

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

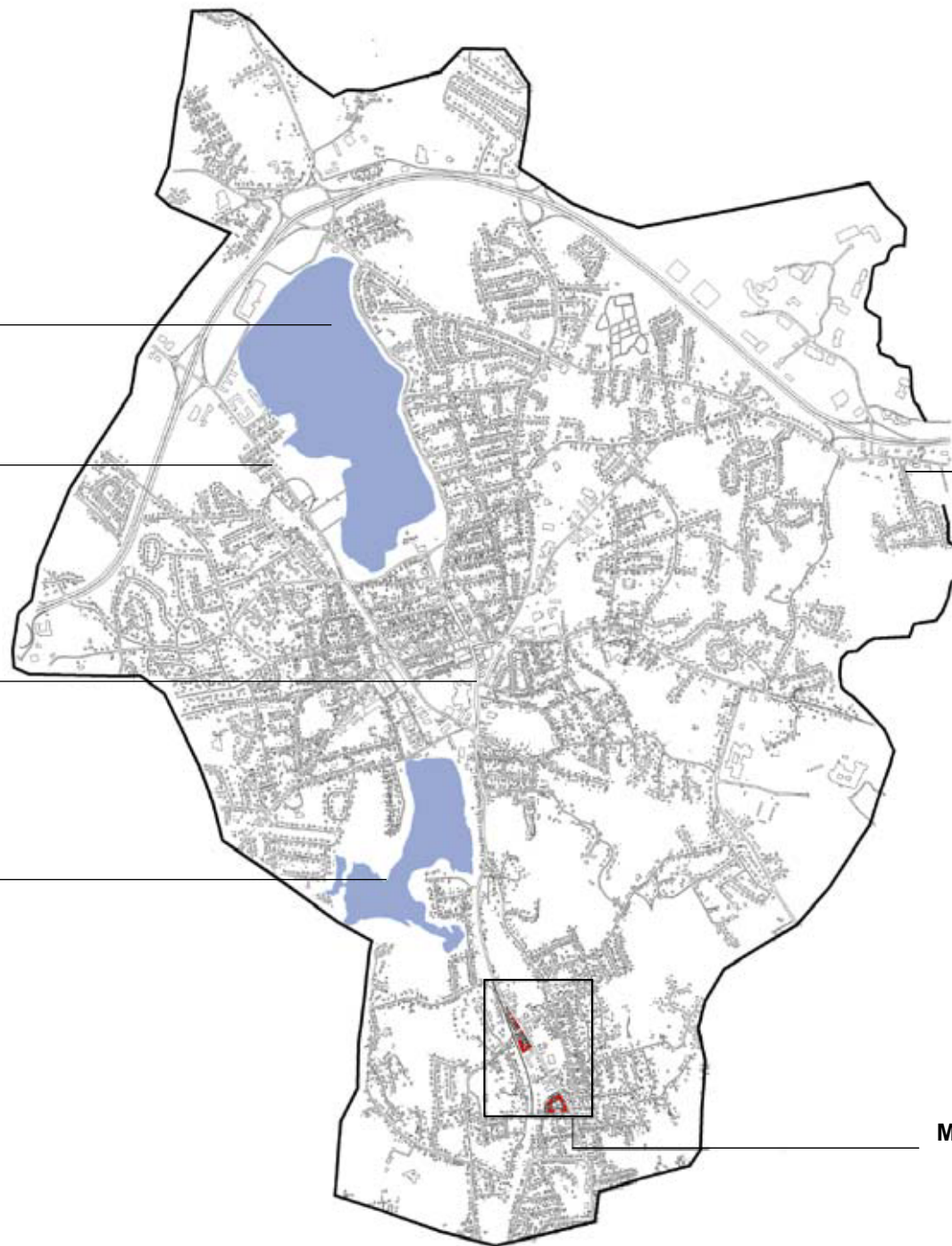
NORTH AVE.

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.

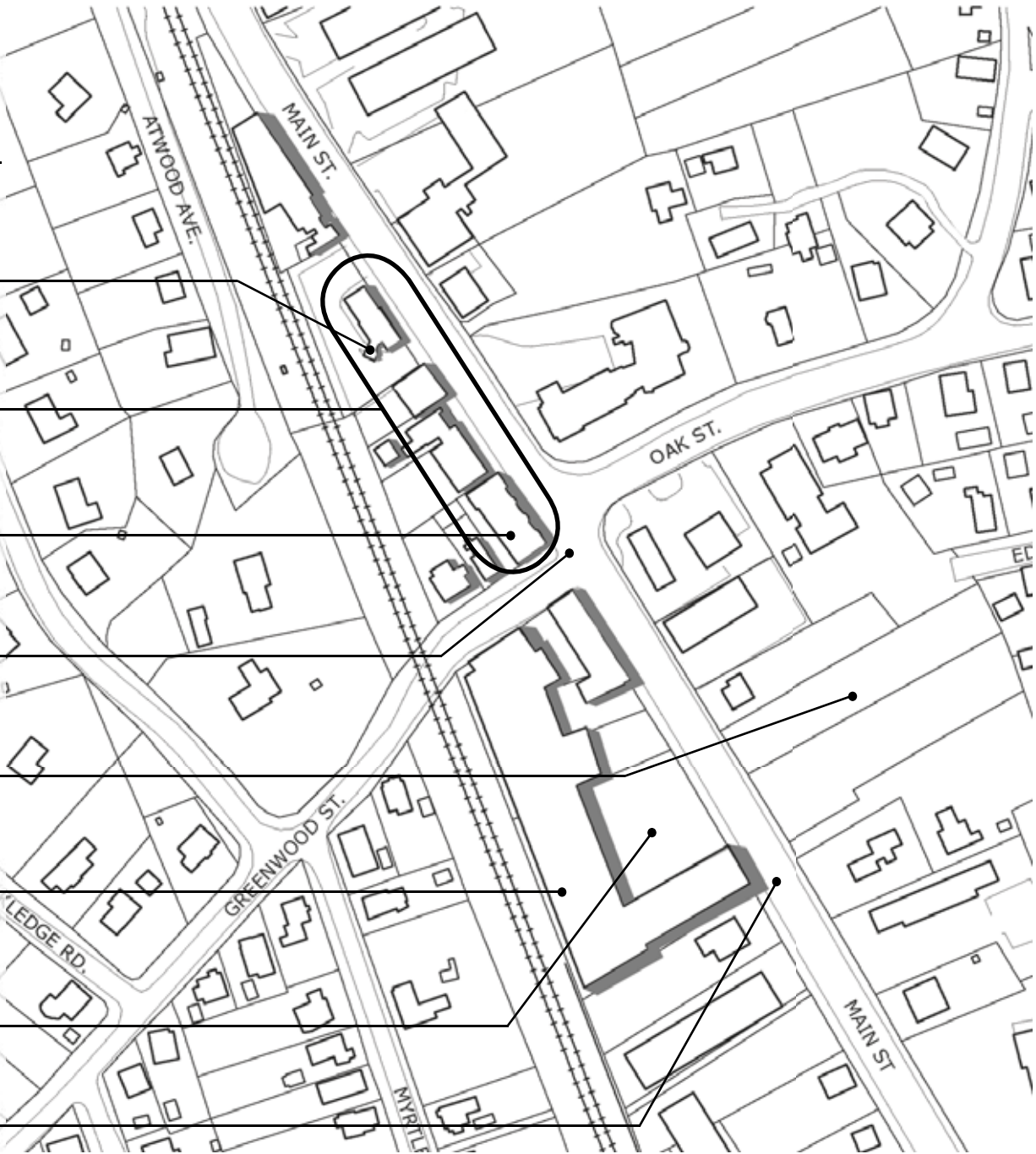




GREENWOOD PROPOSED STREETSCAPE

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.