

NEW MILFORD RIVERFRONT REVITALIZATION



**SEPTEMBER 2020
(Update January 2021)**

The New Milford Riverfront Revitalization Plan was prepared with funds from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Planning Grant program.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The New Milford Riverfront Revitalization Plan builds on the input gathered from more than 20 stakeholder interviews, three public workshops with more than 400 participants (digital and in person), multiple design team charrettes, consultation with the New Milford Town Council, and guidance from the Riverfront Revitalization Committee and Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Planning Grant Committee who met regularly over the year-long-plus process. Special thanks to the following for their participation:

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Properties); Tobacco Harvest (The New
Milford Historical Society)

Page 23: Century Brass (Norm Cummings,
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Page 48: Meriden Green (WRT Planning +
Design); Millennium Bridge (N Chadwick ©);
City of Bellingham, Washington; Colonel
Sam Smith Park Ice Trail (The City of
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Page 49: Nevada City Cohousing (FACD
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A scenic view of a riverbank. In the foreground, a wooden railing runs along a grassy slope. A paved path leads from the railing towards a large, lush green weeping willow tree. To the left of the tree, a calm river flows. The background shows more greenery and a building under a blue sky with light clouds.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Create a dynamic 21st century riverfront integrated with New Milford's Town Center to catalyze community development, resiliency, and revenue generation for the town while protecting the Housatonic River and its ecosystem.





FOREWORD

Welcome to New Milford's Riverfront **Revitalization** Plan, an ambitious new blueprint that reimagines one of our untapped resources – the Housatonic Riverfront and its connections to our historic Village Center business district.

This plan provides the framework to implement exciting new concepts as well as finalizes those generated over the past few years.

- Better access to the riverfront from our Downtown
- Providing valuable riverfront and remediated brownfield properties for economic development, new recreational opportunities, and much-needed housing options
- Alleviation of traffic congestion in the Town Center

The catalyst for this plan began in 2016 when a large-scale natural gas power plant was proposed for the town-owned Century Brass location – on the fringe of our beloved downtown Village Center and across from the Housatonic River. New Milford's citizens demanded a better plan. The developer withdrew its interest, and a committee was formed so we could determine our own destiny and take advantage of the riverfront and adjacent town-owned properties.

Community planning in this context represents the proactive role government can take in working with residents, property owners, and developers to ensure that the redevelopment of former or underutilized industrial/brownfield sites is undertaken in a manner that fully maximizes their potential to meet community needs. The result is a better quality-of-life.

This plan is a living document with a long-term vision: to create a resilient and dynamic 21st-century riverfront integrated with New Milford's Town Center to catalyze community development, resiliency, and revenue generation for the town while protecting the Housatonic River and its ecosystem.

It outlines the principles, context, objectives, and recommendations for a long-term plan to open up this underappreciated and formerly industrial riverfront area, creating increased access, recreational activities, tree-lined walkways, and much-needed new housing. New commercial and business uses will bring people closer to the river while simultaneously generating new jobs and tax revenue. And the Town's investments will inspire and spur private redevelopment.

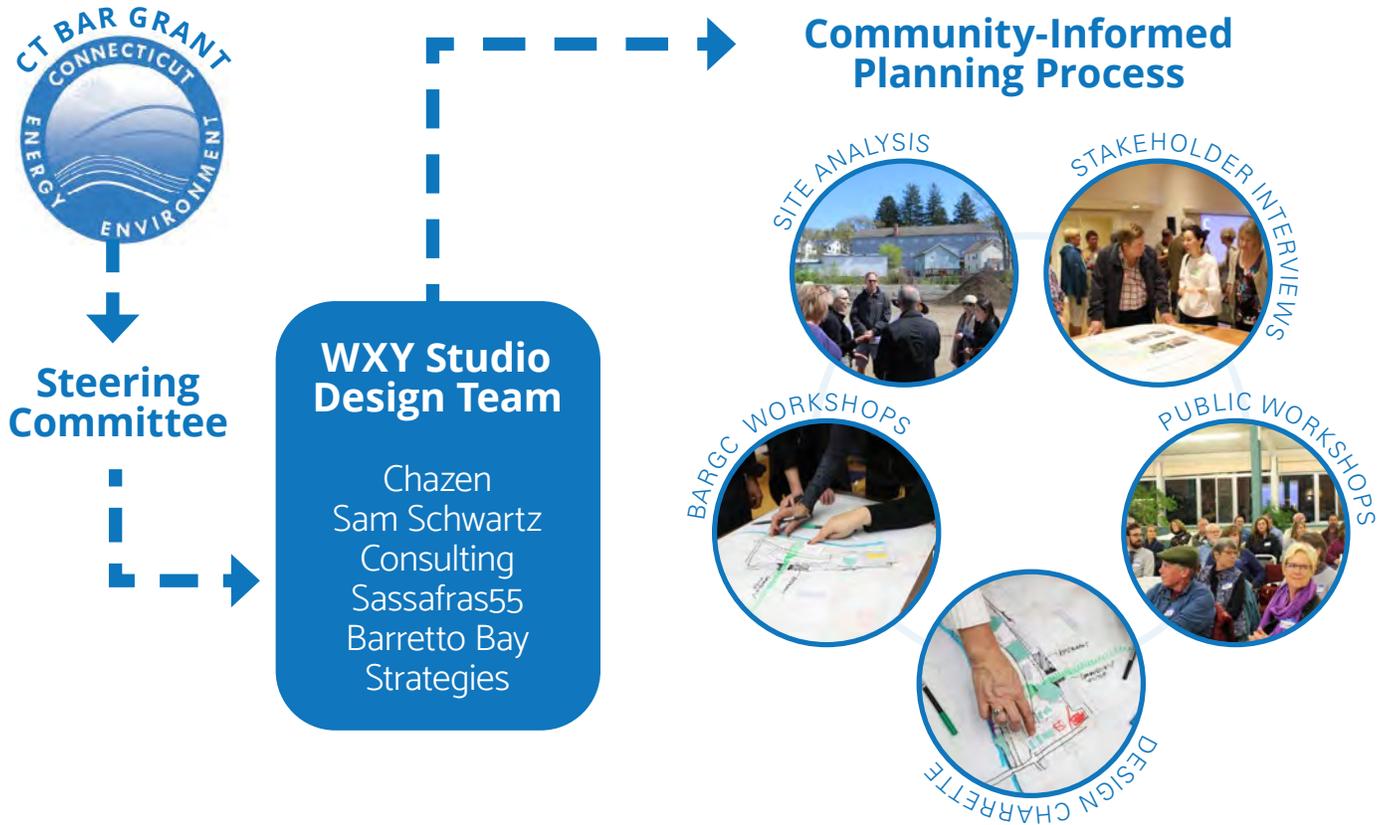
However, the best ideas are only as good as their implementation. Vision without implementation is counterproductive. Execution of the plan will be opportunistic and flexible, driven by the short-term as well as long-term needs of the community. Roadway and sidewalk improvements, creation of greenways and connectors, redevelopment of town and privately owned brownfields, as well as the construction of new recreational facilities and housing are integral to turning this ambitious plan into reality.

This important work was made possible by a \$170,000 Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization (BAR) Planning Grant from the State of Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development. This grant enabled the committee to retain the firm of WXY ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN, a nationally recognized master plan consultant with expertise in riverfront revitalization, to work with both the committee and the community to create, collaborate and refine our many ideas and aspirations into the cohesive vision shared in this report.

Thank you to all of the community members and appointed and elected officials who attended and participated in our public workshops and presentations. Your support is critical to realizing this vision. Thank you to our town staff who shared their expertise and insights, to the Town Council for its encouragement, and to Mayor Pete Bass for his foresight, steadfast leadership, and encouragement.

Liba H. Fuhman, Chairman
New Milford Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Planning Grant Committee

Overview



New Milford’s Riverfront and Brownfield Area Revitalization Master Plan (the Plan) is an action-oriented, community-based strategic master plan that will guide development for the next two decades. The Plan will serve as a flexible framework for connecting New Milford’s Town Center to the isolated Housatonic River riverfront through catalytic re-use of underutilized brownfield sites.

New Milford’s Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Planning Grant Steering Committee (BARGC) commissioned and oversaw the study and planning process, funded by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Planning Grant program. Preparation of the BAR study is an essential component of the town’s ongoing economic development goals to grow and sustain a vibrant Town Center and bring new business, jobs and housing to New Milford. The program is designed to empower applicants with comprehensive redevelopment strategies so brownfields are transformed “from liabilities to community assets.”

Previous planning efforts over the past decade have highlighted areas of opportunity for the town and the surrounding region. The study considered and incorporated those efforts and their respective recommendations, and initiatives already under way.

The master planning process included stakeholder interviews, community visioning and public engagement exercises, environmental

Developed Thematic Goals and Actionable Strategies to Achieve Them



Leveraging Riverfront Brownfields



Town-Wide Revitalization



assessment of known brownfield sites, consultation with relevant Town departments, and multiple design charrettes to develop appropriate options and recommendations for reuse.

Through consideration of these plans, public consultation, and BARGC input, the following thematic goals were developed to achieve the vision of a more connected town and riverfront:

1) Arts and Culture Grow and sustain a vibrant Town Center that prioritizes projects enhancing quality of life and attracting new residents, businesses, and entrepreneurial investment.

2) Recreation Expand year-round use of the Housatonic River and the riverfront as a recreational asset for people of all ages

3) Walkable Address topographic and program barriers to create stronger pedestrian connections between the Town Center and the redesigned Housatonic River riverfront

4) Sustainable Create a sustainable riverfront vision that remediates contaminated sites, addresses stormwater management and flooding, and protects and celebrates the river's natural ecosystem

Implementation of the Plan will require public and private investment to relocate enterprises, and to leverage state and federal funding to remediate land, setting the stage for transformative reuse.

Study Area

The Study Area for the plan is defined as the Housatonic River corridor from the former Century Brass to the north to Hidden Treasures Park to the south, including the Town Center east of the river and Native Meadows Preserve west of the river. Underutilized riverfront brownfield properties limiting town and river connections are the geographic focus for priority projects. The Plan emphasizes redevelopment of these properties for their catalytic potential to seed investment that will lead to greater area-wide changes.

1) TOWN CENTER

The Town Center bounded by Elm Street/Bennitt Street to the north, East Street/Route 202 to the east, and Bridge Street/Route 202 to the south, and the Housatonic Railroad to the west. Priority sites include Patriot's Way, Boardman Terrace and streetscape enhancements to improve the pedestrian at-grade rail crossing.

2) HOUSATONIC RIVERFRONT

The Housatonic River from Young's Field Road and Housatonic Avenue to the north, the Housatonic Railroad to the east, Hidden Treasures Park to the South, and Route 7/Danbury and Kent Roads to the west. Priority sites include Young's Field, Native Meadows Preserve and New Milford's Department of Public Works.

3) HOUSATONIC AVENUE CORRIDOR

Housatonic Avenue connects through traffic from the downtown via Young's Field Road to residential areas in northern New Milford. The area is bounded by Boardman and Aspetuck Ridge Roads to the north, the Housatonic Railroad to the east, Young's Field Road to the south and the Housatonic River to the west. Priority sites include the New Milford Recycling Center and Department of Public Works and stockpile storage.

4) CENTURY BRASS

The 60-acre+ former Century Brass site is a known brownfield with remediation underway.

1



2



3



4



Catalytic Elements

The success of the plan will be catalyzed by the creation of new public space activities adjacent to the Housatonic River and the Town Center (see page 46-47).



1

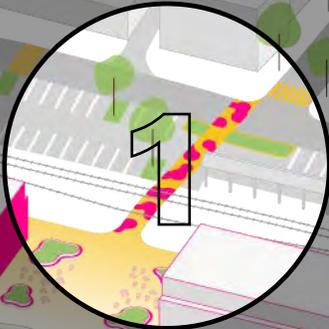
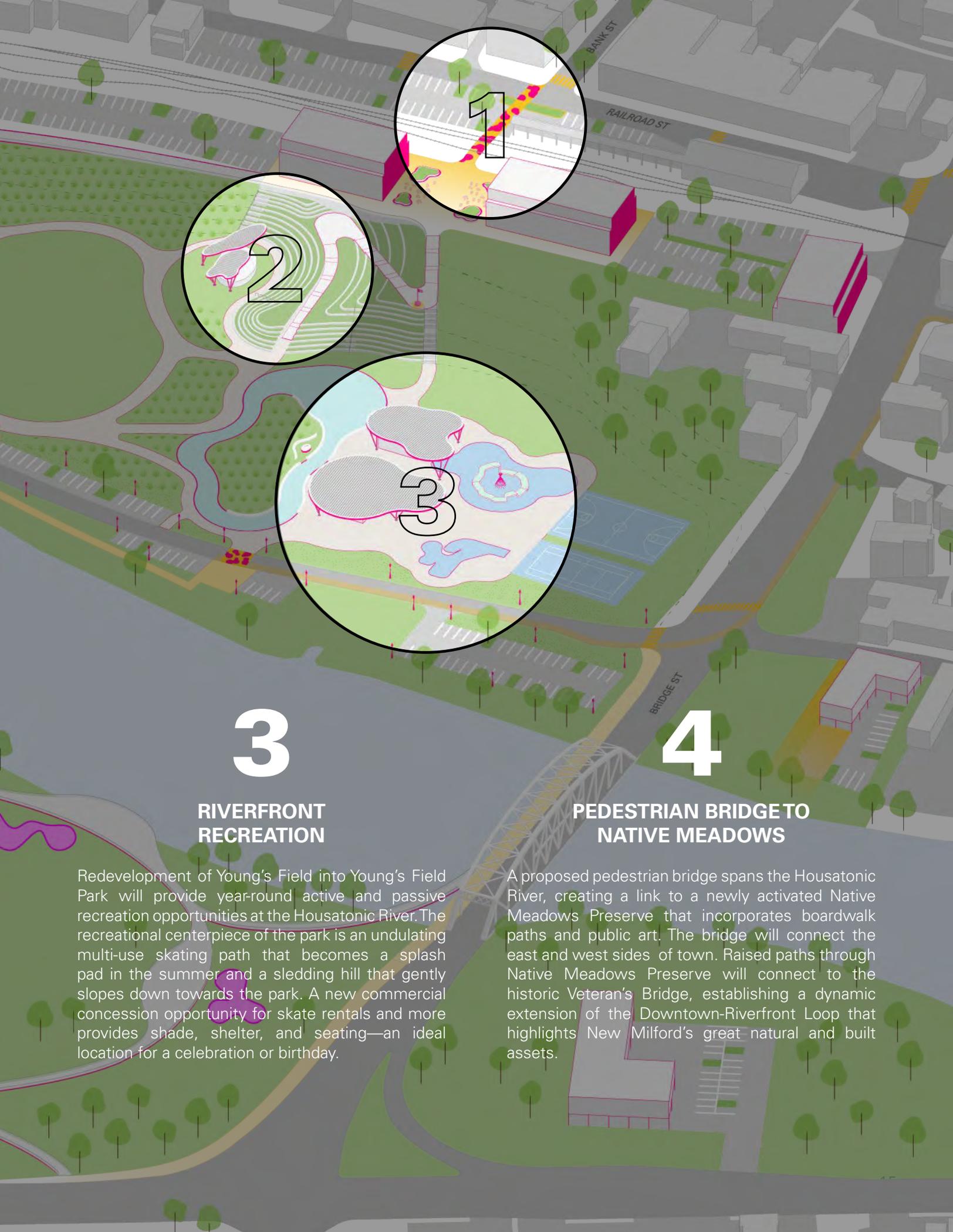
PUBLIC REALM LINKAGES

Railroad Plaza is designed as a public gateway that frames views of the Housatonic River and attracts people to cross the railroad from Bank Street through to the river. Two new mixed-use anchors on Patriot's Way will extend the Town Center commercial activity west of the railroad, activating the underutilized area with ground-floor retail and apartments on top. The buildings flank a public plaza, creating an outdoor living room equipped with seating, shade, and plantings.

2

OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER

The Outdoor Amphitheater will serve as a cultural node for local and regional events, adjacent to festival grounds and an active riverfront. The amphitheater uses grass-covered terraced seating with capacity for 300-600 people to gently step down from the Town Center to Young's Field Park. A path sweeps through the amphitheater seating, creating river viewsheds and moments for reflection at the 9/11 Memorial. The orientation of the stage protects performers and the audiences from the sun and maximizes the river as a scenic backdrop.



3

RIVERFRONT RECREATION

Redevelopment of Young’s Field into Young’s Field Park will provide year-round active and passive recreation opportunities at the Housatonic River. The recreational centerpiece of the park is an undulating multi-use skating path that becomes a splash pad in the summer and a sledding hill that gently slopes down towards the park. A new commercial concession opportunity for skate rentals and more provides shade, shelter, and seating—an ideal location for a celebration or birthday.

4

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO NATIVE MEADOWS

A proposed pedestrian bridge spans the Housatonic River, creating a link to a newly activated Native Meadows Preserve that incorporates boardwalk paths and public art. The bridge will connect the east and west sides of town. Raised paths through Native Meadows Preserve will connect to the historic Veteran’s Bridge, establishing a dynamic extension of the Downtown-Riverfront Loop that highlights New Milford’s great natural and built assets.





INTRODUCTION

Introduction

New Milford's Riverfront **Revitalization** Plan brings together strategies for achieving four thematic goals within the geographic study area that span the Housatonic Riverfront from Century Brass to the north to Veteran's Bridge to the South. The Plan prioritizes remediation and reuse of private and town-owned brownfield sites for area-wide revitalization. The team developed design interventions for the Study Area through research, deliberation, site analysis, environmental assessment, and consultation with the community over a year-long study process starting in April 2019.

1) TOWN CENTER

A quintessential New England town, New Milford has a diverse mix of small businesses, retail, dining and entertainment options, unique historic architectural character and a picturesque Town Green. Challenges include limited and difficult pedestrian connections to the riverfront, traffic and circulation build-up, and inefficient parking.

2) HOUSATONIC RIVERFRONT

Young's Field and the Town's Department of Public Works (DPW) dominate the Housatonic Riverfront from Veteran's Bridge along Young's Field Road/Housatonic Avenue. The riverfront has natural assets on the west side—Native Meadows Preserve—and recreational assets to the east. Truck circulation and heavy uses associated with the DPW are incongruent with family-friendly recreational activities along the river: a playground and skate park, basketball and tennis courts, kayak launch, softball fields, and the River Trail.

3) HOUSATONIC AVENUE CORRIDOR

The Housatonic Avenue Corridor is an important, though lightly trafficked, north-south corridor for residents and emergency services that runs from Young's Field Road and Patriot's Way to Century Brass. The town-owned property adjacent to the rail line and currently home to the recycling center, DPW pipe and stockpile storage and a salt shed, sits on a prized parcel outside the floodplain, with river views. Challenges include a low (9-foot) railroad underpass that makes truck circulation impossible.

4) CENTURY BRASS

The Century Brass Mill was a 320,000-square-foot brass mill on a 60+ acre parcel that closed in 1986. The town began remediation after it acquired the site in 1999, and more recently the former mill was demolished with plans underway to remove contaminated steel. The concrete slab foundation of the original mill remains in place. The massive scale of the site and further remediation needs (depending on end-use) make it challenging for re-use without significant investment. Direct utility and rail connections make it an attractive site for certain reuses.

The master plan design highlights four priority projects in and adjacent to Young's Field, including the baseball fields, Patriot's Way, and the Department of Public Works' areas. The re-imagining of these areas, which are predominantly publicly-owned, offers an opportunity to bring new business and housing as well as cultural and recreational opportunities that will reinvigorate New Milford and help to catalyze other sites in the New Milford Town Center. It is recognized that these projects cannot be achieved without relocating the current uses and remediating brownfield conditions that underlie these sites.



4

3

1

2



2,000 FT

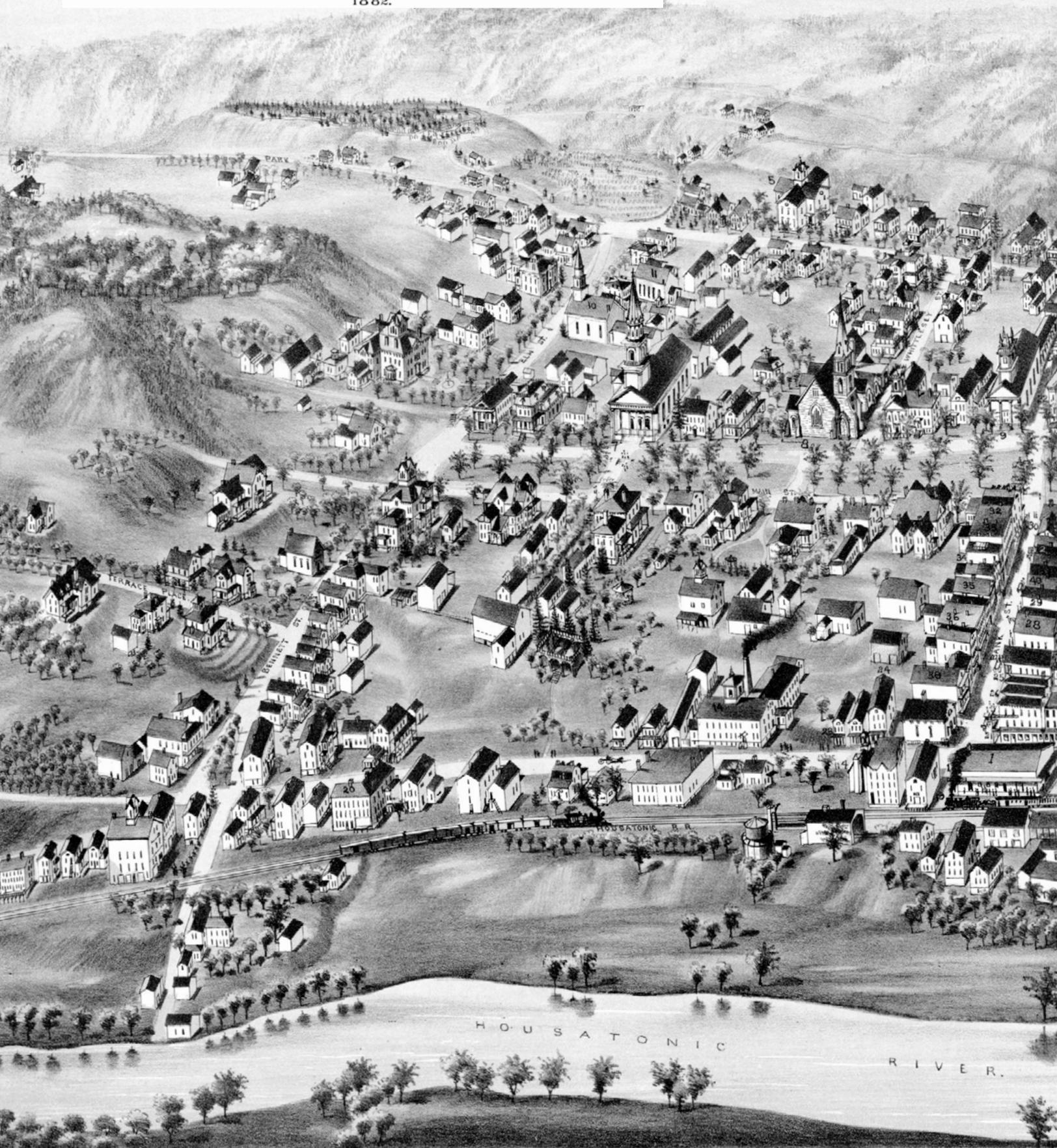


VIEW OF
NEW MILFORD.

CONNECTICUT

OR BAILEY & CO. PUB. BOSTON.

1882.



History



HOUSATONIC RIVER

The Housatonic River stretches 150 miles from the Berkshires of Massachusetts, through western Connecticut, draining into Long Island Sound. The River's watershed helped seed agriculture and industry in New Milford and the region, but decades of industrial and human waste led to contamination and eroded water quality. Since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1973, there has been significant control over industrial waste discharge and efforts to remove contaminated soil from the river bottom and banks, but there are many areas of the river that are still not safe for fishing or swimming. In 1997, the EPA declared several miles of the Housatonic in Massachusetts a superfund site due to the discharge of chemical waste and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) by Pittsfield's General Electric Company from the 1930s to 1977. These releases affected aquatic life and habitats and contributed to a loss in recreational activities. Today, most of the river's pollution is caused by stormwater runoff from agriculture, streets and parking lots, soil erosion, and seepage from dumps and landfills.



AGRICULTURE

The River was once a natural edge flanked by wetlands teeming with plant and animal life that sustained the earliest known settlers, the Mahican Indians, who farmed the river's floodplain banks and fished for food. English settlers expanded agriculture and family farms as a major activity in the region since first settling in New Milford in the early 1700s. Near the end of the 1800s, tobacco and dairy farming reached their peak in the Town. The wide, fertile floodplain that is Young's Field today was used to grow broadleaf tobacco for cigar wrappings. Tobacco farming dwindled by the end of World War II but many of the historic warehouse buildings remain today. In the past few decades, a thriving local food movement and the Town have saved several family farms in New Milford.



RAIL

The Housatonic Railroad (HRRC) runs along 161 miles of track from Pittsfield, Massachusetts to Connecticut and New York state. From its completion in 1840, the Berkshire Line was used for passenger and freight service, helping expand New Milford's agriculture and industry into urban markets. The last passenger service ran in 1971 but the privately held HRRC has continued freight service since. There are renewed efforts to restore passenger service requiring coordination between publicly-owned segments of track in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York and the HRRC.



INDUSTRY AND MANUFACTURING

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Housatonic River played a central role in the development of iron, power, paper, and textile industries that flourished in the region. Areas up-river, rich in iron ore melted and shaped iron in river-adjacent furnaces, using the river to cool and eventually transport it. In the 1800s, there was extensive mining of marble and limestone, and the start of papermaking in the region. Multiple dams began appearing in the late 1800s, powering the industrial operations. The Connecticut Light & Power Company built the Rocky River hydro-electric plant in 1928, providing power to the town and helping to grow industry. More recently, Nestlé, Robertson Bleachery, Century Brass and Kimberly-Clark held manufacturing footholds in the area. While New Milford and the area have seen a long decline in industry and manufacturing, today Kimberly-Clark continues to manufacture tissue products, and joins newer industries like Neeltran and Chemical Marketing Concepts, global leaders in their fields.

Opportunities and Assets



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

New Milford has a strong civic culture, with an organized network of engaged residents and volunteers that take on improvement and advocacy projects throughout town. Local businesses and organizations join the Town in providing cultural opportunities such as concerts, theater, cinema, art shows and festivals. Home to numerous hiking trails, Candlewood Lake, scenic vistas and working farms, New Milford offers a broad range of outdoor recreational activities. Extensive outreach reported that the family-friendly, high quality of life is the Town's major asset. There is an opportunity to cater to a changing community profile and attract new residents by offering housing and amenities to reverse the trend of an aging and shrinking population.



CHARACTER AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The intersection of a picturesque Town Green and Bank Street—each flanked with historic buildings—exemplifies the best of New Milford's distinctive architectural identity. But unused and underutilized building stock, and zoning that constrains housing in the Village Center limit the potential of a thriving year-round Town Center. Careful consideration for reuse and new development that is respectful of the scale and architectural vocabulary of the town alongside review of zoning regulations can revitalize the Town Center without compromising its small-town charm. New Milford's three distinctive bridges—Boardman, Veteran's, and Lover's Leap—should be celebrated as contributors to New Milford's vibrant built form.



ECONOMY

What sets New Milford apart from other similarly sized towns is its vibrant Town Center shopping with comparatively strong independent retail and restaurant components. The town's location, roughly 10 miles off a major highway, has somewhat limited its ability to compete for major commercial and manufacturing operations that need expedient highway access. At the same time, it has protected a high quality of life and local business scene. In-town businesses suffer from retail leakage in favor of big box commercial stores along Route 7, which draw regional shoppers, and beyond. There is an opportunity to recapture local and regional shoppers who currently bypass the Town Center.



TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

New Milford has a tight network of local roads, crossed by State Routes 7, 202, and 67 that connect to I-84 and beyond. The predominately low-density suburban and rural land-use of New Milford, with limited public transportation, incomplete pedestrian and bike networks, and no passenger rail service all contribute to a high reliance on automobiles and an increasingly strained infrastructure. Veteran's Bridge acts as a bottleneck causing traffic along Route 7, Bridge Street and East Street. Low underpasses along the Housatonic Railroad limit truck circulation. Current efforts to improve walkability, bike networks, and restored passenger rail service in addition to increasing shared mobility options promise opportunities for decreased car reliance, alleviating circulation strains in the future.



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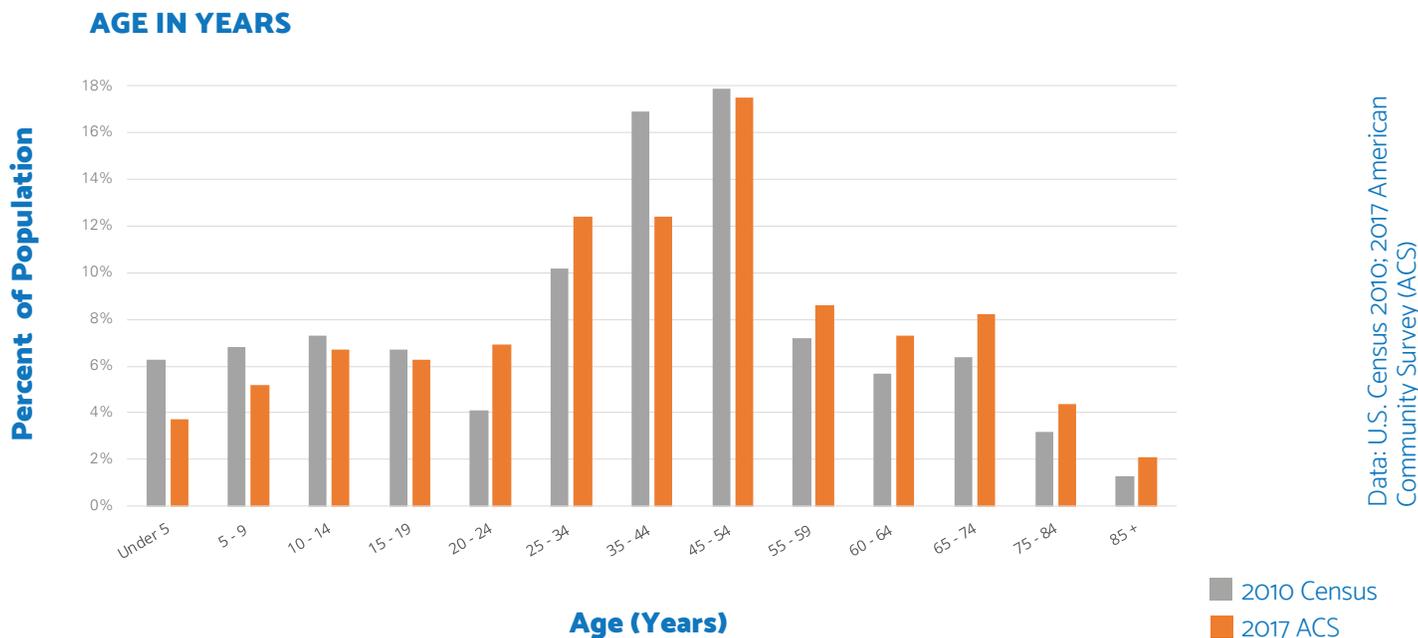
A large, white, stylized number '2' is centered in the upper half of the image. The background is a photograph of a park or residential area with green grass, trees, a wooden bench, and a black street lamp. The sky is blue with some clouds.

2

CONTEXT

Planning Context

Changes in New Milford's Population (2010 - 2017)



New Milford, located in southwest Litchfield County at the foot of the Litchfield Hills, is the largest town geographically in Connecticut and has a population of approximately 27,000 people and an employment base of approximately 8,300 people. New Milford's population is aging and declining. From 2010-2017, there was a more than 5% loss in residents ages 35-44, which has widespread economic impacts, including a shrinking customer base, decrease in school-aged children, and overall limit on the town's ability to grow its economy.

At the same time, New Milford is becoming older and more diverse. From 2010-2017, the Latino population nearly doubled, comprising in 2019 8.4% of the population. To ensure a healthy tax base in the future, New Milford needs to retain existing residents and continue to attract new residents and workers by expanding housing, employment, retail and entertainment opportunities that cater to the changing demographics of the town.

Lack of a robust portfolio of housing at variable price points is a barrier limiting potential growth of New Milford's tax and worker base. The homeowner vacancy rate from 2010-2017 was less than 1% (a healthy homeowner vacancy rate for a similarly sized town is 2%), indicating that there is a potential strain on housing.

The rental market indicates a more acute strain that has worsened in

CENSUS SNAPSHOT

TOTAL POPULATION ESTIMATES

	2010	2017
New Milford	28,159	27,380

AVERAGE MEDIAN AGE

	2010	2017
New Milford	40	44
Litchfield Co.	43	47
Connecticut	39	41

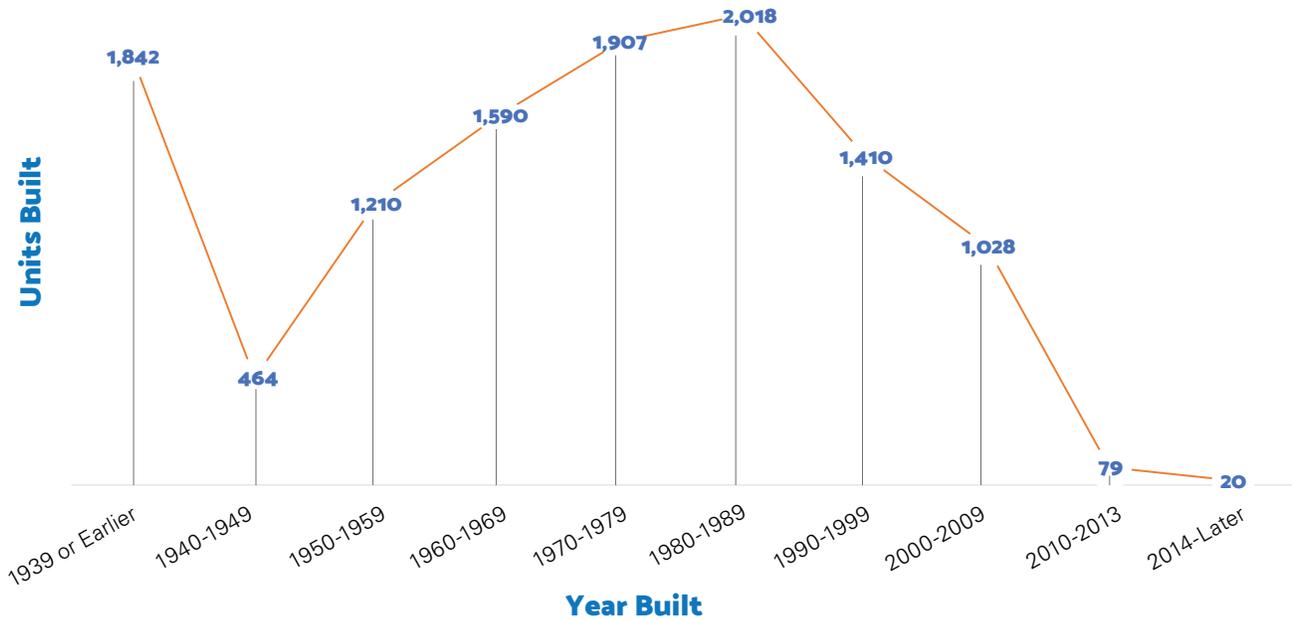
AVERAGE MEDIAN INCOME

	2017
New Milford	\$83,676
Litchfield County	\$76,438
Connecticut	\$73,781

HOUSING VACANCY RATE

	2010	2017
Rentals	14%	3%
Homeowners	0.7%	0.8%

Number of Housing Units Built (1939-2017)



Data: U.S. Census 2010; 2017 American Community Survey (ACS)

MARKET DEMAND*

100-250K SF

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL FLEX SPACE/
COMMERCIAL

122-567

RESIDENTIAL UNITS
100-350 UNITS FOR SENIORS

110K SF

RETAIL

21K SF

GROCERY STORE

50-85**

HOTEL ROOMS

*Camoin Town-Wide Market
Analysis (2019)

** Pinnacle Advising Hotel
Feasibility Analysis

recent years: from 2010-2017 the rental vacancy rate dropped from 14% in 2010 to 3% (a healthy rental vacancy rate for a similarly sized town is around 8%). Nearly 50% of renters in New Milford were rent burdened in 2017, paying 35% or more of their income on rent.

Together these indicators point to a strained housing market and a growing housing affordability crisis. Increasing affordable housing options would free up residents' discretionary income for local spending.

In 2019, Camoin 310 (Camoin) conducted a town-wide market analysis of New Milford. They found that seniors will primarily drive demand for new housing in the coming years, the only population segment projected to see substantial growth, followed by younger adults. Since 2010, there have been fewer than 100 new housing units built. Promisingly, there are new units in the residential development pipeline, with more than 400 units either under construction, approved but undeveloped, or pending approval.

Camoin's town-wide analysis also found that small-scale industrial flex space is the strongest market opportunity for real estate expansion in New Milford. There is latent market demand from existing businesses and startups looking to scale up. Top industry growth sectors are projected to be: Wholesalers and Durable Goods; Computer Systems Design and Related Services & Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing; Research and Development in Life Sciences; and Professional, Scientific & Technical Services.

Built Environment



YOUNG'S FIELD ROAD



YOUNG'S FIELD
SOFTBALL + RECREATION
RIVERFEST
TOWN EVENTS



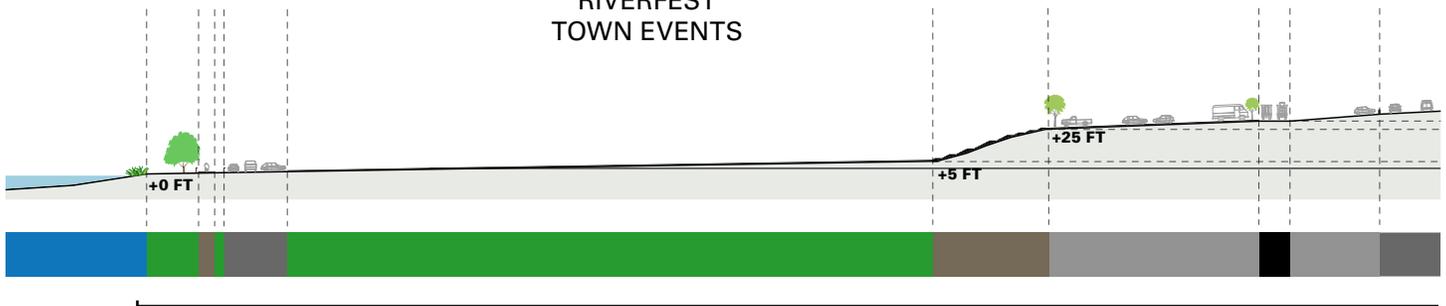
NARROW
STAIRCASE



PATRIOT'S WAY RAILROAD STREET

HOUSATONIC RIVER RIVER TRAIL

RAIL CROSSING



The built, environmental, topographic, and programmatic conditions from Railroad Street to the river's edge act as real and perceptual barriers limiting the Housatonic riverfront from feeling like an integral part of the Town Center. Historically, both Bennitt and Bridge Streets extended down to the River's edge, enabling easier transport of goods and people from the active river and agricultural river edge up the steep embankment to the railroad and Town Center while keeping the riverfront natural. Young's Field Road now runs along the Housatonic River's edge, an important connector, but one that also acts as a barrier to accessing the river.

The river's rich floodplains are used today for recreation—baseball fields, playground, skate park, basketball, and tennis courts— as well as the Department of Public Works (DPW), with some commercial uses on privately-owned parcels. Recreational programming and occasional town events draw people to the riverfront, however the active uses are limited to fair weather and can be impacted by flood events. The historic ridge that climbs 25 feet from the recreation fields to Patriot's Way remains intact and largely unchanged, except for a narrow 5-foot wide staircase for pedestrians. Patriot's Way is an underutilized asset whose surface parking and use as a cut-through to get to the DPW are further barriers to town/river connections.



BANK STREET



TOWN GREEN



CHURCH STREET



50-FOOT GRADE CHANGE FROM RIVERFRONT TO CHURCH STREET

Bridging the distance from the Town Center to the Housatonic riverfront is both a challenge and an opportunity that can be addressed through building, landscaping, and programming changes to the nearly 20 acres of town-owned land that spans from the railroad to the east, the river to the west, from the DPW to the north, and to Bridge Street to the south. The Plan proposes interventions that extend the Town Center’s fabric west of the rail, improve walkability (and ADA accessibility), enhance year-round recreational program opportunities at the riverfront, and that are resilient in nature to accommodate flooding. Investing in these town-owned parcels first will draw attention to the Housatonic River as an incredible natural asset while adding value for future developments in the Town Center.

Infrastructure and Access

STATE ROUTE 7 AND 202

Downtown New Milford is situated roughly 10 miles north of a major highway that continues on to Danbury and Waterbury, at the confluence of State Routes 7, 202, and 67. Route 7 intersects Route 202 at Veteran's Bridge and crosses through the densely developed Town Center, carrying through traffic from the commercial areas in the south to the residential areas to the north. Peak morning and evening commutes and poor signalization along Bridge Street lead to traffic congestion along these routes. Left-hand turns from Bridge Street to Young's Field Road cause bottlenecking that exacerbates traffic. Coordination with the State Department of Transportation would be required for any proposed development or changes to these roadways.

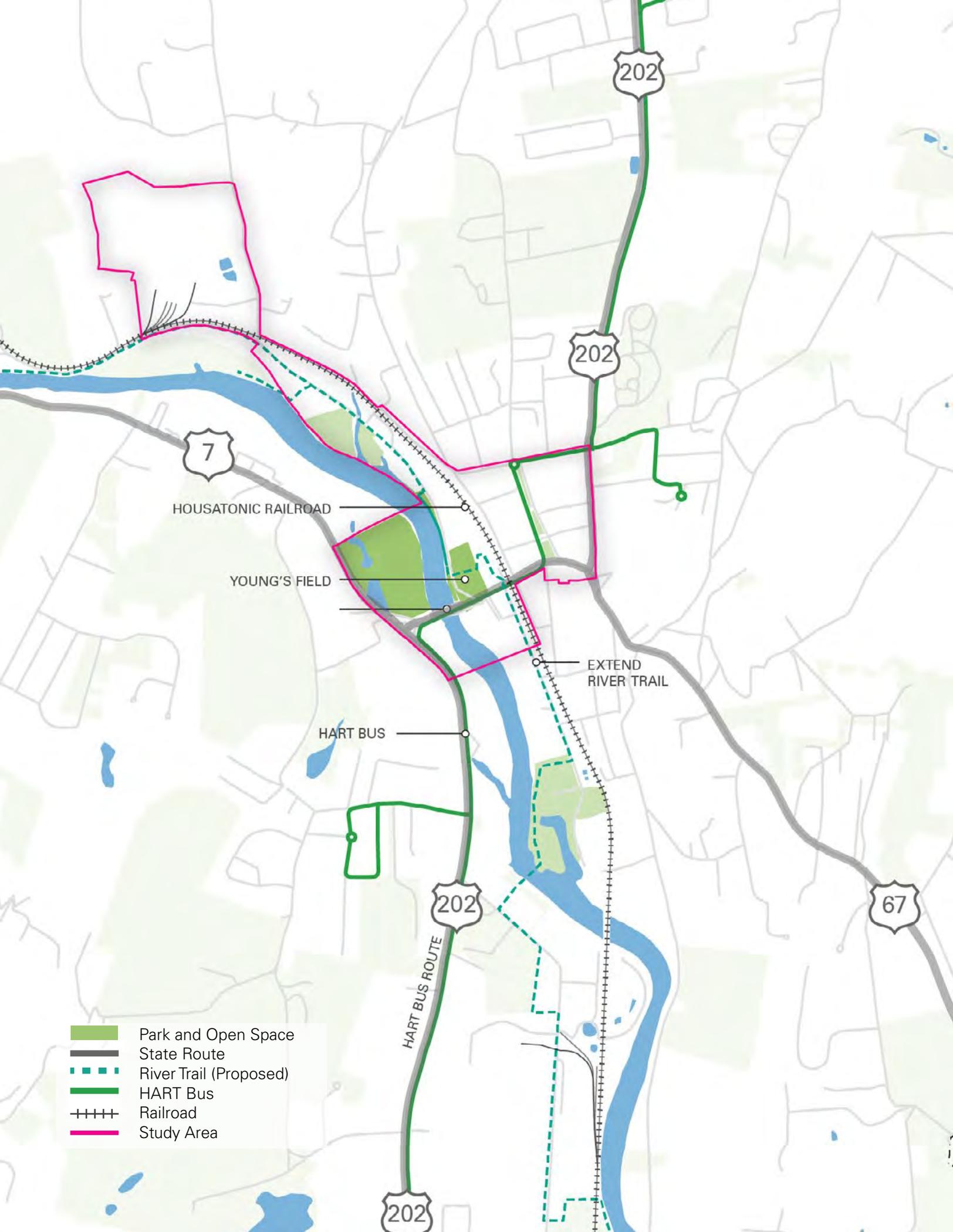
VETERAN'S BRIDGE

Veteran's Bridge (built in 1953) is a metal truss bridge that spans more than 300 feet across the Housatonic River. It is the only river crossing for vehicles for several miles in either direction. Lanes from Route 7/202 taper at the bridge that acts as a 'control valve' to Bridge Street and operates at capacity during peak commute times. The bridge underwent a major rehabilitation in 2000 and further rehabilitation is scheduled for completion in 2020. As the bridge continues to age, there may be consideration for construction of a new bridge.

HOUSATONIC RAILROAD

The Housatonic Railroad acts as a barrier that limits east-west movement for pedestrians due to limited at-grade railroad crossings. There are three at-grade railroad crossings in the Study Area: at Bridge Street, at Bank Street (pedestrian only), and at Aspetuck Ridge Road adjacent to the former Century Brass Mill. The low railroad underpass at Boardman Road adjacent to MEDInstill and across from the north side of Century Brass notably limits truck circulation and the development potential of the site. The 2013 Transportation Management Plan proposed restoring a historic at-grade crossing and extension of Bennett Street to Young's Field Road to help alleviate circulation concerns.





HOUSATONIC RAILROAD

YOUNG'S FIELD

HART BUS

EXTEND RIVER TRAIL

- Park and Open Space
- State Route
- River Trail (Proposed)
- HART Bus
- Railroad
- Study Area

Environment

FLOODPLAINS

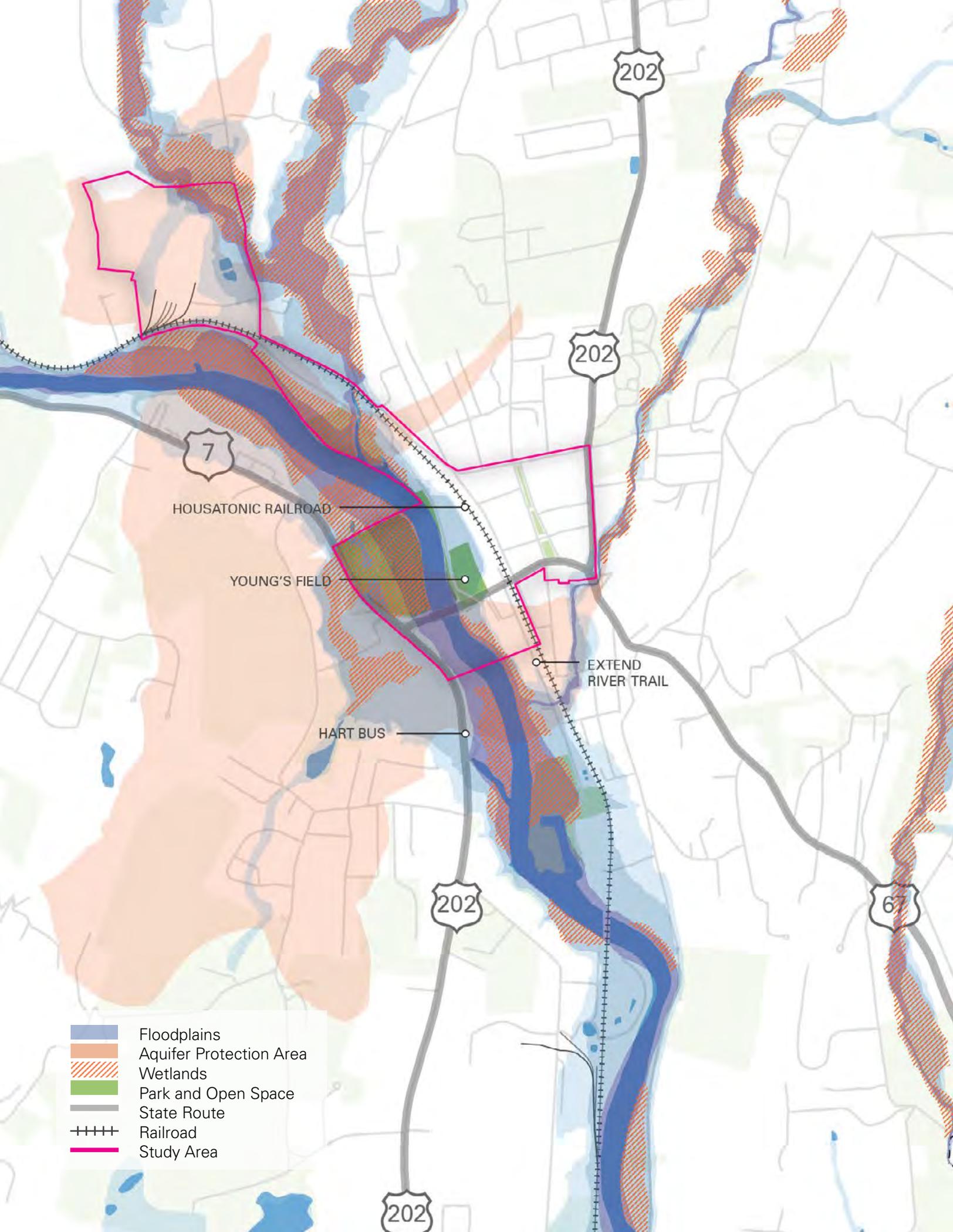
New Milford's riverfront lies within 100- and 500-year floodplains (areas that indicate there is a 1 in 100 chance and a 1 in 500 chance that the area will be flooded every year). According to New Milford and State floodplain regulations, any proposed new construction or improvement to an existing structure in a special flood hazard area must be approved by the zoning commission and include a flood management plan. New construction must use flood resistant materials, be anchored to prevent floatation, and have a design for service facilities that are flood-proof.

WETLAND MANAGEMENT

Wetlands are critical assets that protect water quality, recharge aquifers, stabilize shorelines and protect from flooding, all while creating habitats for fish and wildlife. Regulatory standards for these areas are set by the State and Town and monitored by New Milford's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. New Milford's Plan for Conservation and Development (2010) identified watercourses, wetlands, steep slopes (>25%) and 100-year floodplain as "the highest priority for preservation."

AQUIFER PROTECTION AREA

The study area is largely within a Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Aquifer Protection Area (APA), also called "wellhead protection areas." The program restricts certain types of new land use activities that use, store, handle or dispose of hazardous materials to minimize potential for contamination. New Milford's Planning Commission is responsible for defining and monitoring the town's APA zone. All regulated activities must register and require a permit including most manufacturing, heavy industrial and agricultural uses.



HOUSATONIC RAILROAD

YOUNG'S FIELD

HART BUS

EXTEND RIVER TRAIL

202

202

7

202

67

202

Brownfields

A brownfield is a property with likely or known contamination from hazardous substances, pollutants, or other contaminants. The redevelopment and reuse of such sites is complicated since they require removal or sealing off of contaminants so the sites can be reused without adverse health impacts. Brownfield clean-up can transform vacant, blighted, or low-tax generating sites into tax generating assets that benefit the town and the region. There are several known brownfields in the Riverfront Revitalization study area under various stages of remediation.

ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENTS FINDINGS

Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) were performed for the properties located at 11 Railroad Street, 31 Bridge Street, and 8 Young's Field Road. A Phase II ESA was subsequently performed at 11 Railroad Street.

1) 8 Young's Field Road (Vacant Land)

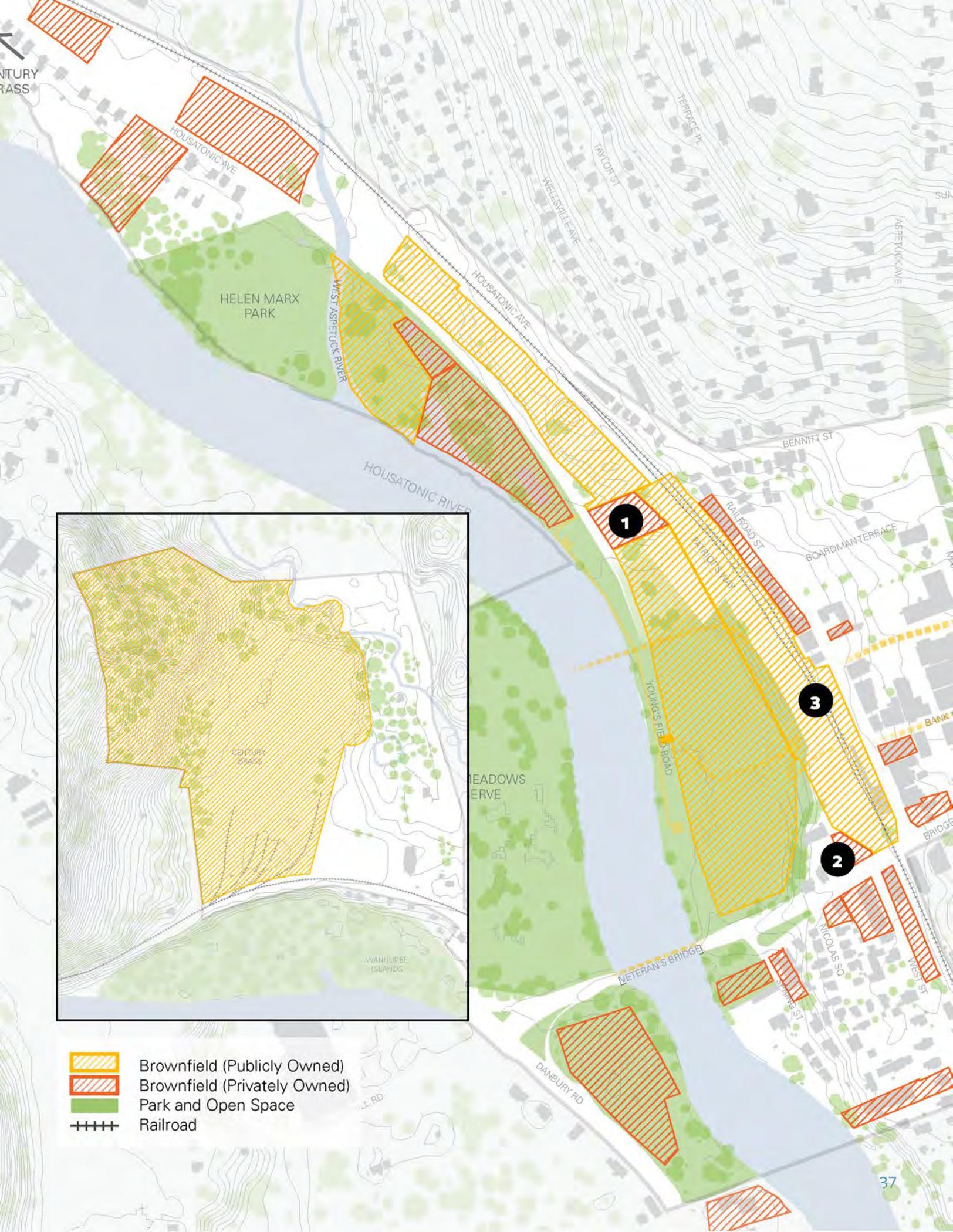
The Phase I ESA for the 8 Young's Field Road property revealed that the Site has been a bulk petroleum facility for over 80 years. Four 16,000-gallon vertical heating fuel above-ground storage tanks (ASTs) were installed circa 1935 and have no foundations. These tanks were emptied and cleaned in 2017. In addition, four 10,000-gallon underground storage tanks (USTs) that had stored gasoline (two) and diesel (two) were installed in 1991 and are approaching the end of their 30-year life expectancy. They are the subject of a 2019 DEEP Warning Letter and Notice of Violation (NOV) regarding compliance. The potential for a release to have occurred should be investigated and the above and below ground tanks should be removed and properly disposed to facilitate future redevelopment of the property. Qualified legal counsel familiar with the Connecticut Property Transfer Law should be consulted to determine if the site is an Establishment pursuant to that law should the property be transferred.

2) 31 Bridge Street (Retail Store)

The Phase I ESA for the 31 Bridge Street property revealed the potential for off-site impacts from multiple former upgradient gasoline service stations. A subsurface investigation should be performed to address a lack of information regarding former operations and groundwater quality and the potential for vapor encroachment. The site is not an Establishment pursuant to the Connecticut Transfer Act.

3) 11 Railroad Street (Former Railroad Station. Currently used as art gallery, offices and municipal parking)

The Phase II ESA performed at the 11 Railroad Street site indicated the presence of a number of contaminants associated with the historical operations. Testing found the presence of a layer of coal, ash, and slag material in shallow soil in the central and southern portions of the site. In places, this material contains polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals at concentrations that exceed applicable direct exposure criteria. This material will require special handling and disposal during future redevelopment and/or utility construction. There is no risk of direct contact under current conditions where the site is paved. In addition, a former railroad siding may remain buried beneath portions of Patriot's Way.



CENTURY BRASS

HOUSATONIC AVE

HELEN MARX PARK

WEST ASPETUCK RIVER

HOUSATONIC RIVER

1

BENNETT ST

RAILROAD ST

BOARDMAN TERRACE

3

YOUNG'S FIELD ROAD

2

MEADOWS ERVE

VETERAN'S BRIDGE

NICOLAS SQ

DANBURY RD



-  Brownfield (Publicly Owned)
-  Brownfield (Privately Owned)
-  Park and Open Space
-  Railroad



A large, white, stylized number '3' is superimposed over a photograph of a grassy field. The background shows a clear blue sky, a light pole with several lamps, and a line of trees with green and yellow foliage. In the distance, a brick building and a parking lot are visible. A set of stairs with a black railing is on the left side of the image.

3

THE PLAN

Vision

The New Milford Riverfront **Revitalization** Plan is a visionary master plan to guide development of the riverfront for the next two decades. The Vision builds on previous planning initiatives, existing conditions, and public input. By transforming private and town-owned brownfields on the Housatonic Riverfront into an attractive amenity, New Milford will be positioned to attract new investment to achieve Study Area-wide reuse concepts and the vision of a 21st century connected riverfront that catalyzes community development, resiliency, and revenue generation for the town.

1

TOWN CENTER

The team analyzed inefficient use of surface parking and proposes a plan to make public realm improvements that highlight Bank Street's importance as a civic spine of the town. The Plan densifies underbuilt sites with new housing and retail options that will appeal to millennial, families, and seniors alike. The catalytic element of this project is a new mixed-use anchor with public plaza anchored by ground-floor restaurant and/or retail, and near to all amenities and shopping. All plan elements would be strengthened by restored passenger rail service in town.

2

HOUSATONIC RIVERFRONT

The Plan transforms Young's Field into a resilient and dynamic riverfront park, with cultural nodes—an amphitheater and sculpture walk—year-round active and passive recreation and sustainably landscaped grounds specializing in flood and erosion control. The Plan, dependent on relocating the Department of Public Works, will make space for a hotel and event center adjacent to a sweeping bridge to Native Meadows Preserve and a sculpture walk. Together, clean up and reuse of these riverfront properties will help generate regional tourism, leisure, and hospitality industry in town.

3

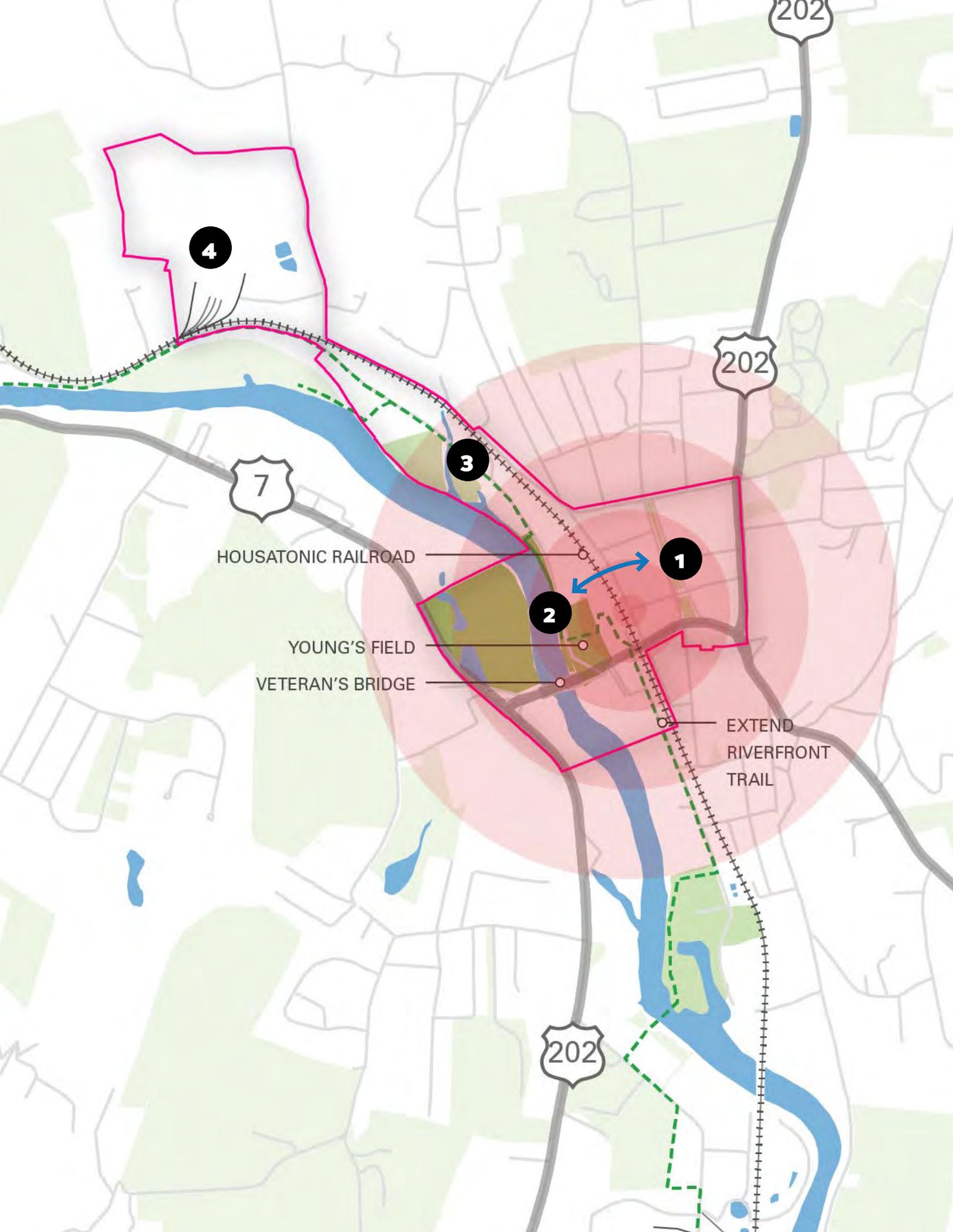
HOUSATONIC AVENUE CORRIDOR

The Plan proposes transforming Young's Field Road to Housatonic Avenue into a residential and makers' corridor that honors the history and significant influence of workmanship, technology, design and artistry in the region. Relocating the New Milford Recycling Center and stockpile storage area frees up an almost six-acre site with river-views that can be redeveloped into a walkable residential community with maker spaces and enhanced circulation via a restored at-grade railroad crossing and extension of Bennitt Street. Together, these uses will support an entrepreneurial economy.

4

CENTURY BRASS

The Plan leverages the remaining concrete slab and railroad spurs as assets in creation of a site for 21st century arts and fabrication, such as a potential foundry that could be connected to the railway line. The partially wooded area next to the West Aspetuck River could be an ideal location for a specialized education campus that ties into New Milford's long history as a creative hub for enterprising artisans and crafts people. The large site can also accommodate the relocation of town services.



4

3

1

2

HOUSATONIC RAILROAD

YOUNG'S FIELD

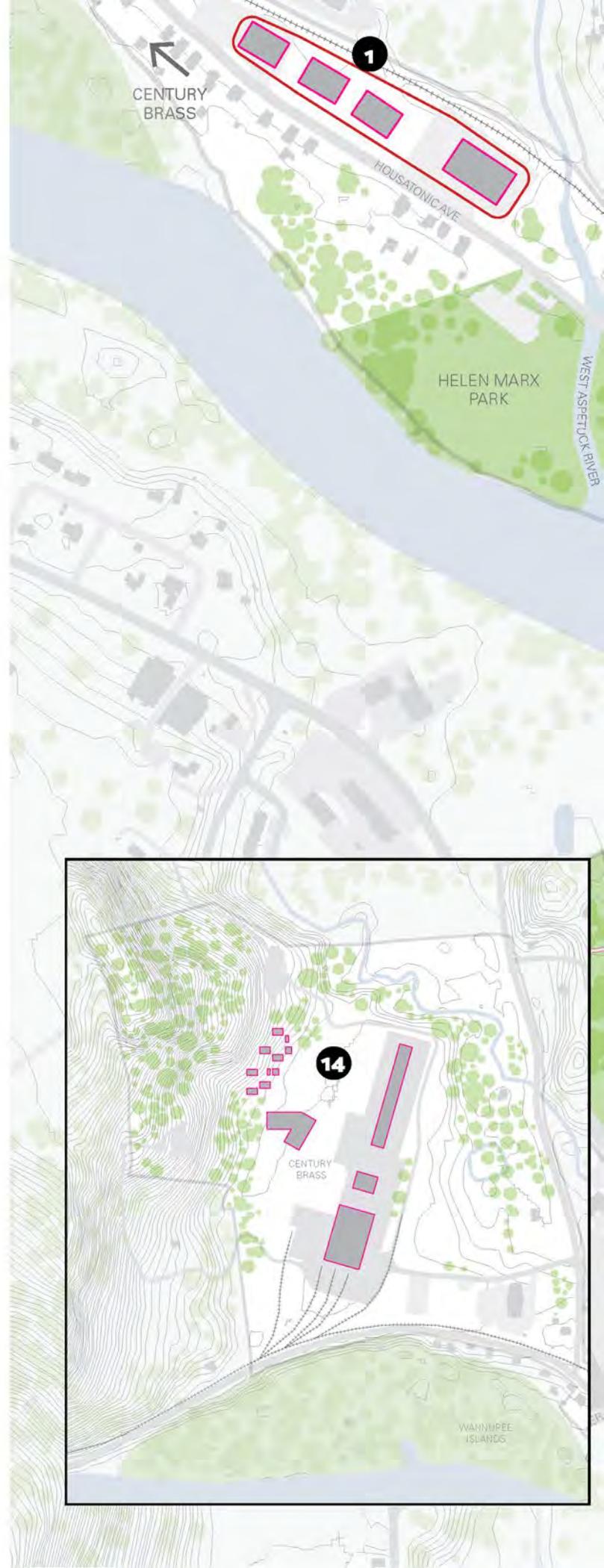
VETERAN'S BRIDGE

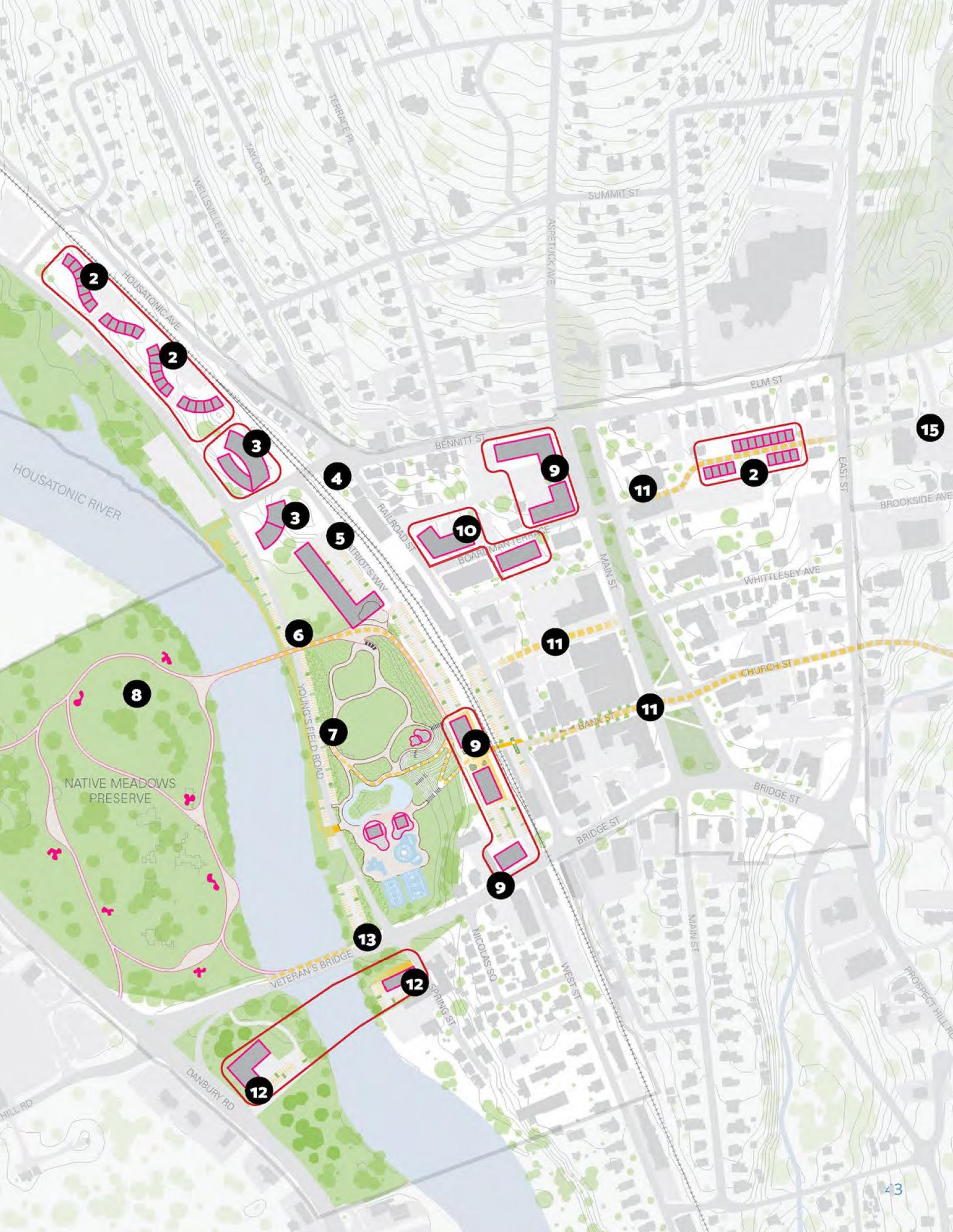
EXTEND
RIVERFRONT
TRAIL



The Plan

1. MAKERSPACE/ LIGHT INDUSTRIAL/ COMMERCIAL
2. TOWNHOMES
3. APARTMENTS
4. BENNITT STREET EXTENSION
5. HOTEL & EVENT SPACE
6. PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
7. YOUNG'S FIELD RIVERFRONT PARK
8. NATIVE MEADOWS PRESERVE AND SCULPTURE WALK
9. MIXED-USE
10. LIVE/WORK
11. PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS
12. GATEWAY MIXED-USE
13. YOUNG'S FIELD ROAD REALIGNMENT
14. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, ARTS CAMPUS & FOUNDRY
15. EAST STREET SCHOOL





2

2

3

3

4

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10

9

11

2

15

11

11

9

9

13

12

12

Civic Procession

WALKABLE

1. COMPLETE STREETS

Streets designed to ensure safety and mobility for all users of all ages, from pedestrians, to bicyclists, to drivers

2. PARKLET*

Create a sidewalk extension with amenities for people—seating and shade—and reduce pedestrian risk at the mid-block crossing

3. DISTINCTIVE CROSSWALK*

Improve pedestrian safety and comfort crossing the road and rail with an ADA accessible distinctive crosswalk

SUSTAINABLE

4. GREEN STREETS PROGRAM

Emphasizes new street trees, planters, bioswales, and permeable surfaces to improve stormwater management while beautifying the streetscape

5. RAIN GARDENS

Catch stormwater from Bank Street before it gets to the River

6. PARKING FIELD

Reorganize and re-stripe parking to accommodate a widened pedestrian crosswalk and planting beds to capture stormwater

ARTS AND CULTURE

7. PUBLIC PLAZA

Anchor the west side of the rail with a gateway to the riverfront through the creation of new civic plaza flanked by mixed-use buildings with planting beds, flexible seating, and shade

8. INFORMATION KIOSK*

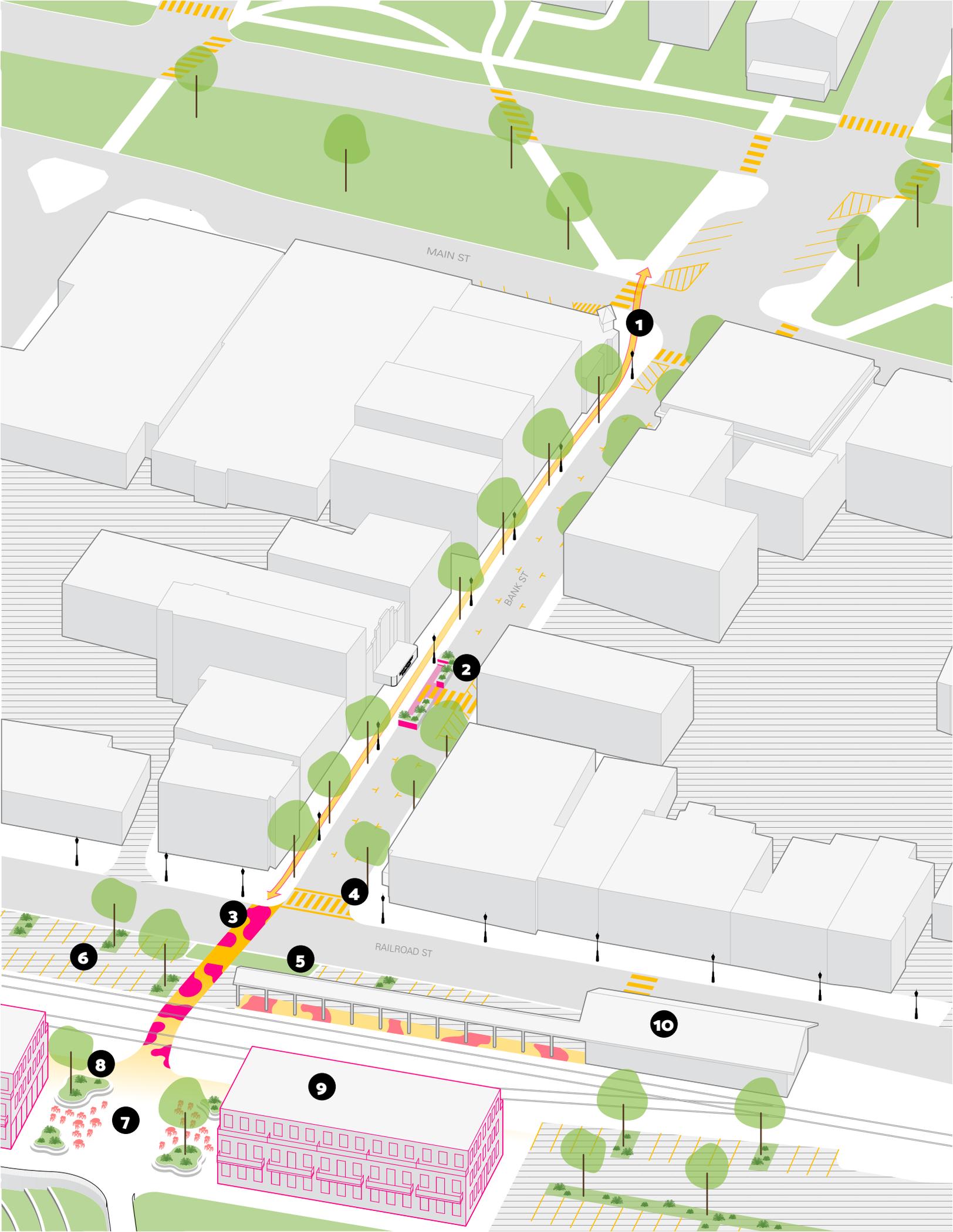
A central space to advertise town events and services

9. RIVERVIEW MIXED-USE ANCHORS WITH GROUND FLOOR RETAIL AND APARTMENTS

Extend Bank Street character with retail, grocery, and restaurant space for new businesses with apartments on upper floors

10. HISTORIC TRAIN STATION

*Short-Term Projects



Catalytic Riverfront



ARTS AND CULTURE

- 1. OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER** Draw residents and visitors to events with terraced seating and beautiful river views
- 2. 9/11 MEMORIAL OVERLOOK** Relocate memorial
- 3. MULTI-PURPOSE FESTIVAL GROUNDS** Maintain open lawn with pedestrian paths for town and regional events
- 4. HOTEL AND EVENT SPACE** Small-scale hotel overlooking the river with rentable event space
- 5. NATIVE MEADOWS SCULPTURE WALK** Raised wetland walk with sculpture and art
- 6. GATEWAY MIXED-USE** Mark the entrance to New Milford's Town Center with gateway land uses and landscaping

WALKABLE

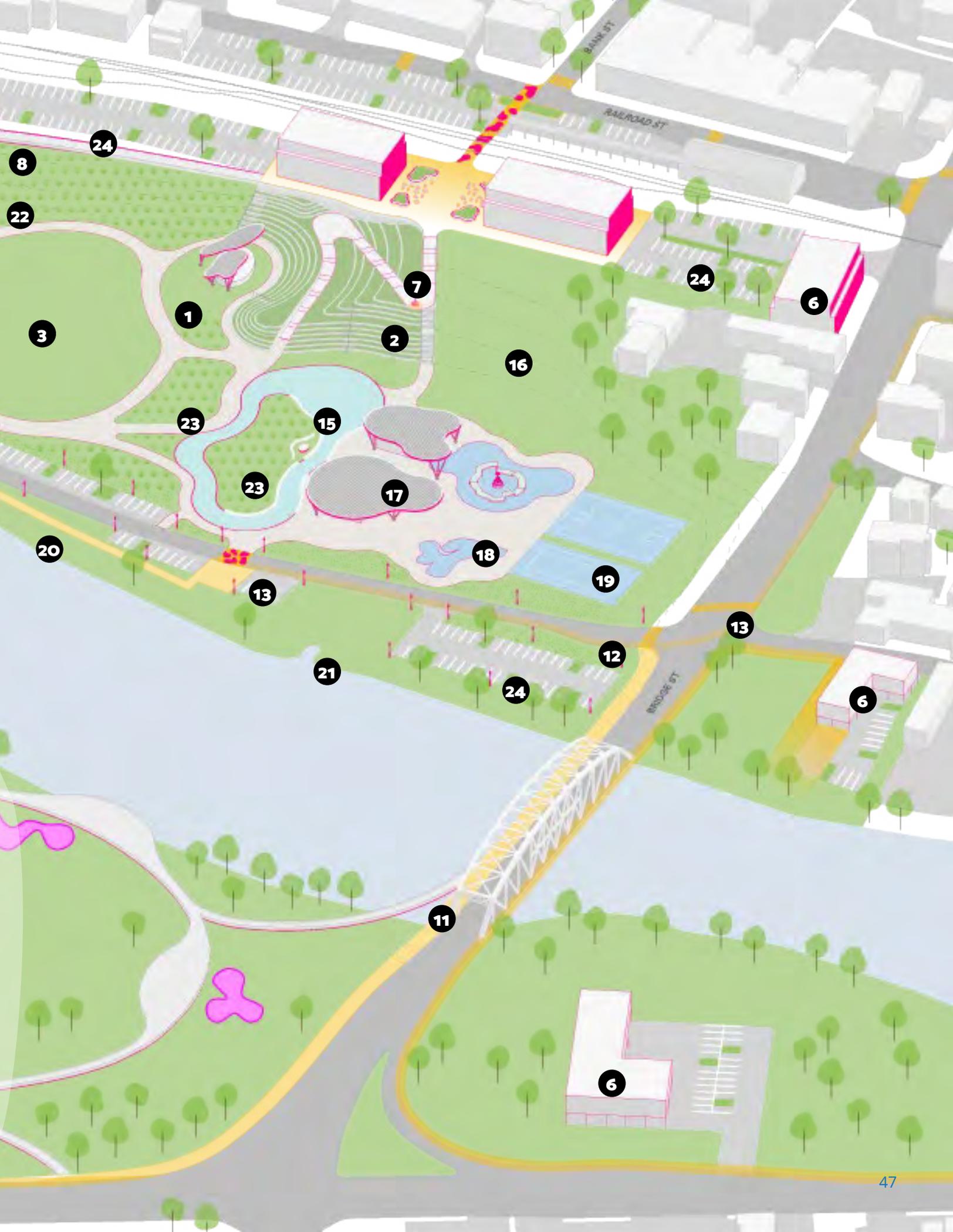
- 7. ADA PATH** Swooping path bridging the slope change
- 8. RIDGE WALK** Connect the plaza to the pedestrian bridge
- 9. OVERLOOK AND STAIRCASE** To Festival Grounds
- 10. PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE** Strengthen east/west connections
- 11. PEDESTRIAN ADD-ON** Add new path on south side of Veteran's Bridge
- 12. REALIGNED YOUNG'S FIELD ROAD** Improve circulation
- 13. CROSSWALK** Add safe crossings
- 14. BENNETT STREET AT-GRADE EXTENSION**

RECREATION

- 15. ICE SKATING PATH/ SPLASH PAD** Generate year-round activity with a convertible ice skating-path /splash pad
- 16. SLEDDING HILL** Playfully incorporate activities that draw people to the riverfront
- 17. CONCESSION AND SHADE PAVILION** Provide shelter and space for skate rentals and more
- 18. PLAYGROUND AND SKATE PARK** Reconfigure and enhance active recreation areas
- 19. BASKETBALL AND TENNIS** Keep existing active recreation in place
- 20. NEW MILFORD RIVER TRAIL** Complete proposed trail; Extend from Young's Field into Native Meadows via existing Veteran's Bridge walkway
- 21. KAYAK LAUNCH AND DOCK** Existing

SUSTAINABLE

- 22. EROSION CONTROL PLANTINGS** Celebrate the ridge with native plantings
- 23. FLOOD CONTROL PLANTINGS** Choose native and adaptive plants that absorb rainfall and flooding
- 24. PARKING FIELD** Add parking for riverfront visitors



Character and Typology

Case Studies



FLOOD CONTROL PARK

Meriden Green (Meriden, Connecticut)

Clean up and remediate brownfield site while addressing flooding to transform town liabilities into productive assets that contribute to a strong sense of place and high quality of life.



PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Millennium Bridge (Kent, United Kingdom)

Encourage residents and visitors to appreciate some of New Milford's greatest natural assets by connecting the town directly to the west side of the river and Native Meadows Preserve.



GREEN STREETS

Bellingham, Washington

Emphasizes new street trees, planters, bioswales, and permeable surfaces to improve stormwater management while beautifying the streetscape.



ICE SKATING AND SPLASH PAD

Central Park Ice Loop (Maple Grove, Minnesota)

An 810-foot long by 20-foot wide concrete ice skating path generates year-round interest with an area that can be used as a splash pad in summer.



TOWNHOMES

NevaCo-Housing (Nevada City, California)

Expand housing options and extend the close-knit town fabric with walkable homes that attract millennials, families, workforce and seniors alike. Flexible two-bedroom, two-story townhomes are the perfect starter home or place to downsize.



MIXED-USE

North Square Mill (Amherst, Massachusetts)

Increase town-center density with infill mixed-use development that enlivens the town center with new residents, retail, grocery and restaurant opportunities.



LIVE/WORK

Kolstrand Building (Ballard, Washington)

Appeal to changing workforces of entrepreneurs, creatives, and telecommuters by allowing a mix of uses in town that allows for people to live and work on the same premises.



MAKERSPACE

Ponyride (Detroit, Michigan)

Incubate entrepreneurship and innovation in New Milford with collaborative worker space with shared amenities that may include tools, equipment, 3D printers, and more.

Century Brass Arts Production Case Studies



POLICH TALLIX FINE ART FOUNDRY

Rock Tavern, New York

Polich Tallix, makers of the Oscars statuettes, has been at the forefront of technological development and craftsmanship in support of their fine arts metal fabrication since 1968. The strategic location in New York's Catskills makes it a go-to destination for large scale art and architectural metallurgic fabrication needs. A fine arts foundry, architectural fabrication and metallurgical engineering at Century Brass would honor the history of the site as a brass foundry while catapulting it into the 21st century and filling a market void for sculptural production in the region.



PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFT

Bakersville, North Carolina

Penland is an internationally renowned center for crafts that provides year-round arts education programming in 1-, 2- and 8-weeklong workshops. It hosts more than 1,400 students each year, has annual revenue of more than \$6 million and 70+ staff people. It plays a central role in contributing to a \$500+ million-dollar craft industry in North Carolina.¹ Camoin's town-wide market analysis of New Milford found that there is an opportunity and demand for new or expanded businesses to support hobbyists and tourists through products and services such as classes. Such a program would build on the existing arts, craft and design legacy in the area and help New Milford to make a name for itself regionally as a preeminent location for arts production and education

¹ Business NC, "Penland School crafts a new chapter," December 5, 2017 <https://businessnc.com/penland-school-crafts-a-new-chapter/>



Land Use and Proposed Development

590,000+ SF
PROPOSED NEW DEVELOPMENT

12-ACRE
RIVERFRONT PARK

220-350
RESIDENTIAL UNITS

208K SF
RESIDENTIAL

156K SF
MIXED-USE

92.5K SF
LIVE/WORK

47K SF
MAKERSPACE/ LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

35K SF
RETAIL

52.5K SF
HOTEL AND EVENT SPACE
50-85 ROOMS





HOUSATONIC AVE

HOUSATONIC RIVER

NATIVE MEADOWS PRESERVE

VETERAN'S BRIDGE

DANBURY RD

TERRACE PL

JAYLOR ST

WELLSVILLE AVE

BENNETT ST

BOARDMAN TERRACE

YOUNGSFIELD ROAD

RAILROAD ST

ASPECTUCK AVE

SUMMIT ST

ELM ST

EAST ST

BROOKSIDE AVE

WHITTLESEY AVE

CHURCH ST

BANK ST

BRIDGE ST

BRIDGE ST

NICHOLAS SQ

WILKING ST

WEST ST

MAIN ST

PROSPECT HILL RD

Circulation and Parking

1. BENNITT STREET AT-GRADE EXTENSION

Restore a historic crossing for cars and pedestrians to alleviate circulation backups and increase overall walkability.

2. PATRIOT’S WAY TURNABOUT

Allows access to new hotel and mixed-use anchors and public access parking from Young’s Field Road and Bridge Street but eliminates through traffic to protect town-river connections.

3. RIVER TRAIL

A completed River Trail will tie the town to a larger network of bike and walking paths.

4. YOUNG’S FIELD ROAD REALIGNMENT

Aligning with Spring Street allows space for left and right-hand turn lanes at the Bridge Street intersection that will help alleviate backup on Veteran’s Bridge if introduced alongside coordinated signals.

5. RIGHT- AND LEFT-HAND TURN

Create a highly visible, ADA accessible crosswalk and railroad crossing.

6. HISTORIC TRAIN STATION

Restore passenger service to historic rail station.

7. PEDESTRIAN PATH

Re-organize surface parking to create space for a pedestrian path with green streets elements.

P PUBLIC ACCESS PARKING

	Existing	Proposed
P1	50	60
P2	90	60
P3	15	15
P4	-	42
P5	44	41
P6	51	57
P7	98	100
P8	-	50
	350	425

**+ 75 PUBLIC ACCESS
PARKING SPACES**



BENNETT ST

RAILROAD ST

BOARDMAN TERRACE

PATRIOTS WAY

YOUNGS FIELD ROAD

BRIDGE ST

VETERAN'S BRIDGE

WEST ST

SPRING ST

NICOLAS SQ

Landscape and Sustainability



AMPHITHEATER

Uses native shade trees with seasonal displays and utility for wildlife, underplanted by a lawn of fine-leaved fescues, which will grow successfully in shade while seldom needing mowing.



RIDGE EROSION CONTROL

Steep slope plantings are all native species chosen for their suckering root structures as well as their benefits to wildlife (berries, pollen, flowers for nectar). The many shrubs, flowering plants and grass chosen hold soil because their rhizomatous roots spread out and down to form colonies.



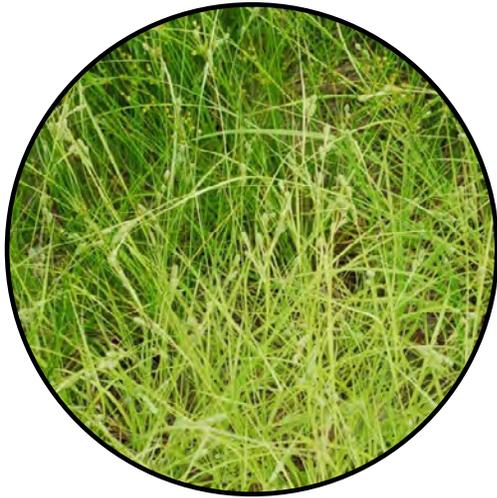
OPEN FESTIVAL LAWN

A commercial conservation grass mix for an area that will see varied uses that will include crowds of participants. Active zones will include native tree species, flowering shrubs, ferns and flowering plants for animal habitat, pollinator species and visual pleasure for visitors.



SLEDDING HILL

A mix of native trees at the top of its slope and periphery for large-scale beauty and shade, while the slopes themselves will be a mix of low native grass and flowering plant species that will attract pollinators and other wildlife in spring, summer and fall, and be easily mown for the sledding season.



NATURE MEADOWS PRESERVE

A variety of native grasses and flowering plants that can take brackish water for prolonged periods, hold the edge as needed, and provide food and habitat for birds, butterflies.



TRANSITION AREAS

A mix of both large and understory native trees that will provide seasonal interest, shady areas for visitors and habitat for animals, in a ground layer mix of low meadow grasses and flowering plants that will not only supply beauty on its own through many seasons, but attract a variety of pollinators, birds and other wildlife.



RAIN GARDENS

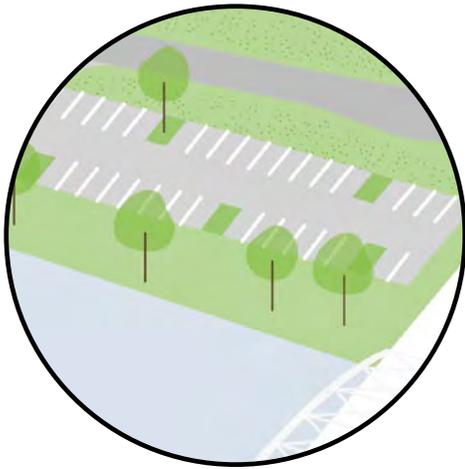
Will feature native trees, shrubs, grasses, ferns and flowers that can accommodate fluctuating moisture levels while providing an oasis for visitors' eyes, as well as habitat for a variety of wildlife.



RIPARIAN AREAS

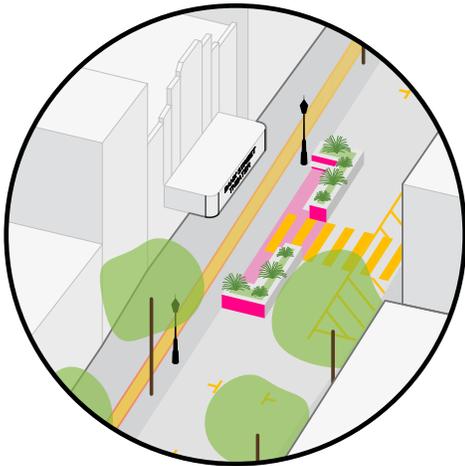
Will include many of the same plant species as those used in the rain gardens, with a greater emphasis on their ability to thrive in wet soil and soil-stabilizing characteristics.

Landscape and Sustainability



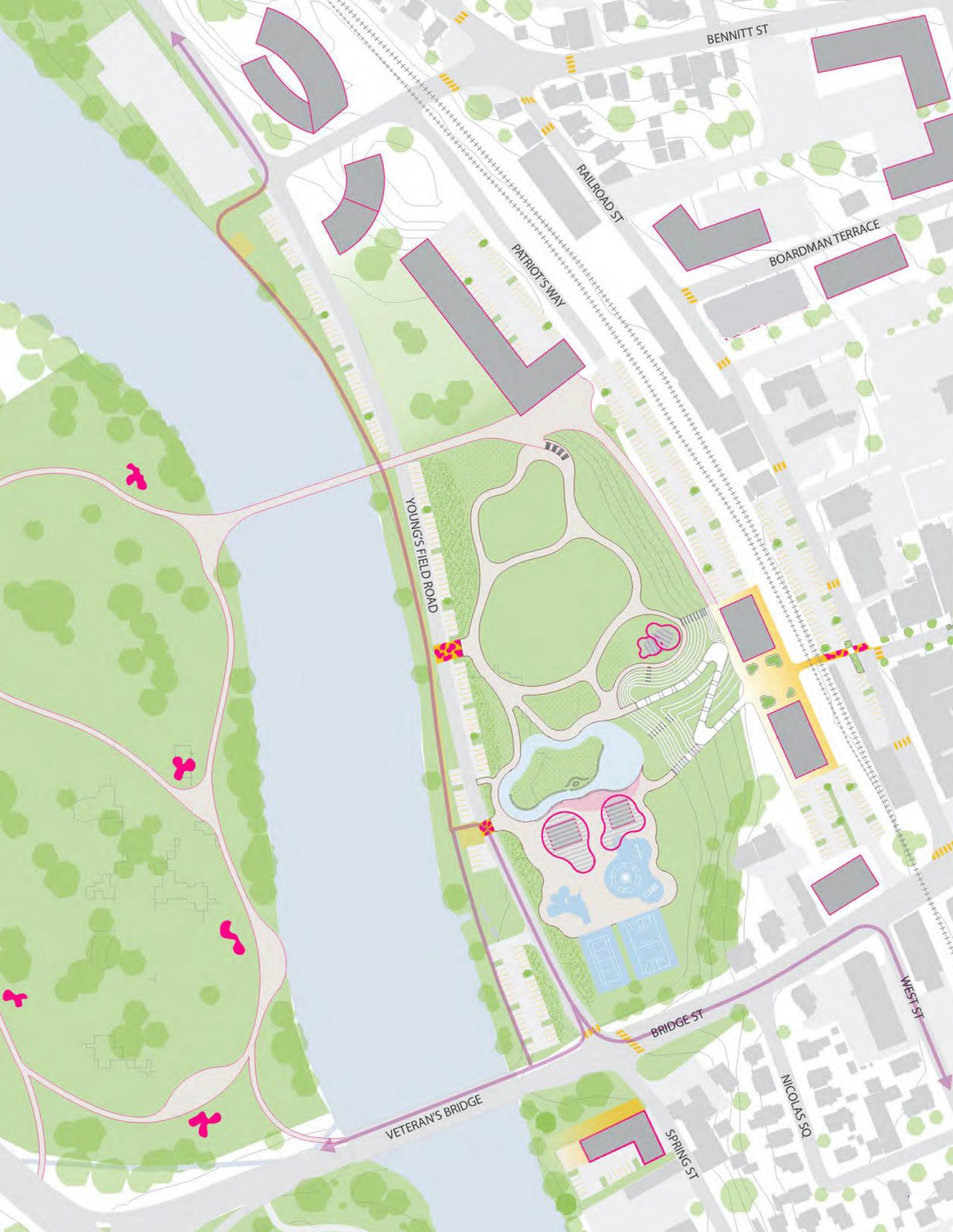
PARKING FIELD STANDARDS

Parking in the study area is varied in character and size. With head-in parking along Young's Field Road, permeable paving can be used; and additional run-off not absorbed by the paved area will be directed to adjacent rain gardens within Young's Field Park. Within the parking strip, shade, understory trees and ground layer plants will be used in 20' x 20' zones (about 2 parking spaces) every 10 parking spaces apart for continuity with the park landscape. Where possible planted swales and rain gardens will be used to absorb stormwater run-off. In smaller lots, streets' stormwater run-off will be collected in runnels and directed to tree islands between the head-to-head parking.



GREEN STREETS

To provide user comfort and infrastructural benefit, green "parklets" will be located curbside at appropriate points along the town's streets. Curb cuts and catch basins will direct street and sidewalk runoff to rain gardens within the existing sidewalk boundaries or in bump-outs that can also define street parking areas and provide more generous crossing zones for pedestrians. Adjacent spaces – where appropriate for stormwater management, and/or where pedestrians gather – will have pervious pavers, benches, and other amenities. These green zones will mitigate heat islands and provide shade and relief for pedestrians. Tree and other plant species for streets have been included in APPENDIX B.



BENNITT ST

RAILROAD ST

PATRIOT'S WAY

BOARDMAN TERRACE

YOUNG'S FIELD ROAD

BRIDGE ST

VETERAN'S BRIDGE

SPRING ST

NICOLAS SQ

WEST ST





4

ACTION PLAN

Implementation



Achieving the Riverfront Master Plan vision requires the coordinated effort and support of many stakeholders—residents, businesses, anchor employers, town officials and departments, and state agencies. It also requires support from non-profit and private partners, that may include developers, the Connecticut Land Bank and others. With the coordinated efforts of stakeholders, the New Milford Riverfront **Revitalization** Plan will reach its full potential for development, programming, and maintenance.

ENGAGE (ongoing)

- Solicit community input early and often to maintain support
- Host developer and banker tours for potential properties

PREPARE

- Identify and apply for state and federal brownfield remediation grants
- Settle remediation at Century Brass
- Commission additional studies: Bridge Street Circulation, in-town parking re-striping
- Develop a cohesive New Milford identity
- Identify potential public and private partners
- Identify financing mechanisms
- Consider Special Zone and Standards

PRIORITIZE

- Prioritize projects to undertake

PILOT

- Tested by simply repainting lines - if the concepts are popular, then they can become permanent fixtures
- Pedestrian paths
- Crosswalks
- Parklet

PARTNER

- Issue RFQ or RFP for key sites

DESIGN

RELOCATE/ACQUIRE

- Identify relocation sites for Department of Public Works sites, Young's Field ballfields
- Acquire sites

REMEDiate

- Remove steel from Century Brass

IMPLEMENT

MONITOR & EVALUATE

This section presents a comprehensive list of strategies to achieve the Plan’s vision, identified in terms of short- and long-term priorities (●) and public-led, private-led or partnership opportunities (■).

	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Public-Led	Private-Led	Pub/Pvt Partnership
ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGIES						
1			●			■
2			●			■
3		●		■		
4		●		■		
5			●		■	
6		●		■		
7	●				■	
8			●			■
9	●			■		
10			●		■	
11			●			■
12		●			■	
13		●			■	
14		●			■	
15		●			■	
16	●					■
RECREATION STRATEGIES						
17			●			■
18			●	■		
19			●			■
20		●		■		
21	●			■		
22	●			■		
23	●			■		
WALKABLE STRATEGIES						
24	●			■		
25	●			■		
26	●			■		
27			●	■		
28			●	■		
29		●		■		
30	●			■		
31			●	■		
32	●			■		
33	●			■		
34		●				■
35			●			■
36		●				■
37			●	■		
SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES						
38	●	●		■		
39	●	●		■		
40		●		■		
41		●		■		
42		●		■		

* These short-term achievable wins are important to generate and sustain support for The Plan.

** Requires coordination with State of Connecticut Department of Transportation.

