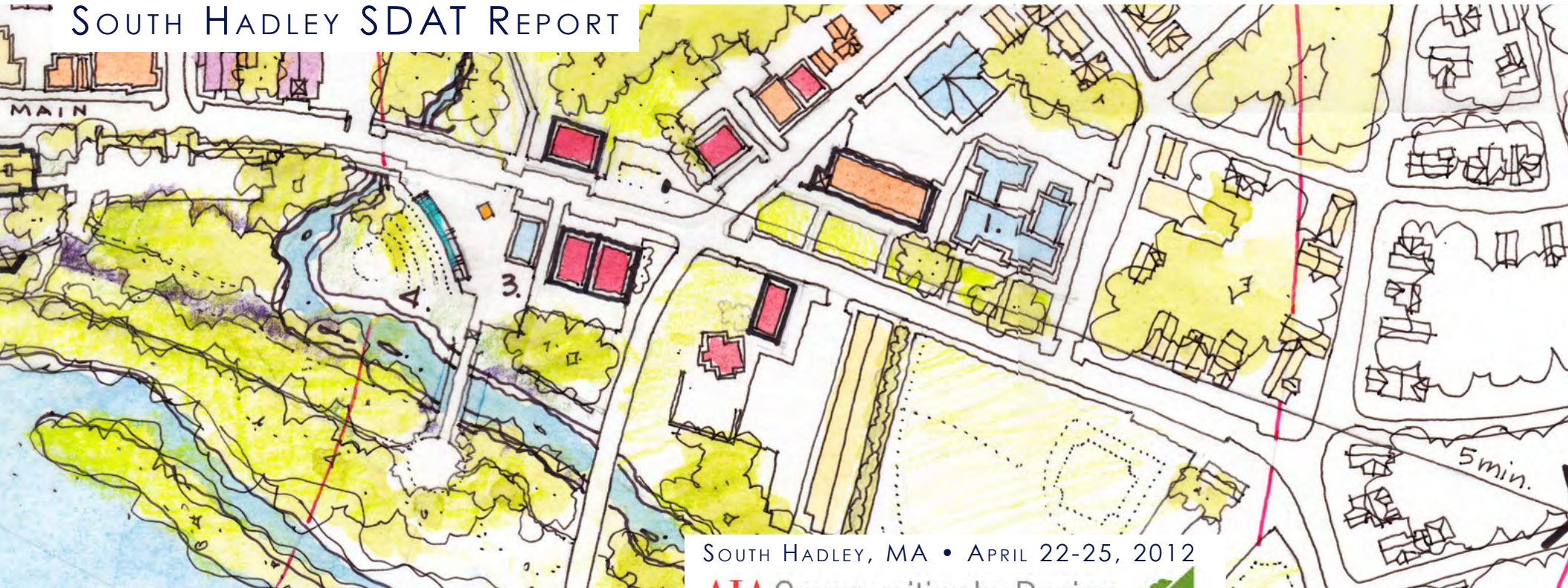


SOUTH HADLEY SDAT REPORT



SOUTH HADLEY, MA • APRIL 22-25, 2012

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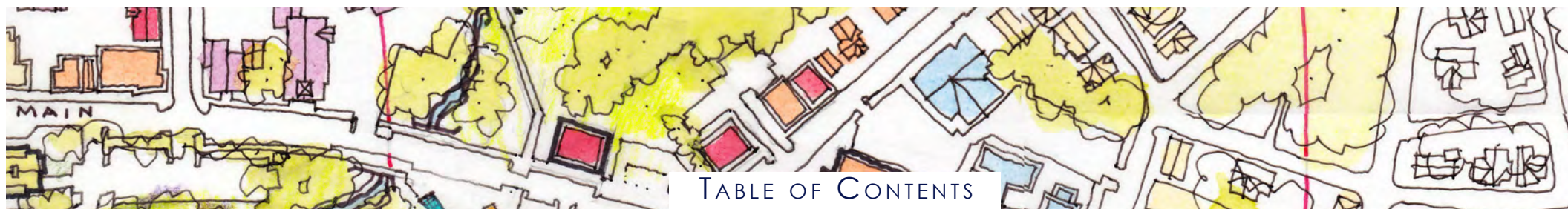


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INTRODUCTION

THE DESIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

With nearly 300 state and local chapters and over 76,000 members, the American Institute of Architects serves as the voice of the architecture profession and the resource for its members in service to society. The AIA has a 44-year history of public service work. Through the Center for Communities by Design, the AIA has engaged over 1,000 professionals from more than 30 disciplines, ultimately providing millions of dollars in professional pro bono services to more than 200 communities across the country, and engaging thousands of participants in community-driven planning processes. Its projects have led to some of the most recognizable places in America, such as the Embarcadero in San Francisco and the Santa Fe Railyard Redevelopment. In 2010, the AIA received the *Organization of the Year* Award from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), recognizing its program impact on communities and contributions to the field.



- **Regional and Urban Design Assistance Teams (R/UDAT):** Created in 1967, the AIA's R/UDAT program pioneered the modern charrette process by combining multi-disciplinary teams in dynamic, multi-day grassroots processes to produce community visions, action plans and recommendations.
- **Sustainable Design Assessment Teams (SDAT):** In 2005, in response to growing interest and concern about local sustainability planning, the AIA launched a companion program to the R/UDAT that allowed it to make a major institutional investment in public service work to assist communities in developing policy frameworks and long term sustainability plans. During the first 7 years of the SDAT program, the Center for Communities by Design has worked with over 50 towns, cities and regions.



The Center's Design Assistance Team programs operate with three guiding principles:

- **Multi-disciplinary Expertise.** Each project is designed as a customized approach to community assistance that incorporates local realities and the unique challenges and assets of each community. As a result, each design assistance team includes a multi-disciplinary focus and a systems approach to assessment and recommendations, incorporating and examining cross-cutting topics and relationships between issues. In order to accomplish this task, the Center forms multi-disciplinary teams that combine a range of disciplines and professions in an integrated assessment and design process.
- **Enhanced Objectivity.** The goal of the design assistance team program is to provide communities with a framework for action. Consequently, each project team is constructed with the goal of bringing an objective perspective to the community that is outside of the normal politics of public discussion. Team members are deliberately selected from geographic regions outside of the host community, and national AIA teams are typically representative of a wide range of community settings. Team members all agree to serve pro bono, and do not engage in business development activity in association with their service. They do not serve a particular client. The team's role is to provide an independent analysis and unencumbered technical advice that serves the public interest.
- **Public Participation.** The AIA has a four-decade tradition of designing community-driven processes that incorporate substantial public input through a multi-faceted format that includes public workshops, small group sessions, stakeholder interviews, formal meetings and presentations. This approach allows the national team to build on the substantial local expertise already present and available within the community and leverage the best existing knowledge available in formulating its recommendations.

THE SOUTH HADLEY SDAT PROCESS

In November 2011, South Hadley, Massachusetts submitted an application to the American Institute of Architects for a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) project. As the application stated:



“This project unquestionably reflects our aspirations for the future of South Hadley Falls, a community that in many ways mirrors the larger history of the United States from its colonial origins to the post-industrial present. We are optimistic that with the help of the SDAT Program, we can bring together preservation and development, the natural and the built

environment to stimulate revitalization of this unique place. Our project title, The Rise of the Falls, expresses this aspiration.”

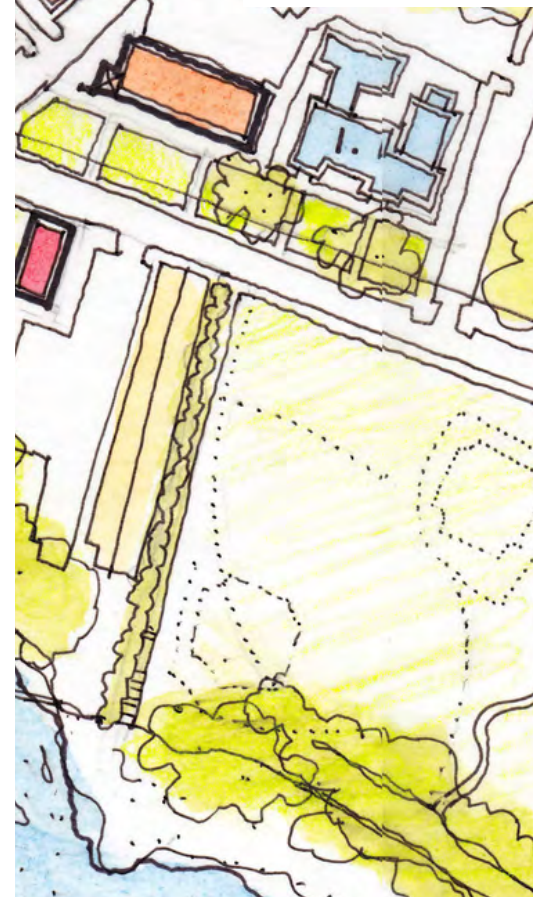
The application was accepted in December, and in February 2012, an initial visit to the community was conducted to determine the project scope and identify the expertise needed for the project. In April 2012, a six-member SDAT team conducted a three-day charrette with the community to assess current conditions, listen to resident input, analyze constraints and opportunities, and form a series of key recommendations for the Town moving forward. The charrette process included tours of the project area, targeted meetings with public officials and stakeholders, a public workshop, and studio design sessions. Hundreds of residents and local stakeholders participated in the process. At the conclusion of the charrette, the team presented its recommendations at a community meeting.

The following report contains a narrative summary of the team’s findings, with additional information and resources.





THE BIG PICTURE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Hadley Falls is a place unique in western Massachusetts. While having a related history with Holyoke and other mill towns along the Connecticut River, it never developed the density that other towns did. However, it retains individual components of each phase of its varied history, from the canal, to paper mills, to power generation, to a government center. After the first bridge was built connecting Holyoke and the Falls in 1872, there was an increase in the Falls population. That connection remains a strong one today and should be capitalized upon.

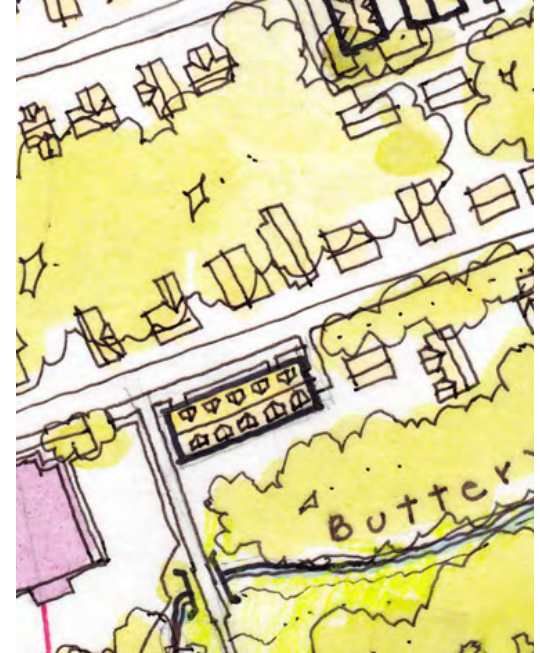
In recent years, South Hadley has been involved in a variety of planning activities. The Town is currently implementing the 2010 Master Plan and preparing to revise its zoning bylaws. It also recently had University of Massachusetts students prepare background assessments of South Hadley and the Falls. The SDAT project represents a new initiative. It was designed to engage the whole community and build collective ownership of an action plan for the future of the Falls that could produce immediate results. In April 2012, the SDAT Team shared its main recommendations in its final presentation to the community. This document expands upon those recommendations with additional detail and offers resources and information to help the community with its implementation of the plan. The report outlines some long term goals, but it also provides suggestions on how to get started *tomorrow*.

KEY AREAS OF INQUIRY

The community of South Hadley asked the SDAT team for assistance in several key areas:

- How to use the Falls' unique attributes to make it a destination for new businesses and residents.
- How to better connect the Falls with the rest of South Hadley and neighboring communities.
- How to use principles of sustainability, such as ecology, local economy and social equity to attract private investment.
- How to engage the community and facilitate public conversations and support for appropriate development.
- How to expand the current park system to increase recreational, educational, cultural and entertainment activities.
- How to increase activities for those people who are visiting Town Hall and the library.
- Finally, what to do with town-owned properties, including the Fibermark Building, the current library when the new one is built, Town Hall, and the SHEL D building.





PRESERVATION



PRESERVING THE BEST OF THE FALLS

Clearly, history continues to play a significant role in the physical makeup of South Hadley Falls. Beginning with the canal and its associated village, the Falls has developed a specific character over time that is markedly different from the rest of South Hadley. In fact, the Falls historically had a stronger visual and functional relationship with Holyoke than areas to the north. At this stage in the rehabilitation of the Falls, there are several important points to make in regard to any historic preservation efforts. This process begins with the recommendations in the South Hadley Reconnaissance Report prepared in June 2009 by the Massachusetts Dept of Conservation and Recreation. A number of these recommendations may not be practical to achieve any time soon, but a couple are key to the area's immediate rehabilitation; 1) Offer assistance and support to potential developers of the Carew mill buildings to help insure the preservation of the main building, and 2) the Falls should be placed on the National Register of Historic Places as an historic district.

At the present time, the future of the Carew mill is undetermined, though demolition is likely. This building is unique in South Hadley and a primary contributor to the unique character of the Falls. If there is any chance that a potential developer could rehabilitate the structure, for whatever use, the town government should make every effort to assist. This building could ultimately be a strong driver of heritage tourism and a key node of activity along the riverfront.

Placing The Falls Historic District on the National Register is a relatively simple act, and one that can generate significant development without placing too many regulations on property owners. A consultant will likely have to be hired to prepare the nomination, and funds found to pay for their work. (For more information see http://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm.) Once designated, no one would be required to make improvements to their buildings or to show them off to the public. However, owners of eligible contributing buildings within the district could utilize federal historic tax credits to rehabilitate their properties. This is a great tool for redevelopment of existing buildings and could help launch one or two significant adaptive reuse projects. (For more information on tax credits see <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>.) Ultimately, the community may wish to develop local design guidelines and incentives for new development in the district, but for now the National Register will give the Falls the biggest bang for the buck.



There has been significant discussion of the original canal and the potential to reconstruct part or all of it. In our opinion, while the canal was a key event in the history of the Falls, and a driver for initial development here, a reconstructed canal would have little impact on the area. The canal actually operated for a very short time and ultimately other industry along the river had a greater impact. Reconstruction would require a significant investment of funds and acquisition of current park land. The current canal is already listed on the National Register and as an artifact it contributes greatly to the park and the riverfront. Additional interpretive materials could be placed within the park to tell the story, but reconstruction would place too much emphasis on a small part of the Falls history. Ultimately, the riverfront will be more important for recreational activities than for historical reconstructions.

The residential parts of the neighborhood are significant in their own right. This is the densest collection of intact historic homes, apartments and boarding houses in South Hadley. Ultimately the community will want to offer technical assistance and incentives for the appropriate rehabilitation of these residences. This area may be considered as a separate historic district, or might easily be included as part of a larger Falls historic district. Local residents may want to begin doing research on their own properties or the neighborhood as a whole; one easy way to see the changes over the years is to look at historic fire insurance maps produced by the Sanborn Company. They were produced every 10 years or so and are available online, usually through your local library or other subscription at <http://sanborn.umi.com/>.

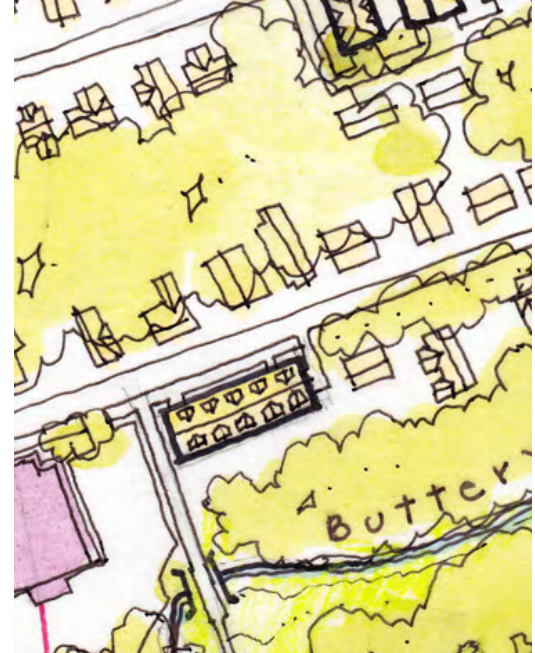
Finally, the historic buildings owned by the Town of South Hadley and other agencies should have various dispositions. Town Hall is a significant government center, and adjacent investments demonstrate that it should be retained by the town government. It could be rehabilitated as housing or for some other purpose, but it has an important presence in the Falls and is a visible landmark for citizens to participate in government. Opportunities for the appropriate rehabilitation of the building to continue as Town Hall should be researched, and a preservation plan developed to identify and prioritize projects. Grants are often available to municipalities for infrastructure improvement that don't necessarily have to be tied to historic preservation. For other public agency historic buildings, such as the SHELD building, consider offering those to private developers with the stipulation that they be rehabilitated appropriately. SHELD will ultimately be moving to another location - the Falls is not an appropriate

area for their yard, and when they do move the current building could easily be re-used for another purpose. It is in relatively good condition and a significant contributor to the Falls Historic District. The same could be done with the historic library when the new one is finished. Offer it to a private developer for adaptive reuse purposes.

Preservation Activities in Summary:

- Offer any needed assistance to developers who can save the Carew building.
- Nominate The Falls Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Interpret the original canal, but don't rebuild it.
- Provide technical assistance and incentives to rehabilitate historic housing in The Falls.
- Retain Town Hall for government use; develop a long term plan for its rehabilitation and implement it.
- Offer SHELD building and the library to private developers for adaptive re-use.





URBAN DESIGN & LAND USE



SOUTH HADLEY HAS GREAT 'BONES'

The streets, parcels and zones of activity that were laid out by the founders of South Hadley established a set of relationships along the riverfront and Main Street that can serve the community well in revitalization efforts. Developers and planners who are creating “new towns” today design them around principles of walkability and proximity of uses not unlike those that already exist in South Hadley Falls. These developers would be envious of the Falls’ relationship to the Connecticut River, its extraordinary authenticity and the variety of housing types and styles that are in the shadow of Main Street.

The diagrams illustrate a strong set of concepts focused on the “reaches of the river and Main Street zones.” There are many ways that these concepts might play out as redevelopment progresses in South Hadley Falls. Communities are living and breathing entities, and the necessity of incremental change creates a dynamic that will demand continual reference to the principles and core ideas of these concepts over time. With every new opportunity and decision facing the Falls, South Hadley should ask: how does this project, business, development or investment reinforce what we are working towards both immediately *and* long- term? The town should be *proactive*, not reactive.

It is also useful for most communities to see at least one way that these ideas might be realized if the concepts and principles were applied to actual parcels and sites within the study area. The illustrative plans can help residents visualize the possibilities and can help to begin a dialogue with decision makers, property owners and interested investors regarding what the community wants the Falls to look like. Illustrative plans are also a first step in testing the capacity of the historic downtown and in thinking about the physical relationships between anchor activities. These decisions reinforce the potential to bring activity back to the historic heart of the community and can make Main Street and the riverfront true destinations.

So, what might the “reaches of the river and Main Street” look like?





THE ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

This illustrative plan shows the Connecticut River – in blue – at the bottom (south) of the drawing. To the left is Highway 202; to the right is Highway 116; the Falls are the white zone in the River. Main Street runs parallel to the River. City Hall is the blue building to the right on Main (1) and the proposed Library is the blue building to the left (2.) The red circles show five minute and ten minute walking distances. As the plan illustrates, from the Library to Town Hall is less than a ten minute walk and many of South Hadley Falls' residential areas are within a ten minute walk of Main Street and the river.

THE GATEWAY

As we zoom into the illustrative plan, the sequence will move from East to West. The diagram to the right depicts the area around Town Hall and the primary intersection of Main Street and the Highway 116 Bridge from Holyoke. Proposed new buildings have a darker outline.

This intersection is an important gateway into all of South Hadley – not just the Falls – and is a place where strong impressions are formed about the community. With the scale of buildings and suburban placement of uses (at the far side of off-street parking) this gateway currently seems more suburban and “strip-like” than the “heart of a small town.” The diagram has illustrated some ideas that can make this gateway – long term – more civic, more commercially viable, and feel more “small town.”



The Main Street and 116 Intersection, viewed East to West

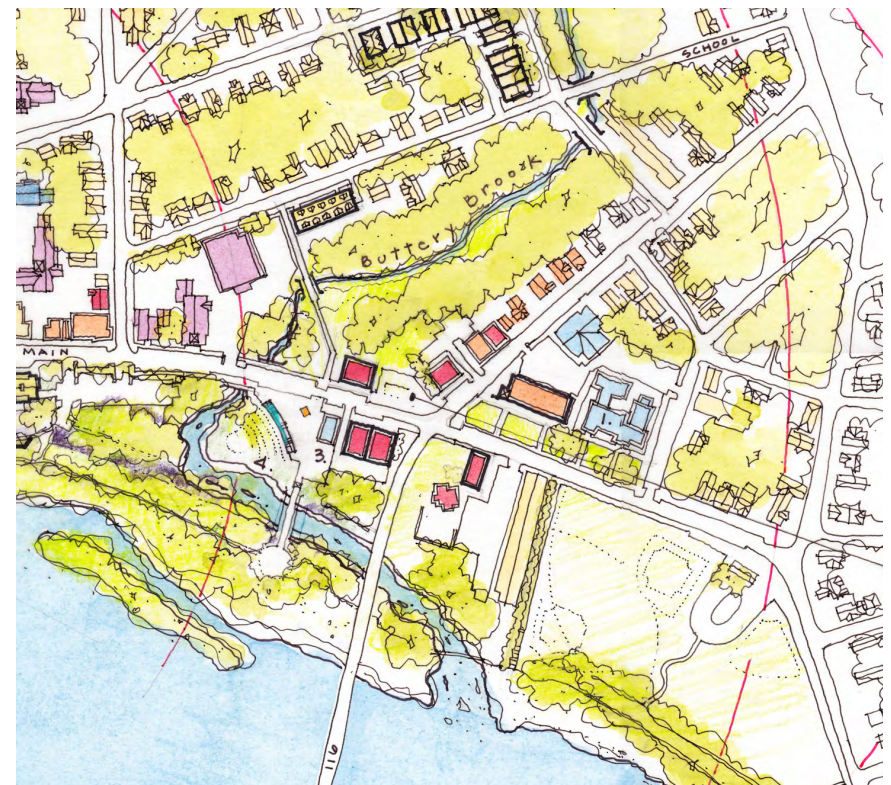
USE AND RE-USE ON THE WATERFRONT

The team recommends that town government remain in its current location. This adaptive reuse of a historic school is strong evidence of South Hadley's commitment to its history. It also is a strong indicator of an understanding that "how we build" shows "what we value." There is real significance in preserving and maintaining the legacies that were left by those who invested in creating good buildings for the contemporary institutions that represent what is important in the community.

The team does believe that it is time to invest in an interior renovation of Town Hall that can make the building more efficient for the day-to-day business and operation of South Hadley. Long-term, the team has imagined a move of some departments and services that are currently in town hall into a new building to the west (left) of Town Hall. This three story building could have Class-A offices above and ground floor retail targeted to activities and users of the Beachgrounds Park across the street. By aligning this building with the front of Town Hall, a civic green can be extended to the primary intersection (116 and Main) providing new visibility for Town Hall. This provides for a stronger civic presence at the gateway, and provides a new area for festivals, commemorative events and for ground floor cafes and restaurants to spill out with sidewalk tables - strong visible evidence that "things are happening" in South Hadley Falls.

Moving north on Bridge Street we imagine mixed-use in the existing structures with service and niche retail shops on the ground floor and residential above. These sites back-up to the proposed Buttery Brook greenway and might be attractive to businesses and shops that specialize in nature-based products, services and resources: bookstore/tools for naturalists and hikers/birders; organic herbs and botanicals; health food stores; outfitters; pet shops; and/or bicycle shops.

The sites to the west and south of this gateway are in the 100-year floodplain. Building in these sensitive areas must be done with great care. Detailed investigation of these sites should be undertaken and a strategy for building should incorporate not only slight elevation of ground floors but also the creation of retention and run-off holding areas that can off-set the potential for high water in these flood prone areas.



Day-lighting Buttery Brook can be part of this strategy; minimizing off-street parking – particularly any without permeable paving; and the use of rain-gardens and cisterns to maintain roof-runoff on site should be incorporated. Our illustrations show bringing buildings to the sidewalk with street-front, rather than off-street parking. Minimum parking and service is to the rear or along a side-alley. It is important, to create downtown vitality as well as leverage economic potential, that ground floors in this area be retail/commercial - *not* covered parking.

The businesses that are currently at this intersection are important to the community. South Hadley doesn't want to lose them, but we recommend that there are better sites in South Hadley or the Falls for these business types. Look across the entire geography of your town and seek out underutilized and/or vacant properties in locations that are better suited to automobile-oriented businesses, and work with owners/vendors to swap properties and/or relocate.



In this spirit, we are proposing that SHEL (3) moves to a new location that will better serve their needs. We would hope that a payment center could be maintained at Town Hall or in conjunction with another business so that walk-in customers are still frequenting the downtown.

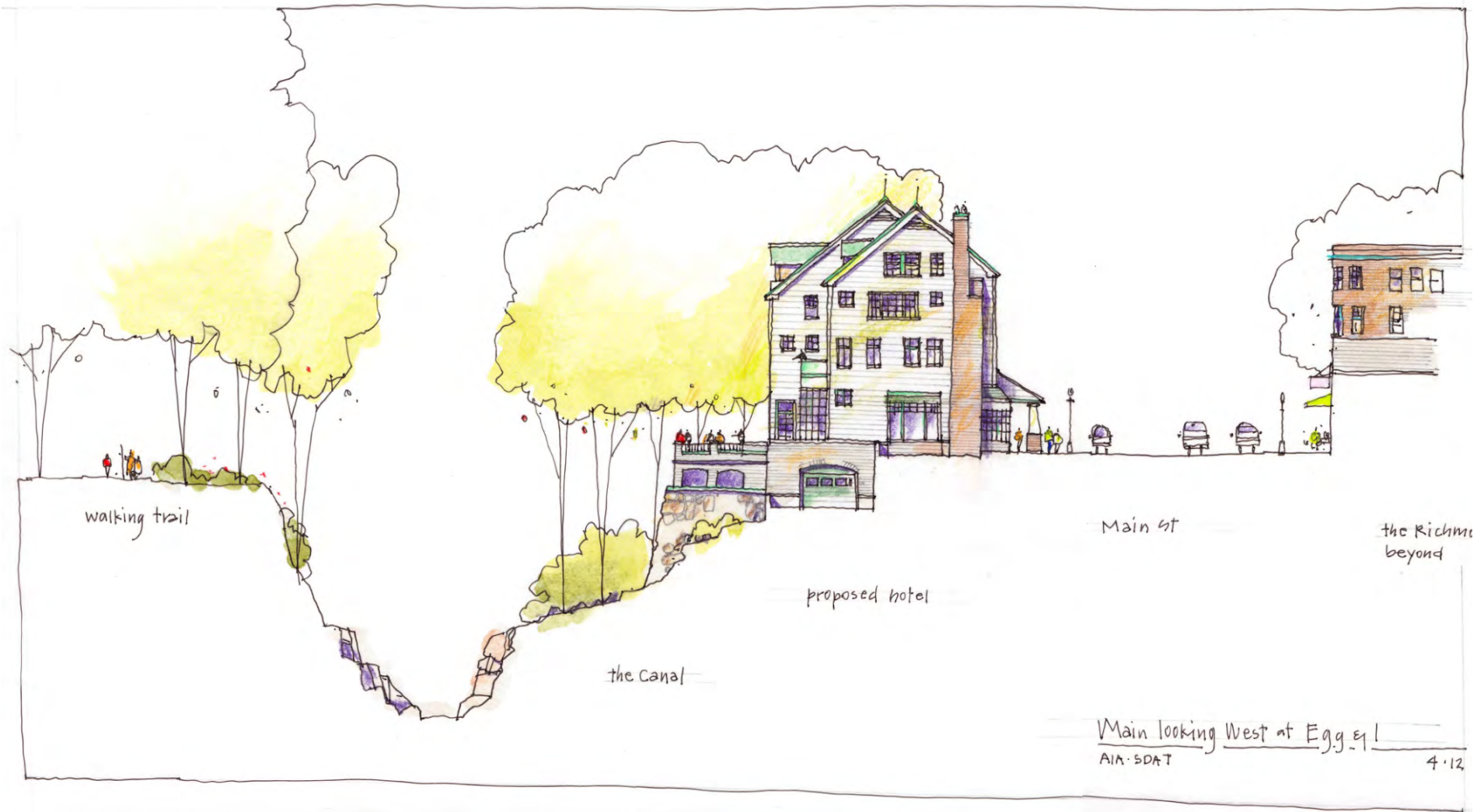
In this proposal we are imagining that the garages would be demolished to provide a site for a Canal-front Amphitheater (4.) This site has a beautiful aspect to the natural landscape along the river and could provide a significant community gathering place along Main and at the river. It anchors the south end of the Buttery Brook greenway and is imagined as a place for concerts, story-telling, history tours and nature discovery excursions from schools and Holyoke College. The old SHEL office building (3) is imagined as a Youth Center and as a new home for Youth Services. The building is not well suited for retail but could be adaptively reused for youth oriented activities, clubs, game rooms, tutoring spaces and arts/crafts areas. Youth Services could also champion the stewardship of the river park and be a primary user/programmer of the amphitheater.

To the north of Buttery Brook – along School Street – there are two under-utilized properties. One is a large parcel that was the historic site of an early school (see illustration on p. 13). The size and location of this property – E-ink is just to the north – make it valuable for a variety of developments. We are recommending a mix of new housing units, including row houses, town houses, duplexes and cottages. A proposed new street through the property creates a stronger set of east-west connections for walking and vehicular circulation through this part of town. The property on the south side of School Street is proposed as a two-three story apartment building – we’re illustrating dormers and an integrity of building that compliments the cohesive residential character across the street. Each of these sites is adjacent to the greenway, in walking distance of Main Street, the river and considerable recreation. This type of residential can be very attractive to young families, retirees and empty nesters who want to down-size but stay in the neighborhood where they have raised their family. New construction in locations like these are also attractive to families who want to live within the fabric of a historic neighborhood but are not interested in an older home or a “fixer-upper.”

Moving down Main Street, we zoom in on the historic birthplace of South Hadley. Historic Sanborn maps indicate that the town started on this high ground with many original retail/commercial and residential uses along Main and North Main. North Main is home to two of the town's most beautiful churches (in purple), the Masonic Hall (blue building on the right side of North Main) and the Fire House Museum (blue building on the left side of North Main.) The Richmond apartment building at the NE corner of Main and North Main is a beautiful example of buildings of the early 20th century. We are imagining additional residential/mixed-use buildings on the two blocks to the west of Main and N. Main. One would replace the park along-side the Firehouse Museum – we've proposed that the park would move across the street to the Riverfront park overlooking the historic canal (6); and the other replaces the existing car wash. Like other uses in this historic core of town, we think there are other good places in town for a car wash and that this site has higher and better potential for residential apartments/condos. These housing units have the potential for spectacular views of the river and riverfront park. Ground floor uses might include laundries (perhaps relocate the laundry next to the Egg and I (a), shoe repair, barber shops, etc. Recruit additional food/eating establishments to the store fronts adjacent to the Egg and I (a.) Some of these might augment the small market (illustrated in red just north of the Egg and I) by providing specialty produce, local cheeses, honey, meats, and other goods.

We have maintained the parking area on the south side of Main. Nested in the trees, the scale of this parking is compatible with this part of town. Long-term, this site is ideal for additional mixed-use that builds capacity in this part of the downtown.



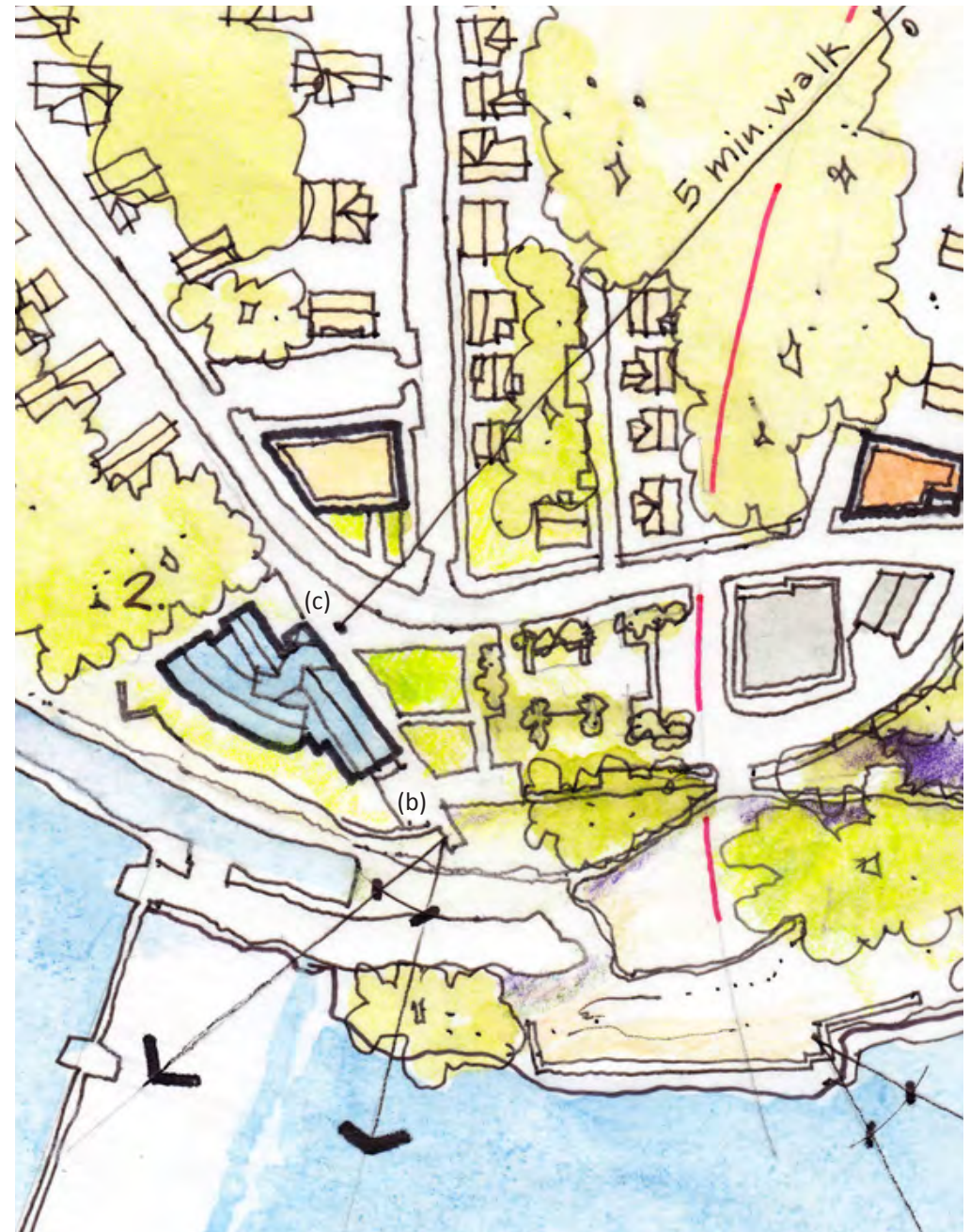


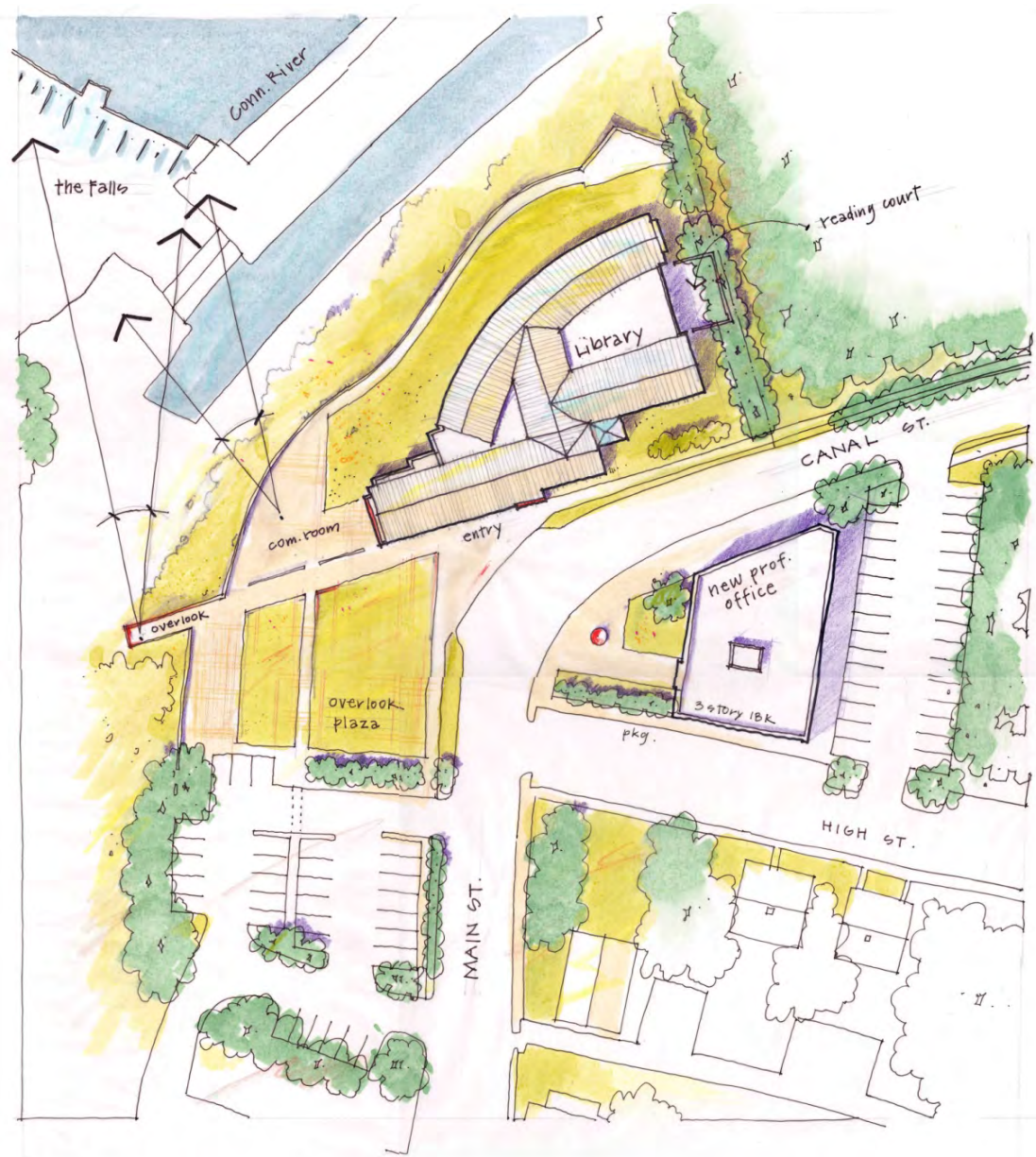
To the west of this parking we are proposing a downtown Inn (5.) This specialty lodging should be distinctive in character and promote its exceptional location along the historic canal and riverfront. The ground floor of the building can have a “white table cloth” restaurant with outside seating overlooking the canal and riverfront trail.

Lodging in a downtown helps to support commercial activity and a sense of vitality by bringing in more people who need food, entertainment and places to spend time and money at nights and on weekends.

This site also anchors one of the primary gateways into the riverfront park and Trail. Having people at this gateway 24/7 provides a strong sense of security and safety to all those who will use the riverfront.

Finally, the team would like to address the proposed library site (2.) We think this is a great location for the new library. Creating an activity center and anchor at the west end of the downtown core is important. It also makes one of the most beautiful and significant viewpoints along the river accessible to everyone. We have proposed nudging the building to the north-west. This relocation places a public plaza and overlooks adjacent to the community rooms in the building, and with prospects that look into the drama of the falls (b). This site shift is facilitated by a re-alignment (c) of the adjacent street: softening the curve and adding frontage to the library site.





Library Site Study

AIA S/DAT 9.2012

A reading court is maintained on the quieter “above the falls” side of the library. It is now nestled under the buffer of trees for shade. The relocation also allows for the library and its front door to visually be at the “head” of the street. Canal Street is visually terminated by the overlook plaza, as is High Street.

This illustration investigates alternative uses for the Fibermark site. We are proposing that the existing building be demolished. Its deferred maintenance and history of ad hoc renovations have resulted in a building that would be expensive to renovate. The size and shape of the existing building is also not conducive to a number of adaptive reuses. The floor plate is too deep for uses such as residential and does not allow for flexible/agile patterns of subdivision that could meet a variety of office rental needs.

It would always be Class B office space, at best. The more expedient and economical route would be to demolish the building and sub-divide the site to accommodate some of the parking needed for peak library use as well as a future 3-story, 18,000 square foot building with a foot plate that is very flexible. This building could be developed as a public-private partnership to meet market demands. Its size and foot print are very compatible with either residential or office uses. New construction would allow for Class A space with an exceptional location. The adjacent parking can also initiate a downtown policy of shared rather than use-specific parking. This strategy makes for much more efficient use of parking that acknowledges patterns of use that shift throughout the day and week.

We are recommending that the historic Carnegie Library transition to a use that reinforces its location imbedded along a residential street. We imagine it as the home to a civic club, historical society or a bed and breakfast that could use the restored vaulted ceiling room of the library for teas, receptions and small weddings.

Field School

We have imagined that the new library could be an incubation site for a field school that brings a scientific and learning agenda to your Riverfront Park and trails. The area along the river is home to significant flora and fauna and aquatic life and could be the trail-head for a focus of studies that attracts scientists, faculty and students from across the region. This focus also celebrates the natural characteristics of your special place along the river and distinguishes you from other riverfront developments but does not negate the need to make the riverfront accessible and a destination. The uses are supportive and reinforce one another. In fact, a field school makes the preservation, stewardship and protection of the riverfront a highly visible value and priority of South Hadley. The field school could be another opportunity for joint ventures between your Five Colleges and could be an excellent way for secondary and post-secondary education to work together. As the school matures and grows, a site along the river might be developed for a small building – with exemplary sustainable design – that functions as a learning center and field school. An adjacent youth hostel would be an interesting supporting use. Long-term, the site to the west of Beachgrounds Park might be an excellent choice for this school.



DESIGN MATTERS

While the field school is an obvious place to highlight sustainable design, all construction and renovation should strive to the highest standards of sustainable design and energy efficiency. Quality of construction saves money – long-term – and signals a confidence in the future of your community. Design guidelines can encourage this commitment to buildings that contribute to the character and quality of your community. Design guidelines simply ask buildings, site plans and open spaces to “have good manners” and respect the ensemble that helps to create a sense of place. Design guidelines should not dictate a “style” but rather should speak to scale, proportions, quality of construction, siting, signage, and materials. You do not want a “pseudo New England” town. You want a town that is evidence of buildings of every era that are good neighbors and respectful of the good buildings that were built in previous eras.

Compatible downtown uses don’t just happen

Walkable and distinctive/authentic downtowns have a scale of businesses and mix of uses that are focused on the “speed of walking.” Interesting window displays, lots of variety of shops, eateries and services are part of what attracts people to spend time (and money) in a vibrant downtown.

“Box retail” and automobile oriented businesses are necessary and important in a community. They provide for many of the things we need day-to-day. But many of these uses are not compatible with a walkable downtown. They require large amounts of parking, numerous curb cuts and target the “speed of the car” in their signage and scale. Find good places at the edge of your community and in existing retail centers for these uses. In the historic downtown recruit uses/vendors/retailers that thrive on the pace of a walking customer. Develop a strategy (and inventory of available space/sites) that let you work with every business that wants to be in your town. Know where their best fit will be in your community and aggressively market your town to the businesses that you need to create a critical mass of places to shop and eat and patronize in South Hadley Falls. Notice that patronization is a critical component of success for businesses in a small downtown. South Hadley’s citizens *must* develop a sense of loyalty and responsibility to these local businesses and *shop locally*.

Also consider redefining “the delivery” of some retail services. For instance, we heard much about the need for a market in the historic core. A contemporary super market would not be a good fit for the historic downtown. But, a series of specialty markets could – collectively – provide the same selection without the big-box characteristics of a super market. Some downtowns are establishing co-ops that deliver a multitude of day-to-day items within a small store front; many of these work with local farmers and growers and feature specialty items of the region.

Parking

There is always a perception that there is not enough parking – particularly in historic downtowns. Part of this perception is reinforced by an expectation developed in strip centers where parking is clumped together in large anonymous lots. Parking in downtowns is - and should be - along the street and in small scattered lots that are distributed throughout the town. Downtowns thrive *because* you walk from your parking spot to your destination and pass other shops and businesses that can entice you to come in and buy something. On-street parking makes for safer walking – buffering the pedestrian from moving traffic and slowing traffic down as people pull in and out of parking spaces. Slower traffic is not only safer (for pedestrians and other drivers) but also allows for seeing what’s displayed in a window or where a neighbor has lingered to visit with a fellow shopper. This pattern of shopping and doing business contributes to a stronger sense of community.

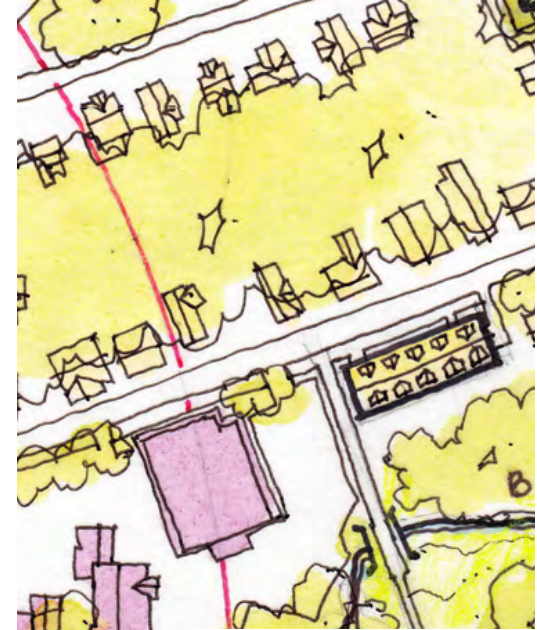
Shared parking between uses helps to reduce the total number of needed parking spaces and acknowledges the diverse patterns of use/need throughout the day and week. Reducing parking to the absolute minimum also encourages people to walk and/or bike – reducing trips and the overall impact of cars and moving traffic in your pedestrian oriented downtown. Good wayfinding and signage can help people find small scattered site lots.

Long-term, you might consider working with the Catholic Church to develop a small deck on their Main Street property – to help accommodate their parish and worshipers – and also to provide overflow and festival parking for the downtown.

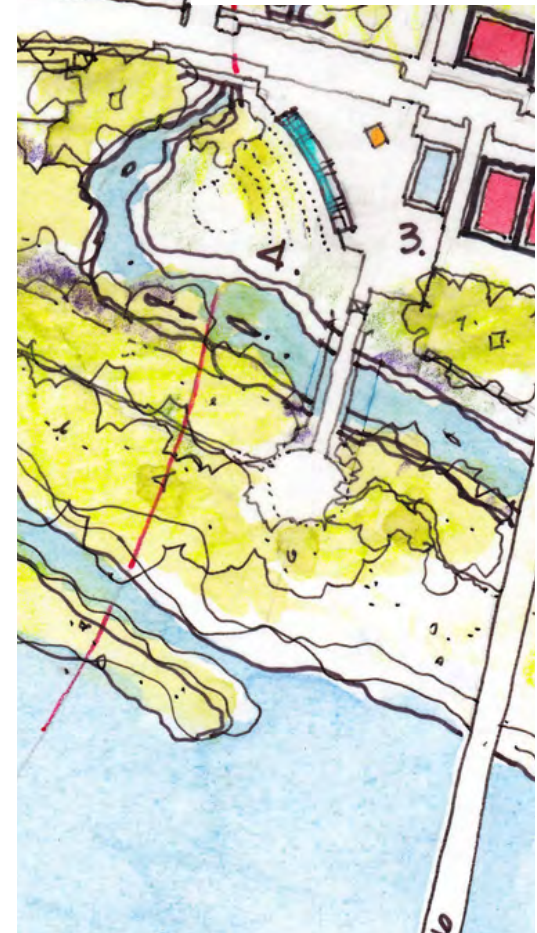
Authentic Places

South Hadley Falls is “real” in so many wonderful and authentic ways. As you recruit, re-invest, and revitalize the Falls be true to the things that contribute to this character. Your good historic buildings were true to their time: well built, of local materials and with an articulation that gave them texture and character and human scale. Within that pallet there is much variety of style. You do not want a downtown that is homogenized, gentrified or “disney-fied.” You also do not want to incrementally become a “strip center” that is car-centric with parking lots defining the front door of every establishment. The guiding principles of this work knit the town back to the riverfront and focuses on a concentration of reinforcing uses that – together – create the vibrancy and attraction that bring people to your downtown and riverfront.





CONNECTIVITY

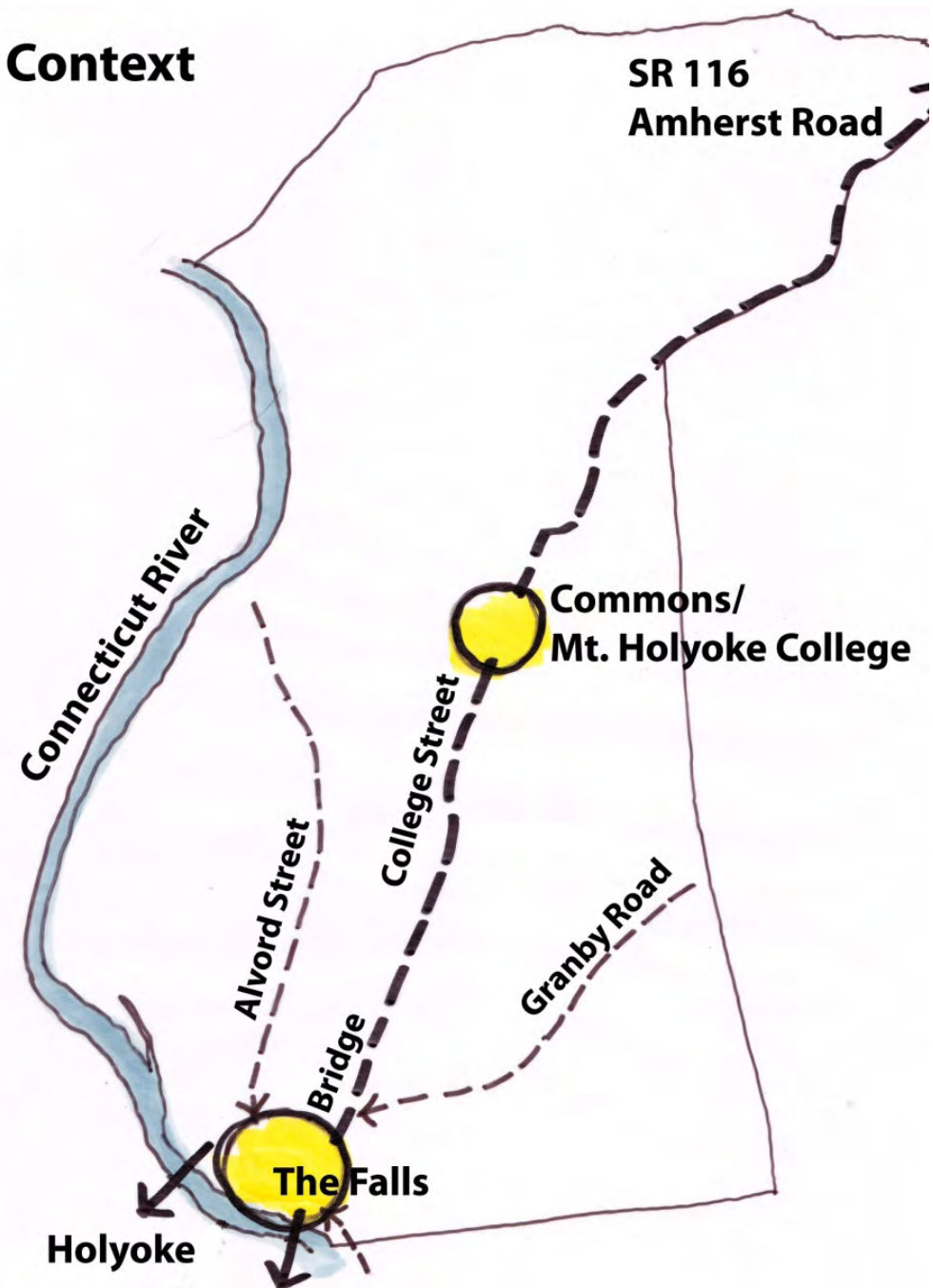


LOCAL CONTEXT

Today, the industry along the Connecticut River in South Hadley Falls is gone and remnants of the canal stand as testimony to the rich industrial heritage of the area. The relationship with the waterfront has been diminished and there is little to instill an awareness of the presence of the river. Although commercial and industrial activities in South Hadley Falls have all but disappeared, the community possesses many elements that can enable it to re-establish the connection to the river, regain prominence as a destination, and celebrate the past.

South Hadley Falls is framed by the Connecticut River and State Routes 116 and 202, which connect it with neighboring communities and destinations. Route 116 provides a connection to South Hadley Center (the Commons) to the north. Both State roadways connect South Hadley Falls with the City of Holyoke to the south via bridge crossings over the river. These roadways, particularly State Route 116, carry people through the area as they travel to other destinations. State Route 202 carries travelers around the village, with only two portals providing access beneath the highway. This roadway acts less as a connecting feature and more as a divider that physically cuts the Falls area and waterfront off from the surrounding community. Additionally, transportation to and from South Hadley Falls is primarily by automobile; public transportation service is limited and bicycle lanes are not prominent features on local roadways. It also seems that the area is somewhat socially and economically disconnected, which are perceptions that can be a challenge to overcome.

Context



IMPROVE WALKING & BIKING IN THE COMMUNITY

One consideration in the renewal efforts for South Hadley Falls is to reinforce the connections to South Hadley Center and the City of Holyoke, and improve opportunities for biking and pedestrian activity. As the waterfront and Main Street in South Hadley Falls are revitalized, planning for the various modes of transportation will become increasingly more important. Emphasizing biking and walking is a way to reduce reliance on the automobile and related demands for parking, which takes up a lot of space in the small business district.

South Hadley Falls and the surrounding area have the potential for becoming more bicycle-friendly for commuters and recreational riders, alike. The roads have right-of-way capacity to accommodate bike lanes and there are logical locations where improvements can be made for bike connections. Bicyclists could be encouraged to use bike lanes already established along Route 116, since the width from the painted fog line to the edge of pavement was observed to be adequate. If Route 116 is a designated bike route, it could easily be improved with signage to reinforce this use. Bike lanes could also be extended across the Route 116 and 202 bridge crossing, where there should be more than just sidewalks for pedestrian travel. Bike lanes should also be considered for Bardwell Street, as well, which could be connected to additional bike lanes on Lathrop and Alvord Streets. In addition, signage for shared bicycle use could be installed on certain local neighborhood streets within South Hadley Falls where traffic volumes and vehicular speeds are low enough for safe travel.

There is also the potential for the establishment of an off-road multi-use trail along an existing power transmission corridor. This multi-use trail would provide a greenway connection between South Hadley Falls and other areas and townships to the north and south. It would also be linked with existing and proposed on-street bikeways. The community should collaborate with the Pioneer Valley Planning Department to create a local bicycle master plan to further develop opportunities for multi-use of local streets and other areas for bicycle travel, which is consistent with regional planning efforts.



Pedestrians on the State Route 116 Bridge



Main Street Business District

In terms of scale, the size of the Falls district makes for a very walkable neighborhood. The team noticed that nearly everything can be accessed on foot within a short ten minute walk. The Town may want to investigate some improvements to make it even easier to walk.

Originally built as a company town, South Hadley's local streets were laid out to extend into neighborhoods from the industrial waterfront and Main St. business district. The current street pattern allows for good access to the riverfront in the north-south direction. However, there is less connectivity of the neighborhood and interconnecting streets in the east-west direction, making a walk across town a bit more of a challenge.

The blocks tend to be largely made up of properties with narrow street frontages. Many have deep lots originally platted to enable home gardening. There are few opportunities to increase public access across the large blocks unless tracts are held by an owner (or owners) willing to dedicate a new street or create a pedestrian easement. One opportunity the SDAT team noticed is the large private parcel between Gaylord and School Street. A new street could align with the School Street Lane allowing a multi-block vehicular and pedestrian linkage from Gaylord to Bridge Street; and using School Street as a pedestrian-only connection or with limited vehicular use.

As a practical matter, the Town should take a careful look at the conditions of its sidewalks to encourage more walking, particularly for kids, families and the elderly. Sidewalks vary from narrow asphalt in poor condition to narrow concrete in good condition. The narrow widths were probably adequate when the primary use was for people walking to and from work. However, it is difficult for two people to walk side-by-side; and some streets are without sidewalks entirely. Most do not meet criteria for the Americans with Disabilities Act. In many places, the team noticed that utility poles create barriers or further limit the width of the sidewalks.



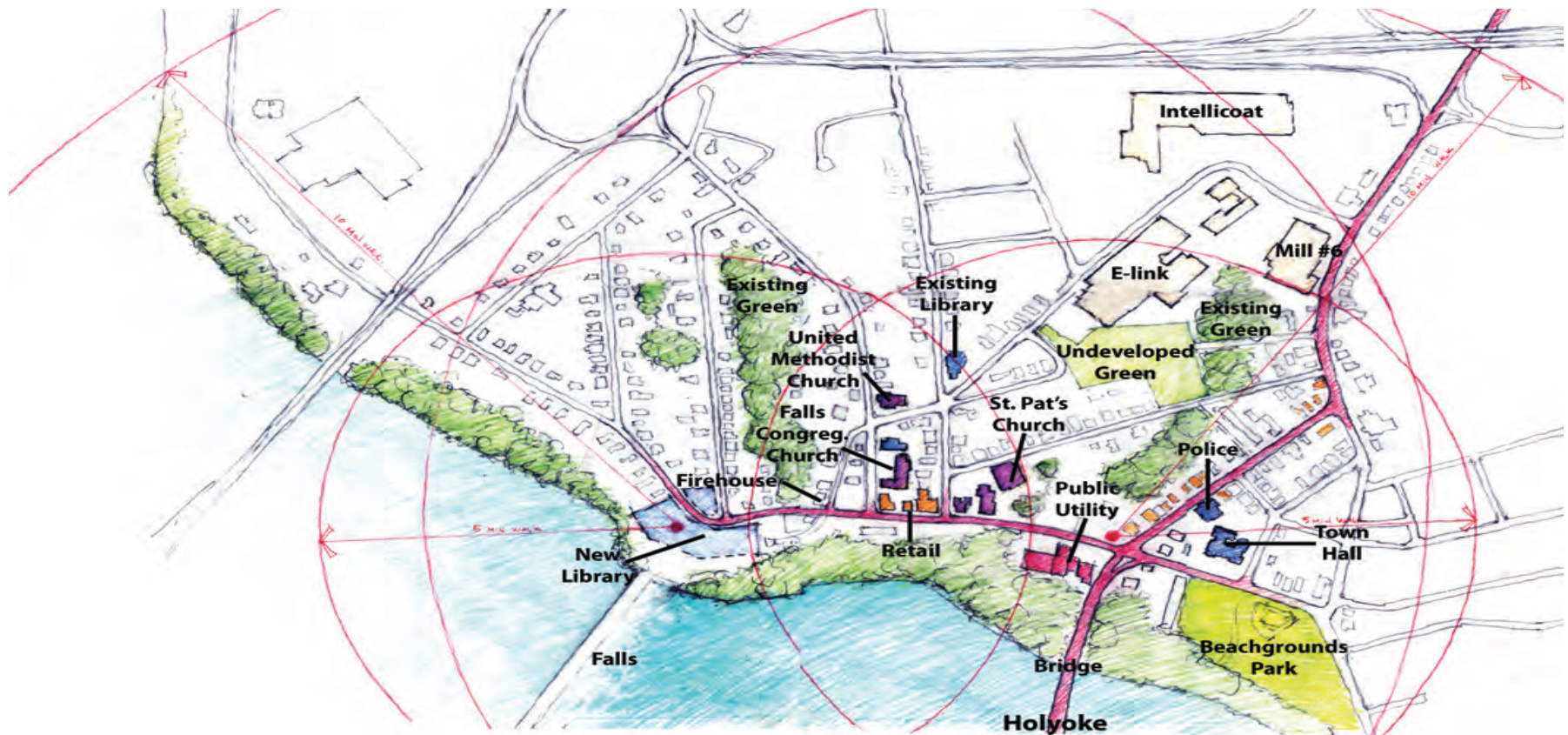
The team believes the Falls and the rest of South Hadley have great potential for becoming more bike-friendly for commuters and recreational riders alike. South Hadley can improve local bike connections as well as links to the Center. It can encourage more riders to use the lanes already established on Route 116, since the width from the painted fog line to edge of pavement appears to be adequate. If it is already a designated bike route, then the Town can easily improve the signage to reinforce its use. The County Bridge, constructed in the 1990s has wide sidewalks and appears to have capacity for bike lanes. Consider bike facilities on Bardwell St. as well. After all, the best invitation for bike riding is seeing more riders on the streets.

South Hadley can also sign certain local neighborhood streets within the district for shared bike roads since the traffic volumes and speeds of vehicles are so low. There may be some opportunities for off-street independent trails using the power transmission corridor running north-south through the city. Connections to larger regional trail systems are likely. As a community, South Hadley can prepare a bike master plan to further study opportunities and challenges for riders of all ages and levels of skill.

COMMUNITY ASSETS AND CONNECTIONS

The proposed relocation of the South Hadley Falls Public Library will allow for a balance of two focal points for activity and connectivity in the community. The library to the west and the Route 116 bridgehead gateway on the east will create activity centers at each end of the waterfront. Parkland and public spaces will establish bookends for commercial use along Main Street, establishing a physical framework for revitalization. This is enhanced by the existence of a continuous area of greenspace that extends along the riverfront, with a large portion of this area in public ownership. This provides opportunities for public access along the full length of the waterfront, which is a true asset.

Additionally, there are no impediments that prohibit access from inland areas to the river. Some communities that have experienced industrial activity along their waterfront areas struggle with post industrial artifacts in the form of highways, railroad corridors or similar structures or development that block or eliminate the ability to access the shoreline. For instance, the Erie Barge Canal ran parallel to the Niagara River shoreline in the City of Buffalo, New York. With the advent of the railroad in the 1920's, the canal became obsolete as cargo could be shipped more efficiently by train. The New York State Department of Transportation purchased the canal, filled it in and constructed an expressway over top that cut the upland residential neighborhoods off from the river. Areas that once had full access to the river (both visual and physical) for passive recreation, fishing and other activities were deprived further enjoyment of this important resource.





Today, access is only available by way of a limited number of pedestrian bridges that cross over the expressway or street and pathway connections that extend beneath it, as well as a few scenic overlooks.

South Hadley Falls has a mix of elements and opportunities that can be appreciated without obstruction. As previously noted, the new library site will offer public open space and visual access to the Connecticut River and the South Hadley Falls Dam. This new facility will act as a destination, enhancing activity along Main Street and potentially benefiting the small business in the area. The library should be physically connected to Lower Falls Park, which is located between the river and the Main Street business district. This area currently supports, and has the potential to include, cultural and civic resources.



Interstate Route 190 denies access to the Niagara River

INCREASE RIVERFRONT IDENTITY, ACCESS & AWARENESS

The location of South Hadley Falls on the river, and its proximity to the falls are true assets for the community. The waterfall and historic stone dam are unique landmarks for both South Hadley and Holyoke. The river and canal remnants are scenic natural resources, which are highly valued by residents and a source of pride. Despite the community's location on the river and historic canal, South Hadley Falls is not necessarily identified or branded as a river town. This is likely due to the lack of public amenities and visual and physical access to the waterfront, although the community's origins and industrial history are water-related. Over time, the mills were closed down and development attention turned to the upland, away from the river entirely. Furthermore, the thick riparian forests along the banks have grown back, presenting a visual barrier. Views and viewpoints should be carefully considered to help people feel reconnected to the river. To the benefit of the community, a large portion of the riverfront is under public or public utility ownership. Existing public parks include Beachgrounds Park, Everson Park at the bridgehead and Hadley Falls Canal Park. The new library site will provide additional public access to the river. Although each is individually accessible from Main Street, these amenities should be connected by a trail or other means that extends along the river. Through negotiations, more riverfront land should be acquired to allow for trail connections, improved views and protected view corridors.

The history of South Hadley Falls is fascinating. So much more of the historic canal story can be told through interpretive materials and exploration of the physical places, to bring to life colorful stories associated with the area. The Texon building is slated for removal; however, this site can be preserved for public access with spectacular waterfall views and reclaimed portions of the historic canal. The Town should work with Holyoke Gas and Electric to ensure that this happens. With these amenities in place, South Hadley Falls could become more of a destination for tourism.

Sidewalks throughout the waterfront area are most important. As this is an area designated for increased activity, having adequate sidewalks to accommodate the needs of all users, and that provide appropriate connections, is required. Many locations on Main Street have concrete sidewalks along both sides of the street. However, improvements should be considered in certain locations. Once the library project is underway, it will be necessary to provide adequate sidewalk connections between this site, Lower Falls Park and the business district. Currently, there are no sidewalks along portions of Main Street and Carew Street.



West Main Street



Carew Street

Signage and wayfinding will be key for encouraging visitors to explore the town and waterfront. Pedestrian connections across the bridge to Holyoke can convey the story of the dam, waterfalls and the former industrial era that shaped the place. The system should be pedestrian in scale with some key directional signs leading visitors to parking, public restrooms and trailheads.



CONSIDER BUTTERY BROOK AS A COMMUNITY ASSET

Buttery Brook, a small tributary of the Connecticut River, runs through the center of the Falls. In the northern reach it has a riparian border; the lower portion that runs under Main Street was placed in a pipe years ago now running beneath a meadow. Its outfall is on the south side of Main Street into the lower part of the historic canal. As natural resources, the water and riparian bankside vegetation have great potential to become a valued greenway and wildlife corridor running through the center of town. Consider daylighting or opening up the piped portion of Buttery Brook east of Main Street to feature what can be a wonderful community asset. The adjacent green spaces of the floodplain may serve to potentially absorb and store water when it backs up from the river. Where the brook runs through private properties, the town may be able to work with landowners to obtain conservation easements to help preserve these natural resources.



IMPROVE URBAN WATER QUALITY

Untreated stormwater run-off from hard surfaces remains the largest non-point source of water pollution in our cities and South Hadley is no exception. Urbanization in the form of hard surfaces and lack of upland percolation into soils and storage for run-off after a large storm event contribute to periodic flooding. As a town, South Hadley may want to consider the multiple benefits of green infrastructure as a sustainable strategy to improve water quality and manage storm events affecting the creek and river.

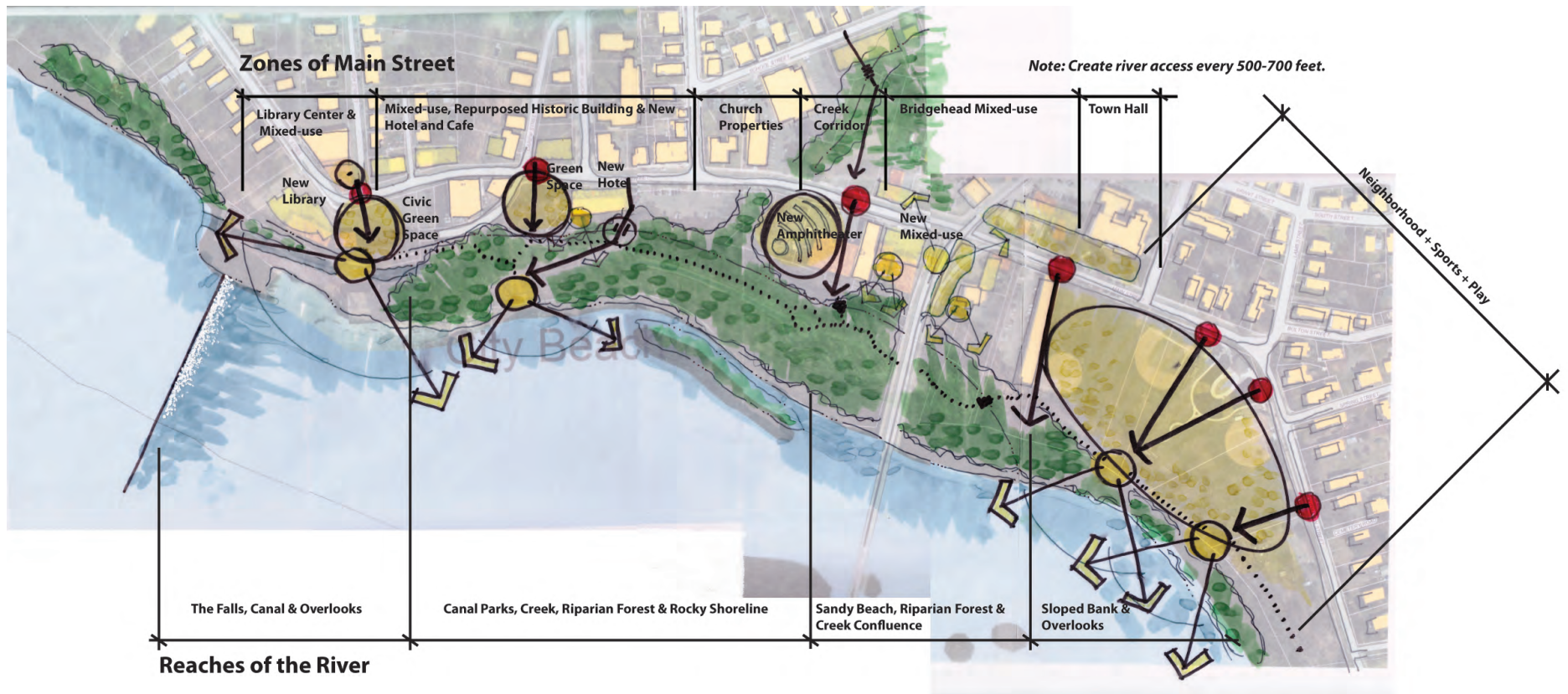
The team noted two large stormwater outfalls into the river adjacent to the County Bridge and near the pump station building in Beachgrounds Park. Fortunately, the town has worked to separate its combined storm and sanitary sewers; however more storage and treatment of run-off from hard, impervious streets and parking lots should be considered.



Other strategies for responsible stormwater management include green roofs on buildings, bioswales in parking lots and planting of additional trees (particularly conifers) that help to store and absorb rainwater. According to Pioneer Valley Planning Commission representatives, not many communities in the region have embraced or implemented green infrastructure. Given its small scale and geographic boundaries, what potential does the Falls have to become a demonstration project for the entire region? The team believes this idea deserves consideration.

EMPHASIZE REACHES OF THE RIVER AND ZONES OF MAIN STREET AS A CONCEPT FOR REVITALIZATION

South Hadley has two parallel, adjacent resources with a great amount of potential: the riverfront and the Main Street business district. Planning them as a couplet of amenities will result in a synergy for development and private investment. As opposed to most American cities, there are no railroads, freeways, strip malls or other impediments between them. They simply lack access and connections. Planning in this area should place focus on existing resources and opportunities. Strong connections should be made along the waterfront every 500 to 700 feet. The Town should leverage the existing (and proposed) anchors and capitalize on good decisions and achievements. Nodes of activity and gateway areas should also be strengthened.



At the east and west ends are two identifiable nodes, Beachgrounds Park/ County Bridgehead and the new library, which will serve as “bookends” to the district. As South Hadley creates stronger links these two resources will enable the commercial district on Main Street between the nodes to become more economically viable.



If designed well, the site for the new library will become a center and destination in the community. The library needs to provide a balance of public open space on the river and connections to nearby commercial mixed-use buildings, thereby extending the business district to the new library. River views, viewpoints, overlooks and interpretive stories about the canal and industrial waterfront will be an attraction for residents and visitors alike.

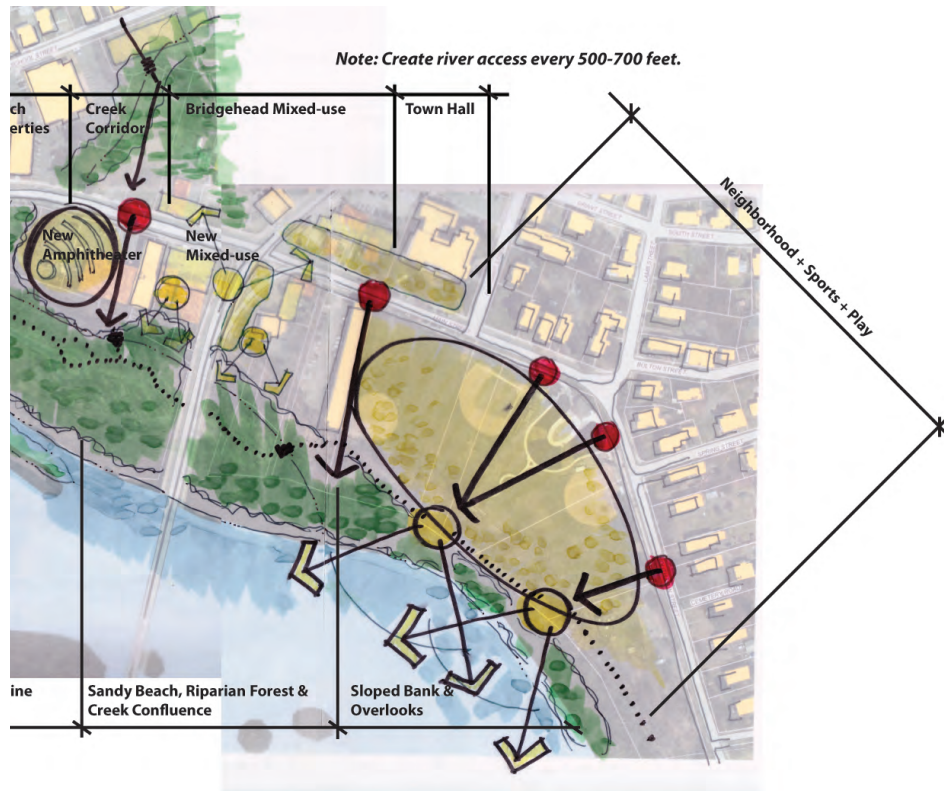


At the east end, the bridgehead at the corner of Main and Bridge Streets can be emphasized with higher quality private development in keeping with the character of the traditional New England town. The buildings and open space (not just signage or flower baskets) need to form a thoughtful, intentional, aesthetic gateway.

The gateway needs to give a positive first impression for north-bound visitors as they descend from the County Bridge. Several of the existing buildings with auto-related businesses (gas station and auto repair that are located in the 100-year floodplain) would be better located elsewhere in the city.



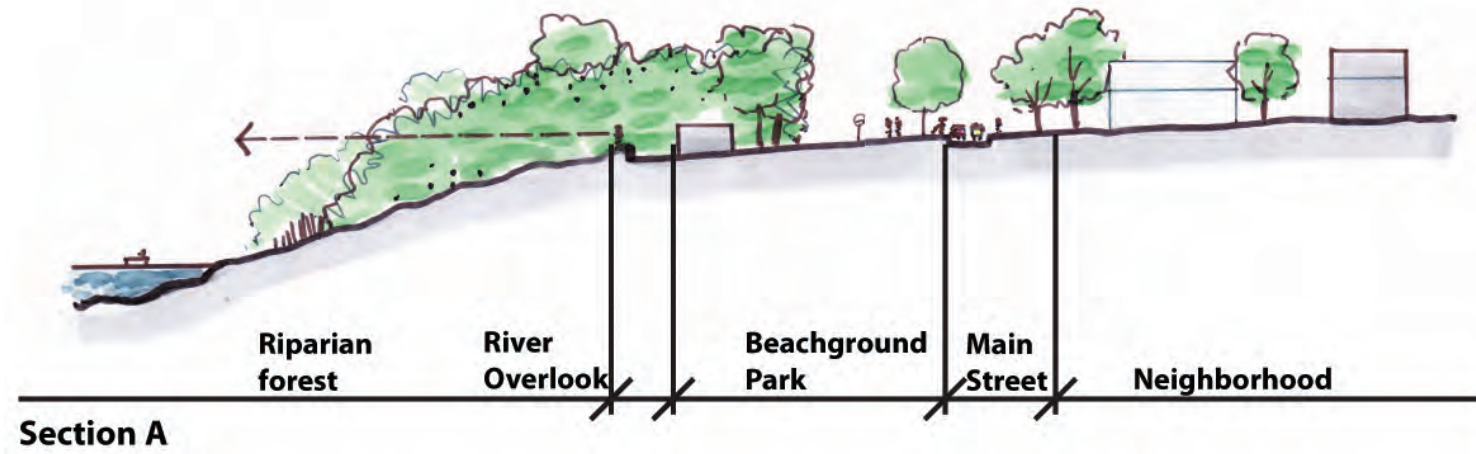
With some building removals and appropriate redevelopment, the South Hadley entrance as a gateway can reflect the character and values of the town, namely the history and valued natural resources.



Between the two anchors at the east and west ends, South Hadley can carefully re-develop Main Street with some new small-scale mixed-use buildings. These buildings can have similar materials and design to the historic fabric of the town so that they blend and allow the historic structures such as the churches and civic buildings to prevail.

A trail connecting the majority of the riverfront is feasible, at least on a seasonal basis, depending on the elevation within the floodplain. In any case, the town needs public access to Main Street about every 500 to 700 feet with no dead-ends in order for it to be well-used and feel safe.

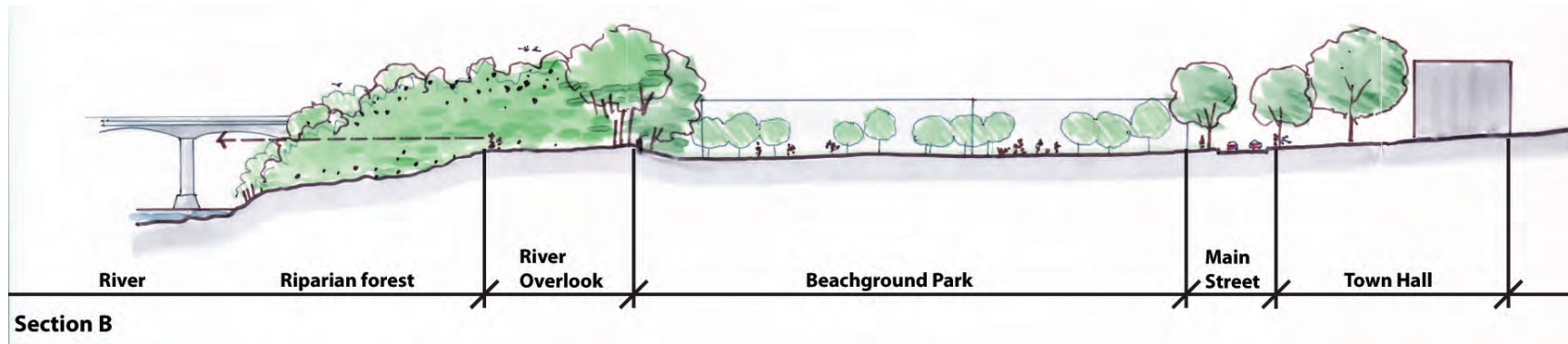
The riverfront lends itself to a series of interesting “episodic” experiences as river conditions and views, topographic forms, bridges, the creek and canal enfold. The east end has more emphasis on natural resources, given the extent of beaches and riparian forest; while the west end has more emphasis on the industrial and cultural history, given the former manufacturing site, falls and canal.



Current Conditions



Proposed Riverfront, with Viewpoints



The town may want to consider some improvements for Beachgrounds Park to make it more versatile and inviting. While sports fields, the basketball court and a new play area are great amenities for the community, they tend to dominate the riverfront park. Viewed from Main Street, it is hard to know there is a major river just a few yards beyond. There is also not much of interest for visitors or other potential park users of different age groups such as non-sporting adults or seniors.

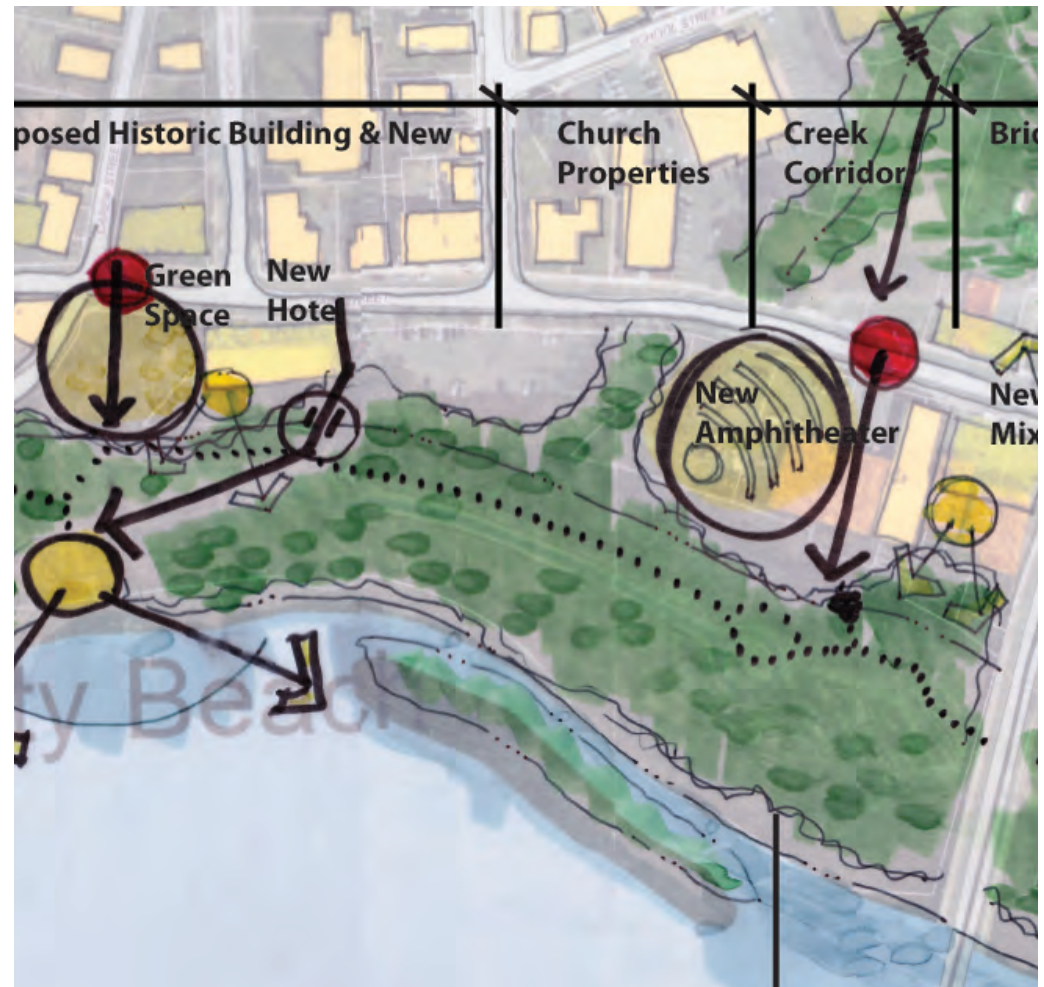
To make it more appealing, consider taking down the chain link fencing at the entry. Add some broad canopy street trees along Main Street to give your park more curbside appeal. Add comfortable benches above the sea wall to provide some park oversight by users. Find space for a soft surface loop trail around the perimeter of your park to attract walkers and joggers when baseball games are not in progress.

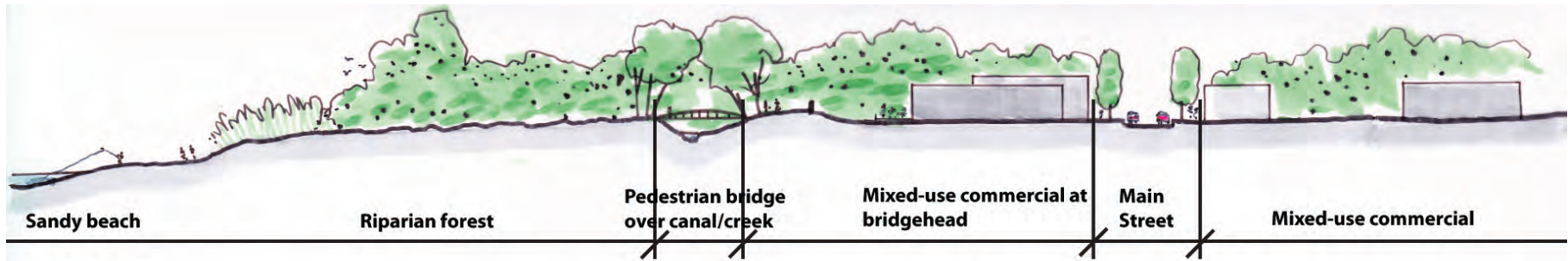
Most importantly, you can brand Beachgrounds Park as a major trailhead for your riverfront. Connect the park trail system to an overlook (just west of the pump station building) that would provide views of the falls, Holyoke and the scenic downstream banks of the river. The parking lot area at the park, although important, could be improved to better accommodate pedestrians and enable visual access to the river. Provide a four-to-five-foot-wide strip along the top of the riverbank would allow pedestrians to move along the shore as part of the suggested internal path system for Beachgrounds Park.

Currently, this area is the location for a dumpster, which should be moved to a less conspicuous location (and screened) regardless of future plans for this area. The parking area does appear to be well-used when sporting events take place. However, as a long-term consideration, would this space be better appreciated as a picnic area and waterfront promenade? It is suggested that the town develop a parking study to determine if parking could be provided at the Town Hall and/or on surface streets to replace what is on the riverfront, so the parking area could be reclaimed for picnic grounds or other more compatible pedestrian and public waterfront use.

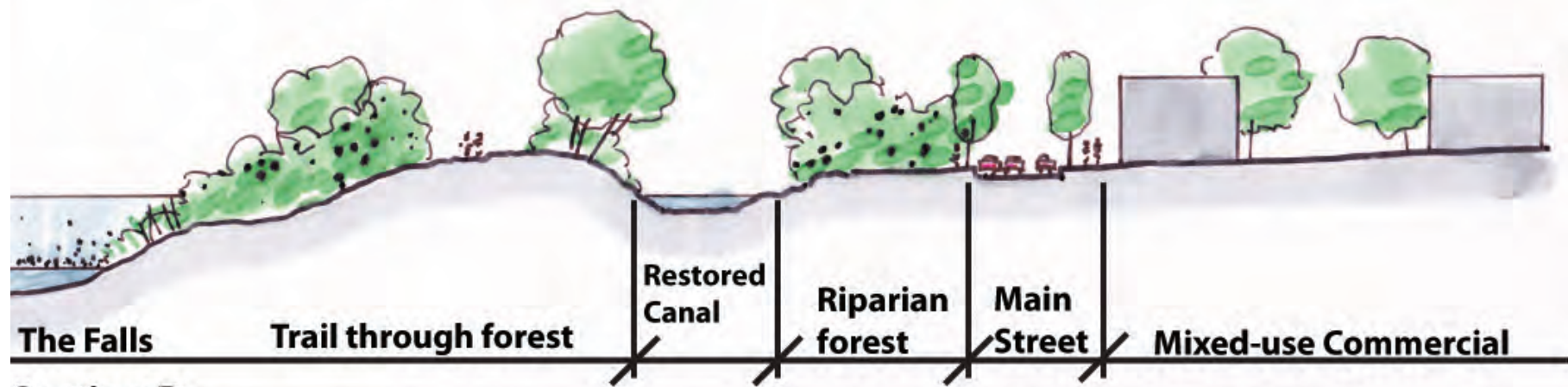


Moving westward, it is easy to imagine a foot trail that descends the bank and passes beneath the bridge through the riparian forest. Intrepid fishermen and kids have already established it. Depending on the elevation, the lower trail may be washed out in years when flooding occurs. For a permanent trail, it needs to be linked at the top of the bank above ordinary high water. In any case, pedestrian bridges will be necessary to connect over Buttery Brook. This trail can then connect up the bank to the existing stone dust trail. A side trail could pass over the canal and connect back to Main St.

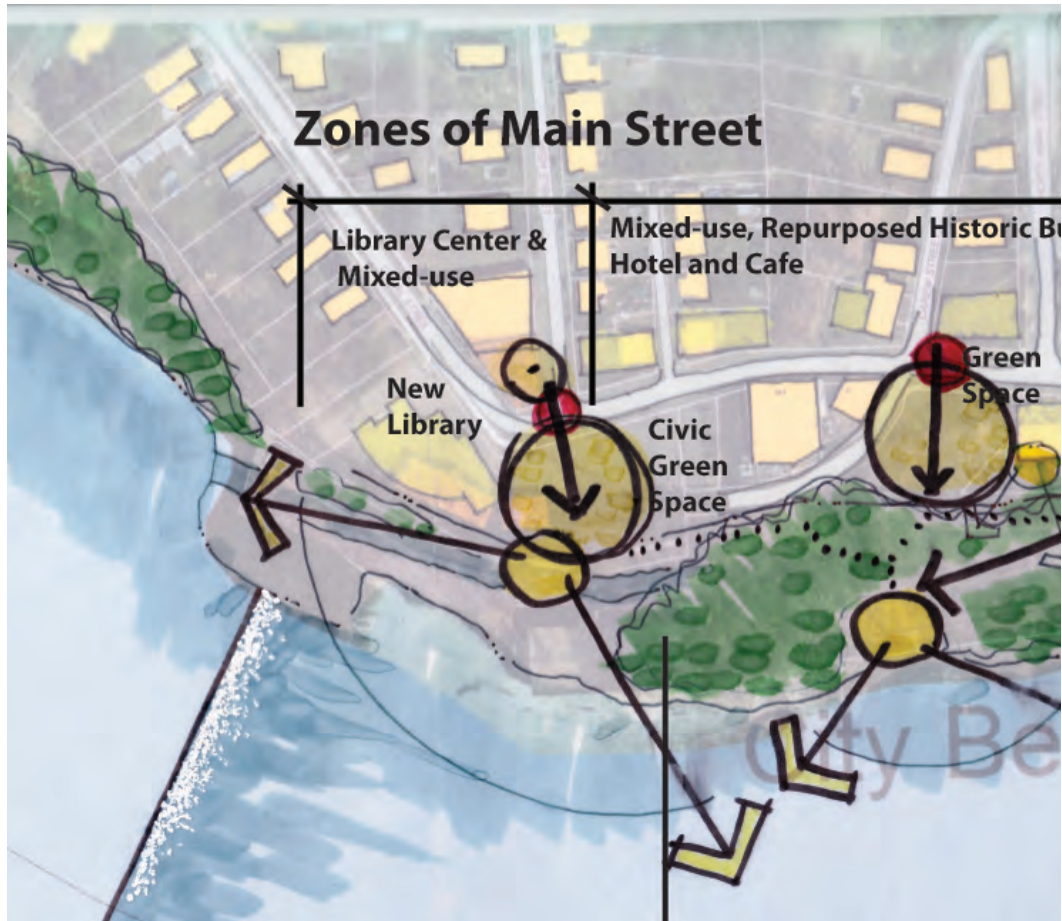




Section C



Section D

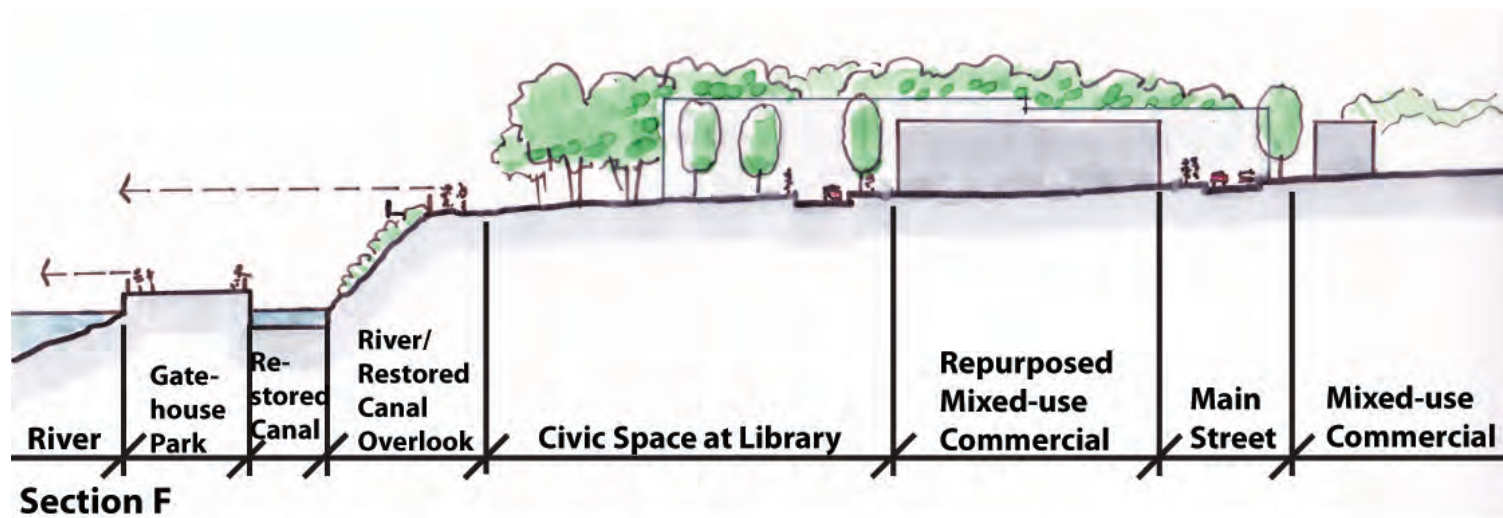
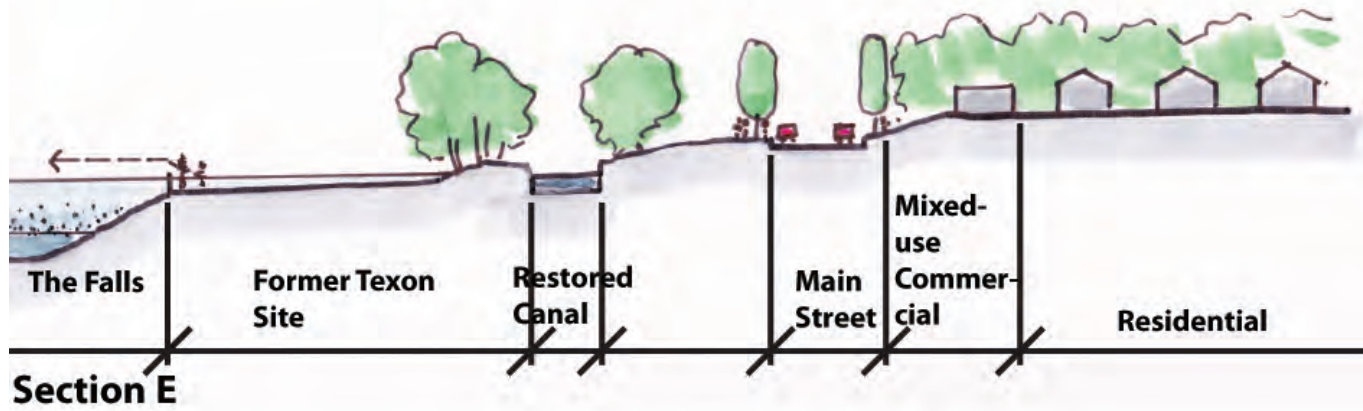


The west end of the riverfront provides great opportunities for restoration of the canal and the former industrial site as a destination for viewing the dam and waterfall. Perhaps there is a way the town could investigate creating a fish ladder within the length of the canal so that migrating shad are given another way around the dam.

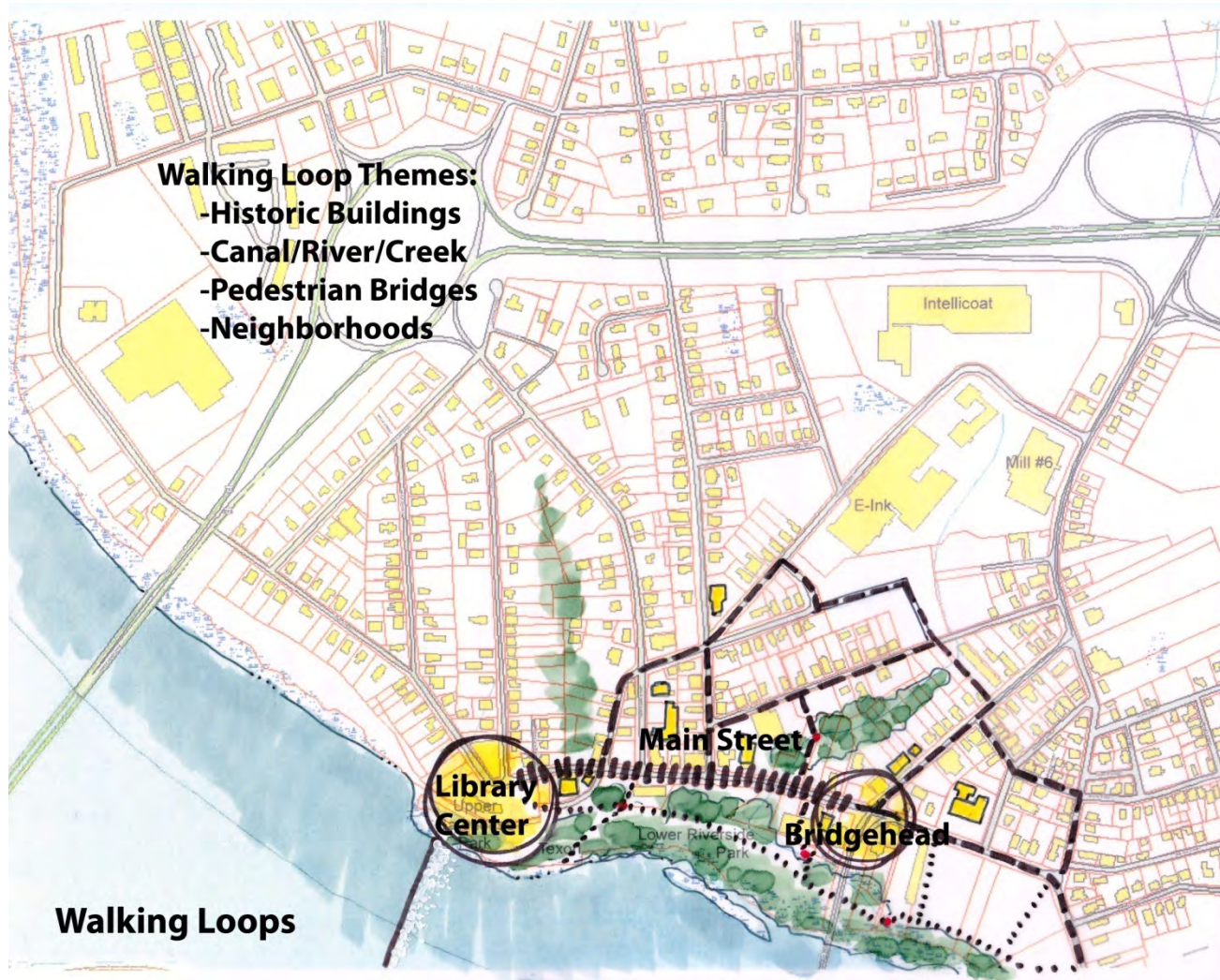
South Hadley can tie the west end trailhead to the library center, with interpretive sites and the related civic open spaces enjoyed along the way. It can use the civic space at the library for special community events and gatherings, a farmers market, art shows, book sales or craft fairs. A trail connection should be established between the library and Lower Falls Park that would extend down the slope adjacent to the canal remnants. This new upland trail connection would tie in with the existing trails in the Lower Falls Park area, which lead to the riverfront near the canal site and to the area beneath the Route 116 bridge. The land area around the existing trail has been left natural and lends itself as an area for nature study and education. This use could be coordinated with Holyoke College.

Well-designed public spaces are important places for neighbors and business owners to socialize and gather. They should be designed with high quality materials, durable furnishings and consideration for aesthetics that reflect the scale, character and uniqueness of this New England town that dates back to the 1700s.





There are several more places South Hadley can create riverfront access from Main Street so that you can make more walking loops. It can extend these walking loops across Main Street into downtown and the neighborhoods. Themes for the pedestrian loops can range from historic landmarks and buildings, to historic neighborhoods, to natural systems to the industrial riverfront.



SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1-2 YEARS)

Land Use, Community Design & Private Development: One of the charms of the Falls district of South Hadley is its authenticity and small scale of development. Therefore, to maintain the character desired by most residents, prepare a set of design standards and guidelines to address the scale and quality of sites and buildings to ensure that infill is done carefully and thoughtfully. Landscape and signage regulations should be part of this effort. A number of small towns have examples of what can be successful. Form a citizen Design Review Commission that includes some professionals trained in the area of architecture, urban design and/or landscape architecture.

Buttery Brook: Consider starting a program of conservation easements on private lands to educate landowners about its value and protect the creek from development impacts and degradation.

Bicycle Transportation and Recreation: Prepare a Bicycle Master Plan that connects the Falls to the rest of the city, county and region. Needs and facilities will vary depending upon the users, which range from commuters and able-bodied recreational users to kids and their families.

Beachgrounds Park: Remove any chain link fencing that is not necessary for protection of ballgame activities. Plant shade trees along Main Street in the fall. Study how to replace parking at the riverfront. Design and build a river overlook, picnic grounds, seating and promenade above the sea wall.

Lower Falls Park Nature and Interpretive Study: Collaborate with Holyoke College to establish a nature study program in the Lower Falls Park area, taking advantage of the preservation of the natural resources in this area.

New Library Site Reconsider the site plan so that the building links to adjacent development and the public waterfront is opened up for use and views. Plan for at least a portion of the parking to be relocated away from the waterfront. Allow the new building to terminate the view at the west end of Main Street.



MID-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (2-5 YEARS)

Riverfront, Access and Trails: Develop an overall riverfront master plan. Study trail connections, overlooks, bridges and access points. Determine the suitable types of trails based on the location within the flood plain. Design the trail system and develop trail standards including signage and furnishings. Improve physical and visual access to the Connecticut River and Buttery Brook. Link the east and west end of the riverfront with a foot trail and bridges over the canal and Buttery Brook. Develop viewpoints, overlooks and public access points every 500 to 700 feet along the riverfront.

Signage Master Plan: Develop an identity and wayfinding plan for South Hadley and the Falls. Include interpretive points and content addressing both history and current issues. Coordinate closely with the Riverfront Master Plan.

Street Improvements: Perform a street assessment to determine condition, presence of barriers (specifically curb cuts and location of utilities) and widths of sidewalks to meet current ADA federal accessibility standards. Prioritize the improvements based on frequency of use and condition. All new development projects must adapt to new design standards.

Green Infrastructure: Develop and implement a stormwater master plan that stores and treats rainwater runoff in order to reduce flooding potential, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and improve aesthetics. Develop guidelines and regulations that set standards for public facilities and private development to follow. Coordinate with the riverfront master plan. Incrementally implement elements of green infrastructure to store and manage flood events and treat stormwater.

Beachgrounds Park: Study how to accommodate a perimeter soft-surface trail for walking and jogging and install the path, including a link along the riverside of the parking lot. Some sports facilities (such as a backstop or two) may need to be shifted. Coordinate this effort with the riverfront master plan.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (5-10 YEARS)

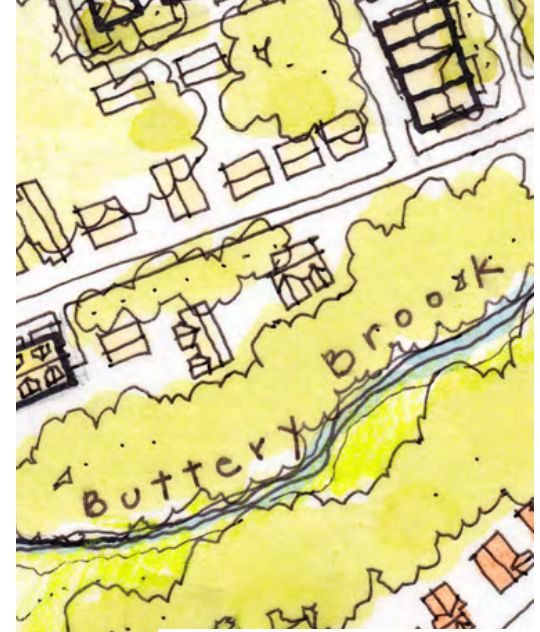
Streets: Fund, design and implement phased sidewalk improvements over time. Where possible, encourage new developments to dedicate new public streets or pedestrian easements in the east-west direction where blocks are large.

Green Infrastructure: Incrementally implement elements of green infrastructure to store and manage flood events and treat stormwater.

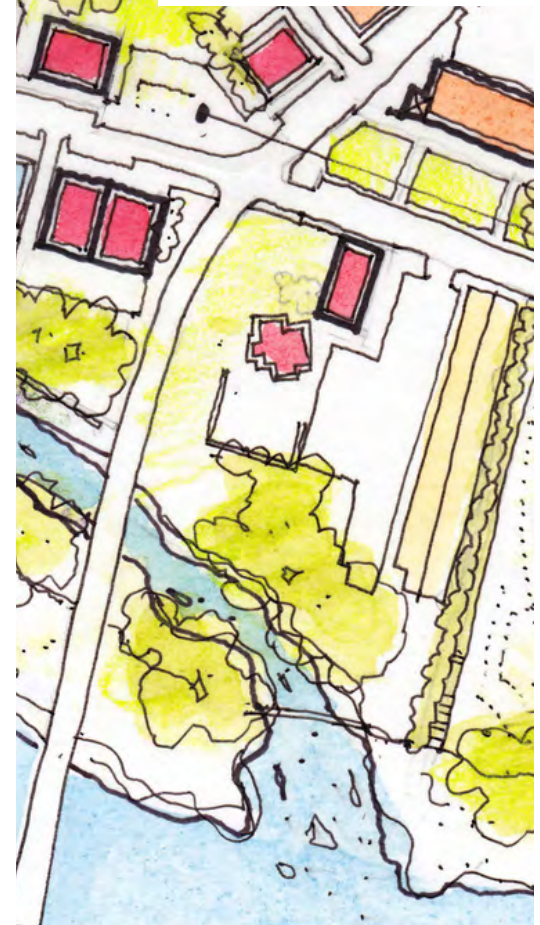
Buttery Brook: Daylight the lower portion of Buttery Brook and improve it as a natural resource. Test, monitor and improve its water quality.

Riverfront: Fund, design, permit and implement elements of the riverfront master plan and connecting trails system. Some phased elements may be feasible to implement sooner, if they are based upon a coordinated overall riverfront master plan.

Library site and Lower Falls Park: Establish a trail connection between the library site and Lower Falls Park to enable residents and visitors easier access between these public facilities. Include interpretive information on the history of the canal.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



South Hadley's comprehensive plan recognizes the importance of the Falls to the town's economic development. During the 3-day SDAT process, the team also heard from a number of community stakeholders who understand the area's value. One of the few areas of the town where significant new growth and development can occur, and in its position as a gateway to the town, the Falls indeed has a significant role to play in the town's future economic health. So how can the town best promote the improvement and revitalization of South Hadley Falls to benefit the entire community?

THE KEY: CREATE A GREAT PLACE

As the first principle in further planning and implementing development strategies in the Falls, the Town and its residents should focus on creating and enhancing the Falls as a *great place* where people want to live, work and visit. In recent years, many communities have recognized the multiple benefits that a placemaking strategy can have. From an economic development perspective, it is a strategy that helps to attract and retain a talented and creative workforce. For South Hadley, it's a strategy that can effectively tap into one of the key economic strengths of the Pioneer Valley: its position at the heart of the Knowledge Corridor, with its 27 institutions of higher learning and 125,000 students. There is a significant amount of institutional capital and creative talent that resides in the five college area. Retaining this talent is key to attracting and retaining innovative, creative, professional and technical businesses; it also represents the potential to create a comfortable, desirable home for a growing class of self employed persons, innovators and entrepreneurs. In other words, placemaking can be considered an indirect strategy for attracting, retaining and nurturing business.

The revitalization of the Falls also can enhance its role as a local and regional destination where people want to linger, supporting restaurants, stores, and other enterprises. If successful as a destination, both out of towners and nearby residents can be drawn to the Falls to enjoy an event or one of the component attractions of the "reaches of the river and Main Street," leaving the car behind as they stroll around, extending their trip into an afternoon or an evening out.

Just as importantly, revitalizing the Falls creates improved amenities for the residents of the Falls and the Town of South Hadley, allowing them enhanced recreational and community space and providing opportunities to support local businesses. Create and enhance places where people want to be – and economic activity will follow.

The focus on quality of life and creating a great place ties in directly with the urban design, civic sphere and bike/pedestrian connectivity recommendations for the Falls. These improvements create a desirable place and connect people to their community.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

The physical assets of the Falls are already apparent to its many boosters and supporters. The river is a hidden gem, a local secret that clearly should be at the core of any revitalization strategy. From a development and revitalization perspective, several other assets of the Falls and South Hadley stand out:

- **The Falls can appeal to key demographic segments.** Because of their size, two key age groups or "generations" dominate the marketplace: Baby Boomers (born between the mid 1940's and mid 1960's) and their children (born between the late 1970's and mid 1990's), often given the label "Generation Y" or "Millennials." Together these two groups account for about half of the U.S. population, about a quarter in each, although Gen Y is a larger cohort than their baby boomer parents. Both groups are transitioning: Baby Boomers towards retirement, and Gen Y towards adulthood and forming new households. As they age, both groups are showing a much greater preference in the near term for housing and lifestyles in walkable communities over the suburban, auto-dominated places where many Baby Boomers raised their children and their Gen Y offspring spent their childhoods. Fortunately for the Falls, it still retains the fine grained street network of the old, pre-automobile community that it is.

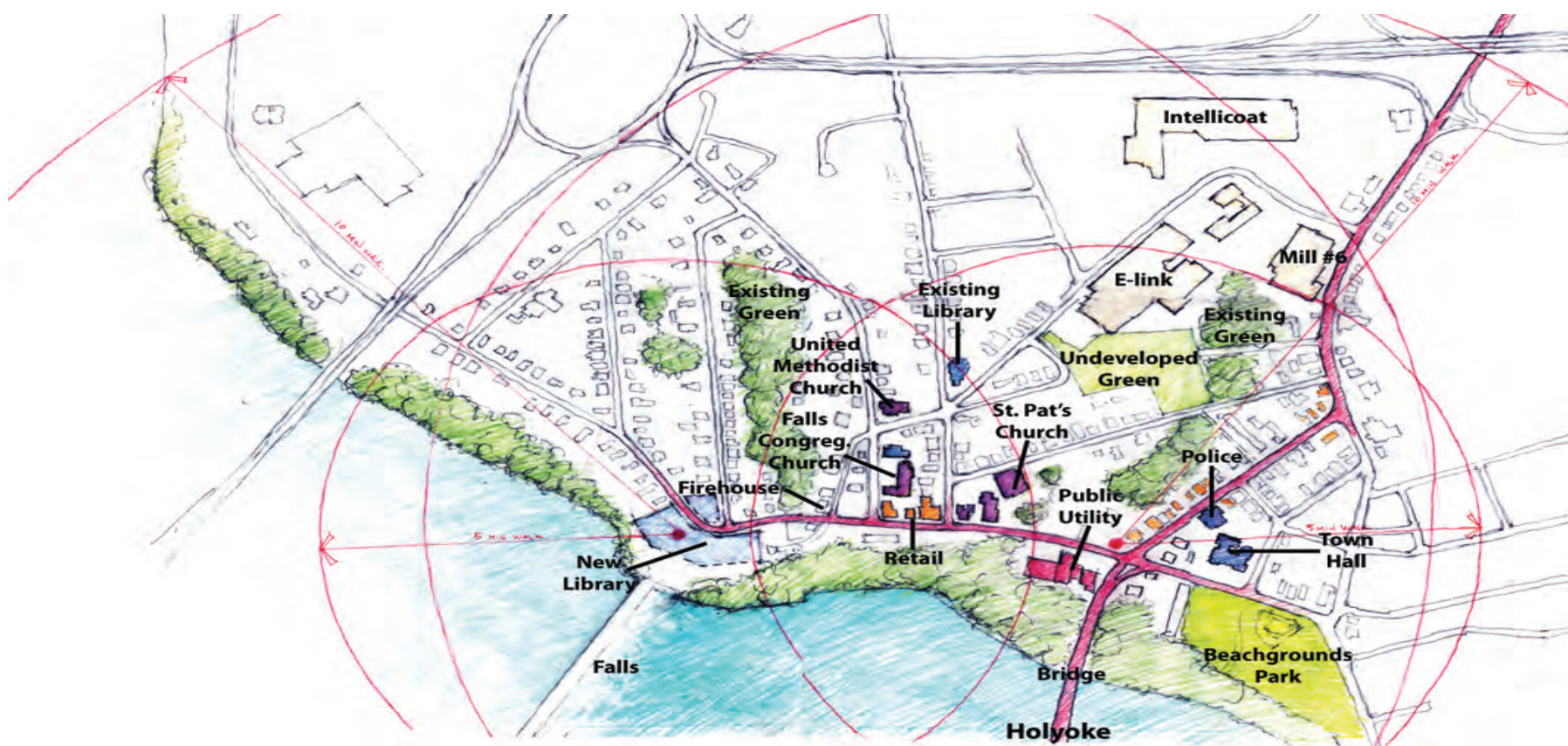
- **The Falls can benefit from existing community and local institutions.**

The Falls is fortunate to have some very strong institutions which can support revitalization through financial investments and expertise. Unlike many places where only large, consolidated lending institutions remain, the Falls has community banks within the neighborhood that know the area and its existing businesses. Mount Holyoke is the town's largest employer and also a key stakeholder in efforts to support the community around it. Most importantly, there are residents and businesses who have made the Falls their home and have a keen interest in preserving what is good and enhancing the things that need improvement.

- **The Falls has a stock of affordable, existing buildings.** While low rents and real estate values can be seen as a negative, it is also a positive that the town can use to its advantage. When we think about other places that have revitalized, a key factor driving the trend is residents, retailers and businesses that are willing to try somewhere new and untested because they are seeking lower cost space. Low rents are critical to an emerging business, whether it is a new clothing store, a new gallery or a new technology startup. Relatively inexpensive housing also provides opportunity for attracting new households priced out of more expensive and established locales in South Hadley and the region. The most inexpensive space is almost always found in existing buildings – another reason why the Falls' existing fabric is so important.

Stakeholders in the Falls should remember to focus on what is unique about the area when making decisions, prioritizing investments and seeking out funding. Duplicating the successful revitalization path followed by other communities will not necessarily leverage the Falls' greatest strengths. It may also set up the Falls to directly compete (rather than complement) the efforts of other nearby communities. Here are some suggestions of "themes" or focus areas that can forge the singular identity of the Falls as a rising community and anchor its revitalization.





- **The history and industrial legacy of the Falls.** Elevating the rich story of the river, the canal and the community that grew up around them can attract visitors, give meaning to the historical structures that are still present, and engender pride in the Falls' role in the early economic development of the Pioneer Valley. Interpretive materials and enhanced access to historical sites within the Falls should be prioritized.

- **The authentic mix of uses found in the Falls.** Part of the recognition of this industrial legacy involves making room for existing industrial businesses. The Falls should strive to keep its "funky edge" provided by a diverse mix of uses. Building, health and safety codes should be strictly enforced, and in some instances, the town and certain businesses may agree that a different location is mutually beneficial in the long term. In particular, there needs to be careful consideration of the impacts of existing industrial uses on any planned new residential development to make sure there is not conflict between the two. Nevertheless, revitalization should accommodate the needs of existing industrial businesses that contribute to the health and well being of the Falls community.

- **The recreational and ecological amenity of the river.** The Falls is fortunate to have a natural shoreline so accessible to the town, and as described elsewhere, links between the town and the riverfront should have a frequency that allows walks of varying distances and enhances a feeling of safety. Waterfront improvements should recognize the value of the river as a place for hiking, contemplation, fishing and viewing wildlife. The stature of the Connecticut River in the Falls can be strengthened by a field school or relatively small scale attractions that draw visitors interested in birding, nature, ecology and river recreation. Quality of life improvements that also improve sustainability, such as the stormwater and bike/pedestrian improvements discussed elsewhere, will also reinforce this asset.

IMPLEMENTING A REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

What course should a revitalization strategy take? How should South Hadley leverage its limited resources, and what activities should be prioritized? The town, the Falls community and other stakeholders will need to work diligently and think carefully about the details, but below are some key components and recommended actions that can help to shape that strategy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A revitalization and placemaking strategy for the Falls should be **ambitious but incremental**, with components that encompass the following:

- **Catalytic public investment.** Public investment decisions should be guided by the objective of making adjoining private property more attractive and marketable for investment, by improving the physical appearance of an area, improving walkability, and/or strengthening an “anchor” that draws people to the area. The town has already made a wise decision to support the revitalization of the Falls by locating the new library there. The priorities for public investment and attention should first focus on Main Street, Bridge Street, their intersection, the riverfront, and the civic complex, strengthening the heart of the Falls and establishing the “reaches of the river and Main Street” concept. A phased approach that is successful, making the heart of the Falls a vibrant place, will create conditions that make the larger vacant and underutilized tracts at the edges of the Falls more attractive and feasible for a wider range of reuse/redevelopment options.

- **Synergy between public and private realm.** Consider the success of the Village Commons: people who might live, shop or set up an office there are drawn by the attraction of the Mount Holyoke campus across the street; at the same time, the Village Commons provides off campus services and amenities for the workers and students at the college. The town should similarly plan for opportunities to create or enhance a symbiotic relationship between existing public and institutional uses (such as the new library, the playing fields, Town Hall, the riverfront) and new/rehabilitated development around it.

- **Programs and activities.** Fortunately, the strategy does not have to wait for big bricks and mortar projects in order for momentum to build. It can start with smaller scale activities and events designed to bring more people to the Falls and keep them there for a longer period of time. Of course, these activities should continue as more ambitious steps are implemented. Another possible component is a marketing and image-building program for the Falls. These programmatic activities may still require some public funds or staffing, but because they are smaller scale, they may even be possible with volunteer efforts.



STEP BY STEP

Organizing a strategy and its implementation should distinguish among the low hanging fruit that can be undertaken in the short term, the challenging but longer term actions, and actions that fall between these two ends. Here are three suggested “tiers” of activities that can help form the framework for a more detailed, coordinated implementation plan.

1. Events, activities and organizing. Organizing and building a base of volunteers who create programs and activities, and make things happen in the Falls, can be the foundation of the revitalization effort. Activities can happen now as businesses and residents begin to organize. Relying more on volunteer efforts than large amounts of funds, a full schedule of movie nights, outdoor concerts and picnics, walking tours and athletic events can be organized – maybe even for the remainder of summer and fall. These efforts help to create early successes, lead to lessons learned, and build capacity. It will also raise awareness of the area – and create a base for more ambitious efforts in subsequent years.

2. Work with what you’ve got. There are lots of exciting things happening on the traditional main streets of cities and towns across the country. Often categorized under the label of “temporary urbanism” or “tactical urbanism,” these activities include temporary retail and gallery space in vacant storefronts (“pop up shops”); temporary green spaces and cafes in curbside parking spaces; temporary public art and performance spaces; and temporary food bazaars that use food trucks and food carts. These actions require organizing effort, and often some funding, but not the financial obligation or commitment to a specific course of action required by larger scale efforts. The idea behind these actions is to try out ideas that may or may not work, and to create buzz that helps activate areas with vacant retail spaces. Existing storefront and second floor commercial space can also be tied to small business development efforts, whether through temporary stores and restaurants, or through incubators or co-working spaces (co-working spaces are privately-run, shared office facilities designed and marketed to the needs of self-employed workers and start up firms in a variety of fields). These users need inexpensive but not necessarily the highest quality space.

CASE STUDY: WASHINGTON DC’S ‘TEMPORIUMS’

A component of the Office of Planning’s Temporary Urbanism initiative, DC’s Temporiiums transform vacant storefronts into unique temporary retail and event space for local entrepreneurs. Aided by small, competitive grants from the Office of Planning, the project pairs those seeking space with those who have available space in the city’s older commercial corridors, and aims to kickstart the collaboration necessary to catalyze long-term use. Temporiiums have drawn thousands of visitors, thousands of customers, and received national press during their limited life (typically less than a month).

3. Think Big, Plan Big. Many of the concepts introduced with the “reaches of the river and Main Street” concept are ambitious: they will require significant investment and often will become feasible only after some initial revitalization success. Town actions should be driven by a strong vision, tempered with patience, diligence and careful consideration of the risks and benefits of different alternatives. Many ideas will need a champion in order to come to fruition.



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The strategic framework described above leaves room for the town and its residents to decide what specific actions should be its main components. A few recommendations pertaining to specific actions are described below.

- **Actively determine the fate of the Fibermark building.** The SDAT committee and the town asked the SDAT team to specifically consider the fate of the Fibermark Building. The team concluded that the town would be better served by the demolition of the Fibermark building rather than its preservation, given the likely expense of its continued maintenance, its awkward siting and floorplate, its key location next to the library, and the more attractive options for redevelopment available with a clear site. An analysis that quantifies the costs and benefits of both options (i.e., the cost and land value associated with a vacant site vs. the cost and land value associated with the building as is) will allow the town to act quickly and decisively on this point.

- **Control the destiny of the riverfront.** Of the strategic purchases and investments that the town could make, the possibility of acquiring or controlling the riverfront land owned by Holyoke Electric and Gas should be seriously considered. Controlling all aspects of the quality and experience of its riverfront can pay off by enhancing the value and development potential of the land around it. Fortunately, there are nonprofit organizations, such as the Trust for Public Land, which can help access funding and technical support to make this dream a possibility.

- **Make space for new residential construction and a balanced mix of development.** Let the market decide what uses are best for redeveloped sites, especially early on. Residential development, particularly in townhouse and mixed use, multifamily products, tends to be the driver of new development in revitalizing areas, due to the demand for new housing (especially rentals) in walkable, interesting communities. Where it is not in direct conflict with industrial uses, welcoming new residential and mixed use development will help re-establish the vibrancy of the area and make subsequently developed sites more feasible for a greater range of development possibilities.





- **Measure Success.** By focusing on a vision with specific objectives, the town can compare alternatives and measure the eventual results of its decision-making. Publicizing successes can build support for continued work.

FUNDING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

Parks and open spaces are increasingly seen as economic assets to their communities. In addition to providing recreational opportunities for residents, they can enhance adjacent property values, generate pedestrian traffic, improve public health, and provide needed ecological services such as capture of storm water runoff. Here are some techniques communities use to offset land purchase and operations & maintenance costs for new or restored parks.

- Generating revenue from the disposition of publicly owned property that is adjacent to or part of a parkland purchase.
- Strategies that dedicate revenue streams associated with park operations, such as food concessions, parking fees from an adjacent lot or garage, special events, sponsorships, and merchandising.
- Establishment of a park conservancy, a non-profit entity that can raise money and organize volunteers for the benefit of the park.
- Establishment of special improvement districts where property owners in close proximity to the park agree to further taxation in order to provide for services that maintain the park as a high quality amenity.
- Value capture strategies such as tax increment financing (TIF) that dedicate the increase in tax revenues from land improvement and property value growth proximate to the parkland.

RESOURCES

Technical Assistance and Financing Strategies

The Trust for Public Land. The Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit organization that employs business skills to successful land conservation projects in urban, suburban and rural areas. www.tpl.org

Trust for Public Land Parks for People Initiatives.

<http://www.tpl.org/what-we-do/initiatives/parks-for-people/>

MassDevelopment (Massachusetts Development Finance Agency). Mass Development offers a wide range of finance and real estate development services to local governmental entities and nonprofits. <http://www.massdevelopment.com/>

The National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Center. The Main Street Center leads a network of state, city and county Main Street programs, and provides technical resources for starting a Main Street program. The Main Street movement has been in existence for 30 years, promoting vibrant and successful older commercial districts through a specific approach and tools. www.Preservationnation.org/mainstreet

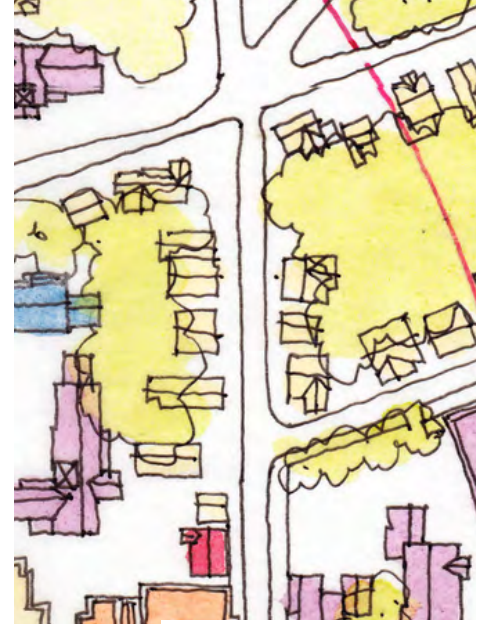
Interesting Ideas

Tactical Urbanism 2: Short Term Action, Long Term Change by Street Plans Collaborative. Available for download at http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final

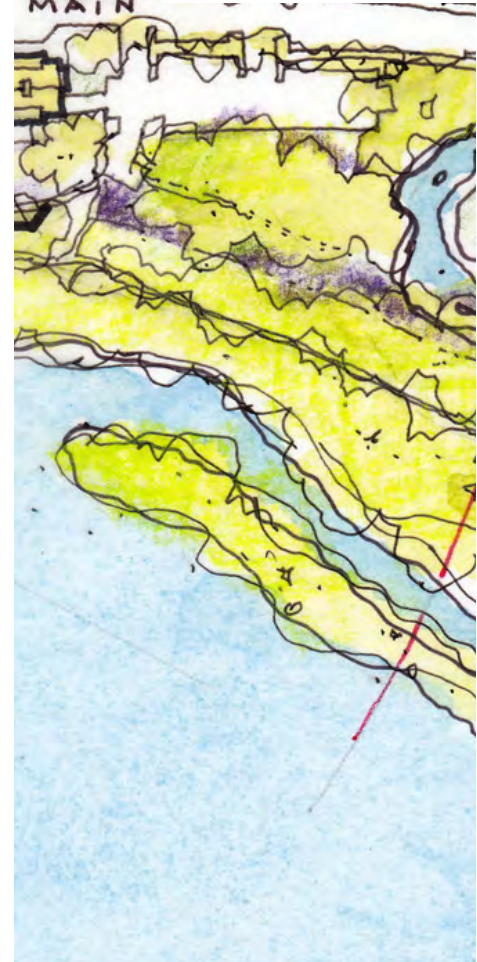
Washington DC's Temporary Urbanism Initiative. <http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/Across+the+City/Other+Citywide+Initiatives/Temporary+Urbanism+Initiative>

Coworking spaces. <http://www.deskmag.com/en/coworking-spaces>

The Soul of the Community survey. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, with the Gallup Organization, interviewed over 43,000 people in 26 communities to find out what attaches people to where they live. <http://www.soulofthecommunity.org/>



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION



SUMMARY

The first part of this report is about *what* to do to help revitalize South Hadley Falls; this section is about *how* to do it. None of the recommendations for community revitalization can be fully realized without the grassroots support of the neighbors and business owners who live and work in the neighborhood. Community buy-in is essential for any real changes to take root. After talking to a wide cross-section of South Hadley Falls residents, business owners and other stakeholders, it is clear that a desire to bring back the town's vitality and celebrate its natural beauty is a goal shared by everyone. However, harnessing that community enthusiasm can be an overwhelming challenge when there is a lack of focused, central community organization.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

There are a number of community organizations that bring energy and enthusiasm to South Hadley Falls, (the "Count Me In" Committee, the Council on Aging, even the Boy Scouts). However, none of them encompass all of the neighborhood's residents. Community outreach is sporadic and haphazard. (In order to reach everyone in the community for the AIA SDAT meeting, the Steering Committee printed door hangers and delivered them to every door in the neighborhood.) The best way to organize the neighborhood is to form a neighborhood association – a nonprofit association, (or small corporation), formed entirely of volunteers, with elected officers and directors. A neighborhood association will provide a central point of reference for all neighborhood information and a cohesive and organized voice to represent the neighborhood on community issues.

- **Leadership & Capacity Building.** South Hadley Falls already has a head start on capacity building – twenty neighbors volunteered to take part in the organization of a neighborhood association during the first SDAT meeting. The Steering Committee can call an initial organizational meeting, during which the volunteers in attendance can nominate themselves or others to act as officers and directors in the association's freshman year. Going forward, the best sources of new volunteers will be friends of the existing volunteers. They will invite those friends and family members who they know will be interested in volunteering for the association. And, friends working with friends makes volunteering fun.

- **Coordinate with Existing Groups.** When a neighborhood already has volunteer organizations actively working to help the community in their own way, find strength in numbers by joining forces. These groups have their own mission statements, goals and interests, so it is not necessarily practical to combine groups. However, representatives from each of these groups could be invited to serve on the neighborhood association's board, (or at least be invited to join as members), thus building a bridge between groups, creating a cohesive means of communication, and providing opportunities for sharing resources whenever appropriate.

- **Outreach and Communication.** The most important aspect of community organization is outreach and communication.



Hundreds of residents and stakeholders participated during the 3-day SDAT process, providing a solid foundation for future work.

Newsletters. The single most effective means of communication is a neighborhood newsletter. A neighborhood newsletter is an opportunity to inform, inspire and motivate. An engaging and well-crafted newsletter will keep the neighbors informed about the organization's activities, projects and events. And it is a means of letting folks know about the latest neighborhood news and opportunities. A newsletter is a great place to recognize and thank volunteers, partners and supporters, sponsors and donors, encouraging them to come back for more. Recognize people who've done something special or interesting in feature articles, include their photos and direct quotes, and the newsletter will make people feel important and appreciated. The more photos and images you can provide that capture the organization's activities, events, projects and the people involved, the more interesting and unique the newsletter will be to Falls readers.

A newsletter can also be a vehicle for fundraising. When area businesses realize that the newsletter is being delivered to virtually every household in the neighborhood, they will want to advertise in the newsletter, recognizing a great "bang for their buck." Ad revenue can help pay for newsletter production and, eventually, the newsletter can turn a profit. And free advertising in the neighborhood newsletter is an enticing benefit to offer sponsors of neighborhood association events and projects.

Use print versions and electronic versions. Publish the newsletter in both print and electronic versions and reach even more people. Printed newsletters delivered to door-to-door will reach neighbors who might otherwise never hear about what's happening in the neighborhood, including those who never come to meetings and those without internet connections. An e-newsletter in addition to the print version is also important. Some people will ignore printed flyers, but will gladly read all of the latest news online. And an e-newsletter can be shared with the click of a mouse, quickly increasing readership.

Website. These days, every organization needs a website. When word gets out that there is a new neighborhood association in town, the first thing an interested or curious person will do is "google" it. When someone googles "South Hadley Falls," you want your website to be the first one that pops up. A website is a great place to keep everyone informed about upcoming events and past accomplishments. It can include a calendar of events and link to copies of the newsletter. Photo albums are fun and an excellent way of letting people know about the organization's activities and the Falls' attractions. A link from the website to theirs is a benefit to offer potential corporate sponsors and donors. A blog on the website may facilitate conversations between neighbors about community events, opportunities and important decisions. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.



PROMOTE COMMUNITY SPIRIT THROUGH EVENTS

One sure way to bring the community together to celebrate the neighborhood is to organize enjoyable and memorable events. Everybody loves a block party. And block parties bring a number of benefits to the organization and the neighborhood as a whole:

- **Attention-Getter.** A block party will let the neighbors know that the new neighborhood association is ready for action. It is highly visible and cannot be ignored like a newsletter or an email. Include attention-grabbing features like a moon bounce and live music, and no one in town will miss it.

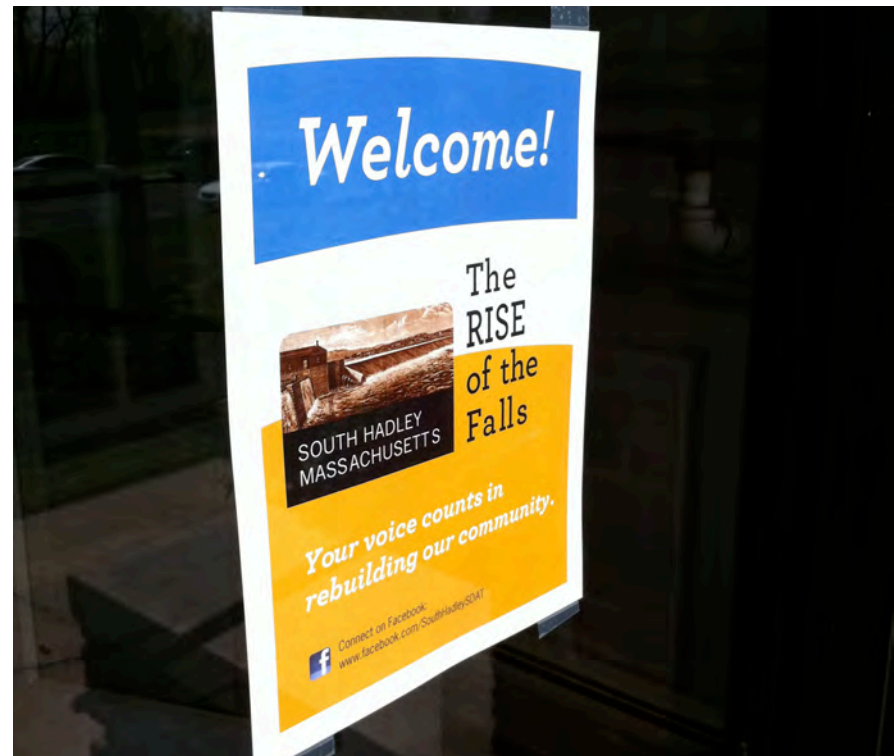
- **Engage the Neighbors.** A block party is a way to engage neighbors in the association's efforts. Neighbors will volunteer to help organize the block party, and more neighbors will step up to volunteer during the event itself. Those same volunteers can be enlisted to participate in other neighborhood projects, attend neighborhood meetings, and help organize events and fundraisers. Encourage them to bring their friends, and the volunteer base will grow exponentially.

- **Raise Money** Block parties can also help the association raise money to support other efforts, including outreach, (the cost of printing newsletter, etc.). Food and drink sales, bake sale tables, sponsorship donations and more are potential profit centers.

Engaging more neighbors in the work of the neighborhood association through a block party leads to more neighborhood engagement in the revitalization of the neighborhood in general, which will, in turn, increase neighborhood pride, and that translates to a cleaner, greener and safer environment for everyone in South Hadley.



Community spirit was in abundance during the SDAT process - now South Hadley needs to apply it to events and volunteerism.



BUILDING A SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteers are easier to enlist than they are to keep. In order to keep volunteers, they must be engaged continuously with something to do. Passive listening at neighborhood meetings is not nearly as interesting as being actively involved in a project. Make a list of tasks and projects for the neighborhood association – a list that will evolve as the association grows. Put volunteers' names next to projects and tasks on that list, (along with achievable goals and deadlines). Tasks and projects may include, for example:

- Neighborhood Meetings (enlisting speakers, refreshments, etc.)
- Block Party (organizing, developing sponsors, setup and cleanup, etc.)
- Neighborhood Cleanup Days (organizing, publicizing, etc.)
- Newsletters (production and delivery)
- Website (creation and updating)
- Greening (planting trees, corner flower pots, hanging baskets, etc.)
- Grant writing and Fundraising
- Kids' Activities, etc.

BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

In addition to the neighborhood association, the businesses in South Hadley Falls could use a means of organizing. When the businesses in a neighborhood get organized, they can work together to promote the neighborhood and bring in new businesses which will create a dynamic mix that will benefit everyone.

- **Organization & Funding Options.** Depending upon availability under local law or ordinance, there may be certain funding and organizational options for the businesses in South Hadley Falls to explore as a means of creating an effective business association and vital business district dedicated to promoting business development and improving the area's quality of life.

For example:

BID (business improvement district) – a defined area within which businesses pay an additional tax or fee to local government in order to fund improvements within the district's boundaries. BID funds may be used to deliver supplemental services such as sanitation and maintenance, public safety and visitor services, marketing and promotional programs, capital improvements, and beautification for the area.

RBDL (retail business district license) – a defined area within which retail businesses pay a fee to a business association comprised of merchants from the district that, in turn, provides advertising and promotional activities for the entire district that would not otherwise be economically feasible for many individual businesses.

- **Marketing & Promotions.** Short of formal management and funding options such as BIDs and RBDLs, the business association may still pool resources for effective marketing and advertising, beautification projects and promotional events.



- **Perception & Appearances:**

Perception of an area precedes the reality. Accordingly, the goal of a business association is to promote the perception of a vital, up-and-coming business district in order to attract both customers and new businesses. To that end, take advantage of every positive story or spin. In connection with the AIA SDAT visit, there were no less than three TV news stories and even more internet news stories and blog discussions. Obtain copies of all positive stories and use them to your advantage in newsletters, ad campaigns, and other promotions. Look for additional upbeat stories and situations and promote them to the local TV and news outlets for even more coverage.

Appearances are the first impressions of your district. Look for ways to beautify your business area, especially the gateway and Main Street. Explore grant funding for cleaning and greening, wall murals, and facade improvements. Give the exterior of the business district a “face lift,” and substantive revitalization will follow.

- **New Business Support.** To support new businesses opening in South Hadley Falls, reach out to your nearest Small Business Administration office to learn what kinds of programs are available locally. That said, South Hadley Falls has a unique resource all its own in the large number of seniors who live in the neighborhood. Many seniors are retirees with a vast wealth of business knowledge and experience that they can share with new entrepreneurs. The business association can work with the various senior citizen groups in the neighborhood to create new business support programs, including seminars and one-on-one counseling. In addition, the business association can work with local government to apply for grant funding for special business development programs and/or incentives such as tax abatements available to assist businesses or to recruit new business.



FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the preceding suggestions, which can be undertaken immediately, as the revitalization of the business district gets underway, there will be future opportunities to expand and improve growth, vitality and development.

Main Street Program. The Main Street program, created by the National trust for Historic Preservation, is the most successful business revitalization program in the country. Once South Hadley Falls has a viable business district, it can explore the possibility of bringing the Main Street program to town. (www.preservationnation.org/main-street)

Economic Development Entity. The current CDEC needs a clearer, more focused mission. It may eventually evolve into a full-fledged business development corporation (BDC) – a 501(c)(3) corporation that contracts with the town of South Hadley Falls to provide economic development services. With a mission to retain and expand existing employers and attract new ones, the BDC could work collaboratively with town government and with private partners to deliver a broad range of business services. A BDC could help grow small companies in the initial stages of their development, even facilitate investment in startup companies. A BDC could act as a liaison between business owners and government agencies advocating for the interests of South Hadley employers. It could work with business owners to shepherd private development projects through public processes saving time and mitigating expense. It could even act as a developer, facilitating the reuse of publicly owned property for new and expanding businesses.

OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT & INVESTMENT

Once the neighborhood association and business association are organized, the next step is to get others involved and investing in the community.

- **Who & How.** South Hadley Falls already has outside resources poised to invest in the community: the five colleges, area utility companies, (electric & light, Comcast cable, etc.), government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Some of these organizations are ready to help *now*, they just need to know how to go about it. Others will need some persuasion. In order to garner their support, be specific. Ask for support with specific tasks, ask them to sponsor events, (request a specific dollar amount or range), ask them to partner on specific projects, (in-kind donations of good and services). For example, ask Comcast Cable to become a \$1,000 sponsor of the block party. Ask one of the area colleges to print the newsletter free of charge. Ask an area nonprofit to provide volunteer support to deliver newsletters or plant trees or run a block party booth. There are plenty of folks who want to support the neighborhood, they just need to be given specific directions as to how they can do it.

- **Sponsorships.** There are two kinds of sponsors: (1) those who support your mission and have altruistic motives for providing their support, and (2) those who are motivated by the benefits of sponsorship and the exposure it can bring to their own company, organization or project. Go for both types of sponsors and tailor your sponsorship packages to each.

Make a list of potential sponsors and note whether they are motivated by your mission or by sponsorship benefits. Make a list of all possible sponsorship benefits, (free ads in your newsletter, feature article in your newsletter, a link on your website to their website, their logo included in all print ads, their logo included on event signage and banners, their logo printed on volunteer t-shirts, their sponsorship mentioned in press releases, etc.), and put together a structured sponsorship package offering more benefits for more money. Send out written sponsorship requests and follow up with phone calls or face-to-face conversations.



Don't be discouraged if the first answer is "no." It often takes two, three or more "asks" before a sponsor says yes. Many sponsors want to see a pattern of success before they invest in your organization, so take lots of pictures of your events and meetings; make sure the pictures emphasize the size of the crowd; capture smiling faces, (not backs of heads). Include the best pictures in your sponsorship requests.

If an offer of exclusive sales is attractive to a particular sponsor, (like sale of an exclusive beer brand at a festival), make that part of the sponsorship benefits package. Alternatively, don't hesitate to engage competing sponsors in cases where that may help you, (realtors and insurance agencies have been known to "up the ante" in order to gain an edge over a competitor, for example, paying a higher price for a better placed ad or larger festival booth space).

- **Excitement and Momentum.** Trumpet *everything*. It all helps. When the TV news or local online blog runs an article about South Hadley Falls, include a story about the article in your newsletter. When a new sponsor signs on to an event, give it a headline in your newsletter and on your website and send out a press release. If an area college provides support creating a website or planting trees, that should be headline news as well. All good news helps build excitement. Take advantage of the excitement and keep up your momentum. Your own enthusiasm is your greatest asset.



SETTING PRIORITIES

Take your plans and turn them into task lists. Prioritize, but remain flexible.

- **"To Do" Lists.** Start with your mission statement and your goals. To actually effect change, those mission statements and goals must be broken down into projects, and then each project must be broken down into tasks. For example, "make the neighborhood cleaner and greener" would translate into, "plant 100 trees; put large flower pots on street corners; organize neighborhood cleanup days," etc.

Each project must be broken down into tasks, for example, "plant 100 trees," becomes a "To Do List" that includes, "identify locations for new trees; contact utility company to verify safety of locations; obtain donations of trees from ABC Nursery; contact college to arrange volunteers; arrange for borrowed planting equipment from XYZ Company; send out flyers advertising planting event two weeks prior; buy coffee and donuts for day of; rent U-Haul to pickup and deliver trees day of; take pictures day of; send thank you letters to sponsors/donors," etc.

Next to each task, list the names of the volunteers who will be responsible for that task as well as a deadline for when the task must be accomplished. As you meet to organize your event, go through the To Do List on a regular basis – in fact, use it as your agenda – update it and fill in all details. That way, you will not only ensure that you have thought of everything and have everything covered, if something happens to your primary event organizer, someone else can pick up the To Do List and carry on. In addition, when you are ready to organize the event again next year, your To Do List from this year will be a blueprint for next year making everything a little easier.

- **Neighborhood Priorities.** Given that community ownership is necessary for revitalization, it is important to identify the community's priorities and to make every effort to address those priorities in order of importance. One method of identifying priorities is to hold a community meeting, make a list of all suggestions – large and small, broad and specific, practical and idealistic – and allow everyone at the meeting to vote for their top five priorities. (List all suggestions on large posters or a blackboard or white erase board and let attendees place a sticker or check mark next to their top five priorities.) All suggestions remain on the list, but by using the vote, you can put them in order of importance to the community.

Note: There will always be community members in attendance who are afraid of change. Community leaders can deal with those who resist by rephrasing the issue. The neighbor who is afraid of change surely remembers the day when the main street was bustling, when neighbors were active in the community, and when the river was a source of recreation and community pride. For that person, frame the revitalization effort as a means of “bringing back” the old vitality that has been lost.

- **Be Flexible.** Even once you have identified neighborhood priorities, it is important that you remain flexible. Don't let a rigid commitment to priorities cause you to miss out on opportunities.



Easy jobs first. There are some community improvements that can be done quickly and easily. Don't delay just because those improvements are not at the top of the priority list. Go ahead and get them done. Cross them off your list of things to do and make immediate progress. For example, cleaning up the trash may not be at the top of your neighborhood's list, but a neighborhood cleanup day can be organized immediately. The amount of preparation and potential costs are minimal, and the results are immediate and visible. Get the easy jobs done first and the community will see immediate progress, which, in turn, will create enthusiasm and momentum for the more challenging projects.

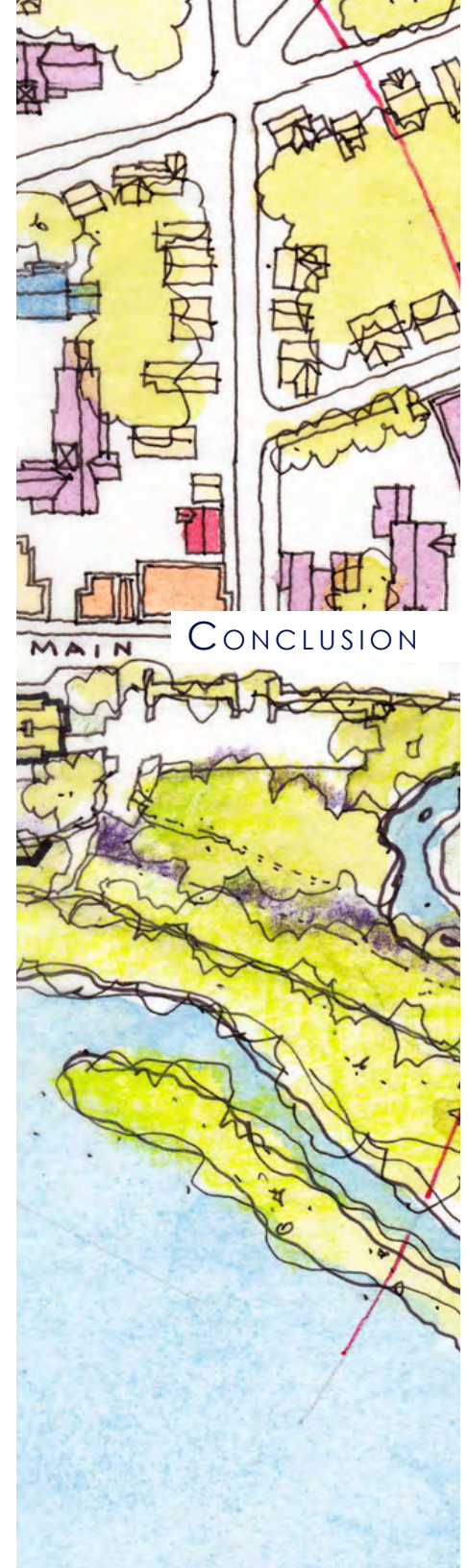
Funding Priorities and Popularity. Some of the projects on your list will require significant funding. Grant writing may be your best resource for those projects. However, grant givers tend to follow trends like everything else. Foundation grant givers in particular go with what's popular because they don't necessarily have their own mission beyond giving away money. Right now, for example, “greening” is very popular. It is much easier to find grants for greening, including clean water projects, than it is for other projects. So even if greening and clean water are not on the top of your priority list, don't miss out on grant opportunities while they're there. If you wait until you've worked through your top priorities and then look for greening funds, they may no longer be available. Take advantage of opportunities as they arise and optimize your resources.

REVITALIZATION IS CONTAGIOUS

By bringing the AIA SDAT team to South Hadley Falls, your community is already moving forward in its quest for improvement and revitalization. Keep up your enthusiasm, your optimism and your momentum, and before you know it, your community revitalization will take on a life of its own. For your first few newsletters, you will have to go door-to-door to sell ads to local businesses, but before you know it, the businesses will be calling you to place their ads. For your first few block parties, you will have to reach out far and wide for sponsors, but before you know it, every sponsor you approach will be saying yes. During your first few years of revitalization, you may have to undertake a broad search and offer major incentives to bring in new businesses, but before you know it, new businesses will be clamoring for space on your main street.

Revitalization is contagious, and each success, small or large, leads to the next one in improving the neighborhood. South Hadley Falls neighbors and businesses are clearly ready to invest their time and energy to make the revitalization work. This is a community that believes in itself. Yours is the perfect opportunity for a unique community renaissance.





IMPLEMENTATION: THE FUTURE OF SOUTH HADLEY FALLS

For three days the SDAT team talked with as many people as possible and heard a lot of great ideas for South Hadley Falls. The team gathered information for several months prior to the SDAT, and used its initial base of information to inform its dialogue with the community. The South Hadley Steering Committee and local volunteers did a tremendous job engaging the community, and the result was broad participation by hundreds and a lot of excitement and momentum for implementation. The Steering Committee and town staff demonstrated a special commitment to community engagement, organizing a fantastic canvassing initiative with door hangers and flyers.

The team has outlined its recommendations for the Falls in the preceding report. Moving forward, we feel there are several critical things to consider. The first and most important priority is your willingness and ability to partner with others to accomplish the goals articulated during the SDAT process. It will be important to partner with property owners, public agencies, non-profits, businesses and residents, even on very small projects. Second, the team feels it is important to leverage previous studies and documents, as many of them have detailed solutions that are still the right choice for South Hadley and can be easily implemented. Third, the team believes South Hadley should connect to the river at every opportunity - for recreation, for viewing, for connecting to other places and to tell your story. The Connecticut River was recently designated as the first National Blueway, a designation intended to recognize and support existing local and regional conservation, recreation and restoration efforts. South Hadley should jump at the opportunity to establish the first connection with this program and to complete its first major project; the town could easily generate significant press coverage and excite residents and visitors all across the state. Fourth and most importantly, the team wants to emphasize the need to build upon the significant community engagement in the SDAT process by including everyone in the implementation effort. This includes not only the citizens of South Hadley, but those in Holyoke who come to the Falls for recreation or business. Everyone should be welcomed in the Falls, and participation by all will make it a much more dynamic and vibrant community as well as a great economic driver. The Falls is off to a great start with participation by so many local residents.



The SDAT team felt that South Hadley demonstrated enormous potential to realize its vision for the future. The team observed tremendous capacity locally to engage the whole community in the effort and build the partnerships necessary for success. Consider the example of another recent SDAT on a waterfront community:

In 2009, the City of Port Angeles, WA (pop: 19,000), hosted an SDAT to focus on downtown revitalization and waterfront development. Port Angeles had suffered declining fortunes as the result of mill closures and reduced productivity from natural resource industries. The three-day charrette process created enormous civic energy to pursue a vision for the city's future. "Just two weeks after the SDAT presented more than 30 recommendations, the Port Angeles Forward committee unanimously agreed to recommend 10 of those items for immediate action," said Nathan West, the City's Director of Community and Economic Development. "Public investment and commitment inspired private investment, and, less than a month later, the community joined together in an effort to revamp the entire downtown, starting with a physical face-lift. Community members donated paint and equipment, and residents picked up their paintbrushes to start the transformation."

During the first summer of implementation, over 43 buildings in the downtown received substantial upgrades, including new paint and other improvements. This effort led to a formal façade improvement program that extended the initiative exponentially. The city dedicated \$118,000 in community development block grants (CDBG) for the effort, which catalyzed over \$265,000 in private investment. The city also moved forward with substantial public investment in its waterfront, which had a dramatic impact in inspiring new partnerships and private investment. Today, in the midst of uncertain economic times nationally, the city has generated over \$75 million in planned and completed investments and has turned the corner by producing huge civic momentum across the community.

As West concludes:

"The City of Port Angeles SDAT experience was far more than just a planning exercise. This opportunity for our community was a catalyst for action, implementation and improvement. Three years after the SDAT team arrived, the progress and excitement continue. A primary outcome has been that the process awakened community pride and inspired

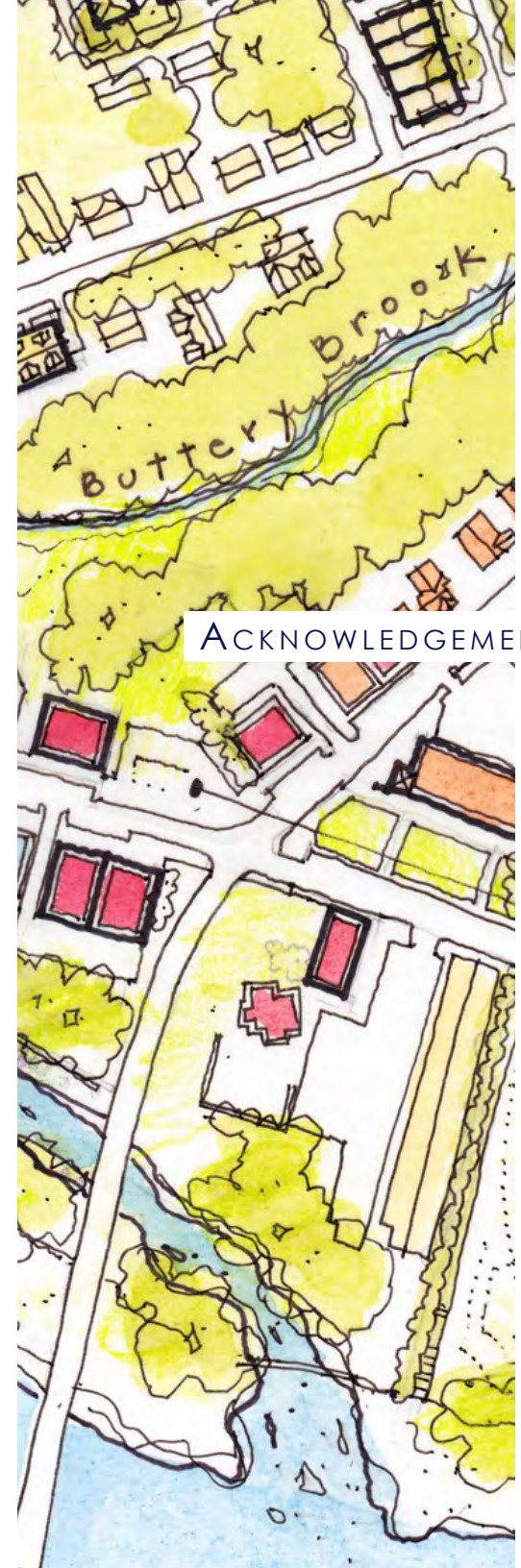
a "together we can" attitude. Today the inspiration remains and the elements and recommendations of the program continue to be the driver for publicly endorsed capital projects and investments in our community. More importantly this sustainable approach has tapped into the core values and priorities of our citizens to ensure a better and more balanced future for our City."

In June 2012, Port Angeles received a state design award for the new waterfront masterplan they've produced, and they break ground on construction this fall. The SDAT team sees the same kind of energy and potential present in South Hadley, if the entire community works together.

One of your volunteers often says, "I fell for the Falls"; the SDAT team couldn't agree more, as our entire team has fallen for the Falls. We heard a specific collective vision for the future from residents, for a new South Hadley Falls, a canal village that capitalizes on its historic and ecological assets, increases commercial and residential density in the neighborhood, provides stronger visual and physical accessibility to the river, and has a strong neighborhood and business association coordinating community activities and economic development. We can't wait to come back and check your progress as you work toward this vision.



Port Angeles - Before & After



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The South Hadley SDAT process was the product of public collaboration among many organizations and individuals. The team would like to thank the many public officials, civic leaders, business representatives and residents who participated in the process. In particular, the team would like to thank the following individuals, without whose leadership the process would have been impossible:

Helen Fantini, AIA - Steering Committee Chair

Richard Harris, AICP - Town Planner

South Hadley Town Staff Members

Steering Committee Members:

Jesse Lytle, Master plan Implementation Committee

Michael Davis, Mount Holyoke College

Frank DeToma, Selectboard

Michael Fisher, Community & Economic Development Commission

Jack Fleming, Conservation Commission

Lucia Foley, Cultural Commission

Walter Hamilton, Library Board of Trustees

Steve Werenski, Pietras Werenski & Co. and St. Patrick's Church

Ken Williamson, Historical Commission

Gillian Woldorf, Neighborhood Representative

In addition, the SDAT team would also like to thank the following individuals who made numerous invaluable contributions to the final product during the charette studio sessions:

Brian Schumacher

Jimmy Regnier

James Fiore





THE SDAT TEAM

CHARRETTE TEAM



Todd Scott, AIA
(Seattle, Washington)
Charrette Team Leader

Todd is a licensed architect who specializes in historic preservation and downtown revitalization. His preservation experience includes stints with Oklahoma City, as historic preservation officer, and with King County, Washington, where he currently provides assistance for historic properties in that county and sixteen suburban and rural communities. He recently completed the intensive level survey of 175 historic barns on the Enumclaw Plateau and 200 historic residential and commercial properties in Kent, both in King County.

He has been involved in the rehabilitation of hundreds of structures in dozens of small downtowns as the state architect for Oklahoma Main Street and for DesignWorks, an arts-based design charrette program. Todd also served as community development director and assistant city manager for the city of Astoria, Oregon. He has presented at numerous state, regional, and national conferences on topics ranging from sustainability in design to mounting grass roots campaigns for endangered structures. Todd has served on the boards of various non-profit agencies including heritage organizations, community development corporations, urban renewal authorities, and architectural foundations.



Cheryl Morgan, AIA
(Birmingham, Alabama)
Urban Design

Cheryl Morgan is an architect and the Gresham Professor of Architecture at Auburn University. In over 23 years of teaching she has worked with architectural programs at Georgia Institute of Technology, Oklahoma State and California College of Arts and Crafts. She is currently the director of Auburn's Urban Studio in Birmingham.

Morgan practiced architecture and urban design in the San Francisco Bay area for more than eight years. She worked with a number of firms including Environmental Planning and

Research, Gensler, and the Gruzen Partnership. Before coming to Auburn in 1992 she was an associate with the Berkeley firm of ELS/Elbasani and Logan. Her last project at ELS was the design of new and adaptive reuse buildings along the Singapore River in five blocks of Singapore's Clarke Quay Historic District. Morgan's professional practice now focuses on urban design, community planning and graphic design.

Morgan holds a Bachelor of Architecture and a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology) from Auburn University. Her Master of Architecture degree is from the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana. She is certified by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards and is a member of the City of Birmingham's Design Review Board. She is also working with the Railroad Reservation Park project in downtown Birmingham; the Red Mountain State Park; is a founding board member of the citizen leadership program – YourTownAlabama; and sits on the boards of Space One Eleven and Operation New Birmingham's Magic City Art Connection.

The Urban Studio's Small Town Design Initiative Program – a significant component of Auburn's outreach agenda – has worked with more than 40 small towns and neighborhoods in Alabama under Morgan's direction.



Carol Mayer-Reed, FASLA
(Portland, Oregon)

*Connectivity, Community Identity,
Natural Environment, Parks & Open
Space*

Carol Mayer-Reed, FASLA, is partner in charge of Mayer/Reed's landscape architecture and urban design group that is recognized regionally and nationally for design excellence and

sustainability leadership. Her 33 years of experience encompass a wide range of project types in both public and private sectors, including waterfronts, site master planning, transportation corridors, urban renewal, plazas, parks and recreation, and corporate and university campuses.

Carol is a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and has served as Chair of its National Awards program. She is appointed to the national General Services Administration Peer Review panel. She recently served on the boards of the Architecture Foundation of Oregon and the School of Architecture & Allied Arts at the University of Oregon. Carol holds registration as a landscape architect in the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California and Ohio. She earned a BFA from The Ohio State University and a Master of Landscape Architecture & Planning from Utah State University.



Wendy Weber Salvati, AICP
(New York)

Land Use/Planning

Ms. Salvati offers over 20 years of comprehensive knowledge and experience as a land use and environmental planner, and is certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners. At Wendel Duchscherer, she has been responsible for numerous projects involving waterfront

planning, comprehensive planning, site planning, environmental review and zoning for Western New York and Long Island municipalities. She has assisted communities with the implementation of comprehensive plans and has vast experience facilitating public meetings and public participation programs. Ms. Salvati has extensive knowledge of the New York State Coastal Management Program and has

prepared Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs (LWRP) and waterfront studies for a number of communities. She has a thorough understanding of SEQRA and has been involved with the preparation of environmental impact statements. Ms. Salvati's overall background enables her to assist municipalities with site planning and subdivision review and she is the planning consultant to a number of Planning Boards in Western New York. She has assisted a number of communities with the protection of their community character, including developing aesthetic and dimensional standards for site design.



Nancy Fox, AICP
(Washington, DC)

Economic Development

Nancy Fox leads the Washington DC office of BAE Urban Economics, a consulting firm specializing in real estate advisory and development

strategies for public sector clients. She specializes in using economic, market and financial tools to create vibrant urban places and form successful public-private partnerships. Recent projects include revitalization strategies for downtown, waterfront neighborhoods in Richmond and Portsmouth, VA, designed to increase the appeal of these unique places to residents, businesses and visitors. She has completed several projects through on call contracts with the Norfolk, VA Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), guiding assignments that provide market support for pioneering new housing developments and assess transit-oriented development opportunities.

Nancy also helps her clients make strategic, economically sustainable decisions by assisting them in understanding the economic impacts of development. Her projects have focused on the economic costs and benefits of mixed use redevelopment compared to existing industrial land use patterns, measuring outcomes in terms of jobs, net fiscal benefits, and sustainability measures. Her expertise also encompasses urban parks and public spaces; her assignments have included analyses of revenue sources that could offset operations and maintenance costs for the High Line and the East River Waterfront Esplanade in New York City.

Prior to joining BAE, she served as project manager for several urban development organizations and economic development agencies in New Jersey. Nancy earned a Master of Urban Planning from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor of Arts from Vassar College. She is a member of the American Institute of Urban Planners (AICP), the Urban Land Institute, and the American Planning Association.

created popular newsletters, brochures and websites, successfully applied for grants, developed foundation and corporate sponsorships and other funding methods, and organized fundraising and marketing events ranging from retail promotions to street festivals with more than 50,000 in attendance. Bonnie has spoken on these subjects at national conventions and seminars and continues to expand her outreach, advising and assisting various Baltimore area nonprofits through her consulting practice.



Bonnie Crockett

(Baltimore, MD)

Community Organization

Bonnie is a Baltimore, Maryland native who has lived and worked in Baltimore City for over 25 years. She began her professional career as an attorney, but after 17 years of banking and commercial law, she changed direction, and in 2001, accepted the position of Executive Director of Federal Hill Main Street, a nonprofit corporation organized to revitalize an historic business district. Under her leadership, the Federal Hill Main Street program grew to be the most successful Main Street program in the city and in the state and one of the foremost Main Street programs in the country, (winning the Greatest American Main Street Award in 2008). In 2008, she moved on to develop and implement Westport Community Partnerships, a community revitalization program focused on the impoverished South Baltimore neighborhood of Westport. Sponsored by Turner Development Group in anticipation of a \$1.6 billion waterfront development, the multi-faceted community revitalization program was based on partnerships between neighbors, city agencies, local businesses and area nonprofits.

Since beginning her career in community and economic revitalization, Bonnie has been effectively promoting and helping to improve the City of Baltimore in various ways. She has recruited, managed, and retained hundreds of volunteers, enlisted and worked with boards of directors and community leaders, brought neighbors, businesses and other stakeholders together to resolve neighborhood conflicts and form effective community associations, negotiated with city agencies and nonprofit organizations to effect social and environmental improvement programs and capital improvement projects, written and implemented strategic plans and work plans,

AIA STAFF:

Joel Mills

Director, Center for Communities by Design

Joel Mills serves as 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. Through its design assistance programs, the Center has worked in 55 communities across 32 states since 2005. 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.

Joel's career in civic health and governance spans over 19 years, and includes community-based technical assistance, process design, facilitation and training across a number of fields. During the 1990s, Mr. Mills spent several years supporting international democratization initiatives by providing technical assistance to parliaments, political parties, local governments, civic and international organizations. His scope of work included constitutional design and governing systems, voter and civic education, election monitoring and administration, political party training and campaign strategy, collaborative governance, human rights and civil society capacity building. His work has been featured on ABC World News Tonight, Nightline, CNN, The Next American City, Smart City Radio, The National Civic Review, Ecostructure Magazine, The Washington Post, and dozens of other media sources.

Erin Simmons

Director, Design Assistance

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.

To date, Erin has served as staff lead on over 45 design assistance teams. Prior to joining the AIA, Erin worked as senior 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.

