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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT  
OF THE WAKEFIELD MASTER PLAN**



*MAIN STREET*



*NORTH AVENUE*



*THE JUNCTION*



*GREENWOOD*

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**ADOPTED: MARCH 30, 2004**



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT OF THE WAKEFIELD MASTER PLAN

PREPARED FOR:

THE TOWN OF WAKEFIELD  
TOWN HALL  
ONE LAFAYETTE STREET  
WAKEFIELD , MASSACHUSETTS

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MARCH 30, 2004

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Credits

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The Economic Development Master Plan establishes a long term vision for economic growth in Wakefield that will reinforce the character of the town and contribute to the quality of life for its residents. The economic and the physical structure of the town are considered in relation to one another so that Wakefield can set the best direction for new development.



*The Wakefield Common establishes a sense of civic dignity and connection to tradition that should be preserved as the town continues to change with the times.*



## 1. MASTER PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of the Economic Development Master Plan is to develop a long-term vision for Wakefield that identifies fiscal priorities, development opportunities, and organizational structures to improve the town's tax base and support the financial well-being of its businesses and citizens. The Plan focuses the town's attention on ways to encourage private sector investment that will bring about the Economic Development Goals and Objectives set out in Section IV.

This Economic Development Plan is a critical component of Wakefield's comprehensive Master Plan for the future growth of the community. The goals and policy changes suggested in the Economic Development Plan are meant to be compatible with the previously adopted Preservation and Housing components of the Master Plan. The plan's policy and implementation recommendations are based on the Economic Development Goals and Objectives articulated in Section IV. They provide a basis for evaluating development proposals that come before the town, as well as forming a foundation for the components of the Master Plan that will follow.

The high level of participation by local citizens in the Master Planning process, and the important contributions made by the Town in its preparation reflect Wakefield's commitment to controlling its fiscal and physical development. During the most recent planning effort town officials, economic development committee members and citizens clearly articulated their economic development concerns. These discussions and the proposals embodied in this Master Plan build on the Economic Development Issues Report released in July, 2002, by the Town of Wakefield and prepared by the Town Planner, Paul Reavis.



*Lake Quannapowitt offers recreational opportunities and a strong visual identity for the town of Wakefield.*

*Route 128 skirts the edge of Wakefield, connecting the town to the region without disturbing its commercial core or its residential neighborhoods.*







*The commuter rail line connects Downtown Wakefield and Greenwood to Boston and neighboring communities.*

*Shady streets and quiet neighborhoods offer a range of housing types, although single family residences predominate.*



The goals expressed in the Issues Report and that were further articulated in numerous discussions can be summarized as follows:

- Maintain and improve town character and quality of life by respecting its history, neighborhoods, open space, and natural beauty;
- Support local businesses and provide appropriate catalysts to jump-start desired development and improvements in the business districts;
- Increase Town revenue by building the tax base so that needed services can be provided; an emphasis on commercial property development can relieve the burden on residents;
- Provide more quality jobs for Wakefield citizens;
- Cultivate new development opportunities, redevelopment opportunities, and the growth of small businesses;
- Provide guidelines for evaluating the competing economic development needs and options for the community;
- Clarify short and long-term objectives, and
- Develop replicable models and tools for future development that embrace Wakefield's economic development and quality of life goals and objectives.

## 2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BACKGROUND

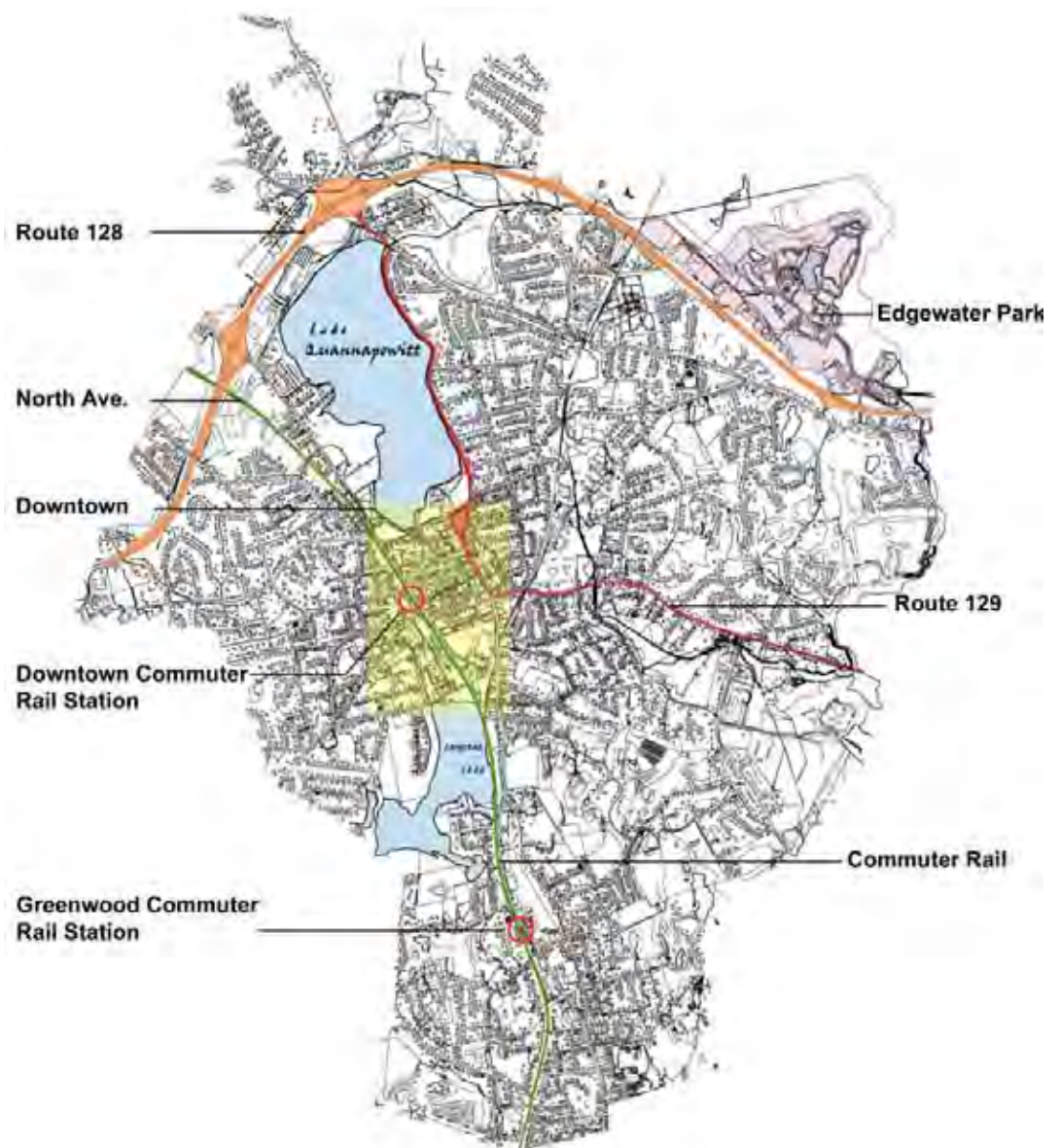
Wakefield is blessed with an attractive physical setting, a rich history and a pivotal location in the region. Natural features such as Lake Quannapowitt, and neighborhoods from Greenwood and Lakeside to downtown and the Common create a series of striking environments.

Over the past century and a half the town has put its assets to good use, fostering the growth of successful businesses and attracting residents to its ever-growing neighborhoods. There are still significant opportunities, however, for further development. The potential remains for considerable economic growth that will lead to improvements in the quality of life for Wakefield's residents.

The location of the major ring road connector around Boston, Route 128, could not be more ideal. The road cuts through only the most northern portion of Wakefield, offering glimpses of Lake Quannapowitt and providing access to and visibility from the regional highway system (including I-93), while protecting residential and commercial areas from its impacts. The commuter rail line running through downtown and Greenwood provides another option for those commuting into Boston. The natural beauty, coherent urban form and transportation infrastructure create a solid foundation on which to base continued economic development.

Wakefield is primarily a family-centered bedroom community with remnant industrial uses scattered throughout the town and office parks located along Route 128. The town is laid out according to familiar New England building patterns, although new construction, particularly some of the more recent residential projects, have not always supported the

Wakefield is well served by highways and rail lines







*Significant commercial development has taken place along Route 128, although opportunities for large scale development in the future are limited by land availability.*

*Downtown Wakefield's charm is still evident, although both the physical structure and retail mix need improving.*



town's traditional fabric. This Master Plan recommends that new development, instrumental to building and supporting the town's fiscal health, should be designed to reinforce those qualities that give the Town its identity, charm and cohesiveness.

In the Nineteenth Century Wakefield's economy was substantially self-sustaining. Local manufacturing took advantage of the railroads and provided employment for the residents of the town. Key industries included knitting mills, rattan, shoes, pianos, and ice cutting on Crystal Lake. The Twentieth Century, however, brought economic and technological changes that undermined local industry. Wakefield became primarily a residential community, its workforce commuting to Boston and to towns along the Route 128 and I-93 corridors.

The Town of Wakefield's economic fate is increasingly linked to that of the Boston metropolitan region and the Metro North area. As in many other towns nearby, the growth of the Route 128 technology corridor in the 1980's created a significant office and service sector that provides commercial tax revenue to ease the tax burden on residential property owners. Today, however, the growth potential for commercial development in Wakefield is limited by the relative scarcity of land available for additional large-scale office projects.

While the office sector has grown in the past decades, retail has been less successful. The Town's offerings are limited in comparison to other communities in the area, and less attractive to today's demanding consumer. The Town Center has not fared well because of regional competition, perceived lack of parking, its fading image, and the out-of-date merchandise mix. Still, the town's commercial districts serve certain needs and, in some locations, provide retail in a distinct and attractive setting.

While the Town is dependent on the economic future of the metropolitan area, it must work strategically to increase its share of the commercial growth that will occur in the area, and should strive to capture a larger share of retail purchases by its own residents and others in the vicinity.

To accomplish this, Wakefield must make itself more attractive to the business community and to the consumers whom it wants to attract. The town should identify and build on its strengths and support its local merchants through both its policies and citizens' purchases.

Wakefield, like almost every city and town in Massachusetts, is facing fiscal challenges. Proposition 2 ½ limits the town's ability to meet its financial needs by limiting the ability to raise tax rates. New development provides a source of much needed new revenues, and it is important that Wakefield pursue its share of regional opportunities.

Not all development, however, will be beneficial for Wakefield's future. Clear guidelines must be established to balance the public interest with private gain. Some recently constructed condominium developments undermine the character of the community, and incentives and controls must be developed to channel new construction in more appropriate directions. Residential developments are taxed at a much lower rate than commercial buildings suggesting that some uses should be encourage over others. This Master Plan offers a range of development options and opportunities along with an evaluation of their fiscal and physical benefits and appropriateness. They are intended as models for the kind of revenue-enhancing developments that are in Wakefield's long-term interest.



*Albion Street has the potential to be an active pedestrian street lined with small shops and cafes.*

*The recent redevelopment of historic Harvard Mills near downtown as office space reinforces the character of Wakefield while increasing job opportunities and the town's tax base.*



## CRITICAL STUDY AREAS

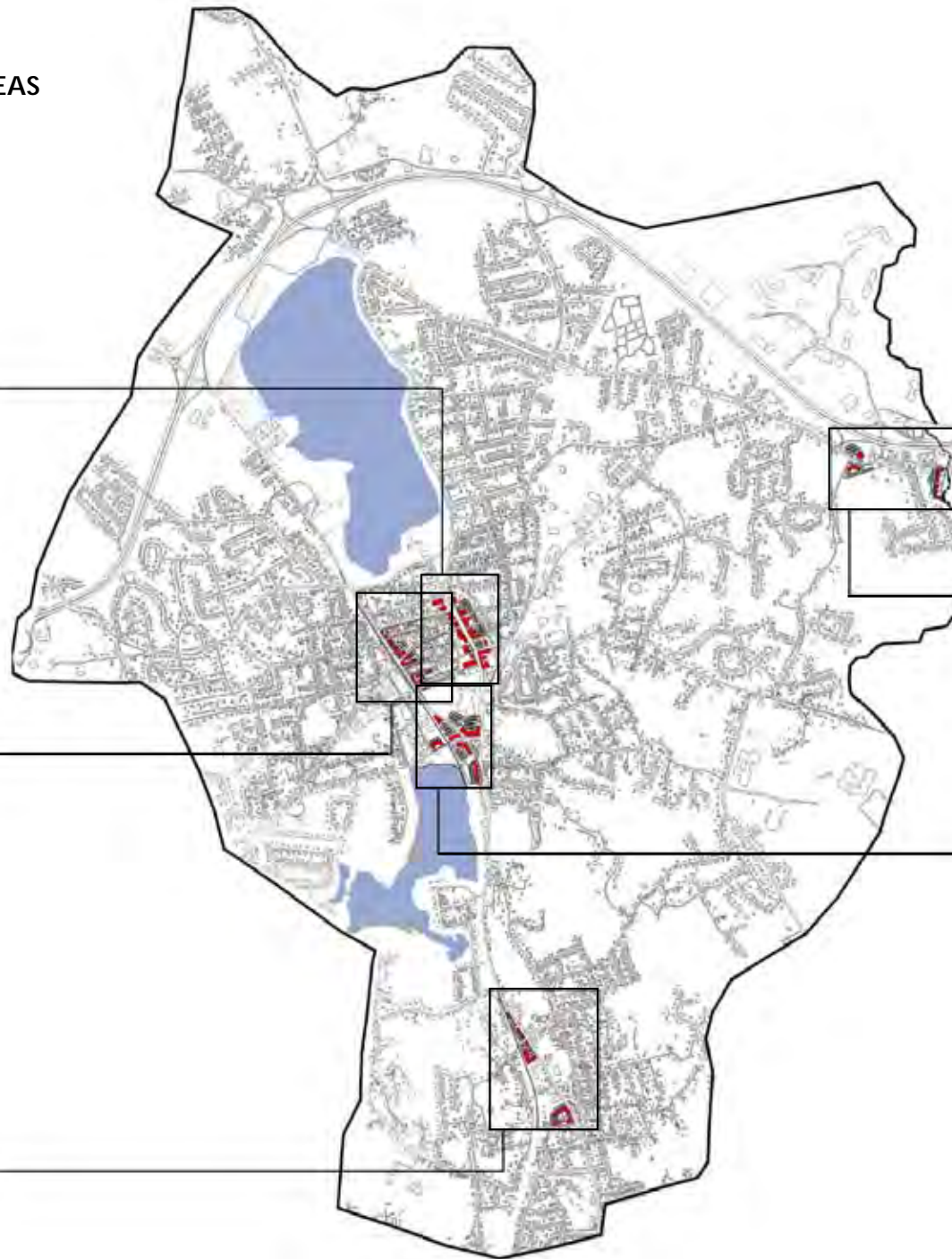
MAIN ST. DOWNTOWN

NORTH AVENUE

MAIN ST. GREENWOOD

SALEM ST. @ ROUTE 128

THE JUNCTION





### 3. CRITICAL STUDY AREAS

Many economic development issues should be addressed on a town-wide basis. Others are best looked at in relation to a particular place, since economic development and the physical structure of the town are inextricably linked in so many ways. The critical study areas provide the opportunity to tie general development issues to specific locations.

Retail areas that have not been maintained discourage new investment that could sustain the small town flavor that attracts people to Wakefield in the first place. Inappropriately designed development can turn pleasant country roads into traffic choked expanses of asphalt. Development brings economic resources to Wakefield that can improve the quality of life, but can also change the character of the town in ways that do not enhance its strong sense of place. This Master Plan ties economic advancement together with physical planning so that private prosperity and the public interest develop



*Recent housing development has not always complemented the Town's neighborhood character, turning away from the public streets.*

together in appropriate ways.

To understand the relationship of economic development to the town's physical structure, this Master Plan looks at development opportunities at five study areas, proposing particular uses and building forms that would constitute the highest and best uses of each site. All five locations offer significant opportunities for economic growth.

These study areas were chosen because they are important places in Wakefield, and appropriate development at these locations could enhance the perception of Wakefield as a thriving community with a real sense of character. They were also chosen because they are typical of many places in Wakefield, and can be models for the type of positive development that could be replicated elsewhere in town.

Within each study area both residential and commercial development are proposed. As in the region as a whole, home values have skyrocketed in recent years, making residential construction attractive. Wakefield is also an excellent location for service industries and office space. Despite the current depression in the office real estate market, the quality commercial properties at Edgewater Park and throughout Wakefield have maintained relatively high occupancy levels. New uses are being found for obsolete manufacturing buildings for both residential and commercial redevelopment.

Each has benefits for Wakefield. Careful consideration, however, must be given to the appropriateness of each development type for any specific location being considered.



**Downtown** – The current streetscape and retail mix suggest a comforting downtown character, but lack vitality and a clear identity.



**North Avenue Near Albion St** - The proximity to downtown and the commuter rail station could support transit oriented development currently promoted through “smart growth” initiatives.



**The Junction** – A critical crossroad location suggests a southern “gateway” to downtown with a connection to Crystal Lake. Significant infrastructure work will be required to take advantage of this opportunity.

## Downtown

Main St. between Yale Ave. and Armory St. is the retail and social heart of Wakefield. Upgrading the retail mix, resolving parking and traffic concerns, inserting carefully designed new buildings, and providing streetscape, facade, and signage improvements will reinforce the Downtown’s centrality to community life.

## North Avenue

The commuter rail station makes North Avenue near Albion Street the type of location actively promoted by “smart growth” advocates for transit oriented development. This mix of housing and commercial construction will reinforce the strength of downtown as a destination accessible by public transportation.

## The Junction

Located between downtown and Crystal Lake, the Junction now turns its back on both with a collection of old industrial buildings, car lots, and poorly designed intersections. Mixed use redevelopment and reconfigured streets will reconnect the area to the water and downtown with a vibrant living and shopping district that can create a gateway to downtown.





**Greenwood** – A poorly maintained streetscape and speeding traffic interfere with the development of this well situated neighborhood center.

### **Greenwood**

The commuter rail stop and small scale retail environment create a strong neighborhood center. Challenges include traffic and parking problems and a neglected streetscape. Modest physical and organizational improvements can make Greenwood a model for neighborhood retail development.



**Salem St. at Route 128** – Environmental issues have limited development although new construction is possible within the semi-rural context.

### **Salem St. at Rt. 128**

Like many of Wakefield's pleasant country roads, Salem Street near the Lynnfield line has lost some of its charm to inappropriate development. The right patterns of land use will allow significant new construction while reinforcing the area's rural character and allowing access to natural areas. Significant environmental issues, however, must be addressed before development can take place.

The demographic profile of Wakefield and the greater Boston area have changed substantially in the past two decades. The economic climate has changed as well in recent years. Recent and projected trends can be quantified to help the town anticipate and respond to changes. The data in this section of the Master Plan provides the demographic and economic background for the proposals that will follow.

A statistical overview of Wakefield's past, along with projections of changes anticipated in the future can help define the context for proposing and evaluating economic development options.

## 1. ECONOMIC HISTORY

Wakefield is located 10 miles Northeast of Boston. In 1851 Cyrus Wakefield, the Town's namesake, brought two important industries to the town; Boston and Main Foundry Company and Heywood-Wakefield Rattan. At the turn of the century, Wakefield attracted the Miller Piano factory and Harvard Knitting Mills. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, however, the town's industries moved away and Wakefield became more residential in character.

During the 1980's Wakefield benefitted from a commercial resurgence resulting from its I-93/Route 128 location and the sudden growth of high tech companies. Commercial real estate developers started looking for locations with convenient highway access that were also near executives' homes and an educated workforce. A series of office developments near Route 128 were constructed and continue to grow.

Wakefield's location serves the town well, and ties it to Boston's regional economy. While the town's economic and demographic statistics suggest that it tends to do slightly better than average in the Commonwealth, Wakefield's economic indicators typically rise and fall with regional trends. Therefore, during the high tech rebound of the mid-to-late 1990's Wakefield once again benefited from its location and completed the transition from a manufactur-

ing-based to a service-based workforce.

Wakefield's population tends to be quite stable. There has been very slow growth in the number of households while the total population has declined almost imperceptibly. Like many communities in the Boston region, there has been a decrease in household size, which has helped fuel residential demand despite the slight population decline. According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission's 2003 projections, Wakefield's population is expected to grow only modestly over the next decade.

The population is also growing wealthier, both in real dollars and in comparison to other communities. The percentage of residents at or below the poverty level dropped from 4.16% in 1990 to 1.7% (113 families) in 2000. The type of jobs held by residents also changed. Service jobs have rapidly replaced manufacturing jobs in Wakefield as well as in the surrounding region.

Even with the development of a number of new office buildings, Wakefield became more of a bedroom community during the 1990's. Only 18.4% of Wakefield's 2000 workforce worked in Wakefield, down from 25.9% a decade earlier (*see Figure 6*). This may be attributable to the explosion of new employment along the 128/1-495 tech corridor combined with an increased tolerance in the general population for longer commutes (the average commute time is 27 minutes).

## 2. POPULATION

Wakefield's population has been very stable over the last 30 years (see **Figures 1 and 2**). There has been a slight decrease of 598 people from 25,402 in 1970 to 24,804 in 2000, a decrease of 2.35% (0.24%/annum). The change since 1990 has been even smaller—a decrease of 21 people, or 0.08% (0.08%/annum). At the same time that there has been a slight decrease in population, there has been a

small increase (4.85%) in the number of households between 1990 and 2000. The number of households in Wakefield increased by 441 from 9,296 in 1990 to 9,737 households in 2000. The decrease in household size over that ten-year period was 0.19 people, from 2.73 persons per household to 2.54 — a decrease of 6.87%.

**Figure 1: Wakefield and Adjacent Communities (2000)**

	<i>Wakefield</i>	<i>Lynnfield</i>	<i>Melrose</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Stoneham</i>	<i>MAPC</i>
<i>Population</i>	<b>24,804</b>	11,542	27,134	23,708	22,219	3,066,394
<i>% of Residents over 25 yrs with Bachelor's Degree</i>	<b>40%</b>	49%	40%	48%	32%	41%
<i>Per Capita Income</i>	<b>\$30,369</b>	\$39,560	\$30,347	\$32,888	\$27,599	n/a
<i>Housing Units</i>	<b>9,937</b>	4,273	11,248	8,823	9,289	1,240,698
<i>Median Household Income</i>	<b>\$66,117</b>	\$80,626	\$62,811	\$77,059	\$56,605	n/a
<i>Average Annual Tax for Single Family Homes</i>	<b>\$2,928</b>	\$4,304	\$3,401	\$3,796	\$3,381	n/a
<i>Median Value of Owner Occupied Home</i>	<b>\$242,400</b>	\$328,000	\$254,400	\$271,600	\$241,800	n/a
<i>Median Gross Rent</i>	<b>\$795</b>	\$572	\$760	\$739	\$827	n/a
<i>Commercial Assessment as % of Aggregate Value</i>	<b>14%</b>	7%	4%	6%	13%	n/a

The housing stock in 2000 was 72% owner-occupied, up from 71.2% in 1990, with single-family homes representing 63%.

In 2001 Wakefield ranked 110 out of 351 communities in Massachusetts in average single-family property values, at \$334,300 (this figure does not include condominiums, multi-family, etc.). The average house price has increased by \$51,800 between 1990 and 2000. This compares to \$43,500 for the state of Massachusetts over the same period. As of April 2003, condominium costs averaged \$229,900, a 26% increase over 2002. The average for all single family homes, according to Banker and Tradesman, is \$377,300. Median gross rents increased \$43 per month over the same period.

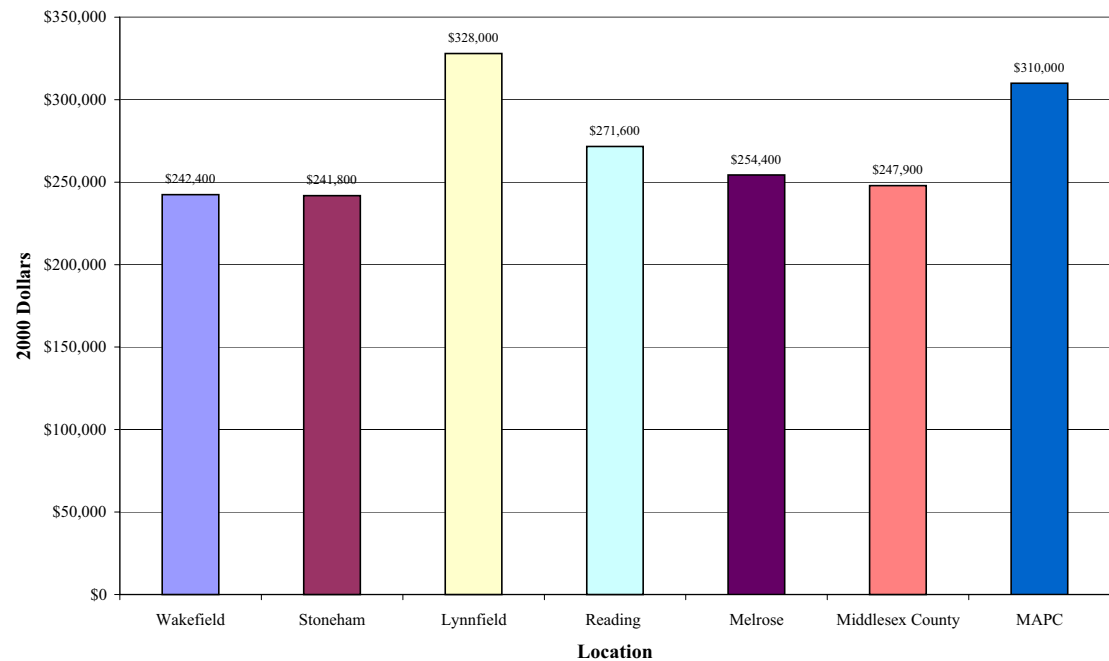
The age mix in Wakefield's population shifted slightly from a median age of 30-34 years old in 1990 to a median age between 35-39 years old in 2000.

The town's demography is markedly homogeneous, and the racial diversity in Wakefield is very limited (*see Figure 4*). 96.36% of the population is White. The next largest group, Asian or Pacific Islanders, only represented 1.43% of the population in 2000.

**Figure 2: Wakefield Housing Profile**

	1990	2000	Increase/ (Decrease)	% Change
Population	24,825	24,804	(21)	(.08%)
Number of Households	9,296	9,747	451	4.85%
Median Household Income	\$43,960	\$66,117	\$22,157	50%
Housing Units	9,520	9,937	417	4.38%
Vacancy	224	190	(34)	(15.18%)
Owner Occupied	6,621	7,019	398	6.01%
Renter Occupied	2,675	2,728	53	1.98%
Median Cost of Owner Occupied Home	\$189,000	\$242,400	\$53,400	28%
Median Monthly Rent	\$673	\$716	\$43	6%
Source: 1990 and 2000 Census				

**Figure 3: Wakefield and Neighbors: Median Home Value**



### 3. WORKFORCE

There were 14,941 Wakefield residents in the regional workforce in 2000, up from 10,301 in 1990. Even though the population has not increased, there is a very substantial increase in the percentage of the Wakefield population that is working. A very high proportion of Wakefield residents have jobs, in relation to the State as a whole. Typically those that want a job have found a job. Unemployment rates for Wakefield have been consistently 0.5% to 1.6% below the State rates. Over the period 1990-2000, Wakefield unemployment rates averaged 4.38% — from a high of 7.5% in 1991 to 1.9% in 2000. As of April 2003 the unemployment rate was 2.6%. (See Figure 5)

There has been a very large increase in educational attainment levels during the 1990's (See Figure 6). The number of residents over 25 years of age with a bachelor's or higher degree increased by 57.19% from 2,845 to 4,472 people. The increased educational achievement level is related to the types of employment held by Wakefield residents. The Service sector accounted for 36.6% of employment in 1991. By 2001 it increased its share of workers by almost a third to 47.8%.

Figure 4: Wakefield Racial Demographic Profile 2000

Source: Census 2000

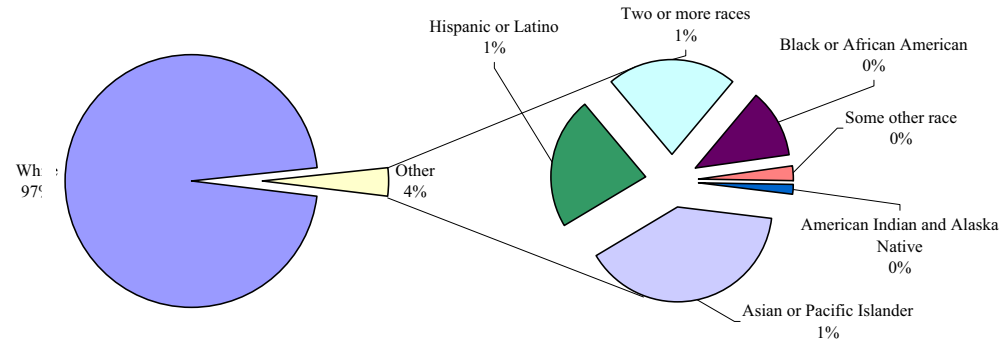
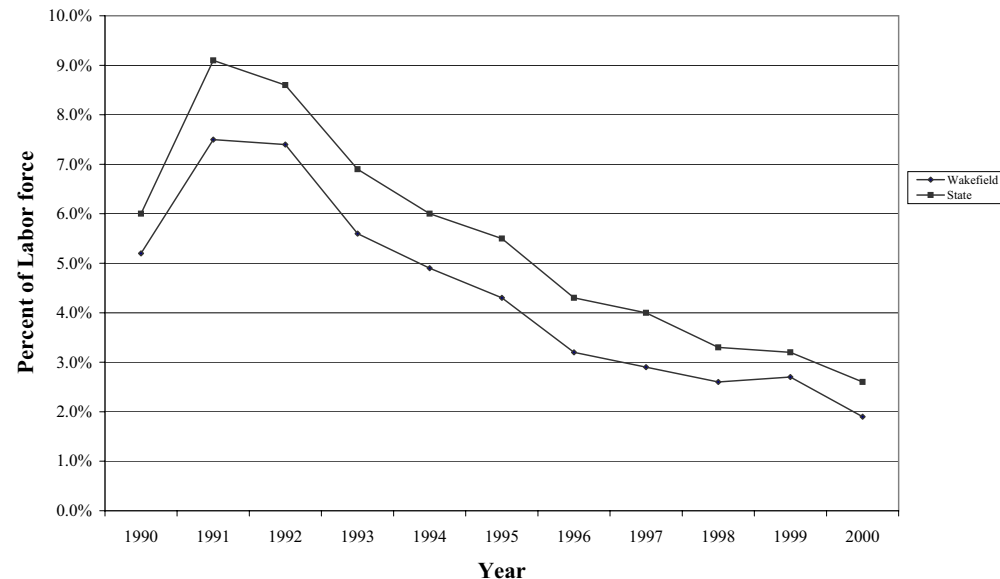


Figure 5: Wakefield vs. State Unemployment Rates

Source: Massachusetts D.E.T.



**Figure 6: Education and Employment Profile of Wakefield Residents**

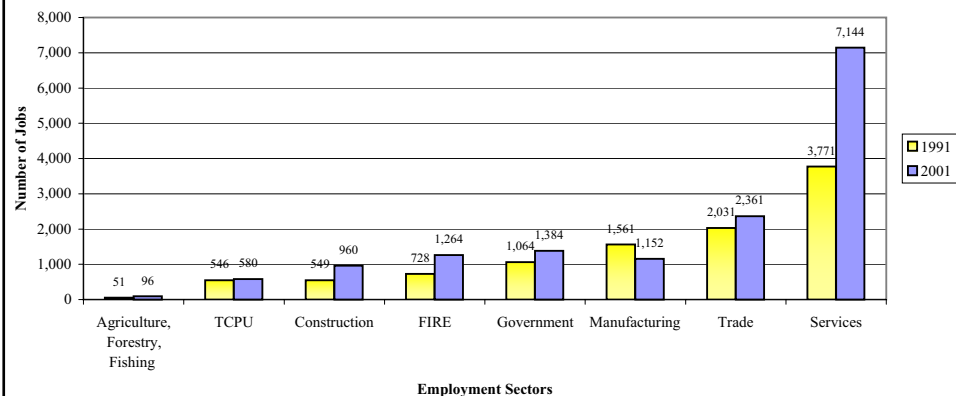
	1990	2000	% Change
% of Residents over 25 yrs with High School Degree (as highest)	67%	50%	(26%)
% of Residents over 25 yrs with Bachelor's Degree	33%	50%	53%
% of Employed Wakefield Residents Who Work in Wakefield	26%	18%	(29%)
% of Employed Wakefield Residents Who Work Outside Wakefield	74%	82%	10%
Per Capita Income	\$19,009	\$30,369	60%
Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes)	22.3	27	21%
Source: US Census			

Meanwhile the Manufacturing sector was reduced by almost half, from 15.2% to 7.7% (**See Figure 7**). Today 75% of Wakefield residents hold jobs in management, professional, sales, and office categories, as compared to 41.3% in 1990. (**See Figure 8**)

The redistribution of jobs from manufacturing to service industries is likely to continue over this decade. By 2010, MAPC predicts that the current number of manufacturing jobs in Wakefield (1000 jobs) will be halved and then stabilize.

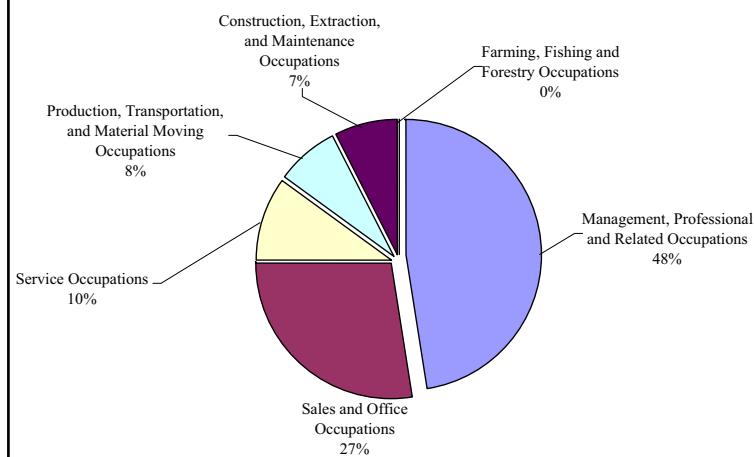
This shift in the type of jobs held by residents may also be the reason there was a significant increase in wages and household income during the same decade (**See Figure 9**). Average wages increased from \$31,524 to \$53,983 (71.24%) between 1991 and 2001, and average household income increased from \$43,960 to \$66,117 (50.40%) between 1990 and 2000. Adjusted for inflation, the real increase in wages would be 31.6%, and the real increase in income would be 12.3%.

**Figure 7: Changes in Employment Sectors of Wakefield Residents (1991-2001)**



Source:Massachusetts D.E.T.

**Figure 8: Employment Profile of Wakefield Residents**



Source:2000 Census



The population is financially better off, not only in real dollars but in comparison to other communities in the state too. In 1999 Wakefield ranked 27<sup>th</sup> out of 351 communities in Massachusetts in average wages.

The Service sector is expected to continue to grow. Projected job growth for Metro North is 1%/annum over the next decade. It is projected that 95% of that growth will be in the Service sector, with the following sub sectors of Service accounting for 87.4% of the overall growth: business, health and social service, engineering, and management. MAPC predicts that the number of service oriented jobs will increase 20% per decade.

#### 4. LAND USE

Wakefield is approximately 8 square miles, or 5,069 acres in area. Residential land use comprises almost 90% of the total land use in Wakefield (*See Figure 10*).

Figure 9: Wakefield Household Income (2000)		
	# households	% of households
\$100,000 or more	2,435	25%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	2,850	29%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	1,732	18%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	936	10%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	729	7%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	669	7%
Less than \$10,000	425	4%
Total Households	9,776	100%

Figure 10: Land Use (2000)			
Zone Code	District Area	Acreage	Percent
SSR	Special Single Residence	64.00	1.26%
SR	Single Residence	3475.19	68.55%
GR	General Residential	761.60	15.02%
NB	Neighborhood Business	12.80	0.25%
LB	Limited Business	83.20	1.64%
B	General Business	211.20	4.17%
I	Industrial	460.80	9.09%
LI	Limited Industrial	0.72	0.01%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>5069.50</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Between 1990 and 2001, there were substantial increases in the number of parcels devoted to single family homes and condominium construction (9.7%). In fact, the number of parcels devoted to commercial, industrial, multi-family and vacant land decreased by 13.8%.

According to MAPC's build-out analysis conducted in 2001, based on Wakefield's existing zoning code the town only has 378 acres of land available for new development (*See Figure 11*). The town faces significant environmental development constraints: lakes, streams, wetlands and steep, rocky grades. The MAPC analysis predicts that the town can only support 207,711 square feet of new commercial development (on currently undeveloped land), less than five acres of buildable commercial/industrial floor area.

Figure 11: MAPC Build-out Analysis (as of 2001)								
Based on Current Zoning								
	Undeveloped Land Area (Sq. ft)	Lots	Dwelling Units	Effective FAR	Buildable Commercial / Industrial Sq.ft	Future Residents	Students	New Roads (miles)
<b>Residential District SSR</b>								
Total Upland Area	1,420,366	54	54			134	19	0.77
<b>Residential District SR</b>								
Total Upland Area	12,907,179	780	780			1,942	280	8.86
Outside flood zone and 100'-200' River Zone	12,057,866	734	734			1,826	264	8.34
Inside flood zone or 100'-200' River Zone	849,313	46	46			116	17	0.53
<b>Residential District GR</b>								
Total Upland Area	1,553,904	136	238			592	85	1.2
Total Upland Outside flood zone and 100'-200' River zone	1,458,646	128	223			556	80	1.16
Total Upland Inside flood zone or 100'-200' River zone	95,258	8	15			36	51	0.02
<b>Business District LB</b>								
Total Upland Area	576,974			0.36	207,711			
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>16,458,423</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>1,072</b>		<b>207,711</b>	<b>2,669</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>11</b>

## 5. TAX REVENUES

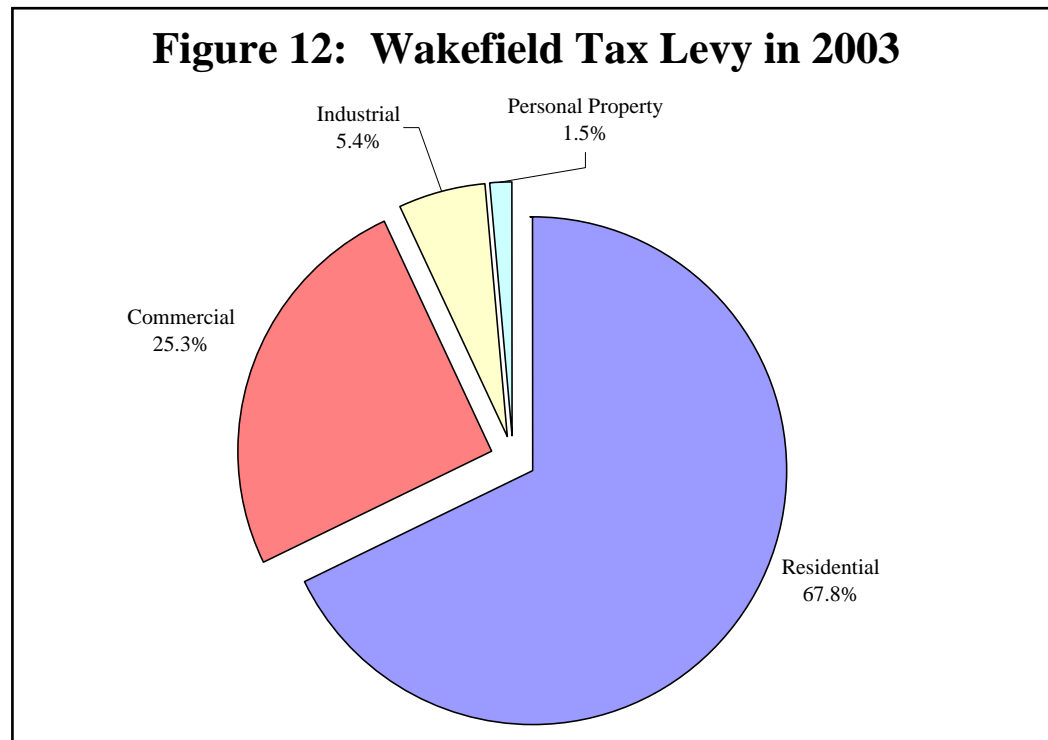
Wakefield's Fiscal 2004 tax rate is \$11.40 per \$1,000 of value for residential properties and \$24.14 per \$1,000 of value for commercial properties. The assessed value of all Wakefield properties in 2001 was \$2,014,846,220. The tax levy for that year was \$34,469,425 (*See Figure 12*).

The assessed value of all Wakefield properties translates to a per capita value of \$81,231, and a tax levy per capita of \$1,390. The assessed value per household was \$206,101, and the tax levy per household was \$3,526. Wakefield ranked 103<sup>rd</sup> out of 351 communities in Massachusetts in average single-family tax bills in 2001.

Proposition 2 ½ limits the amount that the tax levy on existing properties can grow above existing levels to 2 ½% per annum. Gross property tax grew 51.04% during the 1990's (approximately 5% per annum) with half of this growth coming from existing developed property; the other half of this growth was due to new development. Although an over-ride of Proposition 2 ½ could change the situation, it is likely that the generation of new tax revenue will be dependant, to a significant extent, on new development. For this reason, one of the main goals for the Economic Development Component of the Master Plan is to identify and support appropriate

new development and redevelopment in order to ease Wakefield's fiscal constraints.

Because Wakefield is part of the greater Boston regional economy, the town cannot necessarily determine what kind of development will take place. Nevertheless, the town can make an effort to encourage appropriate growth and control what is built. Changes must be responsive to the demographic profile of Wakefield's and the region's residents, providing housing, job opportunities, and retail options that meet the needs of this market.



Changes in Wakefield and the region have created challenges that the town must meet to remain economically strong and physically attractive. This section describes these challenges so that clear goals and objectives can be articulated and appropriate solutions devised.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

During the master planning process, town officials, economic development committee members and active citizens expressed their concerns about Wakefield's economic development needs and preferences. A number of issues emerged that define the existing and desired context for growth. These issues are explored in some detail in this section of the Master Plan, and then distilled into goals and objectives in the following section

### 1. PROTECT AND ENHANCE WAKEFIELD'S CHARACTER

Wakefield conveys a strong sense of New England charm, natural beauty and rich history. Main Street and North Avenue wrap around the shores of Lake Quannapowitt, leading to the Common and the town's civic center. The historic houses of the Lakeside and West Side neighborhoods flank Main Street with its traditional town center feeling. Greenwood's forested hillsides, finely scaled residential areas and retail center have a wonderful village-like quality. This rich sense of character establishes the strong foundation on which this Economic Development Plan is built.

While older commercial and residential buildings and neighborhoods have a coherent character, new developments, particularly some of the more recent residential projects, do not always reinforce the town's urban fabric, or fit into its natural landscape. Buildings are set back from the street behind asphalt parking lots that do not define attractive pedestrian environments. Houses are blasted into hillsides instead of sitting gently on wooded slopes. New development, instrumental to building and supporting the town's fiscal health, should be designed to protect and reinforce Wakefield's unique character.



*Wakefield's physical setting is critical to its identity, both locally and in the region. Lakes, hills, woods and wetlands are woven into the neighborhood fabric. An historic home near Yale and Avon Streets is nestled into a hillside.*



*Many of Wakefield's distinguished buildings have been lost over the years; new development should reinforce the Town's finely scaled core and civic character. In 1955 the 4th of July parade passes Main and Water St.*

*Recent office developments on Salem St. in Lynnfield are integrated into the rural landscape with planted setbacks and stone walls. These design elements provide an appropriate model for Wakefield.*



## 2. INCREASE TAX REVENUES THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

Massachusetts's Proposition 2 ½ limits the town's ability to raise additional revenues to meet the rising costs of municipal services. New development or redevelopment that increases the value of properties will be required to increase tax revenues beyond the Proposition 2 ½ limits.

Some developers and property owners have expressed the concern that the development process in Wakefield can be cumbersome and appear to be “anti-development” as a result of the town's efforts to protect its interests. Wakefield should work with developers and guide development to create win-win situations, rather than either being the passive recipient of development projects or assuming a defensive position toward proposals. In order to capitalize on Wakefield's unique assets and opportunities, the town should streamline the approvals process and eliminate unreasonable barriers in order to promote responsible new development.

Wakefield's past success with commercial development combined with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission's growth projections for new jobs in the service industry sector suggest that the town should establish strategies to take advantage of the next office development cycle. Wakefield should identify appropriate parcels and work with property owners to create commercial development opportunities. Wakefield can also rezone and actively market sites to prospective developers. This Master Plan highlights some sites that meet its economic development criteria and are ripe for redevelopment. The town also needs to undertake a more comprehensive planning process specifically aimed at consolidating the parcels illustrated in this study as well



as targeting parcels in other potential development areas. By taking a proactive approach toward development, the town can achieve its economic development goals: appropriate physical development, job creation, and an increased tax base.

Economic development is typically defined as the process of building local assets and improving the local economy so that local businesses can grow and residents' incomes increase. Because Wakefield is primarily a bedroom community of the greater Boston and Metro North regional economy, most residents' incomes will not be directly affected by economic development within the town. Associated increases in the tax base, however, create very significant benefits for residents through the increased services the town is able to provide.

### 3. CREATE VIBRANT COMMERCIAL CENTERS

Since the 1970's Wakefield has tried to reverse the decline of its neighborhood retail centers, particularly the downtown. These efforts have included physical changes, such as the installation of period streetlights and streets trees, and a short-lived "Main Streets" program to organize merchants. Established in the 1980's, the Main Streets program achieved some positive results. The manager was successful in her effort to recruit and attract new businesses to downtown. However, the program eventually lapsed due to a lack of participation.

Although downtown is certainly surviving, in part due to these earlier investments of time and money, it is not as vibrant as it could be. No entity presently exists to represent the interests of the small retailer in Wakefield.



*Melrose, like many town's in the region, has invested in downtown improvements to offer an attractive alternative to regional shopping malls.*

*Downtown Wakefield has seen energetic new businesses move in, but owners do not always feel supported by the town or fellow merchants.*





Although considerable frustration has been expressed concerning the difficulties facing local retailers, the town, its merchants, and its civic organizations have not made the capital or personal investments, or provided the financial and institutional support necessary to help local merchants prosper, and to provide a viable alternative to the shopping malls. A long term commitment is required to make necessary organizational and physical improvements on a sustained basis. Leadership positions must be established and backed up with required financial and political support.

Many merchants located downtown and in Greenwood expressed the need for an organization that could assist the retail community by improving business recruitment, district marketing and promotion. The Wakefield Chamber of Commerce is an active organization and serves its constituents well. The kind of time-intensive focus on improving retail districts that is contemplated here is beyond the Chamber's current capacity. Later sections of this Master Plan discuss downtown organizational options specifically designed to support Wakefield's retail centers, including Business Improvement Districts and the hiring of a Main Street Coordinator working under the Town Planner.

#### 4. ADDRESS PARKING AND TRAFFIC PROBLEMS

Traffic and parking are frequently mentioned as the problems that interfere the most with the quality of life and the potential for economic development in Wakefield. Most of Wakefield was developed before automobiles were the ubiquitous presence they are today. Unfortunately, mass transportation only exacerbates Wakefield's parking problem: out of town commuters park in Wakefield to take advantage of the commuter rail line and the regional bus service.



*Haphazard parking in small lots behind downtown Main Street retail (shown here in the lot behind CVS) is inefficient and unattractive. By working together Wakefield merchants can create a better situation for owners and for shoppers.*

*Melrose has aggregated its parking lots behind Main St. businesses to create an easy to navigate, spacious municipal parking lot.*



Increasing the amount of parking that is available will not, by itself, turn retail areas around. At certain times of day parking is readily available. Nevertheless, countering the impression that parking is lacking is an important component of a commercial revival in Wakefield. Unlike shopping malls or downtown Boston, where a significant walk from the car may be expected, local retail districts are assumed to have spaces near stores. As the retail mix and downtown character improve, people may be more willing to walk to a favorite store or cafe.

The town must implement a comprehensive and coordinated parking program that includes some combination of time limit enforcement, parking meters, remote parking for store employees, and the creation of new or more efficient lots. Clearly marking public parking is another key to changing the perception that spaces are hard to find. Parking garages should only be consid-

*A downtown between two lakes, easy access to town by rail and road, and a series of well defined neighborhoods create a strong base for economic development.*



ered after other, less expensive options have been implemented and enforced. Recommendations for parking downtown, on North Avenue and in Greenwood follow in their respective sections of this Master Plan.

A commuter rail stop at Route 128, with a large regional parking facility, is another potential long term solution to many of Wakefield's parking problems and merits consideration.

Traffic has become a part of urban life, and Wakefield's streets were not designed to carry the number of cars and trucks that use them today. Both local traffic and commuters using Wakefield as a short cut or alternative to I-93 and Route 128 clog the town's main streets such as Water, Albion, Vernon, Main and North Avenue.

The traffic problem takes two forms. Traffic congestion, especially at rush hour, slows cars to a crawl and leads to back-ups at major intersections. At other times and places traffic is too fast, making it difficult for pedestrians to cross the street. Both of these problems need to be addressed with a comprehensive series of solutions. "Solutions" such as street widening often make marginal improvements for drivers while creating other unanticipated problems.

Traffic calming measures – activated street edges, signals and signage, and clearly marked pedestrian crossings should be considered at many locations in Wakefield to improve the pedestrian environment. Specific locations are proposed in the sections that follow.

A comprehensive traffic and parking study should be undertaken to evaluate in more detail the nature of the problems and possible solutions.

## **5. IMPLEMENT MASTER PLAN PROPOSALS**

Citizen awareness and acceptance of the Master Plan, and the implementation of Master Plan recommendations, are critical steps in addressing the economic development challenges Wakefield faces. The open town meeting form of government, however, is a difficult context in which to make necessary changes in zoning by-laws or to raise monies for organizational and infrastructure improvements.

While design guidelines and development models will help define the type of development Wakefield wants, the town must make a concerted effort to put plans into action by organizing both the public and private sector. Town officials, a new Main Street Coordinator, the Chamber of Commerce, property owners and the business community must all work together to implement recommended changes.

## **6. BALANCE REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONCERNS**

Wakefield, as part of the regional economy, must remain competitive by defining, enhancing, and marketing its identity, and knowing where it can and cannot compete. On the one hand, the town is a bedroom community for Boston and will never be a re-

gional center. On the other hand, it has a well-defined downtown and Common with a strong local flavor that attracts people from other towns.

Wakefield can work to increase its share of the commercial development and growth that will occur in the region by implementing policies that put it at a competitive advantage. Wakefield can also capture a larger share of retail purchases by its residents and others by attracting businesses that are responding to a changing marketplace and meeting current consumer demands.

Regional competition is a reality for every town and city; regional cooperation should be an issue as well. The development of the commuter rail line, roads and highways should be coordinated so that all towns in the area benefit, rather than passing their problems on to the town next door. The current Governor has made regional planning and transit oriented development a top priority. At the time of this writing his office has not released their key initiatives. Incentives for certain types of development and a framework for regional cooperation are anticipated. Wakefield should be prepared to take advantage of these opportunities and work within the framework of a broader planning effort

## **7. PURSUE ZONING CHANGES AND DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Zoning and design guidelines are the primary tools municipalities use to balance public and private benefits. They establish the uses that are permitted on a given site, the size and location of buildings in relation to property lines, parking requirements,

Building a consensus around a series of shared aspirations is important if the Town of Wakefield is going to implement proposed programs. The goals and objectives that follow form an outline for the comprehensive vision that follows, and for the changes that will be required to bring that vision to life.

The Economic Development Goals and Objectives that follow are distilled from the issues documented in the previous chapters and provide a context for the opportunities and proposals that follow. They articulate the goals behind the Master Plan recommendations and are intended as a guide for future planning activities.

These goals are based on views repeatedly expressed in a series of interviews and meetings. They can be used to evaluate the appropriateness of future plans and proposals and suggest the basis for building a consensus around development options and implementation strategies.

**1. INTEGRATE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES WITH A LONG TERM VISION FOR WAKEFIELD**

- Promote physical, economic, and organizational changes that support a shared vision of economic development objectives and that complement other town goals.

**2. PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT THAT PROVIDES FISCAL BENEFIT AND ECONOMIC STABILITY FOR THE TOWN**

- Promote appropriate new commercial development or redevelopment of existing properties where market-supported opportunities to increase value occur.
- Support multi-family residential construction where commercial development would be in conflict with other goals or may not be supported by the marketplace.
- Insure that new development is self-supporting; new tax revenues should exceed marginal costs of new services (i.e. marginal per pupil school, public safety, trash, and DPW costs).
- Identify underutilized industrial areas that may have commercial or residential development potential and whose redevelopment can support the town's fiscal goals without significant detriment to existing commercial centers, residential



*The Master Plan vision for Wakefield builds on its strengths. The town's coherent urban structure, shown in an historic image and a contemporary photo, is still intact. Reinforcing its integrity is critical for the future.*







*Harvard Mills is a good example of how new uses can be developed in existing buildings benefitting private owners and the general public.*

*Wakefield has comfortable neighborhoods and a viable downtown; its economic and physical structure should improve hand in hand.*



neighborhoods or open space.

- Promote area-wide infrastructure improvements that will further the Town's competitive position in the region, both for residential and commercial development.

### **3. SUPPORT AND PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT THAT BUILDS ON AND IMPROVES THE CHARACTER OF WAKEFIELD AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS**

- Reinforce the existing system of streets and open spaces that define Wakefield's coherent, small town character and distinct neighborhoods.
- Define, regulate and promote high quality design and construction for new developments, and limit detrimental impacts on adjoining properties.
- Coordinate private development and public infrastructure improvements to increase environmental quality, control run-off and traffic, improve streetscapes, and preserve open space and greenways.
- Develop regulations, guidelines, organizations, and activities that support public activities and that strengthen business and social networks – fairs, festivals, markets, outdoor dining, etc.

### **4. IMPROVE AND STRENGTHEN WAKEFIELD'S EXISTING COMMERCIAL CENTERS**

- Reinforce existing business centers (prioritize the Downtown core and then Greenwood) with new retail and services that augment the existing character and mix.
- Resolve traffic and parking problems that discourage shopping in the existing commercial centers.
- Recognize the traditional proximity of residential and retail uses in Wakefield. Promote development/redevelopment that

strengthens the clear identity of the town's neighborhoods and districts.

- Reinforce the neighborhood/pedestrian character of accessible shopping districts. Promote pedestrian activity by creating or improving open space that is integrated into the downtown and retail centers.
- Develop streetscape standards and support programs for improving signage, furniture, plantings, lighting, building facades, and paving materials.
- Reinforce commercial district definition and identity by highlighting gateways, edges, and transitions.
- Assist business owners in creating organizations and funding mechanisms to improve their districts.
- Remove counterproductive regulatory impediments that make improvements to streetscape or business identity difficult.

*The strong identity of the civic and recreational area north of Downtown should extend into the commercial area to capture the attention of potential shoppers.*





Wakefield can accomplish its economic development goals and objectives by focusing its efforts on capturing its share of regional growth in the most promising business sectors. By defining how and where it wants this growth to take place, and helping its residents to take advantage of the new opportunities it brings, the town can insure that the benefits are shared by everyone. This section describes some of the opportunities that Wakefield should pursue.

Wakefield can channel change in directions that are productive for all of its residents. Some of the opportunities to plan for, and take advantage of, are described in detail below.

## **CREATING JOBS IN WAKEFIELD**

Wakefield's demographic make-up presented in Section II illustrates the relative wealth of the typical Wakefield resident. The population is primarily middle to upper middle class. Only 1.3% of the town's population was below the poverty line in 2000. The average per capita wage paid in Wakefield in 2001 was \$53,983 (Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training). The Credit Reinvestment Act defines low income families as those that earn below 50% of the Median Family Income (\$65,500 in 2000) or less than \$32,750, and moderate-income between 50% and 79% of the Median Family Income (\$32,750 – \$51,745). By these definitions, 9.9% of Wakefield's population was in the low income category and 14.5% were of moderate income.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission predicts that the number of manufacturing jobs in Wakefield will be cut almost in half, from 1000 jobs to approximately 500, by the end of this decade. Although the town loses valuable jobs in this income category as industrial companies continue to close, new jobs will be created when the town redevelops industrial facilities to meet the expected growth in demand from the service sector. According to census data, 18% of Wakefield jobs held by Wakefield residents are manufacturing jobs. Thus only 90 residents will be affected by the shrinking manufacturing industry.

In general, the transition from manufacturing to services jobs parallels the shift from low and moderate income wages to middle class wages throughout the region. Discussions with residents at local meetings suggest that the town does not believe that trying to retain industrial jobs, or trying to replace them with similar types of employment, is as important as attracting more service sector jobs to keep employment high.

## **OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SERVICE SECTOR**

The service sector makes up nearly half of the Metro North economy . This region, which includes Wakefield, has the highest concentration of service jobs in the state. Services, along with high technology, are two of the fastest growing sectors in the Metro North region. The Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training projects that software and internet services will generate more jobs than any other industry in the state through the year 2006, even taking into account the recent economic downturn. Many of these software and internet companies are located in towns near Wakefield, such as Burlington, Reading, and Woburn, and can provide employment for appropriately trained Wakefield residents.

The demand for labor in the health services field continues to grow. Health is the largest service sector industry in the Metro North region, comprising 33,988 jobs. 1,085 of those jobs come from the Melrose-Wakefield hospital. Connecting residents with jobs or job training in this sector of the economy is a way to fill the employment demand while making up for the loss of jobs in the industrial sector.

## GROWING JOBS BY GROWING BUSINESS

A majority of Wakefield's businesses fall under the micro and small business categories. When added together they provide a significant percentage of employment opportunities and revenues for the town. If Wakefield can provide assistance to help grow new and existing businesses, the town can increase not only the number of jobs available to its citizens, but its tax base as well.

By definition, micro-businesses have less than \$100,000 in annual sales and few employees. Small businesses typically have an annual sales volume of under \$5 million. Business assistance programs appropriate for these types of companies are those that help connect companies and owners to financing, to affordable and appropriate commercial space, and to support networks.

The town should be proactive about promoting and marketing the benefits of operating a small business in Wakefield, and try to attract entrepreneurs who may want to start or relocate businesses. The town should create a business marketing brochure, listing the benefits that Wakefield offers and a list of local real estate brokers. Available commercial spaces can be posted on the town's web site. Business location decisions are usually made by the owners, and often these decisions are based on where they live. The town should promote the quality of life it offers residents and the quality business environment it provides, both for owners and for employees.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses often need only modest financial assistance to get started. Wakefield should provide informa-

tion about accessing micro-enterprise loans and Small Business Assistance loans. The town can also create its own program for "emerging businesses" or sponsor a community revolving loan fund (see Section XIII Implementation Resources for more information). Finally, the town should approach the local banks to provide small loans for entrepreneurs, or to underwrite ventures with slightly higher than usual risks or limited equity.

## TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Wakefield shares the employment and workforce development resources of the Metro North Region, some of which are state programs while others are federally funded. The Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training, along with Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) have been given primary responsibility for leading and managing the area's workforce development system under the Workforce Investment Act. Available services include filing unemployment insurance, One Stop Career Centers, resources for education and training, and job search services. Along with state and local funding, these agencies also receive grants from the U.S. Department of Labor for worker education and training. (Source: A Profile of Leading Industries, Metro North Regional Employment Board. For a detailed list of resources and contact information, see the Section XIII Implementation Resources). Rather than duplicate these efforts, the town should provide information about, and referrals to these programs through the high schools, community centers, the YMCA, social service centers, libraries, at Town Hall, and on the town's website.

## DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Only 3.5% of undeveloped land in Wakefield is zoned for business uses; 96.5% of the undeveloped land is zoned residential. While most of the undeveloped land is located in areas that are inappropriate for commercial development, or unattractive from a market perspective because of access or visibility, sites located near major transportation routes should be examined for their commercial development potential, and rezoning considered.

The redevelopment of existing properties allows them to be put into more productive use, creating value for property owners and the public without disturbing existing open space. The five areas examined in the Development Scenarios section of this Master Plan provide examples of what might be done in a number previously developed areas.

### INDUSTRIAL ZONE OPPORTUNITIES

Former and existing industrial areas are prime candidates for redevelopment, as the recent proposals for the reuse of the Robie Industrial Park and the Spir-It property on Lake St. indicate. The Town should work with owners to identify alternative uses for such sites if manufacturing continues to decline as projected. One possible use is for office park development.

A separate planning study for industrial sites should be commissioned in order to analyze and address significant issues and provide redevelopment alternatives. Providing better connections to downtown and the highway system, and addressing environ-

mental and potential traffic and parking issues should be part of such a study.

### BUSINESS ZONE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The MAPC has projected that 207,711 square feet of new commercial and industrial building development can be supported in Wakefield. According to industry standards, that amount of development represents approximately 765 new jobs. There are also redevelopment opportunities in areas like the Junction that could add even more jobs.

In order to redevelop properties in Wakefield to their highest and best use, attention must be paid to site selection criteria for office and retail uses in order to protect town character and economic viability. Evaluation criteria include:

#### Office

- Convenient access to the regional highway system and public transportation.
- A high quality environment with good visibility that will assist in promoting a strong public image.
- An educated labor force in the area.
- A supportive business environment.

#### Retail:

- Attractive setting that builds confidence in the potential customer base.
- Convenience for customers in terms of pedestrian and automobile access and parking.
- Visibility that allows the creation of an appropriate public

image.

- Surrounding retail mix that serves to draw customers to the area and promotes a synergistic relationship.
- Strong customer base and sufficient pedestrian and vehicular traffic passing by the location.

## COMMERCIAL VERSUS RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The development scenarios presented in this Master Plan vary in the mix of residential and commercial development that they illustrate. Commercial properties have less impact on municipal services because the most costly item, school budget, is not increased by commercial development. Commercial properties pay more in taxes on a value basis. (\$24.14/\$1000 vs. \$11.40/\$1000), thus commercial development will provide significantly more tax revenue on a per-square-foot basis but. Because parking require-



*North Avenue near the commuter rail station could accommodate a mix of residential and commercial development.*

ments tend to be the limiting factor for most developments, and because residential uses require fewer parking spaces per square foot, a given property can usually support more square feet of residential development than commercial. Given the strength of the residential condominium market, the net fiscal benefit from this type of development may be very close to the benefit from new commercial development (see specific analyses in the Development Scenario sections).

There are other factors that make residential development beneficial for the town and potential developers:

- The residential development envisioned as likely and desirable on many sites would be apartments, or more likely, condominiums. Because of unit sizes these developments tend to have fewer school age children (0.2/unit), resulting in only a modest impact on schools.
- As noted, zoning requires fewer parking spaces for the same floor area. (1.5 spaces/unit, vs. one space/250 square feet of floor area for commercial.)
- The market may not support retail or office construction on a particular site due to access, visibility, site dimensions or compatibility with adjoining uses. Some sites may be suitable only for stand-alone one story retail rather than multi-story development, limiting their revenue potential.
- Residential development, in the current market, may be more valuable to the landowner or developer than office uses. Some owners may require residential construction's high value to see a financial reason to redevelop their property.

## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES MAP

*Lake Quannapowitt and nearby civic buildings provide "picture postcard" settings.*

*Residential neighborhoods are within walking distance of downtown, North Avenue and Junction development areas.*

*Main Street redevelopment will reinforce the centrality of downtown.*

*The North Ave. commuter rail station area offers the opportunity for transit oriented development.*

*Middle School relocation/reconstruction is under consideration, and should be coordinated with the Master Plan proposals for the surrounding areas.*

*Access to Crystal Lake is now blocked by industrial uses. Redevelopment can open up the waterfront to the public, although the commuter rail line will remain.*



*Under-utilized industrial areas offer redevelopment opportunities*

*Relocation of the Department of Public Works building could benefit the DPW and facilitate improvements in the Junction.*

*The Junction offers excellent development opportunities*





Three of the five study areas, Salem Street, North Avenue, and the Junction, have the potential for significant redevelopment in the near future. The other development areas modeled, downtown and Greenwood, have an immediate need for improvements to existing buildings and urban infrastructure. New construction and an increase in density are limited by considerable site and market constraints. Improvements in the physical and business environment may create the context for more significant building in the future.

New development at Salem Street, North Avenue and the Junction, along the lines proposed in the Master Plan, will add to the economic well-being of the town while improving the physical surroundings and creating a more vibrant character. Comprehensive redevelopment of these areas can add to the town's tax base, even after subtracting current tax receipts and major costs in municipal services (schools). Additional employment opportunities can also be provided.

The sections that follow analyze the development scenarios and their fiscal implications, and can serve as models for development throughout Wakefield. While every site is unique and presents its own set of opportunities and challenges, the trade-offs, when considering residential, retail or commercial uses, can be generalized to other locations. The accompanying tables illustrate the fiscal impact of redevelopment in each of these three areas, and compare alternate development programs at Salem Street and The Junction.

*Main Street, from Crystal up to the Common and Lake Quannapowitt, should be understood as one continuous spine that ties the town together. New development, suggested here, can support that goal.*

The success of Wakefield's economic development vision will be substantially dependant on the redevelopment efforts of current landowners or the developers to whom they sell their properties. At the same time, Wakefield's citizens and its government must lead the way, acting through this Master Plan and related efforts, encouraging productive growth and channeling it in directions that promote the greater good. To that end this Master Plan is constructed around the development scenarios that are presented in the following sections, focusing on five areas of opportunity throughout the town.

## DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS INTRODUCTION

Most land in Wakefield is privately owned. Parcels are developed as their owners see fit, within the requirements established by zoning and other local, state, and federal codes and ordinances. In general, owners develop properties in order to maximize their profit. Although this benefits Wakefield in terms of an increased tax base, the town has other interests that are not necessarily recognized in this kind of financial calculation. Healthy towns find ways to simultaneously balance public and private interests, including the need to build tax revenues, promote business development, and provide citizens with an attractive and well organized living and working environment.

This Master Plan presents development scenarios for five areas in Wakefield which suggest strategies for achieving such a balance. Each scenario begins with an analysis of the physical and economic strengths and weaknesses of the area, establishes development goals that benefit property owners and the Town, and then suggests how these goals can be given form through conceptual design proposals. An economic analysis lays out anticipated costs and benefits for the public and private sector, along with implementation strategies.

A key to successfully harnessing private economic development to benefit the public is to see Wakefield as more than just a collection of individual properties. Traditionally, this attitude has made the town a great place to live. Buildings around the Common or houses in the West Side group together to create a dignified streetscape with a series of wonderful open spaces.

Three of the study areas, the Junction, North Avenue, and Salem Street near 128 lack this kind of coherent underlying structure. By introducing a vision for these areas, this Master Plan proposes to make them more attractive and more profitable parts of Wakefield. The other two study areas, downtown Wakefield and Main Street in Greenwood each have a clear identity. However, the parking, streetscape, and business mix require improvements so that they can fulfill their civic and economic potential.

This Master Plan provides proposals for improving these areas so that they can meet the needs of area residents. By tying all five areas to a broader vision for the entire town that knits housing, businesses, natural areas and transportation into a unified whole, this Master Plan lays out ways to improve the beauty and economic vitality of Wakefield.

## ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

Property redevelopment must provide a financial benefit sufficient to motivate owners to take on the risk of making changes. In the analysis of each study area it was necessary to determine the level of development (and profitability) required to trigger redevelopment. To do this, urban design, architectural design and financial analyses were conducted to determine realistic development programs consistent with the Master Plan's Goals and Objectives and financial feasibility.

If an initial scheme was not feasible, adjustments were made and revised schemes were tested. The process was repeated until a program and plan were developed that successfully balanced the objectives. While development plans for these properties may change as other considerations are brought to bear, the plans il-

lustrated and analyzed provide a framework for development that is both desirable and realistic.

## **IMPACT OF REDEVELOPMENT ON PROPERTY VALUE**

Most of the properties considered for redevelopment have functioning uses that are paying rent or providing economic benefits. The properties could be sold as-is for a particular amount of money. In these analyses the assumed current value is the assessed value for land and buildings as determined by the Town's assessor. This assumed value is compared to a projected price that a developer might pay for the property if allowed to develop the program proposed in the Economic Development Master Plan.

The projected price that a developer might pay was determined by multiplying the value of the land on a per residential unit or per commercial square foot basis times the number of residential units or commercial square footage that could be developed on the property, less the cost of parking beneath the building (as opposed to surface parking). If the Projected Land Value is sufficiently greater than the Current Assessed Value, then there is likelihood that the property will be redeveloped within a reasonable timeframe. If the difference is small, the property owner will probably not assume the development risk for the time being.

## **VALUATION METHODOLOGY ASSUMPTIONS**

Residential parking requirements are assumed to be 1.5 parking spaces per unit for rental apartments and two spaces per unit, on average, for condominiums.

The land value for apartments and for condominiums may vary depending on location within Wakefield, however, there was insufficient market information to differentiate values for the areas studied. The apartment land value of \$35,000/unit was based on the price developers were typically paying for development sites with the potential to generate rents typical for new apartments in Wakefield. The condominium land value of \$75,000/unit was based on the residual value after subtracting typical development costs and developer profit from a sales price of approximately \$350,000/condominium unit. Surface parking is included in the land value. If underground parking, structured parking, or parking beneath the residential floors is required, this represents a development premium and the cost is deducted from land value.

The assumed land value for commercial uses was based on the estimated price a developer would pay for the land that would allow the development of a square foot of building. At the present time the office market is dormant and over-built. It is assumed that in the future there will be a stable office market again and so land values are based on historic stable rents.

The typical condominium buyer will demand a larger unit than the typical renter. Accordingly, average apartments are assumed to be 1,150 gross square feet (including building common areas), and average condominiums, 1,400 gross square feet.

## **FISCAL IMPACT OF REDEVELOPMENT**

To determine the "Fiscal Benefit" to the Town of Wakefield for a development scenario, the taxes that a new development would generate were calculated and the annual school cost attributable

to the number of school children likely to live in the development were subtracted from this sum. The Town is currently receiving taxes from these properties and, in some cases, is providing schooling for children living on these properties. Current tax receipts were subtracted and current school impact added to the projected Fiscal Benefit to derive “Additional Net Fiscal Benefit”.

Taxes were projected for apartments and commercial projects based on projected development costs times the current (2004) tax rate. For condominiums, tax revenues were based on projected sales price times the tax rate.

The estimated number of school children was based on recent studies generated for different housing types in Eastern Massachusetts. Two bedroom apartments and condominiums generate far fewer school children than single family homes, town houses, or larger apartments. Per child school costs are based on Wakefield’s current cost less state aid.

## **INCLUSIONARY ZONING**

Inclusionary zoning refers to local requirements for the provision of a certain number or percentage of affordable housing units in new housing developments. Wakefield does not currently have an inclusionary zoning requirement. Developers are not currently required to provide “affordable housing” when developing market-rate housing, and no special provision has been made in the financial analyses to fund the cost of subsidized housing. However, the adoption of an inclusionary zoning provision is a recommendation of Wakefield’s Housing Master Plan. If such a provision is adopted in the future, it will decrease the financial

benefit to the property owner (as well as the fiscal benefit to the town) to the extent that associated costs are not made up through governmental support. Additional density might be needed to offset the economic impact if the residual economic benefit to the property owner is small.

## **CONDOMINIUMS VS. APARTMENTS**

Condominiums have a significantly higher land value per unit than apartments, and may be the preferred choice of the property owner. However, certain circumstances may favor apartment building development. Larger-scale development and developments that can’t be phased may be unattractive to property owners for condominiums, as the units take longer to absorb and represent greater risk.

The financial analyses suggest that the market will support condominiums in all of the study areas, with one possible note of concern. The scenarios for North Avenue and the Junction propose some buildings with residential over retail. This familiar housing model, typical throughout New England towns, is readily accepted for rental housing but relatively new for homeowners. Condominiums require a much longer range commitment by the purchaser and, combined with retail, may meet with market resistance. Careful building design that creates a strong identity for the housing and ties it into open green space and the adjacent residential neighborhood is critical to successful development. Condominiums have been proposed at North Avenue because they represent the most economically viable project. Apartment buildings do not generate enough economic benefit on North Avenue when built within acceptable density guidelines.

Downtown Wakefield offers tremendous potential for achieving real economic vitality within the context of its traditional New England town center. Renovating existing buildings, improving the streetscape, resolving parking problems and creating a better pedestrian environment are critical if Wakefield's central business district is to maintain its place as the focus of community life. Organizing merchants, land owners, and town officials will be required if these changes are to be realized.

True revitalization, however, is achieved by creating growth, not just by maintaining the existing urban infrastructure. Wakefield's downtown must expand into new markets and offer a broader range of shopping, living, and working options if it is to reclaim the vitality it once had. This can lead to more significant redevelopment that returns downtown to its roots as the social and commercial heart of Wakefield.



GREATER DOWNTOWN  
STUDY AREAS

LAKE QUANNAPOWITT

THE COMMON

**MAIN ST. DOWNTOWN**

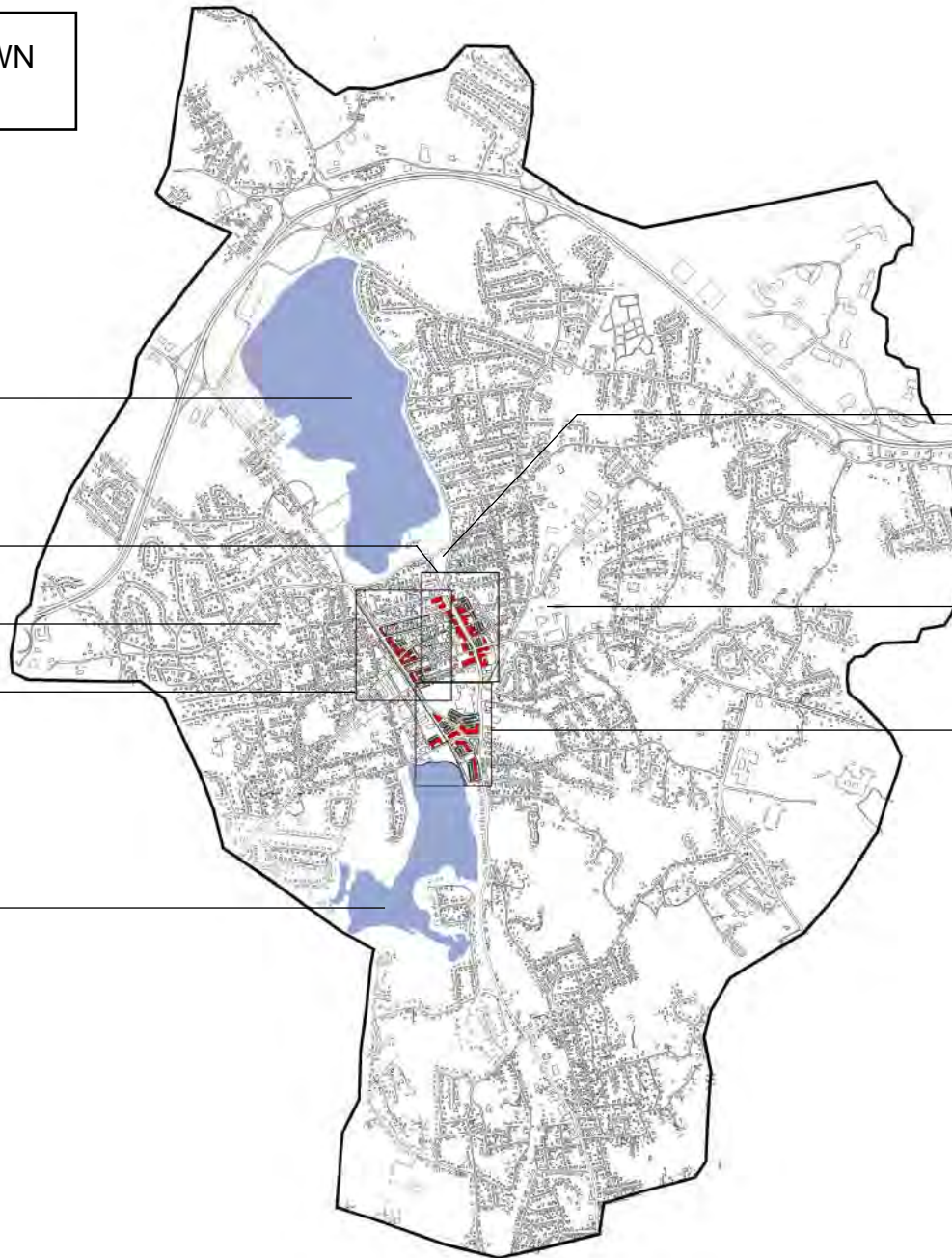
NEW SALEM ST  
INDUSTRIAL AREA

WEST SIDE  
NEIGHBORHOODS

**NORTH AVENUE**

**THE JUNCTION**

CRYSTAL LAKE





*The commuter rail station on North Avenue can contribute to the vibrancy of downtown Wakefield nearby.*

*A line of shops with one or more floors of offices or apartments above defines an appropriate pedestrian scale for downtown. Albion Street near Main Street is shown below.*



## GREATER DOWNTOWN

Main Street, North Avenue and the Junction together form a commercial core bracketed by residential areas to the east and west. With Lake Quannapowitt to the North and Crystal Lake to the south, it is an area with clear boundaries, at least on the map.

In reality, the railroad tracks, high speed traffic on major streets, awkward intersections, and expanses of asphalt adjoining the streets all interfere with the perception of the downtown as a unified, pedestrian oriented area.

Wakefield's downtown, like those in so many small and medium size American cities, has been affected by the automobile. People are no longer dependent on the central business district to meet their shopping needs. Regional malls provide a full range of retail opportunities. The roads that once brought customers and clients into town are often just seen as byways, with Wakefield as one more stop light between where people are coming from and where they are going. Yet many towns in the region, faced with similar situations, are turning things around. They are investing in their central business districts, capitalizing on their unique features and attracting people from surrounding areas.

If a coherent strategy for economic and physical development is to take shape in Wakefield, it must be based on a comprehensive long term vision. Main Street, North Avenue, and the Junction, three of the critical study areas of the Economic Development Master Plan, must be considered as a whole, with a series of interconnected activity areas reaching north to Lake Quannapowitt and south to





*Development should help knit Wakefield together, contributing green space and street trees, not just buildings to the town.*

Crystal Lake. Local and commuter parking issues, traffic problems, and streetscape improvements should be resolved in ways that don't just shift the problems elsewhere. The commuter rail station should be seen as the generator of transit oriented development - the same traditional mix of residential and commercial uses that once brought the area to life. Zoning must be used to define appropriate requirements for new buildings that will give an identity to all of downtown. The result can be a place that serves the retail, living, and social needs of Wakefield residents while providing a memorable destination for visitors from throughout the region.

A series of vibrant commercial, residential and civic uses along tree lined streets connecting Wakefield's two lakes can take maximum advantage of the town's unique assets. The creation of a "Wakefield Square" at downtown's center, accommodating a range activities and surrounded by improved facades, will offer the kind of character that shopping malls can't match. The historic fabric of the town can be preserved while allowing change and appropriate new development. To make it happen, though, will take determination and an organized effort.

## 1. EXISTING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

We all have images of what a traditional New England town center should be. Wakefield's downtown comes close - dignified civic buildings adjacent to turn of the century commercial structures, well defined avenues marked by a sense of arrival at a significant place, and a concentrated mix of retail and service uses near residential neighborhoods.

Improvements in the regional highway system, however, have changed the way Americans shop. Wakefield's town center has been challenged by its proximity to numerous malls and retail centers in the area. The Burlington Mall is 9 miles from the center of Wakefield, the Square One Mall in Saugus is 5 miles away, and the Redstone Shopping Center in Stoneham is only 1.5 miles.

New shopping preferences and retail options have changed the way people think about shopping, and Wakefield's downtown has not kept up with expectations. Owners have not re-invested in their buildings and store owners have not always updated their merchandise. The result is a downtown that lacks the vitality it once had, and that has not yet reinvented itself for the 21st century.

The struggle to maintain a thriving downtown is not unique to Wakefield. Communities throughout Massachusetts and the United States continue to search for ways to revive their retail cores, and many are finding that it is not a hopeless cause. Significant success has been realized in Melrose, Stoneham and other nearby communities. Their achievements are the result of a concentrated effort and an on-going commitment of resources by these communities to halt and reverse the pattern of downtown decline.



*Downtown should create a vibrant image to attract people visiting Lake Quannapowitt and civic buildings around the Common. Banners shown here celebrate the town's spirit in front of the library but disappear in the retail area. Extending the median strip, banners, lighting, signage and other distinctive features into the retail area can help connect it to well-used areas to the north.*

Simply copying the policy changes implemented by Stoneham or Melrose is no guarantee that Wakefield will be able to replicate their success. Each community has its own set of challenges. At the same time, town planners do not need to “reinvent the wheel.” This section of the Master Plan suggests how Wakefield can adapt and modify proven models of town center commercial revitalization to its unique set of issues.

The town has made attempts to organize a downtown revival. Wakefield experimented with a Main Streets program in the 1980's, but the dwindling retail community was unable to sustain the financial support and participation necessary to meet the program's



*Old buildings and new businesses can work together to create a sense of vitality.*

*The intersection of Main Street and Albion St. could be celebrated as a major downtown intersection with a series of pedestrian and shopping amenities and a connection to the commuter rail station. There is little to distinguish it now from any other intersection in town.*



continuing requirements.

Yet Main Street did not die. Despite all the shopping alternatives, residents seem to understand that their town needs at least one great, well-used street as a link with tradition and to the neighborhoods and civic buildings in the area. Such streets imbue towns with character, identity, and a community spirit. There appears to be a consensus that Main Street plays that role in Wakefield.

To uncover the challenges merchants face, the Master Plan consultant team interviewed downtown business owners in person or by telephone. They were questioned about their vision for the district and their perceptions of Main Street opportunities and challenges. Additional meetings were held with the Chamber of Commerce and representatives of the business owners in Greenwood. The Team also discussed retail concerns at a series of public economic development planning meetings organized by the Town Planner. With the input received at each of these sessions the team was able to turn stakeholders' visions of the commercial district into unified development plans.

The participants represented a cross-section of retail interests. Some were the owners of thriving businesses, others were struggling to keep their doors open. Some have family businesses that have been in operation for decades, while other run stores that are brand new ventures or franchises of national chains. Despite their differences, several common themes surfaced during the interviews that have helped to focus the recommendations for this economic development area. (See Section XIV Downtown Merchant Interviews for more information on merchants interviewed and questions asked.)



## **2. KEY FINDINGS FROM MERCHANT INTERVIEWS**

### **1. Business owners in Wakefield were positive in their overall assessment of Wakefield's retail potential.**

- Business owners like and want to protect the small-town feeling created by the variety and number of small independent stores. These shops give downtown Wakefield its identity and sense of uniqueness.
- Despite the current economy, businesses located downtown are surviving.
- A retail location directly on Main Street is advantageous in terms of visibility and accessibility.
- Wakefield has destination retail shops; customers come from surrounding communities to shop in Wakefield.
- Rents tend to be affordable, although some are relatively expensive considering the property's amenities.

### **2. Downtown and Greenwood merchants would like to see specific actions taken to overcome what they see as “barriers to business”. There was, in general, a consensus among merchants interviewed on what constituted the major barriers.**

- The zoning review and appeals process is time-consuming, expensive and inconsistent in its decisions.
- The high commercial tax rate is an impediment to achieving profitability for many businesses.
- Ground floor retail spaces are relatively large; there are not many 1,000 square foot shops on Main St. for smaller or new retailers concerned about start-up costs.

### **3. Business owners said that the top three improvements that would draw more customers are more parking, a better mix of retail, and more attractive storefronts and streetscape.**

- Parking is perceived to be the main obstacle to attracting and retaining a larger customer base.

- Over the past ten years Wakefield's residents have become increasingly professional, but the town does not have the right mix of stores to satisfy their shopping needs.
- Larger, national tenants that fill retail voids are welcome and can reinforce existing businesses.
- The general level of cleanliness and maintenance of streets and sidewalks is a concern for business owners.
- The relatively large number of absentee landlords contributes to a lack of building maintenance, a decline in overall appearance of the district and a lack of improvement in the retail mix.
- Some owners like the individuality of the storefront signs, and would prefer enforced maintenance to uniformity.
- Many buildings have special architectural details that could be uncovered and restored.

### **4. Business owners need assistance in addressing the specific needs of merchants.**

- Downtown does not have a strong organization that can speak for merchants and coordinate marketing, events, business hours, and other central business district issues.
- Town government does not offer a Main Street Coordinator or similar position to offer help to merchants individually or as a group.
- The Wakefield Chamber of Commerce provides valuable services but is not organized to assist retail merchants and address their specific set of needs.
- New merchants or businesses opening in Wakefield do not know who to turn to for assistance in town.
- Many business owners would be willing to pay to be a member of a merchants association or Business Improvement District if its mission was clearly defined and its actions effective.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

The town should support the efforts of small businesses rather than allowing them to struggle for survival on their own. In order to implement the ideas set forth in the Master Plan for downtown, a person or organization must be appointed or hired to follow through on recommendations and advocate for merchants' interests. They should coordinate the activities of business owners, actively pursue implementation of Master Plan goals, and help to improve the quality of the business district that is so crucial to the economic health and sense of pride for Wakefield.

In addition to a Main Street Coordinator position under the Town Planner, there are various types of organizations that can support merchants and help implement business district goals. A number of different models are described in detail in Section XIII Implementation Resources, and include Business Improvements Districts, Merchants Associations, Main Streets programs, Community Development Corporations, and Local Development Corporations.

Creating such an organization is an even greater challenge today because there are fewer retail shops on Main Street than when the Main Streets program was in existence, and governmental assistance is very limited in the current economy. For these organizations to succeed, they require a financial and political commitment from the town and business owners. Wakefield may have to provide some catalysts for the formation of appropriate organizations until the retail community is strong enough to keep them going on its own.

A Main Street Coordinator and organizations such as those noted above can focus initially on the short term successes that will create momentum for tackling larger economic development goals envisioned for the town's retail centers. To provide guidance for such an effort, the town should undertake a full commercial district assessment and prepare a more detailed revitalization plan. This will lead to a clearer plan of action for short term and long term implementation. It will also establish objectives that can be used to evaluate more ambitious development proposals that may follow initial downtown successes.

A more detailed commercial district study should include:

#### 1. Full assessment of existing economic conditions.

- Map businesses, vacancies, ownership patterns, anchors and clusters.
- Assess barriers that prevent current owners from starting or expanding businesses.
- Quantify pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- Complete a comprehensive parking analysis with recommendations.
- Conduct a sales leakage analysis.
- Continue to meet with and interview business owners to monitor progress in meeting objectives and maintain interest in the program.

#### 2. Detailed Revitalization Program.

- Create and sustain interest by business and property owners in downtown improvements.
- Allocate sufficient resources to implement the revitalization program.

- Determine what the community wants and what is viable in the short term and over the long term.
- Conduct market research.
- Create a targeted business list for recruitment including more destination retail businesses and nationally known names such as Starbucks.
- Develop marketing materials that help create a district identity in Wakefield and throughout the region.
- Promote the retail district to recruit new businesses and to attract new customers.

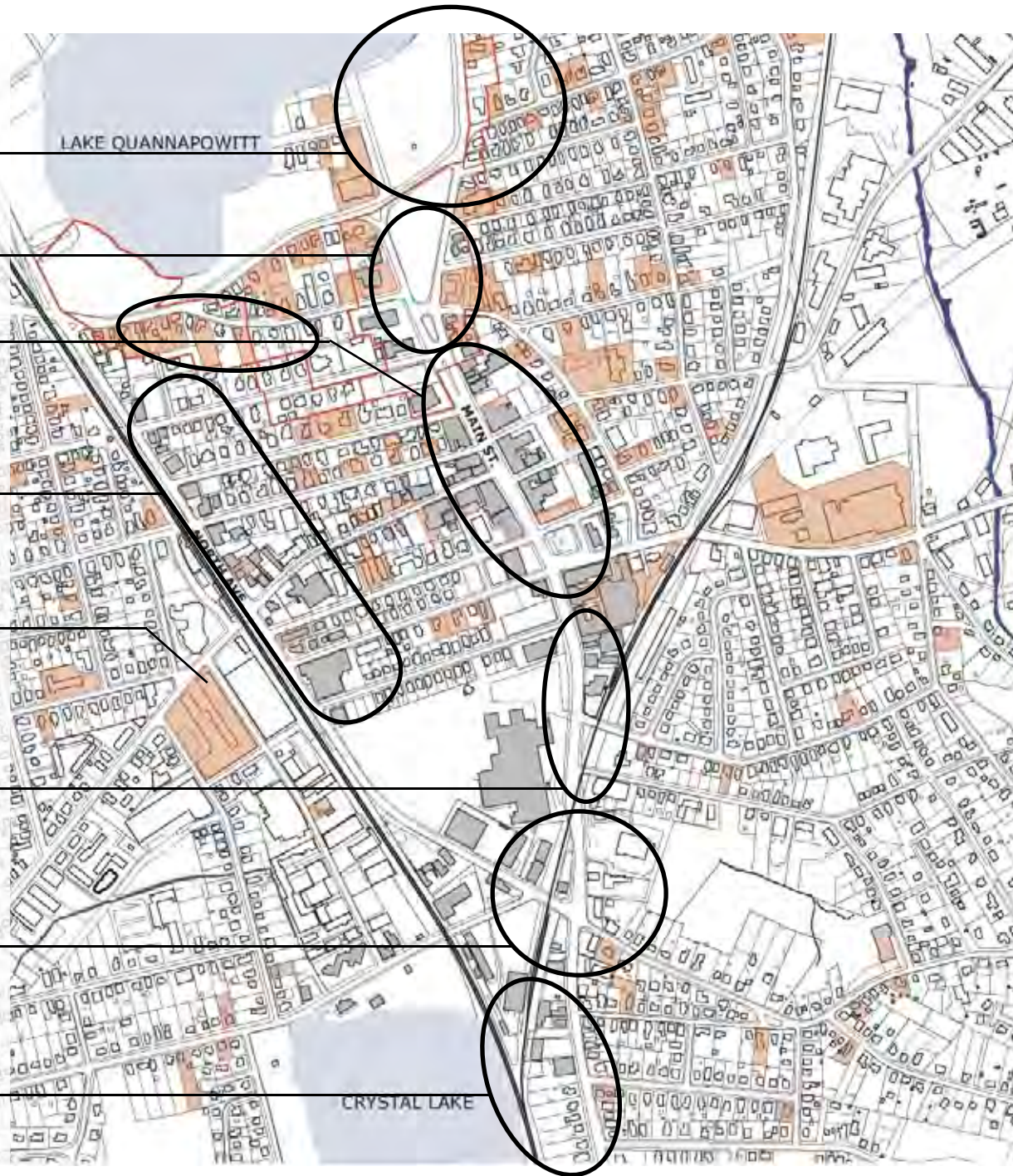
### **3. Business Assistance**

- Pursue state and regional loan programs and grants such as SBA loans, micro-enterprise loans, towns loans, or community revolving loan funds.
- Involve local banks to create loan packages and preparation assistance.
- Offer town sponsored loans and grants that are simple, focused, and minimize red tape for storefront improvement and signage programs, etc.

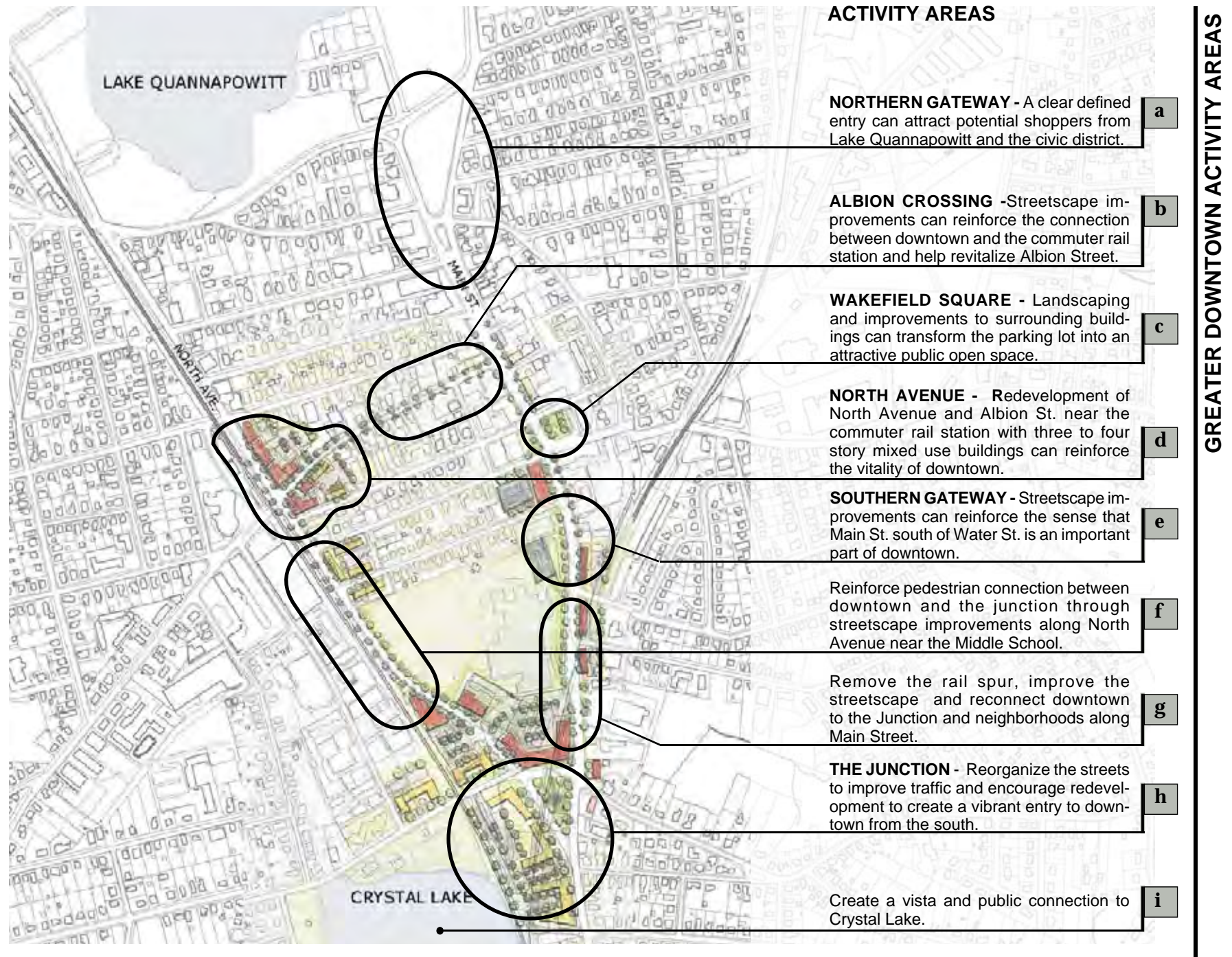
(See Section XIII Implementation Resources for more detailed information on business assistance options.)

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- a** Users of Lake Quannapowitt are not drawn to downtown by a clear connection to a well defined retail district.
- b** The civic area and Common appear more attractive and defined than the commercial district.
- c** Downtown lacks a distinct character, clear activity areas, and a coherent connection to adjacent areas.
- d** One story buildings and industrial uses do not take advantage of opportunities for retail and residential development near downtown and the commuter rail station on North Avenue.
- e** Historic buildings (colored in red) and districts (outlined in red) create a memorable cultural and architectural context for appropriate new development.
- f** The defined downtown fades into an area of parking lots and rail road tracks, without a developed streetscape along Main St.. There is no attractive approach to downtown from the south.
- g** A confusing street layout and unused rail spur interferes with the coherence of the Junction area.
- h** The public is cut off from Crystal Lake by industrial development.











*An expanded Main St. median strip offers the opportunity for a distinctive entry and orientation area for downtown.*

*Projecting banners, lights and crosswalks can help tie the two sides of Main Street together. Continuing the central median strip south from the Common can encourage pedestrians to safely cross the street.*



#### 4. DOWNTOWN MAIN ST. ACTIVITY AREAS AND USES

If downtown is to become a vital commercial area where businesses can thrive it, needs an interesting sequence of well-defined spaces sponsoring a series of meaningful activities. Other towns may offer useful design precedents, but ultimately Wakefield must build on its own strengths and work within its limitations. Main St. in Wakefield is too wide to offer the intimate scale of Main St. in Melrose. Too many of its old buildings have been torn down to give it the historic texture of Lexington or Winchester. Yet downtown Wakefield's central location, collection of dignified historic buildings, and basic economic health offer real opportunities for the Town.

Downtown must become a coherent whole while offering a diverse range of uses. A unified district can be created if Wakefield's downtown is thought of as a series of interconnected activity areas. The areas can be defined by their spatial character, how they are used, and by the types of businesses that are spread out along them. Each area must have easily accessible parking so that users are assured of finding a space near their destination. The critical areas that can define Wakefield's Downtown are illustrated on the maps in this chapter and are described in more detail below.

**NORTHERN GATEWAY** The Central Business District is just to the south of many of Wakefield's most important municipal assets. The Library, Town Hall, several churches and the Post Office create what could be called a Civic District to the north of the first commercial buildings. These dignified and historic structures surround the beautifully landscaped Wakefield Common. Just beyond is Lake Quannapowitt, a popular attraction for joggers, active families, and organized events. The lake, the Common and the civic buildings an-

chor the north end of downtown and create a truly distinctive sense of place with a picture-perfect New England quality..

People do not, however, always venture into the retail area once at the Lake, Church, or Library. The creation of symbolic and functional elements announcing the presence and vitality of downtown Wakefield can help attract them into the business district. These amenities should support a series of meaningful activities that help to define their visit. The important activities to be encouraged include:

**Entry.** Signage, banners, lighting, a literal gateway, or other monumentally scaled elements flanking either side or spanning across Main Street can mark the entry to the retail area from the north. They can suggest the presence of a vibrant shopping and dining district that can attract lake-side strollers or library visitors. From the south, this kind of marker can suggest the termination of the retail area, turning Main St. south of Crescent St. into a generously scaled outdoor room leading to the civic and recreational space beyond. Extending the Main St. median strip another block into the retail area can also help bring people into the commercial area. (see Section XII Streetscape Elements for examples of entry elements).

**Orientation.** A directory of downtown businesses in the Northern Gateway area would give establishments throughout the Central Business District a presence near Lake Quannapowitt and civic buildings. Directories and maps can be placed at the north end of the retail area and close to the lake as well.

A map and signage noting historic buildings and documenting Wakefield's past would help interest people in the community and can be the starting point of a historic walking tour.



*Street trees, attractive furniture and paving, along with well maintained storefronts create an active downtown in Lexington. Thoughtfully designed public places and retail offerings responsive to area residents' needs reinforce one another.*





## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- a** Commercial buildings and downtown streetscape lack the appeal to attract shoppers from the north.
- b** Existing building is a model for historic rehab; too few other buildings have followed its lead.
- c** Parking is not clearly visible from Main Street and is difficult to access.
- d** Albion St. is an important connector to the commuter rail line with potentially attractive buildings that seem to get lost.
- e** One story buildings do not create the kind of street wall that once gave Wakefield a real downtown character.
- f** Some retail areas seem to be coming back to life; more support is needed.
- g** Retail on Lincoln street feels cut-off from downtown activities.
- h** The potential heart of downtown is taken over by parking.
- i** Retail south of Water Street feels cut-off from downtown activities.
- j** Non commercial uses bring downtown to an abrupt end.
- k** Downtown does not provide a vibrant image to attract people passing through.





## PHASE I



**NORTHERN GATEWAY** - Streetscape and facade improvements, a gateway element, bathrooms and benches can provide the functional and design elements to attract shoppers from the north.

Improve visibility and efficiency of off-street parking and investigate construction of garage to provide parking required for enhanced activities.

**ALBION CROSSING** - Mark intersection of Albion St. and Main St. to support Albion St. businesses and connect to commuter rail station on North Ave.

Reinforce restaurant and shopping area with improved facades and streetscape. Encourage outdoor dining.

Improve streetscape to reinforce pedestrian connection to the Junction and to support businesses.

**SOUTHERN GATEWAY** - Improve Americal Center and streetscape to form southern gateway to downtown.

Utilize excess (after hours) middle school parking for Downtown and Americal events.

Downtown redevelopment is an incremental process. Every step that is accomplished helps to build confidence that the next step is achievable. As parking lots become better organized and more accessible, more people come to shop. This brings a better mix of retail and improvements in storefronts. Businesses are more profitable, they become more committed to downtown improvements through their Business Improvement District, and invest in upgrading the streetscape and rehabilitating older buildings. The town benefits from the increased tax revenues and can make investments in services and infrastructure. A parking garage is constructed to meet increased needs and to open up space for outdoor activities along the street and in Wakefield Square. The newly revitalized central business district with a vibrant nightlife

begins to attract developers who establish a residential presence downtown.

Such a scenario is achievable, but will not happen overnight.

The Phase I and Phase II plans on these pages suggest two stages in the process. Each one requires public and private cooperation and public and private investment. Merchants, town officials, citizens, shoppers, developers, and banks must all have the confidence that Wakefield has a clear vision and the determination to achieve it if this revitalization process is to be sustained. Phasing suggests that it takes time, but that there are milestones that can be accomplished and that there will always be new goals to meet.



*Over the long term downtown Wakefield, through appropriate re-development, can become the thriving center it once was while meeting 21st century needs. A rejuvenated Main Street is shown here, with Albion Street in the foreground, looking south.*





## PHASE II

**MAIN STREET** - Redevelop one story buildings as three to four story buildings with residential over retail to create a traditional downtown street wall and a sense of vitality.

a

**HISTORIC REHABILITATION** - Re-build historic buildings, such as the Wakefield block, to return them to their former glory.

**WAKEFIELD SQUARE** - Encourage appropriate development around open space at Main St and Water St and transform it into a pedestrian green.

b

**PARKING** - Well designed garages augment on-street parking for retail uses as well as for residential construction above. Several potential garage sites are illustrated.



*In Watertown, seasonal banners continue from the Civic district into the adjacent business district tying the two areas together.*

*A well marked series of interconnected parking lots behind civic buildings and stores serve both municipal and business uses in Watertown.*



**Refreshment.** Public bathrooms, benches and a drinking fountain will attract people from the Lake and bring them into the downtown area. These can be freestanding elements or tucked into a building along Main St. Their presence should be noted with signage at the Lake as part of a comprehensive signage program.

**Commercial/Residential Uses.** Upgrading storefronts, signage, and the retail mix can attract people who have come to the area for civic and recreational reasons. Uses can include local specialty shops or recognized chain stores with a clear identity in the marketplace. Restaurants with outdoor dining and attractive storefront displays can provide the kind of vibrancy that will draw people in. Existing one story commercial buildings are overshadowed by civic buildings. Re-developing them at three or four stories with residential over retail will reinforce the presence of the urban street wall and bring new life to the neighborhood.

**Parking.** Garage location #1 (see plan on previous page and also on later Main Street Parking Garage Options page) would serve the Northern Gateway area effectively. Improved organization and signage for existing parking behind Main St. commercial buildings would also be beneficial. Enforcement of regulations would control employee and commuter parking and keep spaces open for customer use (see extended discussion in part 7, Traffic and Parking, of this section).

**Recommendations** – Upgrade the streetscape and amenities to lead people from civic and recreational areas into the commercial area. Recruit restaurants and specialty retail. Rebuild one story buildings with office and residential uses above ground floor retail. Create additional parking and use existing parking more effectively.



**ALBION CROSSING** Much of the Central Business District retail activity is along Main Street, and it is too easy miss the fact that there are important commercial buildings and activities on other streets.

Albion St. is an intimately scaled shopping street that connects Main St. to the commuter rail station and the commercial activity along North Ave. Albion St. buildings could be filled with boutiques and cafes; instead many are underutilized. Foot traffic is insufficient to support stores and restaurants. The intersection of Main St. and Albion St. needs to become a distinctive place that can orient shoppers and suggest the range of downtown retail offerings beyond the confines of Main Street. Additional uses should be encouraged to anchor this part of downtown. Activities that could define Albion Crossing include:

**Orientation.** A map and directory of downtown businesses would help direct shoppers to Albion St. and North Ave. establishments. A gateway, vertical marker, special lighting, banners and flags, or the relocation of the clock can provide a sense of centrality to Albion Crossing.

Eliminating four or five parking spaces at Albion and Main would create an enlarged pedestrian area for seating, making a real cross-roads that can become an attractive meeting place. Distinctive paving, planters and other special urban features will provide a character to distinguish it from surrounding areas, while connecting shoppers to both Main Street and Albion Street retailers (see Arlington Heights example in Section X - Greenwood discussion of "streetscape"). Clearly defined crosswalks and traffic signals will help calm traffic and ease pedestrian passage to adjacent blocks.



*Outdoor dining can bring a downtown retail area to life. Awnings, umbrellas, and people enjoying themselves can do a great deal to attract visitors and residents to the business district.*

**Restaurants.** A group of four restaurants on Main Street near Albion Street already creates the beginnings of a dining district. More eating establishments should be actively encouraged. Additional restaurants compete, but bring in additional patrons that ultimately are beneficial to all. Outdoor dining should be encouraged along Main Street and on nearby streets where sidewalks are wide enough for tables. Restaurants continuing around the corner would begin to revitalize Albion Street and connect downtown to the Commuter Rail Station. (See feature on Cravings, Sweetbay and Sushi Island later in this section for an example of a successful restaurant cluster, and Section XII Streetscape Elements for provisions for outdoor dining).

**Commercial/Residential Uses.** Main St. is a relatively wide street, and one story structures are not tall enough to create the kind of outdoor "room" that gives retail areas character. Single story buildings with few distinguishing characteristics should be replaced by three to four story buildings with retail uses on the first floor and businesses or residences on the upper floors. In this area upper floor residential has several advantages, including lower parking requirements, day/night parking synergy, and 24 hour activity. Balconies and setbacks on upper floors help activate the taller facades. Older multi-story and mixed use buildings in the area, such as the Bourbon Building, should be restored.

**Parking.** Garage location #1 would serve the Albion Crossing area effectively. Locations #2 and #3 are close enough to be convenient. A clearly marked entrance to well organized parking behind Main St. commercial buildings would create the confidence that parking is available. New parking spaces could be developed

## Multistory / Multiuse Downtown



Before automobiles redefined small town life just before and after World War II, most people relied on walking to get to where they wanted to go. Stores, offices, and homes were packed fairly densely into the area around downtown. Offices and living spaces were stacked on top of ground floor retail. Main Street was lined with 3 to 5 stories buildings that made Downtown into a great outdoor room for shopping, socializing and celebrating.



Photo Source- Wakefield, 350 years by the Lake, ed. Nancy Bertrand, Wakefield 350 Inc.



As the automobile came into use, more options were offered for business owners and their customers, and Downtown was no longer the destination for most people leaving their homes. Needs changed, as did the economics of running a business. Many of downtown's multistory buildings were torn down and replaced with one story stores and offices.



Today, people are rediscovering the benefits of downtown living and having less dependence on cars. In many towns, the return of residences to the central business district has brought a new sense of vitality to the area.



The introduction of new, taller multi-use buildings would not be a departure from the essential character of Wakefield, but a return to it.

along Foster Street if it were narrowed and made a one way street. Enforcement of parking regulations and/or meters would help to control employee and commuter parking, insuring that there are more spaces available for customer use (see part 7 Traffic and Parking for a more detailed analysis of downtown parking issues).

**Recommendations** - Mark the intersection of Albion St. and Main St. with streetscape improvements and crosswalks that will give it an identity and help with downtown orientation. Recruit restaurants and small specialty retail that will create distinctive facades and signage. Encourage the development of well designed mixed-use three and four story buildings. Create additional parking; use existing parking more effectively.

**WAKEFIELD SQUARE** The parking lots flanking Main St. between Lincoln and Water Streets have the potential to create a center for Downtown – a traditional square with landscaping for passive activities and paving for more active uses. These lots contrast with the continuous street-wall created by buildings along Main St. and adjacent streets. Now, however, the low scale of existing buildings, the compromised quality of the architecture, and the use of these spaces primarily for parking all work against the strong sense of urban identity and open space that this area could convey.





*The variety of building facades in Wakefield creates an interesting downtown character. Multi-use, multi-story buildings can take many different forms. This grouping near the corner of Albion St. and Main St. would be enhanced by banners and crosswalks and new multistory buildings to replace lower ones nearby.*

*The parking lots between Water Street and Lincoln Street could be redesigned to create a coherent Wakefield Square as the focus for downtown activities. This view looking northwest across West Water St. and Main St. beyond suggests the potential spacial character that could be developed.*



Improvements to the paving, landscaping, the surrounding buildings, facades and signage would allow the square to become an anchor for this section of downtown. Wakefield Square could provide a place for a range of recreational, civic and commercial activities, with additional parking provided elsewhere.

Traffic congestion at the corner of Main St. and Water St. is currently a problem. Potential solutions should be investigated in a more detailed traffic and parking report. Proposed resolutions should be coordinated with long term redevelopment plans so that changes to parking and traffic patterns support Master Plan objectives

Potential uses and activities that would reinforce the vibrancy of Wakefield Square as a downtown center include:

**Open Space as a center for business.** Wakefield Square could be redeveloped as a pedestrian space accommodating a range of activities. Planting would create a green oasis sheltered from traffic where lunch purchased at surrounding cafes and markets could be eaten. Paving would allow for weekly farmers' markets, flea markets, and seasonal flower and Christmas tree sales (a huge potential draw for nearby Christmas season retail sales). Saturday morning celebrations and festivals could be sited here, supplementing those now taking place along Lake Quannapowitt. Creative planning and marketing would draw shoppers from throughout the region, supporting downtown merchants.

A redesigned Wakefield Square would connect surrounding businesses to Main Street pedestrian traffic and give them a new presence without interfering with vehicular access. Businesses to the south of Water Street, whose owners' often express the sense that they are not

included in downtown activities, would be integrated into the perception of an enlarged and rejuvenated Downtown retail area.

**Improved Commercial Uses.** Although Starbucks, The Gap, and Barnes & Noble are the kind of ubiquitous presences that sometimes contribute to the homogenization of the American landscape, they are also signs of urban vitality, youthful cosmopolitan culture, and a thriving business center. Wakefield Square, with improvements in the streetscape, landscaping, and the surrounding architecture, can attract these well known brands and the upscale local businesses that often come with them.

Farmland Grocery, Hart's Hardware, and the Fleet Bank provide a core of viable businesses. They provide a context for well-known chains that can complement a range of cafes and specialty retailers, new and existing, that give downtown Wakefield its unique character.

**Office and Residential.** A century ago, downtown Wakefield was composed of three to five story buildings that lined Main St. and the surrounding streets. Over the past decades, many of these buildings were demolished and replaced with characterless one story buildings. The Wakefield Square area, with its proximity to the commuter rail station, bus routes, shopping, civic buildings and open space is an ideal location to rebuild the urban scale buildings that could define downtown Wakefield. Office space and residential above the ground floor stores would support retail throughout the area while creating a place with a real sense of character. Rebuilding the demolished fourth floor of the Wakefield Block building at the corner of Lincoln St. and Main St. should be encouraged.

**Phased Development.** Redevelopment of taller buildings in this vicinity may be part of a Phase II of downtown revitalization after improvements in the retail mix, streetscape, and parking. Phase I should concentrate on upgrading storefronts, streetscape planting and paving, and insuring that signage is well designed. Attracting appropriate shops and cafes that can make these improvements will create a context for further development. Improving the ground floor retail design and uses in the Wakefield Block is especially important given the prominence of this corner (see Section XII Streetscape Elements).

**Parking.** Garage locations # 2 and #3 would serve the Wakefield Square area effectively. Parking enforcement and/or meters to control employee and commuter parking would free up space for customer use. The construction of a parking garage is critical to the redevelopment of Wakefield Square as a pedestrian oriented space. Until then it is likely to remain primarily parking (see the more detailed discussion of parking issues in part 7 Traffic and Parking).

**Recommendations** – Streetscape and building improvements, and relocation of parking lots can create a pedestrian oriented open space as a center for downtown activities. Restaurants and retail including recognized names and appropriate national chains should be actively recruited. A three to four story streetwall of mixed use buildings, new and rehabilitated, along with the relocation of at-grade parking lots to garages should be encouraged as a long term goal.



Bird's eye view of Wakefield Square looking to the southeast





View of Wakefield Square.

View of Wakefield Square: Improvements in facades, uses, signage and streetscape can transform Main Street







View of "Wakefield Square"

**SOUTHERN GATEWAY.** Street-front shops and restaurants continue for another block south of Water Street before auto oriented businesses with parking in front start to dominate the commercial landscape. The urban street wall that defines the central business district breaks down at that point and the comfortable pedestrian-friendly character of the sidewalk disappears. Across the street, the Verizon building, the Americal Center, and then the Middle School, break the continuity of the business district. The rail spur then cuts Main Street off from commercial enterprises to the south.

Eventually, an expanded central business district could connect to the Junction further to the south. This will require a significant effort to remove the rail spur and improve planting and sidewalks to overcome the automobile orientation of this area. In the meantime, the retail area south of Water Street should be more clearly defined as part of downtown with a continuation of the banners, paving and crosswalks used to the north.

The Americal Center forms a kind of entry to the coherent downtown area from the south, and an anchor for this area. Both non-commercial activities at the Americal Center and commercial uses across Main St. to the east should be better integrated into downtown activities. Activities to be supported include:

**Restaurants and stores.** A number of retail establishments continue to do reasonably well despite their owner's concerns that the south of Water Street location leaves them at or out-

### Cravings, Sweetbay and Sushi Island



**Build on successful clusters –** Although downtown Wakefield suffers from a gradual decline in the number and quality of retailers located in its commercial center, three retailers recently relocated their businesses near the corner of Main and Albion Street, and their business has improved dramatically. The owners of Sushi Island (Japanese restaurant), Cravings (ice cream shop and chocolatier) and Sweetbay (florist, antiques and specialty home furnishings) have operated their businesses at various locations in downtown Wakefield for many years and enjoy loyal and regular customer bases. When given the opportunity to move their businesses to Main St., none of the owners hesitated. Despite the general state of the retail environment throughout the region, and downtown Wakefield in particular, each of these owners saw an advantage to being on Main Street. According to the owner of Sweetbay, her volume doubled after she moved around the corner from Albion St.

The owner of Cravings invested a significant amount of capital in a thoughtful renovation of his building, which includes the ice cream parlor and chocolate shop as well as the adjacent space

that he is leasing to Sweetbay. Both of the spaces have special architectural features (Cravings includes the parlor's original booths, soda fountain and marble counters, and Sweetbay's interiors have tiled walls, decorated with fantastic pastoral murals that were covered over for years). The restored character of the buildings hints at the wealth the commercial district once enjoyed. Sushi Island, which originally opened on Princess Street, relocated to the space south of Sweetbay.

These different but complementary types of destination retail draw people of all ages, demographic groups and communities to Wakefield's Main Street. The restaurant and shop owners have coordinated and cooperated with each other, brainstorming on ways to improve and capture more business. There is a desire on the part of these merchants to do more. Owners expressed frustration toward the current zoning regulations, which limit their ability to make their businesses appear more customer-friendly; in particular, they are not allowed to place benches in front of the ice cream shop, create outdoor seating for the restaurant, or design more elaborate storefront and sidewalk displays.

Vibrant retail districts are destination areas where customers achieve many of their shopping needs in one location, and discover additional



surprises along the way. The town should encourage the creation and growth of businesses like these. They require little public financing, and bring creativity and the local flavor that helps create an identity for Wakefield. A series of clusters like this one can create a truly vibrant downtown.

side the effective margin of downtown. Streetscape elements should be used to clearly include these merchants within the central business district. The first of these elements south of Armory Street can become a "southern gateway" to the area. It can announce the start of the pedestrian scaled downtown retail area and distinguish it from the automobile oriented retail uses closer to the Junction. A more formalized gateway, like those illustrated in Section XII Streetscape Elements, should also be considered.

**Recreational and business gatherings.** With improvements to both its architectural character on the outside and the activities it accommodates inside, the Americal Center can serve as the southern counterpoint to the civic buildings to the north. It can be improved into a more dignified, high quality, flexible multi-purpose space.

Acoustical treatment and renovation to some interior spaces would allow the Americal Center to host shows, parties, and meetings, becoming an income generator as well as an anchor that supports nearby businesses. Athletics could continue. Lighting, banners, and landscaping that reinforce the Americal's civic qualities should be encouraged. The parking lot between the Middle School and the Americal could be developed as a parking garage, or at least shared more actively by the Americal Center during off hours, supporting gatherings at both facilities.

Although the Middle School now seems to interrupt the continuity of the streetscape between downtown and the Junction, planting and other improvements, including a well designed

parking garage, could reinforce this connection. A relocation/reconfiguration of the Middle School, as has been proposed, would offer the opportunity to rethink how the street and the open space are defined.

**Parking.** Garage location #2 and #3 would serve the Southern Gateway area effectively. Better organized parking behind Main Street commercial buildings could be connected to this area through Wakefield Square. Parking enforcement and meters to control employee and commuter parking would free up space for customer use. Off hours/excess parking in the Middle School parking lot could be used by the Americal Center and businesses in the vicinity.

**Recommendations** - Study potential uses and marketing options for the Americal Center as an anchor for this end of Main Street. Pursue streetscape improvements for Main Street and the Americal Center to define the area and connect it to downtown to the north and the Junction to the south. Create additional parking; use existing parking more effectively.

## **5. FACADES, SIGNAGE, AND STREETScape**

The character of a downtown is defined by building facades, signage, and streetscape elements such as trees, lighting, and paving. These features serve two important functions. They tie different areas together to create a unified whole. At the same time, they distinguish one area from another to provide a sense of variety. The illustrations of redevelopment proposals suggest their importance in defining downtown Wakefield.

These elements must be carefully considered in terms of the activities they are intended to support, and the context in which they are intended to fit. The previous discussion of activity areas provides background for an evaluation of these design elements. The following outline describes in general terms how they can be used to further the goals articulated in this Master Plan. In addition, Section XII Streetscape Elements provides a broad range of examples for how these elements have been used to bring other downtowns to life.

**FACADES.** Main Street's downtown facades provide a continuous street wall appropriate for a retail area. However, there is very little consistency from one building to the next in either building height or style. Although this variety has its charms, it undermines the integrity of the central business district. Squat one story aluminum curtain wall buildings sit next door to three story masonry antiques. Some of the older buildings have been beautifully renovated; others have been poorly maintained, with a series of ill-conceived alterations to their facades.

It is critically important that Wakefield's historic downtown structures be maintained, and if possible, restored to their former stature. Their two to four story height and nicely scaled rhythms of windows and pilasters help to connect downtown to its past as a thriving business district. The recently renovated Oddfellows Hall at Avon and Main Street gives a dignified character to that corner of Downtown and is a model for the kind of rehabilitation that would benefit many of the older buildings in town. Historic Building or District designation can protect older buildings from demolition and may aid their rehabilitation.



Redevelopment of single story buildings in the central business district into new two to four story buildings with offices or residential above retail should be encouraged. A literal recreation of the older buildings that have been demolished is generally not possible. The cost of a high quality recreation of lost details is prohibitive and the compromises that result from an affordable attempt at simulation can lead to a theme park like quality in the architecture. New construction can be true to its own time, while still capturing the pleasing proportion, human scale, and sense of detail that brought the original buildings to life.

Awnings, projecting canopies, and the use of materials and systems that are appropriately scaled for a small-town retail commercial area can enhance both older and newer facades, giving them visual interest and a sense of spatial complexity. Wakefield needs to develop design guidelines for these elements, simplify their permitting, and encourage their construction. A Façade Improvement Program is highly recommended, although state and federal funding once available for these programs may not be available (see Section XIII Implementation Resources for programs and examples that may facilitate facade improvements). Facade alterations can be regulated through a downtown historic district designation and required design review.

**SIGNAGE.** Signs must be prominent enough to attract attention and convey the unique qualities of each business. At the same time, they must fit in with their building fronts, and with the facades and signs around them. Business owners and sign companies often do not have the design background to develop signage that achieves the right balance.

Some buildings, such as the Farmlands Market block, have standardized signage with a consistent traditional look. Other buildings are much more eclectic, with constantly changing materials, heights, sizes, styles and lighting systems. Downtown retail signage needs to be better regulated, with new guidelines for placement, size, and materials. This is especially important on older buildings. Given the limited number of structures with historic character, it is critical that signage on these buildings enhance, rather than detract from the architectural character of the facades. This does not, however, mean that there should be absolute consistency or a uniformly historicist character.

Given the stylistic variety of Main St. buildings, it is equally important not to expect a rigid consistency from building to building which fails to recognize unique uses and contexts. Santoro's signage for example, often criticized for its aggressive shape, can provide a special sculptural moment that creatively contrasts with more consistent signage on either side.

Signage can be regulated through a Sign Ordinance and guidelines incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance, or through downtown historic district designation. A Business Improvement District or Main Streets Program can help provide expertise, guidelines, and design assistance.

**STREETSCAPE.** Recent streetscape improvements, including some brick paving, historic streetlights, and street trees, are reasonably effective at giving a unity and pleasant character to the Main Street business district. Additional improvements can build off of these elements, both tying the district together and celebrating



unique activities and places.

Marking crosswalks with brick paving will help calm traffic, establish the priority of pedestrians, and create a rhythm out of space, form and color.

Banners hung off streetlights will add color and a sense of vitality to Main Street, and projecting rods are already in place for this purpose. They can also be suspended across the street to mark events or seasons. These sorts of elements are especially important given the excessive width of Main Street which reduces the sense of small town intimacy. Banners can help connect the two sides of the street together.

Planters, special lighting, benches and bollards can be effective elements for enlivening downtown streetscapes, but they should be located in appropriate areas where they can reinforce activities and mark distinct locations. The Northern Gateway, Albion Crossing, and Wakefield Square can be defined, in part, by these kinds of elements.

The most effective streetscape elements are often those that extend businesses outward, displaying goods and services to potential customers and creating an activated pedestrian area. The 14' – 16' width of the downtown sidewalks is sufficient for the display of books, clothes, or for outdoor dining. Tables and chairs along restaurant frontages should be encouraged, rather than discouraged as they are at present. Street furniture should be associated with appropriate uses, such as cafes, to create a sense of vitality and an attractive destination for shoppers (see Section XII Streetscape Elements).

### Bringing Downtown Melrose to Life



Along with its high quality residential environment, over the past 20 years Melrose has become known for its downtown commercial district. In addition to serving local residents, the charming center has become a regional destination

as well. In the 1970's and 80's Melrose began downtown improvements in both the public and private arenas. Street and sidewalk improvements, including Victorian streetlights, were installed as a part of a streetscape program. A grant program was created to replace non-conforming signage and to improve commercial facades. Loans were made available for other commercial renovations.

In the 1990's, a Community Development Revolving Loan, funded by a federal Community Development Block Grant, was allocated to the city of Melrose by the state. The Revolving Loan funded parking and sidewalk improvements downtown, including the addition of 30 spaces for the Dills Court Parking lot, accessibility improvements to streets and sidewalks, and the installation of trash cans throughout downtown.

In an effort to continue these improvements, the Office of Planning and Community Development in Melrose utilizes the Community Development Block Grant Small Cities funds for their Small Business Loans program, reducing loan rates for small businesses. These grants provide financing for 40%

of business improvement project costs at below market rates; local banks that participate in the program finance



another 40% of the project cost at market rates. Businesses are required to invest at least 20% of their own capital in the project. The Community Development Revolving Program also offers the Sign and Facade Grant Program, which funds up to 50% of the cost for new signs and facade improvements. The improvements made to downtown Melrose streets and buildings have transformed the previously deteriorated area into a very successful commercial district. Although many of these programs are no longer providing funding, alternative sources combined with town and business commitment can still bring prosperity to downtowns.

*Source: Melrose City Planning Department*



## 6. DOWNTOWN RECOMMENDATIONS

Wakefield should reduce the administrative and regulatory hurdles facing business owners wanting to improve signage or facades, or to expand dining or retail activities onto the sidewalk. The town can provide design guidelines and expertise to assist owners in making upgrades. The town, Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement District should organize, assist, promote and coordinate improvements to streetscape, facades, and signage. Regular cleaning of the streets, trash pickup, and snow removal can also be helpful in improving the downtown environment. Such efforts can involve a combination of public and private efforts; responsibilities should be clearly articulated (see Section XIII Implementation Resources for programs and financing that may be available).

A Storefront Improvement Program can be created to support these goals. It can be supported by a Main Streets program, town funding, Community Development Block Grants if available, and design assistance from local architects.

The town should help create a range of residential living opportunities in downtown that can help rejuvenate the central business district. A mix of residential and retail uses, especially near transit, creates a vibrant environment that supports appropriate growth. Live/work spaces for artists and entrepreneurs can be especially desirable in creating a "scene" that will attract new residents, shops, and cafes. Housing for seniors allows them walk to neighborhood businesses and downtown services.

Financing of small scale mixed use projects can be a challenge. The town should work with developers to facilitate required financing and permitting of well designed buildings.

The town should create an overlay district, provide zoning relief, or change its zoning restrictions to allow the kinds of mixed use developments that support town goals. Wakefield can make a concerted effort to recruit and work with developers who share the vision articulated in this Master Plan.

The use of 40C historic district designation may be appropriate in the preservation of historic buildings and the character of the downtown area. It is an option that should be pursued.

A Main Street Coordinator or similar position working under the Town Planner should be created within town government or through a public/private collaboration to help promote business interests. Entrepreneurial expertise and experience working with diverse interests should be required of candidates who are seeking the job.

## **7. TRAFFIC AND PARKING**

Lack of parking is the most frequently given reason for Downtown Wakefield's inability to achieve the vitality that business people and citizens desire. It is practically impossible to measure the parking shortfall, and the difficulty in finding a space changes throughout the course of the day, the week, and the year. A preliminary investigation undertaken by the Master Plan team

suggests that parking for downtown shoppers may be easier to find than commonly believed. Nevertheless, identifying parking needs and finding solutions is important for downtown's continued development. Clearly defined parking areas and regulations build confidence in the town and in the convenience of the retail district as a destination.

Any measure taken to add or control parking has costs and benefits: business owners, employees, shoppers, nearby property owners, commuters, and the town are all affected differently by different parking solutions. It is important that all stakeholders are consulted before changes in the parking programs are implemented. It is also important that an entity – the town, the Chamber of Commerce, or a Business Improvement District, take a leadership role in proposing and implementing these changes.

The traffic and parking issues addressed below should be studied in more detail by the appropriate professionals as part of a comprehensive traffic and parking plan.

**Incremental Parking Improvements.** Given the difficulty of precisely determining parking needs, the effectiveness of alternative solutions, and the expense of creating new parking, it would be prudent for the town to pursue incremental improvements in parking policy. The first step would be enforcement, and the ultimate step would be the construction of structured parking, with a series of options in between.

**Time-limit parking with enforcement.** Establishing and enforcing parking limits would be the first step for the Town to pursue in resolving downtown parking problems. Currently there is a

posted “One Hour Parking” limit throughout the central business district. It has been noted that this is rarely enforced.

Two-to-four hour parking limits with enforcement within the central business district would allow customer parking for downtown businesses while preventing the all-day commuter parking that makes spaces for customers difficult to find. One hour parking may discourage potential customers who intend to make several downtown stops. In limited areas - near the post office for example - 15 minute parking may be desirable to allow quick stops for specific purposes.

Local business owners have voiced concern over parking limitations in the past, suggesting that successful implementation will require coordination with area stakeholders if enforcement is to be successful. This is especially true since local business owners and their employees are among the commuters who take prime Central Business District parking spaces for all day use.

Entrenched habits are hard to break, so education will be an important component of the coordination effort. Businesses must understand that they will benefit by locating employee and owner parking outside of the retail area to insure that there are spaces for their customers. Establishing satellite parking lots in areas surrounding downtown could provide parking for business owners and employees that are close enough to be convenient, but utilize open areas that may be perceived by customers as just too far for shopping. A morning and evening shuttle to downtown could be provided. On-street parking dispersed in residential areas is also an alternative.

**Metered Parking.** Wakefield can both control and profit from parking in the central business district by installing parking meters and establishing parking limitations in the vicinity of downtown businesses and nearby residential areas. Parking policy must be carefully coordinated to insure that parking problems do not merely shift from one area to another. Parking meters provide time-limit enforcement as well as revenues to the city, but run the risk of alienating potential customers and creating a “big city” atmosphere. They also run the risk of pushing substantial numbers of cars onto nearby unmetered residential streets unless parking time limits on those streets are also enforced. Meters should be considered as an incremental step beyond the measures noted above.

Parking meters on Main Street, Albion Street, North Avenue, and streets immediately off of these main commercial streets would allow the town to control how long cars can remain parked. Limiting meters to two hours would insure that only patrons, not commuters, use the spaces. Eight hour meters would allow employees of area businesses to park but would again discourage commuter parking. With all approaches, enforcement is essential. Commuters soon learn if parking violations are not punished. Parking costs should be cheap and violations expensive to discourage all-day parking without discouraging shoppers.

To be effective, the all-day rates at the MBTA North Avenue parking areas adjacent to the commuter rail station should increase above the current \$2.00 per day, and be brought in line with the town's overall parking strategy.

Establishing resident-only or time-limited parking in nearby residential areas is important if the problem is to be solved rather



than merely shifted. Establishing a system of signage, permitting, and enforcement for residents-only parking is costly, but insures that those living in the surrounding neighborhoods (or downtown when apartments or condominiums are built) can continue to park near their residences. A two hour parking limit in residential areas near the commuter rail station is recommended. It allows shoppers to park while preventing all-day commuter parking.

**Parking Lot Aggregation.** Parking lots behind the stores fronting the east side of Main St. are privately owned and associated with adjacent buildings. The small size of the properties, which are often fenced off from one another, leads to inefficient parking layouts. Aggregating these parking areas into larger, continuous lots can lead to a significant increase in available parking. With signage and entries located in appropriate places, and attractive landscaping and curbing, a coherent parking system can be created that will make parking seem, and be, more accessible (a schematic plan for reorganized parking in this area is illustrated earlier in this Section with the heading Proposed Main Street Improvements Phase I).

As with any parking solution, it will take leadership on the part of the town, and an entity representing property owners, to implement a plan that requires sacrificing private control to the common good. The result will be the kind of easy-to-navigate community parking that Melrose, Stoneham, Watertown, and many area municipalities now offer, and that shoppers have come to expect.

**Additional parking.** Creating new parking areas – without

destroying existing buildings that give character to the area – can contribute to solving parking problems. Yet given the intensive use of the Downtown area, it is difficult to create significant new parking areas immediately adjacent to businesses. In a few locations, such as Foster Street, travel lanes may be able to be reduced offering additional on-street parking.

The demolition of existing buildings to create at-grade parking may be difficult to justify if it erodes the fabric of the area while providing only a limited number of new spaces. If significant demolition needs to take place, it may be worth building structured parking on the site.

**Parking Garage/Parking Deck.** Many towns have found parking garages to be a cost effective solution to parking problems. In Wakefield, it is not clear that the parking problem is severe enough, that there is an appropriate parcel, and that the money will be available to warrant this kind of construction. Many people feel that the “big city” quality suggested by a parking garage is at odds with residents' image of the town.

Structured parking should be pursued only after the incremental steps noted above have been taken, and proven inadequate. Ultimately, a parking garage may be necessary for downtown to thrive, and possible locations are shown on the following plan. A long-term strategy to bring new multi-use development to downtown Wakefield will require the construction of a parking garage, as it is unlikely that contemplated new three to four floor buildings will be able to accommodate required parking on site.

A parking garage must be part of a comprehensive parking strategy. Parking rates in a garage should be equivalent to or less than the

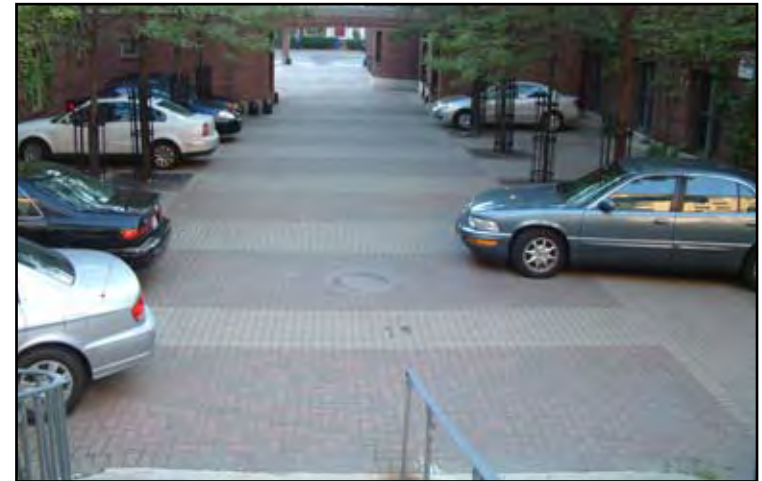
cost of on-street parking if they are to free up existing spaces for casual shoppers passing through. This would require meters on the street and enforcement of parking regulations. Garage rates should be low enough to not discourage downtown shopping and high enough to produce income when used for all-day commuter parking. Per hour costs can rise to subsidize shoppers while profiting off of all-day commuter parking. The high cost of downtown Boston parking suggests that commuters can be charged significant rates in Wakefield while still providing a bargain in comparison. Employees of downtown Wakefield businesses can get stickers or cards to allow for subsidized rates to reduce their use of on-street parking which should be reserved for customers.

*A rate schedule could be as follows:*

<i>1<sup>st</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>free</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>\$.50</i>
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>\$.75</i>
<i>4<sup>th</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>\$1.00</i>
<i>5<sup>th</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>\$2.00</i>
<i>6<sup>th</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>\$3.00</i>
<i>7<sup>th</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>\$4.00</i>
<i>8<sup>th</sup> hour</i>	-	<i>\$5.00</i>

**Financing options for downtown garages.** Identifying funding sources for a town-owned garage may be challenging. One option is to establish a Parking Authority that would sell bonds through a state agency. Potential revenue sources to repay the bonds include user fees charged to developers and property owners to satisfy their parking requirements, monthly parking rates for business district owners and employees, daily and hourly parking fees for customers and

*Multi-colored pavers and trees turn a parking lot into a public plaza in Cambridge near Harvard Square. They are a relief from the usual striped asphalt.*



*Signs in Watertown direct shoppers and town hall users to well-organized parking lots and then clarify parking regulations.*



receipts from parking meters. Community Development Block Grant money may be available as security.

The rough outline for parking garage construction and financing costs are as follows:

*With a hard and soft cost of \$25,000 per space and 5% financing for 25 years, each space must return \$130/month/space including operations and expenses. Assuming 15% vacancy, each space must return \$7.00 per day. \$5.00 per day may be more in line with the market, requiring a \$2.00 per day subsidy from the town or other sources.*

## 8. ALTERNATIVE GARAGE LOCATIONS

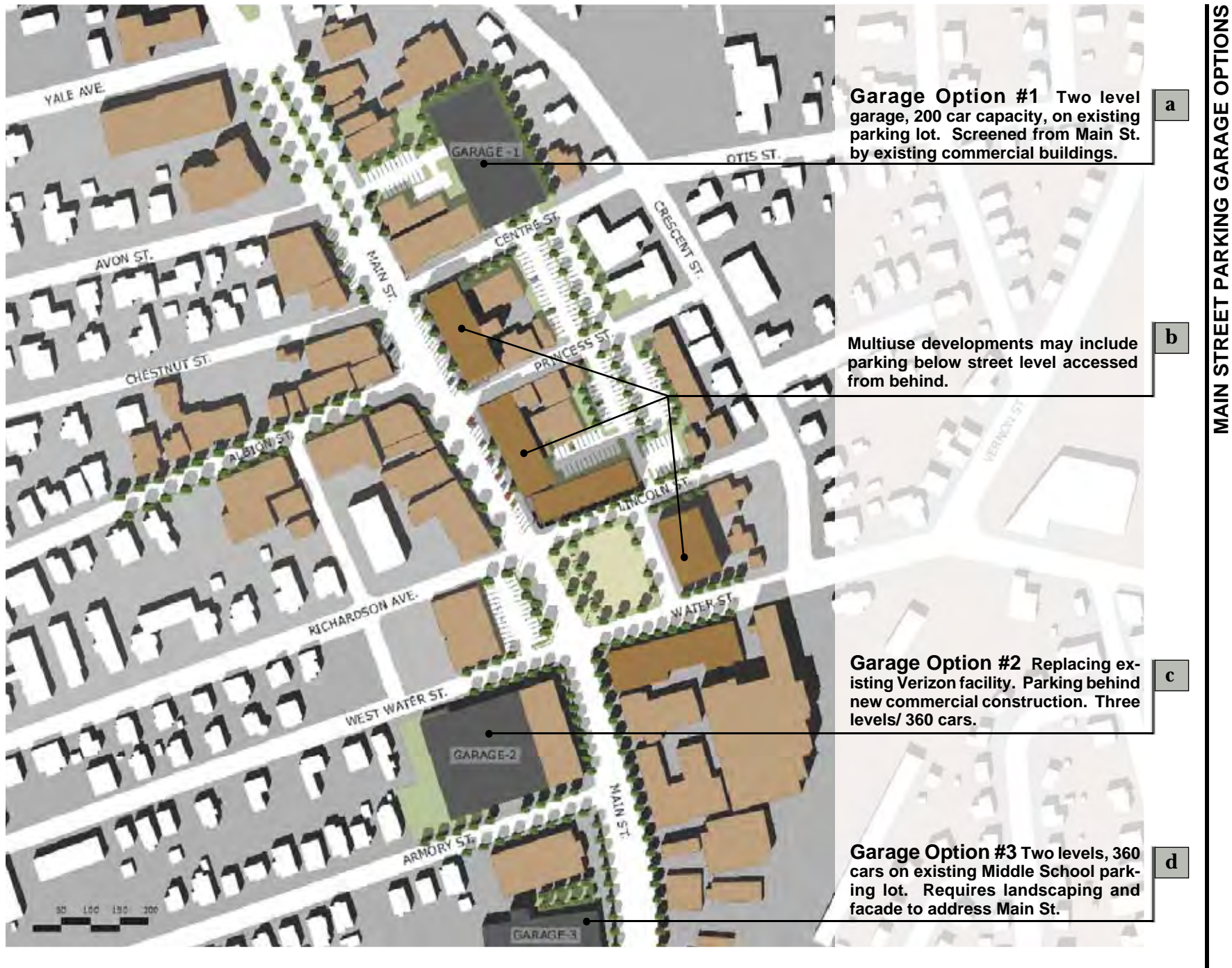
**Garage Option #1** This garage is located between retail buildings on Main St. and residential buildings on Crescent St. If kept at two levels it would not have a significant visual presence except on Centre Street. It would serve the heart of the Downtown commercial and civic district. Access could be from Centre St., Main St. or both. The slope of the land might allow “at-grade” access to two different parking levels, perhaps without the need for a connecting ramp, to maximize the number of spaces provided. Several properties, both private and town owned would have to be consolidated to make development worthwhile. The garage as shown could accommodate approximately 100 cars per level. A garage at this location was proposed in the 1980s but was not pursued after an initial investigation.

**Garage Option #2.** A Verizon facility and truck maintenance and parking area currently occupies the west side of Main St. between West Water St. and Armory St. The Verizon building offers no public access that contributes to the vitality of Main Street. The existing buildings could be replaced by a parking garage on the rear 75% of the site with retail or commercial uses along the front 25%. These uses would contribute to street life while screening the larger garage from view. Access could be from Armory St., West Water St., or both. The garage as shown could accommodate approximately 120 cars per level for a total of as many as 360 cars.

**Garage Option #3.** This site between the Americal Center and the Middle School is currently used as a parking lot along a stretch of Main St. where the downtown commercial fabric gives way to parking lots and railroad tracks. A parking garage structure could reinforce the downtown street-wall while providing multi-level parking where only single level parking now exists. Trees and an attractive garage façade would be desirable to screen the garage interior from view. The site is convenient to the Middle School, the Americal Center, downtown, and the Junction. Approximately 180 cars per level could be accommodated.

*Plans must be coordinated with ongoing use of the school or possible reconstruction of the Middle School in an alternative location on the site.*

**Long Term Commuter Parking Solution** - Wakefield has become a regional transportation hub, with commuters, often from other towns, parking near downtown and taking buses or the commuter rail line. Although this influx of potential customers has possible benefits for the town, it has increased the parking burden on the central business district and is not considered to be desirable. A



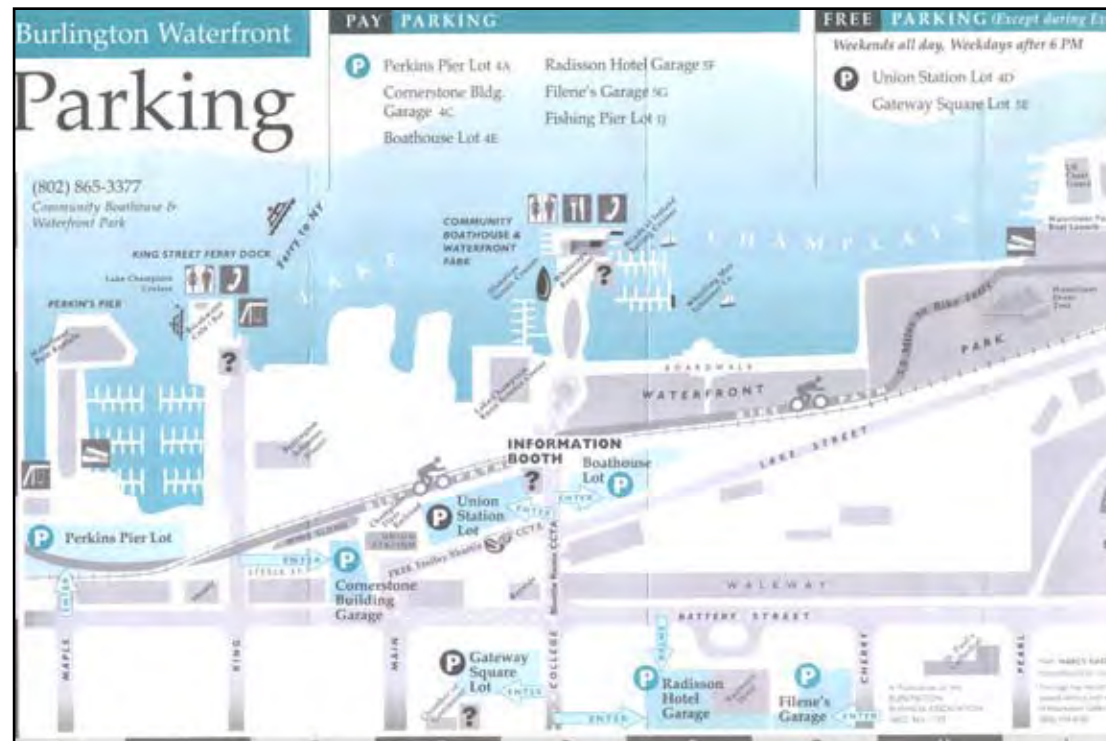


new commuter rail station with large parking lots, located near Rt. 128, would solve many of these problems. This is a long term solution at best, however, and more easily achievable interim solutions are required.

**Implementation** - Given the importance of resolving parking problems to the long term health of downtown, it is important that the business community and town government work together to develop a program for incremental improvements. Leadership

can come from a Main Street Coordinator hired by the town, a representative of a Business Improvement District, or an outside consultant hired to make recommendations and develop a detailed implementation program.

Broad community input will be required to build support for proposed solutions. Parking policy must be clearly explained and regulations enforced to build confidence in the town's ability to provide convenient parking.



*Burlington, Vermont has produced a map of downtown to highlight where parking and other town features are located. These maps are distributed in stores and at other locations throughout the town.*

The intersection of North Avenue and Albion Street near the commuter rail station provides an excellent location for transit oriented development. Its proximity to transportation, retail, services, and Wakefield's recreational and civic center makes it ideal for a relatively dense mix of residential and commercial construction. Aggregating sites, changing zoning, and resolving parking are among the challenges that must be faced to facilitate this new development.

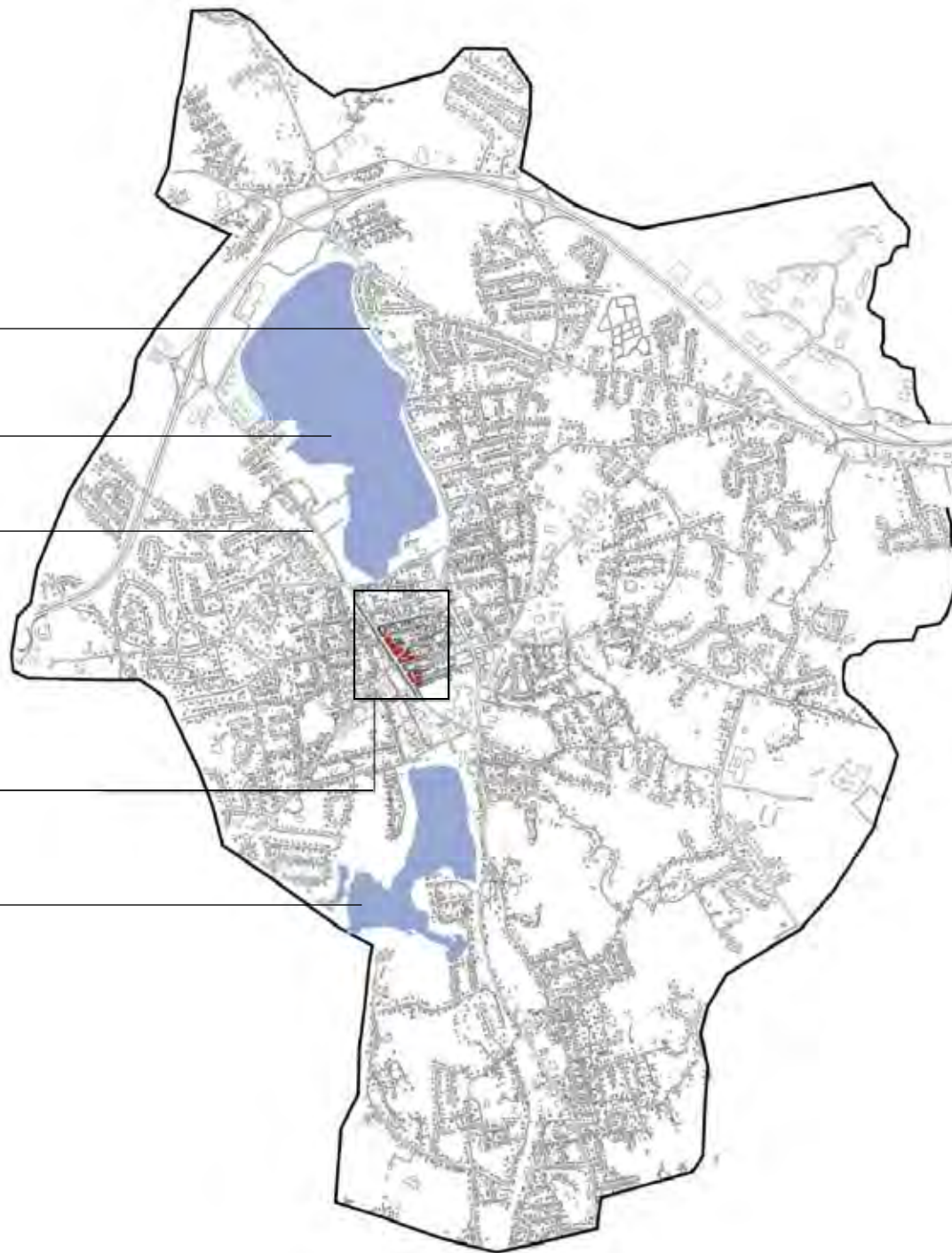
MAIN ST.

LAKE QUANNAPOWITT

NORTH AVE.

**NORTH AVENUE  
DEVELOPMENT AREA**

CRYSTAL LAKE



## 1. EXISTING CONDITIONS- ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL

The intersection of Albion Street and North Avenue is an important crossroads in Wakefield, and a potential economic development area. It is at the edge of the central business district and at one of the two Wakefield stops on the MBTA's Haverhill commuter rail line. The rail line runs along the west side of North Avenue, creating a "one-sided" street with buildings only on the east.

The area north of Albion Street is marked by retail, a coffee shop, and small office buildings interspersed with parking lots. South of Albion Street the streetscape includes several auto repair and industrial establishments along with residential buildings and parking. Further down is the Middle School, the Department of Public Works, and the Junction. The retail uses near the commuter rail station include a small concentration of specialty shops. The area lacks the continuous street wall associated with a downtown area.

According to shop owners, they do not benefit from the station's presence because it creates a shortage of parking. On-street parking on both side of North Avenue between Albion and Chestnut Streets near the commuter rail station is posted as "one hour" but is often unenforced. The west side of North Avenue south of Albion St. and north of Chestnut St. has over 120 all-day parking spaces for commuters that are prepaid at \$2.00 per day.

The current mix of uses now limits the potential for additional residential and commercial development. This Master Plan proposes alternative uses for key parcels along North Avenue and identifies catalysts for change that could lead to more attractive uses for the town and more profit for parcel owners.



*Despite its proximity to downtown, much of North Avenue is characterized by auto oriented strip development and low density buildings, some with industrial uses.*

*Pleasant cross streets connect North Avenue to Main Street although commercial uses do not have the kind of downtown character that would be appropriate.*





## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- a** Attractive historic housing on side streets provides a context for commercial development on North Avenue and should be protected
- b** Albion St. is a critical but weak link between North Avenue and Downtown whose retail character needs to be reinforced.
- c** The one sided commercial district with tracks and parking opposite buildings requires special attention to streetscape along the tracks.
- d** One story commercial buildings and minimal streetscape do not create the vibrant town center quality appropriate at this location.
- e** The commuter rail station offers a focus for economic development on North Avenue.
- f** One story industrial uses do not take advantage of their location near downtown and the commuter rail station nor contribute to a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- g** The density of existing multifamily residential on Richardson Ave. provides a model for future development near North Avenue.
- h** The Harvard Mills renovation provides an example of new office space near downtown utilizing an historic building.







## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Locate parking behind and under new buildings, not along North Avenue.

a

Encourage upper story residential development along North Avenue near the commuter rail station.

b

Improve Albion streetscape and support commercial development to reinforce connection to Downtown.

c

Encourage retail development with housing above to reinforce existing Albion Street retail and the connection to Main Street.

d

Encourage transit oriented development around commuter rail station to reduce the need for cars.

e

Support streetscape improvements on both sides of North Avenue to create neighborhood character.

f

Support streetscape improvements along the middle school to improve pedestrian connections to the Junction.

g

Protect the character of residential neighborhoods and their historic buildings.

h

## DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PROPOSAL

North Avenue near Albion Street is an appropriate location for what is known as “Transit Oriented Development”. It is a recent term for a traditional pattern of building where housing and retail are concentrated near public transportation to create a compact “village” connected by train to the region. It builds on infrastructure already in place, creates housing without paving over open space, reinforces the central business district, and lessens dependence on automobiles, easing traffic and parking problems. Transit oriented development is supported by the Romney administration, which is formulating incentives for this kind of construction.

The proposal illustrated concentrates mixed use development across the street from the train station near the Albion Street connection to Main Street. It is based on a similar proposal in the Housing Component of the Master Plan. Three to four stories of housing sit on top of a floor of retail/commercial space, with parking behind and below. North and south of the Albion Street/North Avenue intersection, mixed use construction could continue, or residential only multifamily housing can line the street. Retail could benefit from a location opposite the commuter rail station.

The proposed retail and commercial uses continue and reinforce those on Albion Street, expanding “downtown” beyond Main Street to create a more vibrant central business district. Appropriate stores and services could anchor this end of Albion, connecting commuters, pedestrians, and drivers to downtown and the Junction in a loop of commercial enterprises.

Housing in this location is appropriate for young professionals commuting to Boston or “empty-nesters” who can walk to the pharmacy, coffee shop, stores, or the library on Main Street.

Although proximity to the train station does not alleviate the need for parking, it reduces it. Commercial and housing uses can share parking, one requiring spaces primarily during the day, and the other at night, reducing parking need further. Cars should be located behind or below buildings, allowing storefronts and building entries to face North Avenue.

Mixed use developments that stack housing, commercial, and parking on tight urban sites such as North Avenue are not inexpensive to build. Excavation for parking and the differing structural requirements of different uses add to the complexity of construction. Developments must be large enough to cover the cost of elevators and other infrastructure improvements, often requiring that multiple parcels be assembled.

Mixed use development will reinforce the integrity of North Avenue, channel development into an area where it reinforces the character of Wakefield, and provide much-needed housing without destroying green space in the Town. It is not a departure from, but a continuation of Wakefield’s traditional way of building in downtown areas. It is appropriate not only on North Ave. but on Main Street downtown, along Albion St. between North Ave. and Main St., and in Greenwood along Main St. as well.

## DESIGN CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION

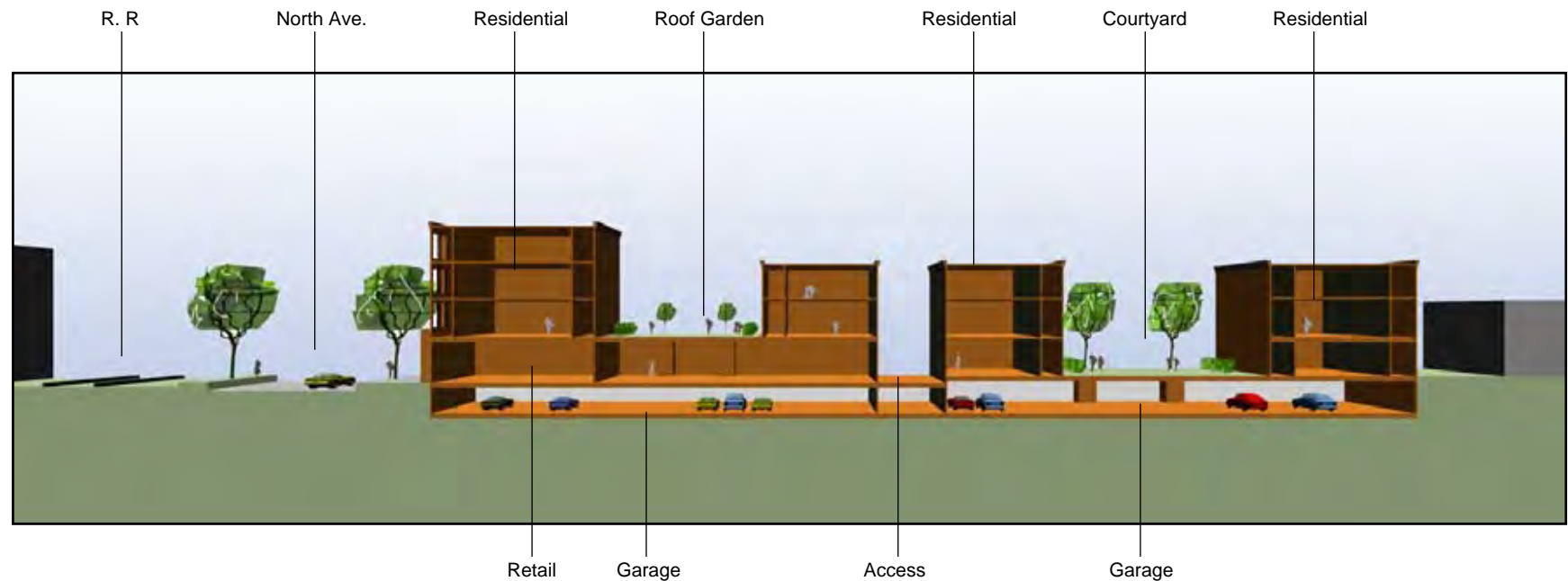
As the feasibility and fiscal benefit analyses on the following pages indicate, market forces are creating a context in which the type of transit oriented development proposed is becoming increasingly realistic. The town can create a more hospitable environment for the type of development that will reinforce the downtown character of North Avenue and Albion St. by taking the measures outlined below. These will allow Wakefield to work with developers to craft proposals that combine financial viability with positive contributions to the business context. Implementation measures include:

**Zoning Changes.** Wakefield should enact changes in its zoning ordinance that will allow and control mixed use development. Changes should include allowing residential development over

first floor commercial space and reduced parking requirements near public transportation.

The creation of a Zoning Overlay District will allow the town to consider transit oriented development in the North Avenue area and acknowledge the area's special conditions. This kind of special district designation can help create a context for negotiations with developers that can lead to improvements in the character of the town and fiscal benefits for Wakefield, while allowing developers to see reasonable profits from their efforts

**State Incentives for Transit Oriented Development.** The town should take advantage of anticipated state incentives for transit oriented development if they are implemented and Wakefield's proposals qualify for the benefits that are offered.







*A new mixed-use building on Mass. Avenue in Harvard Square employs massing, detailing, and materials to fit the pedestrian scale. Note the building setbacks and railings above the first, third and fourth floors. A height of four stories is more appropriate for North Avenue in Wakefield.*



*Waltham's Cronin's Landing mixed use development reinforces the commercial character of Moody Street with retail along the street and housing above. Parking is accommodated on a landscaped two level parking structure partially below grade. The five story complex is articulated in a way that doesn't overwhelm the street. Four stories is more appropriate in Wakefield.*

**Parcel Aggregation.** Mixed use development is generally more economically viable on larger parcels than on smaller ones. The town should support the aggregation of small parcels to allow larger scale development along North Avenue and Albion Street. Wakefield can take the initiative by opening discussions with property owners, developers and realtors on the implementation of a master plan vision and can support appropriate private initiatives as they are proposed.

**Streetscape Improvements.** The town should support improved streetscaping, including planting trees, improving sidewalks and lighting, and upgrading signage and facades. Work can be implemented through programs such as those outlined in the previous chapter and in Sections XII and XIII, and by requiring developers to meet specific requirements in exchange for project approval. Design guidelines will help clarify expectations.

Trees, crosswalks, distinctive lighting, planters, and buildings with canopies or awnings will all add to the vitality of North Avenue. Generous glazing opening into retail spaces or restaurants will connect buildings to the downtown central business district and help to activate Albion Street as a connector. See Streetscape Elements, Section XII, for examples of the kind of design that should be encouraged.

Streetscape improvements sponsored by the town and current property owners will upgrade the area for current uses and create a context that encourages appropriate new redevelopment. Requiring improvements as part of development proposals helps ensure that there are public benefits associated with private development.

## PARKING AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION

**Parking Policy and Enforcement.** The town should pursue incremental parking problem resolutions similar to those recommended for downtown, as part of a comprehensive parking strategy. The first step is enforcement of existing regulations. In particular, the one hour parking spaces near retail storefronts need to turn over for the businesses to thrive. A regular enforcement program in these areas would address one of the most pressing concerns brought forward by participants in the economic development planning process.

Some areas may benefit from extending the parking time limit to 2 hours to allow more extended stays in the area. Other areas can be limited to 15 or 30 minutes to free up spaces for convenience shopping.

The town can benefit by charging more for all-day parking spaces for commuters along the west side of North Ave. Two dollars for the day is below current market rates and discourages commuters from looking for alternatives to parking on North Ave. Fewer spaces used by commuters means more spaces for those patronizing area businesses.

As improvements and redevelopment along North Avenue increase the number of people shopping, living and working in the area, additional measures must be taken to make more parking available for them. Options include reducing the amount of space set aside for commuter parking, finding alternative locations for commuter parking, and increasing the number of spaces available. Additional spaces may be available on North Avenue near the

Middle School and in parking lots at or below grade.

**Parking Garage Construction.** The construction of a parking garage in the downtown area as proposed in the previous chapter can also be beneficial to North Avenue businesses. Significant new mixed-use and multi-family developments illustrated in this chapter may require parking garages to accommodate residential and commercial uses. Given the tight sites and cost of garage construction it is unlikely these developments will be able to provide all the spaces that are needed to meet zoning requirements. Developers may request relief from these requirements given the proximity of mass transportation, so it is unlikely that development sites along North Avenue can contribute to solving on-going parking problems elsewhere.

Although a parking garage can have benefits, the town should carefully control location, size, and design to insure that it fits into its context. Historic district designation can give the town some leverage over where a garage can be built and what it looks like.

**Historic Preservation.** Wakefield should protect residential neighborhoods and historic buildings from demolition and out-of-scale construction. Historic district designation can be a tool that empowers the town to control where new construction can take place and the form it takes.

Historic buildings, such as the old train station, can be celebrated with signage noting the importance of the rail road in Wakefield's development.

View up redeveloped North Avenue







Multiuse development and improved streetscape opposite train station



# REDEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY & FISCAL BENEFIT

The analysis and table below illustrates the fiscal implications of the redevelopment scenario illustrated for North Avenue.

North Avenue Economic Development Plan Land Values and Fiscal Benefits														
	Impact of Redevelopment on Property Value							Fiscal Impact of Redevelopment						
	Res'l Units	GSF	Land Value / Unit or SF	Structured Parking Deduction	Projected Land Value	Current Assessed Value	Increase in Property Value	Tax Calculation				School Cost	Fiscal Benefit	
								Acres	Hard + Soft cost / SF -- condo value	Total Value	Projected Taxes		Fiscal Benefit (Taxes less School Cost)	Additional Net Fiscal Benefit (Fiscal Benefit less Current Taxes)
<b>Avon and Chestnut Street</b>														
Residential -Condominium	16	22,500	\$75,000	\$422,857	\$782,500			0.3	\$350,000	\$5,625,000	\$64,125	\$15,953	\$48,173	\$36,750
Retail		7,500	\$25		\$187,500			0.1	\$100	\$962,500	\$23,235		\$23,235	\$19,427
<b>Total</b>		<b>30,000</b>			<b>\$970,000</b>	\$630,901	<b>\$339,099</b>	<b>0.4</b>		<b>\$6,587,500</b>	<b>\$87,360</b>	\$15,953	\$71,407	<b>\$56,177</b>
<b>Chestnut and Albion Street</b>														
Residential -Condominium	55	77,400	\$75,000	\$951,429	\$3,195,000			1.6	\$350,000	\$19,350,000	\$220,590	\$54,877	\$165,713	\$104,799
Retail		32,000	\$25		\$800,000			0.4	\$100	\$4,100,500	\$98,986	\$0	\$98,986	\$83,758
<b>Total</b>		<b>109,400</b>			<b>\$3,995,000</b>	\$3,154,200	<b>\$840,800</b>	<b>2.0</b>		<b>\$23,450,500</b>	<b>\$319,576</b>	\$54,877	\$264,699	<b>\$188,557</b>
<b>Albion Street and Richardson Avenue</b>														
Residential -Condominium	42	58,500	\$75,000	\$771,429	\$2,362,500			1.1	\$350,000	\$14,625,000	\$166,725	\$41,477	\$125,249	\$99,038
Retail		15,750	\$25		\$393,750			0.3	\$100	\$2,038,750	\$49,215	\$0	\$49,215	\$42,663
<b>Total</b>		<b>74,250</b>			<b>\$2,756,250</b>	\$1,357,200	<b>\$1,399,050</b>	<b>1.4</b>		<b>\$16,663,750</b>	<b>\$215,940</b>	\$41,477	\$174,464	<b>\$141,701</b>
<b>Richardson Ave and West Water Street</b>														
Residential -Condominium	13	17,600	\$75,000	\$229,714	\$713,143			0.3	\$350,000	\$4,400,000	\$50,160	\$12,478	\$37,682	\$26,304
Retail		0	\$25		\$0				\$100				\$0	
<b>Total</b>		<b>17,600</b>			<b>\$713,143</b>	\$471,301	<b>\$241,842</b>	<b>0.3</b>		<b>\$4,400,000</b>	<b>\$50,160</b>	\$12,478	\$37,682	<b>\$26,304</b>
<b>West Water and Armory Street</b>														
Residential -Condominium	40	56,400	\$75,000	\$654,857	\$2,366,571			1.2	\$350,000	\$14,100,000	\$160,740	\$39,988	\$120,752	\$82,927
Retail		14,850	\$25		\$371,250				\$100	\$1,856,250	\$44,810	\$0	\$44,810	\$44,810
<b>Total</b>		<b>71,250</b>			<b>\$2,737,821</b>	\$1,566,901	<b>\$1,170,920</b>	<b>1.2</b>		<b>\$15,956,250</b>	<b>\$205,550</b>	\$39,988	\$165,562	<b>\$127,737</b>
<b>Armory Street</b>														
Residential -Condominium	13	18,000	\$75,000	\$68,571	\$895,714			0.5	\$350,000	\$4,500,000	\$51,300	\$12,762	\$38,538	\$24,549
Retail		0	\$25		\$0				\$100					
<b>Total</b>		<b>18,000</b>			<b>\$895,714</b>	\$579,501	<b>\$316,213</b>	<b>0.5</b>		<b>\$4,500,000</b>	<b>\$51,300</b>	\$12,762	\$38,538	<b>\$24,549</b>
<b>North Avenue TOTAL</b>					\$12,067,929	\$7,760,004	<b>\$4,307,925</b>			<b>\$71,558,000</b>	<b>\$929,886</b>	\$177,534	\$752,353	<b>\$565,026</b>
1 - 2004 Fiscal year residential tax rate = \$11.40 per thousand; commercial tax rate = \$24.14 per thousand 2 - School costs calculated assuming 0.20 children per unit and a cost per child of \$4,963 3- Assumes 1400 gsf for condominiums 4 - Assumes \$250,000/acre for site improvements 5 - Assumes 2 parking spaces per condo 6 - Structured parking cost calculated at \$20,000/space 7 - For additional assumptions see Section VI. Development Scenarios Overview														

All numbers presented on the chart on the previous page are approximate and require further verification. Values and calculations should be considered valid only for demonstrating development potential for the concepts presented, although they can serve as models for development or redevelopment throughout Wakefield. While every site is unique and presents its own set of opportunities and challenges, the trade-offs, when considering residential, retail or commercial uses apply to many sites in town.

Each of the six blocks shown in the redevelopment concept for the North Avenue study area was analyzed based on its financial feasibility. Residential use is the most likely construction option with ground floor retail in some locations clustered on either side of Albion Street. Buildings are to be three to four stories high, not including parking that may be located below.

It would be difficult to substitute office for residential on these sites. The limited parking that is available, and the small floor plates that could be created on the relatively small parcels do not make this a strong office building location.

The development scenarios analyzed balance the community's preference for smaller scaled buildings with the realities of development costs and market demands. Each scenario assumes wood frame construction with some parking located partially below grade and behind buildings. Wood frame structures are limited to four stories and average approximately \$100 per square foot for hard costs and an additional \$30 per square foot for soft costs. Any building over four floors requires steel frame construction which pushes the per square foot hard construction cost to \$140. To recover the costs associated with steel frame construction,

the buildings would have to be higher than 6 stories to create a sufficient number of units. This is a building height unlikely to be acceptable to the town.

The small lot sizes mean that a significant percentage of the parking spaces would have to be constructed below grade, raising costs as the number of units rise. The design scenario assumes some parking relief from existing zoning requirements due to proximity to the commuter rail station. Any further reduction in the amount of parking provided on-site would negatively impact the projects' perceived value and marketing.

These models illustrate that at least 3 to 4 stories of development are needed to make redevelopment attractive to the owners. When taken in aggregate, this model does generate fiscal benefit and added value over existing uses. When analyzed site by site, all of the scenarios have a net positive fiscal impact, but not all of the redevelopment concepts improve on the existing value of the properties.

The current use on the site between Richardson Avenue and West Water Street is generating significant value, therefore it is unlikely that the owner of this particular site would redevelop the property in the near future. As residential and/or retail rental values increase, this site may become more feasible for redevelopment. The site between Chestnut and Albion Streets receives a considerable improvement to the value of the land through redevelopment. This is due in part to the larger size of the parcels, the number of units that can be built, and the addition of a significant amount of ground floor retail to the development.

The Junction, located at a busy crossroads adjacent to Crystal Lake, is well situated for development. Its proximity to the commuter rail line and central business district allow it to benefit from, and contribute to, the vitality of the town center. The Junction has the potential to be a commercial and residential district that is a gateway into downtown. At present, rail lines, poorly planned roads, industrial uses, and a lack of parking stand in the way. Major infrastructure improvements and aggregation of parcels will be required if changes advantageous to the town are to take place.

LAKE QUANNAPOWITT

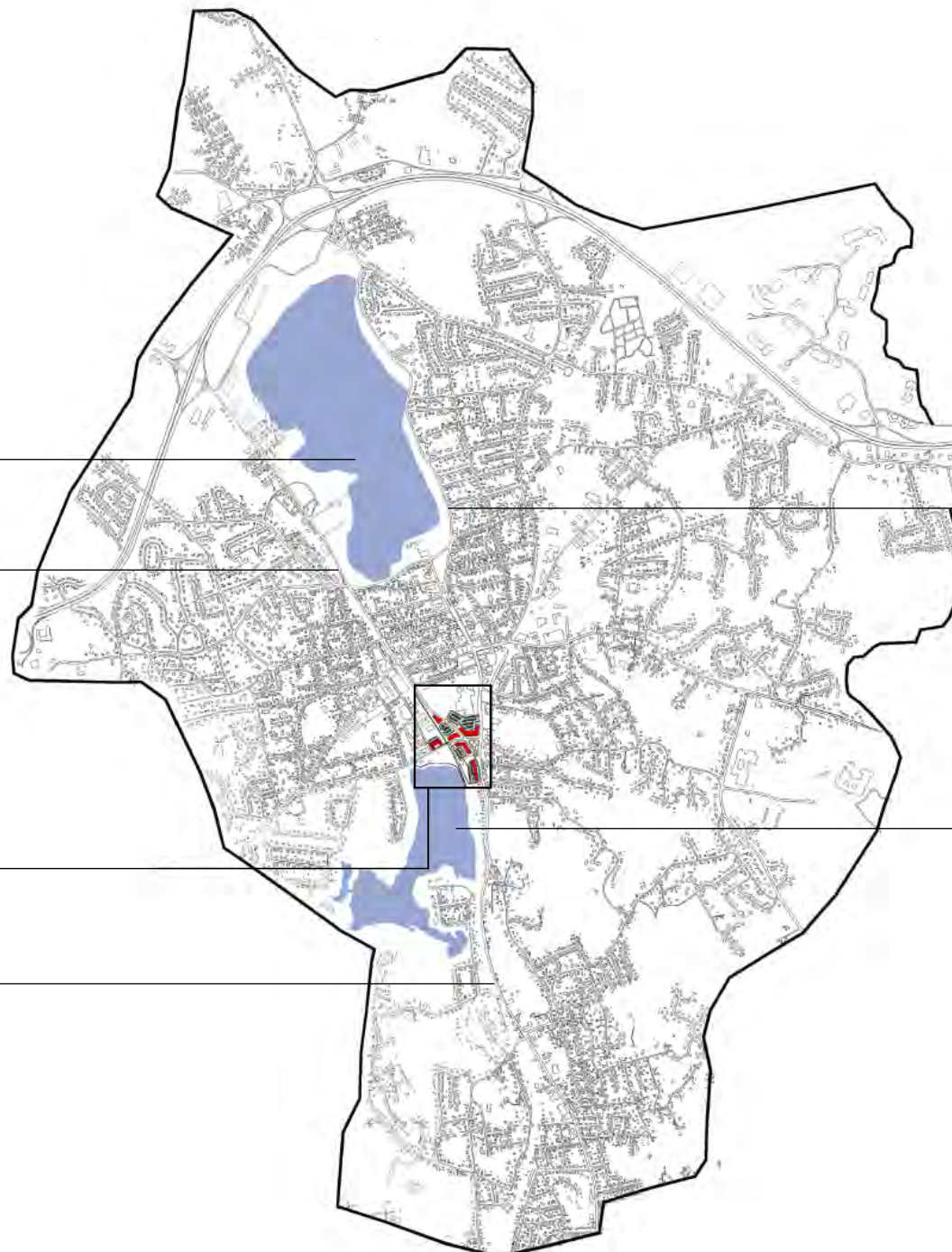
NORTH AVENUE

**THE JUNCTION  
DEVELOPMENT AREA**

MAIN STREET

MAIN STREET

CRYSTAL LAKE





## EXISTING CONDITIONS:

The area known as the Junction is less a defined neighborhood than what its name implies - the intersection of a number of roads running between Wakefield's neighborhoods. This crossroads does not have a coherent spatial structure or clear circulation system for either pedestrians or vehicular traffic, and is marked by low-density, semi-industrial uses that are increasingly inappropriate so close to the town center. Most buildings are set back from the streets in a sea of parking that lines Main St., North Avenue, Nahant St. and Broadway as they come together at various angles. During rush hour, the area suffers from burdensome congestion. The heavy traffic and extensive paving make the junction an unfriendly pedestrian environment. The commuter rail line and industrial rail spur further fragment the intersection.

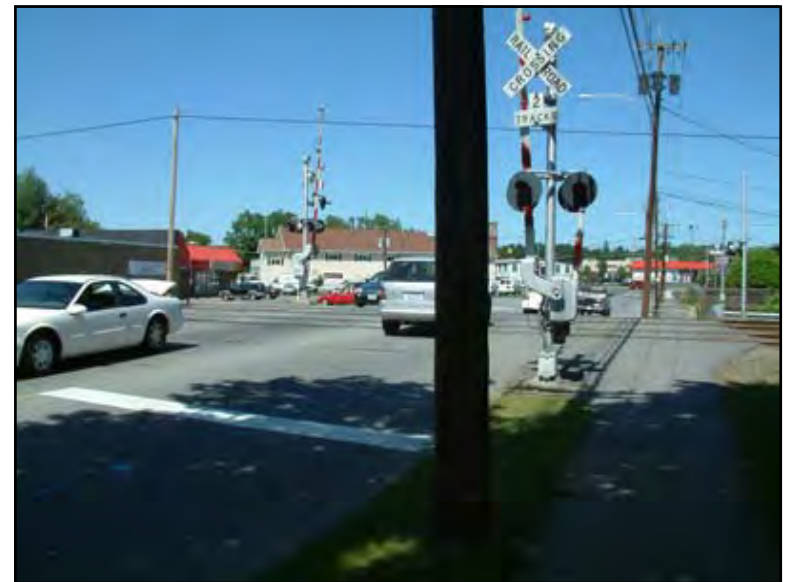
The existing uses at the Junction are commercial and pay the higher commercial tax rate. The properties could be utilized more effectively, however, given their proximity to downtown. An intensification of the commercial uses, along with residential development, could create a higher value for the town. They would improve the character of the area and increase the fiscal benefits.

An issue complicating a comprehensive redevelopment of the Junction is the existing ownership patterns. An analysis of the properties using ownership data provided by the Town of Wakefield's Assessor's Department shows that the Junction area is comprised of a series of small parcels held by different owners. (See ownership map page 112.) This makes it difficult to implement the infrastructure improvements and larger scale developments proposed in this Master Plan. The redevelopment scenarios suggested for the Junction must create enough



*Strip development at the Junction detracts from the sense of entry to the Downtown commercial and civic area and limits access to Crystal Lake.*

*Heavy traffic through awkward intersections makes both vehicular and pedestrian movement difficult and confusing.*



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- a** Proximity to commuter rail line and downtown creates a context for development.
- b** The Junction is a major crossroads offering possibilities for economic development.
- c** Crystal Lake offers beautiful vistas and recreational opportunities.
- d** Dept. of Public Works interferes with potential commercial development.
- e** Small scale commercial and industrial buildings do not reinforce the area's downtown character.
- f** The unused rail spur isolates Main St. from downtown and North Ave.
- g** Parking lots dominate the landscape in the Junction.
- h** The intersection is confusing for traffic and difficult for pedestrians.
- i** Main St. is visually and physically cut off from scenic Crystal Lake by industrial buildings.
- j** The Crystal Lake watershed is not protected from industrial uses.







a The elimination of the rail spur allows the Junction to become a more unified district reconnected to downtown.

b Retail and business development at the busy crossroads takes advantage of visibility.

c Parking is located behind new buildings and screened from view.

d Streetscaping reinforces the connection to downtown Main St. and the commuter rail station on North Ave.

e New development in the Junction can help create a pedestrian oriented neighborhood character.

f New housing development over commercial is appropriate at this attractive location.

g Reconfiguration of the streets creates a more coherent traffic flow.

h New buildings lining the street and defining an open space create a dignified approach to downtown to the north.

i Public open spaces forms a physical and visual connection to Crystal Lake from Main Street and the Junction.

j The Crystal Lake watershed is protected with greenspace.

k The slopes of the landscape can create easily accessed multi-level parking.

l A public promenade above tracks over looks Crystal Lake.



A



B



C

*The reorganization of the Junction can take many different forms. Plan A above lays out new development around the existing rail spur, should it be maintained as a right of way. Plan B incorporates more housing while maintaining a "gateway" commercial or civic building and a triangular public space. Plan C creates a new commercial center along Main Street and North Avenue, housing along Crystal Lake, and an alternative reorganization of streets. The DPW remains on its current site in this plan. A number of inter-related factors will need to be considered in formulating an implementable vision for the Junction. The transformation of the Junction can be a tremendous benefit to Wakefield, in terms of both fiscal and quality of life issues.*



value to incentivize owners to increase the intensity of land use on their site and to cooperate with abutting owners to aggregate their parcels and allow for land consolidation. The town, in turn, must contribute leadership and funding to facilitate required changes.

The Junction has significant environmental issues. The abandoned Kryton plant is a "brownfield" site in need of extensive soil remediation before it can be redeveloped. Cleanup costs may be significant and an evaluation of the problem and solution is an important step in improving the Junction area. (Information on funding brownfield remediation is included in Section XIII.)

Nevertheless, this area has tremendous potential for development that benefits the town in significant ways.

## JUNCTION DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The underutilized areas in the Junction could support significant mixed use development. The area's proximity to Downtown and its accessibility by road and rail make it appropriate for retail, office, and housing. The Crystal Lake reservoir is an underutilized recreational and visual asset that could be used to better advantage, although it requires watershed protection.

The existing low density uses do not take advantage of the land's potential value. The plans in this section suggest a range of options for building out the Junction with a preferred plan shown on page 103, and a series of perspective sketches on the following pages.

Redevelopment offers significant opportunities for the public as well as for developers and owners. Access to Crystal Lake, a dignified southern entry to the downtown area, improved street layouts, and a coherent character for an important crossroads are all benefits that could result from well designed construction in the Junction. Features illustrated on proposal plans include:

**Reorganized intersection.** Awkward intersections between streets currently create confusing traffic patterns that serve both drivers and pedestrians poorly. A comprehensive development plan offers the possibility of improving circulation and bringing clarity to the area. The proposed plan creates a simpler and more understandable traffic pattern that both cars and pedestrians can navigate more easily. Transportation planning professionals should look in more detail at reorganizing traffic patterns in the Junction.

**Eliminating Rail Spur.** Although the commuter rail line will continue to be a presence in the Junction, the industrial rail spur appears to be abandoned. The detailed development scenarios assume that the spur can be removed. (Preliminary plans show proposals for leaving the spur in place - a possible but less desirable option as the spatial coherence and planning options are compromised.)

**Southern Gateway to Downtown.** The Junction is the introduction to downtown for those coming from the South. Unfortunately, the current uses are inappropriate for such a prominent site, making the area less than appealing. A redesigned junction can provide a dignified entry to Wakefield's civic and commercial center while clarifying traffic patterns and the physical structure of the Town. The "Y" shaped intersection of North Avenue and Main St. pro-



*Parking can be integrated into the base of a building above grade while respecting the pedestrian environment. At the Vicomte Condominiums in Allston, the masonry facade at parking level, two story tall windows, and top floor roof and dormers allow a five story building to fit into a small scale residential context. Generous entries are at grade, displacing the parking in critical places.*



posed here becomes the site of a formal commercial or civic block of building fronted by a green space and announcing the beginning of the town center. It mirrors, in a way, the Common as the entry to downtown from the north and builds on the character established in the best parts of Wakefield.

**Connection to Crystal Lake.** At present the Town is cut off from Crystal Lake; unlike Lake Quannapowitt, it is not a presence on North Avenue or Main St. A reconfiguration of streets and buildings can create visual and pedestrian connections to the Lake, defining the commercial center as the “downtown between two lakes” and giving Wakefield a unique identity. Crystal Lake can be a major asset for residential and commercial development while offering recreational opportunities and a protected watershed. It can anchor this end of the commercial district, the way Lake Quannapowitt anchors Wakefield to the north.

**Reinforcing the commercial center.** Small floor areas and insufficient parking have hampered the development of retail downtown. Development in the Junction allows for larger store areas and associated parking, that can complement existing and upgraded retail in the adjacent central business district. National retailers in new buildings in the Junction can coexist with specialty retailers in intimate stores downtown. This mirrors the typical mall mix of anchor stores and smaller retailers, and the traditional central business district with department stores and smaller shops.

**Housing.** The Junction provides an opportunity to build low and mid-rise housing near the commuter and bus lines, and near shopping and restaurants. It can help make the transition from Wakefield’s commercial center to existing residential areas along Main St to the south,







*View across Main Street towards the redeveloped Junction intersection. North Avenue angles off to the left; Crystal Lake is on the far left.*



## VISUAL CONNECTIONS FROM NORTH AVENUE TO CRYSTAL LAKE



*A planted open space with a commercial or civic building behind it forms a dignified entry to downtown from the south. Main St. angles off to the right, North Avenue to the left.*



*Residential and commercial buildings line Main St. and North Avenue while providing access to green space and Crystal Lake beyond. Parking is behind and under buildings.*



*A combination of at-grade parking lots behind buildings, parking decks, and some parking below buildings utilizing the sloping site for access can accommodate all of the required parking for mixed use development at the Junction.*

*A new retail building in Watertown Square defines a prominent street corner, while easily accessed parking is provided behind.*



while providing a public connection to Crystal Lake. The Junction can provide some of the housing, both market rate and affordable, noted as being needed in the Housing Component of the Master Plan.

**Parking.** Lots behind and below buildings can allow commercial and residential construction to reinforce the streetscape while providing convenient parking that meets zoning requirements. The slope of the existing landscape allows stacked parking decks in some areas, accessed with a minimum of excavation and ramping. Mixed use development may allow a reduction in required parking with residential and commercial uses sharing spaces.

**Increasing Tax Base.** Although the Junction has a number of businesses, the area is underperforming in terms of what could be expected from the location. The Junction offers one of Wakefield's relatively few areas where denser development could take place while improving town character and offering a range of public benefits.

## JUNCTION DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Development in the Junction will not necessarily be easy. There are a series of issues that must be resolved before the kind of comprehensive development proposed here can take place. A number of public and private interests must work together to bring this kind of plan to fruition. The challenges include:

**Aggregating parcels.** There are over two dozen separate parcels with almost that many owners included in the plans proposed here. Many land purchases, swaps, and perhaps takings will be involved



in implementing these proposals. Rerouting of streets will change the outlines of parcels, further complicating the aggregation process.

**Eliminating the rail spur.** Eliminating the existing but abandoned rail spur allows the development of a street layout and building street wall far superior to that possible working around the tracks. Removing the rail and transferring ownership may involve negotiations among a number of parties over an extended period of time, and should be pursued by the town.

**Infrastructure improvements.** The proposed plan involves making significant changes to streets, storm drainage, sewage lines, and other municipal systems. The changes will be costly, running into the millions, or tens of millions of dollars. The time and money involved in rebuilding infrastructure must be factored into development cost and may include both public and private contributions.

**Protecting the Crystal Lake watershed.** Crystal Lake, used as a water source, is a protected watershed. Eliminating current industrial uses along the waterfront is in the long term interest of Wakefield, allowing the creation of a buffer along the lake's edge. Construction must be planned to insure protection while demolition, earthwork, and building is taking place. Watershed requirements should be investigated.

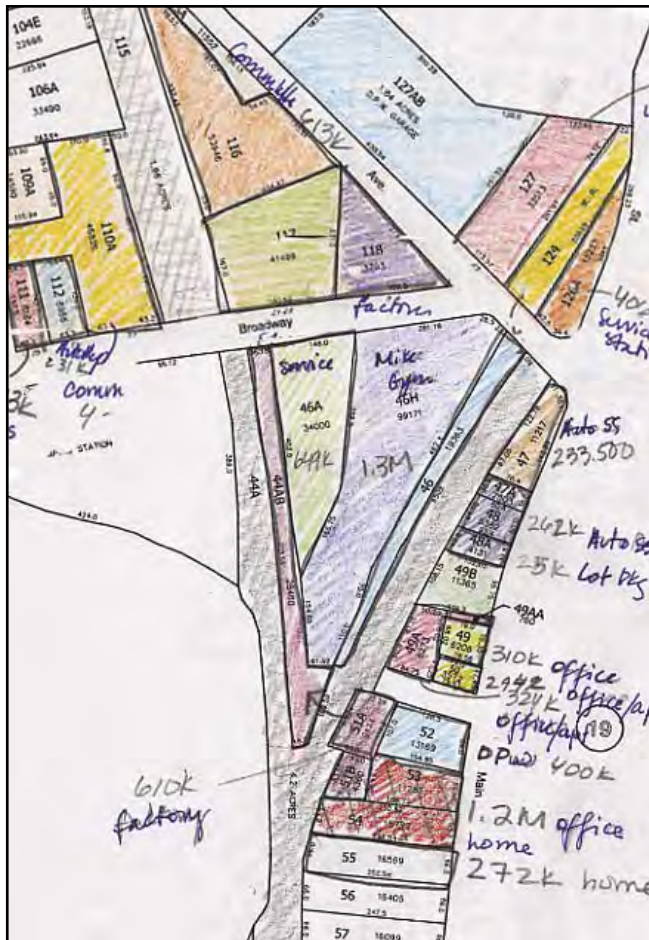
**Protecting viable businesses.** There are a series of viable businesses in the Junction. Although more intense development can lead to more profitable uses for private owners and for the town, these businesses should be allowed to operate while new opportunities are being planned. The town can work with owners to help create incentives for participation in larger renewal efforts that will allow them to take advantage of their land's value.



*Cronin's Landing in Waltham successfully connects pedestrian walkways to the water while providing parking and housing in close proximity to downtown*

*Crystal Lake near the Junction is now hidden from view and offers no pedestrian access except from the back of industrial properties.*





*Patterns of ownership, shown above, will not make it easy to aggregate parcels for larger scale development or a reorganization of streets in the Junction. A comprehensive master plan for the area will be important for getting "buy in" from stakeholders.*

**Relocation of the Department of Public Works.** The current location of the DPW facility on North Avenue just above its intersection with Broadway and Main St. is not ideal for the DPW or for establishing the highest and best use for the Junction. Relocation of the DPW to a larger site would be desirable, and a search for a new site should be part of the town's effort to implement options for this area of town.

**Creating New Parking.** All development is limited by the parking required to accompany it. Main Street and North Avenue already have a parking space shortage and development in the Junction must contribute to the solution, not the problem. Parking should be considered comprehensively, creating solutions for the entire greater downtown area of Wakefield.

Commercial development contributes more to the Town's tax base than residential development, but requires almost three times as much parking per square foot of floor area, limiting the square footage that can be built. Thus parking requirements are inextricably linked to the types of development that are most advantageous to both developers and to the town.

Given the intensity of the uses proposed, structured parking below grade is recommended for buildings over two stories. One or two story development should locate parking behind buildings where it does not interfere with the continuous retail or building frontage. Guidelines for parking must be developed that are realistic, yet lead towards a positive vision for the Junction.



## IMPLEMENTATION.

The Junction is appropriate for transit oriented development mixing retail and commercial on the ground floor with residential uses above. A limited amount of office space could be accommodated on less visible first floor frontages and on the second floors of some buildings. Making decisions on the appropriate mix of uses requires a series of complex considerations.

The redevelopment of the Junction involves both public and private costs and public and private benefits. As with all development, planning and construction are subject to market forces. The relatively high density desired on fairly tight sites and the different parking requirements for different uses suggests that accommodating parking will be a major consideration in evaluating which uses are most appropriate.

The analyses of redevelopment feasibility and fiscal benefits that follow suggest some of the considerations that will go into making decisions on the type of development that will take place and who is to benefit. While acknowledging that development decisions are ultimately made by the private sector, Wakefield can still take actions to encourage appropriate development and to define what is built.

These actions include:

**Creating a Zoning Overlay District.** Creating a zoning overlay district for the Junction would be a first step in dealing with both the potential benefits and real challenges associated with planning in this area, and would create a context for negotiating with property

owners and potential developers. Preparation of a more detailed redevelopment plan for the Junction would allow Wakefield to consider the public benefits it would like, establish guidelines for design, suggest next steps for infrastructure improvements, and send the message to the business community that this is considered a good location for investment.

**Making Infrastructure Improvements.** Wakefield can begin the process of evaluating changes to streets, drainage, and rail lines that will be required before significant development at the Junction can take place. Relocation sites for the Department of Public Works should be located as well.

**Town Sponsored Financing.** The town may want to consider using an EDIP (Economic Development Incentive Program) or TIF (Tax Increment Financing) to accompany the overlay district. If the town is willing to forego some tax benefits in the beginning, it can fund the necessary infrastructure improvements to encourage the scale of development that the Junction can support. Additional funding sources are included in Section XIII. Brownfield funding for contaminated sites should be investigated.

**Making a Long Term Commitment.** Redevelopment of the Junction can have a profound impact on the character and financial stability of Wakefield, giving a strong new identity to an important place in town while reinforcing its existing strengths. The Town and business leaders must make a real commitment to pursuing the opportunities in this area if plans are to move forward.

# REDEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY AND FISCAL BENEFIT

<b>The Junction</b> <b>Economic Development Plan</b> <b>Land Values and Fiscal Benefits</b>															
	Impact of Redevelopment on Property Value							Fiscal Impact of Redevelopment							
	Res'l Units	GSF	Land Value / Unit or SF or Acre	Structured Parking Deduction	Projected Land Value	Current Assessed Value	Added Value	Tax Calculation				Fiscal Benefit			
								Acres	Hard + Soft cost / SF -- condo value	Total Value	Taxes	School Cost	Fiscal Benefit	Current Taxes	Additional Net Fiscal Benefit
<b>Junction as Illustrated</b>															
Residential - Apt	209	240,000	\$35,000	\$3,900,000	\$3,404,348				\$130	\$34,604,348	\$394,490	\$207,151	\$187,338		
Residential -Condo	202	282,800	\$75,000	\$4,980,000	\$10,170,000				\$350,000	\$80,870,000	\$921,918	\$200,505	\$721,413		
Retail		100,000	\$35		\$3,500,000				\$100	\$13,500,000	\$325,890	\$0	\$325,890		
Office		34,000	\$25		\$850,000				\$145	\$5,780,000	\$139,529	\$0	\$139,529		
Park/public		-	\$900,000		\$2,700,000			3	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
<b>Total -Apt</b>	209	374,000			<b>\$10,454,348</b>	\$10,356,000	<b>\$98,348</b>	13		\$56,384,348	<b>\$859,909</b>	\$207,151	\$652,757	\$249,994	<b>\$402,764</b>
<b>Total-Condo</b>	202	416,800			<b>\$17,220,000</b>	\$10,356,000	<b>\$6,864,000</b>	13		\$102,650,000	<b>\$1,387,337</b>	\$200,505	\$1,186,832	\$249,994	<b>\$936,838</b>
<b>Junction with More Residential</b>															
Residential - Apt	252	289,700	\$35,000	\$2,274,000	\$6,542,957				\$130	\$44,203,957	\$503,925	\$250,049	\$253,876		
Residential -Condo	240	336,000	\$75,000	\$3,792,000	\$14,208,000				\$350,000	\$98,208,000	\$1,119,571	\$238,224	\$881,347		
Retail		50,000	\$35		\$1,750,000				\$100	\$6,750,000	\$162,945	\$0	\$162,945		
Office		34,000	\$25		\$850,000				\$145	\$5,780,000	\$139,529	\$0	\$139,529		
Park/public		-	\$900,000		\$2,700,000			3	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
<b>Total -Apt</b>	252	373,700			<b>\$11,842,957</b>	\$10,356,000	<b>\$1,486,957</b>	13		\$59,233,957	<b>\$806,399</b>	\$250,049	\$556,350	\$249,994	<b>\$306,357</b>
<b>Total-Condo</b>	240	420,000			<b>\$19,508,000</b>	\$10,356,000	<b>\$9,152,000</b>	13		\$113,238,000	<b>\$1,422,045</b>	\$238,224	\$1,183,821	\$249,994	<b>\$933,828</b>
<b>Junction with More Commercial</b>															
Residential - Apt	117	135,000	\$35,000	\$4,092,000	\$16,696				\$130	\$17,566,696	\$200,260	\$116,523	\$83,738		
Residential -Condo	128	179,200	\$75,000	\$5,052,000	\$4,548,000				\$350,000	\$49,348,000	\$562,567	\$127,053	\$435,514		
Retail		100,000	\$35		\$3,500,000				\$100	\$13,500,000	\$325,890	\$0	\$325,890		
Office		73,000	\$25		\$1,825,000				\$145	\$12,410,000	\$299,577	\$0	\$299,577		
Park/public		-	\$900,000		\$2,700,000			3	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
<b>Total -Apt</b>	117	308,000			<b>\$8,041,696</b>	\$10,356,000	<b>(\$2,314,304)</b>	13		\$45,976,696	<b>\$825,728</b>	\$116,523	\$709,205	\$249,994	<b>\$459,211</b>
<b>Total-Condo</b>	128	352,200			<b>\$12,573,000</b>	\$10,356,000	<b>\$2,217,000</b>	13		\$77,758,000	<b>\$1,188,035</b>	\$127,053	\$1,060,982	\$249,994	<b>\$810,988</b>
1 - 2004 Fiscal year residential tax rate = \$11.40 per thousand; commercial tax rate = \$24.14 per thousand 2 - School costs calculated assuming 0.20 children per unit and a cost per child of \$4,963 3 - Assumes 1150 gsf for apartments, 1400 gsf for condominiums 4 - Assumes \$250,000/acre for site improvements 5 - Structured parking cost calculated at an average of \$12,000/space for open deck and partially submerged parking under housing 6 - For additional assumptions see Section VI. Development Scenarios Overview															

## THE JUNCTION

This area has the potential for residential, office, and retail uses, but the suitability of each varies from parcel-to-parcel. Some parcels are best used for residential, while others could be used for a mix of retail on the ground floor with office or residential above.

Three programs were analyzed, all of which contain a mix of residential, retail and office use. The illustrated scheme proposes a balance of residential and commercial uses, with the site closest to downtown developed as commercial, the sites furthest away (west along Broadway and south along Main Street) developed as all residential, and the sites in between as mixed-use. The other program options demonstrate the economic effects of shifting the mix to either more residential or more commercial square footage.

All three options generated significant net fiscal benefits to the town. The Junction is not as strong an office location as the office parks located near Rt. 128 and the per square foot land values are somewhat less. The higher the percentage of residential that the model included, the greater the return to the property owner. The "more commercial" scenario generates only a 21% increase in value to the property owners, probably too low for them to take on the development risks, compared to an 88% increase with "more residential" and a 66% increase with the proposal as illustrated.



*New housing in the Junction frames views from North Avenue and Main Street to a park and Crystal Lake beyond. Parking is hidden from view. Landscaping connects up to downtown and Lake Quannapowitt to the north.*

Greenwood is a charming Wakefield neighborhood. Greenwood Center can become an attractive business district for the neighborhood if the town commits to improving the streetscape, resolving parking problems, and controlling out of character development in the vicinity. Although sites are tight, transit oriented development may be possible, reinforcing the commercial district and adding housing in appropriate ways.



LAKE QUANNAPOWITT

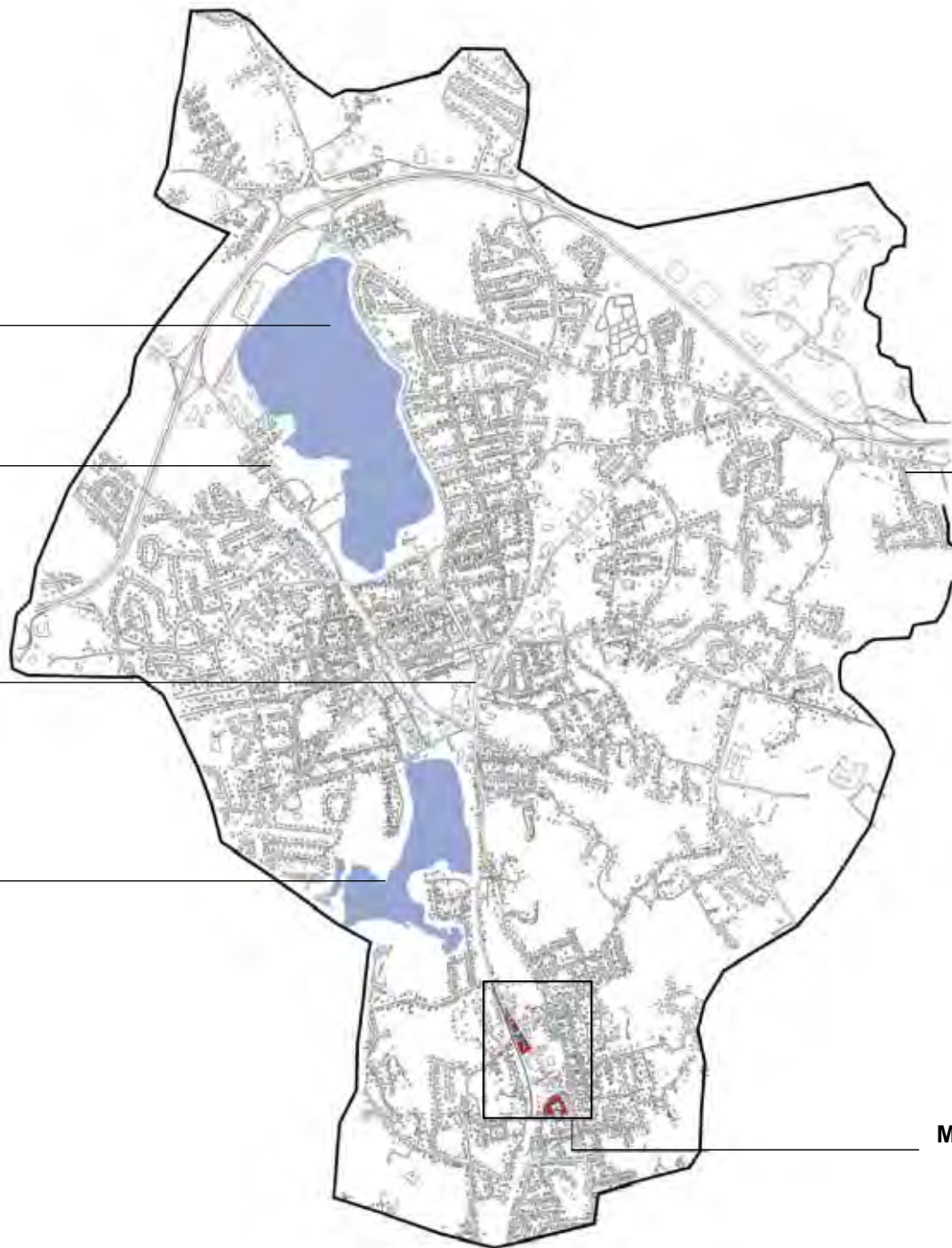
NORTH AVE.

MAIN ST.

CRYSTAL LAKE

SALEM ST

MAIN ST. GREENWOOD  
DEVELOPMENT AREA



## EXISTING CONDITIONS - ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL

Greenwood is a neighborhood with its own identity and history dating back to the late 1840's, around the time the first train lines and stations were built in Wakefield. With the increased use of the automobile in the 20th century, the area developed its own commercial and retail center separate from downtown Wakefield.

The commuter rail line stops in Greenwood just north of Greenwood Street. There is a small, utilitarian shelter hidden from view behind the streetfront buildings.

The landscape has given the area a defining physical character but has limited the types of development that could be easily built. Narrow commercial sites are wedged between Main Street, the rail line, and the steep terrain to east. This character has been compromised in recent years as new residential developments are literally blasted into the rocky hillsides along Main Street.

Today, the Greenwood shopping district is concentrated around the intersection of Main and Greenwood Streets, both in storefronts along the street and in the Greenwood Plaza shopping center. The Plaza has a restaurant, liquor store, gym, some specialty retail and a video store. On Main Street north of the Plaza, the district has a couple of diners and antique shops, and some destination retail such as the paint store and a Subaru dealership. An active Citizen's Bank branch anchors the north end of the Greenwood retail district.

Greenwood is representative of the smaller scale neighborhood retail districts struggling to survive and serve their communities. Determining the appropriate mix of convenience and destination retail



*Greenwood Plaza is a relatively successful shopping center that could be strengthened with additional parking, improved streetscape along Main Street, and a better retail mix.*

*The Greenwood streetscape lacks the sense of vitality that would suggest a strong neighborhood commercial and civic center.*





*Narrow sidewalks, power lines, and the lack of trees, banners, and facade improvements keep the retail area from being as attractive as it could be.*



and whether Greenwood could absorb additional retail activity is a complicated question. Would changing the mix of retail stores increase the volume of activity, or are other barriers, such as commuter and employee parking and the heavy through-traffic volumes during rush hour limiting the potential of the shopping district? Incremental improvements can begin to answer these questions.

Greenwood has a population that is large and affluent enough to support neighborhood businesses, although according to the 2000 census, income is slightly lower than for those living near the town center. The median household income in 1999 dollars was \$64,336 with only 0.9% of the population below the poverty level. The community is comparatively well-educated, and while most of the residents are high school graduates, only 40% are college educated. The median house value was \$227,500 in 2002. A demographic analysis suggests a solid base for neighborhood retail that could be strengthened by offering convenient parking, a more appealing image, and an improved pedestrian environment.

Commuters on the rail line appear to add very little to the customer base of the Greenwood area retail establishments. It is primarily area residents, and drivers passing through on Main Street, who patronize these businesses. An exception is the Subaru dealership, which is a regional draw.

## LOCAL BUSINESS CONCERNS

During a workshop with local residents and businesses, participants stated that they would like Greenwood to be a true neighborhood



shopping district; the kind of place that families would walk to for dinner, ice cream, or for errands. They anticipated that the typical customer would continue to come from the immediate area. Infrastructure improvements, they suggested, would need to be made to improve the quality of the environment and the customer experience in the district. Narrow sidewalks, overhanging power lines and dilapidated structures do not entice people to spend any more time than necessary in Greenwood Center.

Main Street is a conduit for commuters seeking a short cut to the state highways or back home. They drive at speeds that are hazardous to pedestrians and impede the development of a successful retail area. Investing in traffic calming and pedestrian infrastructure improvements will help improve the shopping environment.

Many area residents and business people felt that the insufficient number of parking spaces was keeping potential customers away. In a situation similar to that on North Avenue downtown, commuters who use the Greenwood station occupy precious Main Street retail area parking spaces intended for patrons, while spending little at local stores. The commuters are also encroaching into the adjacent residential areas, suggesting the broader need to enforce controls on where and for how long people can park in Greenwood.

Local merchants are divided about how to control the parking problems and what an appropriate solution and enforcement level should be. Greenwood business employees occupy street and plaza parking spaces because there are few alternatives presented to them. The following sections outline basic approaches to resolving parking problems. A more detailed parking and traffic plan should be prepared and implemented.



*A small retail building at Cooper St. and Main is one of many retail buildings scattered along Main Street between Greenwood Plaza and the Melrose town line. Many of the businesses appear to be struggling, suggesting that a more coherent identity for Greenwood's commercial district should be established.*

*NEXT PAGE: Before and "after" photo simulations suggest how modest improvements in the streetscape, such as burying power lines, adding trees, and hanging banners, can make significant improvements in the pedestrian experience in Greenwood, and create a character that can attract area residents as well as those travelling down Main Street.*









GREENWOOD PROPOSED STREETSCAPE



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- a** The commuter rail station offers opportunities for transit oriented development in Greenwood.
- b** The bank provides a good anchor for this end of the Greenwood business district.
- c** The commercial district streetscape and facades need improvement. Overhead lines are unattractive.
- d** Many businesses appear to be struggling, unable to tap into a solid market.
- e** The traffic and pedestrian environment do not encourage walking or crossing the street.
- f** Blasting and recent new construction has marred Greenwood's landscape.
- g** Greenwood plaza is a relatively successful retail center.
- h** The Plaza's parking is not optimally organized or attractive.
- i** Commuters take a significant proportion of the Greenwood area's parking.





## PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Control commuter parking to insure that space is available for retail customers. **a**

Bury power lines to improve the character of the streets and sidewalks. **b**

Improve the commuter rail stop and relocate it to give it more visibility in Greenwood. **c**

Improve facades and the retail mix to reinforce the character of the neighborhood and take advantage of the changing market. **d**

Rationalize parking to support Greenwood businesses. **e**

Mark crosswalks to create safer pedestrian zones and slow traffic. **f**

Improve the streetscape to reinforce the quality of retail district. **g**

Encourage improvements to Greenwood plaza to increase parking and upgrade the streetscape. **h**



Greenwood business owners say they feel like a forgotten younger sibling, getting insufficient attention from the Chamber of Commerce and those organizing downtown marketing activities. They would like to be included in plans for downtown and receive more support from civic and business organizations, and from the town as it contemplates infrastructure improvements.

Greenwood is changing rapidly. Despite the space constraints, development along Main Street has, and is continuing, to take place. Most of the construction is residential and does little to contribute to the vitality and coherence of the area while disfiguring the hill-sides through excessive blasting and excavation. Developments turn their back to the street and put too much parking along Main Street. Better models for development need to be introduced into the planning and zoning process and developers recruited who support the Master Plan objectives.

The increased residential presence, however, does strengthen the Greenwood Center customer base. Improvements in the retail offerings and physical appearance of the business district will help merchants tap into this new retail market. If properly controlled and supported by streetscape improvements, new development, both residential and commercial, can reinforce the character of the area.

## GREENWOOD PLANNING PROPOSALS

The main focus of the Greenwood Economic Development planning proposal is the intersection of Oak, Greenwood, and Main Streets. This corner is perceived as the center of the Greenwood community and is its commercial core. The Greenwood commuter rail stop reinforces the centrality of this area to the neighborhood. There are a range of other development opportunity sites, including the intersection of Cooper and Main Street, although development in these areas would do less to upgrade the existing Greenwood commercial area or provide a focus for community life.

Unfortunately the space between the commuter rail tracks, Main Street, and the steeply sloping hillside in Greenwood is extremely limited. This makes development along the street difficult, although not impossible, in this focus area. Parking is extremely limited as well, adding to the difficulty of adding commercial or residential buildings. Nevertheless, housing over commercial construction along the street - transit oriented development - is a traditional model that should be encouraged. Proposals illustrated for downtown and North Avenue, in a scaled down version, would be appropriated for Main Street in Greenwood.

Simple interventions that build on the strength of the existing physical fabric can also do a great deal to revitalize the Greenwood area. Improvements to the streetscape and parking situation can help upgrade the commercial district.

**Design Guidelines.** Clearer design guidelines for development along Main Street in Greenwood should be formulated and

implemented. All buildings should address the street and improve the pedestrian environment with planting, porches, and facades with windows. Parking should be located in back.

**Facade Improvements.** Existing buildings to the north of Greenwood Plaza on the west side of Main Street have a certain charm. Yet the aggregation of wood frame houses and brick storefront, with some buildings pushed tight to the street and others pulled back, detracts from the continuity of the street front. Selective demolition and reconstruction of building fronts could contribute to the coherence of Greenwood as a commercial center without imposing an uncharacteristic uniformity.

**Rail Station Improvements.** The commuter rail station brings people to the area but appears to do little to build business in the area. Improvements to the station, including possible relocation or reconstruction, as well as improvements to the streetscape, businesses, facades, and signage in the area could capitalize on Greenwood as a destination both for the neighborhood and for commuters. Retail clustered around the station could build on traffic in the area.

**Plan Improvements.** The planning proposal illustrated on page 133 shows a more ambitious scheme for upgrading the area near the intersection of Greenwood and Main Streets. Buildings and parking have been reconfigured to create a better connection between the street, parking, businesses, and the commuter rail station. Landscaping, street trees, and crosswalks improve the pedestrian environment.

The corner of Main St. and Cooper St. across from the church and a small retail building offers the potential for development with fewer space constraints than the Greenwood Plaza/commuter rail station



*The three story building at Greenwood St. and Main St., although in poor condition and underutilized, is the type of larger scale mixed use structure that could help revitalize this area of Greenwood. Residential over retail helps reinforce the character of this kind of neighborhood center.*

*Greenwood center must compete with a rejuvenated melrose just to the south. Modest improvements could help Greenwood achieve a similar success.*



area. A mixed use development including housing and a commercial component along Main Street could be appropriate on this site.

**Recommendations** – The town should create a Greenwood Zoning Overlay District to encourage certain types of development and discourage others. Residential development over retail is desirable near the commuter rail line. Parking in lots along the sidewalk and residential developments that do not face onto the street are, in general, undesirable, and should be discouraged. Design guidelines can help define the character that the town feels is appropriate in and near Greenwood Center.

## STREETSCAPE

The Greenwood commercial area is a potentially attractive area that could be improved with some relatively modest improvements:

- Relocating power lines underground and removing poles would remove major disruptive elements, create a more attractive shopping and pedestrian district and allow additional street front construction.
- Brick paved crosswalks would begin to slow traffic and establish the presence of pedestrians in the area.
- Additional street trees would create a more pleasant pedestrian environment and reinforce the village-like character that defines Greenwood.
- Banners on poles would establish the retail character of

### Arlington Heights Streetscape Improvements



In 1975, the town of Arlington created the Master Plan for the development of the Massachusetts Avenue corridor, which runs from Cambridge to Lexington. The Master Plan focused on 3-4 business nodes which they believed contained unrealized development potential, describing the uses and activities to be changed in each district. Before redevelopment, Arlington

Heights was a marginal commercial district with limited parking that catered primarily to neighborhood customers. Along with a large vacant site, there were also two, unused MBTA-owned parcels which needed to be rezoned. In 1996, after revising the old Master Plan, discussions about actually implementing changes in Arlington Heights began. The community became increasingly involved as the plan progressed. Public meetings, charettes, and additional planning studies





encouraged further community participation. The Chamber of Commerce, Arlington Heights merchants, town meeting members from the Arlington Heights neighborhood, residents, the historical commission, and the Bicycle Advisory Committee are examples of the groups who became involved.

The final plan included development of the vacant and un-used sites in Arlington Heights as well as streetscape and signage improvements.

Key to the success was the transformation of the vacant group of buildings in the center of Arlington Heights; they were renovated, and occupied by Walgreen's, Trader Joes, and Starbucks. The town wanted the MBTA parcels to be converted to a use that would be sympathetic to local businesses and not adversely affect the residents on the street behind the parcels. The town set up a requirement for the developer to allot 35 on-site parking spaces for local merchants and employees, which limited the types of proposed developments. In the end, the Sunset Assisted Living Home won the bid to build on the MBTA parcels. The total streetscape expenditures totaled 1.4 million dollars, partially funded by the state's Chapter 90 road improvement monies. These positive changes caused a number of merchants to implement their own storefront improvements. The Town also provides design assistance for exterior renovations.



The beautified streetscape as well as the town's demonstrated investment in the commercial community was quickly paid back through the façade and signage improvements initiated by local merchants and increased tax revenue. The Arlington Heights redevelopment, which took five years from plan to completion, is a successful and encouraging example of an economic development vision brought to life.

the area and create a festive environment for the community.

- Improved facades and signage along Main Street would give Greenwood a more dignified character. Many signs are awkwardly placed on storefronts, and many storefronts are old and in poor repair. The addition of awnings and carefully chosen colors and materials would economically upgrade many of the stores.

The Town, the Chamber of Commerce, and a Business Improvement District can provide leadership, design guidance, and incentives for making these kinds of improvements. Attracting new tenants to now vacant spaces will add to the vitality of the area. (See Section XIII for more information on Business Improvement Districts and other organizational models for retail areas.)

Although Greenwood Plaza has seen façade improvements in the past decades, signage is poorly coordinated on storefronts, sidewalks are narrow, the expanse of asphalt in front appears large, and planting is relatively ineffective. A trash enclosure in front further detracts



from the appearance of the Plaza as a center of community activities, while taking up parking spaces. The stores and plaza do not have the “upscale” appearance that more effective façades, signs and site design would provide. Coordination between the Town, tenants and the landlord would be required for improvements to be effective.

**Recommendations** – The town should reduce administrative and regulatory hurdles facing business owners wanting to improve signage or facades, or to expand dining or retail activities onto the sidewalk. Design guidelines and expertise should be provided to assist owners in making upgrades. The Town, Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement District should organize, assist, promote and coordinate improvements to streetscape, facades, and signage, and should consider implementing a Storefront Improvement Program. (See Streetscape Elements Section XII.)

To improve the pedestrian environment crosswalks should be clearly marked and signalization improved. Wakefield should work with local utilities to bury power lines and plant trees. The town should encourage development that defines the street to create a recognizable neighborhood business and living district that will attract both commuters and area residents.

The Main Street Coordinator, a town employee recommended in the downtown section of this Master Plan, can make a sustained effort at improving the area and attracting new businesses. Greenwood business owners need support if improvement plans are to be successfully implemented.

## TRAFFIC AND PARKING

The lack of parking is cited as the most significant deterrent to economic development in Greenwood. It limits the extent to which the neighborhood retail, centered on the intersection of Greenwood and Main Street, can become a vibrant commercial area.

**Limitations on Parking** - The parking available to potential customers is limited by two factors. One is the small area available for developing parking, whether at grade or structured. The dense commercial area is bordered by steeply sloping topography on one side and railroad tracks and a residential neighborhood on the other, leaving little area available for the creation of new parking. The other factor is all-day commuter parking along Main Street, associated with the Greenwood commuter rail station. There are a series of measures that can be taken to control parking in ways that support economic development. These are noted below, starting with the least intrusive.

**Parking Enforcement** – Parking from Forest Street south past Cooper St. on Main St. - a strip centered on the commercial district near Greenwood Street and the commuter rail station – is currently posted “One Hour” parking. It has been noted that this time limit is not enforced, and that many cars park for the entire day. Parking limits should be enforced to insure that spaces remain available for customers. All day parking north of Forest St. and south of Cooper St. can remain for commuters and commercial area employees, as these areas are too far for most customers and patrons to walk.

Enforcement and fines can be coupled with measures to make

customer parking easier. Some areas noted as “No Parking” could possibly accommodate cars without causing traffic problems. Spaces can be striped to clarify that parking is permitted. “One Hour Parking” can be changed to “Two Hour Parking” to encourage more extensive dining and shopping. Other areas can be posted “15 Minute Parking” for quick stops, at the drugstore for example.

**Parking Meters** - The Town can both control and profit from parking on Main St. by installing parking meters in the vicinity of neighborhood businesses. Parking policy must be carefully coordinated to insure that parking problems do not merely shift from one area to another.

Parking meters on Main St. between Cooper St. and Forest St. would allow the town to control how long cars can remain parked. Limiting meters to 2 hour would insure that only patrons, not commuters, would use the spaces. Eight hour meters would allow employees of area businesses to park but would discourage commuter parking. Enforcement is essential - commuters soon learn if parking violations are not punished. Parking could remain unmetered north of Forest St. and South of Marion St., allowing commuters to park but requiring somewhat longer walks. Meters could be cheap and violations expensive to discourage commuter parking without discouraging shoppers.

Establishing resident-only or time-limited parking in nearby residential areas is important if the problem is to be solved rather than merely shifted. Establishing a system of signage, permitting, and enforcement for residents-only parking is costly, but insures that those in the neighborhood can continue to park in front of their

houses. An enforced two hour parking limit in residential areas near the commuter rail station but beyond the metered area is probably more realistic. It allows shoppers to park while preventing all-day commuter parking.

**Implementation** - Any measure taken to add or control parking has costs and benefits; business owners, employees, shoppers, nearby property owner, commuters, and the town are all affected differently by different parking solutions. Local business owners have voiced concern over parking limitations in the past, suggesting that successful implementation will require coordination with area stakeholders if enforcement is to be successful. This is especially true since local business owners and their employees are among the commuters that take Greenwood business district parking spaces, on the street or in Greenwood Plaza, for all day use. Entrenched habits are hard to break, so education will be an important component of the coordination effort.

It is important that all stakeholders are consulted before changes in the parking situation are implemented. It is also important that an entity – the Town, the Chamber of Commerce, or a Business Improvement District, take a leadership role in proposing, implementing, and enforcing these changes.

**Long Term Commuter Parking Solution** - Greenwood has become a regional transportation hub, with commuters, often from other towns, parking in the commercial area and taking the commuter rail line. Although this influx of potential customers has possible benefits for the Town, it has increased the parking burden on the business district in Greenwood as well as downtown. A new commuter rail station with large parking lots, located near Rt. 128,

would solve many of these problems. Although this is a long term solution at best, and additional solutions noted above are required, the town should pursue this option.

**Additional Parking.** - Creating new parking areas without destroying existing buildings that give character to the area can contribute to solving parking problems. Yet given the intensive use of the Greenwood area, it will be difficult to create significant new parking areas immediately adjacent to businesses. Organizing parking at Greenwood plaza more effectively, relocating dumpsters to reclaim parking spaces, selective demolition to create new parking, and utilizing property behind buildings facing Main St. to form a small parking lot can contribute enough new spaces to be worth exploring.

**Structured Parking** - It is unlikely that structured parking is a cost effective solution to Greenwood parking problems unless more extensive, and profitable retailing or mixed use development takes place in the area.

As with any parking solution, it will take leadership on the part of the town and property owners to implement a parking plan that will benefit both businesses and the town as a whole.

**Traffic.** Motorist complain that traffic moves too slowly in Greenwood, backing up at the corner of Greenwood and Main Streets. Pedestrians complain that traffic moves too quickly, making crossing the street dangerous.

The health of the retail businesses in the area are more contingent on providing a safer pedestrian environment than in ensuring that

traffic moves quickly; pedestrians should be prioritized to support the consensus that Greenwood should provide a pleasant neighborhood center. Crosswalks should be more clearly marked at the intersection of Greenwood, Oak, and Main Streets and signals should provide for pedestrian crossing. Changes in materials can reinforce the sense that the intersection is pedestrian oriented. "Bumpouts" in the sidewalk can act as traffic calming features and reduce the width of the crossing.

Banners and other streetscape improvements also serve notice that this is a retail district rather than a high speed artery with a vehicular orientation. Along with parking, traffic calming, improvements in the retail mix, and an upgrading of buildings to provide a defining edge to the street, they can reinforce the character of Greenwood center and make it a more walkable, and more successful business environment.



*Cooper Street at Main is one of a number of sites in the Greenwood area where denser development could take place. Mixed use "transit oriented development" is appropriate given the proximity of the commuter rail station.*



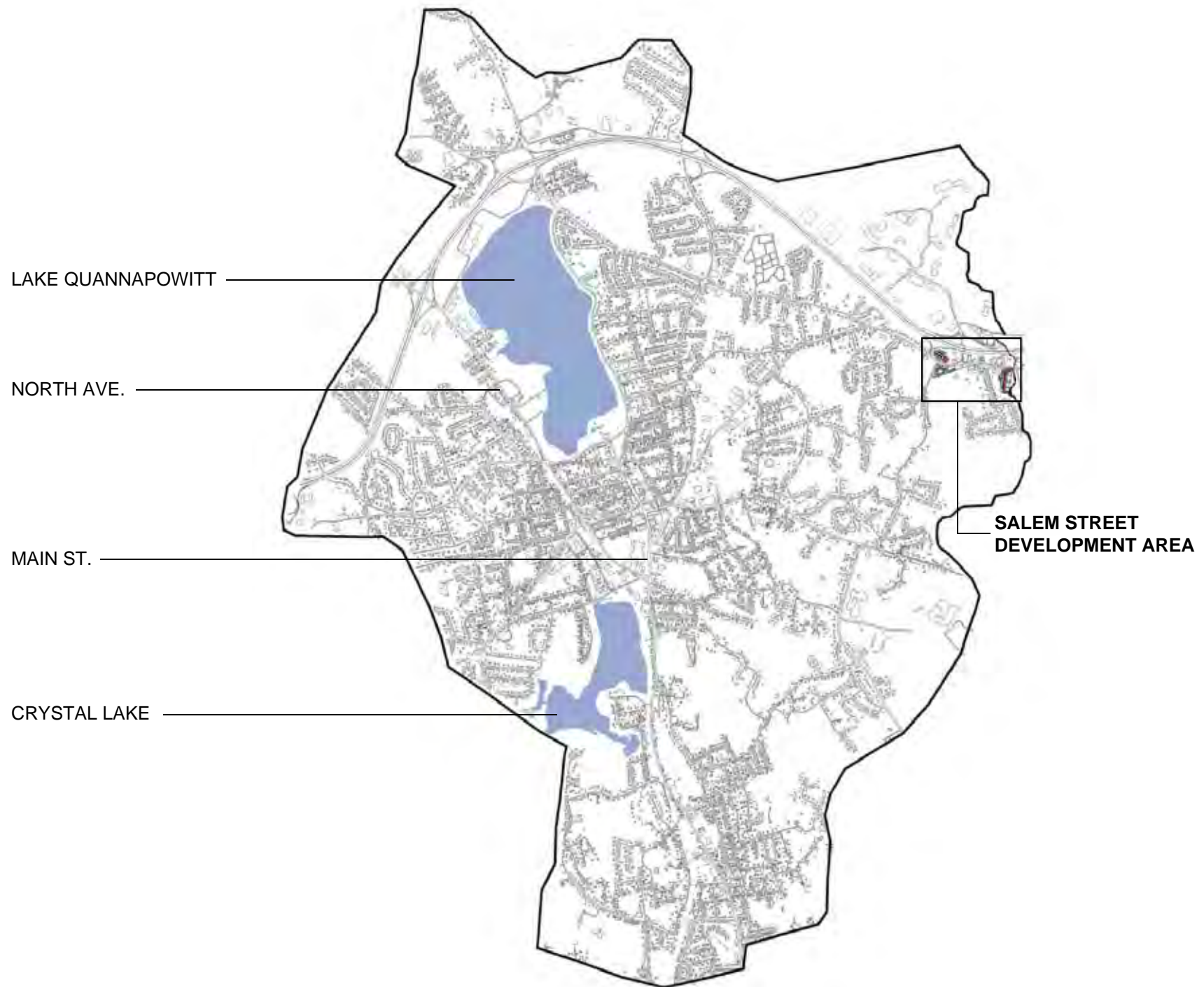
COOPER STREET AT MAIN STREET PROPOSAL

*New development should address Main St. in a way that reinforces the character of the area. A continuous frontage of retail and residential can provide additional density while staying in scale with the neighborhood. Parking should be behind buildings, not up against the sidewalk.*



As has been noted in the previous sections, it is important that Wakefield's business districts grow so that they can provide the choices that today's shopper is looking for, and regain their central place in the life of the town. It is also important that the fringes of Wakefield maintain their rural character while responding to development pressures and opportunities. This is critical if Wakefield is to remain an attractive place to live and work.

Salem Street near route 128 and the Saugus River offers opportunities for office, residential, and small scale retail or restaurant development if site constraints can be overcome. Design guidelines and regulations can help insure that the natural beauty and rural charm of the area is respected at the same time that appropriate development takes place.



## SALEM STREET AT ROUTE 128

### EXISTING CONDITIONS - PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC

Edgewater Park, located on the north side of Route 128 at the Salem Street exit, is an excellent example of a successful and attractive commercial development that continues to benefit the town's fiscal well-being. Underutilized parcels with even better access to the regional highway system sit on the south side of Route 128 near Salem Street between Montrose Avenue and the Lynnfield town line.

For years, town officials and potential developers have struggled to find ways to overcome the barriers that have limited the highest and best use of these sites. Impediments include the presence of wetlands, high tension power lines, environmental contamination, and noise and traffic from Route 128. The parcel sizes tend to be small, and surrounding residential property owners may be resistant to multi-family or commercial development. This further discourages new construction.

Much of the development that has taken place locates buildings and parking lots close to Salem Street, with broad asphalt aprons and very little landscaping to define the edges of the road. This kind of site development detracts from the rural character of the area without providing the denser development that could take real advantage of the proximity to Route 128 and provide significant new taxes to the town. This type of conventional strip development contrasts with what has been built recently in neighboring Lynnfield. Several commercial developments there offer attractive design options that can be a model for proposed development in Wakefield.



*Parking and access drives create a sea of asphalt along Salem Street near Montrose Avenue, detracting from what could be a pleasant rural environment.*

*New construction is possible while protecting the natural environment and character of the landscape. Power lines are one of a number of development challenges.*





## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- a** Wetlands and high tension lines limit development opportunities.
- b** Contamination at the former Hudson Bus depot raises development costs.
- c** Residential neighborhoods and zoning make commercial development more difficult on a site that is appropriate for non-residential development.
- d** Sites at the intersection of Montrose Avenue and Salem Street near Route 128 are very accessible and visible, although lot size limits development options.
- e** Despite the presence of Route 128 and a significant number of buildings, Salem Street still has a rural character that is worth preserving.
- f** Although proximity to wetlands and the Saugus River raises questions about development on the riverfront site, larger parcel size and location suggest development opportunities.





The area around Salem St. at Route 128 provides an opportunity for the town to increase its fiscal base by encouraging and supporting significant new development. It is critical that the town continue developing planning strategies, catalysts and tools that both encourage owners to redevelop their properties to maximize their value, while establishing a clear set of guidelines to ensure that new development has a desirable design character that is appropriate for its rural setting. The area's proximity to significant automobile traffic is likely to attract more strip development if an alternative planning vision is not put forward by the town.

## ROUTE 128 AT SALEM ST. - PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposals that follow envision two possible locations for development. The site at the corner of Salem Street and Montrose Avenue is at a prominent intersection whose redevelopment could significantly improve the character of the area. The other site, off of Salem Street in a more secluded enclave next to the Saugus River, is unusually large for this part of Wakefield, facilitating the scale of construction that makes commercial development more cost-effective. Both multi-family residential and commercial uses are shown in the plans that follow, and could be appropriate if properly designed.

The options illustrate design approaches that are appropriate for the rural context, and are analyzed in terms of their financial impacts. Any proposed development scenario, of course, is subject to changes in the real estate market that can impact viability.

Commercial development requires almost three times as many park-



*New development should incorporate features of a rural landscape, including planted buffers, trees, berms, and appropriately scaled buildings. One option, shown above, locates office buildings set back from the street at the corner of Salem St. and Montrose Ave. to the left, and residential buildings near the Saugus River to the right. Another option, shown below, locates an office building and restaurant at the corner to define the intersection of Salem and Montrose, with an office building along the river.*











*Recent development on Salem Street just over the town line in Lynnfield incorporates elements of a rural vernacular – stone walls, landscaping, low buildings with finely scaled massing – to maintain the character of the area. Parking is screened from view by planting and berms. These kinds of design features should be required for new development in rural parts of Wakefield.*



ing spaces for the same square footage of floor area as residential development, although it returns more in taxes to the town. The design proposals and analyses take this into account in the build-outs shown. Costs and benefits for both Wakefield and private developers must be taken into consideration when the town considers what the most advantageous development options are.

It will take work by both the public and private sectors to create successful developments that achieve the goals established in the Master Plan. Public sector contributions might include improvements to Salem Street, traffic signals and signage to ease access to and from Route 128, and infrastructure improvements to open up areas that are now inaccessible. The town could also help in recruiting developers and assembling parcels large enough for high quality office construction. Additional town and state aid may be required to deal with environmental contamination at the former Hudson Bus property at the corner of Salem Street and Montrose Avenue, and to address wetlands issues.

Private sector contributions would include meeting design standards established by the town. These should include a planted buffer strip between parking areas and Salem Street, building in locations and with massing appropriate for the context, and design features such as stone walls that create a sense of character and continuity from one parcel to the next.

Rewards from such development are significant. In addition to increasing the town's tax base, development could open the Saugus River and the adjoining wetlands up to public access and appreciation while protecting these natural resources and reducing contamination from older industrial uses.



## SALEM STREET AT MONTROSE AVENUE SITE

Low walls, planted buffer strips and landscaped berms screen development from the street and help maintain a rural character. Parking areas interspersed with trees continue the natural landscape through developed areas. Buildings should be of modest height and articulated massing to fit into their surroundings.

The north side of Salem Street is appropriate for office development, although the floor plate area, approximately 10,000 square feet, would make a restaurant perhaps more economically viable. The south side is well suited to office development, although the proportions of the site provide development difficulties. Housing may be considered as well, although the proximity to the street and Route 128 may make residential development less attractive. The site also offers a possible relocation opportunity for the Department of Public Works.

Buildings can be placed close to the street with parking behind - a town center model. Alternatively, buildings can be pulled away from the street with landscaped parking in front - a rural model. Streetscape elements and sidewalks that support pedestrian use should be encouraged. Both options are shown on the plans on the previous pages.

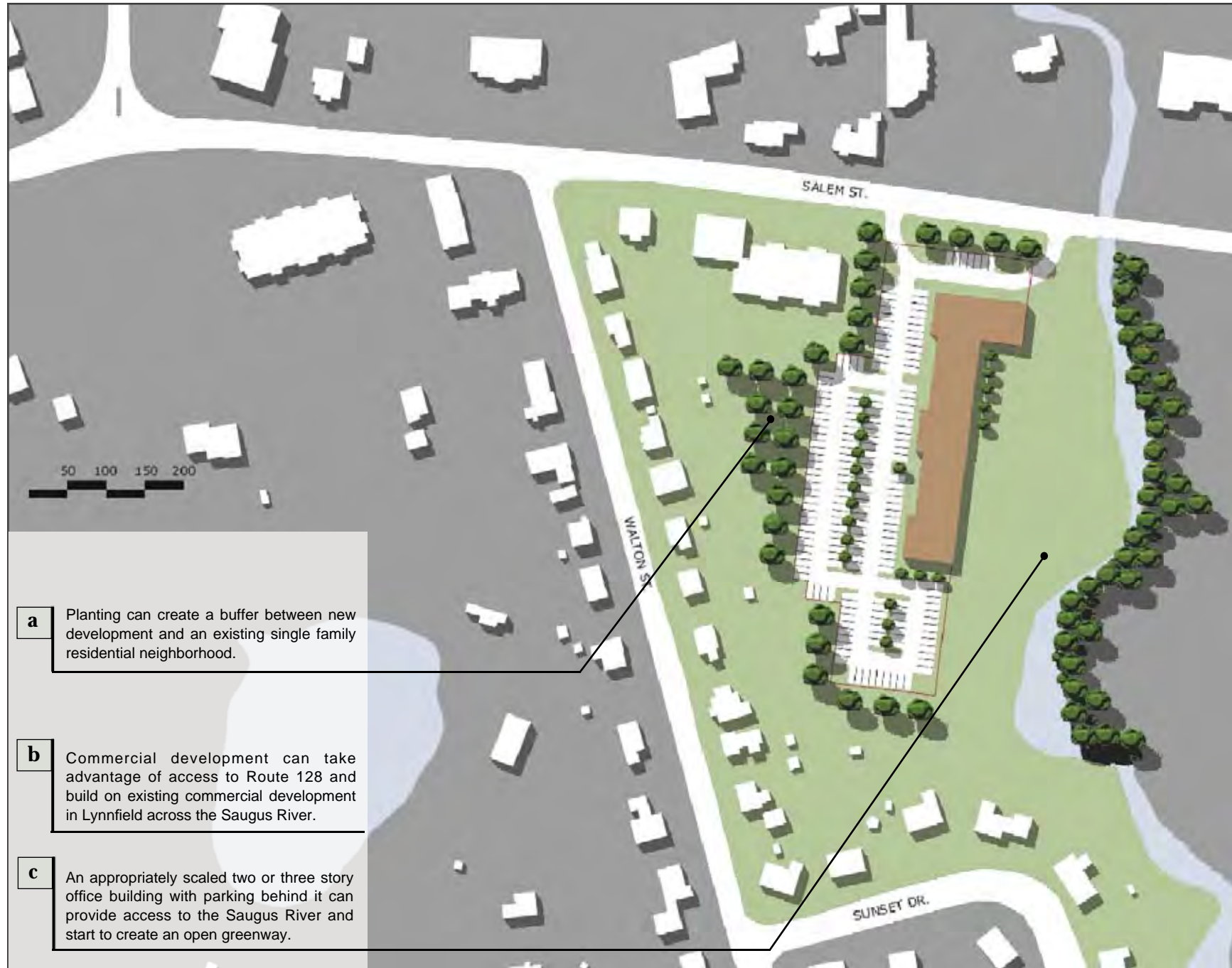
Wetlands, high tension lines, traffic, environmental contamination, and the small size and awkward proportions of the sites make development difficult, but not impossible. With the proper zoning requirements and design guidelines, new construction can reinforce the character of the area.

## SALEM STREET AT THE SAUGUS RIVER SITE

One of the few area parcels large enough for significant commercial development is located off of Salem Street along the Saugus River. It is surrounded by single family residential development on two sides, strip commercial along Salem Street, and the Saugus River on the fourth side.

Significant planting and buffering would be required between new buildings and neighboring parcels, along with parking and appropriate design to get the zoning relief necessary for development. Landscaping along Salem Street and provisions for public access to the Saugus River are public benefits that should be required in return for rezoning the land from single family residential uses. Although commercial development may be the most beneficial to the town in terms of taxes, multifamily residential is also appropriate. Both options are illustrated on the plans that follow.

Proximity to the Saugus River and the presence of wetlands limit the development possible at this location. Proposals may also meet with opposition from abutters, whether residential or commercial. Nevertheless, the size, access to Route 128, and proximity to other commercial and residential projects make this an appropriate development parcel.







## REDEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY AND FISCAL BENEFIT: SALEM STREET AT ROUTE 128

Salem Street at Route 128 - Montrose Avenue Site Economic Development Plan Land Values and Fiscal Benefits													
	Impact of Redevelopment on Property Value							Fiscal Impact of Redevelopment					
	Res'l Units	GSF	Cap Rate	SF or Pad Rent	Projected Land Value	Current Assessed Value	Added Value	Acres	Hard + Soft cost / SF	Total Value	Taxes	Current Taxes	Additional Net Fiscal Benefit
Salem Street Commercial													
Office bldg		37,900		\$25	\$ 947,500	\$ 673,700	\$ 273,800	3.0	\$ 145	\$ 7,193,000	\$ 173,639	\$ 16,263	\$ 157,376
Restaurant		8,600	8.50%	\$170,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 981,700	\$ 1,018,300	2.1	\$ 120	\$ 3,557,000	\$ 85,866	\$ 23,698	\$ 62,168
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>46,500</b>			2,947,500	\$ 1,655,400	<b>\$ 1,292,100</b>	5.1		\$ 10,750,000	\$ 259,505	\$ 39,961	<b>\$ 219,544</b>
1 - 2004 Fiscal year residential tax rate = \$11.40 per thousand; commercial tax rate = \$24.14 per thousand 2 - Cap (Capitalization) Rate is a financial tool that translates an annual rent into an overall value. 8.5% is a prevailing rate for credit retail tenants as of Jan., 2004. 3 - Assumes \$250,000/acre for site improvements 4 - For additional assumptions see Section VI. Development Scenarios Overview													

### Montrose Avenue Site

A fiscal analysis of the Montrose avenue site suggests that commercial and restaurant development could provide significant benefits to both the town and to property owners. While site development costs are included in the valuation, the full cost of environmental remediation for site contamination is not necessarily included in project costs shown. Further study of these issues must be pursued before a more accurate cost-benefit analysis can be prepared.

### Saugus River Site

The Saugus River site has been analyzed comparing two development types - commercial offices, and multi-family residential. Build-outs were based on the following methodology.

The residential density was set at 14 units per acre as per MR-1 Zoning. The site is 5.75 acres resulting in an 81 unit development with either 1,150 gross square feet and 1.5 parking spaces per unit (apartments) or 1400 gross square feet and two parking spaces

Salem Street at Route 128 - Saugus River Site Economic Development Plan Land Values and Fiscal Benefits														
	Impact of Redevelopment on Property Value						Fiscal Impact of Redevelopment							
							Tax Calculation				School Costs	Fiscal Benefit		
	Res'l Units	GSF	Land Value / Unit or SF	Projected Land Value	Current Assessed Value	Increase in Property Value	Acres	Hard + Soft cost / SF -- condo value	Total Value	Taxes		Fiscal Benefit	Current Taxes	Current School Impact
Saugus Commercial Office Building		55,000	\$25	\$1,375,000	\$804,000	<b>\$571,000</b>	5.75	\$145	\$10,787,500	<b>\$260,410</b>	\$0	\$260,410	\$19,409	\$0
Saugus Residential Residential -Apt	81	93,150	\$35,000	\$2,835,000	\$804,000	<b>\$2,031,000</b>	5.75	\$130	\$16,382,000	<b>\$186,755</b>	\$80,401	\$106,354	\$19,409	\$0
Residential - Condo	81	113,400	\$75,000	\$6,075,000	\$804,000	<b>\$5,271,000</b>	5.75	\$350,000	\$28,350,000	<b>\$323,190</b>	\$80,401	\$242,789	\$19,409	\$0
1 - 2004 Fiscal year residential tax rate = \$11.40 per thousand; commercial tax rate = \$24.14 per thousand 2 - School costs calculated assuming 0.20 children per unit and a cost per child of \$4,963 3- Assumes 1150 gsf for apartments, 1400 gsf for condominiums 4 - Assumes \$250,000/acre for site improvements 5 - For additional assumptions see Section VI. Development Scenarios Overview														

per unit (condominiums). Building height is set at three stories. Using the larger condominium proposal, a site plan was drawn (as shown) that utilizes about 38% of the site for building and parking and 62% for open space.

The office development proposal was then designed to fit on a similar footprint taking up the same 38% of the site. Given the requirement for one parking space per 250 square feet of office space,

this plan resulted in a three story building with 55,000 square feet of office space and 220 parking spaces.

The commercial development appears to be slightly more beneficial to the town, while the residential condominium development appears to be the most beneficial to the property owner. Although every site has different cost and benefits, opportunities and constraints, this conclusion is likely to apply to many development sites in Wakefield given the tax rates and parking requirements.

Improving the relationship between pedestrians, buildings, and the street in retail districts can create a sense of vitality that is good for business. Making a trip downtown into a rich, stimulating experience should be the goal of individual businesses, businesses groups, and the town. The following pages give examples of the types of improvements that Wakefield should encourage in order to achieve this goal. The towns should ease permitting of these kinds of improvements, provide design guidelines, and offer funding. Business groups can support creative thinking about how to give identity to a business, and to a business district.



## BUSINESS DIRECTORIES

Most shopping malls offer the convenience of directories listing merchants and their locations. Downtowns can offer a similar amenity, providing useful information and creating a meeting place for shoppers. Improved paving, benches, outdoor dining, and landscaping can reinforce the directory location as an orientation point.



*In Arlington Heights a directory is located at a prominent intersection. It is designed to reinforce the historic character of the area.*



*A three sided kiosk located at the train stop in Coolidge Corner in Brookline offers a community bulletin board along with information about local businesses.*



*In Somerville's Davis Square, the directory is located at the Transit station, and is surrounded by a spacious plaza with outdoor dining.*

## ORIENTATION

Street names, maps, and locations of important places can be integrated into a signage system that provides useful information, a festive environment, and suggests pride in a town's history and current environment.



*By systematizing signage, Lynn creates a signature design that ties the downtown together. Craftsmanship is combined with a clean, contemporary feeling.*



*Directions to civic buildings and open spaces are given in a clear and concise way in Lynn. The importance of these places is emphasized.*



*Awnings, like banners are a lively presence on Main Street in Melrose.*

## BANNERS AND AWNINGS

Banners have become a common feature in downtown environments. Hanging on light poles, off buildings, or over streets, they are an effective way of signaling a concern for the vitality of a retail environment. Their bright colors and rhythm of repetitive forms have a festive quality. Their presence along the street acts as a scaling device to give a sense of intimacy to wide urban thoroughfares.



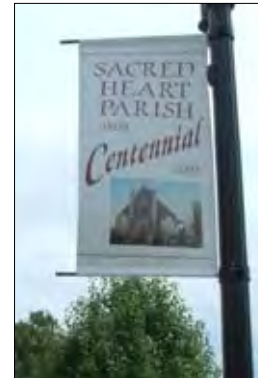
*Bright colors and ornamental lettering add character to the pedestrian environment.*



*The repetition of the banners ties the business district together. The first one suggest entry, the last one a departure.*



*Banners can be changed within a district to call attention to special features in the urban landscape.*



*Banners can mark special places, historic features, or celebrate special events.*



*There are many locations where banners can be effective. Hung on the side of a building they can identify its owner, history, or upcoming events inside.*



## GATEWAYS

San Diego has been very successful at revitalizing its neighborhood retail districts. "Branding" each one with a name, and providing a prominent gateway, has turned the street into an outdoor room of sorts, with a defined character and place in the larger urban landscape. The city and local business groups all worked together on a broad range of redevelopment ideas and implementation strategies appropriate for local conditions and the city's architectural traditions.



*A wide street creates a place for a central island with a broad cantilevered sign. Contemporary illuminated lettering is combined with regional references implied by the ceramic tile base.*



*Little Italy adjoins a trendy loft district. Its gateway suggests the sophisticated taste of those who live and work nearby.*



*Bright colors contrast with the neutral colors of the surrounding buildings. The gateway elements provide a more intimate scale against the taller buildings.*



## OUTDOOR DINING

Downtown Wakefield's 14 foot wide sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate outdoor dining. Combined with awnings, umbrella tables, and flowers, it brings a sense of vitality to a retail district.



*Streetscape elements, paving, flower boxes, furniture, awnings, lights, and umbrellas all serve to "zone" the sidewalk, establishing places for eating and places for walking. Many towns in the area encourage outdoor dining. Beacon Street in Brookline offers many examples of creative outdoor dining solutions. A new development on Sidney Street in Cambridge carefully coordinates paving, facades, storefronts glazing and furniture.*



*Contemporary awning brackets and light fixtures play off the original Art Deco storefront in Woburn, rather than imposing inappropriate period details.*

## SIDEWALK DISPLAYS

Generous openings between sidewalk and store with merchandise spilling out on to the street create an exciting environment that attracts shoppers. Recessed entries or awnings help control the overlapping indoor and outdoor spaces. Shop keepers start to take ownership of the sidewalk, keeping it clean and festive. Shoppers enjoy the farmer's market atmosphere. Shopping malls have learned these lessons from successful downtowns; downtown Wakefield could learn from successful shopping malls.



*Flowers from the florists shop on Beacon St. in Brookline extend down the street. When plants are placed along the storefront owners are more likely to take care of them than when they are closer to the curb. Here curbside flowers complement those in pots.*



*Recessed entries allow for outdoor displays protected from the weather and out of the way of pedestrians in Coolidge Corner in Brookline.*



*Fruits and vegetables make for particularly attractive sidewalk displays on Harvard Avenue in Brookline..*