



West Concord Village Center

Village Pattern Book | Conceptual Master Plan | Implementation Program

TOWN OF CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

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TOWN OF CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS
April 19, 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The West Concord Village Master Plan builds on the vision identified in the town’s Comprehensive Long Range Plan (2005) and the Village Center Study (2007) as well as information collected by the West Concord Task Force (WCTF) during the planning process. The Task Force’s collective goal is to provide a blueprint for the next generation of economic, social, and physical changes in this unique and historic district. The key challenges will be to create an environment for constructive changes to take place while building on the rich history and culture of the community, opening the door to public and private investment for desired results, and maintaining a compatible and supportive relationship with the surrounding neighborhoods.

In preparing the Master Plan, Task Force members and the planning consultant worked closely with key stakeholders (property owners, business owners, other board and committee members and town staff), residents and the general public to identify opportunities and refine implementation strategies in West Concord Village. This involved an interactive public design process, preparation of conceptual plans, and an implementation program including the evolution of strategic land use regulations, design standards and guidelines, economic development incentives, and an infrastructure plan.

West Concord Task Force Master Plan Priorities

- Improved flow and connectivity
- New building development attuned to village scale and character
- Focus on small business preservation and development
- Model best practices in environmental sustainability
- Enhance recreation and social engagement opportunities

Community Involvement

On-going collaboration involving the West Concord

Task Force, local property and business owners, area residents and town staff was an integral component of the Master Plan process. Meaningful public involvement in the exploration of development concepts, design alternatives, and preferred actions is the foundation for gaining acceptance and implementation of the Master Plan. Several formal and informal community outreach methods were utilized to build consensus and understanding of future opportunities in West Concord:

- Regular meetings with the West Concord Task Force and Master Plan Working Group;
- Community surveys sent out to residents and business owners;
- Regular website updates on the town’s homepage;
- Newspaper columns and announcements of upcoming Master Plan events;
- Regular “office hours” with the Master Plan consultant;
- “Lunch Talks” at Debra’s Natural Gourmet with the Master Plan consultant;
- Community design workshop (2 days)
- Visual Preference Survey® of various public space and private development design scenarios;
- Scenario building workshop to present alternative conceptual plans, projects, and programs;
- Public forums to present findings and concepts.

Existing Conditions

To support the analysis and decision-making process necessary to advance the Master Plan, a detailed inventory of existing and evolving conditions in West Concord was conducted. This included a review of land use trends, policies, regulations, historical documents, and other materials relevant to the village’s future.

For the purposes of the plan, West Concord is divided into five (5) general subareas (called “transects”) based on existing land use patterns, future development potential, and desired community

planning objectives. The transects of West Concord village are as follows:

- Village Industrial Transition Areas (VITA)
- Traditional Village Neighborhoods (TVN)
- Village Center Gateways (VCG)
- Village Center Core (VCC)
- Village Open Spaces (VOS)

Village Graphic Master Plan

The West Concord Village Graphic Master Plan illustrates and describes existing and potential building and land use scenarios (such as residential, commercial, civic, and mixed uses); infrastructure improvements; natural and man-made attributes; parking and streetscape, traffic circulation, access and intersection improvements; and parks, trails, and open space enhancements. The projects depicted on the graphic master plan correspond to the action items included in the implementation plan.

Road Design and Traffic Circulation

Alleviating traffic congestion and improving safety is one of the key objectives of the Master Plan. Several potential opportunities for roadway design and circulation changes to reduce traffic congestion and improve flow in the village center were identified. The Village Graphic Master Plan illustrates several existing and new streets designed to improve traffic flow, connectivity, safety, and appearance.

Specific street function, circulation, and design improvements recommended in the Master Plan include extending Beharrell Street west and connecting to Commonwealth Avenue; a new connector street between Beharrell Street and the commuter rail parking lot; a new connector street between Commonwealth Avenue and Maple Court; redesigning Maple Court and Bradford Street with sidewalks and street trees; and adopting a "Complete Street" policy and design hierarchy for existing and new streets in the village center.

Recommended intersection treatments in the village center include upgrading the intersection of Beharrell Street at Commonwealth Avenue; redesigning the intersection of the commuter lot driveway at Commonwealth Avenue; reconfiguring the Main Street at Commonwealth Avenue intersection;

improvements to the Commonwealth Avenue/Laws Brook Road/Kenneth Dunn Square intersection; redesign of the intersection at Church Street and Commonwealth Avenue; and realignment of the Main Street-Baker Avenue-Cottage Street intersection.

Commuter Rail

The MBTA commuter rail station in West Concord is a critical part of the transportation infrastructure in the village center. Local residents and regional commuters rely on the West Concord station as a convenient means of getting to and from work. There are currently 16 inbound trains and 17 outbound trains along the Fitchburg line that make weekday stops in West Concord. Inbound passengers from West Concord are estimated to be 460 daily into North Station in Boston. Specific recommendations related to commuter rail in the plan include extending the MBTA platform to the east and expanding the handicapped ramp (to reduce the occurrence of blocking the intersection) and designating a satellite commuter parking lot at the Baker Avenue industrial park to reduce commuter traffic in the village center.

Parking

Public and private parking is generally adequate and well distributed around the village. In total, there are an estimated 1,420 formal (lined) public and private parking spaces. For the purpose of analysis, parking inventory districts were created to determine where parking capacity and needs may need to be addressed in the future. Recommended improvements address the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing parking supply with proposed redesign and/or management strategies. Specific actions are identified and depicted with regard to parking access and signage, landscaping/screening, distribution, and connectivity of existing and potential private and public off-street and on-street parking areas.

Additional parking and transportation-oriented recommendations included in the Master Plan are an access management program for Commonwealth Avenue and Main Street to limit the number of curb cuts or driveways along these busy thoroughfares; a traffic management plan and a parking management plan for West Concord that promotes shared parking, employee parking, overlapping uses for parking

spaces and a variety of time limits for high volume parking spaces.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Enhancing pedestrian and bicycle movement throughout the village area is important to local residents. Some specific observations and recommendations for improved pedestrian and bicycle circulation in West Concord are as follows:

- Add trails and walkways connecting the Baker Avenue industrial park area to West Concord village center to enhance pedestrian safety and bicycle accessibility. This includes improving the Main Street sidewalk and the possibility of installing a pedestrian bridge over the Assabet River, parallel to the MBTA commuter rail;
- The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail should follow the alignment of the former Old Colony railroad right of way and bring trail users through Junction Park;
- Improve lighting to side streets (such as Bradford Street and Beharrell Street) and nearby neighborhoods to encourage walking and enhance safety;
- Add connections and pathways, including pedestrian access, to public and private parking lots and open spaces. Some specific locations include pedestrian connections to Percy Rideout Playground, Kenneth Dunn Square, and the commuter parking lot;
- Strategically locate more bicycle racks throughout the village center;
- Construct a stairway or ramp to the Harvey Wheeler Center and proposed Overlook Park;
- Improve pedestrian crossings in the Village Center.

Streetscapes

The quality of the existing streetscape in the village center is lacking, with only a few street trees in the core area along Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue. A consistent scheme of streetscape improvements is needed that is specifically designed to balance vehicle mobility with pedestrian safety and enjoyment. Specifically, this would include more viable crosswalk and traffic-calming treatments on the primary streets, such as Main Street, Commonwealth Avenue, Beharrell Street, Bradford Street, and Laws Brook Road. Design elements would include additional pedestrian-level ornamental lighting, new sidewalks where needed, new street trees, benches, trash receptacles, planters, directional and gateway

signage, informational kiosks, bulb-outs or curb extensions, and other enhancements. Attractive streetscapes create a safer pedestrian environment as well as appealing public streets that better support business development and private investment. Streetscape improvements would also improve pedestrian access to parking lots, neighborhoods, and points of public interest.

Specific streetscape and aesthetic enhancements recommended in the Graphic Master Plan include narrowing or shortening pedestrian crossings at key locations along Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue; planting street trees and making sidewalk improvements along Bradford Street, Main Street, Commonwealth Ave., and Beharrell Street Extension; extending decorative light fixtures within the village; upgrading pedestrian alleys along Commonwealth Ave.; enhancing pedestrian access to and within the commuter/public parking lot; and adding gateway treatments and “wayfinding” signage at strategic locations in the village center.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space

West Concord has many natural resources, passive and active open spaces, and recreational facilities. Key natural resources include Warner’s Pond, Nashoba Brook, and the Assabet River. Significant open spaces include Percy Rideout Playground, Kenneth Dunn Square, and the former railroad right-of-way running north-south through the village. One of the main concerns in the village center is that many of these natural and formal resources are underutilized because of poor visual and physical access, lack of connectivity, or the design doesn’t satisfy the desired use of the space.

Promoting open space enhancements and connective networks is an important element of the Graphic Master Plan, particularly near the Assabet River, Nashoba Brook, and Warner’s Pond. Enhanced links between these resources and nearby business areas and integrating and accommodating the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail as it passes through the village center are important to the future vitality of West Concord as well as the quality of life for its residents. Other park, trail, and open space improvements recommended in the Graphic Master Plan include Junction Park enhancements; Mandrioli Pocket Park enhancements; a new HWCC “Overlook Park” and access to Commonwealth Avenue; an improved and

expanded Warner's Pond Pocket Park; a new Village Park at Commonwealth Avenue and Beharrell Street; a new "Confluence Nature Park" on the southern tip of the MCI Concord property; an interpretive "Heritage Park" along the Bruce Freeman Trail at the former switching station; and trails along the Nashoba Brook and Assabet River connecting neighborhoods to the village center.

Wastewater Issues

Much of West Concord village center and the surrounding neighborhoods are served by public water and sewer service. However, at this time there is insufficient capacity at the Concord Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to meet wastewater flow allocations for implementation of Phases 3 and 4 of the 2004 Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan. Future development and redevelopment in the West Concord village area is dependent on identifying suitable wastewater management solutions for any increases in capacity, which is currently being studied by the town.

According to the 2005 Long Range Plan and the 2007 Integrated Planning Initiative (IPI), projected development (based on current zoning) will result in approximately 400,000 gallons per day of additional wastewater demand and allocation. A large share of this would be generated by anticipated development in West Concord. In addition to expanding the 1.2 mgd capacity of the Concord WWTP, the IPI has taken a proactive approach to allocating future wastewater demand from potential development proposals. This includes focusing on village center development, supporting economic development, meeting affordable housing goals, balancing water flows between watersheds, and encouraging on-site septic treatment in non-service areas.

As capital planning for wastewater infrastructure and these initiatives take effect, future development and redevelopment in West Concord village may have to turn to alternative wastewater treatment options. Some examples may include on-site retaining systems with release into the public sewer system during non-peak hours and package treatment plans that provide tertiary treatment and in-ground release systems that can be accommodated in relatively small areas, including below parking lots. Innovative approaches to reducing wastewater should also be considered.

Local Business Retention and Expansion

There are an estimated 180 employers in West Concord village. Many of the businesses are locally owned and operated. They provide a mix of necessities and unique services and products that is valued by neighborhood residents. Businesses in the core area along Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue include a mix of small retailers, eating places, and personal and professional services. These are mostly small operations with an average range of 2,500 to 3,500 square feet. Over the last several years there appears to be growing clusters of related products such as the natural foods and food-product businesses and home decoration and improvement businesses.

There are several large parcels of older industrial buildings with large parking lots in the Beharrell Street, Bradford Street, and Winthrop Street areas. The buildings house a range of creative businesses and many entrepreneurs who need low-cost space. These industrially-zoned areas have served as business start-up locations for many years and have launched several successful local businesses.

Providing affordable business space is a pivotal issue for West Concord and a key reason often cited as to why the village center has so many small, locally owned artistic and entrepreneurial businesses. Preserving this stock of lower-cost rental space, such as that provided by some of the older buildings on Beharrell Street, Commonwealth Avenue, Bradford Street, and Winthrop Street, is of critical concern to many. A goal expressed by the community and incorporated into the Master Plan is keeping the West Concord village center economically sustainable and diverse while preventing the erosion of the town's tax base. Potential methods to expand business development and mixed-use opportunities are suggested in the Master Plan such as providing incentives for property owners to add a second or third story to their building, allowing outdoor cafes, encouraging new entertainment uses that will provide for expanded evening use, and promoting more mixed-use development (i.e., retail, office, housing) to support, sustain and energize the village center.

Several business retention and development strategies are outlined in the Master Plan including economic development initiatives and incentives, marketing and communications programs, and village

events and activities. These strategies require a good working relationship between private sector interests and the town. Additionally, opportunities for start-up and studio-type small businesses, including artists' space and potential live/work space are recognized as a potential business development strategy in the village center.

Land Use Policies and Regulation

An evaluation of village land use regulations was made to determine how they may impact economic development and mixed uses currently and in the future as building renovation and redevelopment occurs in West Concord. The village center is primarily zoned for either business or industrial uses; the evaluation focuses on the compatibility of various uses and takes into consideration the amount of foot traffic, vehicular traffic, visual impacts, and sustainability. This evaluation can be used as a baseline for comparison to existing property and land use characteristics to determine how well they fit existing versus desired land use patterns.

Further discussion is needed to gain a consensus on the future vision for the West Concord business and industrial districts, which can be achieved with a facilitated retreat or workshop involving property owners, business owners, town officials, West Concord Task Force members and residents. This agreed upon vision is needed to move forward with any significant revision of the zoning bylaw and other land use regulations. Such a workshop is planned for after the 2010 Annual Town Meeting.

There are specific regulatory actions and strategies recommended in the Master Plan that are short-term and moving forward. These include preparing zoning amendments to the Business and Industrial District map in West Concord; adopting business size and formula-based business restrictions for West Concord village center; adopting design guidelines and revising the sign bylaw. Future zoning amendments include amending parking requirements for the village center and promoting shared parking opportunities; and preparing form-based code for West Concord village center.

Future Development and Renovation

Several potential new development sites, redevelopment sites, and building renovations are

identified and evaluated in the Master Plan. Potential near- and long-term redevelopment sites include 50 Beharrell Street, 113-135 Commonwealth Avenue, 120 Commonwealth Avenue, 74 Commonwealth Avenue, 152 Commonwealth Avenue, 1220-1224 Main Street, and 30-40 Beharrell Street.

Potential renovation and rehabilitation sites identified and evaluated in the Master Plan include 23-43 Bradford Street (the former mills), 100 Commonwealth Avenue, 85 Commonwealth Avenue, 88 Commonwealth Avenue, West Concord Fire Station/1201 Main Street, and the southern portion of the MCI Concord site.

Buildings identified and evaluated for façade and frontage improvements include 1191 Main Street (Dunkin Donuts), 1238 Main Street (99 Restaurant), 1211 Main Street (Colonial Motors), 1211 Main Street (Tony the Tailor Building), and 120 Commonwealth Avenue (Lawless Upholstery Building). The Master Plan recommends the creation of a façade and sign improvement program to support these and other potential building renovation projects in the village.

To increase housing options and affordability ratios, and to facilitate desired types of mixed-use development in the future, the Master Plan recommends incorporating housing development provisions into zoning regulations that encourage "life cycle" housing in appropriate locations in the village center and surrounding neighborhoods, live/work spaces such as artist lofts and townhouse development that takes advantage of second or third floors over first floor retail/commercial space.

Implementation

The Implementation Plan contains several tools that have evolved out of this community-based approach to understanding and addressing the opportunities in West Concord. It establishes guidance for coordinated development and redevelopment, land use planning, and budgetary preparation. These tools, and their subsequent implementation, are further enhanced by consistent and meaningful input and feedback from the West Concord Task Force (WCTF), town staff and officials, key stakeholders, and the general public.

Potential funding resources for various types of projects and programs in West Concord are also

identified and explained. Commonly used, as well as new, incentive programs for smart growth, business development, transportation and circulation, mixed-use development, village revitalization, and

infrastructure projects are rated for their potential effectiveness and tied to the Implementation Plan.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In June 2009 the Town of Concord began the process of preparing an illustrative master plan for West Concord village to refine the vision identified in the town's 2005 Comprehensive Long Range Plan and the 2007 Village Centers Study. The collective goal of the West Concord Task Force and the community was and is to provide a blueprint for the next generation of economic, social, and physical changes in this unique and historic district. The challenge is creating an environment for constructive changes to take place while building on the rich history and culture of the village, opening the door to public and private investment for desired interests, and maintaining a compatible and supportive relationship with the surrounding neighborhoods.



To prepare the Master Plan, a consultant team was retained to work with the Concord Department of Planning and Land Management, the West Concord Task Force, key stakeholders, and the general public to identify opportunities and implementation strategies for the West Concord village project area. The process included interactive public design workshops, preparation of conceptual development plans, and the evolution of strategic land use regulations and design standards and guidelines.

West Concord village has been the focus of several planning initiatives over the years. Most recently, the **2007 Village Centers Study** solicited public input and recommendations to establish a vision for each of the three village centers in Concord: Concord Center, Thoreau/Depot area, and West Concord. The

primary objectives identified in the study were to maintain the economic diversity and stability of the centers, provide direction on public investment for town infrastructure (e.g., parking, pedestrian enhancements, traffic safety, and wastewater), and outline future changes in land use that would be supportable and desirable to the community.

The Village Centers Study describes West Concord as a “small town, friendly, service oriented, affordable, and a little funky.” There are many owner-operated small businesses and a “sense of identity” that is embedded in the community. The study also observed that local business people and neighborhood residents are adamant about protecting and preserving the village. While the community understands that change will take place in West Concord, they are clear that maintaining the village scale along the main streets and neighborhoods that lead to the retail spine on Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue is critical to the future.

The Villages Committee concluded that there are common planning initiatives that would help support and maintain village character in each of the village centers: design guidelines and a design review process, public works projects for traffic calming and pedestrian enhancements, and further studies for better understanding of how future mixed-use redevelopment might impact the centers.

The planning themes identified for West Concord village center were:

- Preserve the character and feel of West Concord Center.
- Manage future development to retain village scale along Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue.
- Plan for possible expansion and redevelopment of mixed-use sites (sites where uses may include appropriate industrial, office, retail, and/or residential uses) that will maintain the scale of the village in the older industrial areas connecting to Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue.
- Alleviate traffic congestion by reconfiguring and distributing circulation through the village (for example, traffic loops or circles and extending streets).
- Address locations of parking and delivery spaces to discourage a “strip mall” look.
- Improve aesthetics by providing design guidelines and implementing design review.
- Increase and facilitate (well lit) pedestrian movement through West Concord center.
- Promote open space enhancements and networks, particularly along the river, brooks, and ponds.

In 2008, a group of local residents prepared “**A Call to Action**” for West Concord, which laid out the background and proposed a plan of action in response to present and future challenges to the village. The community was concerned that the fundamental character of West Concord was being threatened by a combination of factors, and there was an immediate need to act to preserve that character. The Call to Action proposed the appointment of a Fast Track Task Force to develop recommendations to address these challenges. This task force was expected to learn from past town plans and integrate present realities and future possibilities into a new plan of action for West Concord, which would implement recommendations of the 2005 Comprehensive Long Range Plan.



The West Concord Task Force was established in 2008 by the Board of Selectmen to develop recommendations on how best to address the issues facing West Concord. One of their first directives was to review earlier planning efforts, including the recommendations made in 2007 Concord Village Centers Study. The Task Force determined that the best way to approach the disparate needs of the village was to create a graphic master plan that would include conceptual plans with preferred development and redevelopment scenarios as well as public infrastructure and open space enhancements. The Task Force recommended funding for a master plan and passage of a West Concord Interim Planning

Overlay District (IPOD) to temporarily limit development in the village center until the master plan could be completed. Both measures were supported by the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board and were approved by Town Meeting in April 2009.

The West Concord Task Force also began review of draft design guidelines for West Concord prepared by the Department of Planning and Land Management and prepared a public survey of West Concord residents with three components – what to keep, what to add and what to do away with.

The 1987 Long Range Plan, the West Concord Study of 1993, the Comprehensive Long Range Plan of 2005, the Concord Village Centers Study of 2007, and most recently, the report of the West Concord Task Force public survey have all stated the same goal: “to maintain the character of West Concord.”

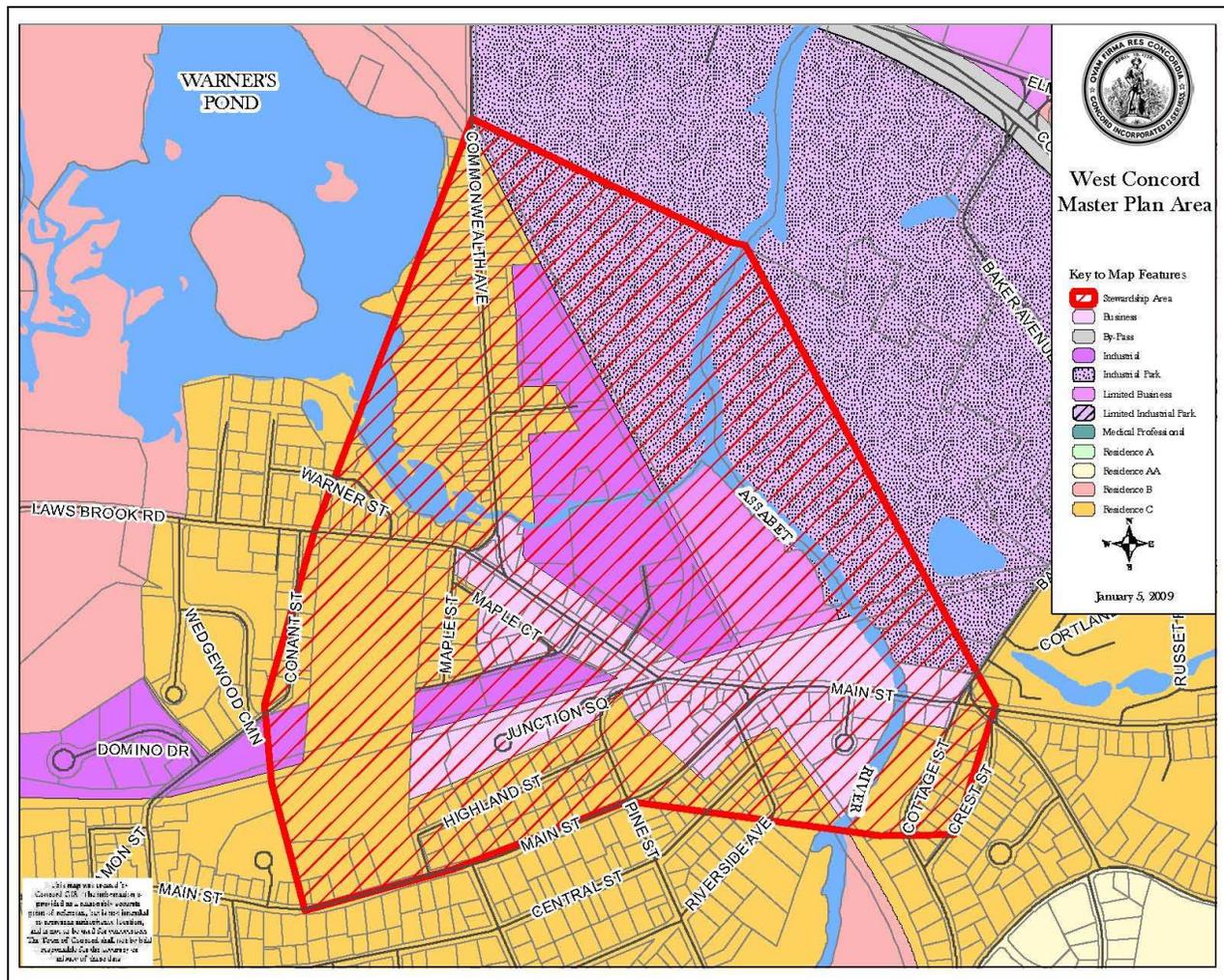
The West Concord Village Master Plan incorporates and expands upon recent planning initiatives and translates this information into an overall conceptual plan and implementation program. Included in the Master Plan are recommendations for physical as well as regulatory changes to address future development and redevelopment, streetscape and traffic-calming enhancements, gateway treatments, parking and access management, and improved

pedestrian, bicycle, and open space opportunities throughout the village. These recommendations and concepts can be implemented incrementally and funded, as opportunity allows, through grant applications for regional and state funding programs, the local capital improvement program, public private development partnerships, and amendments to the town’s zoning bylaw.

1.2 Project Study Area

The West Concord Village Master Plan area extends out from the village center east along Main Street to include the intersection with Baker Avenue and Cottage Street, to the north along Commonwealth Avenue to the railroad right-of-way, south to the Assabet River including the residential neighborhoods, and west along Laws Brook Road to Conant Street. The primary focus of the Master Plan is on the commercial area of the village center, as shown in the map below. For the purposes of this study, West Concord is broken down into five segments (or “transects” as they are referred to in the study), defined by common characteristics such as development patterns, streetscape, and roadway configuration. The West Concord transects include the following:

- Village Industrial Transition Areas (VITA)
- Traditional Village Neighborhoods (TVN)
- Village Gateways (VCG)
- Village Center Core Area (VCC)
- Village Open Spaces (VOS)



1.3 First Impressions of the Village

General observations of West Concord village were made by vehicle and on foot by the consulting team. First impressions were recorded as follows:

The traditional village development pattern creates a sense of history and place – The traditional development pattern of the village center and surrounding neighborhoods, with moderate density, pedestrian orientation of buildings, attractive architecture, and mixed uses, creates an interesting and authentic village setting. However, it becomes disjointed proceeding east along the Main Street corridor in front of the West Concord Shopping Plaza and west along Commonwealth Avenue in front of the former auto dealership evolving into auto-oriented strip development. In these areas, access management, internal connections, streetscape enhancements, sign and façade improvements, and directional signage are needed to improve “curb appeal,” soften the transition into surrounding neighborhoods, and tie the village together.

A real New England village – West Concord is one of only a handful of genuine village centers remaining in New England as defined by the existence of various shops and services to meet the daily needs of residents; public facilities such as the community center, library, and school that improve the quality of life; active and passive recreational facilities serving local neighborhoods; numerous small businesses that are operated by village residents; and intermodal access to other employment centers with the commuter train station. The majority of these services and amenities are within a comfortable walk for village residents.

No major gateway features – There are no “Welcome to the Village” signs on the major corridors leading into the village. The purpose of installing gateway features is to give the traveler a sense of arrival and let them know that the community takes pride in itself. Gateway features can also be a traffic-calming device, informing motorists that they are approaching a heavily populated area. The corner of Cottage Street and Main Street, Kenneth Dunn Square, and Church Street at Main Street are the psychological entrances into West Concord village. An attractive monument, sign, landscaping, or other gateway features installed at these key locations would welcome people as they enter the village and provide a good first impression of West Concord.

Limited directional signage – Only a few small directional signs are scattered along Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue directing visitors to public parking lots and public points of interest. Attractive, coordinated, and visible signage should direct visitors to such points of interest in the village as the central business district, library, community center, MBTA commuter station, and parks and open spaces. Directional signage should also be coordinated with informational kiosks, business directories, landmark signs, and other wayfinding system elements. Signage, however, should not be so pervasive as to obscure the village center itself.

Parking appears to be well distributed but not well identified – There appears to be a fair amount of public and private parking throughout the village but the off-street lots are not well marked, entrance and internal signage is confusing, and much of it is underutilized and not well organized. On-street parking is also well distributed and generally available in the village most times of the day. These spaces are well defined and run parallel to the sidewalk. As the village grows and develops, proper and consistent enforcement of on-street parking spaces will be essential to send long-term parkers into the off-street lots and free up on-street spaces for short-term customers.

Pedestrian connections between off-street parking lots and the business district are limited – The largest public parking lot in the village is at the MBTA commuter station, yet there is no good pedestrian access (i.e., sidewalk) to the



Monument at West Concord's Junction Park

Commonwealth Avenue or Beharrell Street area. (The sidewalk from the west end of the MBTA platform to Commonwealth Avenue is not obvious to those using the parking lot and removed from the natural pedestrian lines along the access road). There are a few alley connections between private parking lots and Commonwealth Avenue, which should be clearly identified and perhaps upgraded with lighting and attractive streetscape improvements.

Connections between Nashoba Brook, Assabet River, and the village are limited – Direct visual or physical access to these attractive natural resources has not been made yet. Providing inviting connections to the waterfront and good links to the surrounding neighborhoods could be a significant asset to the village. When park enhancements and trails are planned adjacent to these surface waters, good connections to the business district and neighborhoods should also be made.

Village parks and open spaces are attractive but improvements are needed – Junction Park is an attractive pocket park at the central intersection of Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue but it has poor edges because no buildings other than the train depot frame this important public space. Percy Rideout Playground is a very vibrant and attractive recreation facility surrounded by well established neighborhoods but it is somewhat disconnected visually and physically from the business district. Kenneth Dunn Square, at the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Laws Brook Road, is an attractive space but serves as a traffic island and is difficult to access on foot because of the vehicular traffic.

There are relatively few street trees in the core area – There are very few prominent street trees along Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue between Junction Park and Kenneth Dunn Square. In fact, the core area along Commonwealth Avenue is nearly devoid of street trees. Strategically placed street trees would complement the buildings, provide shade for pedestrians, portray an image of quality, tie the district together, and recall the days when West Concord's streets were lined with majestic elms.

Activity in the village center is limited in the evening – While there are many people working and living in the village center and surrounding neighborhoods, very few people appear to be in the center in the evening. This may be due to the limited food and entertainment venues currently open in the village.

The place is loaded with opportunity! – Several buildings and sites in the village are well suited for rehabilitation, redevelopment, infill development, pocket parks, waterfront improvements, parking enhancements, historic preservation programs, existing business expansion and new complementary businesses, streetscape improvements, and so on. This is a mixed blessing for local residents that enjoy the vitality but want to maintain the character of the village. Fortunately, West Concord is a fairly small village and, with the guidance of a master plan, incremental changes can have a positive impact on the village.