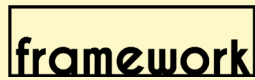




Community Design Charrette Report

October 4-7, 2024



SHAPING THE JUNCTION | *What do you like?*

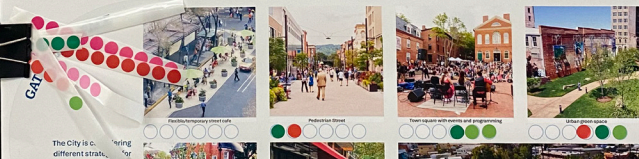
STREETSCAPE

Here are some ideas for improving pedestrian and bike experiences within the project area. Which ones resonate with you?



BUILDING TYPOLOGY

Here are some ideas to increase mixed use and multifamily housing in the project area.



Connect the Junction Community Design Charrette

The Connect the Junction Master Plan aims to outline a vision for thoughtful, transit-oriented development for the Five Corners, Pearl Street, and Park Street areas. As described in the Public Engagement Plan, the project includes multiple public outreach efforts, including presentations to the Planning Commission, stakeholder focus groups, and a Community Design Charrette, which invites the community to engage during a weekend of presentations, site tours, and workshop activities.


The Community Design Charrette took place from October 4-7, hosted at the Champlain Valley Exposition Centre, with additional locations for some activities. The project team included consultants from Framework, planners with the City of Essex Junction, and representatives from Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. The events of the weekend drew families, Councilmembers, developers, youth, seniors, and more who shared what they view as the challenges and opportunities for the project area. Using this feedback, we developed a list of central themes for how the area can develop to offer more housing options, vibrant public spaces, and thriving local businesses accessible via public transit and multi-modal facilities.

The following report outlines what we heard from the public during this series of engagement events.

HOMECOMING GAME

A group of children are sitting at a white table outdoors, engaged in a game. One child is wearing a blue and yellow soccer jersey. There are various items on the table, including a water bottle and some papers.

SITE TOUR

A group of people are standing outdoors, looking at a large orange board held by one of the individuals. They appear to be on a site tour, with a building and trees in the background.

FRIDAY
Oct 4

SATURDAY
Oct 5

SUNDAY
Oct 6

MONDAY
Oct 7



KICK-OFF PRESENTATION



CLOSING PRESENTATION

FRIDAY Oct 4, 2024

Homecoming Game

 Essex High School

We brought project boards to the homecoming game to introduce the project and ask people about challenges and opportunities in the area. Dozens of kids stopped by our table and gladly answered questions in exchange for candy.

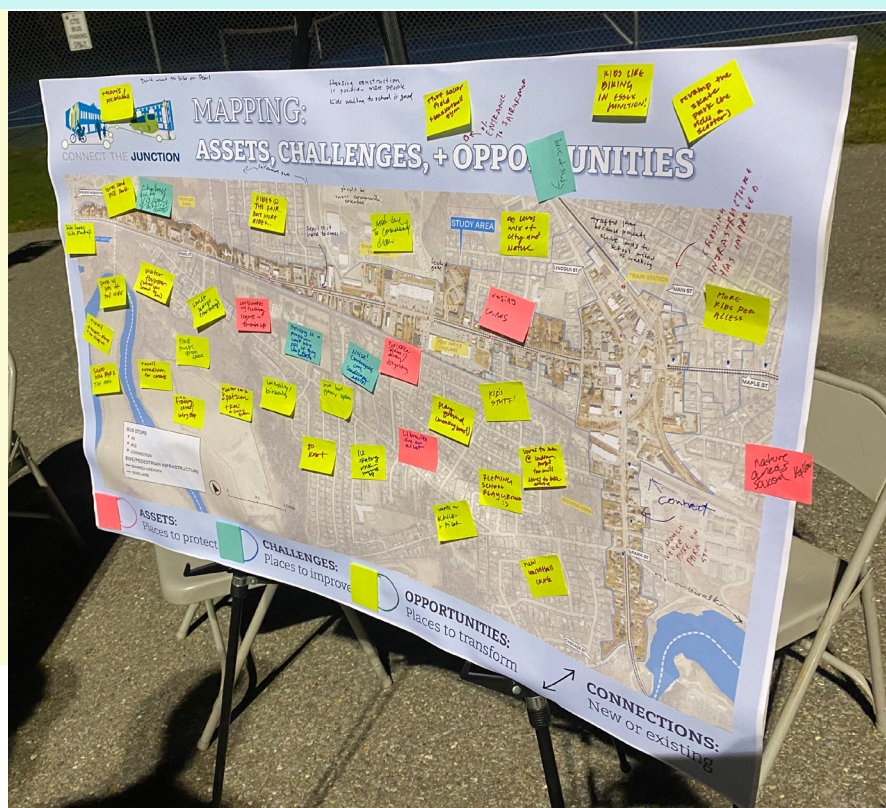
Feedback method: Post-it notes added to *Challenges and Opportunities Map*

Themes:

- Kids enjoy the parks in Essex Junction, such as the playground at Thomas Fleming School and the pool at Maple Street Park. They also enjoy access to larger greenspaces outside the City such as Indian Brook and Sand Hill Park.
- Kids desire more food options and things to do, including shopping, go karts, and ice skating.
- People see opportunities for more green space, food trucks, and grocery stores.
- People appreciate the mix of “city” with “nature” and enjoy biking around, but there is a desire for better biking and walking conditions, especially for families/kids.

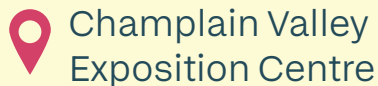
Challenges and Opportunities Map with post-its noting “assets, challenges, opportunities, and connections” ↑

We spoke to lots of kids about what they love and want they want to see added to Essex Junction →



SATURDAY Oct 5, 2024

Kick-Off Presentation



Champlain Valley
Exposition Centre

We presented slides on project background and existing conditions, with an option to join via webinar and live polling questions using Slido.

Feedback method: Live polling using Slido



In response to the open-ended polling question:

Describe the #1 asset you'd like to see preserved in the study area...
participants said:

- Balance robust businesses, community spaces and safety
- Diversity of businesses
- Community connections through coffee shops
- Walkability
- Nothing—it would be ideal to overhaul the entire space and replace it with easy and quiet access paths for the younger generations to encourage civic engagement and community
- Historical character
- More restaurants
- Maintain the vibe
- Historical buildings and compatible new growth
- Ensure accessibility for diverse (in all ways) residents
- Diversity of businesses
- Town character
- Viable local businesses serving residents
- Green space including river access
- Boxcar Bakery
- Open space for healthy activity
- Public transportation
- Safety
- Our historical character
- Nature
- Business vitality

In response to the open-ended polling question:

Describe the #1 thing you'd like to see changed in the study area...
participants said:

- Segregated bike and walking paths bordered by green space to reduce traffic noise and increase walkability and access to businesses by non-car transportation methods
- More trees, with separation between sidewalks & road
- Turn 5 corners to 4 corners
- Historical aesthetic matching
- Traffic control during CVE events—add crosswalk lights
- Traffic calming everywhere
- Keep main street open because traffic will be forced to side streets
- Focus on safety and good use of density
- Pedestrian railroad crossings
- Close Main Street
- Protected bike lanes everywhere
- Mandate green space/communal space in new development
- Less parking out front
- Infill parking lots
- Learn from past planning mistakes
- Add two stories to every building in the study area
- More Affordable housing
- Bike lanes on Pearl—West Street to Susie Wilson
- Return of Amtrak [route] to Montreal
- Crosswalks near every bus stop; Design control; Less traffic
- Not sure yet
- No strip malls—Crosswalks on Pearl Street
- Continuous bike lanes
- Traffic calming strategies
- Better stakeholder involvement
- Close Main Street

In up to 3 words, describe what you see as the biggest challenges in the study area,
participants said:




In up to 3 words, describe your vision for the study area,
participants said:



SATURDAY Oct 5, 2024

Workshop activity #1: Challenges + Opportunities

 Champlain Valley
Exposition Centre

Feedback method: Participants broke into 4 groups and marked up *Challenges and Opportunities Maps* to show:

- Assets they want to protect.
- Challenges that require improvements.
- Opportunities to transform places into something new.
- Existing or potential connections.

Themes:

Pearl Street:

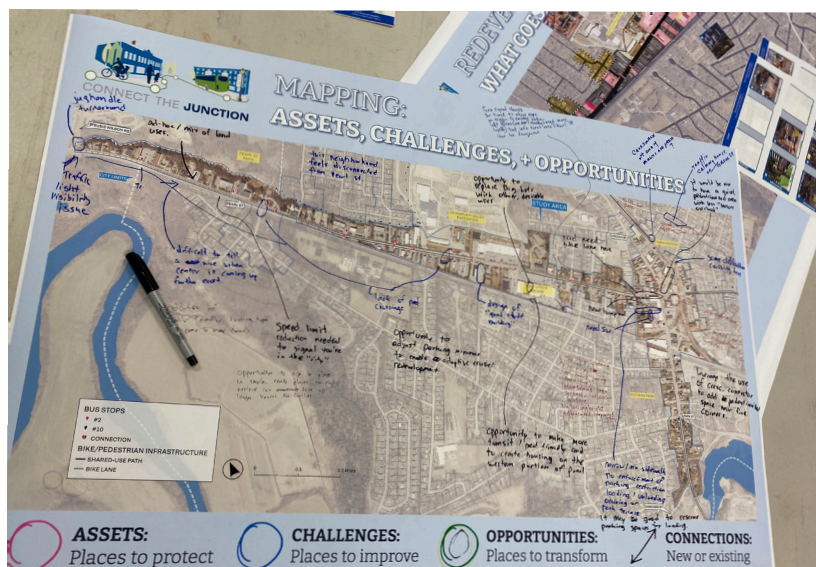
- The city needs to pair crosswalks and bus stops.
- Traffic calming measures should be implemented to slow down through traffic.
- There are fewer eastbound transit stops than westbound.
- Bike lanes are dangerous and discontinuous - opportunity to road diet to create safer bike paths.

5 Corners:

- Possibility of shutting down Main Street or reducing a lane of traffic (opinions for and against).
- Possibility of closing Railroad Ave to car traffic between Central Street and Main Street.

Park Street

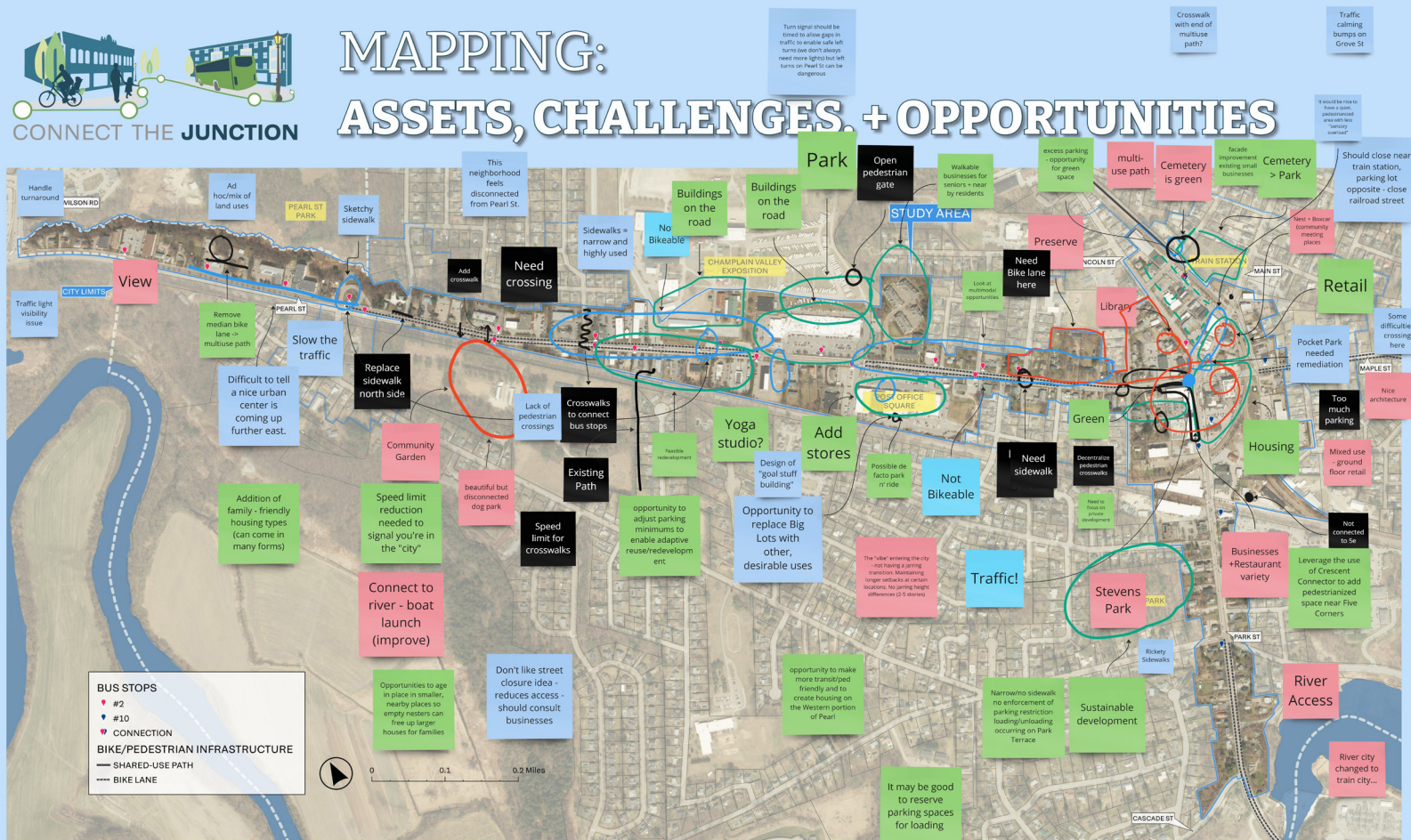
- Desire to create contiguous bike and pedestrian paths to access the river.




*Aggregation of Feedback
from the 4 groups; see
appendix for original maps.*




MAPPING: ASSETS, CHALLENGES. + OPPORTUNITIES



ASSETS:
Places to protect

 **CHALLENGES:**
Places to improve




OPPORTUNITIES:
Places to transform

 **CONNECTIONS:**
New or existing

SATURDAY Oct 5, 2024

Workshop activity #2: Redevelopment + Infill

 Champlain Valley
Exposition Centre

Feedback method: Participants remained in their groups and placed stickers to show where they envision different housing types, public spaces, and streetscape elements.



Themes:

Pearl Street:

- Existing strip malls could be redeveloped as mixed-use without setbacks and with parking behind the buildings.
- Denser housing, including middle housing and lower density multifamily, is desired along the northwest edge of Pearl, and in secondary study areas.
- Challenge with sound mitigation if housing is proposed near the CVE.
- Opportunity for more diverse and year-round uses of the CVE property.


5 Corners

- Desire to integrate green space into future development.
- Residents appreciate the current mix of retail and restaurants.
- Desire for mid- to high-density mixed-use development.
- People like the idea of incorporating parklets and food trucks into public space.



SUNDAY Oct 6, 2024

Site Tour


 Five Corners→Pearl Street

We walked around the Five Corners and Pearl Street areas, talking about existing conditions and noting opportunities for new development and uses of space.



MONDAY Oct 7, 2024

Site Tour

 Crescent Connector + Five Corners

After the ribbon cutting for the new Crescent Connector, we walked the new thoroughway and around Five Corners to discuss how this change can pave the way for new development in the area.



Feedback method: Tour attendees provided feedback through conversation and by marking up maps.

Themes:

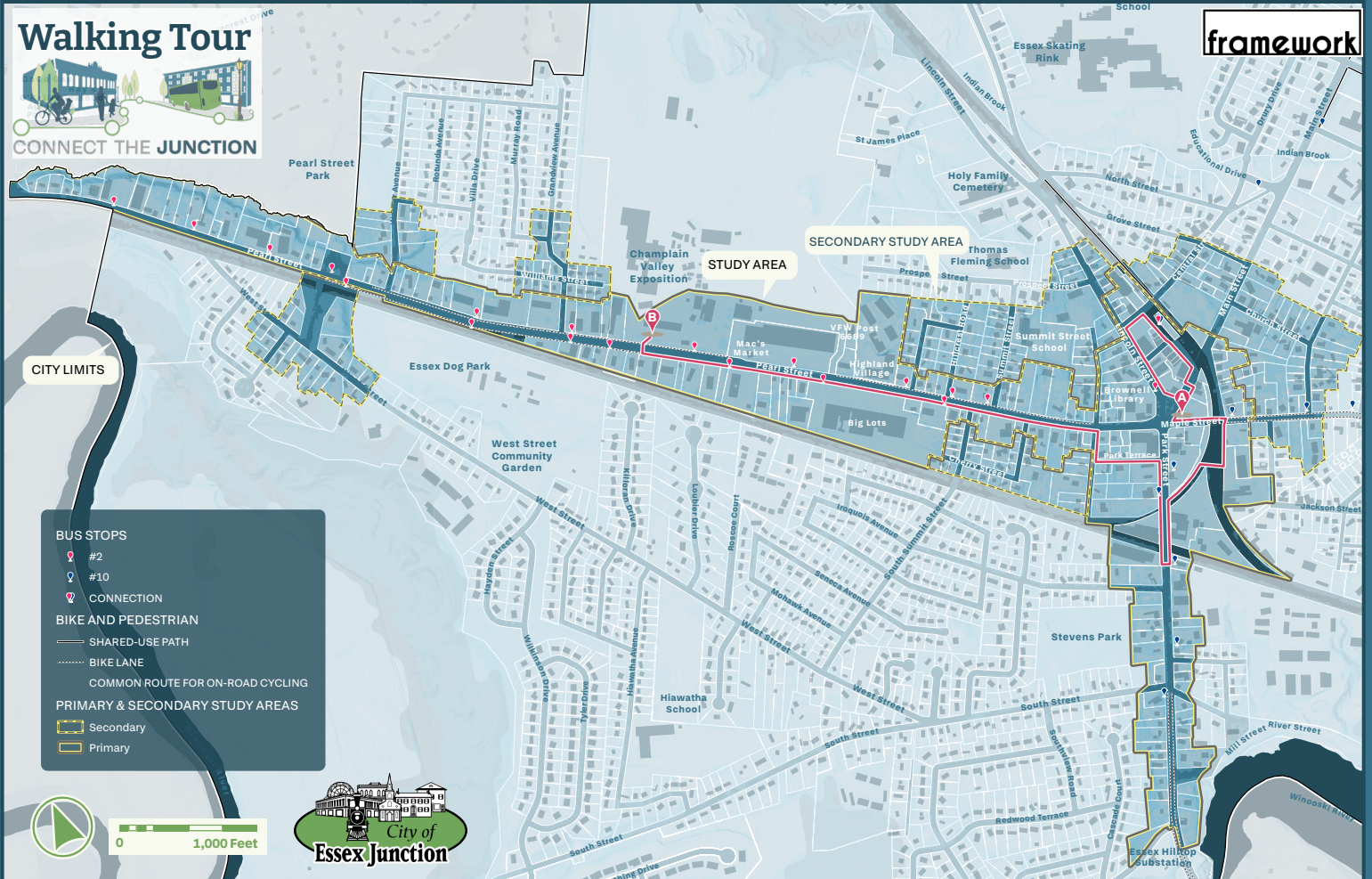
- Reduce impact from traffic on pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Railroad Avenue presents unique opportunity for a pedestrian-oriented street.
- Capitalize on the Crescent Connector.
- Crosswalks should be added to the places where people are already making street crossings.
- Expanded and improved public space will support new development.
- Focus on community needs versus accommodating regional traffic.
- Right-of-way constraints make bicycle facilities challenging.

Walking Tour



CONNECT THE JUNCTION


framework



The Sunday tour started in the parking lot in front of Firebird Cafe, looped around Railroad Ave, and extended along Pearl Street.

MONDAY Oct 7, 2024

Closing Presentation

 Champlain Valley Exposition

We presented a summary of what we had heard throughout the weekend at the workshop, tours, and during “open studio hours” during which people were invited to share feedback on project boards, using activity maps, and via conversation with project team members.



Vision + Big Ideas:

1. Prioritize People
2. Capitalize on the Connector by making more “people space”
3. Add activity and amenities with new development
4. Add housing thoughtfully
5. Make more connections
6. Make the assets shine
7. Essex Junction for Essex Junction

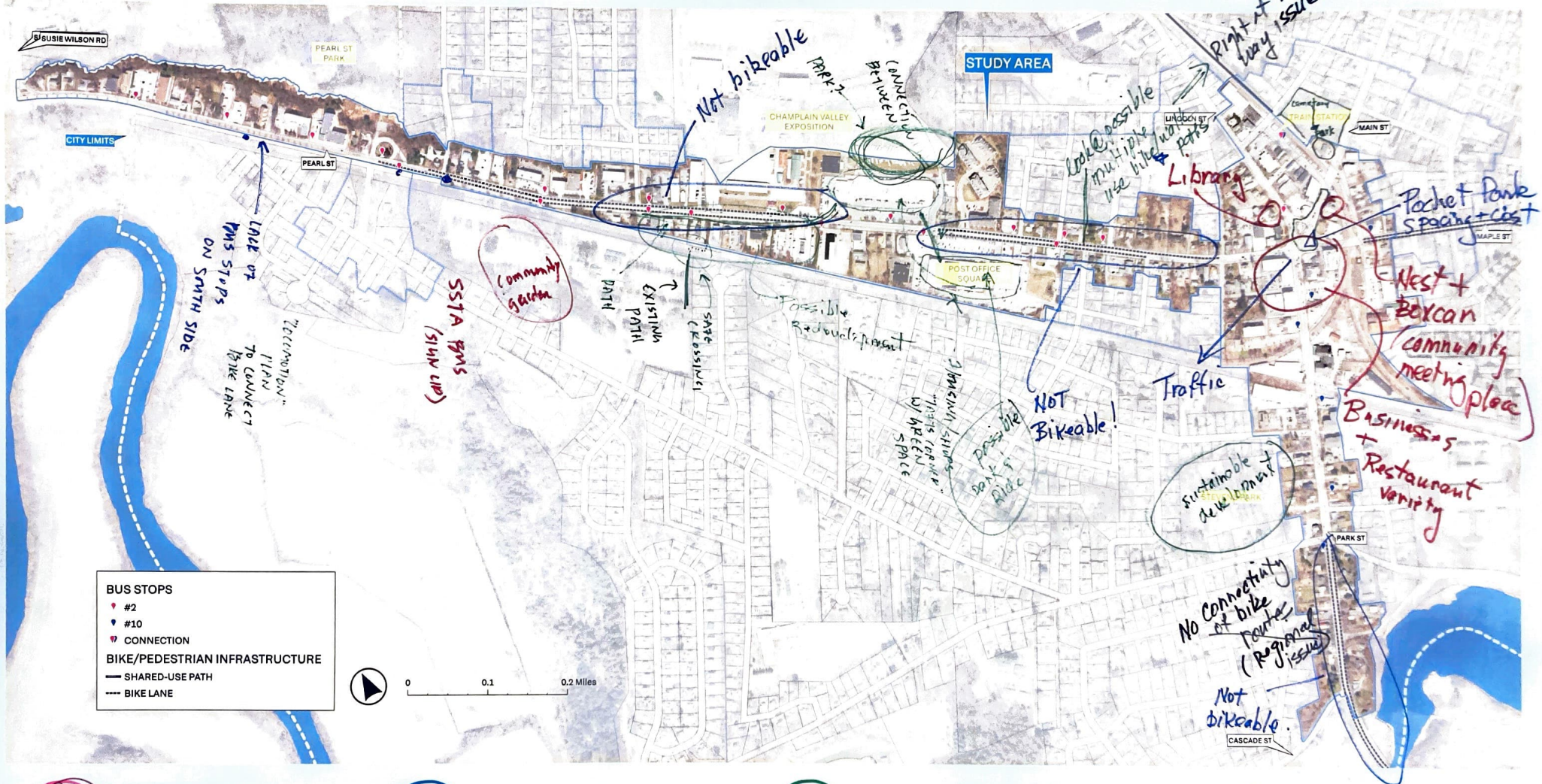
↑ A model of a potential redevelopment scheme whereby the corner of Main Street and Park Street is an urban plaza.

↓ A concept an arc of green spaces around the Five Corners, with Main Street reduced to two lanes and Railroad Avenue improved with market shed buildings.



The following pages include scanned maps that resulted from the workshop on October 5.

MAPPING: ASSETS, CHALLENGES, + OPPORTUNITIES



ASSETS:
Places to protect

CHALLENGES:
Places to improve

OPPORTUNITIES:
Places to transform

CONNECTIONS:
New or existing

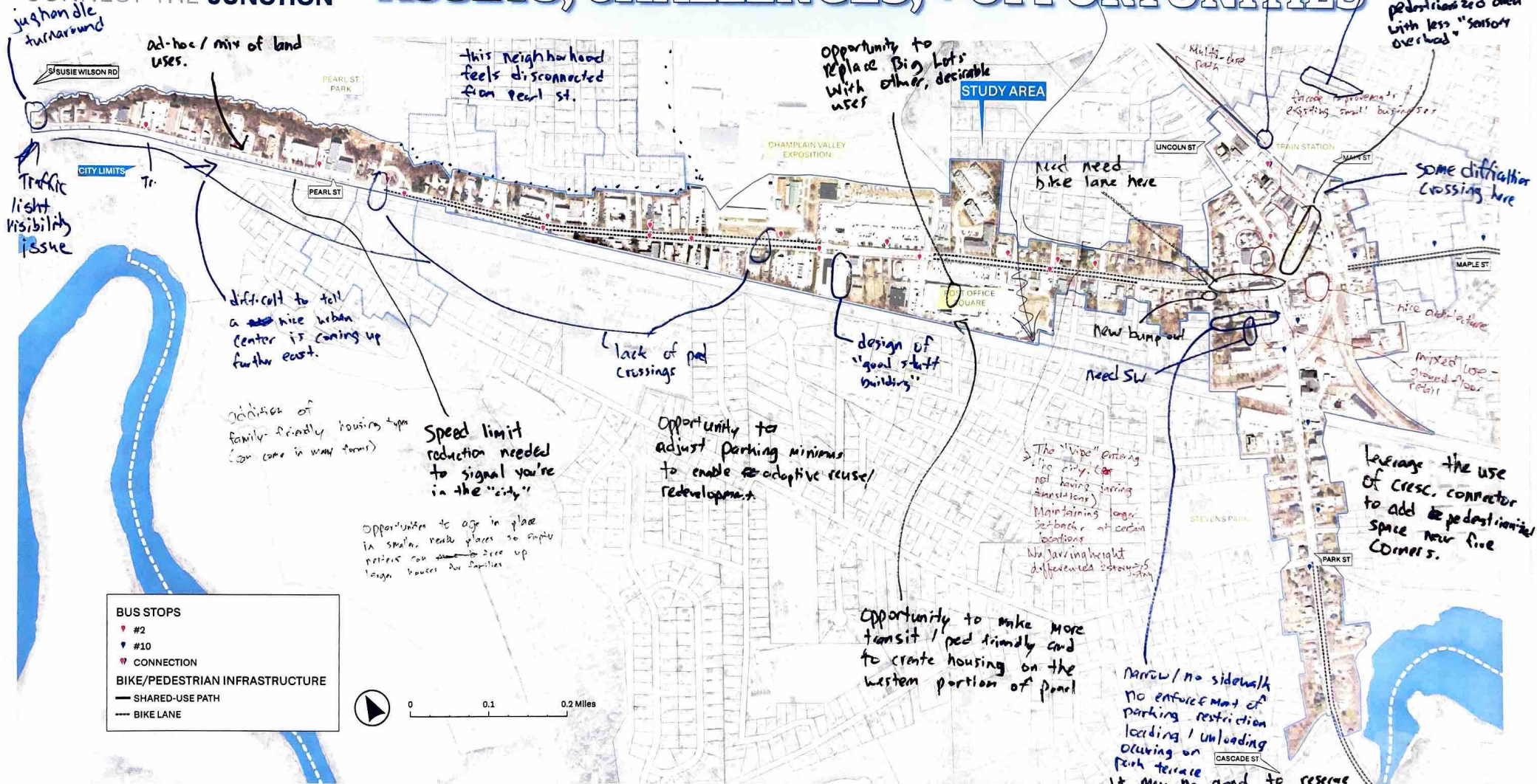




CONNECT THE JUNCTION

MAPPING:

ASSETS, CHALLENGES, + OPPORTUNITIES

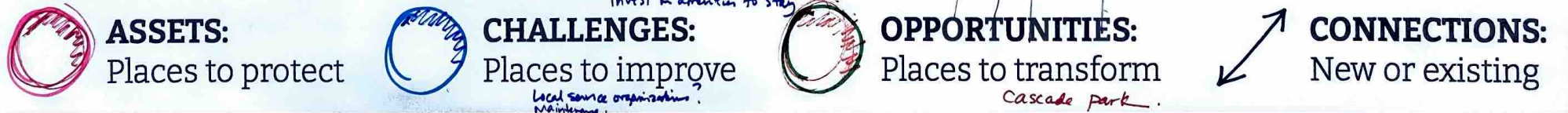


ASSETS:
Places to protect

CHALLENGES:
Places to improve

OPPORTUNITIES:
Places to transform

CONNECTIONS:
New or existing





INFILL SCENARIO: WHAT GOES WHERE?



EXAMPLE

#2



INFILL SCENARIO: WHAT GOES WHERE?

improved in some way to not hear cars while South Lamar Austin Vchi restaurant. in most infill development need require private for outdoor space for open tenants.

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CONNECT THE JUNCTION

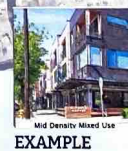


EXAMPLE

Gins Basicall



REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIO: WHAT GOES WHERE?





EXAMPLE

CONNECT THE JUNCTION

REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIO: WHAT GOES WHERE?



EXAMPLE