

Downtown  
Turners Falls

# LIVABILITY PLAN



## DRAFT FINAL REPORT

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Prepared For:

The Town of Montague

April 2013

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE LIVABILITY PLAN

By many definitions downtown Turners Falls, Massachusetts is already a phenomenally livable place. As the largest of five villages within the town of Montague, Turners Falls not only houses the majority of town residents but also serves as a significant center of employment and government in greater Franklin County. Its history as a planned industrial community endures in a well-defined grid of streets and alleys, in beautiful turn-of-the-century brick architecture and in a historic mill district along a still-operational power canal. Small businesses line a wide Avenue A with residential streets branching off in a layout and proximity that exemplifies walkability. Cultural and recreational amenities such as the Shea Theatre, the Carnegie Library, the Great Falls Discovery Center, Town Hall, Unity and Peskeomskut Parks and the Canalside Bike Path are both easily accessible to residents and draw visitors from afar.

In addition to significant community resources, Turners Falls is rich in creative, passionate and committed individuals. A growing creative economy of artists and entrepreneurs thrives in Turners Falls. Community leaders are active on number of fronts, and the RiverCulture Project has leveraged social capital from the Turners Falls arts, business and cultural communities for over 7 years to strengthen local creative industries and engender a sense of place.

At the same time, Turners Falls, like hundreds of mill villages throughout new England, has spent

the last five decades caught up in a wrenching tide of change brought about by the decline of traditional industries and the rise of automobile-focused development. Once affectionately called ‘PowerTown’ because of the influence of the dam, power canal and numerous factories on the local economy, Turners Falls now has only one paper mill left in operation. Montague residents and town officials have worked together diligently over the last 30 years to shift the villages’ identity from big industry to small business, arts, tourism, culture and recreation. In addition, the town has invested in numerous revitalization efforts, including renovations of the Colle Opera House, the Shea Theatre, the Crocker Bank and the Cutlery Buildings, creation of the Great Falls Discovery Center, streetscape improvements and the Canalside Bike Path.

The Town of Montague leveraged a HUD 2010 Sustainable Regional Planning Grant to commission the Livability Plan. Turners Falls is identified in the Franklin County Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (FCRPSD) as one key employment center where efforts to increase livability and economic vitality will support sustainability in the region. The goals of the Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan dovetail with the goals of the FCRPSD.

The study area, defined by the town of Montague, is approximately 100 acres contained by the Connecticut River, 7th Street and ‘the hill’. The study ‘boundaries’ are drawn with

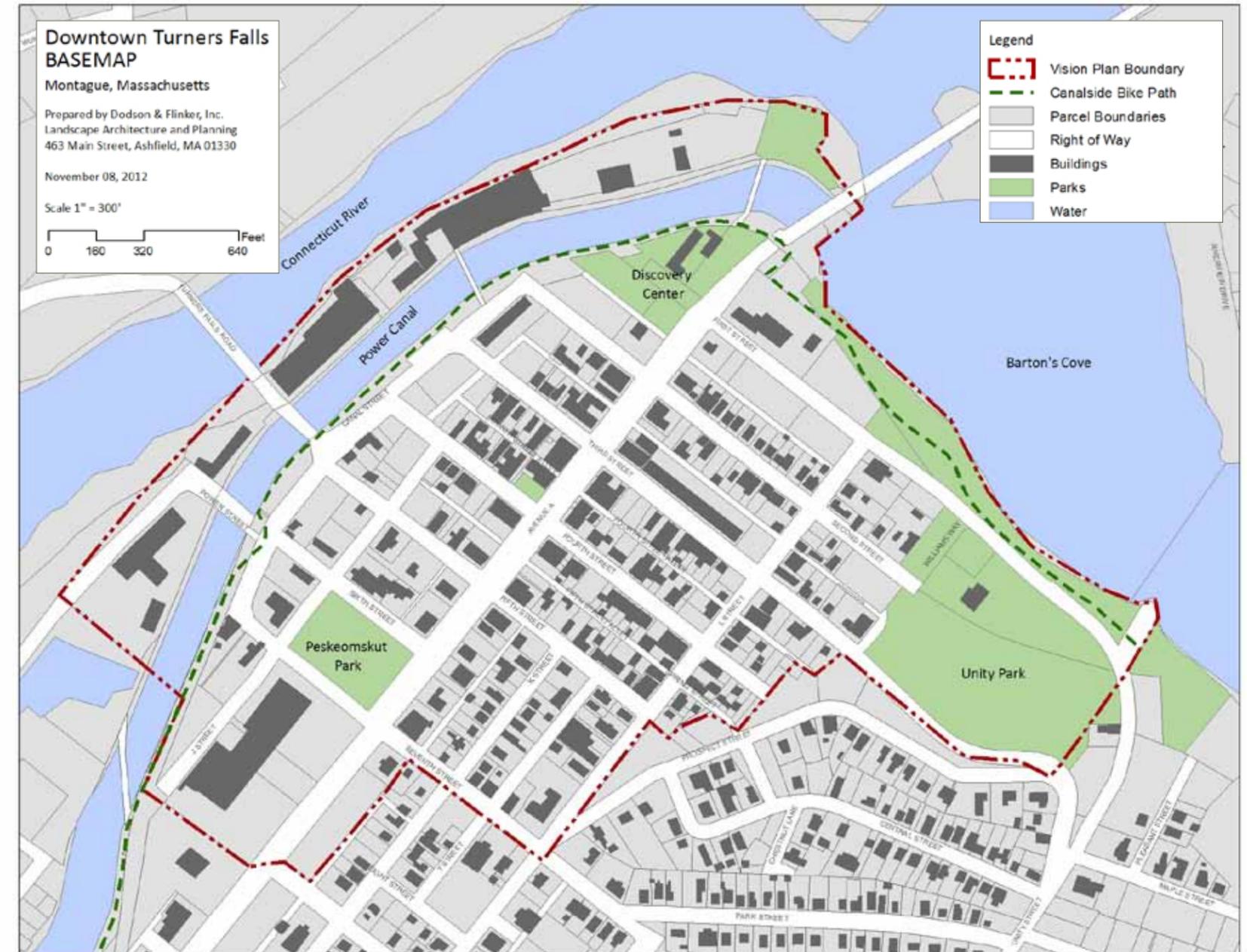
the understanding that livability in downtown Turners Falls has deep impacts on residents of nearby neighborhoods, as well as others throughout Montague and greater Franklin County. Within the study area boundaries, there are 319 parcels that make up about 88 acres (about an additional 12 acres in in public streets and ways). There are an estimated 222 buildings in the Study Area and the average year built is 1901 (buildings are 112 years old on average). The Study Area is bisected by Avenue A, the “Main Street” of Turners Falls and the Town of Montague. From the Connecticut River Bridge to 9th Street, Avenue A is approximately 2,260 linear feet, slightly less than ½ mile.

## Livability Plan Goals

The Town’s articulated objective is to develop a plan that:

- is a concise, yet comprehensive document designed to provide a basis for decision-making about downtown Turners Falls future sustainable development.
- articulates an easily understood vision for the downtown’s future, which is crafted from a wide and varied range of community perspectives.
- contains a specific, realistic and cost-effective implementation plan to achieve the goals of the plan.

*At Right: Basemap for the village of Turners Falls. The focus area for the Vision Plan is outlined with the red dashed line.*



## Community Process

The Turners Falls Livability Plan is a community effort. The goal of the consultant team is to support and empower local residents, business owners and other stakeholders as they create a shared vision for the future as well as a clear and achievable implementation strategy. This is your vision, not ours. As such, the public process to create this plan has three key parts.

1. The *Advisory Committee* consists of town staff and eight key stakeholders from the community. This committee has worked closely with the consultant team to design and implement the public participation plan, to refine the scope of services and to review products of the study. The Advisory Committee meets approximately every two weeks.

2. The *Working Group* is made up of twenty-five people representing each of the stakeholders and interest groups in the village, including residents, business owners, community groups, clubs, service organizations, social service providers, clergy and specific racial, ethnic and language populations. The goal is to ensure that the interests of all local residents and businesses are represented at each phase of the project and to provide a built-in conduit for public outreach. The Working Group has had four meetings - in October, November, March and April. In October, the group reviewed existing conditions information and discussed the key challenges and opportunities facing the village. In November, the group reviewed additional existing conditions information and



Participants engage in discussion and activities at three of the six topical stations at the public workshop.

explored challenges and opportunities in more depth related to key theme areas. In March, the consultants presented draft recommendations and heard detailed feedback from the working group on both general ideas and specific implementation. In April, the working group finalized the recommendation package and discussed implementation strategies and phasing in greater detail. Both the Existing conditions information and the recommendations and implementation ideas in this report are in large



part the products of the working group.

3. A *Public Workshop* took place on February 5th and 6th, 2013. This two-day event included walking tours of the village, meetings with stakeholder groups, student workshops, drop-in time with the consultant team and an open public meeting on Tuesday evening February 5th.

At the Public meeting participants rotated between six focus groups: Avenue A Facades and Uses, Avenue A Streetscape, Parks



Public workshop participants hear summaries of each focus group's discussions at the end of the evening.

and Open Space, Priority Development Sites, Destination Turners Falls (Business Development, Marketing and Branding) and Community. Activities at each station engaged participants in discussion and generated phenomenal feedback and ideas that appear in this report.

Other significant events during the two-day public workshop included a session engaging youth voice at the Turners Falls High School, a luncheon with local business leaders and a meeting with town staff and administrators.

## PART I: TURNERS FALLS TODAY

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- Physical: Historic Patterns Leading to Present Built Environment  
Zoning, Building Use & Underutilized Space  
Open Space, Recreation & Connectivity  
Streetscape Aesthetics & Function
- Economic: Demographics - Population & Housing  
Market Analysis & Business Opportunities

Turners Falls is rich in community. Throughout the planning process participants have reiterated again and again how important people are to a plan for downtown Turners Falls and how much committed, passionate and creative individuals define the village. At the same time, understanding the physical patterns that make up the village helps clarify the underlying structures that ultimately support community by fostering interactions between individuals. This section explores how history has shaped the key building blocks of the community as well as how current policies and populations shape existing physical patterns.

## Building Blocks



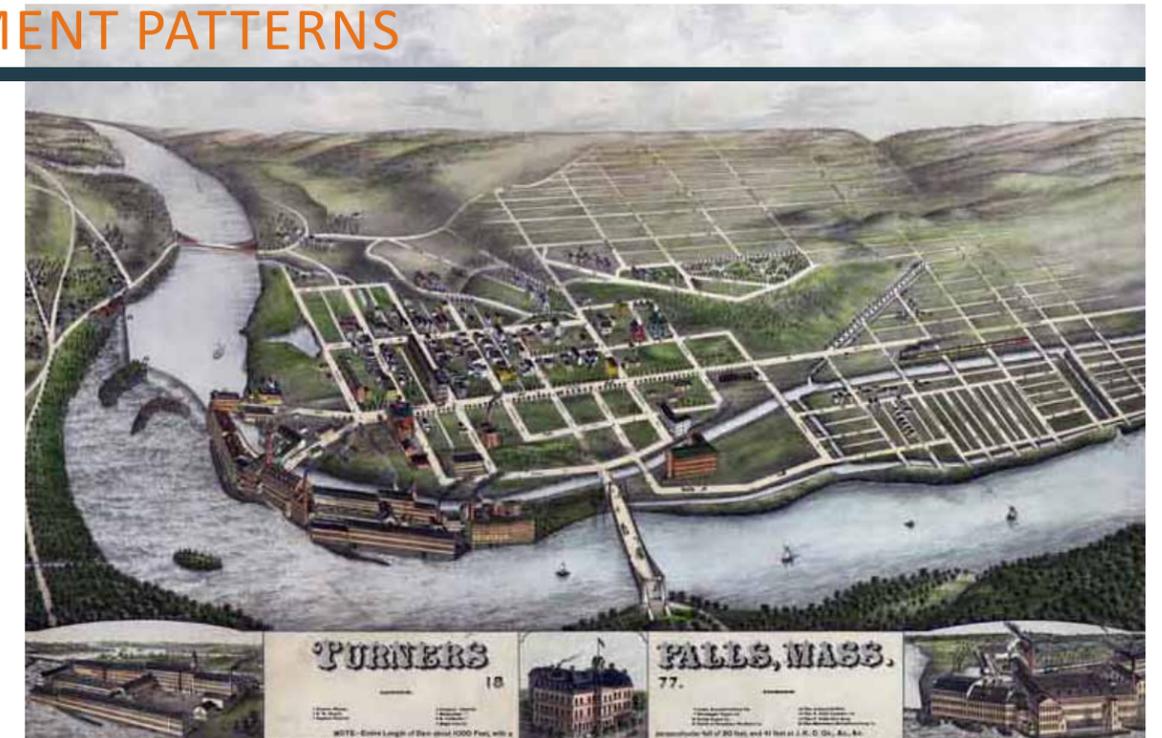
## Analysis



# HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Although the Turners Falls area has been inhabited continuously for more than 10,000 years by native American tribes, the village as we know it today takes its shape primarily from an 1868 plan by Alvah Crocker, an industrial entrepreneur from Fitchburg. Crocker envisioned a thriving industrial community powered by the waterfalls and planned the construction of a dam and canal in order to sell mill sites. The cheap hydropower available at Turners Falls attracted several early mills: the John Russell Cutlery Company (1868), the Montague Paper Company (1871), the Keith Paper Company (1871) and the Turners Falls Cotton Mill (1874). A flood of immigrant workers accompanied the construction of the mills, fueling business development along Avenue A and dense residential development along the adjacent grid of streets. At the turn of the century, the village was a vibrant place, supporting four hotels, numerous taverns, the Colle Opera House (a Vaudeville theatre), direct rail service from New York City and a trolley line connecting the village to Greenfield and Millers Falls.

Most of the patterns established in this turn-of-the century boom are evident in the village today. In particular, Avenue A is still a grand, wide commercial street lined with elegant three and four story development. The typical block width along Avenue A is 240 feet and the typical block length to the southeast (between Ave. A and L Street) is about 620 feet while the average block length to the northwest ranges from 350 feet (to J Street) and about 560 (to Canal Street). The Avenue A blocks are



1877 Bird's Eye Rendering of Planned Downtown Turners Falls

divided into 2 sub-blocks by a 20-foot service alley creating 110-foot frontages on either side. These frontages are typically subdivided into 2 to 3 parcels providing for 40 to 60 feet of building storefronts along the Avenue. Most blocks have a depth of 110 feet as originally laid out in the Crocker Plan.

The vast majority of buildings in downtown date between 1870 and 1950. These buildings are all built right up to their lot lines, supporting the planned grid of streets and alleys. Of notable divergence from this pattern is the Food City plaza, built in the latter half of the 20th century. Its significant setback from

the street with parking lot at the front of the building are typical of car-focused development and starkly different from the pre-automobile patterning of the rest of the village.

The construction of the Gill-Montague bridge in 1938 substantially changed the structure of the north east corner of downtown. Prior to its construction Avenue A terminated at First Street, with several more mill buildings between the street and the river.

A timeline of Turners Falls development patterns appears in the following pages.

Pre-Colonial

1798

1858

1868

1868 - 1874

1873

1880s

Timeline continued on next page...

The Turners Falls area was originally known as Peskeompskut, and served as home to the Pocomtuc confederacy of native american tribes for more than 10,000 years.

### Montague Canal

The purpose of the original Montague canal was to provide boats with a way around the Great Falls on their way north along the Connecticut River. The construction included a dam and a 2.5 mile long, 20 foot wide canal with 10 locks rejoining the Connecticut River at Montague City across from the Deerfield River. It operated profitably until 1856, when it was closed because railroad had become a more cost-effective way to move freight. Below: an 1830 Map of the canal.



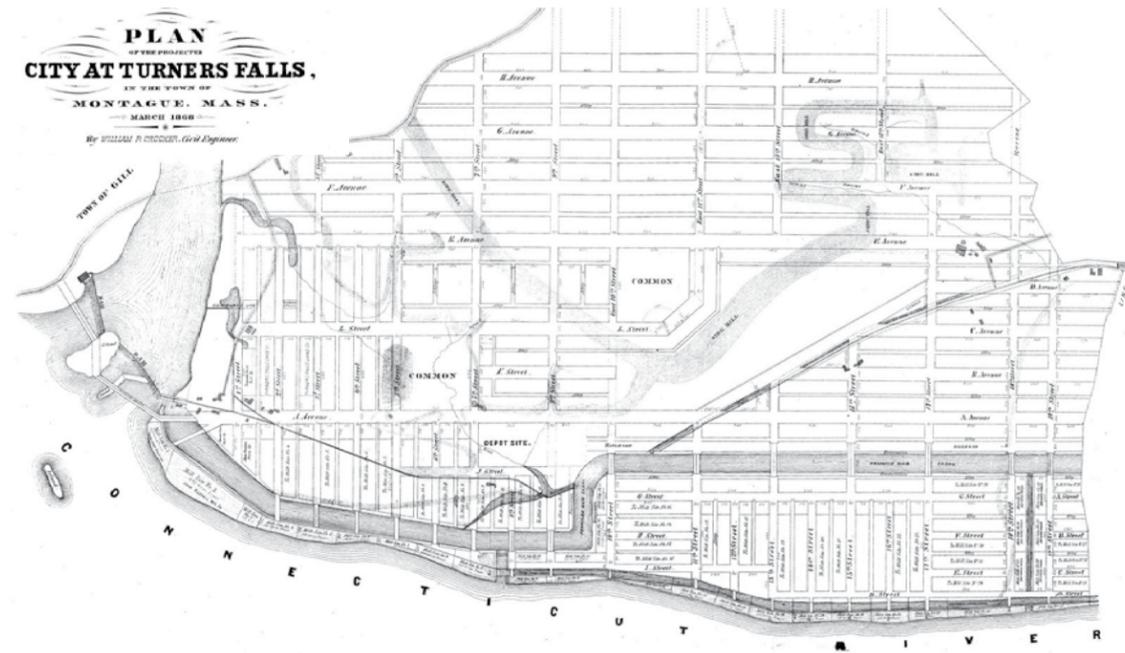
Turners Falls Livability Plan | Final Report

The 1858 Walling Map of Franklin County (excerpt below) shows the original canal. Most settlement was still concentrated around Montague City, at the southern terminus.



### Alvah Crocker's Plan of Turners Falls

Alvah Crocker, an industrial entrepreneur from Fitchburg, Massachusetts, saw great potential for a thriving water-powered industrial community at the "Great Falls". Crocker planned and founded the village of Turners Falls by reconstructing the original dam and rebuilding the navigation canal as a power canal. He then sold development sites along the canal. Crocker's original plan is below - it includes two right angle turns in the power canal and two large town commons.



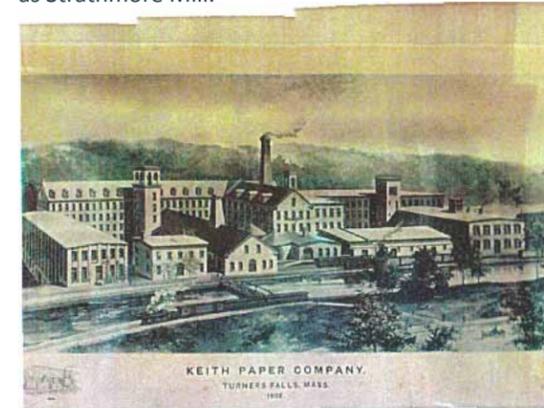
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A revised plan of the city was issued in 1873 (below right). The new plan removed the right angles formerly designed into the power canal and adjusted the grid of streets to accommodate the steep hill to the south of downtown. Although Turners Falls was never built out quite to the extent that Alvah Crocker imagined in his plans, the layout of today's downtown core, with streets and alleys radiating off the wide spine of Avenue A, is nearly identical to this 1873 plan.



### Mill Development

The cheap hydropower available at Turners Falls attracted several early mills: the John Russell Cutlery Company (1868), the Montague Paper Company (1871), the Keith Paper Company (1871) and the Turners Falls Cotton Mill (1874). Below: the original Keith Paper Mill, built in 1874, now known as Strathmore Mill.



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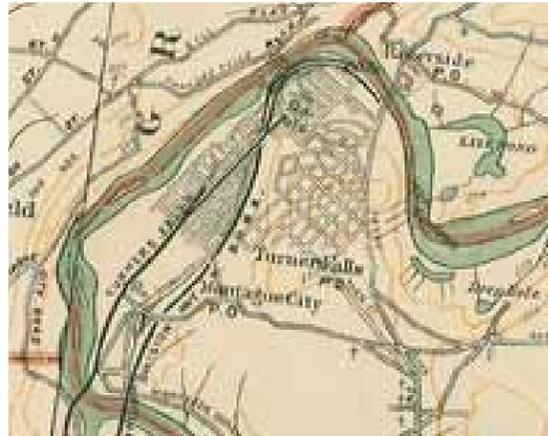
1891

1898

1914

2013

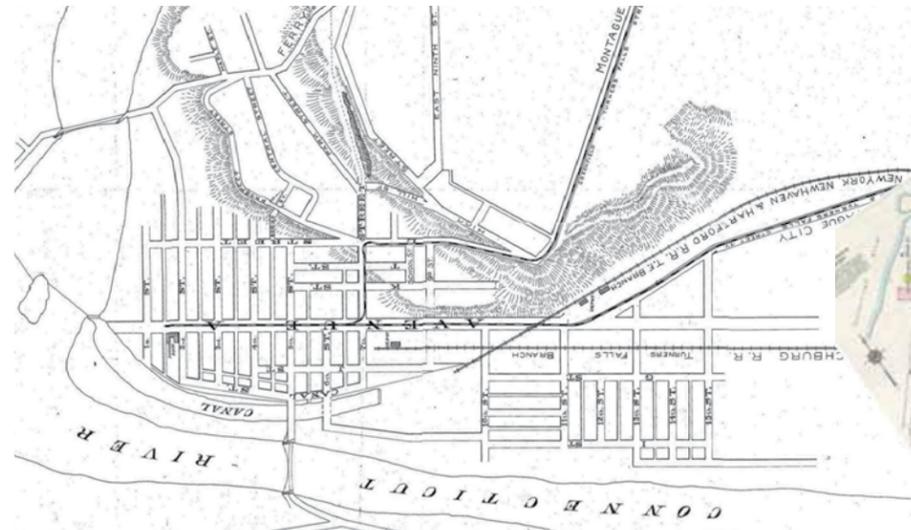
Excerpt from Walker Atlas



Turners Falls was booming in 1898. The 1898 map below left shows the majority of downtown laid out as well as the Patch neighborhood on the island. Two Railroads came directly into downtown to a depot at the site of the present Food City plaza. In addition, a trolley travelled along Avenue A with service to Montague City and Montague Center.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1914. The Gill-Montague Bridge was not built until 1938 so Avenue A terminated at First Street.



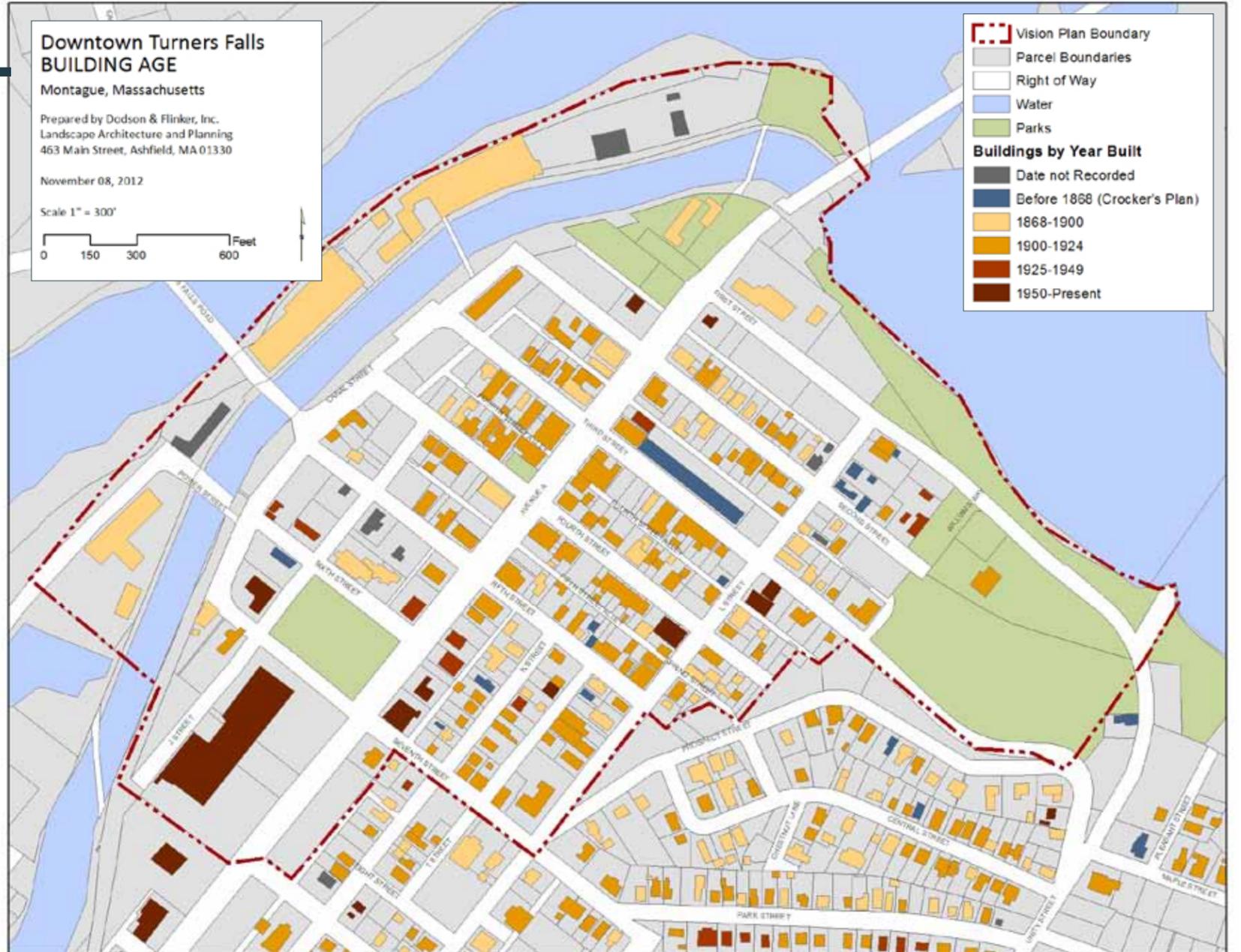
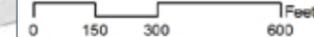
### Downtown Turners Falls BUILDING AGE

Montague, Massachusetts

Prepared by Dodson & Flinker, Inc.  
Landscape Architecture and Planning  
463 Main Street, Ashfield, MA 01330

November 08, 2012

Scale 1" = 300'



# ZONING, LAND USE & UNDERUSED SPACE

The village of Turners Falls predates the advent of zoning. Unlike most of the development that occurred under standard zoning regulations in the middle and latter part of the 20th century, Turners Falls is a dense, mixed use community created with pedestrians, rather than vehicles, in mind. The town of Montague first adopted a zoning bylaw in 1970 and has amended it over two dozen times in the intervening years. Because the downtown was mostly already built-out by the time zoning was adopted it has had relatively little effect on the built environment, and somewhat more effect regulating land and building use patterns.

## Existing Zoning Code

The vast majority of the downtown falls into one of three zoning categories: Central Business District, Neighborhood Business District and Historic Industrial. A detailed description of permitted uses in these zones appears at right, and some additional accessory uses are permitted through special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Both the Central Business District and the Neighborhood Business District are essentially mixed use zones, allowing a diversity of residential, retail and office space. A recent change in the Central Business District actually mandates commercial use of the street level units. Key redevelopment sites on the island, like the Strathmore Mill, are all zoned Historic Industrial, allowing business and light

industrial activity as well as residential and hotel use by special permit.

Just a few parcels within the Vision Plan focus area do not fall within one of these three zoning districts. The largest of these is the site of the Food City shopping plaza. This district allows business, retail and horticulture use with a space restriction (added May 2000) of 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> or 3 acres of land. Across from the Food City plaza, two parcels are designated Public/Semi-Public use, upon which only cemeteries are permitted uses and public utilities are allowed by special permit. Finally Unity Park and portions of the dam and fish ladder are zoned Recreation/Education. Peskeomskut and Spinner Parks, however, are both currently zoned as Central Business District. The town owns both parcels, which confers some level of protection to the parks; however, nothing in the zoning code protects them from development if the town decided to sell.

Need to add info on dimensional requirements & parking requirements.

### Central Business District PERMITTED USES

- Mixed use, with one- and two-family dwelling as an accessory use, with the street level devoted to commercial use.
- Retail sales and services of 10,000 square feet or less of floor area.
- Business office or professional office
- Non-profit club or lodge

### Neighborhood Business District PERMITTED USES

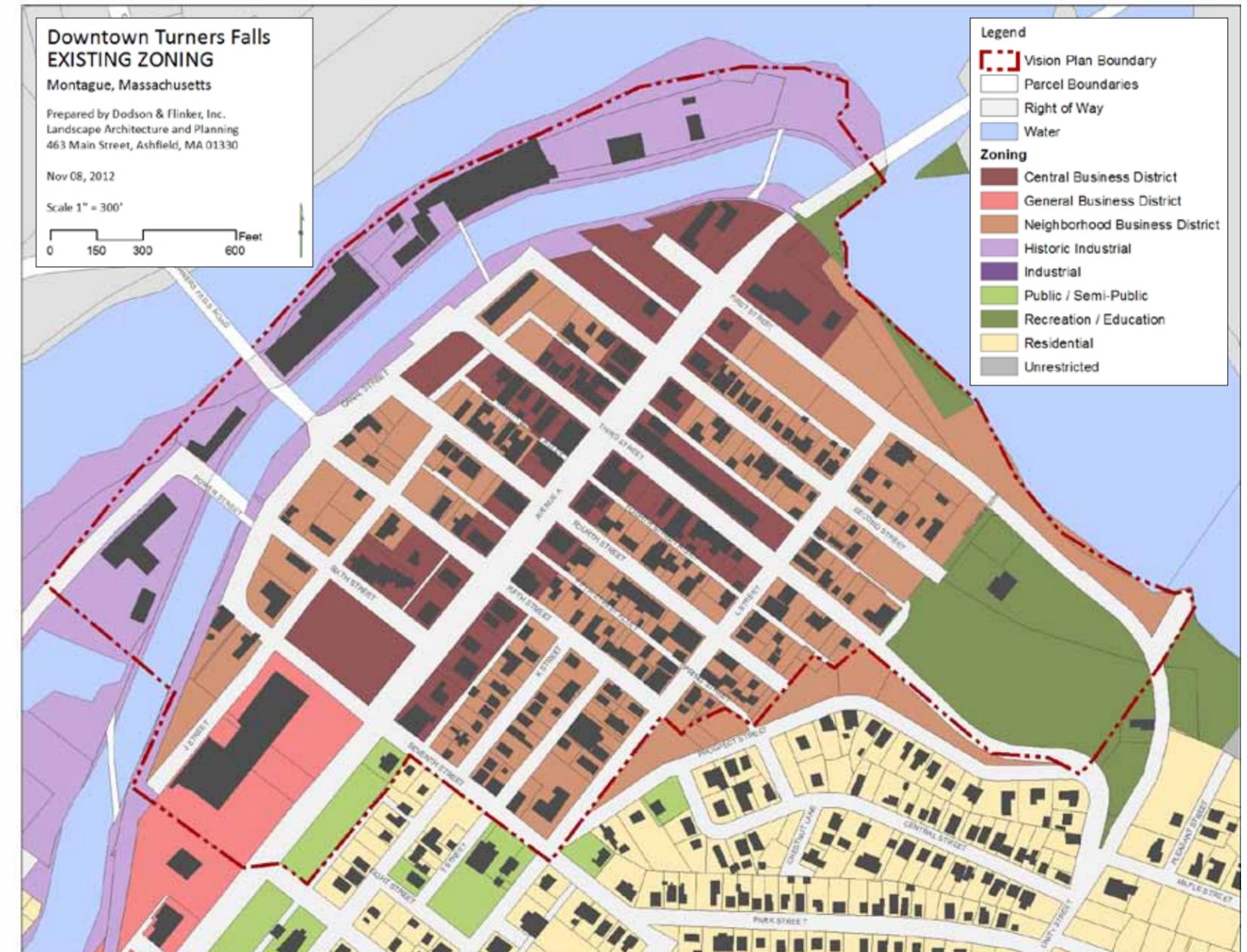
- One and two family dwelling
- Retail sales and service
- Business office or professional office
- Craft workshop or light assembly shop

### Historic Industrial PERMITTED USES

- Business office or professional office
- Retail sales and service
- Manufacturing, processing or research
- Craft workshop or light assembly shop
- Bulk storage, warehousing or distribution



Avenue A between 1st and 2nd Streets. Mixed use: retail on bottom floor, residential and offices above.



## Zoning Analysis within Livability Plan Area

District	Properties		Acres		On Ave A		Buildings		
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	GFA	% of Total
Central Business District (CBD)	88	28%	17.84	20%	50	57%	61	371,802	28%
General Business District (GB)	10	3%	5.39	6%	4	5%	9	75,927	6%
Neighborhood Business District (NB)	196	62%	32.67	37%	0	0%	146	468,001	36%
Historic Industrial	10	3%	15.36	17%	0	0%	3	384,550	29%
Industrial	6	2%	7.32	8%	0	0%	2	6,225	0%
Public/Semi-Public	2	1%	1.38	2%	2	2%	1	6,069	0%
Recreation/Education	3	1%	8.25	9%	0	0%	1	3,040	0%
Undetermined	3	1%		0%		0%			0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>		<b>88.21</b>		<b>56</b>		<b>223</b>	<b>1,315,614</b>	

## Property Ownership

Of the 319 properties in the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area, 286 (about 90%) are owned by residents or corporations of Massachusetts, followed by 11 properties owned by Connecticut residents (3%) and 4 by California residence (1%).

Downtown properties are most commonly owned by residents or corporations of Turners Falls (170 properties or 53% of the total). Greenfield is the next most common with 24 properties (7.5%), followed by residents of Norwood MA (15 properties or 4.7%) and Hartford CT (11 properties or 3.4%). Most of the Norwood properties are owned by Power Town Limited Partnership which are typically subsidized apartment buildings.

Some of the larger property owners in

the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area include the following:

**Inhabitants of Montague** - 24 properties on about 18 acres with 7 buildings totaling about 236,000 square feet including 177,000 in the Strathmore Mill property.

**Montague Economic Development** - 6 properties on 4.3 acres with 1 building of 2,200 square feet (the former Cumberland Falls convenience store).

**Power Town Limited Partnership** (of Norwood MA) - 15 properties on 1.8 acres with 10 buildings totaling 89,245 square feet. Six of these properties are on Ave. A which are mostly

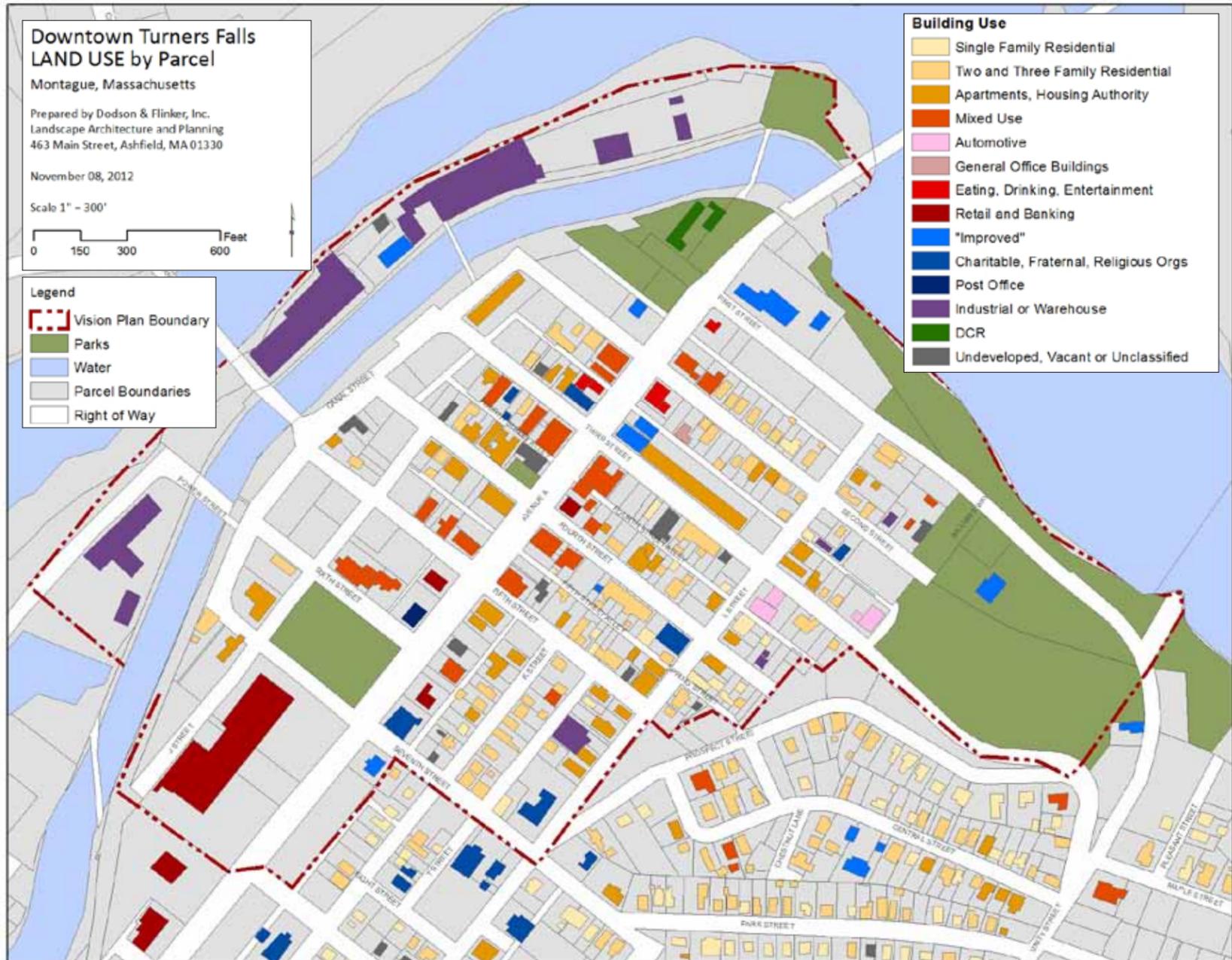
older historic block buildings that are now being used for subsidized apartments.

**Firstlight Hydro Generating Co** (of Hartford CT) - No buildings but over 17 acres of land.

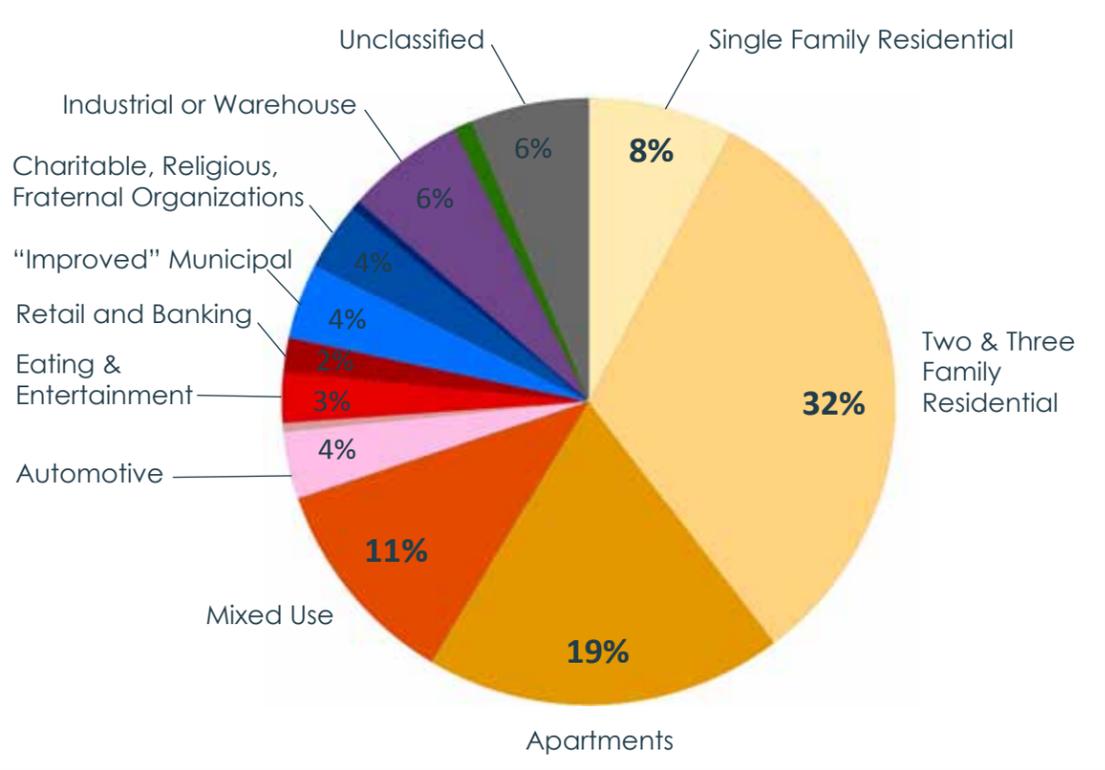
**Southworth Company** - 7 properties on 2.7 acres with 3 buildings totaling 148,292 square feet.

**Crocker Cutlery Limited** - 2 buildings totaling 55,420 square feet





Building Use in Downtown Turners Falls (Within Vision Plan Area)



### Existing Land and Building Use

Downtown Turners Falls is characterized by a dense mosaic of mixed uses. More than one tenth of buildings within the Vision Plan focus area are classified as mixed use, with the majority of these buildings lining Avenue A. Just a few buildings along Avenue A are devoted to a single use: most notably the Powertown apartment buildings (residential), St. Kazimierz Society (fraternal organization) and government/municipal buildings such as the Post Office, the library, the Shea Theatre and Town Hall. Fifty-nine percent of all buildings within the Vision Plan area are residential, mostly two and tree family units multi-family housing units and apartment buildings on the side streets surrounding Avenue A. Most of the industrial or warehousing buildings in downtown are located across the power canal on the island. Although industrial and warehousing buildings make up only 6% of the total buildings downtown, they account for a much more significant portion of the available square footage in the village.

The mosaic of land use patterns in downtown Turners Falls speak volumes to its history as a late 19th century planned industrial community. Constructed in an era before automobiles, this community defines walkability. Residences, businesses and workplaces were meant to be accessible on a pedestrian scale, and the architecture supported both density and mixed use.

Below & Right: Mixed use buildings along Avenue A



## Vacant, Under-utilized and Priority-Redevelopment Parcels

Because of its history as a booming mill village, downtown Turners Falls is densely developed with elegant turn-of-the-century building stock. The existing buildings lend strong support to the grid of streets and alleys, and there are very few vacant parcels that are actually developable. Shown in pale yellow on the map opposite are parcels that are considered undevelopable due to steep slopes or ledge rock. These undevelopable parcels make up the vast majority of parcels without structures. A significant number of vacant parcels are used for surface parking lots (in pale pink opposite). Shown in dark red are parcels that the town assessor's office considers developable. These lots include two sites across First Street from the town hall and a large parcel along Canal Street which is currently the site of the Youth Sculpture Park.

The town's energies are focused on the redevelopment of five key sites: Strathmore Mill, RR Salvage, the former Cumberland Farms, Saint Anne's Church and the Town Hall. A formal request for development proposals for Strathmore Mill was issued in December 2012 and yielded two responses. The town has selected a group of investors from Brooklyn to pursue a year of study into the viability of developing mixed use space within the Mill complex. The RR Salvage building is in very poor condition and will likely need to be torn down and replaced entirely with new construction. The annex building at the rear of the main building has recently been purchased separately to be refurbished.

The former Cumberland Farms building is also in poor condition, but reportedly structurally sound. Built in the second half of the last century, it is one of the few buildings along Avenue A that doesn't come right up to the sidewalk, and, as such, presents a significant break in the Avenue A streetscape experience. When the Discovery Center was redeveloped a deed restriction was placed on the Cumberland Farms site that it must be used for cultural or community use.

The main part of the Town Hall facing Avenue A is a beautiful historic brick building. However, a 1960s addition at the rear of the building is currently vacant and in need of redevelopment. The addition housed the Montague police department until a new headquarters outside of downtown was built recently. Strong support emerged at the public workshop for co-locating a new library and senior center behind the Town Hall.

Finally, Saint Anne's Church and Rectory are a beautiful set of historic brick buildings in good repair along Sixth Street, fronting on Peskeomskut Park. Among the proposals for this space is a bed & breakfast or hotel and a conference center or function hall that could host weddings and banquets.

### Town-Identified PRIORITIES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

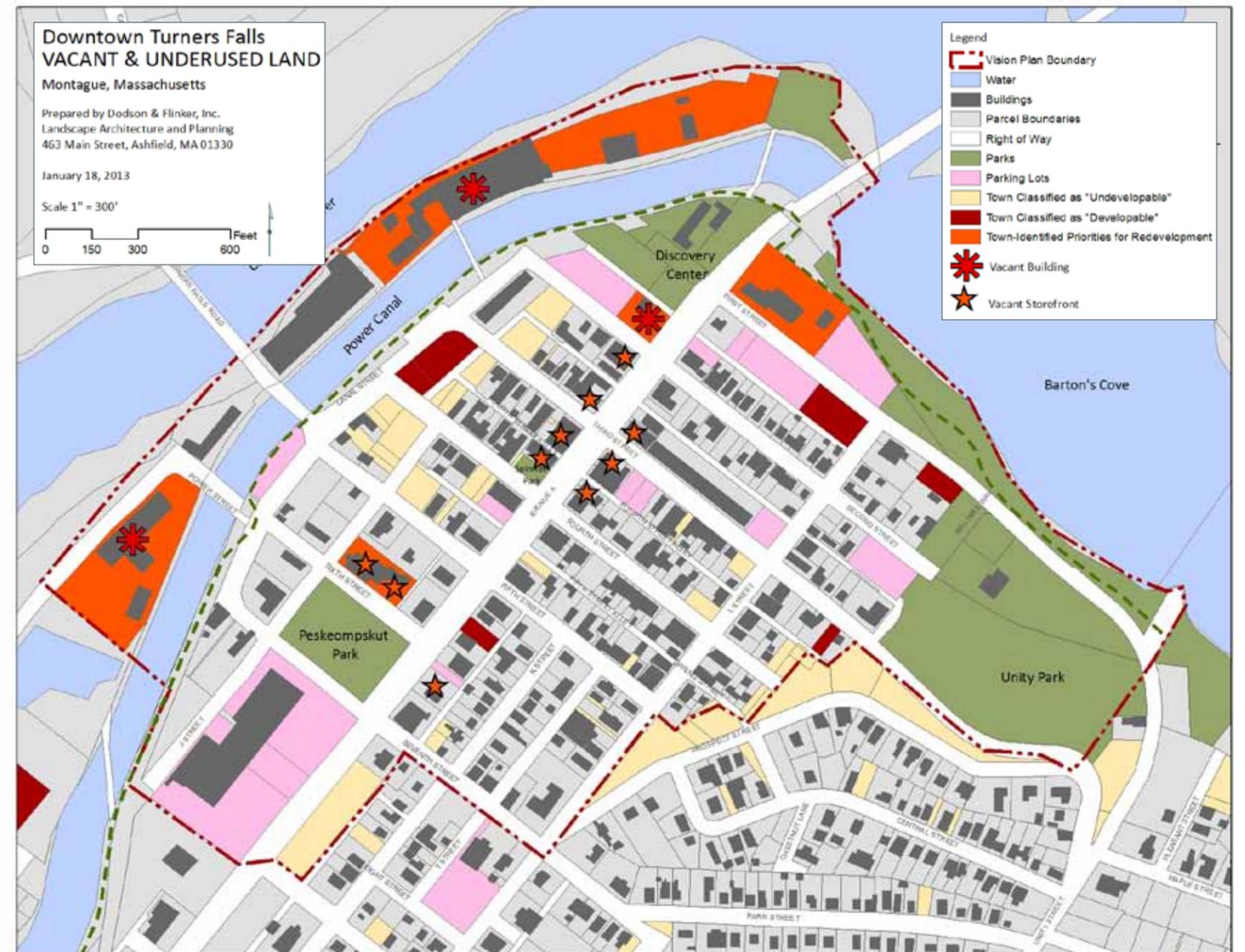
Identified in Orange on Map Opposite

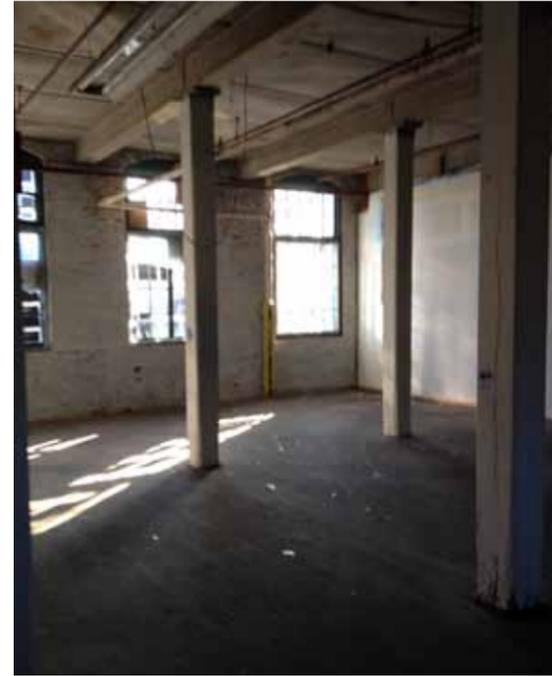
- Strathmore Mill Complex
- R.R. Salvage
- 38 Avenue A (former Cumberland Farms)
- Saint Anne's Church (26 Sixth Street)
- Town Hall

### VACANT STOREFRONTS Along Avenue A

Identified with Orange Star on Map Opposite

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 50      | Crocker Bank Building; Former Crocker Bank, Former Mechanics Lodge of Masons         |
| 74      | Commercial Block - Multiple Use  |
| 85      | Former Hallmark Photography School and Gallery relocated to location near TF Airport |
| 112     | Multi-Use Commercial Block: Cute Nails, Vacant Storefront                            |
| 118     | Multi-Use Commercial Block: Rojo Burritos, Vacant Storefronts                        |
| 101     | Multi-Use Commercial Block: Pipione's, Vacant Storefronts                            |
| 105-107 | Multi-Use Commercial Block: All Vacant Storefronts                                   |
| 123     | Former Toganelli Heating and Cooling   |
| 191     | Former Greenfield Savings Bank   |





**Above:** Vacant storefronts at Avenue A and 3rd Street. Three out of the four storefronts pictured are currently empty due to maintenance issues and an absentee landlord, although the residential apartments above are reportedly occupied. **Below:** Vacant Storefronts at 107 Avenue A and 123 Avenue A.

**Above:** Strathmore Mill. Building 11 is in the best condition of all the buildings in the complex. A public art installation on the exterior of the mill creates interest from across the power canal. The town cleared a substantial amount of debris from the site in 2010. **Below left:** The Carnegie Public Library is a beautiful historic building on the outskirts of downtown. The sidewalks around it are not ADA accessible and the library has insufficient space for both storage and programming. Some suggest moving the library to a new location combined with a senior center behind town hall, and transitioning the Carnegie building into a historic museum. **Below Right:** The former Cumberland Farms building occupies a prime site at the gateway from Gill and Route 2. The site is deemed to have a cultural use.



## PUBLIC WORKSHOP FEEDBACK SUMMARY:

### DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

- Cumberland Site is key: Incorporate retail, farmers market, services for residents: but avoid gentrification!
- Cultural venue compatible with Discovery Center.
- Strathmore Mill: plans in the works – housing, live-work, light industrial, arts and culture all welcome.
- Pursue Library and Senior Center behind Town Hall.

# OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & CONNECTIVITY

Prior to its incarnation as a mill village, Turners Falls was a gathering space and important fishing destination for local native american tribes. This tradition has continued through the present day, with the village and the surrounding river serving as a valuable cultural and recreational destination both for residents of the town of Montague and visitors from further afield in Franklin County.

This section explores open space and recreation resources, connectivity between as well as access to those resources and connections with the surrounding region.

## Open Space & Recreation

Downtown Turners Falls is surrounded by a perfect triangle of open space: Peskeomskut Park to the west, the Discovery Center to the north and Unity Park to the east. A person can walk to a major park in less than three blocks from any point in the downtown. In addition to these three major parks, the central part of downtown has several pocket parks - Spinner Park at the corner of Ave A and 4th Street and two community gardens along L Street - as well as a large swath of open space including the war memorial across from the Food City shopping plaza. The bike path surrounds downtown on the east, north and west and provides recreational connectivity to Greenfield. Although not officially considered open space, the steep terrain of the hill that encloses downtown Turners Falls on

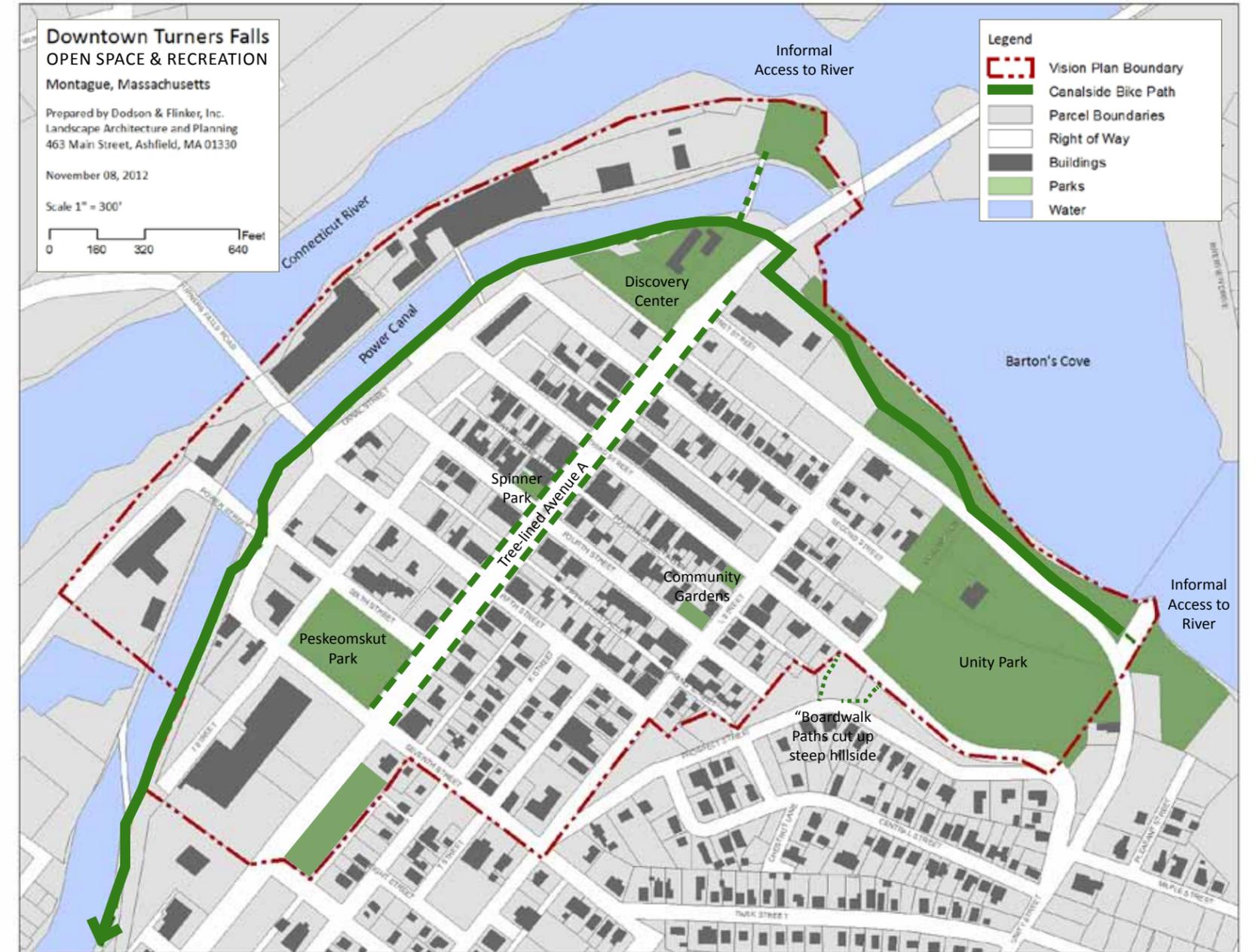
the south side adds a significant sense of green space.

Unity Park is the largest recreational resource in the community. It contains a loop walking path, several ball fields, a recently updated playground with splash area, updated parking and a community building including restroom facilities. Plans for Phase II of renovations include adding a formalized community garden, re-surfacing the ball fields and removing invasive species and overgrowth from the park perimeters. Across First street from Unity Park, land owned by the power company along Barton's Cove is maintained as a picnic area with tables, benches and cookout grills.

Peskeomskut Park occupies an entire block of Avenue A between Sixth Street and Seventh Streets. Its amenities include a recently added band stand for outdoor performances and a small playground for young children. Both Unity and Peskeomskut Parks are significant dog-walking destinations within the community.

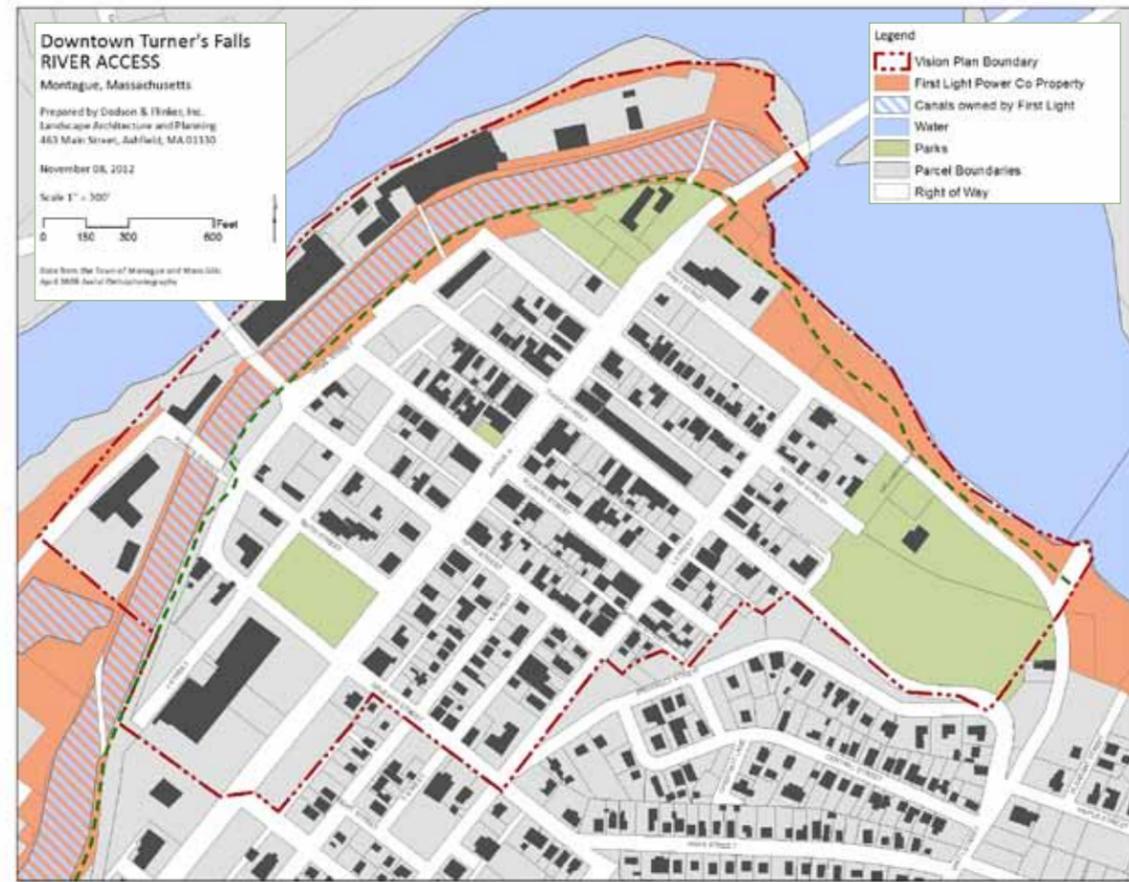
The Discovery Center is surrounded by a significant block of open space that is infrequently used. When the building was renovated and the current gallery and education space installed, the vision for the landscape included demonstration gardens of native plants and ecosystems. A courtyard connecting the parking lot to the main entrance was realized,

*Top right: Canalside Bike Path. Middle right: new play equipment at Unity Park. Bottom right: picnic area on Barton's Cove adjacent to bike path.*



but few people stop in this space and the vast lawn running down towards the power canal is not used. Many workshop participants commented on the need to activate this public space with programming and festivals. Behind the Discovery Center, a pedestrian bridge lead across the Power Canal to the power island. An informal recreational area exists here, with views of the fish ladder and informal access to the river for fishing.

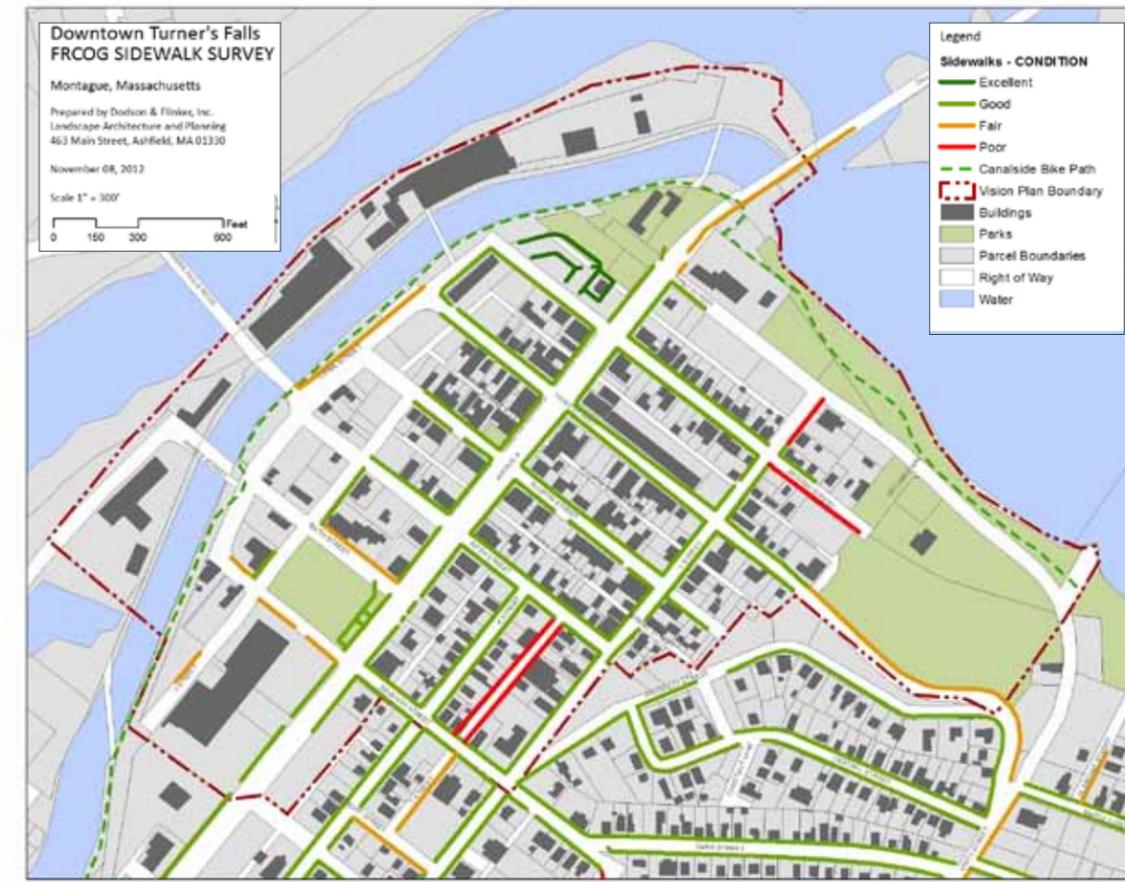
The Canalside Bike Path is an almost universally beloved community resource and a strong point of civic pride. In 2010 Yankee Magazine named it the “Best Urban Bike Path in New England”. It begins adjacent to Unity Park and hugs the shoreline along Barton’s Cove before ducking under the Gill-Montague Bridge abutment and following the edge of the power canal southwest towards Greenfield. Views across Barton’s Cove to Gill and across the Power Canal to historic mill buildings are stunning. The bike path is a significant draw of visitors into the community and generally filled with recreational bikers and joggers on warm days. In the winter it is not plowed, and some use it for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. During discussions with the working group and at the public meeting the need for a few small improvements arose. First, the crossings at both 5th and 6th streets are unsafe and need clarification between vehicular, pedestrian and bike traffic. Second, there should be some way to access downtown from the bikepath between the Discovery Center and 5th Street. And finally, there is a need for a crosswalk between the bike path and Unity Park across First Street.



### River Access

Turners Falls is surrounded on three sides by the Connecticut River and the Power Canal. Water has long been a defining feature of the community. Native American tribes first gathered at the falls more than 10,000 years ago to fish and the power of those same falls drew industrialist Alvah Crocker to invest in the area. Senior citizens who grew up in Turners

Falls describe adventures recreating in the Connecticut River - jumping into the Power Canal to ride the current down to the next bridge, playing in the water beneath the falls and swimming above the dam. Unfortunately a number of accidents occurred, and none of these activities are currently considered safe. What this means is that although Turners Falls is surrounded by water, there is currently no safe and sanctioned recreational access to the



river: people can see the river, but cannot touch, splash or swim in it.

First Light, the power company that operates the dam, owns the entire waterfront in Turners Falls, including the actual power canal. As part of their licensing agreement they are required to maintain a fish ladder which is open to the public adjacent to the town hall during spawning time. They are also required to maintain a boating access ramp, which is located

across Barton’s Cove in Gill. Experienced boaters can launch at an unofficial access point adjacent to Unity Park. First Light does help maintain the bike path and picnic area at Barton’s Cove, but does allow swimming or condone boat launching from anywhere in Turners Falls. First Light will go through re-licensing process again in 2018, and numerous residents mentioned that they would like to see recreational access addressed as part of this process.

### Intra-Village Connectivity

Turners Falls is a phenomenally walkable community. Nearly all parts of the downtown fall within a 1/4 mile walking radius of the main intersection at 3rd Street and Avenue A. A 2010 Franklin Regional Council of Governments sidewalk survey found that the village is well-supported by a network of sidewalks in good condition. In particular Avenue A with its wide sidewalks and tree-lined character provides for a pleasant pedestrian experience connecting Peskeomskut Park to the Discovery Center and Town Hall. Not included in the sidewalk survey are the alleys, which residents attest are a significant part of the pedestrian experience.

At one time up to seven pedestrian bridges connected from the village center across the Power Canal to the mills on the island and mill workers walked back and forth in the morning, at lunch and again in the evening. Currently only two pedestrian bridges remain open: one crossing from the Discovery Center to the head of the island, and one on the side of the 5th Street vehicle bridge crossing to the Southworth Paper Company building. A third pedestrian bridge crossing to the Strathmore Mill complex is closed pending restoration. Currently owned by the power company, it needs new decking and upgrading to meet ADA code. Upgrading and re-opening this bridge is seen as a priority project for the town because of its proximity to the Strathmore Mill.

## Regional Connectivity

Four key gateways lead into Turners Falls: the Gill-Montague Bridge from Route 2, the 5th Street bridge from Greenfield, Avenue A from Montague City, and 3rd Street from Millers Falls and Montague Center. The Gill-Montague Bridge has been closed to two-way traffic for the past two years and is expected to open again in the fall of 2014. The closure of this bridge has had a significant impact on the community.

Although Turners Falls recently invested in a comprehensive wayfinding system which includes signage on route 2 and at key locations downtown, none of the four major gateways into town is marked by a welcome or wayfinding sign, and comments at several working group meetings focused on the need to alert visitors to the unique village community they are entering.

Downtown Turners Falls is served by the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) bus system. Buses stop downtown approximately

30 times per day on their way to and from Greenfield, Orange, Athol, Millers Falls, Montague Center and Amherst. Connections in Greenfield and Amherst can take travelers to destinations further afield.

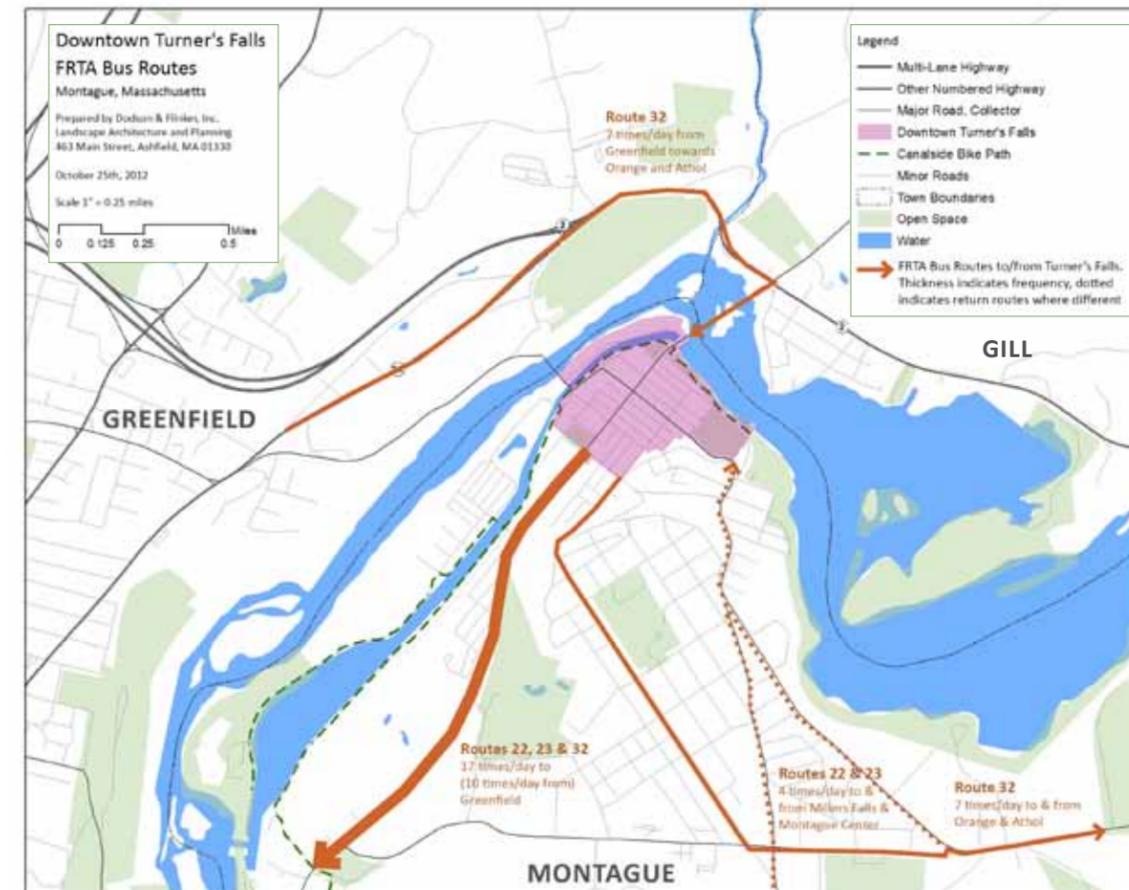
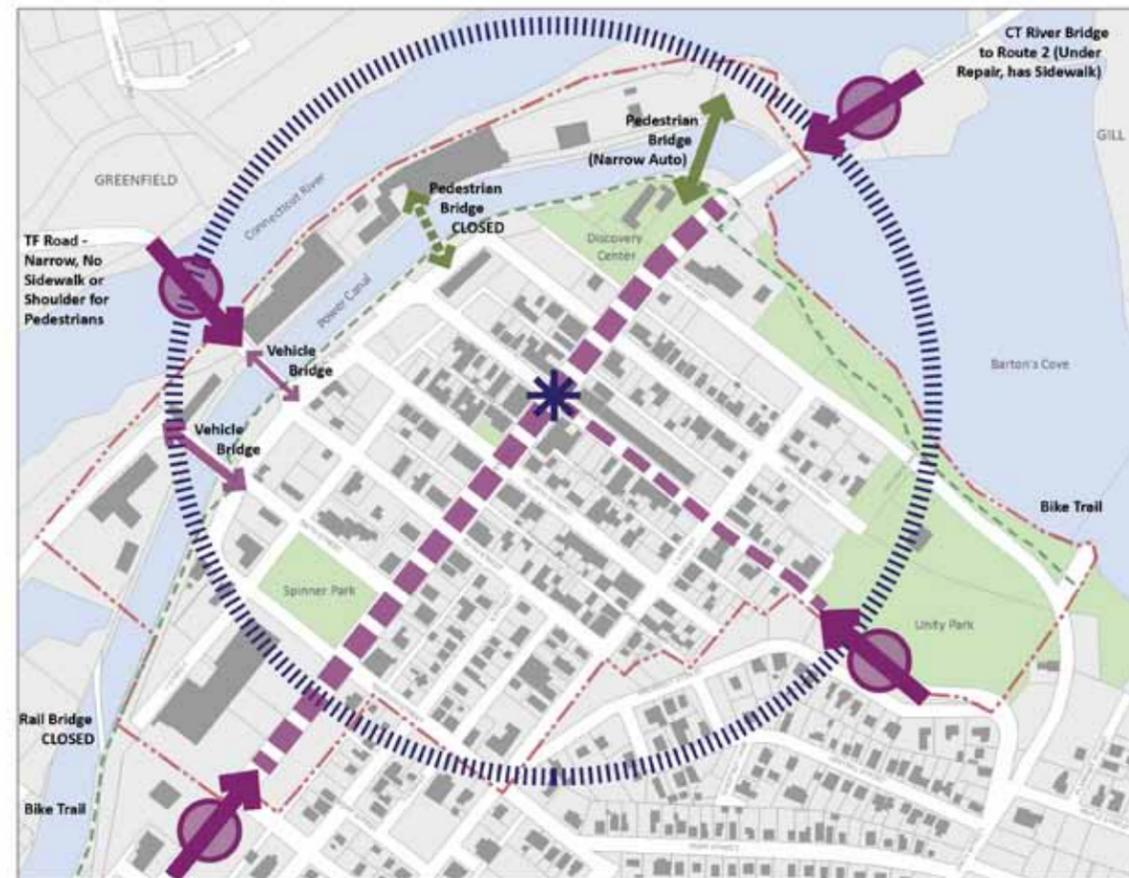
The general feeling expressed at working group meetings was that people were glad for the service, but that buses need to run much more frequently and include evening and weekend hours in order to sufficiently serve the community. Residents describe being “stranded”

away from home or having visitors unable to leave Turners Falls if they miss the last bus in the evening. In addition, several seniors commented many critical services are in Greenfield, but that riding the bus is inconvenient because of how long you have to wait for return trips.

Finally, although Turners Falls is an excellent place to be a pedestrian or bicyclist, getting to the village on foot or on a bike is significantly more difficult. Coming from Montague City, the bike path is an excellent

option; however, adequate sidewalks or bike lanes are lacking on routes approaching from most other directions. Accessing Greenfield by bike or foot was seen as particularly problematic because the shortest route across the 5th street bridge and up the hill to Greenfield has no sidewalk or shoulder and cars speed around the curve.

-  Key Vehicular, Bus and/or Pedestrian, Bike Route into Downtown
-  Vehicle Route to Island
-  Pedestrian Route to Island
-  Key Routes through Downtown
-  1/4 Mile Walking Radius from Ave A & 3rd Street
-  Ave A and 3rd Street - Main Intersection



## PUBLIC WORKSHOP FEEDBACK SUMMARY:

### PARKS & OPEN SPACE DISCUSSION

- Existing parks are great: need to focus on programming and activities.
- Good paths and sidewalks generally; need to make key connections and provide safe cross walks.
- Need community access to the river, including boat launch.
- Need to pursue Native American Cultural Park.
- Need more community garden spaces.
- Need place for families to swim.
- Need dog park (and dog shelter).

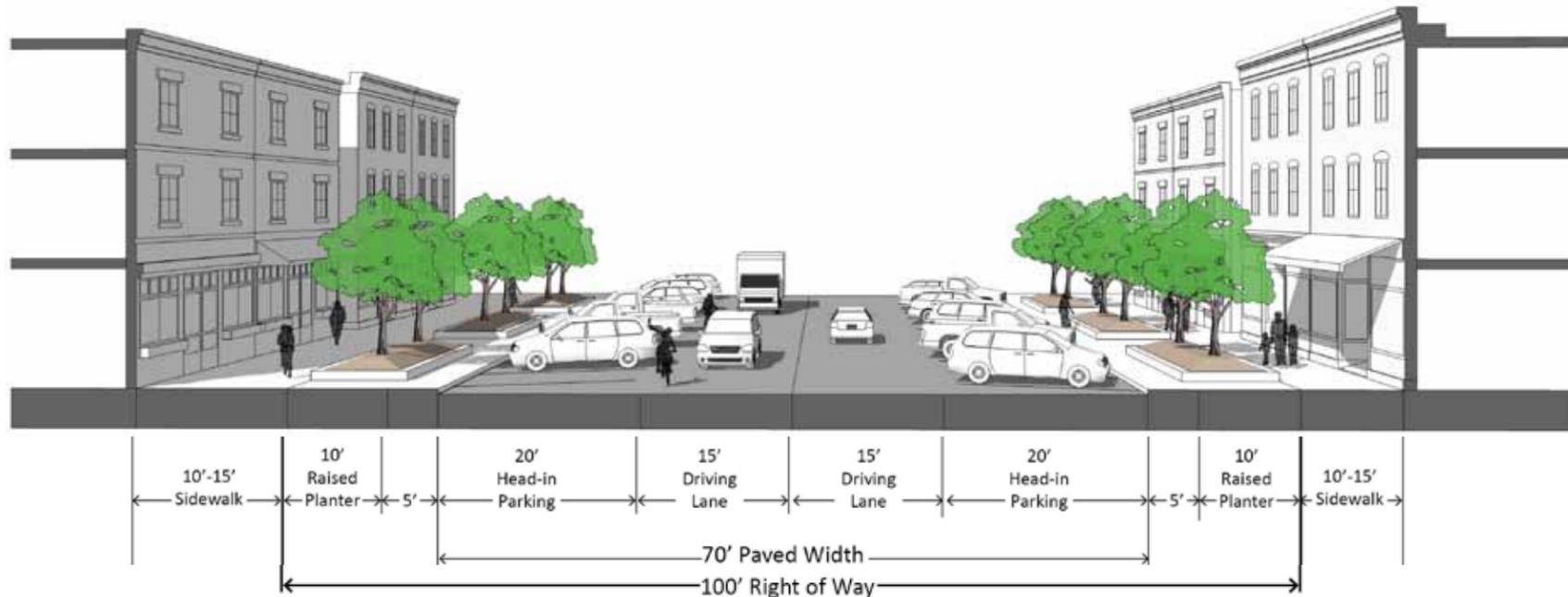
# AVENUE A STREETScape

Avenue A was laid out in Alvah Crocker’s original 1869 plan of Turners Falls as a wide commercial street that would serve as the main axis of the community. More than a century later it has retained both the form and the function of that original intent. Although the brick buildings date to the late 19th century, the current streetscape was largely re-created during revitalization efforts in the 1980s. The town reconstructed sidewalks, planters, parking and driving lanes from First Street through Seventh Street. The result is a coherent and uniform streetscape experience consisting generally of 10-15 foot wide brick and concrete sidewalks, 10 foot

wide bermed tree planters, a 5 foot sidewalk extension, angled parking and a wide driving lane. Overall the town maintains a 100 foot right of way along the length of Avenue A with sidewalks generally falling on private property. The paved width is approximately 70 feet. Several participants at working group meetings raised concerns about long crosswalks feeling dangerous to pedestrians. The town has recently installed bump-outs at the corner of Avenue A and Second Streets to help with visibility and pedestrian safety.

The bermed planters are a hot topic among residents. Some people are fond of them

and enjoy the way that they create a buffer between the sidewalk and cars. Others are frustrated with their uniformity, the steep dirt that is difficult to plant, the awkward height that doesn’t support seating and the choice of trees with low branches that obscure shop signage. The town originally elected to raise the planters as berms in order to keep roots from disrupting utility lines running beneath the sidewalks and street. The trees selected reflect the desire to have shorter trees that would not grow into the power lines above the sidewalk on the south side of Avenue A. The bermed planters are officially maintained by the town, although many have been adopted by adjacent businesses and planted with an assortment of annual and perennial flowers in addition to the trees.



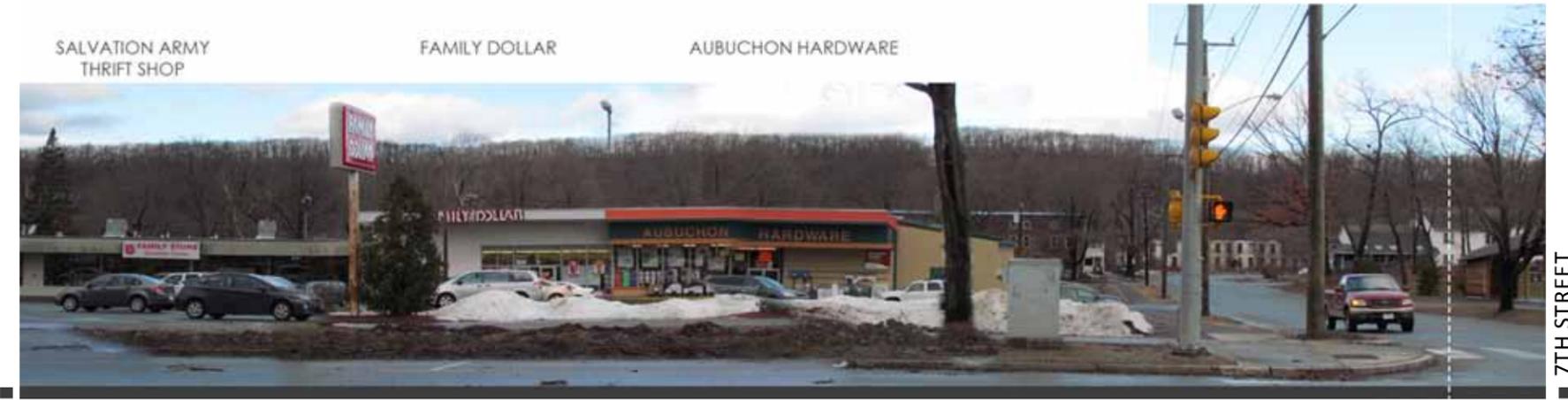
Although the Avenue A paving is very wide it does not currently have a dedicated bike lane. Bicyclists participating in the public workshop noted that biking along the Avenue is a dangerous endeavor because of the angled parking. Many choose alternate routes or bike along the sidewalks creating conflict with pedestrians.



**Above:** Typical Avenue A Streetscape, between 3rd Street and 4th Street. **Below:** Public Art is a defining feature of the downtown Turners Falls streetscape. The majority of installations have been donated by local artists or created by local youth in collaboration with local artists.

**Below:** Public Workshop participants engage with a 22 foot long replica of Avenue A Elevations, noting places they like and places that need improvements. A synopsis of their comments appears with the elevation images block-by-block on the following pages.





7TH STREET

**GATEWAY BLOCK - THROUGH 7TH STREET**

The shopping plaza generated a very large number of comments. In general people felt that the services provided within the plaza were essential to the community but that it made an ugly gateway to the downtown. People especially valued Food City, which is “improving all the time” and the Aubuchon Hardware which “always has what you need”. A vast number of notes suggested landscaping

improvements to the parking lot (especially trees) and altering the facades to fit more with the historic buildings elsewhere along Avenue A. One person suggested that perhaps more variety of the same uses would draw more traffic.

Across the street, opinions about the Carnegie Library were mixed. Some people felt that the “building no longer meets the needs of the community as a library” because it is “too small” and not accessible. These notes

suggested that the library be moved to the Town Hall or Saint Anne’s Church/Rectory and that the building be re-purposed as a cultural center. Other people felt that this was a critical location for the library - anchoring Avenue A in an historic building - and that it should be expanded in place or have an annex nearby (such as the former Greenfield Savings Bank building). In general people like the War Memorial but wish it were more centrally located. Finally, people felt that the hillside and

ledges across from Food City were “ugly” and “filled with dog poop”. These notes suggested formalizing landscaping and paths that cut across the area toward the library. The pathway up the hillside across from Food City is beloved, but the crosswalk here was noted as being particularly dangerous because it is so wide and people are speeding on their way into town. Significant concern was raised about the lack of sidewalk between the war memorial and the pathway up the hillside.

**“How could it be possible to move the strip mall businesses into the downtown vacancies? Could we have multi-level stores? Could we provide historic incentives? We could make beautiful occupied buildings with a lot of foot traffic.”**



HILLSIDE & LEDGE FACING FOOD CITY



WAR MEMORIAL

PUBLIC LIBRARY

7TH STREET



**7TH STREET TO 6TH STREET**

People consider Peskeomskut Park a “beautiful” downtown amenity and a “great quick stop for small children” with its swings and climbing structure. At the same time there was considerable feeling that the park needs to be enlivened with more events and more cultural flair. Notes suggested increasing the number of concerts and movies at the bandstand as well

as adding more “cultural flair” to attract people at times other than programmed events. On the other side of the street, St Kazimiers was honored for its community-oriented programming, such as free family dinners and Polish history focus. People generally liked its well-maintained facade, but a few criticized the smoking porch right along Avenue A. A significant amount of concern and optimism focuses around the former Greenfield

Savings Bank building. People see continued vacancy as a serious blight on the block. At the same time a note suggesting that the building be the future home of a TF cooperative grocery store (or a branch of the Greenfields Coop) received a number of enthusiastic and supportive secondary notes.



**6TH STREET TO 5TH STREET**

The civic buildings on the north side of this block (above) are beloved by the community. The Post Office is seen as a “handsome building” that is a critical component of TF’s “good bones”, although some worry that we need to plan for a future in which this post office branch will close. In general people were thrilled that Greenfield Cooperative Bank will

take over the former Bank of America building. On the south side (below) people thought that both brick buildings adjacent to 5th Street were “beautiful” and “well maintained”. A significant amount of concern focused around the Verizon utility building and the vacant lot next to it. A few people commented that the facade, setback and large curb-cut of Couture Brothers was “ugly” and needed more landscaping to make the sidewalk

consistently pleasant for pedestrians, but they liked the services provided.





**5TH STREET TO 4TH STREET**

In general people commended the high level of maintenance along this block. DiPaolo's Restaurant, Bouksa's Flooring/Avenue A Dental, Dolan and Dolan Law Offices and Sokolosky Realty were all acknowledged as businesses that look good and contribute positively to the Avenue A community. DiPaolo's Restaurant in particular is seen as a destination that draws

regional visitors into downtown on a regular basis. Many people wrote about the beauty of the Powertown Apartments building and how it provides critical affordable housing downtown. At the same time many comments criticized the loss of street-level storefronts to housing.

Several comments recommended facade improvements for the About Face Computer Solutions building. One comment wondered whether the lot adjacent to the Bouksa's Flooring could be improved with landscaping.

4TH STREET



**4TH STREET TO 3RD STREET**

Strong support emerged for the Pizza House, Black Cow Burger Bar and Gary's Coins and Antiques. People felt that these storefronts were doing well, providing good services and for the most part looked good. Nina's Nook was also called out as a positive example for doing a lot with a small space. At the same time a large number of vacant storefronts

were called out along this block, particularly the one between Pipione's and Gary's and the three next to Absolutely Fabulous Hair on the opposite side of the street. Several comments blamed absentee landlords and disrepair of the units for the vacancies. In addition, several comments focused on reclaiming the residential use of storefronts adjacent to Spinner Park. In general people like Spinner Park, and loved the Christmas programming there

this year, but felt that there needed to be more regular programming in order to give it life. Similarly the alleys on both sides of the street were noted as "sketchy" and in need of improvements to paving and lighting. Finally, one comment noted that the bus stop on Third Street needs more definition.

3RD STREET





**3RD STREET TO 2ND STREET**

Overall this block received a lot of positive commentary. People particularly love Loot, Jake's Tavern and the Shea Theatre - all three of these entities are seen as positive forces in the village and destinations for visitors from outside downtown.

The Crocker Building got the most mixed reviews: people generally liked how it

looks and the housing it provides, but felt that the storefronts had "no life" and that this is a critical corner for the downtown shopping district. Similarly the Subway/Jay K's/Cece's Building was contentious. One comment "looks bad, works good" sums up the general feeling that these are essential services provided in an unsightly building. At the Shea theatre, many people liked the new alley gateway but also noted the need for a marquee to

advertise performances. A significant amount of discussion and commentary focused around the use of the former Hallmark gallery as a pop-up shop and its current transition into office space for the Northeast Foundation for Children. Some saw this as a devastating loss of a crucial storefront, while others viewed it as a worthwhile trade-off in order to keep a significant organization in town.



**GENERAL COMMENTS APPLYING TO ALL BLOCKS**

**Safety & Maintenance:**

Many residents do not walk downtown at night because they are worried about their personal safety, and others commented on the "rash" of break-ins that have recently targeted local shops. In general these notes focused on two particular remedies: a beat cop presence in downtown, and improving the lights along Avenue A.

People also discussed the need for more trash cans along the Avenue to keep litter under control and also the need for more benches and seating along the Avenue. Some comments raised concern that more seating could lead to more undesirable loitering.

**Side Streets & Alleys:**

More adequate lighting and continuous sidewalks along the side streets would encourage people to walk downtown in loops on nice summer evenings. A lively discussion at the public meeting also centered around applying this facade commentary activity to the side streets, especially 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th.

In general the community agreed that alleys are a critical part of the downtown experience, both visually and functionally, but there was also a general feeling that the alley gateways needed attention. It is simultaneously difficult to drive into/out of them and to be a pedestrian crossing them. The alleys need lighting and designated pedestrian routes to promote safe circulation patterns.

**Ideas for Future Storefronts:**

Many people focused comments on dreaming ideal uses for vacant storefronts. Top contenders were an ice cream shop, a coffee shop, a flowers and plant shop and upscale consignment shops.

**PUBLIC WORKSHOP SUMMARY:**

**AVENUE A FACADE DISCUSSION**

- Infill buildings and empty lots.
- Improve facades, signage and landscaping.
- Better maintenance –work with absent landlords.
- Clean up trash, waste – fix quality of life issues.
- Enhance cultural programming and street life.

**AVENUE A STREETScape DISCUSSION**

- Wide sidewalks, trees, planters and buildings are great, but need to be spruced up.
- Need more outdoor dining and gathering spaces.
- Alleys are critical part of the experience, visually and functionally.
- Need to upgrade lighting and extend down side streets and alleys.
- Enhance transportation alternatives: bus, bike and walking.
- Keep bricks but fix accessibility issues.
- Address key focus areas: shopping plaza, cumberland farms site, shea theater marquee.



**2RD STREET TO 1ST STREET**

Along the first to second street block of Avenue A, Shady Glen was the most popular spot.

In general people felt that this was a critical “Welcome to Turners Falls” block and that it was currently underutilized and/or not sending the right message. Regarding the former Cumberland Farms site, commentary focused around potential re-use as a pop-up

store, TV station or Native American cultural history center as well as the possibility of tearing the building down to erect a new mixed use building. Many people liked the open space, the farmer’s market and views of the Discovery Center and a few dreamed of resurrecting the former Fallon Hotel at this site.

Between the Uprights received mixed reviews. A few comments commended the establishment for bringing visitors to

town with the sidewalk parties, but others felt that serving alcohol outdoors doesn’t project a healthy image of Turners Falls. Many expressed frustration about the signs that are in violation of the village’s signage ordinance. One comment recommended engaging the community of regulars to push the bar in a new direction.

**1ST STREET TO GILL-MONTAGUE BRIDGE**

Both the Discovery Center and the Town Hall are beloved anchors of Avenue A. People commented that the Discovery Center was “awesome”, “gorgeous” and a “great resource” with “exciting” and “cool” exhibits. At the same time many people cited the need for more programming throughout the year, both for locals and to draw visitors from outside

downtown. Some people wished for better lighting and signage, more native landscaping and more regular public use of the great hall room for receptions and parties. Town Hall received lots of blue (positive) dots, but very little specific commentary other than a note about wishing it could be open on Fridays. Some discussion focused on the possible transition of the old police station at the backside of Town Hall into a senior community

center and/or library. The crosswalk between the Discovery Center and Town Hall was seen as a particularly dangerous one because cars speed off the bridge without stopping for pedestrians.



“The cost of renovating storefronts should not be a barrier to opening a shop...what about a Habitat for Humanity-type program in which people donate sweat equity and others volunteer to help?”

# ECONOMIC ELEMENTS

This section contains general information on downtown population and housing demographics as well as a market analysis.

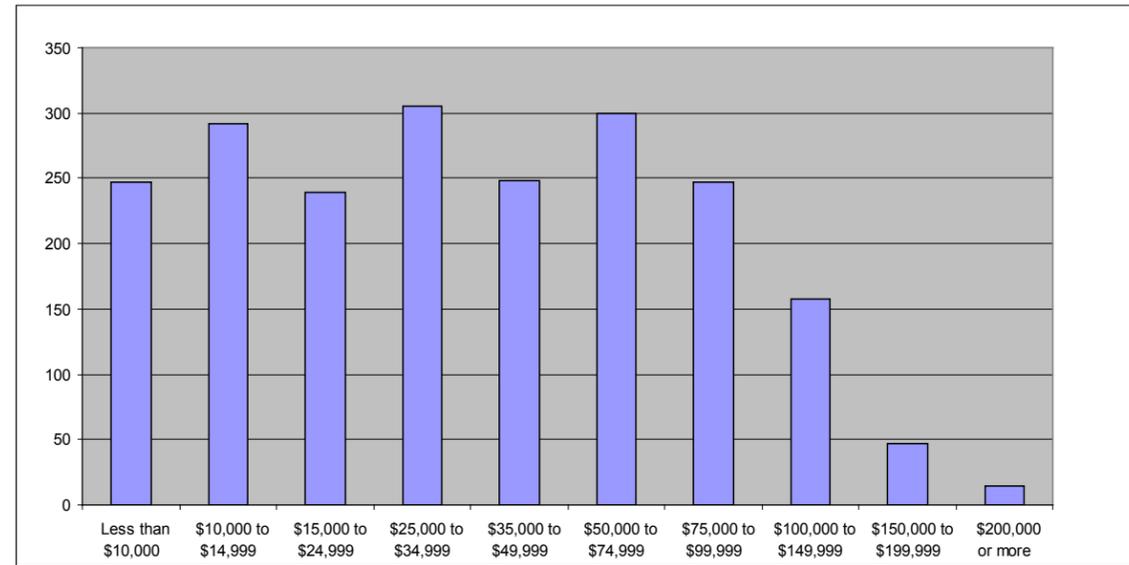
## Population Demographics

The 2010 US Census found that downtown Turners Falls has 4,470 residents, of which 53% are male and 47% are female. Thirty percent of total households are families and the average household size is 2.21 people. The median age of residents is 40.6 years with 19.7% of the population under the age of 18 and 16.3% over age 65. The population is racially 85% White, and 15% identify as ethnically Hispanic.

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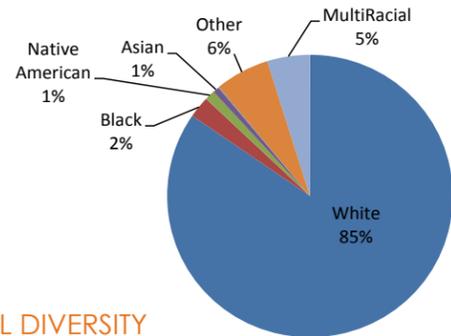
The median household income among downtown residents is \$33,985. Twenty-three percent of the population overall lives in poverty, and more than 42% of children in downtown Turners Falls are living below the Federal Poverty line.

The 2012 American Community Survey

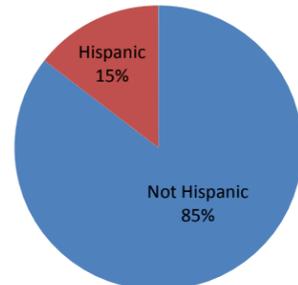


HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION

reports a wider range of employment and population statistics. Residents are employed across a variety of industries with Education, healthcare and social services as the largest industry. Manufacturing, retail, information and entertainment also employ many residents. Ninety-three percent of residents who are working drive to work, implying that they commute outside of downtown Turners Falls. Four percent use public transit or walk/bike to work. The unemployment rate stands at 10.8%.



RACIAL DIVERSITY



ETHNIC DIVERSITY

## Housing Characteristics

Turners Falls is historically a live-work village. Alvah Crocker's original business plan was to sell development sites along the power canal to industries, sites along Avenue A to businesses and parcels along side streets and up the hill to mill-workers for development as residences. As the town boomed at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, this development pattern unfolded almost exactly as planned. The result was an incredibly walkable downtown core: mill workers walked from their homes to amenities along Avenue A and then crossed the canal on pedestrian bridges to their jobs on the island.

Although the mills are no longer the major employers in town, Turners Falls has retained its dense residential character. Side streets off of Avenue A are filled with duplexes, multi-family houses and townhouses. In addition, many buildings along Avenue A are entirely or partially used as apartments. The 2010 US Census counted 4,471 people living in downtown Turners Falls.

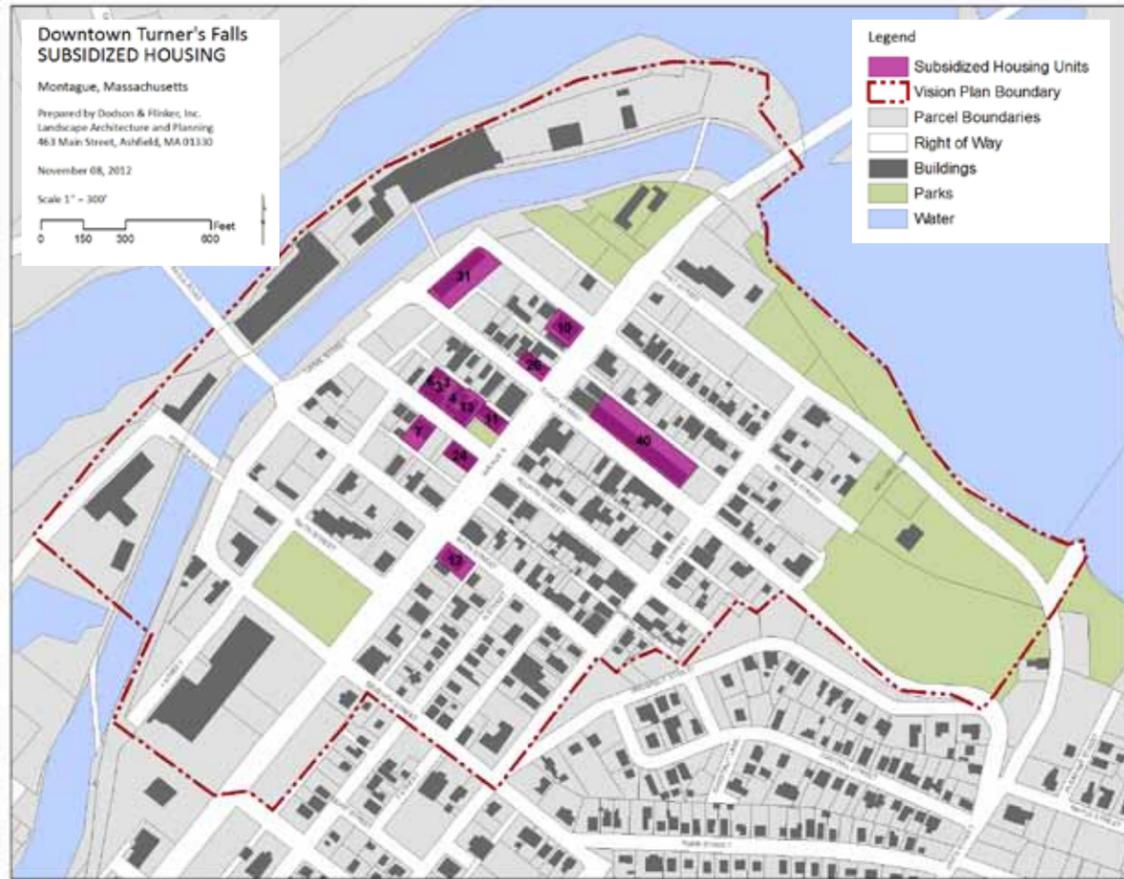
The housing stock in Turners Falls is overwhelmingly made up of rental units. Overall, just 13% of buildings in downtown Turners Falls (within the vision plan area) are owner-occupied. The map at right uses town assessors office data to identify which parcels are owner-occupied. In the dense residential neighborhoods alongside Avenue A, less than one quarter of lots are owner-occupied. The pattern changes significantly on the hill just outside downtown: along Prospect, Central and Park streets the balance is closer to 50-50 rental to owner-occupied.

Significant concern emerged in both



Typical housing units in downtown. Above: Powertown Apartments on Avenue A, Multi-Family Units on Third Street. Below: Cutlery Apartments on Third Street





Working Group meetings about the balance of rental versus owner-occupied properties in downtown. Although some landlords are present and active in the community, many more are absent. A number of residents voiced concern about how the lack of maintenance of these rental properties affects the overall look and feel of the neighborhood.

A large number of the rental units in downtown Turners Falls are actually part of the town's subsidized housing stock. More than half of Montague's subsidized housing units are located within Turners Falls (locations mapped on following page). A number of the buildings occupy prime real-estate along Avenue A and use street-level units as housing.

**SUBSIDIZED HOUSING**

**204** Units in Downtown Turners Falls

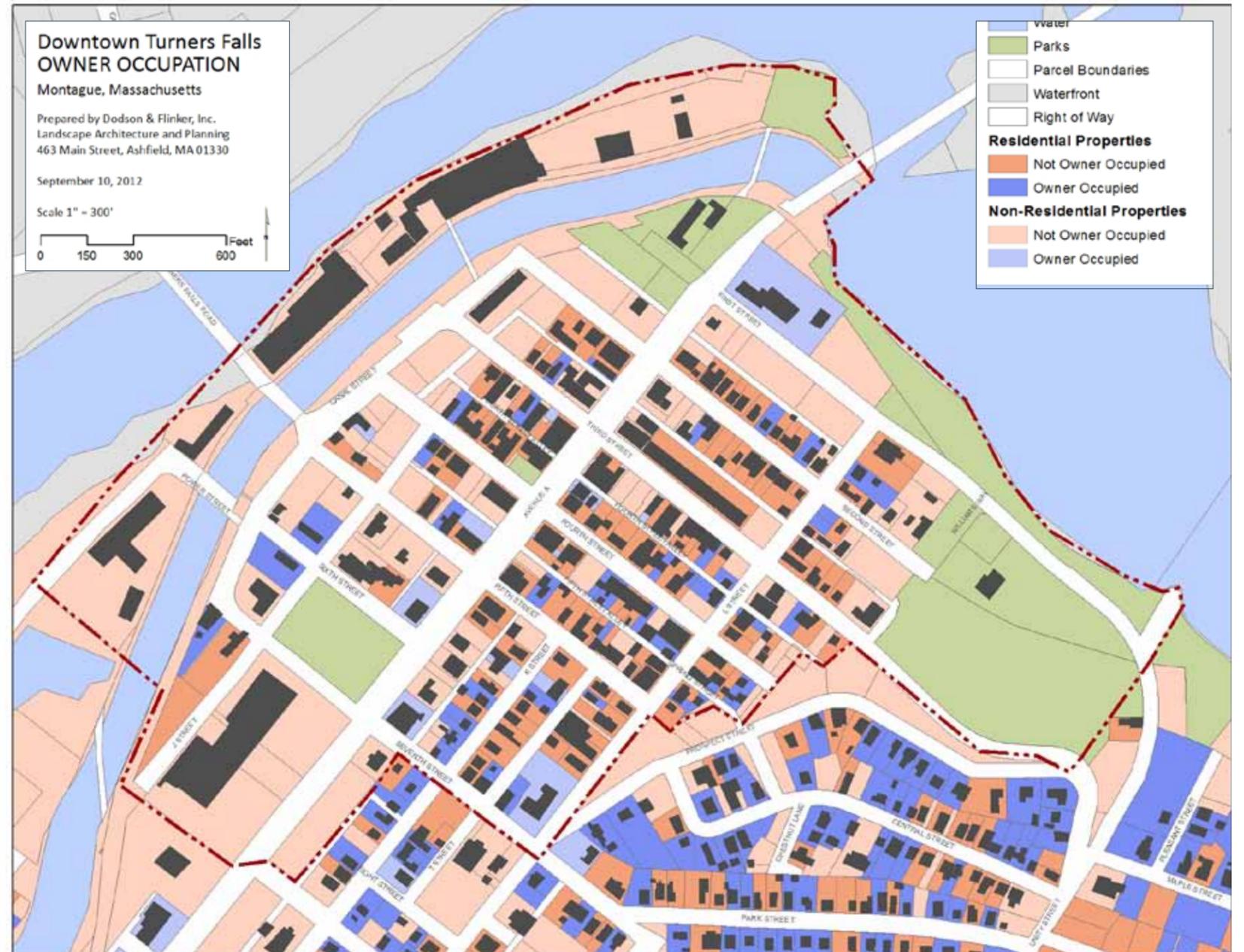
**186** Units Outside Downtown

**390** TOTAL Units in Montague



Owner-Occupancy Percentages from:

2010 U.S. Census Block Data in Vision Plan Area



## Downtown Block Analysis

The Downtown Turners Falls Study Area is approximately 100 acres bounded at the north and west by the Connecticut River, to the south by 9th Street and to the east by “the hill” parallel in Prospect Street. In total, there are 319 parcels that make up about 88 acres (about an additional 12 acres in in public streets and ways). There are an estimated 222 buildings in the Study Area and the average year built is 1901 (buildings are 112 years old on average). The Study Area is bisected by Avenue A, the “Main Street” of Turners Falls and the Town of Montague. From the Connecticut River Bridge to 9th Street, Avenue A is approximately 2,260 linear feet, slightly less than ½ mile.

For the purposes of this plan and evaluation, the study area has been divided into 24 blocks and defined in the table and diagram.

TURNERS FALLS DOWNTOWN PROJECT AREA PROPERTY BY BLOCK										
BLOCK		NO. OF LOTS	NO. OF BLDGS	NO. OF BUS.	PROPERTY VALUE	LOT SIZE (SF)	LOT SIZE	YEAR BUILT	RES. UNITS	STORIES
BLOCK 1	Total	6	2	3	\$ 1,126,600	143,748	3		2	2
	Average				\$ 187,767	23,958	0.55	1934	0	1.0
BLOCK 2	Total	3	1	2	\$ 1,113,618	86,249	1.98		1	2
	Average				\$ 371,206	28,750	0.66	1880	0	2.0
BLOCK 3	Total	3	0	0	\$ 8,746	253,955	5.83			-
	Average				\$ 2,915	84,652	1.94			
BLOCK 4	Total	3	1	1	\$ 388,400	359,370	8.25		-	1
	Average				\$ 129,467	119,790	2.75	1900	-	1
BLOCK 5	Total	17	12	3	\$ 2,300,900	129,809	2.98		33	24
	Average				\$ 143,806	8,113	0.19	1897.92	2	2.00
BLOCK 6	Total	9	6	1	\$ 946,200	79,279	1.82		13	9
	Average				\$ 105,133	8,809	0.20	1881.67	1	2
BLOCK 7	Total	14	11	9	\$ 3,261,700	109,771	2.52		92	28
	Average				\$ 232,979	7,841	0.18	1901	7	3
BLOCK 8	Total	21	13	6	\$ 5,657,000	136,778	3.14		83	35
	Average				\$ 269,381	6,513	0.15	1897.88	4	2
BLOCK 9	Total	14	14	0	\$ 1,808,500	84,071	1.93		25	23
	Average				\$ 129,179	6,005	0.14	1907	2	2
BLOCK 10	Total	24	16	6	\$ 4,074,400	119,354	2.74		78	43
	Average				\$ 169,767	4,973	0.11	1892	3	3
BLOCK 11	Total	35	28	11	\$ 4,547,700	159,430	3.66		89	64
	Average				\$ 129,934	4,555	0.10	1896	3	2
BLOCK 12	Total	13	9	1	\$ 1,579,100	65,776	1.51		16	14
	Average				\$ 121,469	5,060	0.12	1909	1	2
BLOCK 13	Total	14	8	4	\$ 2,953,500	79,715	1.83		68	21
	Average				\$ 210,964	5,694	0.13	1898	5	3
BLOCK 14	Total	37	31	10	\$ 5,127,400	138,085	3.17		98	64
	Average				\$ 138,578	3,732	0.09	1901	3	2
BLOCK 15	Total	14	10	0	\$ 1,256,000	39,640	0.91		19	17
	Average				\$ 89,714	2,831	0.07	1897	1	2
BLOCK 16	Total	23	17	4	\$ 3,489,500	152,460	3.50		52	37
	Average				\$ 151,717	6,629	0.15	1903	2	2
BLOCK 17	Total	21	20	7	\$ 3,713,600	118,919	2.73		42	32
	Average				\$ 176,838	5,663	0.13	1908	2	2
BLOCK 18	Total	6	4	2	\$ 1,742,000	67,954	1.56		4	6
	Average				\$ 348,400	13,591	0.26	1913	1	2
BLOCK 19	Total	21	10	4	\$ 2,017,100	270,508	6.21		40	17
	Average				\$ 100,855	13,525	0.30	1896	2	2
BLOCK 20	Total	1	0	0	\$ 278,900	82,764	1.900		0	
	Average				\$ 278,900	82,764	1.900		0	
BLOCK 21	Total	4	4	5	\$ 2,750,600	212,137	4.87		6	4
	Average				\$ 687,650	53,034	1.22	1974	2	1
BLOCK 22	Total	2		1	\$ 765,200	60,113	1.38		1	2
	Average				\$ 382,600	30,056	0.69	1912	1	2
BLOCK 23	Total	5	1	3	\$ 348,204	419,483	9.63		2	4
	Average				\$ 87,051	104,871	1.93	1880	0	4
BLOCK 24	Total	9	3	5	\$ 2,377,434	481,774	11.06		4	15
	Average				\$ 264,159	53,530	1.23	1917	0	4



## Market Analysis

This section of the Livability Plan examines the trends, conditions, and the potential to support additional business types in the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area, considering factors such as nearby land uses that draw people to the business district, population and household demographics in primary and secondary trade areas, visitor trips and pass-by traffic, commuting patterns, or other factors deemed relevant by Town officials, stakeholders, the Steering Committee and Working Group. This analysis is synthesized to determine the following:

- Strategic advantages of the Downtown Study Area;
- Available land and building vacancies for strategic placement of new uses;
- Effectiveness of existing and on-going marketing initiatives carried out by existing public, quasi-public and private entities; and
- Existing and potential demand for a variety of possible uses in the Downtown Study Area;
- The feasibility of attracting cultural organizations, programs and event which in turn may increase market potential for existing and new businesses.

To check the reasonableness of the market assessment and to uncover potential niche market opportunities, several interviews were conducted with local real estate brokers, business and property owners, cultural and civic organizations, town officials, residents, and other key stakeholders to obtain sufficient data to describe Downtown Turners Falls retail, office,

residential and mixed use potential.

From the assessment and feedback from stakeholders, a Market Profile has been prepared that summarize existing and potential new businesses and other entities which could operate successfully within the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area. The Market Profile is geared to provide perspective businesses and investors with basic information necessary to select the district and create a business plan.

## Defining the Downtown Market Area

The Downtown Turners Falls Market Area consists of several geographic areas. The Downtown Turners Falls Study Area incorporates the core business area and immediate neighborhoods in which residents and visitors can live, work, shop, and recreate within a comfortable walking distance. The Turners Falls Census Designated Place (CDP) includes the additional neighborhoods that make up Turners Falls and constitute the immediate area of influence on the central business district.

The estimated Primary Trade Area for Downtown Turners Falls is within 1-mile of the core area (measured at the intersection of Avenue A and Fifth Street). This area represents approximately 70-80% of Downtown's customer base and households that would gravitate to Turners Falls for necessary daily work, goods and services. The Secondary Trade Area is estimated to be 5 miles from the center of Turners Falls. This area includes local and regional residents that would gravitate to Turners Falls on a regular basis for goods, services, entertainment and

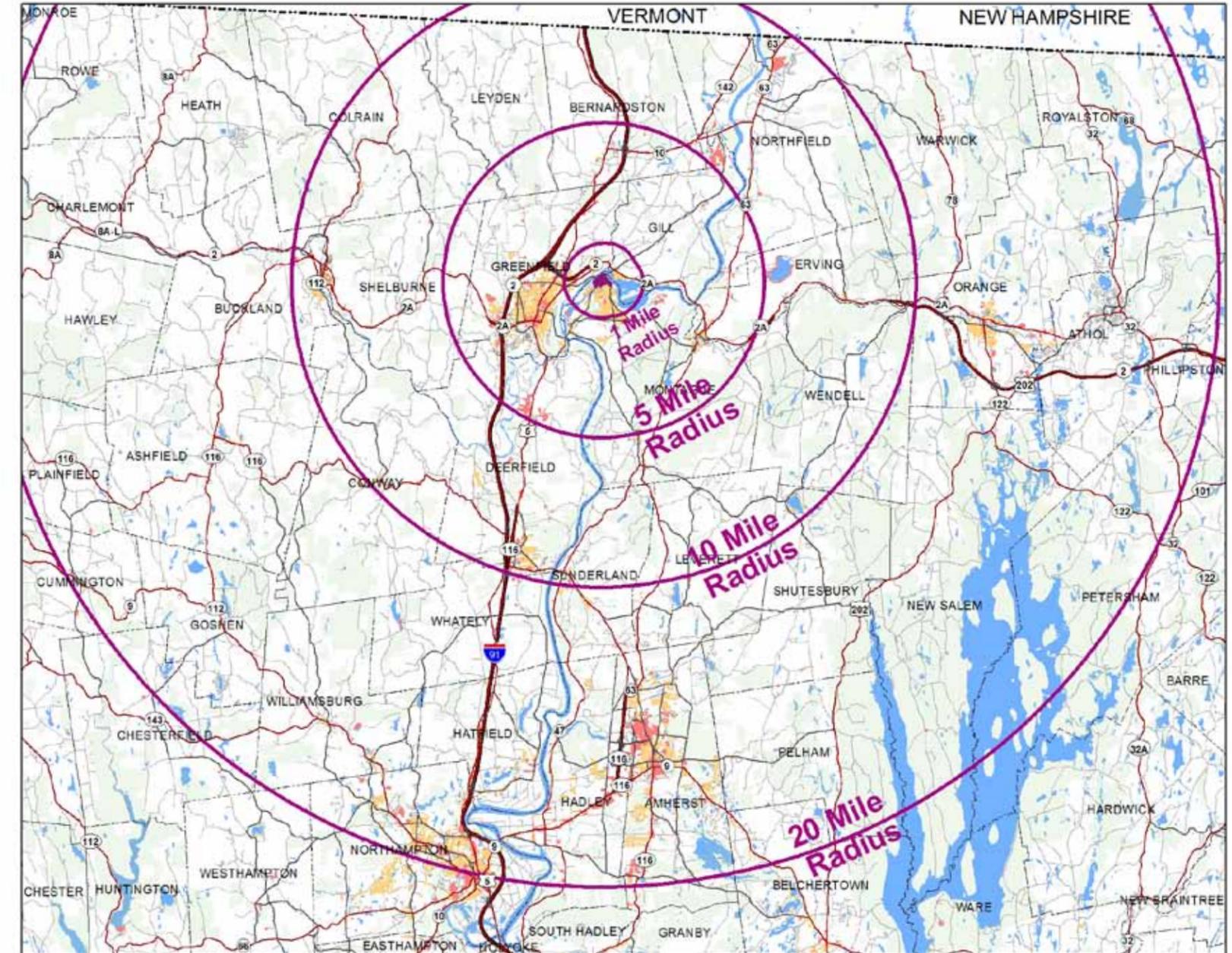
recreation. The Tertiary Trade Area is estimated to be 10 miles from the center of Turners Falls. This area includes local and regional residents that would gravitate to Turners Falls on an occasional basis for goods, services, entertainment and recreation.

- The Primary Trade Area (1-mile radius) includes all of Turners Falls, most of the Town of Montague as well as portions of Gill and Greenfield.
- The Secondary Trade Area (5-mile radius) includes most of Montague, Gill and Greenfield as well as portions of Northfield, Bernardston, Leyden, Shelburne, and Deerfield.
- The Tertiary Trade Area (10-mile radius) includes all of Montague, Gill, Greenfield, Shelburne, Erving, Northfield, Bernardston, Deerfield, and portions of Warwick, Whedell, Leverett, Shutesbury, Sunderland, Conway, Buckland, Claremont, Colrain and Leyden.

## Market Access

In addition to local and regional trade areas, Turners Falls draws visitors from a larger regional market that reach downtown as a destination, by observation as passing by, or by observation as pass-through. While many local residents walk to the downtown area, most Montague residents and visitors arrive by car.

The most common visitor trip types are the following:



- Destination Visits - such as the Great Falls Discovery Center, Canalside Trail, Town Parks, Shea Theater, Fish Ladder, Community Events, and particular shops and restaurants.
- Pass-By Travelers - on Interstate 91, Route 2, Route 2A, and Route 5 and 10 that are in the vicinity or passing by downtown and take notice of signs and other indicators.
- Pass-Thru Travelers- on Ave A, Montague City Road, Millers Falls Road, Turners Falls Road, or other local roads passing through downtown and take notice of signs and other indicators.
- Other Travelers - by boat on the Connecticut River and by plane at the Turners Falls Airport.

(which includes all Turners Falls residents) to those in the secondary (5-mile radius) and tertiary (10-mile radius) trade areas.

Based on the data, average household expenditures in Turners Falls tend to be higher (as a percentage) than the secondary and tertiary trade areas in the following categories:

Food at Home – Including all categories such as a bakery and dairy products, fish and seafood, fruits and vegetables, meats, prepared foods, and others.

- Food Away From Home and Alcohol – Including alcoholic beverages, (at home and away), and lunch, dinner and breakfast away from home.
- Day Care.
- Housing Expenses – Including fuels, utilities and telephone.
- Housekeeping supplies and personal expenses and services.
- Personal care services.
- Smoking products.
- Gasoline and motor oil.
- Used cars.
- Clothing and Apparel

Based on the data, average household expenditures in Turners Falls tend to be lower (as a percentage) than the secondary and tertiary trade areas but are expected to grow over the 5 years by a rate of over 1% per year in the following categories:

- Day Care, Education and Contributions.
- Health Care
- Household Furnishing and Appliances
- Personal Care and Smoking Products
- Pet Expenses

- Sports & Entertainment (high growth projected).
- Clothing and Apparel (high growth projected).

Higher average annual growth is also expected in the secondary and tertiary trade areas for most of these categories.

In comparison to the national average, Turners Falls have a higher than average household expenditure on smoking products as is the case in the region. The secondary and tertiary trade areas tend to have higher average household expenditures than the national average in dairy products, sugars and sweets, alcoholic beverages, housing fuel and utilities, and pet expenses.

### Retail Market Opportunities and Constraints

Table (X) shows selected potential retail opportunities for Downtown Turners Falls based on the analysis of market area spending potential and actual store sales. The analytic technique is called a “retail gap analysis” and is the standard methodology used by retailers to assess market potential against established competitor already in the market. The difference between market area spending potential and actual store sales is called the “retail opportunity” or “retail surplus” and suggests to prospective new entrants to that market whether and to what extent existing stores have captured expenditures expected to be made by residents within a defined trade area. An “opportunity” means that existing stores are

not now capturing expenditures expected to be made by residents within the defined trade areas, while a “surplus” means that retailers (including restaurants) are selling more goods and services than would be expected to be supported by the resident market within the defined trade area.

Retailers typically categorize markets by drive-times – with convenience stores, small household items, periodicals, gifts, novelties, personal and repair services, some pharmacies and clothing stores, and limited service eating establishments typically relying upon a trade area no larger than a 5-minute drive-time. Supermarkets, department stores, full service restaurants, and specialty retailers look to support within 10 and 15-minute drive-time markets. The theory behind the retail “opportunity” is that consumers will buy items they want and need as close to home as there are stores and restaurants available offering the desired goods and services.

Retail opportunity gaps and surpluses were considered for each of the primary, secondary and tertiary trade areas. For example, if a certain retail sector indicated a large opportunity gap in all three trade areas, it was considered as having the best potential in Downtown Turners Falls. If it showed as having only good potential in the primary trade area, then it was considered a moderate opportunity.

Based on the data, the retail analysis for the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area, there is approximately \$47 million in consumer expenditure (demand) and retail sales of \$37.1 in retail sales (supply) indicated an overall opportunity (gap) of \$9.7 million in in the primary trade area. However, this is limited

to the area within 1 mile of Ave A, and the secondary and tertiary trade areas indicate a large surplus of sales indicating that retail supply exceeds demands beyond Turners Falls. Nonetheless, the following retail sectors present opportunities:

#### BEST RETAIL POTENTIAL

- Gas/Convenience Store (44711) – Good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Clothing Stores (4481) – Good potential across all 3 trade areas particularly in women’s and family clothing.
- General Merchandise Stores (452) – Very good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Food Service and Drinking Places (722) – while full service restaurants and drinking places have limited potential, limited service and specialty restaurants have good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Furniture and Home Furnishings (442) – Have limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Electronics and Appliance Stores (443) - Have limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores (45322) - Have limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Sporting Goods, Hobbies, Books and Music Stores (451) – All have very limited potential across all 3 trade areas.

#### LEAST RETAIL POTENTIAL

- Food and Beverage Stores (445) – This sector shows a significant surplus in sales across

all 3 trade areas including grocery stores, convenience stores, and liquor stores..

- Health and Personal Care Stores (446) – This sector shows a significant surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Office Supply, Stationary and Gift Stores (4532) – This sector shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Auto Parks and Tire Stores (4413) – This sector shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Lawn, Garden Equipment and Supply (4442) – This sector shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Miscellaneous Retail Stores (453) – Such as florists and used merchandise shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.

As evidenced by the data in Table (x), there are a number of retail store types that could find Downtown Turners Falls attractive from the standpoint of capturing consumer expenditures that are now made outside of Downtown (and outside the 5-10-and 15-mile trade areas). These data are useful in efforts to recruit prospective retail stores to locate in Downtown because they show that, even with competitive establishments in the local area, there is additional spending potential by residents within the respective trade area markets to support new entrants. Each prospective retailer will need to consider the magnitude of the retail gap based on sales needed to support that specific store type, and whether their sales orientation is to a local (1-mile) or secondary (5-mile) trade area.

### Consumer Spending Patterns

The Consumer Buying Power database for the Turners Falls Downtown Trade Areas (summarized in the Table below) incorporates geography-based estimates of potential annual consumer expenditures for more than 350 household expenditure items. From this data we can determine the potential demand of consumers for products and services by geographic area regardless of where the consumers make their purchase. The database uses the Consumer Expenditure (CE) Surveys conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current-year (2012) estimates and five-year (2017) projections of potential consumer expenditures provided for the primary, secondary, and tertiary trade areas. The table also compares the buying power and spending patterns in the primary trade area

TURNERS FALLS DOWNTOWN RETAIL MARKET POTENTIAL - OPPORTUNITY GAPS 2012 - 1, 5, AND 10 MILES RADIUS FROM AVE A/5TH STREET INTERSECTION									
NAICS CODE AND DESCRIPTION	Radius 1: 0.00 - 1.00 Miles			Radius 2: 0.00 - 5.00 Miles			Radius 3: 0.00 - 10.00 Miles		
	2012 Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	2012 Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus	2012 Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	2012 Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus	2012 Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	2012 Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus
<b>Total Retail Sales, Eating and Drinking Places</b>	<b>46,935,764</b>	<b>37,168,834</b>	<b>9,766,930</b>	<b>425,733,395</b>	<b>642,918,192</b>	<b>(217,184,797)</b>	<b>762,382,720</b>	<b>804,061,763</b>	<b>(41,679,043)</b>
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers-441	6,974,774	1,650,920	5,323,854	67,831,025	144,680,331	(76,849,306)	125,745,238	162,901,853	(37,156,615)
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores-442	812,123	281,105	531,018	8,008,416	4,497,779	3,510,637	14,882,214	5,897,313	8,984,901
Electronics and Appliance Stores-443	926,747	64,104	862,643	8,759,464	4,535,461	4,224,003	16,018,818	5,183,150	10,835,668
Building Material, Garden Equip Stores -444	3,868,820	3,547,490	321,330	37,970,355	91,650,005	(53,679,650)	70,627,068	124,235,765	(53,608,697)
Food and Beverage Stores-445	7,376,827	16,210,319	(8,833,492)	62,171,793	110,912,251	(48,740,458)	107,169,148	125,401,385	(18,232,237)
Health and Personal Care Stores-446	2,609,663	8,273,554	(5,663,891)	24,205,447	78,600,055	(54,394,608)	42,623,806	92,624,765	(50,000,959)
Gasoline Stations-447	5,036,180	1,738,808	3,297,372	43,709,615	26,484,953	17,224,662	77,049,706	51,170,366	25,879,340
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores-448	2,117,401	0	2,117,401	19,453,650	8,176,632	11,277,018	35,185,650	15,704,942	19,480,708
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451	850,786	175,934	674,852	7,849,381	3,411,227	4,438,154	14,398,642	4,519,504	9,879,138
General Merchandise Stores-452	6,504,221	1,177,139	5,327,082	57,380,961	53,582,080	3,798,881	101,489,124	53,727,620	47,761,504
Miscellaneous Store Retailers-453	1,321,987	1,900,002	(578,015)	11,952,498	14,794,225	(2,841,727)	21,514,188	27,262,793	(5,748,605)
Non-Store Retailers-454	3,458,681	0	3,458,681	31,680,645	60,713,476	(29,032,831)	56,705,065	78,142,856	(21,437,791)
Foodservice and Drinking Places-722	5,077,553	2,149,458	2,928,095	44,760,145	40,879,717	3,880,428	78,974,053	57,289,450	21,684,603
<b>GAFO *</b>	<b>11,689,811</b>	<b>2,472,573</b>	<b>9,217,238</b>	<b>105,895,808</b>	<b>83,935,852</b>	<b>21,959,956</b>	<b>190,011,365</b>	<b>96,745,731</b>	<b>93,265,634</b>
General Merchandise Stores-452	6,504,221	1,177,139	5,327,082	57,380,961	53,582,080	3,798,881	101,489,124	53,727,620	47,761,504
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores-448	2,117,401	0	2,117,401	19,453,650	8,176,632	11,277,018	35,185,650	15,704,942	19,480,708
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Electronics and Appliance Stores-443	926,747	64,104	862,643	8,759,464	4,535,461	4,224,003	16,018,818	5,183,150	10,835,668
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451	850,786	175,934	674,852	7,849,381	3,411,227	4,438,154	14,398,642	4,519,504	9,879,138
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores-4532	478,532	774,290	(295,758)	4,443,935	9,732,672	(5,288,737)	8,036,917	11,713,203	(3,676,286)

\* GAFO (General merchandise, Apparel, Furniture and Other) represents sales at stores that sell merchandise normally sold in department stores. This category is not included in Total Retail Sales Including Eating and Drinking Places.

Prepared By:  
Nielsen Solution Center 1 800 866 6511  
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## Rental Market Rates

As indicated in the Strathmore Mill Feasibility Study and on-site observations, the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area has relatively low rents and fairly high vacancies (commercial and industrial). The ULI Panel on the Strathmore Mill project in 2011 conducted interviews with local stakeholders and determined that rents for industrial space run about \$3-\$3.50 per square foot triple net; for office \$6-8, and retail \$8-\$10. Rents in this range support total development costs around \$80-\$100 per square foot. Furthermore, the town is home to only 8,600 residents, which makes it difficult to attract certain uses such as retail or office. While the site is in close proximity to I-91 and State Routes 2 and 63, Greenfield is better served by the transportation network and already has existing retail.

## The Development Market

The ULI Panel in 2011 recognized that investor funding for development has been difficult to obtain for almost all markets since the downturn in the economy in 2008. Large and potential risky projects such as the Strathmore Mill are likely to have a particularly difficult time getting conventional or investor financing.

## PART II: TURNERS FALLS TOMORROW

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- Overall Vision Plan and Vision Map
- Physical Recommendations: Open Space & Recreation  
Schematic Streetscape Improvements  
Avenue A & Gateway Masterplan
- Economic Recommendations: xxx  
xxx  
xxx

**Downtown Turners Falls is a vibrant, diverse and livable community.** We value the beauty of the **Connecticut River** surrounding our village and honor her long history of providing us with food, power, transportation and recreational opportunity. We are proud of the industrial foundations that have given rise to both our **distinctive architecture** and the **hard-working, creative ethic** of our community. Our residents all have access to quality affordable housing and the ability to **walk** safely to work, school, shops, entertainment, services and recreational opportunities. A variety of centrally-located **community centers** support all our citizens - including youth, seniors, English-language learners and disadvantaged populations - through creative programming and accessible resources. A mix of **locally-owned businesses thrive** in storefronts along a **beautiful, active and pedestrian-friendly Avenue A**. Key vacant properties are re-energized with new uses that bring more people and businesses into downtown. Our unique character and lively street culture draws visitors from around the region, both on a daily basis and for special festivals and events. **Turners Falls has been a gathering spot for more than 10,000 years and today is recognized both as a welcoming live/work community as well as a recreational and cultural destination.**







## 5th Street Gateway

### EXISTING

Conflicts between pedestrians, bikes and cars.

Unclear route connecting bikepath to downtown.

No welcome sign or directional information at key gateway from Greenfield.



### POTENTIAL

Clarified bikepath and pedestrian crosswalks.

Bumpout to connect bikepath to new 5th street sidewalk and to clarify parking lot entrance.

New sidewalk along southwestern side of 5th street connects to Avenue A.

Revitalize hillside across from bridge with plantings and welcome signage providing directional information.

## Links to Unity Park: 1st Street between Bikepath and Playground

### EXISTING

No crosswalk linking Bikepath to Playground.

Cars speed along first street into town.



### POTENTIAL

Raised speed-hump, signage and blinker bollards slow traffic.

Crosswalk provides a safe route for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect from the Bikepath to the Playground and back again.





### Links to Unity Park: 3rd Street between Unity Park and Boardwalks to Uptown

#### EXISTING

Cars speed along 3rd street into downtown.

Existing crosswalk at an angle, doesn't feel safe to residents and visitors.

Feels difficult to arrive at key gateway to Unity Park.

#### POTENTIAL

Raised speed-hump, signage and blinker bollards slow traffic.

Crosswalk provides a safe route for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect from downtown along 3rd street and from Uptown into Unity Park.

### The Strathmore Mill Coal Silo: Reimagined.



#### EXISTING

The former Strathmore Mill Coal Silo sits abandoned and fenced in a prime location on the power island. The concrete structure of the silo and the surrounding building walls is sound and much debris cleanup has already been completed. The tower is visible from Route 2 as well as prominent in views entering on the Gill-Montague bridge.



#### POTENTIAL: DAYTIME SCENARIO

Naturalist in the Park - extension programs of the Discovery Center. Connecticut River Learning Laboratory for school groups.

Climb the tower for views of the Connecticut River and surrounding area.



#### POTENTIAL: NIGHTTIME SCENARIO 1

Nighttime Art Galleries, Parties, Movies.

Lights on the Tower can be seen from Route 2, drawing people into the Downtown to explore.



#### POTENTIAL: NIGHTTIME SCENARIO 2

Shakespeare in the Park and other performances - possible collaboration with the Shea Theatre or Double-Edge Theatre Company

# AVENUE A STREETScape - SCHEMATIC IMPROVEMENTS

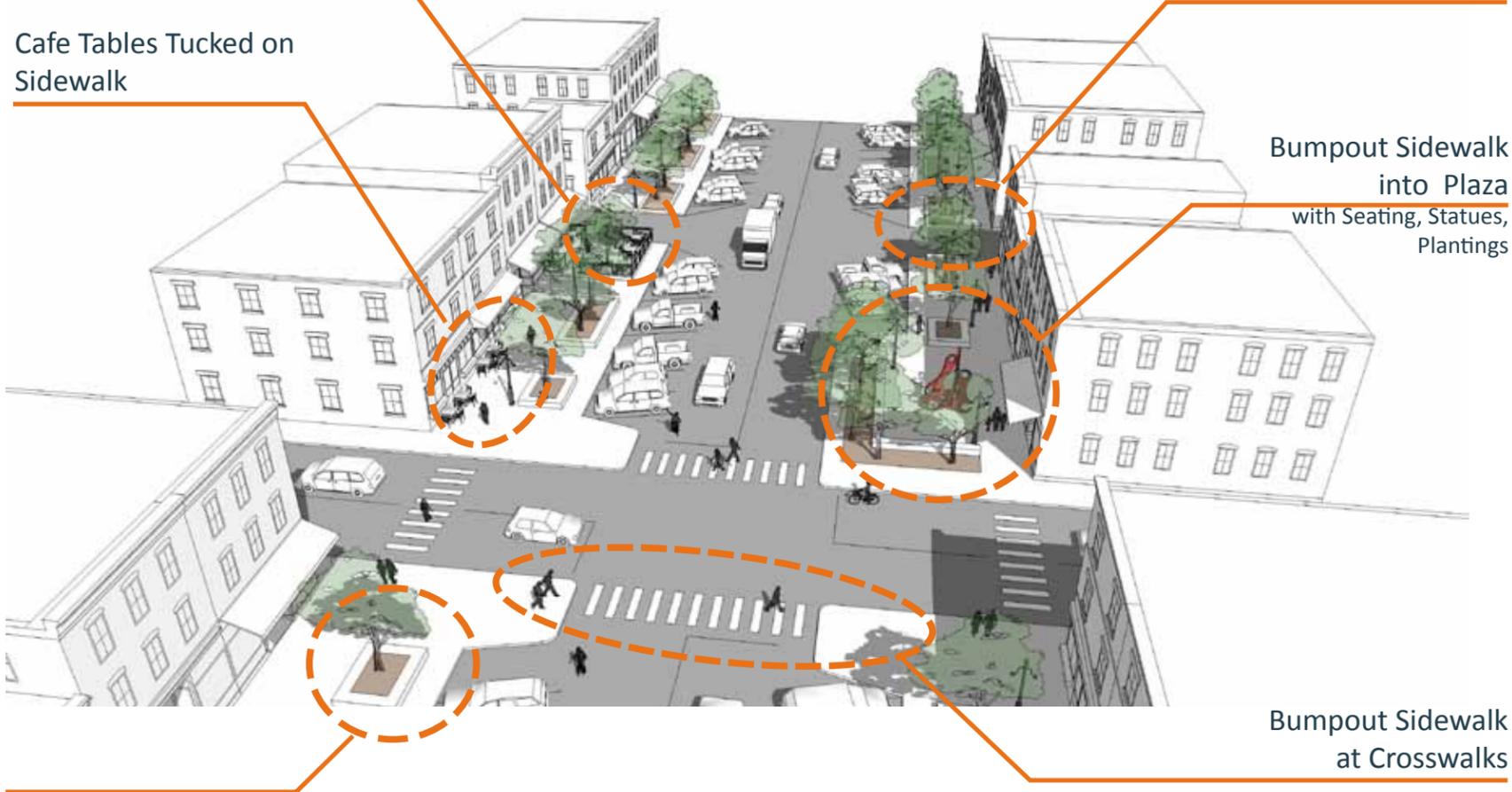


Full Sidewalk Cafe

Cafe Tables Tucked on Sidewalk

Alley Gateway Treatment

Bumpout Sidewalk into Plaza with Seating, Statues, Plantings



Raise Planters to Seatwall Height

Bumpout Sidewalk at Crosswalks

BLOCK 1 - Existing Conditions



EXISTING Block 1 - Aerial

Uniform Planters and sidewalk treatment.  
Long crosswalk for pedestrians.



EXISTING Block 1 - Streetview

Uniform sidewalk experience with long, unbroken views.  
Planter mounds make planting difficult and walls are too low for seating.  
No place to "rest".

BLOCK 1 - Potential

POTENTIAL Block 1 - Aerial

Partial sidewalk cafe tucked into space next to storefront and full sidewalk cafe taking over planter space.  
One planter removed, others raised to meet top of mound and provide seatwall.  
Crosswalk bumpout shortens length of crossing for pedestrians.



POTENTIAL Block 1 - Streetview

View along sidewalk now is varied - sense of something different happening beyond.  
Cafes enliven street culture.  
Seatwalls provide plenty of places to rest.



## BLOCK 2 - Existing Conditions



EXISTING Block 2 - Aerial

Uniform Planters and sidewalk treatment.  
Long crosswalk for pedestrians.

## BLOCK 2 - Potential



POTENTIAL Block 2 - Aerial

Sidewalk extends into parking palces to provide place for seating, plantings and public art.  
Increased bike parking.  
Planters altered to accommodate seatwall.



EXISTING Block 2 - Streetview

Uniform sidewalk experience with long, unbroken views.  
Planter mounds make planting difficult and walls are too low for seating.  
No place to "rest".

POTENTIAL Block 2 - Streetview

View along sidewalk now is varied - sense of something different happening beyond.  
Public art enliven street culture.  
Seatwalls provide plenty of places to rest, as well as watch, eat, etc.



### ALLEY GATEWAY - Existing



#### EXISTING Alley Gateway- Aerial

Uniform Planters and sidewalk treatment.  
No definition of pedestrian and vehicular space.

### ALLEY GATEWAY - Potential



#### POTENTIAL Alley Gateway - Aerial

Bumpout sidewalk to provide buffer from street and increased places for planting. Doing so sacrifices no parking spaces.  
Raise paving at alley to meet sidewalk - clarity for vehicles that they are crossing pedestrian space.  
Remove a planter to create space for benches, food carts, street performances, sidewalk sales, etc.



#### EXISTING Alley Gateway - Streetview

Dangerous crossings, not clearly visible for pedestrians.  
Pedestrians step off curb into vehicular space.  
No buffer from street.

#### POTENTIAL Alley Gateway - Streetview

Raised paving at alley but different texture sends message that the alley crosses but is still pedestrian space.  
Removed planter makes room for benches, food carts or other sidewalk events.



# AVENUE A MASTERPLAN

Scale 1" = 160'



Existing Buildings   
Potential Infill Buildings 

Detail A - Pages 53-54



Detail B - Pages 55-56

Detail C - Pages 57-58



Detail D - Pages 59-60

**DOWNTOWN TURNERS FALLS**  
Montague, Massachusetts  
Prepared by Dodson & Flinker, Inc.  
Landscape Architecture and Planning  
80 Main Street, Northfield, MA 01060  
January 2013, 2012  
Scale 1" = 80'  
Map from the Town of Montague and West 01, April 2009 Aerial Orthorectification

Legend  
- - - Candidate Blue Path  
- - - - - Potential Boundary  
- - - - - Potential Foundation











