

Canaan, New Hampshire Design Charrette

October 27 & 28, 2000



The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment

CREDITS

*Many thanks to these professionals
for the donation of their personal time
and energy:*

Patricia Sherman F.A.I.A.
Architect
Sherman Greiner Halle, Ltd.
2 Capital Plaza
Concord, NH 03301-4911
603-225-0640
pacs@sghltd.com
www.sghltd.com

Thomas N. Emery, R.L.A.
Landscape Architect Manager
Land Use Consultants, Inc.
966 Riverside Street
Portland, ME 04103
207-878-3313
landuse@gwi.net

Scott N. Collard, R.L.A.
Senior Landscape Architect
Land Use Consultants, Inc.
966 Riverside Street
Portland, ME 04103
207-878-3313
landuse@gwi.net

Michael P. Duffy, P.E.
Regional Manager
Provan & Lorber, Inc.
Routes 4 & 118
P.O. Box 416
Canaan, NH 03741-0416
603-523-4114
mduffy@provan-lorber.com
www.provan-lorber.com

Erin Darrow, E.I.T.
TEPP, LLC
261 Sheep Davis Road, Suite D
Concord, NH 03301
603-226-4013
emd@teppllc.com
www.teppllc.com

Benjamin D. Frost
Executive Director
Upper Valley Lake Sunapee
Regional Planning Commission
77 Bank Street
Lebanon, NH 03766
603-448-1680
bfrost@uvlsrpc.org
www.uvlsrpc.org

*. . . and thanks to the Canaan Planning Board and
Board of Selectmen, and to the citizens of Canaan for
their enthusiastic participation.*

Canaan residents, Help plan your downtown!

**Friday, October 27 & Saturday, October 28
Mascoma Senior Center
Fun! Refreshments! Results!**

Canaan residents—gather to think & talk about your downtown.
Get involved. Your ideas for future improvements are needed.

Please, take part in your Downtown Planning Workshop!

Schedule:

Friday, October, 27

Walk about the Village: 3:15 - 5:00 p.m.

Brainstorming & Listening Session: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
(Define the Town Center. What do we value? What do we need?)
Refreshments served.

Saturday, October, 28

Planning Session with Professionals: Noon - 1:30 p.m.
(Work with architects, planners, landscape architects & engineers)
Lunch provided.

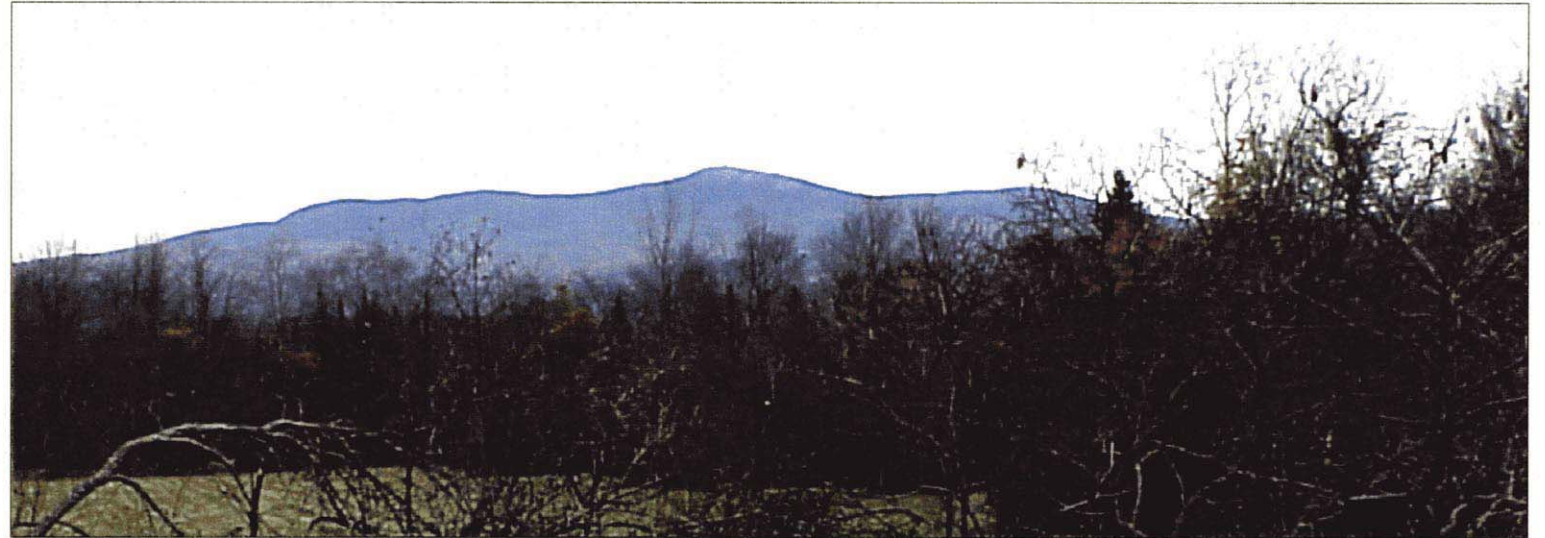
Presentation of Sketches & Plans: 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
(Realistic, practical, and do-able for your downtown.)

In March 2000, Canaan voters set aside \$3000 for this workshop.
In August 2000, PLAN NH, a team of professionals who work with the
built environment, chose to assist Canaan with its downtown planning.

**Come to any and all planning sessions.
Call 523-4501 for information.**

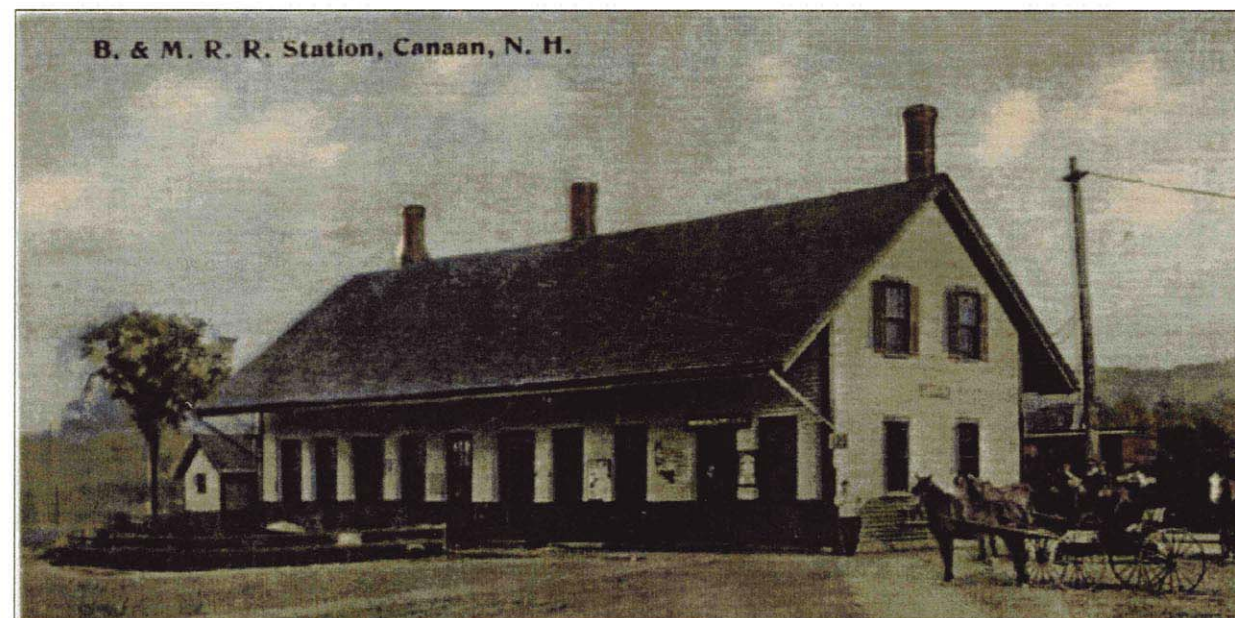
Report prepared by the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission

Canaan, New Hampshire



Design Charrette

October 27 & 28, 2000



Sponsored by
The Town of Canaan and

PLAN NH

The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment

Canaan, New Hampshire Design Charrette

October 27&28, 2000

Who is Plan NH?

Plan NH is a professional association for those working in the *built environment* (architects, planners, engineers, bankers, contractors, historic preservationists, etc.). It was established to create a forum for bringing together these different professional groups, and as a catalyst for spurring interest in community design and development. Part of Plan NH's mission is to make a contribution to New Hampshire communities. One way in which Plan NH does 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 showing the actual details of how a particular building would be constructed.

At their best, charrettes blend the broad experience of design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action to deal with an issue of local concern. The charrette provides an overall framework within which final solutions can be developed. It sets a tone and gives a direction to guide future decisions.

How did the Plan NH Charrette come to Canaan?

Each year, Plan NH invites communities to submit proposals in a competition for a weekend of donated design services to be used in solving a problem of local interest. Plan NH looks for projects that are important to the host community, projects that present an interesting design problem, and projects which seem to have a high probability of being implemented. A community that is organized and has done some early work on a project scores well. Early in 2000, the Canaan Planning Board submitted a proposal for design assistance to Plan NH. It was one of a few selected this year from the dozens of proposals that were submitted.

CHAR • RETTE (she ret'), *n.* a final, intensive effort to finish a product, esp. an architectural design project, before a deadline. [< F: cart, OF, equiv. to *char* chariot, wagon + -ette, from the idea of speed of wheels]

The Proposal

In its proposal to Plan NH, the Canaan Planning Board wrote: "Canaan needs a redevelopment plan for the busy intersection in the center of its small downtown with attention to improving safety and attractiveness of pedestrian ways, street and off-street parking, streetscape improvements, re-use of some of its older buildings (now under-utilized), and approaches to dealing with Rte 4, a heavily traveled State road which bisects the downtown. We need a fresh perspective on what is reasonable and practical to expect in redeveloping this district. Results of the project would be used to help the Planning Board and Town to improve the infrastructure as well as to engage appropriate development, businesses, and funding sources."

The Process

A typical design team brings together a group of professionals who have experience and training in the areas that seem appropriate for the type of problem that the host community has identified. In Canaan's case the team included architects, planners, engineers, and landscape architects.

Although the professional expertise of this group was extensive, as the team explained to the Canaan residents, it was also lacking in one important area: the team didn't know Canaan, and couldn't hope to know Canaan in the way that local citizens do. That knowledge of the local community is critical to making the charrette work. So the team and the residents joined forces, with the design team asking the experts from Canaan to talk to them about the community.

Do Canaan residents have opinions about their community? Yes, they do! And do they like to share them? Yes, right again! So the team asked questions and listened. They listened a lot, during a walk-through of the downtown on Friday afternoon, and again inside the Mascoma Grange building later that evening. They listened to dozens of people tell them what they liked and disliked about their community, what they thought about the downtown area, how they envisioned these places growing and thriving, and what they thought were the key issues for future success.



What the Design Team Heard



Canaan was described by its residents as a “real town,” where you can hear lumber trucks rumbling through town and cows lowing, and where you can always live within sight of a church. The constant presence of Mount Cardigan, as well as the Indian and Mascoma Rivers, were identified as the natural features that give Canaan its special sense of place. The residential neighborhoods around the downtown were described as peaceful and safe. Canaan was called “a community of homes,” with interesting older architecture.

The residents also identified Canaan as a “gateway village,” providing travelers from other places a point to go through on their way to another destination. This effect has recently been accentuated by ongoing commercial and industrial development in the Lebanon/Hanover area, as well as by the growth of tourism in the White Mountains. Because of the intersection of Routes 4 and 118, Canaan provides a logical travel route for many people. It was observed that the people and the traffic are present in downtown Canaan for successful economic development, but people need a reason to slow down as they pass through.

Some degree of loss was expressed, and is shown by empty businesses, forcing residents to travel considerable distances to most shopping and employment opportunities. It was observed that the industry that once thrived in Canaan was also made obsolete by improvements to the highway system, which permitted people to travel farther



distances to more concentrated areas of employment, such as Lebanon. These dual influences have caused a loss of intimacy in the community, and ironically created a sense of isolation, as people increasingly drive out of town headed for various destinations, without passing through the Canaan's center.

Loss was also expressed over the lack of cultural resources and gathering places in the community. It was noted that at one time, there was a movie theater, a pharmacy, and roller skating—each quite different, but each also providing a social outlet for Canaan's families. While people appreciate the surrounding wilderness for its beauty and serenity, they also repeatedly expressed a strong desire to have an intergenerational community center in the downtown, to provide residents with a reason for stopping in the center of Town instead of just passing through.

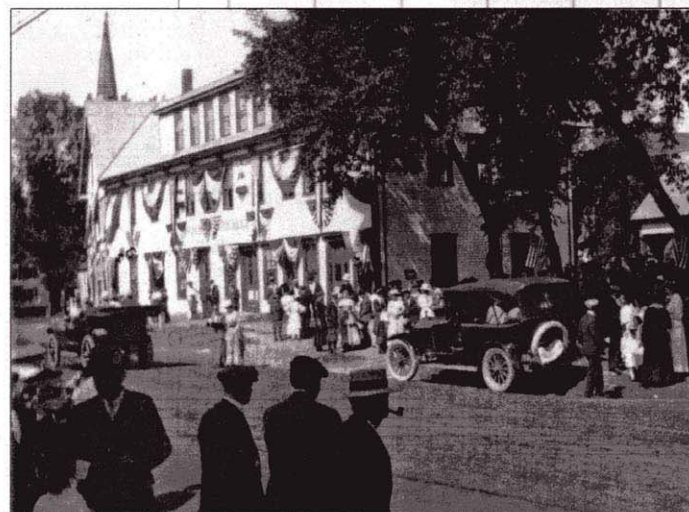
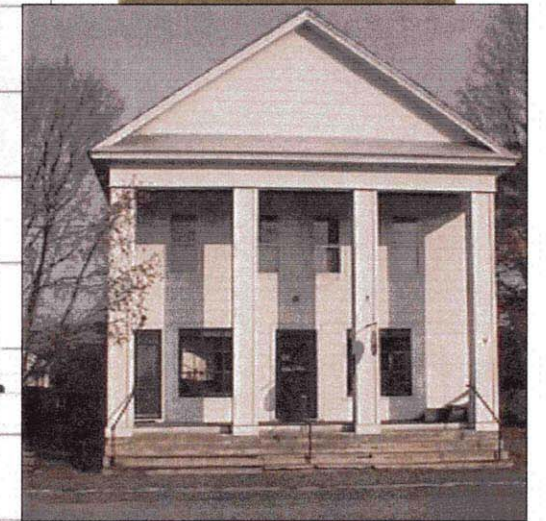
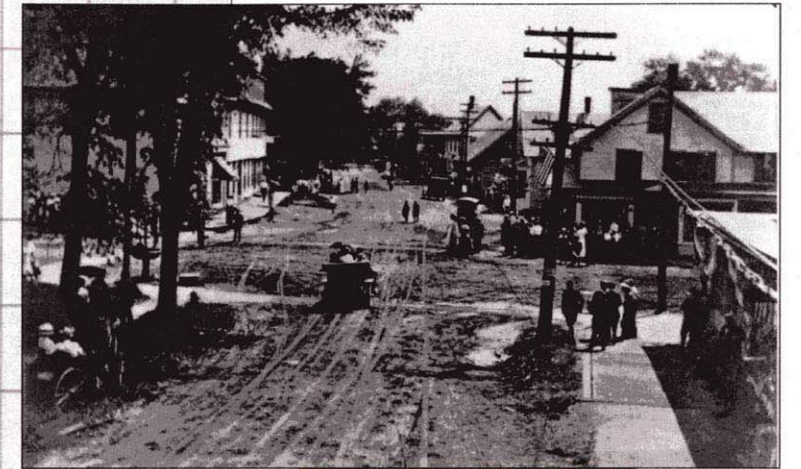
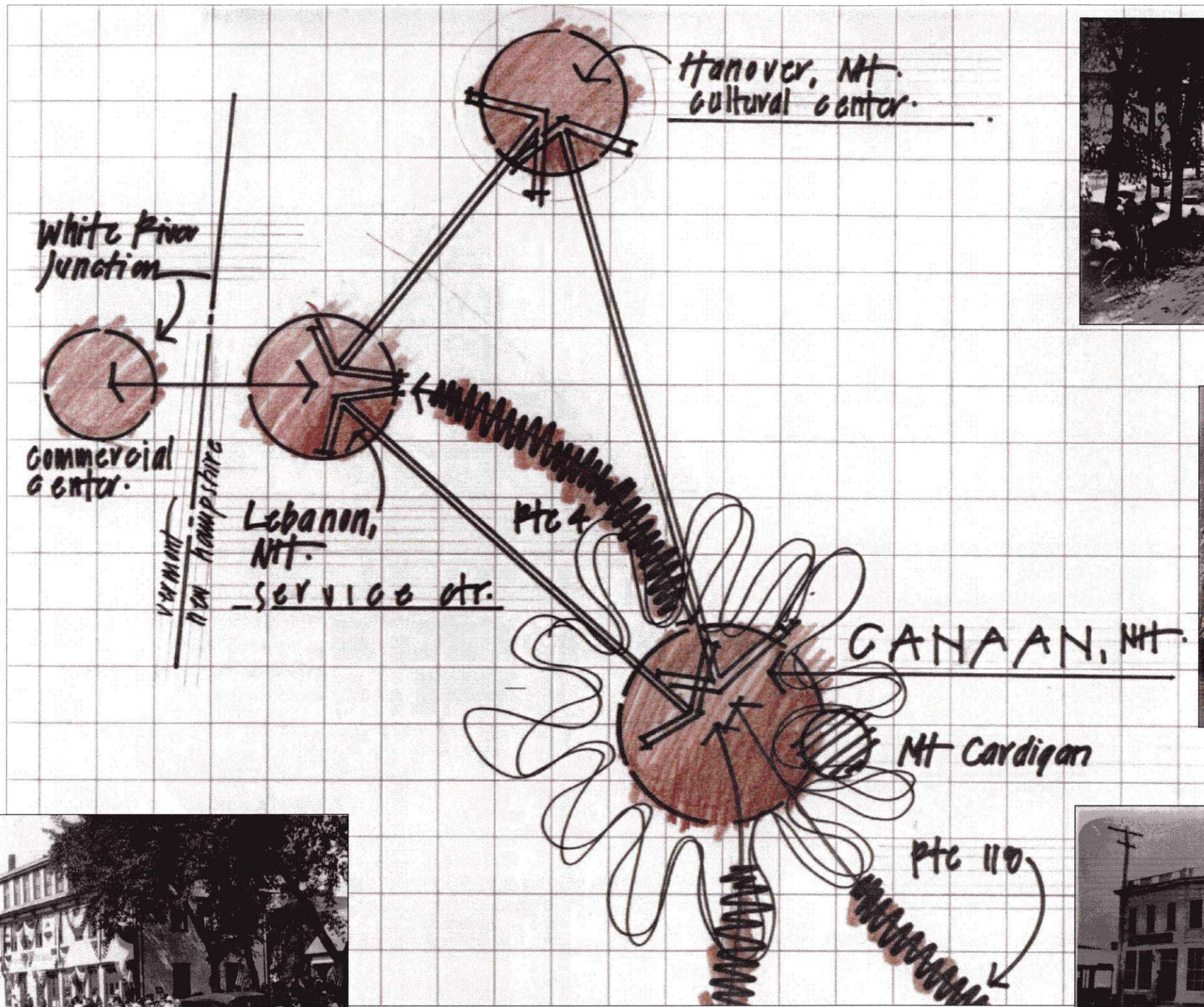
Canaan's Influences

Despite present-day references to historic structures, much of what is seen in Canaan is comparatively new. A great fire in 1923 destroyed the entire downtown area. This loss was rapidly overcome by a concerted local effort to rebuild civic structures, including the Community Building, the Grange, and the Old Post Office, as well as retail establishments and residences. It is these structures that form the foundation of the current downtown of Canaan. The downtown is generally divided by Route 4 into a residential area on the north side, and a commercial area to the south. While the highway formerly united these functionally different spaces, now it divides them—because of the volume and speed of traffic, because of the lack of pedestrian amenities, and because of the sheer width of the pavement.



Fire—Canaan, N. H.—1923

Canaan is at the center of the economic influences of Lebanon/Hanover, Concord, and to a lesser degree, Plymouth, and its residents are simultaneously pulled in all those directions. There is little likelihood that these influences will lessen, given those areas' ongoing economic expansion, such as the proposed major expansion of the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon. While these influences represent in part a drain on Canaan's economy by hindering some types of local economic development, they also represent employment for many residents, permitting them to continue living in town long after local employment opportunities disappeared. By the same token, though, these influences force residents to travel considerable distances for many services and shopping.



Mapping Canaan's Influences

The Design Team Gets to Work!

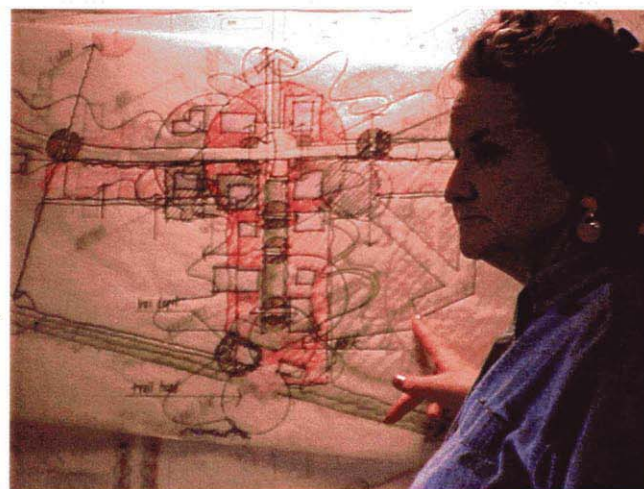
On Saturday morning, the Plan NH design team gathered to start working through the ideas for Canaan raised the night before. Central to these were the need for a combination of interlinked spaces for residences, civic and economic uses, recreation, and nature. These ideas were expressed in the need for a community center, for renewed economic vitality, for a “pedestrian friendly” environment, and for a beautiful town center. Specific considerations include reducing pavement widths, creating or improving sidewalks, reducing the visual intrusion of utilities, improving traffic flow, and creating appealing streetscapes.



After a few hours of brainstorming and sketching, the design team discussed its preliminary findings:

- ♦ *Transportation*—the impact of Route 4 is felt throughout the downtown, yet there is another axis of traffic that must be acknowledged (Depot Street).
- ♦ *Pedestrian movement*—this is all about destinations. Route 4 divides the complementary halves of the downtown into residential (north) and commercial (south)—there needs to be a connection between them.
- ♦ *Green space*—there should no distinct line between where the green space ends and the community begins—it should be a seamless transition.

With these observations in mind, the design team presented its preliminary concept: a polar shift—that is, *changing the orientation of economic activity in the downtown from Route 4 to Depot Street*. This would help to reduce the pedestrian/automobile conflicts presently experienced on Route 4, it would provide a defined area for economic activity—in short, it would return to Canaan what time and traffic have taken away.



Specific ideas that were discussed included the following:

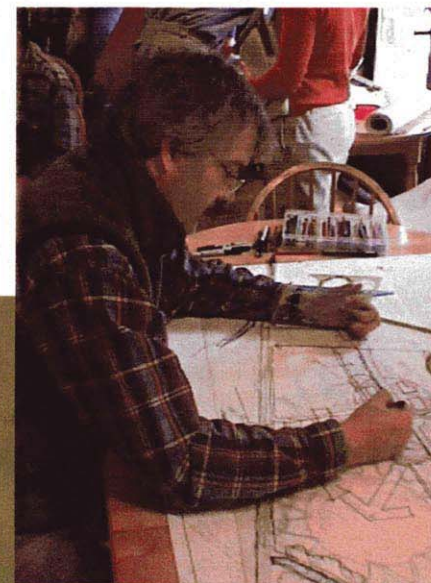
Community Center: expand the Grange Building and connect with parking to the rear to associate it with a bus depot on Depot Street; or find an alternative location eastward on Rte 4.

Gas station: move the gas station from its present location to the southwest corner of Route 4/Depot Street, and build the new station close to the road, with pumps in the rear. This would imitate the relative locations of buildings on the other three corners of the intersection.

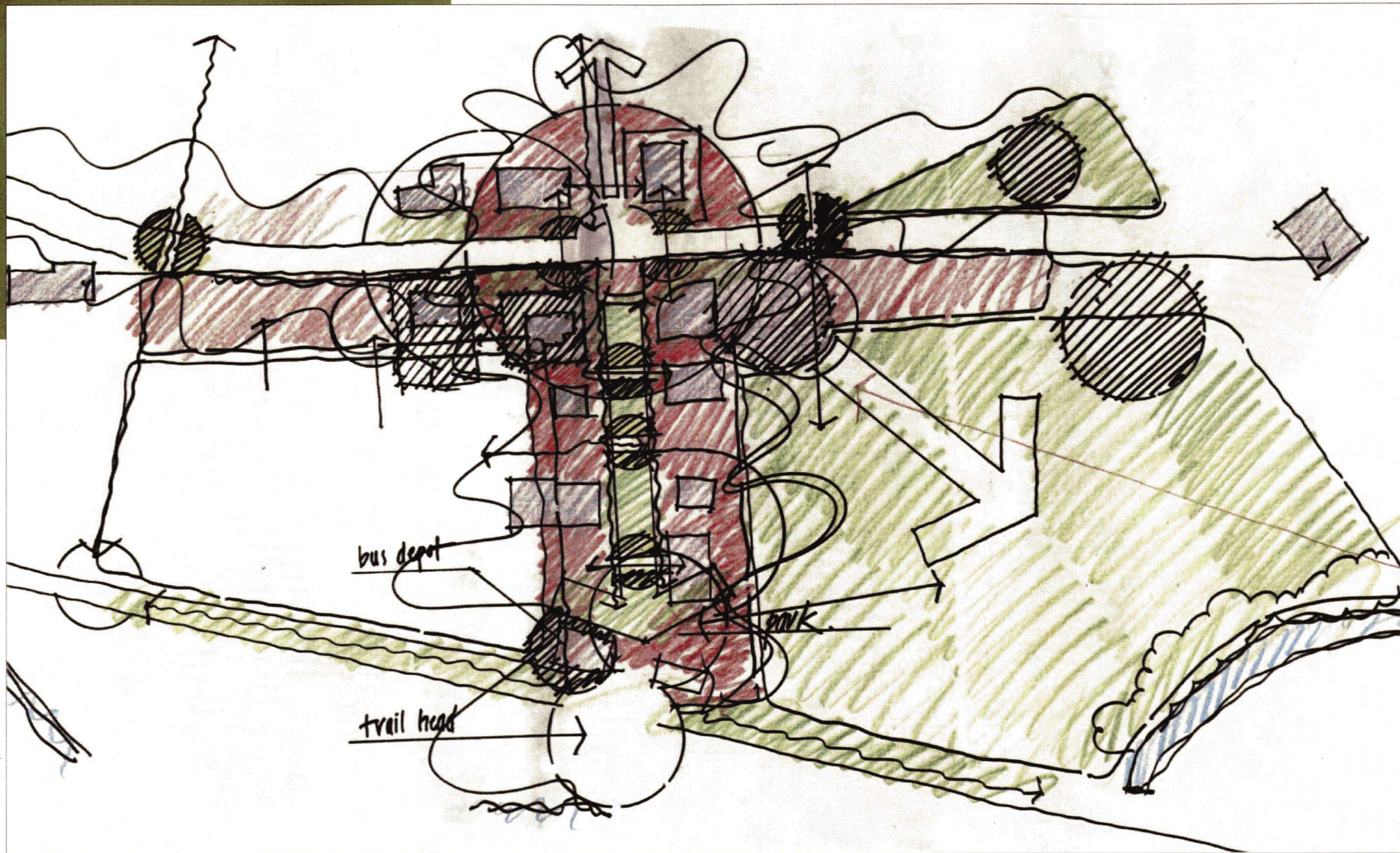
Depot Street: keep it open for traffic, but make it pedestrian friendly by providing crosswalks, wide sidewalks with curbs, ample landscaping, and reduced driveway cuts.

Landscaping and lighting: these two measures are fairly simple to undertake, yet yield significant results. Lighting could include standards to hold banners announcing different events or seasonal themes.

Traffic flow around the Common: this presented a difficult problem, because the Common represents an important pedestrian destination, yet is surrounded by fast-moving traffic. One option discussed was to re-route the traffic traveling on Route 4 so that it traveled along the east and north sides of the Common, rather than along the south sides



With this information in hand, the design team developed its final products: streetscapes, a plan to realign the intersection of Routes 4 and 118, and a conceptual master plan for the downtown area.



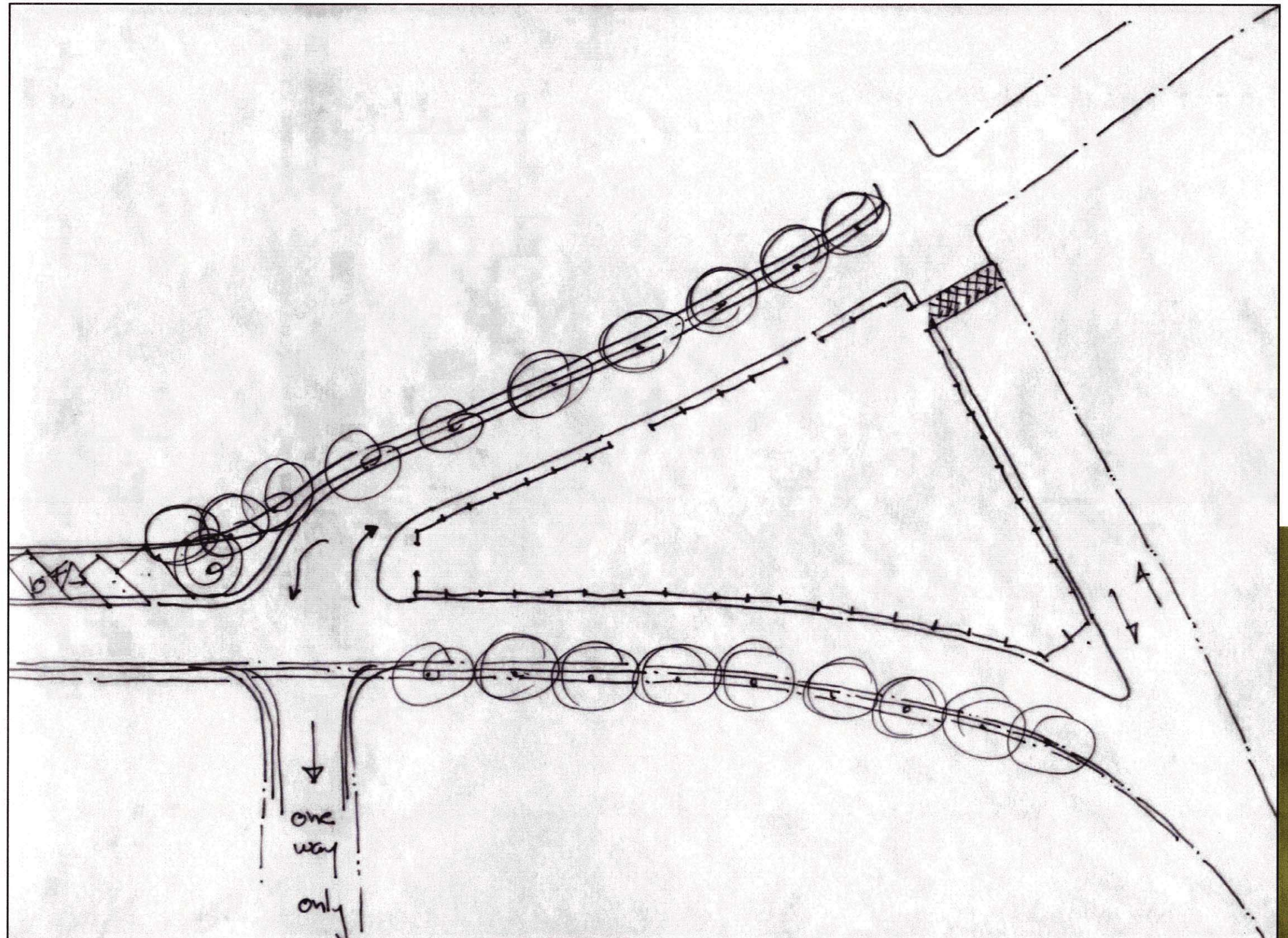
Intersection of Routes 4 & 118

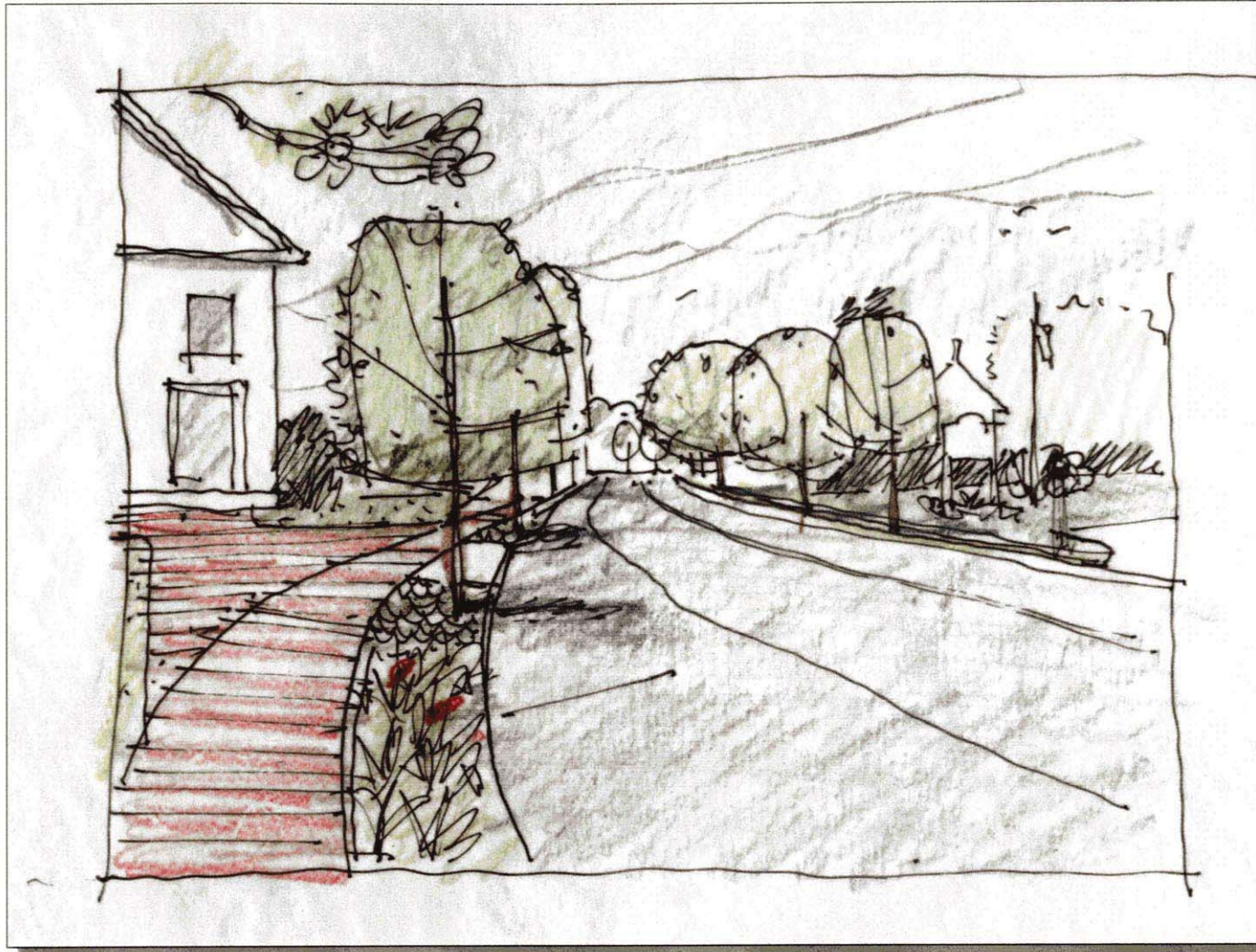
The location of the Common in the heart of the downtown traffic flow presented a unique problem, for if the Common is to retain its recreational use, there must be some effort at shielding the pedestrians from vehicular hazards.

The design alternative shown later in the Conceptual Master Plan depicts Route 4 traffic being re-routed around the north side of the Common, and the south side being devoted exclusively to local parking.

The alternative preferred by the design team, however, is shown here, with through traffic retained on all sides of the Common, accompanied by several changes to the geometry of the intersections. This design also shows a one-way entry to a parking area on the south side of Route 4, which directly accesses Williams Park.

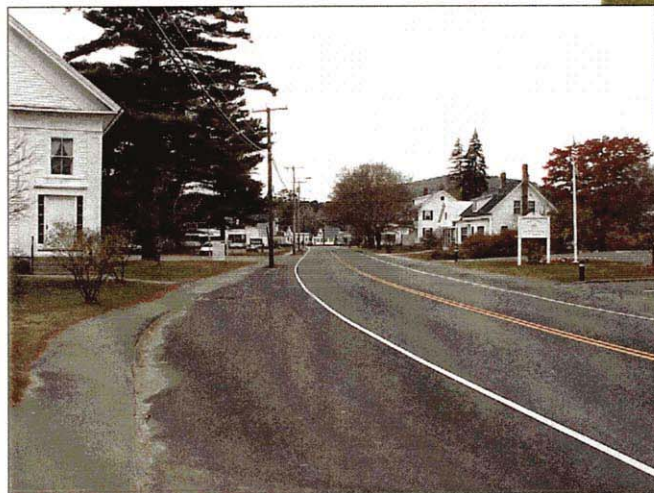
The design team recommends that the Common not be regularly used for active recreation, and that the Common assume a generally ceremonial function. Recreational uses should be focused on Williams Park, as shown later in the Conceptual Master Plan.





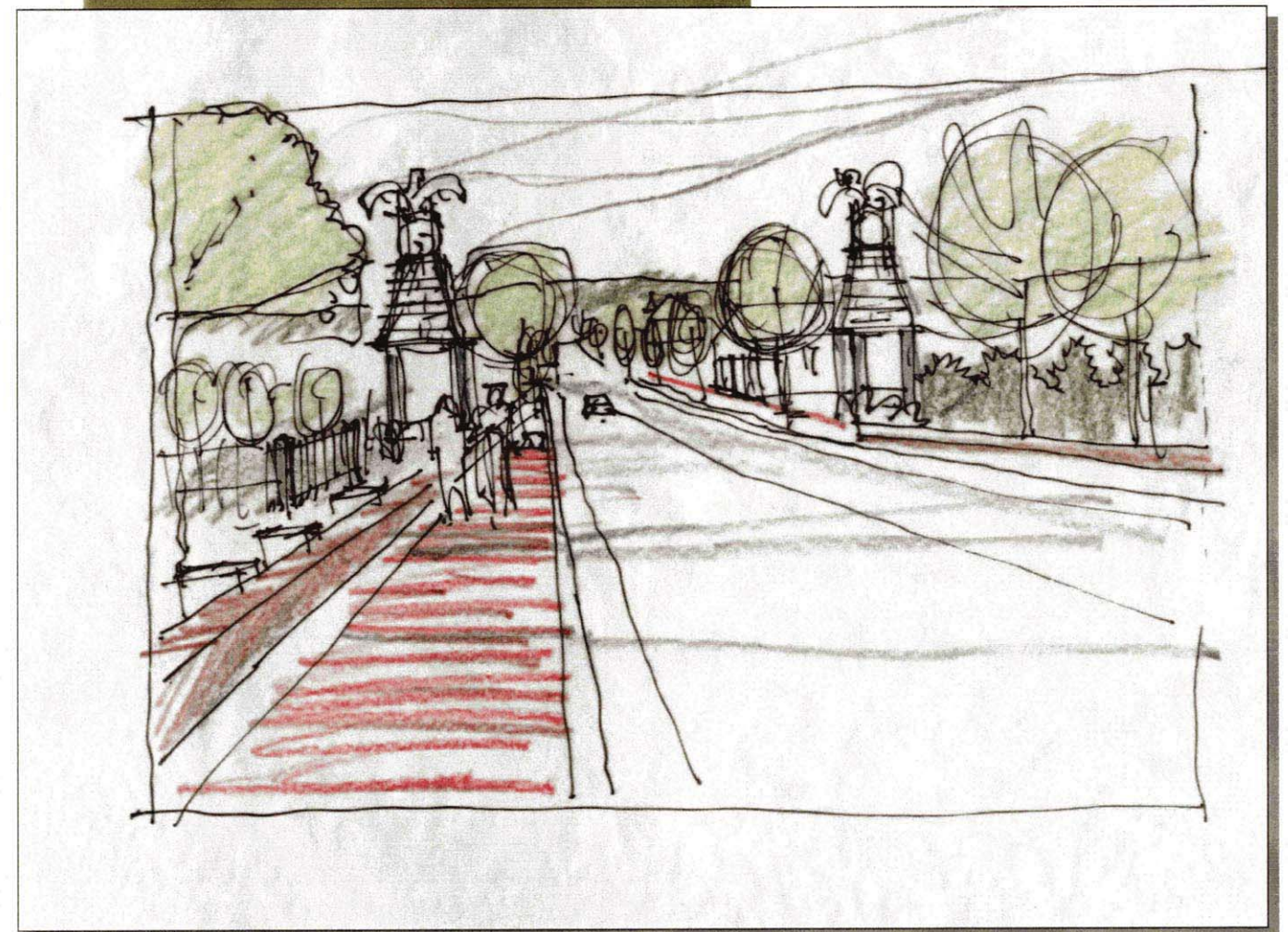
Route 4 Approaching from the East

- ♦ Accented sidewalks
- ♦ Landscaping
- ♦ A "Grand Entrance"



Route 4 Westward from Downtown

- ♦ Reduced pavement width
- ♦ Defined sidewalks
- ♦ Landscaping





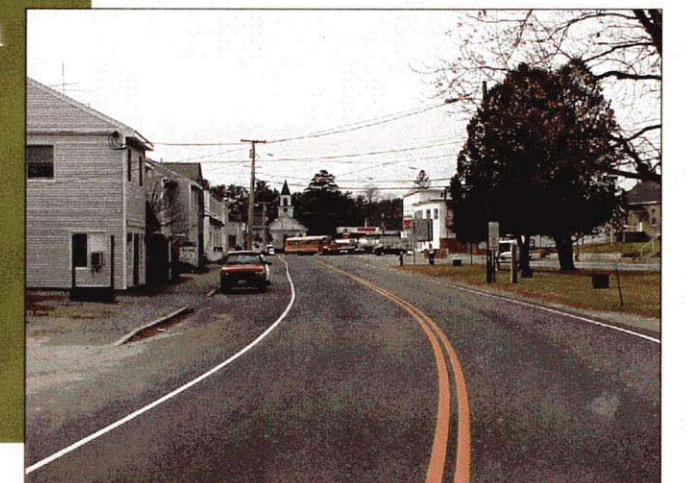
Depot Street

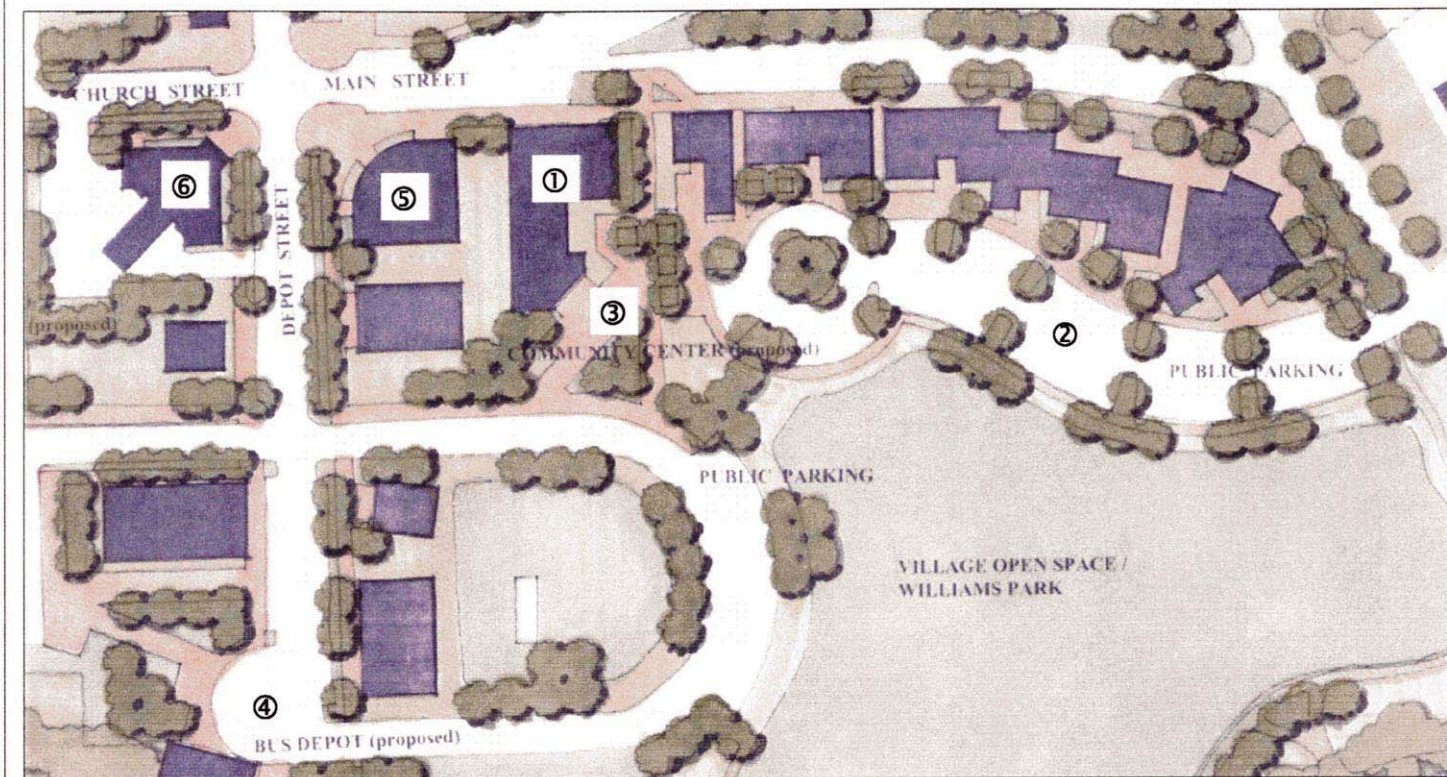
- ♦ Pedestrian environment
- ♦ Landscaping
- ♦ “Human-scale” street lighting



Route 4 on the Common

- ♦ Reduced pavement/ increased sidewalk
- ♦ Fence surrounding the Common
- ♦ Landscaping

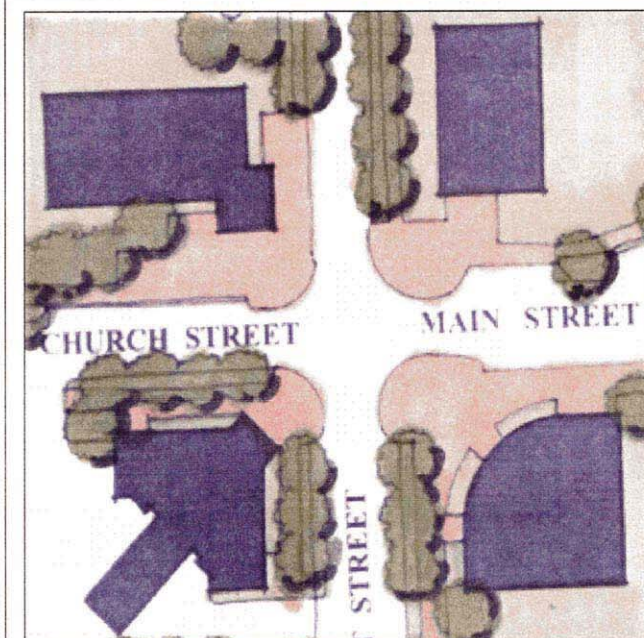




A New Community Center

While the input from the public sessions that dealt with a new community center typically concentrated on a new building, what the design team has proposed is significantly greater than that. In addition to a new community building ①, the design proposes significantly increasing vehicular ② and pedestrian ③ access to Williams Park, turning that area into a major focal point for all community activities. Also, the development of a bus terminal on Depot Street ④ would provide ongoing activity for newly-developed stores on Depot Street. As shown here, Depot Street will become the new commercial hub for downtown Canaan.

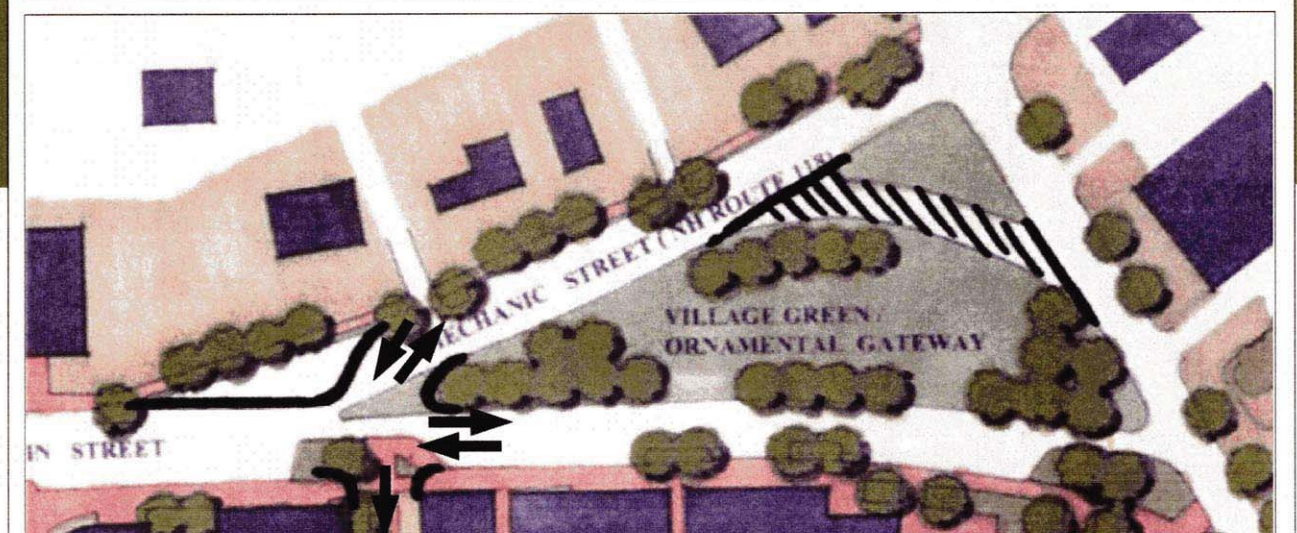
While the Town Hall and the Smith & Taplin (Remacle) Block ⑤ remain the cornerstones of the intersection of Route 4 and Depot Street, the relocation of the gas station/convenience store to the southwest corner of that intersection ⑥ would provide a great opportunity for redevelopment. As shown in this plan, an appropriate design would set out a building close to the street, consistent with the positions of other buildings at the intersection. Gas pumps could be located to the rear of the property, permitting separate vehicular access points onto Route 4 and Depot Street. The building would be compatible in scale and design with the Smith & Taplin Block.



Traffic Calming

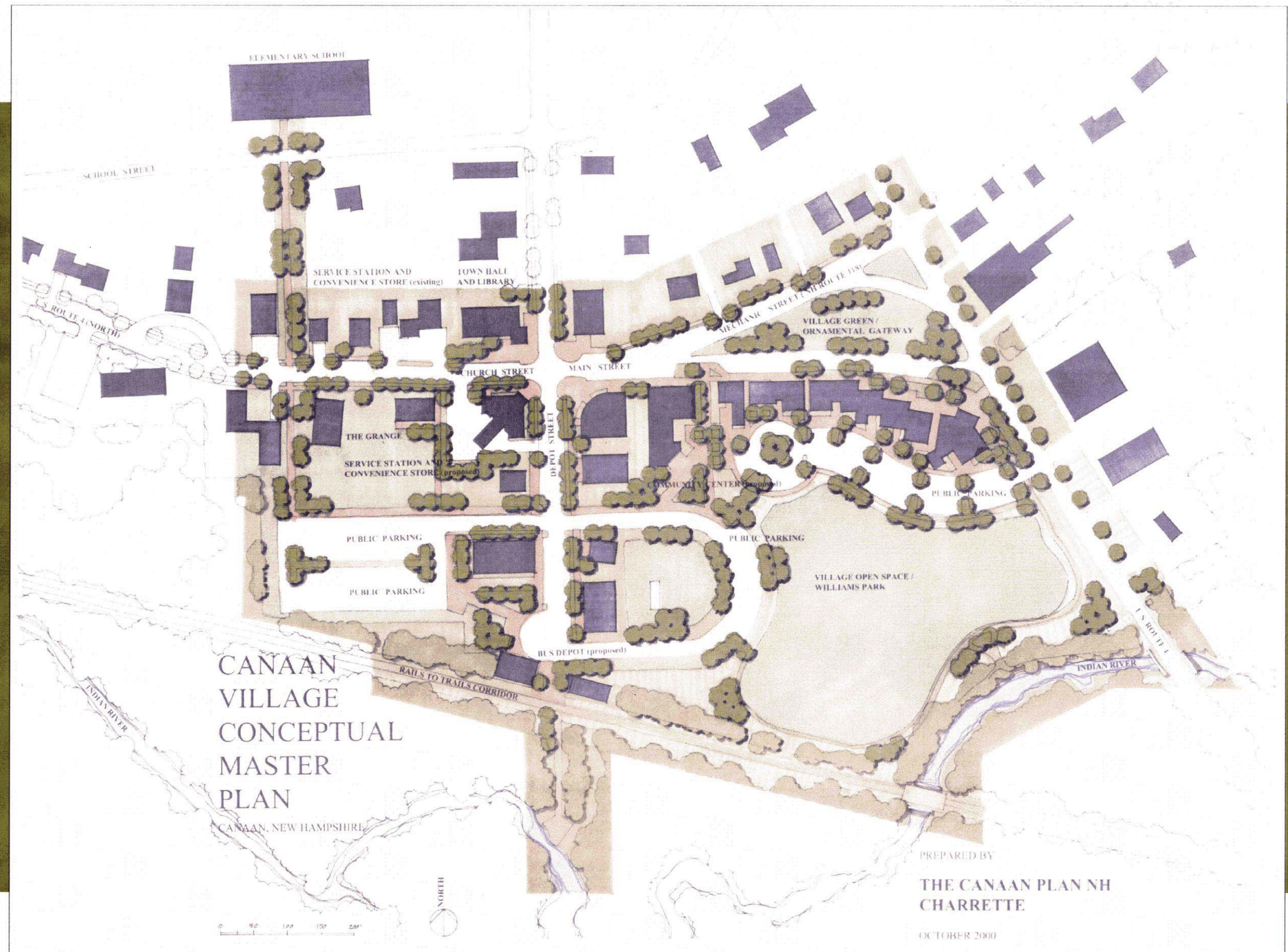
To help reduce the speed of traffic traveling through the center of town, simple traffic calming measures can be taken, such as sidewalk "bump-outs," which reduce the width of pavement, present a visual signal to drivers that they are in a busy area, and provide pedestrians with a safer crossing environment.

Sufficient pavement width is maintained to provide for safe vehicular passage, as well as easy snow-plowing. Choices of sidewalk surface materials, as well as surface materials for crosswalks, can provide additional visual cues for drivers that they should be on the lookout for pedestrians, in addition to being aesthetically appealing.



Alternative Traffic Patterns

A great variety of alternative traffic patterns were considered by the design team, but the final preferred alternative called for a few simple modifications to the geometry of the Common, including eliminating the secondary leg at the intersection of Mechanic Street and High Street, increasing the angle of the intersection of Routes 4 and 118 to approximately ninety degrees, and continue two-way through traffic on all sides of the Common.



Cost Estimates—Public Improvements

Sidewalk Streetscape Specifications

5' paved sidewalk with granite curb:	\$45/Linear Foot
4" caliper trees (50' spacing)	\$550 each
Antique-style pedestrian lighting (50' spacing)	\$6,000 each

Traffic Calming Area Specifications

Z-brick pavers in 4" sand bed	\$11/Square Foot
-------------------------------	------------------

Parking Lot Specifications

Excavate, 8" bank run gravel, 4" process gravel,	
2.5" paving	\$25/Square Yard
Lot striping	\$10/Parking Stall

Community Center

Wood Frame, slab on grade, medium grade finishes	\$60/square foot
---	------------------

Cost Estimates—Specific Areas

Depot Street, east and west sides

West side parking area:	\$40,000
East side parking area:	\$25,000
Sidewalks, trees, lighting:	\$150,000

Church Street, north and south sides

Sidewalks, trees, lighting:	\$150,000
-----------------------------	-----------

Main Street, south side

Sidewalks, trees, lighting:	\$150,000
-----------------------------	-----------

Mechanic Street, north side to Canaan Street

Sidewalks, trees, lighting:	\$100,000
-----------------------------	-----------

Williams Park

Parking and driveway:	\$30,000
-----------------------	----------

Depot Street/Main Street

Traffic Calming Measures:	\$70,000
---------------------------	----------

Mechanic Street/Main Street

Reconfigure intersection:	\$150,000
---------------------------	-----------

Mechanic Street/High Street

Reconfigure intersection:	\$100,000
---------------------------	-----------

New Community Center

Phase 1 (facing Main Street):	\$225,000
Phase 2 (facing Williams Park)	\$180,000

Estimated Cost of Total Design:	\$1,300,000
---------------------------------	-------------

These estimates will vary based upon specific local conditions, more accurate measurements of areas to be improved, and changes in design.

Contacts and Resources

Bill Konrad, Director
Rural Development Administration
Concord, NH
223-6045

George Zoukee, Executive Director
Municipal Bond Bank
Concord, NH
271-2595

Ben Frost, Executive Director
Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
Lebanon, NH
448-1680

Richard Weaver, Housing Specialist
NH Housing Finance Authority
Bedford, NH
472-8623

Pat Herlihy, Community Development Block Grant Program
Office of State Planning
Concord, NH
271-2155

Julie Eades, Executive Director
NH Community Loan Fund
Concord, NH
224-6669

Steve Epstein, Executive Director
Grafton County Economic Development Council
Plymouth, NH
536-1272

The Rural Development Administration is a good source of grants and low-interest loans for rural communities.

The Municipal Bond Bank packages small-town bond issues into aggregate proposals so as to secure lower interest rates.

The regional planning commission is a good source for technical assistance on planning and zoning issues. They may be able to assist with grant preparation and with site design work.

The NH Housing Finance Authority is a source for both planning and development funds for projects that create housing for low-income groups and for seniors. Some programs have income eligibility requirements and others do not.

The Office of State Planning distributes funding for projects which can demonstrate an ability to meet the needs of low and moderate income individuals.

The Community Loan Fund administers low-interest loans for community based project, with a focus on lower-income individuals.

The GCEDC is a comprehensive clearinghouse of business information, and it works with towns and businesses to assist in economic development planning.

Thank you, Canaan!

*From the Plan NH
Design Team*



The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment

The “Other” Charrette

Canaan elementary school students were asked to envision the future of downtown Canaan. Here are some of their ideas, which clearly reflect their priorities: skateboard parks, fast food, retail stores, and a new Canaan Senior Center!

