

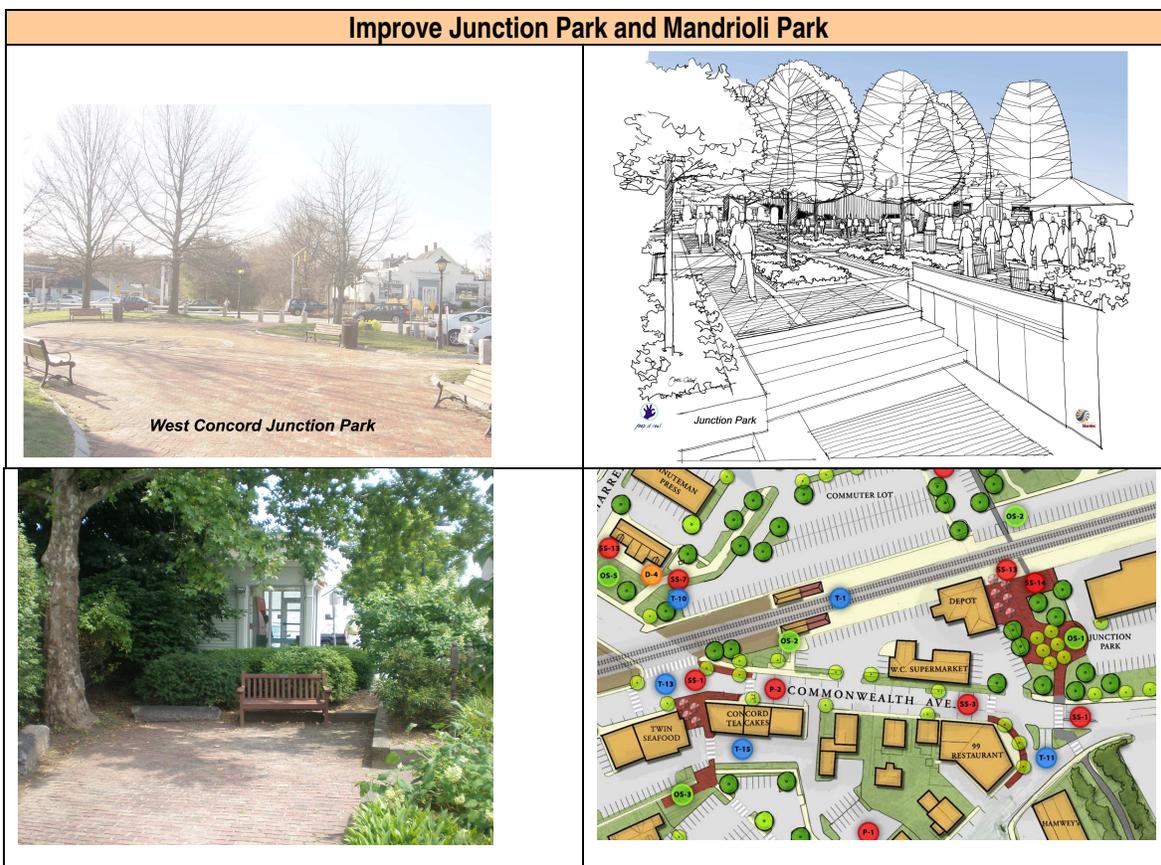
4.4 Recommendations: Parks, Open Space, and Trails

The Graphic Master Plan illustrates enhancements to existing and creation of new open spaces, pedestrian and bicycle corridors, parks, and other public amenities in the village for active and passive recreational uses. Public spaces are an essential element in a vibrant community, serving village residents and drawing other town residents and visitors to West Concord for recreational and civic activities. Open spaces, parks, and trails are also aimed at supporting private businesses and property investment opportunities in the village.

Existing Park and Open Space Enhancements

Junction Park Enhancements (OS-1) – Replacement of the stairway between the park and West Concord Shopping Plaza was recently completed, though further repairs to the brick work are needed. Recommended future enhancements include raised planters and shade trees in the center of the park and the repositioning of the railroad crossing to become a more prominent feature. Additional enhancements may include new benches, bike racks, lighting, an informational kiosk, and interpretive signage.

Improving and defining the edges of Junction Park is critical to making it a more vibrant public space. Some short-term improvements include extending the surface to create an access “apron” on the small MBTA-owned parking lot that might be used as a staging area for a farmers market and encouraging outdoor dining at the Club Car Café. Long-term enhancements may include a railroad history exhibit at the depot and future redevelopment or infill development at the West Concord Shopping Plaza that could include new uses (e.g., a restaurant) connected to and interacting with the park.



Mandrioli Pocket Park Enhancement (OS-2) – This town-owned pocket park is centrally located and attractively landscaped but underutilized. Recommended enhancements include a small expansion toward the Bank of America kiosk (accomplished with the removal of existing yew bushes) together with new native plantings, furnishings, lighting, and signage. The

recommended new curb extension and crosswalk on Commonwealth Avenue are directly in front of the park, extending this pedestrian space and connecting it to Concord Teacakes across the street and possibly to the Harvey Wheeler Community Center in the future. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is also routed directly in front of Mandrioli Park, which should also increase its recognition and utilization.

New Parks and Open Spaces

New HWCC "Overlook Park" and Access to Commonwealth Avenue (OS-3) – This small pocket park and overlook is proposed on the north side of the Harvey Wheeler Community Center parking lot next to the Catholic Church office building and overlooking the village. This spot provides a view up Commonwealth Avenue toward Kenneth Dunn Square. A small terrace, interpretive signage, benches, and selected plantings would create a very attractive public space which could be well utilized by the senior center, children’s center, churches, and surrounding neighborhoods. As noted earlier and on the Village Graphic Master Plan, this park could be tied directly to the village center with a staircase (or ramp) and sidewalk connection behind and adjacent to the Concord Teacakes building.



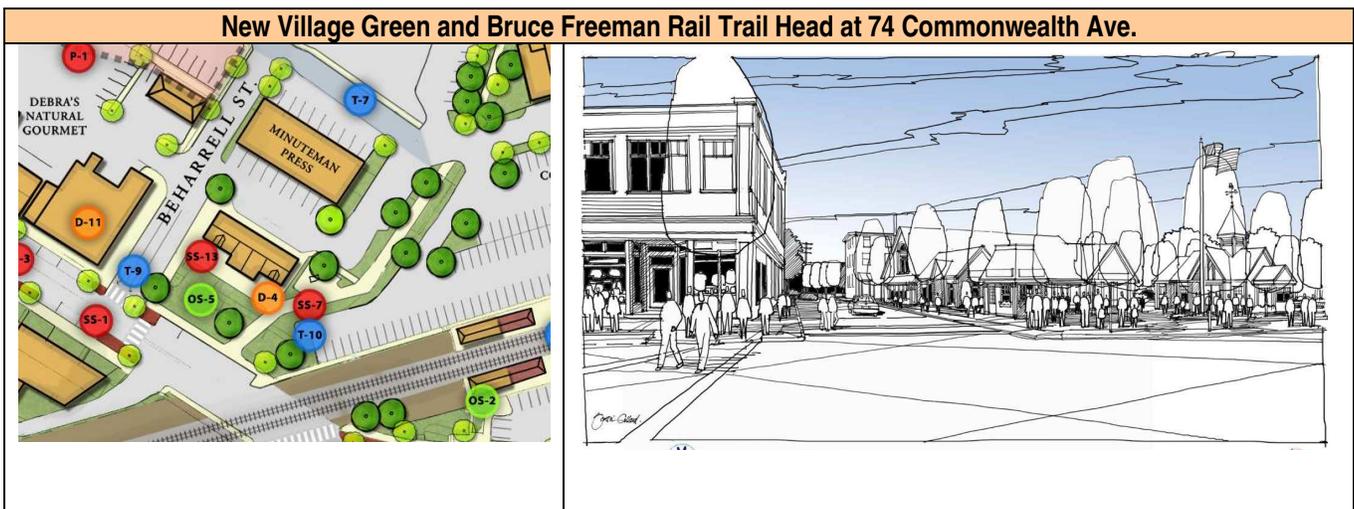
New Pocket Park at Warner's Pond Dam (OS-4) – This small pocket park will be located at the south end of Warner’s Pond on town-owned land next to the dam and spillway. The town is preparing construction plans for the park, which will include an observation and seating area overlooking the pond. The Village Graphic Master Plan also recommends that the park include a canoe landing and be connected to a future trail along Nashoba Brook across Commonwealth Avenue.

Future expansion of the Pocket Park at Warner’s Pond Dam is also a possibility and was considered in the planning process. The property at 169/171 Commonwealth Avenue (on which is located a two-family house) is adjacent to the park and would provide an additional 7,000 square feet of land area that could be used for recreational and cultural purposes. The existing house is one of the oldest houses in West Concord. David Loring, who owned and operated the lead pipe factory on Nashoba Brook, built the two-family house in 1830 and occupied it until 1838. In the early 20th century, it was the property of Loring Fowler and later his daughter Avis. While the original structure has been significantly altered, there may be a possibility that it could be restored and utilized for civic purposes if local or regional resources can be found to acquire and renovate the property.

Further expansion of the park is also possible by creating a T intersection between Laws Brook Road and Commonwealth Avenue on the south end of Kenneth Dunn Square. This would create an opportunity to remove the segment of Laws Brook Road between 169/171 Commonwealth Avenue and Kenneth Dunn Square, creating a fully connected green space between the Pocket Park at Warner’s Pond Dam and Kenneth Dunn Square. This new open space would create an accessible park that provides an attractive gateway to West Concord, focusing attention on the Kenneth Dunn memorial and Warner's Pond, increasing traffic calming, improving pedestrian safety, and expanding recreational opportunities.

New Village Green at Commonwealth Avenue and Beharrell Street (OS-5) – This recommended new open space requires the acquisition of the property at 74 Commonwealth Avenue (the Acadian building) for the purposes of creating a new village green and trail head for the Bruce Freeman Memorial Rail Trail, which is planned to connect to Commonwealth Avenue via the railroad spur adjacent to this property. This new park could also be extended by incorporating the current MBTA commuter lot driveway if a new access road is established between the parking lot and Beharrell Street in the future as recommended (see plan above).

The new green would serve as a gathering space in the heart of the village. The Graphic Master Plan illustrates a small civic building which may include public restrooms and considers the possibility of an ice cream stand, coffee shop, meeting space, and/or local history collections and exhibits. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail would run parallel to the park on the south side, and a seating area and informal kiosk are envisioned in the Master Plan. The village green would preserve the large front lawn that could be used for public gatherings, picnics, Friday night “family flicks”, art exhibits, a farmers market, and other cultural and civic activities.



New North "Confluence Park" (OS-6) – The Graphic Master Plan illustrates the location of a new park at the north confluence of the Assabet River and Nashoba Brook on the southern tip of the Concord prison property. This area includes wetland and forest lands with scenic views of the Assabet River. The purpose of the park would be passive recreational use (trails, picnics, observations, interpretive signage) with connections to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and future development proposed on the prison property.

Heritage Park along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (OS-7) – This proposed small pocket park is located on the railroad right-of-way at the northern end of the MBTA parking lot and serves as a trail head where the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail splits off down the railroad spur to Commonwealth Avenue. The pocket park would include a sitting area and outdoor exhibits about West Concord’s rail heritage, including an old rail switch that is currently in this location.

Trails and Paths

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (OS-8) – The Bruce Freeman Memorial Rail Trail (BFRT) is currently being designed as a 10-foot wide, asphalt, multi-purpose trail along the former Old Colony Railroad right-of-way, which extends north south from Lowell to Framingham. The trail will provide an excellent opportunity for local and regional recreation, intermodal travel, and support for businesses in the village. As the BFRT passes through West Concord, it will be very important to tie and integrate the trail with local cultural and natural resources such as the Assabet River, Nashoba Brook, Warner’s Pond, Junction Park, and the central business district. Integrating greenscaping and open spaces along the



trail corridor to highlight West Concord's historic and cultural heritage will also be important in the final trail design and are illustrated in the Graphic Master Plan.

A direct route for the BFRT across the active commuter railroad tracks (at the existing pedestrian crossing) is not possible because there are no existing gates at this location. The MBTA will not permit an at-grade crossing for the Rail Trail at the platform and other options, such as a tunnel under the track or a ramp and bridge system over the tracks, have been determined to be cost prohibitive. The current plan is for the BFRT to be diverted down the old rail spur to Commonwealth Avenue (where there are existing sidewalk crossing gates), follow Commonwealth Avenue and cross to the south side of Main Street at Junction Park.

Various options have been considered in accommodating the trail on this segment of Commonwealth Avenue, including the removal of parking from one side of the street to provide space for a dedicated bike lane. However, there are serious concerns that removal of parking in this area (which is already limited) will have a significant negative impact on surrounding businesses. Therefore, the Graphic Master Plan illustrates and recommends that the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail follow the Commonwealth Avenue sidewalk from the access point on Commonwealth Avenue near the commuter lot driveway to the intersection of Main Street at Junction Park and that bicycle riders be required to dismount and walk their bikes until crossing the intersection to the trail on the south side of the intersection. The BFRT Advisory Committee is still exploring alternatives.

Nashoba Brook Trail (OS-9) –Nashoba Brook and the Assabet River are West Concord's two main water courses and the most significant natural resources in the village. Nashoba Brook is an underutilized yet scenic corridor with limited access and visibility except for the terrace behind Nashoba Brook Bakery at 152 Commonwealth Avenue and the pedestrian bridge to the Winthrop Street parking lot. The Village Graphic Master Plan illustrates and recommends a new trail along the south side of Nashoba Brook, starting at the pocket park at Warner's Pond Dam, crossing at Commonwealth Avenue and connecting to the future Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. This trail would then continue to the existing Concord Park path and connect with a new trail system proposed along the western side of the Assabet River.

Assabet River Trail (OS-10) – The Assabet River is designated as a National Wild and Scenic River. The water corridor provides excellent opportunities for passive recreation and scenic views. There are informal trails and conservation areas along the riverfront that could be organized into an attractive trail system providing public access and enjoyment. As recommended and illustrated in the Village Graphic Master Plan, the existing trail along the west side from the observation area at Concord Park would link to a new pedestrian bridge over the river connecting to the Baker Avenue Extension business park.

Future extensions of the Assabet River trail system are recommended south of Main Street with a canoe access point from the former Dee Bus property on Main Street (part of the 2009 approved site plan) and additional access at Westgate Park. Upstream connections include residential neighborhoods, the Thoreau School, and Cousins Park.

Other Conservation Areas, Open Spaces, and Trails – A 21-acre conservation area located off Conant Street and extending west of Wedgewood Drive has public access from Conant Street, Laws Brook Road, and Blue Jay Lane that is currently unmarked. The property provides open space in a highly developed section of Concord and offers the opportunity for a pleasant pedestrian link between different neighborhoods. If the entrance points were made visible, a trail system could be developed that would provide a circuit of trails and conservation lands around West Concord village and surrounding neighborhoods. Starting at Percy Rideout Playground one could walk along Conant Street through the conservation area to Laws Brook Road, then along Wright Road to the conservation lands on the west side of Warner's Pond to Route 2 and then back down the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail into the village center.

4.5 Future Development Themes and Potential Scenarios

It is a goal of the West Concord Task Force to provide guidance to developers and property owners through the Graphic Master Plan and preferred alternatives regarding the community's vision of appropriate scale and design characteristics of new development, renovations and expansions, and buffering techniques for surrounding residential neighborhoods. The mix

of uses and relationship with surrounding buildings and spaces is a key consideration. The Task Force also sought to determine the physical plan implications of attracting new residents and commercial development in terms of potential impacts on public infrastructure and services, as well as economic and social benefits.

General Development Patterns and Themes

West Concord development patterns reflect the diversity of the three original villages: Westvale, Concord Junction (or Warnersville), and the Massachusetts Reformatory. Once the industrial heart of the town, West Concord has gradually melded to form a common district identity very different from Concord's other two existing village centers. A "sense of identity" is embedded in the West Concord community.

As the village moves forward into the future, the community has identified established development patterns and themes that are important to continue:

- Maintain the village scale along the core streets and neighborhoods.
- Maintain the affordable rents that have led to the creation of many small owner-operated businesses now thriving in the village.
- Maintain the opportunity and environment for creative and entrepreneurial businesses.
- Manage the size and type of businesses throughout the village center and retain the practical nature of store offerings.
- Building consensus for possible expansion and redevelopment which may include mixed-use sites where appropriate in the older industrial areas.
- Address visual character, including building design and location of parking and delivery areas, to discourage strip development.
- Improve or redevelop existing underutilized parcels along the rail line.
- Rehabilitate or redevelop prominent but deteriorated buildings.
- Integrate the Harvey Wheeler Community Center, Fowler Library, historic Depot, Junction Park, and Percy Rideout Playground into future development and redevelopment plans as they are essential components of the village.
- Retain the West Concord Post Office, a key anchor for the village, in the core area.

Potential Redevelopment Scenarios

West Concord village has several development and redevelopment opportunities including residential, commercial, light industrial, civic uses, and mixed uses. While the community is not necessarily advocating growth and change in the village, several property owners have indicated an interest in short- or long-term development. Based on these discussions and public input, the West Concord Task Force has identified several locations where development or redevelopment may be anticipated in the near future.

50 Beharrell Street (D-1) – The property owner has indicated the intention of redeveloping the property for mixed uses including commercial, light industrial and possibly residential uses. These older industrial buildings are in fair to poor condition but there are approximately 25 local businesses located on the property that may be in jeopardy unless they can be relocated within the village or in new buildings on site. Other issues to be addressed in the future redevelopment of this property are parking, circulation, traffic, and access to Nashoba Brook.

113-135 Commonwealth Avenue Redevelopment (D-2) – An area developer has indicated an intention of redeveloping these properties on the south side of Commonwealth Avenue between Bradford Street and Maple Street. This includes the former Concord Auto buildings, a small office building, the Tony the Tailor building, and two multi-family residential properties. Combined, these properties include over 72,700 square feet of land and about 680 feet of frontage along Commonwealth Avenue. The initial development proposed is for a single apartment building with one to three retail units on the eastern end. Parking and access would be provided behind the buildings, from Maple Court. The key issues for this area are the height, scale, and design of development. Development on the eastern portion of the property should include commercial uses on the ground floor that are compatible with the other uses in the business district. Any residential development on the western portion of the property should attractively frame this side of Commonwealth Avenue and provide a transitional area between

the village and neighborhoods to the west and north. As noted on the Graphic Master Plan, a connection between Maple Court and Commonwealth Avenue is recommended to break up the long frontage and to improve circulation.



Conceptual example of village townhouse on Commonwealth Avenue west of Bradford Street. (This graphic example represents one of several changes that may occur in West Concord Village. It is not intended to suggest that this particular type and form of development is specifically recommended. Additionally, the graphic does not illustrate the proposed Maple Court cut through street.)

120 Commonwealth Avenue (D-3) – The Concord Auto Sales parking lot on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue does not contribute to the character of the village and is well suited for infill development. A potential developer has indicated an interest in developing two buildings on the site, including a mixed-use (commercial/residential) building and community theater and arts building. The preliminary plans for these buildings illustrate three-story buildings with architecture style and design that is intended to be consistent with the historic business core of Commonwealth Avenue. These buildings would be pedestrian-oriented, with close proximity to the sidewalk, and rear parking. A key issue on this property is to provide a corridor for the future extension of Beharrell Street to Commonwealth Avenue.

74 Commonwealth Avenue (D-4) – This property is located at the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Beharrell Street. The current building (known as the Acadian building) is older and in fair condition. There has been a lot of interest in redeveloping this property because of its location in the core area of the village center. The Graphic Master Plan identifies this property as a future village green and trail head for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. This will require a friendly acquisition and development by the Town. If this is not feasible, the building should be renovated for commercial use in keeping with the character of the surrounding historic business district. A key issue on this site is providing space along the western boundary for the widening of Beharrell Street at the Commonwealth Avenue intersection.

152 Commonwealth Avenue (D-5) – The former tannery building (now Nashoba Brook Bakery and other small businesses) sits back off Commonwealth Avenue approximately 150 feet and is located immediately adjacent to Nashoba Brook. The area between the building and the street is a disorganized and largely underutilized parking lot enclosed on the east side with chain linked fence, with parking and access spillover onto the Gulf Station property to the west. A portion of this frontage along Commonwealth Avenue provides an opportunity for infill development with parking located behind a new building and in front of the metal building on site. Access to the property could also be relocated if Beharrell Street were extended to Commonwealth Avenue, creating new frontage for this property.



1220-1224 Main Street (D-6) – The owners of the West Concord Shopping Plaza have not indicated any interest in further development or redevelopment of this property. Given the size and location of the property, however, it may be expected that infill development or redevelopment will occur in the long term. There is high potential for mixed-use (includes residential) infill development with a new building positioned along the frontage and parking behind, adjacent to the MBTA commuter rail line. Bringing the building up to Main Street would provide better street enclosure and create a more attractive pedestrian environment, improving the approach into the village from the east. The natural slope of the property allows for the possibility of a parking deck (two levels) to be placed behind a new building.

The top level would be at grade with Main Street and could serve customers and tenants. The lower deck could be used for customers as well as local commuters with a connection to the MBTA platform directly behind. If the property is redeveloped in the future, another key opportunity would be for new businesses (e.g., restaurant, coffee shop, etc.) to connect directly to Junction Park creating an attractive and vibrant edge to this underutilized public space.



Possible future redevelopment with traditional village development pattern

30-40 Beharrell Street (D-7) – The owner of this property has no plans to renovate or redevelop these two buildings in the near future. These older industrial buildings serve as important and affordable commercial and light industrial space for local businesses. The Graphic Master Plan illustrates a new street connection between the commuter lot and Beharrell Street on the southern boundary of this property. To support businesses at 30–40 Beharrell Street and surrounding properties, the Graphic Plan also illustrates the use of a portion of the railroad spur directly behind the building for parking.

Potential Renovation and Rehabilitation Scenarios

23-43 Bradford Street Rehabilitation (D-8) – These older mill buildings (formerly Bradford Furniture and other businesses) are currently occupied by approximately 23 local businesses for commercial and light industrial purposes. The property owner has indicated the intention of renovating the three main buildings and constructing “infill” structures between the main buildings. The current square footage of the building complex is approximately 75,000 square feet and would be about the same after renovation. Bradford Mills currently serves as good location for start-up businesses and an informal local business

incubator space, but there is concern that several current business tenants will have to relocate after renovations are made and rental rates rise. The Graphic Master Plan illustrates the reconfiguration of the parking lot on the easterly side of the building which encompasses a series of small and disorganized parking areas on Maple Court behind the buildings on Commonwealth Avenue.



Potential Bradford Street Streetscape and Mill Renovations

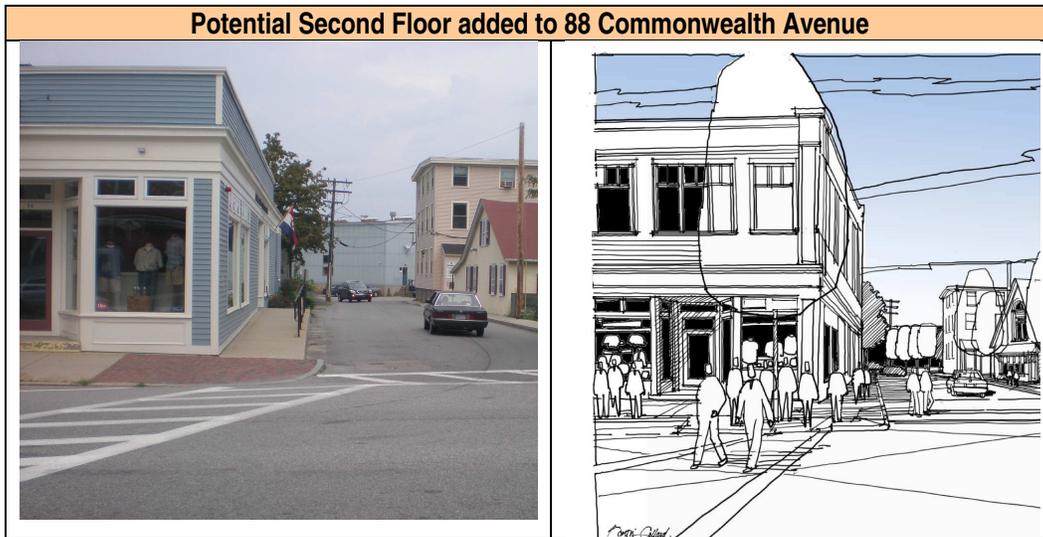
100 Commonwealth Avenue (D-9) – Debra’s Natural Gourmet has grown into a thriving local business and an anchor for the village center. The storefront is attractively decorated with large display windows and a distinctive awning. The owner has indicated a possible interest in providing a small seating area in front and against the building and adding a second floor to the building in the future. The upper floor may be used for small local businesses that complement the store.

Possible Second Floor Addition at 100 Commonwealth Ave (Debra’s Natural Gourmet)



85 Commonwealth Avenue (D-10) – The Commonwealth Apartments are located in the core business section of the village center. This historic building was once a hotel but has been significantly altered over the years to the point that it no longer contributes to the village fabric or vitality of this segment of Commonwealth Avenue. A one-story addition was installed at the front of the building at some point in the past bringing apartment units up to the sidewalk and creating a disconnect with the surrounding business district. While the property owners have not indicated an interest in renovation or redevelopment, it should be encouraged by the community in the future. Recommended renovations include the removal of the first floor apartments and restoring the original building footprint and façade. The ground floor should be renovated for commercial uses and the frontage could be redesigned as an attractive terrace.

88 Commonwealth Avenue (D-11) – The property owner has indicated an interest in adding a second story to this building (Concord Outfitters). This historic building once housed the post office and originally had a second and third story until fire destroyed the upper floors in the early 1900s. (See perspective drawing above).



West Concord Fire Station/1201 Main Street (D-12) – The Concord Fire Department has indicated the intention of expanding the fire station in the future to allow for the addition of an ambulance service and to accommodate modern fire apparatus. The current building was designed in the 1930s and the bays are undersized for many of the trucks used today. It is hoped that any additions to the building will maintain the attractive (if functional) appearance of the current facility.

Southern Portion of Concord Prison Property (D-13) – The southern portion of this property includes approximately 10 to 15 acres of useable land. Representative Cory Atkins, in association with the Walden Woods Project and the Concord Housing Development Corporation (CHDC), has filed legislation for the state to transfer the land to the CHDC for affordable housing and open space purposes. If the legislation passes, members of the CHDC say they plan to construct 20 units of affordable housing on the site. The southern tip of the property, where the Nashoba Brook enters the Assabet River, is recommended as a natural public park with connections to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (see project description above).

Other sites in West Concord Village that should be considered for potential redevelopment or renovation include Westgate Drive (including possible river access and connection to BFRT) and Hamwey Carpets.

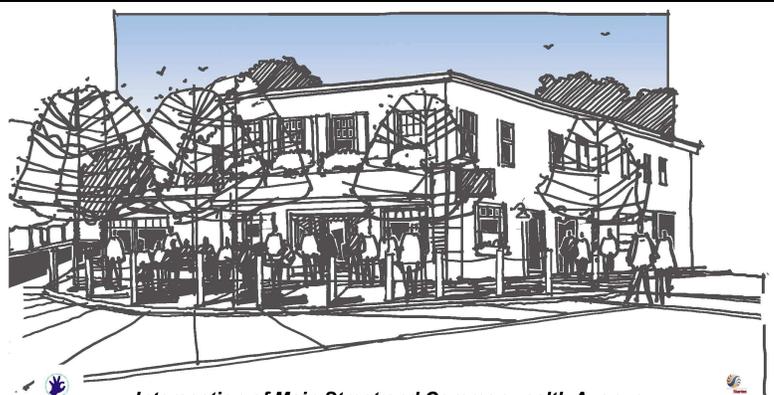
Existing Building Façade and Frontage Improvements

There are several existing, pedestrian-oriented buildings in the village where façade and frontage improvements are recommended to enhance their appearance and appeal while improving their compatibility with surrounding buildings. Some examples are illustrated below.

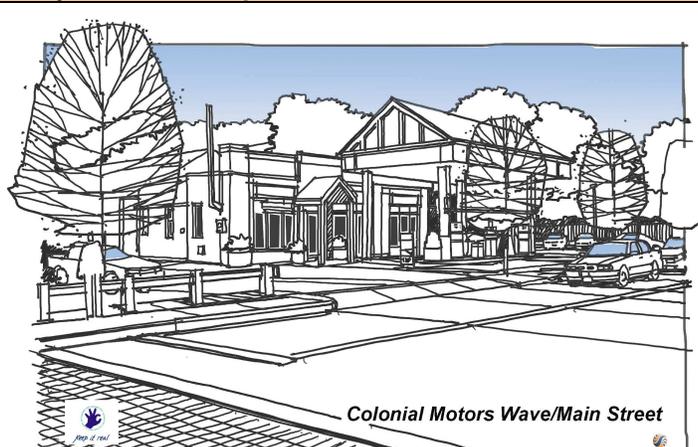
1191 Main St. – Dunkin' Donuts – Façade and Frontage Enhancements



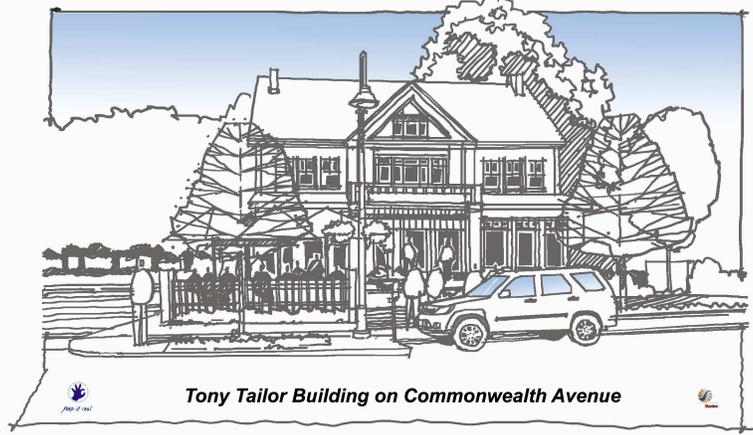
1238 Main St. – 99 Restaurant – Façade and Frontage Enhancements



1211 Main St. – Colonial Motors – Façade and Frontage Enhancements



1211 Main St. – Tony the Tailor Building – Façade and Frontage Enhancements

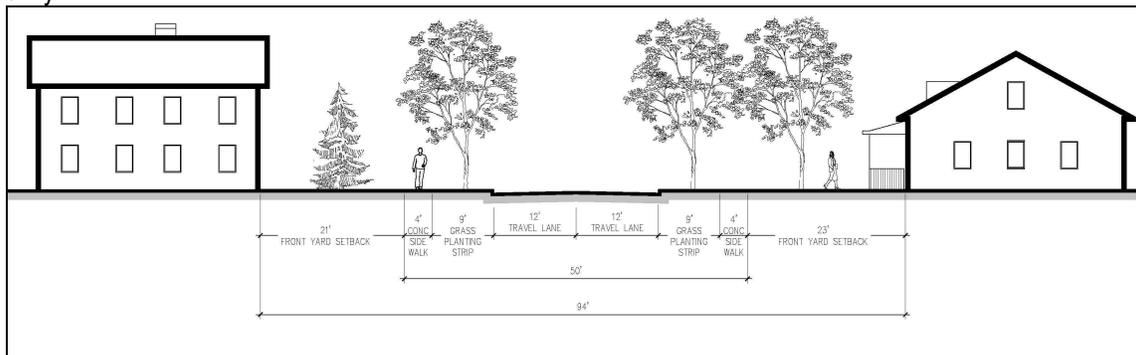


120 Commonwealth Ave. – Lawless Upholstery Building – Façade and Frontage Enhancements



West Concord Neighborhoods

The major theme for the surrounding residential neighborhoods is to preserve the character of these well established and traditional neighborhoods. Future development should pay careful attention to building placement, uses, architectural styles, and streetscape. The addition of life cycle housing within existing homes and accessory structures would benefit the community by providing a broader choice of housing for various age and income groups. A life cycle house is one with accessible and adaptable features that make it appealing to people of all ages and abilities; and possible to live independently.



Maintain Traditional West Concord Village Neighborhood Street Enclosure