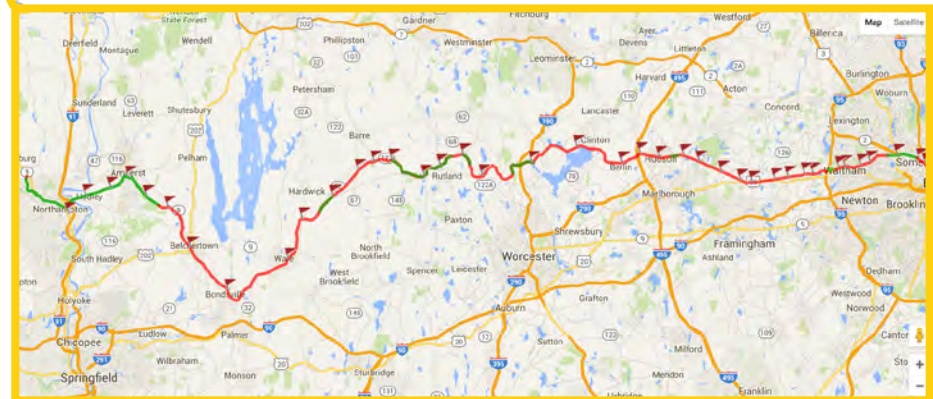
Belchertown is in a good position to capitalize on recreation opportunities. In the current state of the town, there are a number of naturally occurring opportunities for people to explore and exercise outdoors as Belchertown has landscapes that range between pastoral, woodland, wetland, and rocky. However, planned recreation could be a great way to start to create a deeper connection between nodes and the town as a whole. Lampson Brook Farm could provide nature trails encouraging birding and wildlife interaction. The Town Center can provide a space for more passive recreation on the common and show off a connective bike path. The State School could provide facilities for active recreation like sports fields and/or indoor recreation facilities offering sports facilities safe from the elements and more diverse recreation activities like rock climbing. This could prove to be a huge asset for marketing the town and bringing in visitors and income.

# RECREATION

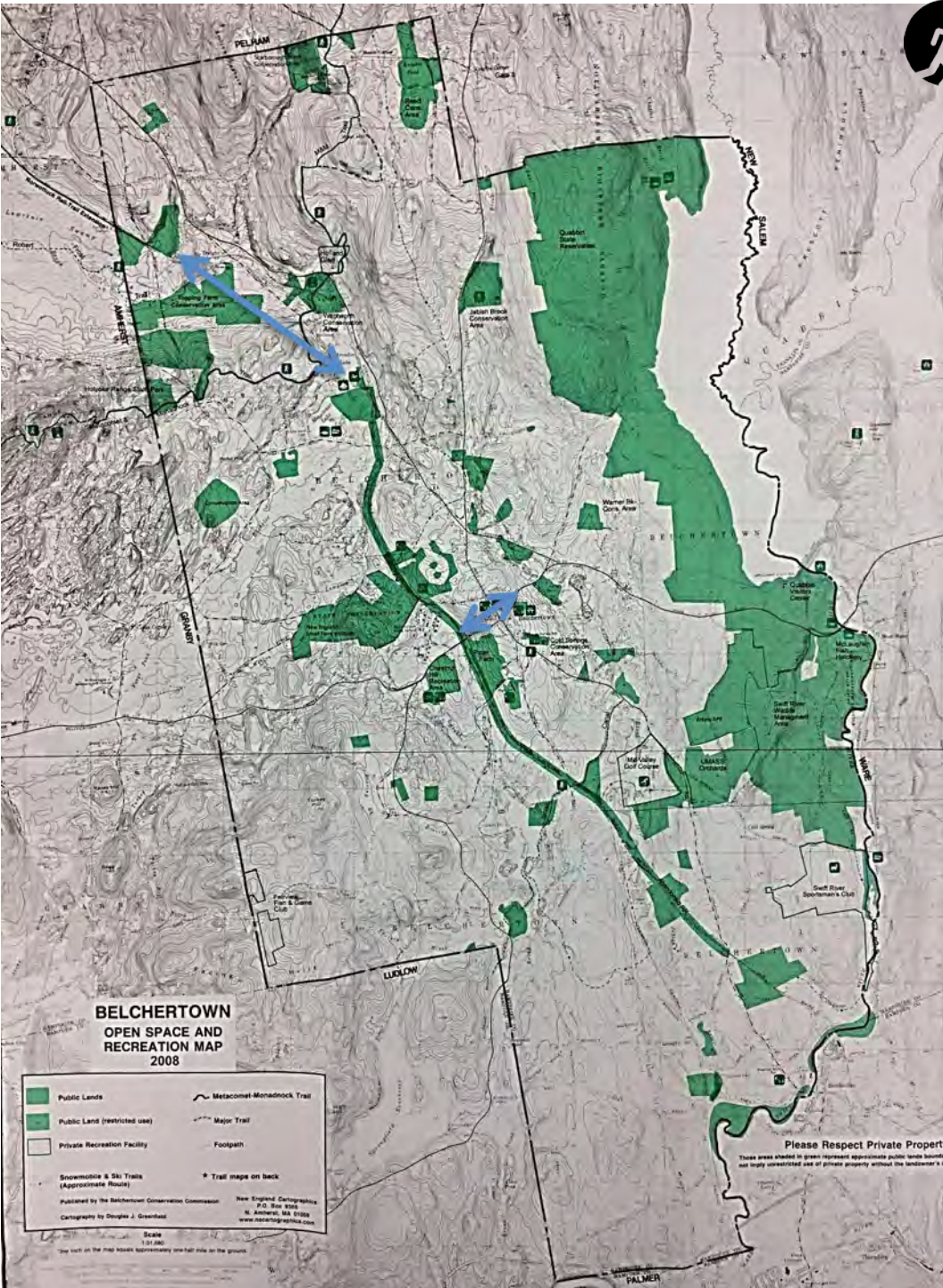


## Connecting to Regional Trails

Hiking is a major source of recreation in the Pioneer Valley. Exploration of trails through natural landscapes provide more than just exercise. Trails offer an opportunity for people to reconnect with nature, experience wildlife and natural systems, and learn from experience. The Pioneer Valley has an abundance of trails through woodland and mountainous landscapes. Belchertown could benefit from celebrating the trails that currently exist in its immediate proximity and creating connections with other trails in the vicinity of the town. In addition to connection with nearby trails, Belchertown can also look to become part of a larger network of trails for people such as the Appalachian trail which runs through the region from north to south or the mass central trail shown below which traverses the entire state on an east to west axis.



# RECREATION



## Linking Open Space

In addition to creating links with existing trails on the macro scale, Belchertown also has many assets and destinations all around and within it. With the Quabbin Reservoir lying to the northeast and a cornucopia of other open space and recreation areas, Belchertown has the opportunity to connect on a more personal scale and allow for direct interaction between users of these trails for long distance travels and the residents of Belchertown. Connections between these various open spaces and recreation zones will serve as an asset to the town and create a situation where people will be coming from outside communities to respect and enjoy the natural landscape that Belchertown has to offer. With new attention given to the natural beauty of Belchertown there is also opportunity to create amenities that interact with visitors and encourage them to stay a while and get involved with other aspects of the town. Belchertown could also apply for PARC funds or other grants to implement a trail around the pond at Foley Field.



# HISTORY



## Node Roles

When considering historical context it is imperative to think of the story as an ever present entity that is used as a cultural advantage throughout the town. History is what has brought the town to be what it is today and this must be celebrated. Whether celebrating the historic strengths that have now lost a bit of steam or using history to emphasize how far we have come, it helps to tell the story of Belchertown. Lampson Brook Farm is rich in environmental history and the story of the farm's inception in partnership with the State School is one that can still be appreciated today. The State School itself carries with it an aura of historical significance in the town, by preserving buildings the history of the site can begin to unfold visually and atmospherically. Still holding a number of historic buildings; the Town Center retains much of its historic quality however the town common itself and some of its surroundings could use some historic restoration. The importance of a historically attractive Town Center is that it is the main tool for drawing in visitors as they pass through Belchertown.

# HISTORY



## A Story Worth Telling

The State School has a number of associations and although some of these connotations might be a little hard to swallow, it is none the less a part of Belchertown's history and can be turned to a positive. The story raises awareness for the developmentally disabled and demonstrates the progress made in the understanding and supporting of these populations in the sense of seeing everyone as people above all. Another part of the State School history is personal connections to the different buildings, grounds, and memories that took place here.



## Opportunity in Ruins

There are countless examples around the world of revitalization of historic sites to create one of a kind attractions that could only have come about by the combination of historic and contemporary means. Directly below is Gas Works Park in Seattle Washington. This now beloved public park was once a gasification plant and is now a landscape that accentuates the old machinery and structures to create a unique dialogue between past and present. The Mill Ruins in Minneapolis (bottom right photo) captures a similar duality between past and present. This same thought process could be applied to some of the historic structures in Belchertown, such as some of the historic buildings at the State School, at least one of the silos at Lampson Brook Farm, or the smoke stack power plant. By working with the constraints of a historic structure, design and implementation are forced to address a different context, creating a completely unique place.



# ART

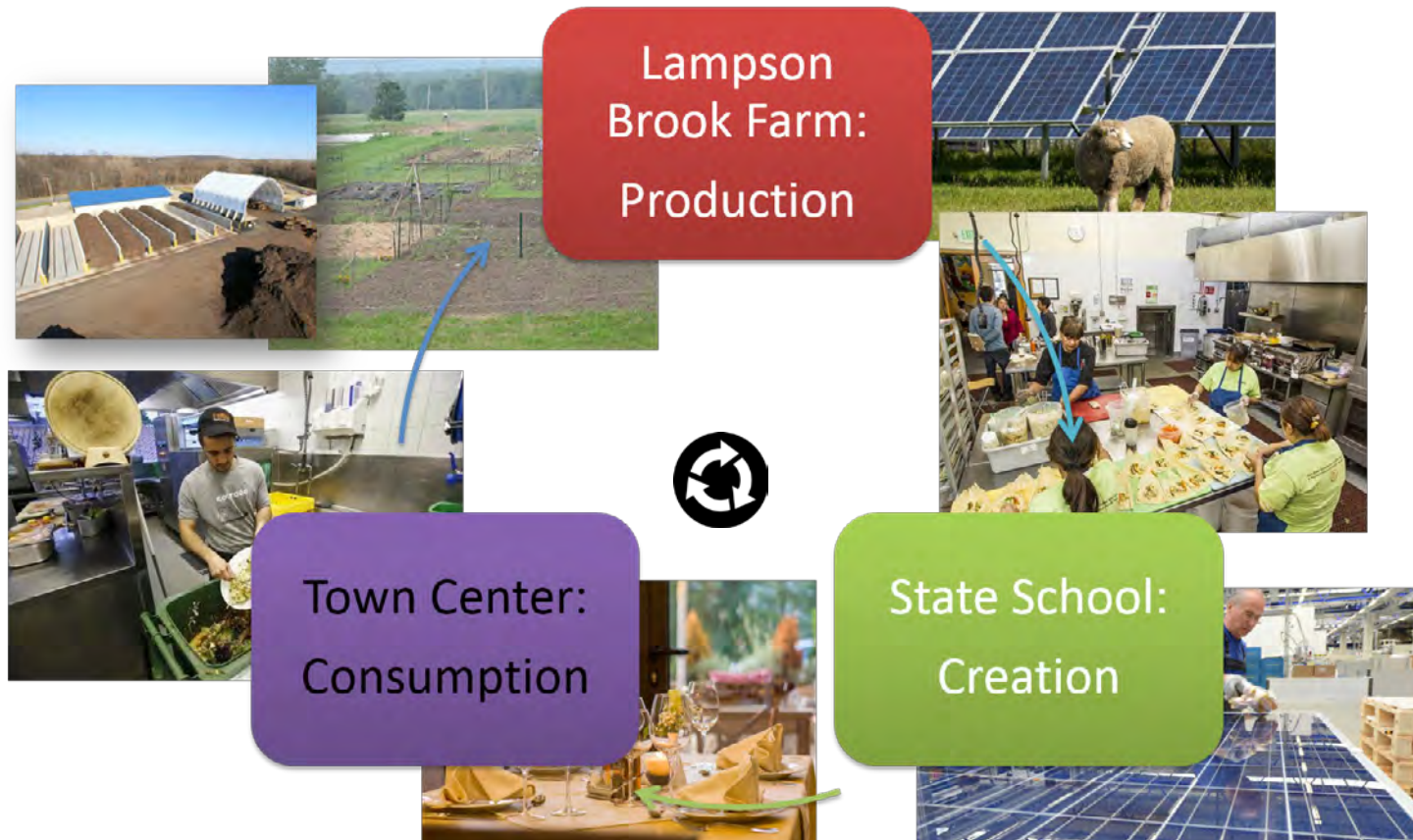


## Node Roles

The arts are a constant engine for bringing people together, creating common interests, and feeling connected. The more that Belchertown can capitalize on its existing arts initiatives as well as creating new opportunities for young people and adults alike to express themselves artistically, the more cohesive the community can become. Art can go in many directions and really has something for everyone in terms of expression. At the Lampson Brook Farm, a beautiful pastoral landscape can provide the perfect muse for a painter, a sketch artist, or a photographer. The natural landscape has been an inspiration for artistic expression for centuries. Some interior spaces in the historic buildings at the State School could be renovated and transformed into live artist work and studio spaces, some being shared to encourage collaboration and the sharing of ideas. The Town Center already contains some existing arts and crafts shops but this could be expanded upon to include art galleries, and music venues. The town common can also be used for live music performances as well as outdoor movie showings.



# SYSTEM CONNECTIVITY & SELF-SUFFICIENCY



The connection of these three major Belchertown nodes can create a self-reinforcing system that will serve residents and attract businesses and visitors. The role of each node is based upon its existing conditions and its potential for expansion, restoration, and development of physical and social construction. The Lampson Brook Farm creates a place harnessing production in the form of food, inspiration, and education. The State School provides a mass of indoor space which can be used for a number of creative purposes, marking the area as a hub for creativity. Finally, receiving goods and services provided by the Lampson Brook Farm and the State School, the Town Center becomes a place for consumption and marketing of the community.

# SPATIAL CONNECTIONS AND PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Understand existing spatial relationships in Belchertown and identify opportunities for improvement



# SPATIAL CONNECTIONS AND PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

## Town Center

Sharing a number of uses, the Town Center serves as a multiuse hub for gathering, marketing, and consuming. The buildings that loosely enclose the Belchertown Town Common include civic (blue), commercial (red), cultural (green), and mixed use (yellow). The diversity of building use is a strength of the Town Center because it offers a multitude of potential engagement situations. The central lawn space that is the town common is enclosed on four sides by roadways and is a quite large space. Route 9 is a wide and busy roadway that runs along the west edge of the town common. This is the major roadway travelled by people moving through Belchertown. This means that the Town Center has great potential to attract people from the road.



# FIGURE GROUND STUDIES



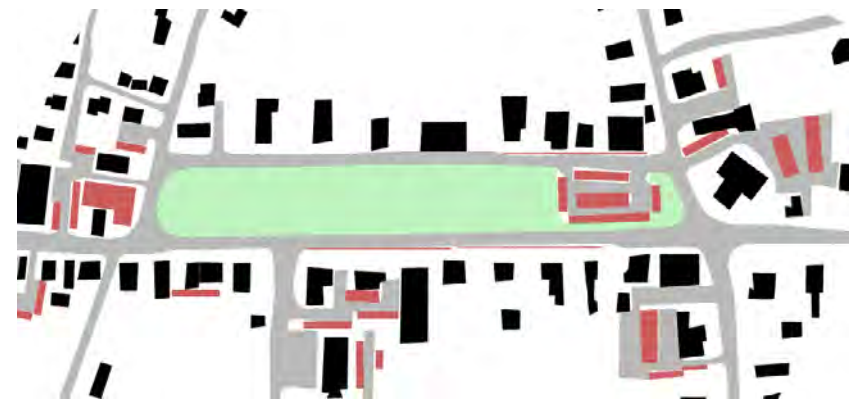
Amherst town common



South Hadley town common



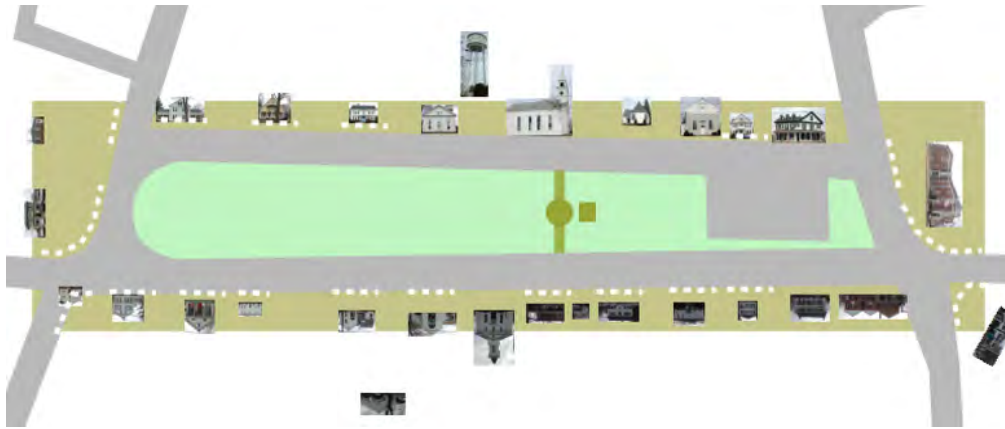
West Springfield town common



Belchertown town common

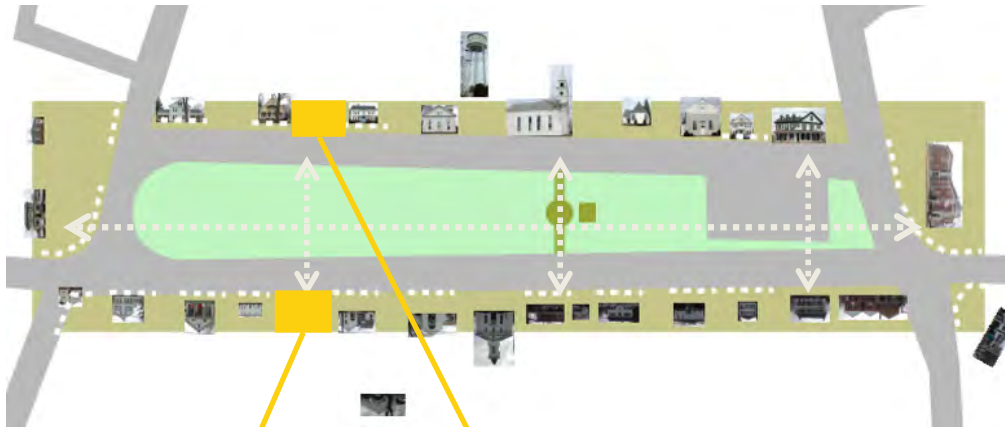
To understand the proportion of the Belchertown Town Common, the DART analyzed it and town commons in other nearby communities through these figure ground studies. In all maps, the town common is marked in green while the buildings are blacked out and parking is coated red. Through these figure ground studies a few observations can be made about some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Belchertown town common. First, relative to these town commons from other communities in the valley, the Belchertown common is fairly well enclosed by the buildings that abut the town common. This is a strength in the sense of creating a feeling of security and community while in the space. What can also be seen is that the Belchertown common is quite long and narrow without any divided spaces. This makes the space feel less complete. The integrity of Belchertown and Amherst Town Commons have both been partially sacrificed to create additional parking.

# DEFINING EDGES



## Enclosing Agents

Enclosing the common currently is a series of sidewalks, roads, parking, small lawns, and eventually building fronts. The common is fairly well enclosed and gives a sense of enclosure from the east and west but not so much from the north and south due to the length of the green. By treating the roadway edges with more visual cues of enclosure, the space can be made stronger. Implementation of picket fences, edge plantings, and other enclosing agents along the street edge would slow people down on the road and create a more defined communal green space. This edge would not only help enclose the common but it would make a clear distinction between public and private space.



## Filling in the Gaps

When looking around the perimeter of the town common some gaps can be seen in the building edge. The common could greatly benefit from some increased density in this edge. An increased density would also open up space for new commercial or mixed uses. By locating a handful of key places and either building a new building or creating some other amenity that deliates space, the edge can be strengthened and the common itself will benefit.



# SUCCESSFUL STREETS

## Complete Streets Make Great Places

Streets are an integral part of the public realm. A complete street is one that is balanced and designed for all users, not just vehicles. A complete street provides safe travel to cyclists, pedestrians, and cars. In Belchertown Center there is some attention to pedestrians but less to cyclists. There must be a shift to streets that are equally accommodating to those using the roadway for foot or bicycle travel. A complete street also provides reasons for pedestrians to have a need to stay and experience the street.



## Town Center Streetscape Principles

- Buildings close to the street
- Critical mass, density, diversity of uses
- Windows & doors
- On-street parking
- Narrow, slow-speed streets
- Complete streets = balanced for all users
- Green infrastructure
- Street trees



# STREET TREES

- Reduced traffic speeds
- Safer walking environment
- Aesthetics, placemaking, & security
- Connection to nature
- Rain, sun, heat, & skin protection
- Reduced tailpipe emissions
- Emotional & psychological health
- Pollutant absorption & lower ozone
- Lower urban air temperatures
- Improved local economy
- Added value & tax base
- Longer pavement life

Health

Happiness

Value

This historic photo of Belchertown's Main Street shows a street heavily planted with street trees. Some of these trees remain as stand alone mature trees but many have completed their life cycle, passed, and have not yet been replaced.

MAIN ST. & PARK, LOOKING WEST, BELCHERTOWN, MASS.

# DESIGNING FOR URBAN TREES



*Streets should be designed to accommodate tree root growth—the most critical factor in implementing tree lined streets.*

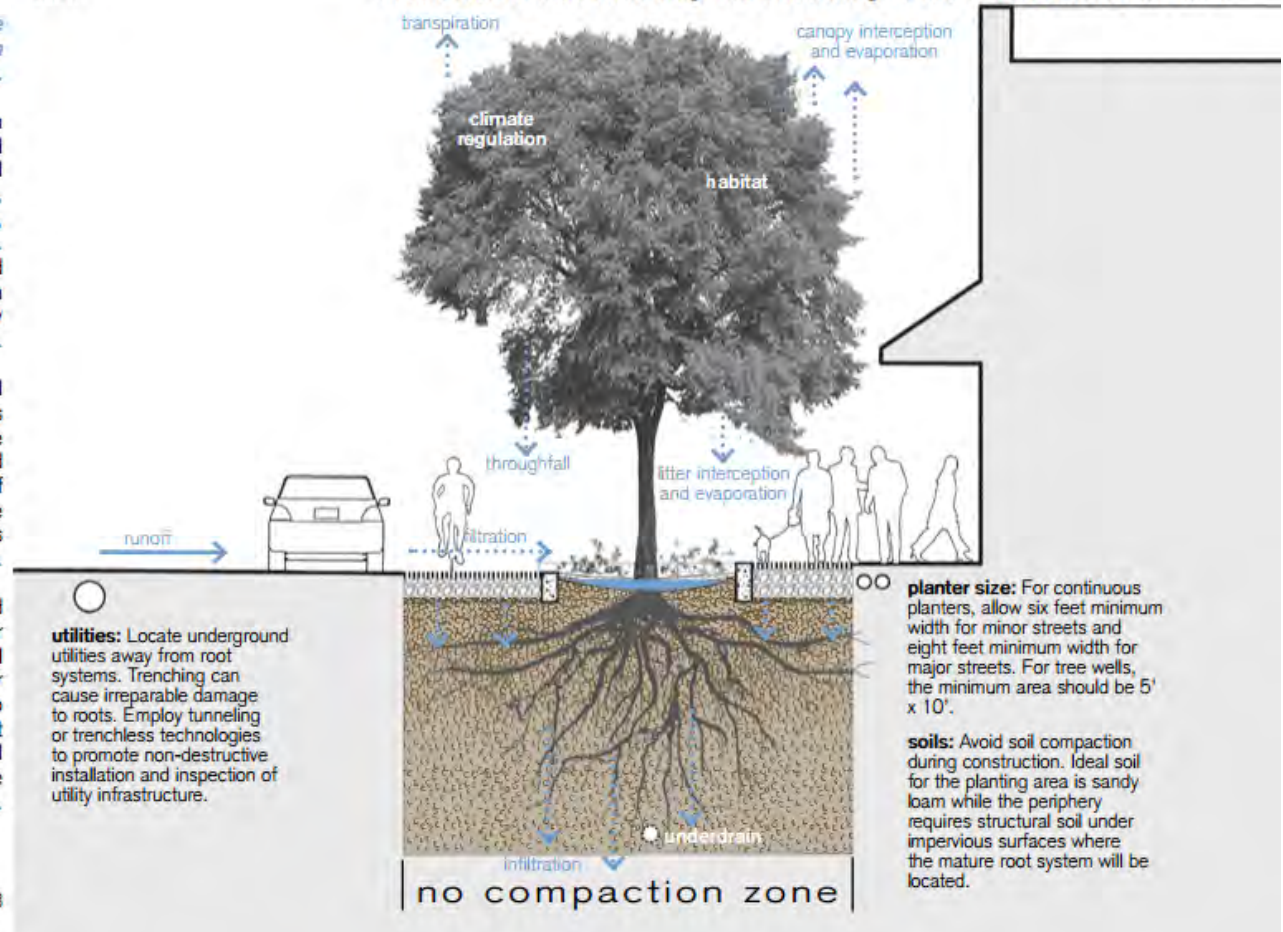
Healthy trees are essential components of green infrastructure and urban forestry. Shade trees planted along hard surfaces reduce the heat island effect and improve air quality. Besides functioning as carbon sinks, trees also reduce stormwater runoff through interception, evapotranspiration, throughfall, and flow attenuation. Trees help create a sense of place, reduce noise and glare, and provide a safety barrier for pedestrians from traffic, which is why neighborhood value is increased by their presence.

Trees vary in their growth requirements and rates based on the biological and physical conditions of the site. Trees should be chosen based on cold hardiness, mature size and shape, drought tolerance, rooting characteristics, and resistance to insect and disease problems. For a list of suitable urban trees, consult a local nursery or landscape design professional (also see "Urban Trees for Zones 4-8" pp. 100-101).

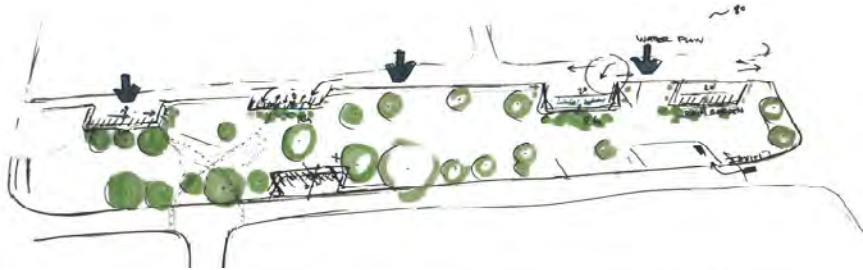
The planting area should accommodate the anticipated root structure at maturity, ensuring absorption of water and nutrients. Remember that roots can extend well beyond the canopy of the tree. Use structural soil for adequate root penetration while minimizing damage to paved surfaces. Spacing between trees should reflect species' crown size at maturity. With proper planning and care, urban street trees can live well beyond their average 10-year lifespan.

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**Due to soil compaction and poor planning the average lifespan of an urban tree is less than 10 years according to the USDA Forest Service.**



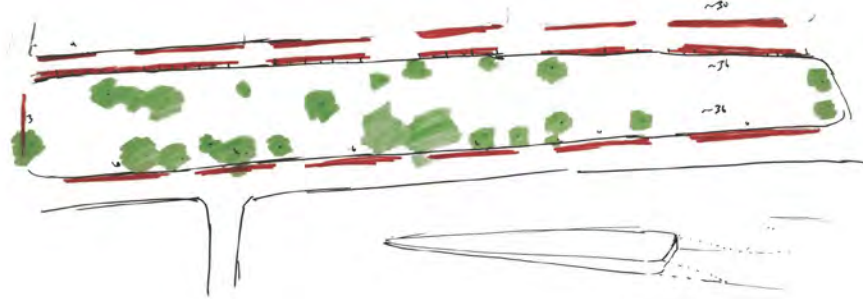
# TOWN CENTER PARKING CONCEPTS



1.

There are numerous options to restore the integrity of the Belchertown Town Common and still retain any needed Town Center parking.

Cut into the common to create angled parking jutting into the space at various points. Using positioning of cut outs to start to delineate space.



2.

Provide parallel parking on streets abutting the common. If compliant with right-of-way code, this is the simplest solution.



3.

Create a system of cut in areas for parallel parking with a system of rain gardens to collect and clean stormwater. Cut two double loaded parking lanes through the space to create more surface parking and smaller plaza spaces.



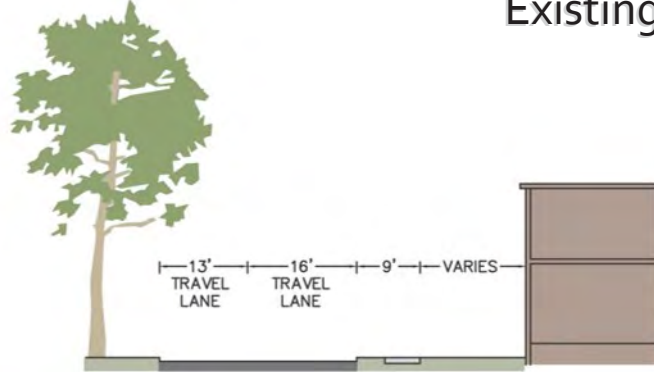
4.

Divide existing parking lot into two smaller parking areas. This allows for more attractive parking area plantings as well as work to create better proportions in the common.

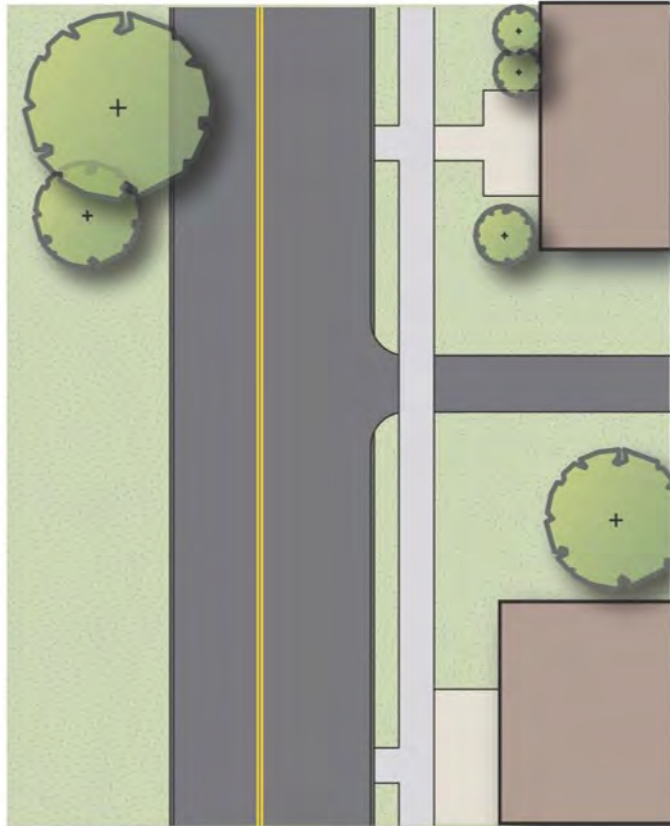
# TOWN CENTER PARKING AND COMPLETE STREETS

## PARK STREET

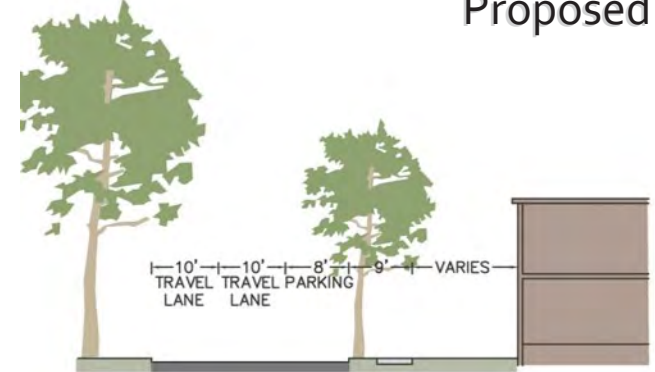
Existing



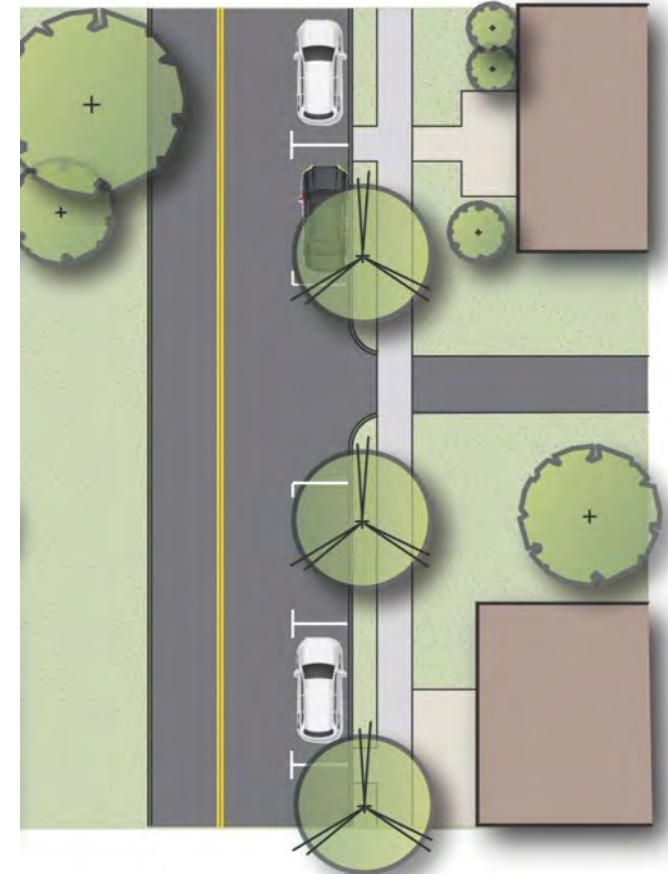
On Park Street the existing condition does not have any street parking or street trees. To the east are mixed use buildings and to the west is the town common. On its east edge the street has a sidewalk.



Proposed



Proposed are both street trees and street parallel parking. Both parking and street trees establish an edge to the roadway corridor and slow down drivers. The lane of parked cars separates the public realm from the road and creates a sense of safety on the sidewalk. Street trees also treat stormwater and increase the value of nearby businesses.



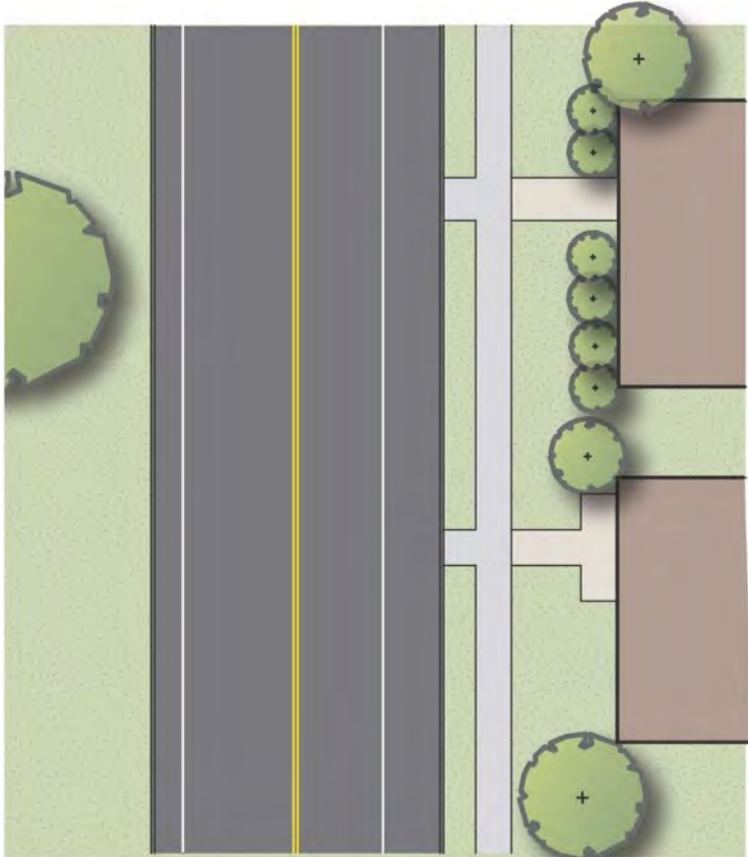
# TOWN CENTER PARKING AND COMPLETE STREETS

## MAIN STREET

### Existing

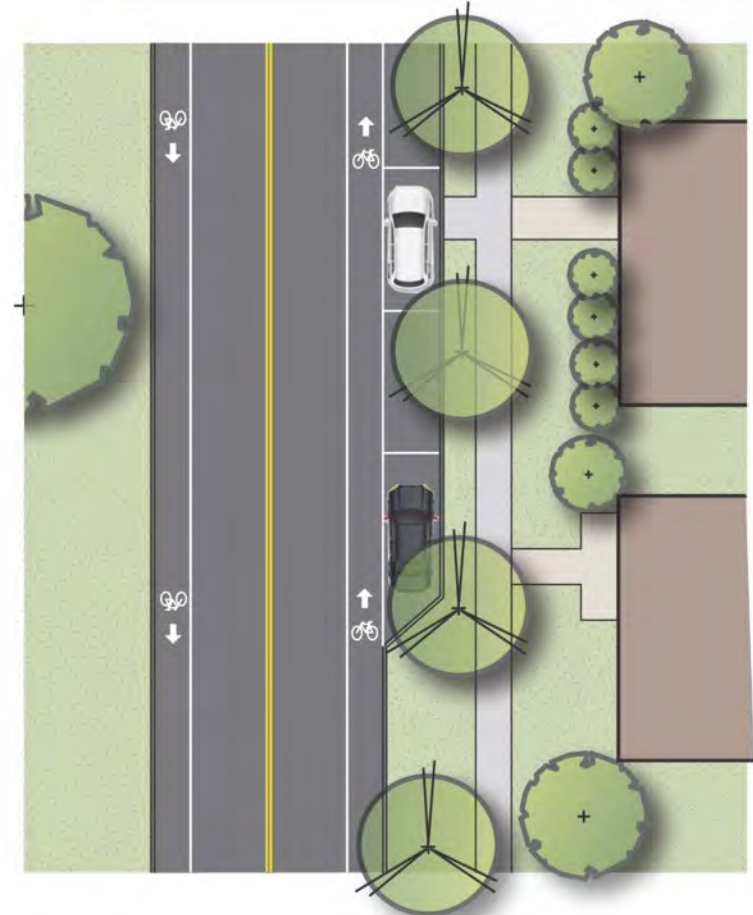
Main street is another road in Belchertown center that is very wide as it stands today. There are two wide lanes as well as wide shoulders on either side. Plantings hug building facades and create distance from the road.

4' 16' 12' 8' 10' VARIES  
SHOULDER TRAVEL LANE TRAVEL LANE SHOULDER



### Proposed

5' 11' 11' 5' 8' 10' VARIES  
BIKE LANE TRAVEL LANE TRAVEL LANE BIKE PARKING



Proposed here is a use of this excess space found within the two lanes and shoulders. Introduction of on street parking to on side and two lanes for cyclists increases balance on the roadway. Parking and street trees create comfort in the public realm of the sidewalk.



15th Ave S Before

15th Ave S After

# FOUR CORNERS AND FARM NODES

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The Four Corners Area is a unique piece of Belchertown that is possibly the most disconnected. At this large scale commercial hub complete with chain grocery stores, fast food restaurants, and office buildings; the human scale is weak. This zone is designed solely for people to drive to, park, get what they need, and be on their way. There is no space for people.



The farm is a major asset to Belchertown. It has potential to teach and provide for the people of the community. By keeping some significant features, rebuilding, reusing, or reinvisioning the heritage of the farm can be brought to the forefront. Finding the appropriate way to do so will be the biggest challenge here.

# THE FARM TO THE STATE SCHOOL



## Significant Features to Preserve:

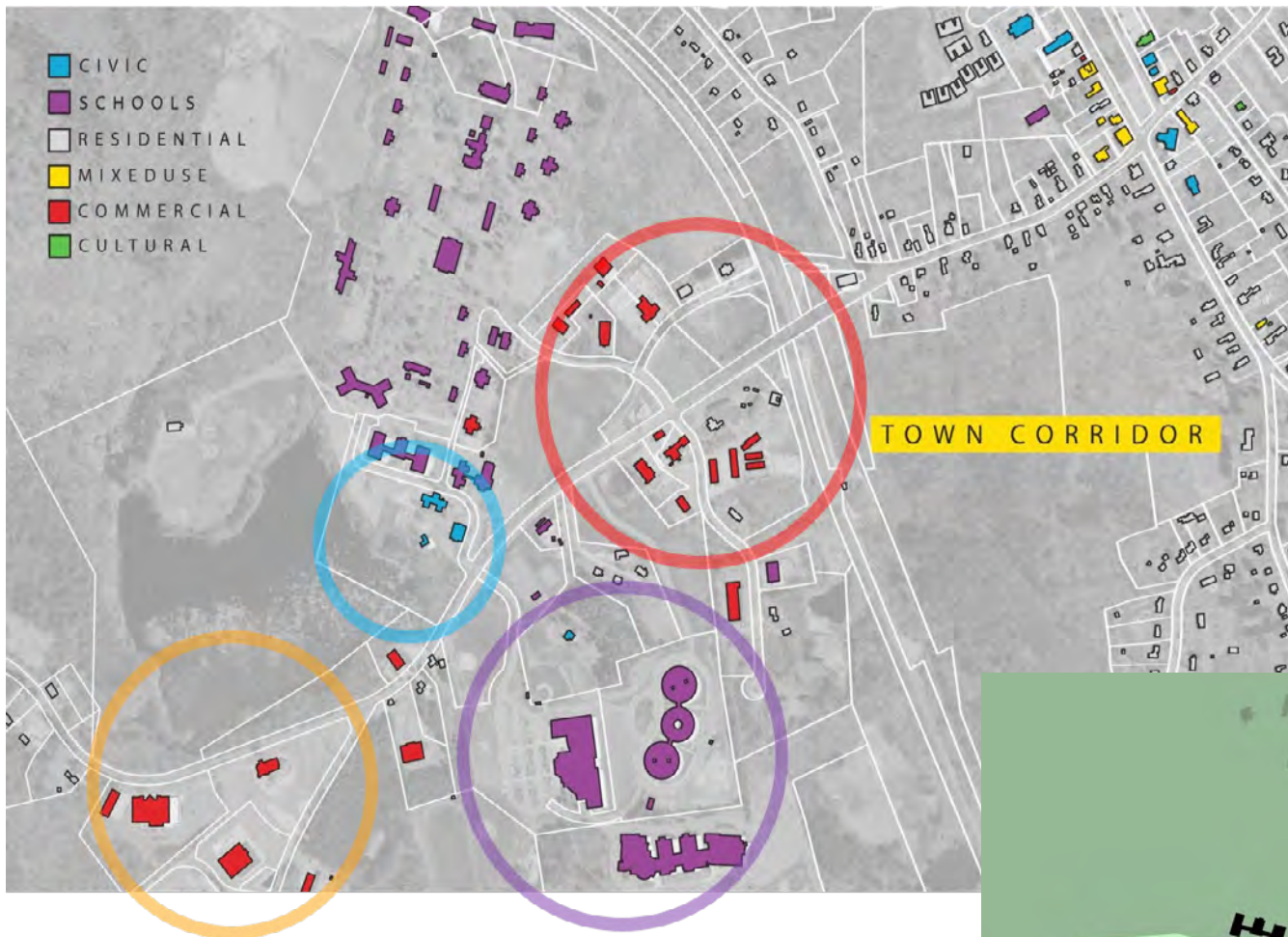
- Silo(es) – Preserve at least one silo for its historic significance
- Main Barn – Educational hub
- Open Space / Agriculture
- View to Holyoke range and to State School Property

- Former Boiler Plant
- Cold Springs Brewery and Restaurant
- Linking the farm with the State School



The former boiler plant at Lamford Brook Farm is the perfect location to think about creating a new and unique community attraction. Its appearance so unique and its heritage so apparent, to work with its condition and create something completely different would surely draw attention from outside communities. A purposed potential use reinvisions the Plant as a Craft Brewery.

# TOWN CENTER TO STATE SCHOOL



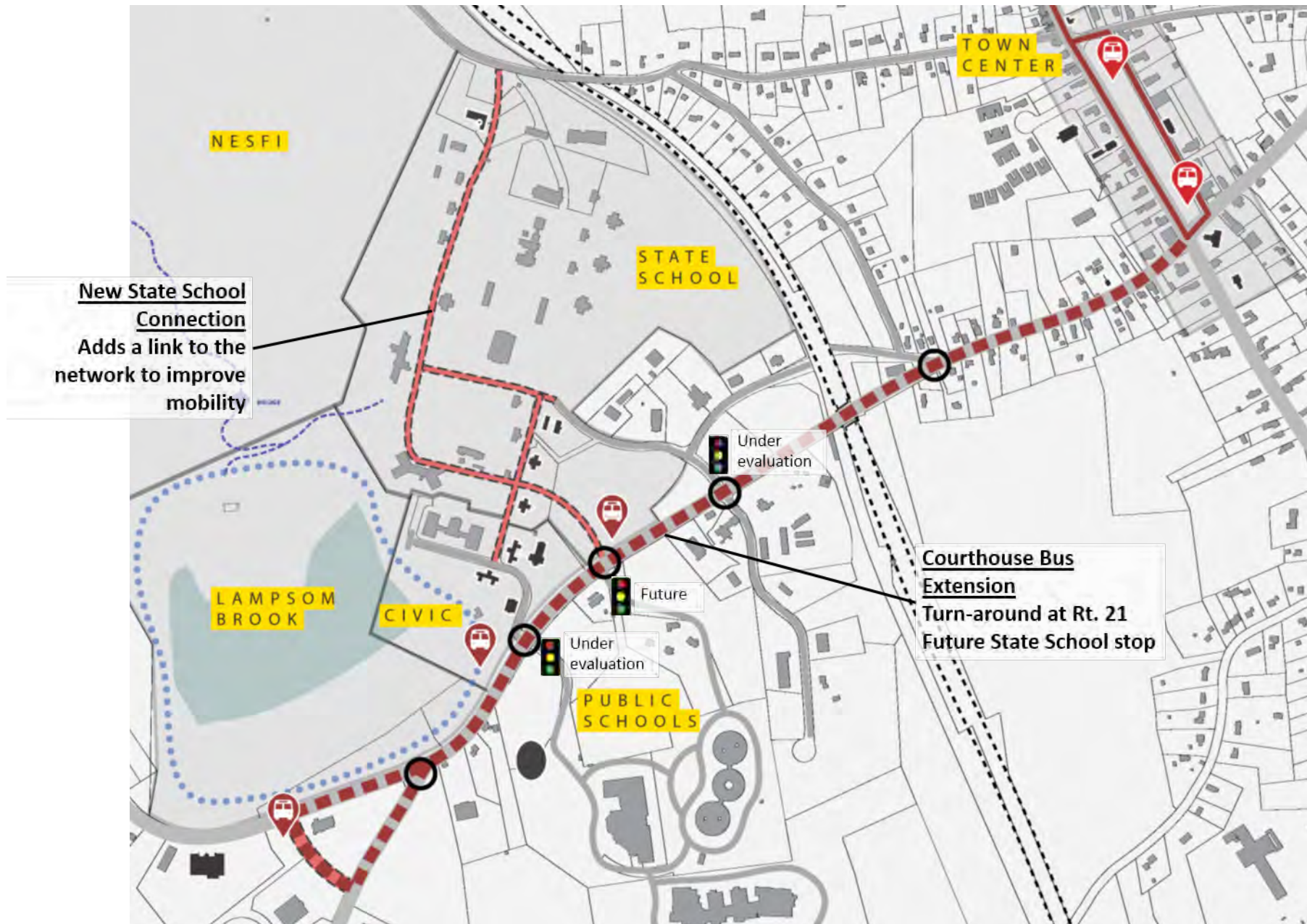
State Street creates a corridor that serves many functions for the people of Belchertown. Where Route 9 runs through the Town Center and makes connection for many travellers from the Mass Pike to the Universities located in the Pioneer Valley; State Street is a much more local main roadway. Although the street is much less of a commuter road, it serves as a connection between multiple functions for the town including commercial, educational, and institutional. This is also the street that the new development of the State School will abut, adding to the plethora of land uses along this powerful corridor.

Along with some of the opportunities posed by State Street, there are some areas that could use improvement. For example, The sidewalk conditions are poor condition and make it unsafe for people to move along the road and into the Town Center on foot. The fairly steep slope of the road also makes it difficult for foot travellers. There are instances where people are capable of walking down the hill but not up it in the reverse direction, this leads to a one way connection. Improved connections come partially from the physical development of the transportation infrastructure on State Street and partially from the nature of the State School Redevelopment. Redevelopment of the school that fronts the streets and adds life will make the street safer and more desirable.



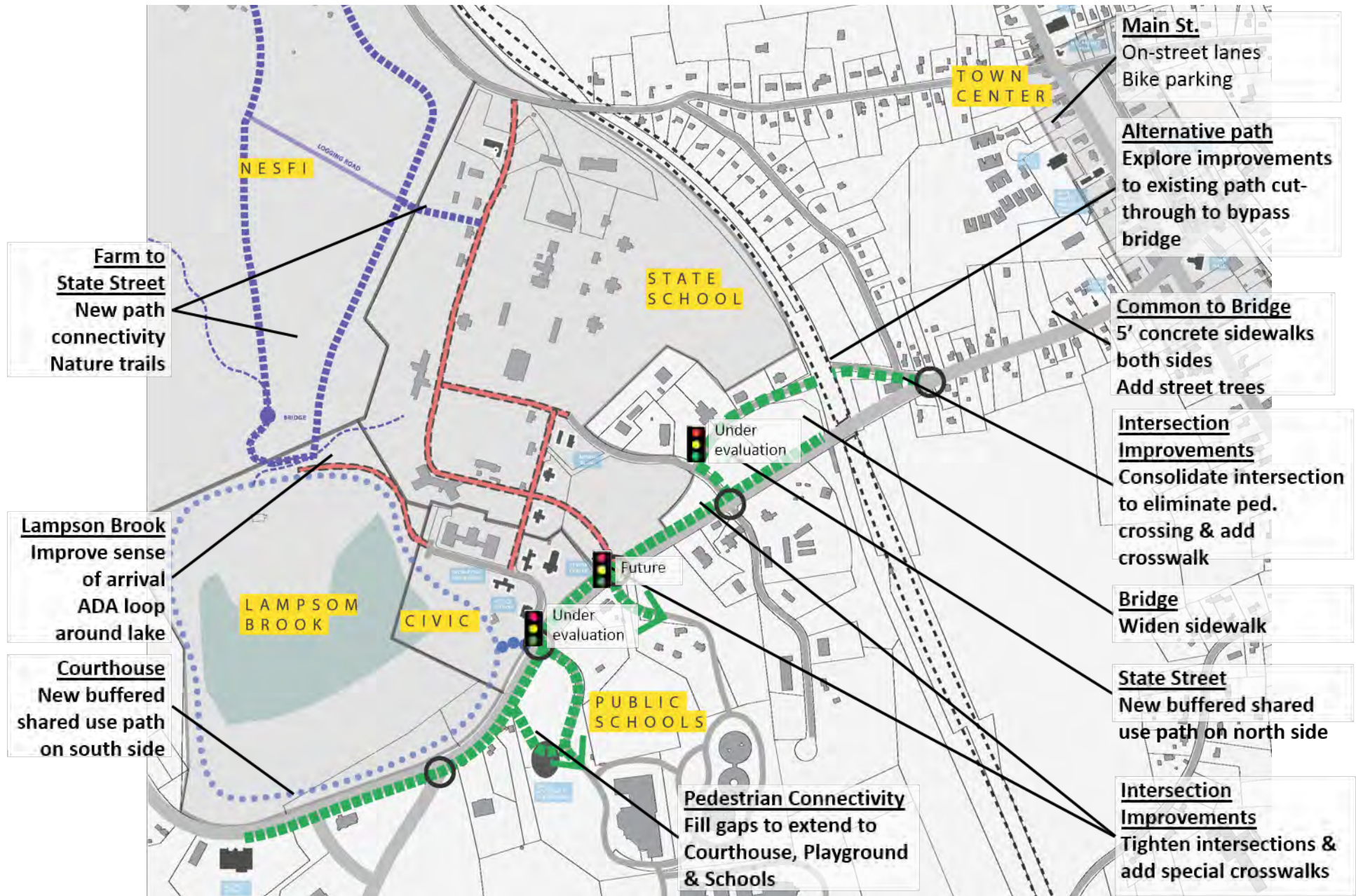
# CORRIDOR CONNECTIVITY

## Vehicular Mobility



# CORRIDOR CONNECTIVITY

## Bicycle / Pedestrian Mobility



# CORRIDOR CONNECTIVITY

Bicycle / Pedestrian Mobility

Wayfinding | Signage | Bike Lanes | Trail Maps | Clarity



# CORRIDOR CONNECTIVITY

## Safer Intersections - Howard / Maple St.

### Existing

As it stands today, the Howard / Maple St. intersection could be safer and more accommodating for pedestrians and cyclists. Currently, the intersection corners are unclear and crosswalks are missing entirely.



### Proposed

To clarify the intersection a few techniques can be implemented. Street trees can be planted to clearly mark off corners for drivers. The intersection can be simplified to just a single offshoot instead of the existing fork. Crosswalks can be strategically placed for pedestrians.



# STATE SCHOOL

## Story Worth Telling



WIKIPEDIA  
The Free Encyclopedia

There is an unavoidable association between the town of Belchertown and the State School. Although all stories associated with the State School are not necessarily appropriate to celebrate, there are a number of ways in which we can celebrate certain attributes of the State School. Whether it be maintaining and refurbishing some of the older buildings and turning them into something special or simply celebrating the great strides that have been taken as far as understanding people with mental disabilities.

Article

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## Belchertown, Massachusetts

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Belchertown** (previously known as **Cold Spring** and **Belcher's Town**)<sup>[1]</sup> is a town in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, United States. It is part of the Springfield, Massachusetts Metropolitan Statistical Area. The population was 14,649 at the 2010 census. The town includes the census-designated place of Belchertown. Belchertown is best known for being the site of the Belchertown State School.

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1 History

2 Geography and transportation

3 Demographics

4 Points of interest

5 Notable people

6 References

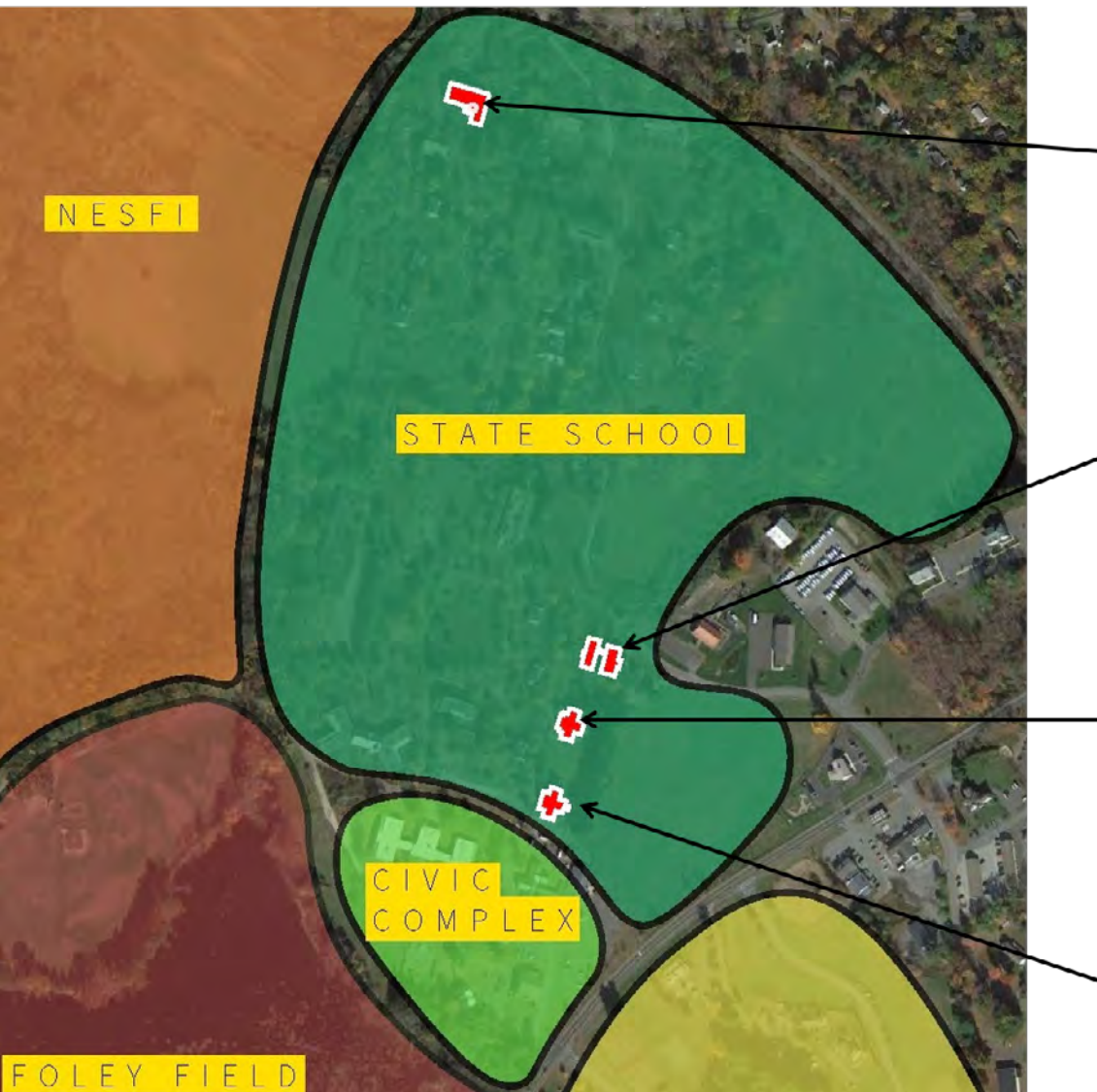
7 External links

### History [edit]

In 1716, the equivalent lands were sold by Connecticut Colony to residents who reside in present day Connecticut and Massachusetts.<sup>[2]</sup> Some of these lands were granted to Jonathan Belcher, the future Royal Governor of Massachusetts.<sup>[3]</sup>

# STATE SCHOOL

## Story Worth Telling



## Physical Assets

The physical make up of the State School is of great historic value. Historic structures create something unique in that they have become what they are with the help of time. Weathering of materials and necessary retrofits only occur when something has been in place for a number of decades. The former boiler plant has already been pointed out as a major opportunity for the repurposing of a historic structure that has a great amount of visual character and presence. These three other buildings carry similar strengths in that they were built with specific needs and uses in mind, when new needs and uses are imposed on these structures, something interesting can happen. By using these structures as assets rather than demolishing and replacing them, some of the visual cues of the State School can be kept and celebrated. This initiative can be especially powerful for those who worked or were involved in the State School when it was in full operation.

# SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES

## The Ridges, Athens, OH

Columbus, Ohio • Feb 24, 2016 • 52° Overcast

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#### Tour of former Athens Asylum tells history, not ghost stories

RELATED ITEMS

- Old Athens insane asylum to get new life as part of Ohio University
- Myths abound at the Ridges, a Victorian-era set of buildings atop a hillside in Athens, Ohio, that is the original site of the Athens Asylum.

Some people associate the property with ghost stories

By [Conor Morris](#)  
For The Dispatch • Monday January 18, 2016 5:55 AM

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There are numerous examples of sites that have successfully turned a place of controversial history into an attraction. The Ridges in Athens, Ohio was once a lunatic asylum and is now celebrated as a tourist attraction visited by people hoping to enjoy its Victorian architecture and beautiful views over the ridge. The Willard Psychiatric Center in New York is now somewhat of a museum featuring the interesting content of suitcases found in the attic of one of its main buildings dating back to the early 1900's. Even looking in the Pioneer Valley, the example of the Village Hill Apartments can be found in Northampton. What was once the Northampton State Hospital is now celebrated as a sustainable and flourishing housing development.

## Willard Psychiatric Center, NY

### Former New York insane asylum overrun with tourists



Several of the buildings are structurally unsafe and are fenced off. The annual tour of the former Willard Asylum in Seneca County was held on Saturday May 16th 2015. Stephen D. Cannarella | [scannarella@syracuse.com](#)

1 / 100 Fullscreen Share Caption Buy

By Teri Weaver | [tweaver@syracuse.com](#)  
Follow on Twitter  
on May 18, 2015 at 4:17 PM; updated May 23, 2015 at 4:37 PM

SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- Thousands of people wanting an inside look at the Willard



## Hilltop Apts. Northampton, MA

MODER E-EDITION NEWSLETTERS RSS

35° High 44° Low 42°

### GAZETTENET.COM

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#### Northampton State Hospital project aims to commemorate those who lived, worked there (with timeline)

SEVEN GAZETTENS  
The former Northampton State Hospital is being converted into a housing development. It is located near the center of downtown Northampton and is a historic landmark.



# SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES

## Traverse City State Hospital, MI



### FAQs: Guided Historic Tour

May 7, 2014 / [16 Comments](#) / in [Spotlight](#) / by [The Village](#)

It was only a year ago last month that we began organized [historic tours](#) of the old Traverse City State Hospital, known today as the Village at Grand Traverse Commons. The public has inquired about tours for many years, and



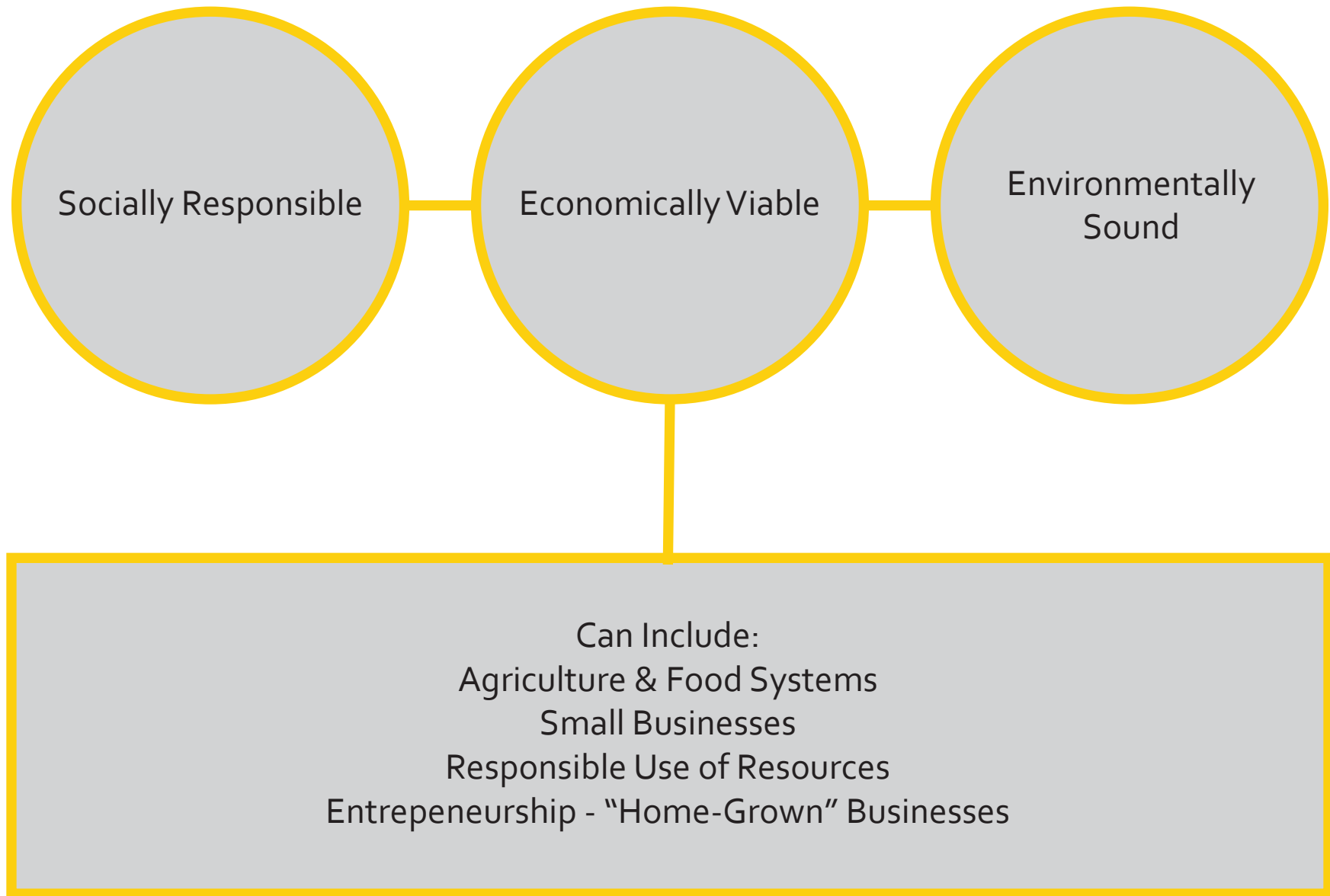
# ECONOMICS

Evaluate Belchertown's current economic strengths and create a plan to move forward in a way that is healthy for the community



# ECONOMICS

A Balanced Approach to Economic Development



# ECONOMICS

## Market Analysis Overview

The following is a summary of a market analysis prepared by RKG Associates as part of the Site Development Feasibility Assessment for Belchertown State School (2009) as they looked at long-term redevelopment options/potential for the site, taking into consideration the regional as well as local context:

- The existing merchant base in Belchertown primarily serves local residents and is not considered to be a regional draw.
- Traffic counts in Belchertown are “insufficient to support any type of retail development, other than for local and convenience goods”
- Many competing shopping venues in nearby communities, such as Amherst, Chicopee, Hadley, and Holyoke... these communities also have higher traffic counts
- There is potential for smaller scale, neighborhood retail development in Belchertown

**The recent and anticipated population growth in town is not enough to support a regional retail center or large retail beyond the existing inventory (i.e., Four Corners)**

- Population change: 10,600 in 1990 > 13,000 in 2000 > 14,600 in 2010
- Low population density
- Additional residential development equates to additional demand, BUT the RKG study estimated retail demand (in 2008) at \$13,000 per household.
- A large % of retail spending goes to establishments in nearby communities, near workplaces, or online.
- Turnover of retail businesses in Belchertown has been high
- Belchertown can support only so much retail... the conclusion is that the town needs to find ways to attract visitors

**MARKET ANALYSIS OF REUSE OPPORTUNITIES  
OF THE FORMER  
BELCHERTOWN STATE SCHOOL  
43D PRIORITY REDEVELOPMENT SITE  
BELCHERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS  
DRAFT JUNE 8, 2009**

Prepared for:

The Town of Belchertown  
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Belchertown, Massachusetts 01007-0670

In cooperation with

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# Town Center

# ECONOMICS

## Town Center

### Compatible Business Opportunities

- B&B or small-scale lodging
- Arts space for kids
- Old-fashioned general store
- Specialty foods and farm products
- Restaurants and cafes
- Professional services



### Co-working Space

- Workspace for individuals who work from home
- "A place to work, network, learn, and socialize"
- Desks or tables and chairs
- Meeting space
- Copiers
- Wi-Fi access



# ECONOMICS

## Four Corners

- Highway-oriented retail & service businesses
- Local/convenience goods and services - e.g., grocery store, pharmacy
- Economic objectives
  - Retain/support existing businesses
  - Fill vacancies in existing space
- Avoid shifting retail activity



# ECONOMICS

## Former State School

- Conceptual Master Plan for the former State School campus calls for a mix of uses, including “live-work” space
- Assisted living and independent living facilities to be developed first
- Economic objectives
  - Continue to meet local needs (i.e., consumer, educational, recreational, health care, etc.)
  - Enhance marketability of State School property
  - Pursue compatible business development and recruitment (long-term)
- Enhance marketability of State School property by giving people a reason to come to the area. Consider using recreation as an economic driver
  - Develop/attract a multi-use recreational facility to serve residents and attract visitors to participate in sports leagues and camps, attend tournaments
  - Enhance and promote trail networks... make it easier to find trail access points through wayfinding signage
  - Consider a drop-in location or rec center for teens with gaming, climbing wall, etc. (teen center identified as a need)
- Compatible business opportunities:
  - Small-scale food processing/ community kitchen
  - Food and beverage; snack bars, restaurants, microbrewery, etc.
  - Lodging options
  - Activities for kids



# ECONOMICS

## Recreational Destination Examples

### Public Sector



Botetourt Sports Complex, Botetourt County, VA

- Public sector example #1: Botetourt Sports Complex, Botetourt County, Virginia (a rural/exurban county north of Roanoke)<sup>4</sup>
  - State-of-the-art complex constructed 2007
  - Located within a 125-acre park that has a cross-country course and soccer fields
  - Has four championship level softball and youth baseball fields for hosting tournaments
  - Has a central, three-story tower with space for tournament operations, scorekeeping, concessions, and restrooms and WiFi for guests
  - Also used for special events unrelated to sports – e.g., regional food expo organized by Cooperative Extension



Green Ridge Recreational Center, Roanoke County, VA

- Public sector example #2: Green Ridge Recreational Center in Roanoke County, VA
  - 76,000-square-foot, county-owned facility that opened in 2010
  - Has an indoor pool with water features, running track, gymnasium, fitness and aerobic rooms, child care and activity rooms, spacious locker rooms with private showers, and an outdoor aquatic area

# ECONOMICS

## Recreational Destination Examples

### Private Sector

- Private sector example #1: Fore Kicks, Norfolk, MA
  - 85,000-square-foot indoor “sports megaplex” with 7 indoor sports arenas on 3 different surfaces
  - Multiple sports including indoor golf driving range, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, basketball, volleyball, golf, ultimate frisbee, baseball, softball, etc.
  - Indoor golf driving range
  - Laser tag facility
  - Adult and youth sports academies
  - Now in 2 more locations



Fore Kicks, Norfolk, MA

- Private sector example #2: Soccer City Sports Center, Wilbraham, MA
  - 44,000-square foot training facility with 4 turfed athletic fields suitable for soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, baseball, and football
  - Youth and adult soccer leagues, youth training programs, camps
- Considerations for recreational facilities
  - Needs and interests of local users – see recent Recreation Committee survey
  - Programming & facilities should not compete with existing public or private resources
  - Potential partnerships - location near schools a plus
  - Market analysis, a sound business plan, financial feasibility - critical



Soccer City Sports Center, Wilbraham, MA

# NEXT STEPS

Identify ways of moving forward and implementing ideas  
that will benefit the community



# NEXT STEPS

## Public Space

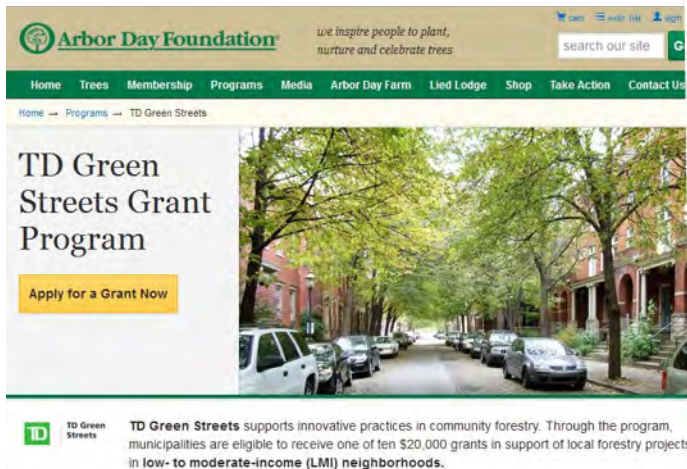
- Start building momentum – ALTA is coming
- Restriping for traffic calming & on-street parking
- Temporary parks coordinated with programming & public art



# GET STARTED

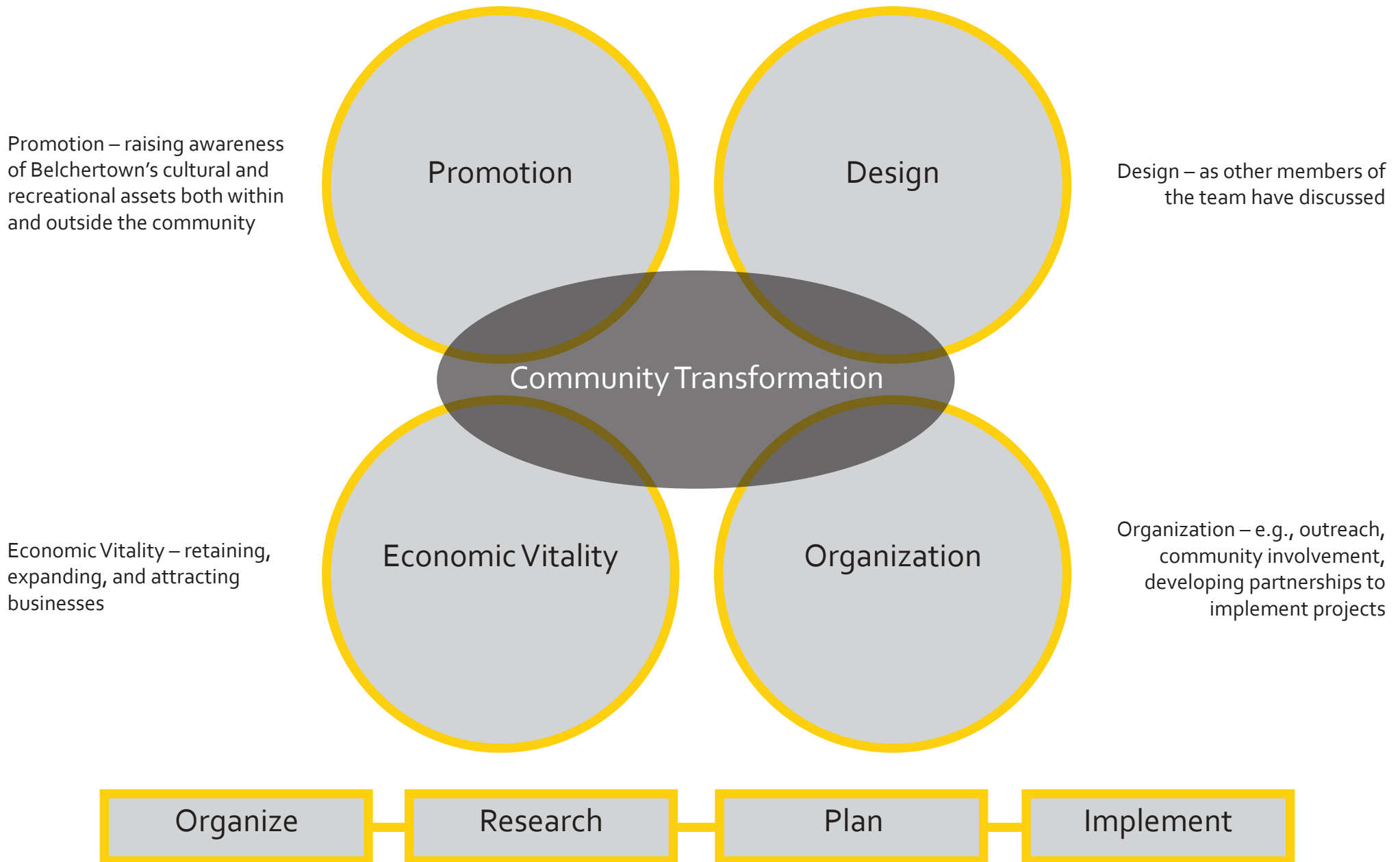
## Green

- Neighborhood tree plantings
- Green infrastructure demonstration project
  - Parking lot retrofits
  - Municipal building retrofits
  - Green roof bus stops
- Green improvements + gateways/wayfinding
- Pavement to parks



# NEXT STEPS

## Town Center Four-Point Approach



# NEXT STEPS

## Regulatory Changes

### Regulatory Actions

- Review subdivision and zoning regulations to better support pedestrians and cyclists
  - See resource: "Commentary on Updating Subdivision Regulations in Massachusetts" – The Trustees of Reservation
- Review zoning regulations to protect agricultural land
  - Currently allow residential single-unit dwellings in AG-A zone—the town's prime farmland.
- Petition state to transfer Lampson Brook Farm land to the town or other mission-oriented organization
- Participate in MassDOT's Complete Streets program to get access to funding
- Continue application of Commercial Design Guidelines
- Include trails in open space plans to make them eligible for funding

### Subdivision Regulations: Street Trees

- **"Where, in the opinion of the Planning Board, the existing trees to remain are not adequate, provisions for two street trees per lot may be required for each lot. Species, size and planting procedures shall be approved, in writing, by the Planning Board. Street trees shall be planted at an average interval of 50 30 feet on both sides of the street separating individual trees or at an interval required by the Planning Board."**



### Subdivision Regulations: Sidewalks

- **"Bituminous Cement concrete sidewalks shall be constructed on one both sides of the roadway when contiguous with other town sidewalks or if required by the Planning Board. The Planning Board may require sidewalks to encourage pedestrian activity and provide more security for pedestrians."**
- "Be a minimum of **four** five feet in width."

### Subdivision Regulations: Sidewalks

- Sidewalks should extend across driveways
  - E.G. "Where driveway aprons cross cement concrete sidewalks, aprons shall also be constructed with cement concrete to create continuity with sidewalk areas."
- Create mix use, commercial, and industrial subdivisions sidewalk standards

|                                                                      | Residential Yield Street                                              | Mixed Use Commercial and Industrial |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Sidewalk (cement concrete only, including where it crosses driveway) | 5' wide on one side. Both sides required if traffic counts >X per day | 6' wide on both sides               |
| Crosswalks                                                           | Raised to elevation of sidewalk                                       | Raised to elevation of sidewalk     |

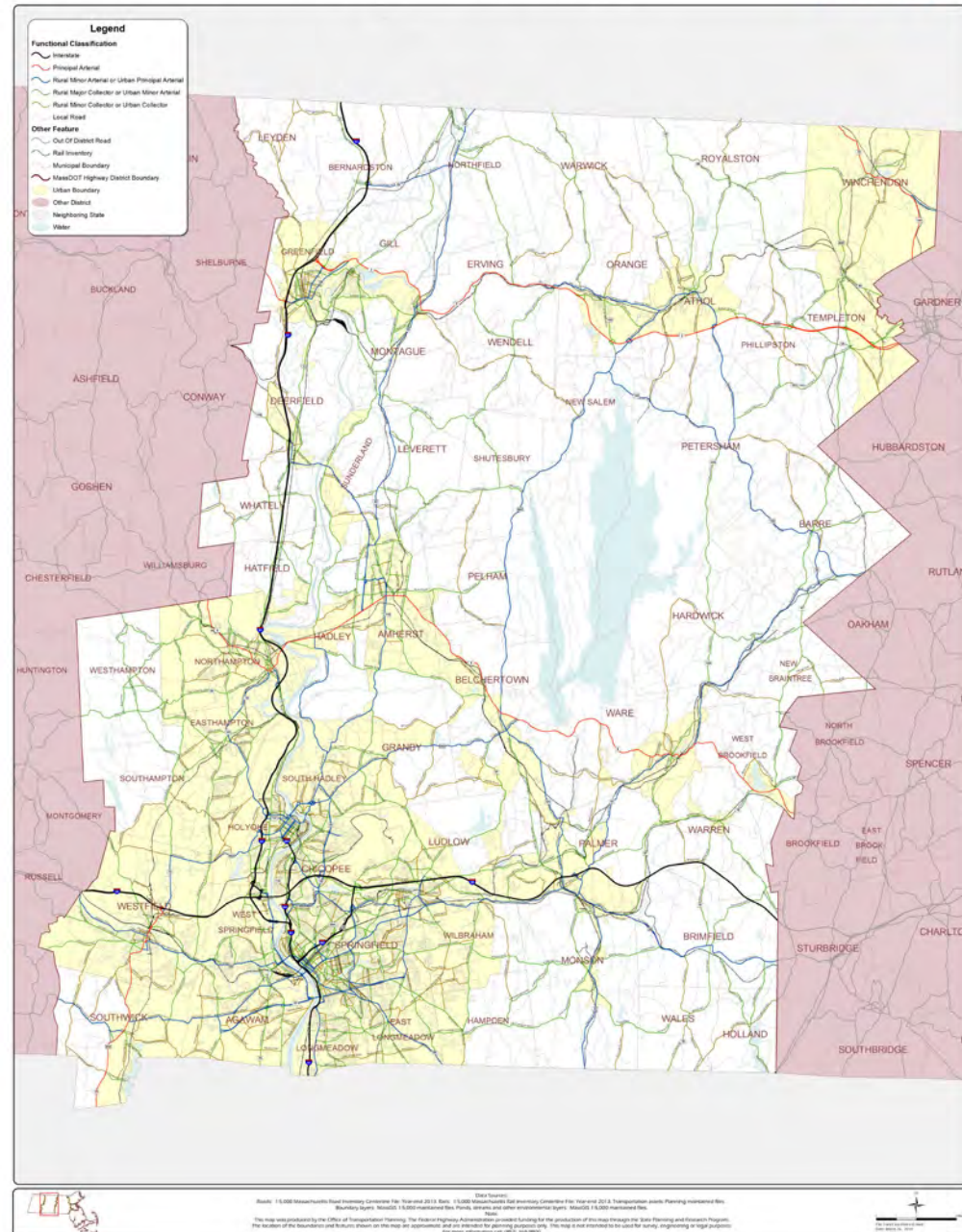
# NEXT STEPS

## Adopt Complete Streets Policy

### Functional Classification of Roads in District 2



- Mass DOT Complete Streets Funding Program
  - To be eligible for up to \$50,000 in technical assistance and up to \$400,000 in construction funding, a municipality must meet three primary requirements:
    - Attendance of a municipal employee at a Complete Streets training
    - Passage of a Complete Streets Policy
    - Development of a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan
- Upon completion of these requirements, municipality is eligible for construction funds



# NEXT STEPS

## First 100 Days

| Action      | Target                                            | Responsible Party                                    |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Install     | State St./ Rte. 202 wayfinding signs              | Belchertown DPW                                      |
| Advance     | Rte 202 design concepts                           | Alta Design with Belchertown DPW and Planning        |
| Design      | State Street tactical urbanism                    | Alta Design                                          |
| Adopt       | MassDOT complete streets policy                   | Belchertown DPW                                      |
| Adopt       | Walk-friendly subdivision regulations             | Belchertown Planning                                 |
| Draft       | Walk-friendly zoning site plan standards          | Belchertown Planning                                 |
| Draft       | NEFSI Zoning district for only farming uses       | Belchertown Planning                                 |
| Request     | Umass Landscape Architecture Town Commons Studio  | Belchertown Planning and Select Board                |
| Second Look | At the three state school buildings               | Belchertown IDIC with Belchertown Planning           |
| File        | Legislation-transfer ownership Lampson Brook Farm | Belchertown Select Board with legislative delagation |

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

---

## **Wayne Feiden, FAICP**

Wayne Feiden is Director of Planning and Sustainability for Northampton, MA and a part-time Lecturer of Practice at the University of Massachusetts. He led Northampton to earn the nation's first 5-STAR Community rating for sustainability and the highest "Commonwealth Capital" score, the former Massachusetts scoring of municipal sustainability efforts, as well as "Bicycle-Friendly," "Pedestrian-Friendly," "APA Great Streets," and "National Historic Trust Distinctive Communities" designations. In this role, he has helped address transportation, amenities, land use and other aspects of downtown revitalization. Wayne's areas of interest include downtown and urban revitalization, multi-modal transportation, open space preservation, sustainability and resiliency, and assessing sustainability. Wayne has also led or served on 25 design assessment teams as well as other assessment efforts from Vermont to Haiti. He has authored American Planning Association PAS Reports on Local Agency Planning Management (in press), Assessing Sustainability, Planning Issues of Onsite and Decentralized Wastewater, and Performance Guarantees. Wayne's German Marshall Fund fellowship (Northern Ireland, England and Denmark), Fulbright Specialist fellowships (South Africa and New Zealand), and Eisenhower Fellowship (Hungary) all focused on urban revitalization and sustainability. Wayne is a fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planning. His other awards include honorary member of Western Mass AIA, professional planner and advocacy planner awards from APA-MA, and American Trails Advocacy Award.

## **Jon Ford, P.E.**

Jon has 17 years of experience and is a Registered Professional Engineer in seven states. Jon is a recognized leader in the area of traditional neighborhood design. Prior to joining HW, this focus and a devotion to interdisciplinary collaboration led Jon to found Morris Beacon Design in 2006 as a New Urbanist civil engineering and planning resource firm. Jon is a 2006 Knight Fellow in Community Building at the University of Miami's School of Architecture, a co-founder of the New England Chapter of the Congress for the New Urbanism, and on the faculty of the Form-Based Codes Institute. Jon's project designs have won numerous local and national awards, including a CNU Charter Award Honorable Mention, the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence, and the Boston Society of Landscape Architects Honor Award.

## **Leah Bamberger**

Mayor Jorge O. Elorza appointed Leah Bamberger as the Director of Sustainability for Providence, RI in April 2015. Leah brings a wealth of experience in municipal sustainability efforts. She previously managed the City of Boston's citywide sustainability initiative, Greenovate Boston. In this role, she worked on policy and community engagement, and led the development of the City's 2014 Climate Action Plan. Prior to this position, Leah served as a consultant to a variety of local and regional governments and nonprofits in the northeast, supporting their climate and sustainability planning work.

The Sustainability Director's responsibilities include identifying opportunities to reduce the City's energy costs, working with community groups, residents, and businesses to implement the City's first comprehensive sustainability action plan, transitioning residents to the Recycle Together program, and other projects. Leah has a B.A. from the College of Charleston in Political Science and Environmental Studies and a Masters in Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She resides in the West End neighborhood.

## **Michael Cavanaugh, AIA, LEED AP**

Mike Cavanaugh is CannonDesign's sustainability leader, responsible for ensuring our firm continues to integrate sustainability into all facets of our business. Mike has demonstrated expertise as architect and technical leader on an array of technically complex healthcare, higher education, and laboratory projects, infusing sustainability strategies – big and small – throughout the design process. In recent years, Mike has been the project architect for a key pharmaceutical research complex near Boston and also served as process leader to implement process improvement efforts in seven of CannonDesign's offices. Mike will continue to work with CannonDesign leaders and clients to align goals and further integrate sustainability into our design efforts. He will also champion the firm's commitment to the AIA 2030 challenge and other key industry metrics.

## **Ellen Morosoff Pemrick**

Ellen Morosoff Pemrick is Principal of E.M. Pemrick and Company, a consulting firm based in Saratoga County, New York. Established in 2006, the firm offers community and economic development planning services to communities and organizations. It often collaborates with various partners, such as land use planners, site selectors, and engineering firms, adding a market-based perspective to standard planning engagements. E.M. Pemrick and Company combines technical expertise in economic development and market analysis with a strong commitment to enhancing the vitality and success of client communities. Ellen has more than 25 years of experience in economic development, community planning, and policy analysis. Prior to establishing E.M. Pemrick and Company, Ellen held long-term positions with two private consulting firms. She also spent five years at a legislative commission where she conducted research and developed recommendations for the New York State Assembly on workforce needs and education and training programs. Ellen has a Master of Regional Planning degree, with a Concentration in Economic and Community Development, from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and a BA in Sociology from the State University of New York College at Purchase.

# PROJECT STAFF

---

## **Joel Mills**

### **Director, Center for Communities by Design**

Joel Mills is Director of the American Institute for Architects' Center for Communities by Design. The Center is a leading provider of pro bono technical assistance and participatory planning for community sustainability. Its processes have been modeled successfully in the United States and across Europe. The Center has been the recipient of a numerous awards recognizing its impact. In 2010, the Center was named Organization of the Year by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) for its impact on communities and contributions to the field. In 2013, the Center received a Power of A Award from the Center for Association Leadership, and a Facilitation Impact Award, given by the International Association of Facilitators. Joel's 20-year career has been focused on strengthening civic capacity and civic institutions around the world. This work has helped millions of people participate in democratic processes, visioning efforts, and community planning initiatives. In the United States, Joel has worked with over 100 communities, leading participatory initiatives and collaborative processes that have facilitated community-generated strategies on a host of issues.

## **Erin Simmons AIA,**

### **Design Assistance, Center for Communities by Design**

Erin Simmons is the Director of Design Assistance at the Center for Communities by design at the American Institute of Architects in Washington, DC. Her primary role at the AIA is to provide process expertise, facilitation and support for the Center's sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT ) and Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT ) programs. In this capacity, she works with AIA components, members, partner organizations and community members to provide technical design assistance to communities across the country. Through its design assistance programs, the AIA has worked in 200 communities across 47 states. In 2010, the Center was named Organization of the Year by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) for its impact on communities and contributions to the field. Erin is a leading practitioner of the design assistance process. Her portfolio includes work in over 70 communities across the United States. A frequent lecturer on the subject of creating livable communities and sustainability, Erin contributed to the recent publication "Assessing Sustainability: A guide for Local Governments". Prior to joining the AIA, Erin worked as historic preservationist and architectural historian for an environmental and engineering firm in Georgia, where she practiced preservation planning, created historic district design guidelines and zoning ordinances, conducted historic resource surveys, and wrote property nominations for the National Register of Historic Places. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Florida State University and a Master's degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Georgia.

## **Dylan Zingg, BSLA**

Dylan is a soon to be graduate of landscape architecture from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. With a concentration in the landscape he is in constant exploration for knowledge and experience crossing over the boundaries that separate the various modes of design. Experience in architecture, urban design, furniture design, and graphic design has given him a unique set of skills to be applied to design at all scales. Recognized for his ability to represent ideas graphically, he was chosen by Wayne Feiden to compile the final report for 'Three Villages and a Farm' the Belchertown, MA DART. Dylan worked closely with the DART members during their time in Belchertown, helping them find ways of expressing their findings and assessments graphically in a way that is clear, concise, and can be referenced by the people of Belchertown for years to come as they reach for resilient practices.

# THANK YOU

---

Residents and Staff



Douglas Albertson | Stephen Williams | LeeAnn Connolly | Judy Metcalf | Sarah Bankert  
Caitlen Marquis | Pat Berry | Bill Terry | Kurt Steven | Judy Gillan

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# THREE VILLAGES & A FARM BELCHERTOWN BEYOND

Design & Resiliency Team: American Institute of Architects and  
The New England Municipal Sustainability Network

