



Town of North Kingstown, Rhode Island

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TO: Michael Embury, Town Manager

FROM: Jonathan J. Reiner, Director of Planning

DATE: November 16, 2012

RE: Route 2/102 Final Process Summary

cc: Planning Commission
Jeannette Alyward, Town Clerk
2/102 Stakeholder Group

Attached please find the Final Process Summary and associated appendices for the Route 2/102 Stakeholder process. This document was released as a draft early this week to the Stakeholder Group, the Planning Commission and other interested parties for review and input. After receiving input from interested parties, the consultant team and planning staff finalized the report for distribution to the Planning Commission and Town Council review.

If you should have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at jreiner@northkingstown.org or 268-1570.

Attachment

Route 2/102 Visioning Process
Final Process Summary
November 16, 2012

Developed by:
The Consensus Building Institute
Horsley Witten Group, Inc.
Dodson & Flinker

North Kingstown, RI
Route 2 and 102 Stakeholder Visioning Process
Final Stakeholder Group Recommendations

Report for the Town Council
on behalf of the Stakeholder Group

November 16, 2012

This report was drafted by Ona Ferguson and reviewed by the Project Team. It has been reviewed by Stakeholder Group members for accuracy and many of their suggestions were incorporated. This document is intended to summarize the outcome and final recommendations of the Stakeholder Visioning Process for the Rt. 2/102 area in North Kingstown. It is not intended to summarize the many diverse and important perspectives on all the issues discussed over the course of the process.

All the recommendations in this report should be considered together. For full information on the process and the discussions over the past few months, please see the other documents relevant to the work of this group, which are available on the town website (<http://www.northkingstown.org/visioning-process-routes-2-and-102>). Several of these documents, along with recent communications from municipal staff, are provided as appendices to this summary. Appendices include:

Appendix A-Memo from Department of Planning to Town Manager entitled “2/102 memo and backup for Comp Plan and ZO amendments” and related materials.

Appendix B-All Stakeholder Group meetings.¹

Appendix C-Development Scenarios tested by the public and the Stakeholder Group.

Appendix D-Summary of input from public meetings.

Appendix E-Reference list of all materials posted to the project website and on file with the Department of Planning.

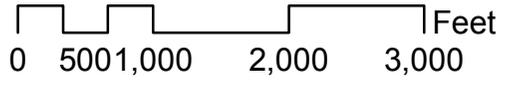
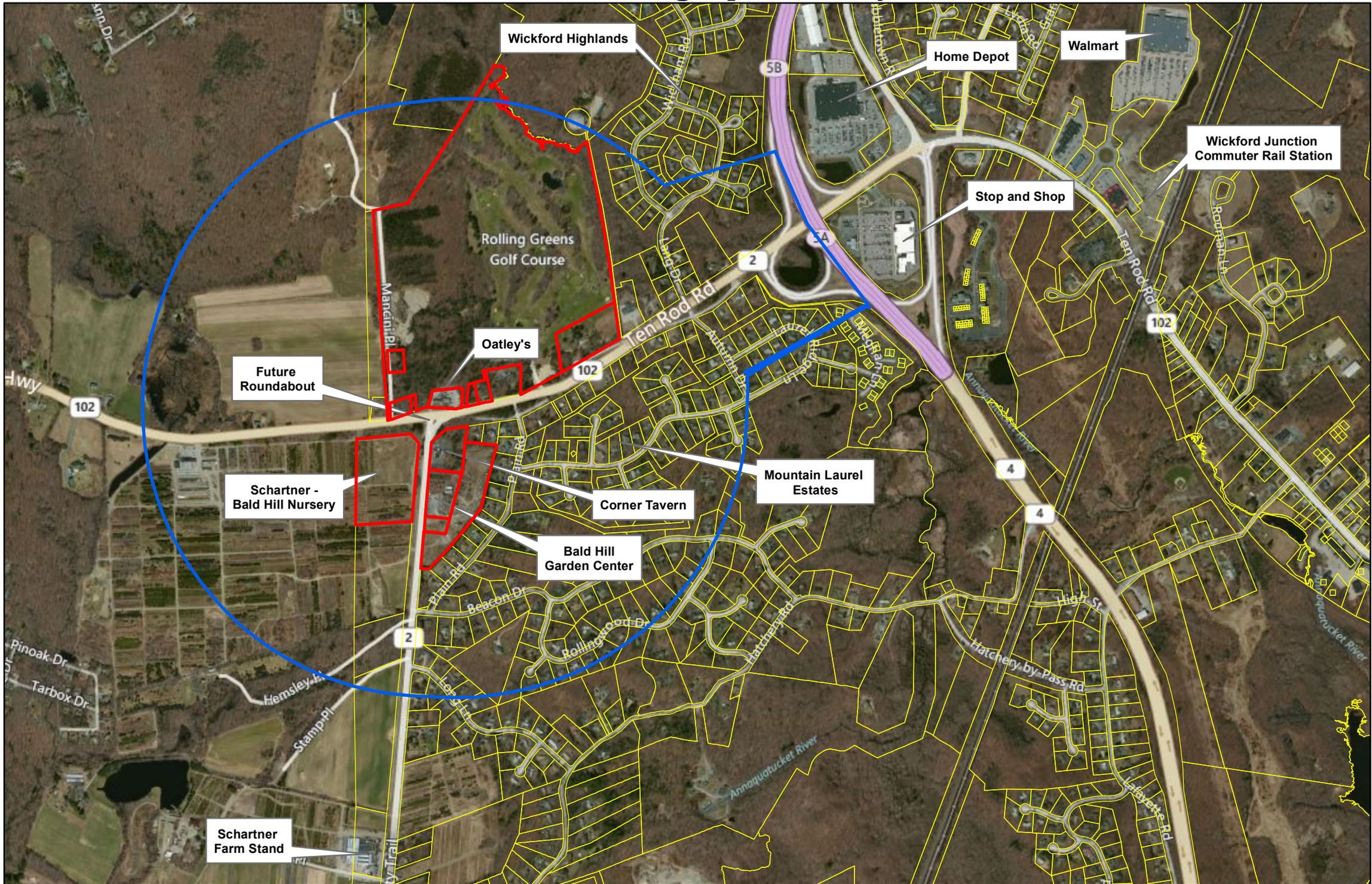
I. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Area

The westernmost intersection of Routes 2 and 102 in North Kingstown is a somewhat rural, less developed area on the western edge of town near Route 4, the new Wickford Junction train station and rural Exeter. See the following page for a map of the study area (which includes a primary focus on the parcels outlined in red and a discussion of impacts within the blue area). It is a well-traveled area, with an estimated 25,000 cars passing through it each day. It is surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the east, and today contains primarily two businesses, the Corner Tavern and Oatley’s Restaurant, and several other parcels zoned for either residential use, or commercial use. Some residentially and commercially zoned land is used for agricultural purposes. While the area is currently quiet in terms of physical development, it could be built out extensively under current zoning. The Schartner Farm parcel in North Kingstown was recently not approved by Statewide Planning for a comprehensive plan amendment that changed 14 acres of a 20 acre parcel from “residential” to “commercial”, and the

¹ The Meeting 5 Summary will be posted on the website as soon as it has been approved by the stakeholder group members.

Route 2 and 102 Geographic Study Area



- Study Area Boundary
- Focus Area Parcels
- Parcels

This map is for reference purposes only. The Planning Department utilizes this information as a reference tool for review. This map is not intended for use as a site plan.



owner of the Rolling Greens and Oately's restaurant parcels are currently requesting a zoning change from mostly residential land to a mixed use zoning designation.

The Challenge

People who care about what happens at this intersection have a range of interests and opinions. Those who own commercial land in the study area and those who own residential land surrounding the study area are personally invested in the area and have a range of expectations of how the area will or will not grow. In addition, residents in town who travel through this area have diverse perspectives on how the intersection should be developed. The area is outside of the state's Urban Services Boundary, so new unplanned or uncoordinated intense commercial development was not envisioned by state plans. Given the substantial interest in this area, and the fact that a comprehensive plan and zoning dispute with Statewide Planning in this area has caused North Kingstown's planning to be out of compliance with the state guide plan, there was a need to figure out what should happen at this intersection. While the Planning Commission and Town Council could have made this determination themselves, the Town Council decided to convene a multi-stakeholder group representing the key stakeholders to seek a joint vision for the future of the area thereby resolving different expectations and trying to find a workable solution.

Process Purpose and Goals

The North Kingstown Town Council convened this group and allocated funds to support this process to generate a community vision for the western intersection of Routes 2 and 102. The North Kingstown Comprehensive Plan must be in compliance with the Rhode Island Land Use 2025 State Guide Plan Element and, because of recent changes to the North Kingstown Comprehensive Plan, in order for the plan to be in compliance with Land Use 2025, it was suggested by the state that a plan and vision for this intersection be developed. The group was convened to explore interests, increase understanding, highlight and refine options and seek agreement, if possible, on what should happen in the area by the western Rt. 2/102 intersection. If the group reached consensus or broad-based support for a recommendation, the Town Council and the Planning Commission agreed to take that under serious consideration. Given the strong opinions, feelings and interests about what happens at this intersection, many people said they hoped this group could bring some clarity of what to expect in the future in a way that will have broad benefits for many different stakeholders.

II. PROCESS OVERVIEW

Description of the Process

This intersection has been under review in one form or another for the past six years, through a number of zoning and development applications, and a recent planning study looking at village style development patterns.

In July of 2012, the Town Council contracted with Ona Ferguson of the Consensus Building Institute to complete an informal assessment of the situation at this intersection. Ona spoke confidentially with 16 individuals representing a range of perspectives and wrote up her impression of the issues at hand and her recommendations for a process for convening a group to work on developing a vision for the study area. (See the summary of the July 2012 interviews and process recommendations.) At a Town Council

meeting at the end of July 2012, the Council appointed a stakeholder group and decided to proceed with a stakeholder process. They also approved a change order with the Horsley Witten Group, under the direction of Senior Planner Nathan Kelly with subcontractors Dodson & Flinker, led by Landscape Architect Peter Flinker, and subcontractor Ona Ferguson from the Consensus Building Institute. These individuals plus staff and an intern from the North Kingstown Planning Department formed the Planning Team that managed this process.

Stakeholder Group Membership

A Stakeholder Group was formed to represent several key perspectives. The group was created by identifying key interests, specifically: business/development, rural/residential, conservation, town-wide “healthy places” efforts, economic development, and Exeter and North Kingstown planners. Following the interviews in July, Ona Ferguson of the Consensus Building Institute proposed a balance among these interests and a group of members, based on who she heard might be legitimate in the eyes of the different groups. This included a distinction between members who would participate fully and vote in the final decision and those who would participate fully but not vote in the final outcome in order to prevent conflicts of interest. (A more detailed description of the final voting procedures as developed by the stakeholder group can be found in the first two meeting summaries.)

The Town Council took list provided by Ona Ferguson and altered it in hopes of making it easier to work with the group by appointing a 16 member group that was slightly smaller than the one suggested, with 11 voting members. They reduced the two largest groups (business and residential) from six to four each, reduced the representation from the Healthy Places Working Group from two to one, had two members representing a conservation perspective, and added an economic development non-voting member. Two non-voting members from North Kingstown planning and two non-voting members from Exeter planning also remained on the list. With the reduction of residential representatives, the Town Council reduced the proposed number of residents in the Stakeholder Group who live right near the study area to three and added a residential representative with town-wide perspective. Members then had the option of identifying an alternate to attend every meeting and sit at the table if their member had to miss a meeting. Three Stakeholder Group members selected alternates.

Stakeholder membership included:

Stakeholder Group Membership		
Total #	Interest Represented	Representatives with affiliation in parenthesis (note some may have multiple affiliations)
FULL VOTING MEMBERS		
4	Business / Development	Mike Baker (Lafayette Mill) Mark Hawkins (Rolling Greens) Vaughn Oatley (Oatley’s) Rit Schartner Sr. (Schartner Farms, with Rich Schartner II as his alternate)
4	Rural / Residential	Kevin Maloney (Wickford Highlands Home Owners’ Assn, with Albert Lyons as his alternate) Colin O’Sullivan (MLHOA) John Patterson (resident) Jeff Zucchi (Heritage Hills, with Tom Kolling as his alternate)

1	Healthy Places Working Groups	John Nosatch (walk/bike workgroup)
2	Conservation	Ahren Cohen (Conservation Commission) Meg Kerr (environmental professional)
NON-VOTING / AD-HOC MEMBERS		
2	Exeter Planning	Frank DiGregorio (Planning Commission) David Schweid (Planner)
2	N. Kingstown Planning	Paul Dion (Planning Commission) Jon Reiner (Planner)
1	Economic Development	Martha Pughe (NK Economic Development)
11 Voting Members + 5 Non-Voting Members = 16 Total Members plus 3 Alternates		

Stakeholder Group Meetings – The Stakeholder Group met five times between the end of August and early November 2012. These were mostly three-hour meetings and were open to the public. (For more information on the content of the meetings, please see the Stakeholder Group meeting summaries in Appendix B).

The group discussed a range of topics, some relatively briefly, others more extensively. Among these topics were some where data was available and others where there were many unknowns. The group was asked to forge ahead despite not having all of the information that they wanted, and some participants expressed concern especially about the lack of data about likely economic impacts of different types of development on the town budget and on other areas of town. Topics discussed include:

- Planning for water use – both water quality and quantity
- The zoning and comprehensive plan designations for this intersection
- The character of the study area and what people hope it will be in the future
- Traffic impacts
- General principles of the economics of development for the town, residential neighbors and land owners of land in the primary study area
- Design and layout of development
- Roadway improvements, including pedestrian and bicycle paths
- Open space and farmland preservation
- Impacts to abutting communities and surrounding development patterns

Broad Public Input – The process also included multiple ways for people outside of the stakeholder group to participate. Members of the public were invited to contact those who represented their interest on the Stakeholder Group (as Stakeholder Group members were encouraged to reach out to constituents throughout the process). For those members of the public who wanted to weigh in directly and give their opinions, there were two public workshops and a neighborhood focus group that the stakeholder group helped plan. The purpose of the workshops was to first gather information from the public about what they hope to see and to then build on their input with some responses and options and again get their input. The neighborhood focus group was specifically designed to enable neighbors

to give their input easily and in close proximity to the study area. This focus group was modeled on the first public meeting at the recommendation of the Stakeholder Group’s rural/residential representatives.

In the month of October, these three additional events were held to give members of the public an opportunity to share their perspective (two public workshops and one neighborhood focus group). These three meetings were attended by at least 100 distinct members of the public who signed in at one or more event, 14 of the 16 members of the Stakeholder Group, and the members of the Project Team. There was also a way to give input online for people who are not able to attend public meetings or preferred to participate online. The questions asked online mimicked those asked at the first two public events, and approximately 50 people gave input online (about 43 of these were people who did not participate in any of the other public events). At any time during the process, anyone was welcome to contact the facilitator with questions or concerns. A few people also made statements during the public comment period that was made available at the end of the first four Stakeholder Group meetings.

The public was engaged in these ways in order to provide input to the Stakeholder Group tasked with developing a shared vision. Stakeholder Group members had the opportunity to listen to and/or read the input from the public, and the input was discussed and synthesized at the beginning of the October 25 (and fourth) Stakeholder Group meeting. Most Stakeholder Group members also attended one or more of these sessions to hear public input directly. These sessions gave those Stakeholder Group members representing the rural/residential perspective a chance to hear directly from the constituents they were representing in the visioning process. (For more information on the input from the public, see the summary of input from the public workshops located in Appendix D).

What Happens Next?

This final process summary will be submitted to the Town Council and Planning Commission for their consideration. The Stakeholder Group was told that their recommendations, if widely accepted within the group, would be seriously considered by these two bodies. The next section of this report describes the group’s recommendations for consideration by the Town Council and Planning Commission.

III. STAKEHOLDER GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

At the fifth and final Stakeholder Group meeting, held on November 7, 2012, Stakeholder Group members had the opportunity to jointly identify statements and proposed futures that most of them could agree to for recommendation to the Planning Commission and Town Council. They had agreed at their second meeting that they would use a threshold for consensus of 8 of 11 voting members indicating support for a statement or proposal. Within any vote of 8 or more, at least two votes would be required within both the “business development” and “residents” groups in order for the group to pass the vote along as representing full group agreement. At this meeting, 10 of 11 voting members were present.²

Over the course of the meeting, member discussed a range of topics, and the following are the ones on which the minimum 8/11 people reached agreement. This report indicates the final vote/count for each

² John Nosatch was unable to attend the final meeting. He designated Meg Kerr to vote on his behalf. Meg indicated votes on his behalf when she was fairly certain he would support a recommendation (as in Section III.a), but did not vote on John’s behalf in final the parcel-based discussion (in Section III.b).

statement so that readers can understand the level of support for different ideas and statements. The group also voted on a number of recommendations that did not reach consensus. To provide additional guidance for the Planning Commission and Town Council to consider, items that were specific parcel based recommendations which a majority of the group (6 or more) were in favor of are also listed in section II.B, with a note that consensus was not reached.

III.a Recommendations on Principles for the Study Area

Members came to agreement on a range of broad principles for any development that occurs in the study area. Many of these could be formalized as design standards and the like. Note especially the high level of consensus and even complete unanimity for many of these items. In this discussion, members voted on two different levels of detail, first a general statement of principle and then a more nuanced indication of what that might mean concretely (indicated as “Details” below).

The list of recommendations here are those items that met the 8 of 11 member threshold for agreement. Those ideas that were discussed and voted on which did not meet that threshold are not included. In this section, “unanimity” means an item received 11 of 11 votes. For simplicity in the tables, the one Healthy Places vote and the conservation interest votes are described as “conservation” votes.

A. Recommendation on Buffers to Protect Plain Road Residents	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle:</i> Residents should be well buffered from any commercial or dense development that occurs.	Unanimity
<i>Details:</i> Follow current standards protecting residential areas from light and sound impacts.	Unanimity
<i>Details:</i> A 50 foot vegetated setback should be required, especially along residential/business zone boundaries. The town’s existing best practices for landscaping should be followed.	8-3, with 3 developers, 3 residents and 2 conservation members in favor

Additional note: Many indicated a desire for trees and other vegetation to be used to mitigate (buffer) the view of commercial premises from the roadway.

B. Recommendation on Lighting	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle:</i> Residents of North Kingstown want to be able to see stars in the night sky.	Unanimity
<i>Details:</i> Support current light standards, work towards dark sky compliance.	Unanimity

C. Recommendation on Signage	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle:</i> The character of the study area is important, including the signage people see.	Unanimity
<i>Details:</i> Require that signs be made of wooden or natural materials and be externally lit.	Unanimity

Additional note: There was some discussion about the possibility of exempting seasonal farm signage from current or future sign regulations, but no vote was taken and agreement was not reached.

D. Recommendation on Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle:</i> People should be able to get around safely by bicycle and on foot between sites, in and around the study area.	Unanimity

<i>Details:</i> Incorporate into the comprehensive plan and make this a condition of approval for developments that they have to design and build portions of the bike path.	Unanimity
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E. Recommendation on Building Design	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle:</i> The character of the study area is important, including the appearance of the buildings.	Unanimity
<i>Statement of Principle 2:</i> Commercial development in this area should maintain a rural feel and add to the character of the neighborhood.	10-1, with 3 developers, 4 residents and 3 conservation members in favor
<i>Details:</i> Draft or use clear standards for the design of the buildings and the sites through draft language for zoning and Comprehensive Plan requirements.	Unanimity

F. Recommendation on Open Space	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle:</i> In order to maintain the rural feel of the study area, it is important to preserve some of its open space for the long term.	10-1, with 4 developers, 3 residents and 3 conservation members in favor
<i>Details:</i> Preserve the golf course.	10-1, with 4 developers, 3 residents and 3 conservation members in favor
<i>Details:</i> Use purchase or transfer of development rights to preserve both the Schartner parcels in the study area and the Morris Farm	10-1, with 4 developers, 4 residents and 2 conservation members in favor

G. Recommendation on Transition Zones (Note: see map of transition zones in appendix.)	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle 1 (east side of study area):</i> The area just west of Route 4 along Ten Rod Road (between Route 4 and the entrance to Rolling Greens is an established residential area that transitions to a more rural place. It should be evident that it is not a continuation of the development to the east but something different and should not be allowed to expand into a CVD or other business or higher density residential zones.	Unanimity
<i>Statement of Principle 2 (south portion of the study area):</i> The area just south of the main study area is primarily agricultural and is a transition zone to a more rural place, with the intent to preserve this property as agricultural and agree to the purchase or transfer of development rights.	Unanimity
<i>Statement of Principle 3 (south portion of study area):</i> The area on either side of South County Trail in the vicinity of the Bald Hill Garden Center and Schartner property south is primarily agricultural and is a transition zone to a	8-3, with 3 developers, 2 residents and 3 conservation members

more rural place.	in favor
<i>Statement of Principle 4 (south portion of study area):</i> It should be evident that the area on either side of South County Trail in the vicinity of the Bald Hill Garden Center and Schartner property south is not a continuation of the development to the north and east but something different.	8-3, with 2 developers, 3 residents and 3 conservation members in favor

H. Recommendation on Building Height	Vote
<i>Statement of Principle:</i> The study area should maintain a small town, rural feel, and so should not contain buildings taller than two stories.	8-3, with 2 developers, 4 residents and 2 conservation members in favor

III.b Recommendations on Three Study Area Segments

Members also came to agreement on what they recommend for each of the three segments of the study area (southeast corner, southwest corner, and north portion). These agreements reflect a general view that the focus study area parcels would receive zoning for specified levels of commercial or mixed use development but, importantly, parcels immediately to the east and south would be considered “transition parcels” where such development would not be appropriate in the future (see figure on next page). Below are the agreements they reached. Note that some key recommendations are dependent on others.

Schartner Farms property east and west (10 acres in NK and 10 acres in Exeter)

The Town of North Kingstown should work with the Town of Exeter, the State of Rhode Island and other partners to preserve the development rights of the Schartner Farm properties either by the use of purchase of development rights (PDR) or transfer of development rights (TDR) within a limited period of time, with language enabling the land to continue to function effectively in agricultural use. The existing zoning on this parcel should remain as it currently is zoned, as General Business, and the landowners should be allowed to continue to engage in agricultural-related businesses on site.

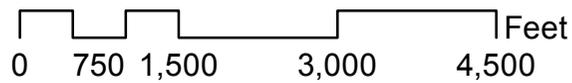
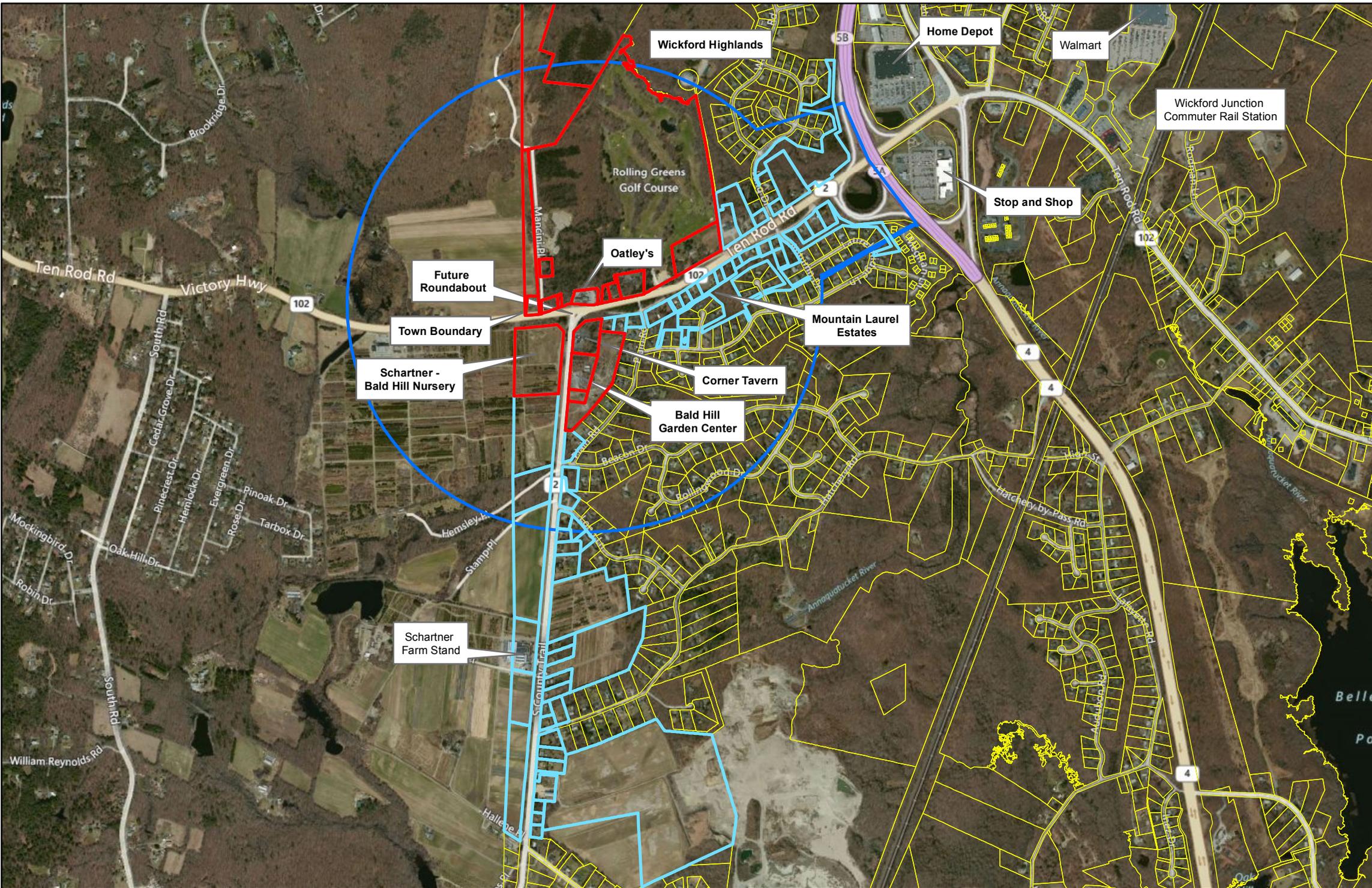
Vote: 9-1, with 4 residents, 2 conservation members, and 3 business members in favor. The Town Planner from Exeter was also present (as a non-voting member) and supported the pursuit of this initiative.

Rolling Greens property (entire property that is within the current application pending before the Planning Commission)

Contingent on the town protecting the Schartner property as noted above, the Rolling Greens development should be allowed to proceed with a limitation of 32,000 square feet of commercial space and 188 residential bedrooms with the design and other parameters as outlined in the Principles section of this report. Buildings or parking lots should be setback 150’ or more from Ten Rod Road. The 150’ buffer zone should be considered to include vegetation and a bike path.

Vote: 8-2, with 2 residents, 2 conservation member, and 4 business members in favor.

Route 2 and 102 Transition Area



- Focus Area Parcels
- Transition Parcels
- Study Area Boundary

This map is for reference purposes only. The Planning Department utilizes this information as a reference tool for review. This map is not intended for use as a site plan.



The Rolling Greens development should be allowed to proceed with 32,000 square feet of commercial space and the existing proposed number of residential bedrooms. Buildings or parking lots should be setback 150' or more from Ten Rod Road. The 150' buffer zone should be considered to include vegetation and a bike path. [Not contingent on the town protecting the Schartner property as noted above.]

Vote: 7-3, with 2 residents, 1 conservation member, and 4 business members in favor. [Note this option did not meet the 8 member in support threshold for consensus. The reason this item did not meet the threshold for consensus is because some Stakeholder Group members considering open space protection in the study area were comfortable supporting this general concept only if the land to the southeast (Schartner parcel) was to be preserved.]

Corner Tavern and Bald Hill Garden Center

Both scenarios for this development included a 50' densely vegetated buffer (this could be somewhat reduced if other measures to mitigate noise and visual impacts were incorporated like berms).

Allow this area to be changed to the proposed CVD Scenario B, which had 20,000 square feet of commercial space plus 20 residential bedrooms for the Bald Hill Garden Center and 6,000 square feet of commercial space for the Corner Tavern.

Vote: 8-2, with 3 residents, 2 conservation member, and 3 business members in favor.

Allow either through purchase or transfer of development rights, buying down the existing commercial development rights to a level that would limit future development to 20,000 square feet of commercial space.

Vote: 8-2, with 2 residents, 2 conservation member, and 4 business members in favor.

III.c Other Issues

There were multiple issues the Stakeholder Group never decided on definitively. Many of these were discussed in great detail at various meetings either by the public or the Stakeholder Group. Please see the reports of these discussions for more detail. Among those topics not yet resolved but important for this study area are:

- Whether or not this area should be included in the Urban Service Boundary.
- Whether or not this area should be designated as a "growth center" as defined by Statewide Planning.
- Whether or not the Town's water service area should be extended to include these parcels.

Participants sought to but did not reach agreement on the following topics:

- Whether or not particular types of commercial should be prevented in the study area, especially national or international chains. Some said this was important for the character of the area, while others noted it could overly constrain or limit landowners' options.

- Whether or not a parameter could be set that required that any businesses in the study area be geared primarily towards the neighborhood rather than seeking to draw additional customers. Some said this would benefit those people in the neighborhood by focusing on their needs and not drawing additional traffic, while others indicated as with the point above that it would overly constrain businesses that would likely need customers from elsewhere to be viable.
- Whether a setback or frontage area should be required in the study area in front (on the side facing the main roadway) of any commercial development beyond the minimum existing requirement. Some felt that this would help maintain a rural character while others suggested it could hinder the visibility of businesses depending on setback distances.