

Suffolk/Virginia

Chuckatuck / Oakland Village Initiatives Plan

Prepared by U R B A N D E S I G N A S S O C I A T E S

Prepared for
City of Suffolk, Virginia

SEPTEMBER 2001



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| <i>I</i> | <i>Introduction</i> | <i>I</i> |
| | The Neighborhood Planning Process | |
| | Assets, Liabilities, Hopes and Dreams | |
| | Design Principles | |
| | Existing Conditions Analysis | |
| <i>II</i> | <i>Short Term Initiatives</i> | <i>6</i> |
| | Conduct Kings Highway feasibility/realignment study | |
| | Conduct Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) | |
| | By-pass feasibility study | |
| | Streetscape Improvements | |
| | Village Center | |
| | Historic Grist Mill and Crump's Mill Pond | |
| | Conduct public sewer feasibility study | |
| <i>III</i> | <i>Long Term Vision</i> | <i>14</i> |
| | Proposed By-Pass Road | |
| | Framework of Parks & Open Space | |
| | Revised Long Term Vision Plan | |
| | Village Center | |
| | Community Center & Library | |
| | Residential Development | |

Acknowledgements

Chuckatuck / Oakland Village Steering Committee

Frank Spady
Chairman

Carolyn Bickham

Reverend Ron Goodwin

Sandra Johnston

Catherine Jones

Pam Saunders

Laurna Taylor

Deatrich Wise

City of Suffolk

The Honorable Curtis R. Milteer
Mayor

The Honorable W. Rufus Powell
Vice Mayor

Steve Herbert
Assistant City Manager

L. Elizabeth McCoury
Downtown Development Coordinator

Scott Mills
Planning Director

Robert Goumas
Principal Planner

Consultants

Urban Design Associates

I Introduction

Aerial view looking southeast showing historic Chuckatuck with the Nansemond River in the background.



THE INITIATIVES PLAN FOR the Villages of Chuckatuck and Oakland is part of the City of Suffolk’s ongoing Initiatives Planning Process. The process began in 1997 when the City hired Urban Design Associates (UDA) to create a plan for the historic Downtown area. Since then the process has expanded to include plans for other parts of the City including the East Washington neighborhoods, Hall Place, and more recently the outlying historic villages of Holland and Whaleyville.

The City’s Comprehensive Plan calls for concentrating some new development in the existing, historic walkable villages in order to revitalize and preserve the quaint character, and to reduce sprawl and its associated traffic problems.

The Neighborhood Planning Process

The physical plan for Chuckatuck/Oakland emerged from a two-phase process that involved community participation.

The first phase consisted of documenting, analyzing, and understanding the existing conditions and historic structure of the village. The design team visited Chuckatuck/Oakland to gather data and tour the village. From the information collected, the design team drew base maps and generated a set of analysis drawings called X-Rays. Each X-Ray focuses on one or two key pieces of information, such as streets or topography, to help the design team to understand the neighborhood patterns and make informed decisions during the design process.

The second phase, and the focus of the UDA planning process, was the design charrette – an intense, multi-day design workshop, held in Chuckatuck with the village residents, workers and property owners. The design work was done on-site, with the community actively involved in the creation of the plan. The involvement of the community helps to insure their commitment to the successful implementation of the plan.

The Chuckatuck/Oakland design charrette was held August 20th through 22nd, 2001 at the Chuckatuck Volunteer Fire Station. During the opening meeting the design team asked the participants three simple questions: what are the area’s strengths and assets, what are its problems or liabilities, and what are the hopes and dreams for the future? The design team took the responses from participants and created lists to articulate the assets, liabilities and hopes & dreams.

The charrette participants used the lists to create a series of short- and long-term initiatives. Short-term initiatives are small-scale improvements that can be implemented over the next year or two from the City’s capital budget. Long term initiatives look ahead 10, 20, or even 40 years.

The community felt strongly that Chuckatuck/Oakland should maintain the small town character but understood the need to plan for the possibility of future growth. The long term plan provides a framework for managing future growth. For the development shown in the long term plan it will likely be necessary to construct a local sewage treatment facility as recommended in the 2018 Suffolk Comprehensive Plan. If soil tests prove that village size lots can

handle septic systems, some limited growth may proceed in advance of the sewage treatment plant.

The community also understands the potential adverse impact of through traffic volumes on the character of the village and the quality of life of the residents. Accordingly, the community strongly endorsed the relocated Kings Highway Bridge connecting directly with Godwin Boulevard south of the village, and a Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) by-pass to the west of the village. Furthermore, while each of these initiatives are warranted individually, the community emphasized that to obtain the most benefit these two initiatives should be designed and constructed to function in concert with each other.

The general store at Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway has been owned and run by the Gwaltneys since 1927.



Assets, Liabilities, Hopes and Dreams

Assets/Good Things

- Friendly people
- Strong sense of community
- Quaint and small - walkable scale
- Safe - low crime rate
- Quiet - no highway noise
- Historic churches, Grist Mill, homes
- Fire department, schools, post office
- Strong locally-owned businesses
- Lone Star Lakes Park
- Good recreation - Chuckatuck sports league, ball parks
- Opportunity to correct through traffic problems

Liabilities/Bad Things

- Dangerous main intersection at Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway; Godwin Boulevard and Moore Farm Lane
- Rush hour traffic, accidents shut down Godwin; no alternate routes
- Without appropriate road improvements, through traffic volumes will continue to increase resulting in the destruction of the charm and character of the village
- Truck traffic on Godwin Boulevard near Oakland school not safe for children
- No sidewalks on Godwin Boulevard and Crittenden Road; inconsistent sidewalks on Kings Highway
- Kings Highway not bicycle-friendly
- Lack of drainage; standing water on highway after rain
- Substandard streets: Wren Road, Brown Lane

- Energy-saving street lights not bright enough (gloomy)
- No public transportation
- No sewer system
- Abandoned/vacant/boarded homes
- Drug problems, dealers
- Loss of local businesses; no local restaurant, lack of neighborhood commercial uses to serve the area.
- Recreation center not open to everyone at all hours
- Few organized activities for teenagers

Hopes and Dreams: Short Term

- Complete feasibility study and begin construction of the relocated Kings Highway Bridge
- Conduct feasibility study for the construction of a Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) by-pass to the west of the village
- New/improved sidewalks/streetscape
- New historic streetlights
- Clean and maintain drainage ditches
- Calm traffic on Godwin Boulevard, Kings Highway; add traffic light at main intersection
- Upgrade signs and mark village entrances
- Renovate historic buildings
- Improve entrance to Lone Star Lakes Park
- Clean vacant lots and enforce housing and zoning codes
- Provide opportunities for new commercial development along Godwin Boulevard toward the oakland area
- Conduct feasibility study for the provision of public sewer service

Hopes and Dreams: Long Term

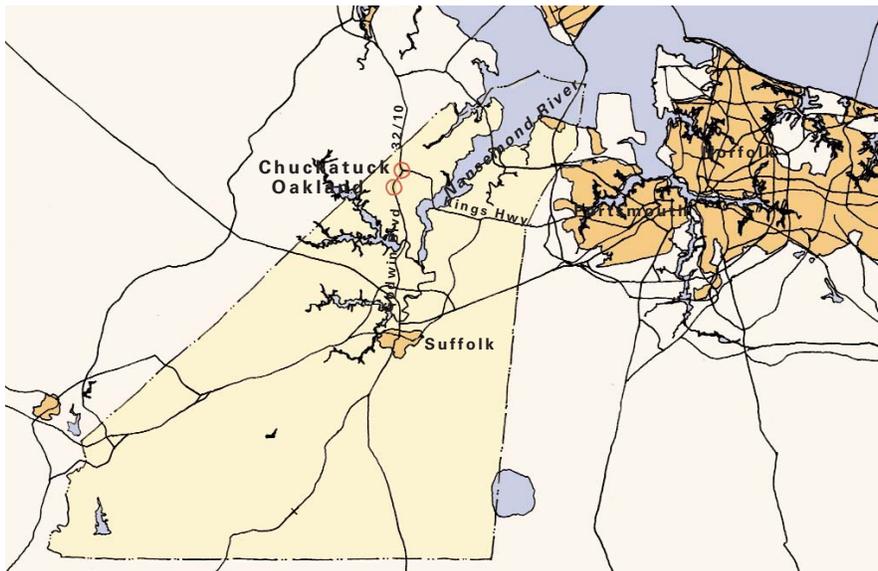
- Maintain small town feeling while planning for moderate growth
- Build a Godwin Boulevard (32/10) truck by-pass, maintain and enhance Godwin business route
- Attract new small businesses (no franchises) pharmacy, café, meeting place, branch bank, dry cleaners
- Consider the establishment of a Nansemond Indian living history Indian village, museum, and pow-wow festival grounds at Lone Star Park
- Build bike paths
- Create a Chuckatuck/Oakland Heritage Center
- Preserve Historic Grist Mill
- Build a monument at the intersection of Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway
- Improve/enlarge park (ball parks, skating rink/skate park)
- Create a community center: adult learning classes, computer lab, small police precinct, meeting hall

- Build new houses with historic character
- Build a seniors' retirement building
- Provide public sewer service

The design team used the lists of assets, liabilities, and visions to form a set of design principles, which acted as a checklist during the charrette process.

Design Principles

- 1 Maintain the quiet, historic, small town character
- 2 Respect and build upon the villages' history
- 3 Resolve traffic problems
- 4 Improve the streets for pedestrians and bicycles
- 5 Build a place for the community to come together
- 6 Revive the crossroads/town center area
- 7 Connect the parks and open spaces
- 8 Allow and plan for moderate growth
- 9 Improve storm drainage

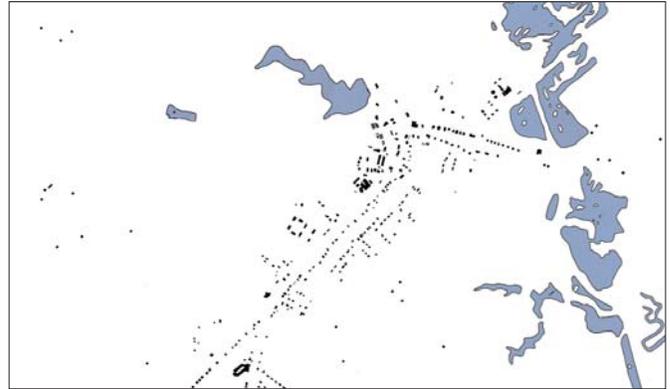


Location: The villages of Chuckatuck and Oakland are located in the north of Suffolk, at the busy intersection of Godwin Boulevard/State Route 32-10, and Kings Highway/Route 125.

Existing Conditions Analysis



Streets: Both Godwin Boulevard (Rte 32/10), and Kings Highway (125), which form the main intersection of Chuckatuck, are busy roads carrying regional traffic. The local streets are disconnected.



Figure/Ground: The building pattern is typical of rural villages with larger commercial buildings located at the main crossroads, and residential scale buildings radiating out along the roads.



Parks, Institutions & Open Space: In addition to the regional Lone Star Lakes Park, Chuckatuck has an elementary school and many churches.



Topography: Ravines and wetlands act as barriers that make road connections difficult and restrict the amount of developable land.



Existing Conditions Plan: The portrait shows agricultural land in light green, parks in medium green, institutions in purple, commercial buildings in pink, and residential buildings in yellow.

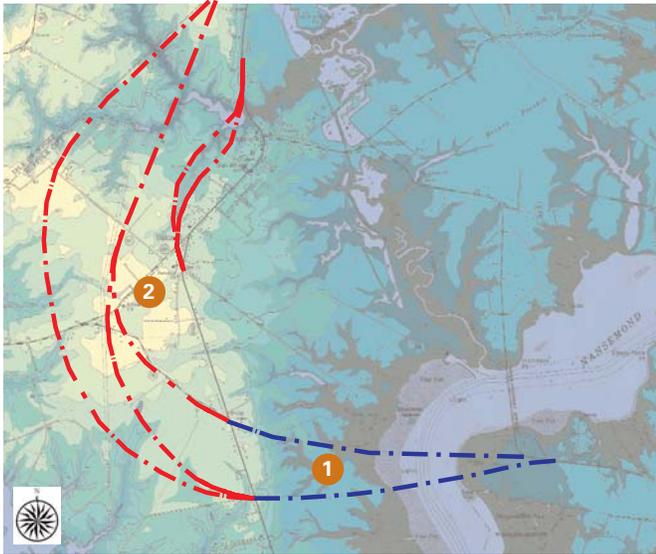
II Short Term Initiatives

THE SHORT TERM INITIATIVES for Chuckatuck/Oakland consist of several straight-forward public improvements that can be undertaken immediately using the City's Capital plan funds and have an immediate impact on the community. The short-term initiatives, which focus mostly on the Village Center, include streetscape improvements along Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway as well as gateways at the main entrances into town. The plan shows more initiatives than can be constructed under one year's budget; it will therefore be necessary for the residents to prioritize the initiatives and to implement the lower priority items as part of the long term strategy.

Frameworks

Diagram of short term initiatives showing streetscape improvements at the Village Center and the three village entrances. The red circle outlines a 1/4 mile or 5-minute walking radius.





Short Term Initiatives

7

- 1 Conduct Kings Highway feasibility/realignment study
- 2 Conduct Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) By-pass feasibility study.
- 3 Gateways: South Godwin Boulevard from Pembroke Lane area, North Godwin Boulevard at Crump's Mill Pond, and Kings Highway at the Chuckatuck Volunteer Fire Station
- 4 Streetscape improvements and pedestrian/non-vehicular access to the Lone Star Park
- 5 Village Center improvements
- 6 Historic Grist Mill and Crump's Mill Pond
- 7 Conduct public sewer feasibility study

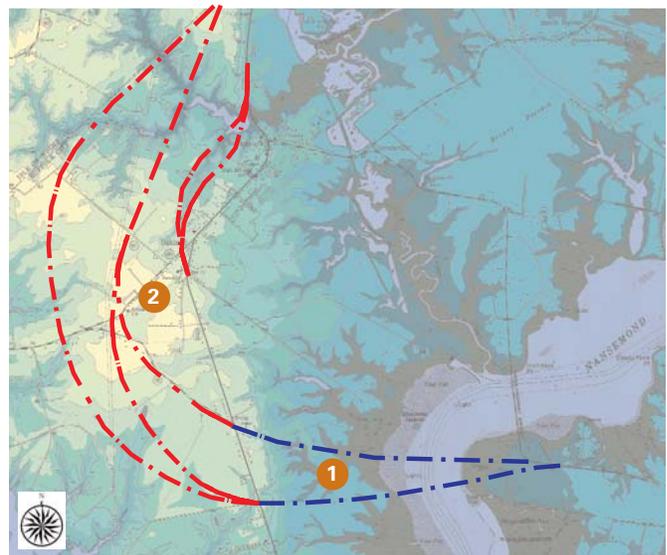


1 Conduct Kings Highway Bridge Feasibility/Realignment Study

The plan calls for the immediate replacement of the Kings Highway Bridge in a new location connecting directly with Godwin Boulevard south of the village. This realignment will maximize existing and future highway capacity by providing a direct connection from King’s Highway to Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32). The new bridge will provide a much needed alternative route from Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) to I-664. This new alignment supports the community’s vision by providing convenient access across the Nasemond River from the Northeast development area to both the Central Core and Northwest development areas. The integrity of many valuable historic resources located on King’s Highway is protected by eliminating future through-traffic increases and thus future needs to widen the roadway between the Nasemond River and Chuckatuck. The village character of Chuckatuck/Oakland is preserved by directing traffic along King’s Highway directly to Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) and to the proposed truck by-pass around the village.

2 Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) By-pass Feasibility Study

During the charrette, many residents complained about the amount of truck traffic, particularly through truck traffic, on Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway. In response, the plan calls for the construction of a Godwin Boulevard (Route 10/32) by-pass to the west of Chuckatuck/Oakland to divert trucks and commuter traffic around the center of the village, leaving Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway for local commercial and residential traffic. The calmer roadways will be safer for pedestrians and maintain the village’s residential scale. In order to maximize the effectiveness of this by-pass, it should be planned and designed to work in concert with the relocated Kings Highway Bridge. A feasibility study should be immediately undertaken by VDOT in the short term.





3 Gateways The plan calls for moving existing signs (or creating new signs) on Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway to more prominent sites, which will help to define the village boundaries and improve the historic image. Landscaping and signage will help to slow traffic and announce the transition from highway to residential and commercial village.



Plan view of Crump's Mill Pond and Grist Mill as it looks today (upper left) and as proposed with better sight lines from Godwin Boulevard (above). New gateway sign (left).

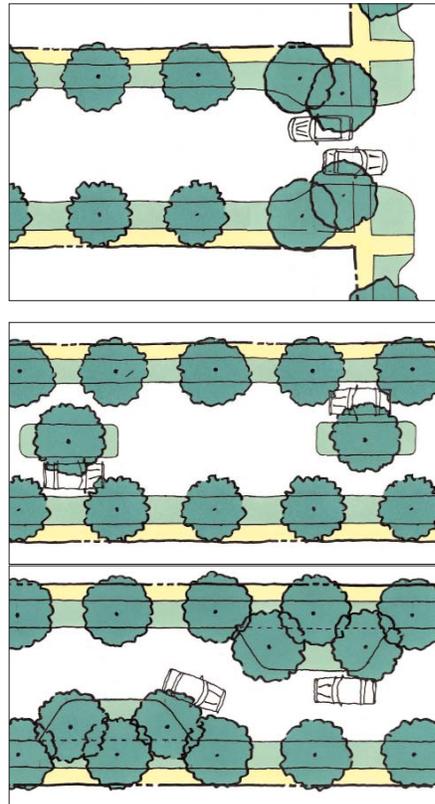
4 Streetscape Improvements During the charrette, many residents voiced concerns over the state of the village streets and highways, the traffic congestion and noise from large trucks, the poor condition of the road and drainage ditches, and the lack of sidewalks. The Plan therefore includes both short- and long-term initiatives to improve the streetscape along Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway. Improvements should begin in the Oakland area at Pembroke Lane and at the other gateways and then the residential areas, including Everets Road. From these beginning points, streetscape improvements will systematically be completed, moving in towards the village center. Concurrently, the vil-

lage center improvements will move out towards the gateways.

In addition, various pedestrian entrances to Lone Star Park will be developed. These new entrances will serve as local entrances providing residents with conveniently located points of access to the park.

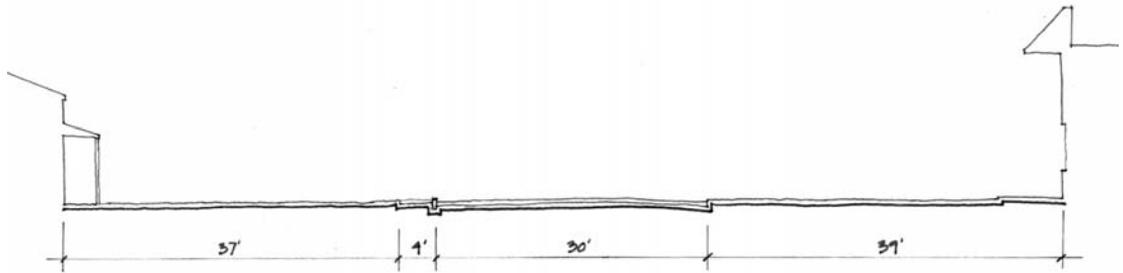
Short term improvements may include the cleanup and maintenance of existing drainage ditches, the addition of sidewalks, street trees and historic street lighting. Traffic calming devices, such as bulbouts and planted medians, can be employed to slow traffic on busy streets.

Proposed streetscape improvements along Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway.

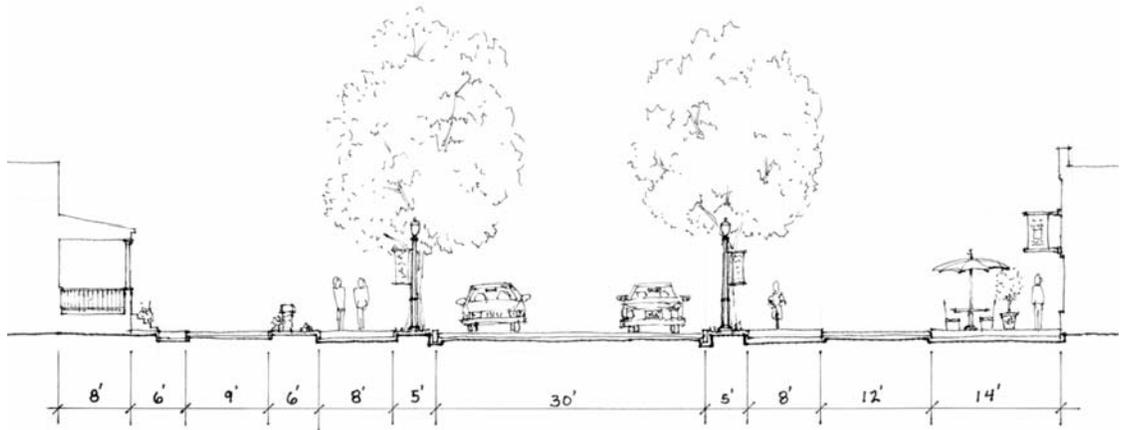


Traffic Calming

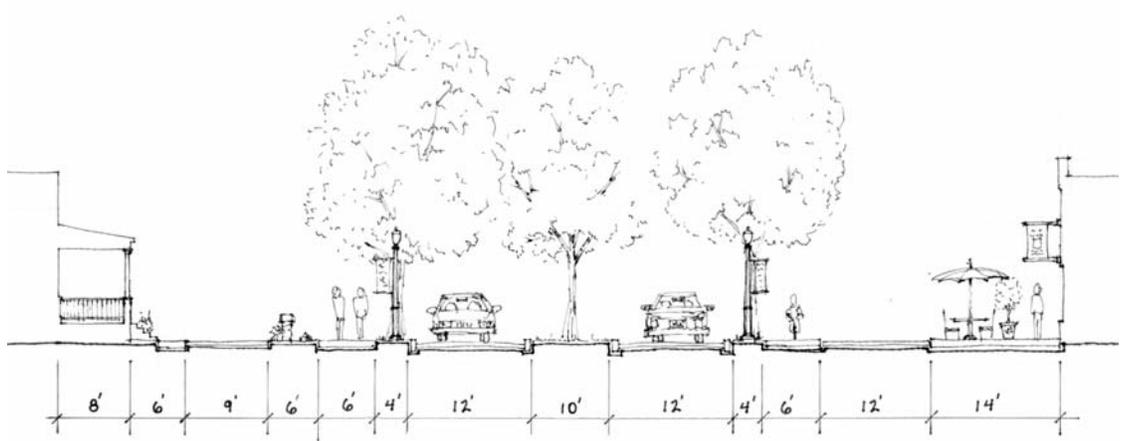
From top, an intersection bulbout, short medians, and a chicane.



Kings Highway Commercial Existing



Kings Highway Commercial Proposed



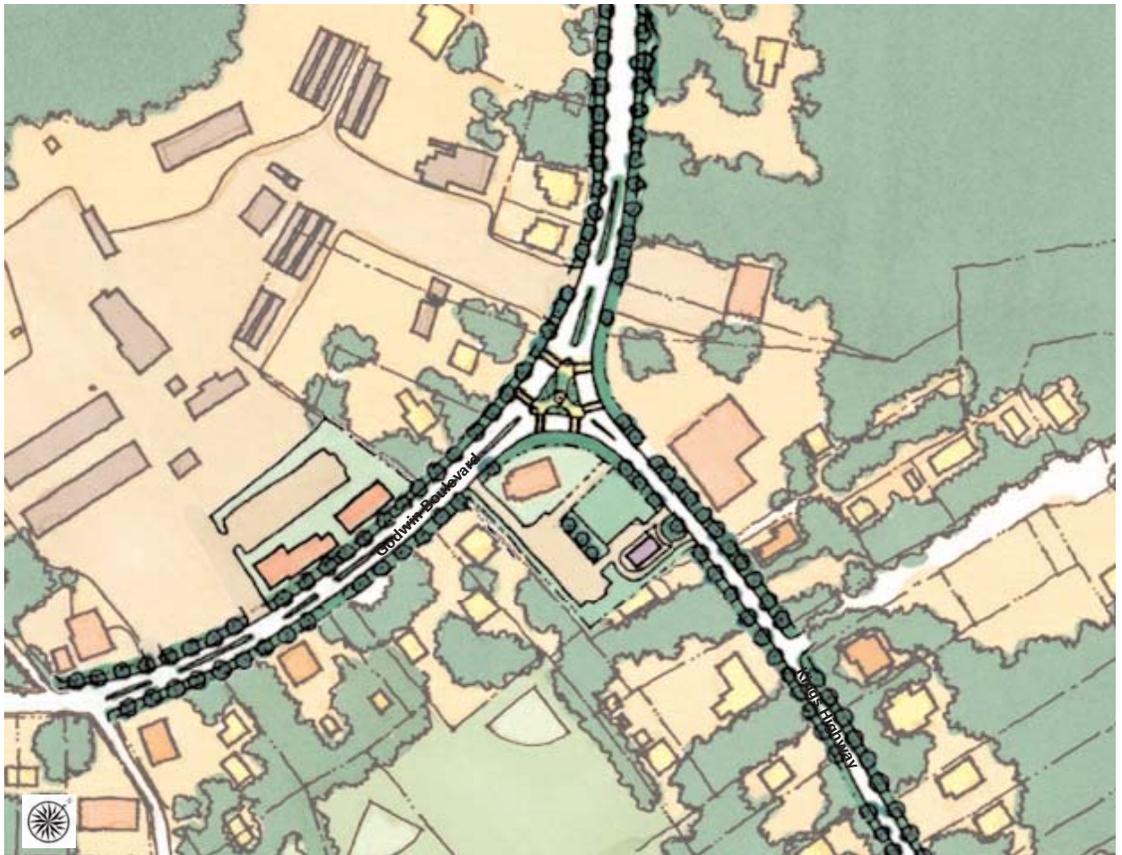
Kings Highway Commercial Proposed (Median Option)

5 Village Center Improvements

Short-term improvements to the Chuckatuck Village Center will build on the historic village character and revitalize the commercial intersection at Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway. Proposed short

term initiatives include wider sidewalks, landscaped “bulb-outs” to calm traffic and define on-street parking areas, historic street lighting and furniture and the addition of banners to make the area more pedestrian friendly.

The Chuckatuck Village Center as it exists today (right) and as proposed (below). Proposed view of the intersection of Godwin Boulevard and Kings Highway (far right).



6 Historic Grist Mill and Crump's Mill Pond The Grist Mill and Crump's Mill Pond are an important part of villages' history. The plan proposes clearing some of the vegetation around them to open the views and give them a more commanding presence along Godwin Boulevard. Other improvements include landscaping and incentives to encourage the renovation of the mill. Residents suggested reuse as an inn, a restaurant or cafe and/or a visitors center.

7 Public Sewer Recognizing that the future availability of public utilities, particularly sewage collection and treatment, will be key to the successful implementation of the plan in the long term, the plan calls for the completion of a sewer feasibility study as one of the plan's short term initia-

Godwin Boulevard at the Historic Mill as it exists today (right) and as proposed (below)

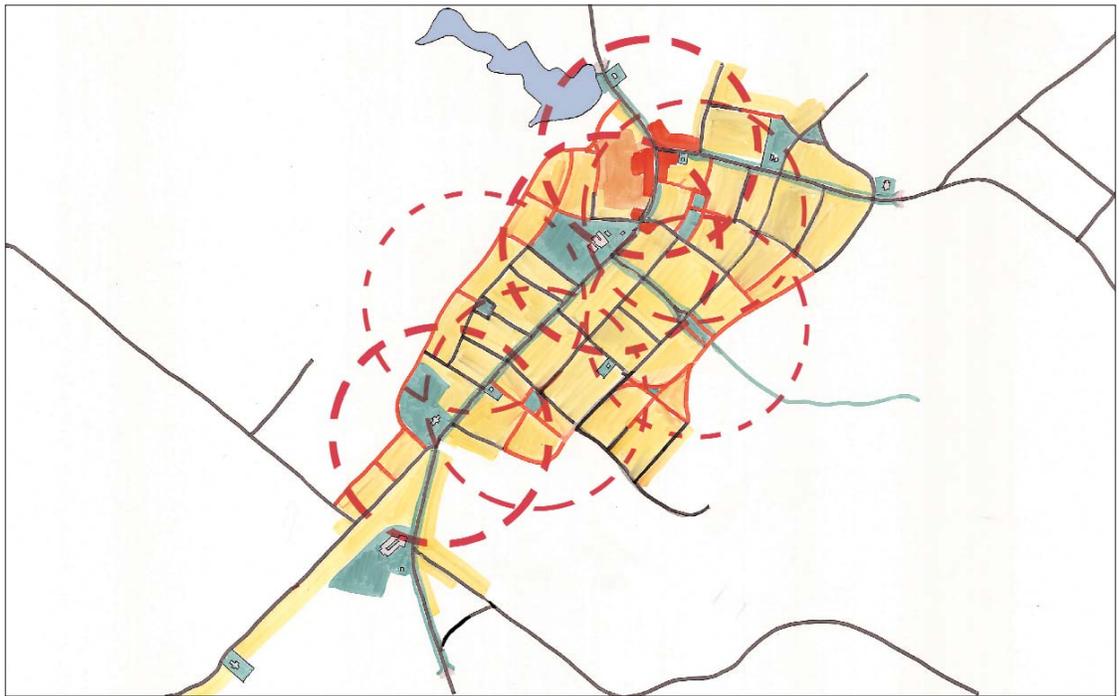


III Long Term Vision

THE LONG TERM VISION allows for the development of infill housing on existing streets and new residential neighborhoods connected to, and expanding, the historic village of Chuckatuck/Oakland. Part of the reason for the village expansion is that it makes other things possible, such as the Village Center improvements and a new Community Center and park.

The long term plan shows a framework for development that may take place over the next 10 to 30 years. The plan calls for the construction of new houses that maintain the same character as the existing residential buildings, in terms of setbacks, massing, and details such as front porches and windows facing the streets. New streets will receive the same lighting, landscaping, and traffic calming as existing streets under the short term initiatives.

Frameworks (above)
 Diagram of long term initiatives showing residential infill areas (yellow), new parks (green), and improved commercial development (red). The red circles show five-minute walking radii.

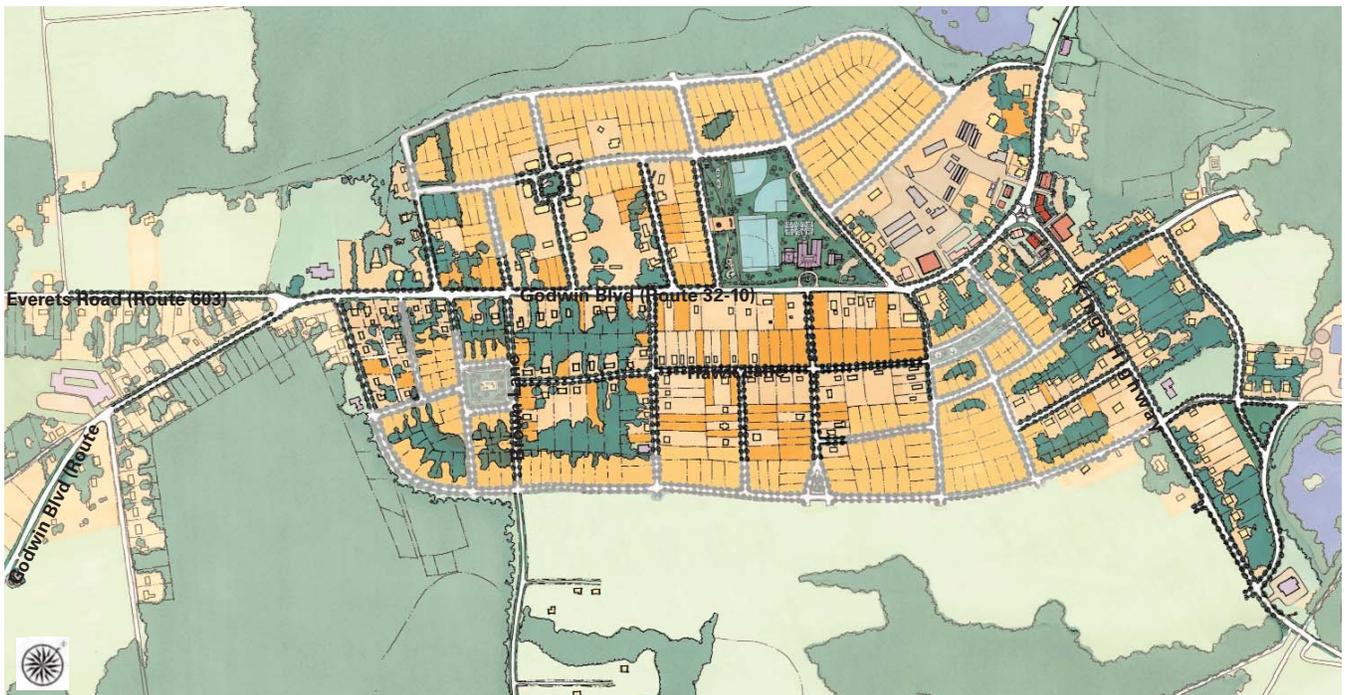


Development should be phased to create complete neighborhoods, each centered around a neighborhood amenity and within walking distance of the village center. New development shown in the long term plan will connect and fill out the street grid already established by the existing street network.

lage is easy to navigate by foot, bike, and car. These initiatives are presented as a “shopping list” of ideas that can be prioritized and implemented over time. In order to fully develop the village it will be necessary to construct a package sewage treatment facility, which becomes financially feasible for a village of the proposed size.

Long Term Plan
(below)

An interconnected network of streets and open spaces will ensure that the vil-

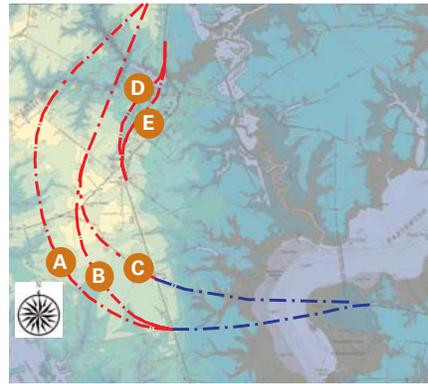


Proposed By-Pass Road

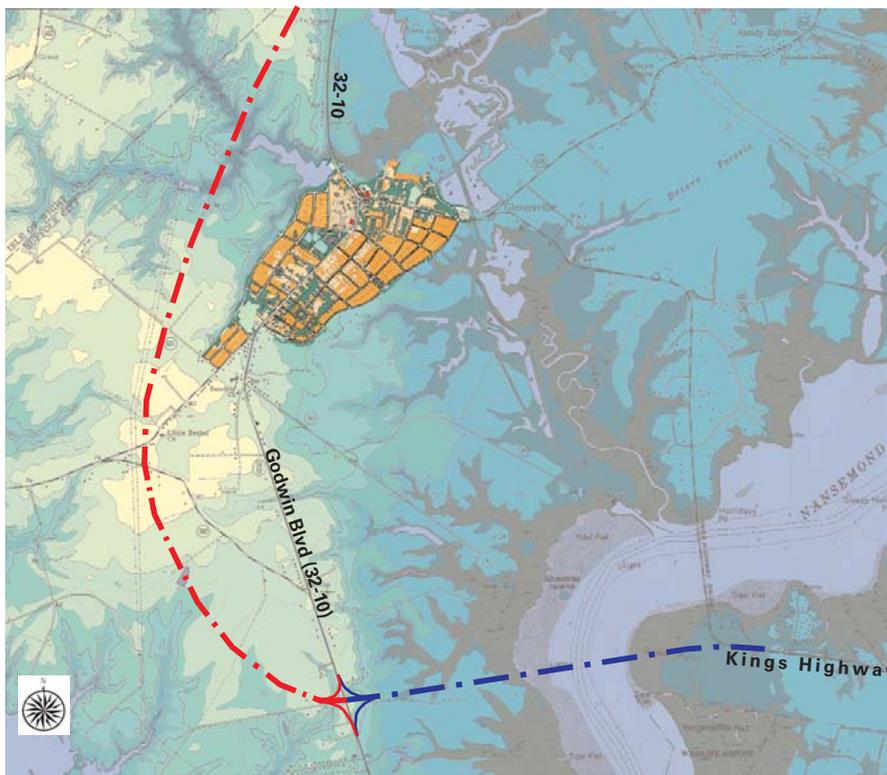
The City of Suffolk and the State of Virginia Department of Transportation have examined a number of regional scale transportation improvements in the Chuckatuck/Oakland area, including a by-pass road for Godwin Boulevard (32/10) and a new alignment for the Kings Highway bridge. While the focus of the charrette was not on these regional scale issues, it was necessary to recommend preferred routes in order to proceed with the design proposals.

The design team studied various alternative alignments based on a number of factors including noise abatement, minimizing environmental impact, creating a village edge or boundary and preserving existing residential areas and

neighborhoods. Significant weight and consideration was also given to the input of the residents and stakeholders. An alignment to the west of the village adjacent to existing power lines was selected as the preferred alternative. This alignment would need to work with the new alignment for the King’s Highway Bridge.



Godwin Boulevard (32/10) by-pass alternatives are shown in red and the Kings Highway (125) Bridge realignment in blue (above right). The long-term plan with the preferred general location of the by-pass (right).



Framework of Parks & Open Space

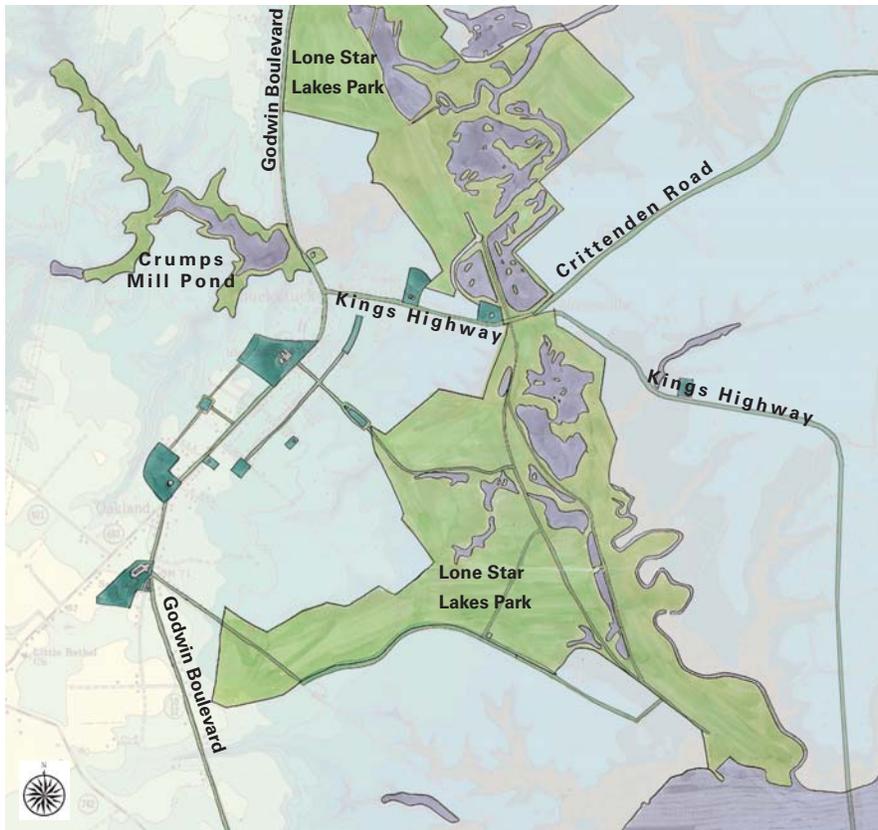
An important part of the overall master plan is the development of a frameworks plan that links together all of the villages’ parks and open spaces with a series of interconnected greenways. Chuckatuck/Oakland already has an impressive collection of parks, including the regional Lone Star Lakes Park and several ball fields. The frameworks plan shows how the existing parks can be linked together through a series of linear parks, bikeways, boulevards and landscaped streets. The plan is designed to allow people to walk or cycle from one park to another within

a park, or park-like setting, without having to use major streets.

The frameworks plan is designed to coordinate with the proposals in the City of Suffolk Parks & Recreation Plan.



Existing parks and open space plan (above right). Proposed interconnected frameworks plan (right).



Long Term Vision Plan

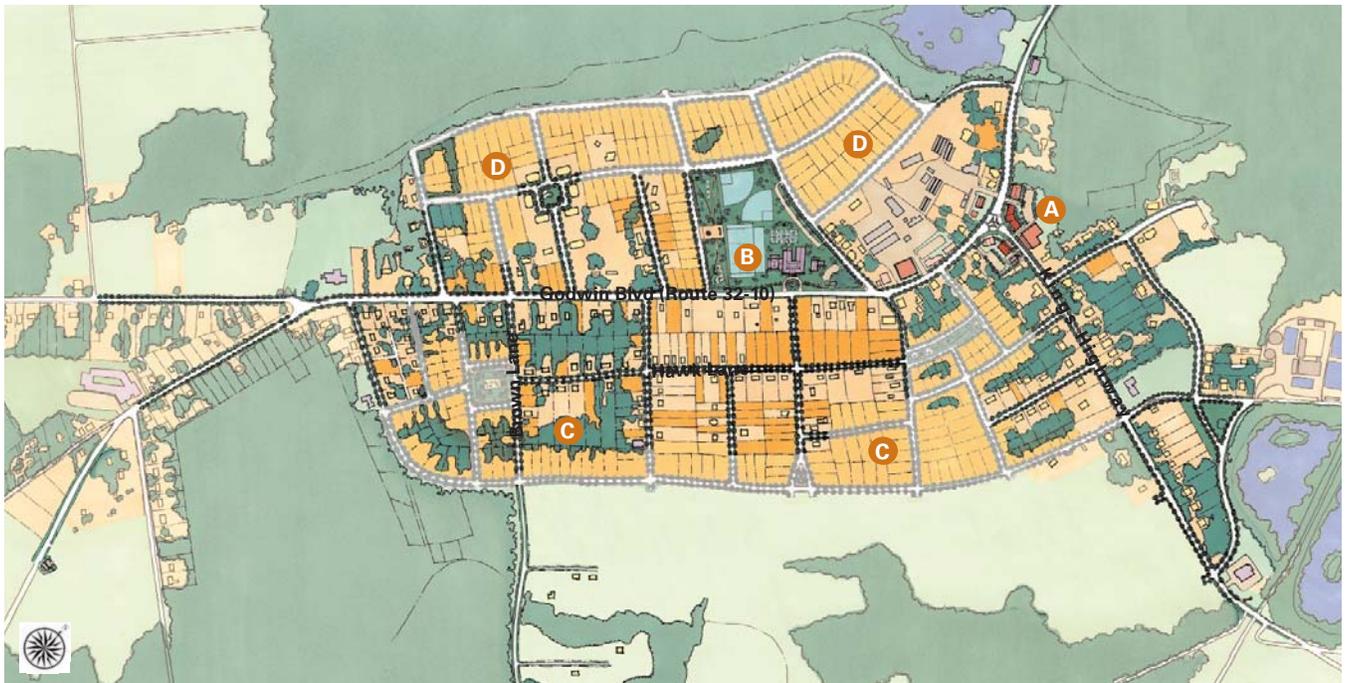
At the public meeting held on the last day of the charrette a number of participants expressed concern over the scale of the long term vision plan developed at the charrette. The plan was revised after the charrette to reflect a more modest long-term growth plan. The plan below follows the design principles set out at the beginning of the charrette, but has fewer units than the charrette plan. The revised plan reinforces the initiatives from the short term plan and creates a series of connected neighborhoods, each centered on a park and within easy access of the Village Center.



The long term plan developed at the Charrette (right). The revised long term plan (below).

Long Term Initiatives

- A** Revitalized Village Center
- B** Community Center and Library
- C** Residential Development East of Godwin Boulevard
- D** Residential Development West of Godwin Boulevard





A. Village Center

The long-term initiatives for the Village Center build on and reinforce Chuckatuck’s historic character. The success of the overall village plan depends to a large extent on the revitalization of the Village Center where residents take care of many of their daily shopping needs. The Village Center should be pedestrian oriented and provide adequate parking behind the buildings.

1 Building Rehabilitation The plan proposes various methods for restoring historic vacant main street buildings, including the old drug store building and the historic house at the east end of the intersection. New businesses or services including a small police precinct have been proposed as uses that could be accommodated in the rehabilitated buildings. The historic Gwaltney’s General Store could also be restored.

2 Post Office Improvements can include a new landscaped drop-off area in front of the building, a landscaped parking lot to the side, and a new building entrance.

3 New Mixed Use Building The empty lot at the north corner of the main intersection and the property adjacent to Gwaltney’s store are ideal locations for new mixed-use buildings, with retail uses on the ground floor and offices or apartments above. The design of all new buildings should complement the historic character of the village.

4 Infill Commercial Buildings New commercial buildings could fill empty lots in the village center. These new buildings could provide space for neighborhood retail that residents requested during the charrette, including a pharmacy, cafe, dry cleaner, and branch bank.

The Village Center plan today (above) and as proposed in the long term vision (right).



5 Intersection Improvements In combination with traffic calming on the village’s main roads, improvement of the triangle at the main intersection could make the intersection safer and improve the image. Residents also supported the idea of installing a monument at the center of the village triangle.

6 Coordinated Parking Plan The plan recommends shared parking lots located behind the new and revitalized buildings in the village center. Parking lots should be landscaped and well lit.

Gwaltney’s Store

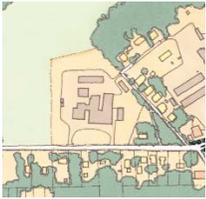
Historic photo (left) and current photo (right) of Gwaltney’s general store, one of the buildings that could be revitalized under the long term plan.



Crossroads Improvements

A view of Kings Highway and Godwin Boulevard as it is today (right) and as proposed (below) with Gwaltney’s at right and a new mixed use building on the left.





B. Community Center and Library

One of the most widely supported ideas that emerged during the charrette was the creation of a centralized community center at the site of the old Chuckatuck High School. This requires the purchase and renovation of the school building, which is currently in use as Saunders Supply Company sales center and offices. Saunders could be relocated to a new building in the commercial area on Godwin Boulevard. As the existing sports leagues are relocated to this facility, the other ball parks can be redeveloped as smaller neighborhood parks or development sites. Specific initiatives include:

1 Library Improvements Residents expressed the need to expand and update the library facility. Improvements and an addition can be accommodated in the long term plan.

2 Community Center Renovation of the old high school building into a community center would provide an ideal central location for activities for residents of all ages, including seniors and teenagers. Because the gym floor still exists in the south wing of the building, it could be restored for indoor athletic activities and social gatherings.

3 Community Park A central community park at the new community center would be a recreation facility for the whole village to use. The park could include new ball fields, soccer and multipurpose fields, tennis and basketball courts, a gazebo for outdoor gatherings, tot lots, and swimming pool.

4 Residential Development New residential development should front the improved library and proposed community center and park.

The Community Center area of Chuckatuck as it looks today (above) and as proposed in the long term vision (right).



The old Chuckatuck High School building, in use by Saunders Supply Company (right); the renovated building as community center with the expanded library at right (below).



C. Residential Development

The long term vision provides a framework for future residential development. Although the amount of new development may not be built for 10, 20, or even 40 years, and is dependent on the implementation of a package sewer plant, it is important for a historic villages such as Chuckatuck and Oakland to have a plan for long term development.

The framework is based on making a complete interconnected network of streets, including connecting existing streets such as Sparrow Road, Beaver Lane, and Wren Road (1). A connected grid will make the village more walkable.

Each new neighborhood has a central park or green with a tot lot and space for neighbors to gather (2). Development should be phased to create complete addresses; for instance, residential frontage on all sides of a new park should be built simultaneously. Infill on vacant lots on existing streets (3) can precede new infrastructure.

Development should be phased to create complete addresses; for instance, residential frontage on all sides of a new park should be built simultaneously. Infill on vacant lots on existing streets (3) can precede new infrastructure.

All new streets should receive the same treatment as the existing street improvements named under the short term initiatives, including residential scale street lights, sidewalks, landscaped verges, and bulbouts to slow traffic.

Residential development can include infill and new streets, centered on neighborhood parks or greens.

