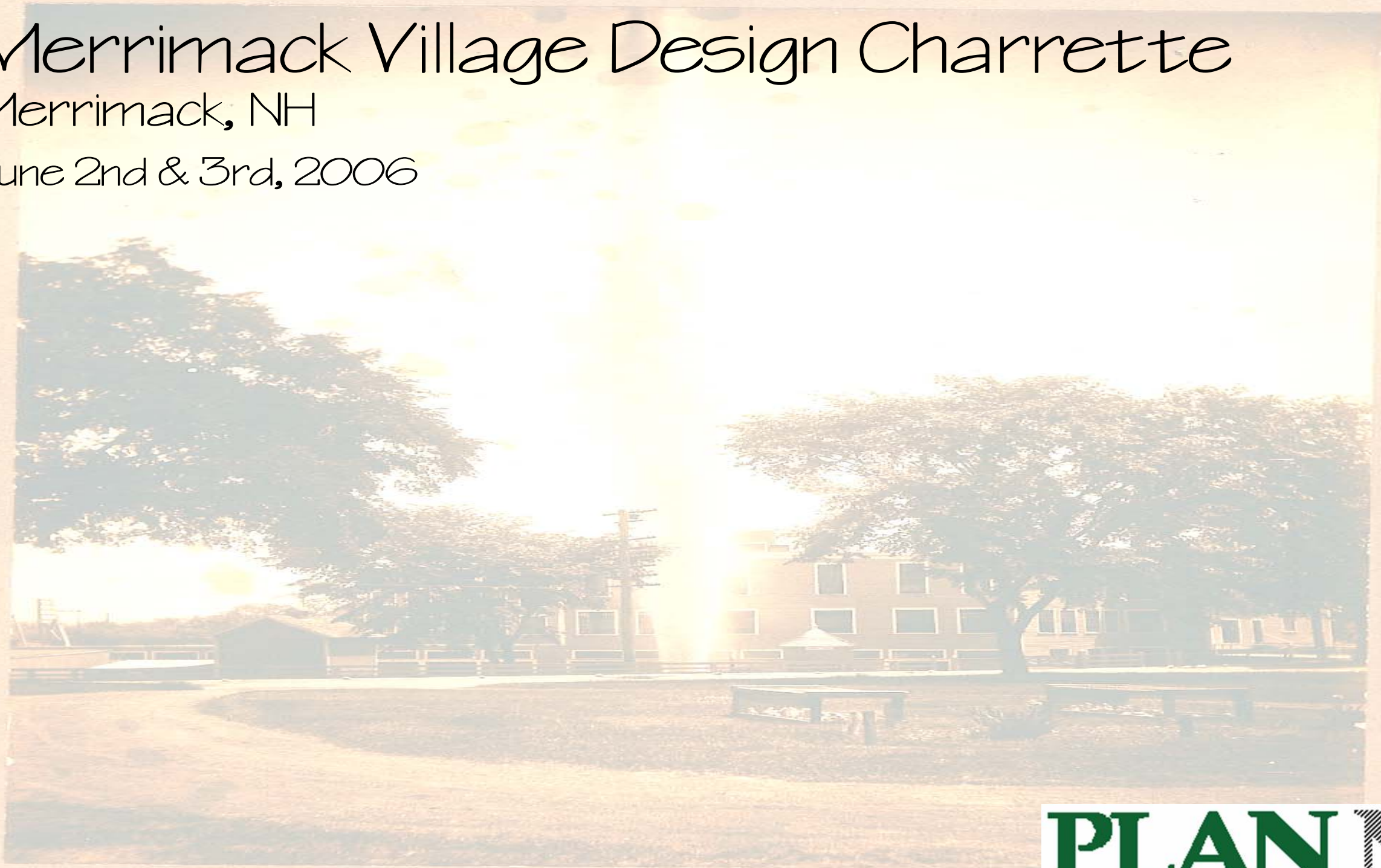


Merrimack Village Design Charrette

Merrimack, NH

June 2nd & 3rd, 2006



The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment

Merrimack Charrette Acknowledgements

Sincere Thanks go out to those individuals who donated their professional and personal time to this charrette

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Also, many thanks to the citizens and town officials who shared their thoughts and knowledge with us

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Plan NH Visits Merrimack, NH

June 2nd. & 3rd., 2006

Who is Plan NH?

Plan NH is a professional association for those working in the *built environment*. The organization includes architects, planners, engineers, bankers, construction managers, historic preservationalists, and others who concern themselves with buildings and communities. It was established to create a forum for bringing together these different professional groups and as a catalyst for spurring interest in community development. Part 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 through the offer of free design assistance to communities with demonstrated needs.

So what is a Design Charrette, anyway?

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 conclusions reached are usually conceptual. They discuss how different plan elements should relate to each other, as opposed to the details of how a particular building would actually be constructed.

At their best, Charrettes blend the broad experience of design professionals with local citizen's knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action that deals with a particular issue of concern to that community. The Charrette provides an overall framework within which final solutions can be developed. It sets a tone and gives a direction against which future decisions may be measured.



How did the Plan NH Charrette come to Merrimack?

In February of 2006, the Town of Merrimack submitted a proposal to **Plan NH** for design assistance. Of the Eighteen plus proposals submitted, Merrimack was one of three communities selected for a Charrette.

Plan NH is interested in providing design assistance to communities that seem ready to move forward with a project, where there appears to be the organizational expertise and where there is the ability to move forward with recommendations that surface in the course of the weekend event. **Plan NH** is looking for community problems that may have transferability to other communities.



The Charrette Process



Merrimack town officials and community residents gathered with the **Plan NH** Charrette team on a rainy Friday afternoon in June to discuss the details of the task in front of us. Design professionals on the team included architects, planners, civil engineers, construction managers, cost estimators, and Real Estate professionals. The critical piece that the Charrette Team lacked, which only the local residents could offer, was the knowledge of the Town of Merrimack.

Local residents are the experts on the community - what makes sense, what history has brought forth, what will pass at the local board meetings - and the design team relies on resident input and knowledge to develop viable suggestions and proposals.

With that in mind, the team and residents began formulating the future of a Merrimack Town Center and central gathering locations

The Team began the Charrette with a walking tour of the area. The team heard that the dam will be removed. The Chamberlain Bridge is on the Historical register. There is an 18" sewer line that crosses DW highway and across the site to the Merrimack River. The town is looking for a better access to the sewer line. The present rail line is the future commuter line connecting Massachusetts to Nashua, Merrimack and points north. The present depot building will be perfect for the Merrimack stop on the Rail line. The recent rains delineated the 100 year flood plain for design reference. Environmental concerns are the cleanup of the old tannery and the abandoned town dump on the Longa site. There is no environmental risk on the sites. There is a state grant in place for new sidewalks on both sides of DW Highway but no plans to widen the road. The monitoring well reports will be available in December 2006. The present fire hydrant on the Watson site is not live. The Souhegan River is Class B. There is an abandoned foundation near the bridge. The active sewer pump station is to remain. The Longa site is a former gravel pit and dump site that will be included in the design process.





Merrimack's Proposal

Merrimack's proposal focused on a 12 acre parcel of land located within the Merrimack's Town Center Overlay District

This land was once home to many different manufacturing facilities dating back to the mid 1800's, including a wood mill, a tannery, a nail maker, a cooperage, and shoe maker that produced boots for soldiers during WWII. The most recent occupant of the site was a chemical manufacturing plant where operations ceased just a few years ago. The end result of this business closure was an abandoned facility atop an environmentally unattractive site, which contributed to a negative aura along the Route 3 business corridor.

Over the past few years, the buildings were razed and an environmental cleanup ensued under the administrative directive of the State Department of Environmental Services.

A Couple of years later, this 12 acre parcel was placed on the market. Zoned for commercial use, the land was destined to be developed as just another commercial retail plaza, something that Merrimack's Town Center District did not need.

Town resident and local philanthropist Harold Watson, however, has the visionary foresight to purchase this property on behalf of the town and over the past 3 years, has shown great patience as town officials navigated the legal complexities associated with assuming ownership of a formerly environmentally contaminated site.

Fortunately, the town leaders brought successful closure to these legal issues and on September 30, 2005, Mr. Watson's bequest was publicly accepted on behalf of the town by the Board of Selectmen.

This parcel looks to be the catalyst for the creation of a town center, make the center a destination point for business and recreation as well as downtown living.

Unlike most New Hampshire municipalities, the Town of Merrimack evolved through the social and economic linkages of four distinct Villages – Reed's Ferry, Souhegan Village, Thornton's Ferry, and South Merrimack – and not around a central town common or center. As a result, the town has historically lacked the identifiable center that neighbors Nashua, Hudson, Amherst, Hollis, and Milford enjoy. Having had no historic "Town Center" per se, the town continues to suffer from a lack of "identity". Having a centrally located park with an outdoor meeting place, such as a gazebo or hatch shell, could help to give the town such an identity.



The Listening Sessions

During the public sessions, residents identified specific issues, and desires for the Watson Property as well as a Town Center

Positive Aspects of Merrimack:

- Cooperative Town Government
- Citizens grateful for land donation
- Citizens are enthusiastic about the project and want to participate in the planning process
- Citizens willing to donate time and resources as sweat equity to make project happen
- Abutting property owners willing to participate in the process
- The river represents a wonderful resource to bring enhancement to the town center

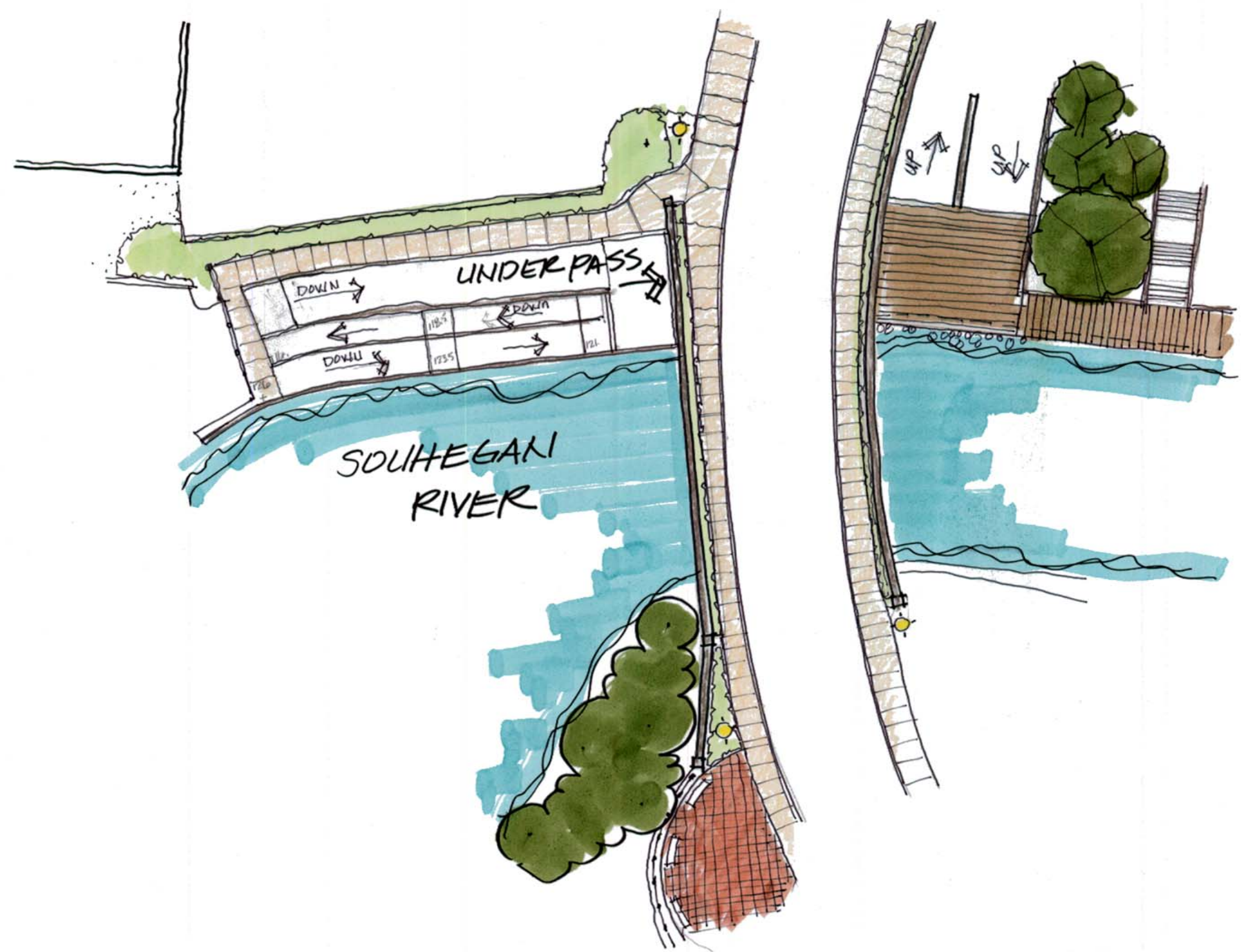
Obstacles & Problem Issues:

- Flooding of area
- Sidewalks not wide enough and lack beatification
- Take fence down now
- Safety of embankments
- Curfews and security
- Soil and ground water contamination issues
- Traffic patterns
- No sidewalks
- Taxpayer burden to implement design
- Easements to connect parcels of land

Community Vision/Goals/Opportunities:

- Dog Park
- Informal open area for sport and recreation
- Kiosk for historical Mill History
- Outdoor dining and other retail shops
- Extend the Heritage Trail along the river
- Drinking fountains
- Involve Community in the planning process
- Incorporate an educational component in the design
- Move the existing bandstand to the new park
- Consideration of flood plain and high water table in design
- Signage to include historical aspects of the area
- Planning should include a commuter train component that will be coming
- Build a new performing arts center and outdoor Amphitheater
- Incorporate sculptures in the park
- A walkway from the west side of DW Highway
- Plantings and trees as enhancements to the Chamberlain Bridge
- Encourage corporate and neighbor participation
- Traffic transition for town center along DW Highway
- Skating rink/ Roller skating
- Do Not commercialize the Park
- River access for fishing, boating, and canoeing
- Gathering area to set up parade days
- Community Garden
- Remove dam and create a kayak course
- Biking Trails
- Separate area for younger children
- Bike shop near trails
- Walking trails including along the river
- Benches, picnic tables, and barbeque area
- Determine a time of operation, policies a security
- Incorporate the bridge, dam and millpond in the design
- Provide adequate parking and access
- Utilize Master plan suggestions in the design of the park
- New location for library
- Pedestrian bridges where needed
- Open space for farmers market
- Quiet area to sit and read with flower gardens or a Japanese garden for meditation
- Plan work to be done in stages
- New location for district court
- Create interesting lighting options
- Handicap accessibility to all areas
- Horseshoe pit
- Connect kids cove to the ballfields to the new park
- Bricks for perimeter of park as a fundraiser
- Swimming hole near little beach





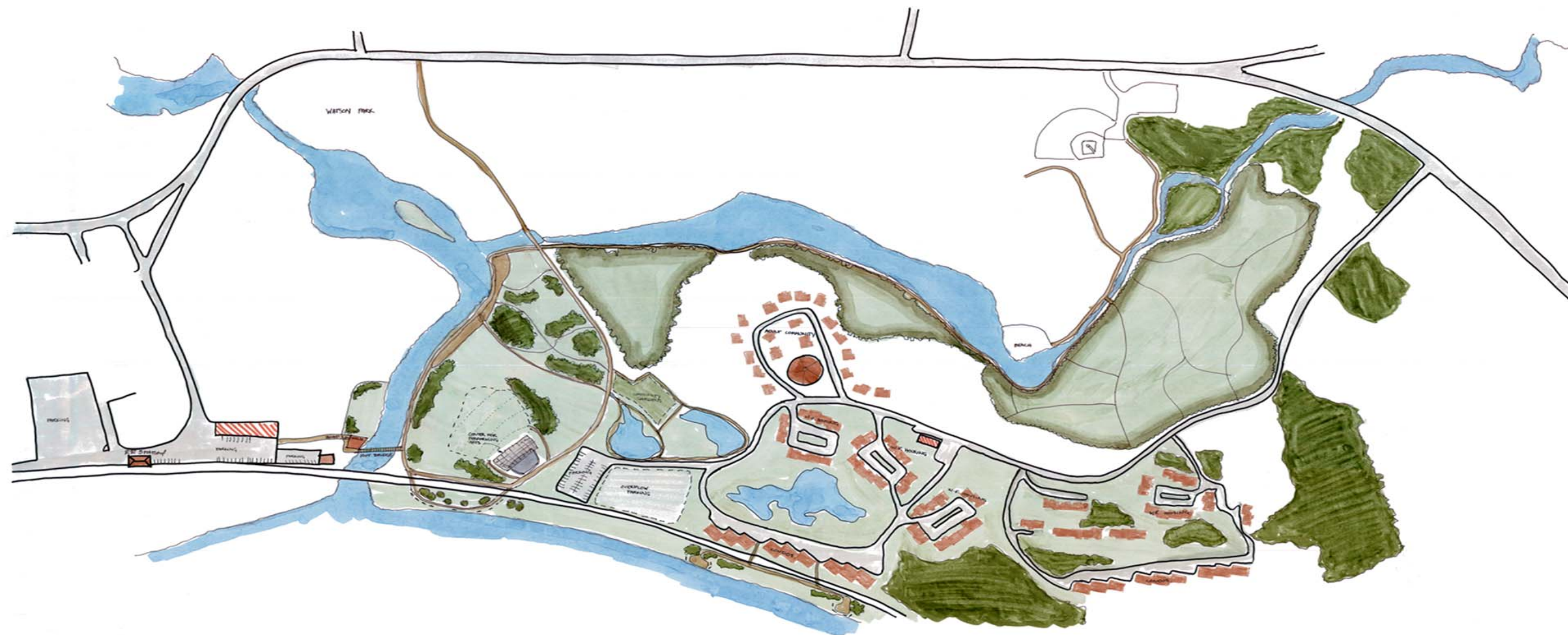
Charrette Team Proposals and Recommendations

We have heard the opinions and the input from the residents. We have walked the area and have seen the conditions with which we must deal. Now, we are prepared to present our findings and recommendations to the citizens of Merrimack.

Riverfront Development: In preparation of the revitalized commuter train plan, the historical train station should be brought back to life in anticipation of a busy, heavily used train service. Adjacent to the depot, parking can be accommodated by using the present school bus parking area and move the buses to a location near the high school. Other development amenities that will also utilize this parking area include a boat launch, and an adjacent riverside green space to be used for quite sitting areas. A foot bridge will be constructed to connect the larger main park area that includes a performing arts pavilion and an open amphitheater. Biking and foot trails will be built that will weave around the park area that would also connect the present Heritage Trail. Additional parking is created to the north of the arts center accessed from the new north connector roadway. A low impact traditional housing neighborhood is proposed on the Longa property to the north of the arts center. Approximately 100 housing units are proposed with mainly workforce housing and high end units directly along the Merrimack River. There are an additional 22 acres that could also be used for the

housing neighborhood that was not incorporated in this plan. Two different road access points from DW Highway will be the main entrances into new development. A proposed pavilion is planned for the housing owners to utilize. The traditional neighborhood concept promotes open spaces, a pedestrian friendly space, as well as locations for such amenities as a convenience store. The present and future trail system in the proposed developed area will interconnect all the points of interest such as the ballfields, and the beach along the river. A green space will act as a buffer to the existing residential housing along DW Highway.





Creating the Town Center: Creating a town center starts with changing the landscape of Daniel Webster Highway. The change will take place



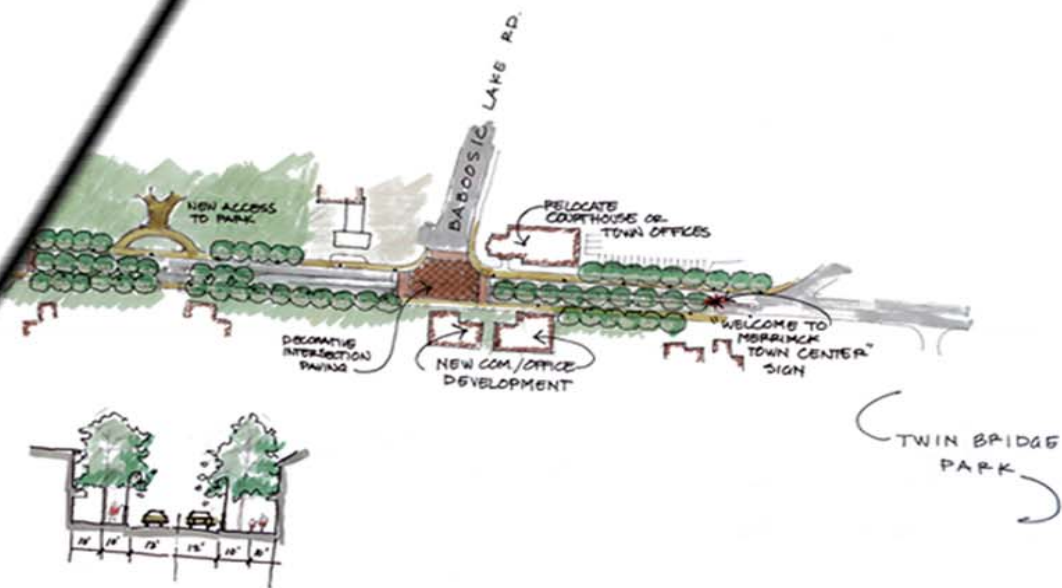
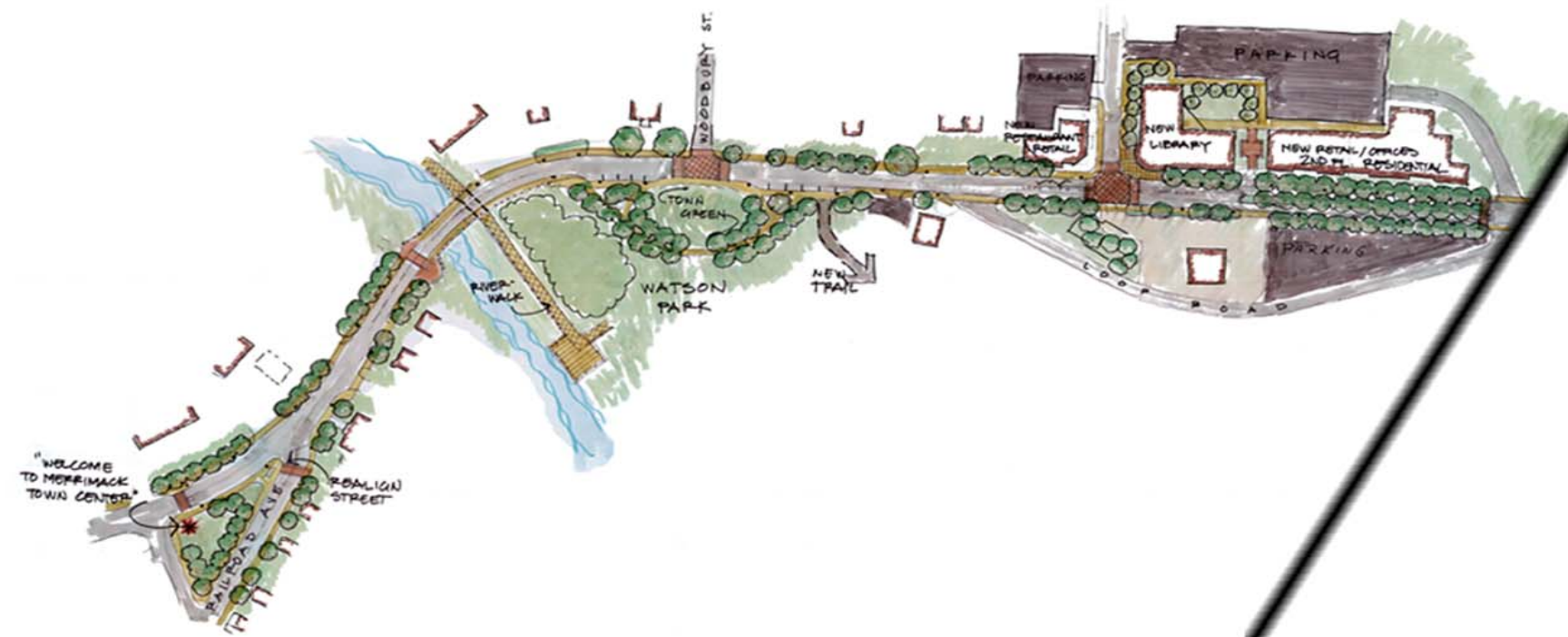
between Railroad Avenue and Wire Road. An identity will be creating by adding sidewalks, narrowing the travel lanes, adding lighting, signage, and landscaping all in an effort to tell the driver that they are entering the town center. These changes will effectively create a pedestrian friendly, inviting streetscape that will encourage people to stop and enjoy the activities that are created as a result of this effort. Accessibility to walking and resting areas will be created by this redevelopment. The library is proposed to be relocated to the present Cornell Shopping center along with future retail/office building/restaurant uses. The town offices could move to the present library building while the district court would take over the present town hall. The Lobster Boat will be able to clean up it's site and expand. Other existing buildings along the new corridor should be renovated or re-

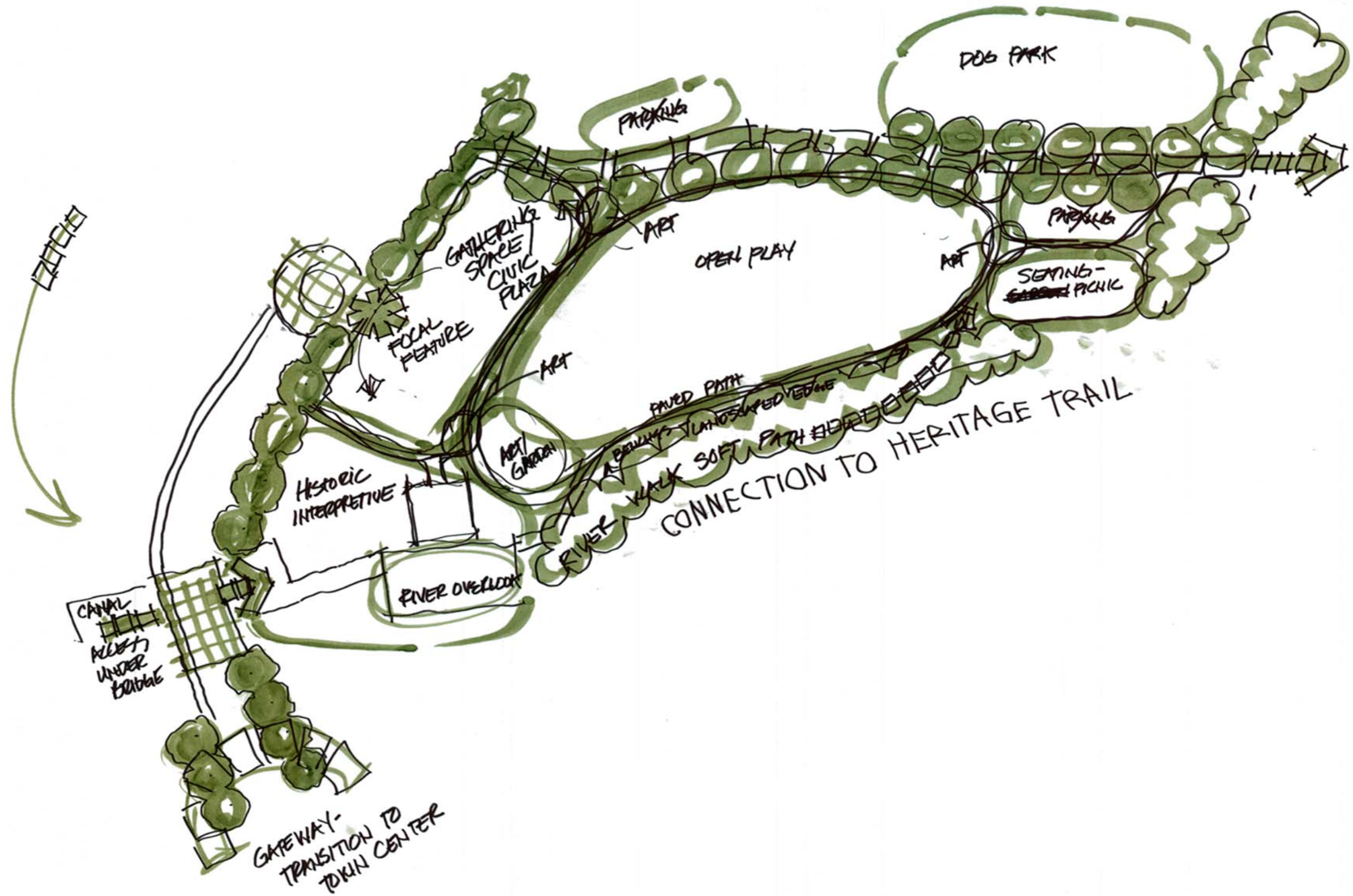
moved in an effort to have a contiguous complimentary look along the entire town center area. Connectivity gateways from DW Highway to the Merrimack river will be created with the new development. Gateways or icons will be strategically placed along the corridor in order to promote traffic



calming. These elements include center raised medians, decorative paving and planting of trees. The site of the used car lot is an important piece in the development scheme.







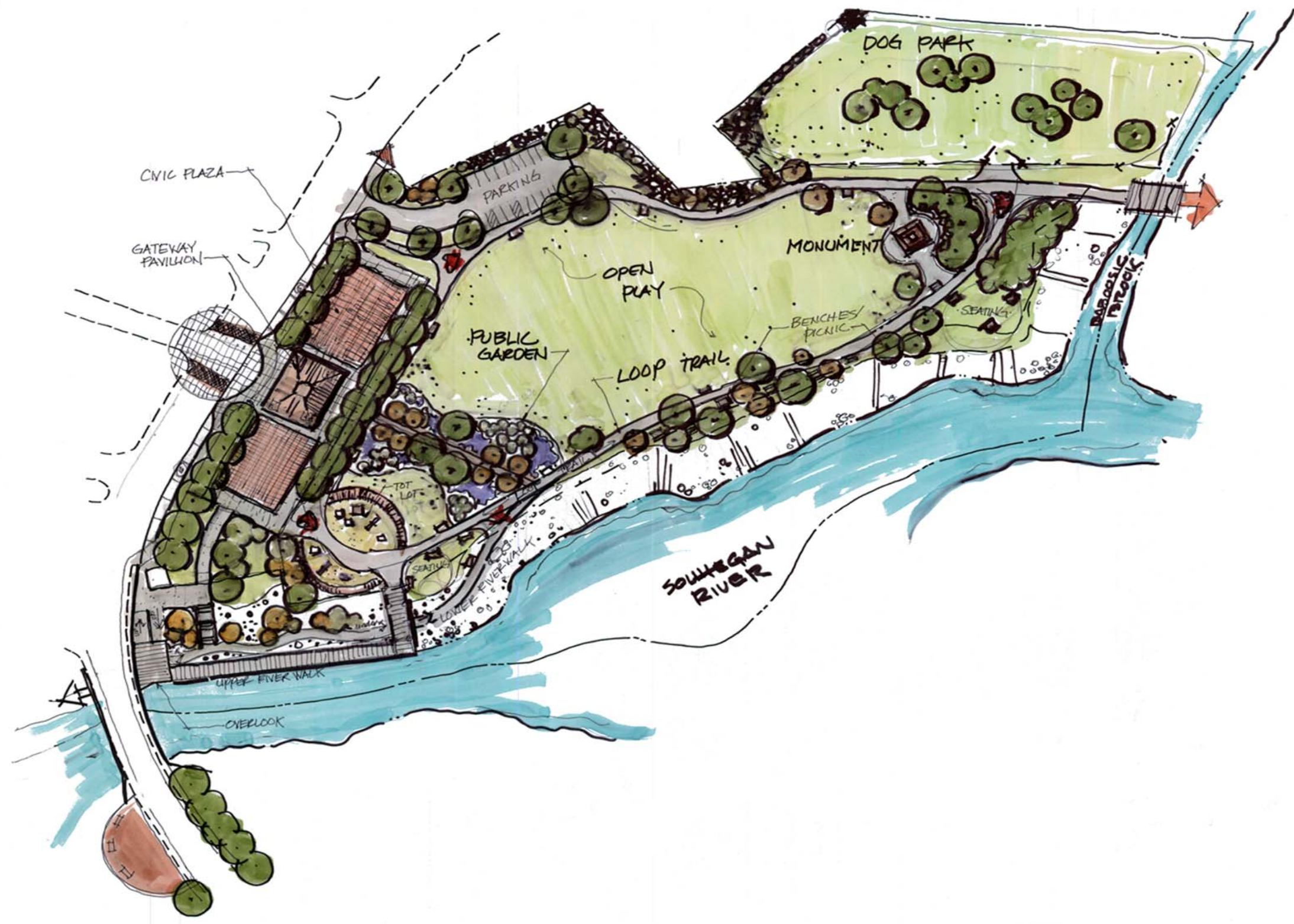
Watson Park: The newly created Watson Park should be the focal point of the town center. It is important and critical for historical preservation as well as educational reasons to place along and in the park signs that instruct and teach. The park should create connections to all of the proposed rede-



velopment of the town center with the park relating directly to the street with good lighting and pedestrian friendly areas. The entrance into the park should be a Signature Gateway that will invite people to enjoy the amenities such as a brick surface. Parking along the street will be another way to calm traffic and allow access to the bridge. The trails in the park should be paved to accommodate handicap accessibility.

Emergency vehicle traffic is needed through the park. Icons within the park should include art sculptures, and monuments to be focal points. Other points of interest include public gardens, picnic areas, seats at the river edge, trail connections and riverwalk connections that connect each side of the highway under the archway bridge. Creation of an overlook is on the east side of the bridge.





Description	Quantity	Unit Cost	Extension
Riverfront Development			
Housing			
18 high end units 2000SF/ea.	36000SF	\$160	\$5,760,000
19 single family, 2400SF/ea.	45600 SF	\$110	\$5,016,000
60 multi-family, 1500SF/ea.	90000SF	\$90	\$8,100,000
Site work	16 acres	\$75,000	\$1,200,000
New Streets 5	200 LF	\$200	\$1,040,000
New Bridges	675 LF	\$600	\$405,000
Foot Bridge	625 LF	\$400	\$250,000
			\$21,771,000
Community/Retail			
Arts Pavilion	25000SF	\$128	\$3,200,000
Outdoor Amphitheater	1 LS	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Train Station remodel	1 LS	\$200,000	\$200,000
Retail	15000 SF	\$150	\$2,250,000
Parking	325 Space	\$300	<u>\$97,500</u>
			\$6,747,500
Town Center Street Work			
Sidewalks/roadwork	8000 LF	\$300	\$2,400,000
Street Lighting	110 Each	\$2,200	\$242,000
Overlook Deck	500 LF	\$600	\$300,000
Underground Utilities	4000 LF	\$35	\$140,000
Signage	1 LS	\$100,000	\$100,000
Landscaping	4000 LF	\$200	<u>\$800,000</u>
			\$3,982,000
Connell Shopping Center Redevelopment			
Demolition	1 LS	\$150,000	\$150,000
Retail/Residential	33000SF	\$150	\$4,950,000
New Library	32000SF	\$282	\$9,024,000
Restaurant/Retail	5000 SF	\$180	\$900,000
Parking	180 Space	\$300	<u>\$54,000</u>
			\$15,078,000
Civic Building Transformation			
Exiting Library Becomes New Town Hall	14000 SF	\$100	\$1,400,000
Existing Town Hall Becomes New District Court House	12000 SF	\$170	<u>\$2,040,000</u>
			\$3,440,000



Description	Quantity		Unit Cost	Extension
<u>Watson Park</u>				
Riverwalk	1	LS	\$350,000	\$350,000
Under bridge Walk	1	LS	\$250,000	\$250,000
Bituminous Walkway	1800	LF	\$170	\$306,000
Brick Plazas	20000	SF	\$25	\$500,000
Dog Park	1	LS	\$20,000	\$20,000
Green Space Improvements	1	LS	\$150,000	\$150,000
Bridge Planters	1	LS	\$20,000	\$20,000
Lighting	1	LS	\$75,000	\$75,000
Memorial	1	LS	\$50,000	\$50,000
Gateway Pavilion	1	LS	\$375,000	<u>\$375,000</u>
				\$2,096,000



Funding Sources & Organizational Information

NH Main Street program: www.nhcdfa.org/mainstreet.html

Wal-Mart Good Works Program, Wal-Mart Foundation: www.walmartfoundation.org

The Home Depot: Community Impact Grants

PSNH: www.psnh.com/community/support/applyfor_funding.asp

TEA Money for Highway and Streetscape work

Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) administered through NHDOT

Public/Private Partnerships



Special Thanks to Plan NH's Corporate Sponsors

