

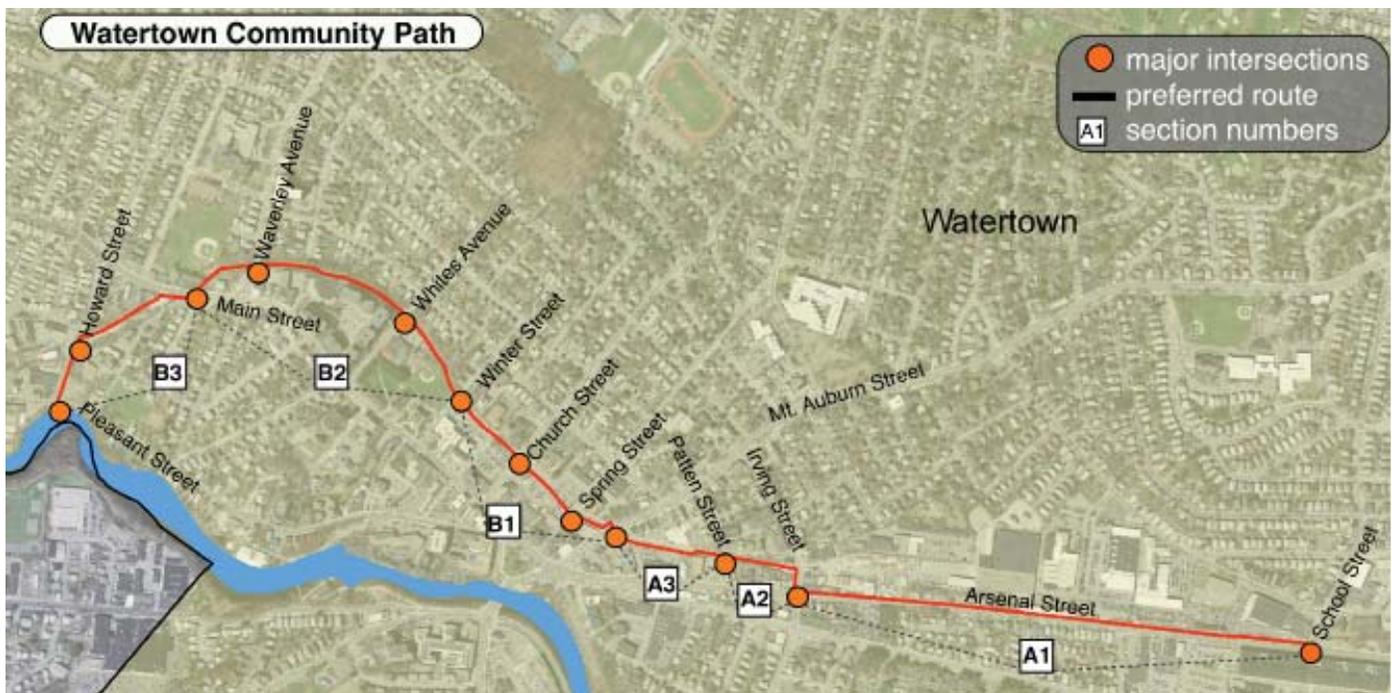


Chapter 5

SITE ANALYSIS + ROUTE OPTIONS

For the purposes of the site analysis, the Field Projects team divided the proposed Path into two sections – Section A: School Street to Mount Auburn Street, and Section B: Mount Auburn Street to Pleasant Street. These sections - and the associated subsections - are shown in Figure 5.1. The team conducted multiple site visits during which they measured street and sidewalk widths, noted obstacles to potential Path routes and took photographs. The site visits also helped the team identify key properties along the Path that would likely be directly impacted by the Path’s development. The team subsequently sought to interview the owners of these select properties. All maps in this chapter were created using data from MassGIS by Kris Carter and Eunice Kim.

Figure 5.1
*The Watertown Community Path
and numbered sections*



Section A - School Street to Mount Auburn Street

Section A of the Community Path extends from the end of the Charles River Connector at School Street to Mount Auburn Street in Watertown. For the majority of this section, the Path will run along Arsenal Street.

Section A.1 - Arsenal Street from School Street to Irving Street

Existing Conditions and Land Use

This section includes the major thoroughfare Arsenal Street and the properties on the north side of the street. The area is zoned industrial and is largely industrial in nature. The properties include several car dealerships such as Lexus of Watertown, a large building materials company, and a strip plaza of food and retail businesses.

Arsenal Street, a principal artery, varies in width, typically being 52 to 53 feet wide. For most of this section, there are two lanes of traffic, one in each direction. There are four travel lanes near School Street, but proceeding west toward Wooley Avenue, they reduce to two lanes. West of School Street, there are also 4-foot-wide bike lanes on both sides of the street that terminate just after Louise Street. This portion of Arsenal Street between School and Louise streets is approximately 50 feet wide.

On-street parking is allowed on both sides of the street for nearly the entire length of Arsenal Street in this section. The exceptions are a short section closest to Irving Street as well as the stretch between Beacon Park and Beechwood Avenue. Like the street, the sidewalks vary in width, with the narrowest section being 4 to 5 feet wide. There are also many obstacles on the sidewalk, including utility poles, hydrants and trees.

There are four MBTA bus stops in this area, including those at Beacon Park, Beechwood Avenue and Louse Street. An additional bus stop is located at the intersection of School and Arsenal streets.

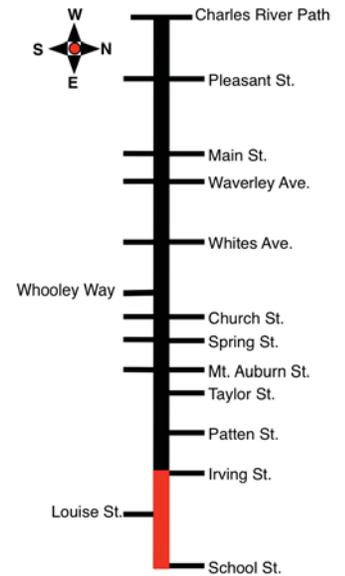


Figure 5.2

Narrow sidewalks along Arsenal Street;

Source: Kris Carter



Ownership

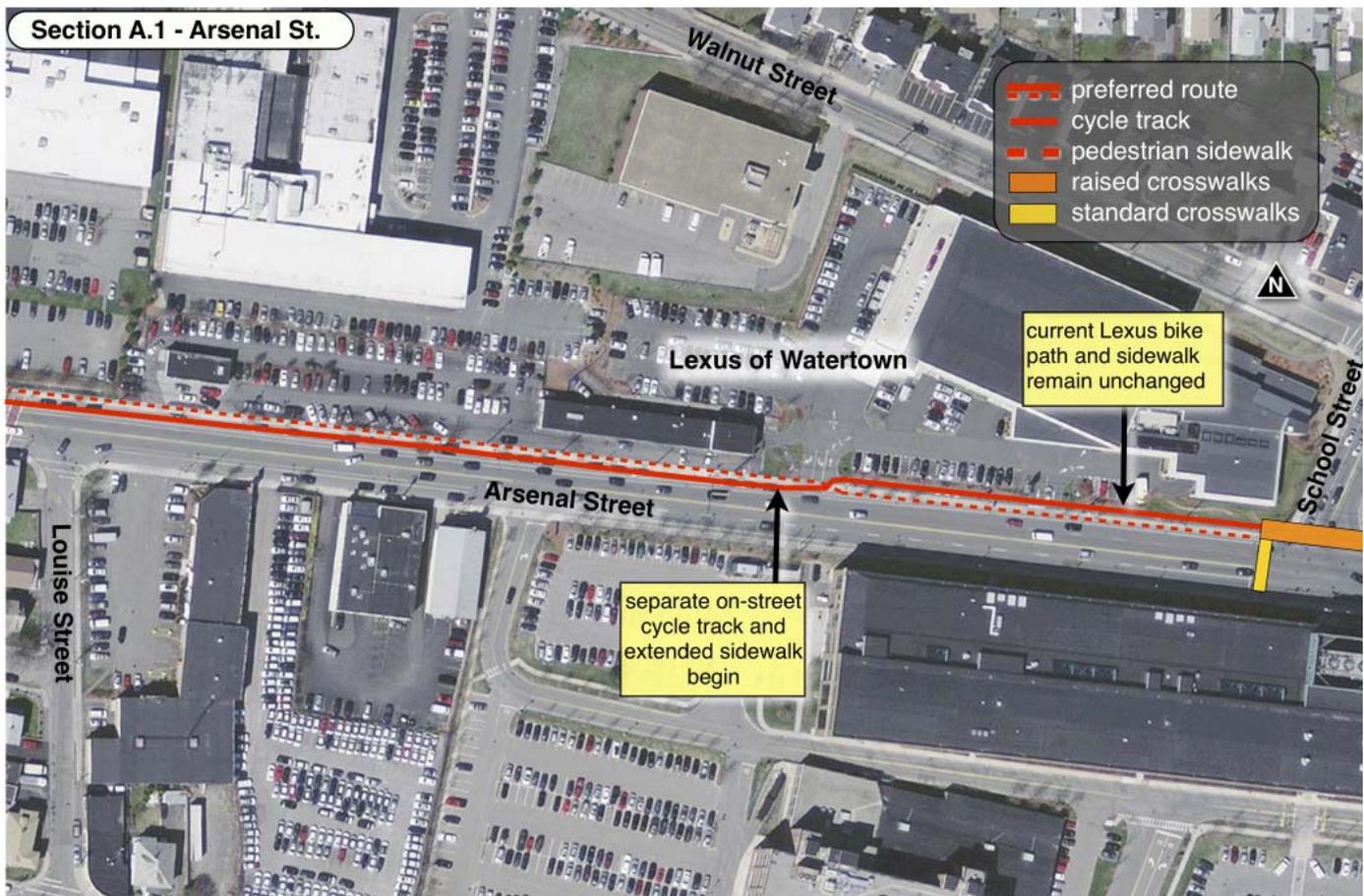
The land abutting Arsenal Street to the north is privately-owned. There are about a half dozen such parcels in the area, the largest being 56-60 Irving Street. That property is 4.1 acres and has approximately 0.25 miles of frontage on Arsenal Street. It is owned by YRT Corporation, which is M. Pirolli and Sons, and is used as a masonry materials storage area.

Constraints

The main constraint is that the land north of Arsenal Street is privately-owned, so the Town would either have to buy the properties or obtain easements through them. The uses of the land pose a challenge to the development of a multi-use path as well. For example, even if YRT Corp. granted the Town an easement, the property would still present safety issues as it is used as a brickyard; building materials such as concrete blocks would need to be moved throughout the property.

Several of the other properties also pose challenges in terms of space. The car dealerships, in particular, park their inventory tightly, leaving little space to spare. These properties thus could not accommodate a multi-use path without losing parking spaces, which would affect their business operations. It is unlikely that these businesses would give up parking spaces, considering vehicles seem to be occupying them at all times.

Figure 5.3
Eastern terminus of the Path



Option 1 - Preferred Route

There is ample space within the roadway on Arsenal Street to accommodate a two-way cycle track for bicyclists and an expanded sidewalk for pedestrians. The cycle track and expanded sidewalk would be on the north side of Arsenal Street, with the cycle track beginning at the eastern end of the two-way bike path that currently exists in front of Lexus of Watertown. The sidewalk would be expanded by about 4 feet.

The cycle track would be 8 feet wide and would be located between the sidewalk and the on-street parking spaces in the roadway. It would be at the same level as the roadway, and there would be a two-foot wide curb or buffer between the cycle track and parked cars. The curb would delineate a clear path of travel for cyclists, while keeping both pedestrians and parked cars out of the cycle track.

Existing on-street parking would be shifted to abut the cycle track and would be 8 feet wide. The motor vehicle travel lanes would each be 11 feet wide, as set forth in the Town's curb and sidewalk ordinance.¹ Currently, there are no painted lines separating on-street parking from travel lanes along the majority of Arsenal Street in this section. To make room for the cycle track and extended sidewalk, the existing on-street bike lanes would be removed from both sides of the street.

Raised crosswalks for pedestrians should be installed at crossings and driveways along Arsenal Street, including the School Street and Irving Street crossings. These raised crosswalks would signal to motor vehicles that they are crossing a pedestrian area. The goal would be to increase safety for pedestrians and others using the sidewalk.

Figure 5.4:
Bike path in front of Lexus;
Source: Eunice Kim



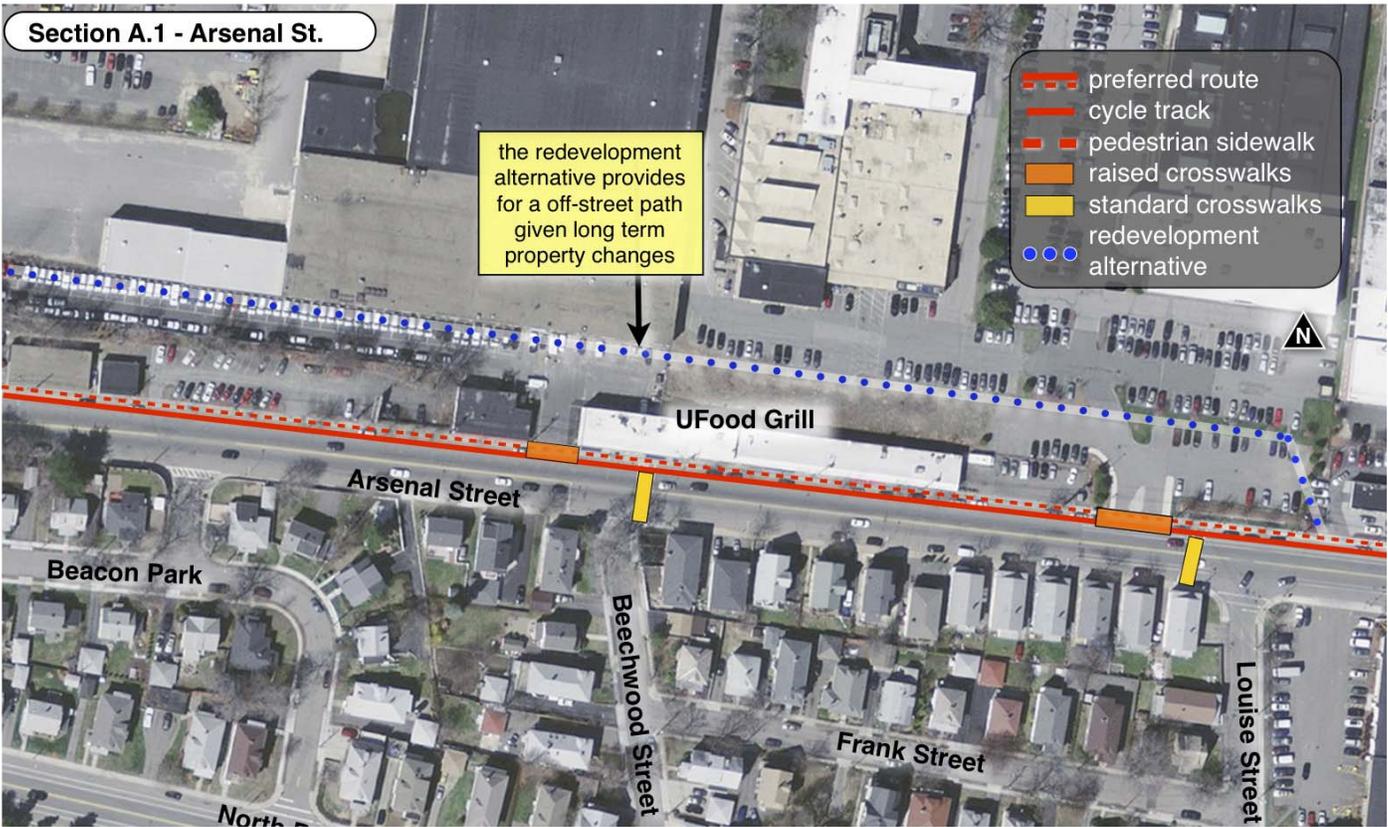
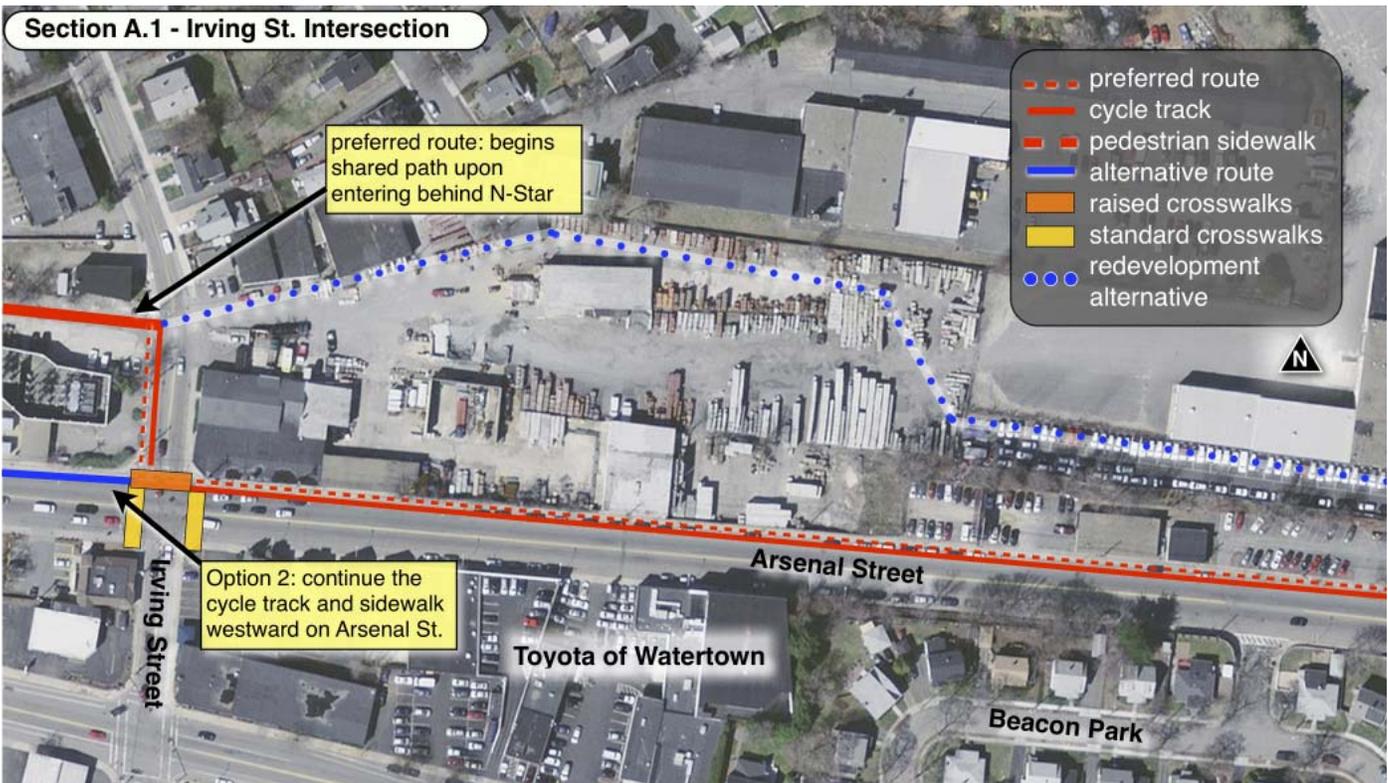


Figure 5.5
Arsenal Street section near businesses

Figure 5.6
Arsenal Street approaching Irving Street



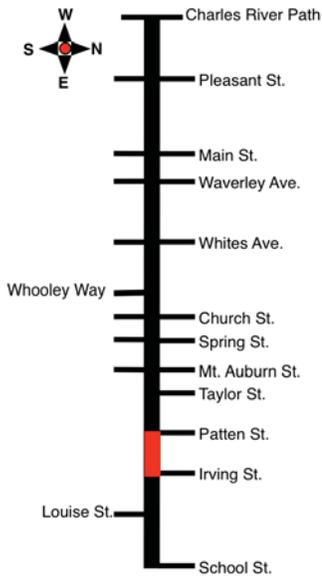


Option 2 - Redevelopment Alternative

Another option would be to build the Path off street as private properties along Arsenal Street redevelop. Under this “redevelopment alternative,” the Path would run roughly parallel to Arsenal Street between the rear entrance of VHB and Irving Street. It would cut through the VHB rear parking lot – VHB has granted the Town of Watertown an easement to do so – and behind the commercial building at 222 Arsenal Street that includes UFood Grill. The Path would continue west through 204 Rear Arsenal Street where Boston Volkswagen parks their inventory of vehicles, and it would proceed along the northern portion of the masonry materials storage area owned by YRT Corp. Because all of these properties are privately-owned, this alternative is meant to serve as a long-term option that the Town could pursue if the properties were to be sold or redeveloped. In either case, the Town would have to obtain easements or purchase properties to develop this off-street Path.

Figure 5.7

*YRT Corp. property along Arsenal Street;
Source: Kris Carter*



Section A.2 - Arsenal Street from Irving Street to Patten Street

Existing Conditions and Land Use

This area between Irving and Patton streets (on the north side of Arsenal Street) is commercial, and it is largely zoned limited business. It includes an NStar Electric Company building, JiffyLube, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Arsenal Street varies in width, being as wide as 55 feet at the Irving Street intersection. This stretch of Arsenal Street has two lanes of traffic, on-street parking on both sides and no bike lanes. There is also one MBTA bus stop on the north side of the street near Irving Street, which is a two-way street.

There is a four-way, signalized intersection at Irving and Arsenal streets, which has four crosswalks. Irving Street (on the north side of Arsenal Street) is 39 feet wide at this intersection and 28 feet wide near M J Pirolli & Sons brickyard. The intersection of Patten and Arsenal streets is not signalized; there is a stop sign and crosswalk at the end of Patten Street. There is a gentle slope going up Patten Street on the bridge.

Ownership

The properties directly to the north of Arsenal Street are privately-owned, as are the properties behind them where the former railroad ROW is located. The Boston and Maine Corporation sold part of the former railroad ROW – a parcel behind the NStar property – to Irving Street LLC in 2000, with that section being used for parking and storage. It sold another part – a narrow wooded lot on Patton Street behind the Jiffy Lube – to Angelo Paolino, Michael and Susan Penta, and SMC Trust for \$30,000 in 2009. There are no plans to develop this property.

Figure 5.8

Patton Street bridge blocking the former railroad ROW;
Source: Kris Carter



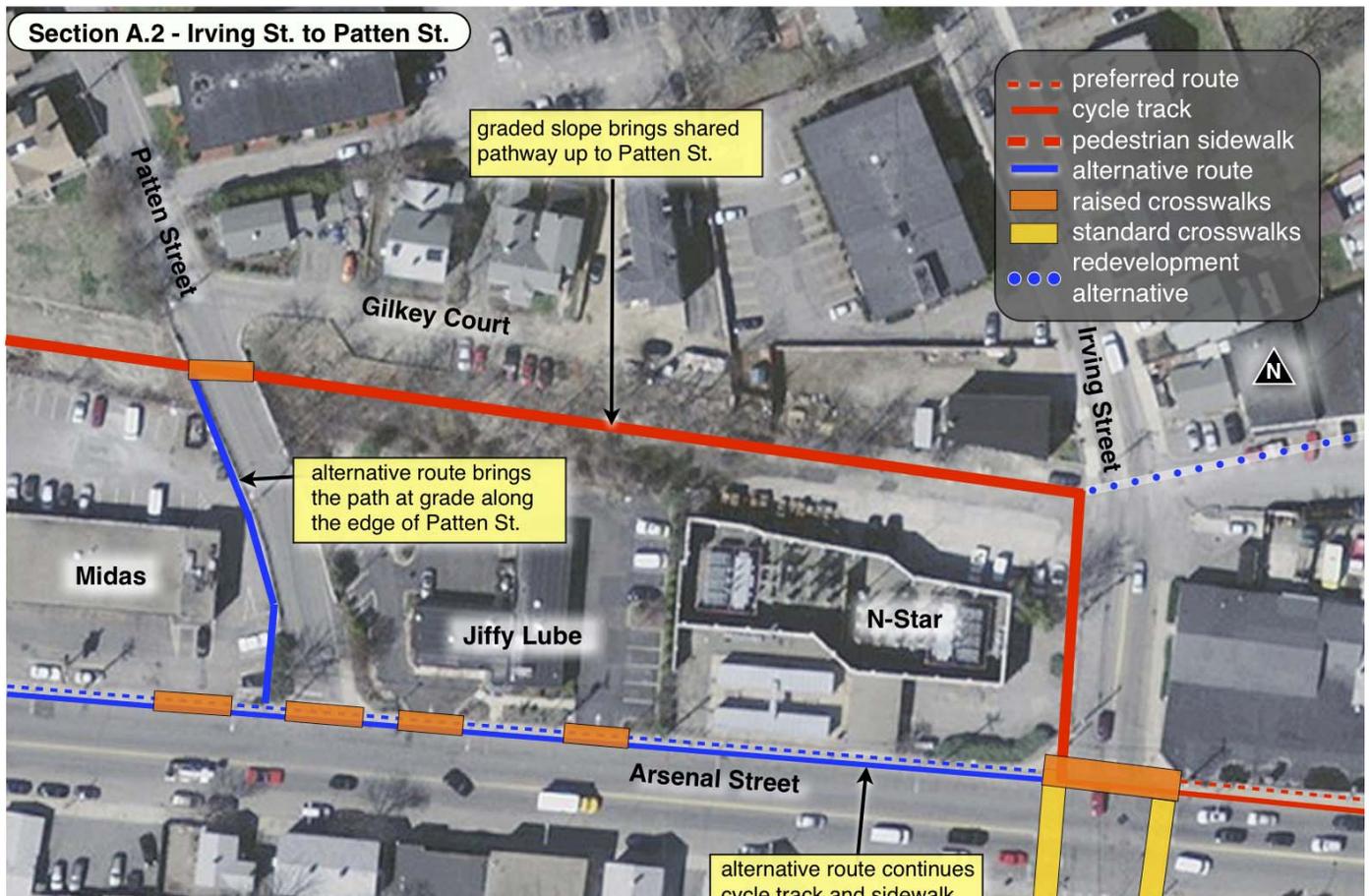
Constraints

The properties that include the former railroad ROW are privately-owned. The Town would have to buy these properties or obtain easements (this might not make sense given their narrow width) if it wanted to construct the Community Path along the former railroad ROW. The Patten Street bridge provides a difficult obstacle because it was filled in several decades ago. The bridge effectively stands as an 11-foot-high wall in the way of the Path as it reaches Patten Street.

Option 1 - Preferred Route

The intersection at Irving Street provides an excellent opportunity to bring the Path off of Arsenal Street before crossing a series of driveways closer to Watertown Square and before reaching Watertown Square itself, which is a busy five-way intersection. The Path would cross Irving Street at the current signalized intersection and then turn right on the southbound side of Irving Street. The street is wide enough to accommodate an 11-foot travel lane in each direction, an 8-foot-wide cycle track, and a 4-foot extension of the sidewalk, which is currently 5 feet wide. The Path would become a shared use path as it turned west toward Patten Street. It would run along the former railroad ROW behind the NStar facility and continue through a dirt lot and a wooded parcel, which is currently littered with refuse.

Figure 5.9
*Vacant parcel
behind NStar property;*



The Patten Street bridge, as mentioned earlier, stands in the way of the Path. The wooded parcel leading up to the bridge is long enough (roughly 200 feet) to create a graded slope or hill (with a 5-6 percent grade), which would allow the Path to then cross Patten Street on a raised crosswalk.

On the other side of the bridge is another vacant property that is also long enough (roughly 200 feet) to create a similar graded slope on which the Path could be located. Both of these slopes or hills should be at least 15 feet wide to increase safety.

Option 2: Alternative Route

A less attractive option would be to continue the Path – as a cycle track and extended sidewalk – on Arsenal Street until the Patten Street intersection. This route would force the Path to cross several driveways, including those of the Jiffy Lube and Enterprise Rental Car properties. Traffic exiting these driveways could pose potential dangers to pedestrians and cyclists; raised crosswalks are recommended for all driveways and crossings in this section.

The Path would cross Patten Street and turn north onto the property at the corner of Arsenal and Patten streets where Midas is located. The Path would then run along the easternmost edge of this private property (76 Arsenal Street), adjacent to the retaining wall that leads up to the Patten Street bridge. To accommodate the Path, the property would lose approximately three to five parking spaces. In addition, vehicle circulation around the Midas building would likely be constrained, if not blocked. This is because there is only 18 feet of space between the corner of the Midas building and the Patten Street retaining wall, and at least 10 feet of that would be taken up by the Path. On the other hand, this alternative route would allow the Path to remain relatively flat as opposed to having a relatively steep slope leading up to the Patten Street bridge, which would be the case in the preferred route.

Figure 5.10

*Vacant parcel behind the Jiffy Lube property;
Source: Kris Carter*



Section A.3 - Patten Street to Mount Auburn Street

Existing Conditions and Land Use

This is a commercial area that is mainly zoned central business (along Mount Auburn Street) and limited business (along Arsenal Street). The properties on Arsenal Street include Midas, Cambridge Savings Bank, Wild Willy's Burgers and Firestone. Many of the businesses have parking in the rear. Behind the Firestone property at 40 Arsenal Street is an 8-foot-wide former ROW that currently consists of trees, brush and a fence that separates the property from the abutting parking lot.

There is a 1.5-acre plaza (Watertown Square Plaza) at 49-59 Mount Auburn Street that is home to several businesses such as Dunkin Donuts. Much of the plaza consists of paved parking spaces, particularly in the section behind the businesses near the former railroad ROW. This parking section is 48 feet wide, curb to curb. Several of the spaces are reserved, but the vast majority is not. None of the parking in this plaza is metered. In addition to parking and businesses, this plaza includes a vacant lot just west of the Patten Street Bridge. About 195 feet in length, the vacant lot is part of the former railroad ROW. It is littered with trash and overgrown with brush.

Taylor Street, which is on the western end of this section, is a narrow one-way street that runs between Arsenal and Mount Auburn streets. Vehicles can only travel north on Taylor Street, which leads to Mount Auburn Street. Taylor Street lacks any striping and is in poor condition. There are also two major commercial driveways along this street: one at the Watertown Square Plaza and the other at the Firestone property. On-street parking is allowed on one side the street, the side closest to Watertown Square.

There is a property at 33 Mount Auburn Street, near the corner of Taylor and Mount Auburn streets, which is currently vacant. Approximately



Figure 5.11
Watertown Plaza parking lot
Source: Kris Carter



0.31 acres in size, it used to be a repair garage. In September of 2009, the property was sold to Robert H. Bray of Cambridge. Prospective developers have expressed interest in developing the property, but no plans have yet to be submitted to the Town. Next to the property – at the very corner of Taylor and Mount Auburn streets – is a small triangular parcel known as the “Taylor Street Triangle,” which is owned by the Town of Watertown. It is currently vacant.

Mount Auburn Street is a four-lane major thoroughfare that is classified as a principal arterial. It is approximately 65 feet wide between Taylor Street and Baptist Walk. At this location, there is a crosswalk.

Ownership

All of the properties in this section – except for the Taylor Street Triangle – are privately-owned. As mentioned above, a parcel at 33 Mount Auburn Street was sold in 2009 to Robert Bray, who is selling the property. Another entity, JF Trust Group, has an option to buy the property and is considering developing it.² Plans for the project have not been developed. Watertown Square Plaza LLC (local attorney Robert Kaloosdian) owns the plaza on Mount Auburn Street that includes the Dunkin Donuts.

Constraints

As mentioned above, most of the properties are privately-owned, which poses a challenge to developing the Community Path in this section. There is one property owner who controls a key parcel, the Watertown Square Plaza on Mount Auburn Street. Also, unlike previous sections of Arsenal Street, this portion has multiple driveways and high volumes of traffic as the road begins to accommodate four lanes of travel. Crossing Taylor and Mount Auburn streets will also be challenging.

Option 1: Preferred Route

The safest and most direct route would be to build the Community Path along the former railroad ROW, which cuts through the Watertown Square Plaza. This would include filling in the vacant lot just west of the Patton Street bridge to create a graded slope or hill, which would have a grade of about 5.5 percent. The Path would then continue west through the parking lot of the Watertown Square Plaza. Current parking would have to be shifted 6 feet toward the buildings to provide space for the 10-foot-wide Path on the eastern portion of the plaza. Additional spaces could be added alongside the Path up to the Patten Street Bridge to accommodate any lost parking. Currently, a row of Jersey barriers line the southern edge of the parking lot, and a number of spaces are used for snow depositories. Along with the generally wide parking strip, this provides the additional width needed for the Path.

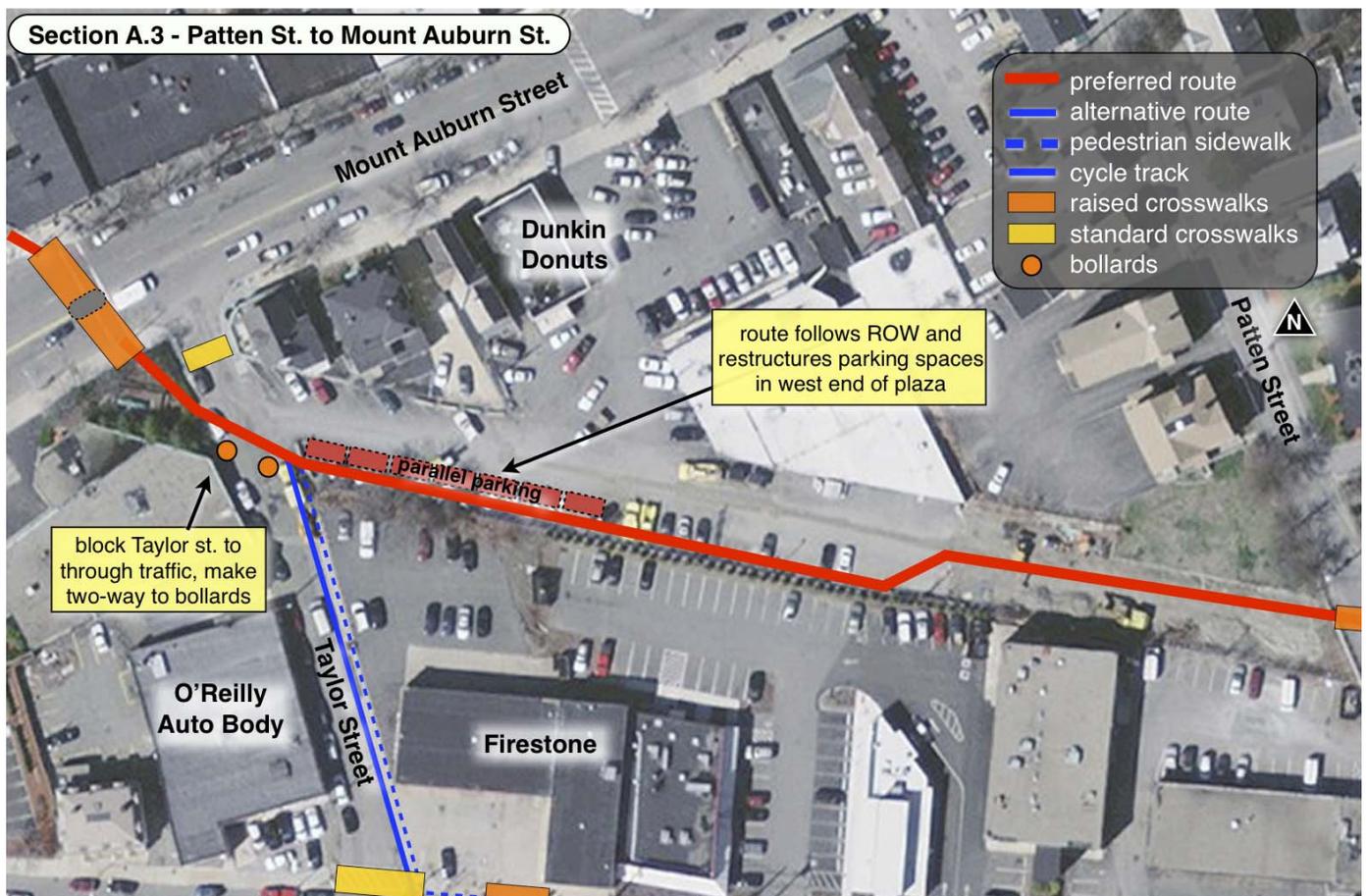
Approaching Taylor Street, the Path would run along the 8-foot ROW on the Firestone property. To make room for the Path, nine parking

spaces would have to be removed near the rear of the Watertown Square Plaza parking lot; these spaces currently face the fence that separates this property from the Firestone property. This parking area – the strip closest to Taylor Street – is not wide enough to accommodate two sides of angled parking if two feet or more is taken up by the Path.

Specifically, this parking strip is about 48 feet wide. Angled parking spaces must be 18 feet long, according to the Town of Watertown Zoning Ordinance Section 6.02, which means two sides of angled parking requires 36 feet³ There must also be an aisle between the two sides of parking that is 11 to 13 feet wide (for parking that is angled 30-45 degrees and where there is one-way traffic). Given these requirements, there is little to no room to accommodate the extra width needed for the Path. In other words, even if the Path were to run along the 8-foot ROW on the Firestone property, an additional two feet, at a minimum, is needed to accommodate the Path, and the parking strip does not have these two feet to give. Alternatively, the Path could be slightly narrowed in this section if there is a desire to keep the parking spaces. If angled parking were removed, approximately four parallel parking spaces could be created in its place, thereby limiting the number of lost parking spaces to five.

The Path would cross Taylor Street near the intersection of Mount Auburn Street and continue through the Taylor Street Triangle owned by the Town of Watertown. To make this crossing safe, it is recommended that bollards be installed diagonally across Taylor Street between 33 Mount Auburn Street (the front corner of the building facing) and the

Figure 5.12
Watertown Plaza and Mount Auburn Street crossing



ROW, prohibiting through traffic. The bollards would essentially run along the southern side of the Path. Taylor Street should be made into a two-way street on the Arsenal Street side, but left turns from Taylor Street to Arsenal Street should be prohibited. The portion of Taylor Street on the Mount Auburn Street side should remain one-way only, so pedestrians and bicyclists on the Community Path would not have to contend with cross traffic.

The crosswalk on Mount Auburn Street should be moved west to the eastern corner of Baptist Walk. Due to the excessive crossing distance at this intersection, it is recommended that an 8-foot wide, 52-foot long raised crosswalk be created and a pedestrian island be installed in the center of Mount Auburn Street. The island would provide refuge for pedestrians and cyclists.

Option 2: Alternative Route

A less attractive option would be to continue the cycle track and extended sidewalk west along Arsenal Street between Patten and Taylor streets. Careful attention should be paid to the entering and exiting vehicle traffic. Raised crosswalks with bright pavement markings would be necessary where the Path crossed driveways. Upon reaching Taylor Street, the Path would continue on the eastern side, abutting the current Firestone building. This would allow access for the garage bays on the western side of Taylor Street.

To accommodate the width of new sidewalks and a cycle track, on-street parking would have to be removed from Taylor Street. The Path would continue north on Taylor Street until the Watertown Plaza driveway or exit. Just prior to the exit, bollards would need to be placed on Taylor Street to prevent through traffic. The Path could then safely cross to the western side of Taylor Street and continue through the Town-owned Taylor Street Triangle to the Mount Auburn Street crossing.

Figure 5.13

*Mount Auburn Street crossing;
Source: Kris Carter*



Section B - Mount Auburn Street to Pleasant Street

Section B of the proposed Community Path extends between Mount Auburn Street in Watertown Square to Pleasant Street, where it will connect to the Charles River Reservation Path. For much of this section, the completed Linear Park path already exists and is utilized by members of the community. Although portions require improvements, Linear Park will serve as the foundation for the Community Path in this section.

Section B.1 - Mount Auburn Street to Winter Street

Existing Conditions and Land Use

This area consists of several Town-owned parking lots between Mount Auburn Street and Saltonstall Park. These municipal lots provide parking for several Town buildings, including Watertown Town Hall, the Watertown Police Department and the Watertown Free Public Library. They also serve many areas businesses, such as CVS and Not Your Average Joe's. Pedestrian navigation within this section is not easy due to numerous islands with parking meters. These are shown in Figure 5.14.

The Watertown Police Department, as mentioned earlier, is located in this section, but it is expected to move to a new headquarters on Main Street this spring or summer. This move will free up 28 off-street parking spaces that are currently reserved by the Police Department.

Watertown Square, which includes a five-way intersection, is located south of the municipal parking lots. Properties to the north of the parking lots on Winter Street are residential. Most of the properties to the east of Mount Auburn Street in this area are commercial. Saltonstall Park is located at the western end of this section.

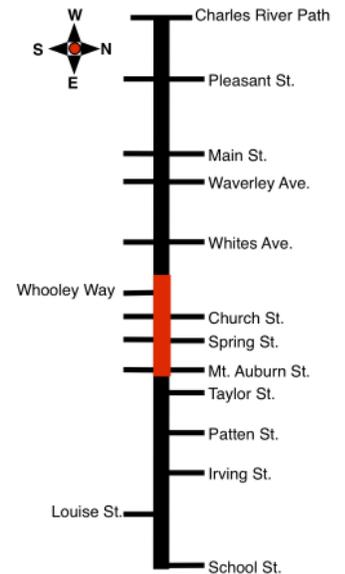


Figure 5.14
Municipal parking lots;
Source: Michelle Moon



Ownership

The Town of Watertown owns most of the parking lots in this area, as noted earlier. In addition, the owner of Verona Restaurant owns the strip of parking to the south of Baptist Walk.

Constraints

The municipal parking lots pose a challenge to the development of the Community Path, as they stand in its direct pathway. Parking spaces would either have to be eliminated or relocated to accommodate the Path. There are several privately-owned parking spaces south of Baptist Walk, next to Mount Auburn Street, which several business owners use. In addition, the municipal parking lot to the north of this private lot is used by customers of Mount Auburn Street businesses.

Option 1: Preferred Route

In this section, the Community Path would generally be constructed along the northern boundary of the three municipal parking lots. This placement would allow for the Path to flow directly into the Linear Park path. In the area of Baptist Walk, the Path should run along the northern edge of the municipal parking lot. The angle of the parking spaces can be changed from its current 60-degree angle to a 45-degree angle, thus requiring less space behind the spots for motor vehicles to enter and exit this parking lot. Parking spaces would not be lost. As mentioned previously, there will also be additional public parking spaces when the Police Department relocates.

The Path would cross Spring Street and then turn north for a short distance along the sidewalk. It would then continue west across the parking lot, displacing approximately 10 parking spaces. This would essentially cut the southeastern portion of this parking lot into two lots,

Figure 5.15

Parking lot behind the library;

Source: Michelle Moon

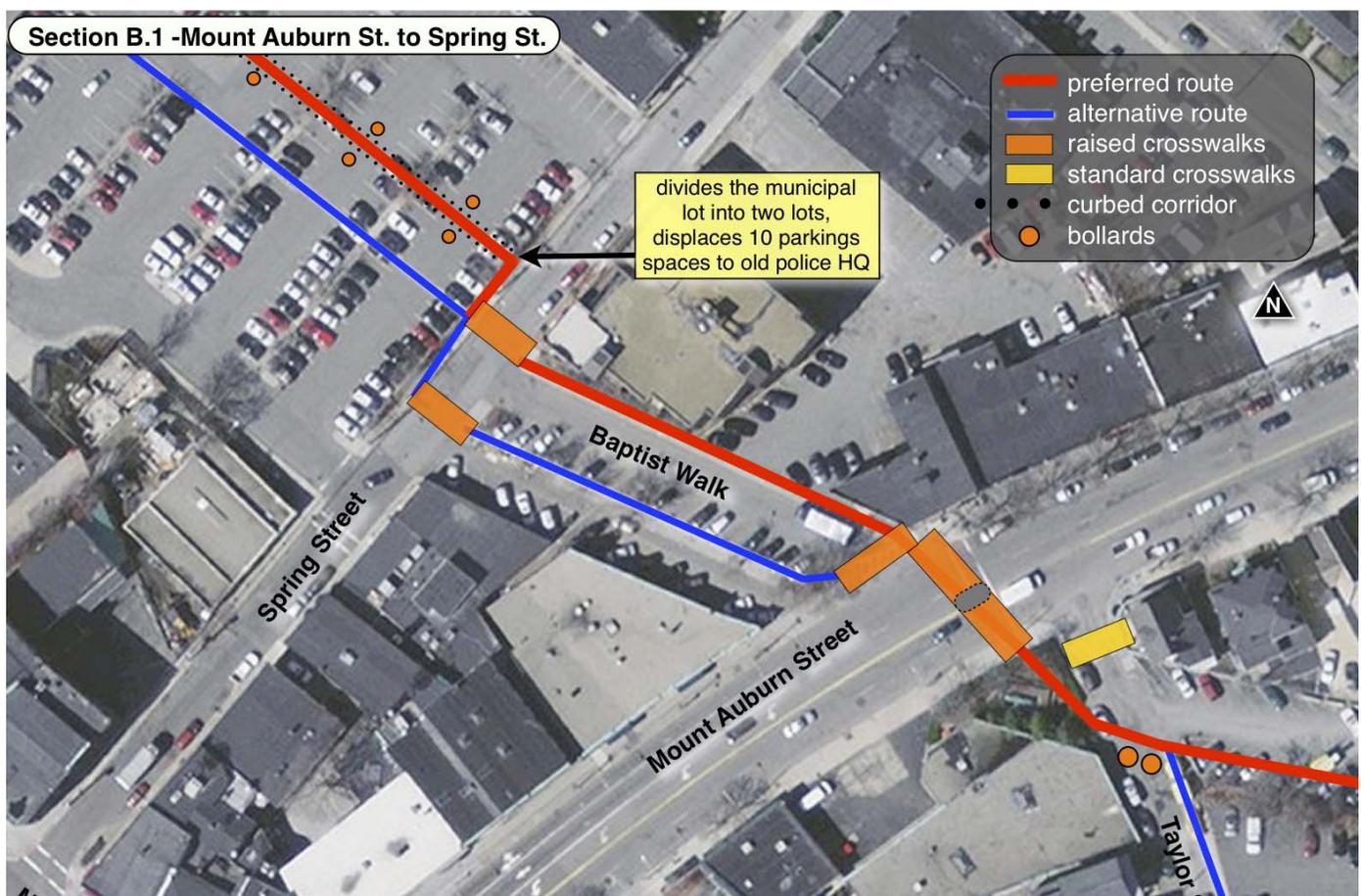


one serving the businesses to the south and one serving the businesses to the north (including Caritas Medical Group). Where the parking lot narrows in width, the Path would continue along the northern boundary, across from the commercial building that includes Tresca's Eating Place. This section of the lot should be converted to one-way traffic flowing west toward Church Street. The straight-angled spots in this area could be angled to 45 degrees in order to make more room, if necessary. The Path would cross Church Street and continue west along the southern boundary of Winter Street. It would then cross John "Sonny" Whooley Way and continue along the vegetated buffer between Winter Street and the municipal parking lot. This vegetated buffer is about 5 feet wide; however, there are utility lines that run down the middle of the buffer, so the Path would have to be located south of these utility lines. The parking spaces directly to the south of the buffer would have to be shifted approximately seven feet to the south. The vertical parking spots on the southern end of this lot could be replaced with about four parallel parking spots. Doing so would reduce the amount of spaces lost to three.

Option 2: Alternative Route

The Path could run on the northern side of Winter Street. At the western end of Winter Street, it would cut to the southwest across Winter Street and connect to Linear Park. If this route is shown, Winter Street would have to be converted into a one-way street, with traffic flowing west.

Figure 5.16
Eastern edge of municipal parking lots



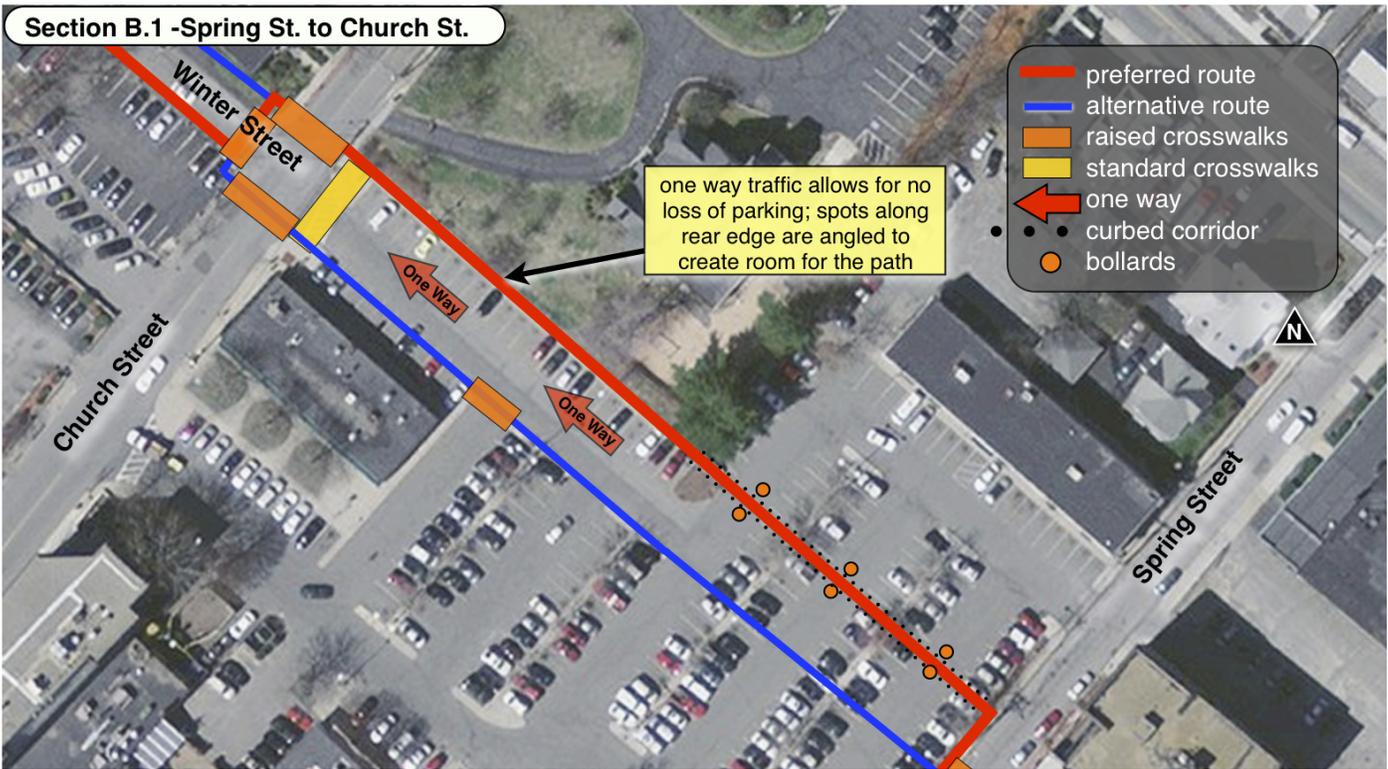
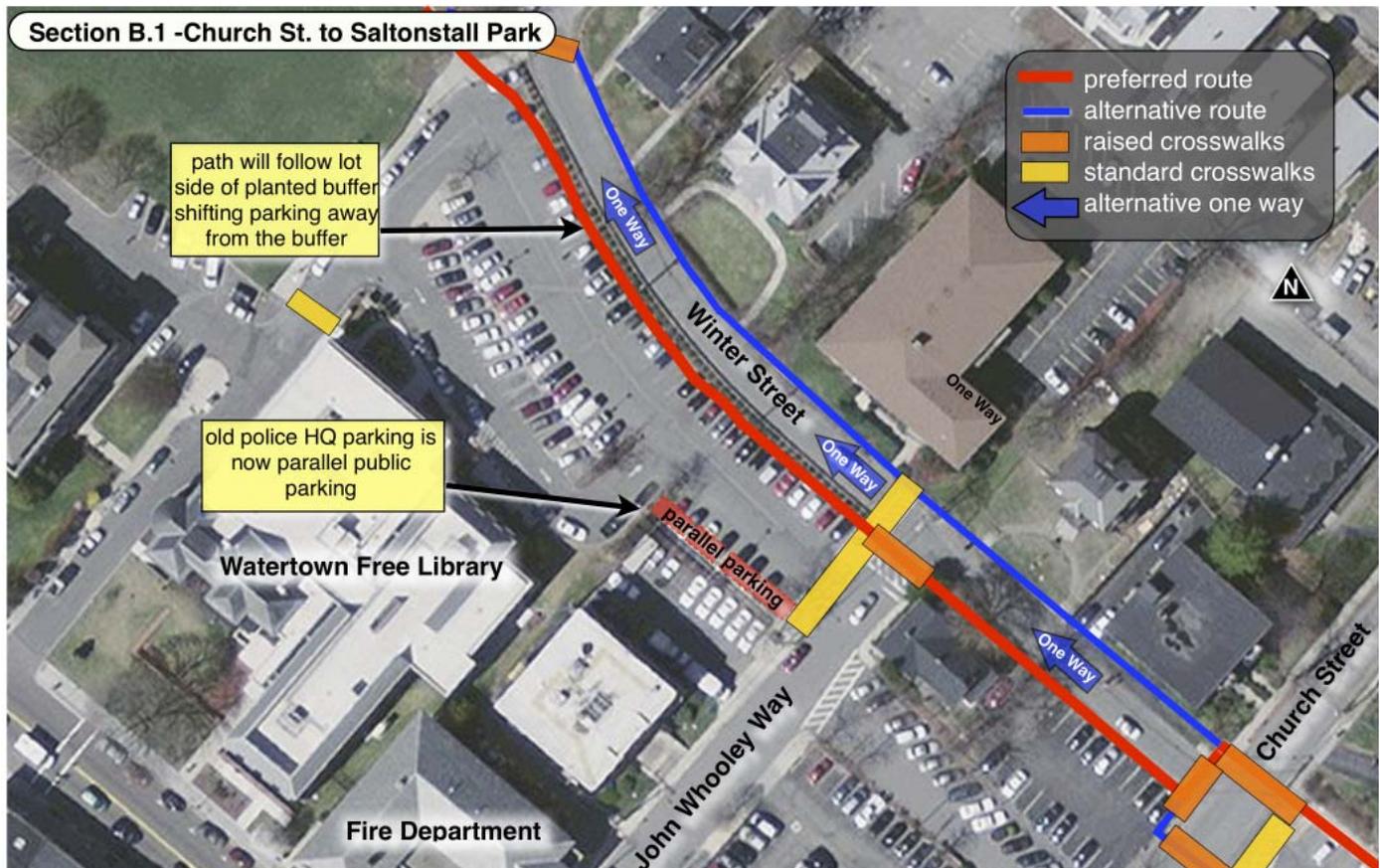


Figure 5.17
Municipal parking behind businesses

Figure 5.18
Parking lot behind the library





Section B.2 - Winter Street to Main Street

Existing Conditions and Land Use

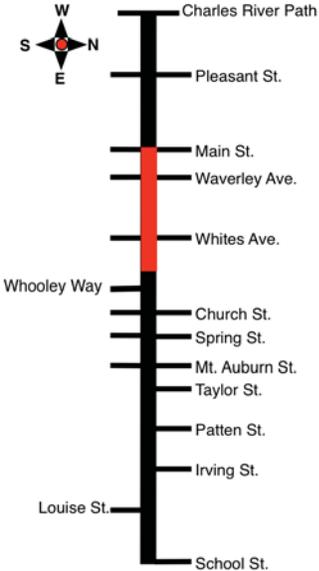
Part of this area is owned by the Town of Watertown. Specifically, the eastern end of the area behind Town Hall is a public park, Saltonstall Park. A narrow, unpaved path runs through Saltonstall Park up a short hill before intersecting with Whites Avenue. Between Whites Avenue and Waverley Avenue is the existing Linear Park path. This path is approximately 10 feet wide. It appears to be in fair condition, though improvements could be made. Fences, hedges and a concrete wall separate the Linear Park path from Whitney Towers Apartments and other abutting residential properties.

To the west of Wwaverley Avenue is Moxley Playground, which contains tennis courts, a baseball field, a small playground and basketball courts. There is an existing unpaved path immediately southeast of Moxley Playground. The unpaved path ends before reaching the rear of the property occupied by Nardone Funeral Home on Main Street. Several residential properties and Whitney Towers Apartments are located in the surrounding area.

Ownership

The Town of Watertown owns Saltonstall Park, Moxley Playground and Linear Park path. Carmine Nardone, owner of Nardone Funeral Home, owns a parking lot that borders the former railroad ROW and a green median strip, which separates the funeral home parking lot from the dentist’s office parking lot to the east.

Figure 5.19
Linear Park path entrance at Saltonstall Park;
Source: Kris Carter



Constraints

The existing path in Saltonstall Park is very narrow, approximately five feet in width, and does not provide adequate space for both bicyclists and pedestrians. There is also an erosion problem in this area, and water tends to collect in the low sections in the spring. The section of the existing path behind the Watertown Boys and Girls Club is very steep, which is not ideal for bicycles, in-line skates, wheelchairs or strollers. There is also no curb cut on the eastern side of the Whites Avenue crossing.

Option 1: Preferred Route

The existing path between Saltonstall Park and Moxley Playground should be incorporated into the development of the Community Path, though improvements should be made. The portion that runs through Saltonstall Park and behind the Boys and Girls Club should be widened to accommodate use by both bicyclists and pedestrians. It should also be re-graded so that the slope is not as steep. There is a large turf area to the south of the baseball field that can be transformed into flower beds or rain gardens. The installation of either would help stabilize the slope while retaining excess run-off and preventing erosion.

The section of the existing path between Whites Avenue and Waverley Avenue is wide enough (approximately 10 feet) to accommodate shared use between pedestrians and cyclists. Other than surface maintenance and beautification, there is little that needs to be done to the path in this section. The concrete wall that separates the Linear Park path from Whitney Towers could be used for a community art project; it could become a permanent mural.

Near Moxley Playground, the existing unpaved path should be paved. It stretches a few hundred feet before disappearing into grass behind the baseball diamond. From here, a new paved path – part of the proposed Community Path – should be constructed. To get to Main Street, the Path would cut through the landscaped area between the Nardone Funeral Home parking lot and the D'Amico Dental office parking lot. This piece of property owned by the Nardone Funeral Home is approximately 15 feet wide, so it could accommodate the Path. The steel fence between this strip of property and Main Street would need to be dismantled. Curb cuts should be installed on both sides of Main Street where the Path connects to the road.

Option 2: Alternative Route

As an alternative, the Path could run south on Waverley Avenue toward Main Street in the form of a cycle track, as opposed to continuing as a shared-use path through Moxley Park. This would allow Path users to use the existing traffic signal at the intersection of Waverley Avenue and Main Street. This would avoid the creation of a new intersection further west on Main Street.

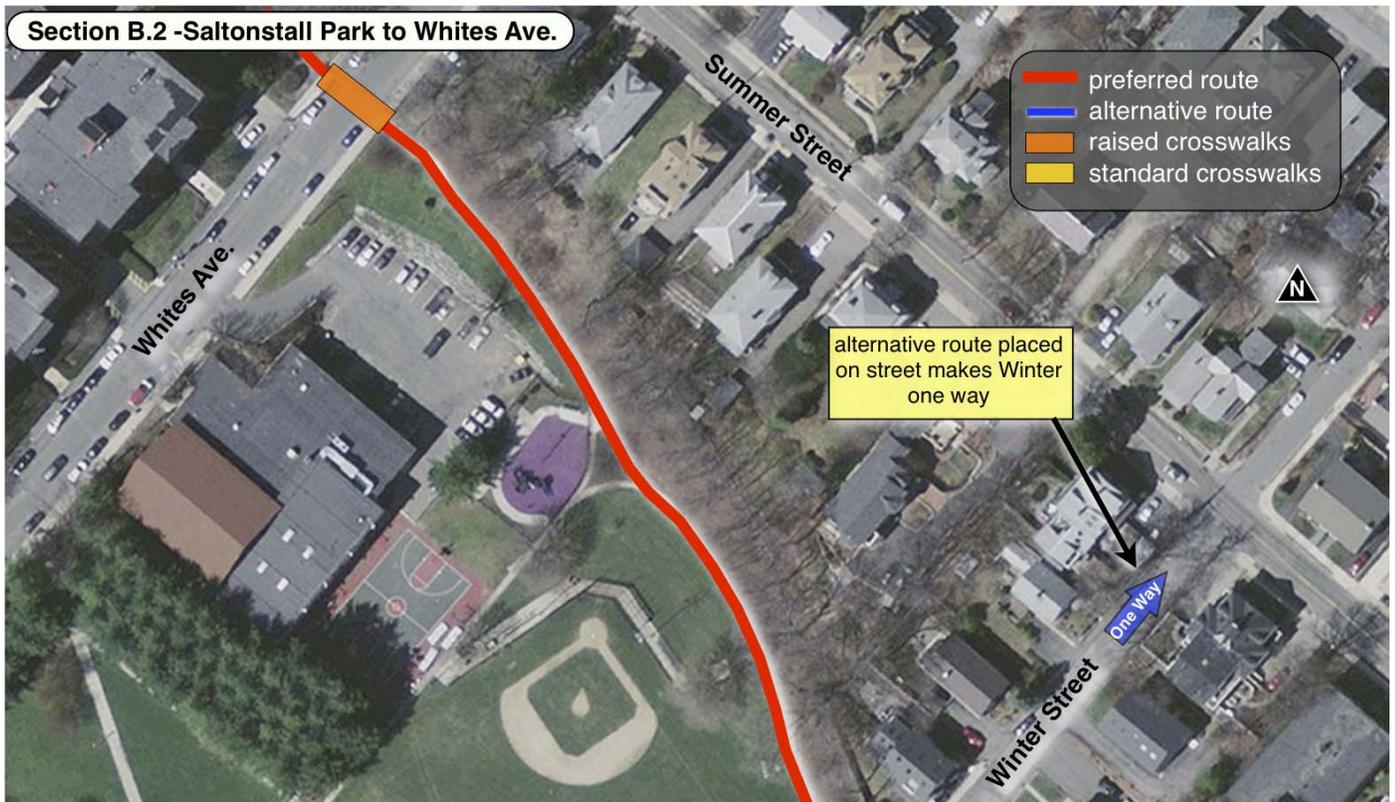
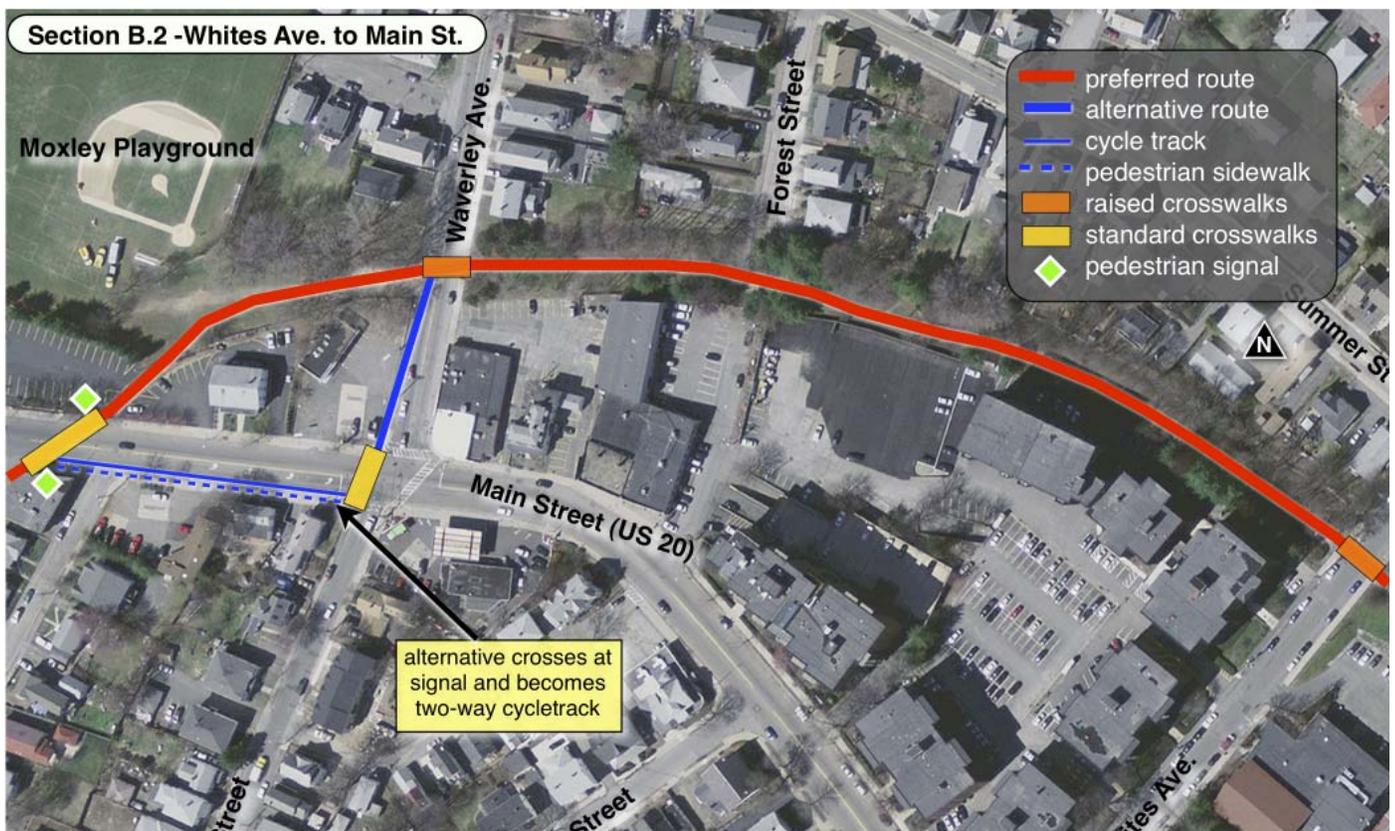


Figure 5.20
Connection to Saltonstall Park

Figure 5.21
Linear Park section



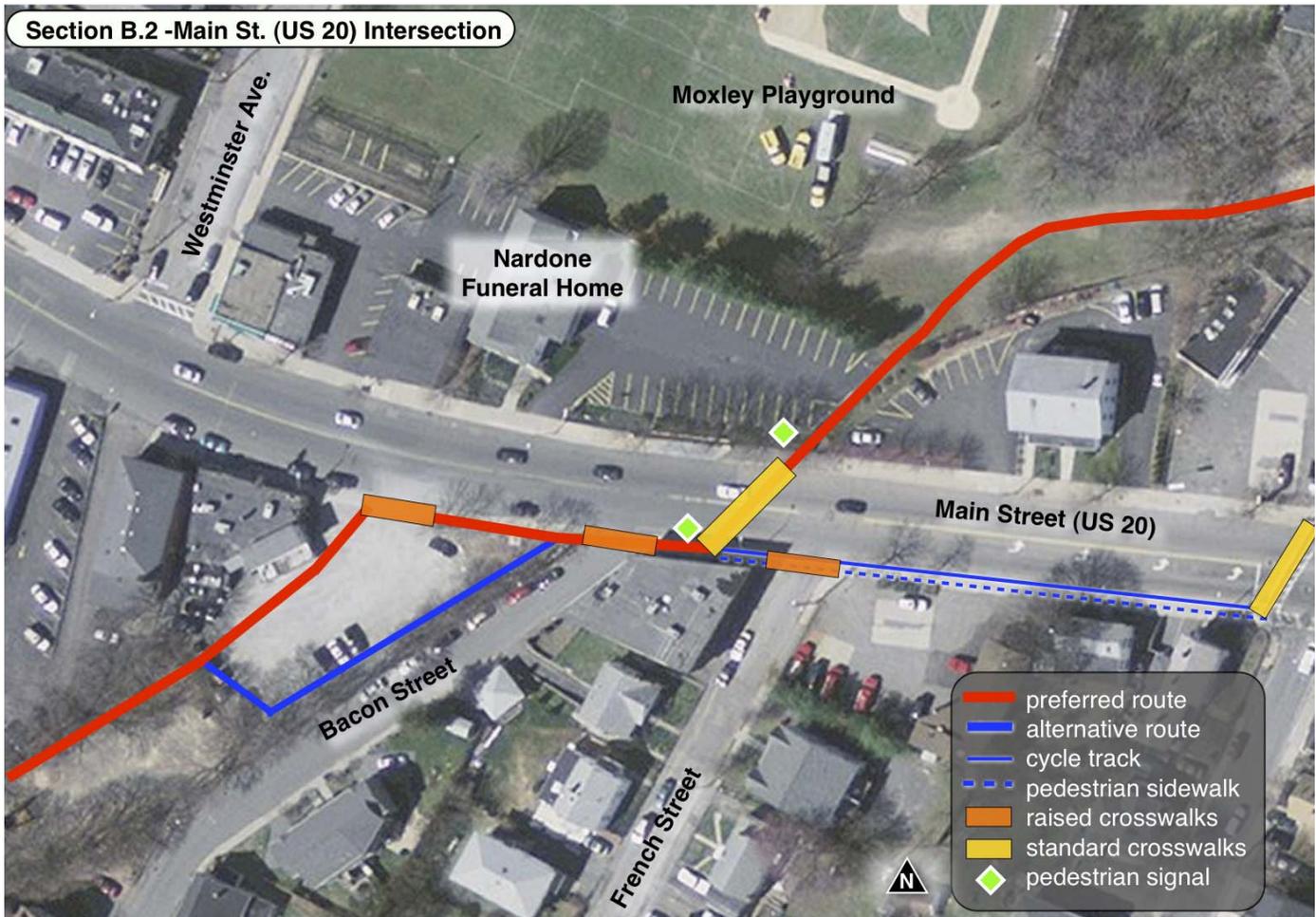


Figure 5.22
Main Street crossing

Figure 5.23
Main Street crossing to DPW corridor
Source: Michelle Moon



Section B.3 - Main Street to Pleasant Street

Existing Conditions and Land Use

At the corner of Bacon and Main streets, there is an unpaved dirt parking lot and several fenced-in lots filled with debris and other materials. Beyond the parking lot, the former railroad ROW continues as an unpaved dirt path toward Howard Street. The Watertown DPW currently utilizes this space to store vehicles and machinery. This area will be referred to as the DPW Corridor for the remainder of this report.

Residential properties surround the area to the east and north on Bacon Street, and several industrial sites lie to the west on Howard Street. Howe Park is located at the corner of Bacon and Pleasant streets. The Charles River Reservation Path is located to the south of Pleasant Street.

Ownership

The Town of Watertown owns the majority of the DPW Corridor as well as the surrounding streets. The City of Cambridge, however, owns a strip of land on the western portion of the DPW Corridor.

Constraints

The crossing of Main Street poses a significant challenge, as the road is heavily used by fast-moving traffic. The intersections at Main and Howard streets and Main and Bacon streets are also relatively dangerous due to the amount of vehicular traffic that goes through them. On Main Street, Path users could be redirected to the Waverley Avenue crossing where there is an existing crosswalk with a light. However, this route would be relatively indirect. If another pedestrian crosswalk were to be added on Main Street further west, this could potentially slow traffic.



Figure 5.24

Parking lot north of DPW staging area;

Source: Michelle Moon



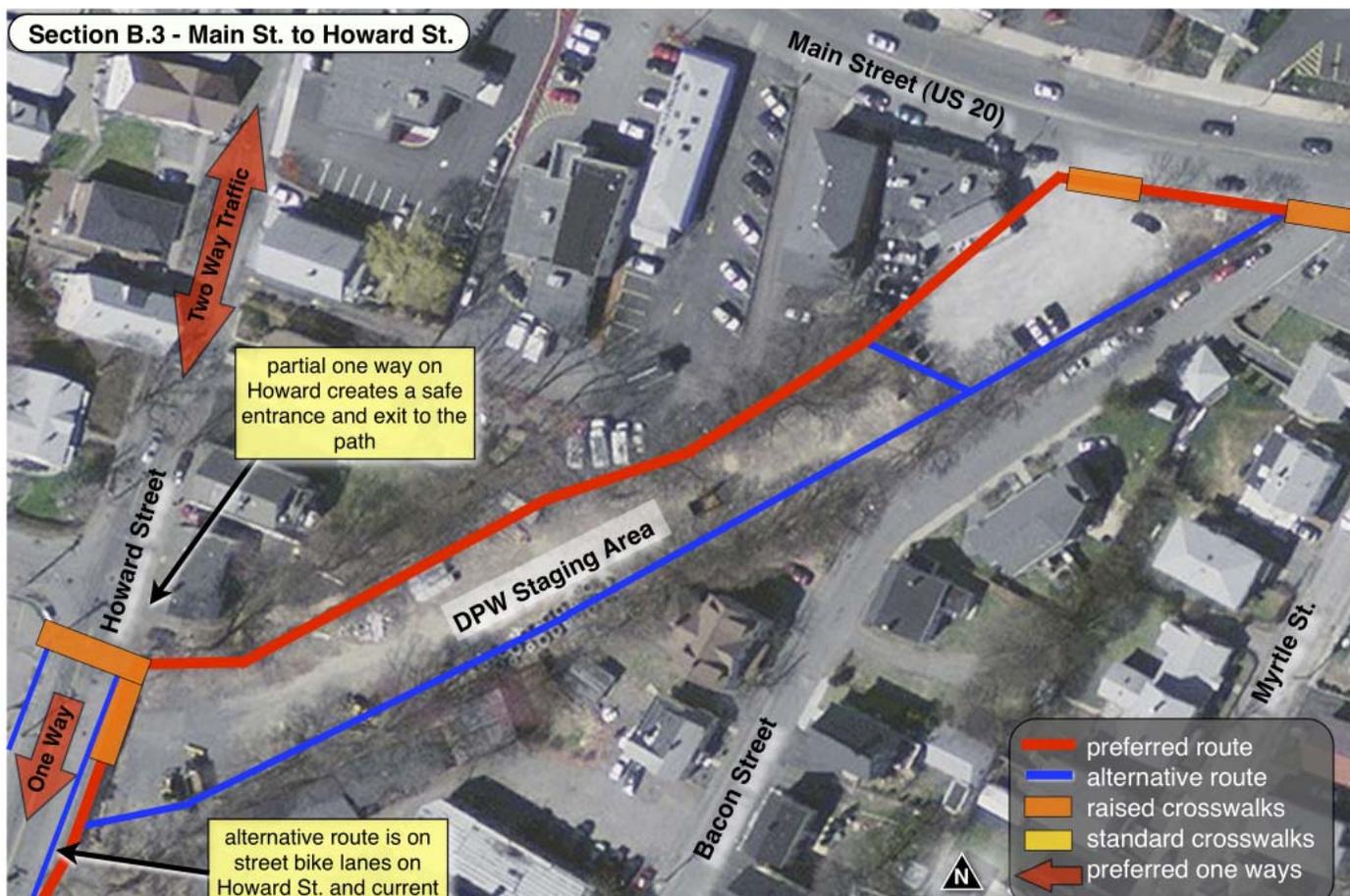


Figure 5.25
 DPW corridor to
 Howard Street

There are several fences along Bacon Street that are not aesthetically pleasing. Shrubs or a hedge could be planted in their place to separate the different spaces. Howard Street has a steep grade and is heavily used by trucks, and Pleasant Street is very busy street. It is already difficult for pedestrians to cross from Howard Street to access the Charles River Reservation Path.

Option 1: Preferred Route

For safety purposes, a pedestrian/bicyclist-actuated signal button should be installed on Main Street where the proposed Path would cross the street. A clear crosswalk with painted lines should also be installed to improve the safety of the crossing. South of Main Street, the Path would continue into the Town's property, which runs diagonally southwest from Main Street to Howard Street. The Town's concept plan is to redevelop this property into a parking lot for the DPW staging area, parking for residents and the Community Path. The Path would run along the northwestern portion of this property. This concurs with the Town's concept plan for this site.

At Howard Street, the Community Path would be split. Pedestrians would be directed to walk on the existing sidewalk, and an on-street bike lane would be striped for the bicycles. It is also recommended that Howard Street be made into a one-way street, with traffic flowing toward Pleasant



Figure 5.26
*Connection to Charles
 River Reservation Path*

Street. This would increase safety for the new pedestrian and bike traffic that would be created. Another option would be to make the northern part of Howard Street into a two-way street to allow for residents of the area to circulate easily.

A curb cut should be added at the entrance to the Charles River Reservation Path at the intersection of Howard and Pleasant streets. In addition, either a traffic or pedestrian light should be installed to make the crossing safer for pedestrians.

Option 2: Alternative Route

The alternative would be to site the Path along the southeastern edge of the DPW staging area.

Endnotes

- 1 Watertown Town Council. "An Ordinance Governing the General Standards and Requirements for Curbs and Sidewalks." 19 February 2010.
- 2 Robert Bray interview, March 31, 2010.
- 3 Watertown Planning Board. "Zoning Ordinance." <http://www.watertown-ma.gov/DocumentView.aspx?DID=1964>.