Space vs. Place
Economic Vitality and Historic Preservation Meet at Grove Street

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Tufts University
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Prepared for
Town of Watertown:
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Cover photos from left: Filipello Park, Filipello Park Walking Path, the Shick House, Sawin's Pond, Mount Auburn Cemetery
Source: Watertown Historical Commission
Acknowledgments

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We would like to offer special thanks to those who worked closely with us through the duration of the study, including: Steve Magoon and Danielle Evans from DCDP, David Barnett and Bill Barry of Mount Auburn Cemetery, and David Russo from the Law Office of David J. Russo.

Thank you Dr. Rachel Bratt, Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University, and Teaching Assistant Peter Kane, for asking the tough questions and providing the guidance that made this study possible.

Abstract

Watertown, Massachusetts is a community seeking to adapt to the challenges and opportunities of evolving economic realities. As its economy transitions from the heavy industrial uses of the past, to knowledge based industries that will define the future, Watertown seeks to assess the relationship between historic preservation and economic development. Recent research in the town has targeted an area on East Watertown’s Grove Street as having strong potential for commercial redevelopment. Prepared for the Watertown Department of Community Development and Planning by a graduate student team from Tufts Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning program, this report examines whether the historic Shick House, currently owned by Mount Auburn Cemetery and centrally located at the targeted Grove Street site, will prove a hindrance or an asset to economic development in the area. This study used four research methods to assess the preservation potential for the Shick House. The first method coupled a community input process, including interviews, a focus group and a public meeting, with a site analysis, to both compare community concerns and visions with physical realities and ground the research in neighborhood goals. A literature review provided knowledge into the many economic benefits of historic preservation, as well as insight into its relationship with future development scenarios. Three case studies revealed common opportunities and challenges that arise in historic preservation projects, including a view into the regulatory tools that municipalities have used to balance historic character with economic development. The study concludes with recommendations and conceptual site designs that can help Watertown utilize the Shick House as a tool for strengthening community character and attracting appropriate business investment.
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Executive Summary

Home to a rich and varied history that spans both agriculture and industry, Watertown Massachusetts’ Shick House has weathered over 150 years of change. The house, formerly home to the Watertown Dairy and later a junkyard, now sits vacant and under Mount Auburn Cemetery ownership. North of the house are six acres of formerly industrial land (northern parcels), also owned by the cemetery. This land, closely abutted by the Coolidge Hill neighborhood to the north, is situated east of Mount Auburn Cemetery and north of the Filipello Park. Despite the proximity of these landmarks, the Shick House stands in relative isolation.

This area, which we call the “Grove Street study area,” was recently identified in Watertown’s Strategic Framework for Economic Development (SFED) as having strong economic development potential. The Grove Street study area falls within a larger economic opportunity area, the “East End Innovation District,” an area which the SFED states is “ideal for small to midsize growth companies (50 employees or fewer) in the targeted economic clusters of life sciences, information technology, and advanced manufacturing.” With such strong development potential in the area, the Watertown Department of Community Development and Planning (DCDP) has asked the question—“Can the Shick House contribute to the economic potential of the area or will it hinder future development?”

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Community participation and research were the primary vehicles for attaining our project goals. To gain knowledge of community values, ideas and concerns, the Field Project team conducted interviews and organized a public meeting and focus group. Information gained from the community input process was complemented by background research, site analyses, a literature review, and relevant case studies. The findings that emerged from our research process laid the foundation for final recommendations and conceptual site designs.

Watertown and the Grove Street Study Area

Watertown, Massachusetts, is a diverse and well-educated community. Positioned mainly north of the Charles River and west of Cambridge, Watertown continues to rely on its location as a crossroads of the surrounding region. The riverfront, which anchored the Town’s former industrial hub, is now home to arterial roadways that allow easy access to Watertown’s attractions and employment centers. As noted in the SFED, the size, location, and features of the Grove Street study area provide strong potential for the area to become a gateway to the town and a home to new knowledge-based industries.

Historic Preservation as Economic Driver

A review of literature regarding the intersection of historic preservation and economic development provided the foundation for our study. Our research suggested that a successful historic preservation project can enhance a community’s character and improve quality of life, which can have positive impacts on a region’s economic development potential. The research lent insight into the feasibility of fitting the Shick House into a redevelopment scenario and began to provide context for our recommendations.

Toward a Common Vision

Community input was an essential component of the Field Project team’s research process. Information gathered through interviews, a community meeting, and focus group provided insights into the assets, opportunities, and future visions for the Shick House and Grove Street study area as a whole. Through the community input process, the Field Project team discovered that, while there is general excitement about the opportunity to preserve the Shick House, a number of concerns still exist and will need to be addressed. The following are key findings from the public input process:

- A preserved Shick House should contribute to the tax base.
- Prominent reuse options include a bed and breakfast, restaurant, office or event space.
- Grove Street should be promoted as a “gateway” into Watertown.
- Traffic congestion, volume and speed along Grove Street are a concern.
- Access to alternative forms of transportation should be improved.
- Public awareness of the Shick House will need to be increased.
A site analysis of the Grove Street study area and Shick House confirmed many of the concerns brought up by residents and further defined issues and opportunities regarding the site's economic development potential. The team integrated knowledge from the public meeting, focus group and interviews to assess connectivity and aesthetics of the study area, and analyze the condition of the Shick House. The analysis found the Shick House in a viable condition, with the surrounding study area conducive to alternate forms of transportation and enhanced uses. Despite opportunities, issues regarding visual appearance and traffic safety were most prominent.

To gain knowledge into the application of our research, three Massachusetts case studies—Mashpee Commons’ Master Plan, Brookline’s Comprehensive Plan and the adaptive reuse of the Taylor House Bed and Breakfast in Jamaica Plain—provided practical lessons for how Watertown can approach community participation, zoning and historic preservation. The planning processes of Mashpee Commons and Brookline demonstrated that a community-based development process, coupled with a form-based zoning approach, may increase the likelihood of a project’s success by maximizing community buy-in and minimizing risk for the developer. The Taylor House case study identifies opportunities and pitfalls of an adaptive reuse project and demonstrates how prioritization of historical values can guide preservation efforts.

**Key Findings**

The Field Project identified six key findings based on a synthesis of information gathered through the case studies, site analysis, community input process, and literature review. Together, these findings guided our recommendations and designs for the Watertown DCDP:

- An emphasis on “placemaking” can contribute to economic development.
- Due to its viable renovation potential and location, the Shick House could add to the economic development potential of the Grove Street study area.
- A regulatory environment conducive to creative zoning will be necessary for the integration of the Shick House with future development.
- Public and private investment in the Grove Street study area will be necessary for its success.
- Public education and outreach can improve the Shick House’s preservation potential.
- Community engagement is necessary for building on the long-term vision for Grove Street.

**Recommendations**

The Field Project team placed a strong emphasis on implementation measures to assist the Watertown DCDP in its long range planning process. The following recommendations are accompanied by conceptual designs and action steps in the report.

- Increase awareness and understanding of the Neighborhood Plan process.
- Begin neighborhood plan process at Grove Street.
- Identify tools that strengthen community character and encourage appropriate development at Grove Street.
- Identify tools that allow for the preservation and restoration of the Shick House.
- Build on community garden interest and time-conscious design principles to draw attention to the Shick House.
- Relocate the recycling facility.
- Enhance the bike and pedestrian path at Filipello Park.
- Create a safer traffic environment along Grove Street.
- Improve Grove Street’s aesthetic appeal.

**Conclusions**

The Grove Street study area and the historic Shick House have potential to both draw from and improve the community character of East Watertown. A long range plan that focuses on quality of life, through historic preservation and site improvements, has potential to turn the Grove Street corridor into the “gateway” to Watertown - attracting visitors and business investment.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Similar to many once industrial communities across the country, Watertown, Massachusetts, is searching for ways to restructure its economy by capitalizing on regional strengths and responding to global trends. To build a broad vision that will guide economic priorities and policies, the Town commissioned Mt. Auburn Associates to create the Strategic Framework for Economic Development in 2010.

Through the course of their research, the consultants identified five “Economic Development Opportunity Areas” to showcase Watertown’s potential for targeted growth.

The largest Economic Development Opportunity Area is situated in East Watertown. This area is home to Filipello Park, Mount Auburn Cemetery, and a patchwork of vacant parcels located at Grove Street. Anchoring the vacant land is a 160-year-old, Italianate style residence, which constitutes the only structure on the seven contiguous acres the cemetery now owns. Commonly referred to as the “Shick House,” the structure takes its name from the family that acquired the property in 1914. Although the town has recently approved Mount Auburn Cemetery’s request to convert lands adjacent to the house to a parking lot for a period of ten years, future development potential for the area remains strong.
Watertown’s Department of Community Development and Planning (DCDP) partnered with Tufts University’s Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) program to study the development potential of the historic Shick House and the surrounding parcels in the Grove Street area of East Watertown. Through a combination of research and public input, the Field Project team sought to provide the Town of Watertown with insight into the site’s economic development potential, while being sensitive to historic and community values. The central goals of the UEP graduate student team are to:

- Contribute to the ongoing community visioning process for economic development in Watertown’s Grove Street area;
- Determine the compatibility of historic preservation and economic development at the site in a just and equitable manner; and
- Provide recommendations for the development and implementation of a long-term community vision.

Overview of Report
The following chapters present the information gained through our research process, key themes that emerged, and recommendations for moving forward. In addition to outlining the report, Chapter 1 provides a description of the Watertown community and the economic development framework for our study. Revealing the history of the Shick House and other features of the study area, Chapter Two provides the basic context for our research. Chapter Three presents a review of literature regarding the practice of historic preservation and its relation to economic development.

Chapters Four and Five include findings from our community input process and site analysis. Chapter Four describes the assets, opportunities, and visions for the Grove Street study area and Shick House that were identified by participants during interviews, a community meeting, and focus group. Chapter Five provides an evaluation of the existing conditions of the area, often in relation to the concerns expressed throughout the community input process.

Finally, Chapters Six and Seven represent a synthesis of the information gathered through the background research, literature review, community input process, and site analysis. Chapter Six moves toward the team’s recommendations by presenting case studies of successfully implemented planning and restoration processes that Watertown may draw from. Chapter Seven presents our key findings and recommendations for moving forward with the development and implementation of a community vision at Grove Street. Conceptual designs are included to aid in the continuing planning and visioning process.

Community Description
Watertown is a small city in eastern Massachusetts, located just east of Cambridge. Although Watertown is officially a city, with a city form of government, it prefers to be called a Town. Resting on the northern edge of the Charles River, the town has a total land area of 4.15 square miles and a population of 33,284.1

Fig.1.2 Satellite Image of Grove Street Study Area
Cartographer: Zhi Li

Fig.1.3 Satellite Image of Grove Street Study Area
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Fig.1.2 Satellite Image of Grove Street Study Area
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Fig.1.3 Satellite Image of Grove Street Study Area
Cartographer: Zhi Li
Watertown is well connected to the surrounding region, including Cambridge to the east, Newton and Waltham to the south and west, and Belmont to the north. The town is within a twenty-minute driving distance to all major highways in eastern Massachusetts, including the Massachusetts Turnpike, Routes 128, 2, 16, and 20, as well as Interstates 93 and 95. In addition, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) commuter rail and bus lines provide service to Cambridge, Boston, and other neighboring cities.3

Founded in 1630, Watertown was the first inland settlement in Massachusetts.4 The Town, originally an agricultural hamlet, eventually became a mill village as a result of its advantageous position on the Charles River. During the industrial era, factories making such diverse products as chocolate, paper, dyes, and clothing opened along its riverbanks.5

Today, industrial jobs have largely been replaced by employment in knowledge-based fields, such as information, technical, and professional services. Between 2001 and 2009, manufacturing jobs decreased by 70 percent, while jobs in the information sector increased by 62 percent and jobs in professional and technical services sector increased by 29 percent.6 Many of the old industrial buildings along the river are being converted to residential and commercial uses to reflect these changes in the local economy.

Table 1.1 Watertown Employment by Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Average Employment</th>
<th>Establishments</th>
<th>Average Weekly Wage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>2,645</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>$617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional &amp; Technical Services</td>
<td>2,615</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1,757</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>2,013</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>$1,833</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance &amp; Insurance</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$1,991</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance</td>
<td>1,503</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>$724</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Services</td>
<td>1,501</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$1,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>$1,430</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4,245</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>$829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,812</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,091</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,158</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: Strategic Framework for Economic Development2

Watertown is home to a diverse range of people. Approximately 89 percent of residents are white, six percent are Asian, four percent are Hispanic/Latino, and three percent are African American/Black. Nearly 22 percent of the population is foreign born, with over 25 percent of the population speaking a language other than English at home.7

Based on census data from 2000, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs defines areas of East Watertown, including the Grove Street study area, as an Environmental Justice Population, which can receive resources and support to ensure equitable participation in planning processes. Designation occurs when 25% or more of the population is a minority, foreign born, lacks proficiency in English, or when the median household income is below 65% of the Massachusetts median average. East Watertown’s designation is due to a large foreign born population and low median income.8

Watertown is a relatively well-educated community. Ninety-three percent of residents have at least a high school education.9

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Wentworth is a relatively well-educated community. Ninety-three percent of residents have at least a high school education.

![Fig. 1.3 Environmental justice populations in East Watertown](Cartographer: Zhi Li)
degree, and over half the population has a bachelor’s degree or higher. The median household income is approximately $71,377 (2009 dollars). The median age is 37.9.9

Framing the Grove Street Study

Watertown’s Strategic Framework for Economic Development (SFED), to be completed in 2011, offers a roadmap for Town priorities, policies, and approvals. The year-long study involved research about economic trends, multiple public meetings, ongoing coordination with the Town and its elected officials, and outreach to businesses. The SFED represents a comprehensive review of the Town’s existing economic conditions, as well as opportunities for future growth. The framework reveals Watertown’s strategic position in the region, while reporting on specifics of the knowledge-based industries that make up much of Watertown’s employment base. The SFED reports that Watertown can be viewed as a "transitional market," suggesting that its location near prominent innovation clusters can attract startup firms that typically search for space in the 25,000 square foot range, which is typical of current spaces now leased in town.10

The report also cites challenges, such as the Town’s "indistinct image." Noting the potential for increased pedestrian and bike access, and “activated" street fronts, the report suggests that physical improvements in targeted parts of Watertown can provide a visual upgrade in appearance and lend to the potential for increased investment.11

For continued economic viability in Watertown, the following five key principles were recognized in the SFED:12

1. Capitalize on key industry clusters
2. Strengthen the identity of the Town and build on existing assets
3. Promote investment in underutilized areas
4. Link jobs and infrastructure
5. Shape the character of new development

The recent recognition of the East End’s economic development potential has generated renewed interest in the Grove Street area. Up to this point, however, discussions about the site have largely ignored the presence of the historic Shick House and its potential contribution to the area’s enhancement. The purpose of this project is to explore various planning options for the study area, including potential preservation of the house as one component of a larger, commercially-viable redevelopment plan that would balance historic preservation, economic development, and community vitality. Using the SFED principles as a starting point for our research, we sought to address the following questions:

▪ How can the Shick House be feasibly incorporated into new development?
▪ How can Watertown attract appropriate firms to Grove Street?
▪ What steps must be taken to turn the Shick House into an enduring community asset?

Methods

The Field Project team employed a wide variety of methods to address the project’s guiding questions and move the Department of Community Development and Planning toward a plan for Grove Street that is both holistic in scope and strategic in its implementation. The team conducted site visits, background research, a review of relevant academic literature, studied case examples, and interviewed key stakeholders and professionals. In addition, the team held a community meeting and a focus group. Finally, the team developed conceptual designs for the study area. The following chapters describe our methods in more depth.


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


7. Ibid.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid, page 33.


Endnotes

East Watertown is home to a number of unique landmarks, including Mount Auburn Cemetery, Filipello Park, Sawins Pond, and the historic Shick House. While the central focus of our project relates to the Shick House and the adjacent property, the Field Project team found it necessary to consider other prominent features in the area, taking note of each landmark’s distinct history and current conditions.

The Field Project team collected this information from records on file in the offices of the DCDP, Historical Commission, and Conservation Commission and from historical records available at the Watertown Free Public Library. Together, the history of the area’s landmarks provided the necessary context for our study and allowed us to develop a more complete picture of the Shick House’s potential to contribute to economic development in the future.

Shick House

Constructed in the 1870s, the Shick House was first owned by Watertown resident Ahner French (1850s-1870s), and later by Joshua Stone (1880s-1914). Historical records indicate that the land surrounding the house was most likely used for growing fruits and vegetables from the 1850s to the early 1900s.

In 1914, Jacob and Maete Shick, immigrants from Poland, purchased the property from Joshua Stone to expand their newly begun dairy operation. The first Jewish-owned dairy in the region, their business quickly became successful. By the 1930s, the Shick family operated one of the region’s largest dairy farms, competing with Hood milk in Charlestown. The Shick dairy eventually outgrew its Grove Street location, and in 1938, the family relocated the operation to Wayland under the title, “The Watertown Dairy.” The couple, however, remained in the house and opened an auto-repair shop and junkyard.
In 2001, the family sold the house and its accompanying one-acre parcel to Mount Auburn Cemetery. For a short period of time, the cemetery considered using the house for administrative purposes, but has since determined that the house does not meet its needs. The cemetery, along with the Historical Commission and the Watertown DCDP, is interested in evaluating how the preservation of the house could contribute to economic development in the area.

Northern Parcels

The six acres northwest of the Shick House, which collectively will be referred to as the “northern parcels,” have been used predominantly by the cemetery as a maintenance and landscaping yard, and by Aggregate Industries for concrete manufacturing since the 1940s. In 2007, Aggregate Industries relocated its operation, leaving three acres vacant along Grove Street and Coolidge Hill Road. In 2008, Hanover Properties proposed a 174-unit residential development on the vacant property and adjacent corner lot. The proposed development was to be a four-story multi-family residential building with two levels of underground parking. Residents from the abutting neighborhood expressed a number of concerns about the development’s density and its corresponding impact on traffic, sunlight, and the neighborhood’s character. After making a number of alterations to the site to address resident concerns, the development company eventually withdrew its proposal. Following the withdrawal of the Hanover Properties proposal, Mount Auburn Cemetery purchased the property, which the Town used for snow storage winter 2011 due to large snowfall amounts.

In February 2011, Watertown’s Zoning Board approved a proposal from Mount Auburn Cemetery to develop a satellite commercial parking lot for use by employees and staff of Mount Auburn Hospital. The new 364-space surface parking lot will allow the hospital to relocate its existing satellite lots in Watertown to this consolidated location. The lease agreement between the cemetery and hospital runs until 2021 (for ten years after the parking lot is in use), after which, the lease is not eligible for renewal.

Public opinion regarding the parking lot proposal is mixed. Some residents believe the lot to be a sensible temporary use, as it consolidates the hospital’s parking areas, generates revenue, and provides time for a thoughtful development process. Others in the community contend that increased traffic and exhaust fumes will negatively impact the neighborhood and that runoff from the lot could pollute Sawin’s Pond and the Charles River.

Most recently, Mount Auburn Cemetery, in conjunction with members of the Watertown Citizens for Environmental Safety and other advocates, has entertained plans for a 6,000 square foot community garden north of the parking lot site.

Mount Auburn Cemetery

Located east of the Shick House and founded in 1831 by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Mount Auburn Cemetery was designed to be both a rural cemetery and an experimental garden. It was the first large-scale designed landscape open to the public in the United States causing the Department of the Interior to designate the site as a National

Fig. 2.4 Present day Shick House
Source: Kristin Feierabend

Fig. 2.5 Past and planned uses at Grove Street
Cartographer: Kristin Feierabend
Historic Landmark in 2003. Today, the 175-acre cemetery is filled with over 5,000 trees, a wide variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants, ornate monuments, and architectural appeal. The cemetery offers a range of programs for the public, and attracts birding groups to tour the premises during the migration seasons. Since 1850, the cemetery has operated greenhouses on-site. The newest greenhouses, erected in the 1970s, are obsolete, beyond their expected service life, are increasingly difficult to maintain, and are energy intensive. In 2010, the cemetery received regulatory approval for phase-1 of the “Meadow Extension Project,” which will see the replacement of the cemetery’s existing greenhouses. Phase-2, still to be approved, will bring construction of a LEED-certified Horticultural Center. By relocating fencing, constructing a sidewalk, and improving landscaping, the cemetery also plans to improve the Grove Street atmosphere where it fronts their property.

Filipello Park
Filipello Park lies just south of the Stick House. The 14-acre park was created by a federal grant in 1979, turning a former town dump into a recreation area. Terms of the grant indicate that the park extends east from Arlington Street to Grove Street. However, the eastern edge of the park, including the fronting Grove Street, has yet to be converted to green space. Instead, the site houses the town recycling facility and a vacant lot once home to the town incinerator, which was demolished in 2004. Watertown’s Conservation Commission is currently advocating for the relocation of the recycling center so that the planned entrance to the park from Grove Street can finally be completed.

Sawins Pond
Just south of Filipello Park lies Sawins Pond. Constructed in the late 1800s, the pond was originally created to complement a nearby hotel and serve as a recreation spot for hotel visitors. Even after the hotel closed in the 1890s, residents continued to use the pond for fishing and swimming for much of the early 1900s. In the 1960s and 1970s, as the town’s riverbanks became a new home for industry, Sawins Pond shifted from a recreational area to a dumping site for nearby factories. Industries, such as the Hood Rubber Company, used the pond to discard waste, leading to major contamination of Sawins Pond and its feeder brook. The 1960s marked the beginning of a long battle to clean up Sawins Pond and the surrounding wetlands. The Watertown Conservation Commission and local community groups have continued to monitor the site, and the owner's development proposals, to ensure that no further damage is done to the wetlands area. As of May 2011, the site was still contaminated and unused.

Conclusions
Together, the Stick House, northern parcels, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Filipello Park, and Sawins Pond serve as the central focus of the Field Project team study. Through a basic review of the area’s history, the team found that:

- Agriculture constituted a prominent historical use at the study area.
- Mount Auburn Cemetery is moving ahead with plans for a new horticultural project called the Meadow Extension.
- The industrial history of the study area is still visible at the incinerator site, the northern parcels and through contamination of Sawins Pond.
- Open space continues to be a significant asset to the area. Both Filipello Park and Mount Auburn Cemetery provide leisure opportunities for residents and visitors.

Understanding the complex history of the Grove Street study area directed the Field Project team’s further research. The intersections between space, time and function helped build the image of Grove Street that exists today. This knowledge of the past strengthened the following review of the historic preservation literature, lending insight into the economic potential that exists at the site.
Chapter 3

Endnotes

1. D. Russo, pers. comm.
8. Focus group with East Watertown Residents, April 4, 2011.
15. Ibid.

Introduction

Local, regulatory and cultural issues can influence the impact an historic preservation project can have on economic development. To grasp the various factors at play in the Grove Street study area, the Field Project team grounded the practice of preservation and adaptive reuse in its environmental benefits and economic development potential; examined techniques that can guide preservation and new design; and assessed challenges to historic preservation through study of infill development. By exploring the practice of preservation through different lenses, the Field Project team gained an understanding of the Shick House’s relationship to the larger Grove Street study area. Economic potential was investigated, and its link to cultural values and the built environment was discovered in the process.

Defining the Practice

Although we will use historic preservation as a term to encompass different techniques, it is important to first differentiate its definition from that of adaptive reuse and infill development. Historic preservation is the process of protecting a structure, and often its physical and conceptual context, for the social and cultural values it represents. It refers to the "maintenance of a property without significant alteration to its current condition." In contrast, adaptive reuse places greater emphasis on the economic viability of a project, often retaining exterior features while making functional changes to the interior.

Historic Preservation as an Economic Driver

“‘Does preservation pay?’ A significant number of these studies have been undertaken across the U.S., and the answer to this question is a resounding ‘yes.’”

Randall Mason, Economics and Historic Preservation
Environmental Benefits of Historic Preservation

Historic preservation and adaptive reuse practices can have positive local and regional impacts on the environment. Redevelopment of historic properties and vacant urban land can take pressure off ecologically sensitive lands at the urban fringe. Additionally, preservation measures can take advantage of infrastructure that already exists, including the structure itself, which can “better deliver sustainable outcomes for society by avoiding unnecessary waste” of resources and materials.

Although the EPA admits that it can be difficult to draw precise conclusions on transportation impacts of infill projects, a case study by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council found that the redevelopment of many sites near town centers could result in “239,000 fewer miles driven during rush hour.” Despite the scope of such benefits there is much to be gained in cultural and economic improvements as well.

Preservation Meets Economic Development

According to Donovan Rypkema, an expert in historic preservation, few of the nearly 500 categories of economic activity have as much impact as the rehabilitation of historic buildings. One of the most common ways to quantify this impact is by counting the number of jobs created. Norman Tyler, author of Historic Preservation, cites a report from the Department of the Interior, claiming that historic preservation projects often rely on local construction materials, and in return “a higher percentage of funds remains as a stimulation in that locality.”

An economic impact study regarding the effects of Maryland’s 2001-02 rehabilitation tax credit, which targets historic preservation among other types of projects, revealed that 2,454 estimated jobs were created, with only half that number consisting of on-site construction jobs. Historic preservation is one of the highest job-generators in the manufacturing and construction sectors, which also benefits the retail trade and service sectors. In tracing the economic effects of historic preservation, it is important to identify the total impact as the sum of the direct and multiplier effects. Direct effect includes the on-site labor and material purchases made specifically for the preservation activity. The multiplier effect incorporates the indirect economic consequences, such as the spending on goods and services by industries that produce the construction materials.

Following the money farther reveals “induced” impacts, which include the expenditures made by the households of workers involved with the preservation project. For instance, in 2000, Massachusetts spent $1.5 billion on rehabilitation of both residential and non-residential structures. That spending translated into the creation of 9,510 jobs, $1.7 billion in gross state product, $385 million in taxes (including $162 million in state local taxes), and $1.4 billion in in-state wealth. It is through these “catalytic effects,” explains Randall Mason, that “historic preservation can (and often does) have a net positive effect on a regional or local economy.”

Toward the Quality of Life Connection

The benefits of historic preservation are not limited to job creation and regional economic activity. Historic preservation in localities and neighborhoods can also often raise, or at least maintain, property values. In a 1991 study of Philadelphia, structures with historic designations were calculated to be valued 131 percent higher than non-historic buildings. A study in South Carolina found that historic district home prices in Columbia rose 26 percent faster than the overall market. In a speech at the National Trust Annual Conference, Donovan Rypkema acknowledged the greater appreciation rates for properties in historic districts, and claimed that in a globalized world, a region’s competitiveness “will be based on the quality of life the local community provides.” Quoting the Inter American Development Bank, he stated that “preserving cultural heritage is an instrument to promote sustainable...
“Placemaking capitalizes on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people’s health, happiness, and well being.”

Project for Public Spaces

Development strongly based on local traditions and community resources.iii

The idea of “placemaking,” a tool for building quality of life, has become a way to activate and drive economies. Placemaking attempts to build on interconnected community assets instead of focusing on isolated problems.xvii According to the Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit organization dedicated to placemaking: “Common problems like traffic-dominated streets, little-used parks, and isolated, underperforming development projects can be avoided by embracing the placemaking perspective that views a place in its entirety, rather than zooming in on isolated fragments of the whole.” xviii

A report by Brad Broberg notes that “placemaking” is the best way to generate lasting prosperity, claiming businesses are looking at your geography and resources and understand what your place based assets are.xix

Looking at preservation through a “place-making” lens is a reminder that people’s attraction to history is difficult to quantify, yet holds potential to become an economic engine. “Heritage” is a term that bridges history’s intrinsic value with its potential as a commercial resource. Thus, heritage tourism is a growing trend rooted in local culture and values.24 In a 2008 report for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), heritage tourism is defined as “traveling to experience the past and present.”25 Just as the cultural essence of a place is difficult to measure in dollars, heritage tourism can also have economic benefits that are hard to pin down. Heritage trips accounted for over 25 percent of all overnight trips in the state.26 Heritage tourism is a growing trend rooted in local culture and values.24 In a 2008 report for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), heritage tourism is defined as “traveling to experience the past and present.”25 Looking at preservation through a “place-making” lens is a reminder that people’s attraction to history is difficult to quantify, yet holds potential to become an economic engine. “Heritage” is a term that bridges history’s intrinsic value with its potential as a commercial resource. Thus, heritage tourism is a growing trend rooted in local culture and values.24 In a 2008 report for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), heritage tourism is defined as “traveling to experience the past and present.”25 Just as the cultural essence of a place is difficult to measure in dollars, heritage tourism can also have economic benefits that are hard to pin down. Heritage trips accounted for over 25 percent of all overnight trips in the state.26

Time-conscious urban design is a second way of understanding design and preservation. As it appears in Urban Sustainability and Environmental Design, the concept goes beyond just historic preservation, recognizing the cultural “development of particular communities,” or the subjective “essence of the place.”xx This concept can therefore be applied to the preservation of individual structures, as well as entire districts or neighborhoods. Time-conscious urban design considers the historic preservation process “as an outcome of an evolutionary process.” Approaching preservation in this way considers a “respect for and responsiveness to the diversity of factors that have led to present situations.”xxi For instance, maintaining a structure to look and function as if it did at a certain point in
the preservation of the past for its intrinsic value and as a resource for the community as a commercial activity.31 Much like the evolutionary concepts behind time conscious urban design, Nasser contends that heritage can evolve “over time in the way it is presented and also in the ways in which the public reacts to its presentation.”32 This suggests that not only can preservation contribute to economic development, but that the definition of heritage, and a community’s reaction to its physical expression, continues to evolve as the community ages, providing new opportunities and challenges. With heritage explained as an evolving value, it is important to look at the historic preservation context—and the challenges of infill development.

**Historic Preservation as Infill Development: Confronting Challenges**

Although historic preservation and adaptive reuse offer great potential for economic development, persistent challenges exist with many projects. The literature often addresses barriers to historic preservation and adaptive reuse in a similar manner as infill projects, suggesting that the three face certain fundamental challenges. Minimizing a developer’s perceived financial risk by providing streamlined permitting processes, bringing clarity to decision making and addressing neighborhood concerns is crucial to attracting investment to underdeveloped projects and ventures.33

Many tools exist to combat financial, regulatory and neighborhood challenges. One survey found that “streamlining the infill development process is one of the most important incentives” for the success of such ventures.34 A developer of an infill project in Massachusetts found that “since all the various boards and commissions met together to review the plans…a suitable compromise was reached without the developer being caught in the middle.”35

While simple restructuring of processes can be helpful, regulatory tools, such as Massachusetts’s Chapter 43D, known as the “expedited permitting” process can further incentivize development. Signed into law in 2006, Chapter 43D provides eligible properties with “guaranteed local permitting decisions” within 180 days of an application, along with assistance for business marketing and eligibility for grants.36 This law has implications for large historic preservation or adaptive reuse projects. For instance, one of the requirements is a structure, or future site of a structure, of at least 30,000 square feet in size.

The tool works for municipalities that are looking to clarify the permitting process. For instance, requirements of eligibility include adapting local processes to conform to the 180 day term, having a qualified site lined up, and pre-identifying the necessary permits. While it may be time consuming for a municipality to bring all the pieces together, clarity to the decision making process can greatly minimize the developer’s perceived risk and incentivize development at underutilized sites.

Simplifying the regulatory process and proactively addressing local concerns regarding density, future visions and land use regulations can be significant contributors to the success of historic preservation and infill development projects. One author and developer suggests using certain mechanisms, such as Massachusetts’s Chapter 43B, to work around restrictive zoning.37

“The city tells it own past, transfers its own memory, largely through the fabric of the built environment. Historic buildings are the physical manifestation of memory – it is memory that makes places significant.”

Donovan Rypkema, Economics, Sustainability and Historic Preservation
Appeal Drives Economic Prosperity
Brad Broberg, A Community’s place based assets are.

You have to take an adaptive reuse or infill project.

setbacks and other requirements that may hinder an adaptive reuse or infill project.

A municipality first designates an area as "District Improvement Financing" (DIF). The DIF tool is used by public/private partnerships to offset the cost of physical or infrastructure improvements to a site.

A municipality first designs an area as small as one parcel, spells out goals and benefits for the district, then linking the project to a development proposal. Proposed market analysis can predict a favorable property tax increase for the property receiving the benefits, Massachusetts’s Economic Assistance Coordinating Council can approve the district. As taxes increase on the properties designated, the municipality can use the increased property tax increase for the property receiving the benefits, then linking the district to a development proposal. Province to a development proposal. Province to a development proposal.

A municipality that can help finance improvements to an area, acting as “a declaration of intent” to the private sector financiers, and employs the sites historic assets, may mark a step toward the quality of life issues that many communities strive for. Using this as a foundation, the Field Project team collected input from the community about assets and opportunities for redevelopment of the Grove Street study area, the restoration of the Shick House may actually encourage development.

Conclusions
Although financial, regulatory and neighborhood obstacles exist, the literature review has uncovered multiple ways historic preservation can enhance the environment and economy of a community. Job growth, increased property values and the preservation of cultural heritage can have positive effects for Watertown. Furthermore, the research suggests that rather than hinder the redevelopment potential of the Grove Street study area, the restoration of the Shick House may actually encourage development. Preservation of the Shick House, coupled with the necessary site upgrades and improvements, could unlock Grove Street’s potential to attract both visitors and “inward investment,” further enhancing job opportunities. A balanced preservation strategy that minimizes perceived risk for private sector financiers, and employs the sites historic assets, may mark a step toward the quality of life issues that many communities strive for. Using this as a foundation, the Field Project team collected input from the community about assets and opportunities for redevelopment of the Grove Street study area and Shick House.
Endnotes continued...

48. Ibid., 78.
49. Ibid., 92.
50. Ibid., 94.

Sidebar Quotes

ii. Beatley and Manning, The Ecology of Place, 175.

Chapter 4

Community Input

One of the central goals of the Field Project team was to contribute to an ongoing community visioning process for East Watertown and the Grove Street study area in particular. To that end, we conducted interviews with 14 key informants, facilitated a public meeting of approximately 40 residents, and organized a focus group with six stakeholders. The team believes gaining first-hand knowledge of community values and concerns is paramount to a successful redevelopment scenario. The first part of this chapter describes the methods used to collect input from the community, while the second presents central themes that were identified through the community input process.

Methods

Interviews

Members of the Field Project team conducted interviews with professionals, stakeholders and residents in the community. Interviewees provided first-hand knowledge about the history of the Grove Street area, as well as challenges and opportunities related to the future development of the site. Individuals were selected based on recommendations from Planning Department staff members and Mount Auburn Cemetery representatives. We also reached out to professionals in the historic preservation and biomedical fields, whom we thought could provide insight into the technical aspects of our study.

Some of these interviewees were present at our initial site visit and offered their contact information, while others were contacted based on their knowledge of a particular facet of the project.

Interviewees included Mount Auburn Cemetery representatives, a Conservation Commission member, two Historical Commission members, lead author of the Strategic Framework for Economic Development, two local business owners, two Town Councillors, and three local residents. Other professionals interviewed included a contractor familiar with historic

Sidebar Quotes

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Sidebar Quotes

ii. Beatley and Manning, The Ecology of Place, 175.
preservation techniques, the director of a local biomedical facility, and an architect with Perkins+Will. Together, these professionals provided the technical expertise needed to understand the restoration potential of the house and the development potential of the site as a whole. All of our interviews were semi-structured in format, with initial and follow-up questions. They were conducted by phone and in person, lasting approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Interviewees and questions from the interview process is included in Appendix G.

Community Meeting
Nearly 40 members of the public attended a community meeting on March 31, 2011. The meeting was organized and facilitated by the Field Projects team and advertised through Planning Department e-mail lists (messages were sent out once in early March and once the week of the meeting), through flyers posted in key locations in East Watertown and postings in the Watertown Tab and Watertown Patch (see Appendix I). The purpose of the public meeting was to gauge interest and generate awareness about the historic Shick House, determine whether or not the house is considered an asset to the Grove Street area, and gather ideas for how the house could be incorporated into future development plans. The Field Project team framed the meeting as the first proactive step in thinking about the future of the Grove Street study area. While the team was aware of past contention regarding proposals for the site, we felt a “future oriented” discussion would allow community members to focus on “the possible” rather than debate past development decisions. Representatives from Mount Auburn Cemetery, the Historical Commission, and the abutting Coolidge Hill Road neighborhood attended, along with three Planning Department staff members and the general public.

After distributing the agenda for the night’s meeting, two members of the Field Project team gave a 15-minute presentation about the history of the site and an overview of their research to date. The presentation was followed by a brief question and answer session. During this portion of the meeting, the other team members took notes and photographs to document the event. Meeting participants were then given a map of the study area and divided into groups for a planned visioning activity. They were asked to identify existing assets in East Watertown, features that could be improved, and discuss future visions for the Shick House and the surrounding study area. Each group designated one person to write down prominent ideas on a large sheet of paperboard that could then be used to report back to the larger crowd before the meeting concluded. Ideas gathered from this activity guided the Field Project team’s final recommendations.

Focus Group
In addition to a public meeting, the Field Project team organized a focus group to learn about concerns that arose with past development proposals and consider design solutions that residents believe could improve the safety and community orientation of the study area. The focus group was attended by six people: a Mount Auburn Cemetery representative, a Historical Commission member, the District A (East Watertown) Town Councilor, and three local residents (see Appendix H). The cemetery representative and Historical Commission member were chosen based on their knowledge of the Shick House history, and the Town Councilor was chosen based on her familiarity with issues in East Watertown. The other residents were recruited by the Councilor based on their homes’ close proximity to the study area. The focus group was held on a Monday evening and lasted one hour. The Field Project team asked broad, guiding questions to generate discussion. Early in the meeting, conversation focused on strengths of the study area and overarching issues at play. The group then shared some concerns to focus on past development proposals before looking forward again to possible solutions.
Central Themes

Several key themes emerged from the community input process. These themes, which can be grouped in terms of Assets, Opportunities for Improvement, and Visions for the Future, relate both to the Shick House and to the study area as a whole. We will first examine the themes as they relate to the Grove Street study area and later in the chapter as they relate to the Shick House.

Grove Street Study Area: Assets

During our interviews, the community meeting, and focus group, we asked residents to describe the assets of East Watertown. Assets that came up repeatedly included the study area’s location and its proximity to local attractions.

Location, Nearby Attractions, Low Cost

All of our interviewees expressed the view that Watertown is in a strategic location, with relatively easy access to Boston and Cambridge. The East End is “well-positioned to capture some of the start-up companies from Cambridge as they mature to the second stage,” said Kathryn Madden, lead author for Watertown’s Strategic Framework for Economic Development. “It’s close to the river, close to Harvard, close to medical districts; it’s in a very accessible location.” Additionally, some participants of our study noted lower property costs in Watertown. A local restaurant owner on Mount Auburn Street decided to open his business in Watertown because an alternative space in Cambridge “was half the size and twice the cost.”

Dr. Henry Paulus, Deputy Director of the Boston Biomedical Research Institute, agreed that the study area has development potential based on its location. During an interview at his Grove Street office, Dr. Paulus claimed that he and other employees walk through Mount Auburn Cemetery before work or “go for walks in the park at lunch.” In response to the recommendations for commercial development outlined in the Strategic Framework for Economic Development, Dr. Paulus remarked on the growing need for incubator space for small biomedical firms. He noted that a facility at Grove Street could potentially house a number of companies, based on the size of the study area and the space available for the equipment-sharing that often occurs among startup firms.

Residents at the public meeting expanded on these assets, suggesting that the study area is large and its proximity to Coolidge Square (an area north of Grove Street with many local businesses) make it well suited for development in the future. One meeting participant envisioned the creation of a “development with sweeping views,” due to the study area’s close proximity to the Charles River.

Grove Street Study Area: Opportunities for Improvement

While location, low property costs, and nearby attractions stood out as three of the major assets in the East End, residents with whom we spoke identified far more opportunities for improvement, both in the planning process and in the physical landscape.

Improvement opportunities included:

• Recognizing the East End’s unique history;
• Involving the community in development decisions;
• Promoting Grove Street as a gateway to Watertown;
• Improving traffic conditions;
• Increasing access to public transit;
• Strengthening connectivity and the pedestrian-friendly environment;
• Promoting a density compatible with the surrounding neighborhood; and
• Relocating the recycling facility.

Recognize Unique History of East End

While many of the residents with whom we spoke saw the East End as an opportunity area for economic development, three interviewees pointed out that the area was once the “town dump” and that it formerly housed many of the town’s industries. One focus group participant noted that, while the East End’s image is changing, some community members may be skeptical of efforts to change or improve the area.
These statements suggest that if new development is to occur in the area, those involved in the development process must be conscious of the East End's history and how this impacts residents' perspectives.

**Involve the Community in Development Decisions**

Several residents at the public meeting expressed concerns that due to the study area’s ownership by the Mount Auburn Cemetery, the cemetery has final say over what development will occur at the site. Resident Laura Tangusso echoed this concern in an interview. While she noted the excitement surrounding the possible installation of community gardens, she had to ask—“What happens in ten years when a future developer moves in?” Her statement suggests that residents are concerned that their voice in the planning process has a limited impact on long-term development decisions. Recognizing this, David Barnett, President of the Mount Auburn Cemetery, reassured meeting participants that the cemetery and Watertown are “willing to work together” to develop a shared vision for the area.

**Promote Grove Street as a Gateway**

In terms of physical improvements to the East End, many with whom we spoke agreed that, although the study area is in a strategic location, Grove Street currently lacks distinction as a key gateway to the town. As one resident put it, “As you come into Watertown—you don’t even know you’re coming into Watertown... maybe that’s something we should be concerned about.” Similarly, Kathryn Madden stated that Grove Street as it passes through the study area should be a “beautiful gateway street into town.” Currently, Grove Street seems like the back door,” said Town Councillor Kounelis. “We’re hoping it will become something more than that.”

**Improve Traffic Conditions**

Because Grove Street is situated as a shortcut between two prominent arterial routes, it is subject to high traffic volumes, particularly at peak hours. In fact, a persistent concern among meeting participants, and interviewees, was the amount of traffic along the street. This was considered problematic both in terms of safety, and in terms of quality of life. Much of the conversation during the focus group session focused on the use of “traffic calming measures,” such as speed bumps, raised crosswalks, and the addition of a traffic signal at the Grove Street and Coolidge Avenue intersection to slow traffic and increase the sense of safety on the roadway. Don Elliott, a resident of East Watertown, said that Grove Street needed to be “reconfigured” so that it could handle higher traffic volumes, though he was uncertain if this would be feasible.

Two interviewees and a focus group participant agreed that any increase in traffic from a new development would “negatively impact the neighborhood.” While some residents mentioned noise as an issue, resident Maria Lane felt that the increased exhaust fumes from vehicles would “impact health, across the board, for all neighborhood residents.”

**Improve Access to Public Transit**

Many residents with whom we spoke felt that one way to reduce traffic might be to improve accessibility to public transit, which is currently lacking on Grove Street. The Field Project team interviewed Gary Shaw, a Watertown resident and architect with Perkins+Will specializing in biomedical design, and the Architect for Boston Biomedical Research Institute. He noted that in terms of attracting technology firms to the study area, closer proximity to transit or a location directly adjacent to the Boston Biomedical Research Institute would make the site more competitive with other locations in the metro area. Shaw observed that “the site’s isolation is a challenge.”

Participants at the public meeting agreed that increased access to transit is important for the study area’s future development. One group recommended that any private buses or shuttles that currently operate (or will operate in the future) along Grove Street be made available to residents of the local community. “I think using the shuttle buses from other developments is a great idea,” confirmed a local resident.

**Strengthen Connectivity and Pedestrian-Friendly Environment**

In addition to improving traffic conditions, nearly all of the residents with whom we spoke recommended that Grove Street become more pedestrian-friendly. During the public meeting, each of the break-out groups specifically mentioned landscaping,
sidewalks, and street trees as a means to improve the pedestrian experience along the Grove Street corridor. “It could be like a boulevard with lovely tree space,” said one resident.

Others at the meeting emphasized the need for “making connections” between local attractions, including “the cemetery, Filippo Park, Coolidge Square, and the bike path.” Participants seemed to infer that improved walkability and connections to transit may also prove important for attracting future users to the site. As Francisco Uloa, a resident of East Watertown, noted, “It would be so easy to just walk to the bus and then take it to Harvard Square, but I will never walk there. There are no walkways.” Based on the frequency of these comments, there seems to be a need to improve pedestrian access and walkability along the Grove Street corridor.

Promote Density that is Compatible with the Surrounding Neighborhood

Also related to issues of traffic are the future density and use of development. In the past, the proposed density of new developments has been identified as a problem by local residents. According to John Airasian, resident and owner of Eastern Clothing, the residential development proposed in 2008 was “too dense… residents don’t want increased traffic as a result of high density.” Similarly, Maria Lane, a resident from the abutting neighborhood, said she opposed that development because “it would have brought too much traffic in.” Conversations during the break-out session at the public meeting confirmed that the size and density of past developments has left an impact on local residents, and thus must be considered as the Grove Street visioning process continues.

Relocate the Recycling Facility

In addition to concerns about traffic, walkability, and density, interviewees and meeting participants expressed their desire to relocate the recycling facility because it lowers the visual appeal of the area. The recommendation to move the facility is not new. In fact, according to Chair of the Conservation Commission, Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, the Commission has been “advocating for its relocation for years, because the recycling facility isn’t legally allowed under the grant that established the park.” The Commission hopes that by removing the recycling center, the “grand entrance” that was originally planned for the park can finally be completed. Many residents nodded their heads when Candice Curry of Mount Auburn Cemetery stated that the town will be renewing its recycling contracts in the near future, and a switch to curbside recycling could mean the recycling facility would no longer be necessary.

Grove Street Study Area: Visions for the Future

During the interview and public meeting process, residents expanded on their ideas for improvements by sharing their future visions for the Grove Street study area. That the site should generate revenue for the town was a consistent theme throughout the meeting, but ideas for potential uses ranged from research and development facilities to residential buildings and mixed use, to a development that could include community gardens. One resident summarized an opinion expressed frequently throughout the community input process — “the property should remain on the tax rolls.” At the public meeting, one group clearly stated that the site “should turn a profit.” The flavor of the comments suggested that a tax-exempt status, if kept in Mount Auburn ownership, would be unpopular. With most residents at the meeting in agreement that the property should contribute to the tax base, visions began to emerge for possible long-term uses of the area, many of which were commercial uses. One participant said his ideal for the parcel would be a research lab site. Shaw noted that it “may be smart for Watertown to consider emphasizing biomedical development” at the site since there are some nearby companies with a focus on life sciences. Also, with Cambridge being both expensive and easily accessible, “Watertown could offer a more economical location for companies wanting to be close to Cambridge.” He also mentioned that with the new horticultural center to be built at the cemetery, “it could be possible to attract a horticultural or education interest that might tie into the local science education programs.”
Other long-term uses focused on housing opportunities. A suggestion that the site be used for apartments sparked Town Councilor Kounelis to remark on a nearby condominium complex that is “actually quite a nice development with low rise buildings and a lovely courtyard.” Another participant thought that a row of wooden, two-story townhouses along Grove Street would blend well with the Shick House. In an interview with Bill Barry and David Barnett of Mount Auburn Cemetery, it was noted that a “mixed-use assisted living area was at one time appraised as the highest and best use.” The two suggested that the cemetery looks forward to the site being upgraded via redevelopment into a use that is compatible with its surroundings.

Shick House
In addition to asking residents to think about the Grove Street study area as a whole, the Field Project team asked residents to consider assets, opportunities for improvements, and visions for the future of the historic Shick House. Although there were an array of ideas proposed for the Shick House at both the meeting and during our interview process, several themes emerged that provided insight into potential uses for the house. Among them was the desire to: find a use that is profitable; capitalize on the house’s unique history; increase public awareness about the house; and identify a use that benefits the community.

Shick House: Assets
While not everyone we spoke with agreed that the Shick House should be preserved, there was general agreement at the public meeting that the house’s historical significance could be an asset to the town. Residents who had had the opportunity to see the Shick House first hand, and tour its interior, commented on its good condition and historical significance. “The first time I went inside [the house], I was just struck by how beautiful it was,” said a community member at the public meeting. “It’s a piece of Watertown’s history,” declared Marilynne Roach, Chair of the Watertown Historical Society, “particularly of Watertown’s Jewish community.”

When asked about his first impression of the Shick House, Asher Nichols, owner of Asher Nichols and Craftsmen LLC, commented on how he was impressed at the large size of the house.4

Shick House: Opportunities for Improvement
Although several interviewees and public meeting participants viewed the house’s history as an asset to the local community, residents made many suggestions for how the Shick House could be improved. Opportunities for improvement included integrating the house profitably into a new development, educating the community about its historical significance, capitalizing on its unique history, and promoting a use that would benefit the local community.

Educate the Community about the House’s History
Prior to the presentation by the Field Project team, many of the residents at the public meeting were unfamiliar with the history of the Shick House. Joyce Kelly, member of the Watertown Historical Society, admitted that “a lot of people are not aware of the house.” “I was amazed when I found out what the Shick House was, that it was the central farm house in the area... it’s really a nice thing,” remarked one resident. Although a few residents did remember that the house was once home to a dairy farm, most recalled the “cars piled up outside,” and the “little house in the middle of all that junk,” referring to its days as a junkyard and auto repair shop. Despite the negative images of the past, many participants pointed to the potential for increased public interest in preserving the house. Their statements further suggest that if the house is preserved, greater outreach could be done to educate the community about the house’s historical significance.

Integrate the House Profitably into New Development
Similar to discussions regarding the Grove Street study area as a whole, the majority of comments at the public meeting suggested that the Shick House should bring in revenue for the town. “From the standpoint of the ‘town,’ it needs to consider revenue, what’s coming in money-wise,” said local resident Don Elliott. However, at least three residents at the community meeting were skeptical that “Years ago this homestead was the showplace of the town... resplendent in a coat of bright yellow paint... Today this old-fashioned dwelling is an aristocrat in overalls.”5

Maete Shick, Owner, 1957
the preservation of the Shick House could contribute to the value of the Grove Street study area. “It’s an economic issue; the house will take away from the value of the site as a whole,” declared one resident.

Attempting to integrate a new facility with the Shick House also provided reasons for skepticism. “With such an historic architectural style, the house could be difficult to fit into a new ‘life sciences’ development that might want to utilize a more contemporary design expression,” claimed architect Gary Shaw. Two interviewees offered similar statements, adding that the isolated nature of the house would make it difficult to incorporate it into a new development. Instead, they proposed to relocate the house or reuse features of the house in a future development. While some skepticism existed regarding the profitability of the Shick House, a sense of excitement did emerge among meeting participants, with all three groups in the breakout sessions reporting positive preservation potential for the Shick House.

Capitalize on the Unique History

Among those who felt that the house should be preserved, several suggested that its unique history be promoted. One group at the public meeting recommended that the house be designated a historic landmark in Watertown. Historical Society members Marilynne Roach and Joyce Kelly said that they would like to see an exhibit about the history of the house and nearby Mount Auburn Cemetery. Another group at the public meeting proposed that community gardens be opened near the house, paying homage to the agricultural history of the area. Building off of the agricultural component, one group felt the house’s history provides intrinsic value to the site. If the Town preserves the home, it “could then sell the site for its historic value.”

Promote a Use that Would Benefit the Local Community

Residents at the meeting who supported the preservation of the Shick House expressed that the house should be adapted to meet community needs. Town Councilor Kounelis said that, historically, East Watertown was used as a “dumping ground,” referring to the area’s history of disproportionate industrial use. There’s an “overall consensus in the area that we’d like to have something in return—something that not only blends with the community the preservation of the Shick House could contribute to the value of the Grove Street study area. “It’s an economic issue; the house will take away from the value of the site as a whole,” declared one resident.

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but that can be part of the community.” Representatives from the Mount Auburn Cemetery shared this sentiment and stated that they “want a development that fits in with the character of the community and that has a positive impact on the cemetery across the street.”

While talk of tax-generating development was prominent, interviews uncovered other potential uses. Susan Reidel, of the Watertown Town Councilor-at-large, commented on the potential for gardens at the site that could complement the cemetery. An interview with East Watertown resident Laura Tanguaro also emphasized the “great opportunity” a community garden site would be for Watertown. “There are no other community gardens in Watertown,” she claimed, although adjacent Belmont and Cambridge both have garden space. Barry also said that meetings with Watertown residents had ”generated a lot of interest” for the idea.

Shick House: Visions for the Future

At the community meeting, discussions about improvements for the Shick House quickly transitioned to brainstorming visions for the future. The most common uses suggested at the meeting and in interviews were a bed and breakfast, a restaurant, offices, event space, and educational space. Community gardens were also mentioned as a complement to the Shick House.

One of the most frequently shared ideas was to convert the Shick House to a bed and breakfast. “The only place to stay in town is Super 8, so I could see a hotel being a good use for the site,” said a local resident. Dr. Paulus supported this claim during an interview, revealing that his facility once rented a space to house their frequent visitors. Now, he stated, “many of the people that visit our facility once a year would like to stay in Harvard Square, so it would be great to have a place to host people locally.” Others felt that a hotel built in conjunction with the Shick House’s renovations could provide a viable reuse.

Another common recommendation at the meeting was to convert the house to a restaurant, “one that could support local residents as well as clients from nearby development.” This could “connect in some way to Coolidge Square... where all the new restaurants are,” added another community member. Councillor Falkoff, however, contended that “restaurants in historic houses often don’t last.”

Other suggestions included converting the house to offices. Councillor Falkoff noted that historic homes can make very comfortable office spaces for appropriate uses, but others were idebal of Watertown’s demand for such space. “I see a lot of vacant office space in Watertown,” said one meeting participant questioning demand.

Some residents at the meeting suggested that the house be converted to an event space, much like the Commander’s Mansion, a restored Victorian mansion in Watertown that hosts weddings and other gatherings. However, the Shick House is much smaller than the Commander’s Mansion and “doesn’t have a banquet hall,” as Councillor Falkoff noted. The Councilor went on to question whether the “Shick House is laid out in a way that would facilitate its use as a function hall.”

This may suggest that the Shick House would be suitable for smaller meetings or gatherings or that interior alterations may be necessary to provide for certain uses. Several people with whom we spoke also discussed the potential for the house to become an education center for local parks and programs, particularly if community gardens were developed on-site. Bill Barry of Mount Auburn Cemetery said he could see special value in the Shick House parcel’s frontage on Filippo Park, and how it might be an area of transition from the park to a new development: “I could see the perceived boundary line blurred.”

Public Participation Conclusions

Based on the Field Project team’s interviews, community meeting and focus group, three conclusions emerged:

1. Due to its location and unique historical assets the Grove Street study area should be promoted as a “gateway” to Watertown.
2. Public outreach is necessary to educate the community about the Shick House. Yet, pedestrian, traffic, and streetscape improvements will also be necessary for the Shick House to make a viable contribution to the site’s redevelopment.
3. Tax generating uses represent the preferred scenarios for redevelopment of both the Shick House and the vacant parcels to the north.

This exploration of community input helped the team conduct its site analysis, final recommendations and design scenarios. Participants offered useful, community-specific information, which continued to build and evolve as the process moved forward. Despite legitimate concerns, most participants in our study seemed hopeful that a process based on future visions could provide desirable outcomes.

Visions for the Future

Shick House: Visions for the Future

At the community meeting, discussions about improvements for the Shick House

“As I walked home... I saw visions of a vegetable garden and a small orchard in my backyard.”

Maete Shick; considering purchase of the house in 1914

Space vs. Place

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Space vs. Place

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Endnotes
1. John Airasian interview, March 5, 2011.
5. Gary Shaw interview, March 18, 2011.

Sidebar Quotes
2. Ibid.

Chapter 5

Site Analysis

The Grove Street study area is located at Watertown, Massachusetts’ east end. It consists of a broadly defined area, which includes three parcels owned by Mount Auburn Cemetery. Located at the southeast corner of the northern parcels is the Shick House. The Coolidge Hill Neighborhood bounds the study area to the north, with Mount Auburn Cemetery to the east, and Filipello Park to the south. In order to understand the site in different contexts, the Field Project team thought it was also necessary to consider a geographical area that included other noteworthy sites, including Mount Auburn Cemetery’s plans for a horticultural center to the northeast of the study area; current biomedical facilities to the north and south; and Sawins Pond to the southwest. The following descriptions separate the study area into focal points, while still assessing the intersecting challenges and opportunities of the site as a whole.

The Field Project team visited the project site on several occasions to familiarize itself with the area and identify any challenges or opportunities that exist on the site. In January, the team toured the interior of the Shick House with representatives from the Planning Department, Mount Auburn Cemetery, and the Historical Commission. During this visit, the team took photos of the house and learned about its history, making note of unique features and possible issues regarding its preservation. During other visits, the team walked around the exterior of the house and through the adjacent Filipello Park. We also visited the abutting Coolidge Hill Road neighborhood to orient ourselves to the study area and the Shick House.

The Shick House

Over 150 years old, the Shick House has weathered the challenges of nearly eight generations. The structure has 3,858 square feet of finished space. It consists of three stories, eight rooms, two bathrooms
and even a cold storage room in the basement dating back to the home’s history as a dairy farm. An addition, added when the home functioned as a junkyard, brought the refurbishing of the kitchen area to wood paneling, as well as an office at the basement level in the southwest corner.

The Shick House closely abuts the former incinerator site to the south, as well as the existing recycling facility to the southwest. On the north side of the house, a driveway runs east to west from Grove Street toward the rear of the house and is separated by a chain link fence. Set back from Grove Street, the front yard of the Shick House contains several older trees that give the space an air of antiquity. However, running east to west in the front yard is a concrete wall about four feet tall with a wooden fence running along its top, which severs any views of the house from the street. On the south side of the wall is a large concrete pad that most likely served as a parking area and storage lot for the auto repair shop. A chain link fence blocks the pad and turns into another wood fence that runs along the sidewalk in front of the house, further contributing to the vacant feel of the streetscape.
The western portion of the Shick House parcel runs along the Filipello Park boundary, sloping downward to a low spot at the southern parcel line (See Fig. 5.5). However, the uneven grade will likely be leveled with the addition of the approved parking lot that will cover much of this area.4

Despite changes to its surroundings, the Shick House structure has remained relatively sound. In 2002, Bruner/Cott and Associates, Inc. completed a "Structural Evaluation Report," which outlines the house's structural deficiencies. In addition to reviewing this report, the team interviewed Asher Nichols, of Asher Nichols and Craftsmen LLC., a general contracting company that specializes in restoration, renovations and remodeling. With preservation carpentry training in buildings to 1850 and earlier, Nichols was well positioned to offer professional input. Bruner and Cott Associates found the house to be in "relatively fair structural condition."3 Despite two lateral load bearing beams on the first floor, which both the report and Nichols noted as needing repair, the existing floor and framing systems seem to meet minimum live load requirements, meaning they can support the weight of the house above and any additional weight due to maximum occupancy.4 While no major deficiencies exist, multiple challenges will still have to be addressed in a preservation or adaptive reuse project. Prominent issues outlined in the "Structural Evaluation Report" include:

▪ Two 12" by 12" brick "piers" that will require repointing
▪ A sagging northwest corner, causing floor sloping - corner may need to be jacked up
▪ Further review of sagging second floor beams above the kitchen
▪ "Severe" rotting of the porch floor framing that will need to be fully removed
▪ Repointing of brick bearing walls – especially on the east side of the structure
▪ Two 9" by 9" transfer beams under the first floor will need to be replaced to meet live load requirements.

While no major deficiencies exist, multiple challenges will still have to be addressed in a preservation or adaptive reuse project. Prominent issues outlined in the "Structural Evaluation Report" include:

▪ Cracking plaster of some walls and ceilings
▪ Potential water damage from roof deficiencies
▪ Rotting column bases at the front entrance

Recognizing Nichols’ claim that "the first thing you do before undertaking any project is, of course, to study the structure," the Field Project team also assessed indoor and outdoor cosmetics.5 The more impressive cosmetic features of the Shick House, as outlined in the Bruner/Cott report, include:

▪ Three ornate cast iron fireplaces
▪ Intact light fixtures on the first and second floors
▪ A detailed staircase handrail
▪ Original plaster moldings and walls
▪ Two arched windows above the front entrance
▪ Large windows extending close to the floor
▪ High ceilings
Prominent cosmetic deficiencies include:  

- Vinyl siding on the exterior with unknown conditions of underlying wood
- Repairs to many exterior windows – some signs of rot
- Possible chimney repairs
- Water damage near interior radiators

To Move or Not to Move

During our initial site visit, several attendees discussed the potential of relocating the Shick House. However, there are considerable challenges to such a move in the case of the Shick House. As Nichols noted, it is “important to first decide what you are trying to preserve. Is it the frame or the finishes” of the house? He went on to explain that moving the house could sacrifice some of the plaster finishes on the walls, and that “some of the plaster moldings may not survive the move.” Furthermore, Nichols noted that a move to a new location would require that many elements, such as wiring and means of egress, be brought up to code. Such rewiring could mean that “a lot of moldings would have to be trashed.”

The team’s interview with Mount Auburn Cemetery representatives Bill Barry and David Barnett, highlighted the physical challenges of moving such a large house. Barnett pointed to the low hanging electrical wires and traffic lights on the street that could present particular challenges to transporting the house off site.

Lastly, it would be necessary to decide on a new location for the house. Barry observed that it would be easier to move the house somewhere within the current site, rather than through the streets. However, he also noted the potential advantage of the house where it stands and the property to act as a “transition” between the park and a future development. The fact that the Shick house is in the southeast corner of Mount Auburn Cemetery’s parcel holdings means it might minimize the impact on a future development compared with a more central site. Also, the Shick House’s position near the street gives it potential to become a prominent focus along Grove Street. A location set further north or west could detract from its presence as a central focus of the corridor and make access to the house more difficult. Lastly, a relocation would have to conform to the parameters of the new parking lot, limiting options within a ten year time-frame.

In fact, the current location of the Shick house may actually be beneficial to both the house itself and the surrounding area. If it is preserved in some capacity, a future use could be found on the proximity and benefits open space can provide. Open space may complement a bed and breakfast or office space, attracting employees or patrons that value recreation opportunities. Although the debate over whether the market value of open space can be quantified through quality of life measurements, open space has been recognized to enhance opportunities for reflection, spiritual enrichment and cognitive development. With its unique location between Mount Auburn Cemetery and Filipello Park, the Shick House is well positioned to draw on those positive aspects.

Filipello Park

South of the Shick House and stretching between the twin pedestrian entrances at Arlington Street and a vehicle entrance at Grove Street, Filipello Park’s fourteen acres comprise a large portion of the Grove Street study area. The park boasts two...
large soccer fields and a softball field with lights for night play. A playground anchors the Arlington Street entrance, while a spray park with grills and picnic tables is centrally located. North of the parking area is another playground and shelter area.\textsuperscript{9}

Another significant feature at Filipello Park is the walking path, extending from two entrances at Arlington Street, forming a horseshoe shape that meets at the spray park, and then leading through trees to the parking loop. From the parking loop east, the path follows the vehicle right of way to a terminus at Grove Street. Appealing lamp posts accompany the path for its length, while a few bike racks suggest its use as for both bicycling and walking. The pavement is mostly in good shape, although the path narrows along the driveway.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are two non-recreational sites on park property – the former incinerator lot and the existing recycling facility. Chain link fencing surrounds most of both lots, enclosing two dumpsters at the incinerator site and several more dumpsters of varying capacity at the recycling center. Vehicles can access the recycling facility from the park entrance on Grove Street. The recycling facility currently sits atop a portion of a standard basketball court, while the incinerator site is a mix of grass with patches of old asphalt. Contaminated soil was removed from the former incinerator site, and the area has since been deemed clean.\textsuperscript{10}

### Opportunities and Challenges

The design aesthetics along Grove Street are a key challenge at Filipello Park. As noted from our public input process and interviews, a potentially inhibiting aspect of the study area is the unappealing nature of the Grove Street corridor. For instance, a member of the focus group felt that the “ugly” chain link fence should be removed. The two dumpsters behind the fencing lend an air of abandonment to the site. However, opportunities exist. One plan, yet to be realized since the creation of the park in 1979, is for a prominent entrance featuring a historically appealing gate.\textsuperscript{11} (See Appendix D for original entrance plans). The current entrance features a faded sign for the park that is almost illegible. According to the Conservation Commission, the town has been looking for funding to finish the long awaited entrance.\textsuperscript{12} Although there are a few new trees that are being maintained along the entrance, the drawings depict landscaping that would further improve the sense of investment in the corridor.

The use of a portion of Fillipello Park as a recycling facility, which has been the basis of debate in Watertown since the incinerator was demolished in 2009, also detracts from the site’s potential. Jillian Ennimore, of the Watertown Tab, reported on the 2007 town councilor vote that called for the removal of the facility. Commission members noted the illicit nature of the use, citing provisions in the original grant that set aside the land for recreational use.\textsuperscript{13} Safety concerns were also raised, specifically regarding the facility’s proximity to play areas.\textsuperscript{14}

Watertown has yet to come up with a viable solution for the recycling facility’s removal. One idea considered by Mount Auburn Cemetery officials would be to move it to the front of the Shick House.\textsuperscript{15} However, such a move could further damage the visual appeal of Grove Street, the Shick House and the study area as a whole.

Finding a solution to the location of the recycling facility will likely be a long-term process. But while the Town continues to work out a resolution, other aspects of the park’s relationship to the broader study area can be addressed.

One opportunity that can be assessed independent of the recycling facility issues are improvements to the Filipello Park walking path. Unlike the current Watertown Community Path, the path at Fig. 5.9 Filipello Park walking path Source: Jesse Steadman

Fig. 5.10 Recycling facility at Filipello Park Source: Jesse Steadman

Fig. 5.11 Former incinerator site at Filipello Park Source: Jesse Steadman

Fig. 5.12 Faded sign at Filipello Park’s Grove Street Entrance Source: Jesse Steadman
Filipello Park lacks a painted center line or any clear indication that it can be used for bikes. However, to the northeast of the parking loop, as well as near the basketball courts, there are steel bicycle racks. Bike and pedestrian accessibility could further be improved by updating signage at the park’s Grove Street entrance. Currently, there is no indication that this is an entrance or exit for bikes. The Arlington Street, there is a more defined entry point with cement posts barring vehicles.

A longer term opportunity is the potential connection of the Filipello walking path with the recently completed section of the Watertown Community Path near Coolidge Square. A safe connection with the Community Path would further link the study area to other Watertown neighborhoods, complementing the Strategic Framework for Economic Development (SFED) finding that businesses in the innovation economy “place a higher degree of importance on access to bicycle and running trails.”

Sawins Pond

With the possibility of Filipello Park functioning as a connection to the open space of Mount Auburn Cemetery, the park’s proximity to Sawins Pond is also worth consideration. With a history of pollution, Sawins Pond poses remediation challenges and safety issues regarding contamination. However, with recognition of the pond’s recreation value, and potential as a link between Filipello Park and the Charles River, it should not be overlooked. In a meeting with Janet Jameson and Peri Onipede of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, and Deborah Peterson of the Watertown Citizens for Environmental Safety, the three expressed their interest in the potential for such a linkage. Although there is currently discussion of a parking lot for the area, strategic planning could allow space for future connections.

While the Field Project team recognized the potential for future connections between Sawins Pond and the study area, our project timeline did not allow for in-depth recommendations related to the pond. However, Sawins Pond should be considered as a comprehensive vision for East Watertown develops.

The Northern Parcels

Currently vacant, the two parcels north of the Shick House are the focal point for redevelopment. A longer term opportunity is the potential connection of the Filipello walking path with the recently completed section of the Watertown Community Path near Coolidge Square. A safe connection with the Community Path would further link the study area to other Watertown neighborhoods, complementing the Strategic Framework for Economic Development (SFED) finding that businesses in the innovation economy “place a higher degree of importance on access to bicycle and running trails.”

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Issues and Opportunities of the Grove Street study area

Cartographer: Kristin Feierabend

for future redevelopment. Abutting the Witricity Corporation’s building at the corner of Coolidge Hill Road and Grove Street, the parcels stretch west toward a forested slope that extends toward the Coolidge Hill Road neighborhood. Based on discussions in the Field Project team’s focus group regarding building height, the slope appears to be roughly equivalent to three stories high. At the base of the hill, the property is marked by a wall of large concrete blocks that stabilize the hillside. The Field Project team is not aware of any safety issues regarding the wall. At the western edge of the parcels, remnants of maintenance yard persist, with a pile of concrete blocks and leftover landscaping materials abutting the hillside.

The northern parcels offer significant road frontage along Grove Street. However, with the heavy snowfall in 2011, the site was used as an additional snow storage lot. The soil type is largely a compacted mix of sandy gravel, with little to no topsoil. Any future landscaping will likely need to have soil brought to the site. According to Bill Barry, Vice President of Preservation and Facilities at Mount Auburn Cemetery, a soil study and subsequent remediation removed contaminants from the former Aggregate Industry parcel. A low spot toward the middle of the site is often a source for standing water during the spring, and should not be considered a vernal pool worthy of preservation. Vegetation is also minimal, save for a strip of hillside forest above the retaining wall, and some scattered trees and shrubs along the Grove Street fence line. Although Mount Auburn Cemetery personnel have agreed to assist with the landscaping for the recently approved parking lot, the lack of vegetation at the study area stands stark against the relatively forested land surrounding the property to the east and west.

At nearly six acres, the size of the site, in comparison with the other Economic Development Opportunity Areas in Watertown, is impressive. Its relatively flat grade and compacted soils are also suitable for new development. However, as discussed in the community input process, the remaining challenge at this site is not the physical barriers to redevelopment, but rather the design and placement of potential building envelopes in relation...
to the Shick House. As noted earlier, Bill Barry and David Barnett agreed that the Shick parcel might serve well as a transition between the park and the northern parcels.

While residents questioned whether the Shick House would be a burden on a new development, the Field Project team also heard concerns regarding the encroachment of future developments onto the Shick House parcel, and up to the border of Filipello Park.

The Streetscape and Grove Street Corridor

As with the Filipello entrance, the streetscape along the Grove Street corridor appears neglected and uninviting. Aggressive, fast growing trees, such as “tree of heaven,” grow along a chain link fence. The entrance to the site is marked by a rolling steel gate, used when the cemetery kept its landscape materials at the site. The sidewalk on the west side of Grove Street is uneven, and through the winter months it collects dirt and grit from the street. The east side of the street is less developed, consisting of a worn down path that provides little separation from the fast-moving vehicles on Grove Street. Where present, telephone poles narrow the way.

Traffic speed, visibility, and congestion—all significant concerns raised in our community input process—continue to be a problem in the Grove Street corridor. Dr. Henry Paulus claimed that “the street can really get backed up in the mornings.” The intersection of Coolidge Avenue and Grove Street, is currently served by a four way stop, although residents from the area with whom we spoke, felt that a traffic light could improve traffic flow. A traffic study commissioned by Hanover Properties found that nearly 10,000 cars can pass through the study area on an average day.

The speed of traffic from Mount Auburn Street to Coolidge Avenue is also a concern. Without any clear curb markings, or a pedestrian presence on the street, there is little incentive to slow down other than to avoid potholes. In our community input sessions, it was suggested that traffic-calming measures and increased pedestrian amenities could reduce speeds. However, with increased bike and pedestrian access, Watertown may also need to reassess speed limits.

Dr. Paulus expressed concern regarding poor visibility at the corner of Coolidge Hill Road and Grove Street. With the Witricity building on the left, cars entering onto Grove Street have difficulty gaining a good line of sight. Attention should be given to the placement of crosswalks at the northern end of the study area with this curve in mind. Perhaps a safer crossing would be along the straight away near the current entrance. Crosswalks would serve to create a pedestrian presence at Grove Street, and incentivize connectivity between the cemetery, Filipello Park (see Fig. 5.15).

Despite the traffic concerns however, Grove Street does function as a corridor that connects the arterial traffic of Arsenal Street and the Charles River thoroughfares with Mount Auburn Street and the Fresh Pond area of Cambridge. With its significance as a regional link, Grove Street is well positioned to showcase new improvements and investments in the study area, contributing to the positive image of Watertown as a whole.

Similarly, Mount Auburn Cemetery’s proposed Meadow Extension includes plans for a new sidewalk in front of their...
The sidewalk would extend south to the intersection with Kondazian and Grove Street, terminating north of the study area. Consideration should be given to extending that walkway farther south, alleviating concerns about visibility and providing a more functional connection to the study area. Mount Auburn Cemetery leadership noted the potential for a pedestrian entrance just east of the Shick House. A future entrance at that location would allow pedestrians an alternative to walking along Grove Street and further enhance the connectivity of the study area.

Transit

Figure 5.20 shows the percentage of riders using public transportation in the neighborhoods surrounding the Grove Street study area. Although the route “71” bus runs frequently along Mount Auburn Street, as well as the “70” along Arsenal Street, opportunities for public transit are lacking on Grove Street.

Public comments in our input sessions raised the issue of private shuttles running to and from the proposed parking lot and Mount Auburn Hospital. Some residents with whom we spoke wondered whether an agreement could be reached to allow for the public use of such amenities. In the future, with increased bike and pedestrian access, shuttles to public transit lines on Mount Auburn Street or Coolidge Avenue could provide greater incentive to commute by public transit rather than by private vehicle.

Toward a Holistic View

The Grove Street study area can be viewed at both the regional and site scale, both of which are necessary in the decision-making process. Through the site analysis, the Field Project team identified opportunities to improve the study area’s pedestrian and bike access, link it to broader trail networks and increase its visual appeal for the attraction of business investment. Watertown’s continued consideration of improving visual aspects along the Grove Street corridor, as well as site specifics that can enhance the Shick House’s viability, could further move the Town toward an image of vitality and livability. The next chapter will reveal how other municipalities and projects have taken advantage of their community’s unique attributes to bridge the gap between community character, historic preservation and economic development.
5. Ibid.
10. Steve Magcon, email message to Kristin Feierabend, May 1, 2011.
11. Marylouise Pallotta McDermott interview, March 5, 2011.
12. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 8.
17. Ibid., 45.
18. Dr. Henry Paulus interview, March 9, 2011.
19. Ibid.
20. Dr. Henry Paulus interview, March 9, 2011.
22. Dr. Henry Paulus interview, March 9, 2011.
23. Ibid.
25. Dr. Henry Paulus interviews, March 9, 2011.

Case Studies

The site analysis and community input process made it clear that if a development in the study area is to be supported by residents in the future, a cohesive community vision must be created for the site. The Field Project team chose to study a Massachusetts based adaptive reuse project to reveal the challenges and opportunities inherent in the preservation process and to uncover pitfalls that a preservation effort of the Shick House may encounter. The other two cases focused on regionally proximate planning processes to highlight examples of success and persistent issues other municipalities face when planning for the intersection of community character and economic development.

Overview

Originally built in 1875 by a wealthy merchant named George Taylor, the Taylor House is situated in the “Monument Square Historic District” of Boston’s Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, as a case study that highlights some of the challenges and opportunities of historic preservation and offers lessons Watertown can draw from in the future. 16

Case Study: Adaptive Reuse

Taylor House Bed & Breakfast
Boston, MA

Throughout the community input process, it was suggested that the Shick House be converted to a bed and breakfast or hotel that could serve the needs of future businesses that locate in the study area. The Field Project team selected the Taylor House Bed and Breakfast in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, as a case study that highlights some of the challenges and opportunities of historic preservation and offers lessons Watertown can draw from in the future. 16

Fig 6.1 Taylor House Bed and Breakfast Source: Jesse Steinman
Plain neighborhood. The structure is Italianate in style, sharing similar and, in some cases, identical design features with the Shick House. Responding to the evolving demographics of the neighborhood, the Taylor House was eventually renovated for five apartments. In 1995, Dave Elliott and his partner purchased the house for $300,000 and embarked on a six-year adaptive reuse project to turn the home into an upscale bed and breakfast. At over 6,000 square feet, the Taylor House currently contains 16 rooms, with three suites available for overnight guests.

Taylor House Restoration

Early challenges

Early in the process, Elliott considered applying for historic designation but decided the guidelines were too strict for his vision for the business. Without historic designation, the partners had trouble obtaining loans for renovation. However, the permitting process for renovation proved even more challenging than obtaining loans. The partners’ first proposal for a bed and breakfast met with much opposition from the neighborhood and was eventually turned down. After $10,000 in lawyer fees and an invitation for the neighborhood to tour the home, the Taylor House restoration was approved after the second permitting process.

Renovation costs

In total, restoration of the Taylor House cost approximately $900,000. “The house was in atrocious shape” from the outset, notes Elliot. There was considerable water damage on the southwest corner, requiring it to be raised for the replacement of deficient beams. However, interior renovations, completed in multiple phases over a six-year period, were the most costly and time-consuming aspect of the project. During this process, the heating system was upgraded, unsightly cable and electric wires were re-routed underground and reconfigured in the basement, and the plumbing was reworked. The home’s former use as an apartment building meant that many of the doors and windows had been changed from their original form. New windows, doors, and moldings were milled from scratch in an appropriate style for the home. The added historic appeal cost Elliott and his partner $175,000, the largest single cost during the project. Faux finish paint, a beautiful but costly addition at nearly $30,000, was used to authenticate the interior look and feel.

Elliot’s decision to replace the original interior features with modern ones represents a departure from more stringent historic preservation standards. By stripping much of the house’s interior to its frame, it was possible to raise the heating and plumbing fixtures through the walls, a feat that may have been impossible if the original plaster had been preserved.

At nearly $75,000, landscaping costs were an unexpected expense during the Taylor House restoration. Prior to restoration, the site had little landscaping, leaving Elliott with a “blank slate” that had to be filled. Elliott admits, however, that the landscaping could have been done at a lower cost. For example, he and his partner chose to use an expensive recycled brick for walkways, instead of cheaper concrete based bricks.

Commercial viability

The Taylor House is a successful local business in Jamaica Plain. Elliot explained that his business fulfills a need in the community because “there are no other hotels or bed and breakfasts in the area.” He estimated that nearly “60 to 70 percent of patrons are specifically visiting their student-age children in Jamaica Plain, or are visiting grandparents.” In the summer, “tourists are the main patrons,” says Elliot.

To further attract customers and overnight guests, the Taylor House partners display local art in the first floor rooms and host weekly music concerts performed by Berklee students and other musicians. The Taylor House receives ten percent of sales from artwork, as well as ten percent of the door admission for musical events. Weddings and funerals, held primarily in the warmer months, provide additional revenue for the business. When asked what other features contribute to the success of the bed and breakfast, Elliott claims that “proximity to public transportation” and the “ten restaurants just over on Centre Street” help keep the business viable.

Lessons for the Shick House

Both the Taylor and Shick Houses share similarities in style and interior features, suggesting that a bed and breakfast at the largest single cost during the project. Faux finish paint, a beautiful but costly addition at nearly $30,000, was used to authenticate the interior look and feel.

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Table 6.1 Comparison of Shick and Taylor Houses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Taylor House</th>
<th>Shick House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Jamaica Plain, MA</td>
<td>Watertown, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architectural Style</strong></td>
<td>1850s Italianate</td>
<td>1850s Italianate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historic District</strong></td>
<td>Situated in Monument Square Historic District</td>
<td>Not located in a historic district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Former Use</strong></td>
<td>Private residence, apartment building</td>
<td>Private residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surrounding Environment</strong></td>
<td>Residential neighborhood near Jamaica Pond, short walk to shops and restaurants</td>
<td>Nearby park and historic cemetery; adjacent to vacant, formerly industrial site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exterior condition prior to restoration</strong></td>
<td>Windows had been shortened to fit lowered ceilings. The balustrade had fallen from the entrance. Front door surrounded by faux brick with arch above door hidden.</td>
<td>To be determined: Vinyl siding was added to the exterior in the 1980s. The underlying materials are likely in decent shape, but this will remain unknown until the siding is removed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interior condition prior to restoration</strong></td>
<td>Original features significantly altered</td>
<td>Good: Original moldings and plaster work in tact; original fireplaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural condition</strong></td>
<td>Water damage required replacement of deficient beams</td>
<td>Relatively fair structural condition, according to Bruner/Cott “Structural Evaluation Report”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated cost of restoration</strong></td>
<td>$900,000</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview with Dave Elliott; Bruner/Cott and Associates, Inc.

Avoid early pitfalls

Without historic designation for the Taylor House, Elliot and his partner had trouble obtaining loans for restoration. Obtaining historic designation for the Shick House may ease the loan process. A thorough review of local, state and federal tax incentives could help facilitate the preservation process. Watertown could also consider changes to the underlying zoning to incentivize a bed and breakfast proposal. Further collaboration with the Historical Commission could help catalyze the process of guideline compliance.

Elliott also faced neighborhood opposition during the permitting process. Although permits for restoration were ultimately granted, Elliott and his partner spent valuable time and money altering their proposal so that it would appeal to the neighborhood. In the case of the Shick House, continuing the community visioning process could minimize resistance to the future restoration of the Shick House. While by no means comprehensive, the Field Project team’s public input process indicates that there is support for preserving the Shick House and that a commercial use, such as a bed and breakfast, could be compatible with the surrounding community.
input process should continue, however, to ensure that decisions regarding the Shick House benefit the community.

**Identify cost savings**

The Taylor House renovation accrued $175,000 worth of milling costs due to many of the home’s features being in poor condition. Fortunately, the plaster moldings of the Shick House, are still intact and will unlikely require replacement. The original plaster walls at the Taylor House were sacrificed so that heating and plumbing could be replaced. This is an issue to be considered at the Shick House, as the condition of the heating system, plumbing and extent of any water damage has yet to be assessed. The restoration of the Taylor House did not require the removal of any walls, suggesting the same may be true of the Shick House due to its similar floorplan. Wherever possible, cost savings should be identified.

Significant landscaping was undertaken at the Taylor House to ensure a visually appealing setting for the upscale bed and breakfast. If the Shick House is to be converted to a bed and breakfast, improving the grounds around the house and along the Grove Street corridor will be essential to attracting customers to the area. Landscaping at the Taylor House could have been done at a lower cost if the owner had chosen to use less expensive materials. Fortunately, unlike the “blank slate” that confronted Elliot during the Taylor House landscaping process, the Shick House has some trees that could be retained and worked into a new landscape configuration, both preserving part of the House’s context and further cutting costs. If the restoration of the Shick House is to remain a viable option, such cost saving opportunities will need to be identified.

**Ensure Commercial Viability**

The owners of the Taylor House host art exhibits, musical shows, weddings and funerals to generate additional revenue for their business. Due to its close proximity to Mount Auburn Cemetery, the potential for hosting funeral events at the Shick House stands out among possible uses. However, the incorporation of local art and music is another way the Shick House could find a unique niche in Watertown. Such a use could enliven the atmosphere of Grove Street, complementing “the hip new restaurants” in Coolidge Square that one resident mentioned. Having a mix of cultural and commercial development at the study area may enforce the message to the business community that Watertown is committed to promoting quality of life, as well as economic development.

**Conduct a Cost-Benefit Analysis**

The restoration of the Taylor House highlights opportunities that may save time and money in a preservation project. Before renovation of the Shick House begins, a cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken for the specified use. It should also be determined which elements of the structure are most valuable to the project. Assessment of such features prior to the start of the renovation process can reduce cost and duration of the project. In thinking about the adaptive reuse of the Shick House, the Taylor House example suggests that an eventual cost-benefit analysis should consider not only the physical renovations necessary for a particular use, but also the impact such a use would have on Grove Street as a whole. The Taylor House exemplifies the multiple benefits a bed and breakfast can provide for a community. Not only is the Taylor House a historic place of lodging for visitors, but the community’s promotion of arts and music makes it an attraction for local residents, as well. Based on the Field Project team’s community input process, Watertown needs additional lodging. However, incorporating other uses, such as art exhibits or event space may attract local residents, making the business even more economically viable. Although these benefits are difficult to quantify consideration should be given to the atmosphere such a use could create. With the proper space and landscaping between the Shick House and a new development, it may be seen more as a boon to commercial activity, rather than a hindrance.

**Case Studies:**

**Planning for Community Character and Economic Development**

There are a number of tools available to engage residents in a planning process and ensure that an appropriate vision for a community is developed and implemented. The Field Project team identified two case studies:
examples—Mashpee Commons Master Plan and Brookline’s Comprehensive Plan—to demonstrate how other cities have used a form based approach to planning in order to retain community character while fostering economic development.

**Mashpee Commons Master Plan**

**Mashpee, Massachusetts**

**Overview**

Beginning in 1986, the Mashpee Commons Master Plan was a reaction against the auto-dependent environment that was transforming Cape Cod. Planners began to recognize that tourists and residents were gravitating to historical communities. Recognized as Mashpee’s growth center in the town’s comprehensive plan, the Commons continues to promote development that is architecturally sensitive to the New England style of building, while fostering mixed use zoning and walkable neighborhoods. The plan is grounded in “Smart Growth” principles, with the intent of creating a “positive social and environmental influence on the community” and surrounding region.4 The Field Projects team chose to examine the Mashpee Commons Master Plan to emphasize three significant similarities shared with the Grove Street study area. Both sites:

- Have been identified as areas for targeted growth;
- Seek to balance historic character with economic development; and
- Could benefit from creative alternatives to traditional zoning approaches.

**Targeting Growth - Creating Form**

When Douglas Storrs, the Managing Partner for Mashpee Commons, L.P., and Buff Chace, Senior Vice President, began the planning process for the Commons (prior to its designation as a targeted growth area), the Commons comprised a traffic circle between two double lane roadways and a traditional strip mall development. From the beginning, Chace and Storrs sought to create a neighborhood development that was similar to “historic patterns” of denser New England town centers. This has resulted in the conversion of a commercial strip development into walkable shopping areas.6

To attract visitors and tenants to Mashpee Commons, the development team has contracted architects Randall Imai, of Imai, Keller Morre in Watertown, Massachusetts, to create a “strong sense of identity” for Mashpee Commons.7 The architects have drawn on the New England vernacular style of building design, while borrowing principles of urban form from pre-1940 villages, such as Barnstable Village in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Using examples from other popular, vibrant village centers, the intent is to create a “close knit” town feel with a compact center and narrow, walkable streets. Renderings of buildings and homes, including mixed-use, “live-work” units, along with examples of different entryways, windows and eaves, break down the architectural style in ways that complement the history of Cape Cod and original New England towns. The buildings are then added to the plan according to their fit with different streetscapes.8

The historically based street plans are analyzed in a similar manner as the
building types. The residential lanes and pedestrian passages are set to the traditional grid pattern, containing specific guidelines determining width, vegetation, and movement parameters. By creating the streetscape, the architects can add the proper building form that will complement the street. This arrangement of streets and uses enlivens the atmosphere at Mashpee Commons and preserves the character of the streetscapes.

**Toward Economic Development**

Due to its insistence on historic form, Mashpee Commons has largely been considered an economic success. In a 2011 article on the Cape Cod Times website, Managing Partner Douglas Storrs claims that Mashpee Commons is an “environment people want to shop in, work in and live in.” An article on the New Urban Network website claims that both commercial and residential units are valued higher than others in the surrounding region. Office space leases at a higher rate, and a lottery was needed for residential units due to high demand. In fact, Mashpee’s Town Manager reported that the development has “been a boon” to the town, with increased revenues and job growth.

**Challenges to Form Based Zoning**

The main website for Mashpee Commons states that the project is a reaction against “out of date land use regulations.” When Chace and Storrs first proposed their vision for Mashpee Commons, the Town’s zoning by-law called for low density residential development and large setbacks for commercial projects that creates the strip mall form. The New Urban Network reports that the initial eleven month permitting process cost over $100,000 for consultants alone. Each step of the permitting process has been difficult due to the great differences between traditional zoning and the village form. At the beginning, the project was so unorthodox when compared to typical planning practice, that obtaining financing was difficult. However, the development team continues to build support in the community and region through broad inclusion of stakeholders. Developers work with officials to appoint citizens and neighbors as representatives of the surrounding community. Through informal meetings and educational sessions with abutters, citizens and local and regional agencies, Chace and Storrs move their plans forward at Mashpee Commons.

**Lessons for Watertown**

Mashpee Commons sought to improve the walkability and vitality of the village by altering its urban form. Similarly, through the public input process, the Field Project team identified concerns related to pedestrian access at Grove Street. Therefore, Watertown may be able to borrow from the Mashpee Commons form based approach to guide accessibility improvements.

Mashpee Commons used a form-based zoning approach to promote development that was compact and walkable. In the case of Watertown, density, height and traffic were all identified as issues during the Field Project team’s community input process, and could potentially be addressed through a form-based approach like Mashpee Commons. For instance, defining streets and avenues by the form of structures, as in the Mashpee Commons plan, could allow Watertown to better control the density of site development at Grove Street or along a potential bike and pedestrian path. Since the Grove Street study area is much smaller than Mashpee Commons, the community may wish to prioritize guidelines for development that is in close proximity to the Shick House, requiring certain height or form limitations that complement the House. Such an approach would ensure that new development would conform to planned improvements for pedestrian access and open space, two elements that may prove vital for the viability of the Shick House.

By having clear, community-supported guidelines for the Grove Street study area, a future developer may feel more confident that a proposal will meet with minimized resistance. For instance, similar to the renderings used in the Mashpee Commons plan (see Fig. 6.6), Watertown could identify the architectural features common to the neighborhoods in the East End and use them to guide a future housing proposal at Grove Street. Or further research into the Italianate style of architecture could reveal design elements that can
be adapted or transferred to different building types. Mashpee Commons did this well, applying similar design elements to different buildings meant for differing uses. Watertown could borrow from that approach by also exploring aspects of commercial and industrial architectural elements in the community. By defining guidelines, visual plans may reassure a potential developer that designs have been agreed on, while also serving to create a character of new development that is sensitive to community history.

Brookline, Massachusetts

In January of 2005 the Brookline Comprehensive Plan (BCP) was published with the intent of creating a balanced plan for growth that “protects neighborhoods and community character and outlines new initiatives... supported by an expanded commercial tax base.” One of the key strategies in the BCP is the Neighborhood Plan, a “form based” planning tool that uses “design standards to help guide new development in a more specific and appropriate way than is available under traditional zoning.” Similar to the form based approach used in Mashpee Commons’ Master Plan, Brookline’s Neighborhood Plan uses illustrations to guide development that is in line with a community vision. The Neighborhood Plans assist developers, the Town, and neighborhood residents in shaping redevelopment projects that will have “positive impacts on neighborhood quality of life.”

Brookline’s Neighborhood Plans seek to address areas of town that may be smaller than a district, yet contain unique characteristics, including historical features, that “play a significant role in the self definition of a neighborhood.” Neighborhood plans are permitted under the Town zoning by-law, which allows the Planning Board to create design guidelines for certain defined areas. Community participation is an essential component of Brookline Neighborhood Plans. Selectmen appoint a Neighborhood Committee that consists of representatives from neighborhood associations, local advocates, Town Meeting members and business leaders. This group articulates features that make the particular community unique, defines goals for moving forward, and identifies issues to be resolved. In areas where development pressures are persistent or require urgent action, such as Brookline’s Coolidge Corner, an interim planning district can be considered at the Town Meeting. Such an interim district provides basic guidelines for a period no longer than a year, during which time the Neighborhood Planning Committee gathers public input and creates more complete standards.

Although the Interim Planning District provides for protections during the Neighborhood Plan process, the BCP recognizes that other measures may be needed to protect historic resources where an overlay district is inappropriate or infeasible. One way Brookline approaches this is through the upgrades to the Demolition Delay Ordinance. Similar to Watertown, the Historic Commission in Brookline provides a stay of demolition while a review into the historic significance of the structure is underway. During that time the developer is asked to consider options of adaptive reuse. The BCP recognizes that although cultural heritage preservation is important for communities, it is not always appropriate to save a deteriorated building, especially if it is a deteriorated specimen among many in good condition. To ensure that historic buildings are not demolished without review, the BCP suggests clarification of the changes in exterior features that constitute a demolition.

Another alternative technique to the standard historic overlay district, is defined by the BCP as a “single building Local...
Historic District.” This type of by-law provides protection for a historic structure that is outside of the scope of a historic district. It is created in a similar fashion as other overlays, yet only deals with a single structure.21

Complementing the preservation of community character is Brookline’s recognition of the impact commercial areas can have on individual neighborhoods. The BCP provides a list of recommendations specifically intended to promote commercial development within the context of a local community. The recommendations seek to balance generation of economic opportunities while retaining community character. The list of recommendations is as follows:22

▪ Enhance visibility and promote business festivals, programming and media.
▪ Enhance the attractiveness of business areas through streetscape improvements.
▪ Expand permitting assistance available to businesses.
▪ Establish design identity and guidelines appropriate to each commercial area.
▪ Attract customers to commercial areas through enhanced appearance, accessibility and programming.
▪ Attract customers to commercial areas by improving the business mix.
▪ Retain and attract an appropriate commercial mix for each area.

Lessons For Watertown

The Brookline Neighborhood Plan strategy was designed to ensure a balance between quality of life and economic development in local neighborhoods. In Watertown, the Grove Street study area has been identified as an “Economic Development Opportunity Area” in the SFED. Through the Field Project team’s community input process, residents expressed the desire for future development to benefit the local neighborhood. Thus, it seems plausible that the Brookline Neighborhood Planning process could be used as a model for future development in Watertown’s East End.

Participatory process

The Brookline Neighborhood Plans give residents the opportunity to influence future development patterns in their community. By reaching consensus on development patterns before development actually happens, the community may reduce the contentiousness of future proposals. Watertown can learn from this process and continue the visioning process for the Grove Street study area. Conducting an in-depth participation process may generate a strong consensus that can preclude failed proposals, such as the Hanover Apartments.

Even without binding guidelines, the BCP seems to suggest that adherence to the comprehensive plan, coupled with consensus among different stakeholders regarding appropriate development standards, provides impetus for a developer to comport with the plan. In Watertown, a hypothetical Neighborhood Committee for Grove Street could recommend zoning amendments that strengthen neighborhood identity. The Town would then have the opportunity to measure the proposed guidelines against the potential feasibility of redevelopment. If the community’s goals seem compatible with the economic development goals of the Town, the zoning amendments could be adopted. Such a model may actually incentivize developer interest by easing some of the uncertainties of public resistance.

Flexibility

Another lesson for the Watertown Department of Community Development and Planning is the flexibility provided by the Brookline Neighborhood Plans. Unlike an historic overlay district, Neighborhood Plans seek to integrate new development within existing neighborhoods by providing site-specific zoning amendments that promote particular uses for a site. In the case of Watertown, such zoning amendments could be used to ensure the preservation of the Shick House is compatible with future development. Additionally the zoning can support such uses as a community garden or bike path extension (both discussed in the
community input process) that would further contribute to the vitality of the Grove Street study area.

In addition to potentially overlooking important form based considerations, a traditional historic overlay district could hinder the future investment potential of the site by establishing cumbersome restrictions that are not applicable to the Grove Street study area as a whole.

To establish historic preservation guidelines that would be applicable to the Shick House but not to new development, Watertown could establish a single structure Local Overlay District. The town could then still ensure, similar to Brookline’s model, that any exterior renovations to the house are reviewed by the Historical Commission’s particular standards for the structure.24 In this role, the Historical Commission would function as an advisory board to a developer proposing a project. Both developer and commission would work through the set guidelines to minimize process times, saving money for the applicant, and ensuring compatibility with community standards.25 By itself, a Local Historic District would not address the Grove Street study area as a whole, which may generate concern about the compatibility of the preserved Shick House and future development. The best way to provide protection for the Shick House without prohibiting future development at the site may be to use the Neighborhood Plan in conjunction with the single structure Local Overlay District.

**Compatibility of Commercial Development and Community Character**

Perhaps the most important lesson for Watertown is Brookline’s recognition that commercial development and community character are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the BCP suggests through its recommendations that community character can contribute to economic development. Neighborhood Plans can provide recommendations for attracting appropriate commercial development to an area while retaining a neighborhood’s identity.26 In the case of Watertown, establishing “design identities” for commercial areas and attracting customers and visitors through improved appearance and accessibility are strategies that could be important for the Shick House and Grove Street study area.

Another one of Brookline’s commercial development strategies is to “increase visibility” of commercial areas. With its large and unique presence, the Shick House is well positioned to function as a defining feature for the Grove Street study area. The House’s economic potential may also support the increased mix of businesses that Brookline’s commercial strategies outlines as a goal for economic development. Brookline’s model approaches an understanding of the ways in which economic development strategies can draw from local identity and even add to it.

Through a participatory process, flexible guidelines, and an incorporation of commercial strategies, the Neighborhood Plan serves as a model for the Grove Street study area. Such a plan is sensitive to the unique nature of each application, which will be crucial for the viability of the Shick House and the effective redevelopment of the Grove Street study area.

**Conclusions**

Researching the Mashpee Commons Master Plan and Brookline’s NeIGHborhood Planning process, the Field Project team found a need for clear guidelines in any future plan for the Grove Street study area. An inclusionary process, which can build consensus and minimize a developer’s perceived risk, stands out as a valuable takeaway. The Watertown DCDP could consider opportunities to fuse the guideline forming process at Mashpee Commons, with the public process and planning procedures outlined in the Brookline Comprehensive Plan. In doing so, the town can better direct the merging of historic preservation and economic development at Grove Street.
Endnotes

6. “Mashpee Commons Master Plan.”
8. Ibid.
11. Shemkus, “Mashpee Commons.”
12. “Mashpee Commons Master Plan.”
15. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 35.
18. Ibid., 34.
19. Ibid., 35.
20. Ibid., 78.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 35.
23. Ibid., 34.
24. Ibid., 78.

Chapter 7

Key Findings & Recommendations

The Field Project team’s case studies, site analysis, community input process, and literature review provide insight into the economic development potential of the Shick House and the Grove Street study area as a whole. The following key findings represent a synthesis of the information gathered and provide a foundation for the team’s recommendations.

An emphasis on “placemaking” can contribute to economic development.

Filippello Park, Mount Auburn Cemetery, the Shick House and Savins Pond are assets to East Watertown. By enhancing pedestrian and bike friendly access between these landmarks and nearby attractions, such as Coolidge and Watertown Squares, Grove Street has the potential to become an attractive “business address” for the town. A development that builds on local assets could become both a place for the community, as well as for commercial activity. Our public input sessions suggest that attention to quality of life improvements could be a driving factor for Grove Street becoming a “gateway” into Watertown.

Public education and outreach can build preservation potential.

While challenges to restoring and adapting the historic home exist, our community input process indicated that there could be widespread support for the adaptive reuse of the Shick House. Potential uses could include a bed and breakfast, restaurants, offices, community center or community gardens. Based on our interactions with residents, however, it seems many residents are currently unfamiliar with the Shick House and its history. More community outreach will be necessary to increase awareness of this hidden community asset.

“Businesses make location decisions by taking into account a host of favorable attributes ranging from the very tangible infrastructure networks to the more intangible elements of character related to the physical resources in the area.”i

Strategic Framework for Economic Development
The Shick House could become a focal point in the Grove Street study area and attract future investment.

The Shick House’s location near Filipello Park and Grove Street provides opportunities for the property to be a focal point for the area. The area around the house could serve as a transition zone from recreational open space to commercial development. Although structural elements of the Shick House are in need of some repair, overall, the building is viable, safe and fit for reuse. Furthermore, the community input process and site analysis suggest that, coupled with physical improvements to its surrounding environment, the Shick House could lend its unique historical attributes to the site, strengthening Watertown’s cultural heritage and attracting investment to the study area.

A regulatory environment that is conducive to creative zoning will be necessary for integration of the Shick House with future development.

Through our case examples and the variety of potential reuse options provided in our community input sessions, the Field Project team found that a form based approach to zoning may be the best way to develop and implement a unique community vision for the Grove Street study area. Neighborhood Plans and community sensitive design guidelines can direct the balance between attracting future investment and preserving community character. If visions for the Shick House are to be realized, zoning will need to be proactively assessed to provide for potential developers and minimize financial risks.

Public and private investment in the Grove Street study area will be necessary for its success.

As the owner of the Shick House and northern parcels, Mount Auburn Cemetery will play an important role in facilitating future development processes and ensuring that alterations to the site are in line with community and cemetery goals. The cemetery and Watertown DCDP will need to work closely to attract private investment and direct public improvements. The community input process identified several opportunities at the Grove Street study area that the Town should consider. Traffic infrastructure, connectivity, and access to transit are issues that will likely need to be addressed. The Town should seek opportunities to partner with non-profits, businesses, and institutions to build consensus for a common vision and implement development strategies.

Continued community engagement is necessary for establishing a cohesive, long-term vision for the Grove Street study area and Shick House.

Although the Field Project team has contributed to the visioning process, the Grove Street study area still needs a common vision. A set of cohesive goals for the area will ensure that development is appropriate and strategically placed. The 10-year timeline for the parking lot offers an ideal opportunity to plan for the future of this area in such a way that it benefits the community and contributes to the economic development goals of the town.

Together, these findings guided our recommendations and conceptual designs for the Grove Street study area. They represent a view that is both rooted in community participation and mindful of Watertown’s location in the greater region. The recommendations on the following pages have been placed in table format. Overarching goals (dark blue) are supported by time sensitive objectives (light blue). “Action steps” (orange) for each objective outline steps the Watertown DCDP can take to enhance economic development at Grove Street. Action steps are arranged by short- and long-term goals. Short-term action steps are designed for a one to five year time-frame, while long-term steps are designed for a five to fifteen year time-frame.

Conceptual designs, located in Appendix A, can be used to clarify physical elements of the Field Project team’s recommendations and provide a visual aid for subsequent planning processes for the study area.
Goal 1: Engage community members and key stakeholders in a long-range planning process for the Grove Street study area.

**Objective A:**

**Provide Information Via Watertown's Website:** ST
To ensure that residents are informed about issues related to the Grove Street neighborhood planning process, the DCDP should post regular updates to the Town website. The website should also include information about the Shick House's unique history and photos of its interior to increase community awareness about the house.

**Organize Site Visits to the Shick House:** ST
The Watertown Historical Society and Historical Commission could partner with Mount Auburn Cemetery to organize visits to the Shick House grounds in order to further boost appreciation and knowledge of the site's history.

**Objective B:**

**Begin Neighborhood Plan process at Grove Street:**

**Work with the Grove Street Neighborhood to Define Goals:** Ongoing
Mount Auburn Cemetery and the DCDP should continue to conduct community meetings in which residents work together to develop clear goals for the study area. The DCDP should consider hiring an intern to assist with outreach efforts and the neighborhood planning process. An intern with experience in public outreach, community organizing or urban planning could reach out to communities like Brookline to learn more about how to successfully engage residents in neighborhood planning. An intern could also help organize and facilitate meetings, as well as continue communications with various groups and departments to increase knowledge of the Shick House.

**Prepare Educational Materials for Neighborhood Plan Process:** ST
As demonstrated in the Mashpee Commons and Brookline case studies, illustrative materials can help residents understand how different types of development and design elements will impact their community. Such illustrative materials should be used during a neighborhood planning process to help residents articulate their goals and move forward with specific design recommendations. Web and print based materials such as the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy’s “Visualizing Density,” can be used in the planning process.

**Create Grove Street Neighborhood Committee:** ST
The DCDP should coordinate with Town officials to appoint local representatives to a Neighborhood Committee. Representatives should include Town Councillors, Mount Auburn Cemetery, business owners, residents and local experts who have knowledge of design principles or historic preservation. The Committee would work with the community to articulate features that make the neighborhood unique, define long-term goals, and identify issues to be resolved.
Goal 2
Pursue regulatory measures to support economic development and historic preservation activities at Grove Street.

Objective A
Identify tools that strengthen community character and encourage appropriate development in the Grove Street study area.

Action Steps
- Evaluate Potential Zoning Amendments: Ongoing
  Currently, the Grove Street parcels north of Filippello Park are zoned as Industrial 3 districts. Depending on the outcome of a potential Neighborhood Plan process, the underlying zoning may need to be amended to residential or business districts to better reflect changing neighborhood character. The DCDP should anticipate potential inconsistencies between the Neighborhood Plan and the underlying zoning, and seek to address issues of precedence.
- Assess Potential for Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting: Ongoing
  Although Watertown has designated three “Priority Development Sites” at the Pleasant Street Corridor to take advantage of the town’s 43D community status, there is no limit on the number of such sites that can be created. The northern parcels could benefit from such a designation, incentivizing reuse and further creating opportunities for Watertown to be eligible for state programs that can be planned in conjunction with a redevelopment proposal.
- Consider Interim Planning District: ST
  Collaborate with Mount Auburn Cemetery to discuss whether a zoning amendment for an Interim Planning District is necessary for the duration of the Neighborhood Plan process. If Mount Auburn Cemetery is willing to screen potential proposals for compliance with basic neighborhood goals, such an interim district may not be necessary.
- Assess Potential for District Improvement Financing: LT
  The Massachusetts District Improvement Financing program may offer a way to link physical improvements and upgrades at Grove Street to a specific development proposal. As market conditions often dictate the success of a district, a well-defined vision with clear goals will be necessary to better predict outcomes.
- Consider Pre-Permitting Site for Research and Development: LT
  The Strategic Framework for Economic Development recommends updating the “Bio-Ready Community” rating of Watertown. Pre-permitting the Grove Street site for biotechnology development would raise Watertown’s rating to “platinum,” the highest level, which would further increase the Town's image as a municipality that is working to create an attractive environment for business.

Objective B
Identify tools that allow for the protection and restoration of the Shick House.

Action Steps
- Assess Demolition Delay Ordinance: ST
  Work with the Historical Commission to review the clarity of exterior alteration guidelines that trigger demolition delays. The DCDP should work with the Commission to discuss measures a developer would need to take to be sure they have explored all options for adaptive reuse before requesting demolition.
- Consider Single Structure Local Historic District: ST
  Assess potential for a single structure Local Historic District for the Shick House. While a Historic District encompassing the whole study area may become a hindrance to redevelopment potential, a Local Historic District would only provide standards for alterations to the Shick House and its immediate environment.
- Evaluate Historical Commission’s Role in Review Process: ST
  Work with Historical Commission to expedite review of proposals at the Shick House. The DCDP could collaborate with the Commission to help applicants work through the design guidelines set in a new Local Historic District or Neighborhood Plan. By working with the developer the application process may be easier to navigate for the developer, which could increase the potential for preservation of the Shick House.
- Conduct a Cost-Benefit Analysis to Determine Best Use for the Shick House: ST
  Consider working with Mount Auburn Cemetery to commission a cost-benefit analysis for one or more uses at the Shick House. Based on our community input process, possible uses could include a bed and breakfast, restaurant, offices, event space, or community space. By having an analysis completed, plans for site improvements and future development scenarios will be clearer in their intention and provide valuable information for potential investors. As demonstrated in the Taylor House case example, a preliminary cost-benefit analysis could save an investor significant time and money during the restoration process.
- Identify Funding Sources for Restoration of the Shick House: ST
  A number of incentives and tax credits exist for restoring historic buildings. A partial list is located in the appendix and should be explored further if the Shick House is to be restored.
**Goal 2**  
**Pursue regulatory measures to support economic development and historic preservation activities at Grove Street.**

**Objective C**  
**Enhance the appearance of the Shick House parcel.**

**Action Steps**

- **Remove the Concrete Wall and Wooden Fence:**  
  ST Short-term  
  LT Long-term  
  Consult with Mount Auburn Cemetery on the removal of the wooden fence and concrete wall in the front yard of the Shick House that currently block views from Grove Street.

- **Assess Concrete Pad South of the Shick House:**  
  LT Long-term  
  The cracked concrete pad to the south of the Shick House should be repaired to provide parking for a future use or removed to create a better connection to the park. Coordinate with Mount Auburn Cemetery to decide on the possible future of this space.

- **Consider Grading the Backyard:**  
  LT Long-term  
  Although the approved parking lot may level the ground behind the Shick House, the DCDP should work with Mount Auburn Cemetery to assess further grading that could enhance future uses of the Shick House.

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**Goal 3**  
**Implement pedestrian, traffic and streetscape improvements that will augment Grove Street’s image as a distinct gateway to the town and raise the overall value of the study area.**

**Objective A**  
**Improve Grove Street’s overall image.**

**Action Steps**

- **Replace Unsightly Vegetation and Coordinate Landscaping Efforts:**  
  Ongoing  
  A mix of trees, some non-native, are growing along the current fence line and should be assessed for removal or maintenance to provide an atmosphere of active upkeep. The DCDP should continue to coordinate with Mount Auburn Cemetery to ensure compatibility of landscaping on both sides of the street to create a cohesive image for Grove Street. Collaboration with Mount Auburn Cemetery on the placement of trees and other long lasting vegetation could define the environment even after the parking lot is replaced.

- **Remove or Replace Fencing along Grove Street:**  
  ST Short-term  
  Mount Auburn Cemetery and the DCDP should discuss the upgrade or removal of unattractive fencing along Grove Street.

- **Complete Filipello Park Entrance Plans:**  
  ST Short-term  
  Plans for a wrought iron gate and attendant landscaping were in place at the outset of Filipello Park’s creation. Consider both construction of the gate to clearly mark the park entrance and an update to the park’s poor signage. Coordination with Mount Auburn Cemetery, regarding their fence and gate styles, may help unify Grove Street’s visual aesthetic.

- **Install Lighting Near Improved Sidewalks:**  
  ST Short-term  
  The installation of historically appropriate lampposts at Grove Street, similar to those used along the Filipello walking path, could contribute to the positive image of the street, while improving pedestrian and vehicle safety.

- **Consider Installing Identifiable Signage at Grove Street:**  
  LT Long-term  
  The Town should consider installing signage where Grove Street intersects Mount Auburn Street and Coolidge Avenue to indicate that visitors are entering Watertown’s East End. Branding the East End will help give the Grove Street an identifiable “business address.”
Goal 3

Implement pedestrian, traffic and streetscape improvements that will augment Grove Street’s image as a distinct gateway to the town and raise the overall value of the study area.

Objective B

Re-evaluate Recycling Facility Location: ST
As it stands, the recycling facility is not in compliance with federal guidelines, and it detracts from both the recreational and aesthetic appeal of the eastern portion of Filipello Park. If Grove Street is to be marketed as a distinct gateway into town, the recycling facility should be relocated so that a distinct and visually appealing entryway to the park can be established.

Assess Recycling Trends: ST
The Town should identify trends in recycling to determine the feasibility of transitioning to single stream recycling. This could preclude a costly relocation of the existing facility.

Objective C

Create a safer traffic environment at the Grove Street study area.

Locate Crosswalks Near the Shick House: ST
Crosswalks could be located where there are ample lines of sight, well away from the curve near Coolidge Hill Road. Crosswalks should provide clear and unobstructed access by bike or on foot. Although introducing crosswalks near the Shick House would improve connections between the house, new development, Filipello Park, and Mount Auburn Cemetery, they may also provide a visual cue to drivers that there is an enhanced pedestrian presence as the site. The viability of the Shick House and any plans for removing or demolishing the house should be taken into consideration before crosswalks are placed.

Improve Grove Street and Coolidge Avenue Intersection: ST
The four-way stop at the intersection of Grove Street and Coolidge Avenue may need to be replaced by a traffic light to alleviate peak hour congestion and improve safety. Additionally, a traffic study for Grove Street will likely need to be conducted if substantial new development is proposed for the study area.

Objective D

Enhance bike and pedestrian accessibility near the Grove Street study area.

Plan in conjunction with Mount Auburn Cemetery’s Horticultural Center Proposal: Ongoing
Mount Auburn Cemetery’s Meadow Extension project contains plans for sidewalk upgrades along the east side of Grove Street. The Town and cemetery should work together to discuss connections between the Filipello Park walking path and a potential pedestrian entrance to the cemetery, located across the street from the approved parking lot. Such a connection would improve accessibility options for neighborhood residents and visitors to the restored Shick House and future redevelopment.

Connect the Filipello Park Path with the Watertown Community Path: ST
Currently, the Watertown Community Path is in close proximity to Filipello Park, yet the connection along Arlington Street is poorly marked and may prove unsafe. This connection should be strengthened so that pedestrians and cyclists from other neighborhoods can safely access the park, Grove Street and Mount Auburn Cemetery. In the future, this connection may support non-vehicular commuting.
Goal 3: Implement pedestrian, traffic and streetscape improvements that will augment Grove Street’s image as a distinct gateway to the town and raise the overall value of the study area.

Objective D continued...

Enhance bike and pedestrian accessibility near the Grove Street study area.

Upgrade Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure along Grove Street: ST
Upgrades in pedestrian and bike infrastructure along Grove Street are needed to provide safe access to Filipello Park, Mount Auburn Cemetery, the Coolidge Hill Road neighborhood, and Mount Auburn Street. Such upgrades could include new and improved sidewalks, in conjunction with on-road bicycle lanes. The town could also consider constructing a shared walking/biking path along the western edge of Grove Street in lieu of on-street bicycle lanes. These improvements should connect with the Filipello Park Path.

Assess the Re-route or Improvement of the Filipello Park Bike and Pedestrian Path: LT

Assess Community Garden Potential: ST
The DCDP, the Mount Auburn Cemetery, and local organizations should work together to identify an appropriate location for community gardens in the Grove Street study area. Based on the Field Project team’s site analysis, the former incinerator site or the western portion of the Shick House parcel could serve as potential locations. Placing community gardens close to the Shick House would both reflect the house’s historic use as a working farm and allow the area to serve as a transition zone between recreational use of the park and new development on the northern parcels. In contrast, locating the gardens north of the approved parking lot (an idea still under consideration in May 2011) may hinder the development potential of the site or prove contentious among community members who may be asked to relocate their gardens at a future date. Regardless of their location, if community gardens are installed in the study area, residents from nearby neighborhoods should be given priority when allocating garden plots.

Remove Dumpsters at Incinerator Site: ST
The two dumpsters at the incinerator site are inconsistent with recreational or garden uses and should be removed or relocated.

Consider an Easement to Allow for Public Use of Gardens: LT
While an easement is a restriction on the future use of the Shick House parcel, it could provide for legal public use of portions of the Shick House property. Such an easement could accommodate a potential bike and pedestrian path near any gardens and provide long-term security when assessing the Shick House’s adaptive reuse potential. As the approved parking lot is nearing its sunset in 2021, Mount Auburn Cemetery and the DCDP should discuss the possibility of easement parameters.
Endnotes


Sidebar Quotes


Conclusion

Emphasizing community participation during the planning process, the Field Project team worked toward a proactive dialogue to build a common vision for the Grove Street study area. Public input was integrated into various research methods to reveal the potential of the area’s future. By addressing community concerns and researching the economic barriers and benefits to historic preservation, the Field Project team found that the Shick House has the potential to turn the Grove Street study area into a vital public space – a place that can strengthen community character, build on Watertown’s image, and enhance the town’s economy. For over eight generations the Shick House has evolved to fit the needs of East Watertown. With the right balance between preservation and viable reuse, the Shick House can emerge from Watertown’s past as an icon of its economic future.
References


Banner, Earl. "Dry Spell Didn’t Halt Corn Crop on This Wayland Farm." *Boston Globe,* August 4, 1957.


The Field Project team generated conceptual designs for the potential redevelopment of the Shick House and adjacent study area. The designs, which were created with Google SketchUp, combine the team’s guiding principles with our research, case studies, and community input. The purpose of the designs is not to prescribe one particular use for the property, but instead, to assist the Planning Department and Watertown community in envisioning the potential of the Grove Street area. Therefore, they can be seen as a first step toward understanding the site’s opportunities and also as a tool for further outreach and education as the process moves forward.

Fig. A1 Aerial view looking west
In the above image, the recycling facility has been removed and Filipello park has been extended to Grove Street. The Shick parcel has been converted to community gardens and green space, allowing for a smooth transition from the park to the new development. The development to the north (right) represents research and development facilities with a central courtyard. The building to the northwest has a green roof where residents can enjoy views of the Shick House and Boston. Island uses along Grove Street help to activate the street and draw people to the area. Cross walks enhance connectivity between the new development, Filipello Park, and Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Appendix A

Conceptual Designs

The Field Project team generated conceptual designs for the potential redevelopment of the Shick House and adjacent study area. The designs, which were created with Google SketchUp, combine the team’s guiding principles with our research, case studies, and community input. The purpose of the designs is not to prescribe one particular use for the property, but instead, to assist the Planning Department and Watertown community in envisioning the potential of the Grove Street area. Therefore, they can be seen as a first step toward understanding the site’s opportunities and also as a tool for further outreach and education as the process moves forward.

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Removal of fences along Grove Street allows for improved views of the Shick House.

A possible scenario of the Shick House as a restaurant and event space benefits from the removal of the incinerator site. The revitalized space increases aesthetics and connection to Filipello Park, as well as drawing off potential community garden space.

Community garden potential is enhanced with the removal of dumpsters and fencing at the incinerator and recycling sites.
The existing and proposed bike paths connect near the Filipello Park vehicle lot, meeting Grove Street at visible intersections.

A bike path running along the northern Shick House parcel line offers alternative transportation to future developments and provides a transition between open and developed spaces.

Completion of the original Filipello Park entrance plan could replace the now faded sign and boost Grove Street’s image.

Bike lanes, landscaping, lighting and pedestrian improvements could enhance safety and visual appeal on Grove Street.
Activate the Street

Mixed use and wide sidewalks could further enhance the streetscape and invite new activity to the area.

Research & Development

A parking garage allows for the provision of a central courtyard, which provides continuity between the park, the Shick House and the structures. Relatively low buildings do not tower over the Shick House.

An open courtyard allows for more social space, with views of the Shick House and easy access by bike.
Community Benefits

Access and community benefit come together in a concept of a green roof that connects with Coolidge Hill Road. The roof could be open to employee and community use during the work hours. Elevators in the parking garage could provide residents from the Coolidge Hill neighborhood with easy access to the lower courtyard, Shick House, and Filipello Park. The emphasis here is on site design that offers the community amenities of views, social space and improved access to the Grove Street study area.

Fig. A15 View South from Coolidge Hill Neighborhood
A green roof provides a community space in the neighborhood without towering over nearby residences.

Fig. A16 View northeast of the Grove Street study area

Appendix B

Community Meeting Flyer
Community Meeting Agenda

Appendix C

Filipello Park Entrance Plans

Appendix D
Filipello Park Entrance Plans continued...

Appendix E

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) continued...

Appendix F

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval
Interviewees

- Asher Nichols, Owner, Asher Nichols and Craftsmen LLC.
- Bill Barry, Vice President of Preservation and Facilities, Mount Auburn Cemetery
- Christine Cousineau, Senior Planner, Harvard University
- David Barnett, President, Mount Auburn Cemetery
- Deborah Peterson, Watertown Citizens for Environmental Safety
- Gary Shaw, Architect, Perkins+Will
- Dr. Henry Paulus, Deputy Director Boston Biomedical Research Institute
- Janet Jameson, Watertown Bike and Pedestrian Committee
- John Airasian, Owner, Eastern Clothing Company
- Joyce Kelly, Member, Watertown Historical Society
- Kathryn Madden, Principal, Madden Planning Group
- Laura Tangusso, Watertown Citizens for Environmental Safety
- Marilyne Roach, President, Watertown Historical Society
- Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Chair, Watertown Conservation Commission
- Peri Onipede, Watertown Bike and Pedestrian Committee
- Susan Falkoff, Watertown Town Councilor at Large

Interview Questions
Interview Questions continued...

Do you have any experience with product design? How do you keep up with trends in the industry?

How do you stay current with new technologies and tools that are relevant to your field?

What is your approach to design? How do you balance aesthetics with practicality?

How do you handle criticism or feedback on your work?

Can you give an example of a project you worked on where you had to work with a tight deadline?

What is your process for brainstorming new ideas for a project?

How do you ensure that your designs are accessible to all users?

What is your experience with user testing and how do you incorporate feedback from users into your design process?

How do you handle conflicting design preferences from different stakeholders?

What is your process for creating wireframes and prototypes?

Can you talk about a time when you had to make a difficult tradeoff in your design?

What is your experience with responsive design and mobile devices?

How do you handle the design process in a team environment? Do you prefer working on your own or in collaboration?
Appendix H

Focus Group Participants

- Angie Kounelis, District A Town Councilor
- Bill Barry, Vice President of Preservation and Facilities, Mount Auburn Cemetery
- David Russo, Historical Commission
- Don Elliott, Resident
- Francisco Ulloa, Resident
- Maria Lane, Resident

Focus Group Questions
Appendix I

Earned Media