Merrimack River District Planning

Scenario Planning and Evaluation of Community Benefits

Prepared by:
Dodson & Flinker, Landscape Architecture and Planning
with
Barrett Planning Group LLC
& BETA

Prepared for:
City of Amesbury, MA
September 9, 2022

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CONTENTS

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The Merrimack River District Planning Project was a collaborative effort of City elected officials, staff, individual citizens, and consultants. The following people contributed to project.

Steering Committee

- Kassandra Gove, Mayor
- Angela Cleveland, AICP, Director of Community & Economic Development
- Nipun Jain, Director of Planning

Working Group

- Tracey Chalifour, Coastal Trails Coalition, Resident of District
- Carol Finn, Resident of District
- Ann Ferguson, Amesbury Improvement Association and Resident
- Jon Hickok, City Councilor and Resident of District
- Bob Labadini, Deacon of Union Congregational Church and Resident of District
- Alex Loth, Minco Development, Landowner in District
- Joel Nice, Planning Board Members and Resident of Amesbury
- Sally Nutt, Member of Union Congregational Church and Resident of District
- Nina Regan, Landowner in District
- Christine Remus, Resident of District
- Cory Riley, Natural Resources Professional and Resident of Amesbury
- Linda Rodier, Resident of District
- Herb Sears, Landowner in District
- Peter Suorsa, Landowner in District and Resident of Amesbury

We gratefully acknowledge the important contributions of members of the public who provided input for this project by participating in public forums, completing the survey, or speaking with City Staff or the consultants.

We appreciate the contributions of employees of the City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and Essex County Greenbelt Association, and others who provided data, reports, and background information for this project.

Consulting Team

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Amesbury received a Community Planning Grant grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development in the 2022 fiscal year to develop a land use decision support tool for the city and to use scenario planning to explore possibilities for future land use, transportation infrastructure, building design and density, and open space and trail connections in the Merrimack River District. Defined by the Merrimack River to the south and I-95 and I-495 to the east and north, the Merrimack River District contains historic neighborhoods, a commercial corridor, valued natural resources, and vacant and underutilized commercial land. The area's mix of land-uses and the diverse interests of its land owners and the City-at-large results in the need for coordinated planning.

Working with the planning firms Dodson and Flinker, Barrett Planning Group, and BETA Group, Amesbury's Office of Community and Economic Development initiated a planning process that engaged local residents, landowners, and other community members in identifying key features of the Merrimack River District: the parts that people love and should be preserved, the parts that are not living up to expectations and should be improved, and the parts that are deleterious and should be transformed. The project set out to answer the following questions:

- What changes are occurring in the Merrimack River District?
- How do changes in one part of the district affect other parts of the district and the city as a whole?
- What kinds of changes are desirable and undesirable for different parts of the district?
- What factors should the City consider when making decisions in this area and throughout the city?

The project had two major outcomes. First, it developed and tested a method for community-driven neighborhood planning in Amesbury. Key elements of the method include the use of a "Working Group" (an ad hoc group of diverse local stakeholders who are convened for a defined period of time to work toward consensus on a planning issue), the use of scenario planning, and the development of a Community Benefits Model that can be used to evaluate land use decisions citywide. Second, the project produced a clearer understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the Merrimack River District, including evaluating which of three future land use scenarios would have the most community benefits, and producing a list of options for preserving and improving the Merrimack River District.

Project Process

During six months between January and June 2022, the project followed an iterative process of gathering and analyzing information and sharing findings with community members to arrive at a set of development scenarios and a method for evaluating them against community values. Key components in this process included:

- A review of Amesbury's past community plans and studies to identify topics of significant public interest
- Collection and analysis of data from the City of Amesbury, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, the Massachusetts Bureau of Geographic Information

You can find more information about this project and other City planning projects at:

https://www.amesbury-ma.gov/249/Community-Development

Participants at the first Public Forum give input about how the Merrimack River District relates to City-wide needs and objectives

(MassGIS), and previous traffic studies
- Evaluation of conditions in the field including a public site tour
- Community feedback from six Working Group meetings, three Public Forums, stakeholder interviews, and regular meetings with the Mayor and staff from the Office of Community and Economic Development
- A community survey to gather community priorities for benefits associated with development and land use policies
- Development of three potential build-out scenarios for the Merrimack River District
- Development of a Community Benefits Model and evaluation of the development scenarios with it
- Development of implementation options to meet community goals for the district and the city

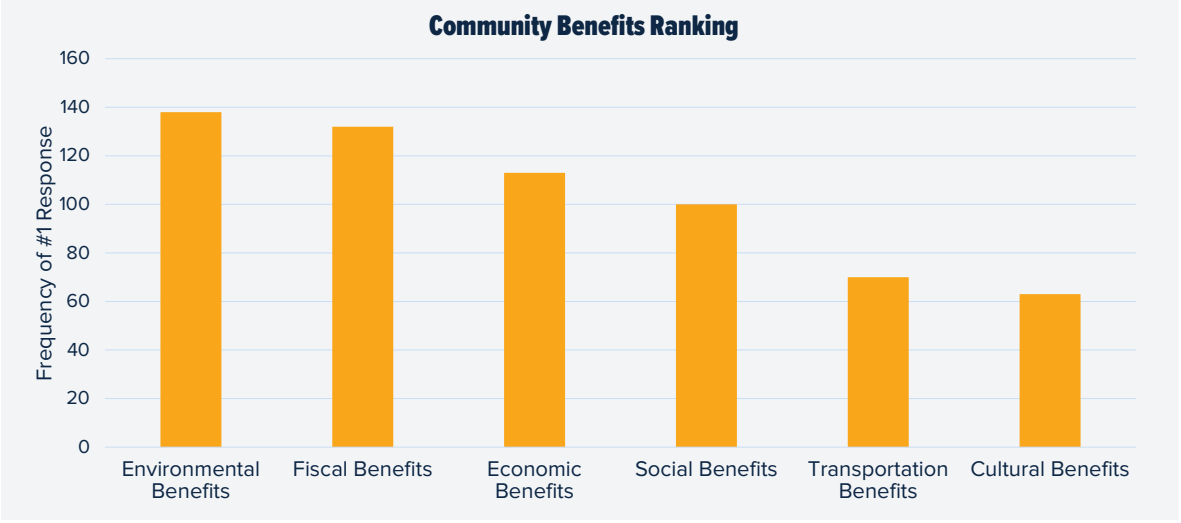


Figure 1. Community survey results showed that respondents valued potential Environmental and Fiscal Benefits the most out of potential community benefits from land-use changes.

Outcomes & Implementation Options

Goals

Through shared fact-finding and community discussion during this process, the project established the following goals for the Merrimack River District:

- Manage impacts from automobile traffic
- Improve streets, multi-use paths and trails to make walking, biking, and transit more convenient, safe, and comfortable
- Protect open space and natural resources
- Increase access to the river and open spaces and connect them
- Ensure that building & site design reflect neighborhood precedents and result in attractive walkable neighborhoods and centers
- Revitalize commercial corridors and gateways
- Expand the range of housing choices
- Attract small businesses and businesses that provide good-paying jobs
- Increase climate resilience
- Provide a high quality of life for current and future residents

These goals can guide future planning for the study area.

Community Benefits Model

The Community Benefits Model identified and weighted a variety of potential community benefits from land use changes. It drew from previous planning projects and public input gathered during this project, especially the community survey results. The survey revealed that out of six “buckets” of community benefits, community mem-

bers valued Environmental Benefits the most, followed by Fiscal Benefits, Economic Benefits, Social Benefits, Transportation Benefits, and Cultural Benefits. The Model was developed into an Excel-based tool that can be used to evaluate land use decisions City-wide in a consistent manner. The Model was tested and proved effective for evaluating the comparative benefits from land use changes.

Scenarios for Future Land Use

Based on analysis of existing conditions, recent development trends, and public input, the team developed scenarios showing potential future land uses for focus areas in the Merrimack River District. The focus areas were: 21 Pond View Avenue, a city-owned property that is undergoing a disposition process; the Golden Triangle, a triangle of largely vacant land between Route 110, Elm Street, I-95 and I-495; and land around the intersection of Elm Street/Route 110/Clark's Road and off of Clark's Road, much of which is within a recently proposed 40R district. Three land-use scenarios were developed for the focus areas to show potential future build-outs for the area. The baseline Build-Out Under Zoning showed a maximum potential build-out of the area under the current zoning. The Market-Driven Scenario showed a build-out based on conceptual plans by potential developers for parcels in the study area and precedents of recent projects in places that are similar to Amesbury. The Mixed-Use Scenario was based on community input and previous planning that showed a desire for walkable, village-style development that creates a sense of place that reflects Amesbury's past, while addressing the City's housing and economic development needs, and preserving open space.

Figure 2. Scenario 3: Mixed-Use Build-Out for I-95 Gateway (left), and 21 Pond View Ave (above)

Legend

- Parcel
- Water
- Open Space, Park
- Physically Constrained
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Commercial
- Office
- Public or Quasi-Public
- Multi-family
- 1-3 family
- Road Right of Way
- Vacant
- Outside of Study Area
- Landscaped Open Space
- Merrimack River District
- Amesbury City Boundary

Feet 0 200 400

The Mixed-Use Scenario provides the most community benefits according to the Community Benefits Model. It was also generally favored by community members during the final Working Group meeting and Public Forum. While dense, walkable development that sets aside open space was viewed as adding character to the gateway areas at either end of the district, community members remained concerned about the impacts of traffic, which emerged early on in the project as the foremost issue harming quality of life in the district.

Traffic was frequently cited as the most pressing issue facing the Merrimack River District. Participants were concerned about high traffic volumes, speeding and unsafe driving, poor sidewalk conditions, lack of bicycle facilities, dangerous crosswalks and intersections, and trucks that proceed down Main Street and Merrimac Street despite being too tall to cross the Bailey Memorial Bridge over the Powwow River. (Dodson & Flinker)

The project identified a menu of potential options for implementing the Goals for the Merrimack River District.

Transportation Implementation Options

Safety

- Collect more recent data for the project area during the summer
- Install speed feedback radar signs
- Pedestrian-oriented devices, such as movable in-street "Yield to Pedestrians" sign and pedestrian flags and cannisters at crosswalks
- Evaluate All-Way Stop at Main Street/Merrimac Street to improve pedestrian crossing
- Consider 20 MPH Safety Zone at Alliance Park (need MassDOT approval)

Circulation

- Conduct Pilot Study for changing Main Street to reduce westbound traffic onto Main Street through No Left Turn sign from Merrill Street northbound onto Main Street OR designating Main Street as one-way eastbound (need MassDOT approval)
- Conduct Pilot Study for changing Rocky Hill Road to one-way northbound and Clark's Road to one-way southbound

Speed Reduction

- Conduct Pilot Study for installing temporary vertical traffic calming devices (raised crosswalks, intersections) on Main Street and other locations

Long-Term Options

- Provide new sidewalk on Main Street between Crum Hill and I-95
- Consider shared-use path on north side of Main Street
- ADA and streetscape improvements on Main Street
- Rebuild sidewalk on Merrimac Street
- New sidewalk and/or crossing at marina redevelopment and boat ramp & driveway access/egress improvements/consolidation on Merrimac Street
- Complete shared-use path on Rt 150 between Summit Avenue and Beacon Street

Land Use Implementation Options

- Revise zoning for 21 Pond View Avenue and Golden Triangle to allow mixed-use development
- Move forward with East End Smart Growth 40R district
- Explore creating a special permit for additional use of marina properties when redevelopment will result in significant public benefits—like improvements to intersections, sidewalks, and/or public access to the river
- Enhance zoning requirements for sustainability and climate resilience

Open Space & Trail Implementation Options

- Improve public access to the Merrimack and Powwow Rivers
- Connect the Powwow/Amesbury Riverwalk with the Salisbury Ghost Trail
- Improve multimodal connections between the Merrimack River District and the rest of Amesbury, including Environmental Justice Block Groups along Elm Street
- Improve sidewalks and bike facilities along Merrimac St, Main St, and Evan's Place

- Preserve the undeveloped parcels abutting the river along Main Street (aka Bailey's Green) as open space
- Connect the Point Shore Meadows Conservation Land with trails and open space farther north
- Preserve remaining natural land around Bailey Pond and improve access to the pond
- Connect Margaret Rice Park to Bailey Pond and sidewalk on Beacon St

Placemaking Implementation Options

- Create Gateways by redeveloping key nodes in district into walkable mixed-use centers
- Add wayfinding to and from key destinations
- Promote history: create walking tour and/or interpretive signs, consider adopting a local historic district
- Make streetscape improvements throughout area: sidewalk improvements, street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, bury powerlines
- Establish events that take advantage of river & celebrate history and culture
- Activate the Visitor Center at the Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station

Planning Process Implementation Options

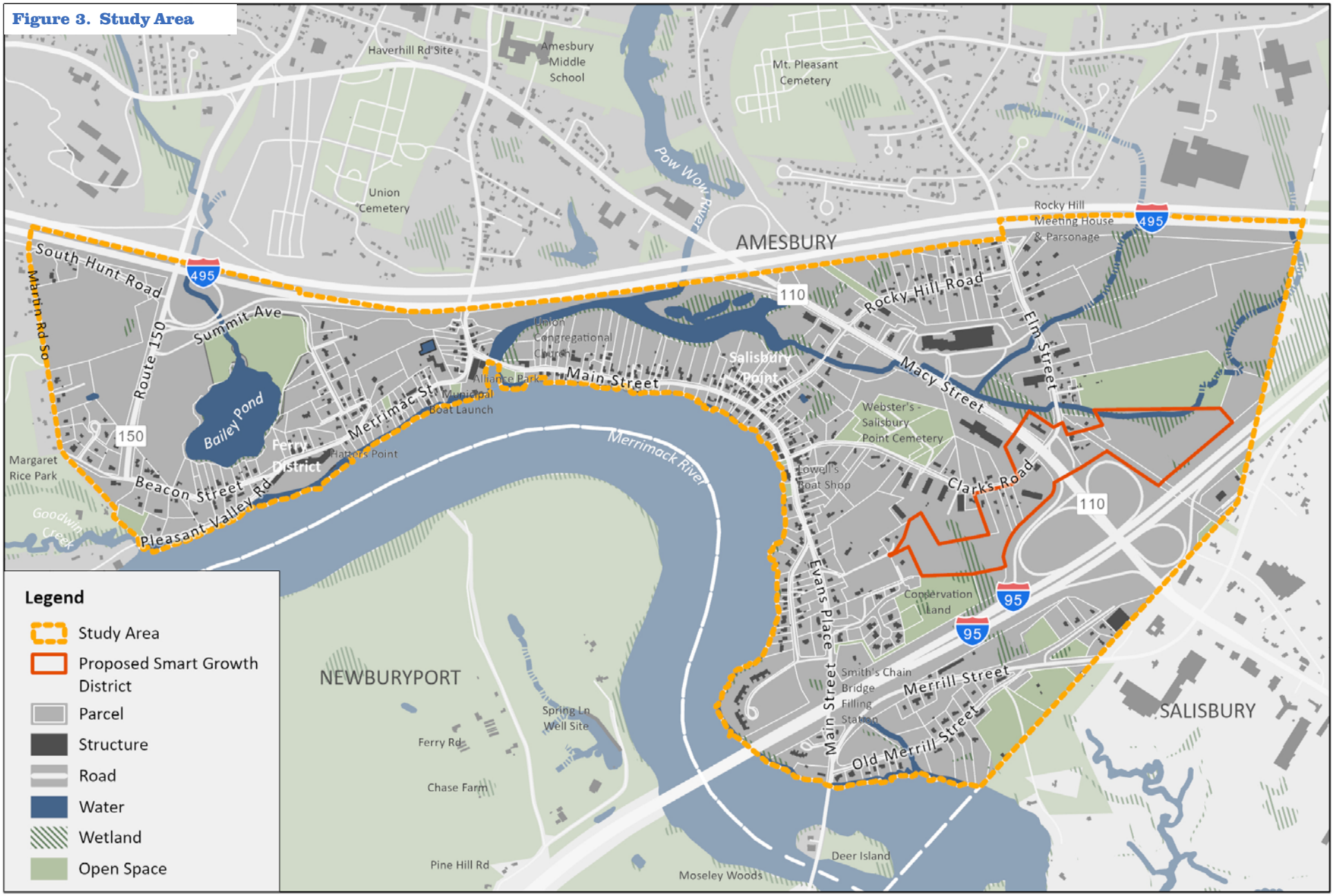
- Implement use of the Community Benefits Model
- Continue proactive planning for Merrimack River District and other neighborhoods
- Continue to use scenario planning to make it easier for citizens to envision and plan for long-term change
- Use short-term, low-cost, full-scale mock-ups to test infrastructure improvements before final design is complete. These demonstrations can be used for transportation and park improvement projects, among others
- Develop a web-page that briefly summarizes key policy takeaways from planning projects and tracks implementation of actions

Next Steps

Community members and city officials can further evaluate and implement these options through several planning processes in the district, such as the East End Smart Growth Overlay District, disposition of 21 Pond View Ave, planning for the Golden Triangle, and the Marina at Amesbury Point, and implementation of complete streets improvements. Some of these projects may involve zoning changes or special permits with the opportunity for advocacy for goals and options outlined in this report. By continuing active and inclusive public planning processes, the City of Amesbury can create vibrant gateways and smart and sustainable land uses in the Merrimack River District that preserve what people love about the area while enabling it to live up to its potential to help fulfill City-wide goals. Use of the Community Benefits Model in planning decisions will ensure that the City has a consistent basis for evaluating the potential benefits of land use changes.

Regional trail connections and improved access to Bailey Pond were overlapping goals for community members. The photo above shows a trail along Bailey Pond that is under construction as part of the Bailey's Pond Development (City of Amesbury)

Figure 3. Study Area



Study Area with Proposed East End Smart Growth District

Merrimack River District Planning Project

Amesbury, MA

Draft: 4/18/22

Prepared by:

DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

INTRODUCTION

Physical Context and Planning Context

The Merrimack River District is in the southeast corner of Amesbury in an area defined by the Merrimack River to the south, Interstate Highway 495 to the north, the border with Salisbury to the east, and Martin Road South to the west. The district, also referred to as the "study area" in this report, contains the historic residential neighborhood of Point Shore, part of the historic Ferry District, lower Elm Street, Rocky Hill Road, Clark's Road, as well as the commercial Rt 110 Corridor, serving as an eastern gateway to the city, and Rt 150 where it connects with South Hunt Road and I-495 at a mixed industrial and commercial site. The confluence of the Powwow River and the Merrimack River at Bailey Bridge is just west of the geographic center of the district, and Bailey Pond to the west and the Golden Triangle to the northeast are two other important land features in the district. While the distinct parts of the district have widely different land use patterns, together, they represent a section of Amesbury that is relatively isolated from downtown by I-495 but serves as an entry point to the city for neighbors and visitors.

Preserving and enhancing the valued features of this area, and transforming its underutilized and incongruous sections, is a complex planning process that stands to improve the quality of life for local residents while serving the city's larger goals. Objectives of this process may overlap, such as improving multimodal transportation options and improving access to and awareness of open space areas, and they may also require trade-offs to resolve conflicting needs, such as increasing affordable housing and reducing traffic congestion. Additionally, the physical proximity

Figure 4. City of Amesbury

City of Amesbury
Merrimack River District Smart Growth Planning Project
Amesbury, MA
Draft: 4/822

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

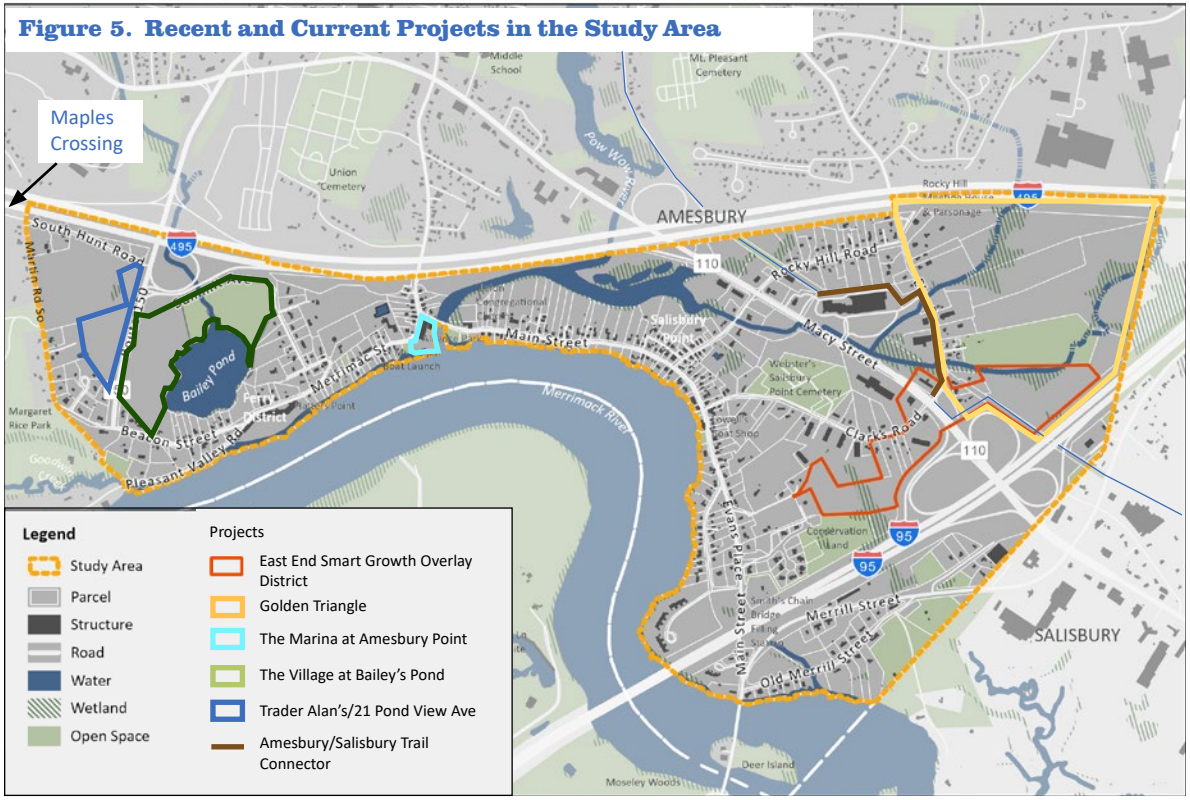
Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

0 0.5 1 Mile

of the district's unique areas, punctuated by steep slopes and water resources, deepens the challenge of creating inviting transitions between neighborhoods. Using a collaborative process to meet these challenges is an ideal opportunity for comprehensive planning.

This report first documents the existing conditions and planning needs of the district based on previous studies, public input, and data collection and analysis by the consultants. The report then presents the Community Benefits Model—a tool that can support City decision-making about land use changes by evaluating the relative benefits of those changes. The Model was developed based on community input during this project and is intended for City-wide use. The next section of the report presents potential build-out scenarios for focus areas within the Merrimack River District. It then evaluates them using the Community Benefits Tool. The report concludes with a list of implementation options to serve the Merrimack River District and the City of Amesbury as a whole.

Figure 5. Recent and Current Projects in the Study Area



As additional context for this planning process, the district is home to several other ongoing planning initiatives and development projects:

- The East End Smart Growth Overlay District is a proposed Zoning Overlay District under the state's Chapter 40R Smart Growth Act. The proposed 40R Overlay district is located around the junction of Rt 110, Elm Street, and Clark's Road. It would allow increased housing and mixed-use development in some parts of the overlay district, while designating others for open space preservation. The district would include design standards and the City would qualify for incentive payments from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the net increase in units that could potentially be built under the Overlay zoning.
- The Golden Triangle, a 135-acre site off of I-95 that was designated a Priority Development Area by the City and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) in 2008. It was a focus of the 2004 Amesbury Master Plan, a 2006 planning study, and a subsequently adopted zoning overlay district. It has historically been

viewed as a key economic development opportunity for the City because it is a large area of undeveloped land adjacent to two highways. Development of this area may require zoning changes.

- The Marina at Amesbury Point, a.k.a. former Larry's Marina, is a 2-acre site on the Merrimack River adjacent to the confluence with the Powwow River is the focus of a redevelopment project. The project proponent has gathered input from neighbors, and put forth a conceptual plan. Currently, the plans are being revised and no formal steps have been taken with the City. This project may require zoning changes.
- The Village at Bailey's Pond, a 120-unit subdivision located off of Pond Hill Road on Bailey's Pond that is now in Phase 2 of development
- Former Trader Alan's Truck Stop, a 6.77-acre, City-owned, brownfield site located at 21 Pond View Road, off of I-495, that is under review by the Disposition Committee. Depending on which uses a future Request for Proposals seeks, this site may require zoning changes.
- The Amesbury/Salisbury Trail Connector, a proposed multimodal trail connection behind CarriageTown Marketplace, identified as an action step of the 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Maples Crossing is a sports complex that is under development. While this project is outside of the study area, it could have impacts on the study area including transportation system impacts and economic development opportunities.

This project intended to plan for the area comprehensively taking into consideration these various ongoing efforts.

Project Objectives

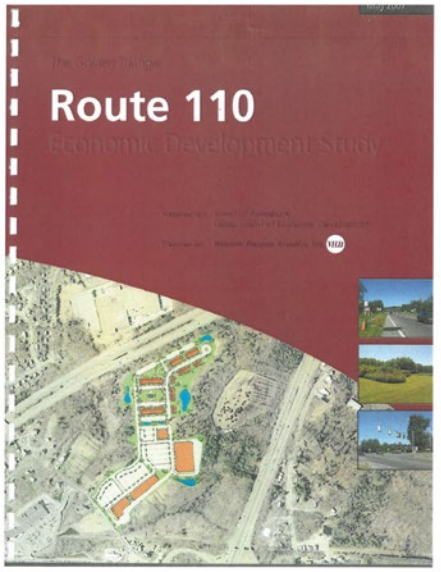
The objectives for this project arose from previous planning initiatives, especially outreach for the proposed East End Smart Growth Overlay District, that revealed a need to look at land use decisions more broadly in the area and attempt to coordinate them with one another. A few questions have helped frame the project:

- What changes are occurring in the Merrimack River District?
- How do changes in one part of the district affect other parts of the district and the city as a whole?
- What kinds of changes are desirable and undesirable for different parts of the district?
- What factors should the City consider when making decisions in this area and throughout the city?

These questions reflect an intention to coordinate multiple objectives at once, which is also articulated in Amesbury's Vision Statement in the 2004 Master Plan:

> We want to build upon the past by reinforcing a sense of belonging to an open and accepting community with outstanding natural and cultural resources [...] to cultivate a prosperous community with a diversified economic tax base where civic involvement is an integral part of a valued quality of life [... and] to preserve the classic New England Village character and heritage that currently exists in Amesbury, while accommodating growth in a manner that is well controlled and appropriate to meet the needs of the community.[1]

1 Town of Amesbury Master Plan (2004), p.ES-9



Construction at Bailey Pond, above, and a study of development potential of the Golden Triangle are examples of the long history of planning and development activity in the district (Dodson & Flinker; City of Amesbury)

Point Shore and the Rt 110 Corridor are only a half mile apart, but have very different planning needs (Dodson & Flinker)

The Merrimack River District's unique combination of community assets and needs and the high level of civic engagement in planning for the area presents an opportunity to implement this vision. Through a robust public engagement process, the project developed the following specific goals for the study area:

- Manage impacts from automobile traffic
- Improve streets, multi-use paths and trails to make walking, biking, and transit more convenient, safe, and comfortable
- Protect open space and natural resources
- Increase access to the river and open spaces and connect them
- Ensure that building & site design reflect neighborhood precedents and result in attractive walkable neighborhoods and centers
- Revitalize commercial corridors and gateways
- Expand the range of housing choices
- Attract small businesses and businesses that provide good-paying jobs
- Increase climate resilience
- Provide a high quality of life for current and future residents

Process

The project followed a multi-step process in which team members gathered data and used public input to develop insights and options for improving for the district. Amesbury's past plans and studies revealed topics of significant public interest, and data provided by the City, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC), and the Massachusetts Bureau of Geographic Information (MassGIS) informed a series of maps of existing conditions, land use constraints, and buildout potential. Community input gathered from the Working Group, staff interviews, and public outreach guided the project's goals and informed the creation of a Community Benefits Model used to assess a set of alternative scenarios for land uses changes in the district, resulting in the proposed implementation ideas for improving the district.

The Steering Committee formally launched the project with a kick-off meeting in January 2022, followed by weekly Steering Committee meetings, six Working Group meetings, and three Public Forums, culminating in the third Public Forum on June 22, 2022. With the exception of the first two Public Forums, which were held in person, all meetings were held over Zoom. Consultants facilitated discussion at most meetings. One public survey gathered input from Amesbury residents to inform the Community Benefits Model. A fuller description of the project's components follows.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee included Amesbury's Director of Planning, Director of Community & Economic Development, and Mayor Kassandra Gove, along with planners from the consultant firms Dodson & Flinker, acting as project lead, Barrett Planning Group, coordinating the Community Benefits Model and public survey, and BETA Group, providing traffic analysis. Steering Committee meetings helped identify Working Group members, frame the large questions of the project, provide information to the consultants, and guide the overall process.

Working Group

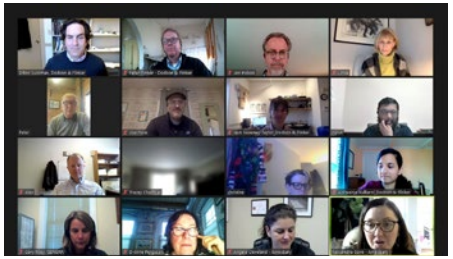
A group of fifteen residents, community leaders, and landowners met with the Steering Committee members to form the Working Group. Working Group members represented community organizations including the Amesbury Improvement Association, the Union Congregational Church, and the Coastal Trails Coalition; additionally, one member was an active City Councilor, another was an active member of the Planning Board, and one member represented Minco, a local development firm. Together, their experience living and working in the district and diverse set of interests and perspectives grounded the project's discussion in key issues affecting quality of life in the district. The Working Group met six times over the course of the project and was responsible for guiding and refining the project's goals, naming the Merrimack River District, conducting a shared fact-finding process that included responding to information from the consultants and identifying gaps in knowledge, discussing and debating issues and locations of concern, and helping to recruit community members for public forums.

The Working Group was designed to represent as many of the interest groups in the study area as possible, and to provide a platform through which members could get to know the study area and each other. The design of the Working Group enables members to engage in substantive conversations about the future of the study area, which in turn provides nuanced information for decision making by elected and appointed officials.

First and Second Public Forums

The first two Public Forums were held in person on back-to-back days on the weekend of April 8th-9th at the Amesbury High School. Approximately 35 community members attended the first Public Forum on Friday April 8th, held between 6PM and 8PM. The forum's objectives were to introduce the project and learn how community members compared priorities for Amesbury as a whole with needs and objectives for the Merrimack River District, in part to inform the Community Benefits Model. The agenda included a brief introduction to the project, a presentation on the Community Benefits Model, also referred to as a "Decision-Support Tool", a breakout discussion of city-wide values and priorities, and a second presentation on existing conditions in the study area, with particular attention to traffic and sidewalks, followed by a second breakout discussion related more specifically to the study area.

The first forum's first breakout discussion asked participants in small groups to identify features of Amesbury that they wish to "protect", "improve", and "transform", noting areas of overlap in these categories on a Venn Diagram. Participants filled out Venn diagrams individually, and then came together to discuss with their small group, comparing responses and sharing why they wrote what they wrote. This activity formed the basis for the second breakout discussion, which asked participants first to discuss what makes the study area unique within the city, and then to identify how the study area relates to the city-wide goals. Findings from these discussions are reviewed in the Existing Conditions part of this report, under City-Wide Goals.



Six online Working Group meetings enabled a representative group of community members and stakeholders to have in depth discussions about the project (Dodson & Flinker)

Hands-on work-stations at the first and second Public Forums asked participants to get creative (Barrett Planning Group)

Participants during a presentation at the first Public Forum, on April 8th, 2022 (Dodson & Flinker)

The second Public Forum, held on the following morning of Saturday April 9th from 10AM-1PM, was attended by 30 community members, many of whom had attended the first forum. The forum's objectives were to share information and gather community priorities for the study area, in order to develop future land use scenarios shared in the third Public Forum. The forum opened with a presentation of input from the first forum and case studies of mixed-use, village-style redevelopment of commercial areas similar to the Rt 110 Corridor. A majority of the forum was dedicated to an activity in which participants broke out into six small randomly-assigned groups that rotated through the following work stations:

1. Visual Preference Survey: Participants reviewed images of buildings and features of the public realm, such as bike lanes, rain gardens, or public art, and placed green dots on images that they think are appropriate to the Merrimack River District, and red dots on areas that they are inappropriate. They then discussed how preferences may vary across different neighborhoods in the district, and important precedents in the district.
2. Transportation: Participants reviewed a map identifying locations of existing transportation issues, previous recommendations, and potential opportunities. They then marked the map with their own priority areas and recommendations.
3. Open Space, Recreation, and Trails: Participants reviewed a map showing existing open space and trails in the study area and then identified which natural and recreational features are most important for management, including maintenance improvements, signage, or public events, as well as new parks, recreation facilities, or trail connections.
4. Riverfront (Main Street/Merrimac Street): Participants reviewed a map highlighting the riverfront portion of the study area and identified key historical and cultural features, visual and physical access to the Merrimack River, and streetscape improvements. A guiding question was, "How can the riverfront be improved or activated while minimizing conflicts between residents and visitors?"
5. Modeling 1, Gateway from I-95 (Elm St/Clark/s Rd/ Route 110): Using a 1"=40' scale model of the I-95 Gateway, participants worked with a designer to explore opportunities for infill development, street and pedestrian improvements, shared parking, and other

topics, by arranging at-scale model pieces of buildings and road infrastructure in different configurations.

6. Modeling 2, Gateway from I-495 (Pond View Ave): The second modeling station followed the same format, focusing on the I-495 Gateway and the site of the former Trader Alan's in particular.

The forum dedicated an hour and a half to work stations, allowing each group to spend approximately 20 minutes at four of the six stations (each group visited a unique set of four stations). The whole group reconvened, and facilitators reported back key findings for each station, and participants asked questions or offered additional insights before the forum closed.

Public Survey and Community Benefits Model

Following the second Public Forum, a public survey was released to solicit community input on potential benefits of future development. The survey was open between April 11th and April 29th and received 425 responses. Results from the survey were used to develop the Community Benefits Model, discussed later in this report.

Third Public Forum

The third and final Public Forum took place over Zoom on Wednesday June 22, between 6 and 8PM, attended by approximately 30 community members. The forum's objectives were to report back findings from the use of the Community Benefits Model to assess future land use scenarios, to share implementation options, and to solicit community members' feedback. Following a presentation on the process, findings, and implementation options for the project, the second half of the meeting was dedicated to answering participants' questions and an open discussion.

Representativeness of Public Input

The public forums and public survey for this project were based on "convenience samples"—members of the community who chose to participate. Input gleaned from them may or may not accurately represent the *balance of opinion* in Amesbury (in other words, how many people hold which opinions). Despite the convenience samples, the public input is useful. It provides in depth information about the study area from people with first hand experience of it. It also shows the *range of opinions* held by community members about various topics that are relevant to planning. Local elected and appointed officials are ultimately responsible for carrying out any implementation options arising from this project. These officials can further evaluate the balance of opinions in Amesbury as part of their decision-making processes.

The third and final Public Forum solicited community feedback about the Community Benefits Model and the implementation options for the district (City of Amesbury)

EXISTING CONDITIONS INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Buildings along Main Street and the Riverfront are mostly residential and historic (Dodson & Flinker)

Land Use and Zoning

The distinct patterns of development within the Merrimack River District fall into three main areas: the central Riverfront and its historic Point Shore and Ferry District neighborhoods; the gateway to I-95 and the Golden Triangle to the east; and the gateway to I-495 and the South Hunt Area to the west. Properties vary from small and residential by the Riverfront to larger commercial parcels at the gateways, with a handful of agricultural parcels, industrial sites, and exempt properties owned by religious, non-profit, or public entities sprinkled throughout. Zoning reinforces existing land use trends, with the Residential-20 (R-20) zoning district making up much of the central Riverfront area, a Residential-8 (R-8) zoning district along Rocky Hill Road, and Office Park or Commercial zoning at the gateways. As a note to the descriptions below, all zoning districts in Amesbury allow crop-based agriculture.

A fuller description of land use and zoning in each of the three main areas follows.

The Riverfront

The area defined here as "the Riverfront" includes the land between the Merrimack River and parcels on the south side of Rt 110 to the northeast, and parcels on the east side of Rt 150 to the west, with I-495 forming the boundary in the center. Colonial settlement in this area is visible in the historic houses and long, narrow lots along Main Street in the Point Shore neighborhood, and along Merrimac Street in the Ferry District west of the Bailey Bridge. Together, the Point Shore and Ferry District neighborhoods share a history of shipbuilding and mixed-use village development, with original houses built on the river-facing north side of the street, and trade buildings along the shore. Today, the area is almost entirely residential, with the exception of two marinas, Lowell's Boat Shop, and a few parcels owned by the City, churches, or non-profit groups, which show up as exempt on the land use map.

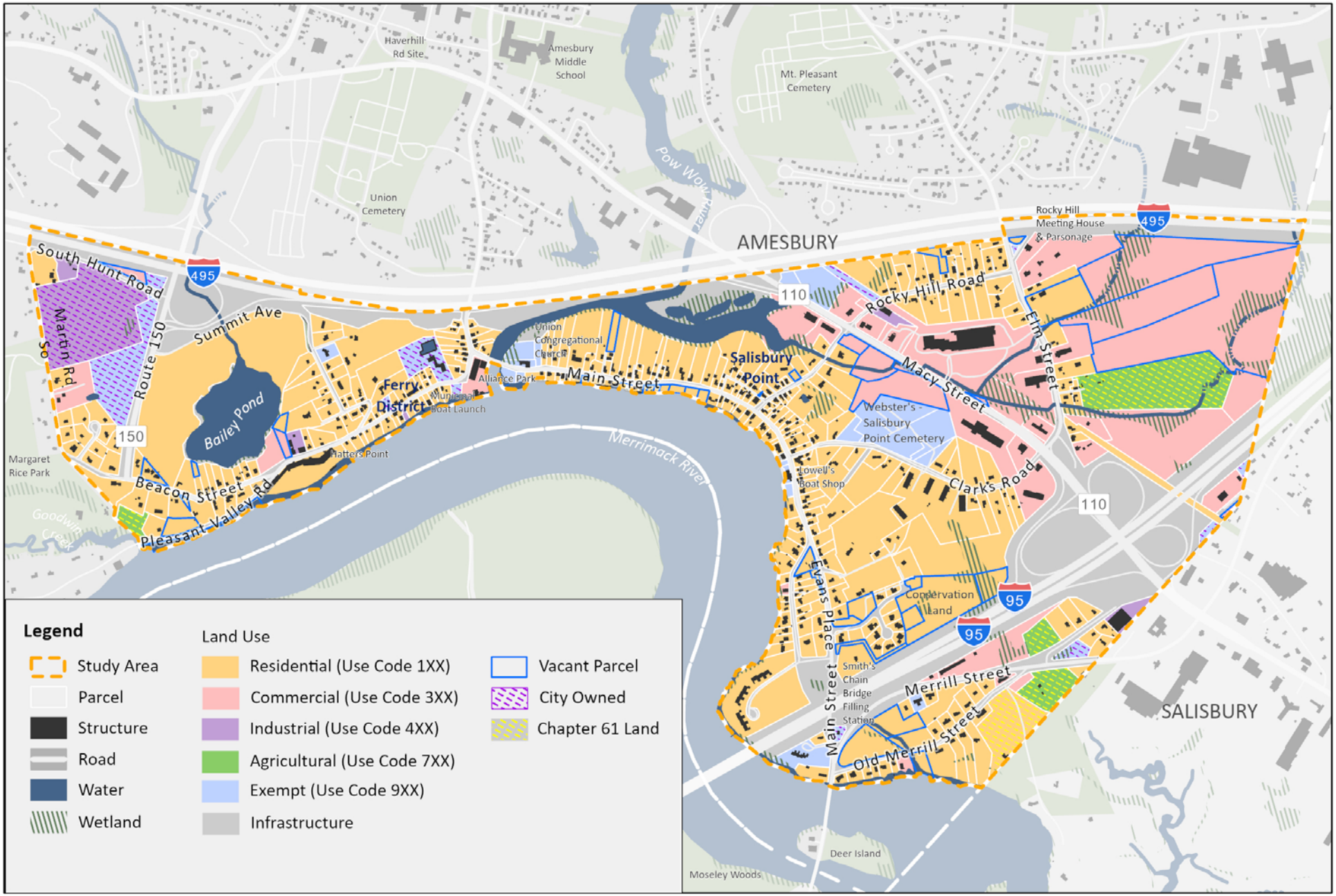
Much of the Riverfront area is in the R-20 zoning district, which allows single-family residential development by right on lot sizes of 20,000 ft2 or more. Amesbury's special condition for Residential Conversions and Special Permit for Historic Conversions allow two- and three-family dwellings on qualifying parcels, including many parcels along the Riverfront. Section IV. Scenario Analysis examines this buildout potential more fully.

Other zoning districts along the Riverfront reflect the specific context of smaller areas. For example, at Hatters Point, the site of the former Merrimack Hat Company has been zoned for Planned Unit Development, allowing conversion of the mill building into condominiums. Open Space Conservancy zoning districts at Alliance Park and the municipal water treatment plant on Merrimac Street restrict residential and commercial development, and allow land conservation, agriculture, parks and recreational facilities, non-profit and religious uses, public schools, or other municipal facilities.

I-95 Gateway and the Golden Triangle

The I-95 Gateway, including all parcels adjacent to Rt 110 and north to I-495, has a mixture of small- and large-lot commercial development along the Rt 110 corridor, transitioning to residential lots along Elm Street and Rocky Hill Road. The Golden Triangle, and area northeast of Elm

Figure 6. Land Use in the Study Area



Land Use

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Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

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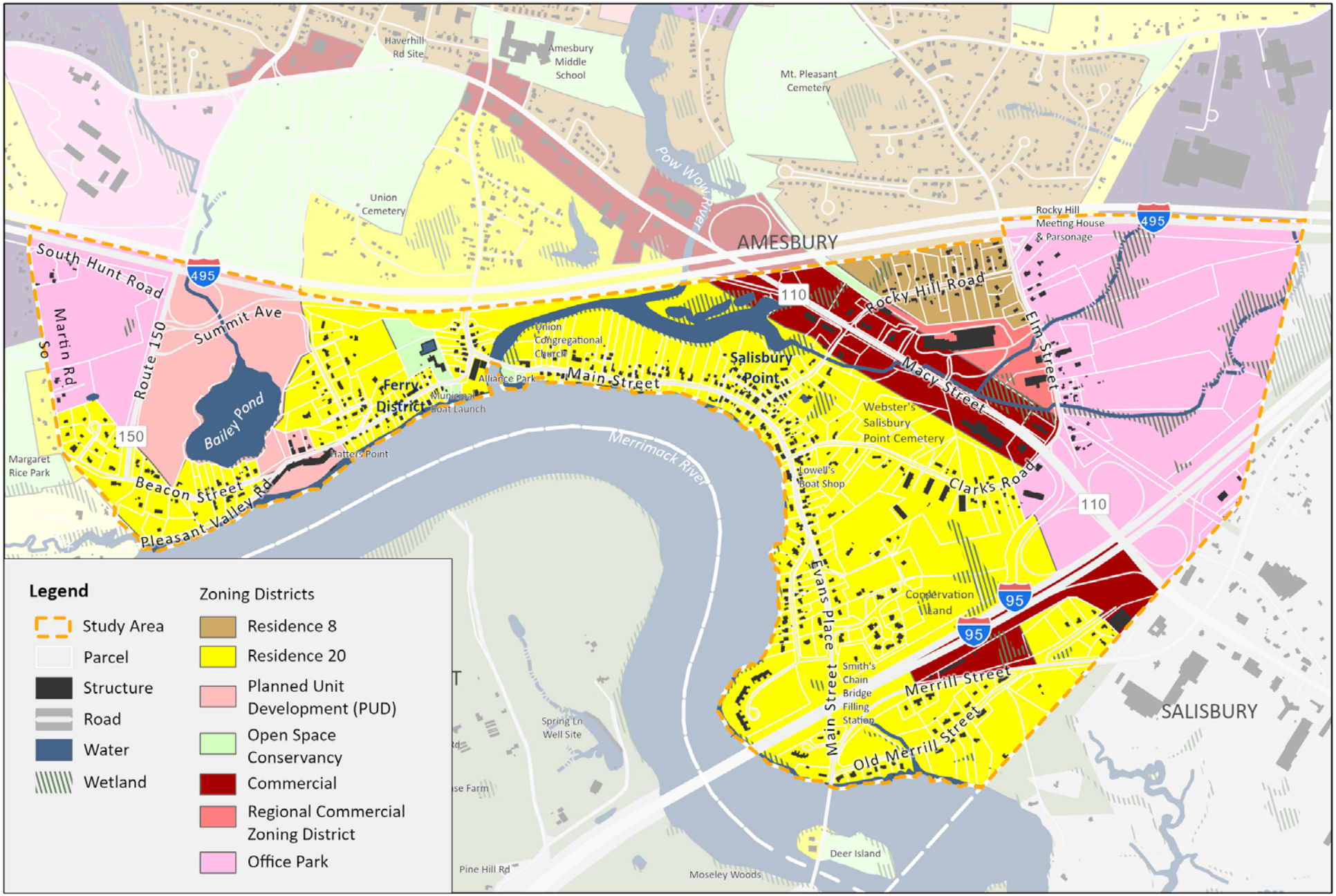
Figure 7. Zoning Districts in the Study Area



Zoning Districts

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Amesbury, MA

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Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
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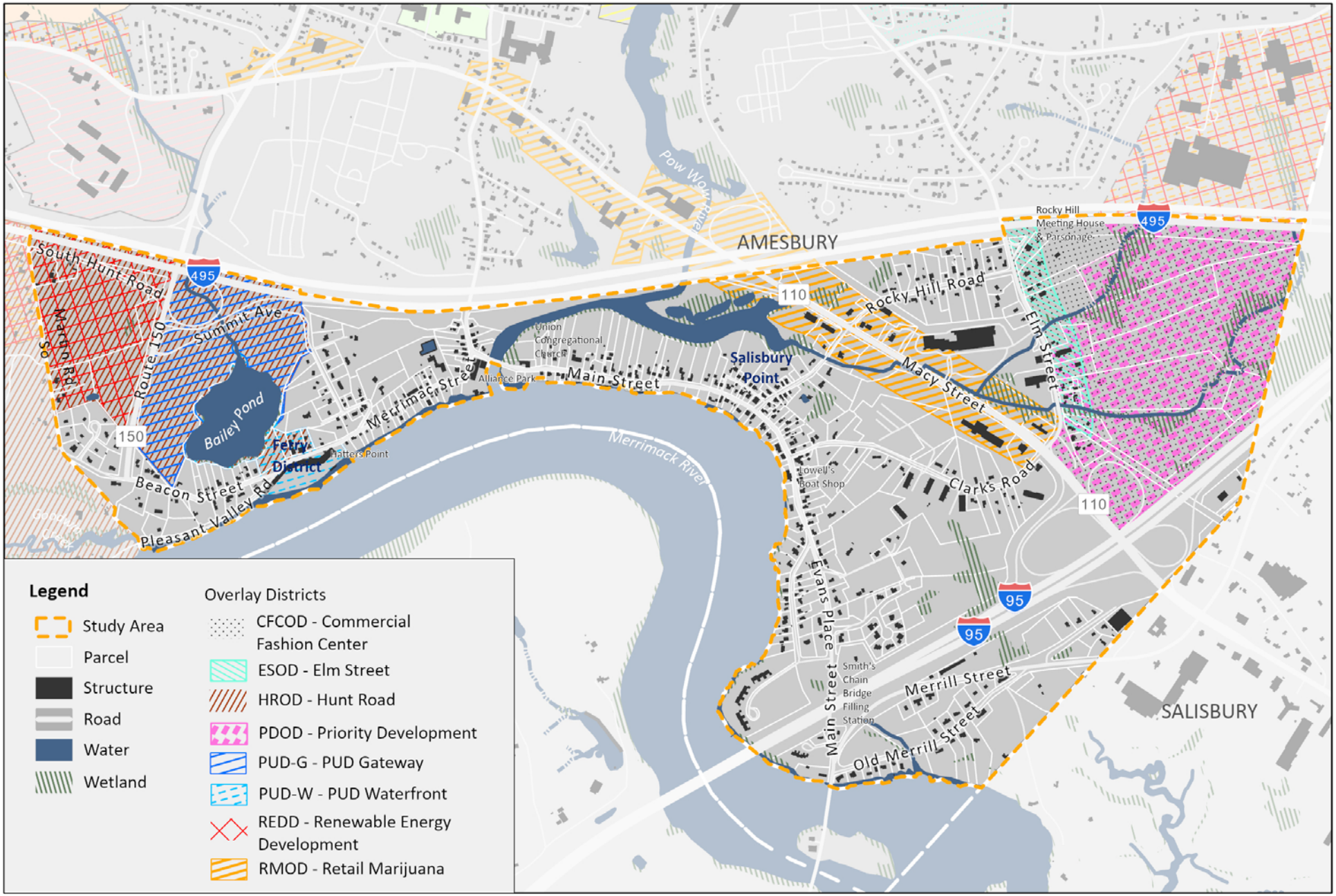
Figure 8. Zoning Overlay Districts in the Study Area



Overlay Districts

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Amesbury, MA

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Data Sources:
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Shops at the CarriageTown Market Place (Dodson & Flinker)

Recent commercial development viewed from the CarriageTown Market Place parking lot (Dodson & Flinker)

The back of CNA Cannabis Shop on Route 110 (Dodson & Flinker)

Street and south of I-495, has several large, vacant commercial lots, some with agricultural use, and a few smaller residential and commercial parcels along Elm Street. Land use in parts of the area is constrained by wet soils and streams that flow southwest from the Golden Triangle to feed the Powwow River (see Section F. Land Use Constraints).

The zoning of the area is also a mix of commercial and residential districts, with additional overlay districts.

Along Rt 110, Commercial (C) zoning requires 20,000 ft2 lot sizes and permits most businesses and community facilities by right, while auto services and light industrial uses require a Special Permit. Residential uses are not allowed except via Section XI.J of Amesbury's Zoning Ordinance which enables the Planning Board to grant a special permit for upper-story multi-family in the Commercial District. The number of dwelling units allowed is determined by the Planning Board. Dimensional requirements are the same as the underlying district, except where the Planning Board increases them. Parking requirements are the sum of the requirements for the commercial space and 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit.

The CarriageTown Market Place and adjoining parcels fall into the Regional Commercial Zoning District (RCZD), which permits shopping centers and commercial parking areas on lots greater than 2 acres. Residential uses are not allowed in this district.

The Office Park zoning district covers the Golden Triangle, and several parcels to its south on the opposite side of Route 110. The Office Park district allows offices and light manufacturing by right, and other commercial and light industrial uses with a Special Permit. It does not allow residential uses.

North of Rt 110, along Rocky Hill Road, a Residence-8 (R-8) zoning district allows single-family homes by right on lots greater than 8,000 ft2, and two – to three-family conversions on lots greater than 12,000 ft2. A parcel along the Powwow Riverwalk (a.k.a. Amesbury Riverwalk) off of Rocky Hill Road is zoned Open Space Conservancy.

Overlay Districts

The potential for commercial uses near the busy highway interchange between Rt 110 and I-95, and the mixture of historic properties and large undeveloped commercial parcels in the Golden Triangle, has inspired zoning overlays in the area. A Retail Marijuana Overlay allows commercial cannabis along Rt 110. In the Golden Triangle, a 2007 decision by the City Council established the area as a "Priority Development Site" under MGL Chapter 43D, allowing expedited permitting for large-scale commercial development within the Priority Development Overlay District (PDOD), overlapping with the underlying Office Park zoning. Following interest from a developer, and grant-funded studies by the Town, the Commercial Fashion Center Overlay District (CFCOD) in the Golden Triangle was established to allow development of a regional clothing retail center. The developers who initiated this project did not follow through.

The Elm Street Overlay District (ESOD) aims to preserve historic properties on the north side of Elm Street within

300 feet of the road's centerline, by reducing maximum height requirements to 35 feet or 2.5 stories, restricting light manufacturing, subjecting development proposals to design review, and incentivizing developments in the Golden Triangle not to provide access from Elm Street.[2]

I-495 Gateway and the South Hunt Area

On the western edge of the Merrimack River District, the interchange between I-495 and Rt 150 creates another gateway to the district that contains a variety of land uses. A solar field on top of a former landfill abutting South Hunt Road and a vacant parcel at the former site of Trader Alan's truck stop are both owned by the City. An auto salvage business and residential properties line Martin Road South. Across Rt 150, the first phase of a townhouse condominium development, called the Village at Bailey's Pond, is wrapping up, with Phase 2 getting underway.

Underlying zoning districts include Office Park on the west side of Rt 150 and Planned Unit Development (PUD) on the east. Similar to the eastern gateway, the I-495 Gateway's underutilized parcels, proximity to regional transportation, and role as an entry point to the city has inspired overlay districts to encourage targeted redevelopment. The PUD Gateway overlay guides condominium development at the Village at Bailey's Pond, while the Renewable Energy Development District west of Rt 150 allows the solar field, and the Hunt Road Overlay District enables a sports complex just outside of the study area. The underlying Office Park zoning of the west side of Rt 150 also provides a basis for redevelopment of the Trader Alan's parcel, which is under review by the City's Disposition Committee at the writing of this report. Many of these projects contribute to the South Hunt Area District Improvement Program, which aims to encourage economic development and public tax revenue through public-private partnerships in the area.

Public Input on Land Use & Zoning

During the second Public Forum, the Riverfront work station identified land use conditions and preferences for that area, while the modeling stations for the two Gateways brainstormed specific land use changes in these areas. The Visual Preference Survey added input for all three areas.

Along the Riverfront, participants valued the area's historic character and visual access to the river; however, opinions diverged about how to preserve and enhance the riverfront's neighborhood feel. Some participants, both from the district and from elsewhere in Amesbury, expressed a perception that the Riverfront "is a road, not a neighborhood", due to heavy traffic and inhospitable sidewalk conditions along Main Street. One resident from elsewhere in Amesbury said that he only passes through Point Shore on his way to Newburyport and does not visit, because he does not "want to intrude" and does not feel like he "could stop and walk in that space". To address accessibility, some expressed interest in finding ways to increase public parking at strategic locations, though some said that there is "no space to add parking". Others stated that the Riverfront had sufficient public parking.

Some participants in the Visual Preference Survey expressed interest in a small commercial node or coffee

At the I-495 Gateway, the City owns 21 Pond View Ave (top) and is currently undertaking a disposition process for the property. On the opposite side of Rt 150, the Village at Bailey's Pond (bottom) is the site of an ongoing residential development (Dodson & Flinker)

2 Zoning Section VI. Table of Dimensional and Density Regulations, Note 6

At the I-95 Gateway Modeling Station, participants demonstrated openness to mixed-use development with pedestrian-friendly elements (Dodson & Flinker)

shop at Point Shore, suggesting new zoning to allow for this; however, another group preferred no further development of any kind. Participants in the Riverfront station expressed concern for "encroachment from nearby development" at properties such as Lowell's Boat Shop.

At the I-95 Gateway modeling station, participants considered options for redevelopment of the Rt 110 corridor. Participants identified a number of specific recommendations:

- Redevelop street frontage surrounding the intersection of Rt. 110, Elm Street and Clark's Road with attractive 2-1/3 to 3 story mixed-use buildings
- Keep the scale of buildings relatively modest along the frontage and put larger apartments and other uses on deeper lots extending to the north and south
- Move parking lots, gas pumps and other automobile-related uses to the rear
- Consolidate curb cuts, share driveways, and link across lot lines in the rear of parcels to improve vehicular circulation
- Create shared parking lots serving multiple buildings, including adjoining parcels in different ownership
- Create a consistent streetscape along the frontage of Rt. 110, Elm Street and Clark's Road with safe, continuous sidewalks, street trees and other landscaping
- Create a safe North-South crossing of Rt. 110 for pedestrians and bicycles
- Keep the MassDOT parcel at 110 and Elm Street as a public park or as the site of a visitor's center.
- Explore provision of an additional park on Clark's Road to serve neighborhood residents

The Visual Preference Survey also noted an interest in mixed-used development along Rt 110 and Elm Street and suggested outdoor dining options and small businesses located in buildings designed to look like houses.

The I-495 Gateway modeling station considered redevelopment of the former Trader Alan's property at 21 Pond View Ave. The most popular recommendation was to preserve the site as a public park with passive and active recreation possibilities. Some participants advocated for an open space area with more trees to balance the removal of trees at the Village at Bailey's Pond and elsewhere, and with trail connections to Margaret Rice Park. Suggestions for active recreation included adding a playground, playing fields, or fenced dog park.

Some participants said that housing would be a good use of the site, citing the statewide housing crisis and the difficulty young people face trying to purchase homes when prices have escalated dramatically and supply is very tight. Some participants cited a need for subsidized affordable housing. Suggestions for housing ranged in scale from single-family to townhouses to larger multi-family units. Some participants were interested in combining the 21 Pond View Ave parcel with the auto salvage yard on Martin Road South and allowing smaller scale housing (like a cottage community) on the interior of the parcel. Because the site is currently in the Office Park District, which does not allow residential uses, a zoning change would be required to enable housing development.

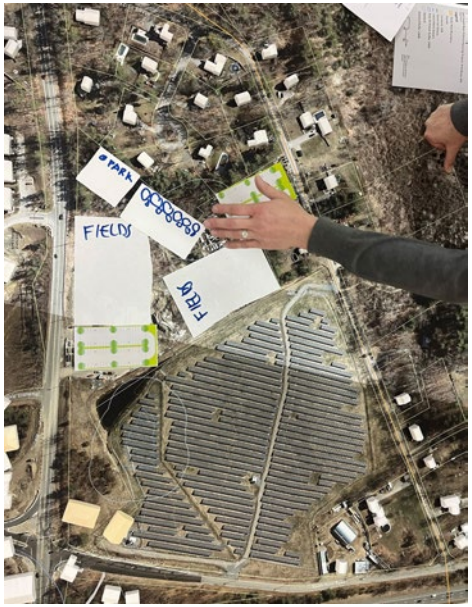
Commercial uses were less supported, as several groups said that there is already more suitable industrial or com-

mercially zoned land along Hunt Road. When commercial was supported, preferences included office use, mixed-use, or small-scale restaurant or retail that could serve the nearby Maple's Crossing sports complex. Some members of one group supported the idea of a heavily landscaped office park campus, and one person suggested a grocery store, such as Trader Joe's. One group suggested municipal uses for the site, such as a fire station, greenhouses to be used by schools and seniors, a natatorium, or a senior facility.

General recommendations for 21 Pond Ave included:

- Make Pond View Ave more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Add a shared use path.
- Signal to drivers that they are entering a neighborhood
- Line street with buildings. Put smaller structures at front of street, put taller ones behind (if taller structures are going to be on site).
- Locate public commercial spaces in the northeast corner (if shadow limitations allow) because it is closest to the highway exit and furthest from adjacent residential properties.
- Buffer adjacent residential neighbors with substantial landscaping
- Connect the site to auto salvage yard and develop a cohesive design for all uses on both properties
- Connect the site to Margaret Rice Park

Participants also supported hiding parking in the lot interior or along the solar field edge, and some suggested that parking needed to be minimized so that parking did not dominate the site.



Publicly accessible open space was popular for the I-495 Gateway (left). Participants that favored commercial or mixed-use development recommended hiding parking at the rear, lining buildings up along the street, and making streetscape improvements (above) (Dodson & Flinker)

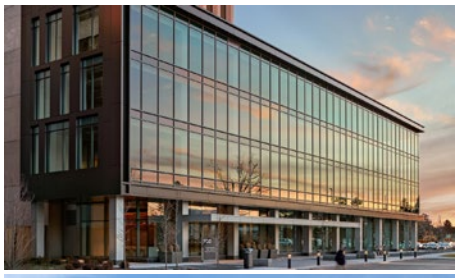
Figure 9. Building Precedent Images That Were Strongly Supported in the Visual Preference Survey

During the second public forum, between 100%-67% of participants in the Visual Preference Survey, said that the examples on this page were appropriate precedents for the Merrimack River District. While the examples vary, commonalities include: gabled roofs, often with dormers; a maximum height of two-and-a-half stories; traditional building materials with a preponderance of clapboards and shingles; massing that is composed of smaller components; and at least some level of architectural detailing in trim, window design, etc. Two images do not fit the general patterns regarding roofs. Both are one-story flat roofed commercial structures.

Figure 10. Building Precedent Images That Were Moderately Supported in the Visual Preference Survey

66%-50% of the participants in the Visual Preference Survey said the examples above were appropriate. Most of these images are similar to those that ranked higher, though two of the examples are taller, at four stories and three and a half stories, respectively.

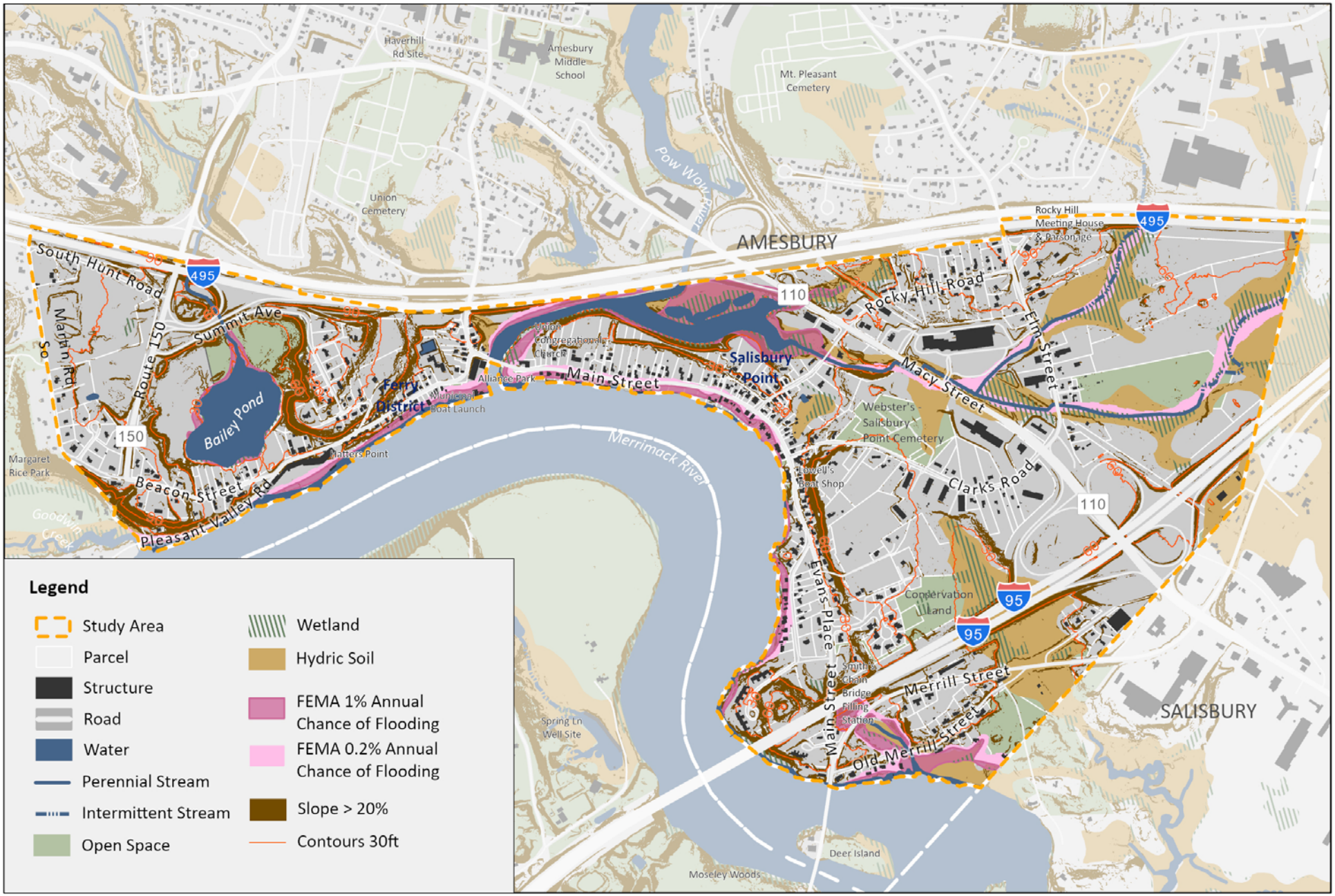
Figure 11. Building Precedent Images That Were Moderately to Strongly Opposed in the Visual Preference Survey



More than half (58%-100%) of the participants in the Visual Preference Survey said that the building precedents on this page were inappropriate for the Merrimack River District. Noticeable features of buildings in this set include: exterior materials like brick, metal, and extensive glass; taller buildings—including all but one of the examples in the survey that is over two-and-a-half stories; longer buildings, especially when the length is not broken up into smaller component masses; and flat roofs.

The confluence of the Powwow and Merrimack Rivers at Alliance Park (Dodson & Flinker)

Figure 12. Physical Constraints in the Study Area



Natural & Physical Features

Merrimack River District Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

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Natural & Physical Resources

Terraces and slopes, wetlands, and the confluence of the Merrimack and the Powwow Rivers define the district's landscape and set underlying conditions for ecological resources and open space and recreational opportunities, discussed in this section.

Natural & Physical Features

The landscape of the district was defined by glacial activity during the last ice age, when glacial deposits of sand and gravel created flat formations with steep slopes called kame terraces, which can be seen in the embankments in Point Shore and around Bailey Pond.[3] These embankments rise up to 137 feet on Summit Ave, and to about 80 feet along Rt 150, Clark's Road, and Crum Hill Road, while a lower, rounded deposit, called an esker, lines the south side of the Powwow River. Poorly drained, hydric soils create wetlands in the eastern part of the district, such as between Point Shore Meadows and Clark's Road and along streams in the Golden Triangle and Rt 110 corridor. According to the 2007 "Golden Triangle and Route 110 Economic Development Study," nearly forty per cent of the Golden Triangle's acreage is wetland, contributing to important habitat and floodwater storage.

The Merrimack and Powwow Rivers are another key feature of this landscape. In addition to their historic use for trade, transportation, and settlement (discussed more elsewhere in this report), the Powwow River sub-watershed has been a primary source of drinking water for Amesbury and neighboring towns in New Hampshire.[4] The 100-year floodplain is limited to a narrow buffer around the rivers and Bailey Pond, due to the steep glacial embankments, though the 500-year floodplain extends to the Golden Triangle along two streams that feed the Powwow River. The City's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan identifies the Golden Triangle area as a high priority for resilience investments. It recommends: "Conduct flood storage/hydrologic study to facilitate culvert replacement so that culverts meet stream crossing standards. Undersized culverts are located under Rt 110 and under Elm Street. Develop plans for streambank and ecological restoration: invasive species removal, potential increase in flood storage capacity, stabilize streambanks."[5]

Steep slopes, like these on Beacon Street, are a defining feature of the Merrimack River District (Dodson & Flinker)

Ecological Resources

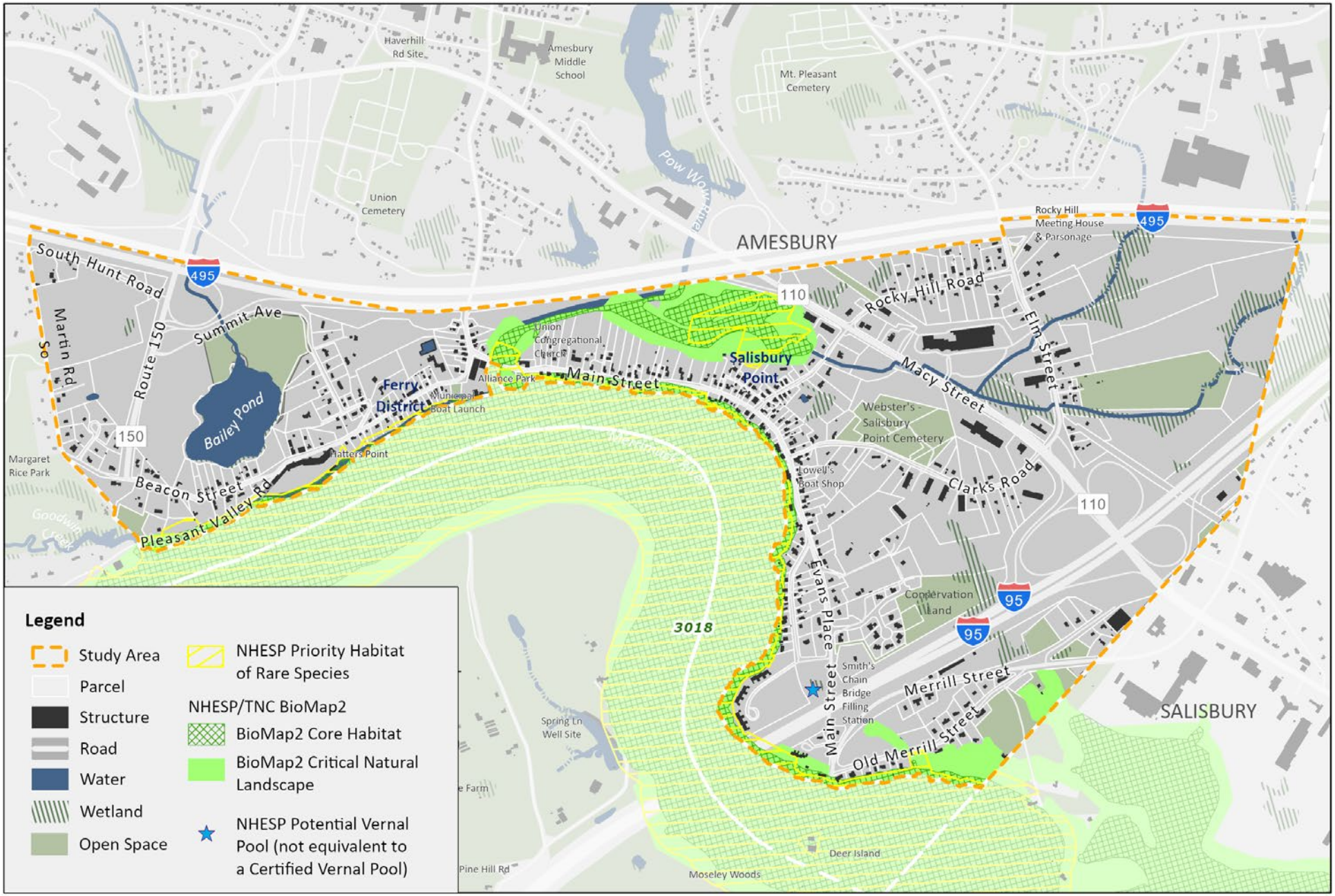
The Merrimack and Powwow Rivers also provide key sources of habitat for local ecosystems. Two sources of ecological data identify these rivers as sites of ecological importance, requiring regulatory review and conservation planning. The state's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) uses observations of rare animal or plant species in the last 25 years to identify "Priority Habitats for Rare Species" that require proposals for development or other activity on these sites to file a report with MassWildlife for review under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) and the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Similarly, BioMap2 is an ecological dataset produced by the NHESP and The Nature Conser-

3 Preservation Plan for the Town of Amesbury (1999), p.1-3

4 Amesbury Open Space & Recreation Plan (2020), p.27

5 Amesbury Community Resilience Building Summary of Findings (2019), p. 17

Figure 13. Ecological Resources in the Study Area



Ecological Resources

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Landscape Architecture and Planning

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vancy that outlines "Core Habitat" areas for endangered species and species identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan, as well as "Critical Natural Landscapes" (CNL) that have exceptional environmental qualities for biodiversity over long time frames. Unlike the "Priority Habitats", the BioMap2 does not require regulatory review, but it does help prioritize conservation strategies.

The entire Merrimack River, the mouth of the Powwow River, a section of the Powwow near Rt 110, and an area of salt marsh in the southeast corner of the district are identified as critical areas by both the Priority Habitats for Rare Species and the BioMap2. Some of the rare species identified in Amesbury that may be in these areas include:

- Shortnose Sturgeon, (Acipenser brevirostrum, Endangered, federally Endangered)
- Atlantic Sturgeon, (Acipenser oxyrinchus, Endangered, federally Threatened)
- Blue-spotted Salamander, (Ambystoma laterale, Special Concern)
- Bald Eagle, (Haliaeetus leucocephalus, Special Concern)
- Eastern Pondmussel, (Ligumia nasuta, Special Concern)
- Eastern Meadowlark (Sturnella magna, Special Concern)[6]

A 2020 letter from NHESP recommends using these designations to prioritize land protection and habitat management, as well as to inform the Conservation Commission in enforcing MESA and the WPA and develop education and outreach.

In addition, the 2007 "Golden Triangle and Route 110 Economic Development Study" identified three acres of rare species habitat adjacent to the streams on the site. It is unclear from the report whether the identification was based on field work conducted for the study or on a previous version of the NHESP atlas that has subsequently been updated, removing the rare species habitat.

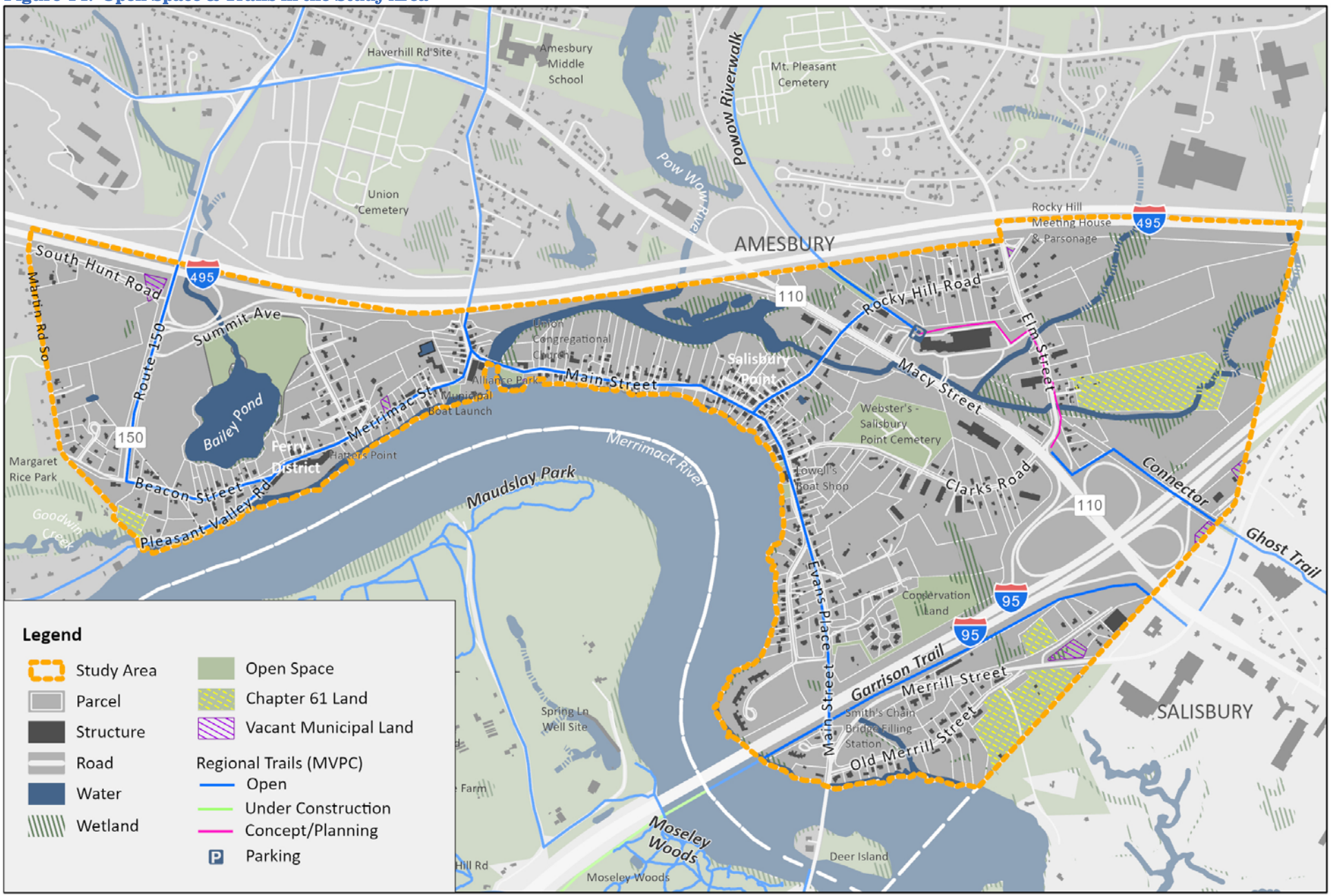
Open Space & Trails

Relatively few parcels are protected as open space in the district. A recently conserved area adjoining the Point Shore Meadows subdivision is the only permanently protected land in the district. Other parcels that lack permanent protection but are enjoyed as open space include Alliance Park, owned by the Amesbury Improvement Association; land on the north side of Bailey Pond, owned by the Village at Bailey Pond; two parcels owned by Lowell's Boat Shop on either side of the shop; the Webster-Salisbury Point Cemetery; and a handful of municipal properties, including the Municipal Boat Launch and an easement along the Powwow Riverwalk off of Rocky Hill Road. Five privately owned parcels, mostly along the eastern border of the district, are covered under Massachusetts' Chapter 61, which gives tax advantages to owners who maintain the property as farmland, and allows the City the right of first refusal should the property go for sale. One of these parcels abuts the Margaret Rice Park, just southwest of the district, presenting the possibility of expanding that open space.

The municipal boat launch and the Garrison Rail Trail along the John Whittier Bridge provide access to adventure beyond Amesbury (Dodson & Flinker)

6 Amesbury Open Space & Recreation Plan (2020), p.34, citing letter from MA NHESP (2020)

Figure 14. Open Space & Trails in the Study Area



Open Space & Trails

Merrimack River District Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
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Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

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A few key trails serve bicycles and pedestrians in the district. The Coastal Trail Network (CTN) is a regional system of multi-use off-road paths and bike lanes connecting Amesbury, Salisbury, Newbury, and Newburyport. CTN trails include the Powwow Riverwalk, which travels from downtown Amesbury to CarriageTown Market Place, where it requires a final connection to join the Salisbury Ghost Trail. The Ghost Trail recently added an underpass below I-91 to help complete this connection. Establishing the connection was one of 14 priority actions shown on the Action Plan Map for the City's 2020-2027 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Garrison Trail, a multi-use path crossing the John Whittier Bridge, has an entrance at the Visitor Center at the Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station in the southeast corner of the district, and connects travelers with Newburyport to the south and Salisbury to the north.

The CTN also includes plans for bike lanes along the Main Street Riverfront, continuing northward to downtown and west along Beacon Street to Rt 150 or along Pleasant Valley Road toward Merrimac. While the City of Amesbury participated in a planning process with the MVPC to complete this route in 2011, dubbed the "Merrimack River Trail", these plans have yet to be implemented. The "Merrimack River Trail Reconnaissance Report" includes a recommendation that Amesbury take advantage of Chapter 91, the Public Waterfront Act, to help secure multimodal improvements from developments along the river that may trigger the law. It is clear that making pedestrian and bicycle connections is a priority that the City has been working toward for many years, but that some crucial links like that between the Riverwalk and the Ghost Trail remain difficult to implement.

Amesbury also has a Scenic Roads Ordinance that regulates removal of trees or stone walls on Elm Street, Merrimac Street, and Main Street between Bailey Bridge and Deer Island. See Section C for more details on the Scenic Roads Ordinance.

The district's access to open space and views of the river is relevant to Amesbury's Environmental Justice (EJ) block groups. Massachusetts' Environmental Justice policy states that "assuring access to parks, green amenities, and recreational opportunities" is a core objective of improving environmental quality for EJ communities.[7] Amesbury's two Environmental Justice block groups are located north of the study area along Elm Street on the northern side of I-495, with direct multimodal access to the district along the Powwow Riverwalk.

Public Input on Natural & Physical Resources

The Open Space station at the second Public Forum identified key assets, needs, and recommendations for natural resources, open space, and outdoor recreation. The map below combines this input, and key points are summarized below.

Natural Resources

- The Merrimack Riverfront was universally considered an important natural resource and outdoor recreation location.

7 Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (2021), "Objectives of Environmental Justice", accessed at https://www.mass.gov/service-details/objectives-of-environmental-justice

Figure 15. Environmental Justice Populations

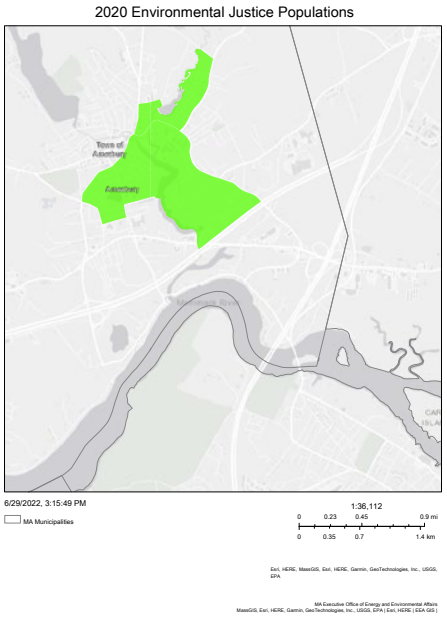
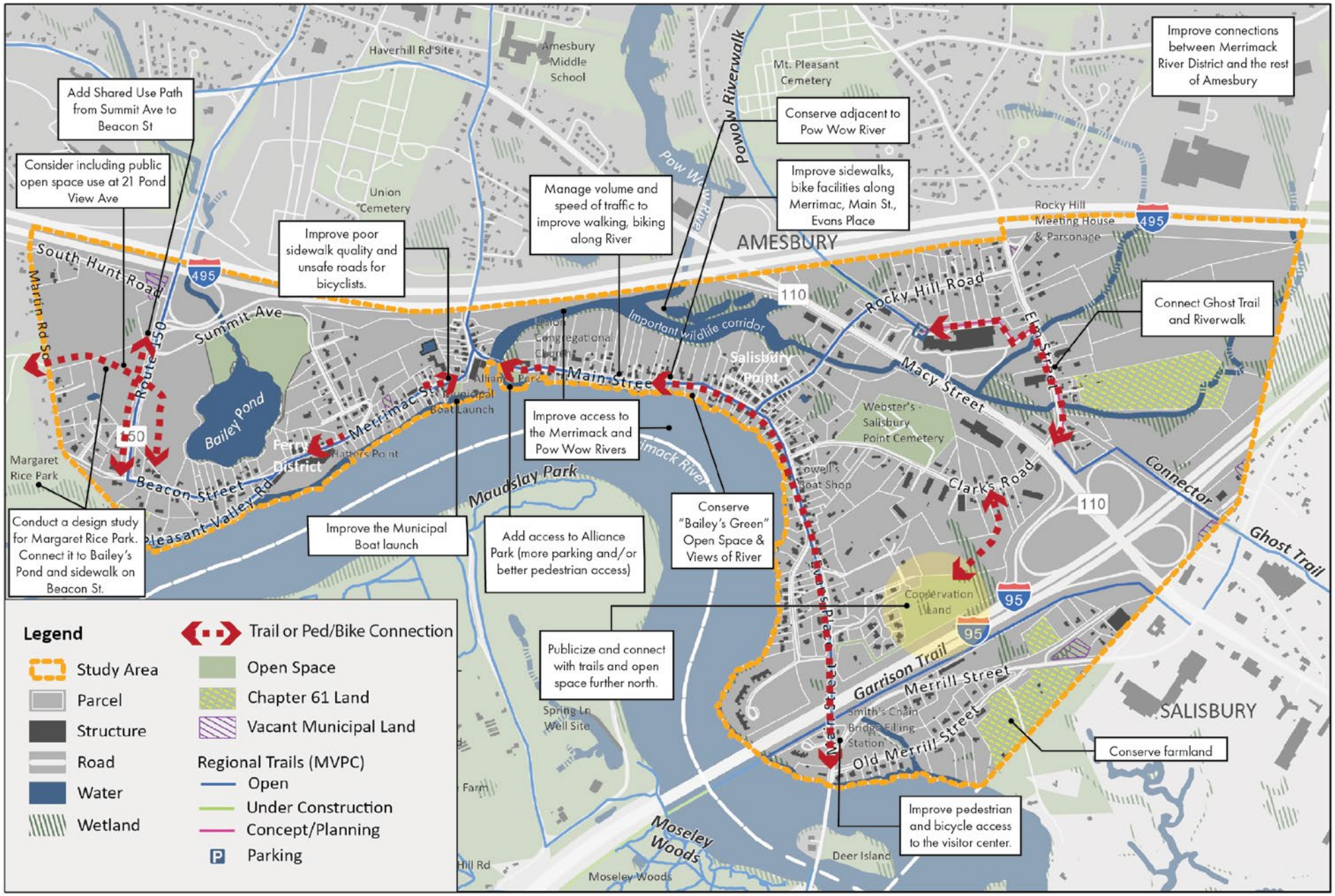


Figure 16. Open Space & Trails Public Input & Recommendations



Open Space & Trails Recommendations

Merrimack River District Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
Dodson & Flinker
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

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- The local wildlife was identified as a valuable resource that draws people to the area.
- Open Space
- Alliance Park and the municipal boat launch were commonly identified as the only two public spaces along the Riverfront. Of note, two groups at the Riverfront station also commented on public access at the boardwalk at Hatter's Point.
- Multiple participants identified the Point Shore Meadows conservation area off Point Shore Drive as an underutilized piece of open space that not enough residents were aware of. They identified the potential for development off of Clark's Road (the site of the Eagle's Point 40B project) as an opportunity to connect this conservation area with the Powwow Riverwalk and other trails and open space farther north.
- Groups identified a series of privately-owned parcels along the Merrimack that comprise the largest remaining undeveloped stretch of Riverfront, referred to by some participants as Bailey's Green. Participants noted the scenic views and were concerned about the potential for development of these parcels.
- Several participants wanted to preserve as much natural land as possible around Bailey's Pond.

Outdoor Recreation

- Several participants valued kayak/boat access in the Merrimack and Powwow rivers and noted that access could be improved and expanded.
- Most groups noted that the volume and speed of traffic along Main Street were significant barriers to increased use of those spaces by cyclists and pedestrians.
- Sidewalk quality, especially along the Merrimack Street portion of the Riverfront, was also identified as a problem. Participants stated that most roads in the area were not safe to bike on.
- Multiple groups wanted better pedestrian and bicycle access to the new Visitor Center at the Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station to the south, which would then connect to Deer Island and Newburyport.
- Most agreed that the former Trader Alan's property would be a good location for outdoor recreation activities, although some thought this should be combined with commercial or industrial development.

The Visual Preference Survey station produced a few other opinions and recommendations for open space and recreation:

- Alliance Park is good, but very small. The stacked boats in front of the park block the views.
- Bike trails are good, and they will slow things down on the Main Street
- Need more green space at Elm and Macy Street
- Design parklets along the river
- Splash pool/pad:
  - "Splash pool at 110 or Trader Alan's would be a good investment"
  - "No splash pads. Existing at Town Park"
- Add Pickle ball courts at Trader Alan's

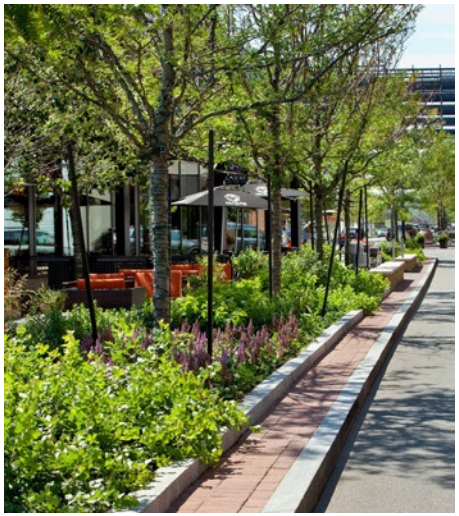
Additional input from other stations recommended burying utility lines along the Riverfront and carefully considering visual access to the river when planting trees or making other changes on the river-side of Main Street and Merrimac Street.

Undeveloped and privately-owned parcels along Main Street, sometimes referred to as Bailey's Green, provide highly valued visual access to the river (Dodson & Flinker)

Figure 17. Public Realm Precedent Images That Were Strongly Supported in the Visual Preference Survey





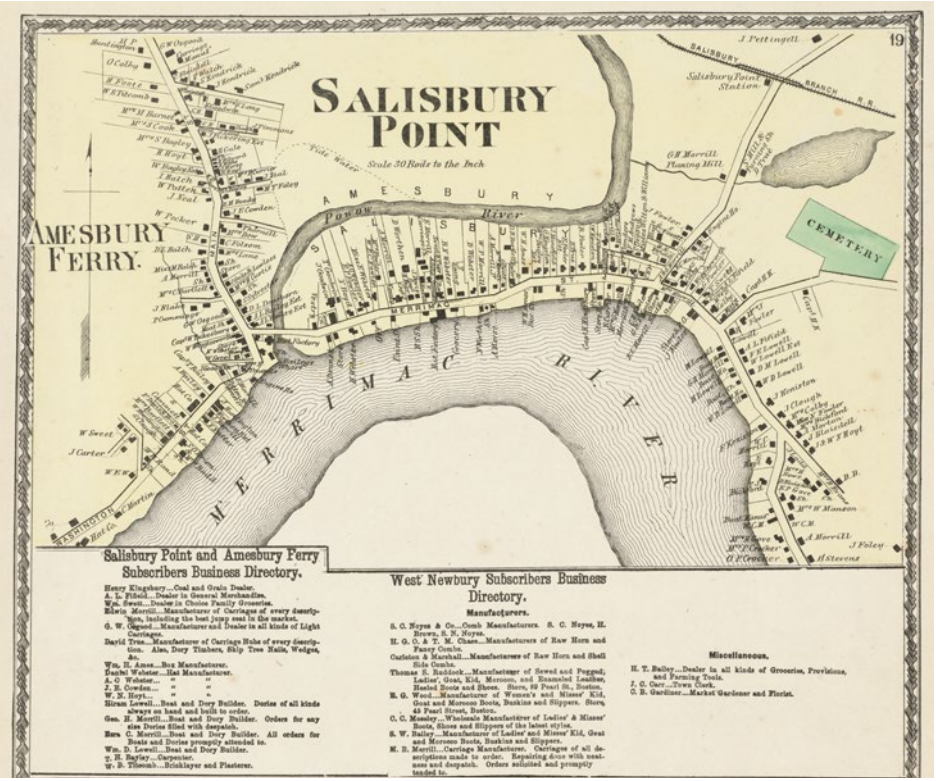
The images on this page and the next show precedents for use and design of the public realm, including sidewalks, trails, and open spaces. 100% of the participants in the Visual Preference Survey at the second public forum indicated that these examples are appropriate precedents for the Merrimack River District. Common themes in the precedents are: infrastructure for bicycling (bike lanes and paths, bike racks); well planted sidewalks and public spaces; sidewalk dining; outdoor events, like yoga, a concert in a park, or a farmer's market; and high quality street furnishings, like hanging baskets on period lights, a bench, public art, and bike racks. The images reflect priorities frequently voiced in public input: preservation and access to natural open spaces, improving conditions for walking and bicycling, and maintaining and improving sense of place.


Welcome
beautiful
Lake Oswego


ORGANIC

Historic & Cultural Resources

Several sites show a history of activity in the district. According to Amesbury's 1999 Preservation Plan, archaeological evidence indicates long-term settlements and fishing by Pennacook Native Americans (also referred to there as Pentucket) along the mouth of the Powwow River before European settlement in the 1600s. The Massachusetts Historical Commission's 1985 Reconnaissance Survey Town Report for Amesbury describes a decline in Native American presence in the area following European contact in the 17th Century, citing a declining population due to epidemics in 1617-1619 and regional armed conflicts.

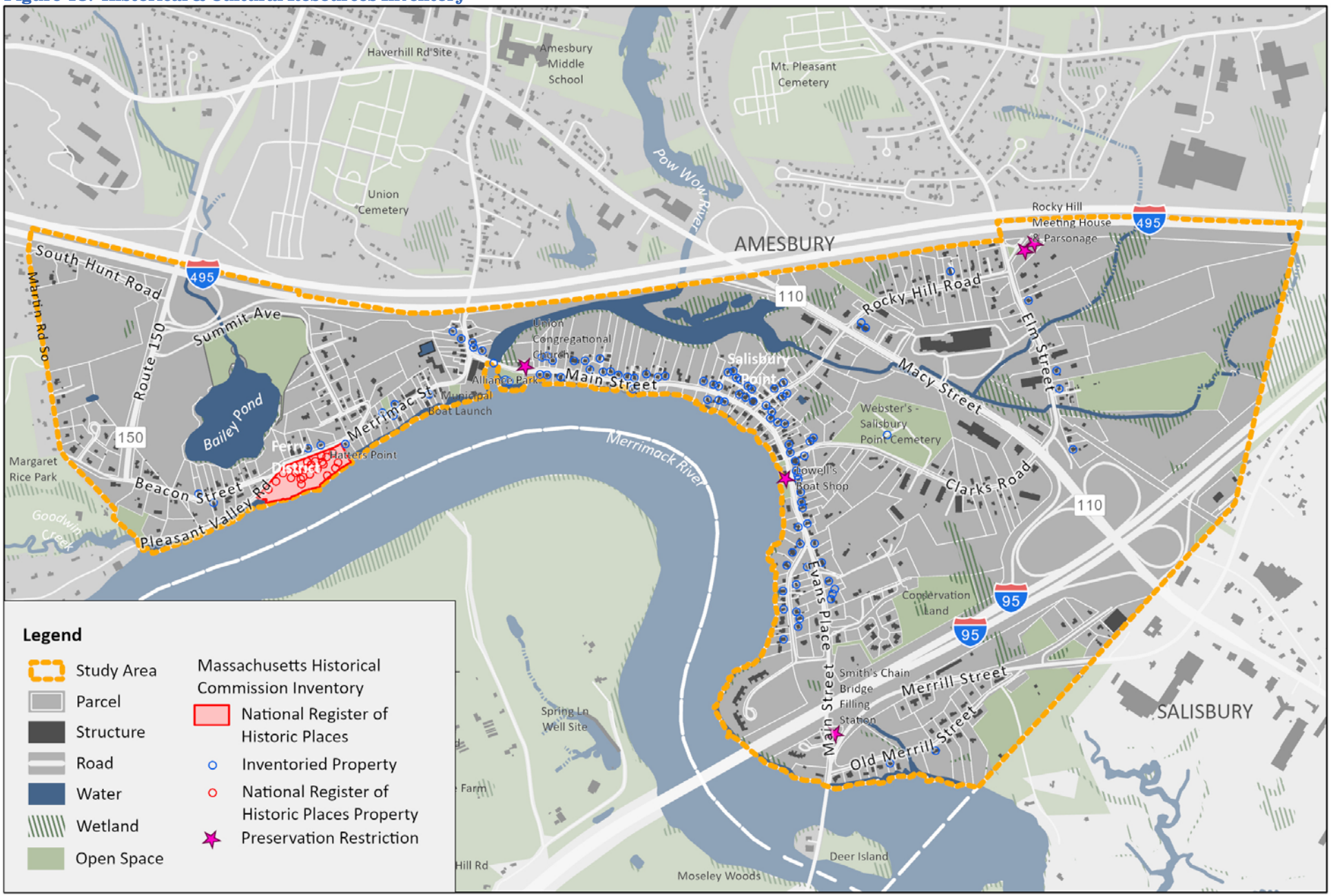


1872 Map showing Amesbury Ferry and Salisbury Point. ("Map of Amesbury and South Amesbury," Digital Amesbury, accessed June 29, 2022, https://amesburylocalhistory.omeka.net/items/show/35)

English settlers made their home along the Merrimack River and east of the Powwow River as part of Salisbury in the 1640s. Sawmills along the Powwow encouraged shipbuilding in the area, and maritime industries established Salisbury Point and the adjoining Ferry District, west of the Powwow River, as a village center during the Colonial Era, giving rise to trade shops, houses, churches, and cemeteries that remain points of interest today. Salisbury Point, also known as the Point Shore neighborhood, became part of Amesbury in 1886, and hat manufacturing replaced shipbuilding as a main industry in the district during the 19th Century. By the second half of the 20th Century, auto-oriented development and the construction of I-95 and I-495 had created a commercial corridor along Rt 110, altering the economic and cultural landscape of the area again.

Inventories by the National Register of Historic Places and the Massachusetts Historical Commission recognize numerous sites in the area, including five properties with Preservation Restrictions, listed below (the Rocky Hill Meeting House and Parsonage have been combined in the table). Preservation Restrictions, at a minimum, prohibit alterations to the exterior envelope of the building, and may apply to the interior as well.

Figure 18. Historical & Cultural Resources Inventory



Historical & Cultural Resources

Merrimack River District Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

Miles
0 0.1 0.2

The Rocky Hill Meeting House is permanently protected by Preservation Restrictions (Massachusetts Historical Commission)

The National Register of Historic Places also lists a determination of eligibility for the site of the former Merrimac Hat Company, including 24 individual buildings or structures within the original mills complex. Listing as a National Historic District (also known as a National Register District) qualifies work on registered features to receive federal tax credits for historic preservation. National Register listing does not limit the use of a property or alterations to it, except that it provides protections from some state or federally funded, licensed, or assisted protects. The Massachusetts Historical Commission lists the Ferry District and Salisbury Point neighborhoods as inventoried areas, and another 101 properties as inventoried points that are not designated under the national or state registers of historic places. These properties are mostly houses along the riverfront, as well as a few on Rocky Hill Road and Elm Street, and are recognized for their historic architectural significance as examples of Colonial, Federal, Georgian, and other styles. Inventoried properties also include non-residential sites, such as Alliance Park and the Frigate Alliance Marker, the Webster-Salisbury Point Cemetery, Bailey Bridge, the Point Shore Christian Church, and the David True Saw Mill and Turning Shop, on Rocky Hill Road.

Amesbury's Demolition of Buildings Ordinance, Chapter 225 of the City's General Legislation, provides protection for "historically significant buildings or structures", which must be at least 75 years old and within a historic district, listed in the National Register of Historic Places or in a Comprehensive Historic Resource Inventory, or designated by the Historical Commission for their historic, architectural, or cultural significance. Notably, Amesbury has not designated any part of the Merrimack River District as a local historic district.

Table 1. Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Restrictions

Site	Address	Year built	Historic Designation	Historic significance
Rocky Hill Meeting House and Parsonage	255 Elm St	1718; 1785	National Register Individual Property; MA Historic Landmark	Representative 18th Century New England meeting house, with exceptionally preserved interior features
Lowell's Boat Shop	459 Main St	1793	National Register Individual Property; National Historic Landmark	Oldest continuously operating wooden boat-building shop in the US; site of the original fishing dory
Union Congregational Church	350-354 Main St	1835	National Register Individual Property	Exceptional example of Greek Revival religious architecture; perhaps built by local shipbuilders
Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station	520 Main St	1938	National Register Individual Property	Representative family-designed and built gas station of the early automobile era

Amesbury's 2005 "Amesbury Reconnaissance Report" for the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program identifies the Point Shore Neighborhood, the Powwow River, and the Merrimack River as three of its ten priority heritage landscapes that are highly valued for their contribution to Amesbury's community character. The report recommends further protections for these landscapes, such as the use of local historic districts or neighborhood conservation districts. Under MGL Chapter 40C, a local historic district grants the local Historical Commission authority to regulate any alterations to the exterior architectural features visible from a public way, in addition to demolitions, and to adopt district design guidelines that reflect the existing historic character.

Amesbury's Scenic Roads Ordinance, under the state Scenic Roads Act, authorizes the City's Traffic Commission to regulate the removal of trees or stone walls within or along the right-of-way of a designated scenic road. Any proposal to alter a scenic road must consider a list of factors such as environmental and historical values, scenic and aesthetic characteristics, and traffic volume, and may require a form of compensation for alterations. Three roads within the district are designated as a scenic road: Elm Street, Merrimac Street, and Main Street between Bailey Bridge and Deer Island.

In addition to serving as historical markers, a few sites within the district provide publicly accessible cultural attractions. Lowell's Boat Shop includes a museum featuring demonstration construction and restoration of boats, community programming, such as educational hikes and river outings, and social events. Historic New England provides tours of the Rocky Hill Meeting House, and the Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station serves as a visitor center for the city. The Marina at Hatter's Point and the Marina at Amesbury Point provide seasonal dockage for rent and Hatter's Point has a public promenade. The Rt 110 corridor serves basic shopping needs, and some businesses may serve as gathering places. Adjacent to the district along Main Street is the Bartlett Museum of Amesbury history, the historic Macy-Colby House, and the Mary Baker Eddy Historical House, which features tours through the Chestnut Hill-based Longyear Museum.

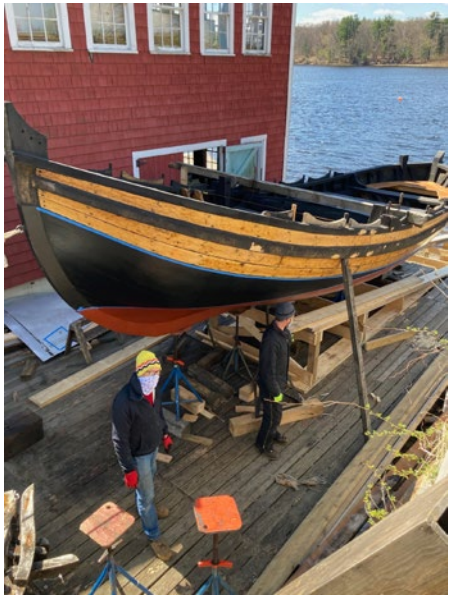
Public Input on Historic & Cultural Resources

The Riverfront station at the second Public Forum identified places in Point Shore and the Ferry District that participants valued for contributing to a sense of place, as well as recommendations for preserving these assets. The map below combines this input, and key points are summarized below.

Assets

- Massachusetts Historical Commission inventoried properties demonstrate vernacular residential architecture of the 18th Century and Industrial Revolution
- Alliance Park provides valued public space and parking
    - Along with Lowell's Boat Shop, the park bookends the walkable area of the riverfront
- Union Congregational Church is source of community events and identity
    - Women's Group events

Lowell's Boat Shop is permanently protected by Preservation Restrictions (Lowell's Boat Shop & Museum)



Lowell's Boat Shop continues to build and restore boats and engage the public in riverfront events (Lowell's Boat Shop & Museum)

Figure 19. Key Historical & Cultural Resources

Cultural Resources

Merrimack River District Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

Miles
0 0.1 0.2

- Road races with other non-profits, ex: Lazarus House
- Provides additional parking for use of Alliance Park

- Lowell's Boat Shop is another source of community events and identity

  - Represents legacy of shipbuilding along Main Street
  - Forms second bookend, with Alliance Park/UCC, of walkable area of riverfront
  - Offers social events for neighborhood

- Other locations of interest:

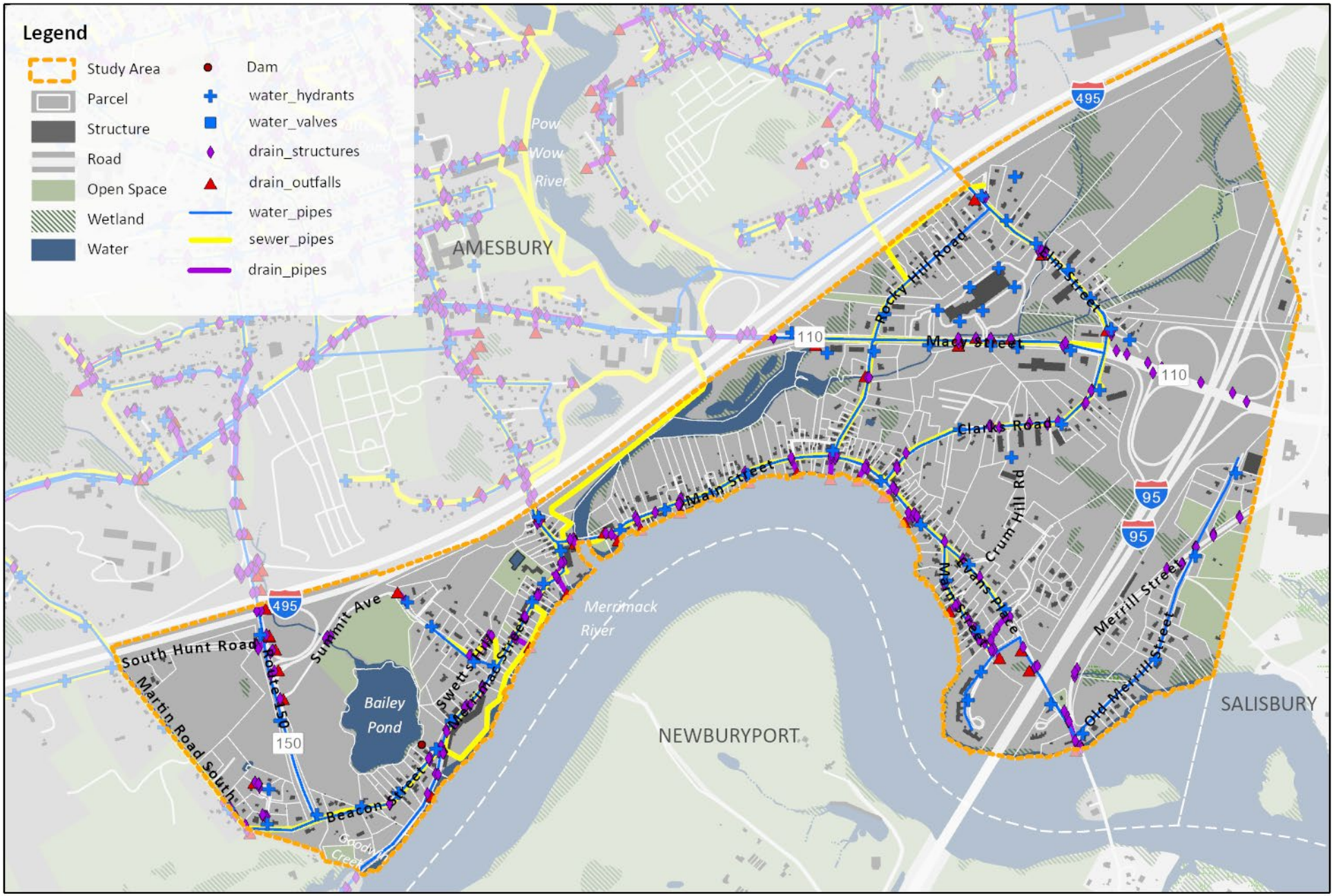
  - Land fill "bump out" onto river for coal barges near Lowell's Boat Shop
  - Smith's Chain Bridge Station
  - Deer Island
  - Garrison Rail Trail
  - Local Historic Burial Ground: Webster's – Salisbury Point Cemetery

Improvement Ideas

- Improve Merrimac Hat factory signage. It is not inviting.
- Protect Lowell's Boat Shop from encroachment by nearby development
- Improve parking at Lowell's Boat Shop, as it provides source for local social events
- Restore plaque at Water Treatment Plant commemorating George Washington's crossing of Merrimack River by ferry

The Union Congregational Church (top) and the Webster-Salisbury Point Cemetery (above) are two of the cultural assets of the area (Dodson & Flinker)

Figure 20. Water Infrastructure



Water Infrastructure

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Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
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Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

Water Infrastructure

Water and sewage lines serve much of area (See Figure 20). This infrastructure does not present a significant constraint on service needs for existing properties or potential development, though some upgrades may be necessary to satisfy the needs of significant projects. According to Amesbury's 2020 Housing Production Plan, the public water supply system serves 98% of the city, and consumption levels are at just half of the total capacity, indicating the ability to sustain service needs through further growth. Additionally, a recent upgrade of the city's Wastewater Treatment Facility is sufficient to meet a growth in need into the future.[8]

Bailey's Pond occasionally spills over its dam and flows across Merrimac Street. This results from a collapsed underground outflow pipe that is owned by the Hat Factory.

8 Amesbury Housing Production Plan (2020), p.47-48

Water spilling over the banks of Bailey's Pond due to a collapsed outlfow pipe (Dodson & Flinker)

The Amesbury Water Pollution Abatement Facility is located on Main Street in the study area (Dodson & Flinker)

The posted speed limit along Main Street at Alliance Park is 25 miles per hour. Speeding remains a concern for local residents, as are traffic volumes, and truck traffic (Dodson & Flinker)

Transportation

BETA Group, Inc. (BETA) was retained by the City of Amesbury to evaluate traffic and transportation conditions and recommend transportation improvements within the proposed Merrimack River District Smart Growth District located between Route 495, Route 95, and the Merrimack River. The project team reviewed previous town reports and existing sources of traffic data, including volumes and crashes from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), engaged with Amesbury residents, and collaborated with town staff and stakeholders to recommend short-term and long-term strategies for circulation, safety, and multimodal uses in the project area.

Literature Review

The traffic conditions within the project area have been recently evaluated by The Engineering Group (TEC, Inc). The following documents from TEC, Inc. were obtained and reviewed by the BETA project team:

- Main Street Traffic Evaluation, dated November 1, 2019, prepared TEC, Inc.
- Main Street Traffic Calming Preliminary Options, dated November 14, 2019, prepared by TEC, Inc.
- Main Street Traffic Calming Options, dated December 16, 2020, prepared by TEC, Inc.
- South Hunt Area Infrastructure Improvement Project (MassWorks Grant) Route 150 and I-495 Interchange, dated February 26, 2020, prepared by TEC, Inc.

Main Street Traffic Evaluation examined the traffic flow patterns along Main Street/Evans Place between Newburyport and Merrimac Street, and along Merrimac Street/Beacon Street between Main Street and Route 150. The study found traffic along the roadway was higher during the week than the weekend, but traffic volumes on weekends showed recreational use. The study indicated the volumes may not be cut- through traffic but area residents going to the highway. The highest travel speeds (38 mph) were on Evans Place. Truck volumes were generally low (less than 2.5%), with more activity on Main Street West of Merrimack Street due to DPW vehicles.

The *Main Street Traffic Calming Preliminary Options* memo outlined possible options for calming traffic on Main Street based on the *Main Street Traffic Evaluation*. Preliminary options included:

- Convert Rocky Hill Road to northbound traffic only
- Reconstruct sidewalks on Main Street and construct sidewalk on Evans Place
- Speed humps on Rocky Hill Road
- Speed cushions on Main Street
- Crosswalk treatments including textured pavement and RRFBs on Main Street at Merrimac Street, Rocky Hill Road, Clark's Road, and Evans Place
- Median islands along Main Street
- Speed Feedback Signage on Main Street or Evans Place
- Statutory Speed Alternative on Main Street, Rocky Hill Road, Clark's Road, and Merrimac Street to 25 mph

The *Main Street Traffic Calming Options* memo built on the preliminary options report. The memo proposed consideration of:

- Five-foot bike lanes on Main Street westbound, and sharrows in the eastbound direction
- Reconstruct 5-foot ADA compliant sidewalks on Main Street and construct sidewalk on Evans Place
- Raised crosswalks or median islands along Main Street
- Textured pavement treatment at crosswalks
- Clark's Road and Rocky Hill Road conversion to one-way pair, with all way stop at Clark's Road and Main Street
- Statutory Speed Alternative on Main Street, Rocky Hill Road, Clark's Road, and Merrimac Street to 25 mph

The *South Hunt Area Infrastructure Improvement Project (MassWorks Grant) Route 150 and I-495 Interchange* study was conducted in response to increased recent and future land development in the South Hunt Development Area on South Hunt Road, Beacon Street, and Route 150. The study recommended:

- Traffic signalization at Route 150 surface intersections with I-495, rather than roundabouts
- Intersection realignment and widening at South Hunt Road and I-495 Northbound Ramp at Route 150 to provide standard four leg intersection and turn lanes
- Shared use path on the east side of Route 150 and bike lanes on the west side

Figure 21 shows a map of previously recommended improvements in the project area

Travel Characteristics for Project Area

Roadways: Interstates, Arterials, and Collectors

The Interstates 95 and 495 run along the boundary of the Merrimack River District, carrying vehicular traffic to regional destinations. The arterials and collectors within the project area carry vehicular traffic to the interstates, within town, and to neighboring communities, while also offering mobility options for people walking and biking. **Table 2** describes the interstates, arterials, and collectors in the district, and **Figure 22** shows them on a map.

Previous recommendations include adding an all-way stop at the intersection of Clark's Road and Main Street, above, and making Clark's Road one-way (Dodson & Flinker)

Figure 21. Summary of Previously Recommended Improvements in the Study Area

Previous Recommendations

Merrimack River District Smart Growth Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

BETA
40 Years
IMPROVING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

Table 2. Roadways in Merrimack River District

Roadway	Classification	Typical Number of Lanes in Project Area	Speed Limit	Jurisdiction
Interstate 495	Interstate	6-8	65	State
Interstate 95	Interstate	4-6	65	State
Macy Street (Route 110)	Principle Arterial	4	40-45	State
Merrill Street	Principle Arterial	2	30	State
Pond View Avenue (Route 150)	Minor Arterial	2	25	Town
Beacon Street	Minor Arterial	2	25	Town
Merrimac Street	Minor Arterial	2	25	Town
Main Street	Minor Arterial	2	25	Town
Evans Place	Minor Arterial	2	25	Town
Elm Street	Minor Arterial	2	30	State
Clark's Road	Collector	2	25	Town
South Hunt Road	Collector	2	30	Town
Pleasant Valley Road	Collector	2	25	Town

Figure 22. Roadway Classification and Jurisdiction

Roadway Classification & Jurisdiction

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Amesbury, MA

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Landscape Architecture and Planning

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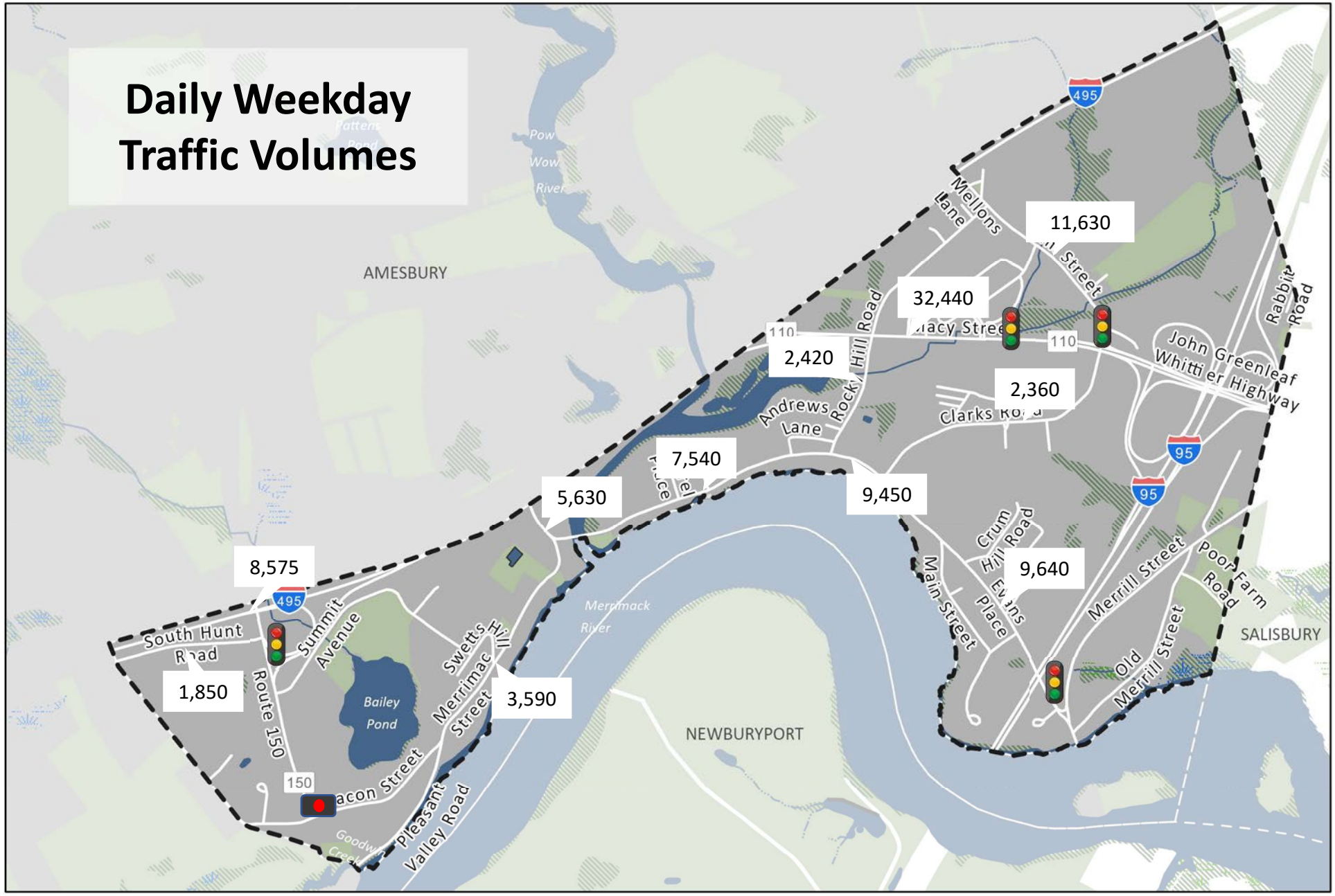
IMPROVING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

Miles
0 0.1 0.2

Figure 23. Daily Weekday Traffic Volumes



Daily Weekday Traffic Volumes

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Amesbury, MA

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Landscape Architecture and Planning

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Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS, TEC, Inc, MassDOT

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

The intersection of Rt 110, Clark's Road, and Elm Street has the most vehicle crashes in the area (Dodson & Flinker)

Traffic Volumes

Figure 23 shows weekday daily traffic volumes within the project area. Volumes for Evan's Place, Main Street, Merrimac Street, Rocky Hill Road, and Clark's Road were collected using automatic traffic recorder in October of 2019 and demonstrate the reported total eastbound and westbound counts on a weekday[9]. Volumes for South Hunt Road and Route 150 were collected using automatic traffic recorders in March and April of 2018 and demonstrated the total eastbound and westbound volumes on a weekday[10]. Elm Street traffic volume demonstrates average daily traffic collected by Massachusetts Department of Transportation in 2019 and Macy Street (Route 110) demonstrates average daily traffic collected by Massachusetts Department of Transportation in 2021[11].

Route 110 (Macy Street) has the highest volumes in the study area. Elm Street, Main Street, Route 150, and Evan's Place also have relatively high volumes.

Vehicle Crashes

Figure 24 shows the highest crash locations in the study area between 2017 and 2021, as reported by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation crash portal. Route 110 has the highest number of crashes in the area, followed by the intersection of Merrill Street and Main Street.

Speed Information

Figure 25 shows 85th percentile speeds in the project area. 85th percentile speeds show the speed at or below which 85 percent of vehicles travel. Speeds for Evan's Place, Main Street, Merrimac Street, Rocky Hill Road, and Clark's Road were collected using automatic traffic recorder in October of 2019 and demonstrate the average of the eastbound and westbound 85th percentile speeds on a weekday[12]. Speeds for South Hunt Road and Route 150 were collected using automatic traffic recorders in March and April of 2018 and average of the eastbound and westbound 85th percentile speeds on a weekday[13].

Boat Access

Along with the roadways in town, a town boat ramp is located on Merrimac Street by the private marina and allows for boats to access the Merrimack River. Smaller boast such as Kayaks and canoes can also access the Powwow River where it intersects the Merrimack River.

9 TEC, Inc. (2019). *Main Street Traffic Evaluation.*

10 TEC, Inc. (2019). *South Hunt Area Infrastructure Improvement Project (MassWorks Grant) Route 150 and I-495 Interchange.*

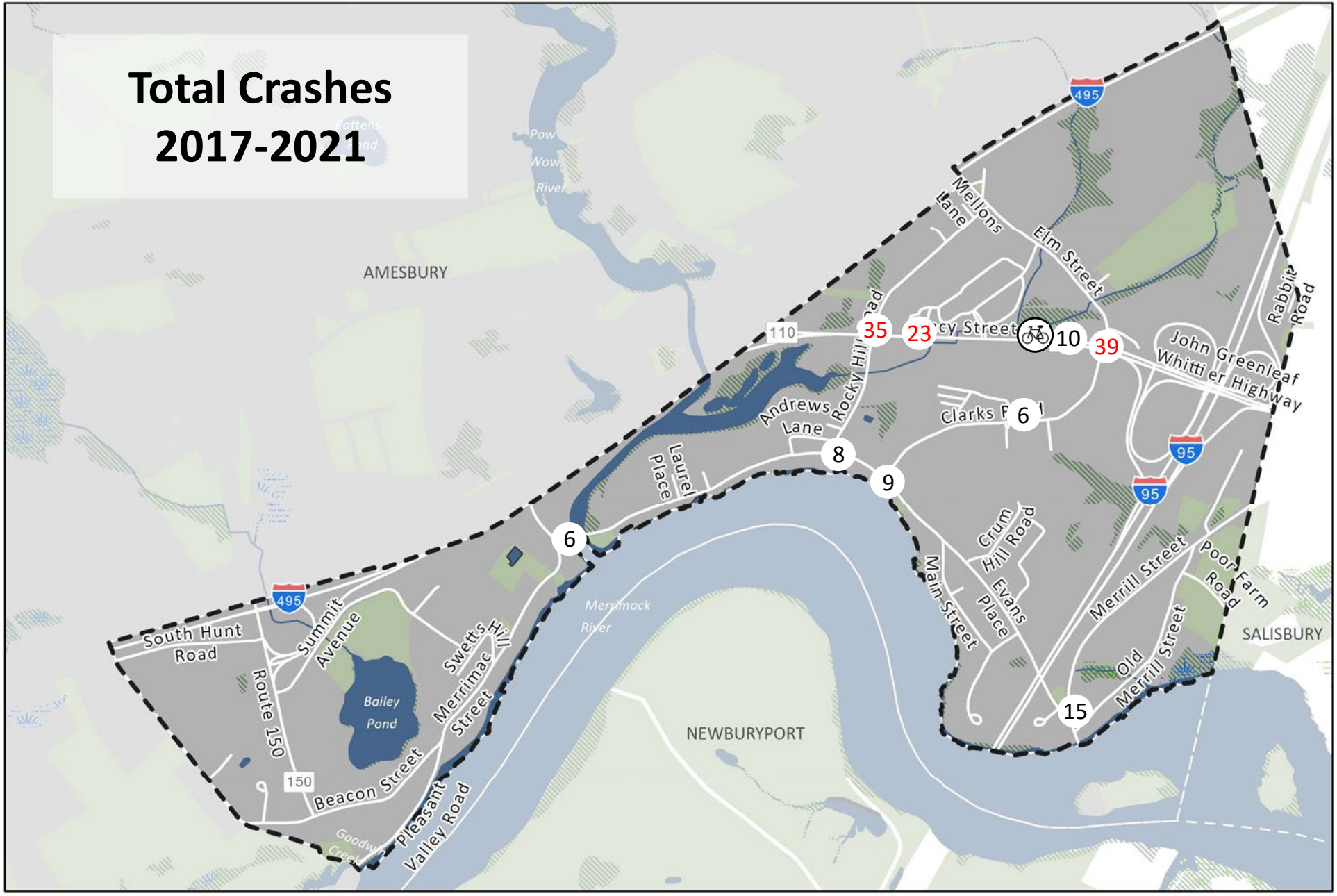
11 MassDOT (2019) *Elm Street Average Daily Traffic*

MassDOT (2021) *Route 110 Average Daily Traffic*

12 TEC, Inc. (2019). *Main Street Traffic Evaluation.*

13 TEC, Inc. (2019). *South Hunt Area Infrastructure Improvement Project (MassWorks Grant) Route 150 and I-495 Interchange.*

Figure 24. Crashes 2017-2021



Study Area

Merrimack River District Smart Growth Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

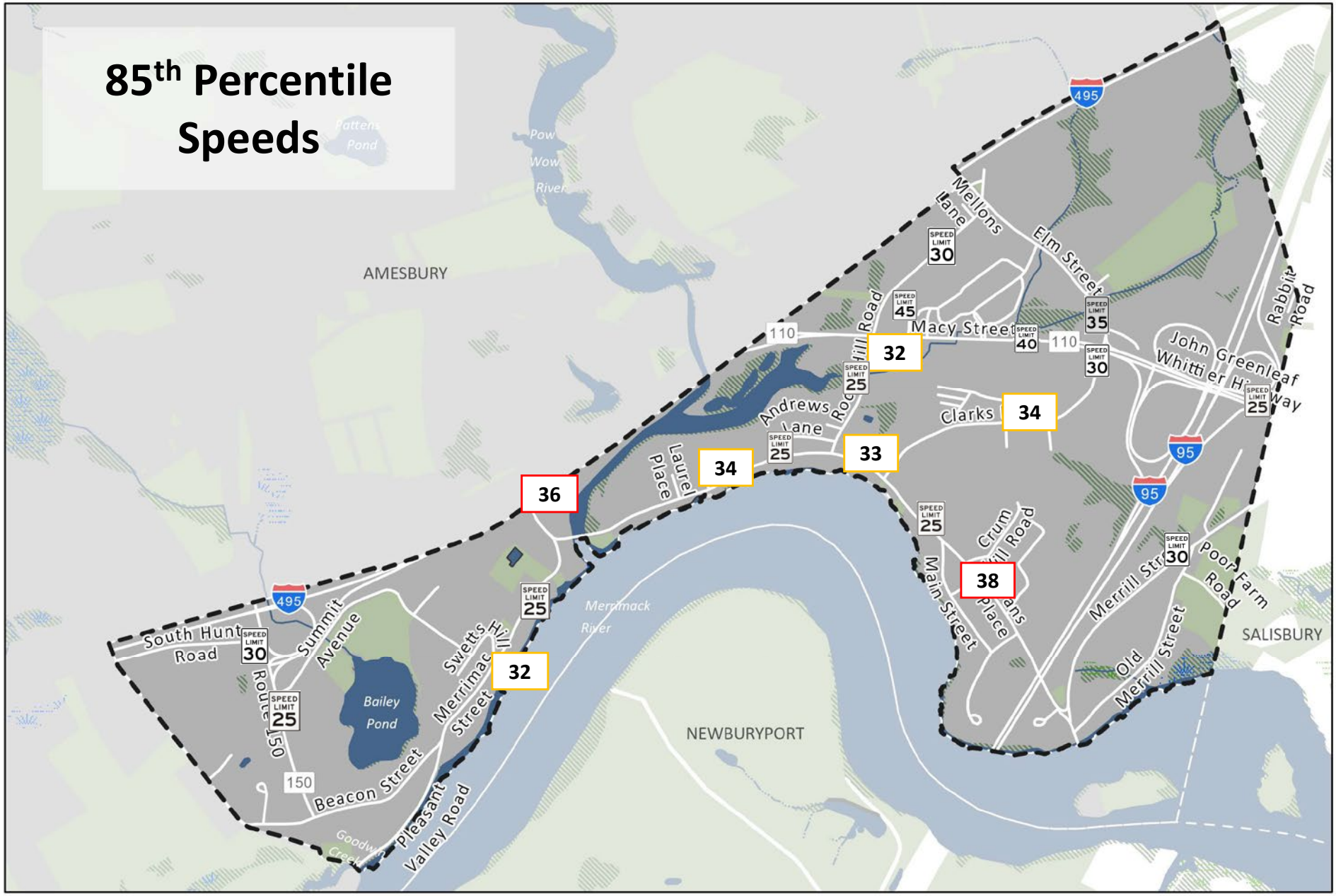
Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

BETA
IMPROVING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS, MassDOT

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

Figure 25. 85th Percentile Vehicle Speeds



Study Area

Merrimack River District Smart Growth Planning Project
Amesbury, MA

Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

BETA
40 Years
IMPROVING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS, TEC, Inc,

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

Pedestrian and Bike Connectivity

Figure 26 shows where sidewalks, shared use paths, crosswalks, and speed humps are in the project area, and shows the surface condition of the sidewalks and shared use paths using data obtained from the Merrimack Valley Planning Council. The City of Amesbury and MassDOT have made great strides in the past few years to add crossings and new sidewalks and shared use paths in the area, including a new sidewalk along Elm Street, a new sidewalk along Route 150, a new crossing at Beacon Street and Merrimac Street and a new crosswalk at Main Street and Merrimac Street.

Areas still missing sidewalk exist along Clark's Road, Route 150, and Evan's Place, while sidewalk condition on much of Clark's road, on the northern park of Rocky Hill Road, and on parts of Main Street and Merrimack Street is very poor.

In addition to the sidewalk gaps, the Salisbury Ghost Trail runs to Route 110 and continues after the Stop & Shop Plaza as the Riverwalk Rail Trail. There is a gap in the trail where bikes must ride on road or on sidewalks to continue. Both trails are part of a larger network of shared use trails. Salisbury Ghost Trail runs from Amesbury east to Salisbury where it connects with the Old Eastern Marsh Trail to Seabrook New Hampshire and closely connects to the William Lloyd Garrison Trail into Newburyport. The Amesbury Riverwalk Trail connects to Amesbury Center.

Poor Sidewalk Condition on Clark's Road (Google Streetview)

New crosswalk at Merrimac Street and Main Street (Nearmap)

Figure 26. Pedestrian and Bicycle Amenities in the Study Area

Study Area

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Amesbury, MA

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Landscape Architecture and Planning

BETA
40 Years
IMPROVING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

Public Input on Transportation

On April 8th and 9th 2022, the City of Amesbury hosted a public meeting at Amesbury High School, involving around 40 residents. In coordination with Dodson & Flinker and Barrett Planning, the BETA project team presented slides and hosted a table at the event to engage residents on traffic and transportation opportunities and challenges in the Merrimack River Smart Growth District.

In general, public meeting participants were in favor of discouraging cut-through traffic on Main Street and encouraging vehicles to use Route 110. Some residents are willing to accept impacts to accessibility in exchange for lower traffic volumes. Residents voiced desire to see improved amenities for people walking and biking and speed reduction on Main Street. Below is a summary of the issues and ideas heard during the public meeting.

Issues

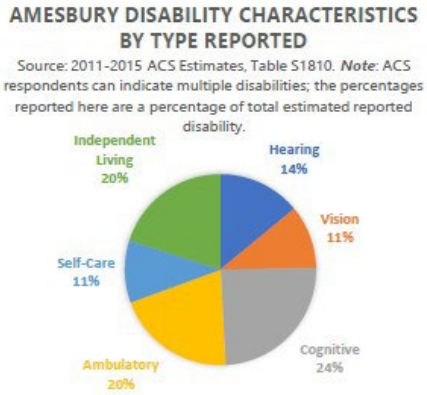
- Main Street is a scenic roadway (minor arterial) and cut-thru traffic should be discouraged, keeping traffic on Rt. 110
- High traffic volumes and speeds
- Sidewalks in poor condition
- Lack of bicycle facilities
- Plows push snow onto sidewalks, blocking pedestrian mobility

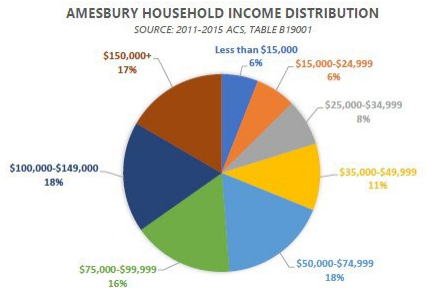
Ideas

- Raised intersections or crosswalks, suggested at Alliance Park, Main Street and Rocky Hill Road, Main Street and Clark's Road, Lowell's Boat Yard, and Main Street and Evan's Place
- Sidewalks on Evans Place and add a sidewalk between I-95 and Clark's Road
- One-way patterns suggested for Main Street eastbound, including no left turn from Main/Merrill onto Main Street westbound, on Merrimac Street eastbound, on Rocky Hill Road northbound, on Clark's Road southbound
- Bike lanes on Main Street, Evan's Place, and Pleasant Valley Road
- All way stop signs at Main Street and Merrimac Street, Main Street and Rocky Hill Road, and Main Street and Clark's Road
- Add speed feedback signs
- Add no right turn on red from Route 110 Eastbound onto Clark's Road and Route 110 Eastbound onto Evan's Place
- Request MassDOT prohibit trucks on Main Street
- Provide public transit to the Merrimack River District area

Residents did not agree unanimously on potential solutions. One resident spoke against a one-way configuration on Main Street. Another group conflicted on whether raised intersections with all-way stop signs should be added at Main Street and Rocky Hill Road and Main Street and Clark's Road.

Members of the public expressed interest in making Rocky Hill Road (above) and Clark's Road one-way, and adding an all-way stop at each road's intersection with Main Street (Dodson & Flinker)





Graphs from Amesbury's 2020 Housing Production Plan (City of Amesbury)

City-wide Conditions & Goals

Public input for this project and Amesbury's previous planning documents identify additional city-wide conditions and goals that relate to planning for the district.

The first Public Forum asked participants to identify features of the City of Amesbury that they would like to protect, improve, or transform. The most common elements that participants mentioned to protect or improve were: open space, historically significant sites and structures, the Merrimack and Powwow Rivers, and city and neighborhood character (in that order). The most frequently mentioned element to improve in the city was traffic and transportation needs, including road and sidewalk conditions. The Lower Millyard received the most mentions for "Transform." The Lower Millyard is outside of the study area for this project.

Two other elements mentioned across all three objectives to protect, transform, and improve were housing and economic development. Participants mentioned the importance of housing availability and affordability for many household types, including seniors and those with disabilities, as well as affordable housing for those with the greatest economic need. Participants also expressed support for smaller businesses as something to protect, improve, and transform. Previous plans highlight the relevance of these two elements to planning for the Merrimack River District.

Housing

Amesbury's 2020 Housing Production Plan finds that while the city's housing stock is "generally meeting demand", it is too expensive for households earning the city's median income and lacks sufficient affordable units for the city's lowest-income households.[14] Similar to trends in the region, Amesbury has an affordability gap for new homes, meaning that the average sales price is about $50,000 more than what households earning the city's median income can afford.[15] Low- and moderate-income households—those that earn 80 percent or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) – make up more than a third of all households in Amesbury. Of these households, 70 percent are cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income toward housing. Thirty-seven percent of these households, or about 900 households in Amesbury, are severely cost-burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. As the Housing Production Plan notes, cost burdened households face challenges in purchasing necessities and are vulnerable to housing instability and homelessness.[16]

Furthermore, the Housing Production Plan notes a high rate of residents living with a disability in Amesbury, at 14 percent, a rate that is 38 percent for seniors. The plan cites a projected increase in adults aged 65 or older to make up 30 percent of the population by 2035, noting the need for more ADA-accessible units.

To address these issues, and to meet the state's affordable housing requirements under MGL Chapter 40B, the

14 Amesbury *Housing Production Plan* (2020), p.26
15 Affordability in this context means spending not more than 30% of household income on housing
16 Amesbury *Housing Production Plan* (2020), p.26-42

Housing Production Plan recommends adding 35 units toward Amesbury's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) each year. Units counting toward SHI must be deed-restricted as affordable to incomes at or below 80 percent of the AMI (though rental developments with 25 percent affordable units, or 20 percent affordable to households earning 50 percent of the AMI, can include all units toward the SHI, not just those that are actually affordable).[17] As of December 2020, Amesbury had met the state's SHI goal of 10 percent. However, the HPP calculates that maintaining this rate requires the additional 35 units each year. If the City does not continue to meet the 10% threshold for the SHI, it will have less leverage over projects submitted for a comprehensive permit through Chapter 40B.

The HPP proposes strategies for meeting its housing goals. These range from converting existing single-family homes or municipally-owned buildings to multi-family housing, to utilizing state incentives, such as 40R Smart Growth zoning, to encourage mixed-use development of underutilized parcels at strategic locations. The City recently received a Conditional Letter of Eligibility from the state Department of Housing and Community Development for the proposed East End Smart Growth 40R district at the I-95 Gateway of the Merrimack River District The City now has a three-year window within which the City Council can adopt the zoning.

Public input on housing was mixed. During the first Public Forum, participants expressed a need to increase housing availability in Amesbury, particularly for younger people and those with jobs in the city, as well as a need for more housing options for a variety of incomes. Others called for more assisted living centers for elders and those with disabilities and affordable housing for the lowest earning households in the city. When connecting these needs to the study area, some mentioned the Rt 110 corridor as a good spot for development, and felt this should prioritize senior housing with walkability to nearby services.

During the second Public Forum, several participants at the 21 Pond View Ave modeling station were in favor of different housing options at the site, even though zoning currently does not allow for it. Some suggested multi-family housing and the need to provide more affordable housing. However, participants at the second forum also voiced concern about increased traffic, diminished quality of life, encroachment on open space, and concerns that new residential development would cost the City more than it would generate in tax revenue.

The Village at Bailey's Pond will add 124 units to the city's housing stock, at market rate prices (Dodson & Flinker)

Economic Development

The "Land Use and Growth Management Recommendations" in the 2004 *Master Plan* state the need to "keep economic development in the areas already suitable for commercial or industrial uses, particularly along Route 110, the Golden Triangle, and the Route 150 Gateway/'Terrasphere' area" as a strategy to reinvigorate the economy, balance residential development with local jobs and tax revenue, and improve the character of the city's

17 Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (2014). *Guidelines, G.L. C.40B Comprehensive Permit Projects and Subsidized Housing Authority*

gateways.[18] The Master Plan identifies this area as being in danger of becoming a "bedroom community" to larger economic regions closer to Boston without a local source of jobs. In noting the district's access to regional transportation networks and rivers, and pointing out the redevelopment potential for underutilized sites, the *Master Plan* suggests investment in local economic initiatives and the potential for ecotourism.[19]

In 2014, the Office of Community & Economic Development established the Amesbury Economic Incentive Program (AEIP) to "address blighted, distressed, underutilized and slow development areas" through a mixture of public and private investment and economic development tools such as tax incentives for several projects with the Merrimack River District. Completed AEIP projects include Tax Increment Financing for the Hampton Inn on Elm Street and Payment in Lieu of Taxes for the solar field at the former landfill off of South Hunt Road. Other economic planning in the district includes the South Hunt Area District Improvement Program, which covers developments at Hatters Point and Bailey Pond, and plans for 21 Pond View Ave, currently under review by the Amesbury Disposition Committee and site of the I-495 modeling work station for this project.

Public input on economic development of the Gateways, like housing development in the district, highlighted concern for traffic impacts, while also expressing interest in supporting small businesses through mixed-use, village-style development and placemaking. Small coffee shops were supported in all areas of the district, with mixed support in the Riverfront, and the most popular redevelopment option for 21 Pond Ave was as a public park (see Section A. Land Use & Zoning). Mixed-use development of the Route 110 Corridor was also seen as a way of encouraging New England character in this area.

Climate Change Resilience

Climate change resilience did not arise frequently in the public process for this project. Comments at the first Public Forum noted that the riverfront is threatened by flooding, and some voiced concern that additional development could increase impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff in the area.

Hurricane inundation data generated by the US Army Corps of Engineers indicates that some areas around the confluence of the Powwow and Merrimack Rivers are susceptible to storm surges from Category 4 and 5 hurricanes, and the City's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness planning process identified the Golden Triangle area as a high priority for climate resilience projects including upgrading culverts under Route 110 and Elm Street, and developing plans for streambank and ecological restoration. Future development or other changes in the Merrimack River District should be based on reasonable climate change projections and be designed to enhance climate change resilience.

18 *The Town of Amesbury Master Plan* (2004), p.LU-33 to 37
19 *The Town of Amesbury Master Plan* (2004), p.

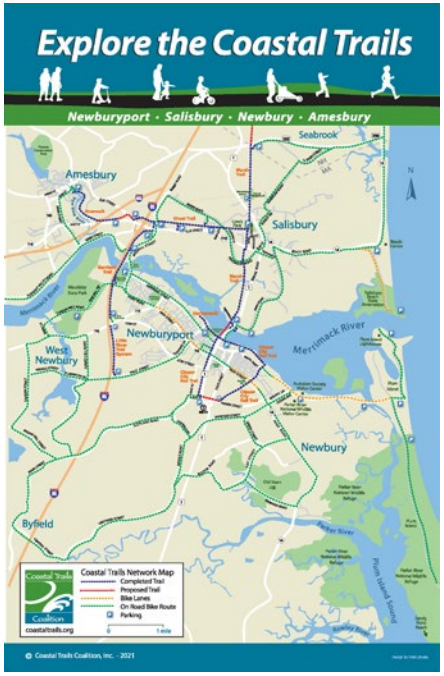
Summary of Existing Conditions

The breadth of development patterns in close proximity to one another in the Merrimack River District presents a unique planning process for the area. The following list of strengths, challenges, and opportunities revealed from the Existing Conditions inventory helps identify tradeoffs and strategies for the district and informs the use of scenarios in the next sections of this report.

Strengths

- History. Historic sites throughout the area, from Pennacook settlements to Lowell's Boat Shop to the Merrimac Hat Company to the Chain Bridge Filling Station demonstrate the area's evolving identity
    - The area has a particularly strong identity as a Colonial maritime community with contributions to regional and colonial fishing, boat-building, and other industries.
    - Relatively intact neighborhoods of historic buildings and sites creates a unique sense of place, especially in the Amesbury Ferry and Point Shore areas. Participants in this planning project consistently valued this sense of place and connection to history, citing it as a key strength of Amesbury.
- The Rivers. The Merrimack and Powwow Rivers are highly valued by residents of the Merrimack River District and Amesbury.
    - The views of the Merrimack River and Powwow Rivers are considered beautiful and a selling point for Amesbury. People described visiting Alliance Park to be close to the rivers and the enjoyment they get from walking, bicycling, or driving along the Merrimack River.
    - Both rivers offer recreational opportunities, like boating or kayaking. These enrich lives of resident. Their ecotourism potential could be expanded.
    - The Merrimack and Powwow Rivers also provide strong ecological assets, such as rare species habitat.
- Multimodal Transportation.
    - The Coastal Trails Network trails provide multimodal connections to downtown Amesbury, Salisbury Ghost Trail, and Newburyport. These have added value because they serve Environmental Justice communities just north of the study area. Recent complete streets improvements like sidewalk construction along Elm Street improves pedestrian connections to the study area.
- Highway Access. Access to state and interstate highways offer regional transportation and economic opportunities.
    - It is easy to commute to and from the study area.
    - Locations near highway exits appeal to businesses that depend on convenient access and/or high traffic volumes, like the Stop & Shop in CarriageTown Plaza or the recently built Hampton Inn and Amesbury Dental Associates on Elm Street.
- People. The Merrimack River District has engaged res-

The Marina at Amesbury Point offers private boating access. Recreation along the Merrimack River is a strength and an opportunity for the district (Dodson & Flinker)



The Coastal Trails Network is another major asset for outdoor recreation in the area. However, connecting the Powwow Riverwalk with the Salisbury Ghost Trail remains a challenge (Coastal Trails Coalition)

idents who care deeply about their neighborhood and work for its benefit. They attend community meetings, participate in planning projects, and support local institutions. This level of civic engagement enriches the neighborhood.

- Large undeveloped parcels. The Amesbury Ferry and Point Shore parts of the Merrimack River District were developed centuries ago and are mostly built out, but some upland portions of the study area remained undeveloped until much later. Large vacant parcels remain. These large parcels present the opportunity for large development projects, especially when they are in close proximity to highway interchanges. This has made them a focus area for economic development and housing efforts in Amesbury for decades.

Challenges

- High traffic volumes along Main Street disturb quality of life and sense of place, and limit safety of residents, pedestrians, and bikers
    - Given the district's location adjacent to two highways traffic is likely to continue to be a dominant feature of the area, but steps can be taken to manage its negative impacts.
- Lack of multimodal transportation infrastructure
    - While the area is a meeting point for several shared use paths, limited bike lanes and inhospitable sidewalk conditions limit active transportation within the study area and connections to those paths.
    - Limited public transit. Lack of public transit increases car-dependence and associated traffic.
- Development pressures
    - As Amesbury becomes a more desirable community, and as the demand for housing results in increased building, development pressure in the Merrimack River District is likely to continue to grow. At the same time, some citizens say that recent development has been too much, too fast.
    - Some citizens are concerned that development may negatively impact open space or valued historic areas
    - Amesbury tax revenue is largely generated from residential properties. Amesbury has long sought commercial development to bolster its fiscal health. Some citizens are concerned that additional residential development will negatively impact the City's fiscal health. On the other hand, studies have shown that, contrary to assumptions, multi-family development is generally fiscally positive for municipalities.
- Physical Constraints
    - While large parcels in the study area have long been seen as an economic development and housing opportunity for Amesbury, wetlands and streams often limit their development potential. In particular, wetlands impact the Golden Triangle and Rt 110
    - Steep slopes limit development elsewhere in the district, though the recent Bailey's Pond project shows that steep slopes are not always a barrier to development when sales values rise high enough to

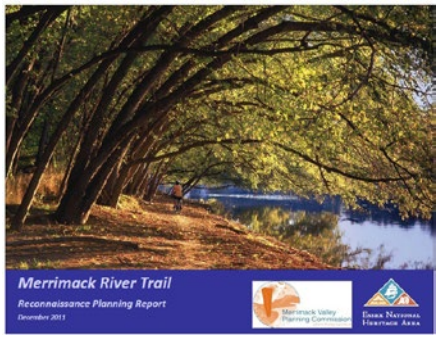
make extensive site construction financially feasible.

- Interstate gateways
    - The lack of a unique identity for the gateways along Route 110 and Route 150 degrade the experience of arriving in Amesbury. While Amesbury's zoning permitting process has resulted in recent buildings in this area that are better designed than the average suburban sprawl, the building designs alone are unable to overcome the highway design of Route 110 and the adjacent auto-oriented low density site designs. Given the market demand for authentic, walkable places, this may limit economic opportunity for small businesses in this area. On the other hand, Amesbury's downtown provides these opportunities and the City must be careful not to draw businesses away from the downtown or create too much competition for its existing businesses.
    - The Interstate gateway areas are physically disconnected from downtown Amesbury and the Riverfront. I-495 creates physical and symbolic barrier.

- Incomplete connection between Powwow Riverwalk and the Salisbury Ghost Trail limits bike/pedestrian access in the study area.
- Traffic, the lack of walking and bicycling facilities, and limited public open spaces limit the sense of neighborhood identity and access to the rivers, especially for people who do not live in the neighborhood. As one participant in a public workshop put it, the area "feels like a road, not a neighborhood"
- Housing needs
    - Amesbury has a housing affordability gap for median-income households
    - Many low/moderate-income households are cost-burdened
    - Amesbury has a high percentage of residents with disabilities and an increasing population of seniors, some of whom will require ADA accessible housing. This results in a shortage of ADA accessible housing.

- Economics
    - Like many Massachusetts municipalities Amesbury's economy suffered when it lost much of its industrial jobs base. The City continues to work to preserve and create local businesses, especially those with high quality jobs.
    - Highway oriented retail in Amesbury competes with regional commercial hubs, including several in New Hampshire which have the advantage of not having sales tax. Downtown Amesbury competes with Newburyport which has a strong tourist base.
    - Amesbury has a single tax rate, which at $17.69 per $1000 of assessed value for 2022, ranked 63rd highest out of the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities. Based on the average single-family tax bill, Amesbury ranked 73rd highest out of 351 municipalities. While this appeared to be a major concern in previous planning for Amesbury, public input for this project indicated that tax revenue is not something residents want to pursue blindly. It appears many residents value open space, historic preservation, and quality of life over increased tax revenue.

A lack of quality sidewalk infrastructure on Main Street limits public enjoyment of the river (Dodson & Flinker)



The 2011 Merrimack River Trail study suggests strategies for creating a bike lane along the riverfront (Merrimack Valley Planning Commission)

- Climate Change
    - Storm surge and flooding potential on Merrimack
    - Threat of riverbank erosion

Opportunities

- Vacant and underutilized parcels in Golden Triangle, Rt 110 Corridor, and 21 Pond View
    - Encourage mixed-use development along Rt 110 and Elm St to preserve and create jobs, create village center
- Historic and cultural assets of Riverfront and Elm Street area may be further accessed and appreciated with trail connections, signage, and gathering spaces
- Open space and trails access and awareness
    - Complete connection of Powwow Riverwalk with Ghost Trail
    - Encourage greater use of Point Shore Meadows Conservation Land
    - Forge greater access to Margaret Rice Park
    - Create bike lane along Pleasant Valley, Merrimac, and Main Streets for proposed Merrimack River Trail

AMESBURY LAND USE EVALUATION MODEL

Barrett Planning Group's role in this project was to design a decision support model that weighs the challenges and benefits associated with land use policy changes and potential development opportunities. The Excel-based tool described in this section allows decision-makers to rate the degree to which a proposal meets goals that Amesbury residents have for their community and its future, determined through the City's master plan survey and a survey specifically conducted for this project. The model's primary purpose is to support important land use policy conversations among Amesbury's leadership, staff, residents, and developers. It gives the City a way to analyze otherwise hard-to-quantify values and priorities and to advocate for the wants and needs of the community in negotiations with developers and land owners.

The model is called a Community Benefits Model because by design, it focuses on what could be beneficial outcomes from development. People often assume that all development is inherently negative, but that is not the case. Development can bring significant benefits, and sometimes it brings both benefits and drawbacks. It also can bring different impacts to neighborhoods than the community as a whole. As a result, depending on location and context, and sometimes timing, what appears to be a benefit to some may not be so beneficial to others. The model does not reconcile all the potential conflicts that arise when a community's leaders or staff need to make a decision. No model can do that. What it does is provide a framework for reasoning through a decision process and documenting how and why a given decision was or will be made. Equally important, perhaps, is the value the model can bring to the project planning process. When developers know what a community wants, they will usually try to accommodate local wishes as much as possible because they want the City to approve their request, whether it is for a zoning change or a proposed project.

Developing the Model

To inform the creation of the Community Benefits Model, Barrett Planning Group conducted an online survey between April 19 and May 13, 2022. This survey was designed to gather ideas from residents about the potential benefits and drawbacks of growth and change and drew from two sources of ideas about what Amesbury residents have said they value: (1) input received at a Community Forum on April 8, 2022; and (2) a report prepared by the I AMESBURY 2030 Task Force.[20] The survey received 429 responses, and the team used these responses to create the evaluation criteria and weights used to rate and rank potential community benefits (described further below).

Within each category, the survey also asked respondents to select three examples of outcomes that City policies could help to encourage. The team identified the most favored outcomes in each benefit category and built the model using the top selections as evaluation criteria for proposed development and policy changes. The benefit categories that received the most community support are the ones that tool's scoring favors because they have the highest potential point values., i.e., they exert more weight in evaluation process. Because a given land use proposal may not address, meet, or exceed expectations for all the

Public input from the first Public Forum and a public survey informed the priorities of the Community Benefits Model (Barrett Planning Group)

20 I AMESBURY 2030 Community Survey Results, April 2021.

The first Public Forum gathered perspectives on what participants wish to "protect, improve, or transform" in the city (Barrett Planning Group)

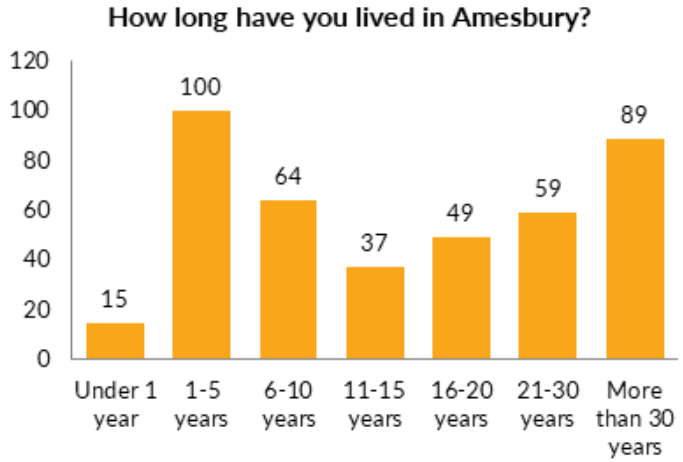
criteria, the tool makes adjustments for such variables. The model is designed to reward projects and proposals that align most closely with the needs and priorities identified in the community survey results. It can also help City officials work with developers to improve a project by negotiating for changes that will address more of the community's priorities, where possible.

Who took the survey?

Of 429 respondents, 415 indicated that they were residents and 4 were non-resident business owners. The chart below shows that the median duration of residence among respondents was 11-15 years in Amesbury, although the largest proportions have lived in Amesbury for 1-5 years or more than 30 years.

Respondents were most likely to be retired (22.7 percent), work remotely home in Amesbury (22.3 percent), or work within a 30-minute commute from Amesbury (21.8 percent). About one quarter of respondents were under the age of 40, and three of every eight respondents were over 60.

Figure 27. Length of Residency in Amesbury of Survey Respondents



Survey Findings

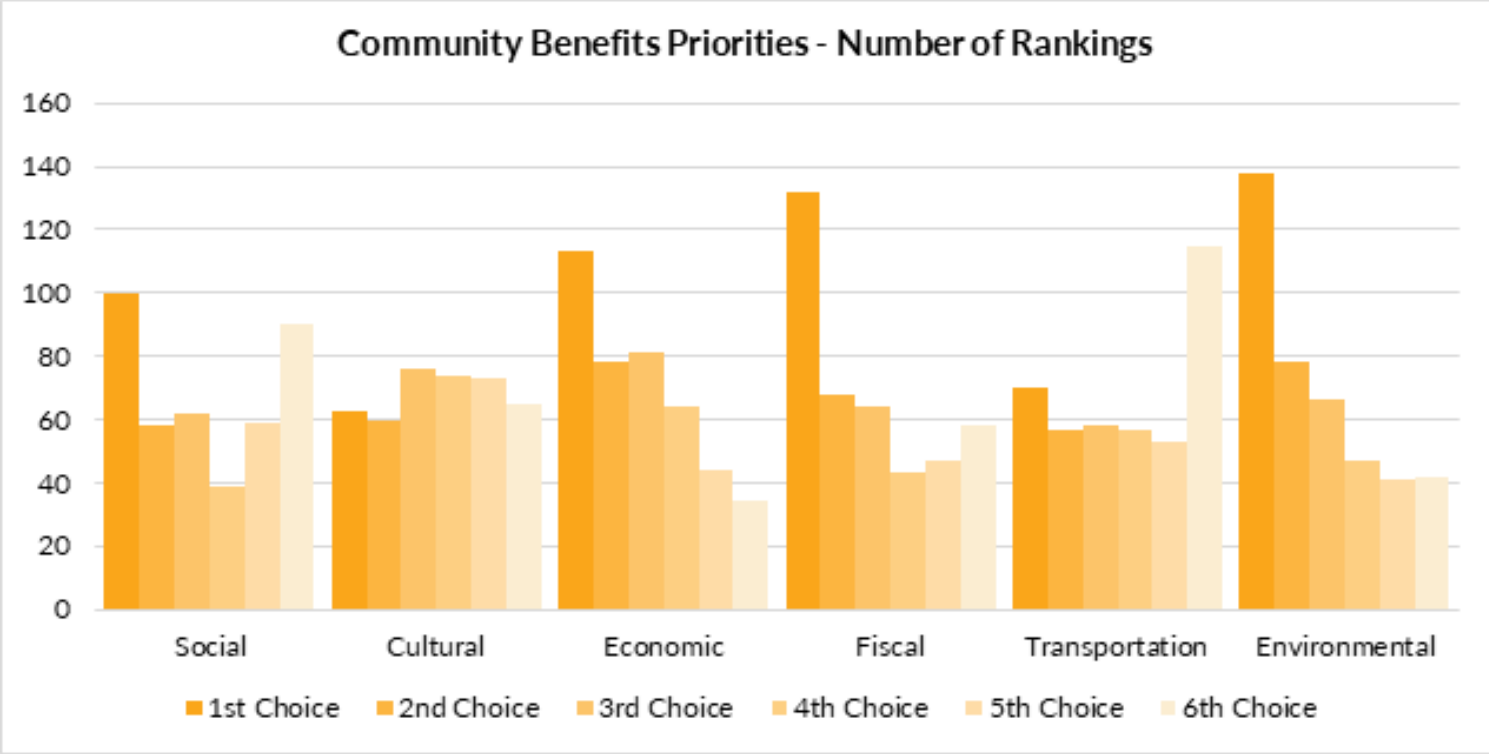
Survey respondents rated their benefit priorities among six categories:

- Social Benefits: support a healthy and equitable community in Amesbury
- Cultural Benefits: contribute to what makes Amesbury special including history, art, and learning
- Economic Benefits: support local businesses and jobs
- Fiscal Benefits: generate tax revenue for the City or diversify the tax base
- Transportation Benefits: improve traffic and circulation in Amesbury or improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians and bikers
- Environmental Benefits: protect Amesbury's natural resources and support climate resilience

Environmental benefits received the largest number of first- and second- priority responses, and fiscal benefits closely followed. The chart below shows the number of respondents who ranked each category, from first priority to sixth priority (See Figure 28).

Respondents selected features or outcomes within each benefit category that would align with Amesbury needs or objectives. Table 3 below shows the number of respondents who selected each outcome among up to three preferences, or they may have selected "no benefits."

Figure 28. Graph of Community Benefit Priority Rankings



Barrett Planning Group used these results to create the Community Benefits Model. The top five selections from each category were adapted for inclusion in the tool to provide the basis for evaluating proposed projects or policy changes, and their overall prioritization factors into the weight of each criterion, as well as the ranking of each benefit category.

Table 3. Survey Results

Social Benefits	Selections	Percent Selected
Outdoor recreation areas, e.g., playground, park, or tennis courts for general public use	242	56.4%
Public access to open space	188	43.8%
Housing affordability for a range of household types and sizes	161	37.5%
Support for seniors to remain in their home or in Amesbury	158	36.8%
Community gathering spaces	112	26.1%
Strengthening connection between residents	80	18.6%
Healthy homes (dry, clean, safe, ventilated, pest-free, contaminant-free, maintained, and thermally controlled)	50	11.7%
Health care services	48	11.2%
Encouraging minority households to apply for affordable units in Amesbury	41	9.6%
Assisted living or memory care residence for older adults needing 24-hour support	35	8.2%
Supportive housing for people with disabilities	25	5.8%
Encouraging home-based business	21	4.9%
Other (comment box)	21	4.9%
No benefits	12	2.8%

Cultural Benefits	Selections	Percent Selected
Preservation of a historic building, landscape, or farmland	281	65.5%
Placemaking, e.g., attractive neighborhoods or downtown area	208	48.5%
Venue for live performances	130	30.3%
Access to opportunities, e.g. to housing, services, or jobs	122	28.4%
Architecturally or historically appropriate building design	120	28.0%
Increasing racial or ethnic diversity in Amesbury's public schools	116	27.0%
Live-and-work space for artists	59	13.8%
Informational or educational displays about Amesbury's history	47	11.0%
Informational or educational displays to promote Amesbury as a welcoming community	37	8.6%
Other (comment box)	15	3.5%
No benefits	13	3.0%

Economic Benefits	Selections	Percent Selected
Investments in improved walkability, e.g., better or upgraded sidewalks or paths	214	49.9%
Attractive downtown and neighborhood commercial areas that give businesses a competitive advantage	194	45.2%
Incentives to reuse existing buildings	178	41.5%
Measures to encourage businesses with high-wage jobs such as technology manufacturing to locate or stay in Amesbury	164	38.2%
Measures to encourage small businesses to locate or stay in Amesbury	131	30.5%
Specialty food store (e.g. foreign grocery stores or artisanal food shops)	81	18.9%
Measures to encourage businesses that support the needs for services of local residents such as healthcare or childcare	72	16.8%
Incentives to improve the City's gateways (major entrances to Amesbury)	59	13.8%
Co-work center or incubator to support self-employment and small business development in Amesbury	55	12.8%
Tourism	39	9.1%
Other (comment box)	9	2.1%
No benefits	7	1.6%

Fiscal Benefits	Selections	Percent Selected
Improved public infrastructure where needed, e.g., upgraded water lines, underground utilities, paid for in whole or in part by non-local sources such as new development or state grants	303	70.6%
Development of vacant or underutilized properties in commercial or mixed-use corridors	240	55.9%
Development that provides more revenue than the City's cost to provide services	193	45.0%
Development that does not overburden City Services	162	37.8%
Financial contributions from development to the cost of public improvements identified in the City's Capital Improvements Plan	121	28.2%
Regular review of the City's user fees to reflect the City's actual cost of services	92	21.4%
Other (comment box)	21	4.9%
No benefits	15	3.5%

Transportation Benefits	Selections	Percent Selected
Improvements to sidewalks or walking paths	291	67.8%
Improvements to the condition of local or neighborhood streets	222	51.7%
Improved access to the Merrimack and Powow Rivers, as well as Amesbury's lakes and ponds	148	34.5%
Traffic calming, i.e., physical or other changes in streets to make them safer for walking or biking by reducing traffic speeds or cut-through traffic	141	32.9%
Bicycle lanes or bike paths	110	25.6%
Improved access for people with disabilities	66	15.4%
Incentives to improve public transportation access	63	14.7%
Improvements to intersections, e.g., better signage or signalization, or a roundabout	59	13.8%
No benefits	22	5.1%
Other (comment box)	13	3.0%

Environmental Benefits	Selections	Percent Selected
Development that includes permanent protection of open space	232	54.1%
Protection of areas with significant ecological and habitat integrity	191	44.5%
Incentives to redevelop existing properties	126	29.4%
Measures to protect surface water or groundwater	114	26.6%
Provision of public park or open space to make open space access equitable for all neighborhoods	106	24.7%
Protection or enhancement of scenic views	98	22.8%
Climate resiliency	91	21.2%
Stormwater management improvements	83	19.3%
Cleanup and restoration of brownfield sites	70	16.3%
No benefits	19	4.4%
Public education or informational displays about climate change	17	4.0%
Other (comment box)	15	3.5%

Working with the Model

The model is Excel-based for ease of use. It was important to the City and consultants that the tool be easy for officials, staff, and developers to interpret and use, and that it provide for transparency so the public could understand the results.

Each of the six community benefit types (social, cultural, economic, fiscal, transportation, environmental) lists several criteria for review. To use the model, an evaluator needs to assess the *degree to which* the proposal satisfies the criteria. The dropdown menu allows the tool's user to select:

- 0% - Criterion is not met.
- 33% - Project minimally meets the criterion, but could be improved upon.
- 67% - Project or proposal more closely approximates the criterion and should receive credit for doing so, but does not fully satisfy it.
- 100% - Project or proposal meets or exceeds the criterion.
- N/A - Criterion does not apply to project or proposal.
- TBD - More information is required.

The percentages represent the share of the points the proposal earns relative to the total points available for each criterion. If a criterion does not apply to a given proposal, the possible points from that criterion are removed from score calculations so that they count neither for nor against the proposal. If there is insufficient information to evaluate the degree to which a criterion is or is not met (to be determined, or TBD), zero points are awarded, and the possible points are *not* removed from the calculations: this approach penalizes incomplete proposals and encourages applicants to provide comprehensive information. When the proponent submits additional documentation, the score for that criterion can be reevaluated.

There are up to 100 points available for projects or proposals to earn. The last sheet of the workbook calculates a score for the proposal. This score is intended to start conversations about aligning the project or proposal with Amesbury's goals and priorities. Sharing the criteria with developers will provide a preferred list of features and characteristics that can shape and guide the creation of better projects and proposals. No score guarantees project approval, but high scores indicate that the proposal may be favorable because it addresses many of the needs and priorities identified by residents. The tool does not "make" decisions. **It does not replace the City's established permitting procedures or any requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, and it does not dictate outcomes that fall within the jurisdiction of the City's elected officials.**

Low scores illustrate potential for a project or proposal's improvement. If a proposal earns five or more zero scores (one for each benefit category except fiscal impact) or earns a score less than 67% overall, the proponents should be advised to rethink their proposal and consider ways to make it more responsive to the community's needs.

Fiscal Impact: Tread Carefully

Survey respondents ranked the fiscal impact category as among the most important community benefits. A fiscal impact analysis helps to determine whether a development can "pay for itself," i.e., if the total revenue it gen-

The Community Benefits Model is intended to help guide city officials, developers, and community members in planning and evaluating projects (Barrett Planning Group)

erates from all sources will be enough to cover the City's cost to provide services to the residents, businesses, or other uses in a project. It is an important consideration for a community's growth planning, but it should never be the *only* basis for a decision or even the most important one. *For legal reasons, it cannot be the determining factor, especially if the proposal under review involves housing.*

It is easy to assume that commercial development will be an automatic "winner" in a fiscal impact analysis. Business is good because it provides goods and services, and jobs, and it is usually a fiscally positive, revenue generating land use. Still, business development can place burdens on City services, too. Some types of retail generate more many public safety calls than other retail uses, and the fiscal impact analysis should account for the estimated cost of those services. High traffic-generating commercial development or industrial development that generates large volumes of truck traffic provide jobs too – and sometimes high-wage jobs – but there is an associated cost in terms of traffic safety, accidents, and wear and tear on public streets.

Other uses generate little or no revenue but may benefit the City's economy and meet other needs. For example, if a college or university established a satellite campus in Amesbury, the City would not receive any tax revenue from it, yet the City would have to respond to public safety calls and its library may see more demands for service, too. Regardless, the City could not deny the project because state law prohibits communities from regulating or restricting public and non-profit educational uses. It makes no sense to subject a tax-exempt land use to a fiscal impact analysis.

Housing raises a different set of issues. Just as it is easy to think all commercial development is fiscally positive, it is easy to classify all housing as fiscally negative. Single-family homes often are negative because they attract families and that leads to growth in education spending. However, most small cities and towns prefer single-family homes over other types of housing, even though the literature of fiscal impact research almost always shows that market-rate multi-family developments generate more revenue than service costs. Age-restricted developments usually generate excess revenue as well, yet the demands they place on public safety services are widely misunderstood and underestimated. No matter what type of housing is involved, cities and towns throughout the country must take care to prevent housing discrimination in their land use policy and permitting decisions.

The Federal Fair Housing Act (FFHA) protects people from discrimination in housing based on their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, disability, marital status, and age. The laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts protect the same groups and many others. Discrimination in real estate transactions such as rentals, sales, lending, and insurance is a civil rights violation. However, fair housing laws also apply to planning and zoning.

The FFHA prohibits discrimination in a dwelling, meaning "any building, structure, or portion thereof which is occupied as, or designed or intended for occupancy as, a residence by one or more families, and any vacant land which is offered for sale or lease for the construction or location thereon of any such building, structure, or portion thereof" (42 USC §3602(b)). Decisions related to the development

or use of land must comply with FFH regulations and cannot be based upon the protected class of the residents or prospective residents.

A land use policy or zoning practice can result in discrimination if it has caused or is likely to cause a disparate impact on a group of persons, or if it creates, increases, reinforces, or perpetuates segregated housing patterns because of a protected characteristic. An example includes prohibiting low income or multifamily housing because of protected characteristics, such as family status or age. Without a legally sufficient justification, a prohibition like this would violate the FFHA.[21] Finally, it is important to note that as a recipient of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Amesbury has a legal obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.[22]

Thinking Ahead – Recommendations for Using the Community Benefits Model

Use the Fiscal Impact Calculation Sheet Sparingly

The Excel workbook has a separate "Fiscal Impact Calculation Sheet" that allows the scorer to make an approximate, high-level assumption about a project's potential fiscal impact. The sheet includes fields with information about the City's budget, population size, parcels by type, and other local considerations, in addition to local and regional market assumptions. These factors allow the scorer to calculate potential project costs and revenue — with some caveats:

- Much of the data built into the worksheet must be updated regularly (annually, ideally) by the City for the tool to remain current. This is, of course, a time-consuming undertaking. Additionally, such an effort should involve interdepartmental review for accuracy and opportunity for input. The initial assumptions built into this draft of sheet have **not** been reviewed with all department heads, and there is much room for future discussion and refinement.
- Maintaining accurate market assumptions about sale prices, employees per square foot, and other industry factors may require accessing and interpreting proprietary data. The current employee square footage assumptions were calculated based upon multipliers from the Institute of Transportation Engineers' most recent Trip Generation Manual, and many of the assumptions about commercial real estate values came from Reonomy and CoStar; all three of these sources are proprietary, and the City may not have continued access to them. However, talking to business owners, property owners, and the City's Assessor can help inform future updates to these figures – and may yield more accurate information grounded in real-time local trends.
- Some factors can significantly affect the estimated assessed value of a property—namely, the cap rate and any probable external obsolescence factors for a spe-

21 Joint Statement of The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and The Department of Justice. *State and Local Land Use Laws and Practices and the Application of The Fair Housing Act*. November 2016.

22 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Version 1, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule Guidebook (2015), and Fair Housing Planning Guide (1996).

cific proposed project.[23] Speaking with property owners and the City's Assessor can help inform whether these figures should be updated or whether an external obsolescence factor should be applied to a particular project.

- The scorer must input commercial square footage assumptions (if applicable to the project) and unit counts by type for residential uses. Generating such assumptions, if not readily available, requires experience and can be laborious and complicated.
- Lastly and most importantly, fiscal impact analysis is a very nuanced undertaking. Attempting to apply a very general tool to a variety of projects should be done with caution and with the understanding that the findings likely fall into a much broader range.

For the reasons above, as well as the legal considerations previously described, the City should consider using the Fiscal Impact Calculation Sheet sparingly and not make it a primary consideration for decision-making. It may make sense for the City to apply this part of the tool only when a project or proposal has attained a suitable score in all other areas—for example, 67% or higher in each category.

Make Room for Change

Over time, some of Amesbury's goals and priorities may change. The model is designed to be updated as needed. Another community survey like the one the consultants prepared for this project can help the City update the criteria and determine their relative importance, and perhaps add, modify, or remove some criteria. The frequencies of selection provide the basis for weighting scores. Updating the criteria and frequencies will allow the City to ensure that the model continues to reflect the community's interests. When the City makes these updates, the scores will continue to add up to 100 for clarity.

Provide Transparency

While the tool is intended for use by City officials and staff, it is appropriate to share the criteria and their relative weights with residents and developers to support transparency as well as community conversations about the City's future. As the tool is used and Amesbury continues to grow and develop, criteria may come to be interpreted differently over time to refine the development traits and features that are most desirable, or they may change altogether as the needs and priorities in Amesbury change over time.

Define and Develop Metrics

The table provided on the following page lists the benefits and their criteria, and subsequent pages offer suggestions and preliminary guidance on how to score proposals and projects. The purpose of the tables is to help the City make effective use of the model, but they may not include every possible way to meet or exceed each criterion; these are suggestions and can be revised, updated, or changed altogether.

Allow for Subjectivity

The model is intended to be subjective, and scoring is not absolute: scorers may differ between members of a board,

23 An external obsolescence factor is an external factor that lowers a property's value and is effectively "unfixable" by the owner—for example, location.

or between a developer's self-evaluation and a board's assessment. These differences are a feature rather than a weakness of the model because they identify potential for discussion, collaboration, and improvement. A primary purpose of this tool is to facilitate conversations about projects — and to ensure that all parties consider the goals and values of the community in these conversations.

Community Benefits Model: Overview and Scoring Guidance

Table 4. Overview of Benefits and Criteria

Environmental Benefits: Protect Amesbury's natural resources and support climate resilience	**Fiscal Benefits:** Generate tax revenue for the City or diversify the tax base	**Economic Benefits:** Support local businesses and jobs	**Social Benefits:** Support a healthy and equitable community in Amesbury	**Transportation Benefits:** Improve traffic and circulation in Amesbury or improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians and bikers	**Cultural Benefits:** Contribute to what makes Amesbury special including history, art, and learning
Includes permanent open space protection	Improved public infrastructure	Investments in improved walkability	Outdoor recreation, e.g., park or playground	Improves walkability	Historic preservation
Protects areas with ecological significance/ habitat integrity	Develop vacant/ underutilized properties	Attractive downtown/ neighborhood commercial areas	Public access to open space	Traffic calming	Placemaking
Redevelop existing properties/ minimizes new land disruption	Development provides more revenue than cost	Reuses existing buildings	Housing affordability	Traffic mitigation	Venue or spaces for cultural activities
Measures to protect water resources	Development does not overburden City services	Encourage businesses with high-wage jobs	Support for seniors to stay in their home or in Amesbury	Improvements to condition neighborhood streets	Access to opportunities, e.g., housing, jobs
Public park/open space	Financial contributions from development to cost of public improvements	Measures to encourage small businesses to locate or stay	Community gathering space		Increasing racial or ethnic diversity

Table 5. Criteria for Environmental Benefits:

Protect Amesbury's natural resources and support climate resilience

Includes permanent open space protection	To earn 100% of possible points: project should provide significant contiguous open space. If the site has waterfront access, protected open space should extend to the water. To earn 67% of possible points: protected open space should be at least 50% of the proposed area, consistent with conventional Open Space Residential Design standards. Open space should be contiguous. If the site is situated in more densely developed areas or the project involves redevelopment such that open space protection is not applicable, this criterion may be reevaluated or revised.
Protects areas with ecological significance/ habitat integrity	To earn 100% of possible points: open space should be contiguous for habitat protection, with habitats identified as having demonstrable City-wide or regional significance as identified in the Open Space & Recreation Plan, MAPPR, BioMap, or other local, regional, or state inventory or plan. Wetlands buffers exceed those set forth in the 2008 Amesbury Wetlands Protection Ordinance. To earn 67% of possible points: open space should be contiguous wherever possible, with the most ecologically significant habitat on a site protected. Wetlands buffers are no less than 100 feet for any wetland type, as required by the City's Wetlands Protection Ordinance.
Redevelop existing properties/minimizes new land disruption	To earn 100% of possible points: site redevelopment limits land disturbance to existing developed footprint and minimizes areas of impervious surface compared to similar developments in the region. To earn 67% of possible points: new development and site redevelopment should avoid clear-cutting, preserve as many specimen trees as possible, and limit areas of impervious surface to existing conditions or compared to similar developments in the region.
Measures to protect water resources	To earn 100% of possible points: site utilizes Low Impact Development (LID) Best Management Practices (BMPs) for on-site stormwater management to the greatest extent possible. Wetlands buffers exceed those set forth in the 2008 Amesbury Wetlands Protection Ordinance. To earn 67% of possible points: site utilizes Low Impact Development (LID) Best Management Practices (BMPs) for on-site stormwater management. Wetlands buffers are no less than 100 feet for any wetland type as required by the City's Wetlands Protection Ordinance.
Public park/open space	To earn 100% of possible points: provides or protects public access to protected open space for passive or active recreation, including waterfront access if applicable; meets needs and goals identified in the City's Open Space & Recreation Plan. To earn 67% of possible points: provides or protects public access to designated outdoor spaces likely to be utilized due to design, natural features, or convenient location. If the site is situated in more densely developed areas such as the City Center and open space availability is limited, rooftop open space, gardens, and green roofs may be considered to satisfy this criterion.

Table 6. Fiscal Benefits:

Generate tax revenue for the City or diversify the tax base

Improved public infrastructure	To earn 100% of possible points: development will include improvements to water, sewer, or transportation infrastructure. Sidewalks will be included. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal includes payment to the City for improvements to water, sewer, or transportation infrastructure. Sidewalks will be included.
Develop vacant/ underutilized properties	To earn 100% of possible points: revitalizes a vacant/abandoned property and restores it to tax rolls. To earn 67% of possible points: remediates vacant/abandoned property. If the project or proposal does not include the site of a vacant property (undeveloped properties are not included as vacant), then this criterion does not apply.
Development provides more revenue than cost	To earn 100% of possible points: taxes on the development exceed estimated costs of municipal services. To earn 67% of possible points: taxes on the development are at least equal to or moderately in excess of the estimated costs of public safety and infrastructure service provision. The Fiscal Impact Calculations Sheet included in the Community Benefits Model Excel workbook can help with this scoring but should be used sparingly and not as a determining factor.
Development does not overburden City services	To earn 100% of possible points: development is designed with built-in/on-site features to limit impact on municipal services, e.g., dwellings or other uses equipped with sprinkler systems even if not required by code to provide them, or on-site security in nonresidential or residential development. To earn 67% of possible points: development will not place demands on municipal services that existing departments do not have capacity to meet.
Financial contributions from development to cost of public improvements	To earn 100% of possible points: development will pay 100% of the proportional cost of one or more off-site public improvements related to the project. To earn 67% of possible points: development will provide a negotiated payment less than 100% of the proportional cost of one or more off-site improvements related to the project.

Table 7. Economic Benefits:
Support local businesses and jobs

Investments in improved walkability	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal promotes walking connectivity in Amesbury that supports patronage of other businesses and destinations without getting (back) into the car. To earn 67% of possible points: proposed development includes sidewalks and is walkable from businesses or residences.
Attractive downtown/ neighborhood commercial areas	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal will represent a cornerstone of its neighborhood context (including commercial corridors) and will help to establish or support a welcoming neighborhood identity. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal contributes to the character of the area and fits into the fabric of the community.
Reuses existing buildings	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal utilizes and improves upon existing structures on the site to preserve the scale, character, and architectural styles of existing neighborhoods and commercial areas. To earn 67% of possible points: new and reused buildings support neighborhood continuity (including commercial areas).
Encourage businesses with high-wage jobs	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal supports attractive and innovative uses and features for business and industry that appeal to a range of employers and incentivize them to locate in Amesbury. Employees will be able to live, work, shop, and play in Amesbury. To earn 67% of possible points: attractive commercial or industrial spaces will support the needs of a range of well-paying industries.
Measures to encourage small businesses to locate or stay	To earn 100% of possible points: development will offer below-market rents to retain existing small businesses or favorable lease rates and terms to keep small businesses or attract new ones. To earn 67% of possible points: development will provide some benefits for small businesses, such as opportunity to remain in existing leased space for at least one year or relocation assistance to other available space in Amesbury.

Table 8. Social Benefits:
Support a healthy and equitable community in Amesbury

Outdoor recreation, e.g., park or playground	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal includes open space available to the public for passive and active recreation with waterfront access if applicable. Programmed spaces include multi-generational facilities to accommodate a range of outdoor activities such as courts or fields, community gardens, fitness equipment, and shade canopy. Meets needs and goals identified in the City's Open Space & Recreation Plan. To earn 67% of possible points: open space is available for passive and active recreation with waterfront access if applicable.
Public access to open space	To earn 100% of possible points: permanently protected open space is available to the public for passive recreation, including waterfront access if applicable; meets needs and goals identified in the City's Open Space & Recreation Plan. To earn 67% of possible points: open space is available to the public, including waterfront access if applicable.
Housing affordability	To earn 100% of possible points: housing development meets needs identified in the City's Housing Production Plan; includes deeply affordable rental or homeownership units for families and seniors and more ADA-accessible units than required by law; and units that are not income-restricted include "missing middle" housing types. To earn 67% of possible points: housing development includes affordable housing options for families and seniors.
Support for seniors to stay in their home or in Amesbury	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal supports a self-sufficient neighborhood that allows residents to access goods and services close to home in a safe and walkable community setting. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal includes walkability and accessibility features.
Community gathering space	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal supports indoor and outdoor community gathering spaces, including gallery and performance space, kitchen facilities, and recreation facilities. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal supports indoor community gathering spaces, including gallery and performance space, kitchen facilities, or recreation facilities.

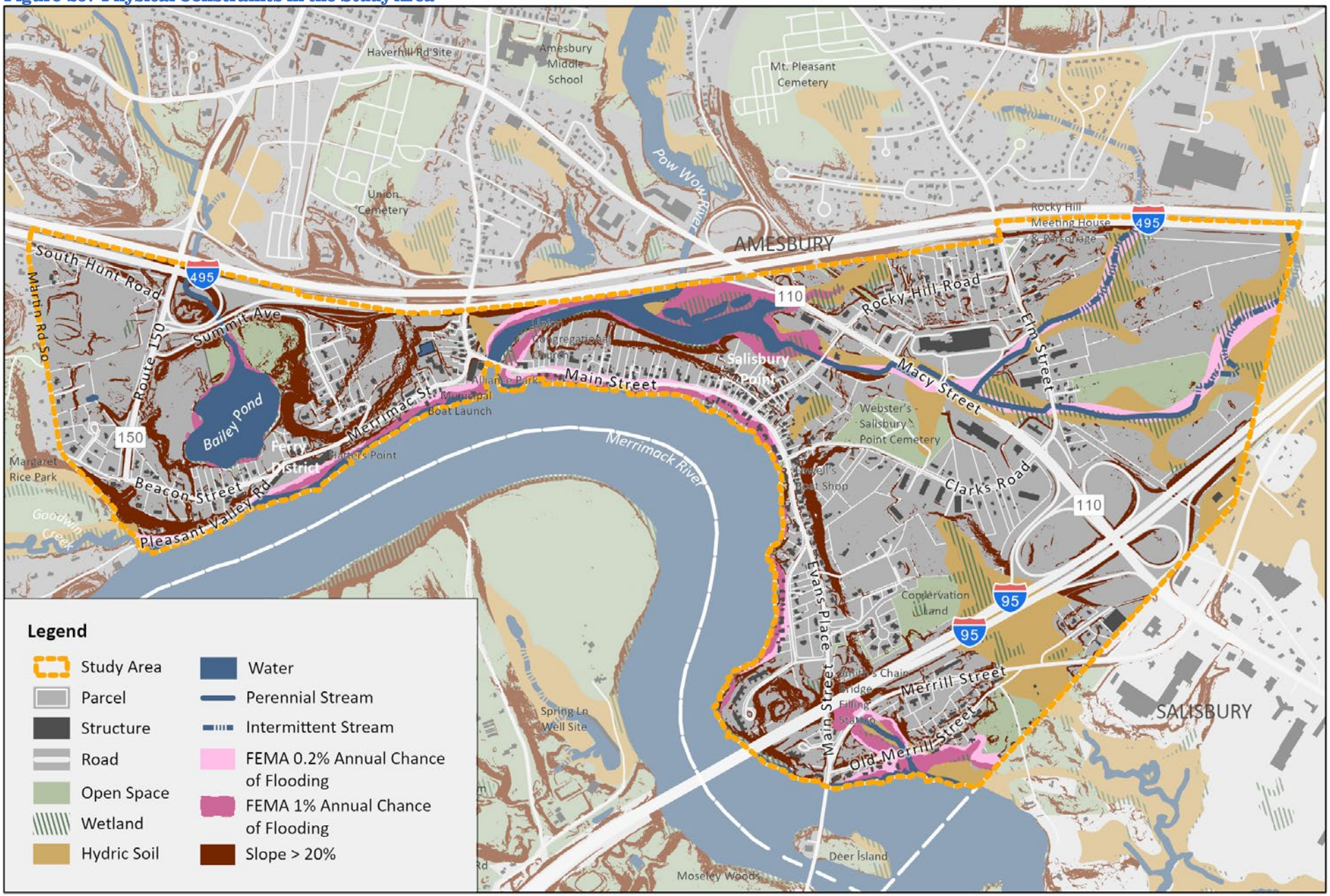
Table 9. Transportation Benefits:
Improve traffic and circulation in Amesbury or improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians and bikers

Improves walkability	To earn 100% of possible points: development includes sidewalks and walking paths for access into and throughout the site to support indoor and outdoor connectivity, as well as ADA accessibility throughout. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal includes sidewalks and walking paths to access primary site features.
Traffic calming	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal includes traffic calming features to encourage low vehicular speeds, as well as pedestrian and bike accommodations to facilitate multi-modal travel to and throughout the site. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal includes traffic calming features to encourage low vehicular speeds. Sidewalks and crosswalks are included for safety.
Traffic mitigation	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal provides for multiple traffic demand management strategies that encourage multi-modal travel and reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal provides traffic demand management strategies that encourage multi-modal travel or reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips.
Improvements to condition of neighborhood streets	To earn 100% of possible points: development will pay 100% of the proportional cost of one or more off-site street improvements related to the project. To earn 67% of possible points: development will provide a negotiated payment less than 100% of the proportional cost of one or more off-site street improvements related to the project.

Table 10. Cultural Benefits:
Contribute to what makes Amesbury special including history, art, and learning

Historic preservation	To earn 100% of possible points: historic resources and structures are preserved to the greatest extent possible and will be added to state or national registries, if applicable. Programming honors and emphasizes historic character while adding something new. To earn 67% of possible points: historic resources and structures are preserved and added to state or national registries, if applicable.
Placemaking	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal supports a sense of community continuity (including uses, design and architecture, and indoor-outdoor connectivity if possible) and neighborhood identity. New development should demonstrate pride of place and help to create connected activity nodes and promote Amesbury as a destination. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal supports a sense of community continuity (including uses, design and architecture, and indoor-outdoor connectivity if possible) and neighborhood identity.
Venue or spaces for cultural activities	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal includes spaces for cultural activities for reservation by the public. These spaces may be indoor or outdoor (gallery, amphitheater, stage, pavilion, etc.). To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal includes indoor or outdoor spaces for cultural activities.
Access to opportunities, e.g., housing, jobs	To earn 100% of possible points: project or proposal includes a variety of housing types at multiple affordability levels in accordance with the City's Housing Production Plan; commercial or industrial spaces for a variety of needs identified within the context of the local and regional market; or a combination of these for a mix of uses and housing types to promote accessibility and desirability in the community. To earn 67% of possible points: project or proposal includes a variety of housing types at multiple affordability levels; commercial or industrial spaces; or a combination of these for a mix of uses and housing types to promote accessibility and desirability in the community.
Increasing racial or ethnic diversity	To earn 100% of possible points: development includes a wide range of housing sizes and price points, including three-bedroom units and deeply affordable units, to encourage and accommodate diverse households. To earn 67% of possible points: development includes at least 10 percent of affordable units.

Figure 29. Physical Constraints in the Study Area



Physical Constraints

Merrimack River District Planning Project
Amesbury, MA
Draft: 4/21/22

Prepared by:
DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Data Sources:
City of Amesbury, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

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LAND USE SCENARIOS

Introduction

This project used a scenario planning approach to develop and evaluate different potential land use outcomes for the Merrimack River District. Scenario planning enables planners and the public to talk about alternative futures for a place in a way that is concrete and grounded. Participants can weigh the benefits and drawbacks of potential configurations of future land use and take actions to steer public and private efforts toward the preferred outcome.

"Scenario planning enables professionals, and the public, to respond dynamically to an unknown future. It assists them with thinking, in advance, about the many ways the future may unfold and how they can be responsive, resilient, and effective, as the future becomes reality." –American Planning Association (https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/scenarioplanning/)

The process of developing land use scenarios began with a "constraints" analysis. This analysis overlays a variety of barriers, including physical and regulatory barriers, to identify where development is unlikely to occur. This in turn reveals the relatively unconstrained land where change is more likely.

Physical Constraints

Physical constraints are aspects of the land, like topography and hydrology, that limit development potential. Steep slopes can make developing land prohibitively expensive. Ponds, streams, wetlands and floodplains, also make development difficult or impossible and are subject to legal restrictions. The map includes areas with hydric soils (soils that are saturated with water). Hydric soils may limit development and are also indicate areas that may have unmapped wetlands.

The "Physical Constraints" map overlays data layers to reveal parts of the Merrimack River District that are more or less physically constrained. Areas with more physical constraints (colored areas) overlaid on top of one another or in close proximity are more difficult to develop.

A large portion of the land in the Merrimack River District is physically constrained. A network of streams and wetlands flows from the northern portion of the study area, across the "Golden Triangle" properties, along and under Rt 110/Macy Street, and under Rocky Hill Road, where it enters the backwaters of the Pow Wow River. A large complex of wetlands and hydric soils also stretches from land east of Clark's Road to Salisbury. Another area of wetlands and floodplains is north of the Visitor Center (aka Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station) between Merrill Street and the Merrimack River. Low-lying areas adjacent to the Merrimack River are constrained by its floodplains. Bands of steep slopes run roughly parallel to Evan's Place and Main Street. Steep slopes also wrap around Bailey's Pond and in the area between Summit Avenue and Main Street. In general, these constrains are most impactful when several of them overlap and when they restrict access to developable land. In other words, an isolated steep slope at the back of a lot may not have much impact on development, whereas a steep slope and a wetland that stretches along the front of a lot may constrain development.

Regulatory Constraints

State and local laws further constrain which land is developable. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Wetlands Protection Act and the Amesbury Wetland Protection Ordinance give the Conservation Commission jurisdiction over:

1. any freshwater wetland bordering on any creek, river, stream, pond or lake;
2. any bank, beach, dune, flat, marsh, wet meadow, bog or swamp;
3. any isolated vegetated wetland;
4. any vernal pool;
5. any coastal wetland bordering on any ocean, estuary, creek, river, stream, pond or lake;
6. any 100-foot buffer zone on wetland areas 1-5 listed above;
7. land under any of the wetland areas 1-5 listed above;
8. any land subject to tidal action, storm flowage, flooding by groundwater or surface water;
9. and the 200-foot riverfront area.

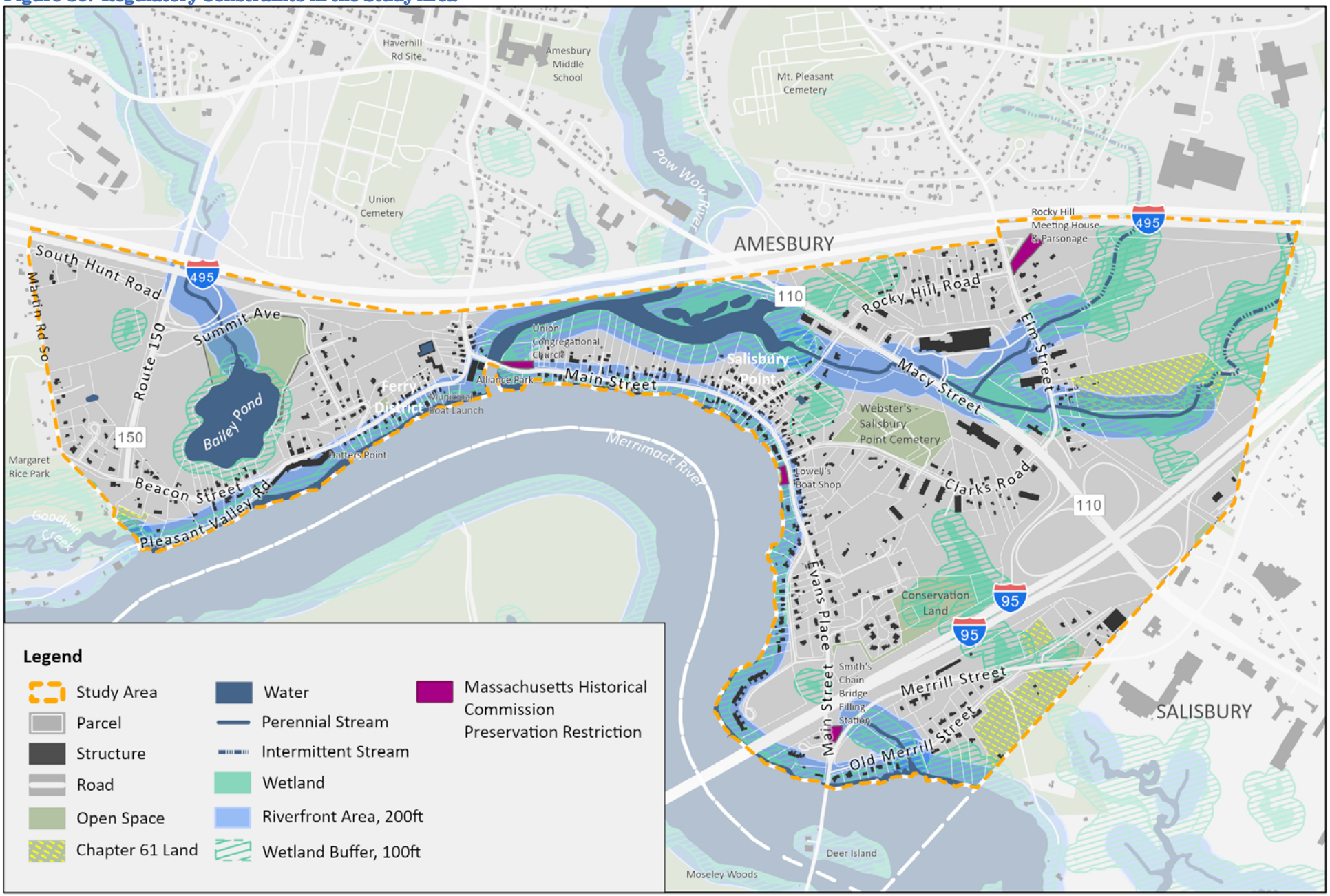
The 200-ft riverfront area includes land adjacent to the Merrimack River, the Powwow River, and "any unnamed perennial stream as defined under 310 CMR 10.58(2), as amended." These areas are subject to the Commonwealth's Rivers Protection Act.

These constraints expand upon the areas shown on the previous Physical Constraints map.

In addition, several structures are limited by Preservation Restrictions that have been approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission: Union Congregational Church, Lowell's Boat Shop, Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station, and Rocky Hill Meeting House and Parsonage. A Preservation Restriction limits demolition and alteration of significant historic features.

The only permanently protected open in the district is the Point Shore Meadows Conservation Land. Five parcels in the study area are subject to Chapter 61A. One is in the Golden Triangle and three are in the vicinity of the intersection of Merrill Street and Old Merrill Street, and one is in the southwest corner of the district, along Pleasant Valley Road. The owners of these properties have enrolled them in a state tax reduction program for land in "current use" for agriculture. When land in the program is sold, the City has a right of first refusal on its purchase. This is a minor constraint on development for these parcels.

Figure 30. Regulatory Constraints in the Study Area



Regulatory Constraints

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Landscape Architecture and Planning

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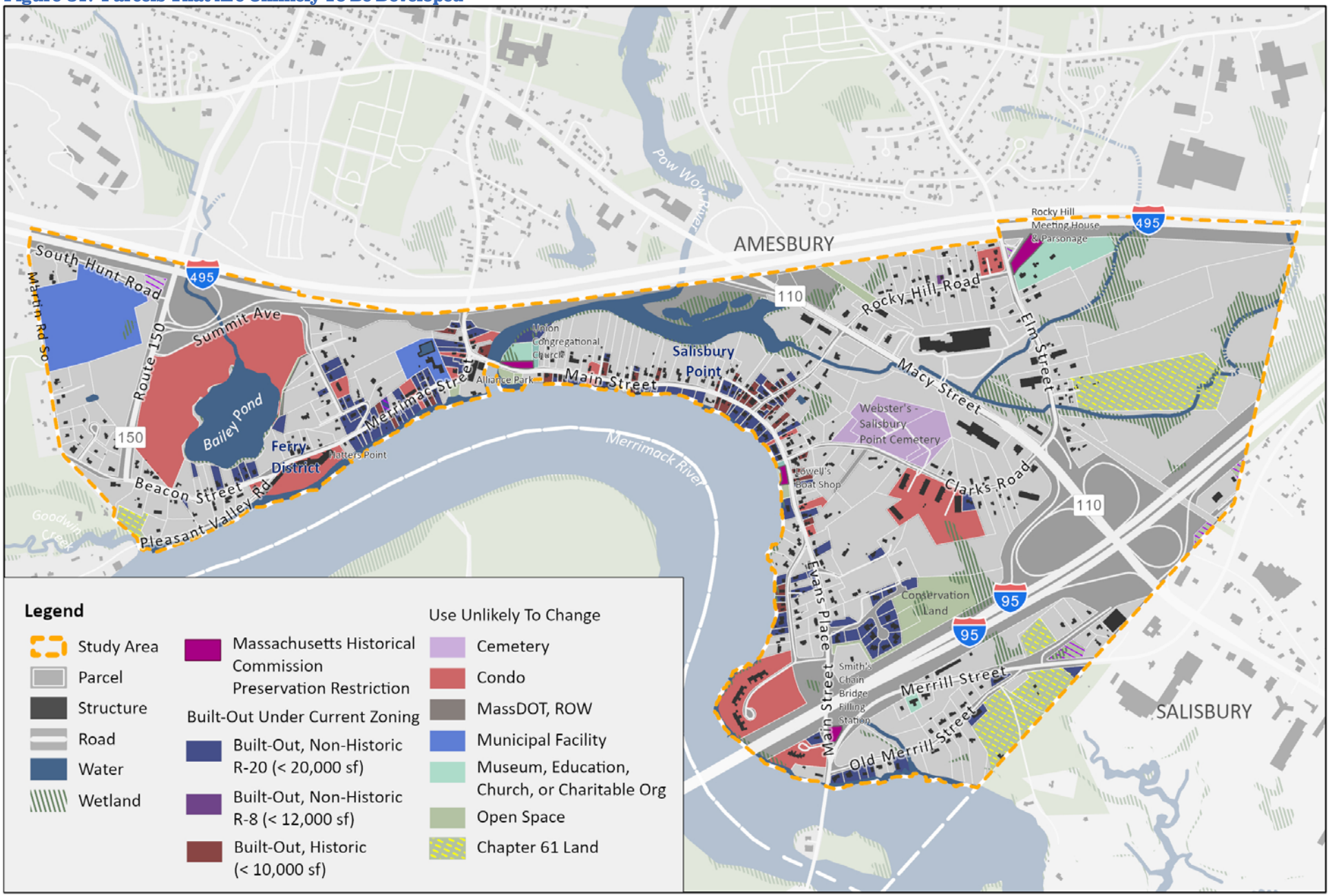
Figure 31. Parcels That Are Unlikely To Be Developed



Parcels Unlikely To Be Developed

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Parcels That Are Unlikely to Be Developed

Many parcels are unlikely to be developed further due to their existing use. These include:

- Parcels that are under condominium ownership. Multiple condominium owners are unlikely to agree upon a development project.
- Municipal facilities like the Amesbury Water Pollution Abatement Facility on Merrimac Street or the former landfill west of Pond View Avenue and South Hunt Road.
- Webster's Salisbury Point Cemetery on Clark's Road
- Parcels owned by institutions like churches, schools, and charitable organizations
- Parcels that are built-out under zoning. This includes many of the parcels along Main Street, Merrimack Street, and Summit Ave.
- Open spaces like Alliance Park, the City boat launch on Merrimac Street, and the conservation land behind the recent Point Shore Meadows cluster development.

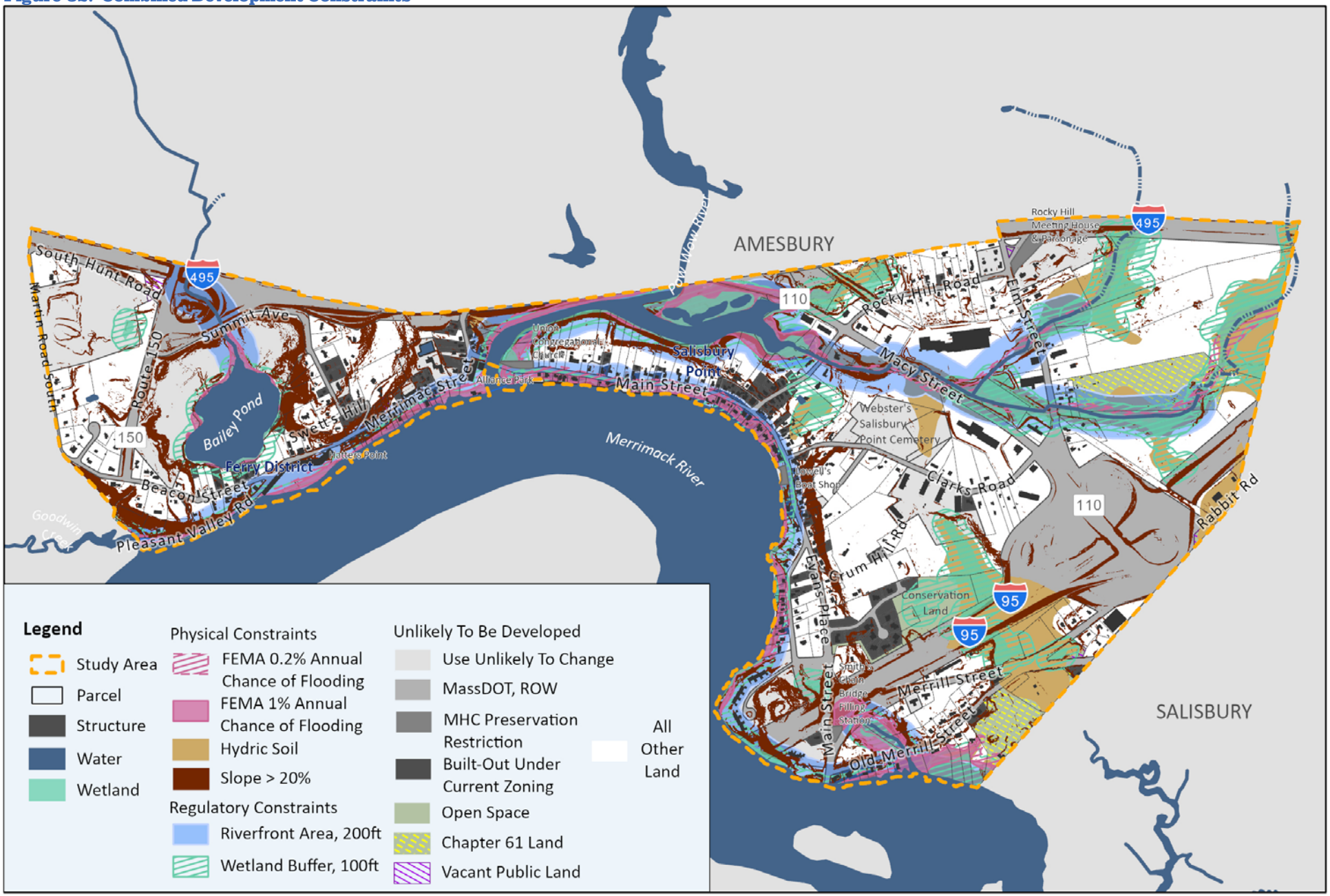
While the map shows properties that are enrolled in Chapter 61. While this is a minor constraint, it does not have a significant impact on the likelihood of a property being developed. In fact, agricultural land often has physical characteristics that make it easy to develop, like being flat and free of trees.

Combined Development Constraints

Overlaying the physical constraints, regulatory constraints, and parcels that are unlikely to be developed reveals the parcels that are most likely to be developed. On the Combined Development Constraints Map, these parcels have a white background. The map reveals several large areas with development potential:

- Land east and west of Pond View Avenue, including the solar field on the former land fill, the Bailey's Pond development, which is under construction, and the vacant Trader Alan's property at 21 Pond View Avenue;
- Land between Clark's Road and the steep slopes parallel to Evans Place;
- The "Golden Triangle" land between Elm Street, I-95, I-495, and Route 110.
- Parcels at the four corners of Clark's Road, Elm Street, and Route 110. These parcels are already developed, but because of their visibility to the many motorists that travel on Route 110, they may be redeveloped if economic conditions are favorable. For example, the currently vacant Friendly's restaurant has high potential for redevelopment.
- There are numerous small parcels throughout the study area that have limited development potential.

Figure 32. Combined Development Constraints



Combined Development Constraints

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Figure 33. Build-Out Status Map

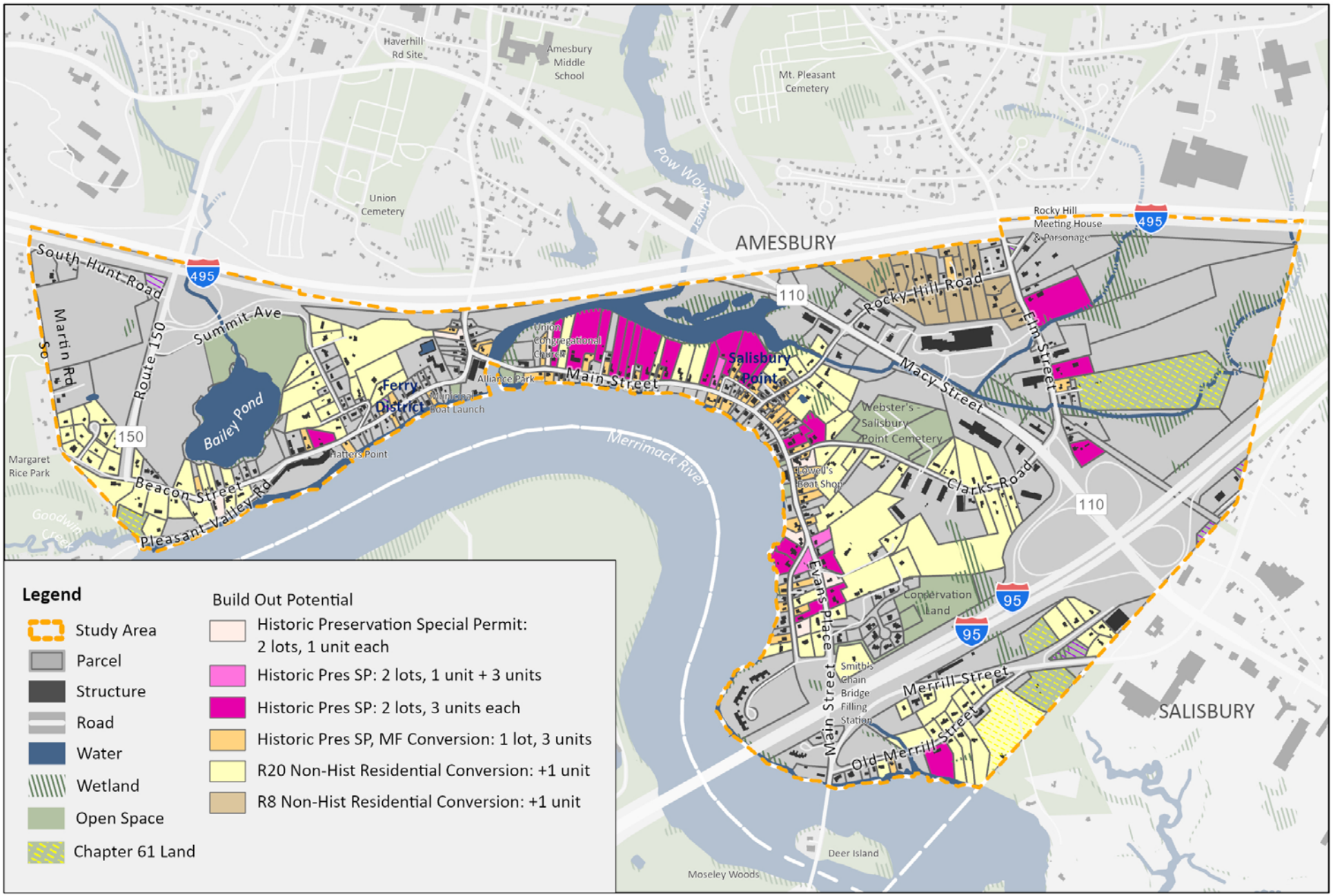
Build-Out Status

The Build-Out Status Map shows current land uses within the study area. Large areas of vacant developable land are highlighted in gray. These areas were the focus areas for scenario planning.

They include:

- 21 Pond View Ave (Trader Alan's)
- Large parcels between Clark's Road and Evan's Place
- The Golden Triangle

Figure 34. Build-Out Potential of Small Parcels



Build Out Potential

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6/22/22

Build-Out Potential of Small Parcels

Many of the smaller parcels in the study area are too small to be further developed through conventional subdivision. However, the Zoning Ordinance establishes two special permits that enable units to be added to existing parcels.

The Historic Preservation Special Permit is intended to incentivize the preservation and continued and expanded use of historic structures and sites, so that they are not demolished and replaced with new structures. The special permit allows the Planning Board to modify dimensional standards like lot size, frontage, and setbacks. The Planning Board can also allow multi-family use, more than one principal use on a lot, and subdivision with a lot size that is smaller than that normally required by the zoning. The special permit provisions establish a variety of limitations on the development including that, "No more than one (1) new principal building or structure may be proposed on a lot(s) and it shall not exceed one half (1/2) of the gross floor area of the existing principal historic building or structure on the lot(s)." The special permit applies to "Any building structure or element that is 75 years or more old and meets the eligibility criteria" laid out in the section of the zoning ordinance. The eligibility requirements include: being listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Places, being identified in one of a number of designated Town and State historic inventories or plans. Based on these criteria, many parcels in the study area could apply for a Historic Preservation Special Permit, especially parcels along Main Street.

The "Residential Conversions" special permit enables additional residential units to be added to parcels in the R-8 and R-20 zoning districts. These districts cover about half of the study area. The special permit applies to lots with at least 12,000 square feet of area and 80 feet of frontage in R-8 or 20,000 square feet and 125 feet of frontage in R-20. It stipulates that a one-family dwelling can be converted to a two-family dwelling and a two-family dwelling can be converted to a three-family dwelling.

Table 11. Maximum Build-Out Potential of Parcels That Are Too Small for Conventional Subdivision

	Total Qualifying Parcels	Total Additional Units	Additional Units on Single Family property	Additional Units on Two-Family property	Additional Units on all other property
Historic Preservation Special Permit	89	242	210	13	19
Residential Conversions	115	115	112	3	NA

Land Use-Scenarios for Focus Areas

Three scenarios were developed for the focus areas:

- Build-Out Under Zoning
- Market-Driven Build-Out
- Mixed-Use Build-Out

The Build-Out Under Zoning shows one potential outcome if the focus areas were built with uses and dimensions allowed by-right in Amesbury's zoning. The Market-Driven Approach shows the kind of development that has been prevalent in similar places to Amesbury in recent years. For portions of the Golden Triangle and the Clark's Road area this scenario reflects recent development proposals, but does not replicate them exactly. The Mixed-Use Approach shows village-style development of the focus areas—development that intentionally mixes land uses, and shapes development to create walkable places with a unique sense of place and high quality open spaces and conserved land.

All three development scenarios avoid land within 50' of known wetlands. Amesbury's wetland bylaw establishes a 100' buffer, but a previous study, the 2007 "Golden Triangle and Route 110 Economic Development Study," stated the Conservation Agent at that time indicated a 25' wetland buffer might be acceptable. Using a fifty foot buffer gives a sense of the middle range of development potential for the focus areas. If a 100' buffer is required there would be less development potential. If a 25' is allowed, there would be more.

The land-use scenarios show three possible outcomes for the district. In reality the possible outcomes are infinite. The actual build out of the areas is unlikely to match any of these scenarios. Nonetheless, the scenarios explore key opportunities and constraints that are likely to arise if the focus areas experience development.

Site specific analysis of market demand, potential rental or sales income, and development costs was beyond the scope of this project. As such, the development scenarios may or may not be economically viable.

So why, create scenarios if they come with so many caveats? Because the scenarios enable members of the public and decision-makers to evaluate the pros and cons of alternative futures for the Merrimack River District. They can inform steps the City can take to steer future development toward the City's goals.

Scenario 1: Build-Out Under Zoning

Scenario 1 shows a potential build-out of focus area parcels under the existing zoning. This is one potential outcome among many. It is was developed to illustrate what is allowed by the current zoning and evaluate the potential benefits of development under it.

The Golden Triangle

The Golden Triangle is located in the Office Park zoning district. Few uses are allowed by right in this district. Of the ones that are, office and light manufacturing, appear to be the most viable uses of these properties. That said, the future demand for office space is uncertain based on dramatic shifts to work-from-home and hybrid-work in the wake of the pandemic.

Figure 35. Scenario 1: Build-Out Under Zoning

The Golden Triangle is also covered by the Commercial Fashion Center Overlay District. This overlay, which has a minimum 50 acre lot size, enables development of a village-style fashion center with a focus on high end products. Based on trends in clothing retail, it seems unlikely that a new commercial Fashion Center will be established at the Golden Triangle.

The Golden Triangle is also covered by a Priority Development Overlay District. This Overlay is intended to streamlines permit review processes.

After subtracting 50' wetland buffers and riverfront areas and areas that are difficult to access because of those regulated areas, three large developable areas remain within the Golden Triangle, totaling about 27 acres. All three are shown with office or light manufacturing use. The southern area is accessed from the south end of Elm Street near Route 110. The middle and north developable areas are accessed by a new road that meets Elm Street in the vicinity of the Hampton Inn.

Elm Street/Route 110/Clark's Road Intersection

The northeast corner of the intersection is discussed in the Golden Triangle section above. The other corners of the intersection are currently occupied by a gas station, Burger King, and a vacant Friendly's restaurant in front of a Fairfield Inn hotel. These three corners are not expected to undergo substantial land use changes under the existing zoning.

20-30 Clark's Road

Several parcels on the north side of Clark's Road (#20-30) are large enough that they could be subdivided, resulting in three new lots. None of these property owners has expressed interest in subdivision and because this project would require coordination between several property owners, it is unlikely to occur.

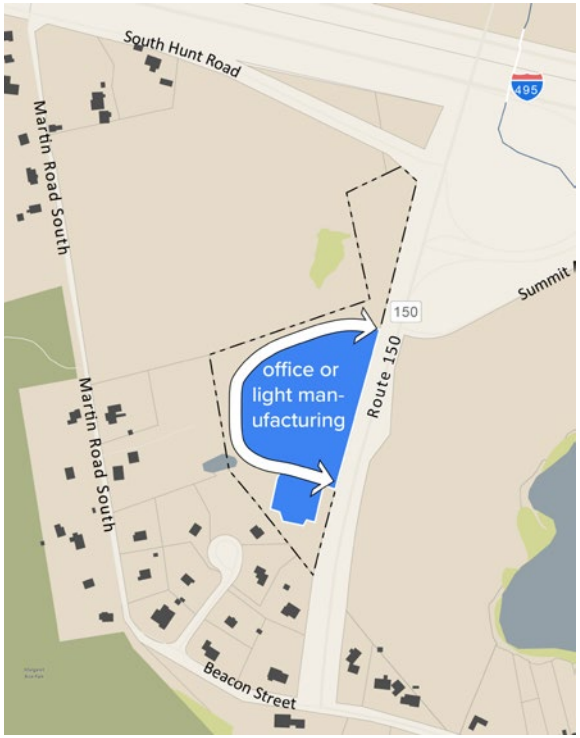
29 Clark's Road

An approved comprehensive permit (40B) permit for 29 Clark's Road allows 56 units on the parcel. This is the most likely development scenario under the existing zoning. Minco Development purchased the property in 2020. They have expressed interest an alternative design for the property that requires a zoning change. It is discussed in the Market-Rate Scenario.

Parcels Between Clark's Rd & Main Street

Several parcels between Clark's Road and Main Street are large enough to subdivide under existing zoning. These include 4 Point Shore Drive, 4 Crum Hill Road, 15 Clark's Road, and 5.5 Clark's Road. Several of these parcels could be subdivided independently. Alternatively, a subdivision road could be created that connects Main Street to Clark's Road, potentially connecting to Point Shore Drive or Crum Hill Road. The latter approach has the potential for creating more lots, but would require cooperation between several land owners. Under existing zoning, subdivision of these parcels could result in about twelve new lots. None of these property owners has expressed interest in subdivision and this change is unlikely.

Figure 36. Scenario 2: Market-Driven Build-Out, 21 Pond View Ave.



Trader Alan's (21 Pond View Avenue)

This town-owned property is in the Office Park district. It is currently undergoing the City's disposition process, meaning the City intends to solicit bids from potential buyers. Based on current zoning, the most likely future land use on this parcel is office or light manufacturing.

Scenario 2: Market-Driven Build-Out

Scenario 2 shows a potential build-out of focus area parcels based on conceptual plans by potential developers for parcels in the study area and precedents of recent projects in places that are similar to Amesbury. The scenario is one potential outcome among many. It was developed to illustrate what "the market wants," so the City can evaluate market-driven development in comparison to build-out under the current zoning, and a more village style mixed-use development scenario.

Based on the current real estate market and discussions with potential project proponents there appears to be a stronger market for residential development than for office, light manufacturing or fashion retail in the Merrimack River District. Scenario 2 reflects this.

The Golden Triangle

Based on its physical constraints, this scenario for the Golden Triangle follows the same basic pattern as Scenario 1. Avoiding wetlands and stream corridors leaves three large developable areas. Under a market-driven scenario, these developable areas would likely be built out into "pods" of similar building types. The southern end of the Golden Triangle shows mixed-use development. Under a market-driven scenario, this would likely be horizontal mixed-use with commercial uses closer to the street and residential uses further from Elm Street. The middle development area shows commercial space fronting on Elm Street with public and private open spaces and a multi-family pod further into the site. The northern devel-

Figure 37. Scenario 2: Market-Driven Build-Out

opment area shows another park for the future residents and pods of detached single family structures and townhouses. The remaining landscape open space follows wetland buffers and river resource areas and areas of the site that are inaccessible.

Elm Street/Route 110/Clark's Road Intersection

The northeast corner of the intersection is discussed in the Golden Triangle section above. In this scenario the gas station remains, while mixed use buildings are added at the southeast and southwest corners of the intersection replacing the vacant Friendly's and the Burger King. These buildings would likely be similar to the recent building at 242 Main Street (adjacent to CVS at the intersection of Macy Street and Main Street). Each would have two-and-a-half to three stories with ground floor commercial space and residential above.

20-30 Clark's Road

Under a market-driven scenario, it is unlikely that 20-30 Clark's Road would be subdivided.

29 Clark's Road

The scenario shows 2-3 family buildings along the street frontage with multi-family buildings behind. A single road ending in a cul-de-sac runs perpendicular to Clark's Road. This parcel is bisected by a wetland. The approved 40B project for the parcel including a crossing of the wetland with development on both sides of it. In this scenario, there is no wetland crossing and the portion of the site on its far side, behind the Birchwood Pointe Condominiums is undeveloped. There could be trails through this portion of the site, if a wetlands permit can be obtained. These trails may be able to be connected to the new open space that was conserved as part of the Point Shore Meadows project. This would establish a pedestrian connection between Clark's Road and Evans Place.

Parcels Between Clark's Rd & Main Street

Under a market-driven scenario, these parcels are unlikely to be subdivided.

Trader Alan's (21 Pond View Avenue)

As in the Scenario 1, office or light industrial use is shown in this scenario, with the same footprint. Residential use of the site also seems viable under a market driven scenario.

Scenario 3: Mixed-Use

Scenario 3 shows a potential build-out of focus area parcels based on community priorities identified through public input during this project. Public input indicated a desire for the Clark's Road/Elm Street/Route 110 intersection to be a gateway for Amesbury that reflected the sense of place of the City and the Merrimack River District. Public input showed strong support for walkable development with high quality streetscapes and pedestrian-scale buildings that frame intersections and streets. Public input also showed interest in residential development at village densities with support for mixed-use, cottage clusters, and mixing various kinds of buildings in close proximity to each other. Compared to the Market-Driven Scenario, this scenario shows more mixed-use development, more intermixing of building types. A similar amount of housing and commercial space is shown, but it is clustered on a smaller amount of land so more land can be conserved

Like the other scenarios, the Mixed-Use Scenario shows one potential outcome among many. It is not a development proposal for an actual project. It was developed to enable the City to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of this development approach.

The Golden Triangle

Like the first two scenarios, the mixed-use scenario avoids development on wetlands and stream corridors leaving three large developable areas.

The southern end of the Golden Triangle shows more development than in the other two scenarios. Mixed-use development fronts on Elm Street with multi-family buildings behind. There would likely be vertical mixed use in this area with commercial uses below and residential uses above. Based on the participatory modeling exercise from the first public workshop, these buildings could be two-and-a-half to three story buildings. The massing of the buildings would reflect historic precedents in the Merrimack River District, with smaller masses added together to compose larger buildings, similar to how historic residential structures grew over time.

The middle development area shows various building types in close proximity with mixed-use adjacent to Elm Street and fronting a park in the middle of this area. 1-family, 2-family, and multi-family buildings are also found in this area.

The northern development are continues the pattern of more mixing of building types than the market-driven scenario Again a mixed-use area fronts a park with 1-family, 2-family, townhouses, and multi-family nearby. The northeast corner of the site has a large area of open space that would be conserved.

Elm Street/Route 110/Clark's Road Intersection

The northeast corner of the intersection is discussed in the Golden Triangle section above. In this scenario, all sides of the intersection would be framed by two-and-a-half to three-story buildings, creating a recognizable gateway to Amesbury. The gas station is replaced with mixed-use development. The northwest corner of the intersection has mixed-use development that replaces both the Burger King and a portion Amesbury Chevrolet property along Clark's Road that is currently used for car storage. Mixed-

Figure 38. Scenario 3: Mixed-Use Build-Out

Figure 39. Scenario 3: Mixed-Use Build-Out, 21 Pond View Ave.

Figure 40. Scenario 3: Mixed-Use Build-Out, 21 Pond View Ave. With Addition of Martin Road South Parcel

use buildings replace the former Friendly's and part of the parking lot for the Fairfield Inn.

20-30 Clark's Road

Under a mixed-use scenario, 20-30 Clark's Road would be not be subdivided.

29 Clark's Road

Like the Market-Driven Scenario, the Mixed-Use Scenario shows 2-3 family buildings along the street frontage with multi-family buildings behind. The wetland and the backlands behind the Birchwood Pointe Condominiums remain undeveloped. If a wetlands permit can be obtained, trails may be able cross the wetland and proceed through the backlands to the Point Shore Meadows open space, establishing a pedestrian connection between Clark's Road and Evans Place.

Parcels Between Clark's Rd & Main Street

Under a mixed-use scenario, these parcels are unlikely to be subdivided.

Trader Alan's (21 Pond View Avenue)

In this Scenario, 21 Pond View Avenue is developed with a mix of uses in close proximity. The north portion of the site would remain open space, while Pond View Avenue

would be fronted by mixed-use (ideally with a ground floor cafe), office, and multi-family buildings. A small park in the middle of the property would be publicly accessible. Perhaps it could be a dog park, as desired by many workshop participants. Shared parking for the office and mixed use buildings would be located adjacent to the solar field, while the multi-family buildings would have tuck-under parking accessed off a rear alley.

Participants in the first public forum expressed interest in expanding this development site to include the adjacent Honk's Martin Road Salvage. Several participants envisioned small cottage-style single-family houses there. These could be connected to the road through the 21 Pond View Avenue property. While the City has no intention of acquiring this property, a private developer could, if its owner wanted to sell it. Any buyer would evaluate contamination and clean up costs to determine whether redevelopment is viable. One advantage of adding these properties is that it could establish a straightforward pedestrian connection between Pond View Ave and Martin Road South making it easier for residents of Bailey's Pond to access the Margaret Rice Park off Martin Road South.

Scenario Evaluation

The three scenarios were evaluated using the Community Benefits Model to assess the benefits that each scenario would bring to the neighborhood and the City as a whole. (The results are on the following pages). The scenarios were evaluated by staff from Dodson & Flinker and Barrett Planning Group. Staff completed evaluations separately and then discussed their results. Where there was disagreement about the rating for a particular item, the consultants negotiated a score. The Community Benefits Tool is subjective; the numerical score is instructive, but the real value of the tool is in giving an overall sense of the magnitude of benefits from a land-use change proposal, where its benefits are strongest and weakest, and in the discussions it can facilitate amongst decision makers and project proponents.

It is worth reiterating that the Community Benefits Tool evaluates only benefits. It does not evaluate negative impacts from land-use change. This is intentional. Current permitting processes, such as Amesbury's zoning ordinance, have robust requirements for evaluating and mitigating negative impacts from development. Likewise community input during public meetings and hearings related to land use planning projects often focus on potential negative impacts. While negative impacts are well covered, evaluating the benefits of land use change is generally not as well embedded in planning and permitting processes. The Community Benefits Tool is designed to remedy that. This will enable Amesbury to better evaluate the pros and cons of land-use change, to answer: how can be best steer change so that its benefits outweighs negative impacts.

Comparison of Scenarios

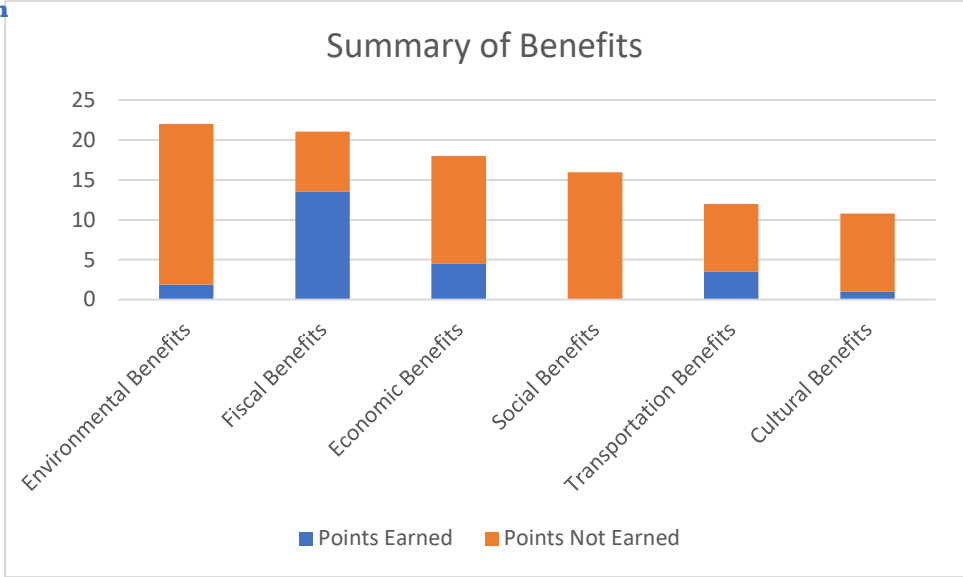
Overall the Mixed-Use Scenario scored highest in total and for many criteria, followed by the Market-Rate Scenario, and the Build-Out Under Zoning. This is not surprising since the Mixed-Use Scenario was designed based on public input gathered throughout the planning process.

That the Build-Out Under Zoning scored so low is significant. It indicates that Amesbury's zoning, especially the Office Park zoning in the study area, has room for improvement to better reflect the design and use preferences of the neighborhood and Amesbury as a whole. Potential opportunities include:

- allowing residential development and a greater diversity of commercial uses,
- improving open space provisions to ensure that open spaces are both the highest value environmentally and also designed for use and public access, where appropriate
- ensuring that development makes significant improvements to streets and sidewalks, when warranted, and that these result in comfortable environments for walkers and bikers.
- ensuring that building and site designs reflect local precedents and create a unique sense of place.
- designing complete neighborhoods with a mix of uses and building types instead of "pods" of single uses or building types.

Scenario 1: Build-Out Under Zoning

Figure 41. Graph of Summary of Benefits, Scenario 1



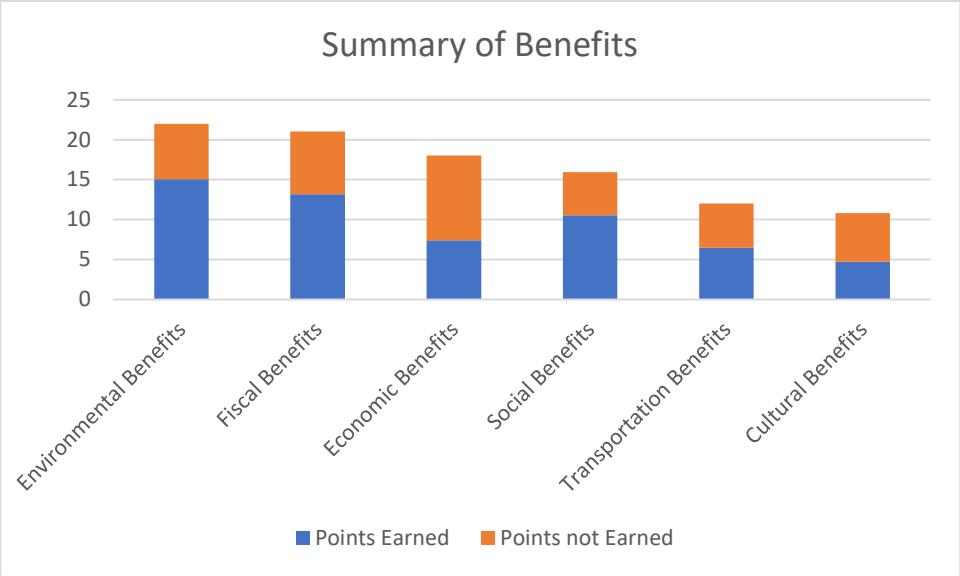
The Build-Out Under Zoning Scenario scored relatively poorly with a total of 24 points out of 100 overall. Its strongest category was Fiscal Benefits because Office or Light Manufacturing Uses are expected to have net positive fiscal benefits for the town and to generate jobs. It was weakest in Social Benefits where it didn't receive any points, and Cultural Benefits where it received just 1 out of 11 points.

Table 12. Scoring of Scenario 1

	Potential Points	Points Earned
Environmental Benefits	22	2
Fiscal Benefits	21	14
Economic Benefits	18	5
Social Benefits	16	0
Transportation Benefits	12	4
Cultural Benefits	11	1
Total (Rounded)	100	24

Scenario 2: Market-Driven Build-Out

Figure 42. Graph of Summary of Benefits, Scenario 2



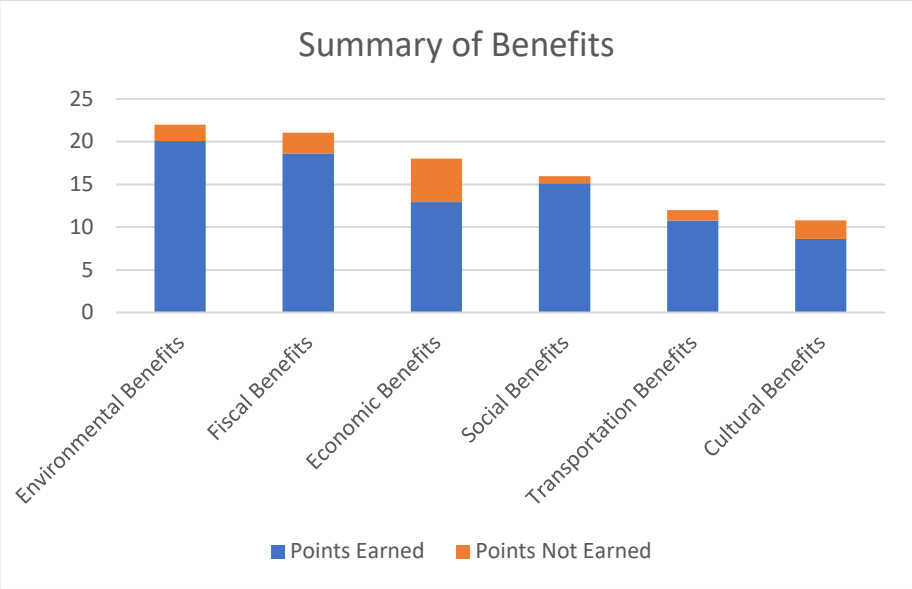
The Market-Driven Build-Out Scenario scored moderately well with a total of 57 points out of 100 overall. Its strongest category was Environmental Benefits because it is expected that this scenario would result in open spaces that are conserved and publicly accessible. Fiscal Benefits are also strong because the scenario would result in some new commercial development and multi-family residential housing, which is generally fiscally positive. The high score for social benefits results from opportunities for gathering spaces and affordable housing. Transportation benefits come from trail connections, and improvements to streets and sidewalks.

Table 13. Scoring of Scenario 1

	Potential Points	Points Earned
Environmental Benefits	22	15
Fiscal Benefits	21	13
Economic Benefits	18	7
Social Benefits	16	11
Transportation Benefits	12	7
Cultural Benefits	11	5
Total (Rounded)	100	57

Scenario 2: Mixed-Use Build-Out

Figure 43. Graph of Summary of Benefits, Scenario 3



The Mixed-Use Scenario scored quite well with a total of 86 points out of 100 overall. Its strongest category was Environmental Benefits because it is expected that this scenario would result in significant open spaces that are conserved and publicly accessible and well designed. Fiscal Benefits are also strong because the scenario would result in many new commercial spaces of a variety of sizes and locations, opening opportunities for a variety of businesses. It also includes multi-family residential housing, which is generally fiscally positive. The high score for social benefits results from opportunities for gathering spaces and a diverse housing mix that integrates units of different types, including affordable housing. Transportation benefits come from trail connections, and improvements to streets and sidewalks. This score indicates that this scenario would provide significant benefits to Amesbury. Of course, the scenario also would have negative impacts, which would need to be mitigated in planning and permitting review.

Table 14. Scoring of Scenario 1

	Potential Points	Points Earned
Environmental Benefits	22	20
Fiscal Benefits	21	19
Economic Benefits	18	13
Social Benefits	16	15
Transportation Benefits	12	11
Cultural Benefits	11	9
Total (Rounded)	**100**	**86**

Illustrative Plan for Mixed-Use Scenario

After evaluating the three scenarios, and discussing them with the Working Group, it was clear that the mixed-use scenario provides the most community benefits. An illustrative plan of the Mixed-Use Scenario was developed to illustrate key design ideas. The illustrative plan shows the maximum build-out of the site. As with all of the scenarios, it would be implemented by separate property owners in multiple phases over time.

The illustrative plan is designed so that mixed-use development is incorporated throughout the plan and each sub-area of the plan would provide community benefits. If one or more portions of the plan proves infeasible, the portions that are built would still contribute to creation of an attractive, walkable gateway. For example, if development of the Golden Triangle is limited by road capacity or market demand, building just its east or west sub-areas would provide a new complete mixed neighborhood.

Public Input on Scenario Evaluation

The third Public Forum provided an opportunity for community members to comment on the Scenario Evaluation, ask clarifying questions, and make additional recommendations. Overall, participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to imagine future possibilities for the district to enable a more proactive process. One participant commented that "the mixed-use scenarios would help ensure we don't end up with development that is entirely incongruous with the distinct neighborhoods of our community including the Salisbury Point (Point Shore) and Ferry District as large strip malls." Another participant commented that mixed-use development that scores high on the Community Benefits Model will also be market-driven, "because it works" and contributes to placemaking for the district. Traffic remained a concern for many participants, as it was throughout the project. One participant who was concerned about traffic congestion expressed appreciation for the use of scenarios to "embrace growth, but direct it" toward practical solutions to vexing problems. Preservation of open space and natural resources was also a priority for participants.

Figure 44. Illustrative Plan for Mixed-Use Build-Out, I-95 Gateway Focus Area

Figure 45. Illustrative Plan for Mixed-Use Build-Out, I-95 Gateway Focus Area, Clark's Road/Elm Street/Route 110 Enlargement

1 Preserved wetlands and backlands. Potential trail connection to Point Shore Meadows

2 New housing. Four 24-unit apartment buildings and two four unit houses

3 New mixed-use buildings wrap both corners at the intersection of Clark's Road and Route 110 providing space for restaurants, retail, and offices, with upper story apartments. The smaller free standing buildings on the north side of the intersection are 2 and 2½ stories, while the large buildings are composed of smaller masses that are 1, 2, 2½, and 3 stories. On the north side of the intersection, two freestanding buildings New wide sidewalks are added with a generous tree belt that buffers sidewalks from traffic on Route 110. Shared parking is located behind the buildings, hidden from view from the street.

4 Two new buildings at the north east corner of Elm Street and Route 110 hold the corner and screen the gas station pumps from view.

5 The existing green space owned by MassDOT is preserved and improved into a functional, attractive park

6 Two new mixed-use buildings are added off of the Elm Street extension that runs parallel to Route 110. Behind them sit three 24-unit apartment buildings with a common green.

7 The eastern portion of this lot is preserved.

Together the buildings add about 70,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space, and a total of about 100,000 square feet of upper story space, some of which could be a mix of residential and commercial space.

Figure 46. Illustrative Plan for Mixed-Use Build-Out, I-95 Gateway Focus Area, Golden Triangle Enlargement

The Mixed-use Build Out for the Golden Triangle shows a new complete neighborhood with three mixed use nodes, two greens, a well developed street network with connected sidewalks throughout. The visual impact of off-street parking is minimized. Open space with trails wraps around the new neighborhood..

1 Four new 2-story mixed-use buildings line Elm Street and the new streets into the Golden Triangle. They provide about 20,500 square feet for ground floor commercial uses with about 21 apartments above

2 New housing. 10 new stacked-flat buildings create a neighborhood with 128 apartments.

3 A second mixed-use node with 3 new buildings creates about 22,500 square feet of commercial space and 30 upper-story apartments across from a village common.

4 A new village common provides public open space for all City residents..

5 Two apartment buildings front on the common, while a third looks over preserved land to the south. Five stacked flat buildings wrap the loop road. Together they create 144 places for people to live.

6 A third mixed-use center has three buildings on the north, east, and south sides of a green. This adds 17,000 square feet of commercial space with 34 apartments on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

7 A townhouse neighborhood wraps around the third mixed-use center and adds 96 units.

8 The remainder of the Golden Triangle is permanently protected open space including a large field. A trail network could wind through this protected open space.

Design Principles for Merrimack River District Gateways

This project showed a strong desire for gateways that build from Amesbury's historic character and unique sense of place. The following design principles will help development in the Merrimack River District gateways achieve those aims.

Organize development around the "public realm" of streets, parks and greenways.

- Create networks of interconnect streets to make circulation more efficient, reduce the concentration of traffic, and create more frontage for mixed-use development

The illustrative plan for the Mixed-Use scenario shows a connected street network

- Locate parks in the centers of activity areas (e.g. the middle of a commercial area). Line the edges of greens and squares with buildings.

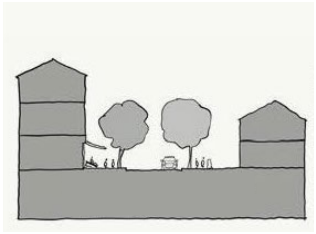
Buildings with generous porches and simple farmhouse-like massing wrap around a green at the Ridgeline View Townhouses, Middlebury, VT (Union Studio)

- Establish interconnected trail networks that link developed areas to natural areas and natural areas to each other
- Line sidewalks with buildings and trees.

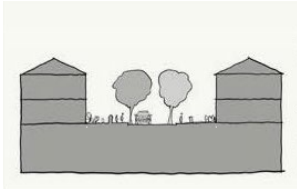
Shaping the space of a sidewalk by lining up buildings on one side and trees on the other is a time-tested techniques for successful design of a village center (Dodson & Flinker)

The design principle also applies in village residential areas. Here front setbacks are about 10 feet—a distance that provides privacy for residents while still allowing buildings to shape the sidewalk space (Dodson & Flinker)

- Ensure that the ratio of the height of buildings to the width of streets creates a sense of enclosure that is "village-scaled." Generally, enclosure should be between 1:1 and 1:3 (height:width), with wider streets and taller buildings in high activity areas and narrower streets and shorter buildings in quieter areas.



Primary Street
Enclosure Ratio: 1:3



Local Street
Enclosure Ratio: 1:2.5

(Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, U.K.)

- Keep the scale of buildings relatively modest along primary street frontages (2 1/2 to 3 stories and less than 60-75' long). Locate larger apartment buildings and larger commercial buildings in the interior of lots away from primary streets.

The examples at left both use creative roof design to maximize floor area in the upper story of a 2 1/2 story building. The tall peaked roofs in the top image reduce the apparent scale of the mixed-use buildings. The dormers of the lower image give it a village feel. Both examples define the edges of the streets they front on. (Union Studio, Dodson &Flinker)

Use a compact, efficient form that conserves resources.

- Build multi-story, mixed-use 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.

At Mashpee Commons new buildings line streets creating the sense of a village in an area that was formerly a shopping mall (Dodson & Flinker)

- While allowing greater density in developed areas, increase the proportion of open space that must remain undeveloped and require or incentivize its conservation.
- 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.

A compact development project in West Acton made the village center into a recognizable place. It leveraged Complete Streets funding and resulted in high quality buildings, sidewalks, and outdoor spaces (West Acton Villageworks).

Design buildings that reflect Amesbury's built heritage

- Ensure that buildings have closely spaced, highly visible entrances along streets. Storefronts should have a large clear windows that allow visibility into 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.

Traditional storefront design and attention to detailing and color can make even a very simple building appealing (Dodson & Flinker)

- Use relatively simple building forms that reflect historic precedents in Amesbury, like 19th century storefront buildings, 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 plane and/or direction, and dormers.
- Use locally appropriate materials like wood and brick, or alternative materials with equivalent visual texture, and proven durability.

This mixed-use building in Hingham is composed of a number of simple masses that make its overall bulk look smaller (Compass)

A recent mixed-use building in Manchester-by-the-Sea looks like a house that has grown over time. The curb bumpout allows for outdoor seating and improves crosswalk safety (Dodson & Flinker)

Promote walking and biking; car drivers are welcome, but should not dominate the environment.

- 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.

Left: Ample plantings between the street and the active part of the sidewalk buffers pedestrians from motor vehicles (Copley-Wolff Design Group). Right: Planters, street trees, and a pocket park make an appealing environment for pedestrians at Linden Square in Wellesley (Source unknown)

- Ensure that street crossings are safe for pedestrians, through the use of techniques like curb bumpouts, at grade crosswalks, rapid flash beacons, and/or High Intensity Activated CrossWalK (HAWK) beacon signal.

An at-grade crosswalk in Oak Bluffs, MA (Dodson & Flinker)

- Create a network of comfortable routes for bicyclists of all ages and abilities. Use a variety of bicycle facilities customized to the context--shared-use paths, separated bicycle lanes, shared slow streets, etc.

Two types of bicycle facilities. Left: separated bike lane, Right: shared-use path (Arlington County, Matthew Lupoli)

- Minimize the pedestrian safety, visual, and environmental impacts of parking lots (e.g. heat islands and stormwater runoff) by minimizing the number of curb cuts, providing a larger number of interconnected smaller parking lots instead of a few large ones, hiding parking behind buildings, providing public and shared parking to eliminate the need for redundant parking spaces that often sit empty, and minimizing or eliminating minimum parking requirements.

Provide diverse housing choices for people at every stage of life.

- Include a wide variety of building types, including apartments over commercial spaces, large and small apartment buildings, triplexes, duplexes, townhouses, cottage neighborhoods, live/work buildings, etc.

Housing design precedents that were supported by public input for this project (clockwise from upper left): cottage housing, duplexes, apartments over storefronts, apartment buildings (Ross Chapin, Dodson & Flinker, MLS.com, Civico Development)

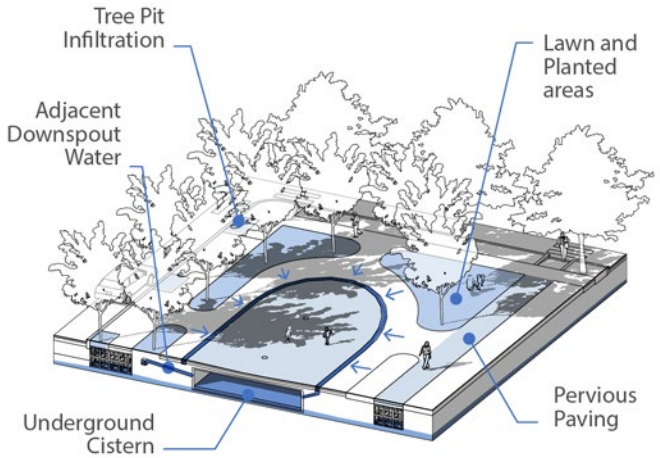
- (Provide a variety of unit sizes and levels of finish quality to increase the available price points in a development project
- Provide affordable housing and intersperse it throughout a development project so that it is indistinguishable from market rate units
- Design for universal accessibility. Design should: be useful and marketable for people with diverse abilities; be flexible; be simple and intuitive; have a high tolerance for error; communicate necessary information regardless of user's sensory abilities; require only low physical effort; be sized for approach and use regardless of a user's body size, posture, or mobility.[1]

Connect to the surrounding landscape

- Avoid development in areas that are ecologically rich or rare.
- Opt for preservation of a few large natural areas, over many small ones.
- Connect green spaces into larger greenways, considering corridors for wildlife for climate-driven species migration, and protection of waterways and core habitats.
- Landscape with 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.

1 https://universaldesign.ie/what-is-universal-design/the-7-principles/

- 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.



Top: LID practices for a plaza, bottom: examples of bioretention areas along streets (Dodson & Flinker, Chris Hamby, City of Portland)

Provide publicly accessible open spaces and recreational opportunities.

- 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.

The illustrative plan for the Mixed-Use scenarios shows a variety of types and sizes of open spaces (outlined in orange above) interspersed with housing and mixed-use development

- Design sites to communicates which open spaces are public and which are private. 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.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS & NEXT STEPS

Public input from the Working Group and public forums, combined with analysis of existing conditions, and the evaluation of potential land use scenarios revealed a menu of options for implementing the goals for the Merrimack River District and land use planning processes across Amesbury. While these ideas were discussed during the planning process for the project, most require further evaluation and development before they can be implemented. This is in keeping with consistent theme of this project: that planning is a long-term dynamic process that requires consistent engagement and adjusting strategies to reflect changing conditions on the ground. Options for addressing traffic and multimodal transportation are shared here first, followed by options for land use, open space and trails, placemaking, and the overall planning process. Finally, the report concludes with ongoing efforts and next steps for district planning.

Transportation Implementation Options

Based on review of past reports and recommendations, roadway characteristics, and public feedback, the project team developed preliminary options for short-term and long-term strategies for the area. This list of options is a preliminary list of transportation measures that can be considered to improve transportation safety, operations, and quality of life for residents in the study.

Short-Term Options

The project team suggested short-term safety, circulation and speed reduction improvements for the project area that are low cost and able to be done quickly. These options include:

Safety

- Collect more recent data for the project area during the summer. Most recent traffic data collected is at least two and one-half years old (pre-COVID). Collecting new data (summer) would be useful to record current conditions and can be used as a base for any before-and-after monitoring studies.
- Speed Feedback Radar Signs
- Movable In Street Yield to Pedestrians Sign
- Pedestrian flags and cannisters at crosswalks
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon or Hybrid Beacon at crosswalk on Rt. 110 east of Rocky Hill Road
- Install No-Right-Turn-on-Red sign on Rt.110 eastbound/Clark's Road (need MassDOT approval)
- Evaluate All-Way Stop at Main Street/Merrimac Street
  - Would improve pedestrian crossing
- Consider 20 MPH Safety Zone at Alliance Park (need MassDOT approval)

Circulation

- Conduct Pilot Study for changing Main Street to reduce westbound traffic onto Main Street (need MassDOT approval)
  - Option A – Install No Left Turn sign from Merrill Street northbound onto Main Street
    - MassDOT jurisdiction, requires approval
    - May create U-turns on Merrill Street
    - Continue to allow southbound right turn (option to prohibit this movement)
    - Two-way traffic on Main Street

An all-way stop and improved pedestrian infrastructure are options for improving the intersection of Merrimac Street and Main Street (Dodson & Flinker)

Highly visible crosswalks, especially raised crosswalks, could help reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian access and safety for many streets in the district (Dodson & Flinker)

  - Reduces traffic volumes, low impact on resident accessibility
  - Can reduce volumes to acceptable levels to consider traffic calming
- Option B – Designate Main Street one-way eastbound
  - Greater impact on resident circulation and access
    - Any bicycle westbound bicycle facilities need to be contra-flow
    - Creates additional space for new/improved sidewalks, bike facilities, parking

- Conduct Pilot Study for changing Rocky Hill Road to one-way northbound and Clark's Road to one-way southbound
  - Do Not Enter signs
  - Will reduce traffic volume on each road, may increase speed on Clark's Road
  - Will increase delay for Clark's Road southbound approach at Main Street under current control, may impact safety. Can consider all-way Stop control which will increase delay for all approaches but may be acceptable.
  - Additional space for new/improved sidewalk and bicycle facilities

Speed Reduction

Conduct Pilot Study for installing temporary vertical traffic calming devices (raised crosswalks, intersections) on Main Street at a few locations such as:

- Evan's Place
- Clark's Road
- Rocky Hill Road
- Midway between Andrews Land and Eastman lane
- Alliance Park
- Swett's Hill
- Main Street is not typically a good candidate for vertical traffic calming devices due to roadway classification (minor arterial) and volumes (9,400 ADT)

The following are other considerations for raised traffic calming devices:

- Devices may also reduce traffic volume
- Travel time impact on emergency vehicles
- Noise impact
- ADA, drainage, and driveway design issues

Long-Term Options

The project team suggested long-term improvements for the project area focused on enhancements for people walking and biking that require a longer planning, design, and construction timeline. These options include:

- Provide new sidewalk on Main Street between Crum Hill and I-95
- Consider shared-use path on north side of Main Street
  - Would provide separated bi-directional facility for pedestrians and bikes
- ADA and streetscape improvements on Main Street
- Rebuild sidewalk on Merrimac Street
- Add a new sidewalk and/or crossing to address pedestrian safety at the Marina at Amesbury Point and the City boat ramp & driveway. Make access/egress

improvements and/or consolidate driveway openings on this stretch of Merrimac Street
- Complete shared-use path on Rt.150 between Summit Avenue and Beacon Street

Land Use Implementation Options

The planning process showed the Merrimack River District is complex. The areas within it have different, and sometimes conflicting, opportunities and challenges.

Overall, there appears to be strong support for keeping land use in the riverfront and historic portions of the Merrimack River District largely as it is. The existing zoning should help do that, while also allowing for adaptive reuse of historic structures and the slow addition of much needed housing units.

The Gateway areas of the District are less loved by the community and more ripe for transformational development. Public input from the survey, the public forum, and working group discussions revealed community priorities for these areas include creating a sense of place that reflects Amesbury's character, improving multi-modal transportation, managing traffic impacts, creating jobs, adding options for goods and services, providing tax revenue, creating housing opportunities, preserving open spaces and making them publicly accessible. Well designed redevelopment of the Gateways can achieve all of these priorities. At the same time, change in these areas will impact other parts of the district. The challenge, and opportunity, is to ensure that the benefits of change in the Gateway areas outweigh the drawbacks. The results of the evaluation of land use scenarios indicate that well-designed mixed-use development in the Gateways will be more beneficial than development under the current zoning for the Gateways. Achieving more mixed-use development would require zoning changes at key areas of the two gateways, including adoption of the proposed East End Smart Growth District.

Other land use implementation options will help advance streetscape improvements and climate resilience.

1. Retain the existing zoning for the riverfront and historic portions of the Merrimack River District. Periodically re-evaluate the zoning to ensure it is resulting in historic preservation, incremental addition of housing units, and preservation of open space in these areas.
2. Revise zoning for 21 Pond View Avenue and Golden Triangle to allow mixed-use development.
   a. Require significant open space protection and key trail connections
   b. Require mixed-use
   c. Require diverse housing types
   d. Establish design guidelines that reflect the ideas shown in the mixed-use scenario and the design principles based on it
3. Move forward with East End Smart Growth 40R district
   a. Create 40R Design Standards focused on:
      - Ensuring creation of walkable mixed-use node at Clark's Rd/Elm St/Rt 110
      - Managing scale transitions to adjacent residential districts
      - Diversity of housing types
      - Open spaces and trails that connect to current

Paving and landscaping at the CVS on Rt 110 and Main Street, just outside the district, provides an example of attractive pedestrian infrastructure (Dodson & Flinker)

A medical facility adjacent to CVS demonstrates characteristics of mixed-use building design that would be appropriate for the Merrimack River District gateways (Dodson & Flinker)

and future open spaces

4. Explore creating a special permit for additional uses allowed at marina properties when redevelopment will result in significant public benefits—like improvements to intersections, sidewalks, and/or public access to the river
5. Enhance zoning requirements for sustainability and climate resilience

Open Space & Trail Implementation Options

Increasing multimodal connections between existing open space areas is a key factor to improving their accessibility and use. Forging other trail connections can support active transportation in the area, and may be especially valuable where trails can provide an alternative to streets that are inhospitable to walking and biking. Public input also emphasizes conserving additional spaces for open space. High priorities include the empty parcels along Main Street (sometimes referred to as Bailey's Green), areas around Bailey Pond, and between Point Shore Meadows Conservation Area and Clark's Road.

1. Improve public access to the Merrimack and Powwow Rivers
2. Connect the Powwow/Amesbury Riverwalk with the Salisbury Ghost Trail
3. Improve multimodal connections between the Merrimack River District and the rest of Amesbury, including Environmental Justice Block Groups along Elm Street
4. Manage volume and speed of traffic to improve walking and biking along the Merrimack River
5. Improve sidewalks and bike facilities along Merrimac St, Main St, and Evan's Place
6. Preserve the undeveloped parcels abutting the river along Main Street (aka Bailey's Green) as open space
7. Connect the Point Shore Meadows Conservation Land with trails and open space farther north
8. Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the Visitor Center at the Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station
9. Preserve remaining natural land around Bailey Pond and improve access to the pond
10. Connect Margaret Rice Park to Bailey Pond and sidewalk on Beacon St
11. Add sidewalks to Rt 150

Placemaking Implementation Options

Investing in wayfinding, walking tours, and community events are low-hanging fruit for activating valued areas within the district. Other actions to improve the streetscape and transform mixed-use centers require more political will and/or more resources, but may be essential for maintaining and enhancing the character of the district.

1. Create gateways by redeveloping key nodes into walkable mixed-use centers
   a. Design sites with buildings close to streets to frame streets and intersections. Require prominent pedestrian entrances facing streets. Hide parking behind buildings

   b. Encourage multi-story mixed-use buildings whose design reflects local precedents
   c. Require functional open spaces
   d. At Elm St/Clark's Road/Route 110 Gateway: significantly improve public realm with wide sidewalks, street trees, street furniture, etc.
   e. At Pond View Ave Gateway: add a shared-use path
2. Add wayfinding to and from key destinations
3. Promote history: create walking tour and/or interpretive signs, consider adopting a local historic district
4. Make streetscape improvements throughout area: sidewalk improvements, street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, bury powerlines
5. Establish events that take advantage of river & celebrate history and culture
6. Activate the Visitor Center at the Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station

Planning Process Implementation Options

This project was as much an exploration of community planning processes and methods as it was an evaluation of the Merrimack River District. The implementation options related to planning processes are relevant across Amesbury. Key highlights are described below. More detail can be found in the section about the Community Benefits Model above.

1. Implement use of the Community Benefits Model
   a. Incorporate the Model into zoning permit processes for development projects
   b. Use it to evaluate potential policy changes
   c. Update the tool every five years to reflect citizens' changing priorities
2. Continue proactive planning for the Merrimack River District and other neighborhoods. The time, energy, and thought invested in this project by community members, elected officials, and City staff provides a foundation of shared knowledge and vision that can be leveraged to implement improvements for the Merrimack River District. Undertaking similar planning efforts in other parts of the City will help the City understand how different neighborhoods fit together and which policies are most beneficial for neighborhoods and the City overall. Implementation of improvements for the Merrimack River District and expanded neighborhood planning efforts will support community trust and working relationships.
3. Continue to use scenario planning to make it easier for citizens to envision and plan for long-term change.
4. Use short-term, low-cost, full-scale mock-ups to test infrastructure improvements before final design is complete. These demonstrations can be used for transportation and park improvement projects, among others
5. Develop a webpage that briefly summarizes key policy takeaways from planning projects and tracks implementation of actions. The City has completed a robust set of plans and studies on a wide variety of topics These provide essential information for community planning, but for the general public it can be difficult to keep up with the various plans. The City's website could include a brief summary of key ideas from each plan and how they fit into the City's overarching policies. This would help everyone see how various ef-

Wayfinding would help visitors and residents navigate the Merrimack River District's and raise awareness of its assets and attractions. The wayfinding sign templates from Scituate, above, show how a coherent family of signs can make information more legible and reinforce the identity of an area (Town of Scituate)

The proposed East End Smart Growth Overlay District combines increased options for residential development with open space preservation

forts fit together. The completion of the Master Plan will achieve similar ends. Going forward, key takeaways from future plans can be linked to the Master Plan's recommendations.

Next Steps and Opportunities for Public Participation

This planning process builds upon several other projects in the district that are key to the implementation of options outlined above. Below are a few ongoing projects that community members may seek out as opportunities for continued discussion and advocacy. Arrows at the bottom of each project description indicate ways for the general public to participate.

East End Smart Growth Overlay District (40R)

Process:

1. Local public hearing
2. Application to DHCD
3. DHCD Letter of Eligibility
4. Local Zoning Adoption
5. Evidence of Adoption
6. DHCD Letter of Approval
7. Local Project Approval

- City has received DHCD Letter of Eligibility.
- Ways to participate:
  ➔ Participate in Local Zoning Adoption process: attend meetings, contact decision makers
  ➔ See project website: https://www.amesburyma.gov/259/East-End-Smart-Growth-Overlay-40R

21 Pond View Ave/Trader Alan's Disposition

Process:

1. File surplus order with City Council
2. Establish Disposition Committee
3. Disposition Committee determines reuse of property.
4. Disposition Committee makes reuse recommendations to Mayor
5. Project Development. Review by Mayor's office. OCED drafts scope for reuse and RFP
6. Procurement
7. Proposal Review

- Currently at Step 3
- Ways to participate:
  ➔ Attend public meetings
  ➔ See project website: https://www.amesburyma.gov/257/Disposition-Committee

Golden Triangle (Elm Street) and Marina at Amesbury Point (Merrimac Street)

- Owners of these properties are exploring options for the sites
- New land use options (i.e., housing) may require zoning changes
- As of the release of this document (August 2022) there are no formal development proposals for these properties

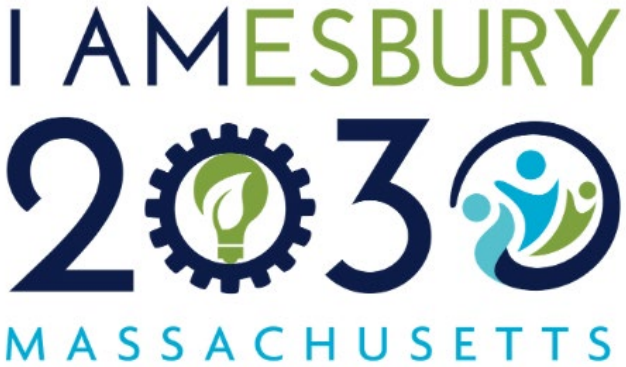
- Ways to participate:
  - ➔ Pay attention to news, social media, City website for information about these sites. Attend public meetings.
  - ➔ Regularly check the city website with information about various projects: https://www.amesburyma.gov/249/Community-Development

Transportation Improvements

- Ways to participate:
  - ➔ Pay attention to news, social media, City website. Attend public meetings.
  - ➔ See Traffic & Transportation Committee website: https://www.amesburyma.gov/406/Traffic-Transportation-Committee

I AMesbury 2030 Master Plan

- Ways to participate:
  - ➔ See project website: https://cleargov.com/massachusetts/essex/city/amesbury/projects/1946/i-amesbury-2030



The I Amesbury 2030 Master Plan will set out the City's major policy goals for the coming decade. Public participation in the plan will ensure that it reflects community values, knowledge, and priorities

Conclusion

This project developed and tested several methods for improving land use planning in Amesbury while focusing on the Merrimack River District. The Merrimack River District, and its diverse subareas, provide an opportunity to implement Amesbury's vision for itself, "to preserve the classic New England Village character and heritage that currently exists in Amesbury, while accommodating growth in a manner that is well controlled and appropriate to meet the needs of the community."[24] Achieving this vision requires ongoing community dialogue, weighing tradeoffs, and implementation of policies and actions that reflect shared community goals. The community involvement that made this project possible is vital to moving forward with the implementation options in this report. By continuing active and inclusive public planning processes, the City of Amesbury can achieve its vision for vibrant gateways and smart and sustainable land uses in the Merrimack River District and the City as whole.

24 *Town of Amesbury Master Plan* (2004), p.ES-9

Merrimack River District Planning

Scenario Planning and Evaluation of Community Benefits

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