

ENVISIONING CENTRALVILLE

MIT | FALL 2005
department of urban studies and planning

BRIDGE STREET

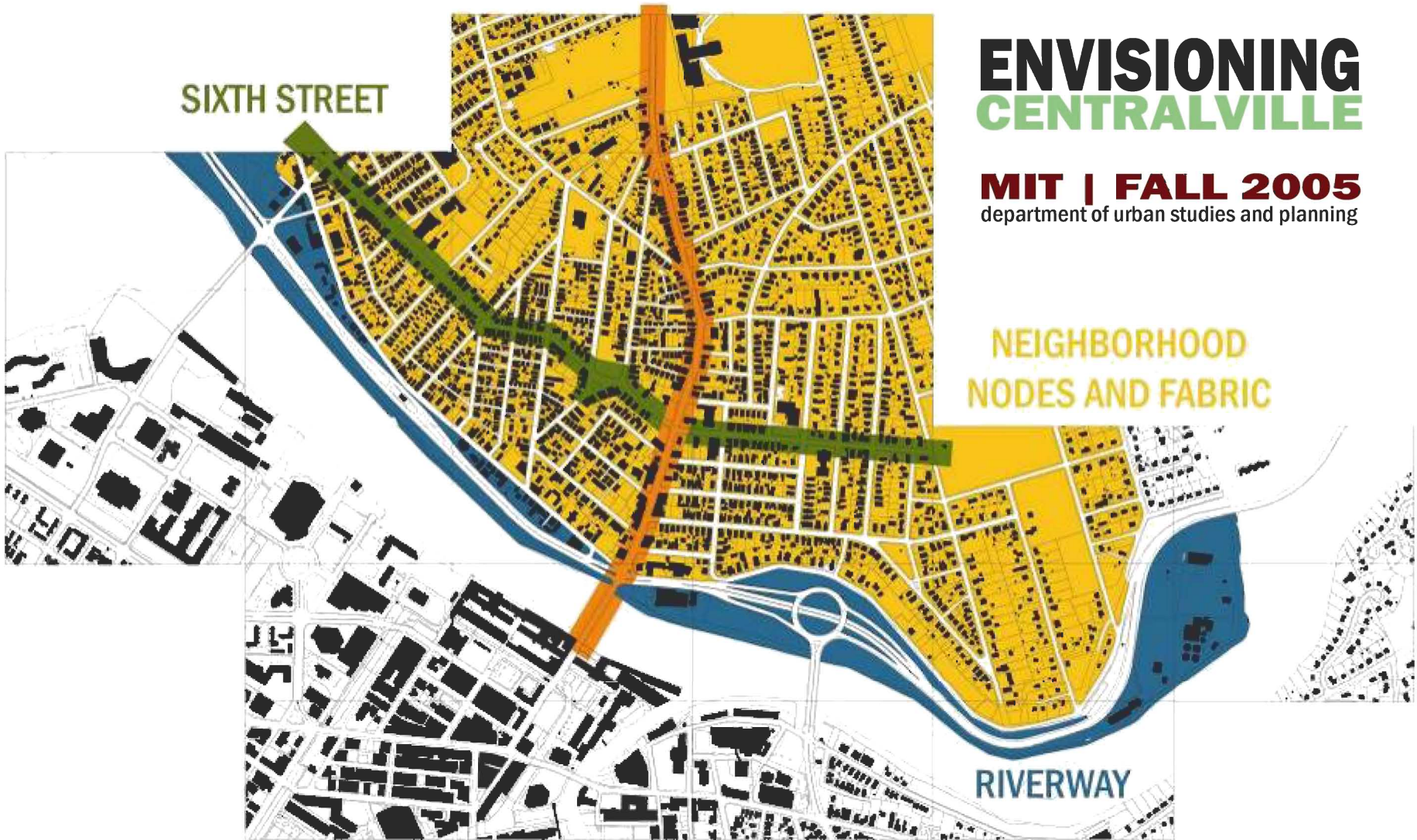
SIXTH STREET

ENVISIONING CENTRALVILLE

MIT | FALL 2005
department of urban studies and planning

NEIGHBORHOOD
NODES AND FABRIC

RIVERWAY



ENVISIONING CENTRALVILLE

MIT | FALL 2005
department of urban studies and planning

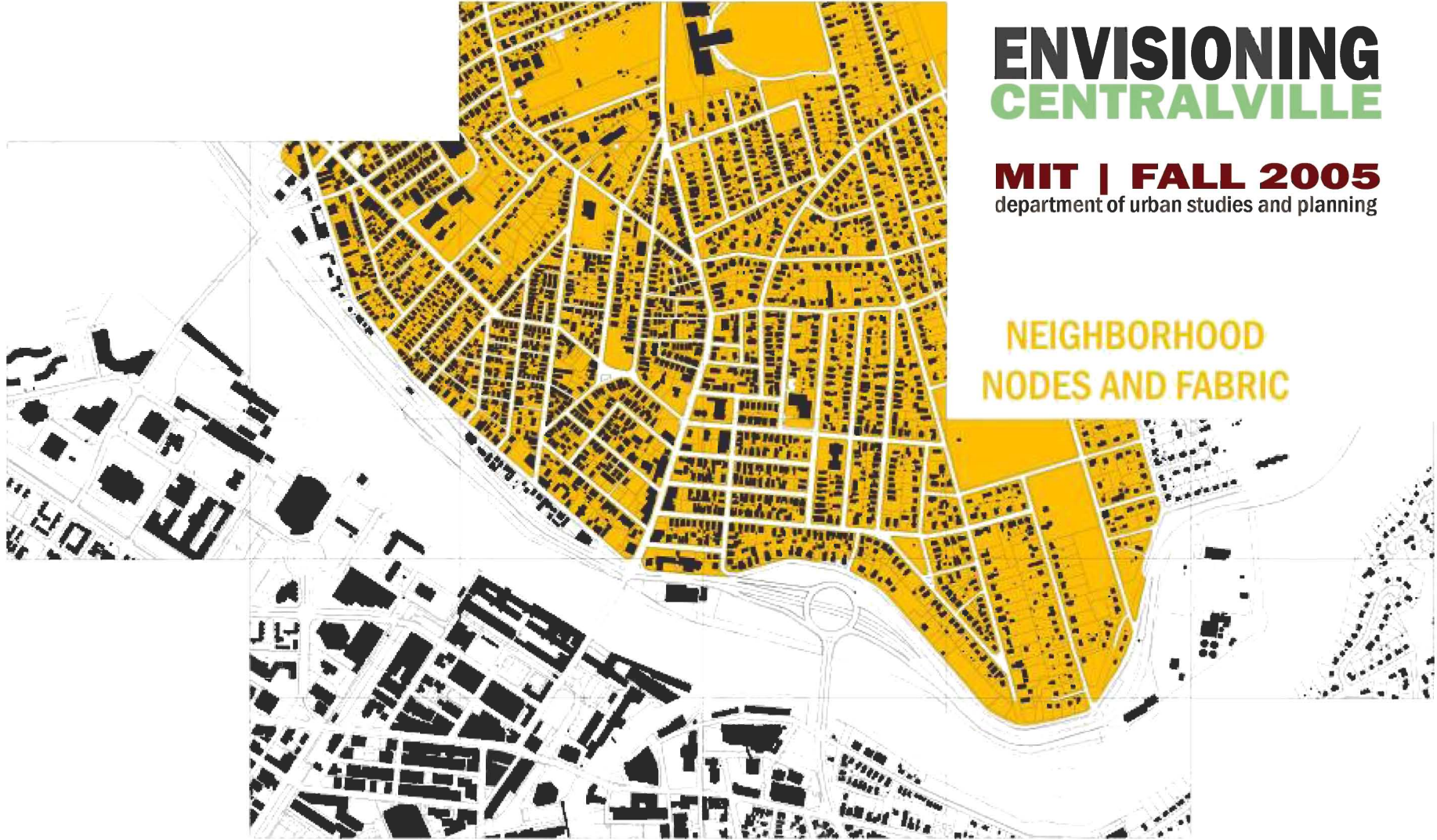
NEIGHBORHOOD
NODES AND FABRIC

SIXTH STREET AND
BRIDGE STREET



DOWNTOWN LOWELL





ENVISIONING CENTRALVILLE

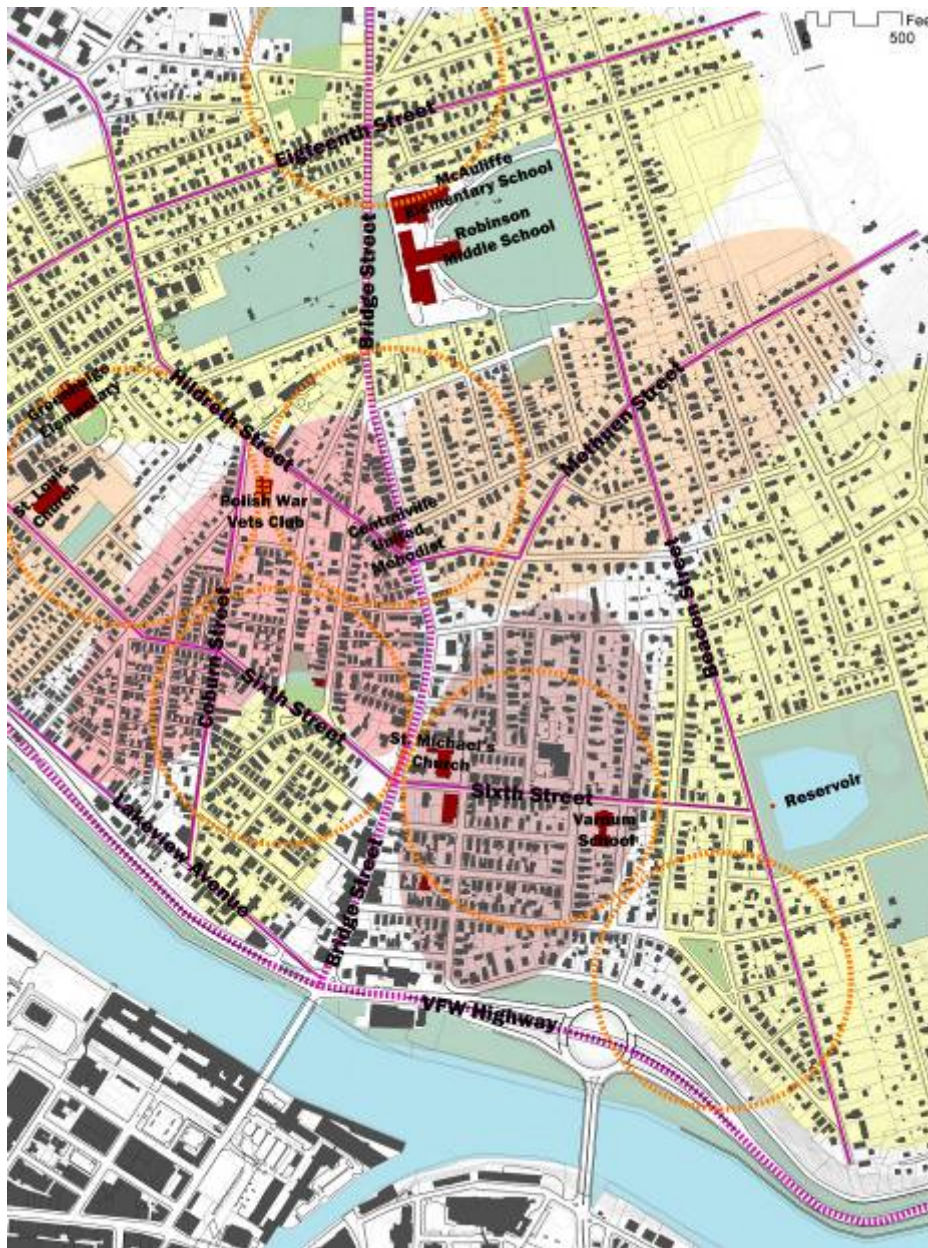
MIT | FALL 2005
department of urban studies and planning

NEIGHBORHOOD
NODES AND FABRIC

Neighborhood Fabric & Nodes: “Mission Statement”

Protect what works, celebrate what’s worth celebrating, and implement strategies to preserve and enhance it.





Understanding Centralville

Paths, Edges, Districts, Nodes, Landmarks

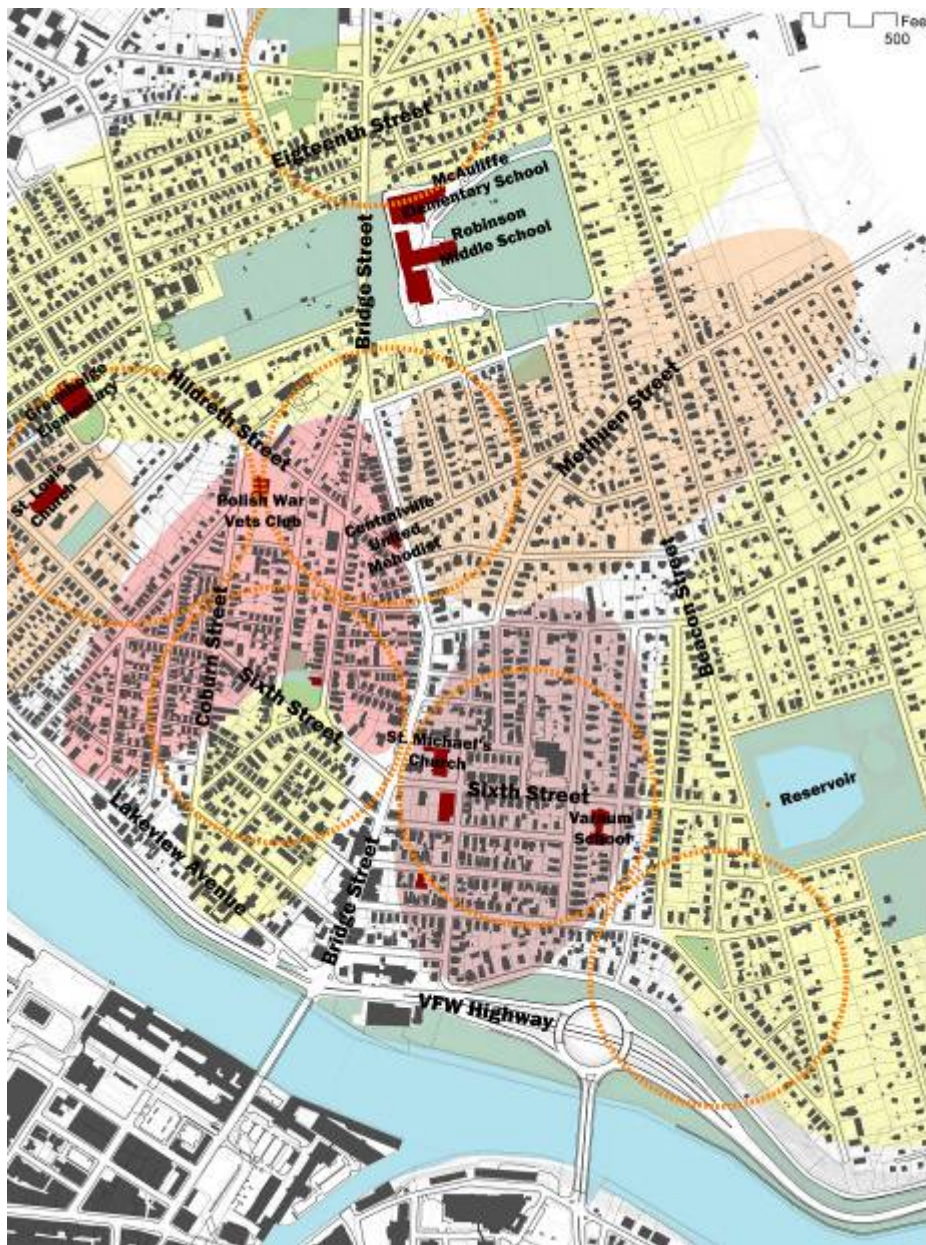
What is a District?

- Medium to large areas, usually with both residential and commercial or civic uses
- Centered around a node of activity
- Identifiable by both locals and visitors
- Boundaries can blend with other districts

What is a Node?

- A place of interpersonal activity: commercial, social, recreational
- An intersection of paths or streets
- A place for commerce, education, recreation, worship
- A place that holds a neighborhood together



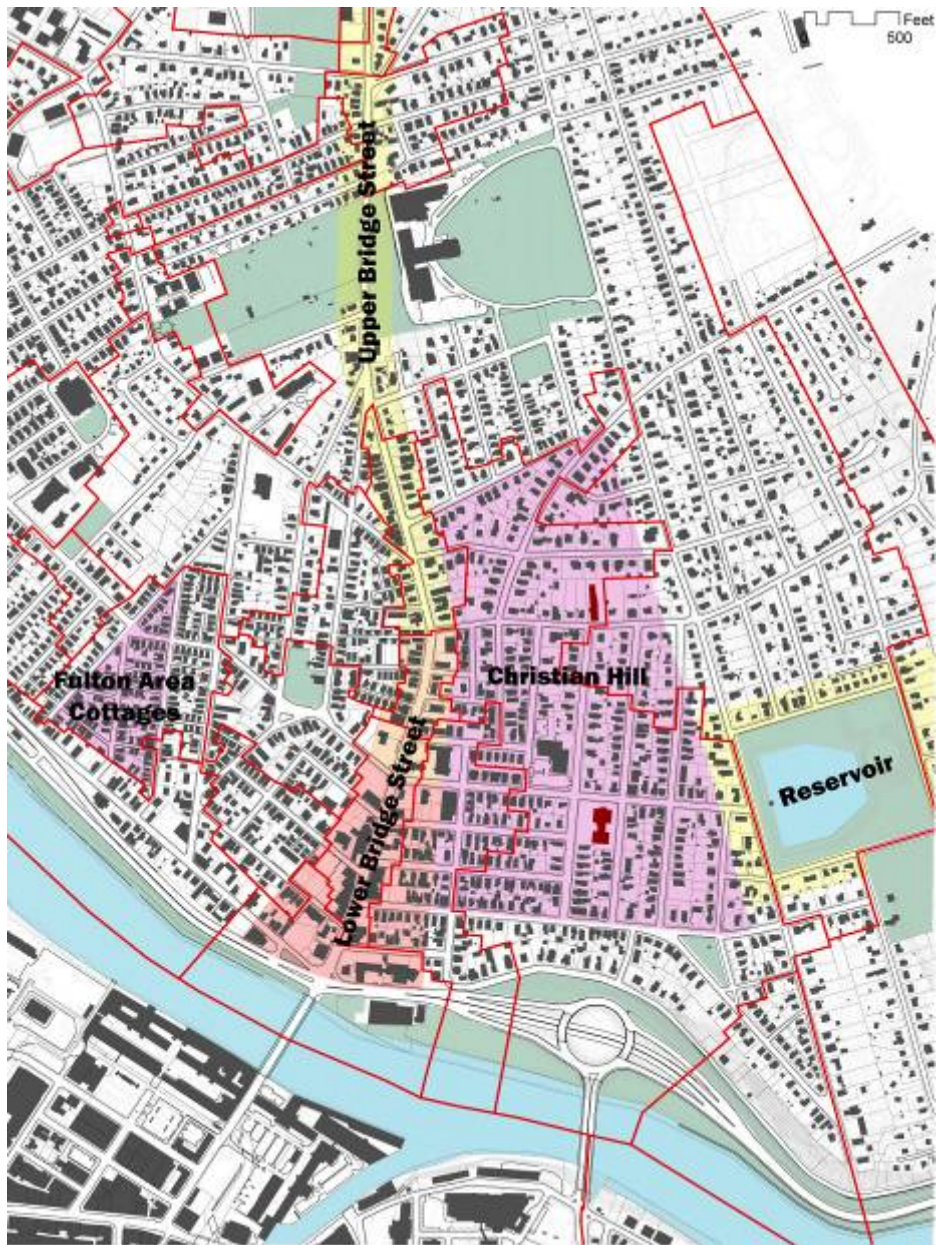


Character Districts

Current zoning establishes a sound framework for codes based on the intrinsic character of the neighborhood.

- Reconcile the conception of character districts as **place-based** with the conception of character districts as **community-based**.
- Consider a participatory process to establish a **vision for Centralville** and definition for the boundaries that define the districts.





Overlay Districts

- Establish **continuity** across the districts as demarcated by zoning.
- Allow for a more **comprehensive** approach towards issues like traffic and use regulations.
 - Overlay districts as a means to promote compatible infill development.
 - Example: Bridge Street, Reservoir District
 - Overlay districts as a means to protect historic character.
 - Example: Fulton Street Area Cottages and Christian Hill
 - **Artist Overlay** district to provide live-work opportunities for artists outside downtown Lowell.
- Maintain underlying 'as-of-right' zoning.
- **Citizen Design Review Board** for infill and transition sites.



Upper Bridge Street

Issues:

- Mostly residential with a mix of types (single family transitioning to multi-family closer to Lower Bridge Street).
- Traffic on Bridge Street severely impacts connectivity.
- Zoning (FAR, Lot size, Setbacks)
 - Imposition of a single district.
 - Transition between zoning districts.

Recommended:

- Overlay district to further enhance the continuity of Bridge Street.
- Traffic calming along Bridge Street.
- Limit parking on Bridge Street to one side (between Eleventh Street and Eustis Avenue).
- Widen sidewalks with proper landscaping and paving.



Reservoir District

Importance:

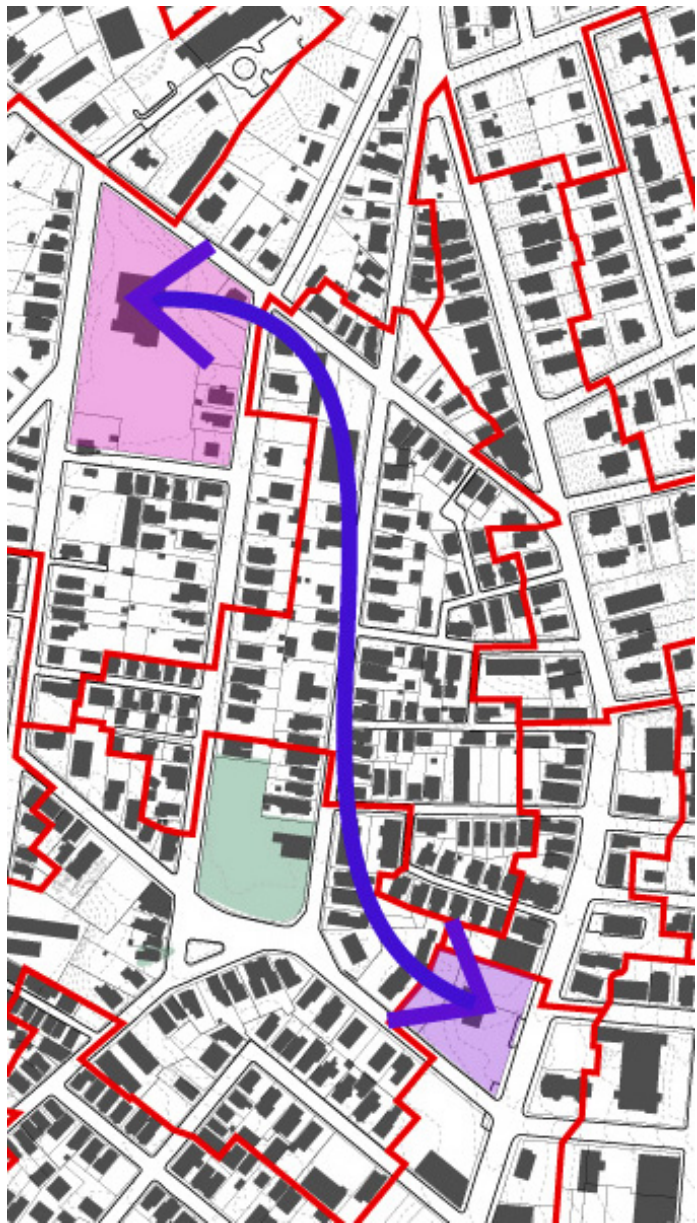
- Local Water supply
- Public open space
- Good views of the river and downtown



Recommendations:

1. Build up connections to the neighborhood through Sixth Street
 - Gate house renovation
 - Set up bulletins for information exchange, introduction, and water resource conservation education
2. Increase accessibility
 - Clarify that it's a public space
 - Set-up jogging/walking track
3. Enhance the safety
 - Repair/replace chain link fence
 - Set up signs for safety warning
4. Improve the physical appearance and visibility
 - litter removal
 - outdoor furniture
 - tree planting/ bird watching/picnic area
5. Overlay district to maintain continuity between the adjacent properties and the park
6. Volunteer residential group





Transfer of Development Rights

- Voluntary, incentive-based process for preserving a community resource for public benefit in limited and controlled application to address open space requirements, parking requirements, etc.
- To protect volatile sites from over-development.

Example: Polish War Veterans Club site

Site Area: 99,000 sq.ft. approx., Building Area: 10,000 sq.ft. approx., Allowable FAR: 1 (Zone: TSF)

Vision - Community facility with recreational open space, day care (for children and seniors), performing arts and craft center, etc.

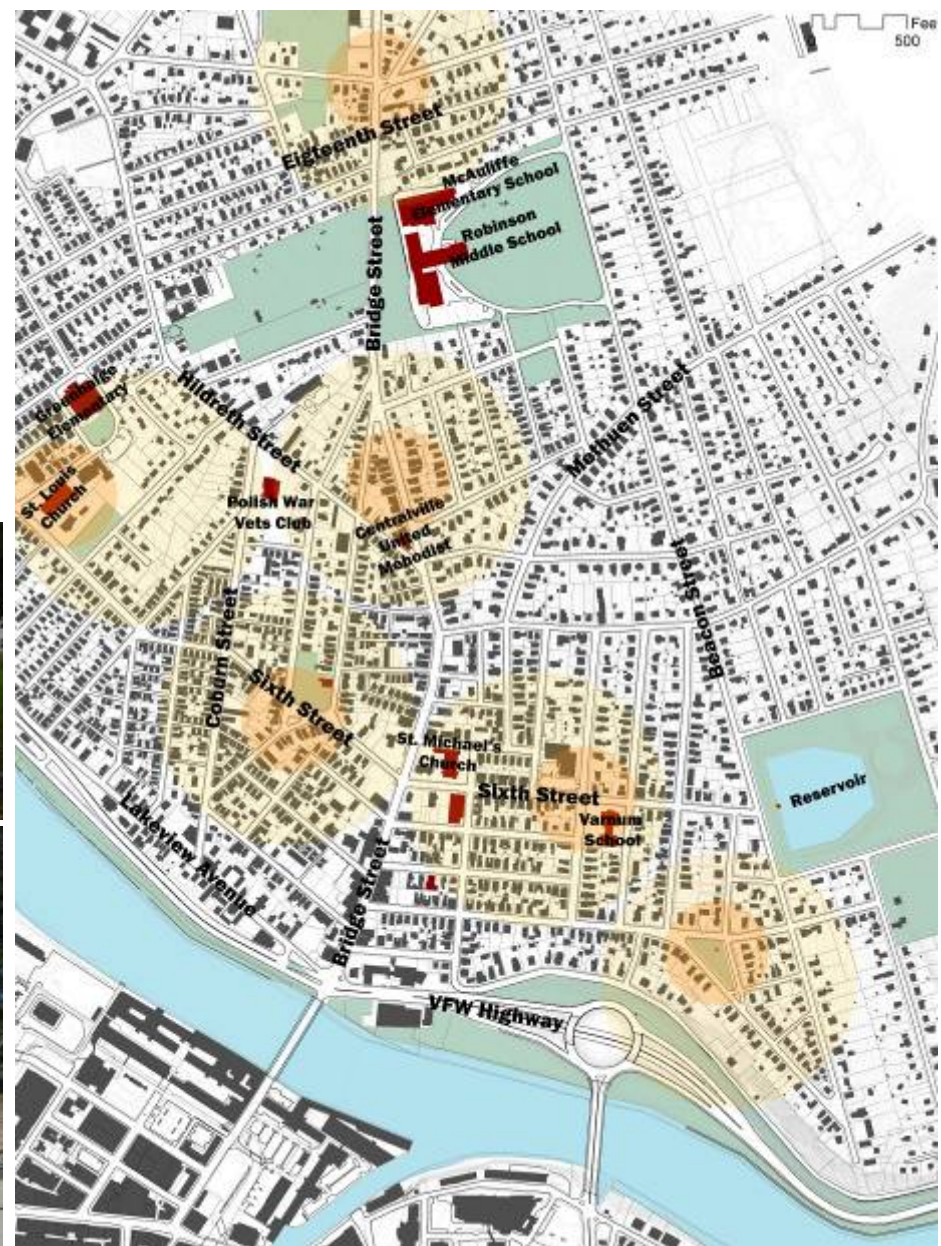
Recommendation:

- Include TDR option in current zoning
- Establish the following:
 - Definitions of transferable rights (open space, parking, etc.)
 - Locations for donor sites (residential districts) and receiver sites (neighborhood business or mixed-use districts)
- Maximums for transfer.

Nodes

Centers of pedestrian activity, often with retail, neighborhood, or social service functions.

Small pedestrian-oriented neighborhood retail doesn't conform to zoning but provides a valuable local service and does not require parking.



Varnum School Node

Recommended:

- Provide community open spaces.
 - Traffic calming along Sixth Street.
 - Accommodate non-conforming uses. Example: J&M Variety
- Zoning code, Section 4.5.8: Reversion to Nonconformity:
“No nonconforming use shall, if changed to a conforming use, revert to a nonconforming use.”

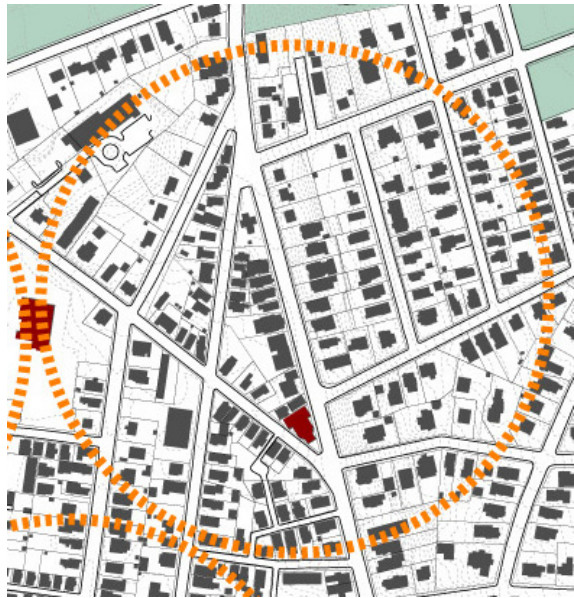
Text amendment:

“Except by special permit for uses under 2500 square feet, restricted to neighborhood retail use and excluding garages, auto services, or drive-through establishments”.



Gateway Node

- Traffic calming and safety enhancement.
Limit traffic to two lanes and parking to one side of Bridge Street. Improve connection of Jewett Street and Hampshire Street with Bridge Street.
- Pedestrian environment enhancements with landscaping and walkability/accessibility improvements.
- Signage for Centralville and Lower Bridge Street business district.
- Community open space.
- Transit related amenities like a bus shelter.



Looking Ahead at Multifamily



Multifamily issues:

- Ground floor garages
- Blank walls
- Inconsistent fabric

Can current zoning encourage more sensitive development? How can zoning prevent tear-down of historic homes and encourage redevelopment of these properties in multifamily districts?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide incentives to small-scale multifamily developers like density bonuses, parking requirement waivers, “FastTrack” permitting, etc. to encourage preservation of appropriate single-family homes as multifamily properties?
- Citizen Design Review Board can help ensure consistency with existing built fabric.



Recommendations & Implementation

1. Amendment to zoning maps and text

- Character districts
- Overlay districts
- TDR- transfer of development rights
- Incentives and streamlining for developers who “do it right”
- Text amendments to help maintain non-conforming retail uses at nodes

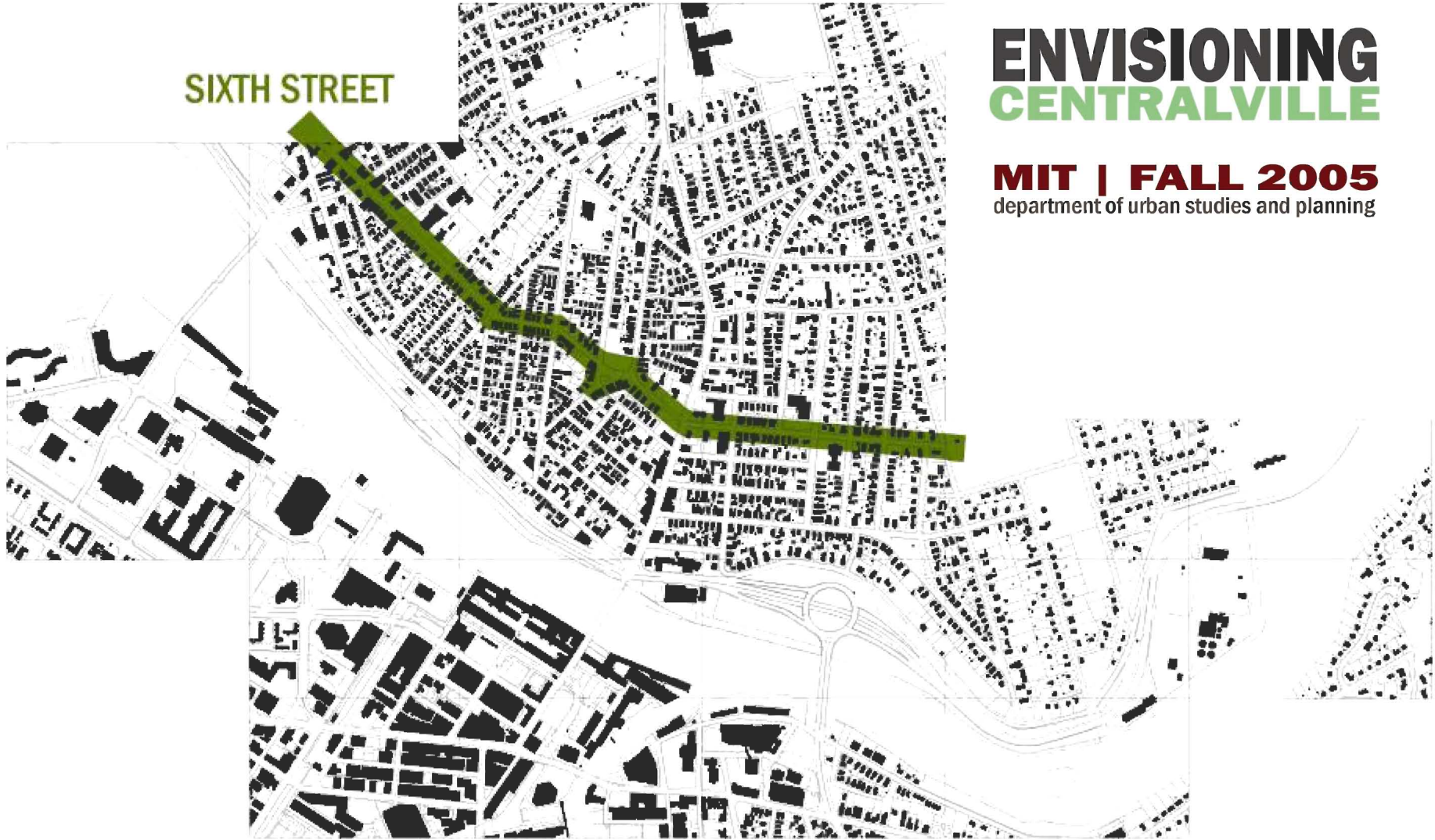
2. Citizen Design Review Board

- Will focus on issues of size and scale, encouraging appropriate infill development without limiting options for private property owners
- Helps develop and guide implementation of historic overlay or character districts

3. Consider creating a new group which draws its membership from CNP, CNAG, other neighborhood groups so that it serves both sides of Bridge Street as well as business interests, using the model of Boston Redevelopment Authority

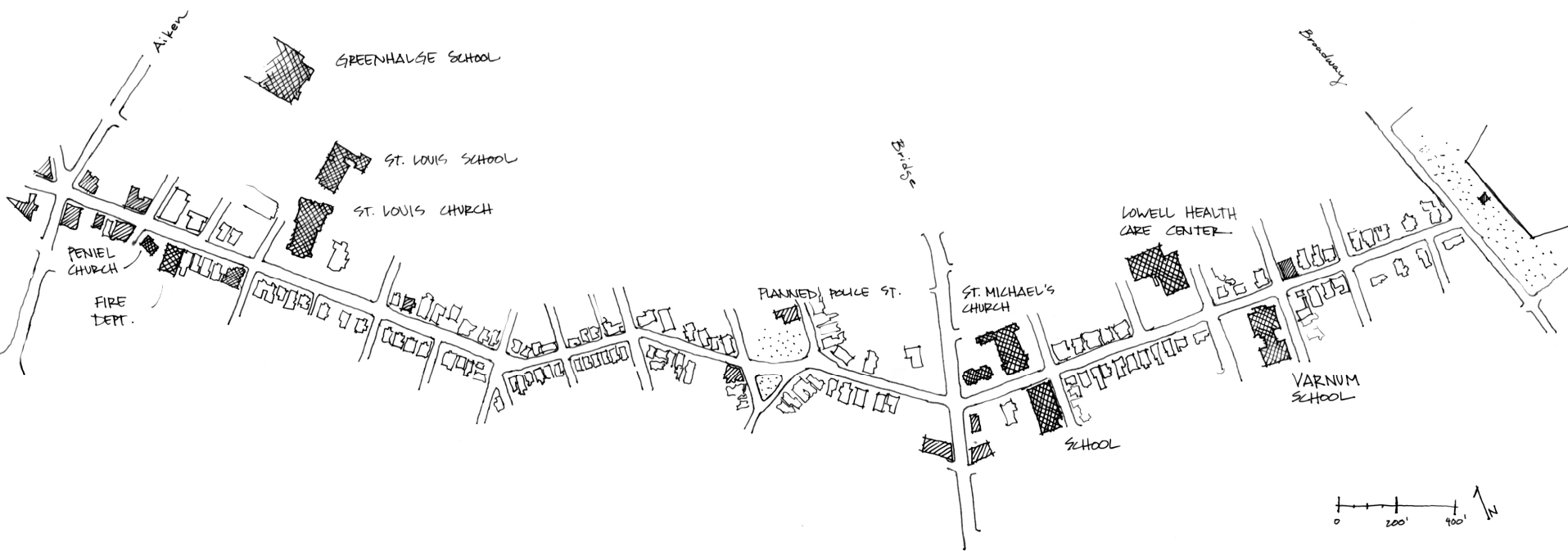
- Formal representation for a diverse but cohesive set of interests
- Will facilitate partnerships to leverage capital to invest in streetscape improvements and maintenance
- Will also help Centralville present a single, strong voice when negotiating for resources with Lowell government and interests

SIXTH STREET



ENVISIONING CENTRALVILLE

MIT | FALL 2005
department of urban studies and planning



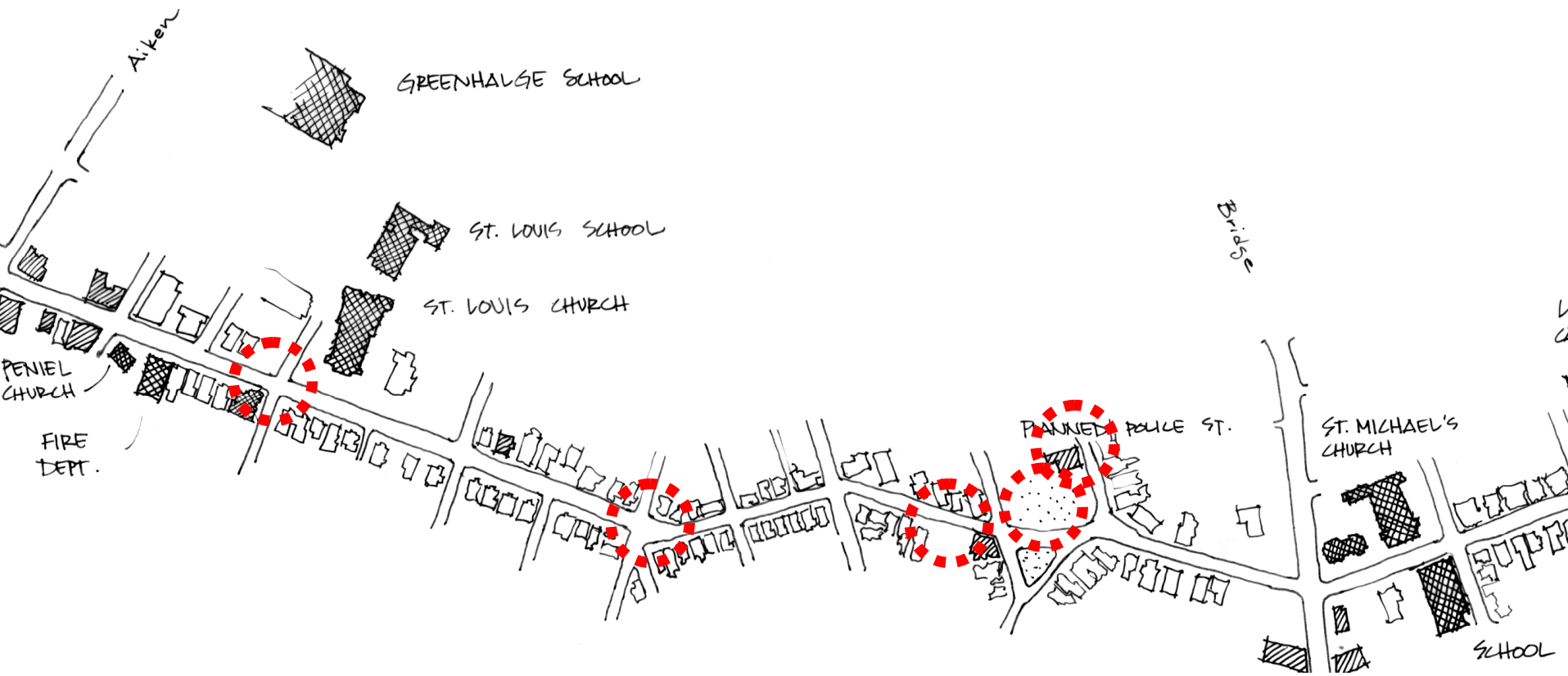


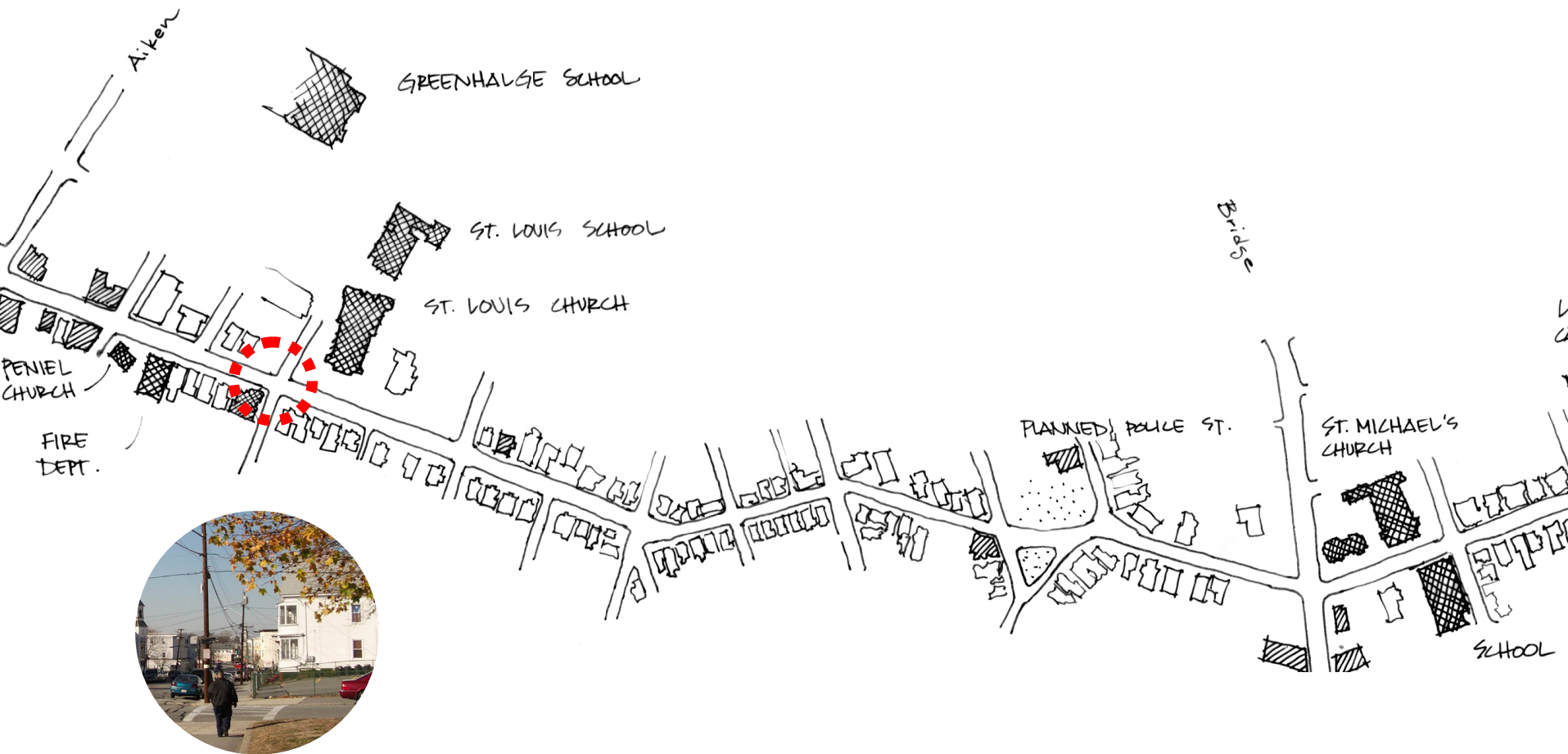


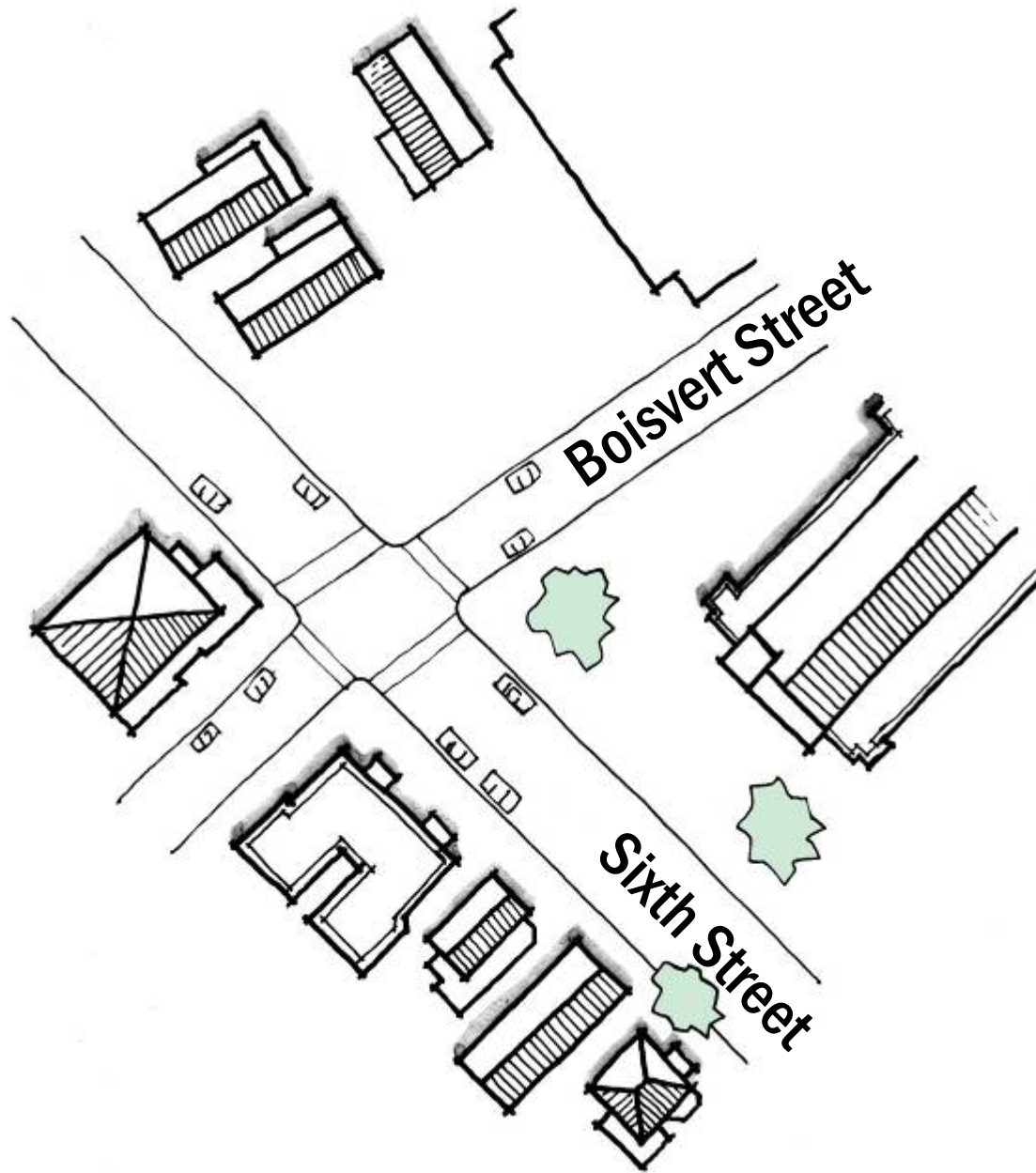
Arterial

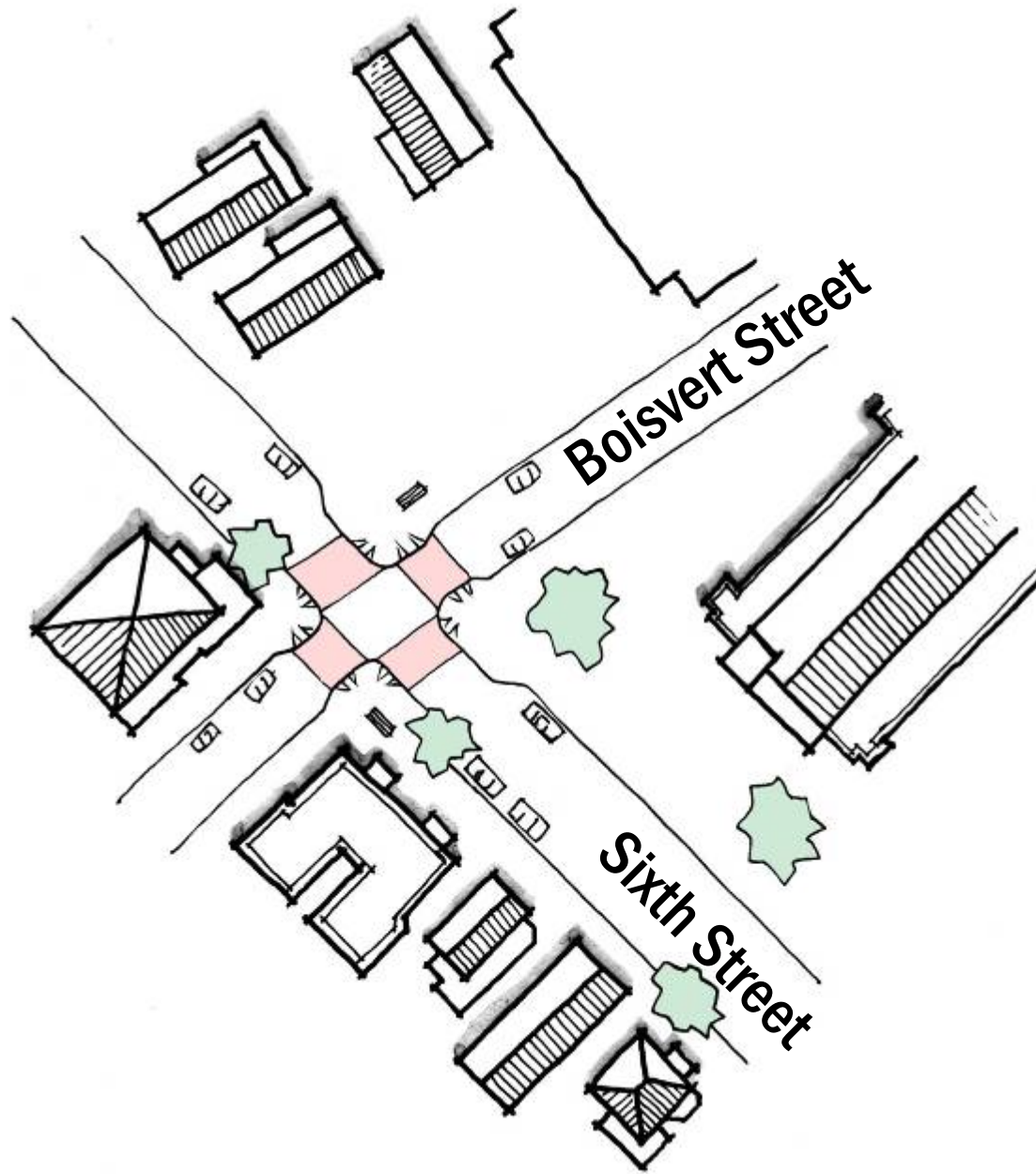


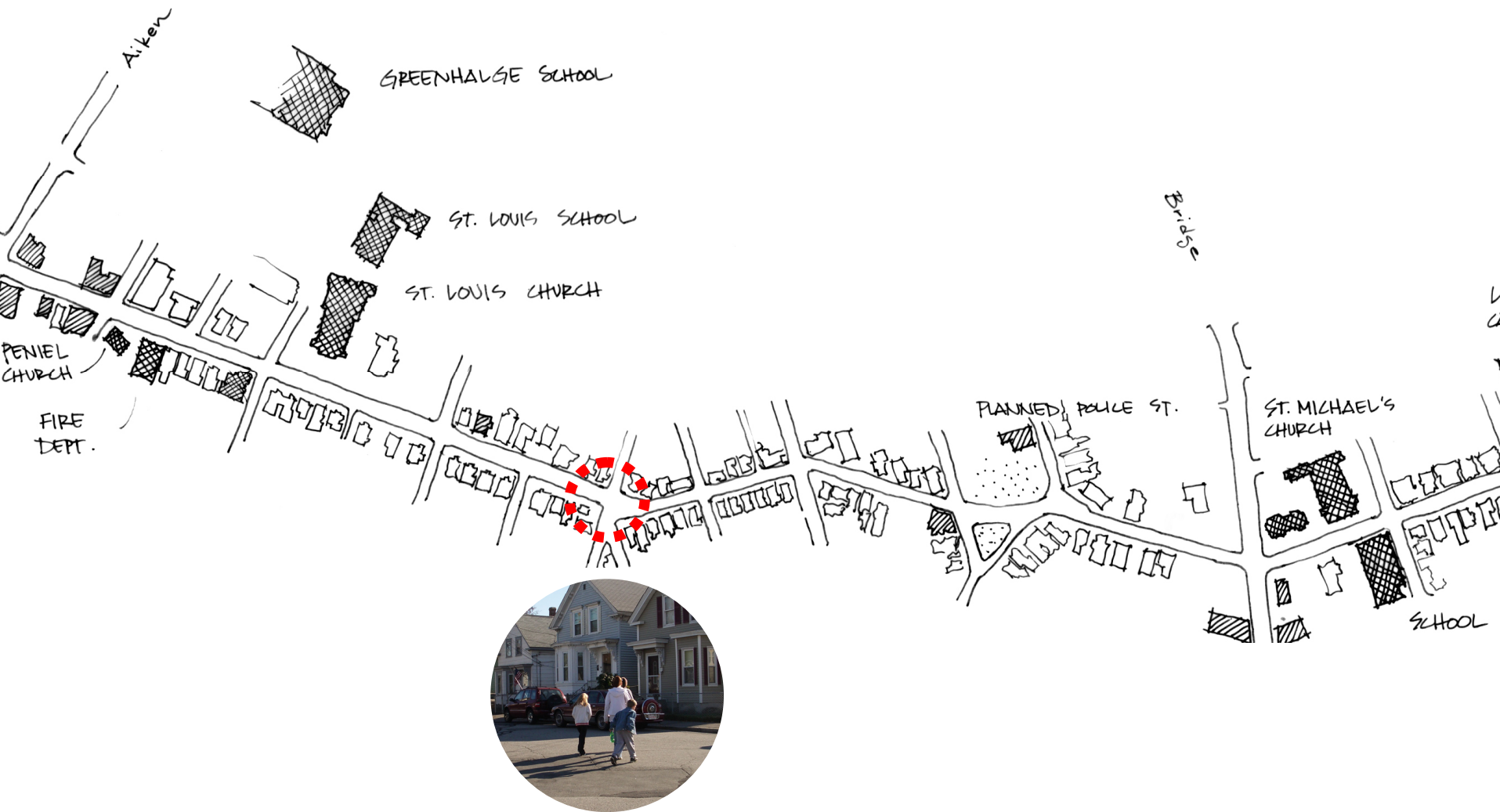
Neighborhood Street



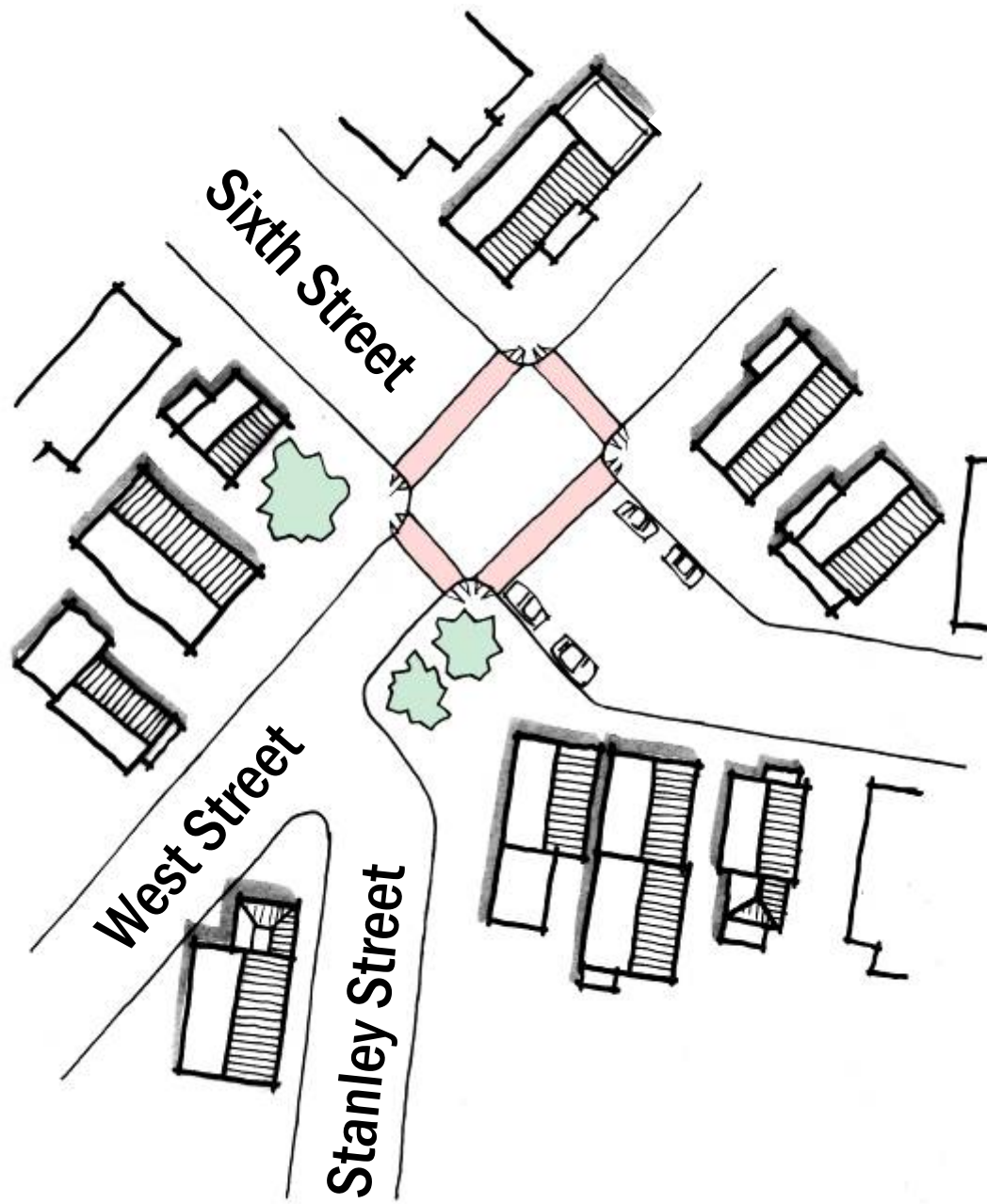


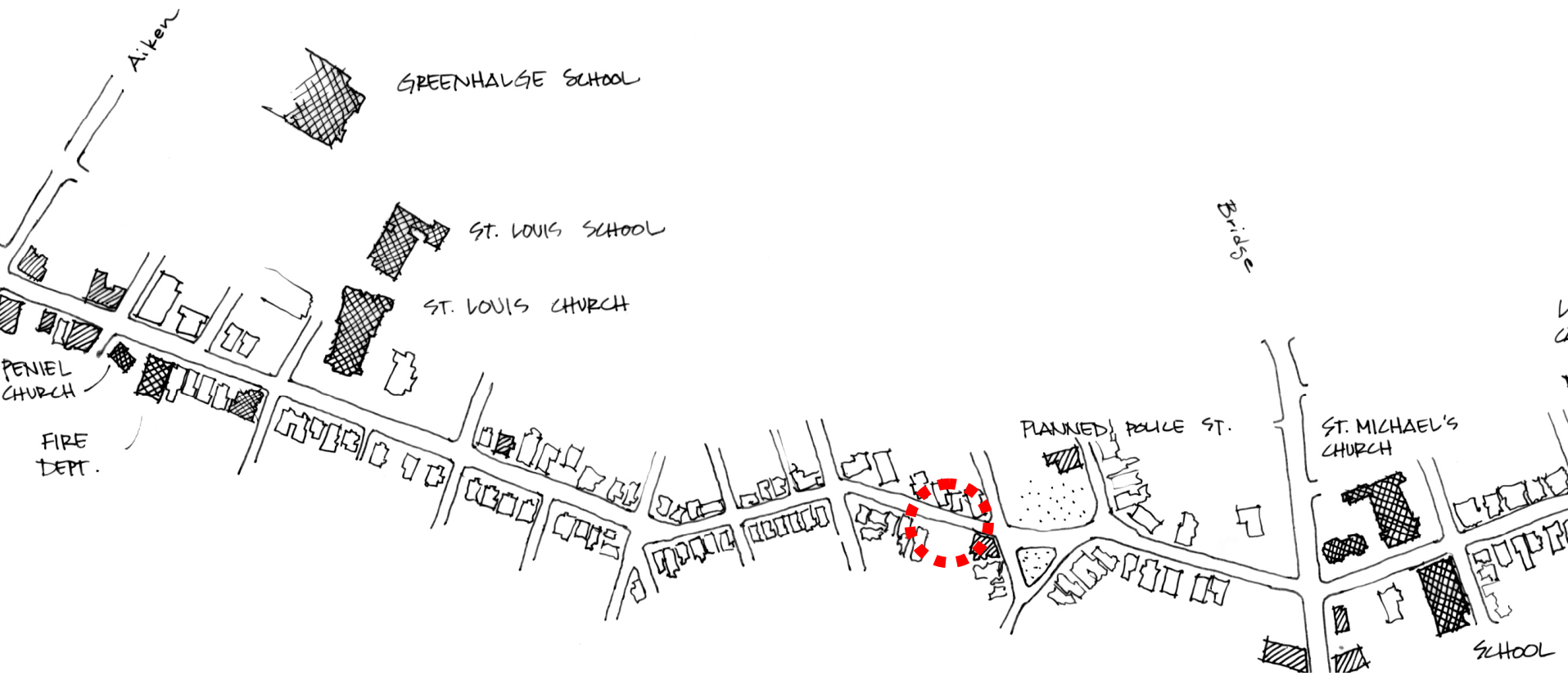












Vacant Parcel at 84 West Sixth Street



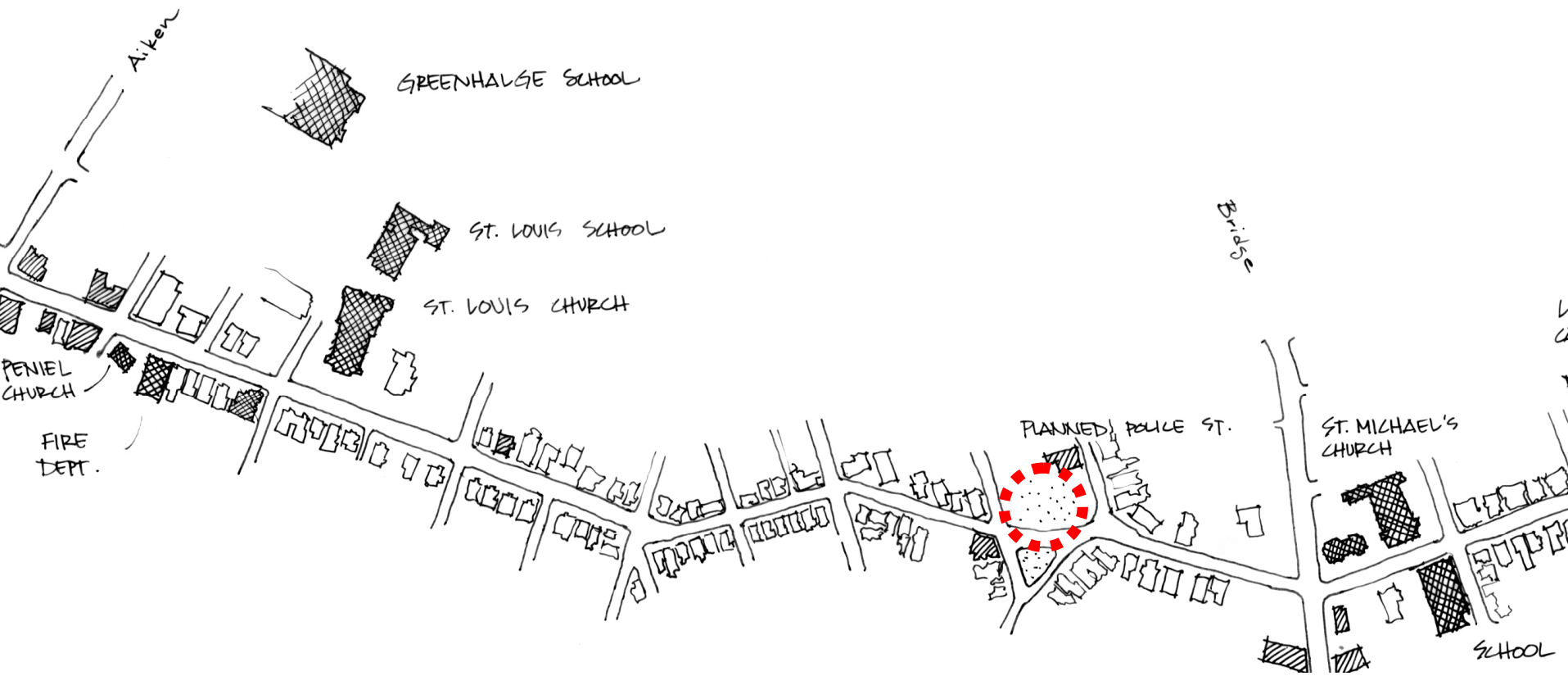
Site Conditions

- **Opportunity: Rare Vacant Parcel in Neighborhood**
- **Blight: Overgrown weeds and litter**
- **Fiscally distressed: \$50K+ owed to city**
- **Zoning: Traditional Multi-Family**
 - **Would allow for up to four dwelling units**

Recommendations

- City should take control of property
- Special attention to facade treatment in new development
- Possible Innovations
 - Small scale neighborhood retail
 - Condominiumized parking spaces





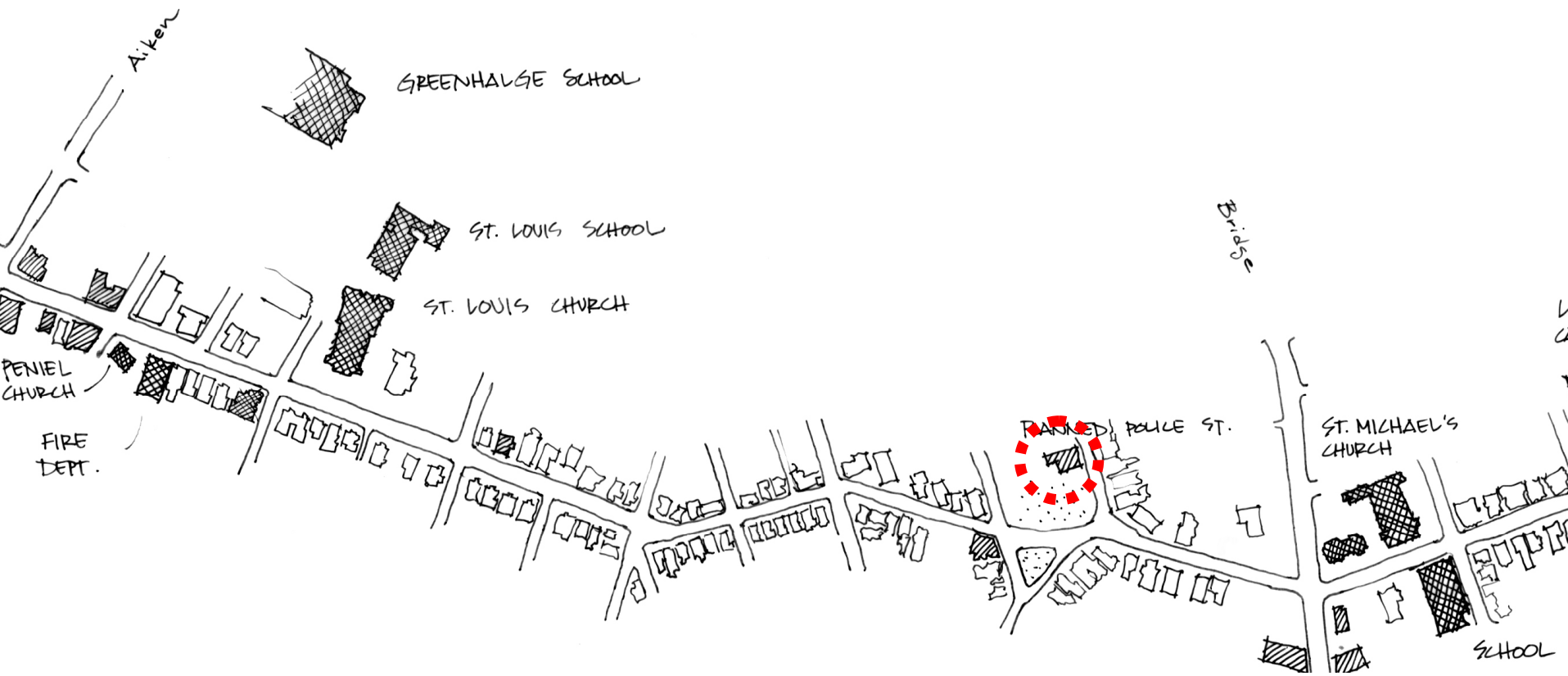
Monsignor Keenan Playground



Issues & Recommendations

- Litter (Short Term)
 - Install additional trash receptacles
 - Community cleaning days
- Presence (Long Term)
 - Install shorter, wrought iron fence
 - Additional/moved entrances
 - Along West Sixth Street
 - Corner of West Sixth and Hampshire





10 Hampshire Street former Parks and Rec building



OPPORTUNITY!

Under-used city-owned property

Current Conditions



- > **Unsafe - piles of material**
- > **Disturbance from use of parking lot and basketball court after dark**
- > **Fear of drug activity in the area**
- > **Parking is difficult**

THREE ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVE ONE

POLICE PRECINCT/COMMUNITY SPACE

- > Increased police presence thwarts illicit activity
- > Initial analysis exists
- > Conserves historic building
- > All parking on site
- > City maintains ownership
- > Financial concerns





ALTERNATIVE TWO

RESIDENTIAL REHAB

- > 2-4 units housing
- > Conserves historic building
- > All parking on site
- > City sells property with building requirements



Example: 10th Street School



before rehab



ALTERNATIVE THREE

RESIDENTIAL REHAB w/ POLICE PRECINCT

- > Increased police presence thwarts illicit activity
- > 2-3 units housing
- > Conserves historic building
- > All parking on site
- > City sells property with building requirements
- > New owner rents space to Police Department

(480 Bridge Street = 1,300 sf, \$12,000/year)



