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## The Bristol Team

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# *Bristol, New Hampshire*

## *Design Charrette*

Sponsored by:

Plan NH  
Town of Bristol, NH

*September 19 & 20, 2008*





# *Plan NH*

## *Bristol Charrette*

### **Who is Plan NH?**

Plan NH, founded in 1989, is a professional association established to create a forum to bring together those focused on the built environment and interested in community development. Plan NH members include architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, bankers, contractors, historic preservationists, and others. A principle aspect of Plan NH's mission is to make a positive contribution to New Hampshire communities. One way in which Plan NH is doing this is by offering pro-bono design assistance each year to New Hampshire communities with demonstrated needs.

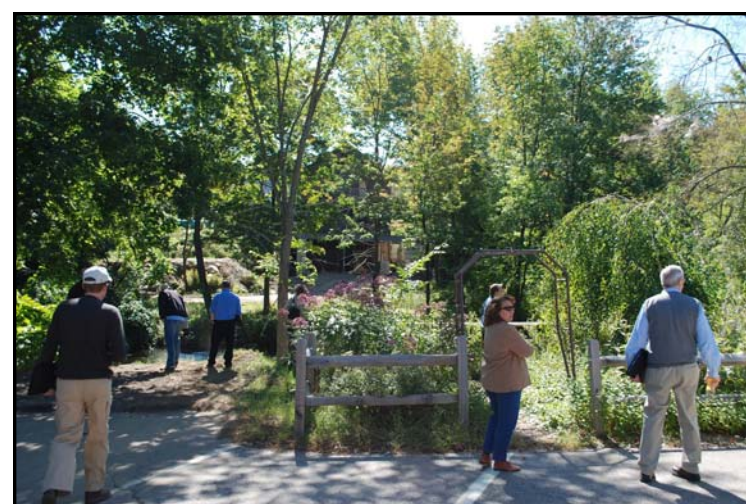
### **What is a Design Charrette?**

Simply stated, a design Charrette is a brainstorming session where lots of ideas are brought forth by both professional designers and local citizens, in an attempt to resolve a problem of local interest. Because of the compressed time frame, the recommendations reached are usually conceptual. Recommendations present the relationship of different plan elements, as

opposed to the details of how a particular building would actually be constructed. The Charrette process blends the broad experience of design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action to address a particular development issue within the community. The Charrette provides an overall framework in which final solutions can be developed and gives a direction against which future decisions can be measured. The Plan NH Charrette are typically two day workshops that produce a number of design ideas and possible solutions, which are documented in booklets and presented to the town to be used as a starting point in their design process.

### **Why did Plan NH come to Bristol?**

Each year Plan NH invites communities to submit proposals outlining a community design opportunity. The proposals are examined and two or three are chosen for a weekend charrette consisting of volunteer professionals to brainstorm and develop creative ideas addressing a problem of local interest. Plan NH assesses the proposals on the basis of: importance of the project to the host community, interest in the design problem, and probability of the project actually being implemented. Communities that are organized, have done some early work on a project, thought out its needs, and how it would implement the recommendations are favored by the selection committee.





## *The Charrette Process*

The Plan NH charrette process includes one day of our design team listening to members of the community and town officials as well as making site observations. The second day involves an intense brainstorming of ideas culminating in the generation of sketches, concepts, and implementation strategies

Plan NH members, town officials, and community members met in the Town Hall over the course of two days in late September 2008. On Friday morning, the Plan NH team met with representatives from the Planning Board and Bristol citizens to discuss the town's needs at length. The group then toured Bristol downtown core and Newfound River area. This gave the charrette team an opportunity to walk the entire area to experience the circulation patterns and routes, view existing buildings and land uses, and get a first-hand look at the amenities and assets of the town.

On Friday afternoon and evening, Plan NH held two public listening sessions at which members of the community raised concerns and describe their wishes for the town's future.

This sharing of local knowledge is critical, as it provides the design team with a understanding of the town's actual needs, opportunities, and constraints.

On Saturday morning, the design team members convened to strategize. Taking the information they had gathered during the listening sessions and the site walks along with a review of the town ordinances and master plans the group identified several critical planning topics. The Plan NH Charrette Team formed several groups to address each planning topic through discussion, recommendations and drawings Plans and sketches as well as recommendations were presented later that afternoon at a well-attended public forum.





## *The Bristol Proposal*

Bristol's proposal, submitted by the Bristol Planning Board, requested assistance in looking at the central business district of the town "...to create plans which will make a major contribution to the revitalization of the downtown area." The proposal also added the plans should also include a recreational 'riverwalk' along the Newfound River that runs through the downtown core.

Plans for improving the downtown area has been the subject of previous Master Plans. The Bristol proposal requested that the Plan NH team review 2003 Master Plan and use it as a starting point to make improvement suggestions. The vision statement for the 2003 Master Plan included the following guiding principles:

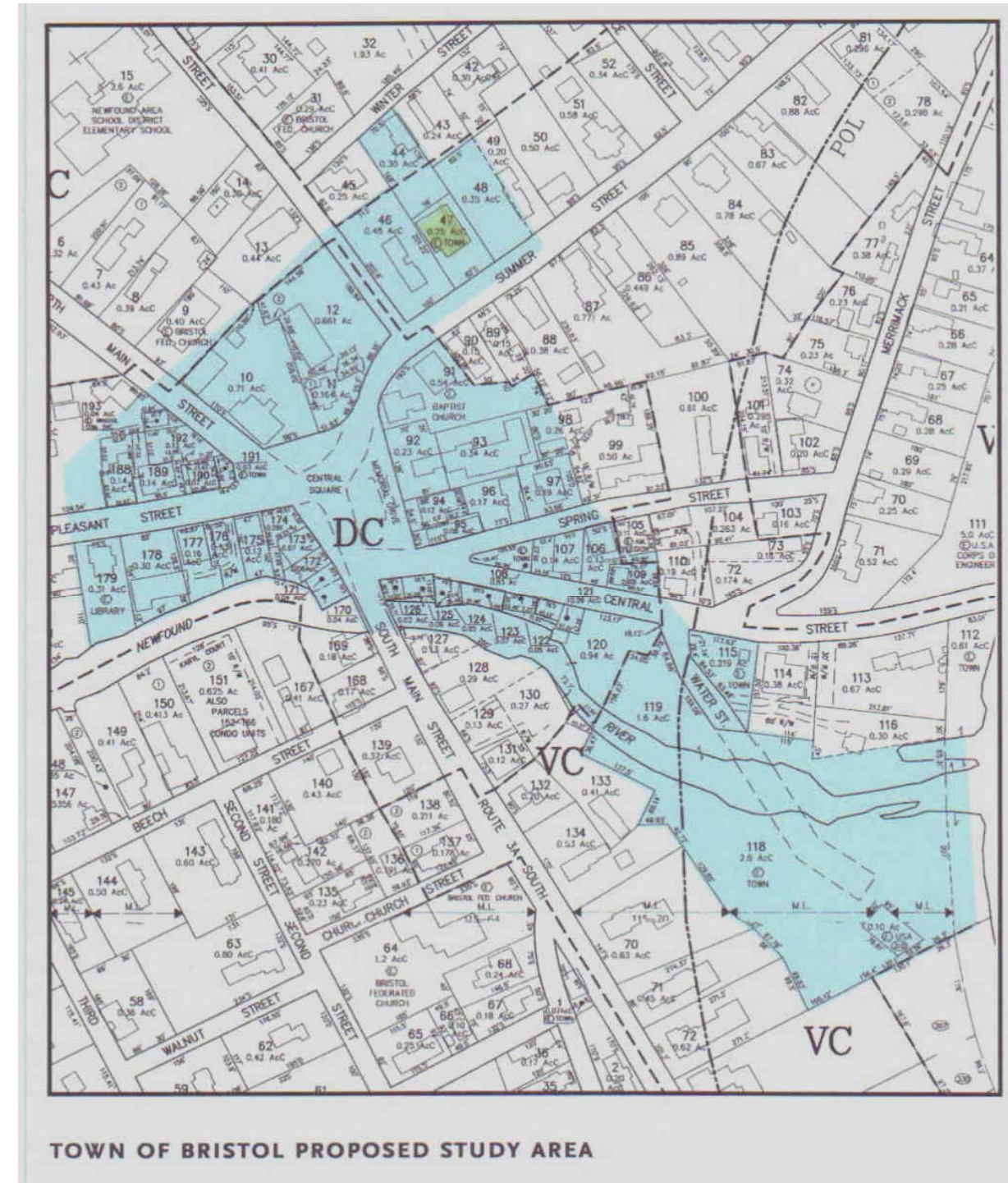
- Enhancing Bristol's economic vitality through ongoing reinvestment in the downtown core
- Preserve historic assets
- Maintaining and improving community assets supporting public safety, recreation, transportation and the general welfare.



Several points in Bristol's proposal were particularly attractive to Plan NH:

- The existing viability of the downtown area provided an excellent opportunity for commercial revitalization.
- Opportunities for recreational use along the scenic Newfound River.
- The Bristol Planning Board has been actively studying economic and commercial strategies.

The focus of the charrette was to center around the downtown Central Square. This area included the study area of North Main Street, South Main Street, Summer Street, Pleasant Street, Spring Street and Central Street. This downtown core is the central business district for the town and includes the Library, Post Office, Town Hall, and many commercial establishments including several nationally registered historic buildings.





## Central Square

Bristol's Central Square is at the heart of the improvement plans. The square is registered as a National Historic District and contains many buildings dating from the 19th century. The square, nearly rectangular, is formed by the intersection of the six major streets radiating from the downtown area. The commercial buildings are arranged around the square, a common historical configuration of many New Hampshire towns.



Currently Central Square is surrounded by parking and includes a small green space. The Soldier's Monument located in the grassy area memorializes the Civil War navy soldiers and includes a mortar given to the town in 1896. The Square has survived the last 200 years or so virtually intact, it has changed little since the end of the 19th century.

General recommendations for improvements to Central Square outlined in the previous Master Plans and comments heard from the citizens of Bristol include:

- Traffic calming needed in the Square
- Reduce the expanse of asphalt in the Square
- Enlarge the green space
- Improve pedestrian access and street crossings
- Create a pedestrian connection to the Newfound River



*Historic Cavis and White's Blocks on the west side of Central Square*



*Soldier Monument in Central Street with 1893 Bristol Savings Bank beyond*



*Looking towards green space with Bartlett House on left*



## *Historic Buildings of Central Square*



*Approach to Central Square from Summer Street*



*Bean-Turkey Block on Southside of square at corner of South Main Street and Central Street*



*Intersection of North Main and Pleasant Streets*



*Bartlett House*



*Abel Block*



*Draper Block at south end of South Main Street bridge crossing the Newfound River*



## Newfound River

The Newfound River is the most prominent natural feature within the study area. The river serves as the outlet for Newfound Lake located in the northern area of town. The Newfound River and its hydro power was the main influence in the development of Bristol as a manufacturing and commercial center in the 1800's.

A park and picnic area along the Newfound River in the downtown area has been discussed as part of the vision for the Improvement Plan.



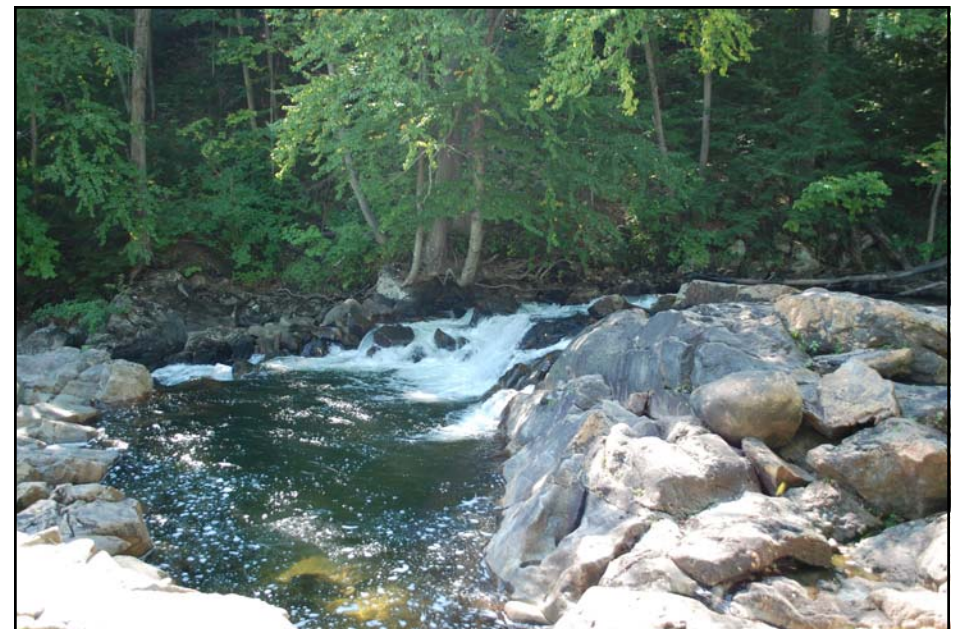
*Newfound River looking Southeast From South Main Street Bridge*



*Newfound River as it passes behind the historic buildings along Central Street*



*Newfound River behind 11-13 Central Square*



*Newfound River southeast of Central Street*



## *Summary of Comments at Listening Sessions*

During the two listening sessions the design team collected many suggestions and important information from the local citizens. Much of the discussion and comments focused on maintaining the historic character of Bristol while creating a vibrant year-round community and visitor destination. The suggestions heard during the two listening sessions can be generally categorized into three interrelated issues: **Economic development of Central Square; Central Square streetscape improvements; Access to the river and development of a pedestrian/ bike path along the Newfound River.**

The charrette team heard several discussions on the question of how to attract more visitors to Central Square on a year-round basis. The businesses make much of their yearly income during the summer months when vacationers flock to Newfound Lake. Many of these suggestions focused on physical improvements to Central Square to make it a safer and more attractive place for pedestrians. Many folks wanted to see decrease in roadway pavement, overhead utilities put underground or out of sight, more attractive pedestrian scale lighting, safer crosswalks, more green space and landscaping, and traffic calming measures. Creating a gateway to the downtown area was also discussed.

Vehicular traffic issues and parking were at the center of the safety and pedestrian access problems in Central Square. Complicating efforts to make changes to traffic patterns in the square is the fact that Main Street is a State owned roadway which has strict design guidelines. A final roadway design solution in the square would need to improve the pedestrian safety while satisfying the state guidelines for roadway widths and turning radii and signalization. Many possible ideas were suggested such as roundabouts, speed tables, light signals, bump-outs, traffic lane realignment.

Providing a pedestrian and bike path along the Newfound River was the subject of many discussions and suggestions. The river is a beautiful natural asset, with stunning waterfalls, as it flows through the downtown area to the Pemigewasset River. Many attendees mentioned taking advantage of this resource to attract more visitors for recreational use. Access for kayaking and fishing, and a 'riverwalk' for biking walking were suggested. Connecting a pathway to Profile Falls was also recommended.



## LISTENING SESSIONS: WHAT WE HEARD

### Problems:

- Width of roads
- Lack of green space
- “Lazy parking” - Square—Dangerous
- Moving the monument
- 6 roads coming into square

### Solutions:

- Soften curb
- Re-design parking (angled parking)
- Widen sidewalk-park benches green space
- Strengthen Gateway
- Re-design circulation Rt104
- Ped. friendly lighting—remove overhead utilities more aesthetic lighting as design element
- Traffic Calming– Bump-outs/ change in pavement, i.e. cobbles
- Speed tables
- Build up riverwalk—good for economy
- Tie bike path to Profile Falls
- Take advantage of square— square is heart of town
- Riverwalk could become flooded
- Walkability in square
- Access to church parking lot a problem
- Re-organize structural issues throughout—make businesses stay
- Hide utilities w/landscaping? How to maintain businesses?? Anchor business?
- Upper level in businesses what are the spaces used for
- Bristol as ‘Model’ community—making Bristol a hub
- Bristol needs economic development plan
- Need manufacturer on outskirts of town to support economy
- Need more full-time residents, currently summer res. are supporting most of the economy
- Modify downtown “Build it and they will come”
- Bus. Owners try to make most income in summer—How do they continue throughout year?
- Relocate memorial somewhere else in square? At gateway?
- What are the bus. opportunities In Bristol ski shop w/ Ragged Mountain
- Just received \$5k grant for safe routes to school
- Capitol Improvement Plan / Brick Building –3A
- Multi-million Solving—Anchor– Town Office or Police Station
- Preservation of historic buildings
- Permanent ‘accent’ lighting Bikepath / riverwalk

- How do we get people to stop in square?
- How do we stop revolving door for businesses?
- Business and public blds. outside of square creates traffic congestion in square
- Landscape lighting and signage needs improvement
- Change bank parking in to roadway
- Create angled parking
- Create regional exchange between other towns
- Bikeway—tourism
- Music food shopping and biking

### River:

- Scary, has amazing waterfalls
- Teenagers
- Unsafe
- New bridge will have stairs down to river on Hampton side for kayaks
- How does Bristol become an environmental draw?
- Connection to Profile Falls (fed land is developed) to town
- Trailheads to riverwalk

### Library:

- increased visitors to Library, considered town jewel
- Has butterfly garden
- Library expansion need \$\$
- Need wireless/cell service , use existing tavern steeple? (Verizon says not enough business to support)
- More landscaping, nicer sidewalks, traffic calming, lighting
- Needs places to sit /gather
- Blind spot on Summer St.
- Roundabout? Reduce traffic
- North St one-way traffic going east would have to go by Elementary school—potentially unsafe how to make it safe?
- Ecotourism w/ riverwalk—river fly-fishing salmon stocking area, bass tie to Profile falls fishing area
- Can the old Mill bld. Be salvaged? Structural ok? Town zoning? Change to riverfront park and connect to river activity
- Signage for businesses
- Connection to park activities all ages
- Bring local businesses together Central store necessity goods to center of town
- Re-establish street frontage
- Create a good location for triathlons/road races
- Educate new bus about operating in historic area



## LISTENING SESSIONS: WHAT WE HEARD (cont.)

- Retain visual identity
- Open up RR sta. area down to falls, reestablish rr bridges
- Bike trail for children safe route
- Mooseman triathlon, marathon
- River—access from above the dam/below create a portage area. Around dam at Central St. br.
- Capitalize on Major event—Triath. Marathon, Kayaking
- Create footbridge off riverwalk where 2 bridges once were
- Traffic light at square/ safe crosswalks
- Why we came to live in Bristol: Bus. Opportunities, Quaint hist. village, To retire
- Frustration for businesses:
  - Too many requirements
  - Lack of trees/ window boxes (moveable planters?)
  - Lighting
  - Crosswalks
  - Obtaining grant \$\$
- Woodstock VT. as example
- Eco-friendly building flat roofs solar panels
- Newer infrastructure— filter storm-water connecting to river
- Water is the “new Gold” of the 21st Cent.
- Need infrastructure around depot
- Wider paths for winter sports, snowmobiling
- Riverwalk bike way
- Mixing res. With business and riverwalk
- Events:
  - Lilac fest.
  - Apple fest
  - Thanksgiving
  - Old home day
  - 4th July parade
  - X-man fest
  - Memorial day
  - Mooseman Triathlon
  - Marathon
  - Kayak
- Regional trail system
- Town hall located downtown (possibly on old church lot?)

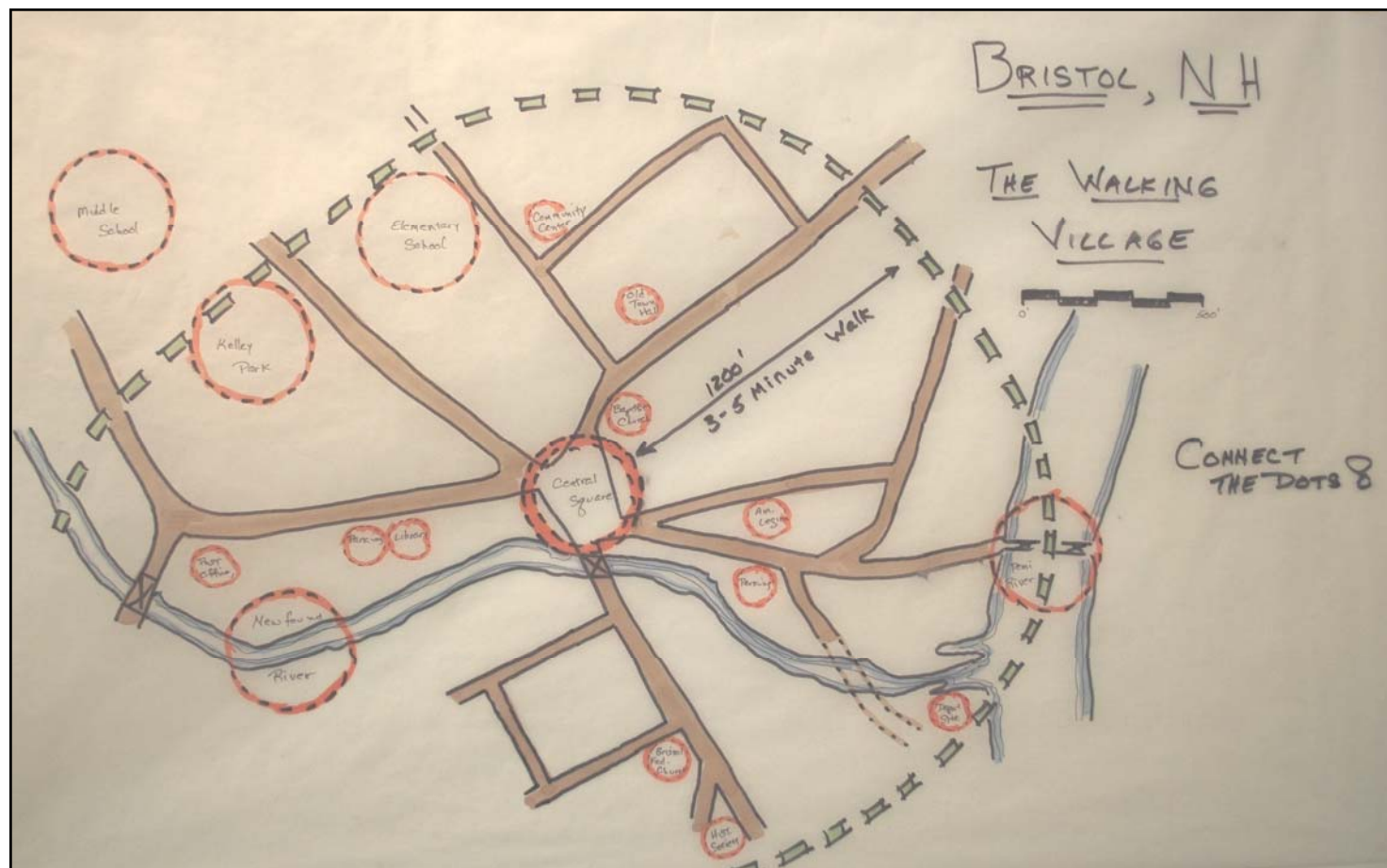
## *Charrette Team Recommendations*

The citizen’s of the Town of Bristol recognize the opportunity to revitalize and reinvent their village area. Capitalizing on the unique character of the Central Square area to attract visitors as well as town residents is the key to economic sustainability. The town has fortunately preserved much of the historic buildings and structure of the square that are at the heart of Bristol’s charm, scale and sense of place.

The natural features of the area, Newfound Lake, Pemigewasset River, Tenney Mountain, attract many tourists and visitors on seasonal basis. Many Bristol Central Square businesses are heavily dependant on seasonal traffic. The comments heard during the charrette suggested a strong desire to create opportunities for a year-round economy as well as attracting more visitors during summer and winter seasons. This may include attracting new businesses and small companies that service the town residents in addition to offering recreational and tourism opportunities. Making the Central Square district more attractive and a pleasant place to shop and visit will draw new customers and new businesses.

The Charrette Team gathered Saturday morning to tackle the issues presented at the listening sessions the day before. The group broke out into sub-teams to tackle the key issues:

- **Improving vehicular and pedestrian traffic circulation**
- **Rehab un-used historic buildings in the square**
- **Examining a possible path along the Newfound River**
- **Implementation strategies and cost considerations**



## Existing Conditions

### The Walking Village

A quick study of walking distances from Central Square revealed that downtown Bristol is very “walkable”; most town services and amenities are within 1200 feet, or a 3-5 minute walk, from the square. From Central Square one can walk to the Library, the post office, Kelly Park, the community center, the Elementary and Middle schools, churches as well as shopping and banking in no more than 5 minutes. The vision for the Central Square area is to capitalize on the downtown’s “walkability” and attract visitors and residents passing through to create a bustling economic center. Calming the through traffic, allowing for a more pleasant and safe walking environment. Is the major objective of improvement plans. This would include creating safe pedestrian street crossings, providing amenities such as benches, street trees and landscaping, and pedestrian scale lighting.

## Traffic Patterns

After discussions with residents and site walks it became clear to the charrette team that a central issue was to improve the vehicular traffic patterns in the downtown area. The principle question to the team was; how can Bristol redesign the main intersection while maintaining NH Department of Transportation standards? Previous plans for this intersection had been proposed in the 2003 Master Plan, however they were not approved by the NH DOT. Summer Street and Pleasant Street are part of State Route 104, and South Main is also a State route, 3A.

Prior to the Charrette a traffic engineer, and member of the charrette team, studied the traffic within Central Square (see the following page for traffic diagrams). In summary; most vehicular traffic is traveling through Central Square on Summer and Pleasant Streets. During the morning peak traffic hours nearly one thousand vehicles were traveling on Summer and Pleasant, and approximately 200 were traveling on North and South Main Streets. While most vehicles are traveling straight through the square and not turning onto South or North Main, the two lane configuration of Summer and Pleasant Streets does not allow for turning without backing up traffic.





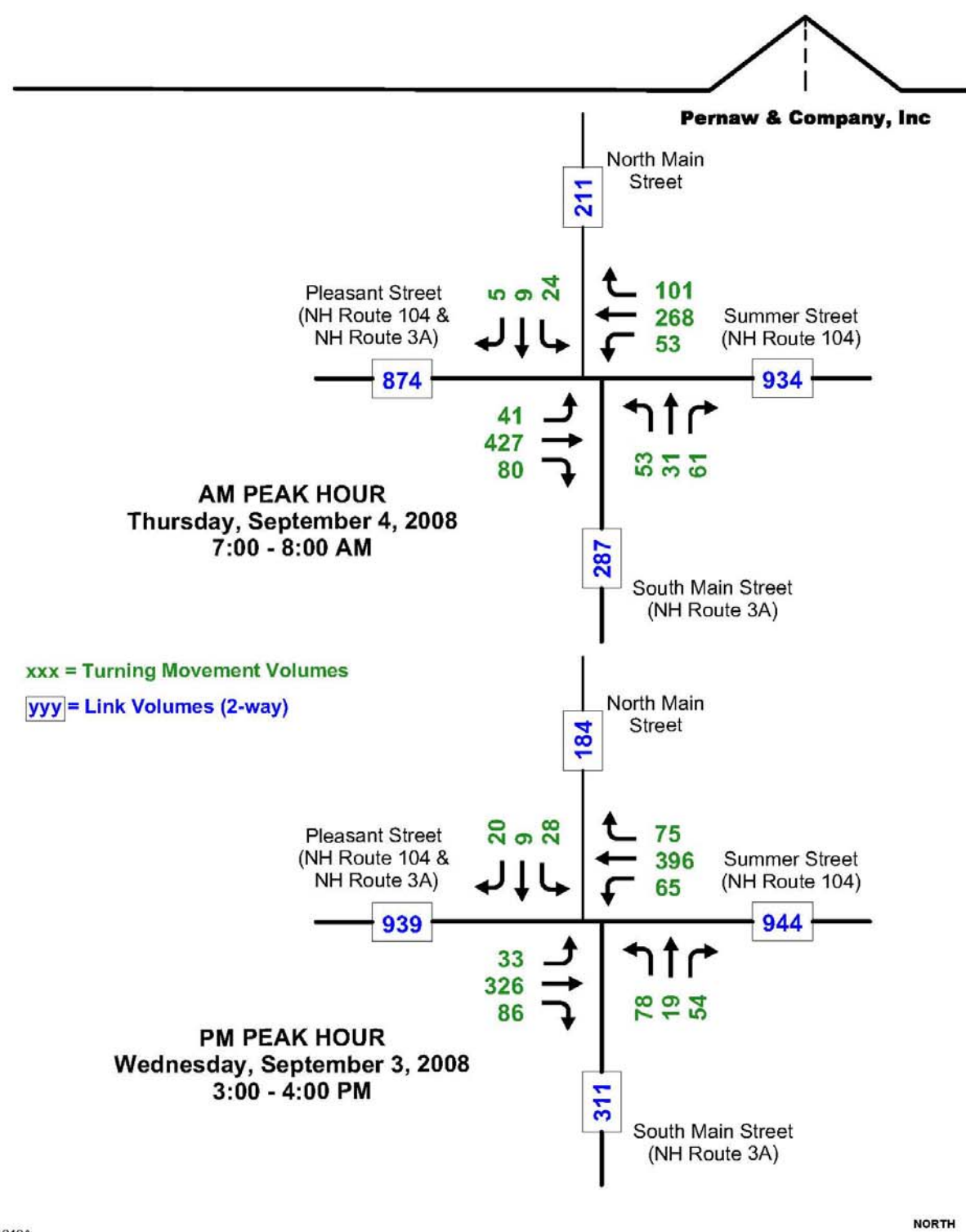


Figure 2

### 2008 Existing Traffic Volumes - Peak Hour Volumes

Traffic Evaluation, Design Charette, Town of Bristol, New Hampshire

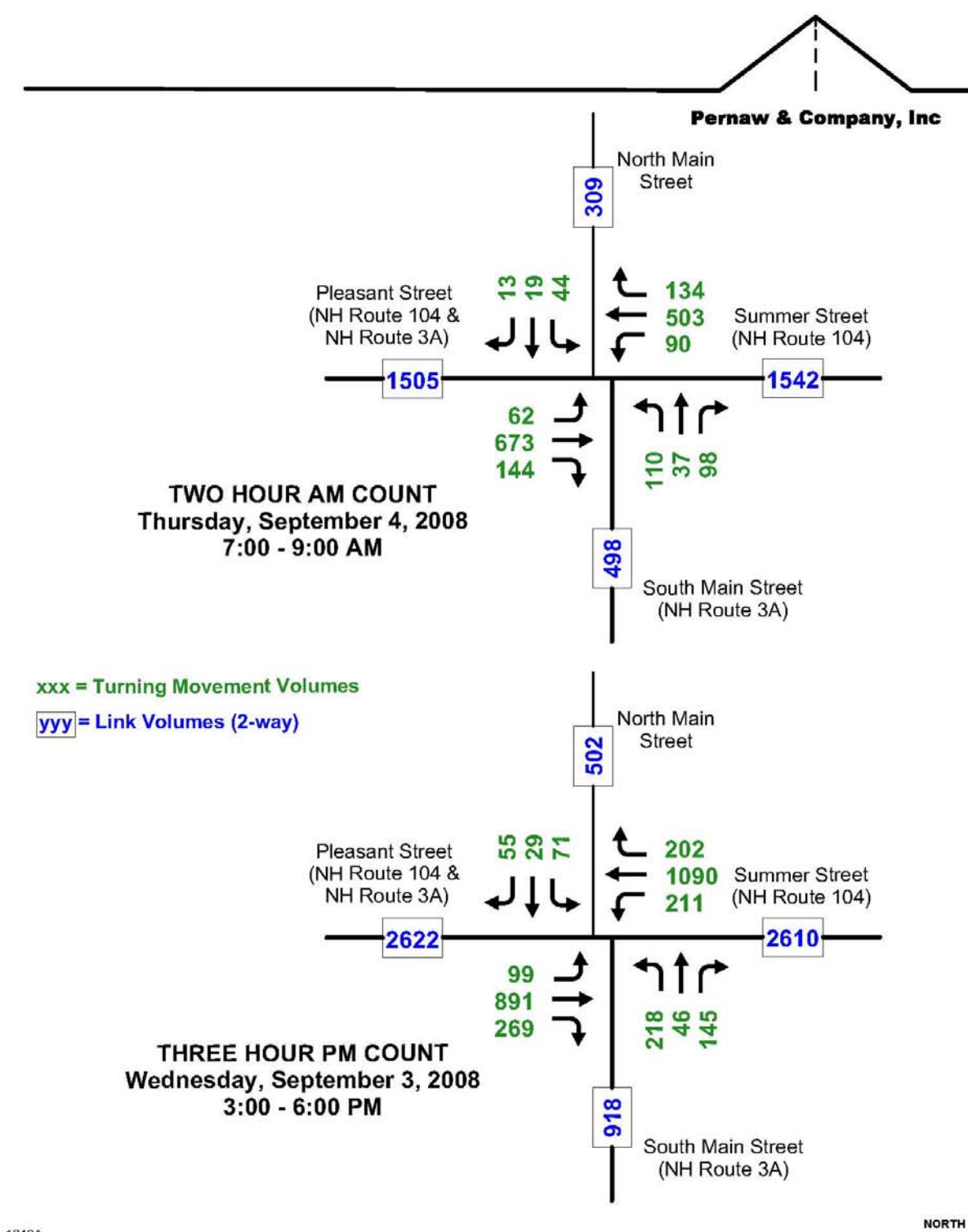


Figure 3

### 2008 Existing Traffic Volumes - Total Count Volumes

Traffic Evaluation, Design Charette, Town of Bristol, New Hampshire

**Parking**

Any retail merchant understands that parking is a key component of the success of their business, especially in smaller rural communities where most of us travel by automobile from home to work to school to shopping sites and then back home again. Some might wish it were otherwise, but with destinations generally spread out and no transit services available, travel by automobile simply is the way things are and the way they are likely to be for the foreseeable future in rural New Hampshire.



There are some glimmers of hope across the state, however, locations where walking between destinations is at least an option for some of our travels. By and large these are older communities, towns or cities that have retained a somewhat dense urban core that predates the automobile. Nearby Plymouth is one of those places. Walpole and Peterborough and Keene are others. Bristol has the potential to be one of those places. In its tightly knit town square, Bristol has the opportunity to establish an active, vibrant village center once more.

The merchants are not wrong about parking. It is an important issue. But it is not the only important issue. In fact, it is probably only one of four critical issues that need to be dealt with within the public right of way for a successful village center: vehicular convenience/safety, pedestrian convenience/safety, pedestrian amenities (i.e. a place to sit down, tie up your bike, sit in the shade of a tree, etc.), *and* parking.

Successful downtowns and village centers have been able to strike a balance between all four of these elements. Bristol's report card on these criteria at present probably looks something like this:

Town of Bristol – Village Square Report Card		
Village Element	Grade	Comment(s)
Vehicular Safety/ Convenience	D in Summer, C rest of year	Lots of accidents Lots of backed up traffic Traffic entering from East is moving too fast
Pedestrian Safety/ Convenience	D year round	Too much asphalt to get across Stories of driving across the Square because afraid to walk across
Pedestrian Amenities	C+	Lots of potential!! A few benches exist!! Also some plantings!! Time for a Makeover!!
Parking	B	Best grade!! Quantity is fine Convenience, safety, access are not

Something needs to give here. Bristol Square has a reasonable supply of parking, but that very supply and the space it consumes is preventing you from making progress on some of the other necessary elements. At present there are 131 parking places in the Square (according to the 2003 master plan), and additional 7 nearby in the bank parking lot. That is excellent, but by itself it is impeding progress, not making it. It needs progress on the other components to be successful as well.

Following are two improvement plans for the Square. The Roundabout Plan improves vehicular and pedestrian safety, but reduces the parking spaces immediately available in the Square to approximately 21 to 24 spaces. The Turning Lane Plan similarly increases vehicular and pedestrian safety, but reduces the parking spaces immediately available in the Square to approximately 34 to 36 spaces. While either of these reductions is regrettable, the removal of the parking spaces allows for the creation of solutions in the other elements of the Square. Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety are both improved in either plan. The plantings and memorials are re-organized into a more compatible and attractive whole. Following the two traffic improvement plans, the Design Team presents alternative parking solutions that are reasonably close to the square. Along Central and Spring Streets, and adjacent to the Library, the Team was to able to recommend the creation of over 50 new public parking spaces.



It is this balancing of progress on ALL ELEMENTS that will make Bristol Square SAFE and SUCCESSFUL. A *B grade* in all elements will put Bristol Square on the Honor Roll. An *A grade* would put Bristol Square on the High Honor Roll. Let's aim high!!

## Traffic Engineering

Easing the traffic flow and allowing through and turning traffic without backing up traffic coming into the square is at the crux of the design problem. However new roadway configuration that satisfies the requirements of the NHDOT alone is not the answer to fulfilling the vision for Central Square. Any solution to the traffic issue would also have to include enhancements to pedestrian experience including safety and aesthetic character of the square. Taking this in to account the key points considered by the charrette team members were:

- Maintaining through traffic on Rt.104 Summer St./Pleasant St.
- Allowing left turn on to South Main with out backing up traffic on Summer St.
- Allowing left and right turns from South Main onto Summer and Pleasant St. without backing up traffic
- Providing Safe pedestrian crossings
- Maintaining adequate parking
- Improving sight distance for westbound travelers on Summer St.
- Enhancing the streetscape character, maintain historic sense of place

The Charrette team studied these issues and proposed two possible traffic redesign alternatives; ***The Roundabout Plan***, and ***The Turning Lane Plan***. The Roundabout Plan proposes constructing a one lane traffic circle at the major intersection in Central Square, no signals would be required. The Turning Lane Plan proposes the addition of dedicated turning lanes on both Summer Street and South Main in addition to traffic signal lights.

While there are major differences between the two plans in traffic management concepts,

both plans recommend similar streetscape improvements; the addition of street trees, paving material changes in crosswalks and intersections, well defined sidewalks and curbs, and pedestrian scale lighting. In addition, both plans enlarge the green space currently used for the Soldier's memorial along with more opportunities for planters and planting areas along side walks.



*Currently the narrow sidewalks in Central Square are squeezed even more by the parked car overhang, light poles and sign posts*

## The Roundabout Plan

Roundabouts are used to solve intersection traffic flow problems in many congested cities throughout the world and across the country, and are gaining popularity in many New Hampshire towns. The benefit of the roundabout is that it permits constant movement of traffic, allowing for turns without the addition of a traffic signal. Roundabouts are also very effective at slowing down traffic speeds in busy intersections.

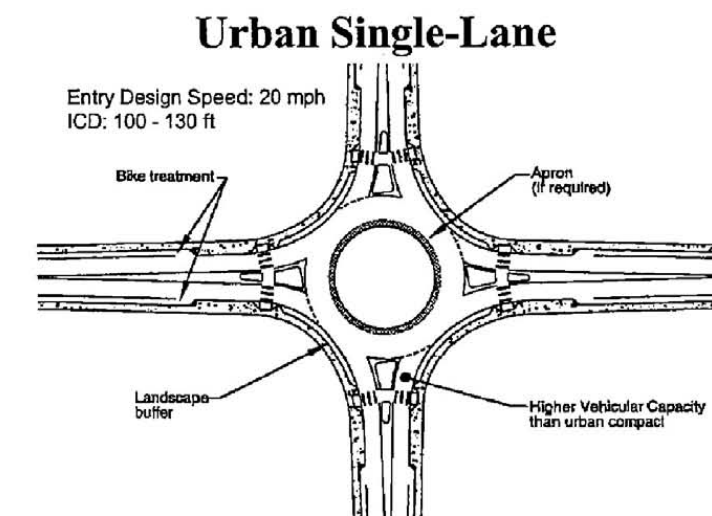
The charrette team examined a roundabout configuration in place of the Central Square intersection. The proposed plan includes a 120'-130' diameter one-lane traffic circle that would allow for a constant movement of traffic through the square while allowing for right and left turns. This plan would require realignment of the roads entering the square. The Roundabout plan developed by the charrette team would meet the requirements of the NHDOT.

### Highlights of The Roundabout Plan :

- Maintain two lane traffic on all roads
- No traffic back-up due to turning movements
- Increase in green space in Central Square, memorial could remain in existing location
- Safer pedestrian crossings, although there would not be pedestrian crossing signal lights, divider island provides pedestrian 'refuge' areas allowing walkers to cross one lane at a time.
- Increase in sidewalk area
- Safer Parsonage driveway exit/entrance
- Opportunities for "Welcome to Bristol" signage in roundabout center

## ROUNABOUT CONSIDERATIONS

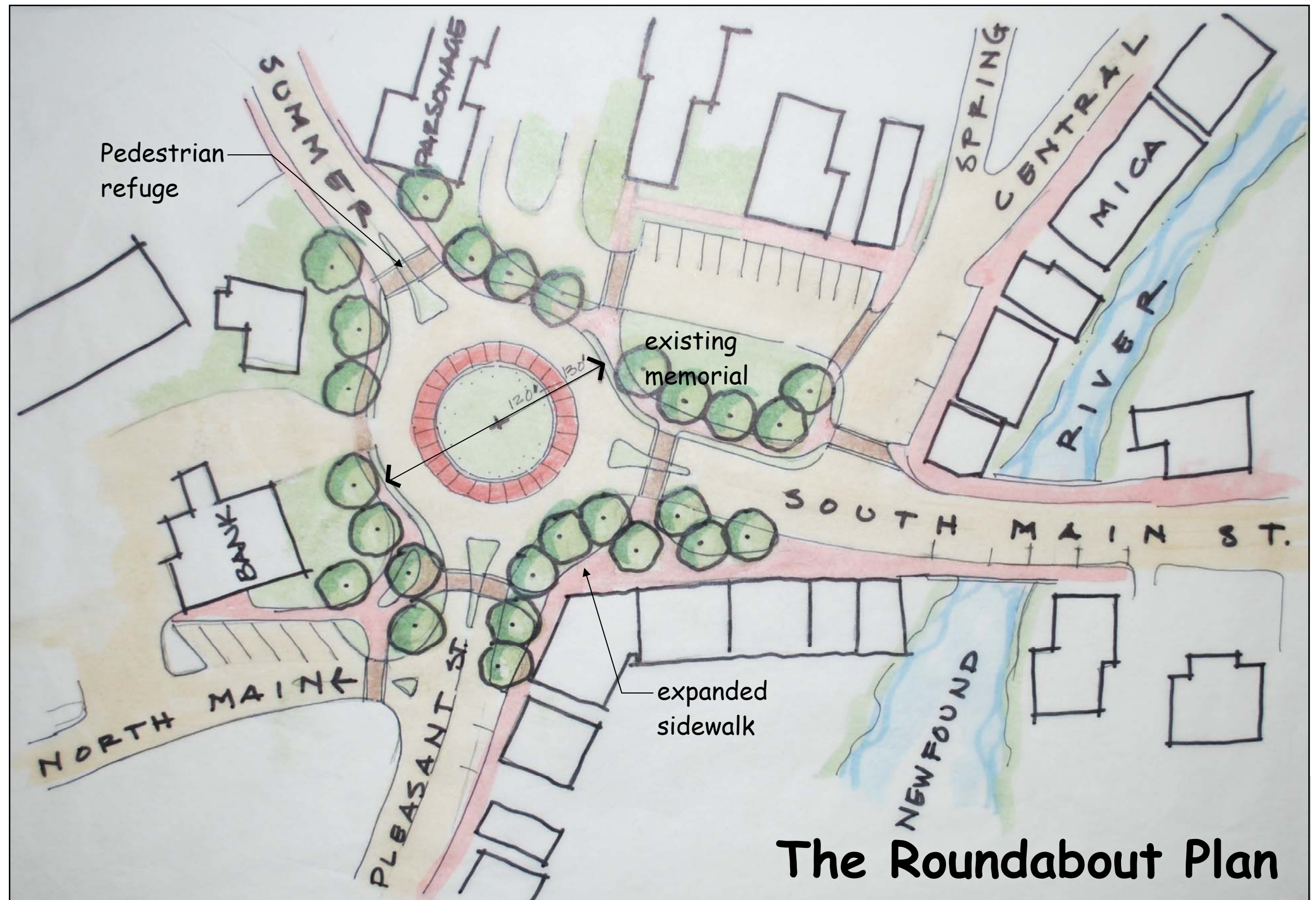
### I. SINGLE-LANE ROUNABOUT IS SUFFICIENT:



### II. REMEMBER, ROUNABOUTS DO NOT NEED TO BE ROUND:







## The Turning Lane Plan

The charrette team agreed there was another possible traffic management concept using dedicated turning lanes at the intersection in Central Square. The Turning Lane Plan allows for dedicated through and turning lanes on Summer Street and South Main Street and proposes traffic signals. The addition of lanes would require the widening of Summer and South Main, eliminating the parallel parking on the east-bound side of South Main Street. The new intersection would also require the acquisition of the bank parking area.

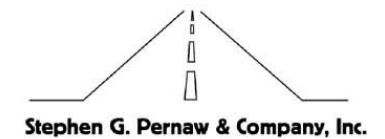
The Turning Lane Plan proposes bump-outs at the south Main and Pleasant Street corners and the North Main corner. These bump-outs would shorten the pedestrian crossing distances, pedestrian crossing signals could also improve the safety for pedestrian traffic.

A change in paving within the intersection and the crosswalks, using either concrete pavers, stamped colored concrete or colored asphalt, would calm traffic as it moves through the intersection.

This plan substantially increases the green space in Central Square. This larger green space could be used for community functions and celebrations, possible new location for the farmers market which would bring shoppers downtown. Rerouting the Parsonage driveway to be accessed from Central Street eliminates the dangerous intersection with Summer Street and allows for a larger green space.

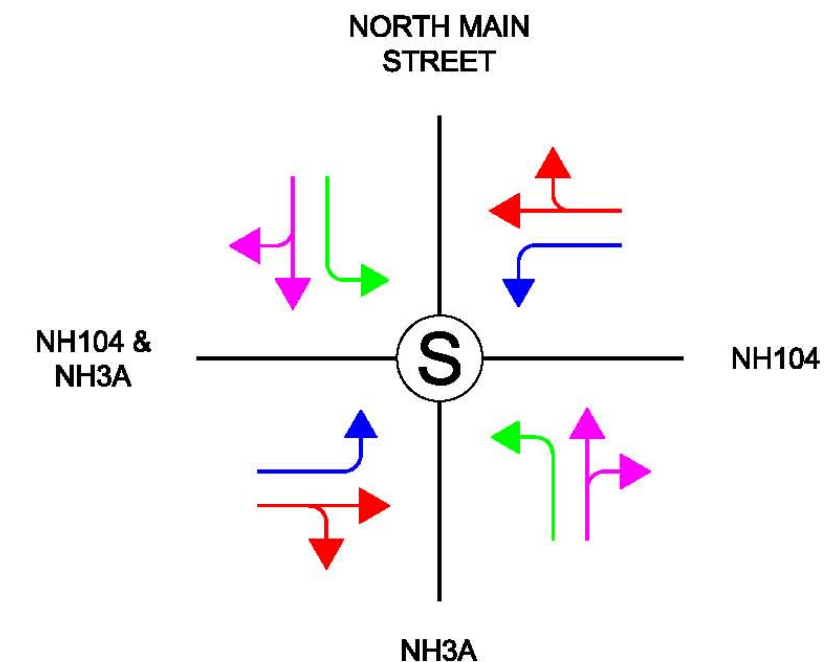
### Highlights of The Turning Lane Plan :

- Ease traffic back-up by allowing dedicated through and turning lanes
- Increase in green space in Central Square, memorial could remain in existing location
- Safer pedestrian crossings, using pedestrian crossing signals and bump-outs
- Safer Parsonage driveway exit/entrance



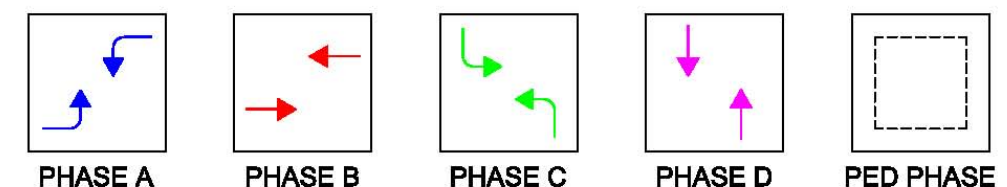
## SIGNALIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

### I. RECOMMENDED LANE CONFIGURATION:

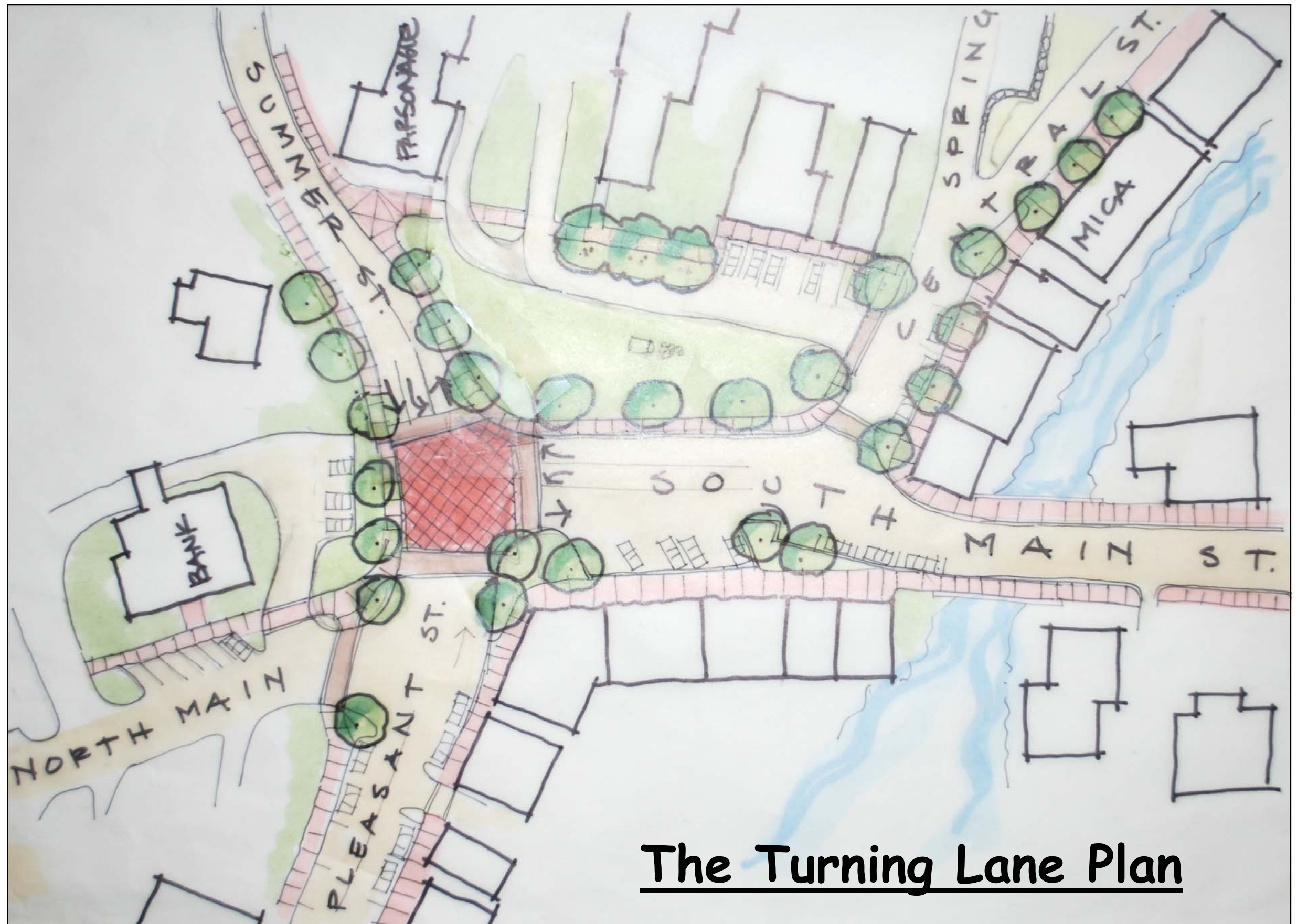


(EXCLUSIVE LEFT-TURN LANE AND SHARED THROUGH/RIGHT-TURN LANE ON ALL APPROACHES)

### II. RECOMMEND VEHICLE-ACTUATED CONTROLLER WITH EXCLUSIVE PEDESTRIAN PHASE:



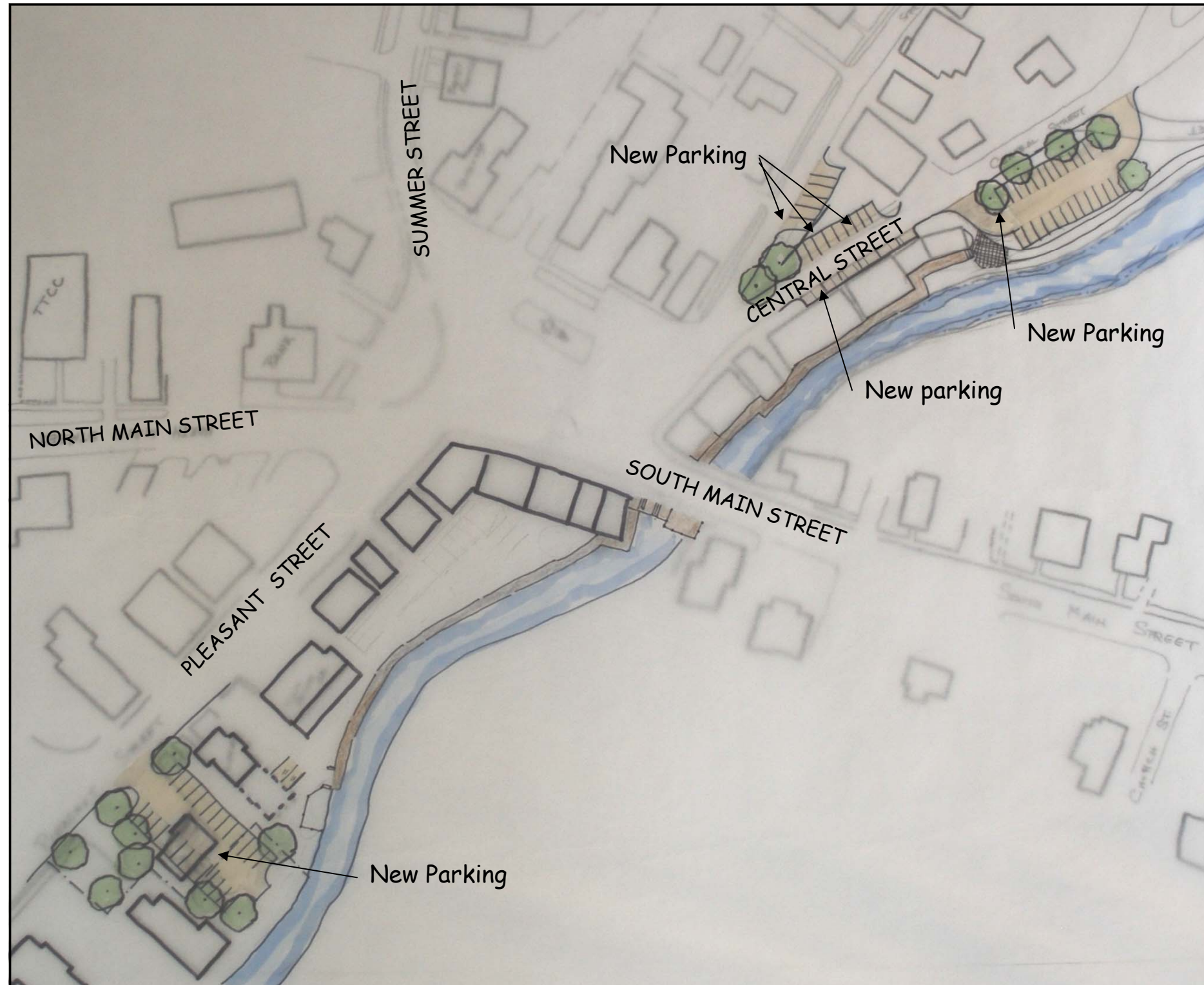




The Turning Lane Plan



## Alternate Parking Opportunities



Due to the realignment of the major intersection roads The Roundabout Plan would require the relocation of on-street parking and acquisition of the Bank parking area. As part of this plan the charrette team offered possible alternate parking areas. Most of the opportunities for additional parking are located in the Central Street and Spring Street areas.

A 24+ parking space lot could be developed on central Street at the vacant lot at the Water Street entrance. This lot could service the downtown merchants and users of the Riverwalk. Approximately fifteen new spaces could also be developed between Central and Spring Streets. These spaces would be head-in or angled parking and, because of the grade change in that space, would require retaining walls.

The parking lot located on the west side of the Library could also be expanded with the removal of the building in that lot. This expansion could possibly add 14-16 new spaces.

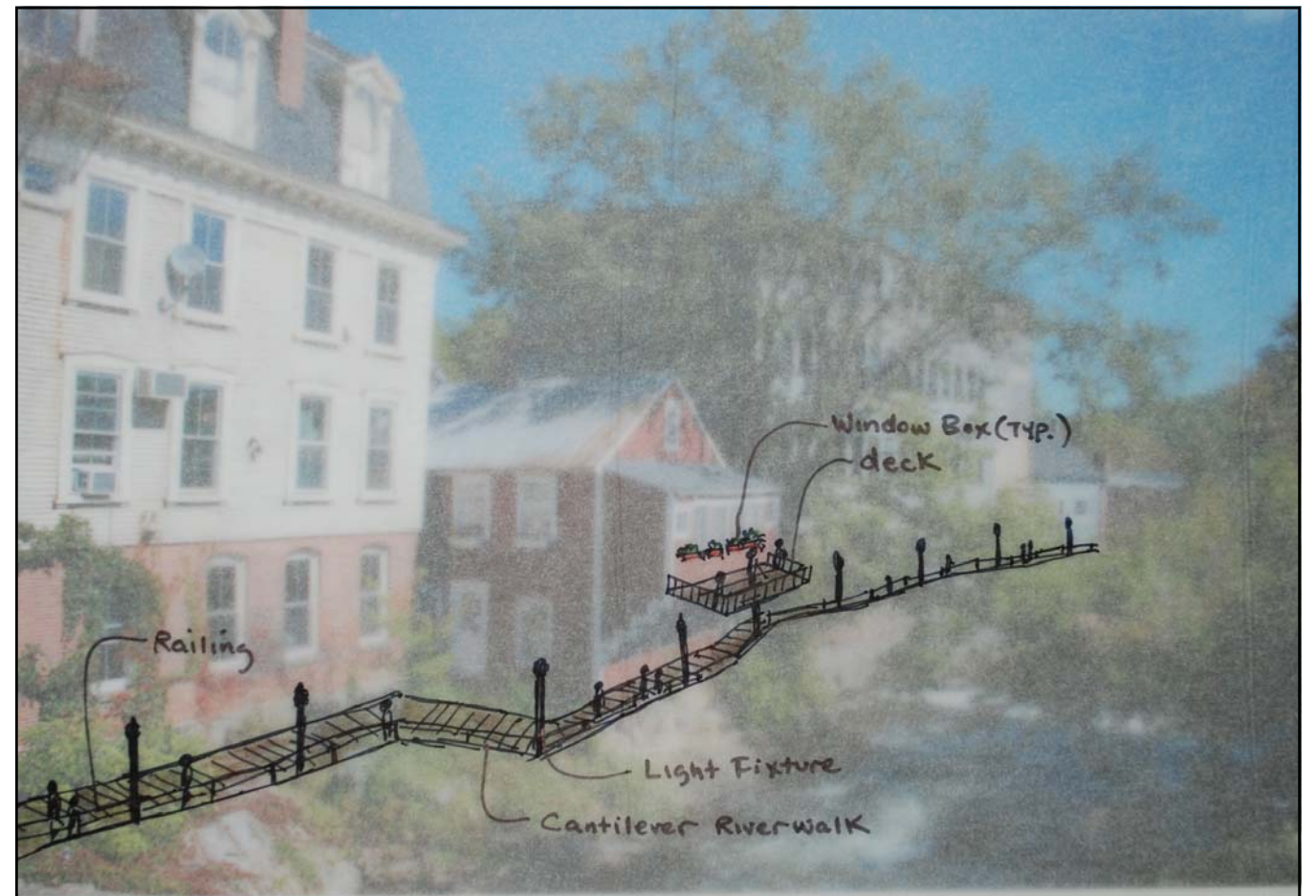


## The Riverwalk

The Newfound River presents a unique opportunity for a pedestrian and bicycle path linking the downtown area. This was identified as a key component of the downtown improvement plan, starting at the Library and connecting to Central Square and the Pemigewasset River. A walking path along the east side of the river would follow the edge of the river requiring a cantilevered structure attached to the back of the buildings located at the South Main Street bridge and along Central Street. The river walk would lead to a park at the terminus of Water Street where the walkway could cross to the west side of the river, (possibly utilizing existing old bridge abutments), and connect to paths along the Pemigewasset River leading to Profile Falls Recreation Area. This path way could provide a safe, vehicular-free travel route for pedestrians and bikes in the downtown area.

Planning and design of the riverwalk would require approval and coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Other design issues to be considered are flooding possibilities, private property abutters, permitting and working with the State Department of Environmental Services.





The Butterfly Garden located at the Library provides a perfect access way to the proposed river walk.





## Architectural Improvements

### The Parsonage

The Baptist Parsonage building was built in 1794 by Ebenezer Kelly as a Tavern now serves as the parsonage for the adjacent Bristol Baptist Church. The building has been extensively remodeled and bears little resemblance to the original structure. However, the building is in good shape and is worthy of renovation.

The Parsonage occupies one of the focal corners of Central Square and serves as an important anchor on Summer Street. Currently the building sits very close to the curb line creating difficult access to the front door and parking behind. As part of the Central Square streetscape design the charrette team recommended realigning Summer Street to allow for more frontage at the front of the Parsonage. This would allow for protection of the building as well as possibly providing a barrier-free access to the facility, particularly important if the building is converted for public use.

One concept developed by the team was to convert the Parsonage to the new Bristol Town Hall or office use. Parking behind the building and the adjacent church could be shared and a new accessible entrance could be constructed on the parking lot side.



*Proposed road realignment at the front of the Parsonage .*

*The Parsonage on Summer Street (left) looking towards Central Square*





## Joe's Supermarket

Central Street and the buildings along this side of Central Square occupy a significant place in Bristol's History. In 1767 the first mill was built on the Newfound River, a sawmill and a grist mill. Central Street was originally a path from the Main Street (South Main), creating the first intersection in town and the beginning of the commercial center. The concrete block building that sits on the corner of Central Street and Spring Street built in 1917 is the only 20th century building on Central Square. However this site is the location of the original miller's log cabin.

Currently the building is mixed use with retail on the ground floor and residential above. The team heard suggestions from the community for alternate uses for this building which related to recreational activities on the Newfound River such as a kayak and canoe shop. As part of an economic development plan a renovation of this building could bring significant change to the viability of Central Street. By taking architectural cues from the historic buildings surrounding Central Square, this structure could become an asset that compliments the character of the downtown. Façade improvements and a gable roofline reminiscent of the 19th century architecture could be added to improve the aesthetic quality. While the mixed use should be maintained, the street level could be improved by opening up the retail space and adding windows and architectural details that create an attractive pedestrian scaled entrance.







*Sketch of proposed façade and sidewalk renovations for the Mica and neighboring building which includes canopies, window details, widened sidewalks, street trees, decorative street lights.*

The Mica Building is Bristol's largest downtown structure. Historically it was a hydro-powered mill that processed mica. It has been vacant for many years. Suggestions for re-use heard from the charrette attendees included renovating it as artist lofts with residential units and studio spaces on the upper floors and galleries at the street level. The building will require significant reconstruction but could become an anchor and vibrant establishment for Central Square attracting many visitors and shoppers. At this point an assessment of the structure has not been done. This step will be critical to determining if the building is in adequate condition to be salvaged.

The building adjacent to the Mica building, on the east side, was also considered by the charrette team for possible renovation. This building could become office or mixed use. The façade improvements for these buildings are important to the north edge of Central Square. Improvements to create a more attractive inviting streetscape would trigger retail business along this edge of the Square. Both of these structures are sited on the Newfound River and would also benefit from the development of a riverwalk along the rear, south sides. This could be an ideal location for a restaurant or café deck seating inviting pedestrian and cyclists traveling on the riverwalk with wonderful views of the river.



*Existing stark, unattractive facades of the Mica building and adjacent building. There are no side walks along this block.*

## *Improvements Cost Analysis*

The cost analysis addresses the major improvements to the Bristol Central Square area identified during the charrette. The cost cover construction only and are general in nature based on current construction practices. These costs are given to be used as an order of magnitude guide only and not for final budgeting purposes.

An order of magnitude cost analysis was prepared by a charrette team member which included estimates for the road work, riverwalk and the renovations for the Mica Building and Joe's Supermarket building.

- The reconstruction work for the Turning Lane Plan and The Roundabout Plan, each including, road realignment, repaving, curb, crosswalk paving, sidewalks and landscaping was estimated to be \$750,000 -\$1,000,000 for either plan.
- The construction of the Riverwalk is difficult to estimate at this point, there are many factors that could effect the cost of the pathway including materials, structural elements such as cantilevered decks, lighting, signage and amenities. If the pathway extended 1500 linear feet from the library to Water St. the estimated costs could be in the range of \$500,000-\$750,000.
- The renovations of the Mica building for 10,000 square feet of residential artists lofts at \$170.00 per square feet and 3,200 square feet of retail space at \$150.00 per square feet could be estimated at about \$1,700,000. The Joes Supermarket renovations were estimated to be approximately \$900,000 with similar costs per square feet. These estimates do not include any major structural work that may be necessary.

## *Next Steps*

The recommendations clearly involve the decisions and consensus of many public agencies and stakeholders. Sorting out what should and could be done first is a critical step towards implementation. Often it is the small improvements that are the catalysts for bigger changes. The flowing list, developed by the charrette team, includes action items which are easily accomplished in the near future along with long range tasks. Resources for services and funding are also listed below.

### **1. Start**

- Gateway signage/statement to approach to Central Square
- Meet with landowners and stakeholders to encourage involvement and gain consensus
- Institute a façade improvement program for Central Square
- Work with NHDOT to develop street improvements that best serve the community and the Village objectives
- Institute low cost sidewalk and streetscape enhancements such as plantings, flowers, benches, sidewalk and crosswalk pavement coloring.
- Activate the pedestrian lights
- Begin discussions and negotiations for potential public/private partnerships
- Seek areas to make continued incremental steps towards the vision of a pedestrian oriented village core with unique retail establishments, residences, and businesses

### **2. Specific projects**

- Conduct a detailed analysis of desired options for streetscape and parking options
- Preliminary analysis of existing conditions, code reviews, and space needs to verify proposed changes and define budget implications
- Detailed evaluation of riverwalk/ pedestrian way and connection to Pemigewasset River.
- In-depth exploration of funding options, develop a funding plan



# Funding Resources

- **NH Department of Transportation** a source of public funding for state road improvements, as well as safety and sidewalk improvements

Mr. George Campbell, Commissioner  
Ms. Nancy Mayville, Planning and Community Assistance Bureau  
NHDOT  
Hazen Drive  
Concord, NH 03301

- **Rural Development Administration** provides low interest loans and grants for municipal projects as well as financing for some private development

Mr. Rob McCarthy  
U.S. Rural Development Administration  
Ferry Street  
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Division of Historic Resources** may be used as a source for historic property advice and expertise, any use of historic tax credits must be approved by this agency.

Mr. Jim Garvin  
State Architectural Historian  
NH Division of Historic Resources  
19 Pillsbury Street  
Concord, NH 03001

- **NH Business Finance Authority** is a source for tax-exempt bonding and other subsidies for private and non-profit investment

Mr., Jack Donovan  
NH Business Finance Authority  
14 Dixon Avenue  
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Community Development Finance Authority** is a source for tax credits for publicly supported projects

Ms. Kathy Bogel-Shields  
NH Community Development Finance Authority  
2 Pillsbury St  
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Community Development Block Grant Program** provides grants and loans to projects which assist low to moderate income residents.

Ms. Alice Veenstra  
NH Community Development Block Grant Program  
14 Dixon Avenue  
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Municipal Bond Bank** provides low interest funds for publicly bonded projects

Ms. Sheila St Germain  
NH Municipal Bond Bank  
25 Triangle Park Drive  
Suite 102  
Concord, NH 03301



# Local



Reverse mortgages  
available to help  
area seniors. B3

IN BRISTOL

## Suggestions outlined following charrette

By ERIN PLUMMER  
eplummer@citizen.com

Traffic reconfiguration, exterior improvements and making the area more attractive to pedestrians are among the suggested changes made by planners following a weekend charrette.

Bristol residents and business owners gathered on Friday for two sessions on making improvements to Central Square in a charrette held by Plan New Hampshire. Planners, architects and engineers from around the state put together sug-

gestions with their own observations to come up with lost of suggestions for possible improvement.

"We have tried to implement as many of the thoughts and ideas as we could," said planner Jeff Taylor.

The town will receive booklets documenting the charrette process, providing a list of suggesting and drawings, and a list of potential resources.

Taylor said Bristol has a "strong village center" with a school, fields, chamber of commerce, post office, and other key buildings within a "three to five

minute walk" and close to the Newfound River. Taylor said these elements could be better linked together.

With the town having a number of events, planners suggested there be green space where events could occur. Additionally, the area is a popular location for canoeers, kayakers, and fishers, which is a group the community could better accommodate.

The traffic pattern around the square was seen as one of the biggest issues and engineers suggested two possible solutions, one involving reconfiguring the in-

tersection and the other involving a roundabout.

The first proposal includes cutting the already five access points to three, possible making North Main Street one way, decrease the "throat" of South Main Street from 150 feet to 50 feet and "create a pedestrian friendly area that stands out to drivers" according to Chris Nedezau of Nobis Engineering, saying a pedestrian area with a different color or texture makes drivers aware of pedestrian activ-

See Charrette, B4

## Charrette

From Page B1

ity. Angled parking would be maintained at storefronts and part of the bank parking lot could be cut back and landscaping could be addressed at that area.

A roundabout was proposed as another option for the intersection. A 130-foot diameter roundabout would be required to accommodate trucks on the state road. Planner Gene McCarthy of McFarland Johnson said the roundabout would slow traffic coming from Summer Street, though it would take up more space than the previous option. Pedestrian areas will be constructed at sections leading to the roundabout.

Architect Christopher Williams suggested possible design changes to downtown buildings including exterior improvements to some buildings. He also suggested the "mica building" be renovated as a possible location for art studios and commercial space. Buildings next to the mica building could also be renovated as commercial or residential space, Williams saying designers "could make it somewhat of an art center."

"I think all these buildings are important to what the history of

Bristol is all about," Williams said.

Architect Mara Robinson talked about a possible riverwalk with the walk cantilevered from buildings near the Newfound River. Green space, steps, and a deck could also be added by the river. A butterfly garden could also be added behind the library with benches, whisky barrels with flowers, and other design elements.

The entire central Square project, including traffic reconfiguration, sidewalk rebuilding, new curbing, drainage, and other related work, is estimated at \$1 million.

Nancy Mayville, municipal highways engineer with the Department of Transportation, advised attendees and town officials on potential funding and grant sources that could pay for elements of the project including state and federal highway and transportation enhancement funds among other sources.

Planners did give a list of minor, less expensive changes that could be made to improve the intersection which included not having a left turn at the intersection, various forms of traffic calming including signage and rumble strips, activating the pedestrian lights, adding texture to sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, speed indicators at the top of Summer Street, among others.

## This week's Sunday Citizen

■ **How's them apples?** Family-owned and -operated Cardigan Mountain Orchard explains its operation.

■ **Medical mystery:** Rates of bladder cancer are significantly higher in the northern New England states and researchers are working to determine why.

■ **Novel idea:** Why don't we make anyone who wants to be president live for a few months working a minimum wage job and living solely off that income?

## Charette aims at improving Square

By ERIN PLUMMER  
eplummer@citizen.com

SAT. 9/20/08

Incorporating the river with the downtown and making the area more attractive to visitors and businesses were major suggestions for improving Bristol's Central Square and Newfound River waterfront at the start of a charrette process on Friday. Bristol is one of three towns this year approved by Plan NH for charrettes out of the nearly 25 that applied. Residents, town officials, and business owners gathered on Friday for a series of sessions making suggestions for possible improvements to the area.

An afternoon and evening session was held for members of the public with planners also discussing options

and looking around the area. The after-noon session identified issues such as the parking configuration, which is viewed as being disorganized, and making the area more pedestrian-friendly.

Planner Jeff Taylor said that, during his walk around the square, he saw one pedestrian and that was a mail carrier.

Taylor said a goal of the charrette process is to "try and make this a place that people will come to and get out of their car."

He also said the consensus was that the town culture "has turned its back on the river" and suggestions were made on how to better incorporate the river into the square, such as having a river walk. While it may not

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From Page A1

be possible to have a river walk that goes from the post office to the former train depot, Taylor said it can be done in sections.

Taylor said a previous idea to eliminate visible wires has since been implemented with the exception of a few lights.

Another idea was to develop a multiuse trail system around the river that could bring more visitors to the downtown area.

Making the town more attractive to canoeers, kayakers, and fishermen was another idea, as the area around the dams has a ledge and is a prime whitewater area.

Several seasonal events do take place in Bristol, as does the Newfound Ironman triathlon and other events that generate a great deal of money for the area.

Other suggestions included having an economic development plan, speaking with Ragged and Tenney mountains, making the area more accessible to snowmobiles, and building on the cultural resources of the community.

Former Selectman Steve Favorite said Bristol has become attractive to retirees and many people have come to start businesses, though there are some issues with the formation of the square area such as lights and crosswalks.

Favorite said he went to Woodstock, Vt., for research and talked with store owners there.

"If we don't put our feet on the ground [and] run with this, then we're going to have to raise money to do it," Favorite said, noting that finding volunteers for projects might be difficult.

"This has got to be about implementation," Taylor said, adding that, at the end of the process, "we'll try to give you an array of projects."

Taylor said the charrette process will be documented and a book will be given to the town with a series of drawings, maps, and other material, along with an implementation strategy and a list of potential small projects that can be done for between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Planners will draw plans and compile ideas during open sessions this morning and will give their final presentation this afternoon.