# Site & Architectural Design Study for the Conversion of Parking Lots

Manchester, CT

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# Preface

The Town government and administration have been active partners with the Downtown Manchester Special Services District (SSD) since the SSD's inception in 1991. Both partners have worked to improve the physical appearance and business climate of this historic central business district. We have pursued the long-term goal of increasing investment, development, and activity in the downtown to ensure it remains a vibrant and successful center of the community.

The Town and the SSD recognize there are two obvious ways to encourage development. One is to encourage reinvestment and adaptive reuse of the existing buildings. While most of the ground floor spaces on Main Street are occupied, significant upper floors and some lower floors are not occupied or are under occupied. The Town has offered property tax assessment agreements and façade improvement grants to help stimulate physical improvements to these buildings, but ultimately the property owner must be willing to make the substantial investment necessary for renovation and seek tenants to fill them. Some owners are unable, or unwilling, to pursue this kind of investment for personal or economic reasons. Both the Town and the SSD stand ready to help these property owners or investors in any way we can.

Another strategy is to encourage new development, and the Town as a property owner can use its real estate assets for that purpose. Manchester owns several parking lots in the downtown area. Three of those lots represent underused assets (see attachment A), and perhaps provide an opportunity to secure development partners to build new buildings and bring new uses to the downtown.

Given the desire to increase development and investment in the Downtown and the fact that these municipal parking lots are underused, the Town commissioned this <u>Site and Architectural Design Study for the Conversion of Parking Lots</u> to explore what types and sizes of buildings and parking would be possible given the Town's existing zoning regulations. The consultants, Crosskey Architects, LLC with Ferrero Hixon Associates, landscape architects, were asked to provide three different scenarios for each lot: one with as much building as possible, one with a building and all of its required (by the zoning regulations) parking on the lot, and one with a mix of building and some parking. A steering committee was formed to provide guidance and feedback to the consultants.

We believe the results of the study indicate there are exciting opportunities to develop each of these lots in a way that would enhance Downtown architecturally and economically, adding people and activity to create a more vibrant place. Some of the development options can be built within our current zoning regulations, while others may require regulation amendments.

This report recommends preferred site development options and uses. We caution this was not a market or real estate analysis, but a design and zoning analysis. If there is support for developing these municipal properties, the Board of Directors must decide whether to solicit proposals for a preferred developer or for a specific development project for any or all of these lots. We recognize that soliciting successful proposals depends on the economic climate, but we also recognize one way to gauge the feasibility of a project is to solicit proposals and make a decision based on the responses received.





# Preface continued

The Town should not consider selling these real estate assets as a way to generate cash, but instead as a longer-term investment in the downtown and the community. Selling these properties at nominal cost, or through a long-term land lease, and providing real estate and personal property tax incentives could provide significant financial incentives to help secure the type of development the Town would like to see. New development may encourage owners of other downtown properties to invest in improvements, or encourage new investors to buy existing buildings, further revitalizing the district.

One final observation: One of the reasons the parking lots are currently underused, with the notable exception of the Purnell Place parking lot, is that there are considerable vacancies on the upper floors of buildings. If the Town is successful over the next several years in developing its municipal parking lots and attracting more businesses and people to the downtown, and if current or future property owners are successful in filling their vacant upper floors, we may have a real parking shortage in the district. The 1991 Downtown Strategic Plan envisioned that, in such an event, the Town could build a one-level parking deck over the Purnell Place lot with improved connections to Main Street. None of us can be certain how soon development and redevelopment in the downtown would occur, and thus, this is not an immediate need. However, if we begin to see significant success in the revitalization of Downtown, there are possibilities to increase parking to accommodate this success without the need for property acquisition or any disruption to either Main Street or the historic East Side or West Side neighborhoods.

#### **Steering Committee**

Tana Parseliti, Downtown Manager
Bernie Apter, Economic Development Commission
John B. Sayre, Economic Development Commission
Marty Fins, Special Services District
Don Dubaldo, Special Services District
Mark Pellegrini, Director of Neighborhood Services and Economic Development
James Williams, Public Works Project Manager
James Mayer, Traffic Engineer
Mark Carlino, Director of Public Works
Gary Anderson, Senior Planner



# Introduction

Crosskey Architects LLC and Ferrero Hixon Associates were hired by the Town of Manchester to provide a planning study for three Town owned sites, 1050 Main Street, 19 Birch Street and 53 Cottage Street. All three sites are currently used as surface parking lots and it is the Town's desire to evaluate possible development options and determine preferred solutions to encourage and stimulate the highest and best use of these parcels.

Our approach was divided into the three parts. First we gathered information on existing conditions and developed alternative concept plans for each site. Next, a preferred concept plan was chosen and more specific plans developed. The final part of the study produced a rendering of a building for each site to illustrate potential development.



# Part One

The first part of the project involved a review of the area encompassed by each of the three sites. We gathered all available information and diagrammatically illustrated current uses of each of the three subject parcels, the number of parking spaces provided, the size and zone of each parcel, and on-street and surface parking available within a two minute walking distance.

We then studied the surrounding urban fabric relative to each site's relationship to downtown land uses, pedestrian circulation paths from parking to services, available parking, and way finding, linkages, access points and other similar factors. A further evaluation of parking included anticipated absorption and zoning requirements based on specific uses.

Individual site plans were created from available information showing existing site conditions, boundaries and topography. Photographs of adjacent building exteriors were taken to illustrate height, materials, use, style, scale, etc.

Following the compilation and analysis of the above information, each site was studied for conceptual highest and best use site development options. The consultant team and the steering committee reached an early consensus that the highest and best uses, and those most desirable for the Downtown, would be a mix of retail, service, and restaurant uses on the ground floors and market rate or mixed-income housing on upper floors. The former uses are preferred because they would add business activity and put "feet on the street". The latter is preferred because adding new market rate residences would create a more 24-hour Downtown, take most advantage of the existing public infrastructure, put "eyes on the street", and create more pedestrian activity and support Main Street businesses.

We also recognize there are significant challenges, both construction and financial, to converting formerly commercial spaces on the upper floors of historic buildings to residential use. We believe the owners of those buildings may find it more financially feasible to convert upper floors to uses that do not change use classifications, and thus avoid the sometimes significant expenses of meeting building and fire codes for the mixed-uses that may result.

Parking was discussed relative to the practical needs of the proposed uses compared to the parking required by the zoning regulations. Based on Town and consultant generated downtown public parking analysis, it was concluded required parking for residential uses should be provided on-site if possible, but for commercial uses the parking requirement could be met through a combination of on-site and public spaces on the street and in nearby surface lots.





# Part One continued

Three concept schemes for each site were presented. Each scheme illustrates a general building size, use and location, parking and open space. From these diagrams a preferred option was chosen for further development. In general the options chosen maximize the highest and best use of the parcels and promote uses, scale and density of development which compliment the surrounding context.

#### 1050 Main Street

This site is characterized by its frontage on Main Street which, based on the analysis of its context, may support ground floor commercial space with housing above. The three concept options are shown on the Main Street Diagram plans. Option C was determined to be the most desirable because of its corner plaza, on street parking, building length stretched along Main Street to maintain the pedestrian streetscape, ground floor commercial with residential above, and limited parking at the rear of the site. Additional investigation will be required to determine the viability of having parking in the basement of the building if that is desirable. The option of providing parking above the first floor commercial space for residential units was also explored.

#### 19 Birch Street

The Birch Street site is located one lot east of Main Street. Although not directly fronting Main Street, it was determined that commercial land uses may be successful in this location. Residential use on the ground floor in this location would be more challenging. Increased noise and traffic from Main Street makes this area less desirable for living space. However, raising the residential space above the street by raising the first floor three feet above grade, or locating all of the residential space on upper floors with commercial below, would make residential uses more attractive here.

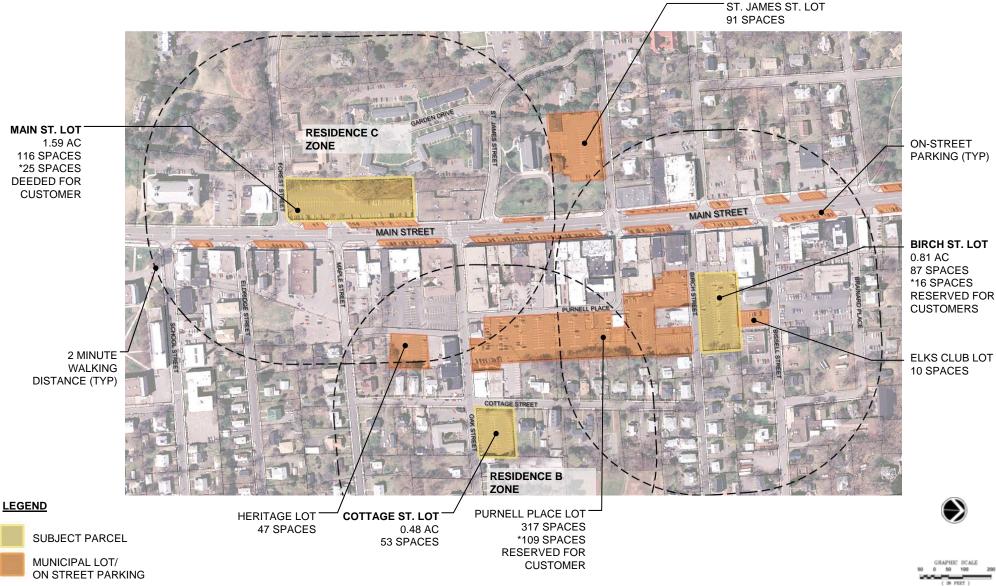
Of the three options shown on the <u>Birch Street Diagram</u> Option B was preferred. This option maximizes the use of the site with a building that is three stories at the street, but two stories over surface parking at the rear. The required parking for the residential uses on the upper floors is provided at ground level but behind street-front commercial space. Commercial parking can be provided in the seldom-used northern portion of the Purnell lot across the street.

#### 53 Cottage Street

This site is the quietest of the three and based on its distance from the downtown and the surrounding residential uses, should be developed as residential. A number of residential development scenarios were presented and Option B chosen (see <u>Cottage Street Diagram</u>) because it most closely fit the neighborhood context with respect to building size, scale and site use. The residential building would be located along the Oak Street edge of the site with vehicle access from both Cottage Street and Oak Street. Parking is located to the rear of the building.

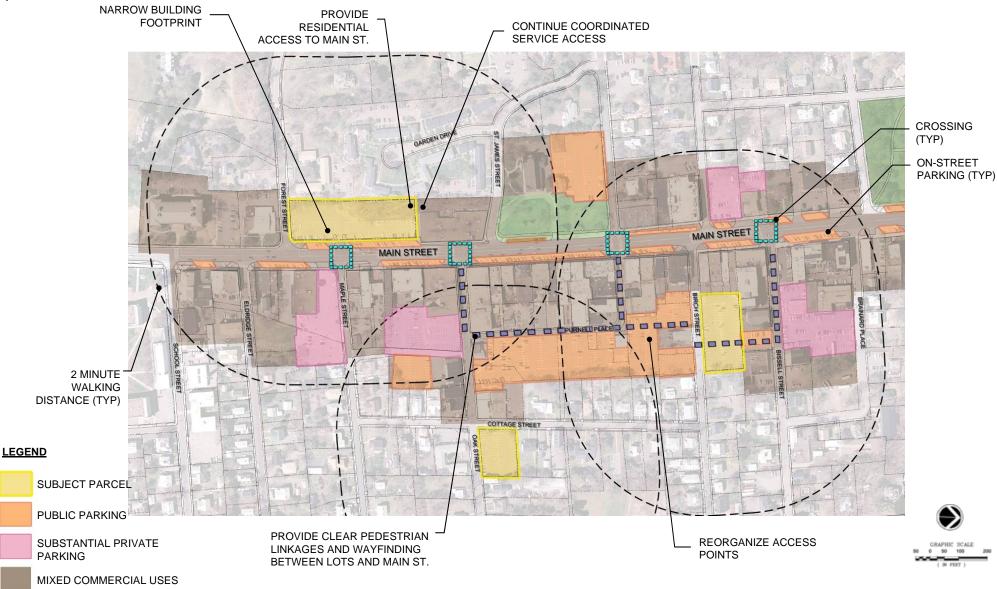


Key Plan

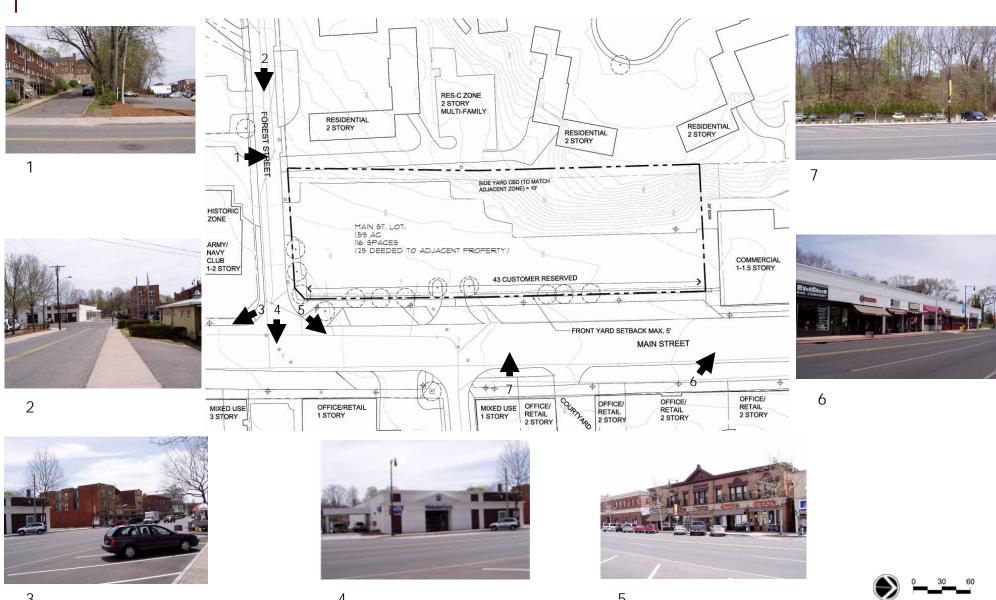




# Key Plan - Uses



### Main Street Views

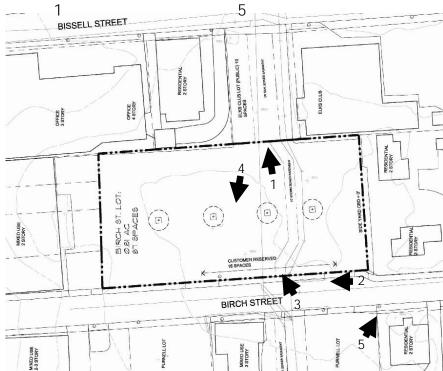




#### **BIRCH STREET VIEWS**











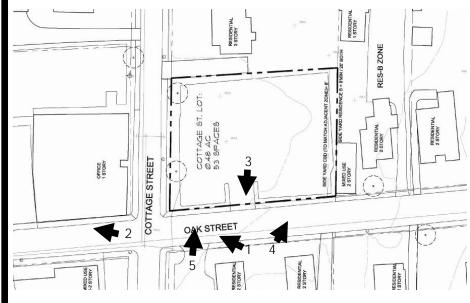
3



#### **COTTAGE STREET VIEWS**













2



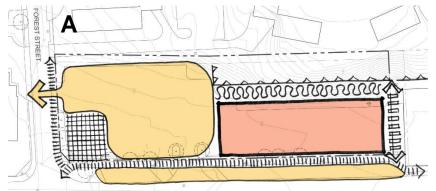






3

# Main Street Diagram



OPTION A
BUILDING USES

+/- 30,000 SF (2 FLOORS) +/- 100

PARKING REQUIRED PARKING PROVIDED

+/- 100

MAIN STREET

OPTION B
BUILDING USES
PARKING REQUIRED

B

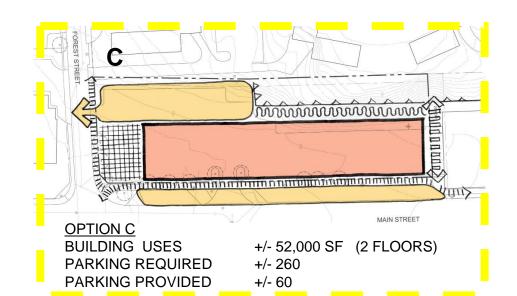
PARKING PROVIDED

MAIN STREET

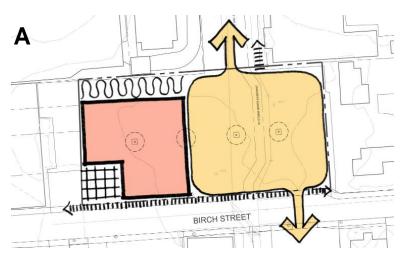
+/- 29,000 SF (1 FLOOR)

+/- 150

+/- 150 (INCLUDES ROOFTOP)



# Birch Street Diagram

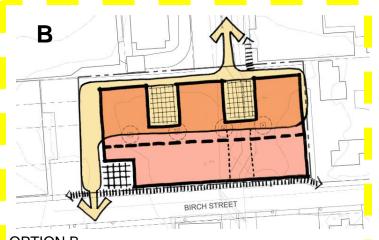


OPTION A
BUILDING USES
PARKING REQUIRED
PARKING PROVIDED

+/- 16,000 SF (2 FLOORS)

+/- 55

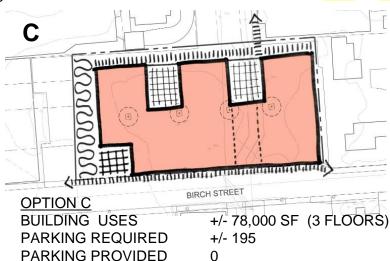
+/- 40



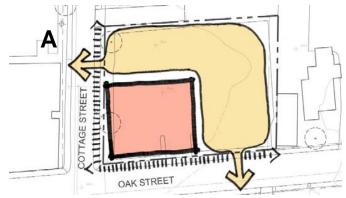
OPTION B
BUILDING USES

+/- 60,000 SF (3 FLOOR)

PARKING REQUIRED +/- 120 PARKING PROVIDED +/- 45



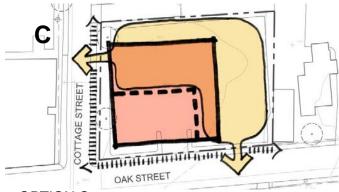
# Cottage Street Diagram



#### **OPTION A**

**BUILDING USES** +/- 11,000 SF (2 FLOORS)

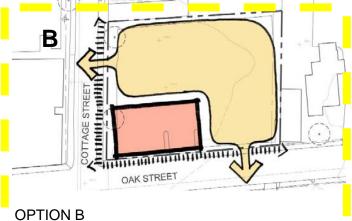
PARKING REQUIRED +/- 28 PARKING PROVIDED +/- 28



#### **OPTION C**

**BUILDING USES** +/- 21,000 SF (3 FLOORS)

PARKING REQUIRED +/- 40 PARKING PROVIDED +/- 35



**BUILDING USES** +/- 10,500 SF (3 FLOORS)

PARKING REQUIRED +/- 30 PARKING PROVIDED +/- 34

OTTAGE STREET OAK STREET

**OPTION D** 

**BUILDING USES** +/- 14,000 SF (2 FLOORS)

PARKING REQUIRED +/- 70

PARKING PROVIDED +/- 20



# Part Two

Our next task involved taking the chosen concept from Part I for each site and developing three building schemes with proposed uses.

#### 1050 Main Street

All three schemes for this site have a corner plaza, parking at the rear of the site, and ground floor commercial with residential above. Scheme A utilizes the slope of the hill at the rear of the property to access additional parking for residents on the roof above the ground floor commercial space. The 17 residential units are two story townhouses located on the second and third floors. Access is provided to these units from the rooftop parking or by exterior stairs leading to the rooftop parking lot. There is no interior common space, since each townhouse has a private entry.

The Scheme B plan is similar, except access is provided to the basement for additional parking. The ramp in this scheme slopes down as it goes to the north, requiring a retaining wall and significant excavation. The building has a common hallway, elevator and stairways for 34 apartments. One-half of the units have views to Main Street. Scheme C has only ground floor commercial with parking on the roof.

Schemes A and B were determined to be the most desirable, with Scheme A believed to be marketable for homeownership condominiums and Scheme B as rental apartments. Of the two, Scheme A was preferred because it provided downtown homeownership opportunities, something new to Main Street and different than the rental units in the Cheney district.

The development as proposed could be built under the Town's current zoning regulations in the central business district. However, there are deed restrictions on the property that must be addressed. When the Town purchased the parking lot it agreed to provide a maximum of 25 parking spaces for employees of the building at 942-974 Main Street, and agreed the parking area or the number of spaces would not be reduced for 50 years from the date of the closing (the deed was recorded in July of 1985). The proposed plan would provide the minimum number of parking spaces on that lot.

The deed also states the property would be used solely for vehicle parking for a period of 50 years from the date of the closing, unless the owners of 942-974 Main Street agree otherwise. The concept plans have been discussed with the owners of that adjacent parcel. If the Town wished to proceed with the development of this lot we must secure the agreement of the adjacent owner. It is also possible, and the idea has been raised, to combine the adjacent property with the Town parcel. This would provide further options for development on both properties. These matters must be negotiated if the Board wished to proceed with this project.



# Part Two continued

#### 19 Birch Street

Scheme A has no on-site parking and was explored with the assumption that the large Purnell Place lot across the street could fulfill the parking need. A corner entry plaza creates a visual connection with Main Street making it clear where the lobby entrance to the upper floor residences is located. At the first floor, retail/commercial space fronts Birch Street with residential common spaces located behind. Above are two levels of residential apartments, most with views of Birch Street or internal courtyards.

Scheme B, identical to Scheme A on the second and third floor, has ground floor retail/commercial facing Birch Street backed by surface parking behind it underneath the upper two floors of residential. Scheme C explores another option: two story townhouses with the first floor three feet above the street and parking in the rear. This option could allow for live/work units or commercial on the first floor and residences above.

Scheme B was selected as the most desirable for this site, and could be constructed as proposed under the existing CBD regulations. If Scheme B were the selected and preferred option, further detailed study would be necessary to ensure the commercial buildings on the adjacent lots on Main Street will continue to have suitable access to the parking lots behind their buildings. We also recognize that the lot would need to be designed and engineered to take into account the subsurface drainage issues in the "dry brook".

#### 53 Cottage Street

The Cottage Street site is located on a corner lot on a residential block. Scheme A shows six two-bedroom townhouses with surface parking behind, accessed from both Cottage Street and Oak Street. Scheme B has 11 two-bedroom townhouses with parking on the first level, living on the second and bedrooms on the third floor. Thirteen units face Oak Street, with the remaining two facing Cottage Street. The higher density of this scheme is achieved because the parking is garaged under the building.

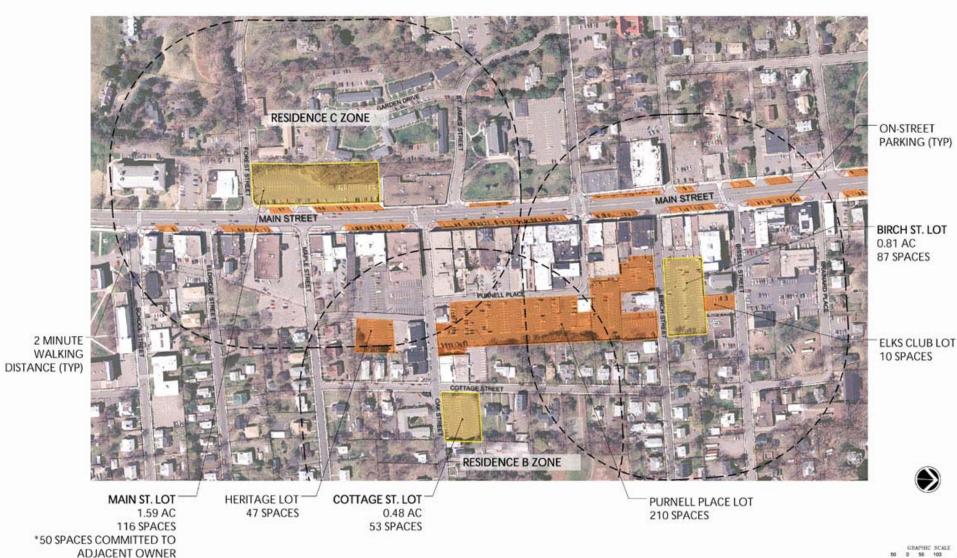
Scheme C is an even higher density scenario. It is a three-story building with a small common room for residents and a small amount of retail on the first floor at the corner. Surface parking is partially under the building at the first floor. The second and third floors are double loaded hallways with apartments on each side.

Scheme A was selected for this site due to its fit with the adjacent neighborhood regarding use, and density. The units could be owned or rented. The preferred plan would not be permitted under the current zoning regulations. A change to PRD would only allow four units on this .48-acre parcel. A new regulation, such as a housing overlay zone, or revisions to the PRD regulation would be needed to achieve this plan.





# Key Plan





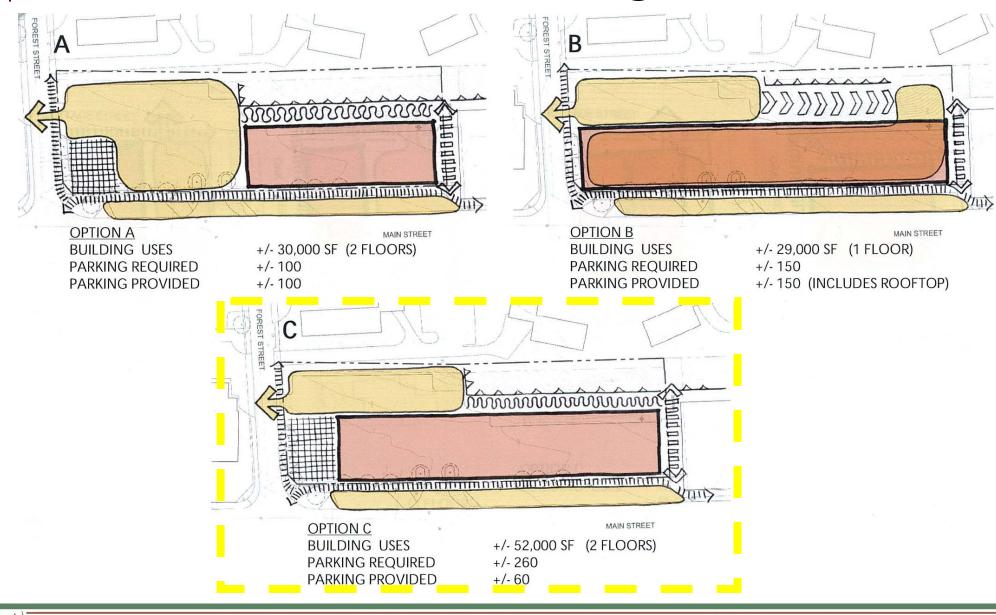


# Main Street - Existing





# Main Street - Diagram



### Main Street - Scheme A

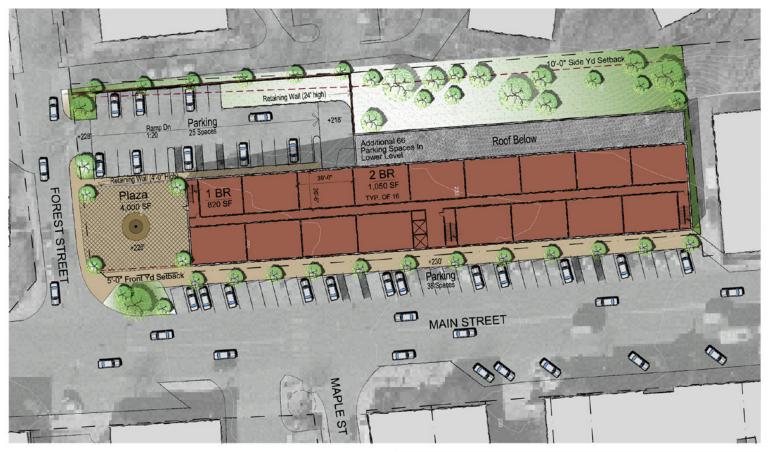


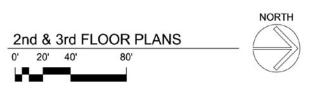


'SCHEME A' PROJECT INFO										
LEVEL	PROGRAM	AREA/ NO.	PARKING REQUIREMENT	REQ'D SPACES	PROVIDED SPACES					
1	RETAIL	28,600 SF	1/250 SF	115						
2 & 3	TOWNHOUSES	17 Units	1.5/UNIT	26	104					
TOTAL		17 Units		141						



### Main Street - Scheme B



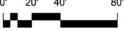


	'SCHEME B' PROJECT INFO										
LEVEL PROGRAM AREA/ PARKING REQ'D PROVIDED REQUIREMENT SPACES SPACES											
1	RETAIL	25,600 SF	1/250 SF	103							
2	1& 2 BR FLATS	17 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	25.5	400						
3	1& 2 BR FLATS	17 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	25.5	129						
TOTAL		34 UNITS		154							

### Main Street – Scheme C









	'SCHEME C' PROJECT INFO											
LEVEL PROGRAM AREA PARKING REQ'D PROVIDE REQUIREMENT SPACES SPACES												
1	RETAIL	24,850 SF	1/250 SF	100								
2	PARKING			0	147							
TOTAL				100								

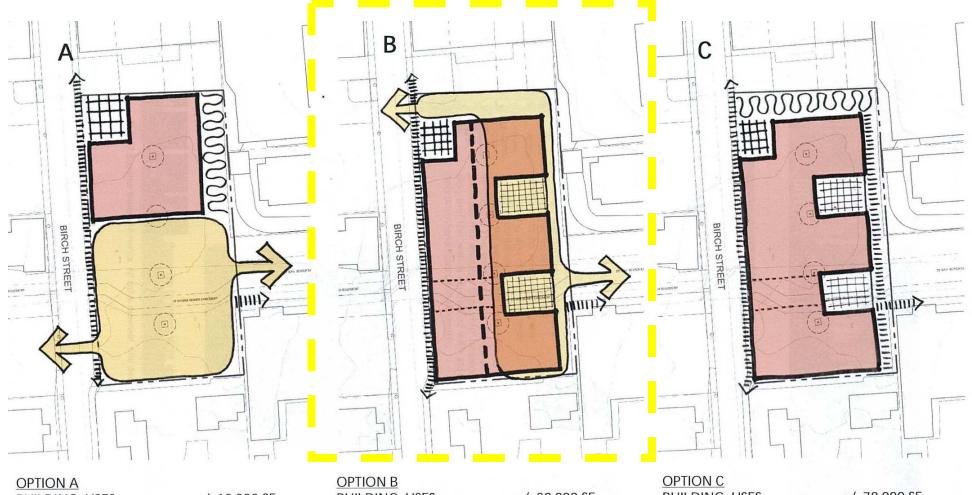


# Birch Street - Existing





# Birch Street - Diagram



**BUILDING USES** 

PARKING REQUIRED **PARKING PROVIDED**  +/- 16,000 SF (2 FLOORS)

+/- 55 +/- 40 **BUILDING USES** 

PARKING REQUIRED PARKING PROVIDED +/- 60,000 SF

(3 FLOORS) +/- 120 +/- 45

**BUILDING USES** 

PARKING REQUIRED

+/- 78,000 SF (3 FLOORS)

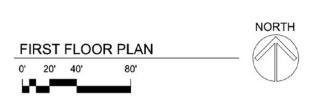
+/- 195 PARKING PROVIDED





# Birch Street – Scheme A (1st Floor)



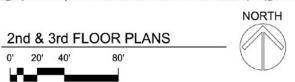


	'SCHEME A' PROJECT INFO										
LEVEL	PROGRAM	AREA/ NO.	PARKING REQUIREMENT	REQ'D SPACES	PROVIDED SPACES						
1	RETAIL	9,160 SF	1/250 SF	37							
2	1& 2 BR FLATS	18 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	27	0						
3	1& 2 BR FLATS	18 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	27	U						
TOTAL		36 UNITS		91							



# Birch Street - Scheme A (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor)

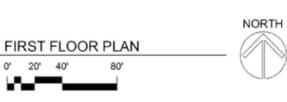






### Birch Street - Scheme B





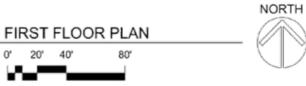
	'SCHEME B' PROJECT INFO										
LEVEL	PROGRAM	AREA/ NO.	PARKING REQUIREMENT	REQ'D SPACES	PROVIDED SPACES						
1	RETAIL	11,120 SF	1/250 SF	45							
2	1& 2 BR FLATS	18 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	27	42						
3	1& 2 BR FLATS	18 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	27	42						
TOTAL		36 UNITS		99							





### Birch Street - Scheme C





	'SCHEME C' PROJECT INFO									
LEVEL	LEVEL PROGRAM NO. PARKING REQ'D PROVIDED SPACES SPACES									
1-3	TOWNHOUSES	12	1.5/UNIT	18	24					

# Cottage Street - Existing





# Cottage Street - Diagram



OPTION A

BUILDING USES +/- 11,000 SF (2 FLOORS)

PARKING REQUIRED +/- 28 PARKING PROVIDED +/- 28 OPTION B

BUILDING USES

+/- 10,500 SF (3 FLOORS)

PARKING REQUIRED +/- 30

PARKING PROVIDED +/- 34

**OPTION C** 

**BUILDING USES** 

+/- 21,000 SF (3 FLOORS)

PARKING REQUIRED +/- 40

PARKING PROVIDED +/- 35

OPTION D

BUILDING USES

+/- 14,000 SF (2 FLOORS)

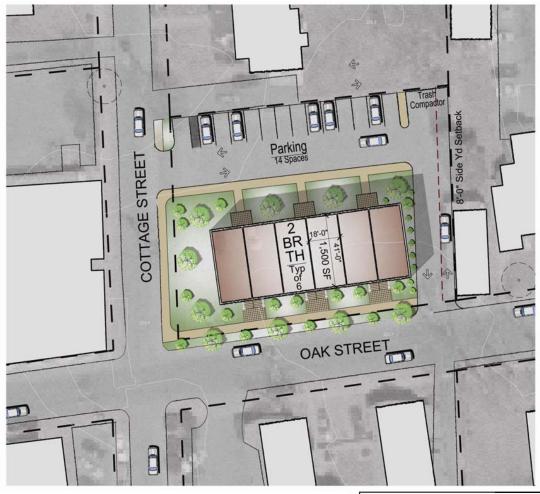
PARKING REQUIRED +/- 70

PARKING PROVIDED +/- 20





# Cottage Street - Scheme A



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

0' 20' 40' 80



'SCH	'SCHEME A' PROJECT INFO										
5PACE	AREA/ NO.	REQUIREMENT	REQ'D SPACES	PROVIDED SPACES							
RETAIL	NO RETAIL	1/25Ø SF	9	14							
RESIDENTIAL UNITS	6 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	J ,	14							



Cottage Street - Scheme B









	'SCHEME B' PROJECT INFO									
LEVEL	LEVEL PROGRAM NO. PARKING REQ'D PROVIDED SPACES									
1 & 2	1 & 2 TOWNHOUSES 11 1.5/UNIT 17 15									



# Cottage Street - Scheme C





	'SCHEME C' PROJECT INFO										
LEVEL	PROGRAM	AREA/ NO.	PARKING REQUIREMENT	REQ'D SPACES	PROVIDED SPACES						
1	COMM. ROOM OR RETAIL	2,100 SF	1/250 SF	9							
2	1& 2 BR FLATS	10 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	15							
3	1& 2 BR FLATS	10 UNITS	1.5/UNIT	15	38						
TOTAL		20 UNITS		30 OR 39							



# Part Three

After one development scheme for each site was chosen as the most compatible and desirable, a building was then designed and a color perspective rendering created depicting the character, mass, and scale desired in a new building.























# Conclusion

This report and site analysis should be used by the Town Planning and Zoning Commission to provide direction for revisions to the zoning regulations to achieve the desired mix of uses and physical form. It should also provide the preferred use and development options to be included in any request for proposals or development solicitation by the Town Board of Directors. There may be variations on the design and site plans and other uses that the Town or a developer may find equally acceptable. While some flexibility is helpful, the Town should agree on and express its preferences in any development solicitation, and only depart from the preferences if the alternatives are equal to or better than the schemes proposed here. Hopefully this analysis will be helpful in that regard.



# Attachment A

The parking lot at the corner of Main Street and Forest Street has 116 spaces; the Cottage Street lot has 53; and the Birch Street lot has 87. Casual observation indicates these lots are not fully used either during the week or on weekends. In January 2007 planning department staff, over a period of three days, surveyed the parking lots to determine their actual use. The heaviest use of the Main Street lot was 35 cars of the 116 spaces in mid-morning on a weekday. On street spaces in front of the Main Street lot were also underused. Nine of the 21 available spaces were the maximum number occupied during our count. On Birch Street there were never more than 12 cars in the 87-space lot, and the most cars observed in the Cottage Street lot was five of those 53 spaces.

Because over a year had gone by while the study was in progress, the planning staff conducted similar counts in March of 2008. The heaviest use of the Main Street lot was 25 cars (with nine cars parked in the on-street spaces) during a weekday and 32 on a Saturday (with three cars on Main Street). On Birch Street the highest use was 22 cars on a weekday afternoon while at Cottage Street there were at the most eight cars. The following tables compare the parking lot counts conducted in 2007 and 2008.

It is worth noting that the March 2008 counts were conducted after the Café on Main closed and Samadhi Yoga relocated from Main Street. These two establishments probably accounted for the higher parking levels in 2007 in the Main Street lot and on Main Street in that vicinity. The Army Navy Club occasionally uses the parking lot for special events or for their meetings. If the Main Street parking lot is developed, the Town might consider requiring that portions of the surface parking be available to the Army Navy Club or general business customers, in addition to the nearby on-street and municipal parking spaces in the vicinity.



# Attachment A

		THURSDAY									
<u>PARKING LOT</u>	10 AM		12 PM		2 PM		4 PM				
	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>			
<u>Birch Street</u>	11	13	12	<u>12</u>	11	19	<u>11</u>	20			
Cottage Street	3	6	2	7	3	8	<u>2</u>	3			
Main/Forest Street North	29	15	28	21	20	12	<u>23</u>	16			
Main/Forest Street South	6	3	4	4	6	3	<u>5</u>	1			

	SATURDAY						
<u>PARKING LOT</u>	9 <i>A</i>	M	10	AM			
	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>			
Birch Street	2	2	2	<u>4</u>			
Cottage Street	1	1	2	1			
Main/Forest Street North	15	7	32	13			
Main/Forest Street South	2	19	9	19			

		FRIDAY									
PARKING LOT	10 AM		12 PM		2 PM		4 PM				
	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>			
<u>Birch Street</u>	8	15	9	<u>16</u>	10	22	<u>12</u>	18			
Cottage Street	3	6	4	6	5	7	<u>5</u>	6			
Main/Forest Street North	26	16	25	23	21	17	<u>27</u>	21			
Main/Forest Street South	3	5	3	1	5	2	<u>2</u>	1			

<sup>\*</sup> North or South of driveway entrance at Main and Maple Street.