Preferred Development Alternatives and Recommended Design Strategies

Southampton Commons - 0 College Highway, Southampton, MA



Catalyst for Regional Progress
PVPC

DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Existing Conditions

This base map was prepared by tracing over portions of an orthophoto from MassGIS to create a simplified map of existing features, including roads (white), buildings (grey), forested areas (dark green) and open fields and lawn areas (light green). Please note that both this plan and the subsequent development options are presented with the north arrow pointed to the lower left – showing the site "as seen from Route 10."

For more information about existing conditions and the site assessment, please see previous presentations.



Development Alternatives:

Many different schemes were developed for arranging the desired program of uses on the site, including a new public safety complex, senior center, housing, and commercial uses, along with trails and open space. The final options presented below represent the schemes that the committee felt best achieved the town's objectives while being as efficient and cost-effective as possible.

Option A: Village Focus with Senior Center and Public Safety Complex on West Side

In Option A, the Public Safety complex is located to the right of the main entry road, and shares parking with the senior center. Commercial and/or mixed-use buildings are located to the left, with residential uses arrayed around a central park or town green. A multi-use path leads down the slope to the east and south, past the existing open field and through the woods to connect to the proposed Southampton Greenway. Walking trails loop through the open space surrounding the village.



Option B: Village Focus with Senior Center and Public Safety Complex on East Side

This alternative places the public safety complex on the east side of the entry road (to the left in this plan view). Commercial and/or mixed-use buildings are located to the right. The senior center is placed at the north end of the village green, with housing clustered to the south.

The committee noted that both options A and B allow the senior center and public safety building to share access and parking, as well as a possible shared septic system. Both schemes also allow separate lots to easily be split off for commercial and residential uses while minimizing total road length and walking distance between different elements.

Please see following pages for more detailed images of each alternative.



Option A: Senior Center and Public Safety on the West Side.



Option B: Senior Center and Public Safety on the East Side



Southampton Commons Design Strategies

① **Village Design:** The new neighborhood is laid out as a compact, walkable village, with new buildings and parking areas clustered on an area of about 16 acres at the northwest corner of the property, including 4-5 acres of internal parks and other open spaces. That means that about 25.5 of the entire 41.5 acre parcel can be preserved as open space, amounting to over 60% of the site. Within the development area, streets are no wider than necessary, and parking areas are laid out efficiently to reduce the total amount of pavement – limiting environmental impacts and making the project cheaper to build and maintain over time.

② **Traditional Village Street**: A new street provides shared access to the property for all users. This will limit turning movements on and off College Highway to a single point to improve safety. This is designed as a traditional street, lined with sidewalks and street trees. It loops through the site, providing access to each of the various parcels. It can be laid out as a separate subdivision street to provide individual frontage for private residential or commercial parcels. The public right of way could continue to join Lynn Drive, allowing for a connection to existing water service lines there. To limit traffic impacts on Lynn Drive, any actual road connection would be for emergency access only.

③ **A Village Green** provides a visual and functional focus that unifies the surrounding civic, commercial and residential uses while providing space for informal recreation, community gatherings and other uses. Depending on soil conditions, this can also provide space for stormwater infiltration or shared septic drain fields. Public sidewalks and walking paths line the periphery of the space, shaded by a continuous tree canopy.

④ **Open Space and Trails:** with much of the site preserved as open space, there are many opportunities to create natural surface trails. These could be laid out in what is sometimes called a stacked loop system, with shorter and more gently sloping trails close to the edge of the village and more challenging loops extending down the slope to the rail trail and beyond it to the Manhan River. Some of these could be simple forest trails constructed using existing soils, others could be improved with a crushed stone surface to provide accessibility for people with disabilities, older folks, families with young children in strollers, etc. Trails would be laid out to provide an interesting experience incorporating restored meadows, forested areas with large trees, and viewpoints looking out over the valley. Along the rail trail there are opportunities to view the remains of the historic canal.



Southampton Commons Design Strategies

⑤ **The Public Safety Building** floor plan and general parking requirements are taken from preliminary plans developed by the Public Safety Building Committee with the help of another consultant. One of the key requirements is direct access to College Highway, and in these scenarios that means it could be located either north or south of the main entrance. In either case trees and landscaping help to mitigate the visual impact of the structure, and to the extent possible, parking areas are placed in the rear. Part of the parking lot could be shared with the senior center, making efficient use of the pavement. Landscaped islands and areas along the parking lots could serve as rain gardens and bioswales.

⑥ **The Senior Center** is given pride of place overlooking the village green, and could be located on either the east or west side of the village. In both cases it could be on the same parcel as the public safety building, and could share parking and wastewater treatment facilities. There is ample space for an outdoor terrace, community gardens and other open space adjacent to the building. There could also be an accessible trail leading from the senior center, looping around the open space, and connecting to a larger network of trails on the property and the Southampton Greenway.

Like the public safety building, the building design, footprint and parking totals are based on a preliminary plan developed for the Senior Center Building Committee by another consultant. The building as shown may not fit perfectly with the given site, access to parking, etc. As the plan is revised to fit a chosen site the final location of entrances, windows and outdoor spaces can be optimized to take advantage of the chosen location.

⑦ **An extension of the Southampton Greenway Trail** follows the route of a former farm lane from the northwest corner of the new village south through the open space to connect to the rail trail at the southwest corner of the property. It appears possible to lay this out at no more than a 5% grade, making the path safer for bicyclists and allowing it to meet accessibility standards. This would likely be a paved asphalt trail, 10 feet wide to match the Greenway Trail layout – though it could also be done with a narrower cross section and a crushed stone surface to reducecosts. Parking and a trailhead kiosk could be located at the northeast edge of the village.



Southampton Commons Design Strategies

⑧ **Townhouse Neighborhood:** 45 townhouses are clustered on 4-5 acres on the south side of the town green, with vehicular access from a quiet residential street that loops through the property and connects to other uses. The new homes will likely be built on a separate parcel and served by their own shared septic system, which is limited by Title 5 to a total flow of 10,000 gallon-per-day. At a design-flow of 110 gallons per bedroom per day, that amounts to 45 two-bedroom units on average (there would likely be a mix of 1,2 and 3 bedroom units).

In these scenarios, each home has a private entrance on the street side, with a driveway leading to a one-car garage integrated into the building. Depending on the builder and market demand, garages may not be included. In that case there is room for head-in parking along the edge of the street in front of each unit. A continuous sidewalk parallel to the street leads to walkways to a private entrance for each home, framed by trees and other landscaping. Each unit also could have a quiet patio space on the opposite side of the building facing out on shared open space. In some cases this is a shared garden or courtyard; other homes look out to the woods.

Each home has an exclusive use space that includes an individual driveway, entry walk and stoop, and a private patio. These private spaces are separated from shared public spaces by sidewalks or walking paths, lined with fences and/or hedges, perennials or other low plantings. Trees are planted around each structure, close enough to eventually form a continuous canopy. This can include a combination of taller shade trees where shade is needed, and smaller flowering trees to allow more sun, create privacy, and attract wildlife.

⑨ **Commercial and Mixed-Use Neighborhood:** Another separate parcel could be set aside along the College Highway frontage for several mixed-use buildings. These could have shops, restaurants, or other businesses on the ground floor and apartments on upper stories. Parking is kept to the rear of the buildings and accessed through shared driveways to limit the number of curb cuts. This creates a more continuous pedestrian area along the street and between buildings, opening up opportunities for outdoor dining, displays, gardens and landscaping. Existing vegetation, including the large oak trees along the edge of Route 10, could likely be retained as part of the project.



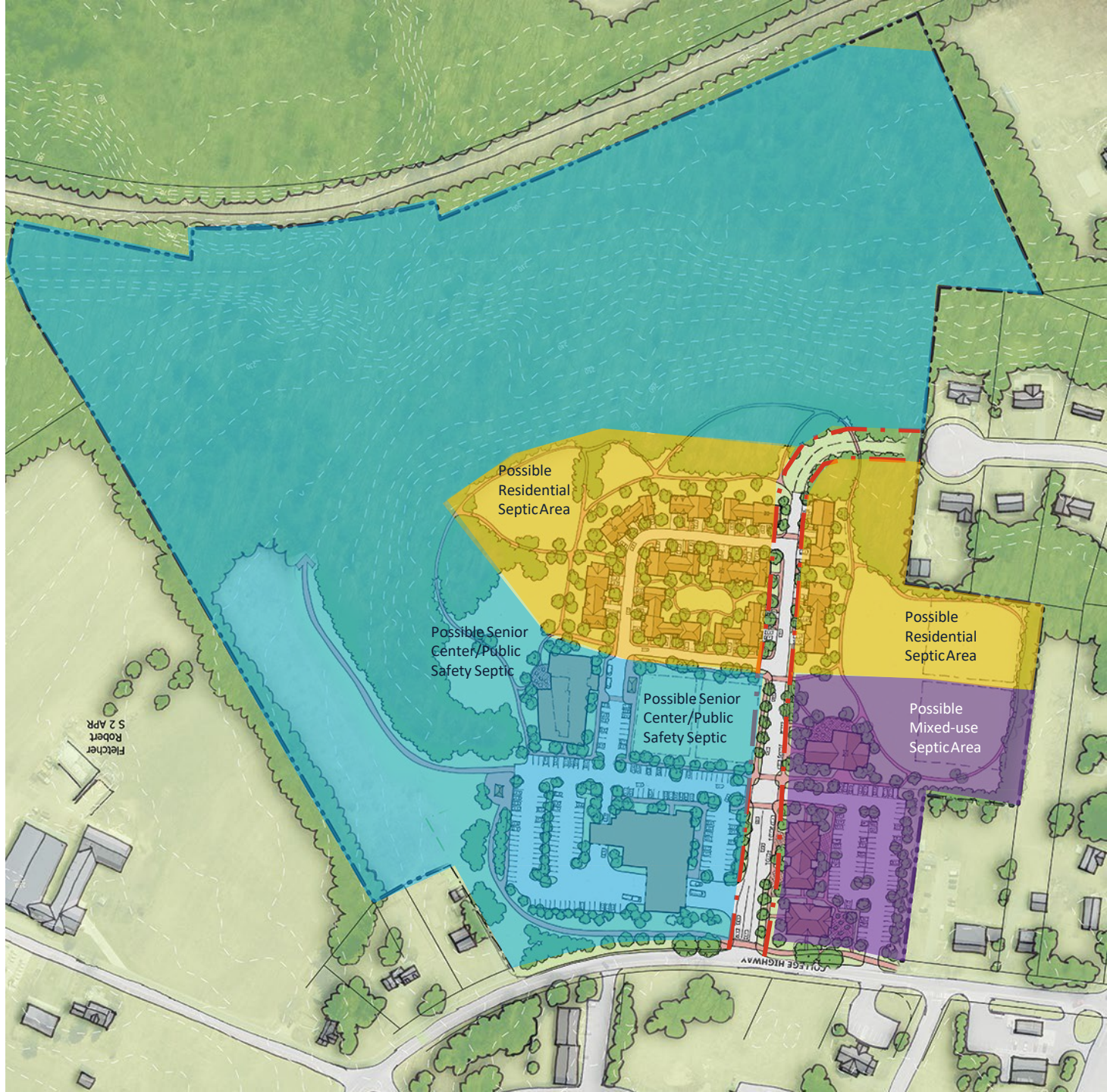
Southampton Commons Design Strategies

⑩ **Subdivision Options:** The new village will likely include both private and public ownership of separate lots. Public properties would include the road right-of-way and a single lot or multiple lots for the public safety complex, senior center, conservation land and recreational amenities, including the greenway connector and other trails. The commercial and/or mixed-use elements will likely be sold as a separate parcel to a private developer, and another developer would take control of a parcel for the residential area.

One way to divide the parcel would be through a subdivision plan that would establish a new town road, off of which each of the new parcels would get its required access and frontage (if applicable under zoning). This could extend from College Highway to Lynn Drive (whether or not the connection is paved), allowing for water and other utilities to be connected to existing lines on Lynn Drive.

Separate parcels for each use would require enough area to meet zoning requirements and provide room for septic drain fields and stormwater management. In the map shown at right, this could be configured as two residential lots (yellow) totaling about 7 acres; a commercial or mixed-use lot (purple) of around 3.75 acres, and the town facilities lot (blue) of about 30.75 acres.

Since on-site wastewater disposal will likely be required, however, the boundaries and lot size of each parcel may need to be adjusted to meet the requirements of Title 5. Because the entire site is within the Zone II wellhead protection area, it is designated a “nitrogen sensitive area” and there is a limit of 440 gallons of wastewater per 40,000 square feet of lot area. The 41.5 acre property can therefore support wastewater flow of almost 20,000 gallons per day – more than enough to support the entire development program. While Title 5 does allow all uses to be aggregated across the entire parcel, if the ownership is divided it may be necessary to reconfigure the lots so that each one contains 40,000 square feet of area for each 440 gallons of wastewater. For example, a residential development with 40 2-beroom units could require its own 22.5 acre lot. There does not appear to be a problem complying with that provision, if it is required.



Southampton Commons Design Strategies

Conceptual Lot Layout, Option A: This plan shows a potential layout for lot lines that would allow each property to include the necessary nitrogen loading area. This assumes that lots on either side of the roadway, but in the same ownership, could be aggregated for the purposed of calculating nitrogen loading. Road right of ways vary from 50-60 feet wide and should comply with the town's subdivision regulations.



Conceptual Lot Layout, Option B: Both plans also incorporate the potential areas for wastewater treatment systems within the boundary of the respective lots, along with suitable area for stormwater management systems.



View From North: Existing Conditions



View From North: Option A



View From North: Option B




View From South: Existing Conditions


View From South: Option A


View From South: Option B



View From College Highway: Existing Conditions


View From College Highway: Option A


View From College Highway: Option B


View From Northwest: Option B



Sidewalk and Café Spaces along Entry Road – Facing South



Homes and Private Yards, Public Path and Village Green



View of Homes Across Village Green



Homes Fronting Village Green



Interior Courtyard



Residential Street Providing Vehicle Access to Homes



Trailhead Facilities at Start of the Greenway Connector

Southampton Commons Design Principles

Many different masterplan alternatives were explored over the course of a series of committee meetings and two public workshops. What emerged from this process were two preferred options, both of which feature a roughly equal amount of building floor area, roads, parking and open space, arranged in different ways.

Keep in mind that neither of them shows exactly what will eventually get built. Plans for the Senior Center and Public Safety building will continue to change as plans evolve and the budgets get clearer. The residential and mixed-use sections will also likely change to reflect the needs of the private developers who will purchase those parcels from the town.

What the plans do demonstrate, however, is the town's preferred approach to designing a walkable village on the site; including the layout of streets and sidewalks; the location of buildings and parking areas, the relationship of buildings to streets and open spaces; and the design of parks and other open space elements.

Regardless of the final size, shape and mix of different uses on the site, the following design principles describe the town's preferred approach to overall organization of these different elements, as well as the design of each of their component parts.



Organize the Village Around the "Public Realm" of Streets, Parks and Greenways.

One of the reasons traditional villages work is they are easy to understand and find your way around. Mixed-use village centers need to have a clear visual structure or they become difficult to navigate and visually chaotic. A coherent and legible network of streets, sidewalks, parks and other public spaces uses creates a structure within which uses can vary without causing confusion.

- Create networks of interconnect streets to make circulation more efficient, reduce the concentration of traffic, and create more frontage for mixed-use development.
- Locate parks in the centers of activity areas: in the center of a neighborhood or commercial area, and/or in the center of the village surrounded by a mix of uses.
- Orient buildings to streets, parks and pedestrian spaces to tie them into the overall pattern. Line the edges of streets, parks and squares with buildings to create a comfortable sense of enclosure.
- Connect open spaces together to create movement corridors for people and wildlife.
- Coordinate connected green spaces and corridors with the stormwater management plan.
- Establish interconnected trail networks that link developed areas to natural areas and natural areas to each other
- Locate sidewalks and paths to reinforce the pattern of streets and public spaces, and line them with shade trees to enhance physical and psychological comfort.



Use a Compact, Efficient Form that Conserves Resources Now and in the Future

Walkable villages developed long before people had cars, in times when people had little choice but to be as efficient as possible. Following the same principles, a compact new village will cost less to build and maintain in the long run, and use less energy, allowing the community to save money and focus resources on adding amenities that make life better for everyone.

- Build 2-3 story buildings and locate them close to each other so that buildings relate to each other instead of standing on their own. This creates a sense of place, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
- Balance increased density with a rich assortment of shared parks, playgrounds and naturalized open space both within and surrounding the village.
- Direct the cost savings from compact development toward providing higher quality materials in buildings, and the public realm. For example, build higher quality sidewalks and install more landscaping and street furniture.
- Design for renewable energy production and to minimize building energy use.



In this visualization of Option B, mixed-use buildings in the foreground are linked to other uses in the village with continuous, tree-shaded sidewalks, inviting people to park once (or leave their car at home) and enjoy and easy, safe and comfortable walk around the village.

Design Buildings that Reflect Southampton's Built Heritage

Like the villages and town centers where they are still found in abundance, traditional New England buildings evolved over time to meet the needs of people living and working in a particular place. Broad seasonal swings in climate, the availability of local wood and stone, and a skilled labor pool combined with the architectural traditions of the old world to create a consistent approach to building that lasted for centuries. While contemporary design and materials may be appropriate for key structures, Southampton residents prefer architecture that learns from and reflects local traditions.

- Use relatively simple building forms that reflect historic precedents in Southampton, like rambling farmsteads, mills, and historic houses.
- Combine smaller masses into larger ones to make it look like buildings have grown over time and maintain visual interest and diversity. Break up large roofs with variations in roof planes and the addition of cross gables, hips, dormers and porches.
- Use locally appropriate materials like wood and brick, or alternative materials with equivalent visual texture, and proven durability.
- Ensure that buildings have attractive, clearly visible entrances along streets. Storefronts should have large transparent windows that reveal the interior of the space. Upper stories should have adequate windows to provide light and air into the interior and maintain the visual interest of the building facade.



Visualization of farmhouse style townhouses as seen across the green. Gabled roofs, porches and dormers reflect local architectural traditions.





Village Hill in Northampton was designed to combine a mix of single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, and other uses. Many buildings adopt a simple farmhouse style with functional elements like porches, fences, hedges and landscaping that helps to make a compact neighborhood very livable.







Three different projects on Cape Cod illustrate how even deeply subsidized affordable housing can be designed with an eye to fitting into a context of an historic small town.

Provide Diverse Housing Choices for Every Stage of Life.

In Southampton, as in many towns in the region, there is an abundance of large single-family houses, but not enough housing appropriate for smaller households and seniors. Whether or not it qualifies as affordable, having a mix of housing types and sizes makes is more likely that the town's residents can find the housing they need.

- Include a variety of building types, including apartments over commercial spaces and townhouses arranged in groups ranging from two to five units.
- Provide a variety of unit sizes and levels of finish quality to meet the need for a range of price points for market rate units.
- Provide affordable housing and intersperse it throughout a development project so that it is indistinguishable from market rate units



Visualization of farmhouse style townhouses as shown in Option A. These could also be configured as small apartments.



Affordable apartments in Brookline, designed to feel like a single large estate or manor house



A mixed-use building in Manchester, with apartments over ground floor office and restaurant uses.

Build According to the Principles of Universal Design

Universal Design refers to the design of buildings, products or environmental to make them accessible to people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors. It goes beyond the legal requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to simply say that everything should be designed to make it as easy as possible to use. A trail system that is firm and level enough for a wheelchair, for example, will also be welcoming to an older person using a cane, a family with a stroller, or a free-range toddler. Southampton Commons will be designed and built from the ground up, providing a unique opportunity to maximize accessibility and ease of use. This can include:

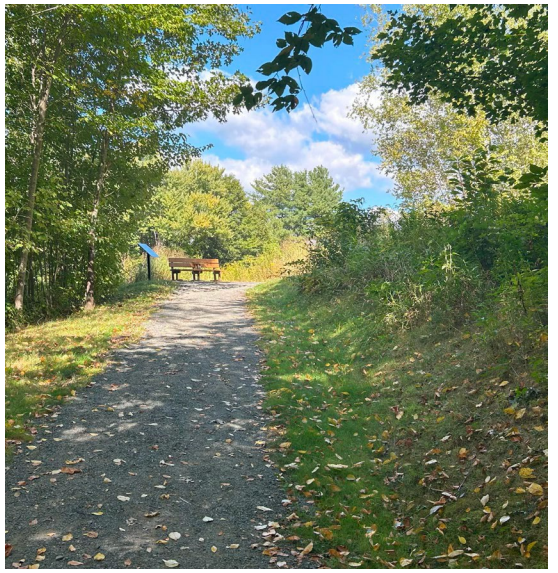
- Providing at-grade entrances to buildings that minimize the need for accessible ramps and railings.
- Providing a seamless, interconnected system of sidewalks, entry walks and recreational trails that work with site grading and building heights to provide easy access to each part of the village.
- Separating vehicles from pedestrians as much as possible to make it easier for young and old to get around, and making street crossings safe and visible.
- Providing some single-level, fully-ADA accessible units, as well as including universal design features that make every home and business space easier to use.
- Including people with the lived experience of a disability in the planning and design of each part of the village.



With care, the entire pedestrian system – including access to the ground floor of homes and businesses – can be designed without steps, allowing safe access everywhere.



A Universal Design approach means paying attention to features that go beyond the strict requirements of ADA and focus on improving comfort and safety for everyone: outdoors, that means providing amenities like legible signage to help people navigate, and lighting, benches, shade and attractive landscaping.



A specialized mix of compacted crushed stone can provide a firm accessible surface for a trail that still feels like part of nature

Promote Walking and Biking:
Cars are Welcome, but Should Not Dominate the Environment.

Private automobiles will likely continue as the principal form of transportation in our daily lives for the foreseeable future. Considering the location and limited access to public transportation, most people living and working at Southampton Commons will rely on a car. But with careful design and coordination among uses, cars can take a back seat to pedestrians once they reach the village itself.

- Minimize the width of vehicle travel lanes to slow traffic
- Provide on street parking to separate traffic from sidewalks, make parking convenient, and reduce the need for large parking lots.
- Provide wide sidewalks with ample street furniture, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and a complete canopy of street trees.
- Ensure that street crossings are safe for pedestrians, through the use of techniques like curb bump-outs, at grade crosswalks and/or rapid flash beacons.
- Provide a continuous network of pedestrian routes, including sidewalks and walking paths, connecting every structure and public amenity.
- Create a network of comfortable routes for bicyclists of all ages and abilities, and ensure a safe and easy-to-use connection from the existing path on College Highway to the future Southampton Greenway Trail.
- Reduce the visual and environmental impacts of parking lots by placing them behind buildings, sharing access drives, and providing trees and landscaping to reduce heat and absorb stormwater. Connect parking lots together to ease circulation and reduce the number of curb cuts, and share parking between different uses to make more efficient use of space.



A visualization of the main entry road shows how wide sidewalks, bike lanes and shared outdoor space can invite people to walk or ride a bike.



A visualization of potential facilities at the start of the greenway connector trail: accessible parking, restrooms, seating, signage and landscaping support use by everyone.

Connect to the Surrounding Landscape and Enhance Ecological Functions

One of the benefits of building a more compact, efficient village is that more than 60% of the site can be preserved as open space. The selected location of the village in the northwest corner of the site increases the benefit of this approach, limiting fragmentation of existing open space that continues across property lines to the Fletcher Farm to the east, and the Manhan River corridor to the south. Careful design of the new village can enhance the resulting benefits:

- Take advantage of existing cleared, recently overgrown and disturbed areas, while avoiding clearing of areas with older forest to reduce ecological impacts.
- Preserve farmland adjacent to farmland on neighboring parcels.
- Connect green spaces into larger greenways, considering corridors for wildlife for climate-driven species migration, and protection of waterways and core habitats.
- Plant regionally-appropriate native and naturalized plant species to reinforce the local sense of place and provide habitat for local insects and wildlife. Specify plants that are appropriate to the environment in which they will be planted to minimize the need for irrigation, fertilization, and pesticides.
- Utilize a low impact development (LID) approach to stormwater management: preserve natural drainage ways and infiltration areas; use small-scale stormwater management practices to slow runoff and infiltrate it as close to its source as possible; use bioretention areas, bioswales, and other LID practices.





Landscaped areas in parking lots and along streets can serve double duty with the incorporation of stormwater collection and treatment systems that put water back into the ground close to the source.



Restored meadow at Mt. Tom North Trailhead Park in Easthampton



There is plenty of space and good soils on the site to support community gardens, or even small farm allotments. Organically-managed gardens are great for pollinators and enhance human health.

Provide publicly accessible open spaces and recreational opportunities.

Open spaces should be planned intentionally so that the space between every building, road and parking lot has a dedicated and productive use. This can include formal parks, informal recreation spaces with lawns, community gardens and orchards, and naturalized areas of meadow and forest. To the extent possible, open space should perform multiple functions, so that spaces with septic drain fields or stormwater infiltration chambers are also available for recreation.

- Provide diverse public open spaces. Parks should range from small pocket parks to larger greens, squares, and natural open spaces. Provide spaces for both active and passive uses. Provide parks with a range of micro-climates--spaces that trap heat for winter use, and spaces with cooling breezes and shade for summer.
- Locate public open spaces in prominent locations with welcoming entrances. Locate private open spaces further from activity areas with entrances that are connected to private spaces.
- Use paths, fences, hedges and landscaping to create a clear separation between private yards and public spaces like streets and parks.



In a well-designed village it's easy to find your way around and there are well-defined paths. Public and private spaces are clearly marked and separated by fences and landscaping.

