

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

Revitalizing Pittsfield's West Street Corridor

Pittsfield, Massachusetts



May 6, 2012



**Urban Land
Institute**

Boston

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Executive Summary

Under the direction of the Urban Land Institute's Boston District Council, The Pittsfield Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened in Pittsfield, MA in March, 2012, bringing together stakeholders, City and community leaders, and a panel of land use and development professionals for a day-long session focused on opportunities for redeveloping Pittsfield's West Street Corridor and strengthening connections between that area and the City's increasingly thriving North Street downtown spine. The report that follows is separated into six chapters.

Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process gives an overview of the Urban Land Institute's Boston District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) and provides a detailed list of participants in the Pittsfield TAP including City officials, stakeholders, and the panel of land use and development professionals, as well as MassDevelopment's role in helping to facilitate the Pittsfield TAP.

Chapter 2: Background and Assignment provides an overview of the West Street Corridor, focusing on the building stock, development patterns, recent redevelopment, and individual stakeholders' future plans. This chapter also reviews the City's planning efforts to date as well as its objectives for this Technical Assistance Panel which were to address the following key issues: creating connectivity; improving the public realm; creating a sense of place; creating connectivity internally and with abutting neighborhoods and downtown; marketing the plan; and evaluating plan feasibility and financing.

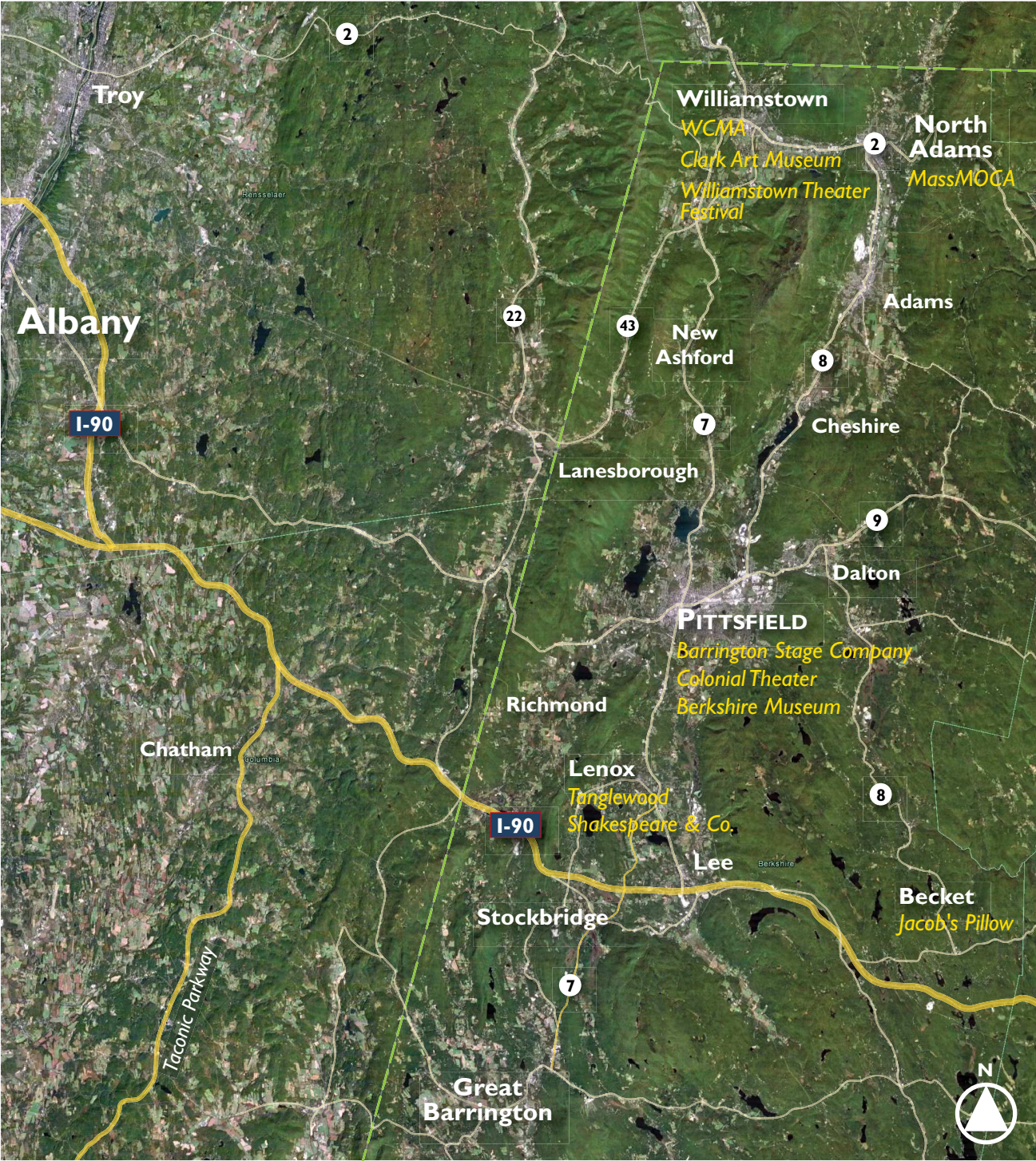
Chapter 3: Observations and Findings addresses the relevant issues raised in the tour and panel deliberations concerning the physical, market, and economic conditions that now characterize and challenge revitalization of the project area. These included the automobile-dominated pedestrian environment, surplus parking, the apparent shifts in downtown office and residential markets, and opportunities for engaging the nearby Housatonic River, which is hidden from the corridor by development and parking lots.

Chapter 4: Planning & Design Framework presents a concept plan for creating connectivity across the Study Area. The Concept Plan introduces a new riverfront park to serve as an anchor accessed from the North Street downtown by a "pedestrian spine" integrating "green" infrastructure and art to the street front. The plan also suggests redevelopment on several key sites fronting that pedestrian spine.

Chapter 5: Development Considerations discusses challenges to developing market rate housing in the current economic context and provides an overview of possible financing tools that could play a role in facilitating development, as well as recommendations for zoning changes to support development activity.

Finally, *Chapter 6: Next Steps* summarizes recommendations for actionable next steps for the City to explore and implement the strategies for revitalization of the West Street Corridor.

Figure I: Regional Context, Pittsfield at the Center of a Culturally Rich Region (Google Earth Pro, Spring, 2012)



BECKET	LENOX	NORTH ADAMS	PITTSFIELD	WILLIAMSTOWN
Jacob's Pillow	Tanglewood Shakespeare & Co.	MassMOCA	Barrington Stage Company Colonial Theater Berkshire Museum	WCMA Clark Art Institute Williamstown Theater Festival

1 | ULI & The TAP Process

a. Urban Land Institute (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute now has nearly 30,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service.

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help sustain and create thriving communities. The Boston District Council serves the six New England states and has over 1,100 members.

b. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

The ULI Boston Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes Technical Assistance Panels at the request of public officials and local stakeholders of under-resourced communities and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use challenges who benefit from planning and development professionals providing pro bono recommendations. At the TAP, a group of diverse professionals representing the full spectrum of land use and real estate disciplines typically spend one to two days visiting and analyzing existing built environments, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a way consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

c. MassDevelopment Support

Recognizing the alignment between ULI Boston's Technical Assistance Panels and MassDevelopment's mission to support sustainable redevelopment across the Commonwealth, in 2011 the two organizations partnered to support TAPs in four Gateway Cities throughout the Commonwealth. The Pittsfield TAP was the fourth sponsored by MassDevelopment to date.

d. Panelists and The TAP Process

Panel Members

ULI Boston convened a panel of volunteers whose members represent a range of the disciplines associated with land use and development required to assess possibilities for redeveloping parts of Pittsfield's West Street Corridor, improving its public realm, and creating stronger connections between the area and the City's increasingly thriving downtown, anchored by North Street.

Disciplines represented included planning, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, transportation planning and engineering, market analysis, development finance and entitlement, and arts and culture development. Members were selected with the intent of convening a robust array of professional expertise relevant to the City's objectives for this TAP. The following is the list of panelists:

- Victor Karen, Development Consultant (TAP Co-Chair)
- Dave Traggorth, Director of Development, Mitchell Properties (TAP Co-Chair)
- Ted Carman, President, Concord Square Planning & Development, Inc.
- Matthew J. Chase, P.E., P.T.O.E., Project Manager (Transportation), VHB
- John R. Mullin, Department Head, Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts

- Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment
- James Fasser, ASLA, AICP, LEED AP, Director, Landscape Architecture & Planning, VHB
- Jay Paget, Cultural Facilities Fund Program Director, Massachusetts Cultural Council
- George Tremblay, AIA, Principal, Arrowstreet, Inc.

Caitlin Bowler of ICON architecture, inc. served as a consulting technical writer, while Michelle Landers of ULI Boston provided organizational and technical support in preparation for and during the TAP event.

Officials from the City of Pittsfield who served as primary contacts for ULI Boston included the following:

- Deanna Ruffer, Director of Community Development
- Cornelius J. Hoss, City Planner
- Sheila Irvin, Vice Chair, Community Development Board
- Jim Lydon, Senior Vice President at MassDevelopment, provides overall coordination of MassDevelopment involvement in the joint ULI/MassDevelopment TAP Program.

Stakeholders

The TAP benefited from the participation of the diverse group of stakeholders—property owners, local residents, business people, and non-profit board members—who met with the panel and shared ideas, assessments and opinions on a range of issues related to West Street Corridor.

Stakeholders at the session included:

- David Carver, Owner, Head of Real Estate Development, Scarafoni Associates,
- Bruce Collingwood, Commissioner of DPW and Utilities, City of Pittsfield
- Matt D'Amour, Design and Construction Manager, Big Y Foods, Inc.,
- Elie Hammerling, Member, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.
- Peter Lafayette, President, Berkshire Bank Foundation, (Member, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.)
- Laurie Mick, City of Pittsfield, Community Development Specialist

- Steve Miller, Owner, Miller Art Supply
- Gerry Murray, President, Downtown Pittsfield Cultural Association Board (VP of Human Resource Benefits and Services, Greylock Federal Credit Union; Member, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.)
- Mike Supranowicz, President & CEO, Berkshire Chamber of Commerce
- Andrew Swanton, Vice President of Operations, Berkshire Eagle
- Pam Tobin, Executive Director, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.

TAP Process

The Pittsfield TAP was held on March 29, 2012 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on West Street. In the morning, Mayor Daniel L. Bianchi, Deanna Ruffer, and Cornelius Hoss welcomed the panelists and a large group of stakeholders and community members who had been invited to meet and speak with panelists prior to the walking tour. Nearly 40 Pittsfield residents, business people, stakeholders and others arrived and provided a wealth of information and insight to the panel, including City Councilors John Krol (Ward 6) and Jonathan Lothrop (Ward 5).

Deanna Ruffer then led the group on a walking tour of the West Street Corridor, beginning at the McKay Street Parking Garage (its 1,000 or so spaces are an incredible asset to the City's downtown), then included the former KB Toys building, Big Y, Miller Art Supply, the Clock Tower, and the TD Bank building at the corner of West and Center Streets.

After the tour, the ULI panel interviewed a diverse series of stakeholders to gain a better understanding of relevant issues, dynamics, and opportunities in the West Street Corridor. The panelists then engaged in an intensive charrette to develop potential revitalization concepts for the Corridor, as well as “next step” recommendations. The panel presented these to the public that evening. The presentation is available electronically at the ULI Boston website <http://boston.uli.org>.

2 | Background & Assignment

a. The West Street Corridor

Pittsfield's West Street Corridor (the Study Area) is a somewhat isolated commercial enclave organized around the City's major east-west traffic artery, just west of the City's historic downtown. The Study Area was the focus of urban renewal policies and actions in the late 1960s and early 1970s—the Big Y stands on the site of the old train station—and now embodies a mix of both the best and worst of urban design, preservation, and redevelopment policy from that period.

The Study Area is cut off from adjacent residential and commercial development through a combination of topography (it is significantly lower in elevation than the North Street downtown spine that lays to the northeast), the large railroad embankment to the north, and the Housatonic River to the west and south. Despite two very handsomely renovated historic buildings in a former mill complex toward the west—both of which sit on the banks of the Housatonic—the West Street Corridor is generally characterized by a suburban development pattern (one- to three-story buildings set back from the street and surrounded by parking).

As an auto-oriented commercial area it appears to be doing relatively well: Big Y, CVS, and Miller's Art Supply all report healthy and thriving sales activity, enjoying the benefits from their proximity to the downtown and the nearby office uses at the east edge of the corridor, including Greylock Federal Credit Union Headquarters and TD Bank. The auto dominated West Street Corridor is, however, experienced as separate from downtown and the increasingly thriving urban spine along North Street and has generally not benefited from the improvements on North Street and its increased pedestrian traffic.

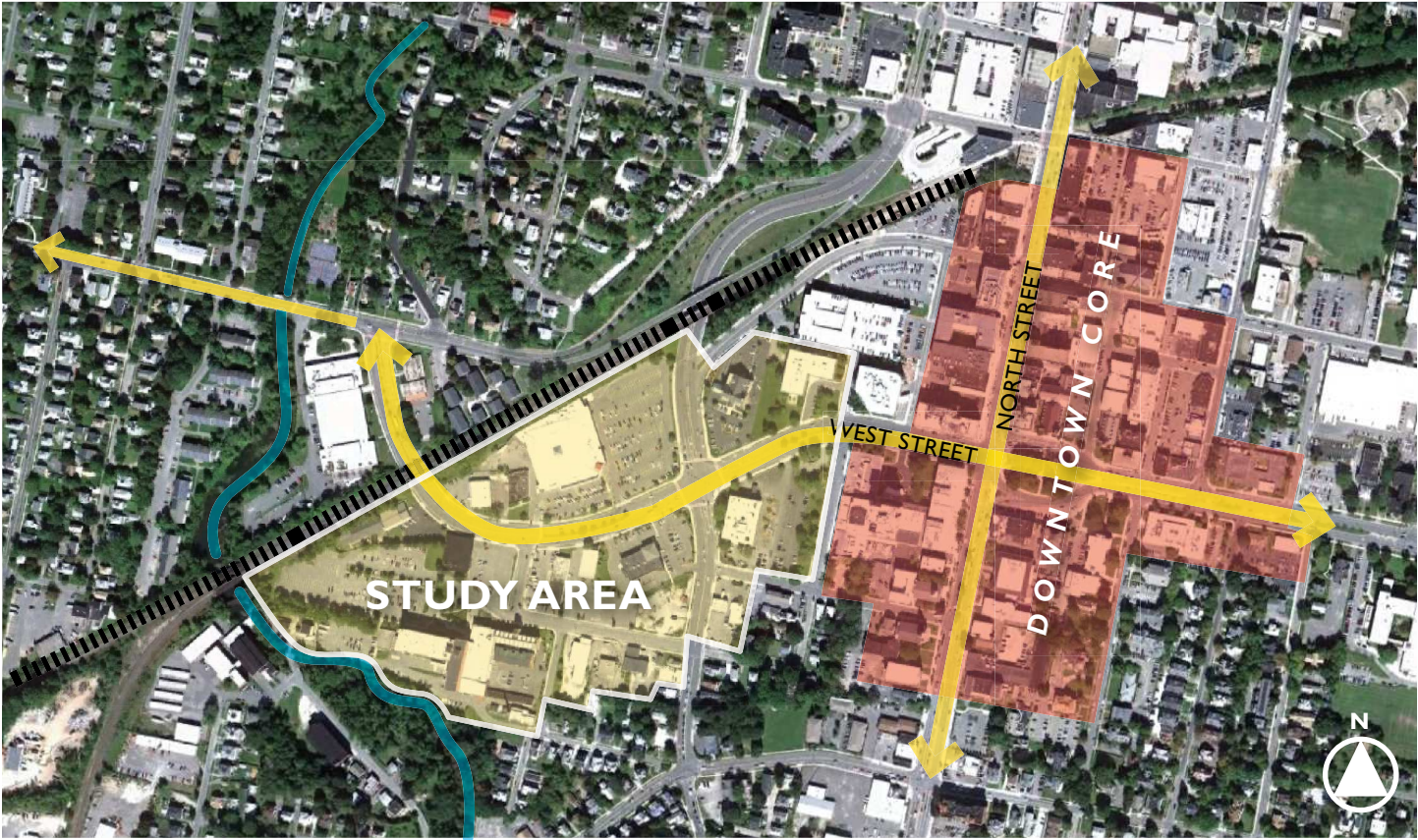
b. Recent Redevelopment Activity / Future Plans

The Clock Tower Residences. There are 30 dwelling units in two of the three renovated buildings in this historic commercial complex. Of the 30 units, 17 have been sold, five are leased, and the remainder are either under negotiation or being marketed. The developer will determine plans for the third building when the property is fully stabilized. This housing is an important first step toward transforming the West Street Corridor into a mixed-use district.

The Big Y. Several years ago Big Y decided to maintain its presence near downtown Pittsfield and is currently planning for renovations to the facility in both the interior and exterior that should commence in the next year or two. The company is open to working with the City to achieve a look for the renovated facade that will complement the work being done in the downtown and designing its overall improvements to have a positive impact on the look, function, and success of the West Street Corridor.

McKay Parking Garage. Although not officially within the Study Area, the McKay Garage plays an important role in the downtown's function and the viability of the now vacant, KB Toys building, which has little on-site parking. Its significant capacity may provide capacity for future residential redevelopment in the downtown, where providing on site parking would pose a prohibitively high burden. A \$7 million renovation of the garage is planned for the coming year, which will include waterproofing and other needed maintenance.

Figure 2: The West Street Corridor in relation to North Street and Downtown



Clock Tower Residences

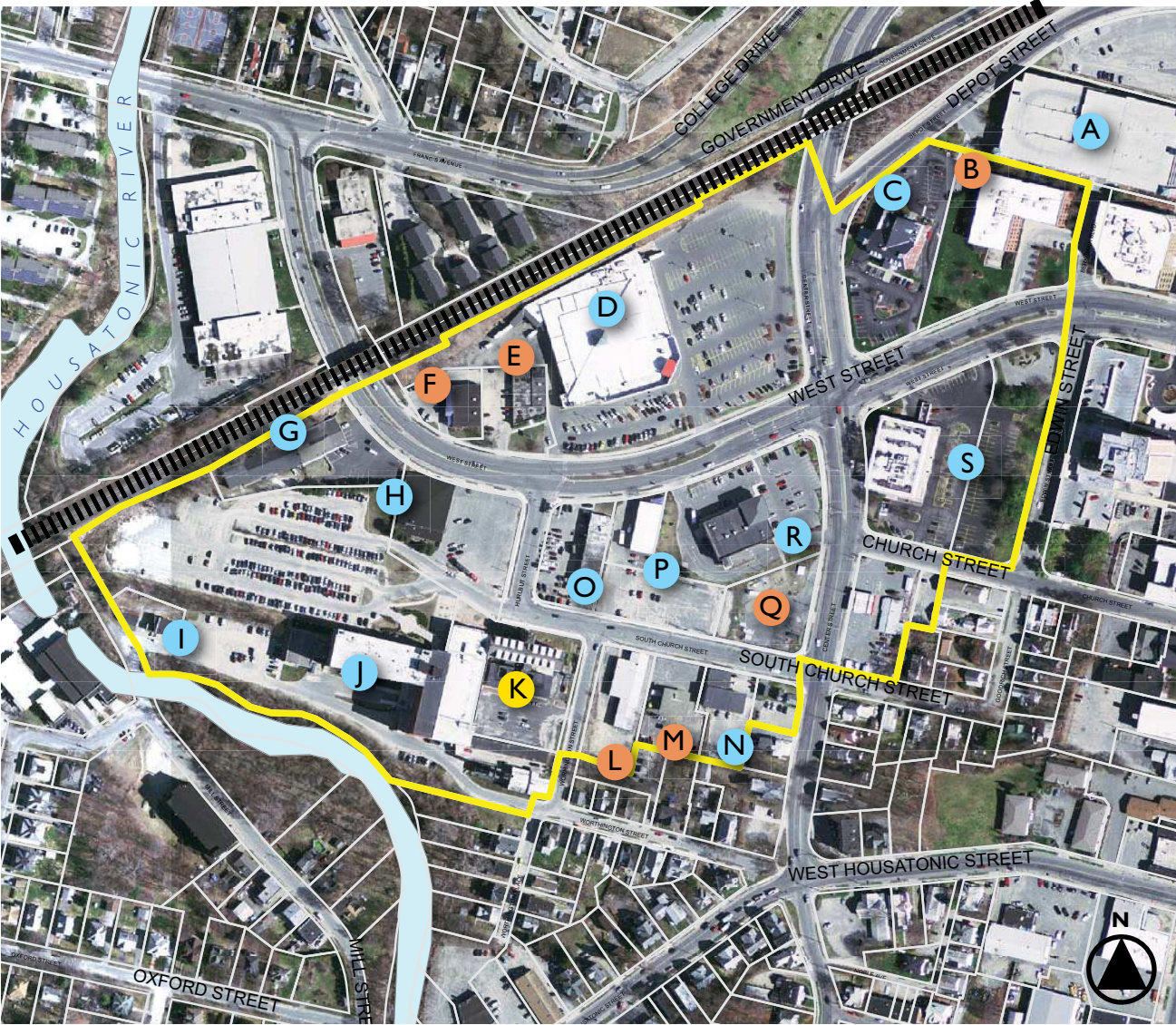


Big Y Supermarket



McKay Parking Garage

Figure 3: Study Area and Existing Development



- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| A McKay Parking Garage | K Clock Tower Residences | ● COMMERCIAL/OFFICE |
| B Former KB Toys Building | L Vacant Commercial | ● RESIDENTIAL |
| C Greylock Federal Credit Union | M Former Bus Station | ● VACANT |
| D Big Y | N Medical Offices | |
| E Former Goodwill | O Pittsfield Tire & Auto Services | |
| F Vacant Commercial/Professional Office | P Carousel Plaza | |
| G IM Press Printing | Q Vacant Lot | |
| H Miller Art Supply | R CVS | |
| I Berkshire Eagle Offices | S TD Bank | |
| J Pittsfield Fire & Safety Co. | | |

c. The City's Efforts to Date

Since 2009, the City, with impressive support from community organizations and individual residents, has been actively implementing significant recommendations from the 2006 Downtown Streetscape Master Plan and 2009 Master Plan for physical improvements, pursuing policy objectives, and engaging in other planning initiatives for its downtown. These have included:

- North Street Streetscape Improvements
- Downtown Arts District Overlay
- Downtown Off Street Parking Study
- Marketing and Permitting of the William Stanley Business Park

The City's engagement with ULI to organize and host the Pittsfield Technical Assistance Panel marks the beginning of an intention to initiate like planning efforts in the West Street Corridor.

In its application to ULI for hosting a TAP, the City indicated its intention to have a significant role in the success of implementing recommendations from the final TAP report. The following tasks were identified to be within the City's purview:

- Create and market a plan based on the final report;
- Regulate the process for which development/redevelopment activities would occur;
- Provide incentives to encourage development/redevelopment activities to further the vision of the study area; and
- Operate as an active partner to facilitate the implementation of the vision for the study area.

Its commitment—as well as the engagement of members of the community and stakeholders—bodes well for the future of the West Street Corridor.

d. City of Pittsfield's Objectives for the TAP

(1) PLANNING AND DESIGN:

The City asked the Panel to address a range of issues related to urban design and redevelopment, including:

- How can we create and strengthen connectivity between the West Street Corridor and North Street—for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles?
- How can we balance parking needs while creating a pedestrian friendly environment with strong connections to the adjacent downtown area?
- How can several potential redevelopment sites be best utilized in the future?
- How can we blend the existing properties that are unlikely to be redeveloped into the overall character of the area (and vice versa)?
- How do we create a sense of place in the project area?

(2) MARKETING:

- How can we market the vision for the project area to potential developers?
 - Is the success of project implementation based on a collective vision for the area or individual opportunities?
 - Would government aggregation of parcels facilitate redevelopment and/or achievement of the vision for the area?

(3) FEASIBILITY AND FINANCING:

- What is a feasible development pattern for the proposed study area?
- Can mixed-use development that includes a residential component succeed in the study area?
- Are there regulatory barriers to the vision of the study area?
 - Do the underlying zoning districts impact the vision?
 - Will the Downtown Arts Overlay District facilitate the vision?
 - Should the Downtown Arts Overlay District be the primary and only zoning district that encompasses the proposed study area?

3 | Observations & Findings

Issues raised in Tour & Discussions

During the tour and in the subsequent charrette, panelists' discussion focused on five sets of issues:

(1) challenging pedestrian environment; (2) abundance of parking; (3) shifts in downtown use demands; (4) the underutilization of the Housatonic River; and (5) building redevelopment challenges and strategies.

Challenging Pedestrian Environment

The West Street Corner was designed for cars, not pedestrians. Its public realm is harsh, with few trees, little vegetation, and the sidewalks are generally dwarfed by the scale and width of West Street on one side and expanses of parking on the other. A more even balance can and should be achieved between pedestrian enhancements/amenities and business visibility to make the area more welcoming to pedestrians, signal the City's commitment to the district's success, and make it a place people want to be.

Figure 4: A Birds Eye of the Study Area (looking west)



Downtown Use Demand Shifting

Through discussions with various stakeholders the issues of the evolving demands on uses downtown emerged as a critical issue.

Office. The office market continues to struggle and there is concern that, as in other regional markets, it may not return to previous levels in the near or medium-term future. Simultaneously, at least one large occupant of a downtown building is consolidating operations into another building, which will only soften the office market further.

Residential. In counterpoint, recent residential development in the downtown has done well, even after the downturn. As North Street's revitalization has continued, the downtown's draw has increased, making it possible for people to enjoy an urban lifestyle in the heart of the Berkshires. Local developers recount that, until six or seven years ago, it had been 30 years since anyone attempted major residential development downtown so there was a latent and unmet demand for modern, safe, condo and rental development in and around North Street.

Within the Study Area, the Clock Tower condominium and rental project is almost fully occupied, representing a new and important constituency for future redevelopment and revitalization in the West Street Corridor and providing further legitimacy to the concept of the West Street Corridor becoming something more than an auto-oriented district.

Traffic

While traffic congestion is not an issue within the Study Area, outreach meetings with key stakeholders identified traffic congestion just outside the limits of the West Street Corridor Study Area. Particularly, congestion is now occurring at the intersection of West Street/Center Street and Center Street/West Housatonic (Route 20). As a result of present issues, future improvements may be necessary.

In addition, the Mill Street Bridge over the Housatonic River is slated to be replaced by the MassDOT, and construction is anticipated to start in 2017. Since this bridge connects the Study Area to a neighborhood just to the west of the Housatonic River, special consideration to incorporating any new traffic or access may need to be considered. This bridge

could encourage alternative access to the West Street Corridor, leading to cut-through traffic as a result of the congestion identified at the two intersections mentioned above.

Parking

Parking is an asset for the Study Area. With nearly 1,300 privately owned spaces, finding a spot west of Edwin Street is rarely a problem and contributes to the success of the corridor's auto-oriented businesses. There may be opportunities to reconfigure parking on specific properties to accommodate "green" stormwater management infrastructure (similar to what is being implemented on North Street) that would address the area's flooding issues, make way for a pedestrian way, and enhance the pedestrian environment.

Housatonic River

Although it is the southern and western boundary of the West Street Corridor, no development or uses in the study area and the larger city engage the river. The river presents a major opportunity for the City to reshape the character and create a different kind of draw to this very destination-oriented district.



4 | Planning & Design Framework

The West Street Corridor will always be distinct in character from North Street. Its suburban-style, auto-oriented development produces valuable services and economic activity for the City and the Study Area. The Panel's recommendations are thus aimed at enhancing the overall amenity of these uses rather than their wholesale displacement. When developing the following urban design framework for revitalization, the panel described these structures as “rocks”—entities that may relocate eventually, but around which planned improvements should be organized for now. These structures are shown in white in Figure 5.

This urban design framework focuses on opportunities to build on recent redevelopment that has created a true mix of users to transform the corridor into a more pedestrian-oriented, mixed use district that can serve as a daily resource and amenity to those who live and work there, as well as to those customers and shoppers who come to the Corridor now.

Creating Connectivity

Building a Draw: A Riverfront Park

Creating connectivity across the Study Area and on to North Street will require a draw at the west end of the Study Area. Together, the significant surplus of parking at the furthest west end (Berkshire Eagle parking lot), the extensive river edge (approximately 500 feet west of the Berkshire Eagle building, 400 feet east of the Berkshire Eagle building.), the presence of both day time office workers and residents in the morning and evening, and the absence of any public park areas near Pittsfield's downtown that engage the Housatonic, make this an ideal place to create a public amenity. A significant waterfront park at the west end would anchor the new district, provide a draw for a range of users, and serve as a foundation for attracting institutional uses. Such uses would enhance current commercial and residential uses.

Enhancing Pedestrian Access through “Green” Infrastructure & Art

“Green” infrastructure development would be an ideal way to dramatically improve the existing pedestrian environment, which is almost completely hardscape and not fully accessible, and provide access to the new waterfront park. Green infrastructure would simultaneously improve stormwater management in the area, introduce vegetation to soften the environment and introduce color and variety, and serve as an imageable and highly visible pedestrian way through the corridor.

The introduction of art to this pedestrian way—as the City has introduced it in other locations throughout the city—at a density and with prominence to signify its importance would increase visibility and reinforce Pittsfield's position as the urban center of this culturally rich Berkshire region.

Figure 5: "Creating Connectivity" Concept Plan



- A Waterfront Park
- B "Green" Pedestrian Way with Art
- C Market Rate Housing
- D Retail Village
- E Carousel Plaza

- "Green" Infrastructure
- Parking
- New Construction

New Development

Looking longer term, new development throughout the corridor that follows more typically urban guidelines in terms of site plan, setback, orientation to the street, etc., would also do much to increase connectivity throughout the Study Area. These uses might include housing, retail, art, or institutions.

MARKET RATE HOUSING

The TD Bank site has significant redevelopment potential, in terms of its prominence, location, and size. A three to five story residential building with ground floor commercial or retail uses and a strong building edge would anchor this key corner, extend the downtown's traditionally urban development pattern, and draw pedestrians down into the West Street corridor from North Street given the direct views of additional shops and amenities.

The location of the Big Y across the street and the proximity to downtown's North Street offerings make this an ideal location for housing from an urban dweller's perspective.



Development concept for a prominent corner site in Jackson Square, Boston.



The TD Bank building creates little meaningful street edge, is surrounded by underutilized parking.



VILLAGE RETAIL AT BIG Y

The Big Y is a major draw and amenity for Pittsfield's downtown and the Study Area in particular—both for residents and downtown workers. Introduction of smaller scale, retail space—in a retail village style—to provide goods or services complementary to Big Y would enhance the regional draw of the Big Y site and increase connectivity along the corridor.

CAROUSEL PLAZA

At the intersection of Center and Church Streets, the northwest corner sits vacant, serving only as staging ground for ongoing curb repair at other sites in the Corridor. With the right development or draw here, this corner could serve as a prominent pedestrian gateway to this revitalized district and park.

The Berkshire Carousel is an ambitious project, initiated in 2008 by a former resident, to create an authentic classical wooden carousel, whose carousel figures are carved and painted by volunteers throughout the County. According to the project's website (www.berkshirecarousel.com) the project will be complete in May 2013, leaving ample time for the City to discuss possibilities for siting the carousel at the Church/Center Street site. Initially a simple plaza would be adequate to host this colorful and interactive amenity.

EXPANDED KB

On April 6th *The Berkshire Eagle* reported that the Laurin Publishing Company (of Pittsfield) purchased the KB Building and plans to relocate its operations there, although it anticipates it will use only one third of the space. As Laurin looks for other tenants, the City should give them the opportunity to expand the building, if asked, to bring the building closer to full occupancy.



Examples of completed ponies from the *Berkshire Carousel Project*. See www.berkshirecarousel.com for additional images and history of the project.

5 | Development Considerations

Challenges to Market Rate Housing

The Market & Appropriate Products

Developers report that downtown housing completed in the last five years is doing well, but much of this has been adaptive reuse that rents in the range of \$1 per square foot. New construction must rent in at least the \$2 per square foot range, so while there may be demand for new housing on the TD Bank (or other) site, redevelopment will require some combination of subsidy to fill the gap between development costs and rents.

To control costs it is recommended that new construction be three to four stories, stick built, and have low operating costs. Townhouses can be an ideal unit type to fulfill these requirements because each unit has direct access to the street.

Creative Financing Tools

Over the past few decades the Commonwealth and departments within the federal government have developed sophisticated financing tools to fill the gap between development costs and rents for market rate housing. These include:

- New Market Tax Credits
- Housing Development Incentive Program
- Tax Increment Financing
- Community Block Development Grant
- Community Preservation Act

The City of Pittsfield can work to educate existing developers about these tools or attract developers who have experience using these tools if it decides to encourage housing in the West Street Corridor.

Parking & Traffic

Parking

Between the publicly owned McKay Garage and privately owned lots there is no shortage of spaces. Older zoning bylaws tend to oversupply parking and that seems to be the case here.

Going forward, the City should look for shared parking opportunities where complementary uses that do not share peak times can rely on fewer numbers of spaces to meet their needs. For instance, instead of requiring developers of new housing to provide one parking space per unit on site, the City could require a developer to *identify* one parking space per unit, which would expand the properties with the potential to be redeveloped into housing should the demand persist and the economics work. A developer could then negotiate a separate arrangement to lease nearby privately or publicly owned spaces that represent excess capacity. The City of Lowell implemented a similar policy that has been successful in allowing high quality, well conceived development projects move forward that would otherwise have been impossible under traditional zoning requirement regarding parking.

Traffic

The West Street Corridor appears to have an excess capacity to accommodate new traffic courtesy of urban renewal. However, even though the Study Area is an auto-oriented corridor, providing a safe means of access for vehicles is still important to the success of revitalization. While there are not many areas within the Study Area where traffic congestion is an issue, there are two intersections just on the outer limits of the Study Area that experience congestion, they include the following: (i) West Street/Center Street; (ii.) and Center Street/West Housatonic Street (Route 20). These two intersection nodes provide access to the Study Area from the west and the south. As redevelopment and revitalization occurs, improving traffic operations at these intersections may be needed and could contribute to the success of revitalizing the West Street Corridor. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Mill Street Bridge is planned to be replaced starting in 2017. This bridge and the new access opportunities to the Study Area will need to be closely monitored and considered because this is the proposed area for the Riverfront Park which could be a significant attraction in the future.

In addition, Road Diets and Access Management Techniques should be considered within the Study Area, possibly through the creation of a zoning overlay district. Road Diets usually include the reduction of travel lanes within the roadway cross-section. This improvement measure can aid in reducing vehicle speeds and improving pedestrian safety by providing opportunities for wider sidewalks, wider landscape strips, and bicycle accommodations. Access Management Techniques would assist in limiting vehicle conflicts on the main roadways, encourage shared access plans, and provide opportunities for shared parking. Access Management also provides opportunities to preserve property frontage for pedestrian or landscaping improvements. Road Diets and Access Management Techniques can promote better land use and these could be encouraged through the implementation of a zoning overlay district.

The City should take a dynamic approach to assessing the roadway infrastructure as this revitalization plan advances. Considering new traffic as a result of redevelopment should not be forgotten. Simply reducing pavement width or eliminating lanes may not be the most practical means for providing new opportunities and accommodating other modes of transportation.

6 | Recommendations

a. Name / Brand the Neighborhood

The Box District in Chelsea is an illustrative example of this strategy. During the approvals process for its 53 unit mill adaptive reuse project, the developer began referring to larger, former industrial neighborhood as "The Box District." Residents and city officials picked up on the name, and its continued use brought attention to this previously forgotten part of the city. Eventually the city put up banners on street lights, creating a more distinct neighborhood that people could be proud of and had some cachet.

A similar, low cost, word of mouth strategy could be successful in the West End Corridor as the City and stakeholders begin to develop a more refined vision for area plans.

b. Streetscape Improvements

Similar to what the City has done on North Street, in the West Street Corridor the City will need to "set the table" for development, by improving the public realm. By creating sidewalks that are pleasant, planting trees for shade, and implementing buffers from traffic, people will begin to feel safer and more willing to make the trip through the corridor on foot.



Streetscape improvements on North Street, coordinated by the City.

c. Introduce Green Space

Introduction of green space, especially along the Housatonic at the west end of the Corridor, will serve as a strong draw to nearby users and residents throughout the City. Trading parking for a River-front Park would be a bold move that signals the City's commitment to this district.

d. Change the Rules

"You get what you zone for." Given this adage, the City should consider its codes for the West Street Corridor and make the changes necessary to match the larger vision for the district. As mentioned before, the city should consider requiring developers to identify parking spaces, rather than provide them on site, if it truly wants to encourage more housing development downtown. Also, the City should be open to density and housing types that are possible, but which may not have been seen by the City yet.

e. Secure Funding

Develop a bold, thoughtful, and feasible vision for the West Street Corridor that includes all levels of government support and then look for state and federal funding to supplement local government investment such as TIF, etc.

f. Empower a Strong Partner

Attract developers that know how to use sophisticated finance tools or teach existing pool of developers how to use those tools.