1.0 PUBLIC VISIONING AND PREFERENCES FOR THE TOWN CENTER

The idea of creating a new Town Center was born from the updated Barrington Master Plan in 2003. During this process, visioning sessions and a design charette were conducted with the public and the Barrington Village Center Conceptual Plan was developed along with a written description of the area's goals and objectives.

The Village District was formally established in the updated Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Review, and Subdivision Regulations of 2004. Specific zoning boundaries, dimensional and use requirements, and performances standards were created to facilitate the desired composition for the existing and future Town Center.

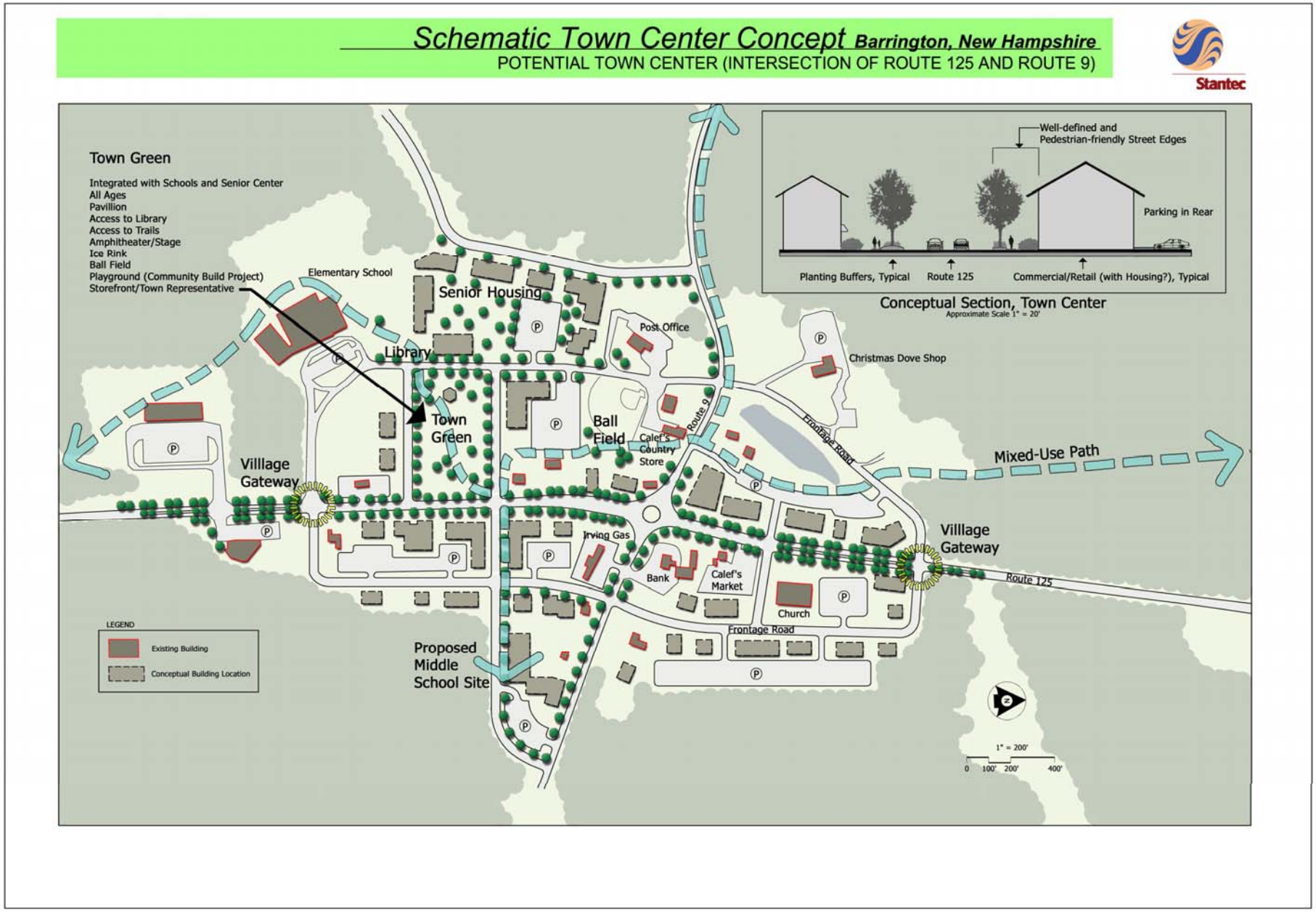
This report and concept plans represent the next step in facilitating the Barrington Town Center by refining the community's vision on a parcel-by-parcel basis and evaluating the economic feasibility for desired forms of development. Extensive community involvement was an important part of the planning process for the new Town Center. Involvement by the Planning Board, local organizations, town officials, property and business owners, and the general public was critical to creating a sense of ownership in the Town Center Plan and its implementation strategies.

1.1 "First Glance" Observations of the Project Area

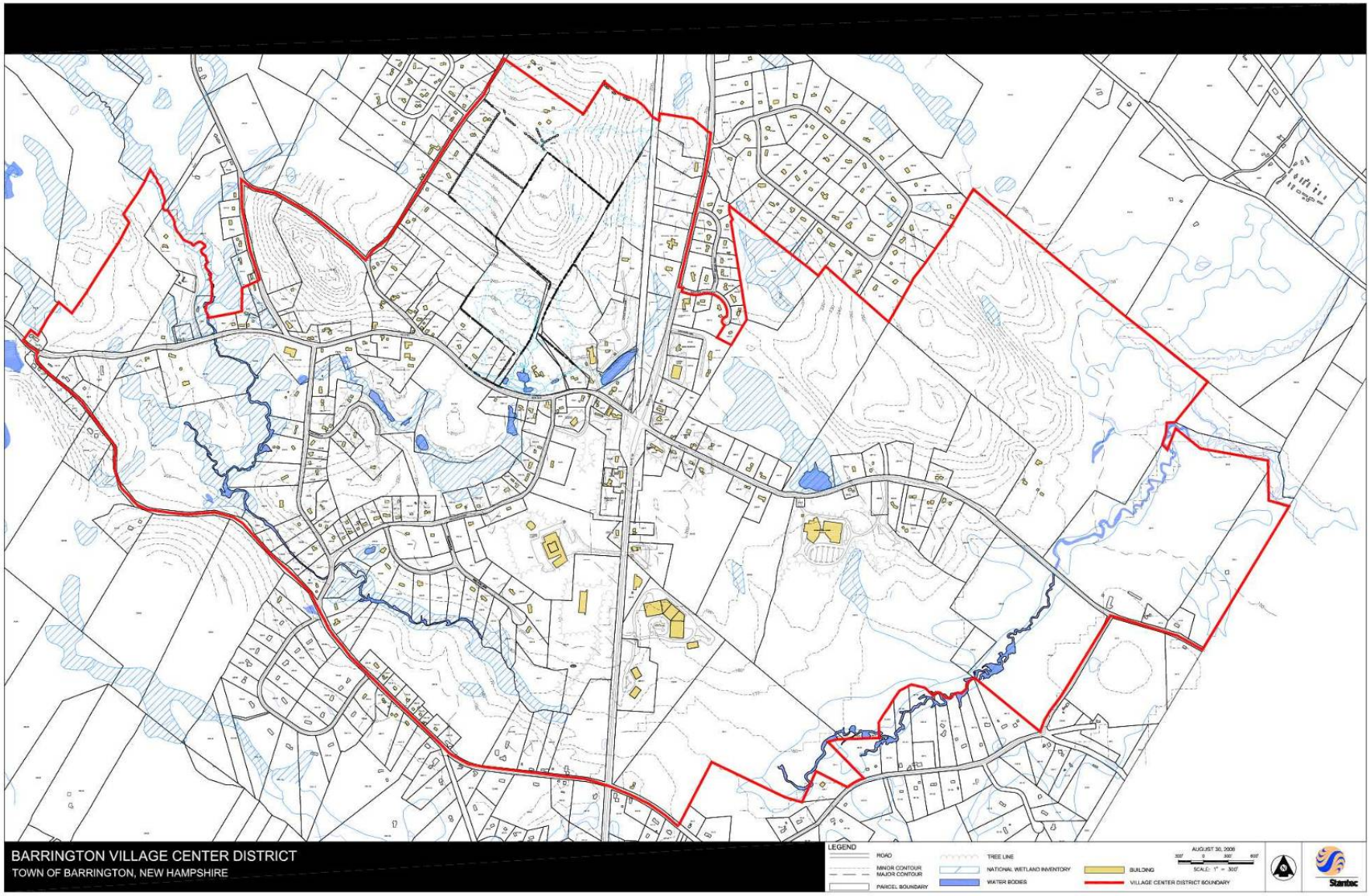
A thorough visual survey of the Town Center project area was conducted both on foot and behind the wheel. Detailed photo documentation of existing conditions, attributes, issues, and opportunities was prepared and presented at the first public workshop on February 22, 2006, and at subsequent meetings with the Planning Board. The results of the visual survey were also used in creating the Existing Conditions, Issues & Opportunities Map Series (see below).

General observations of the Town Center project area were as follows:

No Major Gateway Features – As you approach the center of the district at the intersection of Routes 125 and 9 there are no specific gateway features to welcome travelers and announce their arrival in the community. The only existing feature is the Calef's General Store and Christmas Dove billboard placed at the northeast corner of the intersection, which serves as more of a detraction than an asset in portraying the district and community as a high-quality, traditional New England village.


Schematic Town Center Concept Barrington, New Hampshire
POTENTIAL TOWN CENTER (INTERSECTION OF ROUTE 125 AND ROUTE 9)
Stantec
Town Green
Integrated with Schools and Senior Center
All Ages
Pavillion
Access to Library
Access to Trails
Amphitheater/Stage
Ice Rink
Ball Field
Playground (Community Build Project)
Storefront/Town Representative
Elementary School
Senior Housing
Library
Town Green
Post Office
Ball Field
Calef's Country Store
Route 9
Frontage Road
Christmas Dove Shop
Mixed-Use Path
Villlage Gateway
Villlage Gateway
Irving Gas
Bank
Calef's Market
Church
Frontage Road
Route 125
Proposed Middle School Site
LEGEND
Existing Building
Conceptual Building Location
Well-defined and Pedestrian-friendly Street Edges
Parking in Rear
Planting Buffers, Typical
Route 125
Commercial/Retail (with Housing?), Typical
Conceptual Section, Town Center
Approximate Scale 1" = 20'
1" = 200'
0 100' 200' 400'

Village Center Concept Plan from the Barrington Master Plan, 2003



Village Center Project Area Base Map

The purpose of installing gateway features is to give the traveler a sense of arrival and the understanding that the community takes pride in itself. The intersection of Routes 9 and 125 is the psychological entrance into Barrington's future village, yet there are no formal welcoming signs or other gateway treatments. An attractive monument sign, landscaping, and other gateway features installed at this intersection as well as at the edges of the Village District along the Route 125 and Route 9 corridors would greet people as they approach the new Town Center.

Standard Highway Sign in

Limited Directional Signage – In addition to the lack of gateway features there are no directional signs other than standard highway route signs. An example of the type of directional signage we are suggesting is signage of distinct color and materials that directs travelers to various points of interest in the district and around the community. Attractive, coordinated, and visible signage should direct these visitors to such points of interest as historic landmarks, businesses of regional interest, and future civic attractions.

Barrington Historical Society Building

Attractive Historic Buildings along Route 9 – There are several historic buildings and sites along Route 9 in the project area, particularly to the west of the Route 125 intersection. Some more notable places are Calef's General Store, Svenson Home, Haley Residence, Hayes Residence, Barrington Historical Society, Barrington Cemetery, and First Congregational Church, among others.

A Few Well-Established Businesses with Regional Appeal and Draw – Local businesses such as Calef's General Store, the Christmas Dove, and George Calef's Fine Foods are local business institutions with regional draw and appeal. Together, these and other locally established businesses serve as the foundation for adding new complementary businesses and enhancing the mix of uses.

Fair Amount of Open Lands for New Development – There are several open parcels within the Town Center project area for new development and redevelopment. Many are located in the core area around the intersection of Routes 9 and 125, such as the Svenson property, Lemos property, RLC property (south of the general store), Kay property, Barrington Pines LLC (NW corner of the intersection), out parcels at the Barrington Station Plaza, Calef property (NE of the intersection), Rice, Haley and several other smaller properties.

Calef's General Store

Good Traffic Flow in the District to Support Business Development, but Route 125/9 Intersection Is a Growing Concern – The average daily traffic volumes along Route 125 at the Route 9 intersection were approximately 14,000 in 1997–1998 and approximately 18,000 in 2002. Traffic on both of these corridors is growing, which is conducive to business development. However, peak hour congestion at the Route 125/9 intersection and seasonal traffic in the summer months is a growing concern to a number of residents.

A Large Percentage of Year-Round Residents in the Village District – The Village District included an estimated 175 dwelling units, representing about 6 percent of the total housing stock in Barrington. According to the 2000 Census, the average household size is 2.71 persons, resulting in an estimated 474 people living in the district and representing approximately 6 percent of all residents in the community. The vast majority of homes and residents in the Village District are year-round which, in general, is conducive to business development and the establishment of civic uses in the Town Center.

Growing Commercial Development along the Route 125 Corridor – There are a growing number of commercial developments along the Route 125 corridor, particularly professional offices. Some of this development is located south of the Town Center District, which could potentially impact the viability of the district

if commercial development is allowed extensively in a linear pattern along the corridor. This linear development would dilute the impact of the district and create more vehicle-oriented development, resulting in more traffic and turning movements.

Relatively Few Street Trees and Landscaping in the District – Strategically placed street trees would complement existing and future buildings, provide shade for pedestrians, portray an image of quality, tie the district together, and create a sense of place.

Limited Pedestrian and Bicycle Amenities – There are no sidewalks or designated bicycle trails within the Town Center District. Additionally, Route 125 traffic and vehicle speed make pedestrian connections challenging. Route 9 is narrow and sidewalks are also a challenge along this corridor. However, pedestrian and bicycle enhancements in combination with certain traffic-calming measures, streetscape improvements, and combined public/private siting of sidewalks and trails would greatly enhance the environment for business development and create a sense of place in the project area.

Loads of Opportunity – Numerous buildings and sites are well suited for rehabilitation, redevelopment, infill development, pocket parks, parking enhancements, historic preservation programs, visitor attractions and promotion, existing business expansion and new complementary businesses, streetscape improvements, and so on. Fortunately, the core of the Village District is a fairly small area so small and incremental changes can make a big difference.

1.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted collectively and individually with representatives of the Planning Board, selectmen, department heads, property and business owners, district residents, and other interested citizens to identify issues facing the Town Center today and opportunities for improvements in the future. Over a three-day period, the following stakeholders were interviewed by the project team (the number indicates their parcel location):

- Dwight Haley (238-0001)
- Richard Kay and Tim Noonan (234-0079)
- Charlie Soule (239-0104)
- Barrington Library Trustees
- Russ and Rodney Hayes (239-0002 & 239-0013)
- Dave Tinisham, Major Waldron Sportsman Club (237-4)
- Barrington Cenn Grange (234-0029)
- Pastor Scott Littlefield (234-0080 & 0081)
- RLC Jere Calef (239-0007)
- Eric Spinale (234-0087)
- Paul and Audrey Guptil (239-0066)
- Christmas Dove Corporation and Partnership (235-001,002,003 and more)
- Cleve Horton, Calef's Country Store (238-0050 and 0002)
- Tim Roache and Gerald Mylroie, Strafford Regional Planning Commission
- Pat Friars (239-0103)
- Pat Lavoie (234-0023)
- William and Pamela Stone (237-0007)
- Charlie Moreno (235-0005, 0008, 0009)
- Barrington Recreation Department
- Robert Lemos
- Richard Helminski (239-0079 & 0090)
- George Calef (238-0005)
- Lindsay Rice (Nick's Meadow Farm 238-0019)

These interviewees shared various opinions and ideas with the project team. A synopsis of their interviews is included in Appendix 1.

1.3 Public Visioning Session

Stantec conducted the ***Visioning and Scenario Building Workshop*** on February 22, 2006. The workshop was broadly advertised to encourage participation. The session was approximately 3 hours long and an estimated 75 people attended.

Notable comments from the visioning workshop and stakeholder interviews included:

- What is the ratio of possible economic growth that may pay off bonds or up-front community taxes?
- City water is required for community growth. Should additional infrastructure such as streetscapes and expanded water and sewer be paid by the developer or community?
- There should be a tax impact for those who benefit the most.
- Routes 9 and 125 are barriers to pedestrians.
- The state is undergoing a review of possible traffic improvements at the intersection and the Route 125 corridor.
- Build-out scenarios propose curb cuts at each parcel; currently it's at three per 500 feet.
- Town Center lighting is needed that is different than from standard highway lighting.
- The new center needs visibility from the highway. We need to convince the Planning Board to allow some tree removal.
- The community needs opportunities for townspeople to gather and for others to come to town and buy things.
- It's prudent to plan for growth; the community is feeling pressure now from bordering towns.
- The proposed Town Center should incorporate senior housing and community ball fields. Currently, there are no town-owned ball fields.
- Most lands surrounding the Town Center are held in private large tracts.
- The development plan should incorporate village history.
- The plan should visually link the new town green to the Christmas Dove's pond and locate a new public library in this area.
- Encourage paved pedestrian trails.
- Larger stores and category busters on Route 16 and 202A in Epping are going to take business away from Barrington. The community is too close to larger business districts in Rochester, Durham, and Dover. Local stores can't compete with these big boxes unless they sell different merchandise.
- Parking in front of Calef's store is dangerous. People are backing out right into traffic. The land behind the store should be bought to accommodate all the businesses that are growing around the intersection.
- There is a fair amount of parking located behind Calef's store but it is not well signed or used by customers.

- A sign needs to be installed identifying the park-and-ride lot and a crosswalk should be placed across Route 9 from the lot to Calef's store for pedestrian safety.

- The minimum lot size requirement (particularly for SF homes at 80,000 sf) is too large and will not allow for enough housing units to make the development project worth while.

- The Planning Board's use of the 60-ft boulevard right-of-way cross section for residential subdivision access roads makes roadway construction even more expensive.

- The 62+ requirement for senior housing is too restrictive. It should be changed to 55+ which would broaden the market and still achieve the town's goals of creating more housing for older residents while not generating additional demands on local schools.

- Route 9 traffic is partially caused by growth in Epping and can back up in the afternoons over a mile.

- Timing is poor on the traffic signal at the Rt. 125 and 9 intersection and should be fixed with a looped or smart system.

- As traffic continues to grow on Route 9 more people are using Mallego Road, Cate Road, and Province Road as a bypass to Route 125. There is now too much traffic on each of these roads and travel speeds are too high.

- The size of buildings should be limited to 10,000 square feet, which some feel will exclude drug stores and grocery stores from the community.

- Some older residents are being forced to move out because taxes and property values are getting too high. Also, the elderly need doctors, hospitals, and drug stores, which are not readily available in Barrington.

- The library is developing a long-range plan for added space and amenities, and preliminary findings suggest that a new library should contain 14,000 to 16,000 square feet, be sited on 3 to 4 acres, and have about 80 to 100 parking spaces. The trustees would like the new facility to also include function and meeting space and an art gallery. Their goal is to make it the cultural center of Barrington. The trustees figure that the new library should be built in the next 5 to 10 years, and preliminary estimates are $2 to $3 million for construction. The trustees' immediate concern is finding a property and hoping that a landowner will donate the space needed for a new library. They would like to be in the Town Center.

- Specialty stores are not needed in Barrington. The Town Center should include local services such as a grocery store, auto services, a drug store, and other daily needs.

- It is important to keep community events such as the antique truck show, Fourth of July fireworks, and the road race.

- Concern was raised about possible new residential development on some of the larger tracts of land east of the Route 9/125 intersection.

- A town common or public park would fit well behind Calef's store and next to the ball fields. This site could also be used for elderly housing, which is needed in the community.

- Meeting spaces are needed that can be used for local organizations and clubs such as the Women's Club, American Legion, Boy Scouts, AA, WeightWatchers, and others.

- There is potential for a connection between the Congregational church and Calef's store such as a trail system that might also connect the cemetery.

- What are the potential financial benefits and impacts of developing the Town Center?
- Small home-based businesses should be allowed to continue.
- Conservation subdivisions should be allowed in the Village District so that single-family homes could be located on smaller lots but centered around common open spaces as in traditional village neighborhoods.
- Barrington needs more moderately priced housing.
- Selective thinning is needed at the Route 125/9 intersection to open up views of Calef's store, the pond, and Christmas Dove.
- Public indoor and outdoor recreational facilities should be expanded in the Village District. Ball fields off Smoke Street and on school grounds are not very accessible to the public. A large indoor facility as well as outdoor fields could be built on the open parcel behind Calef's store or on the Christmas Dove site.
- Civic and cultural uses are important to consider for the Town Center. Barrington should be recognized as a great place to raise a family and business.
- Although the volume of traffic on Route 125 is good for business, the congestion may be creating more of a disadvantage if people are not willing to shop at local stores due to existing conditions.

The purpose of the first visioning session was to identify the district's general strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and specific locations for potential development or redevelopment. The visioning workshop, along with the stakeholder interviews, were used to formulate potential development project strategies such as the best locations for development, proper mix of uses, size and scale, and parking and transportation needs as well as an overall conceptual design for the Village District.

1.4 Planning Board Workshops

Workshops were conducted with the Planning Board on April 27 and May 11, 2006 to discuss the results of the public visioning process, stakeholder interviews, and initial observations and assessment of current properties in the Village District and their development potential. Also discussed were the potential constraints of current regulations on the Town Center based on the community's future vision.

An initial concept plan was prepared base on the current land use regulations and was quickly rejected by the Planning Board. The board considered the concept to be too focused on residential development with not enough commercial development and orientation toward Route 9 rather than Route 125. The board also wanted to concentrate most of the commercial and mixed use development on the west side of the 125 corridor rather than placing the village core around the Route 125/9 intersection.

The board's input led to two additional village concept plans which illustrated more of a commercial, mixed-use Town Center, particularly in the northwest quadrant of the intersection, surrounded by traditional village neighborhoods. These two alternative concept plans also demonstrated different treatments to the Route 125/9 intersection (a signal vs. a roundabout), internal access roads on each of the quadrants, multi-family elderly housing, single-family homes, and civic uses including a new town common and library. The concept plans also portrayed various commercial and mixed-use infill development and renovations of existing buildings.

The Planning Board selected their preferred elements of each on the concept alternatives and provided additional input, which led to the preparation of a third village concept plan (or the Preliminary Town Center Concept Plan).

1.5 Public Workshop on Preliminary Town Center Concept Plan

The Planning Board hosted a public workshop on July 27, 2006 to discuss the preliminary Town Center concept plan. Approximately 50 citizens were in attendance to participate in the working session. A formal presentation of the concept plan was presented to the group followed by questions and answers. Participants were also

encouraged to stop by the Town Hall and review the concept plans that were on display. Citizens were asked to submit their comments to the Town Administrator in writing, by email or in person. Public comments received after the meeting as well as the minutes from the Planning Board meetings are included in Appendix A.

Through the Planning Board sessions and public visioning workshops, the following objectives and guidance were provided for preparing a creative yet viable Town Center Plan for Barrington:

- The planning framework should include a coherent vision for the future.
- The plan needs to identify the perceived identity of the center and specific methods to enhance its vitality.
- It should include the desired visual, architectural, and aesthetic characteristics of the center.
- It should delineated appropriate uses and desired activities that provide for mixed-use retail, office, institutional, residential, and recreational and/or open space gathering spaces and uses.
- It should offer opportunities to connect adjacent commercial properties on Routes 125 and 9 through pathways and roadway connections.
- The plan should provide a framework of design guidelines that incorporate the principles of traditional development patterns while allowing developers and landowner's flexibility in land use and design.

The Barrington Town Center Conceptual Plan is presented in Section 3 of this report.