

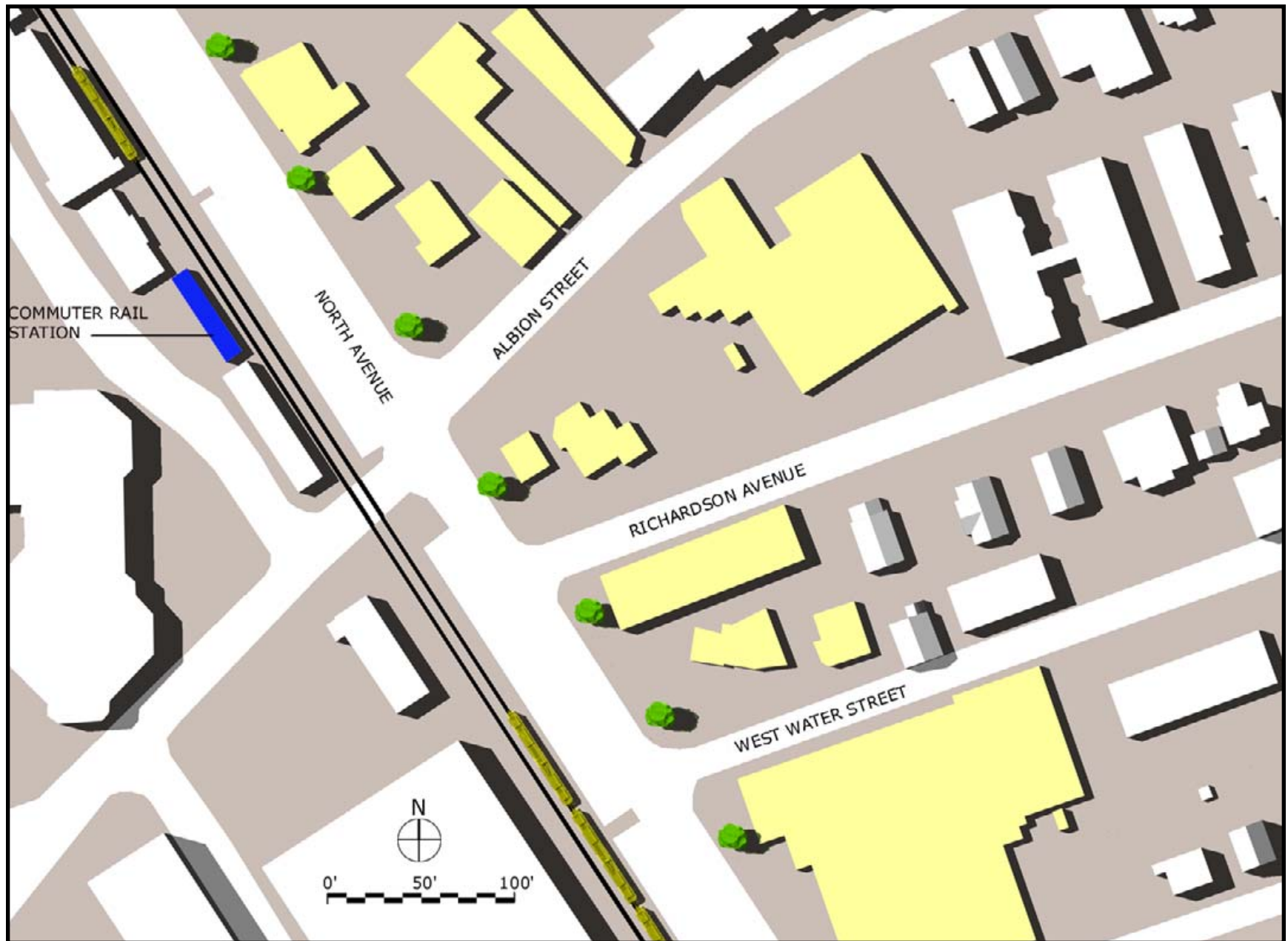
### EXISTING CONDITIONS

North Avenue is a heavily traveled artery connecting downtown with Route 128 and running parallel to the north-south commuter rail line. From 128 south to downtown it parallels Lake Quannapowitt's western shoreline. The area chosen to illustrate the D3 concept is near downtown adjacent to the Commuter Rail station, centered on the intersection of North Avenue and Albion Street. Albion is lined with shops and businesses and is the connecting street that links the commercial uses centered around the rail station with downtown's primary shopping district on Main Street. Wakefield's historic downtown neighborhood is to the east of the site while the west side of North Avenue is bounded by the railroad line.

This part of North Avenue is defined by:

- Easy access, both by car and by public transportation. The commuter rail station is immediately across the street from the study area.
- Proximity to downtown stores and services.
- Low buildings that do not create the kind of urban street front that would be appropriate for a downtown area opposite a train station.
- Industrial and Service uses that are no longer appropriate for the downtown location in an area developing as a business and residential center.
- An under-utilization of land, given the need for housing and the relative prosperity of nearby Central Business District businesses.

*Aerial view of North Avenue from the South.*



## North Avenue Mixed Use - D3

### SITE DESCRIPTION

Assessors Maps 12 and 13  
Assembled lots – 7.15 acres  
Zone – B Business



*Residences over business uses can revitalize downtown areas, as with these new mixed use buildings in Cambridge.*



### PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

The D3 Model proposes a mixed-use housing and retail concept based on traditional New England main street development. New 3-4 story buildings along North Avenue would contain apartments over ground floor retail development. Parking is accommodated below ground and/or in surface lots behind street-front buildings. Residential density is similar to D3 residential development along Richardson Street – see Neighborhood Studies, Section 4.

The current zoning for the site – Business Use – allows up to 36 units per acre by Special Permit.

The proposed 2-3 story housing is extended partway down the side streets, stepping down a story from its height along North Avenue to match the existing residential development along Richardson Avenue.

200 units on 3 floors – 27.9 units per acre.  
1,560 square feet of lot area per unit.

### PUBLIC BENEFITS

- Mixed use development – housing over retail – can revitalize urban areas 24 hours a day. Housing sustains commercial establishments; retail allows access to shopping without use of a car and enlivens the street. Together they reinforce the vitality of North Avenue and the entire downtown area.
- New development is near public transit, reducing use of automobiles.
- Currently underutilized industrial properties can be utilized effectively as housing and commercial space benefitting the Town, its citizens, and property owners.
- Dense downtown development can help meet Wakefield's housing needs without building on currently open sites.
- Downtown housing development is appropriate for seniors, singles, and young couples who need low cost housing near central business district services. There is a documented need for small housing units to serve all three of these populations. In addition, the added cost for municipal services associated with this new housing is typically reduced by greater reliance on walking and public transportation as well as lower schools cost (generally fewer school-age children in smaller units).





*North Avenue could accommodate residential development above a continuous row of commercial uses.*

*Residential development near the train station allows travel without automobile use.*



### OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENT

There should be a courtyard requirement to provide open space in Type D3 developments. A modest green common area can tip the scale and encourage homeowners rather than renters to settle in these areas. Good examples of residential buildings with successful courtyards include several of the nearby buildings along Richardson Avenue as well as the Crystal Condominiums on Main Street.

### IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS – LEGAL

- Multi-family 1 in B zone allowable with Special Permit (currently).
- Allow mixed use development.
- Consider overlay zone to define specific redevelopment goals
- Parking requirement reduction based on shared parking with daytime/nighttime synergy, allowable remote parking provision, and reduced parking requirement within short distance of transit.
- Consider enhanced landscaping requirements.

### IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS – ECONOMIC

- Community Preservation Act and proposed “greenfield fee” measures could subsidize urban redevelopment paid for by taxes on development of currently open land.
- “Brownfield” redevelopment funds could support environmental remediation if required.
- Other locations for D3 development:
  - Main St. near Downtown and the Junction.
  - Albion St. between North Avenue and Main St.
  - Greenwood along Main St.



*View north along North Avenue*

## North Avenue Conclusions



*Several stories of apartments or condominiums above commercial uses can create a lively streetscape.*

*Businesses benefit from street front exposure while residences enjoy privacy above.*



### NORTH AVENUE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CONCLUSIONS

Development of housing above stores on North Avenue and other streets that can function as urban centers has advantages for the town and its residents. These include:

- Dense development can be low cost, offering affordable housing for seniors, empty-nesters, young couples and singles who are otherwise priced out of the Wakefield housing market.
- Development near mass transit eliminates or reduces the need for cars, which reduces required parking, paving, and congestion.
- Housing development activates downtown and supports the viability of stores and restaurants in the area.
- Housing development downtown allows the creation of new housing without reducing green space or altering the natural landscape if development pressures are channelled into the town center.
- Changes to zoning to encourage development downtown and discourage development that reduces green space should be pursued by the town.

Unlike many towns that have demolished much of their downtown areas to make way for parking and large scale development, Wakefield has preserved its traditional small-town environment. New development can and should reinforce the urban quality of Main Street, North Avenue, and other streets in the downtown area.



*View north along North Avenue*

## **NORTH AVENUE / D3 DEVELOPMENT**

Type D3 Development requires a careful consideration of parking, greenspace, and building layout requirements to make the best use of land available within the context of zoning requirements.

The conceptual section on the opposite page suggests how ground floor retail space, structured parking below, and residential construction above can create marketable spaces on the interior and public benefits on the exterior while reinforcing the character of the urban environment.

