

# Wolfeboro Community Design Charrette

# Wolfeboro, NH

# October 22-23, 2021





# Wolfeboro Community Design Charrette Acknowledgments

Thank you to the individuals who donated their time, energy, and expertise for this charrette – it was the largest group we have ever had out of the 70 Plan NH has done. Extra thanks to all the community members who shared their insights about Wolfeboro.

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## The Wolfeboro Charrette Steering Committee

*Thank you for all of your help pulling this together for us!*

### Maggie Stier, Chair, Wolfeboro Heritage Commission

### Anne Blodgett, Wolfeboro Heritage Commission

### Tavis J. Austin, Director of Planning and Development, Town of Wolfeboro

### Kathy Barnard, Chair, Wolfeboro Planning Board

### Christine Collins, Chair, Director of Parks and Recreation

### Denise Roy Palmer, Executive Director, Wentworth Economic Development Corporation Incorporated

## A Huge Thank You to Our Sponsors!

Wentworth Economic Development Corporation

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Wolfeboro Trolley Company

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# Who is Plan NH?

**Plan New Hampshire, The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment (Plan NH)**, is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989. Plan NH has *a vision* of a New Hampshire that is vibrant and healthy for its people, its economies and the environment. To achieve that vision, Plan NH's mission is to “foster excellence in planning, design and development of New Hampshire’s built environment,” because we believe that *what* we build, *where* we build and *how* we build anything has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

Plan NH *champions principles and ideas* that balance building projects, including anything built in the public realm, such as buildings, roads, bridges, memorials, public sculpture, with:

- The needs of people, including where they live, how they get about, what services are necessary, what they value
- Maintaining the “sense of place” of our towns, cities and villages that make them unique, including preserving historic assets, open spaces, agriculture and farming
- Protecting our air, water, flora and fauna

Among our signature programs is *the design charrette*, an exercise that brings professionals from our membership together with New Hampshire communities to explore design ideas, usually around a town center or other significant neighborhood. Through recommendations made, Plan NH can demonstrate the role and importance of the principles and ideas noted above in concrete, real examples.





# Why did Plan NH come to Wolfeboro?



The Town of Wolfeboro submitted an application to Plan NH in the summer of 2020 to identify issues in the project area related to connectivity, traffic, housing and more.

The Town was seeking assistance to address four major areas of concern:

1. Preservation and enhancement of historic character and beautification of streetscape as this area evolves and redevelops, including new uses and rehabilitation of town-owned buildings.
2. Linking the downtown and the Back Bay commercial area, continuing to support mixed commercial, residential and municipal use, from the downtown train station and Freight House along the rail trail, Glendon Street, Lehner Street, playing fields, and adjacent portions of Center Street
3. Encouraging pedestrian connections between the downtown and the Back Bay shopping and recreation areas
4. Improving recreational and social opportunities in the focus area for all age groups

*In terms of project area, as well as charrette team, the Wolfeboro charrette was one of the largest Plan NH has experienced. It was the first charrette done in person since the COVID-19 pandemic began (the 70th charrette overall), and we were very excited to undertake the task ahead of us.*



# Plan NH in Wolfeboro, NH

## October 22-23, 2021

### What is a charrette?

Simply stated, a charrette is a brief, intense, brainstorming session in which ideas are brought together for the purpose of defining potential planning recommendations and possible design solutions for an identified need. For Plan NH, this is usually related to a town center or other significant neighborhood in a community.

Plan NH's community design charrettes take place over the course of two days: eight hours on a Friday for listening and then another eight hours the next day for brainstorming, crafting recommended solutions, and presenting thoughts to the community.

The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with each other and with local residents to collect information needed in order to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge. Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of discovery: discovering who the community is, what they value, what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of a Plan NH charrette are general and overarching planning and design recommendations, rather than specific directions. Plan NH does not dictate but suggests. Most often, the outcome of a Plan NH charrette is described as a "vision": an expression of how things might be, based on what the team saw and heard and learned.

***Charrettes blend the broad experience of planning and design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their own community to develop recommendations that address challenges and opportunities in the project at hand. These recommendations provide a framework within which more detailed solutions and plans of action can be developed.***



*A landscape architect works on a sketch for the public presentation.*



*Our charrette team works together to prepare materials to share findings to the public.*

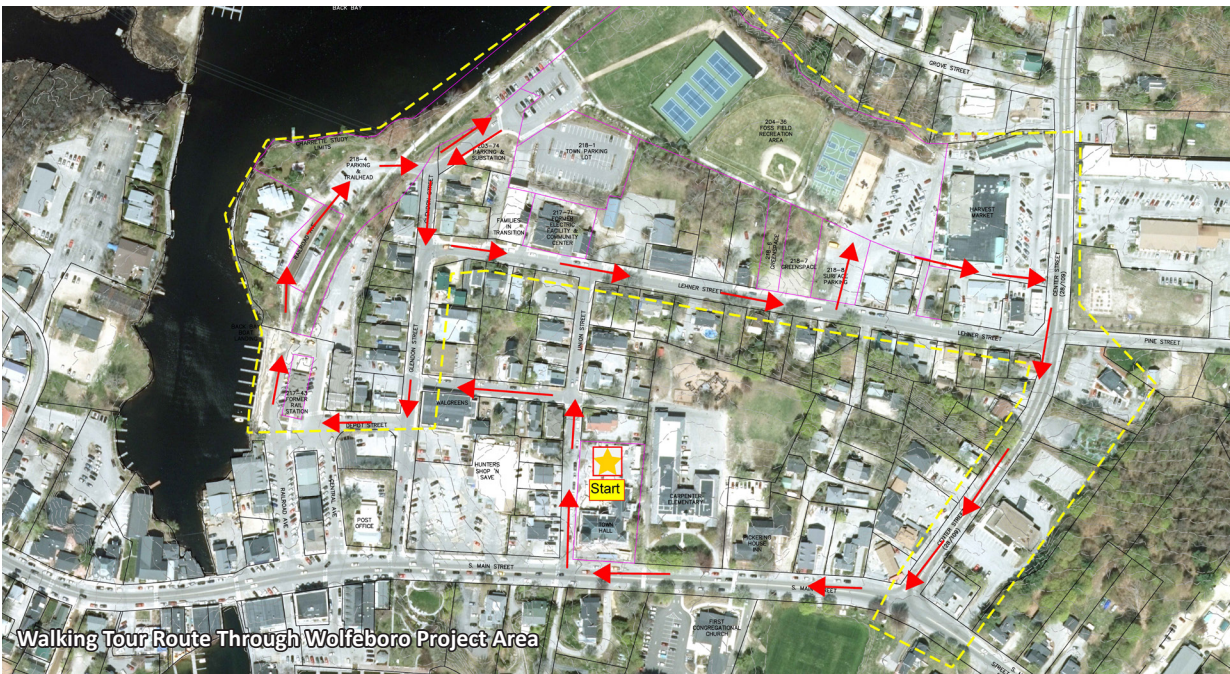


# Site Tour Observations



## What the Plan NH team saw during our walking tour of Wolfeboro

- As you can see from the map below, our team started at Brewster Memorial Hall, headed up Union Street, down School Street and eventually started our tour at Wolfeboro Station in front of the Back Bay.
- From there we explored each piece of the project area, starting along the water, evaluating the existing Cotton Valley Rail Trail and parking amenities.
- We then headed up Glendon Street, went down Lehner Street (in the Trolley), and stopped over at the recreation area at Foss Field behind Harvest Market. Here we learned about the uses of this area, and envisioned how we could both better utilize the existing space, as well as possibly provide greater connectivity to both the Center Street area and up to Lehner Street.
- Next, we headed up Center Street heading toward South Main Street, and stopped at the Movie Warehouse to discuss our observations from the intersections and Center-Pine and Center-Lehner, as well as the challenges and opportunities at the gas station on the corner of Center and South Main Street,
- Finally, we circled back to Lehner Street to further look at the housing and mixed use intricacies of Wolfeboro.



Walking Tour Route Through Wolfeboro Project Area

*Plan NH would like to thank our wonderful tour guides and Molly the Trolley for our engaging and insightful tour of Wolfeboro!*



# What Wolfeboro Told Plan NH

## What Plan NH Heard from Community Leaders

After the tour of downtown Wolfeboro and a hearty lunch, the team met with key community leaders to learn about the challenges and opportunities from their perspectives as those that work in and serve Wolfeboro on a daily basis. Many of these challenges and findings are intertwined in terms of their causes and potential solutions.

### Parking

- During the summer, parking is “impossible” due to the tourism
- Lack of parking outside of the lot by the Back Bay and over at recreation fields

### Lack of Pedestrian Connectivity and Continuity

- Project area feels disjointed
- Tourists don’t want to walk through areas that are not conducive to walking
- A real deterrent to those visiting, not maximizing the potential of the area

### Housing

- An interesting blend of single family and multi-family housing along Lehner Street and through community.
- Not enough workforce housing options, particularly to support the local, walkable businesses
- Most options are not financially feasible for the tenants that would live there
- Current zoning restrictions make it difficult to develop new housing along Lehner Street
- Lack of sense of community on Lehner Street for housing, which is a mixed-use area.

### Wayfinding

- Improved, consistent signage would help tourists and residents alike
- Provide identity to downtown

### Traffic Concerns

- Traffic calming
- Backups along Center Street and South Main Street
  - More welcoming amenities
  - Work with existing tenants (such as gas stations) for viable solutions

### Historic Elements

- Can we leverage some of the existing structures along Lehner Street that are being underutilized?
- Preserve the historic nature of Wolfeboro
  - Ordinance for no drive-thru restaurants
  - Adhere to existing zoning





# What Wolfeboro Residents Told Plan NH

Two public listening sessions were held during the afternoon and evening of Friday, October 22nd. The sessions served as an opportunity for the public to share their comments and ideas about the various challenges and opportunities throughout the project area. Plan NH's process encouraged participation and input from everyone in the room. The residents in attendance shared their opinions about how to preserve Wolfeboro's charm while looking to explore ways to improve. It was obvious to the charrette team that there is great care for the community and that what is here is cherished.

## What we heard from your residents:

- Preserve the historic character of Wolfeboro
- Need to improve the streetscapes
- Explore opportunities to improve traffic flow and circulation
- Enhance existing public spaces
- Identify open spaces that can be utilized for future amenities and development
- Improve pedestrian and vehicular connectivity
- Attract and retain young families with more affordable housing options
- Serve retirees – don't price them out
- How do we deal with seasonality differences?





# What the History of Wolfeboro Tells Us

The Town of Wolfeboro originated from lands once owned by John Mason and Ferdinand Gorges. In 1789, Wolfeboro's 36 square miles were granted to a group of investors who commissioned a survey and advocated for initial settlement in the 1760s. Early settlement focused on Wolfeboro Falls, just north of the project area, where a number of sawmills and excelsior mills were erected. The early settlement of Wolfeboro was also spurred by Governor John Wentworth who constructed a summer house on Lake Wentworth. Wentworth advocated for good roads and transportation opened up new opportunities by the early nineteenth century.

The Eastern Railroad (which later became the Boston and Maine), completed a spur line from Sanbornville in 1872. The passenger station, freight house, and railroad right of way (now recreation trail) is located along the west side of the project area. These resources are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and the freight house has been listed to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places. Historic maps show this area adjacent to the bay with a variety of railroad related resources. These included an engine house, turntable, coalhouse and storage sheds. The tracks originally traversed Railroad Avenue and extended down to the lake which accessed the dock and another freight station. Extending the recreation trail along the original right of way to the lake would provide additional pedestrian access in this busy area of town. The railroad was instrumental in promoting Wolfeboro as a major tourist destination.



***Wolfeboro is a dynamic community that comes alive in the summer with a huge influx of visitors and part-time residents. Many appreciate the historic character inherent in town and found in areas that are adjacent to Main Street. Recommendations made as part of this report should respect this unique character that has been built upon traditions of industry, recreation, transportation, and community engagement.***

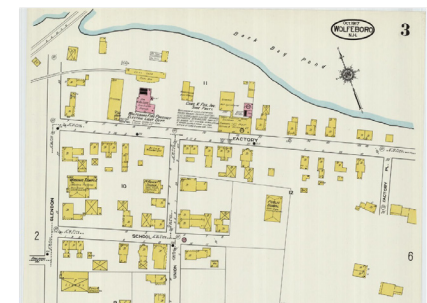
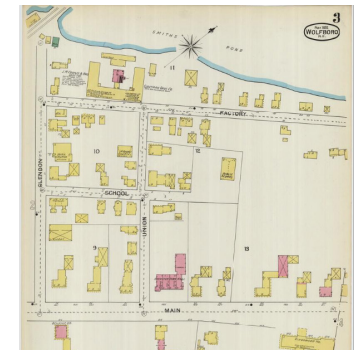
# What the History of Wolfeboro Tells Us

Several large hotels were constructed in town along with services and industries. Within the project area, shoemaking was the dominant industry. J. M. Cropley Shoe Manufacturers was constructed on Factory Street (now Lehner Street) in 1884 and located on the western end of the project area. This frame building was four stories tall configured in a U-shape around a brick boiler house and chimney. The factory and several nearby residences burned on August 9, 1887. According to the Wolfeboro Historical Society, the Shoe Factory or the Big Shop, was rebuilt in 1887 according to the original specifications (4-story 200 feet long by 36 feet deep with 2 ells, 36 x 75 feet). The Cropley and Brother Shoe Co. made shoes there from 1884-1894, employing as many as 300 workers. The Monroe Co. made shoes at the other end of the building from 1884-1891. Owned by the Town in the hopes of attracting business, it was continually controversial and a burden. In 1911, vacant at the time, it was torn down to make way for the power station, except for a section of the west wing, which was reduced to 2 stories. The west wing was used by the Bell Brothers from 1923-1938. A third story was added in 1925, and that wing stands today at 16-18 Lehner Street. A series of Sanborn Insurance Company maps shows the progression of the building alterations (1887, 1892, 1901, and 1917).

Other changes on Factory/Lehner Street during this period are shown on the series of Sanborn maps noted above. In 1892, the large shoe factory is shown wrapping around the boiler

house. Along the street are a variety of single and double family homes of modest scale. By 1901, a second shoe factory building had been constructed to the east. Both factories are noted as “vacant”. The neighborhood continued to exhibit a low-density residential character. The second shoe factory building is likely the currently vacant building that once housed the Sanel Auto Parts Company. The most recent map from 1917 shows significant change related to the original shoe factory building. Primarily, the demolition of a large part of the original shoe factory, with an expansion of the municipal “Wolfeboro Fire Precinct Electric Light Company” which incorporated earlier elements of the boiler house that was part of the shoe factory. This building was added onto again in the 1930s. The shoe factory to the east was now operated by the Charles K. Fox, Inc. Shoe Factory. By the mid-twentieth century, the fire station was constructed and later converted into a community center. Thoughtful consideration should be given to the value of these unique buildings when planning any new construction in this part of the project area.

The western end of the project area ends at Center Street. The area connecting Factory/Lehner Street and Center Street housed a commercial grocery facility for much of the twentieth century. Heading south on Center Street, the roadway was characterized by a continuation of small-scale residential buildings toward Main Street. While there has been significant change in this corridor since that time, several small-scale residential buildings are still present. Any new infill construction should take into account the remaining historic character in the vicinity.



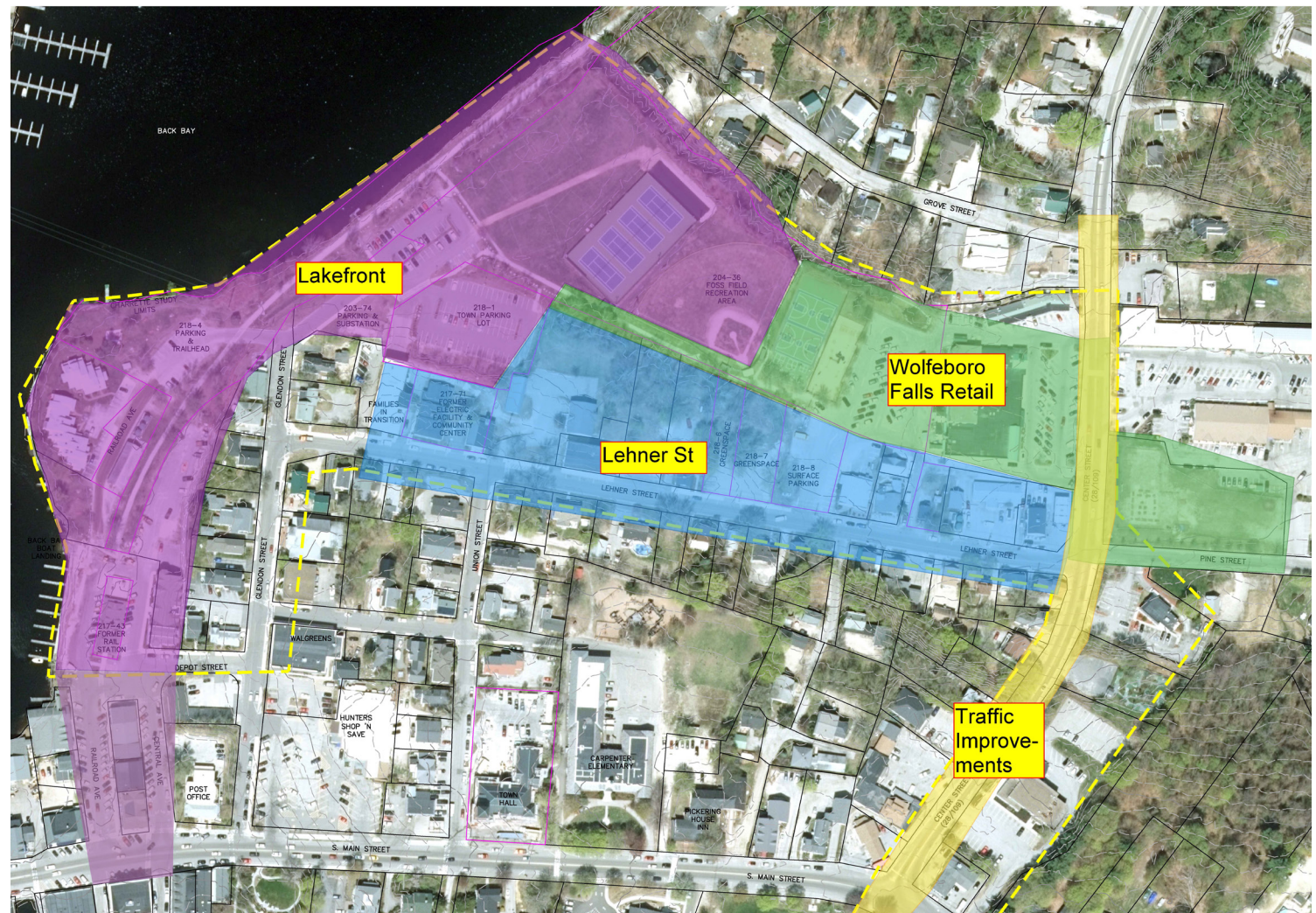
*Historic Sanborn Maps of Factory Street from 1892, 1901, and 1917*



# The Project Area: Four Main Components

The Wolfeboro Charrette explores one of the largest project areas that any Plan NH project team has seen. To try and best understand the various components and challenges unique to each section, as well as thematic commonalities throughout, we decided to compartmentalize the project area into four distinctive areas shown below. Much of the report evaluates and identifies opportunities and challenges in the following areas:

- Lakefront
- Wolfeboro Falls (Retail)
- Lehner Street
- Traffic Improvements down Center Street up to South Main Street





# Waterfront Improvements

The waterfront area was focused on the following elements:

- A small section of South Main Street including Glendon Street, the Post Office, Central Avenue, and Railroad Avenue.
- All of Railroad Avenue including existing commercial area, the Rail Station, future train museum, two sets of condominiums, the beginning section of the “Cotton Valley Rail Trail” up until just south of Grove Street.
- From the Rail Trail East toward the town owned tennis/pickle ball courts until just before the town baseball field.
- The town parking lots and the electric company substation.
- The former Electric Company building and the Community Center.
- The waterfront area across the Back Bay was added as a result of public input.

While walking the subject area, our focus was visualizing planning practices in order to transform the subject area to meet a few of the town’s goals. A few of the town’s goals are:

1. Preservation and enhancement of historic character and existing assets while improving streetscape.
2. Linking downtown with the Back Bay commercial area with pedestrian connections and more.
3. Improving traffic flow in some portions of the subject area with a focus on safety and encouraging alternative means of transportation in and around the Back Bay area.
4. Improve existing green spaces and create additional outdoor gathering spaces for recreational and social opportunities for all ages and abilities all year round.

## Strengthening pedestrian and vehicular connections to the Back Bay

A long-term goal was for greater connectivity to the trail and water amenities through various avenues. We explored connecting South Main Street to the rail trail. There are also opportunities along the rail trail for plantings and/or signage to enhance the navigation and use of the area, as wayfinding is currently lacking a bit in this area. Our team also heard a desire for a pathway going from the waterfront, behind the basketball courts, and up to the Wolfeboro Falls retail area, which we can further investigate. On the map, we also show how traffic is moving through the area (via the orange arrows). We are also cognizant of how improvements in this area can impact the area across the Back Bay, which is experiencing redevelopment, so connecting there potentially beyond Front Bay Park should be considered.



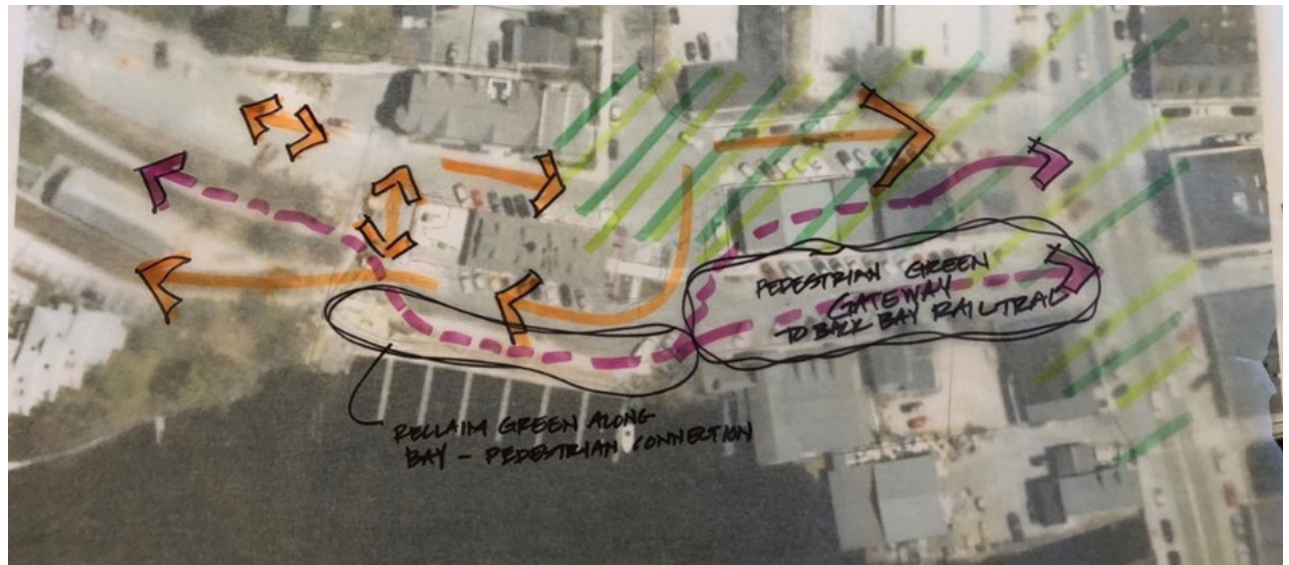


# Gateway to the Back Bay: Two Options

## Creating a “Pedestrian Plaza”

1. Close off Railroad Avenue at South Main Street up to the hardware store in order to create a “Pedestrian Plaza.” The “Plaza” could include outdoor seating, bike racks, park benches, a gazebo for live music, planter boxes with native plants and flowers. Include signage advertising: the beginning of a Historic Walking Tour, the train museum, and for the Cotton Valley Rail Trail. This would create a lively and safe gathering place for residents and tourists for shopping, dining, gathering, and recreation activities. Pedestrians and vendors would not be standing in the street causing safety and traffic flow issues. A connection between Back Bay and Downtown will be created meeting a goal of the town and the residents.
2. Redesign Central Avenue to have parallel parking instead of diagonal parking along with Complete Street Design Standards. That would include wider sidewalks with street trees, safer pedestrian and bicyclist movement, and outdoor seating.
3. Maintain the parking spaces in front of the hardware store.

The area would still have a one-way access via Glendon Street and Central Avenue and maintain Railroad Avenue as one-way from the hardware store up and around the train station. A few parking spaces as well as handicap spaces can be relocated along South Main Street.



## Redesigning using Complete Streets

A second proposal for this particular section would be to keep Railroad Avenue open but redesign it using Complete Street Standards:

1. Remove parking spaces from one side of the street
2. Use parallel parking instead of diagonal parking
3. Provide outdoor seating, bike racks, park benches, a gazebo to have live music, and add planter boxes with native plants and flowers.

This proposal would include the redesign of Central Avenue and the other recommendations as described in the Pedestrian Plaza scenario.

Additionally, thought should be put to redesigning South Main Street in its entirety according to Complete Street Standards to accommodate all users e.g., pedestrians, bicyclists, dog walkers, wheelchairs, families with strollers and other users. The area can also be further beautified with better streetlights, and other accents like black iron for a more traditional New England look.



# Waterfront Improvements: Enhancing the Trails

The rail trail is an excellent community amenity, but like other areas of Wolfeboro, it tends to get overcrowded. With potential enhancements in the area and assets adjacent to the trail, it can not only serve more users, but also connect more residents and tourists, more opportunities to improve pedestrian mobility, and reduce vehicles within the area. Some additional considerations for improving the rail trail are:

Building on an existing waterfront trail, starting from the new Boat Museum location or perhaps even from Front Bay Park, running along the water down to the Calvary church parking lot, with pedestrian walkway highlighting on the pavement out to North Main Street will help connect the waterfront trail to the other side of Back Bay. The existing walkway and bridge may need updating.

Starting at the Chamber of Commerce, ranging to the board docks and launch area, continuing on to include the former freight shed currently being renovated for use as a model train museum, all the way to the park currently used by the Abenaki Water Ski Club, this area offers opportunities for improvements including:

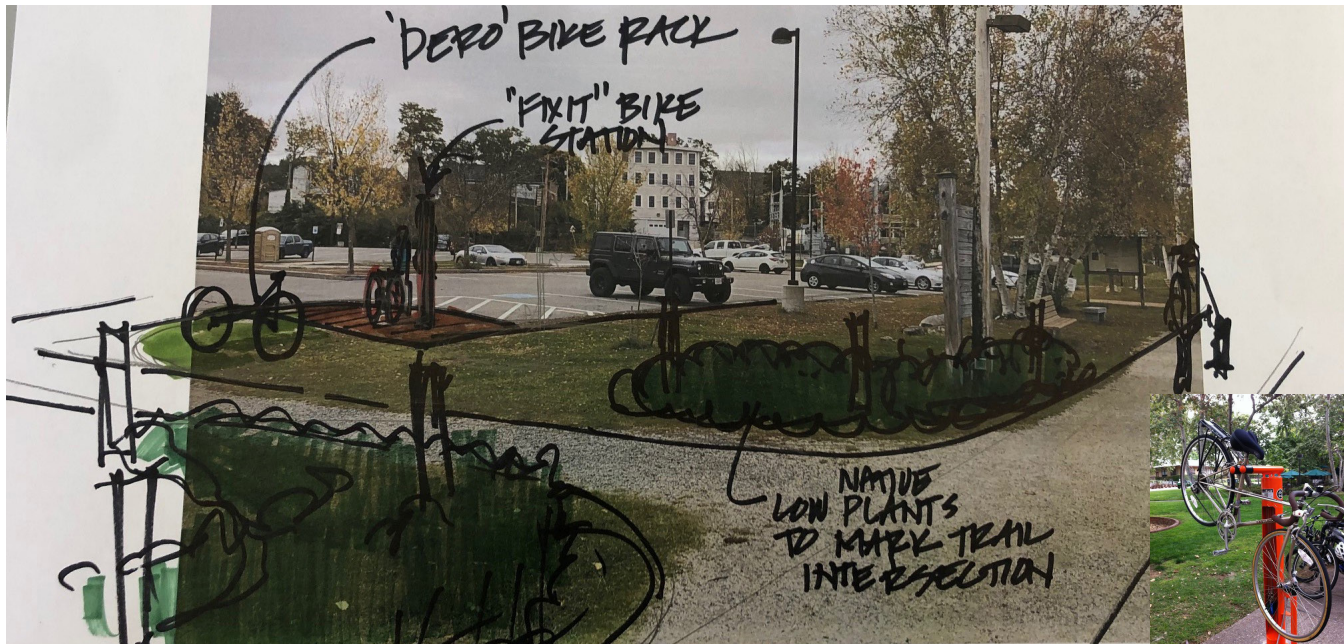
1. Maintain Railroad Avenue as a one way street, from Depot Street all the way down to Glendon Street and the Municipal parking lots.
2. Add a low screen either of vegetation or “pop-up” art installation between the Rail Trail and the private parking lot in the area of the Freight Shed, all the way down to the intersection of Railroad Avenue and the Rail Trail.
3. The vegetation along the water in the park used by the Abenaki Water Ski Club is an invasive species and should be removed and replaced with native plants.

The Abenaki Water Ski Club is an important community group, so they should be consulted with during discussions of changes to this area.





# Waterfront Opportunities



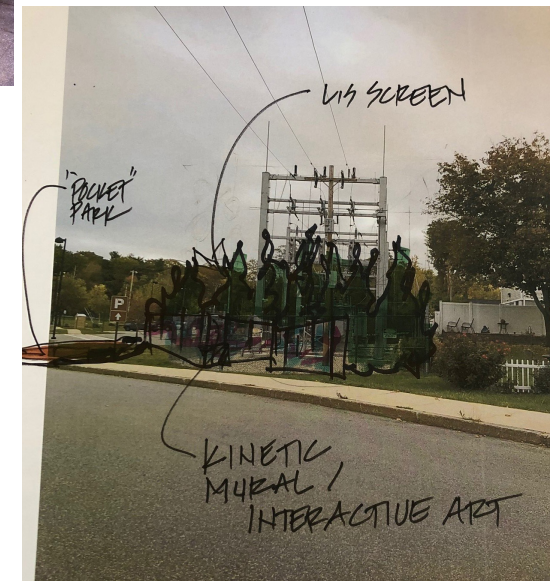
Example of Fixit Bike Station

The sketch to the left shows some possible simple opportunities to enhance the rail trail area:

- Native low plantings help mark the trail intersection, which is a subtle way to improve wayfinding and keep the natural character of the area
- Installing a “Fixit” Bike Repair Station essentially makes repairs possible along the trail for cycling enthusiasts
- “Dero” Bike Rack can serve as a parking station for bicycle in-season, but also adds a sculptural, aesthetic element to the area during the winter months.

The sketch to the right shows the area adjacent to the parking lot as you head back toward Glendon Street in front of the electrical substation, which while incredibly necessary, is a visually unappealing structure in the midst of this beautiful waterfront area. Some ways to enhance this area are:

- The idea of putting a pocket park would add seating and a congregation area. It would be a subtle, yet effective use of an open space within the project area.
- Adding native plantings, as suggested along the rail trail, can further tie the two areas together, making it feel more connected and cohesive.
- Creating a sculpture, possibly something that is interactive to pedestrians, in front of the electrical substation could help beautify the area. It is also a potential opportunity to implement something that further reflects the history of Wolfeboro within the public art. It would be possible to engage the community with an art competition through local artists and students to try and develop a solution that helps camouflage this structure to some degree.





# Waterfront Opportunities



## Pedestrian Bridge Trail Connection

There is currently about a 12-inch plank that goes across the drainage ditch that people already use to get to the recreational fields. There is a great opportunity to connect the trail area to the recreational fields, without really disturbing the area, by building a pedestrian footbridge. Our recommendation would be a simple wooden structure, where you might be able to engage scouts or other community members to help put this together.

## Vehicular Connection to Lehner Street

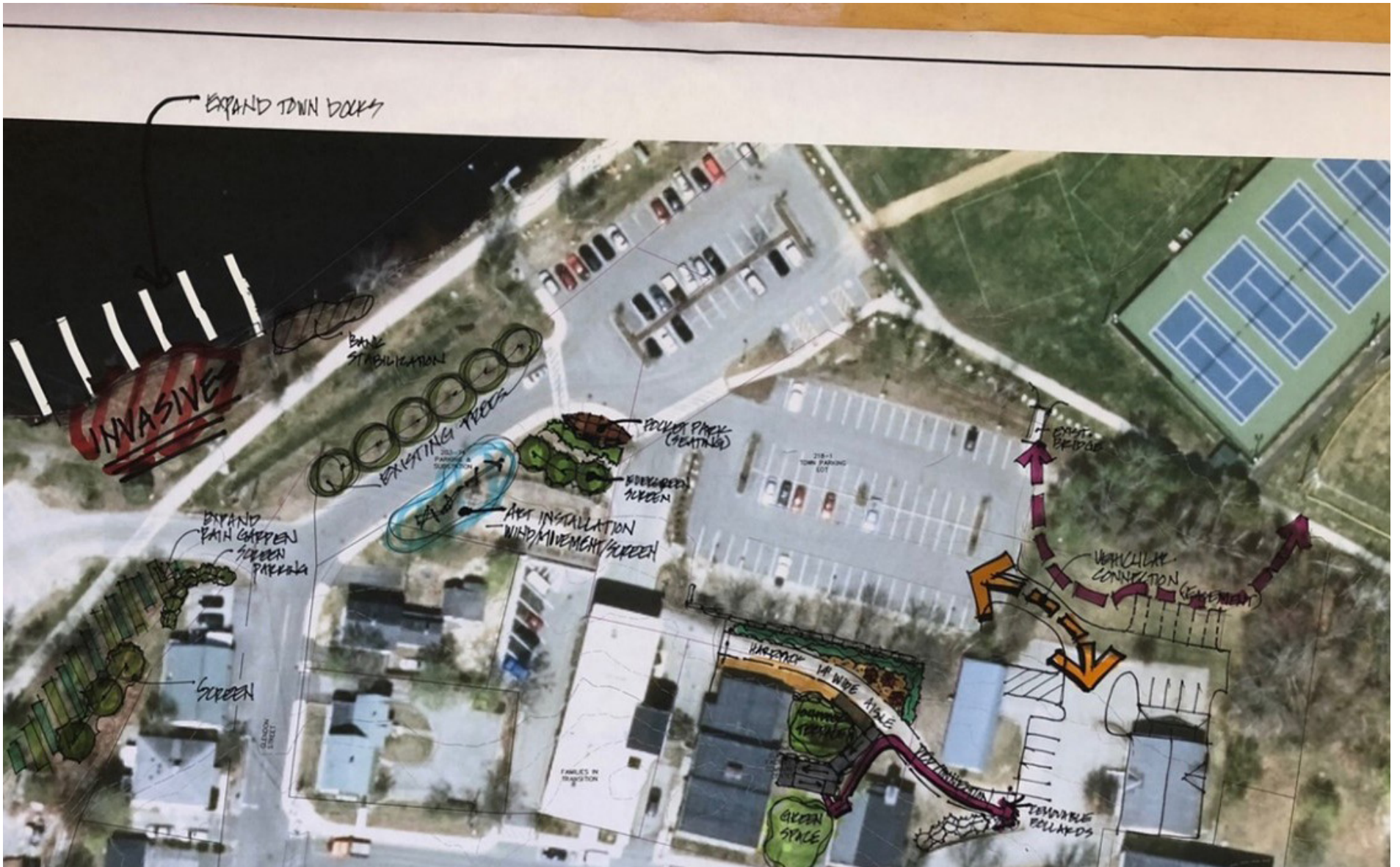
Since there is no real loop that brings people up to Lehner Street from the municipal parking lot area, we wanted to explore a vehicular connection that can achieve this movement. We envision connecting the back side of the municipal parking lot with the Silva Family Dentistry office lot, giving the opportunity to provide quicker access to Lehner Street without having to loop around. To do this you would have to:

- Communicate with the property owner to understand their needs and make arrangements to providing access – getting an easement would probably be necessary.
- There is a little drainage issue, but that could be solved with the installation of a rain garden or culvert
- Additionally, this would allow ADA wheelchair access to the community center via a new gently sloped path running behind the old fire station and on to the new community center.





## Proposed Connections Map





# Lehner Street: Re-imagined



## Utilizing and Investing in Existing Assets

Starting at the Hope House and traversing all the way to the gas station, Lehner street is a living timeline of the history of Wolfeboro, as well as a reminder of some of the challenges this corridor faces. Before talking about future development, it is instructive and valuable to evaluate existing assets, and on Lehner Street, we want to first explore the former Municipal Electric Department Building and the Community Center/old fire station.

## Municipal Electric Department Building

- This building is an unfolding timeline of three eras of structures
- We agree with the Girl Scouts proposal to invest in it, bring it up to current code, and turn it into a new Community Center for teens and a new Senior Center.
  - We love that idea! But also want flexibility in mind in case the Town ever wants to change use
  - Grade challenges and parking reconfiguration would need to be examined

## Community Center/Old Fire Station

- Stabilize and renovate old building, possibly connect it to Electric Building to complete complex
- Sunroom/garden pavilion area
- Connect lower side to path system and down to the waterfront.



*The Girl Scouts gave a wonderful presentation about their vision for a new community center!*



# Lehner Street: Re-imagined

## Connecting the character of different structures and embracing the legacy of this area.

As you can see below, Lehner Street is a complex mix of new and old, with uses ranging from various types of housing, industrial, community, retail, hospitality and more. One really interesting property to investigate redevelopment is the Sanel Auto Parts Building (highlighted in an orange box below). The character of this building does not match the housing even directly across the street, and as we have seen in the past, at one point it was a four-story building. One option could be to restore that four-story look with a renovation and possibly develop some loft housing units to the top floors of the building. The character of this building, which is a bit different than the overall character of the neighborhood, is a legacy building, and could then reflect the character of the industrial component and workforce housing, all under one roof, which could be an interesting option to explore.

No matter the development choices, it is important to protect the integrity and character of the neighborhood as illustrated at the bottom of the page.

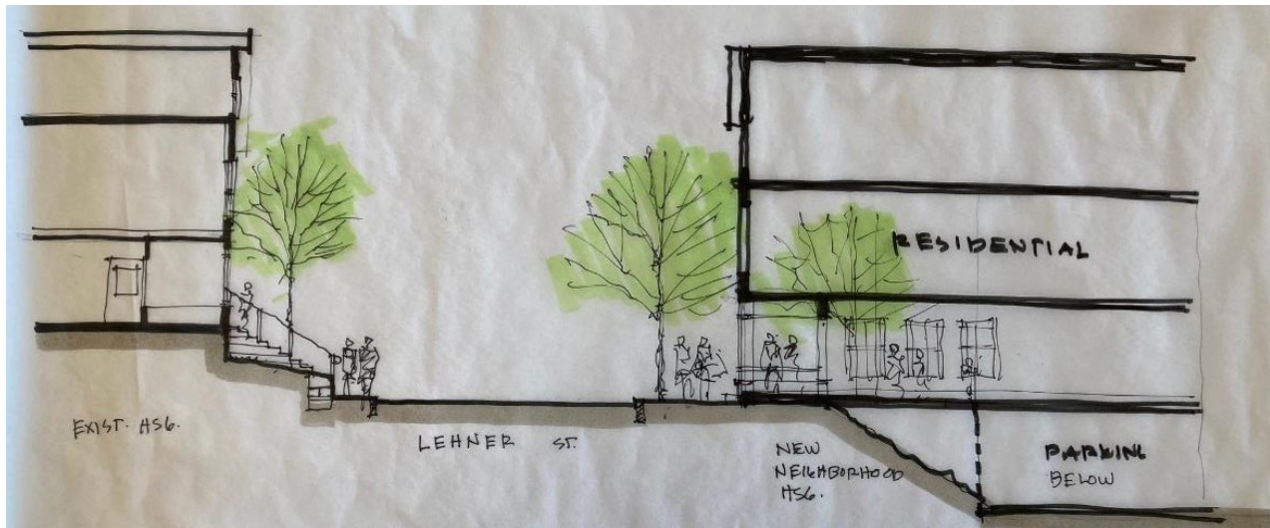




# Lehner Street: Re-imagined

## Housing is a need, but it has to be done with the neighborhood in mind.

As we continued to walk down Lehner Street past the Sanel Building, we envisioned more housing units that would essentially mirror the existing units across the street. This embraces history while helping address one of the largest needs in the area. Our recommendation would be small multi-family buildings that fit within the size and scale of this neighborhood. No large industrial housing!



## Fitting New Development into Existing Scale

By understanding the streetscape in its entirety, as well as the uses of the existing structures and hopes for future development needs, we can inform and pave the way for Wolfeboro's future to honor its past.

To the left is a cross section looking down Lehner Street, with a typical existing building on the left, and a potential new neighborhood housing building on the right. This shows how development can fit in seamlessly, while providing enhanced amenities on Lehner Street.

- Most of these buildings have an intimate relationship with the sidewalk
- In some areas, the grade drops 10-15 feet, which could be an opportunity for additional parking, ideally designed for these units.



*Virtual model of potential future streetscape on Lehner Street.*



# Housing Considerations

## What we heard:

- Need for affordable housing for young families, retirees, and Wolfeboro's workforce
- 2019 Master Plan specifically said that Wolfeboro is seeking to attract and retain more young people and young families
- Businesses are struggling to recruit and retain employees and, as a result, have been forced to be open or closed during unpredictable hours or operate with reduced staff. Even during summer months when the population in Wolfeboro is booming.
- The median purchase price here in Wolfeboro in the first quarter of this year was \$340,000, which is well above the median for the County (\$269,000)



*Several beautiful houses with 3-5 units would not be allowed under current Wolfeboro zoning requirements!*

## What we saw:

- We walked up and down Lehner Street and on the adjacent streets (Center Street, Glendon Street) to take a look at the existing housing in our target area
- Zoning ordinance and what's on the street don't match
- Zoning doesn't match the history of Lehner Street
- For context, the entire target area for the charrette is within the C1/Central Business District ordinance, which allows only 6 units per acre of residential development and has a maximum height of 35 feet





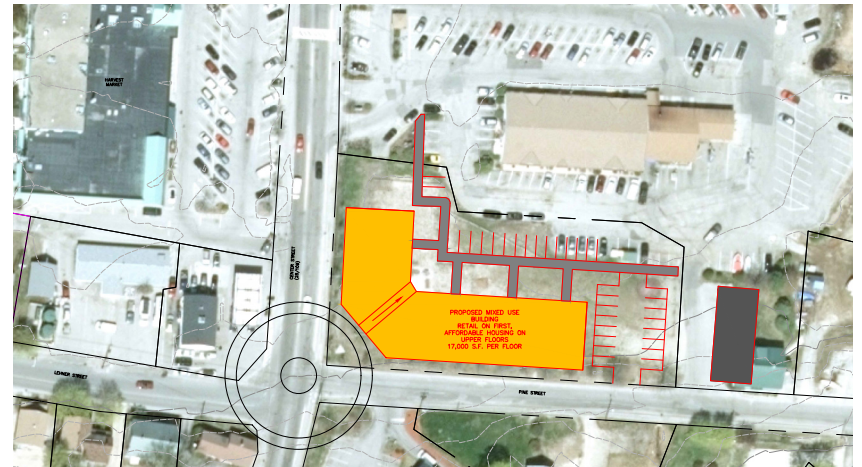
# Housing Recommendations

## Here's what you can do:

- Explore increasing the allowed residential density, both units per acre and height, in the C1/CBD. This was a recommendation made in the 2019 Master Plan, so it's not too outside of the box.
- Explore amendments to the inclusionary zoning ordinance. Wolfeboro could, for example, allow 30 units per acre by right and then insist that developers wishing to build greater than 30 units per acre ensure 10-20% of the total units be rent restricted to below the County's workforce housing limit.
- Consider lessening the restrictions for accessory dwelling units (ADU).
- Consider applying for a municipal technical assistance grant (MTAG). The MTAG program provides dollars to communities specifically to hire a consultant to work with the community to explore zoning changes that will allow for opportunities for housing affordability, diversity, and supply.



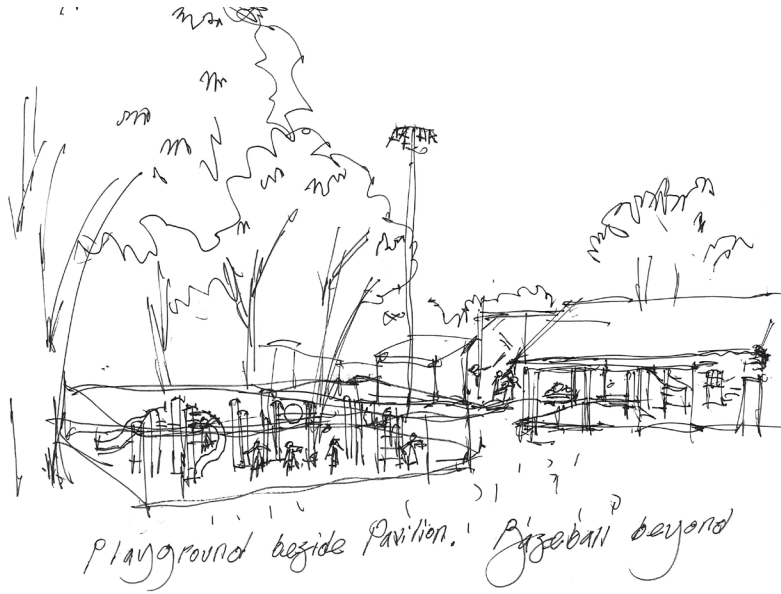
*Sanel Building was once four stories – this would not be possible under current zoning without several variances*



*The Zimmerman parcel on the Corner of Center and Pine may provide an opportunity for housing elements to be explored*



# Connecting Center Street



*Playground beside Pavilion. Baseball beyond*

## Maximizing Vibrancy and Efficiency in Wolfeboro Falls

As we approach the end of Lehner Street heading toward the connection at Center Street, there is an area known as Wolfeboro Falls that has many uses and functions, as well as exciting existing amenities and challenges. By improving the access through the Wolfeboro Falls retail and recreation through the main trail and a potentially new walking path, tourists and regulars can more easily utilize the existing amenities.

## Enhancing Wolfeboro Falls with Parking and Recreation Options

- Parking lot behind Harvest Market is very congested and does not offer enough capacity; adding directionality may help with congestion
- Adding new parking would require relocation of the existing playground to the other side of the pavilion structure
- Greater amenities, both from a parking and pedestrian perspective, can amplify the connectivity of this area and provide a sensible way to connect folks from the waterfront area all the way down to Center Street.
- Existing lot has 79 spaces including 3 bus parking spaces; proposed lot has 99 parking spaces and 1 bus/trolley parking space.





# Center Street and Wolfeboro Falls

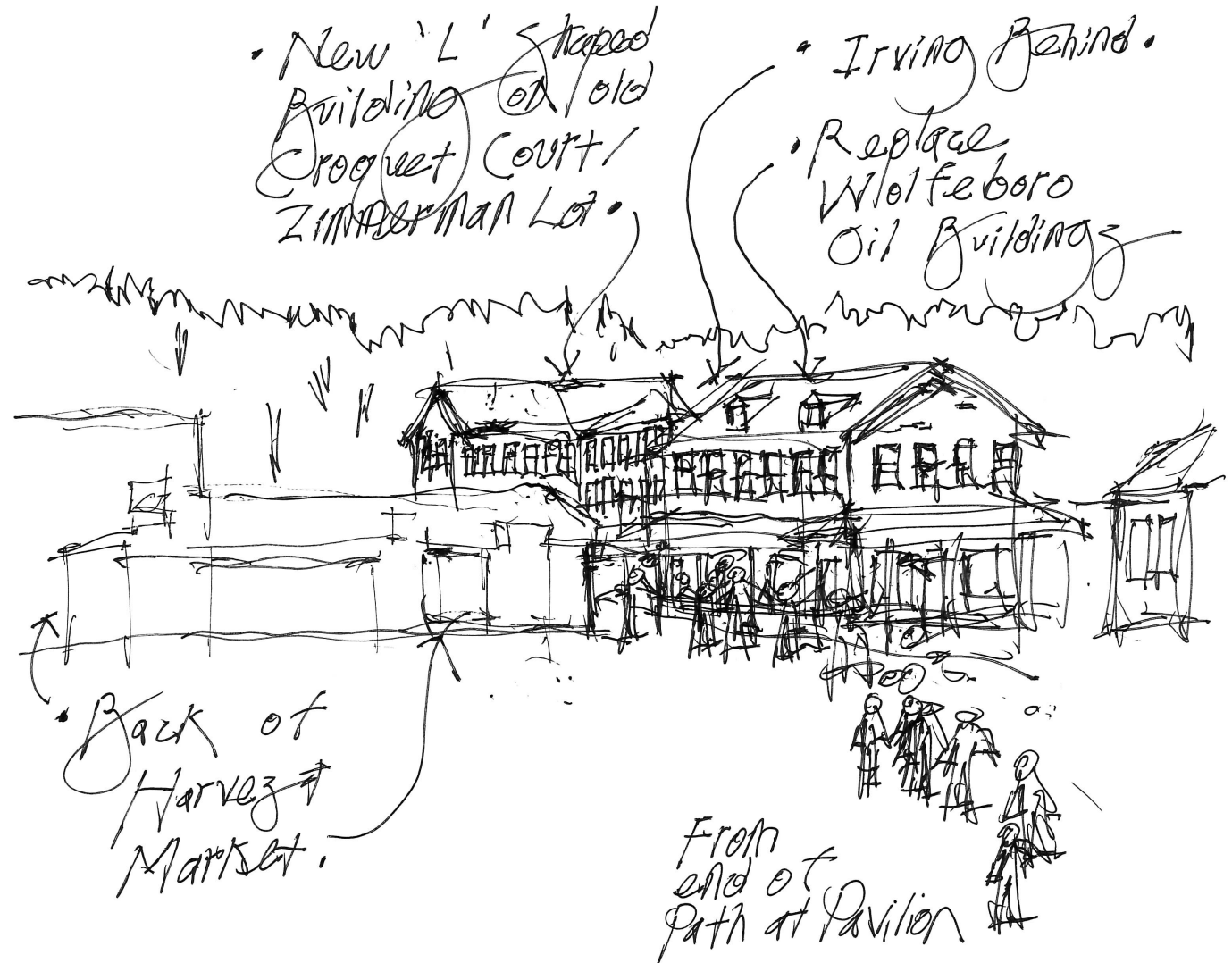
## Making the Falls a Place to Spend More Time

As we focus on improving connectivity from the lakefront all the way down to Center Street, part of the challenges are to create spaces where people want to stay, as opposed to just need to go. In the sketch to the right, given the perspective from the pavilion, we have a few recommendations to improve the area.

### Recommendations

- Explore renovating and/or repurposing the Wolfeboro Oil Buildings into shops or restaurants to bring and keep people in the area
- Develop the Zimmerman Lot, where the old croquet courts were across Center Street, with an L-shaped building that provides affordable housing on the upper floors and retail on the main floor.

These additions and considerations to this area could attract more tourists and residents, while pumping more money into the area.





# Center Street Transportation Improvements

While most of the components within the project area were positive in nature, in terms of the opportunities and potential available, when talking about Center Street and some of the transportation options available, it was met with the most negativity. Some of the consistent themes we heard were:

- There are lots of traffic backups, particularly coming from the south direction
- Aesthetically, it is not pleasing to the eye as it currently exists
- “I hate this road”
- The look and character does not have the same feeling as much of the rest of the project area

Our team’s task was to determine the best ways to improve this area while keeping it operational and functional. This corridor and area is used by a variety of users from motor vehicles, some that may have boat trailers, commercial vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. Having that variety of users in the area can cause problems in areas that are not optimized for various users.

To try and better balance this corridor for all users, our team would like Wolfeboro to consider:

- Complete streets and other intersection types that will help balance the modes of transportation, and enhance the safety and character to tie it in better with the downtown area. Possibilities include:
  - Gateway features coming from either direction to help designate arrival and wayfinding
  - Features like trees, markings and other indicators improve aesthetics and capacity for all users
  - Further defining the transportation setting and improving safety by implementing traffic calming measures to reduce vehicular speed
- Roundabouts at Pickering Corner and the intersection of Lehner and Pine Street.





# Center Street Improvements: Pickering Corner



Given the location of the intersection, where Center Street meets South Main Street, there are many challenges in this area. With two gas stations on the corner, a monument park located across from the intersection, and schools, churches, residences and other commercial properties lining or adjacent to the area, many modes of transport and users interact with this unoptimized area. We recommend a small 107-foot roundabout as a way to minimize impacts and improve safety for all users. Some considerations:

- The “smaller” roundabout fits within the footprint of the intersection, and would be large enough to accommodate boat trailers and larger vehicles, but small enough to slow vehicles down to safe speeds
- The monuments would have to likely be relocated
- With gas stations on each corner, those properties would likely be impacted – need to coordinate with property owners to make driveways more intuitive and useful
- This would provide a gateway to the Town from the south
- New roundabout facilitates bike and pedestrian users, as well as helps with vehicular traffic flows





# Center Street Improvements: Another Roundabout!

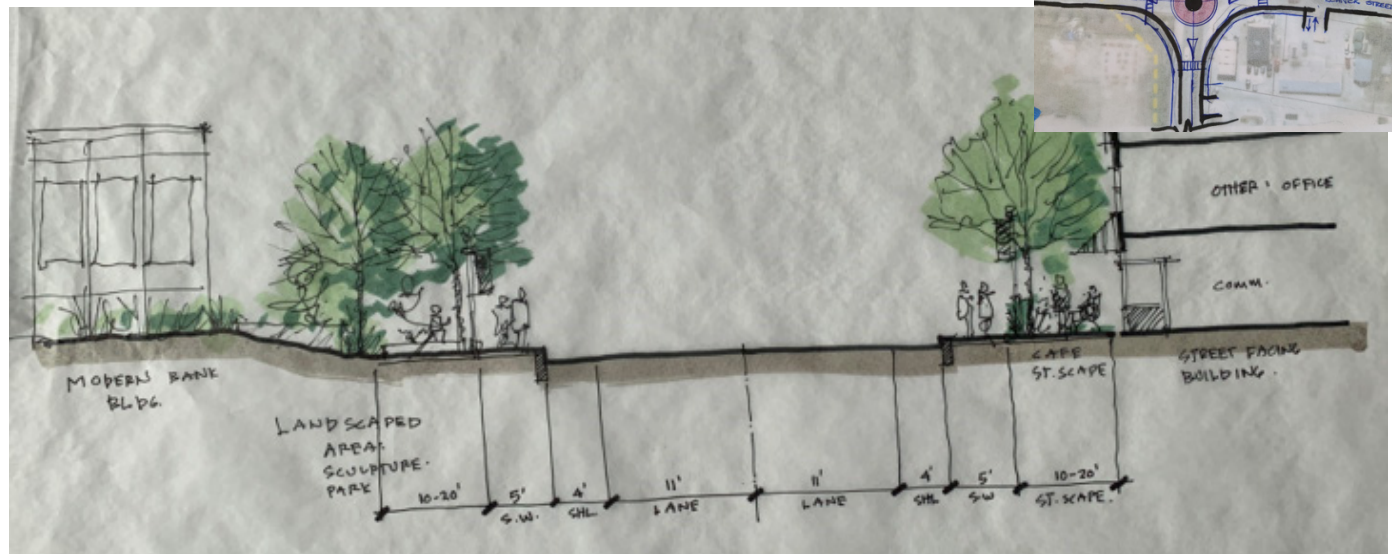
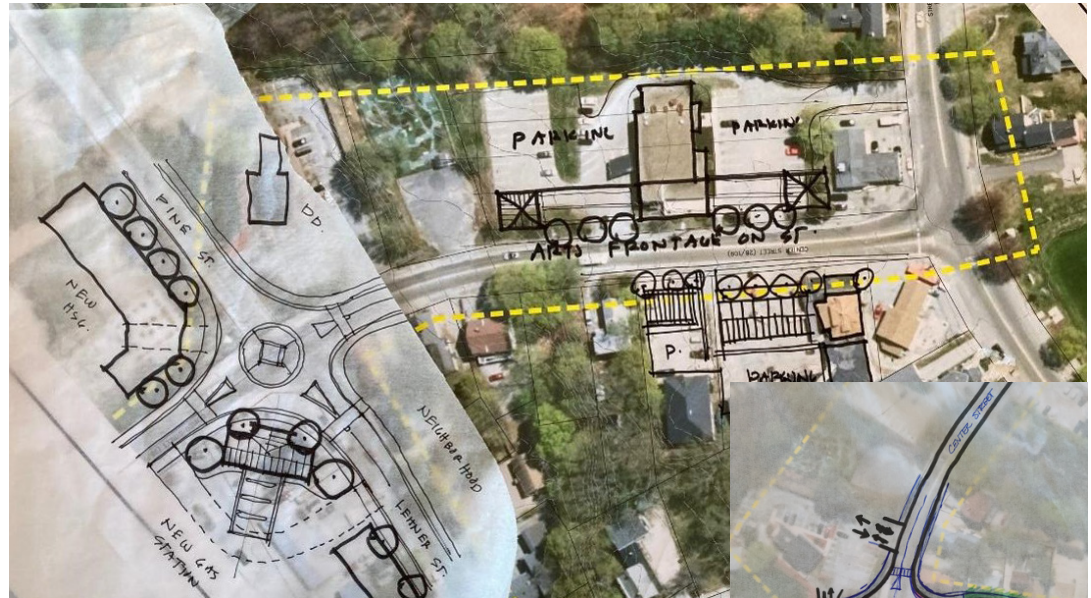
The current four-way intersection at Lehner and Pine Streets can be better utilized as a roundabout:

- Smaller, single-lane (107-foot in diameter) roundabout improves flow and safety for all users
- The footprint of the intersection would be slid slightly toward the vacant lot to make the geometry work
- With the Irving Oil gas station on the corner, property impacts to the gas station would have to be evaluated
- Side road access for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians would improve
- The configuration of the roundabout eliminates sight distance issues uphill from Lehner Street

The recommended roundabout would have elements that fit into the updates within Wolfeboro falls with regard to pavement markings and other indicators to be amenable to all users and modes of movement.

The sketch to the right is a proposed typical roadway section along Center Street. We propose thirty feet curb-to-curb, which results in eleven foot lanes and four foot shoulders. Sidewalks on each side would measure five feet apiece. These minor adjustments would fit in the current roadway profile and existing right-of-way. As the road currently stands, there is not enough width for a median island and wider sidewalks or landscaping without private property impacts.

Our goal is to improve the corridor while preserving as much as possible.





# Economic and Development Considerations

## How to Improve and Spur New Development

In listening to town staff and residents, we see an overriding issue with development. As Wolfeboro gets more popular, the town is seeing development pressure from not only existing property owners, but also outside developers who are buying up properties with an eye towards redeveloping those properties. Zoning and planning ordinances can only do so much to control the outcome. One answer to this problem is to find ways to be proactive.

The town can be proactive in being a buyer when key properties come on the market for purchase and control them. The town can maintain ownership, or place development easements on the properties, and then sell them through a Request for Proposal process with the town selecting the proposal that best meets their vision and allows the property to stay on the tax roll. The overall goal should be to control what gets built.

The town already has an economic and development committee. The town can align with an economic and development corporation that can finance the purchase to allow the town to hold the property while a developer is selected. Ideally the economic and development committee knows the town and the players, and can negotiate to purchase key properties before they hit the open market.





# Next Steps and What You Can Do

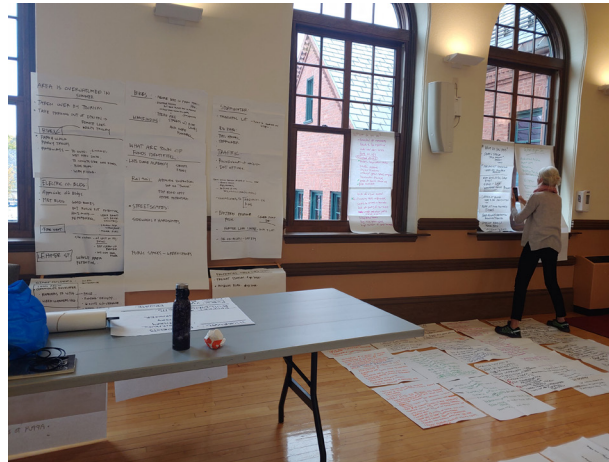
Wolfeboro is a passionate community full of residents who want to see the area evolve to provide enhanced and safer amenities for themselves but also tourists and visitors that come to your picturesque town. The people who live and work there who have tremendous talents and gifts to offer and the potential to create a great future for itself. This report includes recommendations and suggestions that the team believed would address some of the challenges Wolfeboro faces. These are just recommendations – it is now up to you to decide which you want to follow, and then lay out a plan.

And that means all of you. We recommend that an all call go out to the Town, so that anyone interested can come together for a general review of the recommendations and then a discussion about what's next.

Further we recommend that when different ideas from this charrette are developed and implemented, that right at the beginning, interested people are part of the planning and the actions to be taken. We recommend not just “input”, but true dialog throughout.



*What is next? Create a future that is distinct from the past. Have conversations with each other. Think about 20 years from now. What about 50? Come together and choose your path forward.*





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