Neighborhood Nodes & Fabric
Historic Neighborhood Fabric

Present  
City of Lowell GIS

1907  
Sanborn Map
Neighborhood districts...
…with a diversity of architectural styles.
Neighborhood Nodes… that work!
Neighborhoods

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
Moulton Square Node
6th, Hampshire, & Jewett Streets

- Dense Housing
- Homogenous Architecture
- Small Front Yards—No Setbacks
- Few trees
- Chain-linked fences
- Side-walks
- Street & Driveway Parking
Housing around Moulton Square
Varnum School Node
6th & Myrtle Streets

- Mix of Single and Multi-Family
- Varied Architectural styles
- Some trees
- Topography Changes- uphill
- Varnum School
- J&M Variety Store
- Lowell Health Care Center
Varnum School Node
Gazebo Node
3rd, Durant & Vernon Streets

- Mostly Single-Family homes
- More uniform architectural styles
- Larger homes with driveways
- Many trees, landscaping
- Ample on street parking
- Minimal traffic
Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Brown-Maynard House (Private Owner)

Areas Assessed by City of Lowell as Potential Historic Districts
- Fulton Street Area Cottages
- Christian Hill Area

ENVISIONING CENTRALVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD NODES AND FABRIC

MIT | FALL 2005
department of urban studies and planning
Opportunities and Preliminary Recommendations

- Centralville works!
- Protect what's good & beautiful; celebrate what's worth celebrating
- Encourage neighborhood pride
- Plant Seeds for Change where needed most
  - Attract investment and compatible infill development
- Suggestions—incremental improvements:
  - Tree Plantings
  - Sidewalk Improvements
  - Street furniture
  - Parking
  - Overlay & Historic Districts
  - Remove/alter some barriers
- Clear community character & identity
- Historical integrity in form types
- Planning for the future guided by history & current character
Physical Environment of Lower Bridge Street

Traditional Commercial Storefronts

Traditional Homes

Non-traditional Commercial Storefronts
Physical Environment of Lower Bridge Street

- choices… character of any new buildings?

Alternative – Complement the Traditional Street

Alternative – More Non-Traditional Buildings
Physical Environment of Lower Bridge Street

Other urban design observations

• Coding/zoning can accentuate character
• Signage – storefront or free standing?
• Telephone poles
• Community gardens – link with landscaping?
• Centralville sign?

• Traffic/pedestrian considerations
BRIDGE STREET

Getting Around Bridge Street

• Pedestrian environment
• Public transportation
• Parking
BRIDGE STREET

Getting Around: What's Comfortable
BRIDGE STREET

Getting Around: What's Comfortable
BRIDGE STREET

Getting Around: What's Comfortable
BRIDGE STREET

Getting Around: What's Safe
In your opinion, how does Centraville rank in each of the following areas: "Poor" to "Fair" or "Good" to "Strong"?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Support</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Mix</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bridge Street Business Mix

- Convenience: 12%
- Food: 12%
- Vacant: 9%
- Misc.: 2%
- Comparison: 12%
- Services: 56%

Economic Development of Lower Bridge Street

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BRIDGE STREET

Economic Development of Lower Bridge Street

Opportunities for Lower Bridge Street

New Business Development
BRIDGE STREET

Where do we go from here?

• How can design accentuate Centralville's character?

• Traffic and safety: How do we balance business activity and pedestrian safety with efficient travel time for drivers?

• What new city-sponsored economic development programs would be useful?

• What type of businesses would benefit the community at 6th and Bridge and the Sunoco station?

• Does the current Centralville identity include the historic Lowell experience?
Why 6th Street?
• A central thread that connects internally not externally—different from Bridge or Aiken Streets
• 2 parks, 3 churches, 4 schools, many shops
Opportunities on 6th Street

1. Streetscape investments
2. Reservoir Park access
3. Moulton Square: Next Steps
4. Excess road surface at West Street
5. Events in open spaces
2. Reservoir Park access
3. Moulton Square: Next Steps
4. Excess road surface at West Street
5. Events in open spaces
What Streetscape Investments?

- Tree planting
- Sidewalk widening
- "Bump outs"
- Under-grounding utility lines
- Appropriate lighting
SIXTH STREET

Why Streetscape?

• Calm traffic flow
  - capacity: 3,357 vehicles/hr
  - use: 565 vehicles/hr

• Connect
  - schools, churches, businesses, shops
Example 1: between Bunker Hill + West
Example 2: between Fulton + Coburn
Example 2: between Fulton + Coburn
Example 2: between Fulton + Coburn

SIXTH STREET
1. Streetscape investments
3. Moulton Square: Next Steps
4. Excess road surface at West Street
5. Events in open spaces
Why the Reservoir?

SIXTH STREET
SIXTH STREET

Why Increase Access?

• Current open space may not meet resident needs
The Goal

• Increase access and make the approach to the Reservoir more significant
SIXTH STREET

Opportunity 1

• Enhance the approach to the Reservoir
Opportunity 2

• Enhance the identity of the Reservoir
1. Streetscape investments
2. Reservoir Park access
4. Excess road surface at West Street
5. Events in open spaces
Legitimizing Nonconforming Uses

Appropriateness of a commercial use

• History (1897)
• Well patronized by pedestrian traffic
• Convenience = positive attribute of dense neighborhoods

What legitimization might bring

• Flexibility to allow for greater responsiveness to resident needs
• Special permitting process may burden innovation
• Increased certainty could encourage investment
Possibilities at 84 6th Street
SIXTH STREET

Possibilities at 84 6th Street

- Comports with mixed-use nature of 6th Street
- Emphasizes Square as neighborhood focal point
- Maintains historic form of 6th Street
- Parking needs could be met behind site
SIXTH STREET

84 West 6th: Mixed-Use Opportunities
SIXTH STREET

Development of Former Lowell

• Plans for Police Precinct
• Alternative plans?
• Building design should enhance Square
• Synergy with playground, commercial

uses
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1. Streetscape investments
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• Do you more often drive or walk down 6th Street?
• Where are you headed when you drive on 6th Street? Within town? Out of town?
• Do you spend time in Moulton Square?
• What do you value about the institutions/stores on 6th Street?
• Do you think 6th Street is safe to walk down? Drive down?
• Do you use the open space at the reservoir?
Riverway: history of place
View of Lowell from across the Merrimack River.
PROPOSED STATE HIGHWAY
by
FRANK RICARD

SKETCH OF ROUTE OF THE STATE HIGHWAY, PROPOSED BY FRANK RICARD.
Riverway: Finding special places

Varnum Park / Gateway

Watertown, Massachusetts
Riverway: Gateway Traffic

Potential strategies for promoting pedestrian safety:

• Change Road Surfacing
• Textured crosswalks
Optional Strategies for Promoting Pedestrian Safety:

- Repaint Crosswalks
- Introduce Bike Lanes
- Increase Plant Life
Riverway: Gateway Traffic Possibilities for the Future
Varnum Park / Gateway
“Coleman Playground”
Riverway: Focus on the pedestrian

• Prepare drivers to enter pedestrian zone.
• Help pedestrians access park, river.
• Shield park from highway traffic, noise.

VFW Parkway
Riverway: What do YOU think?

• What do you think of traffic calming measures on the VFW parkway?
• What do you think of traffic calming measures on the gateway?
• What kind of uses would you like to see at the gateway (residential, commercial, mixed use……)?
• What kind of uses would you like to see at the Coleman Playground?
• What does the river mean to you?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.