

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

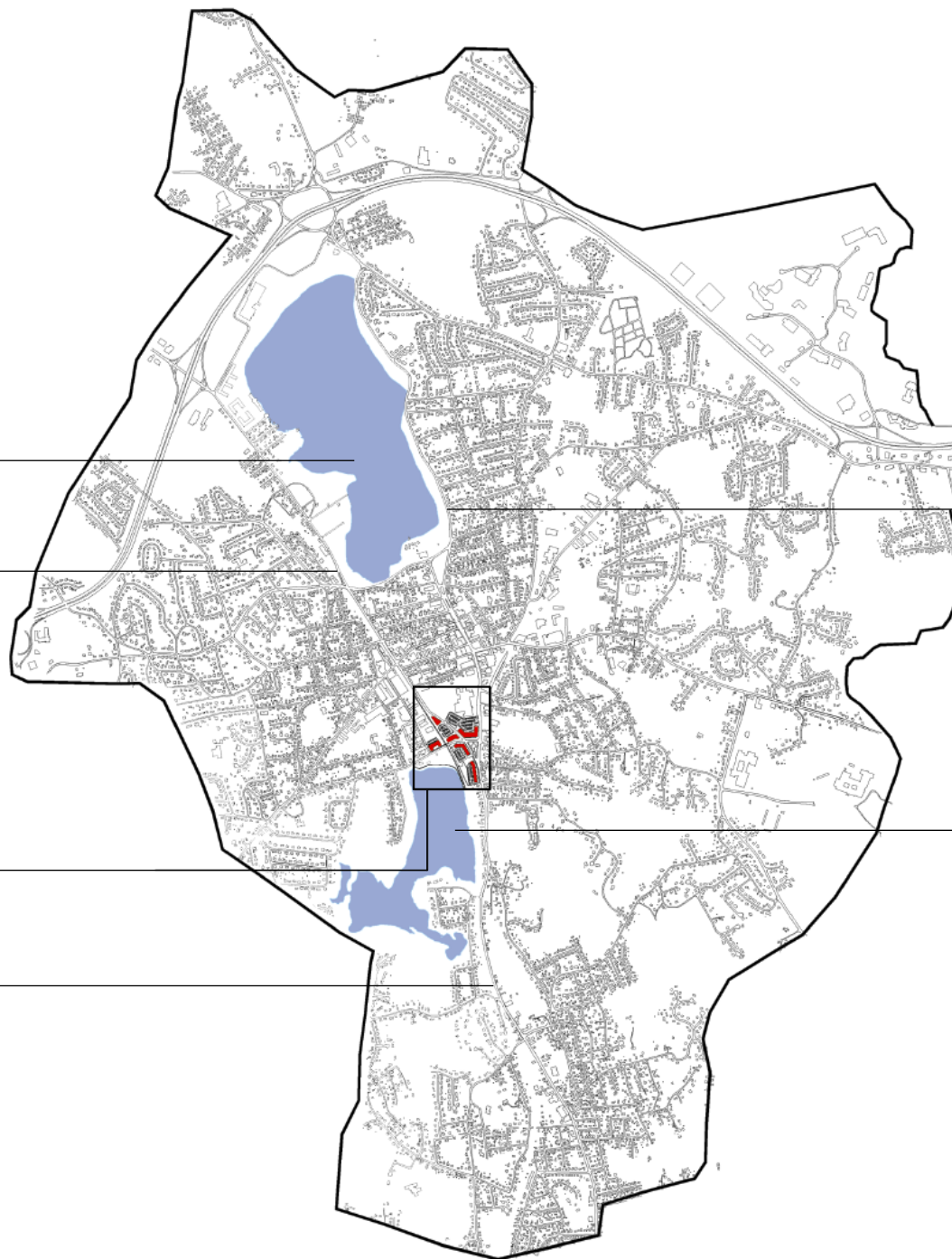
NORTH AVENUE

**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



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 consider 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.

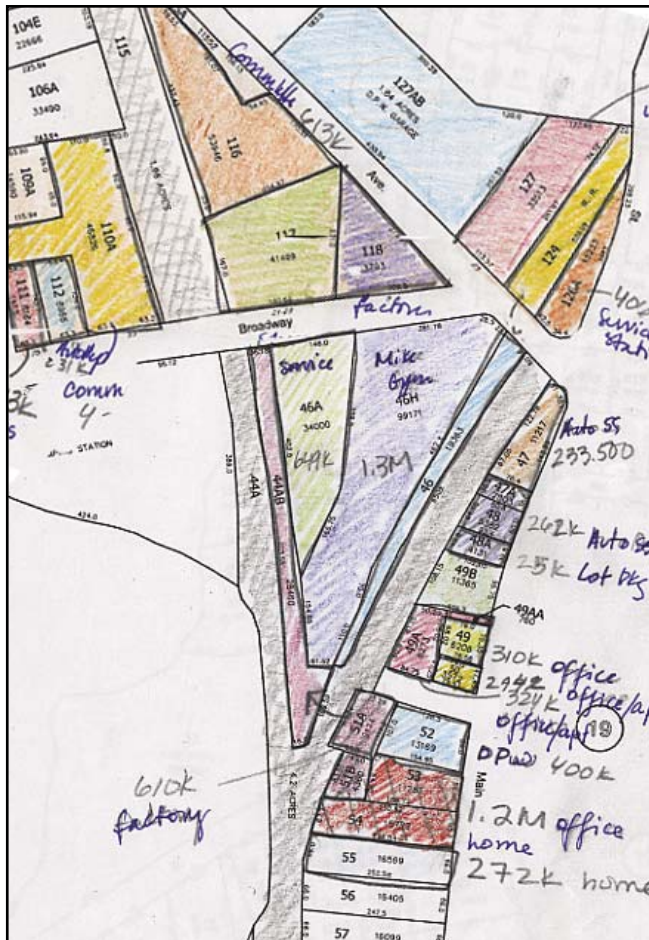
Protecting viable businesses. There are a series of viable businesses in the Junction. Although more intense development can lead to more profitable uses for private owners and for the town, these businesses should be allowed to operate while new opportunities are being planned. The town can work with 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

The Junction 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 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
Junction as Illustrated															
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		
Total -Apt	209	374,000			\$10,454,348	\$10,356,000	\$98,348	13		\$56,384,348	\$859,909	\$207,151	\$652,757	\$249,994	\$402,764
Total-Condo	202	416,800			\$17,220,000	\$10,356,000	\$6,864,000	13		\$102,650,000	\$1,387,337	\$200,505	\$1,186,832	\$249,994	\$936,838
Junction with More Residential															
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		
Total -Apt	252	373,700			\$11,842,957	\$10,356,000	\$1,486,957	13		\$59,233,957	\$806,399	\$250,049	\$556,350	\$249,994	\$306,357
Total-Condo	240	420,000			\$19,508,000	\$10,356,000	\$9,152,000	13		\$113,238,000	\$1,422,045	\$238,224	\$1,183,821	\$249,994	\$933,828
Junction with More Commercial															
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		
Total -Apt	117	308,000			\$8,041,696	\$10,356,000	(\$2,314,304)	13		\$45,976,696	\$825,728	\$116,523	\$709,205	\$249,994	\$459,211
Total-Condo	128	352,200			\$12,573,000	\$10,356,000	\$2,217,000	13		\$77,758,000	\$1,188,035	\$127,053	\$1,060,982	\$249,994	\$810,988
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.