

HAMILTON WENHAM VILLAGE VISION + ACTION PLAN

2014



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Communities Consortium



 **MAPC 50 YEARS**
METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL
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Acknowledgements

This report documents the Hamilton-Wenham Village Vision and Action Plan project. This project was a joint effort between the Town of Hamilton Planning Board, the Town of Wenham Planning Board, MAPC, the Hamilton Development Corporation and residents. The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding from the Barr Foundation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hamilton/Wenham Village study area is primarily a traditional New England style village that serves to meet the local needs of the community. The area also contains a commuter rail station, providing convenient access to downtown Boston and other stops along the route. The Towns now wish to restart the planning process for this area to plan for future development and improve connectivity. Building upon the existing assets in the Hamilton/Wenham Village, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in partnership with the Towns embarked on a visioning process to identify opportunities and impediments in this area and develop an action-oriented plan for the Village.

The overall vision from the residents, businesses, and property owners in the Village was to enhance ease of access and safety, especially for pedestrians, while improving infrastructure and adding new, context-sensitive development in key locations. Residents would like additional housing and retail opportunities to create a more lively village, as well as an improved streetscape. The community also would like better connections throughout the Village through improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Building upon the core concepts of what makes a successful transit-oriented development, MAPC and the Towns outlined a series of recommendations to capitalize on the opportunities and overcome impediments to stimulate investment in the Village.

Key recommendations include:

Land Use and Zoning

- Expand the existing Willow Street Overlay District to overlay all of the Hamilton Business District. The new Hamilton Village Overlay District will set regulations that are consistent with the principles and goals of this study.
- Reduce required lot size from 20,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet, allowing for smaller mixed use developments along with larger developments.
- Increase height limits for developments meeting affordable housing minimums.
- Reduce setbacks to encourage active street frontage.
- Incorporate size limits for retail/office uses to prevent inappropriate applications of oversized retail in Village area.
- Alter parking requirements and encourage shared parking arrangements to be more appropriate for transit-oriented development.

Transportation

- Re-allocate roadway right-of-way along some streets in the Village to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Improve and maintain pedestrian crosswalks, as well incorporating other safety and aesthetic improvements at key intersections.
- Public Realm Improvements
- Focus on short-term, implementable solutions to improve public spaces throughout the village.
- Install period lighting and streetscape improvements to create a cohesive neighborhood that is safe and distinctive.

Each of these recommendations, and several more, are described in greater detail in the main body of this report. Short and long-term actions are also listed in the report with the goal of creating a pathway to implementation, where incremental steps will result in long-term positive change for the Hamilton/Wenham Village.

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INTRODUCTION

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a cohesive vision for the village area of Hamilton and Wenham and to develop the zoning necessary to achieve that vision. The project builds on previous studies and planning initiatives but takes a fresh look at the issues with a new visioning process that includes residents and business owners. This process will also include developing renderings of what future development might look like under proposed zoning.

Project Background

Hamilton completed a master plan in 2004 and followed it with a charrette in 2009. Both the master plan and charrette processes underlined the need to advance development in the village of Hamilton, including some Wenham parcels abutting the village. However, development has been stalled in the past due to a lack of sewer capacity.

Now, faced with rising property tax bills, a lack of senior and moderate income housing options, and little expansion of the town's tax base over the last decade, Hamilton and Wenham, whose residents are both served by the shops in Hamilton village, have re-started their village planning process. A 2005 study indicated that there were sewage package treatment options available to the community but high sewerage connection costs delayed action. The Hamilton Development Corporation, a public/private town entity, was formed after the 2009 charrette. To continue the momentum on village planning, the two towns submitted an application to MAPC for funding under a Barr Foundation grant.

Scope of Work

The following tasks were delineated in an approved scope of work for the project.

- Meet with the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) and the Hamilton Planning Board to establish project goals and parameters.
- Review past studies and document existing conditions.
- Hold a “check-in” visioning workshop to form the basis of a vision statement for the Hamilton/Wenham village area.
- Draft a visioning statement and review with the Hamilton Development Corporation and the Planning Board.
- Develop an action map highlighting the Hamilton/Wenham village vision with a strong emphasis on housing, mixed use, green infrastructure and pedestrian and bicycle use by Hamilton/Wenham residents, emphasizing the village as a bicycle destination.
- Develop draft zoning language, design guideline options, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity recommendations, and green infrastructure conceptual sites and review with the HDC/PB.
- Present the draft zoning recommendations and design guideline options at a public meeting.
- Draft and submit a final report.

Previous Plans and Studies

At the onset of the project, MAPC staff reviewed previous plans and studies. The most relevant such study was titled “Forum on the Future: The Hamilton Downtown Charrette”. It was prepared for the Town of Hamilton Downtown Charrette Steering Committee by the Cecil Group, Inc. in November 2009. The charrette was preceded by a number of focus groups followed up with the charrette. The issues and concerns that were raised during this process were very similar to those expressed during the 2013 process. The top themes identified by the four groups during the charrette were as follows:

- Add commercial uses to create retail variety and economic opportunities.
- Explore development potential at several areas along Willow Street.
- Improve parking options and enforce parking regulations.
- Improve the streetscapes throughout the Village area.
- Pay attention to traffic (speeds and changes in traffic flow) and create a system for managing it.
- Make a plan for growth: maximize what Hamilton offers while maintaining the small town feel and rural village architecture.
- Support local businesses with better signage and with improved services and access.
- Improve pedestrian connections between the different areas of Downtown.
- Create architectural standards to encourage a consistent design theme for Downtown.
- Create diverse housing choices.

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**THE HAMILTON/WENHAM
VILLAGE AREA**

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council has created a classification system of municipalities in Massachusetts to support planning, analysis and policy development. MAPC has identified five basic community types and nine sub-types. Both Hamilton and Wenham are classified as Developing Suburbs with a sub-type classification of Maturing New England Towns. This community type is characterized by a well-defined town center, mixed densities and with room to grow. The mixed-use town center is generally surrounded by compact neighborhoods with low-density outlying areas. There is a large amount of vacant developable land (>35% of total town area is vacant and developable). New growth is generally conventional subdivision development on vacant land.

Description of the Study Area

The study area is located in south-central Hamilton at the Hamilton/Wenham town line. Figure 1 shows the study area in relation to Hamilton, Wenham and the North Shore and Figure 2 shows the study area itself.

Study Area Geography

Throughout this report, two different terms will be used to describe the geography under consideration. The term study area refers to the area shown within the green outline and is the primary area of concern for analysis and for recommendations. The term focus area describes an area within a ½ mile radius of a central point in the study area. In this case, the central point for the focus area is the Hamilton/Wenham MBTA station. The focus area shows how the study area connects to the nearby neighborhoods.

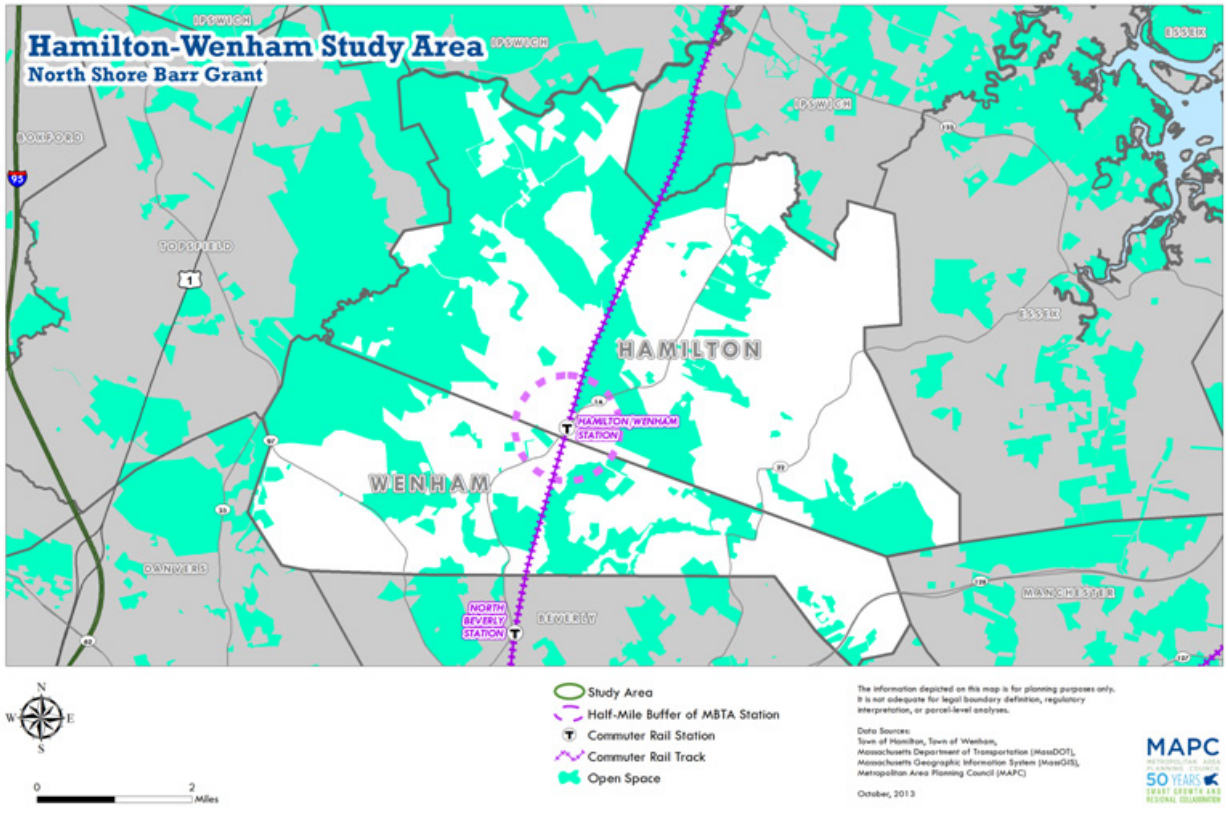


Figure 1: Regional Context of the Hamilton/Wenham Study Area

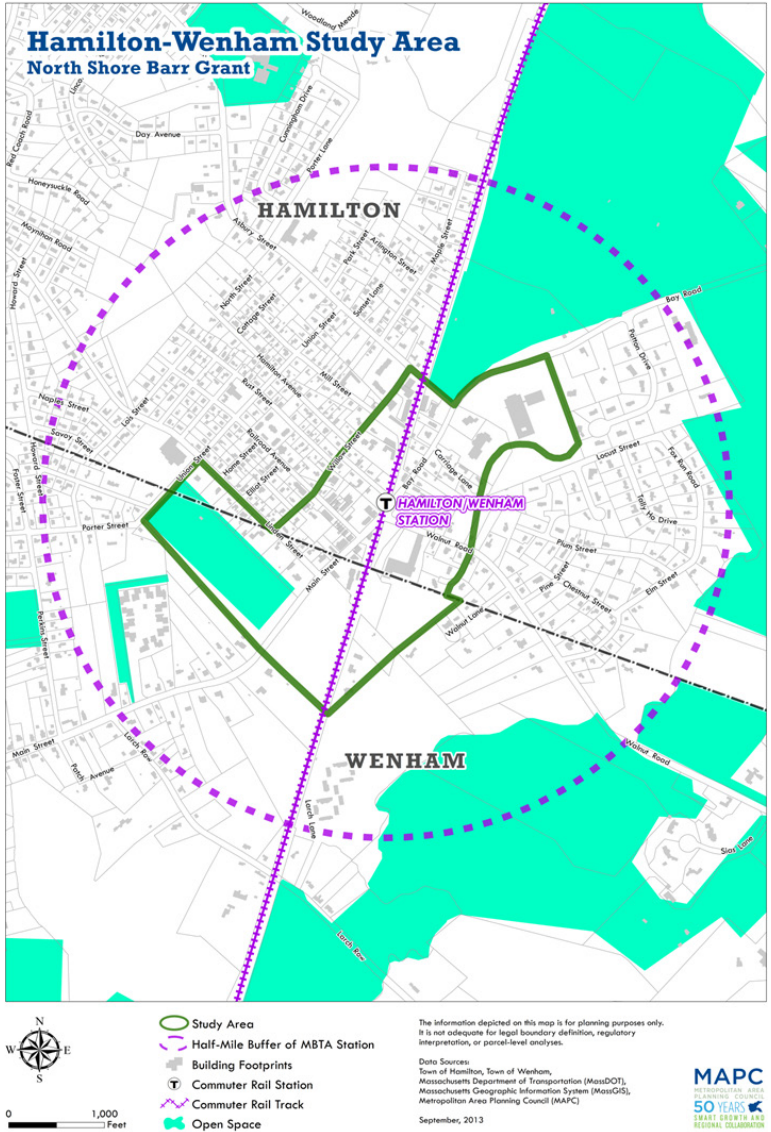


Figure 2: Hamilton/Wenham Study Area Boundaries

Land Use and Zoning in the Study Area

Land Use

Table 1 shows the acreage and percentage of the study area and larger focus area by land use. The study area, which is comprised of 79 acres, is 34% commercial and almost 30% open space. The next highest land use category is residential at 21% of the study area. The larger focus area is less commercial but is almost equally divided into residential and open space. Figure 3 depicts residential land use throughout the study area and the focus area.

Table 1: Land Use

Land Use	Study Area		1/2 Mile Boundary	
	Acres	% of Study Area	Acres	% of 1/2 Mile Area
Residential	16.6	21.0%	207.9	44.2%
Commercial	26.8	34.0%	30.0	6.4%
Open Space	23.2	29.3%	206.7	44.0%
Public/Institutional	9.9	12.5%	20.7	4.4%
Transportation	2.5	3.1%	4.9	1.0%
Total	78.9	100.00%	470.18	100.00%

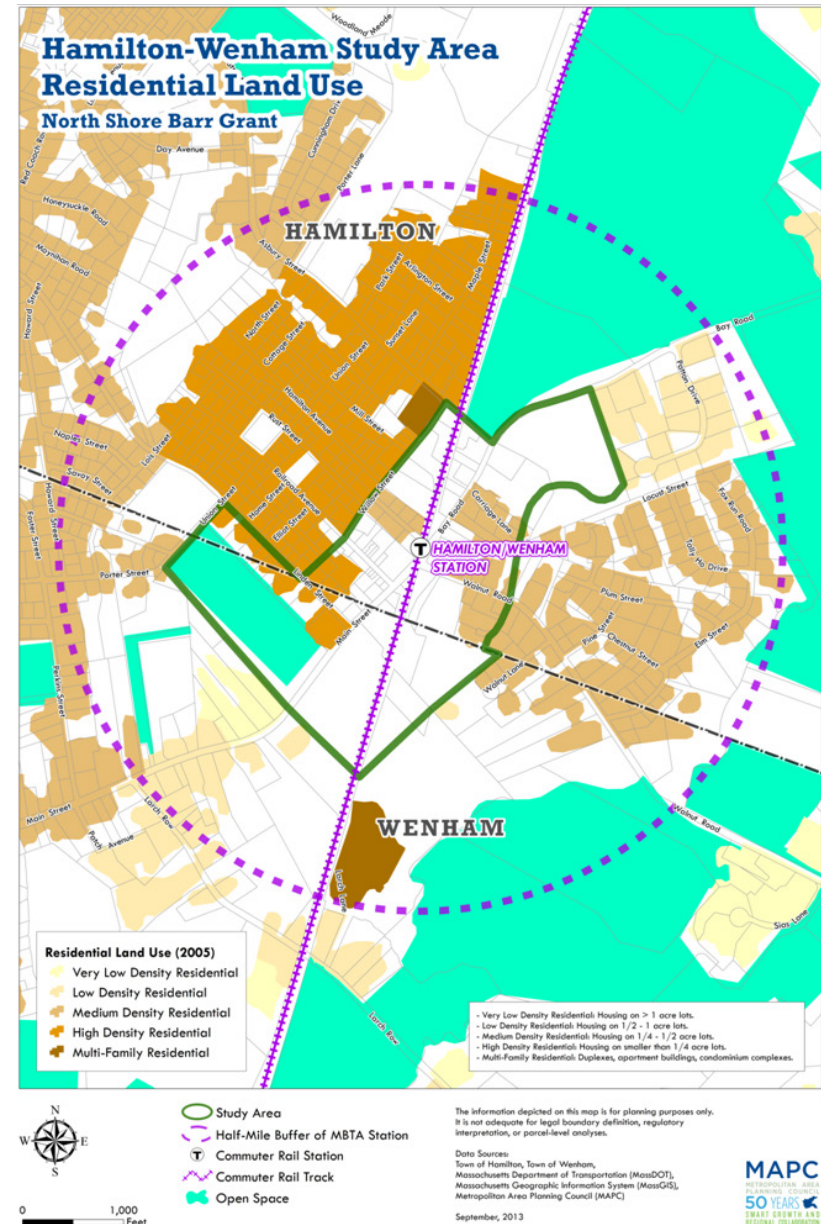


Figure 3: Residential Land Use

Overview of the Study Area

The study area is anchored by the MBTA commuter rail station and associated parking lots as well as a retail complex known as The Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing. From this intersection, the study area can be thought of as four quadrants.

Northwest Quadrant

On the northwest side of Route 1A there is commercial development on both sides of Railroad Avenue between Willow Street and Route 1A (Bay Road). There are also several municipal or civic uses including the Post Office and Firehouse Place which houses the food pantry and four affordable housing units. Additional commercial development can be found at Depot Square Common. There is also a residential neighborhood north of Willow Street which is the boundary of the study area as well as the Hamilton-Wenham Community House. The Hamilton-Wenham library is just outside of the study area as well.

Southwest Quadrant

On the southwest side of Route 1A there is also some commercial development on Bay Road up until Pingree Park which is at the southern end of the study area.



Stores along Railroad Avenue



Pingree Park

Northeast Quadrant

On the northeast side of Route 1A there is some commercial development along the road closer to downtown and also a number of municipal buildings including the Winthrop School, the Senior Center and the Public Safety building.

Southeast Quadrant

On the southeast side of Route 1A, in addition to the Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing, there is a small retail complex known as Haddem Mill.



Hamilton Council on Aging



Stores at Haddem Mill

Who Lives in the Study Area

It is important to begin any planning process or discussion of the future with an understanding of the people who currently live in the area.

Population

The total population in the study area in 2010 was 2,560 people. The largest percentage was the population 65 and older which comprised 26.5% of the study area population. This age group often seeks out smaller housing options after their children leave home and benefit from being able to walk to shopping areas and services. Transit is also very desirable as this age group tends to drive less.

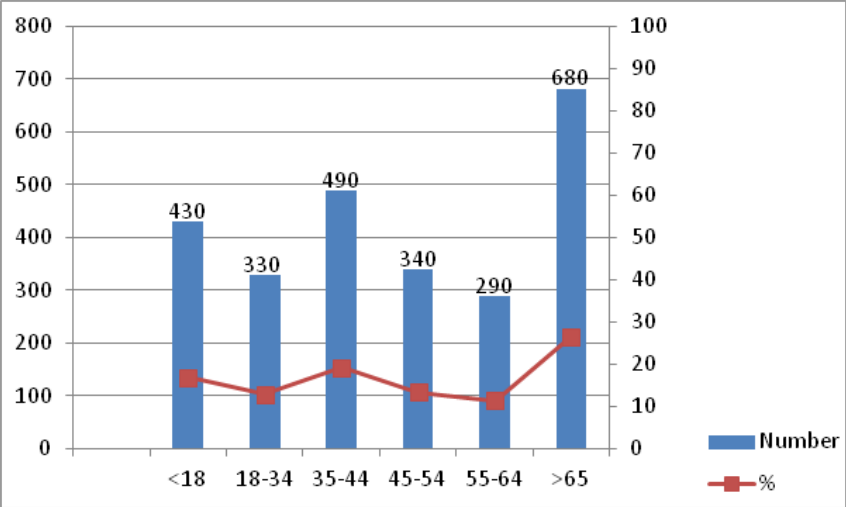


Figure 4: Population by Age

As is apparent from Table 3, the population of both Hamilton and Wenham is predominantly white. The next highest percentage of the population is of Asian descent.

Table 2: Percentage of Population by Ethnicity

	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black or African American	Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaska Native	Non-Hispanic Asian	Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Non-Hispanic Other Race	Two or More Non-Hispanic Races	Hispanic or Latino
Tract 2151.01	90.1%	0.8%	0.3%	7.7%	0.0%	0.2%	0.9%	1.3%
Tract 2151.02	96.3%	0.2%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.5%	1.4%	2.0%
Hamilton	92.4%	0.6%	0.2%	5.4%	0.0%	0.3%	1.0%	1.6%
Wenham	95.8%	0.6%	0.1%	1.7%	0.1%	0.8%	0.9%	1.9%

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey. The study area is located at the intersection of census tracts 2151.01, 2151.02 and 2161. Tract 2161 covers the town of Wenham.

Income and Poverty

The Hamilton/Wenham village area is far more affluent than the statewide median. The median household income for the study area is \$115,000 as compared to \$65,900 for Massachusetts as a whole. Within the study area, Wenham has a higher median household income than Hamilton and there are variations within the two census tracts.

Although the median household income is high, there are still households in the study area that are below the poverty level. Within the study area the number of households below the poverty level ranges from 1.23% to 8.22%. This is below the statewide average of 11%.

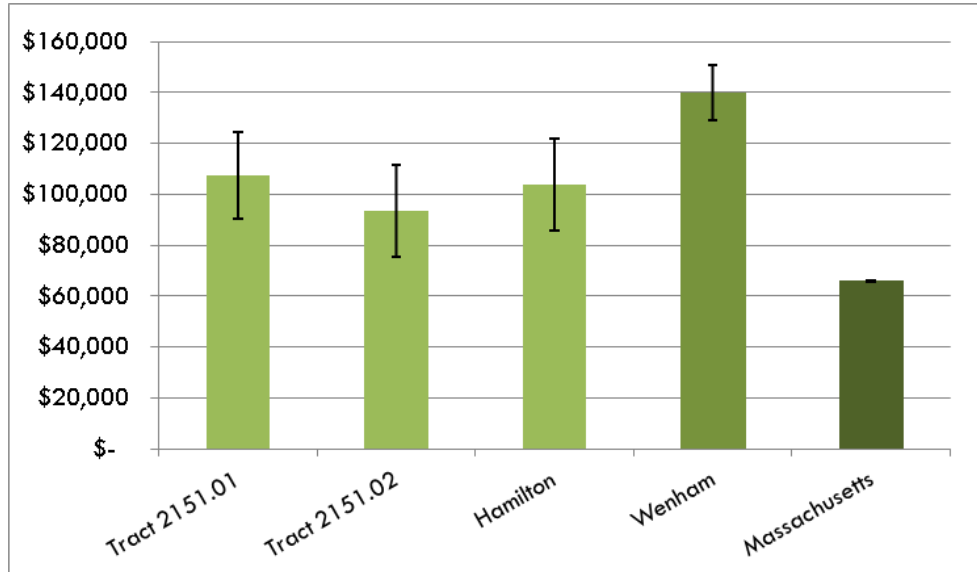


Figure 5: Median Household Income

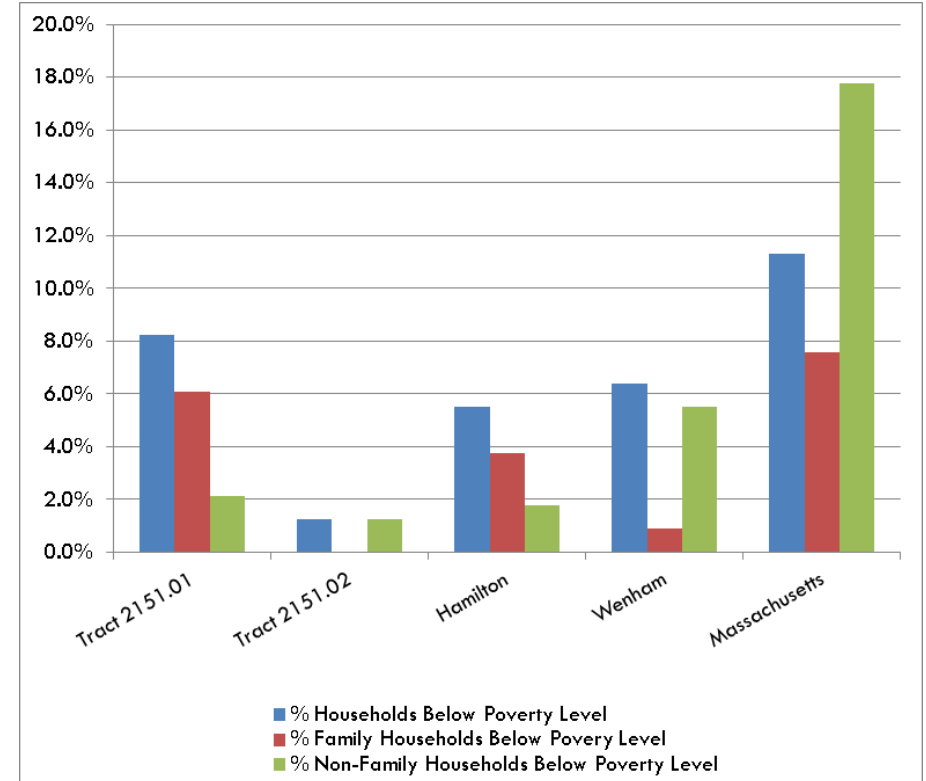


Figure 6: Households below the Poverty Level

Housing

The study area contains 1,034 housing units (within ½ mile radius of the train station). 75% of these units are owner-occupied which is well above the Boston region’s average of 60% home ownership. In 2013, MAPC worked with Hamilton to complete an update of the town’s Housing Production Plan. Under that Plan, MAPC developed projections for the numbers and types of housing could be needed in the community, based on housing unit preferences often associated with various demographic cohorts. These projections help communities determine whether or not current construction trends are likely to meet the projected need over time. Based on current trends, the majority of household growth in Hamilton over the next twenty years will be senior households, who often prefer condominiums or apartment settings that require less maintenance and driving to reach shops and services. To meet that need, it is estimated that 114 units of this variety of housing should be added over the next twenty years. Though the Town’s preference has been for single-family housing construction, adding a more diverse variety of housing options within the Village study area could help meet that anticipated demand.



**THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
PROCESS**

The two major elements in the process were consultation with planning staff, boards and committees and a series of focus groups and public meetings to engage targeted groups as well as the general public. These meetings are described below.

Site Visit

The project began on July 2, 2013 with a site visit by MAPC staff to become familiar with the entire study area. This site visit included town staff who walked the area with MAPC staff to discuss key issues. MAPC photographed key sites and took measurements of the roads.

Board of Selectmen Walk

On July 11, 2013 the Board of Selectmen walked and toured the area for the purpose of identifying areas to address in the village. They prepared a list of 19 areas for potential landscaping improvements as well as other infrastructure improvements.

The residential focus group

A focus group for residents was held at the Hamilton-Wenham Library on July 30, 2013. The focus group was attended by approximately 23 people as well as MAPC and town staff. The key issues that were identified are:

- The “Village” feel is an important part of the identity.
- Concerns about noise and light pollution.
- Pedestrian safety crossing Route 1A.
- What role will design standards and/or architectural review have?
- If density increases so will traffic.

- The village is not lively enough at the street level.
- What is the impact of the malls and large stores on small businesses?
- Is there enough water to sustain increased development?
- Some of the types of businesses that would enhance the village include: bakery, ice cream shop, family restaurant, farmers market, coffee shop, more ethnic restaurants, vegetarian offerings, a book store, bike store, vintage clothing, more places to “linger” and park benches.
- It is difficult for people to see all the destinations and how to get to them. Route 1A functions as a pass through rather than encouraging lingering.
- Identity – Hamilton is a quiet town with open spaces and does not have a loud/lively night life. This is a positive for many.
- Many people want to live here knowing that the housing and taxes are expensive, but the quality of life is the purpose for being here.
- The village needs more landscaping, period lighting, underground utilities.

Hamilton/Wenham Downtown Merchants Group

This focus group was held on August 14, 2013 and was attended by MAPC staff and approximately 10-12 business owners. In response to the question what are the strengths of doing business in Hamilton merchants had the following responses:

- Route 1A: Although the road is often seen as a busy pass through, it also is a great strength for visibility and marketing. Many residents from Beverly, Ipswich and Essex cross through town as well as tourists.
- MBTA: The commuter train is a plus for the village area. But it is also more of an opportunity. There is not enough marketing done on the larger scale to bring people into town from Boston. The pedestrian / shopping connections could be improved.
- Parking: Many merchants feel that there is adequate parking. Sometimes people do not use it and then walk around.

The second question that was asked was what are some areas for improvement:

- Lack of a central place for information on events. The community is not communicating what it has to offer.
- Pedestrian safety- Route 1 A is busy and vehicle speed is high at different times of the day. Better locations and more prominent markings would assist pedestrians from shopping center parking to other village locations.
- Benches and a pocket park.
- Marketing: Businesses need shoppers and marketing (website, maps, events) is important. The merchants do not have full financial support from all village businesses. What about the involvement of banks and the Rotary? Coordination with businesses in Wenham is not working out very well.
- Why not use the Patton Estate to promote the Hamilton identity of open space, fields, equestrian uses and General Patton?
- Senior Center and Community House are opportunities to capture more people with services if they were offered at that location.
- Period lighting and banners along Route 1A would help to create the connection between the gateway to the community (Wenham line) and Patton Park. It would provide a level of distinction and also a festive/historic feel.

Other concerns cited include:

- They do not see enough local employees shopping in town or using services
- There are not enough affordable shops/businesses for families.
- Destination shops versus community services
- There is a mix of destination shops and then service businesses (medical, office, etc). Location of this mix may not be working. Destination shops and restaurants need to be on the main level. Office uses tend to close in the evening.
- Merchants need shoppers and pedestrian activity is key.
- Building design and signs should not be standardized. Small business owners are entrepreneurs who value their independence. They would not want a village that all looked the same. The shopping plaza needed some uniformity but not for the other parts of the village.

First Public Meeting

The first public meeting was held on October 3, 2013 at the Hamilton-Wenham Library. Twenty-three (23) people attended. The first part of the meeting consisted of a presentation of basic demographic data on the study area and surrounding areas. This was followed by a presentation of potential mixed-use developments on four sites. These “visualizations” do not represent actual proposals but were developed for the purposes of generating discussion to give the project team a better understanding of what elements to include in proposed zoning. Residents were asked to give their opinions on any aspect of these visualizations. The evening ended with facilitated table discussions during which residents were asked to respond to a series of questions and to mark up a map.

The following is a summary of comments on the visualizations of the four sites:

- Buildings that are too close to the street and lack setbacks are out of place in Hamilton.
- What is an overlay district and how extensively will it be used in the two towns?
- It is not realistic to provide only one parking space per unit so this will encourage more on-street parking.
- Why did you show row houses rather than scattered duplexes?
- There should be retail on the first floor if these buildings are going to be so close to the street.
- These are not truly mixed-use developments because the commercial is in

separate buildings.

- The consistent roof line shown is boring.
- In general, the buildings are too big and out of scale.
- The smaller building on the gas station site is closer to what is appropriate.
- Could there be some parking provided in parking decks?
- Any development on the Haley Farm should maximize open space preservation and the provision of trails. This parcel is a prime candidate for preservation because visually it is important to the look and feel of Wenham.

Summary of Group Discussion Questions

Participants were asked to consider five questions relating to what they valued about the downtown, opportunities for adding housing, design issues, how to connect downtown with the surrounding neighborhoods and what will downtown look like in 2033. Due to time constraints, participants were not able to answer all the questions. The following is a summary of responses to those questions.

- Allowing parking on Willow Street could be a problem; parking enforcement is an issue.
- There is some informal shared parking going on with parking at the Police Station and Winthrop Elementary school.
- Parking at the commuter rail lot is under-utilized.
- The town should consider moving the Winthrop Elementary School since that

site might be better used for other uses.

- Wayfinding signage in town would be very desirable, particularly near the commuter rail station.
- Kiosks and/or bulletin boards would be a good way to publicize events.
- Additional housing is currently constrained by lack of sewers.
- There are certain types of affordable housing in town such as carriage houses which provide lower-cost housing but aren't counted on the state's inventory.
- There is a need for more rental housing.
- Public-private partnerships would be one way to add housing.
- The village is currently very walkable but there are some improvements that would be desirable.

Second Public Meeting

This meeting was held at the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library on November 14, 2013 and was attended by approximately 25 residents. The first part of the meeting focused on transportation recommendations and the second half focused on land use recommendations. During the transportation presentation, MAPC presented a number of recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle safety as well as streetscape improvements. The land use recommendations focused on potential revisions to, and expansion of, the Willow Street overlay district as well as design review guidelines. Below is a brief summary of the comments received at that meeting.

- Residents feel strongly that the appropriate

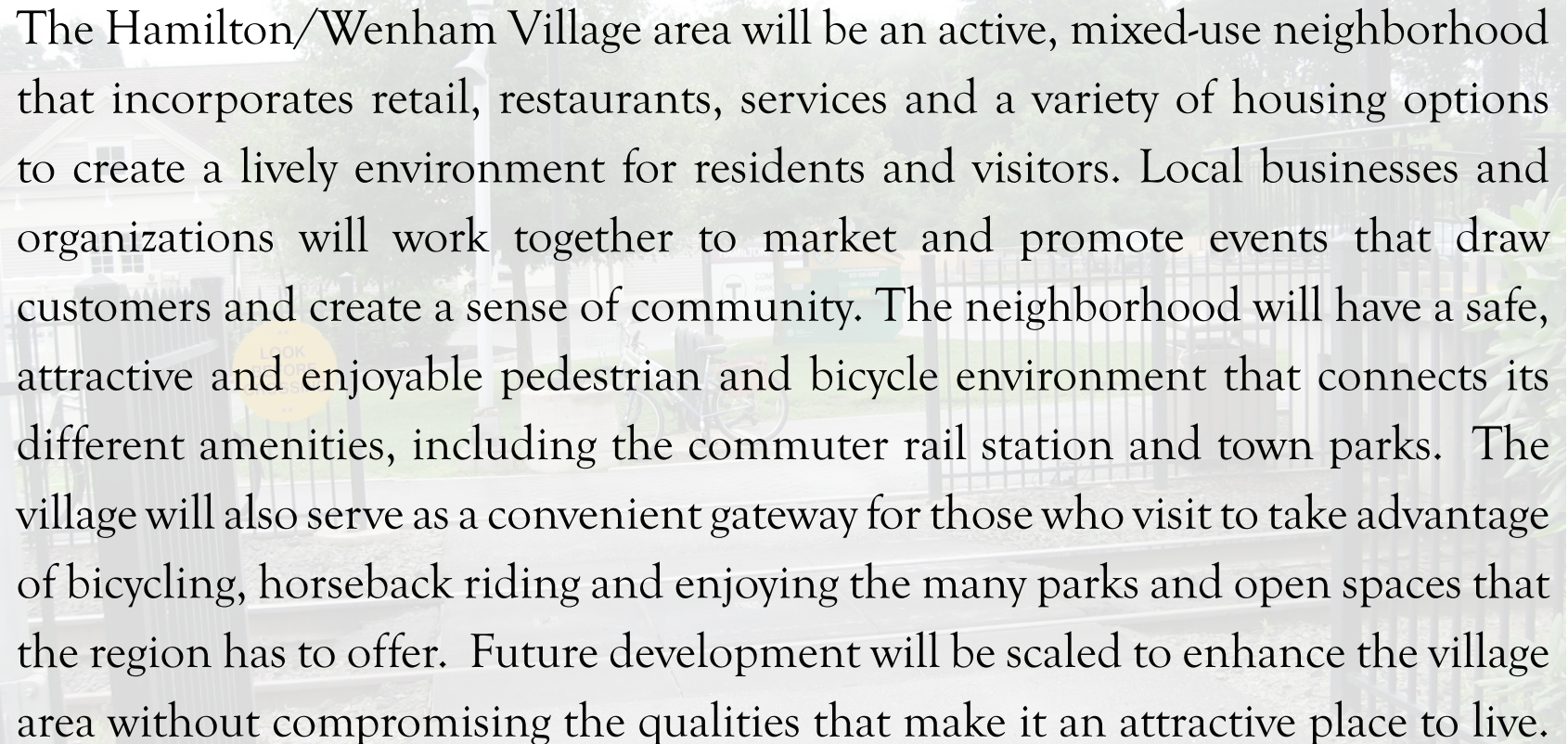
term for the study area is village, not downtown. Downtown denotes density. The Planning Board views this area as a pedestrian scale village.

- It is important to maintain street trees. The town has been losing trees and needs to replace them.
- The lack of recommendations for the Wenham portion of the study area is troubling.
- For two decades the consensus has been that we need a WWTP and more parking to draw people in.
- It is important to keep new development at a village scale. Height can change the character of the village and set backs are important as well.
- The train is a big safety problem because the gates stay down too long, traffic backs up and cars start to try to pass.
- What might be the economic impacts of potential developments under the proposed new zoning? What might be the impacts on existing businesses?
- Overlay area - Cummings and Hamilton Shoppes - do we want to include them?
- Is angle parking a possibility?
- The intersection of Route 1A and RR Avenue is dangerous because traffic is fast and pedestrians aren't visible until they are already in the street.
- Consideration should be given to adding crosswalks where people actually cross.

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THE HAMILTON/WENHAM VILLAGE VISION STATEMENT

This vision statement was prepared after careful consideration of all previous plans and studies and comments received from residents at the public meetings. It was presented at the November 14, 2013 public meeting. The various elements presented in the following pages are designed to help the towns achieve this vision. It should be noted that this vision assumes that the town has been able to provide sewer service to the village area.



The Hamilton/Wenham Village area will be an active, mixed-use neighborhood that incorporates retail, restaurants, services and a variety of housing options to create a lively environment for residents and visitors. Local businesses and organizations will work together to market and promote events that draw customers and create a sense of community. The neighborhood will have a safe, attractive and enjoyable pedestrian and bicycle environment that connects its different amenities, including the commuter rail station and town parks. The village will also serve as a convenient gateway for those who visit to take advantage of bicycling, horseback riding and enjoying the many parks and open spaces that the region has to offer. Future development will be scaled to enhance the village area without compromising the qualities that make it an attractive place to live.

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**ACHIEVING THE VISION:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

Overview of the Recommendations

This chapter sets the stage for the remainder of the report which contains numerous recommendations related to the transportation system and zoning. The first section discusses the benefits of mixed-use while the second section presents the basics of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) as a tool for achieving a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood. The sixth chapter in this report outlines how to create a connected neighborhood in which a multi-modal transportation system knits together the various parts of the village. The following chapter outlines recommendations for zoning to support the mixed-use neighborhood.

The Benefits of a Mixed-Use Neighborhood

A basic premise of this planning effort was to strengthen the Hamilton/Wenham village area as a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood that embodies smart growth principles. Smart growth is a principle of land development that emphasizes the mixing of land uses, increases the availability of a range of housing types in neighborhoods, takes advantage of compact design, fosters distinctive and attractive communities, preserves open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas, strengthens existing communities, provides a variety of transportation choices, makes development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective, and encourages community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Mixing of land uses creates an environment where people are able to work to meet more of their needs and offers multiple destinations to attract more people throughout the day and evening. These neighborhoods are very attractive to young adults and older individuals who enjoy not having to drive everywhere. The Hamilton/Wenham village area already has many of these characteristics and the goal of this plan was to build on those assets.

Transit-Oriented Development

Transit oriented development (TOD) is a strategy to integrate a mixture of housing, office, retail and other daily needs in a walkable neighborhood within close proximity to quality public transportation. TOD is usually accomplished through higher intensity, mixed-use, mixed-income development close to the station area with decreasing intensity as one gets further from the station. Successful examples of TOD include a mixture of housing types at varying price points, ensuring that those who need to live near transit and those that choose to live near transit can be accommodated.

The ability of residents and employees to walk and bike to and from the station area is also extremely important. A safe and well connected walking and biking network helps connect residents to local businesses, jobs, recreation areas, and the transit station itself. More trips taken by cyclists and pedestrians can help reduce auto traffic on local and regional roadways, improving congestion and air quality.

By coordinating investments in transportation and existing and future development, the Towns of Hamilton and Wenham can greatly improve the quality and ease of life in the Village. TOD has a number of benefits for a community depending on the type and quality of the transit service available.

Benefits of Transit Oriented Development

TOD can provide transportation choices - TOD provides transportation for young people, the elderly, people who do not drive, and those who choose to or cannot afford to own a car.

TOD can increase transit ridership - TOD improves the efficiency and cost effectiveness of transit investments. New development around transit stations can increase transit ridership by 20 to 40 percent, which would increase revenue for the MBTA.

TOD can reduce reliance on automobiles - By creating neighborhoods where housing, jobs, and shopping are within walking distance to transit, reliance on driving can be reduced. TOD can reduce annual household rates of driving by 20 to 40 percent.

TOD can reduce air pollution and energy consumption - With more pedestrian, bike, and transit travel taking place, reductions in driving can ease congestion and improve local air quality. TODs can reduce rates of greenhouse gas emissions by 2.5 to 3.7 tons per year for each household.

TOD can increase households' disposable income - Housing and transportation costs are the number one and two highest expenses households have to account for. Some estimates show that reducing household driving costs can help save \$3,000-\$4,000 annually. This can greatly increase a household's disposable income and ease overall household cost burden.

TOD can bolster the local economy - Constructing housing in walking distance to existing or future business districts means local businesses can be supported by the surrounding neighborhoods.

TOD can increase the municipal tax base - New development around the transit station can add to the municipal tax base without large infrastructure costs. This can mean new investments in schools, municipal services, or parks and recreation.

TOD can contribute to more affordable housing - By reducing household expenditures on transportation costs, more disposable income is available to be spent on housing costs. New development around transit stations should also include deed restricted affordable housing units for households making below the area median income.

TOD concepts can be applied in a context-sensitive manner to fit the character of the community, from small suburbs to urban centers. The accompanying photos are examples of TOD in a variety of community types.



Manchester by the Sea



Newton



Chelsea



Boston

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A CONNECTED NEIGHBORHOOD

INTRODUCTION

A neighborhood's roadways can have a tremendous impact on both the character and quality of life of the area. The design, types of facilities, and streetscape elements can help unify a neighborhood, as well as make it safer, more comfortable, and more accessible to all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. A safe and attractive environment for all users requires a high standard of facility design, including the quality of pedestrian facilities, the integration with the vehicular way, and relation to surrounding buildings and activity centers.

The Village area consists of a mixture of quiet and busy roads with varying levels of amenities for the various types of travelers (motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.). Route 1A (Main Street in Wenham; Bay Road in Hamilton) forms the spine of the Village's transportation network. Walnut Road, a busy arterial, extends from Route 1A to the southeast. Intersecting Route 1A to the north and west are a number of streets, including Linden Street, Railroad Avenue, and Asbury Street. Willow Street runs approximately parallel to Route 1A. Cutting across the site is the commuter rail line, with the Hamilton/Wenham Commuter Rail stop located in the heart of the Village, near the intersection of Route 1A and Walnut Road.



Connectivity Network Plan

There are a number of assets within the Village, including:

- A number of recreational opportunities (e.g., sports fields, Weaver Pond, and a Community Pool);
- Shopping areas (Railroad Avenue, the shopping plaza off of Walnut Road);
- An elementary school;
- The public library;
- A commuter rail stop;
- Residential areas; and,
- Other amenities, such as a planned antique fire truck display.

The network plan for the Hamilton-Wenham Village (Figure 7) focuses on two overarching aspects to connect these assets:

1. Improving the safety, comfort, and accessibility for all users of the roads, including pedestrians and bicyclists and with particular attention to children and elderly.
2. Connecting (psychologically) the various elements in the neighborhood to make the Village “feel” more unified and create an historic character fitting for a traditional New England village.

Elements of the network plan include sidewalk construction, bicycle lanes, multi-use trails, crosswalks and other intersection improvements, way-finding improvements, and place-making elements. The following sections provide details on these recommendations.

Building on Existing Assets

The location of the commuter rail is a tremendous asset to the Hamilton-Wenham Village. In addition, there are a number of existing streetscape elements that the network plan recommendations build upon. These include plantings and trees along sidewalks, seating, crosswalks, wide sidewalks (on Railroad Avenue), and attractive paving treatments.



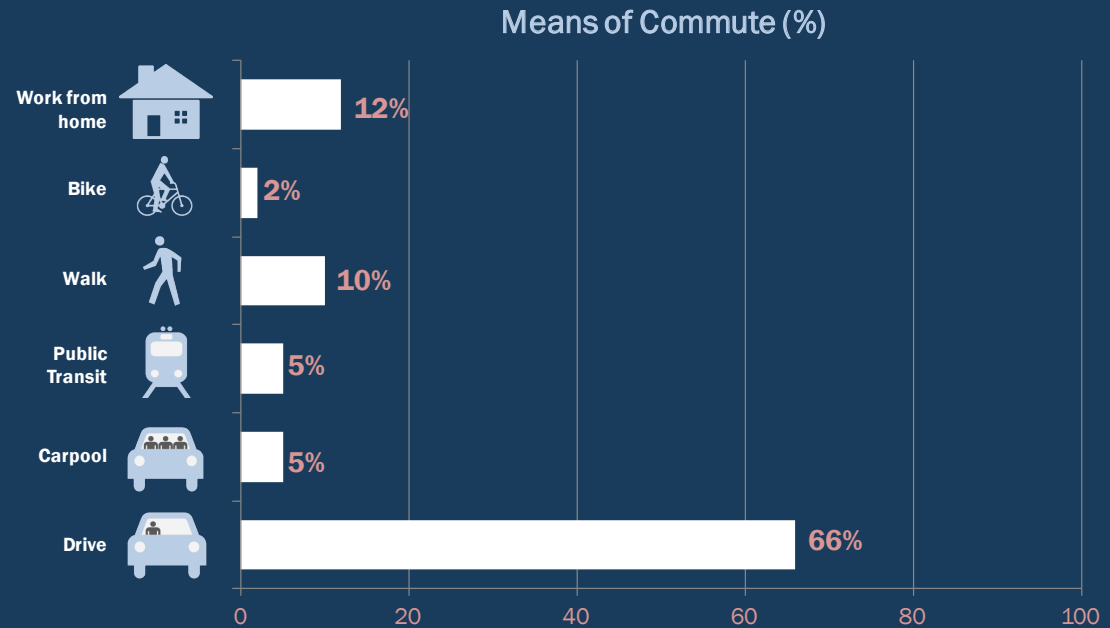
Transit and Commute to Work

Two thirds of the approximately 6,000 workers living in the vicinity of the Village drive to work. As noted previously, it is important, therefore, to maintain an efficient road network for vehicles. However, the remaining one third of commuters (almost 2,000 workers) utilize alternative means to commute to work, such as taking the commuter rail, walking and bicycling to work.

The Hamilton-Wenham Commuter Rail stop provides a great benefit to the Village, providing a means for residents to commute to Boston easily. Over 400 area residents utilize the commuter rail each morning and afternoon, and among these 30% walk to and from home to access the stop (and 1% bike – a number that may increase if appropriate facilities are constructed).

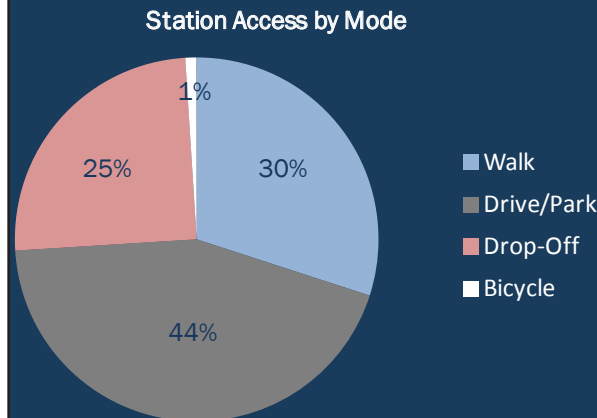


6,035 Total Workers
(16 Years and Over)*



Source: 2007-11 ACS

*Data refers to Census Tracts 2151.01, 2151.02, 2161, which include study area.



HW Station: Average Weekday Inbound Boardings by Year

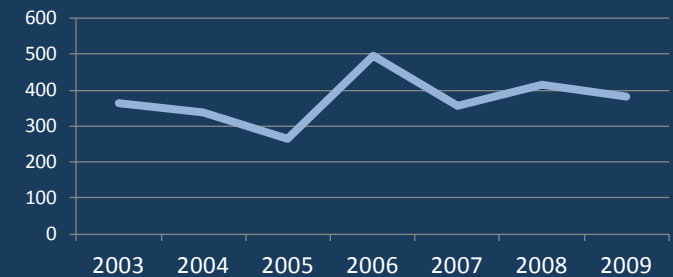


Figure 8: Selected Commute Data

Pedestrian Improvements

Having a safe and accessible environment for walkers can add vitality to a neighborhood. The following describes several of the important elements considered for creating a safe, accessible, and comfortable neighborhood for walkers.²

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are a critical component for a walkable, safe, and well-connected pedestrian network. Sidewalks, provided on both sides of a street, are generally the preferred pedestrian facility and provide for a safe walking area outside the motor vehicle traffic travel-way.³

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates a minimum width of 3' of unobstructed sidewalk passageway. In addition, according to the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), a width of 5' is needed to allow to adults to walk comfortably side-by-side.

The preferred sidewalk surface is concrete, as it requires the least maintenance, has a long life span, and is a stable, slip-resistant material. Brick sidewalks can be aesthetically pleasing, but can be uneven over time and slippery when wet.⁴

When possible, a buffer with grass, plantings, and/or trees along the area immediately adjacent to the curb can increase the comfort of pedestrians.

The conditions of sidewalks vary throughout the Village. Table 5 provides a summary of existing conditions and sidewalk recommendations for three of the roads within the site.

Table 3: Selected Locations Sidewalk Conditions and Opportunities



Street	Route 1A	Linden Street	Railroad Avenue
Existing Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Adjacent to busy road » Sidewalk on one side of street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Provides connection to Library and north to Highland Street » Sidewalk on northbound side 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Sidewalks on both sides » In general, sidewalks are wide (approximately 10') and comfortable » Presence of some streetscape elements (planters, and trees)
Future Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Construct sidewalk on northbound side » Incorporate streetscape elements (period lighting, trees, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Construct sidewalk on southbound side (right-of-way must be confirmed to ensure adequate space) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure surface is well-maintained and cohesive throughout site (i.e., all the same material) » Increase streetscape elements (e.g., construct period lighting) » Consider opportunities for additional seating

²Primary sources for developing the recommendations in this section are the 2010 Boston Region's Transportation Plan (MAPC), 2006 Project Design and Development Guide (MassDOT), and the 2013 City of Boston Complete Streets Guidelines (Boston Transportation Department). Please refer to these sources, available online, for additional information and resources.

³In some cases, it may not be feasible to construct sidewalks on both sides of the street. For example, Willow Street has sidewalks on one side, but there may not be existing right-of-way wide enough to allow for construction on the other side.

⁴If the Towns wish to consider constructing brick sidewalks, MAPC recommends consulting the City of Cambridge Pedestrian Plan as a model for appropriate brick sidewalk design standards.

Crosswalks

Marked crosswalks contribute towards pedestrian safety. Crosswalks should be provided at intersections where there is pedestrian activity, be placed at regular intervals and convenient locations, and be visible to both the motorist and the pedestrian. ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps should be provided at all crosswalks.

MAPC recommends utilizing the continental or ladder style crosswalks as opposed to the standard marking style (two parallel bars), because the former is more visible to motorists. Crosswalks should be at least 10' wide, and should consist of non-skid, thermoplastic, retro-reflective material. Although this material is initially more costly than paint, it is longer lasting and requires less maintenance; therefore, it is more cost effective in the longer run.

As with sidewalks, crosswalks should be smooth and accessible for those in wheelchairs and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Brick crosswalks, therefore, should be avoided. The Towns may wish, however, to utilize enhanced crosswalk designs that do not impede users' ability to cross. These designs include different colored pavements (as is currently used in parts of the Village) and/or bands of decorative paving (e.g., bricks) along the outside edges of the crosswalk (i.e., not within the pedestrian path of travel).

The network plan recommends a number of locations where crosswalks should be present, including mid-block crossings. Because motorists are less likely to expect a mid-block crossing,

additional warning indicators (e.g., flashing lights, signs, advanced yield markings) should be utilized to alert motorists to pedestrians crossing the roadway.

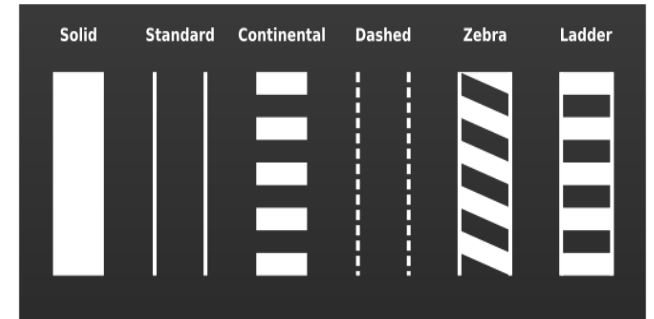
Mid-block crossings on the network plan include:

1. Route 1A at Linden Street – this is an important crossing that a number of residents utilize. It also forms the beginning of what many consider the Village, thus making it the “gateway” to the neighborhood.
2. Route 1A at Pingree Park – this park and sports fields provides an off-road connection to the Hamilton Wenham Library.
3. Walnut Road at the existing Gulf Gas Station – behind the station a trail (along a gas pipeline) provides an important connection to residential areas in Hamilton.

Several residents at the public meetings also recommended installing a crosswalk on Willow Street at Asbury Street. In addition, several areas are noted on the map as “enhanced crossings.” In addition to crosswalks, these are important locations that could benefit from additional treatments, described in the following section.



Example of ladder style crosswalk



Crosswalk styles (Source: commons.wikimedia.org)

Enhanced Crossings

While crosswalks are one of the most important elements to providing a safe crossing for pedestrians, there several other treatments that can improve the safety or increase the attractiveness of an intersection. These enhancements may be broadly divided into two groups: Safety and Aesthetics.

Safety



In-street Yield to Pedestrian Signs

These signs are placed in the center of the roadway at crosswalk locations to increase the visibility of pedestrians and remind motorists to yield to them.



ADA Compliance

Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design applies to all projects involving new or altered pedestrian facilities. While these improvements for people with disabilities are mandated, street designs that accommodate people with disabilities create a better walking environment for all pedestrians.



Advanced Yield Lines

These markings encourage drivers to stop further back from crosswalks and improves visibility of pedestrians.



Pedestrian Rapid-Flash Beacons

On roadways with high speeds, especially multiple lanes in each direction, pedestrians often have difficulty crossing even with the presence of a crosswalk. Rapid-flash beacons have been shown to improve yield compliance by motorists and increase pedestrian safety. These may be used in areas where there are crucial safety concerns. These beacons, which may be solar-powered, are less expensive than mast-arm mounted signals.



Curb Extensions

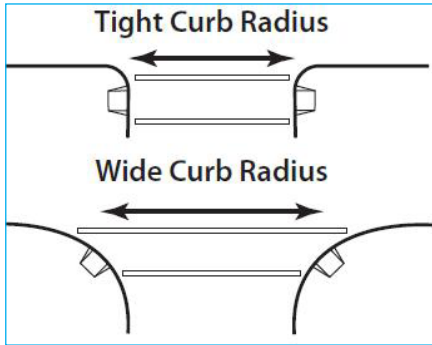
Also known as neckdowns, bump-outs, or bulb-outs, these extend the sidewalk at crossings, which decrease the crossing distance for pedestrians and increase their visibility. Emergency access is often improved because intersections are kept clear of parked cars. They should only be utilized where on-street parking is present (i.e., they should not be used to reduce a travel lane or a bicycle lane to an unsafe width).



Crossing (Refuge) Islands

These are raised islands used on high-speed roads to interrupt long crosswalks. These raised areas allow pedestrians to cross fewer lanes at a time, provide a refuge so that slower pedestrians can wait for a break in the traffic stream, allow pedestrians to focus on traffic from only one direction at a time, and reduce the total distance over which pedestrians are exposed to conflicts with motor vehicles.

Aesthetics



Tightened Curb Radii

Curb radii is the measurement of the sharpness of a corner at an intersection. Generally, a smaller or tighter curb radius is better for pedestrians, because among other reasons, they require vehicles to slow as they turn the corner and improve sight distance between pedestrians and drivers. An appropriate turning radius for new construction is approximately 15 feet (25 feet for arterial streets that carry a significant volume of turning buses and/or trucks); however, having curb radii that accommodate emergency vehicles (e.g., the ability to turn at an intersection) is an essential consideration.

There are a number of potential improvements that can apply not only to the enhanced intersections, but throughout the village area as well, including:

- Period lighting;
- Way-finding elements (e.g., business directory kiosks);
- Seating and other streetscape elements; and,
- Placemaking opportunities (e.g., pocket parks).

Please refer to the Streets as Placemaking Opportunities subsection for additional details.

Table 6 provides a summary of the recommendations for the Enhanced Crossings, located on Route 1A at Asbury Street, Walnut Street, and Railroad Avenue. Implementation of any recommendations should occur in consultation with the Department of Public Works and any other relevant stakeholders (e.g., emergency departments). In addition, many of the elements featured in the enhanced crossings can be implemented at other areas throughout the Village, as desired by the Town.

Safety

Table 4: Enhanced Intersections Improvement Summary

		Crosswalks	Pedestrian Signs or Signals	Curb Extensions	Tightened Curb Radii
Rt. 1A @ Asbury Street		✓	✓		✓
Rt. 1A @ Walnut Street		✓			✓
Rt. 1A @ Railroad Ave.		✓	✓	✓	✓
Notes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Highly visible » “Ladder” style » Walkable material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Mid-road signs alert motorists to pedestrians » Signals cost more but may increase safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Reduces pedestrian crossing distance » Increases visibility of pedestrians by motorists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Reduces speed of turning vehicles » Should be reduced only to extent that emergency vehicles can safely turn

Safety

Aesthetics

ADA Compliance	Pedestrian Crossing Islands	Advanced Yield Markings	Period Lighting	Wayfinding	Streetscape Elements	Placemaking
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
» Applies to a variety of elements, such as grade of curb cuts, tactile ramps, etc.	» Provides refuge for pedestrians crossing busy / wide roads	» Alerts motorists to upcoming crosswalks	» Applies along entire stretch of Route 1A and Railroad Avenue within the Village	» Business kiosks » Community billboards	» Benches » Trees (provide shade, filter air) » Planters » Etc.	» Pocket parks or Parklets » Events » Sculptures

Bicycle Infrastructure

Bicycle lanes provide an exclusive space for bicyclists within the roadway, designated by striping and markings. While they have been used in larger cities for years, they are becoming increasingly popular in a number of communities within the metropolitan Boston region. For example, this accompanying photograph illustrates a recently constructed bicycle lane in Hudson, MA.

Bicycle lanes should typically be 5' in width, although they may be reduced to as narrow as 4' if necessary (e.g., because of limited right-of-way width). When adjacent to on-street parallel parking, bicycle lanes should be at least five feet wide in order to avoid potential conflicts with motorists opening their doors into the lanes (known as “dooring”), a major cause of bicycle crashes.

The network plan identifies the following streets for bicycle lanes:

- Route 1A
- Linden Street
- Railroad Avenue
- Asbury Street

In each of these roadways bicycle lanes may be added to the roadway without altering the existing curb-to-curb width, which provides a significant cost savings over reconstructing the width of the roadway. See the subsection Existing and Proposed Cross Sections for additional details on how the roadway space may be allocated for the various users.

In addition to bicycle lanes, adequate bicycle parking is needed to ensure that cyclists have appropriate places to lock their bicycles while in the Village.



Recently installed bicycle lanes on Manning Road, Hudson

Streets as Placemaking Opportunities

While efficiency of travel is an important component to the roadway network, a neighborhood's streets, especially in a downtown or village setting, are also important places that can greatly affect its character, comfort, and livability. They can help drive economic development, build community, and inject life into an area. Furthermore, elements to the streetscape can provide a psychological connection throughout the area. A number of residents commented that although the site is not extremely large (e.g., Route 1A from Linden Street to Asbury Street is approximately 1/3 mile) the Village does not always feel connected or cohesive.

Period Lighting

One way to increase the feeling of a connected neighborhood within the Village is through the installation of period lighting throughout the area, especially along Route 1A and on Railroad Avenue. This may increase the "sense of place" when members of the community are within the Village by providing a visual cue that the area is a cohesive place. Period lighting also has the benefit of emphasizing the historic aspect of the Hamilton-Wenham Village and improving pedestrian safety by having human-scaled lights along the roadway.

Traditionally lit by gas, light bulbs are now sometimes used. In both cases timers that turn on the lamps at dusk reduce costs to the Town by limiting energy usage to the times when the lights are necessary.



Figure 9: Proposed Period Street Lighting Locations



Wayfinding Elements

The network plan identifies several areas for potential wayfinding elements, which orient visitors and describe the retail and commercial destinations in the area, as well as community events and announcements.

As identified on the Network Plan, the shopping center and Railroad Avenue near the intersection of Route 1A are high-visibility locations for business directory kiosks. Route 1A near Walnut Road and Route 1A near the Community House of Hamilton and Wenham are two appropriate locations for community billboards.



Example of business directory kiosk



Example of community billboard

Seating

When placed in locations with large numbers of pedestrians, especially near transit or retail locations, they can add life to an area by providing an opportunity for people to linger in an area.

Adequate seating also provides periodic opportunities for pedestrians to rest during their trips throughout the Village, which is especially important for elderly and disabled populations.



Seating should be comfortable and allow multiple people to sit at one time.

Parklets and/or Pocket Parks

Parklets are small patio-style spaces for pedestrians to sit and linger, often located in one or more existing on-street parking spaces. They often combine elements such as seating, trees, and lighting to reflect the unique character of the location. When located adjacent to cafes or restaurants, they can act as an outdoor seating space if there is inadequate room on the sidewalk. Because they do not require a permanent concrete base, parklets are a relatively inexpensive and quick way to bring life to a street; furthermore, they are often paid for by non-Town entities, such as property owner hosts and other sponsors (while remaining publicly accessible). They can be done on a pilot basis to assess their affect on both parking needs and on the community. Studies suggest that Parklets enhance surrounding businesses as they attract people to the location and provide a place to linger.

Small parks (pocket parks) can provide a place for people to linger and/or children to play (e.g., a playground). In order to be highly utilized, they should be located in areas with relatively high volumes of pedestrians. The Network Plan identifies several areas that may be appropriate places for constructing small parks. These parks could be permanent or used in the interim prior to a long-term development.



Example of a parklet. Parklets can be constructed in a variety of ways with various materials, types of seating, types of plantings, and sizes.

Existing and Proposed Cross Sections

The following are examples of cross sections illustrating existing and proposed conditions of several streets within the Village, incorporating the recommendations provided above. These cross sections highlight different options to show how pedestrian and bicyclist improvements can be made by reallocating existing roadway space.⁵

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation recommends non-local roads (i.e., roads classified as collectors or arterials) to have a vehicular travel lane width of 10 to 12 feet. Narrower travel lanes have the effect of “calming traffic,” which improves the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, an important consideration within the Hamilton-Wenham Village. MAPC often recommends narrowing the travel lanes to the extent practicable, both to allow for the installation of bicycle lanes, as well as to calm the traffic within this area.

⁵Note that the following cross-sections were based upon individual measurements during site visits. The actual conditions along the road segment may vary, and therefore, the Department of Public Works should verify roadway widths and conditions to determine whether the recommendations proposed below are practicable along the entire roadway segment.

Route 1A

Route 1A provides the dual role of being the primary corridor within the Village, while also being an important road for commuters traveling through the area. A goal of this road is to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists without causing overly detrimental affects to motorists. The primary deficiency on this roadway is the lack of sidewalks on both sides of the street.

In addition recommendations for this segment include:

1. Constructing a sidewalk on the northbound side of the roadway. The sidewalk should meet ADA requirements and be at least 5 feet wide, depending upon the right-of-way limitations
2. Installing 4.5 foot bicycle lanes in both directions. Currently, the northbound side has a 5 foot shoulder, parts of which are used for parking for commuters. The Town should explore whether adequate parking exists in the commuter rail lot, which would allow for a bicycle lane on this important roadway section.
3. Narrowing the vehicular travel lanes to 10 feet.
4. Installing period lighting, trees, and other streetscape elements to improve the comfort and safety of pedestrians. See the Sidewalks subsection for additional information.

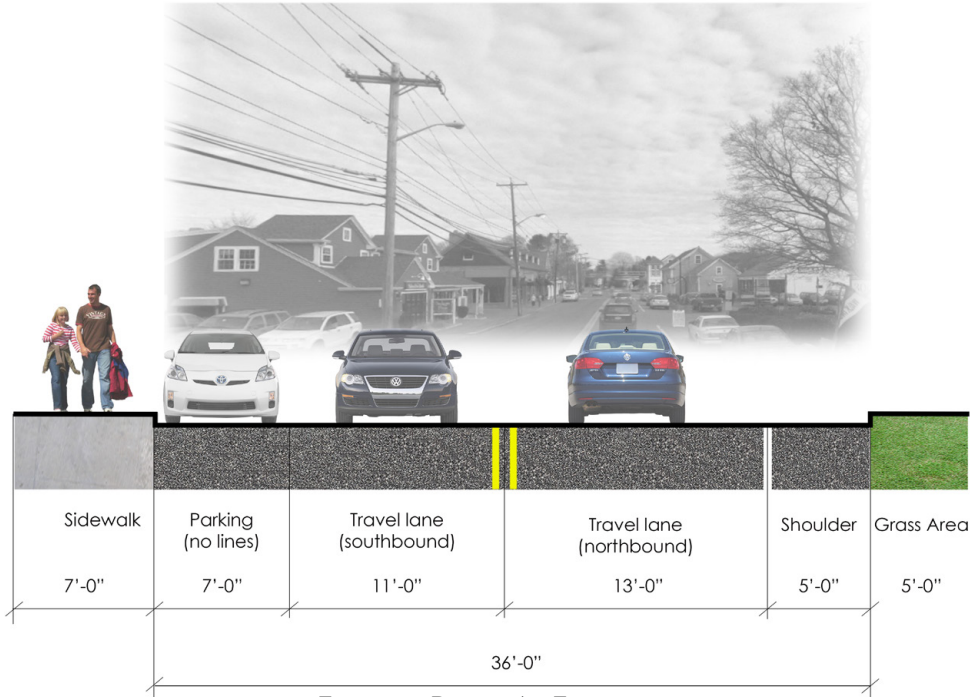


Figure 10: Route 1A - Existing

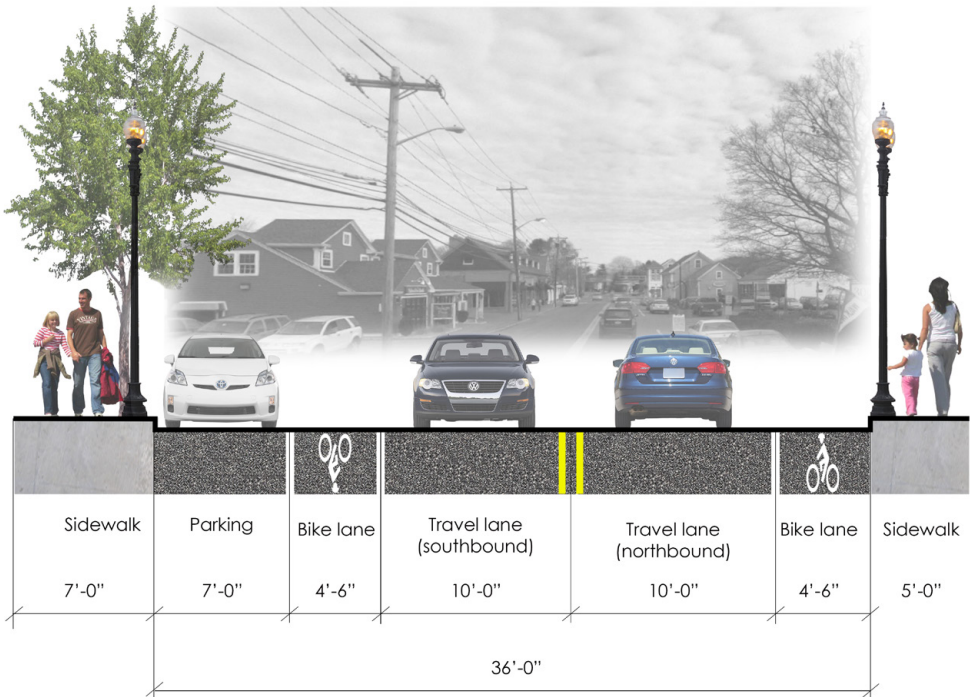


Figure 11: Route 1A - Proposed

If the northbound parking is unable to be removed, a bicycle lane could be provided on one side of the street, while on the other side shared lane markings (sharrows) could be provided. Sharrows are pavement markings on streets popular with bicyclists but too narrow for conventional bicycle lanes and alert motorists that bicycles may be present on the roadway. In this scenario the bicycle lane should be 5 feet.



Example of a sharrow

Railroad Avenue

As the existing conditions diagram illustrates, Railroad Avenue has relatively wide sidewalks on both sides of the street. (See the *Sidewalks* subsection for additional recommendations). The travel lane, however, is extremely wide, thus providing an opportunity to include bicycle accommodations.

The Proposed Alternative provides one possible way to reallocate the roadway space by providing a buffered bicycle lane. Buffered bicycle lanes are conventional bicycle lanes paired with a designated buffer space separating the bicycle lane from the adjacent motor vehicle travel lane and/or parking lane through painted pavement markings.

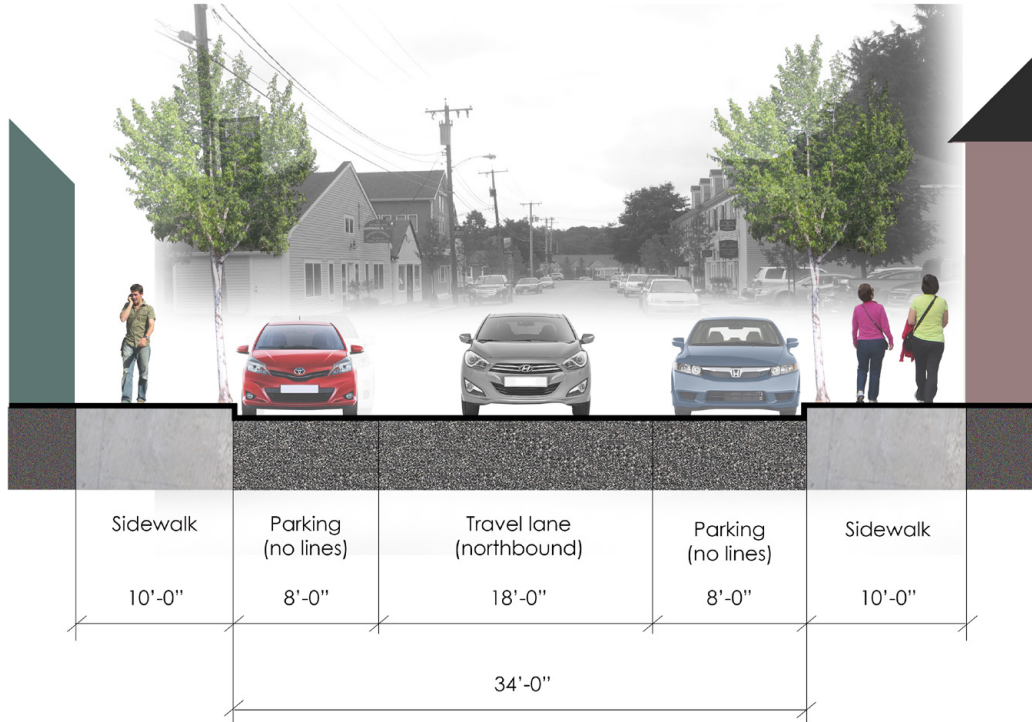


Figure 12: Railroad Avenue - Existing

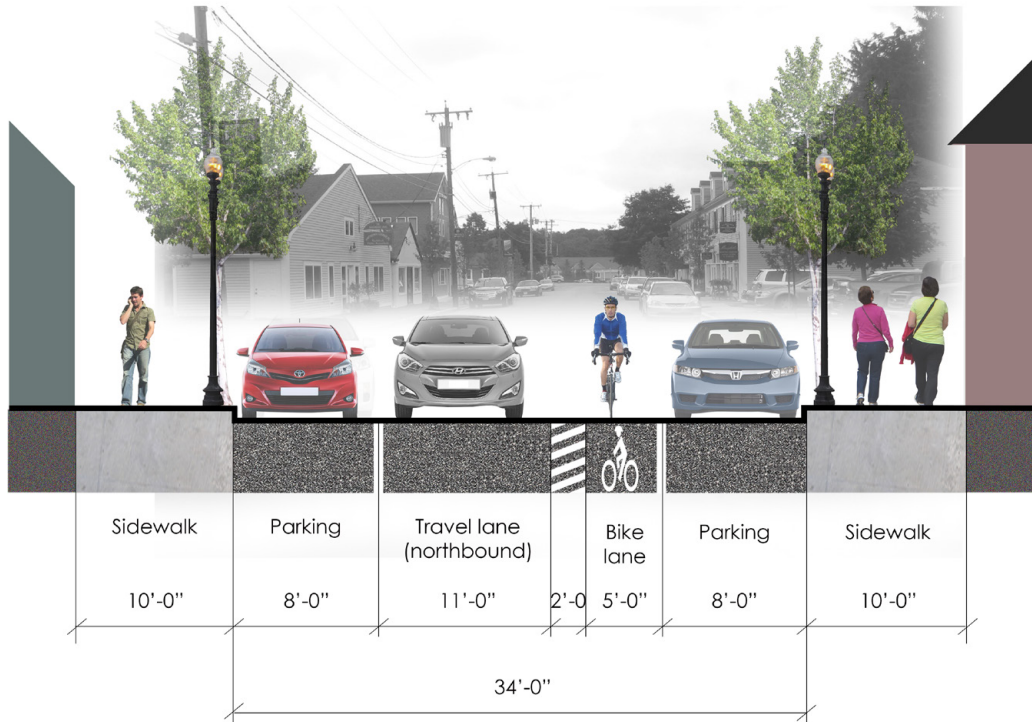
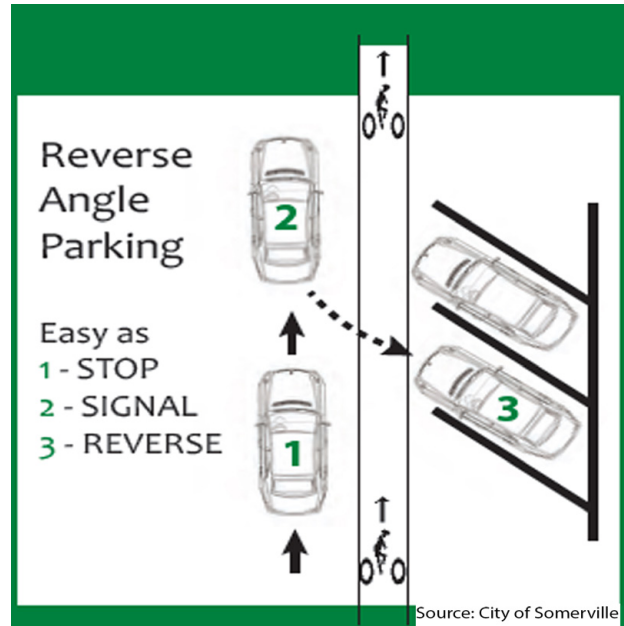


Figure 13: Railroad Avenue - Proposed

An additional option for Railroad Avenue is to remove parking on the northeastern side of the street and install angle parking on the southwestern side. According to estimates using aerial imagery, the segment of Railroad Avenue within the site area currently can contain approximately 21 vehicles. Angle parking on the southwestern side (45 degree angle) would yield approximately 27 spaces, thus increasing the number of vehicles that can park in this important area.

MAPC strongly recommends installing reverse angle parking rather than the traditional head-on angle parking. Reverse angle parking improves safety for pedestrians and cyclists by improving motorists' visibility and reduces accidents because motorists avoid having to back out blindly from parking spaces. It also improves safety for loading and unloading children and cargo, since all sides of the vehicle are shielded from oncoming traffic.

Table 7 summarizes the potential roadway allocation for the two scenarios on Railroad Avenue.



Reverse angle parking provides motorists have improved view of cyclists and other cars

Table 5 Railroad Avenue roadway allocation scenarios

Option A: Buffered Bicycle Lane	Sidewalk (northeast side)	Parking lane	Travel lane	Bicycle lane	Parking lane	Sidewalk (southwest side)
Width:	10'	8'	11'	5' + 2' buffer	8'	10'
Option B: Reverse Angle-in Parking	Sidewalk (northeast side)	Bicycle lane	Travel lane	Parking lane (angle-in)	Sidewalk (southwest side)	
Width:	10'	5' + 2' buffer	11'	16'	10'	

Linden Street

As the Linden Street existing section illustrates, the street segment lacks a sidewalk on the southbound side and has wider than recommended travel lanes. The proposed condition constructs a sidewalk and stripes a 4' bicycle lane in each direction. Note that this does not require a change to the centerline location, thus the bicycle lane addition can be accomplished without a total repaving and restriping of the street.

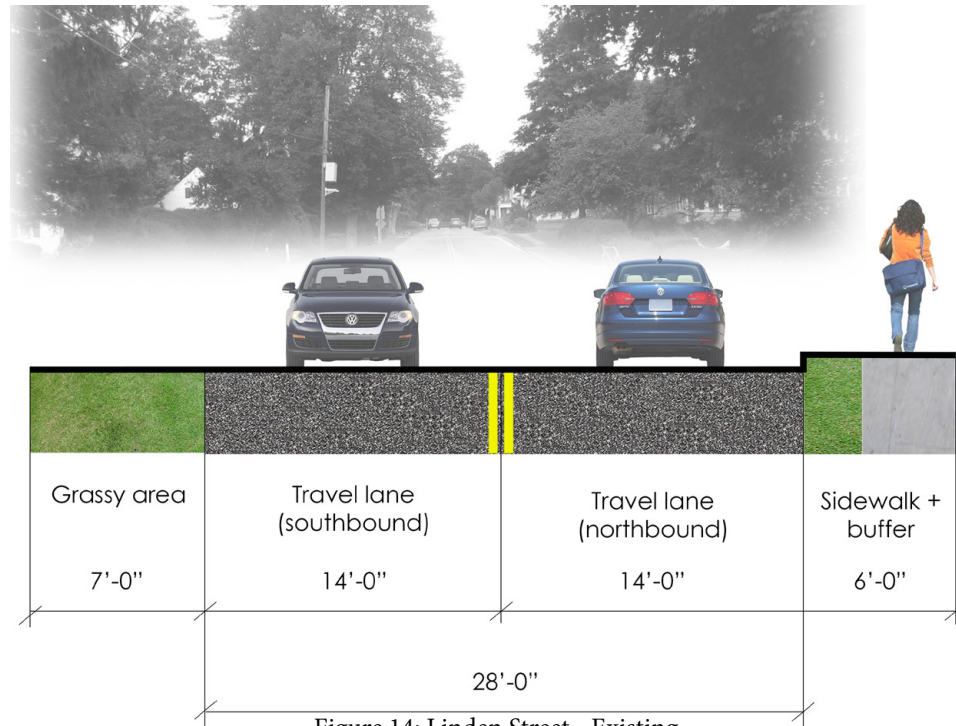


Figure 14: Linden Street - Existing

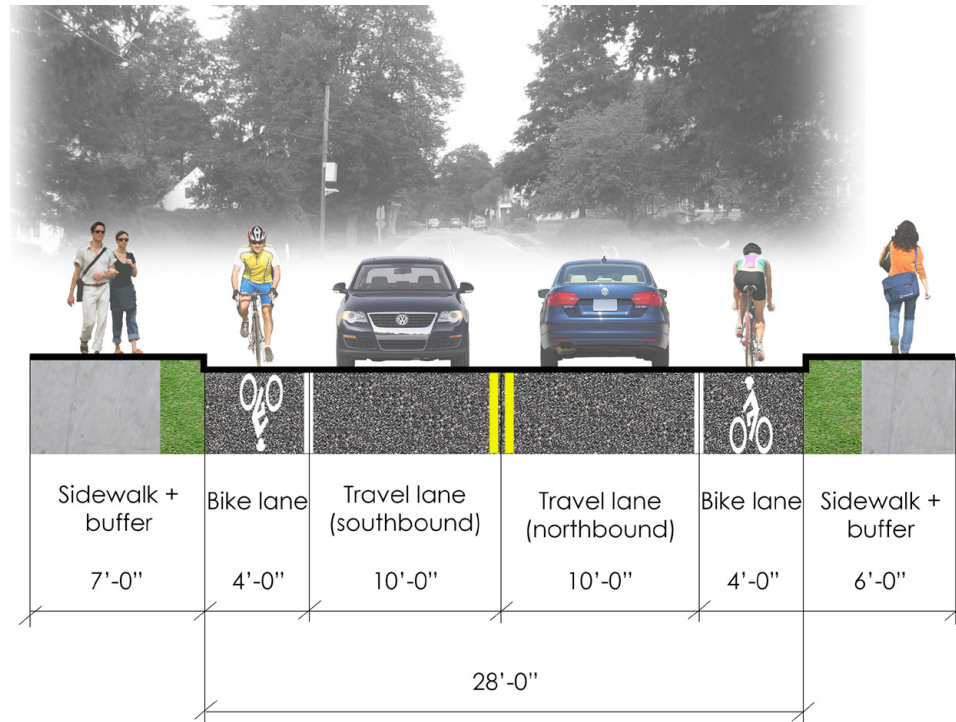


Figure 15: Linden Street - Proposed





**ZONING FOR A VIBRANT,
MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD**

Zoning Assessment

One of most important components of the vision, which the towns of Hamilton and Wenham both have jurisdiction over, is the zoning in the Village study area. The existing zoning was identified as an impediment to new development by MAPC in our analysis of zoning and development feasibility. This section describes the existing zoning characteristics in the Village, identifies the impediments, and offers recommendations to improve the zoning and make it more flexible to allow for the type of development identified by the community in the vision.

Background

The Hamilton section of the Village study area is a traditional New England style village that serves to meet local shopping needs for Hamilton and Wenham residents. Modestly scaled offices, stores and homes on smaller lots, most of which pre-date the adoption of zoning in Hamilton (1954), make up most of the 26-acre Business District. The small Village area, which grew around the junction of two Eastern Railroad railway lines in the mid 1800s, also includes the Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing, and serves as both a gateway to South Hamilton and a local transit hub, with the Hamilton-Wenham MBTA commuter rail station located just over the town boundary in Wenham. In keeping with its heritage of agriculture, open space preservation and equestrian activities, the relatively small Village is located adjacent to Patton Park, itself a donation from the Patton family to the town and less than a mile from Myopia Hunt Club, founded in 1882, 414-acres of fields and

open space that separates the Hamilton-Wenham Village area from the Hamilton Historic District, the original settlement area in the town.

The Wenham section of the Hamilton-Wenham Village study area consists primarily of the MBTA commuter rail station and parking area, Pingree Park, the Haley farm property, and a small number of commercial and residential properties with frontage on Bay Road and Linden Street. This part of the study area is the northern extension of Wenham's Village center, itself a small, traditional New England settlement with deep agricultural and open space roots. Zoned for business but protected by the Wenham Historic District Overlay, it extends south along Bay Road to Cherry Street and includes landmarks such as Wenham Town Hall and Common, the Wenham Museum, Congregational Church and residences along Main Street. Primarily residential in nature, Wenham Village contains very few businesses and historically, Hamilton has served as the commercial center for both Village areas since the 19th century.

Anchoring Wenham's strong ties to the same agricultural and equestrian based economy associated with neighboring Hamilton, the Haley Farm stands opposite Pingree Park and includes barns, stone walls and open fields. Though still active as an equestrian center, the Haley Farm is zoned for commercial use by Wenham and its large size stands in contrast to the mostly smaller lot sizes found in the Hamilton section of the Hamilton-Wenham Village study area.

The Hamilton-Wenham study area is comprised primarily of business zoning districts in both towns, with a smaller amount of residentially zoned property included in Hamilton. The Hamilton

Business District (B), including the Willow Street Overlay District, along with the Wenham Business District (B-1) make up the most of the study area. The Winthrop School property, located along Bay Road in Hamilton at the northeast end of the study area, is zoned for residential use (R-1b). The school was included in the study as it a center of community activity and a destination point for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Residential districts make up the majority of the land surrounding the study area, with R1-a zoning abutting the study area in Hamilton, except that the protected open space of Patton Park (underlain by R-1b zoning) abuts the area just beyond Asbury Street in Hamilton. Wenham's single Residential District surrounds the large percentage of its Business District that is included in the study area. Figure 15 below shows the existing zoning districts within the study area and adjacent areas.

Both Hamilton and Wenham provide access to public water supplied by their respective Water Departments but neither town provides sewer services. One of the primary limitations on development within the Village study area has been the lack of adequate wastewater treatment, primarily within the more developed Hamilton Business District, which with its smaller lots and numerous small businesses, serves as the commercial center for both communities. The Hamilton Development Corporation, formed following the completion of Hamilton's 2004 Master Plan and 2009 Downtown Charrette, is actively studying wastewater disposal options for Hamilton that would allow the expansion of existing small businesses within the Village area and support the introduction of additional mixed-use and housing options the town has continued to express support for.

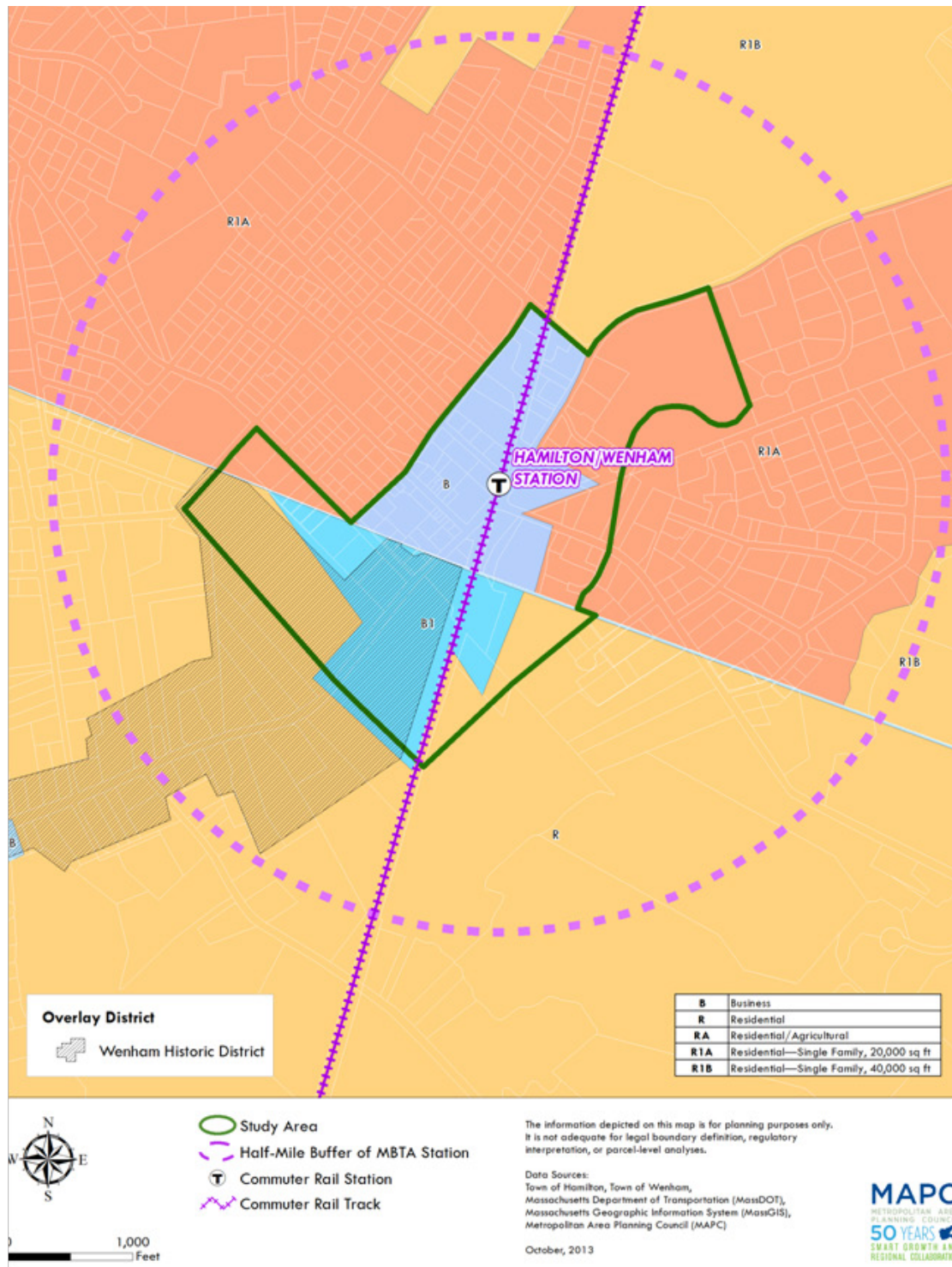


Figure 16: Hamilton-Wenham Study Area Zoning

The current zoning districts in the Village area are fairly exclusive to their dominant use classes. That is, the business districts allow primarily commercial development (retail and service establishments), while the residential districts are fairly exclusive to residential development. The result is that there are few opportunities to mix uses and, as most of the study area is devoted to business uses, there are limited means to support additional residential uses in the Hamilton-Wenham Village. The only exceptions are the regulations within the Willow Street Overlay District, a small, four-lot overlay district located within the Hamilton Business District.

Business Districts

The 26-acre Hamilton Business District provides small retail, services, offices and neighborhood shopping, with single family homes and agricultural uses allowed as well. The conversion of former homes and modifications to existing businesses have seen the Business District gradually grow out from the Village-north towards Asbury Street and south towards Wenham. The single-family residential, as well as agricultural uses permitted in both R-1a and R-1b are also allowed within the Business district, though all are subject to some Special Permit requirements. All allowed uses in the district are subject to Site Plan Review by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Beyond the uses mentioned, gas stations, auto repair and sales, funeral homes, limited manufacturing, research and development, wind energy conversion systems and adult entertainment are all uses permitted by Special Permit and also require Site Plan Review. There is no formal process for design review beyond Site

Plan Review and the town does not have a set of design guideline standards in place.

The Willow Street Overlay District (WSOD), consisting of four properties within the Hamilton Business District, was put in place by the town in 2010 in order to increase Hamilton's taxable commercial land use base by attracting new business and job growth to the Village and surrounding residential neighborhoods. The average lot size within the WSOD is .81 acres. Business (B) underlying uses such as single-family homes, retail, services, offices and restaurants are allowed uses in the WSOD while also adding multi-family residential and mixed uses by Special Permit from the Planning Board. The WSOD offers significant design flexibility in height, density and parking but is somewhat limited in scope due to its reduced area.

Wenham's Business District within the study area is 21-acres, thirteen of which are taken up by the Haley Farm property. The sixteen Business zoned properties have an average lot size of .51 acres and by-right uses include single family residential, retail/wholesale shops, offices, banks, service establishments and agricultural/horticultural uses. Special Permit review is required for uses such as clubs or lodges, nursing homes, bed and breakfasts, accessory apartments and home occupations. Multi-family residential is allowed only within the Senior Housing Overlay District by Special Permit. Wenham does have a Flexible Development Option but it does not apply to the Business District. Manufacturing, warehouse uses, contractors' yards or transport terminals are prohibited uses within it B District.

Residential Districts

While the residential districts comprise a smaller proportion of the study area in Hamilton and Wenham, they are important to understand as context for potential zoning changes.

In Hamilton, about 21% of the study area consists of residential uses and the residential zoning within the Village study area is R-1a, single-family zoning requiring a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet. The R-1a District is Hamilton's highest density district and provides only for single-family residential uses as of right, with no two-family or multi-family residential uses allowed. The district provides for a range of community uses, as well as including home occupations and small boarding houses, and customary accessory uses. No additional commercial or mixed uses are allowed in R-1a.

Wenham has a single Residential (R) District for zoning. It is somewhat similar to Hamilton's R-1a zone as only single-family residential uses are allowed by-right, with no multi-family (two or more dwelling units) allowed. Minimum lot size is 40,000 square feet. By Special Permit, the town does permit multi-family senior housing on parcels of at least 7.5 acres in a Senior Housing Overlay District and has a Flex Development option.

Dimensional Standards

The Hamilton-Wenham Village study area is comprised of several different zoning districts creating some inconsistencies between the dimensional standards of development projects. The different zoning districts create distinct differences in the study area for building heights,

setbacks, location of parking, lot coverage, and amount of open space.

In the Village study area, particularly close to the commuter rail station where the Hamilton, and parts of the Wenham Business zoning district, are located, many buildings built prior to the adoption of zoning tend to be set closer to the street; some historically contained a mix of uses in a multi-story building, and have parking located in the side or rear yards. Further from the center of the Village area towards the R-1a District, some existing structures tend to reflect the mid-20th century single-use residential styles with deeper setbacks from the street and their neighbors, with parking often in front of the building. Since the primary focus of this study is on the two towns' business districts and the WSOD within the Hamilton-Wenham Village, it is important to note how the dimensional standards differ between these districts. The Willow Street Overlay has begun to establish dimensional standards that are used to encourage a more traditional style of development, most commonly associated with how neighborhood business centers were designed decades ago. There is some design flexibility offered through the Willow Street District. This can allow for a more compact development pattern with buildings that are designed to meet the street and engage pedestrians. Table 7 illustrates the different dimensional requirements in each of the zoning districts within the Hamilton-Wenham Village.

Table 6: Hamilton and Wenham Dimensional Standards or Study Area Zoning Districts

District	Hamilton and Wenham- Dimensional Standards for Study Area Zoning Districts											
	Hamilton											
	Use	Min lot size*	Max lot coverage	Frontage	Depth	Setbacks			Height	Stories	FAR	Open Space
Front						Side	Rear					
B	Any	*20,000	**75%	By Site Plan	75	25	****15,20	15,20	35	3	None	None
WSOD	Any	*20,000	**75%	By Site Plan	75	25	15,20	15,20	***35	3	None	None
R-1A	Any	*20,000	25%	125	100	20	15,20	15,20	35	3	None	None
Wenham												
B	Dwelling unit	40,000	70%	170	NA	20	15	15	35	2.5	None	None
B	Non-residential unit		70%	170	NA	20	15	15	35	2.5	None	None
R	Any	40,000	50%	100	NA	20	15	15	35	35	None	None
*or as provided by Special Permit by ZBA												
** or as shown on approved Site Plan												
*** height limit may be waived by PB												
**** 15, 20 setbacks:15 feet to lot line, 20 feet to nearest building												

Parking Requirements

Parking is a critical component to village and downtown development and can be an asset or a hindrance to the success of development around transit. The goal of transit oriented development is to provide options for travel that do not rely solely on personal vehicles. Limiting parking around transit stations is one way to ease traffic congestion and promote more walking, biking and transit use as part of new development. In Hamilton, parking facilities within the study area include approximately 59 spaces along Bay Road and Railroad Avenue, 42 spaces in municipal lots, 226 spaces at the Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing shopping center and 200 spaces at the commuter rail station.

The parking requirements in Hamilton and Wenham are measured on a per residential unit basis or on a square footage basis for retail and office development. There may be the opportunity to reduce the residential parking requirement to a standard more consistent with other TOD provisions. Hamilton implemented some lower parking requirements for residential and retail development following recommendations under its 2004 Master Plan, with parking determined at times on an as-needed basis during Special Permit review in the Willow Street Overlay District for multi-family and mixed use.

In Wenham, the office and retail requirements are on par with typical suburban parking standards. The Business District parking standards, however, are high if the town chooses to promote transit oriented development within the Business District near the commuter rail station it shares with Hamilton. Requiring two parking spaces per dwelling unit for all residential development, regardless of proximity to transit and daily needs will not encourage people to take trips using other modes of transportation. The current parking regulations for residential, retail and office development shown in Table 7 are the parking regulations for the zoning districts within the study area.

Table 7: Parking Requirements by District and Residential and Commercial Uses Categories

District	Use	Parking Requirement
Hamilton		
Business (B)	Residential	Residential: one space per dwelling unit
	Places of public assembly, not including churches	1 space per each three seats
	Retail and Service Establishments	1 space per 300 square feet of gross floor area
Willow Street Overlay (WSOD)	Residential, Retail, Service, Mixed Use	Match underlying B requirements or sufficient to serve use needs by Special Permit
Residential (R-1A)	Residential, schools and allowed uses	1 space per dwelling unit and 300 square feet space
Wenham		
Business (B) and Residential (R)	Residential	2 spaces per dwelling unit
	Nursing Home/Assisted Living	1 space per two rooms
	Place of Public Assembly	1 space per 4 seats
	Retail Business, personal or general service establishment	1 space for each 200 square feet of gross floor area
Business (B) and Residential (R)	Restaurant	1 space per 4 seats
	All other permitted uses	Sufficient parking as determined by Planning Board

Zoning Opportunities and Impediments

There are several parts of the existing zoning bylaws regulating development in the Hamilton-Wenham Village and elsewhere in the two towns that offer opportunities for encouraging development around transit, as well as parts that are potential impediments to this type of development. This section will mostly focus on the two Business districts and the Willow Street Overlay District, since these districts regulate a majority of the land within the Hamilton-Wenham Village. However, these opportunities, impediments, and recommendations could be applied to other transit oriented growth areas the two Towns may want to promote in the future.

Opportunity

Opportunity: Building Height – Within the Willow Street Overlay District, the Planning Board has discretion over non-residential and mixed-use building heights under the Special Permit process. For areas with smaller, shallower parcels like much of the Hamilton part of the Village, height flexibility can offer development feasibility versus being restricted to shorter buildings that may not fit well on a smaller lot. Generally, if there is concern about creating a wall of building along relatively narrow streets, the town could consider a slight step back of the upper two floors. If height and massing are a concern in this area, the town should continue to address this through design review or design criteria instead of specific height restriction clauses.

Opportunity: Open Space – Both the Hamilton and Wenham Business Districts, and Willow Street Overlay, have no open space requirements. While the incorporation of open space on development sites is important, open space requirements that are too high can limit the ability of developers to construct buildings large enough to cover costs. The Hamilton-Wenham Village already benefits from a number of inclusive or nearby large open spaces and recreation areas including Pingree Park, Patton Park and Myopia Hunt Club. In addition, both towns do limit impervious coverage in each of their Business zones- 75 percent in Hamilton, 70 percent in Wenham- which could help balance the zero percent open space requirement. For the Willow Street Overlay area, Hamilton may

wish to consider allowing waiving the lot coverage regulation under the Special Permit process to provide more flexibility in siting mixed use.

Opportunity: Parking – The Willow Street Overlay District allows the Planning Board discretion to permit parking sufficient to meet the various uses found in a mixed-use project, with the burden of proof being on the applicant to show how shared parking or reduced overall parking can be appropriate.

Opportunity-Frontage – The Zoning Board of Appeals determines frontage for the Willow Street Overlay District using the Site Plan Review process. For older, narrower lots, many of which may have been in existence since long before zoning was adopted, this process can provide flexibility in establishing frontage requirements for lots that may otherwise be restricted. However, establishing frontage by Site Plan Review establishes an uncertainty for a potential developer planning a project. The Town may wish to consider adding a reasonable frontage requirement for the Willow Street Overlay (MAPC has suggested 50 feet) to remove project uncertainty and complexity; a dimensional variance for frontage could still be sought if a lot could not meet this requirement.

Impediments

Impediment: Implementing new zoning regulations

- There are three basic options for changing zoning requirements:

- One option is to adjust the current underlying zoning district regulations in a zoning district to reflect these changes;
- The second is implementing a new , or expanding an existing overlay district;
- The third is to create a brand new zoning district.

While the first option obviates the need for an additional district, it runs the risk of running against established uses and traditions within an area and may require a community to make difficult political decisions on what land uses and zoning dimensions to change, add or discard.

An overlay district allows the underlying uses in a zoning district to continue while adding new ones under certain conditions. A property owner can develop his or her property using either the existing underlying zoning or choose the uses offered under the overlay district, agreeing to be permitted using the overlay's regulations. The overlay method allows a more gradual land use transition. Over time, if development constraints (such as adding wastewater treatment) are remedied, transit-oriented downtown and village areas such as the Hamilton-Wenham Village may become increasingly valuable and the market may shift towards building more inherently valuable mixed use projects.

Creating a new zoning district, while more straightforward to permit than an overlay district, may raise some of the same issues as adjusting

an existing zoning district. It can also create significant use and dimensional non-conformity issues for existing property owners and can potentially reduce the number of choices a landowner has to develop their property.

Each of these tools has applicability in certain situations.

Recommendation: This recommendation is aimed primarily at the Hamilton section of the Village study area, where most of the commercial activity and businesses that serve both communities take place. Wenham may choose to consider it for those areas of its Business District that now have commercial development. Since it may not be appropriate to make wholesale changes to the Hamilton Business District, or create a new Village Zoning Business District for the reasons described above, MAPC recommends that the current Willow Street Overlay District be expanded to overlay all of the Hamilton Business District.

The new Hamilton Village Overlay District would build on the Willow Street Overlay District adopted by the Town in 2010. It offers modified dimensional language and additional site planning guidelines, while preserving current uses and permitting processes. The Village Overlay District will set regulations that are consistent with the principles and goals of this study and promote mixed-use, walkable development around transit. The Town can work with residents, business owners, and property owners to define the final boundaries of the overlay district as well as engage in further discussion about the appropriate uses and regulations for the overlay district. See Town of Hamilton Village

Overlay Draft Bylaw Appendix.

Impediments found within the current Willow Street Overlay and Hamilton Business District (WSOD) and further recommendations include the following:

- **Lot size within WSOD** - The current minimum lot size within the overlay is 20,000 square feet, matching the underlying B District requirement as well as the adjacent R1-a required lot area. MAPC's recommendation under the Village Overlay is to reduce the required lot size to 10,000 square feet, which would allow a small business owner an opportunity to do a small mixed use project while still allowing for larger development. Variance requests for dimensional relief tend to discourage small business projects and make it more expensive to build or expand. Special permit review and increased use of appropriate design guidelines can prevent poorly designed projects.
- **Density of allowed development within WSOD** - The overlay district currently offers no limit on the number of dwelling units per acre. While smaller lot sizes, parking requirements, height guidelines and lot coverage restrictions will probably mean smaller village developments overall, MAPC is recommending that the town consider a limit of 8 residential units per acre, a density more appropriate for a smaller suburban village setting.
- **Height limits within WSOD** - Consider making one of the considerations for

raising building height in the Village Overlay beyond 35 feet if 10% of housing units, with a minimum of one unit required for smaller projects, are kept affordable as defined by the town's inclusionary housing bylaw. This could help meet the projected demand by seniors and younger people for smaller, more diverse housing options near the village area, services and transit.

- **Setbacks in the WSOD and Hamilton Business District** – The setbacks in these two zoning districts are currently higher than what would typically be seen in a walkable, mixed-use, transit oriented Hamilton-Wenham Village. Front yard setbacks are currently at a minimum of 25 feet, side and rear yards at 15 or 20 feet depending on whether adjoining a lot line or a building . Recommendation: Reduce the front yard setbacks in the overlay district to a 0 foot minimum and institute a 20 foot maximum, with flexibility granted to the Planning Board to use average setbacks in the area as a guide instead. Reduce minimum side yard setbacks to ten feet and rear yards to 15 feet. Reducing front set backs where appropriate discourages locating parking in the front of the lot and reducing overall setbacks offers more design flexibility for smaller village lots where space can be at a premium.
- **Design Guidelines in the WSOD District and the Village area** – The 2004 Hamilton Master Plan recommended that the town develop downtown/village

design guidelines and integrate them into Site Plan Review. MAPC has added additional language in the Draft Village Overlay District Bylaw to augment what is currently in the WSOD, adding clarifying language on parking, pedestrian access and bicycle guidelines, landscaping, lighting, appearance and architectural design. In addition, MAPC has developed a Design Review Guidelines Template that the town, perhaps working in accord with its Village neighbor Wenham, may wish to complete and use to help visually guide development in the Village study area. Though certainly not a complete design assessment and guide, a simple booklet can offer valuable pre-application guidance to those considering building or expanding and are used in many communities. See Design Review Guidelines Template Appendix.

- **Allowed uses definitions** – The Hamilton Zoning Bylaw, Section VII, Definitions, does not include definitions for key allowed Business and WSOD uses including Mixed Residential and Commercial, Retail Store or Service Establishment, Business or Professional Office, Restaurant or Other Place for Serving Food. The town should consider discussing and then adding definitions for these uses to avoid confusion in the permitting process and to better protect itself legally in the case of a disputed or appealed permitting decision.
- **Size limits for retail/office uses** – The Hamilton Zoning Bylaw does not define different types or sizes of retail and office use by size. The Town may wish to limit the

size of retail and office businesses allowed in both the Business District and Village Overlay District so as to prevent confusion and inappropriate applications of oversized retail in the Village area, assuming that wastewater utilities are successfully installed.

- **Smaller uses allowed by-right in Village Overlay** – The Town should discuss allowing small office, retail, service and restaurants in the Village Overlay as allowed uses subject to Site Plan Review, but not requiring Special Permit. Allowing small business of up to 2,500-3,000 square feet gross floor area that can meet Site Plan Review, parking requirements and design guidelines will help make permitting less onerous for small business owners and can help attract additional businesses to the area.
- **Impediment: Parking Ratios** – The parking ratios for office and retail development in the Hamilton and Wenham Business districts are consistent with industry standards for suburban development, but are slightly higher than what may be appropriate for an area with easy access to transit. The current ratio for office and retail development in the Hamilton bylaw is 1 parking space for every 300 square feet of development (3.33 spaces per 1,000 square feet). MAPC would recommend that the town consider increasing their minimum parking requirements for retail and office development from 1 space per 300 square feet to 1 space per 350 square feet.

In Wenham, the residential parking ratio of 2 spaces per dwelling unit regardless of unit size is also higher than what may be typical of development around transit. Allowing developers to construct more parking than what may actually be warranted encourages residents to own cars and drive more. This adds to local traffic impacts, reduces roadway safety, and negatively impacts local water and air quality. Current parking requirements for retail, personal and general service establishments call for one space per 200 square feet of gross floor area. MAPC recommends that Wenham consider increasing this to one space per 350 feet of gross floor space.

MAPC also recommends that each community consider implementing parking minimums and maximums for residential units based on the number of bedrooms per unit. MAPC recommends the Towns consider a tiered set of parking minimums and maximums as described below:

- Studio and One Bedroom Units - Minimum of 0.5 spaces per unit to a maximum of 1 space per unit.
- Two Bedroom Units - Minimum of 1 space per unit to a maximum of 1.5 spaces per unit.
- Three + Bedroom Units - Minimum of 1.5 spaces per unit to a maximum of 2 spaces per unit.

The Towns should each consider creating a shared parking ordinance between residential, office, and retail uses that are part of the same development. Though Hamilton offers flexibility within its current Willow Street Overlay District,

mixed use parking will often require that the developer provide parking equal to the sum of the parking requirements from each separate use on the site. This method can lead to excess parking on a site because residential uses typically have peak parking periods at opposite times of the office and some retail uses.





NEXT STEPS

Short Term

1. Reallocating roadway right-of-way along some streets in the Village to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Addressing the transportation improvements in the short-term can be accomplished through temporary changes to the street to test whether or not reallocating the roadway for other users is effective. Cones, tape, removable paint or striping, barriers, and signage can be used to delineate wider sidewalks, bike lanes, or adjusted travel lanes on the street. If these temporary improvements do not work well, they can be easily removed and the street can go back to functioning as it did before. If the improvements work well, the Towns can pursue means to make the improvements permanent (see Long Term improvements). Bicycle facilities, such as bicycle lanes, are a relatively inexpensive treatment that can be striped in the short term or medium term.

2. Through discussions with Town Planners and Departments of Public Works, the Towns should consider beginning to implement the recommendations for the Enhanced Crossings, such as crosswalks and signage. In addition, crosswalks should be striped at all intersections and mid-block crossings noted on the Connectivity Network Plan.

3. Public realm improvements can also be accomplished through simple, quick, and cost-effective means. Efforts to improve the streets and potential green spaces for public use can be done through temporary measures as well. Temporary benches, planter boxes, tables, chairs, public art installations, plantings, etc. can be constructed

from recycled materials like pallets or scrap wood. Temporary plantings could be donated by a local landscaping business. Public art could be constructed or painted by local artists or temporarily borrowed from an artist from outside the area

4. Hamilton should discuss and consider revising its required parking requirements for commercial uses, frontage, setbacks, and height within the current WSOD, and amend its zoning to include clear definition of allowed uses within the Business and WSOD Overlay Districts.

5. Wenham should consider amending its parking requirements for its Business District.

6. Hamilton, perhaps in collaboration with Wenham, should complete Design Review Guidelines for the Village area, either starting with the simple model provided or funding a full design review assessment and guide.

Long Term

1. If temporary changes to the roadway configuration throughout the Village prove to be successful, the Towns should pursue permanent changes through roadway construction projects. This may require moving curbs, utilities, adjusting traffic signals, extending medians, and new roadway striping. The Towns could consider several different funding sources for this work including City transportation improvement funds, state funding through a program like MassWorks, or federal funding through the Boston MPO.

2. Extending streetscape elements such as period lamp posts, street trees, benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles will help create a cohesive look and feel throughout the Village. This could be completed through a partnership between the Town and businesses, or possibly through a combination of local, state, and federal funding sources.

3. Hamilton can discuss, revise as needed and move forward with adopting the Village Overlay District Bylaw.

4. Wenham may wish to begin discussions of using the Village Overlay model for relevant areas of the Wenham Business District. Alternatively, it may wish to amend its current Business District zoning to allow some additional forms of housing and mixed use by Special Permit or as allowed uses under certain conditions.

APPENDICES

The following appendices are provided to supplement the work described in this report. These appendices are provided as separate documents.

Appendix A: Visualizations

The first public meeting included a presentation of potential mixed-use developments on four sites. These “visualizations” do not represent actual proposals but were developed for the purposes of generating discussion to give the project team a better understanding of what elements to include in proposed zoning. Residents were asked to give their opinions on any aspect of these visualizations. Appendix A provides the visualizations that were discussed.

Appendix B: Design Review Guidelines Template

The goal of these guidelines is to help improve the design quality of Hamilton’s retail districts, helping to attract customers to the area and encourage economic revitalization. These guidelines are provided as a template typical of a traditional New England village, to be adjusted for the needs of the Towns.

Appendix C: Draft Hamilton-Wenham Overlay Bylaw

The new Hamilton Village Overlay District would build on the Willow Street Overlay District adopted by the town in 2010. It offers modified dimensional language and additional site planning guidelines, while preserving current uses and permitting processes. The Village Overlay District will set regulations that are consistent with the principles and goals of this study and promote mixed-use, walkable development around transit.

Appendix D: Hamilton-Wenham Village Connectivity Plan

This diagram, provided in the body of the report, is also included in a large scale format outlining the recommendations for improving the connectivity throughout the Village.