

The heart of the Shenandoah Valley

MOUNT JACKSON

Master Park & Pedestrian Connectivity Plan

October 30, 2024



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Introduction

Mount Jackson, Virginia is a charming town in the heart of Shenandoah County. It is situated along Interstate 81, easily accessible to local county residents, families from neighboring towns, tourists, and interstate travelers.

In 2017, the Town of Mount Jackson released their Comprehensive Plan; a long-range planning document to guide the growth and development of Mount Jackson for the next 20+ years. The vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan includes several goals for the Plan and for the Town, ranging from preservation and environmental stewardship to economic development and education. Many of these goals involve the parks, trails, and pedestrian infrastructure in the Town:

Goal: Provide high quality services and facilities that meet the current and future needs of the Town.

Task: Expand and improve park facilities and events to serve a growing population.

Goal: Protect the small-town character of Mount Jackson for the benefit of existing residents, future residents, and visitors.

Task: Participate in regional tourism programs, trails, and promotional efforts.

Goal: Protect, preserve, and promote the town's environmental assets.

Task: Plan, implement, and promote greenway trails, rail trails, and river trails as an amenity for residents and as an attraction for visitors.

Goal: Plan for adequate transportation and access for all areas of Mount Jackson and all modes of travel.

Task: Continue to pursue and fund the construction of sidewalks throughout the Town.

This Master Park and Pedestrian Connectivity Plan aims to expand and explore those objectives as they relate to selected Town-owned parcels and overall town-wide pedestrian infrastructure. This report aims to allow the Town and its residents to share the vision for the future of parks and recreation spaces and provide a framework for funding and implementation.

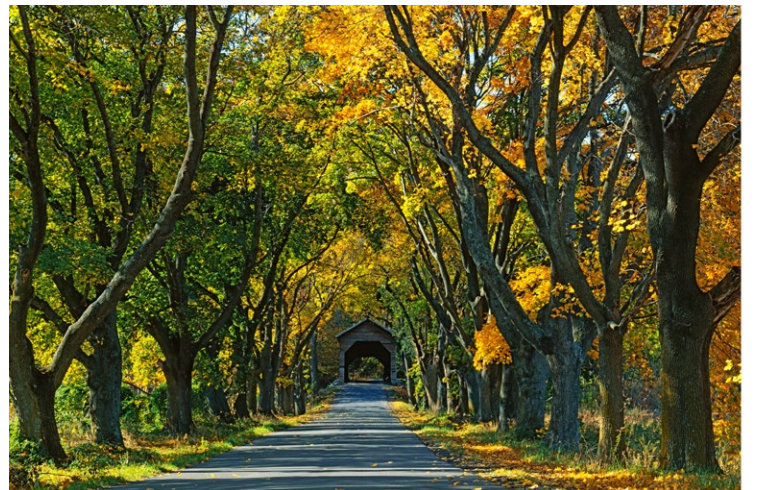
The report is divided into three sections: an analysis of the existing conditions within three park spaces (Town Park, the Community Center site, and Kings Park) and pedestrian spaces; plans and precedent images for each of the areas; and photo simulations to enhance the visualization of the proposed amenities and spaces.



Event at Mayors Park in downtown Mount Jackson



Little league field at Lions Park



Covered bridge at water access point south of town

SECTION ONE: **EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**



Town-Wide Existing Conditions

The downtown core of Mount Jackson is quaint, vibrant, and fairly accessible. Concrete sidewalks are currently being replaced with brick walkways. Beyond the downtown core, sidewalk sections become fragmented, accessibility decreases, and wayfinding signage is less obvious. Many locations around Town are not accessible to pedestrians due to lack of infrastructure. This plan addresses pedestrian infrastructure along both sides of Main Street between Mount Jackson Road (to the north) and the CREW Community Center (to the South), between I-81 (to the west) and the Shenandoah River (to the east).



D Main Street looking South at Mayors Park



A Gospel Street Sidewalk. Condition and curb cuts not ADA compliant.



E Pedestrian stair and crossing at railroad tracks behind Town offices.



B Lower section Wunder Street. This is a town owned street segment.



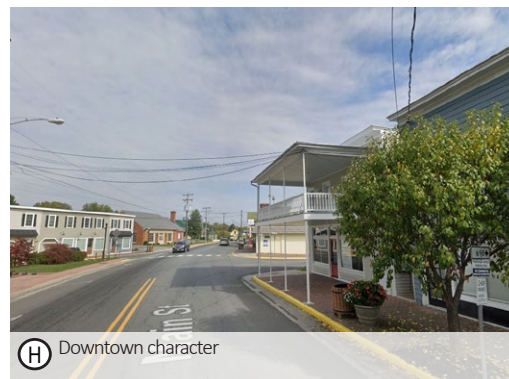
C Main Street looking north at Mayors Park



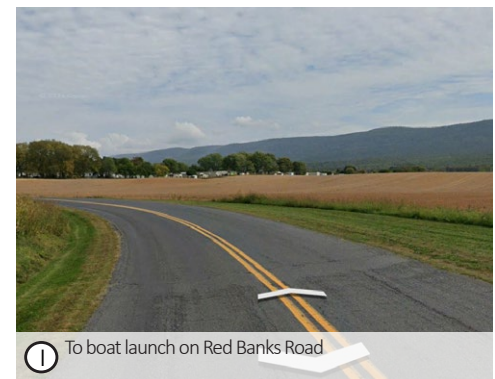
F Directional signage in Town lacks visual appeal and does not convey town brand.



G Main street in this segment has a sidewalk on one side of the road. The building setbacks on the other side of the street are narrow and leave little room for pedestrians.

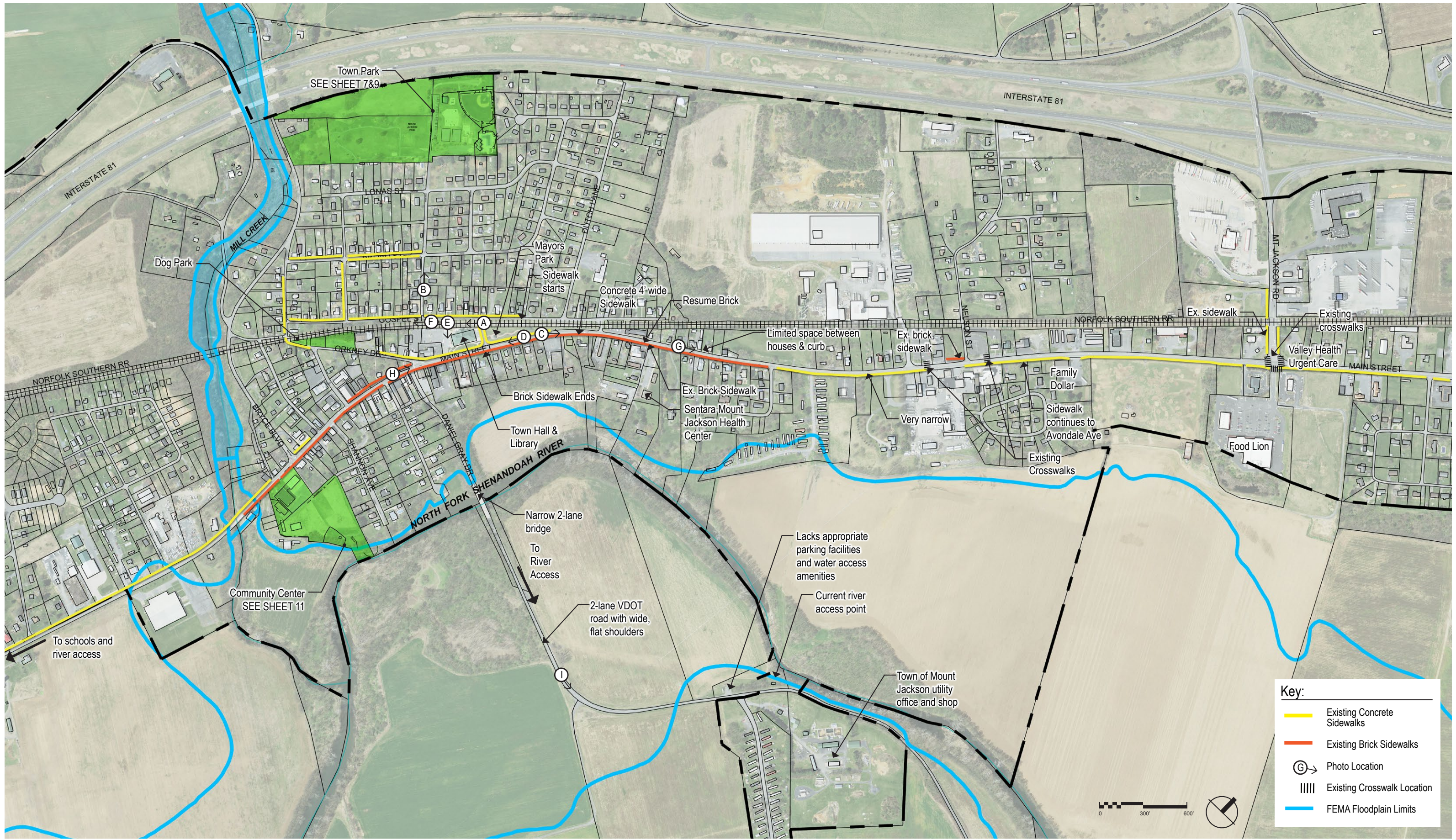


H Downtown character



I To boat launch on Red Banks Road





Town Park Existing Conditions

Town Park, also known as Lions Park, is host to the Town swimming pool, several playground spaces, two basketball courts, a little league field, tee ball field, walking path, open lawn areas, and a picnic pavilion. The views to the west are a significant feature of the Park. The Town recently acquired additional park land on the south end of the park.

The design team visited the site in 2023 in order to document the conditions, opportunities, and constraints (see map next page).



(A) Paved loop trail (non-ADA compliant)



(B) Parking lot with overly wide drive aisle



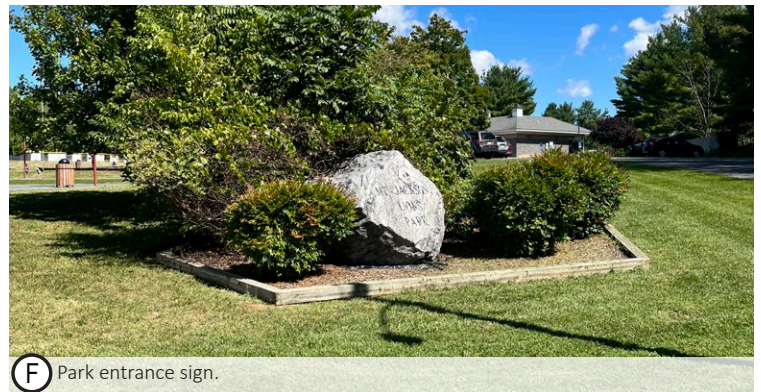
(C) View to I-81 and beyond.



(D) Existing playground areas with plastic edge material.



(E) Kiddie pool and utility shed.

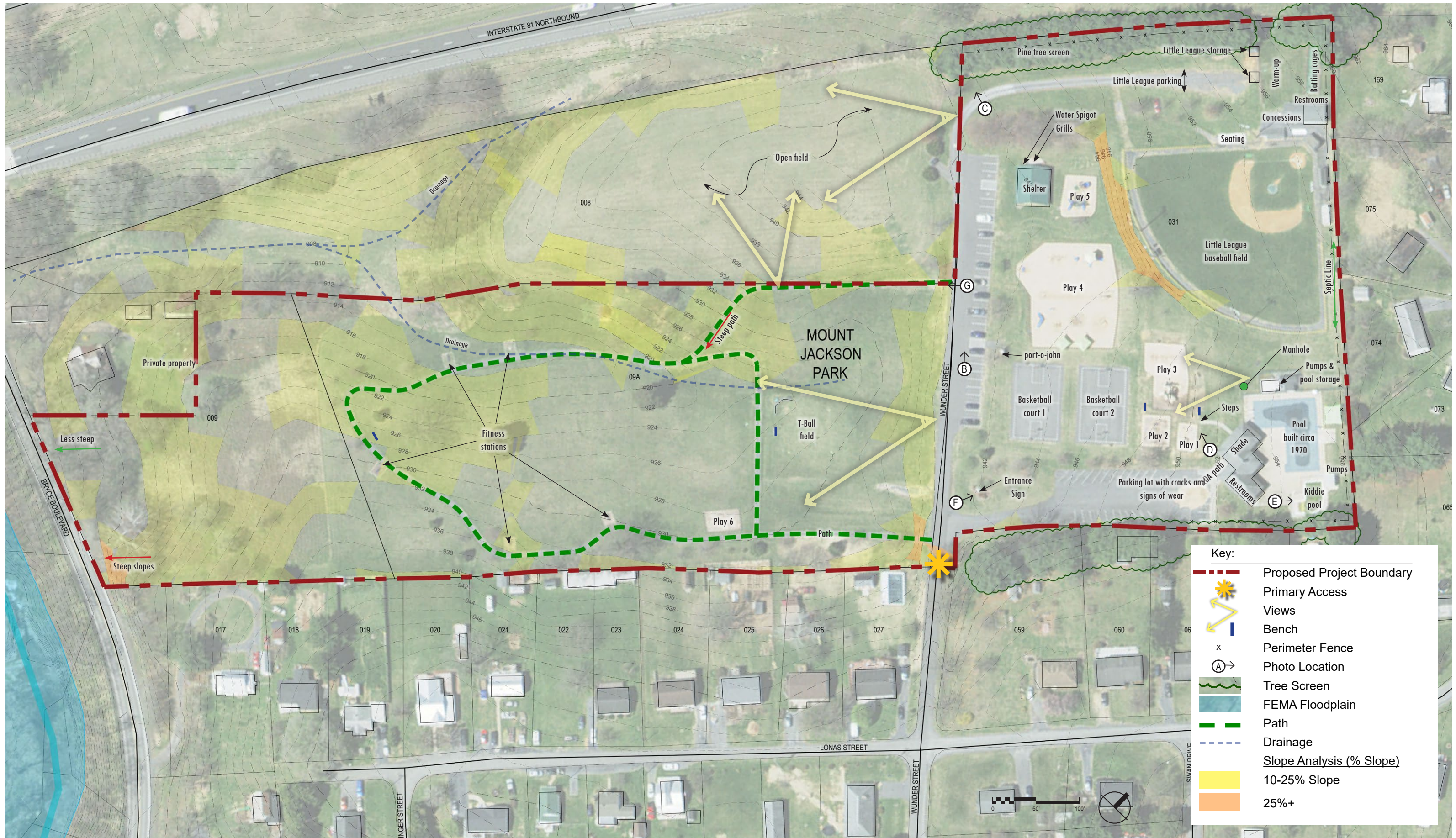


(F) Park entrance sign.



(G) Open lawn with play structure and t-ball.





Town Park Baker Parcel Existing Conditions

In the summer of 2024 The Town of Mount Jackson acquired the Baker Parcel to expand Town Park. This undeveloped land features rolling pastures framed by hedgerows, with about 40% of the site consisting of slopes ranging from 10% to 25%. From the highest point on the property, visitors can enjoy mountain views to both the east and west. However, the proximity to I-81 results in a noticeable amount of noise, which could influence the type of programming suitable for this site.



(A) View from private property looking toward Baker Parcel.



(B) View from private property looking toward Town Park.



(C) View toward baseball field from Baker Parcel meadow edge.



(D) View looking west across drainage.



(E) Looking toward Baker Parcel from a Town Park fitness station.



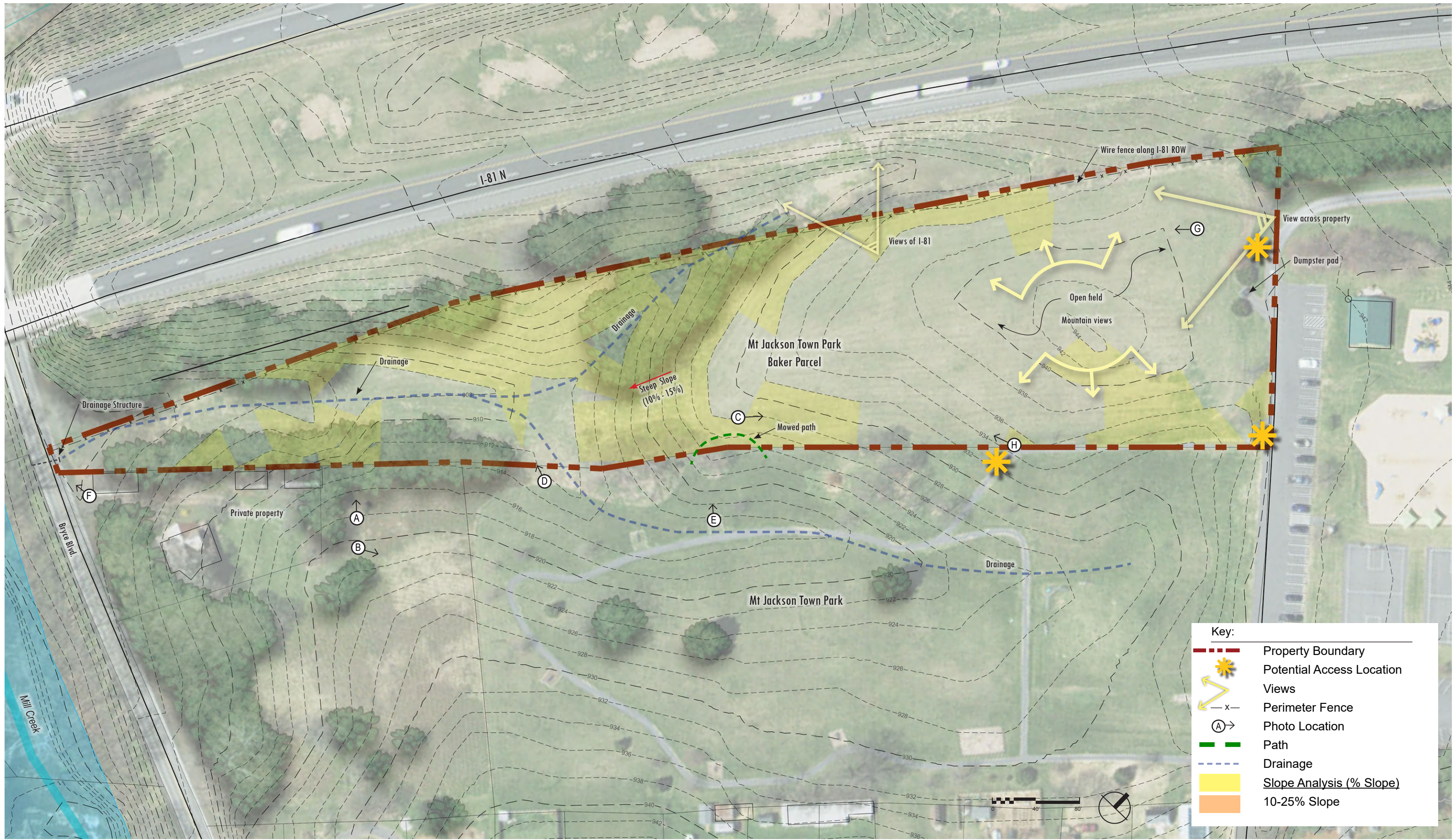
(F) View toward the I-81 underpass from the private driveway at 370 Bryce Blvd.
Note: the culvert structure conveys water from Baker Parcel across Bryce Blvd.



(G) View across the Baker Parcel site.



(H) View across the Baker Parcel site from the Town Park path.



Community Center Park Existing Conditions

The Mount Jackson Community Center building is located on Main Street, just south of the downtown core. The building spaces are managed by CREW, a local non-profit group. The adjacent gravel lot and open field site are included in the current Master Planning process. There are a few empty concrete pads and a brick utility building on the site. Parking lot reconfiguration will need to be considered in regards to building uses.

The design team visited the site in early 2024 to meet with CREW members and document the site conditions (see map on next page).



(A) View across lower field to the east.



(D) Lower field, concrete pad and utility building.



(B) CREW community center



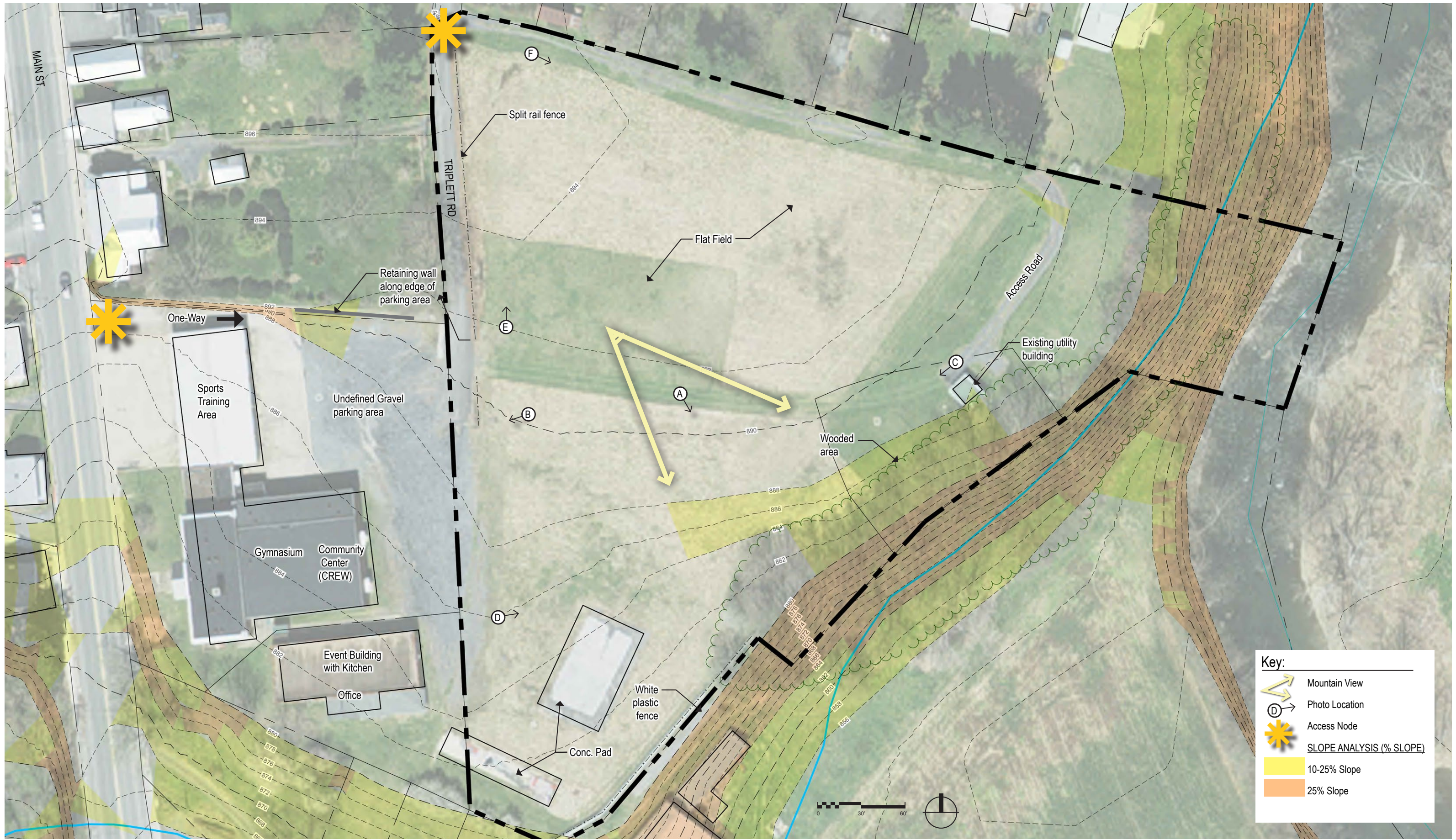
(E) Open field looking north.



(C) View from utility building looking south.



(F) Mountain view looking east



SECTION TWO: **PLANS & VISION**



Town-Wide Pedestrian Connectivity Plan

During the site visit conducted on January 25th, 2024, the following design decisions were identified to guide the development of the Pedestrian Connectivity Master Plan:

- Continue to replace concrete sidewalks with brick paver sidewalks along the east side of Main Street in the downtown area.
- Consider extending and filling-in the sidewalk along the west side of Main Street between Mayors Park and Our Soldiers Cemetery.
- Consider adding bike lanes or sharrows along Daniel Gray Drive between Main Street and the river access/boat launch.
- Locate new dog park, parking, and sidewalk extension at King's Park. Consider allowing 2-way traffic on the south end of Orkney Drive.
- Consider converting the eastern block of Wunder Street to one-way in order to accommodate a sidewalk. Add sidewalk to the central and western block of Wunder St.



Bike boulevard with sharrows



ADA sidewalk retrofit



Town directional sign



Railing



Neighborhood pedestrian crossing



Pedestrian railroad crossing



Town-Wide Pedestrian Connectivity Plan

This chapter looks at expanding the pedestrian network to and beyond the Town limits, connecting the parks, water access points, and frequently visited Town amenities, and providing the community and visitors with safe and accessible walking routes throughout the Town and surrounding areas. The images display how the Town can create safer, more accessible, and pedestrian-friendly pathways for residents and visitors alike.

A pedestrian greenway in Mount Jackson could enhance connectivity by providing safe and accessible pathways linking key areas of the town, such as parks, schools, the river, and downtown. Integrating ADA curb ramps ensures sidewalks and paved areas are accessible to all residents, facilitating easy access for those with mobility challenges. Street trees lining the greenway and downtown sidewalks not only enhance aesthetics but also provide shade, and create a cohesive inviting atmosphere throughout the town.



Rural multi-use greenway trail



Boat ramp



ADA curb ramps



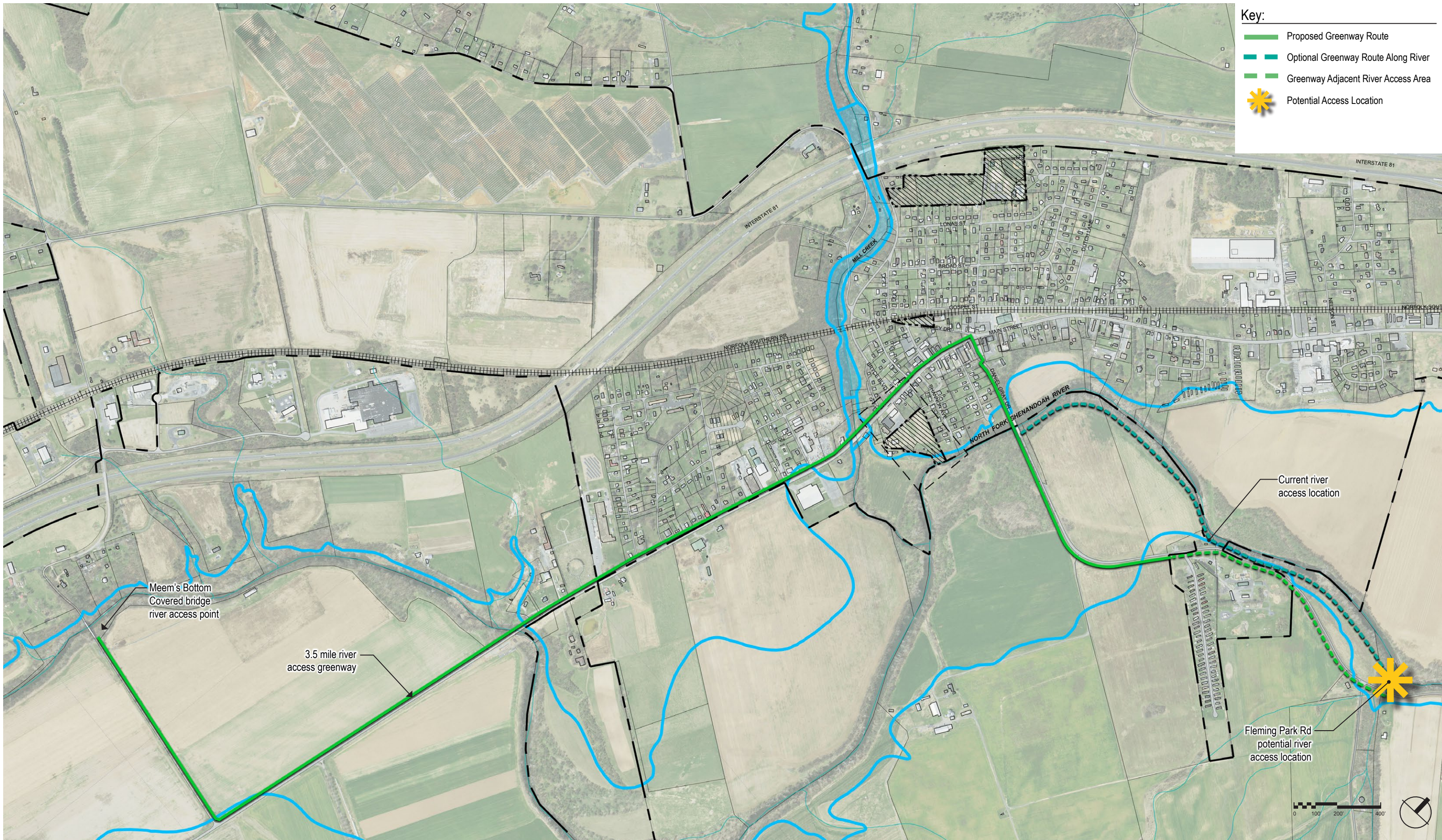
River access / boat slide



Brick Sidewalk with street trees in downtown Gordonsville

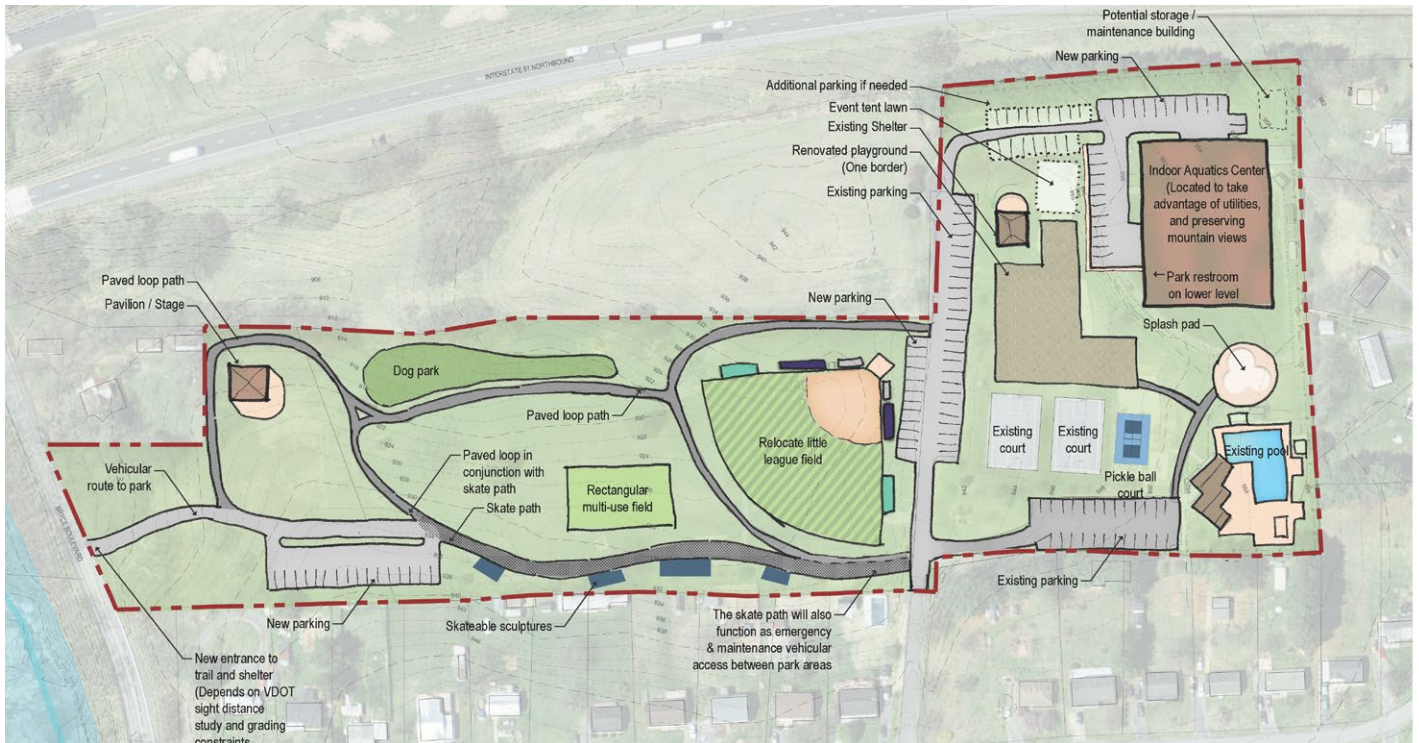




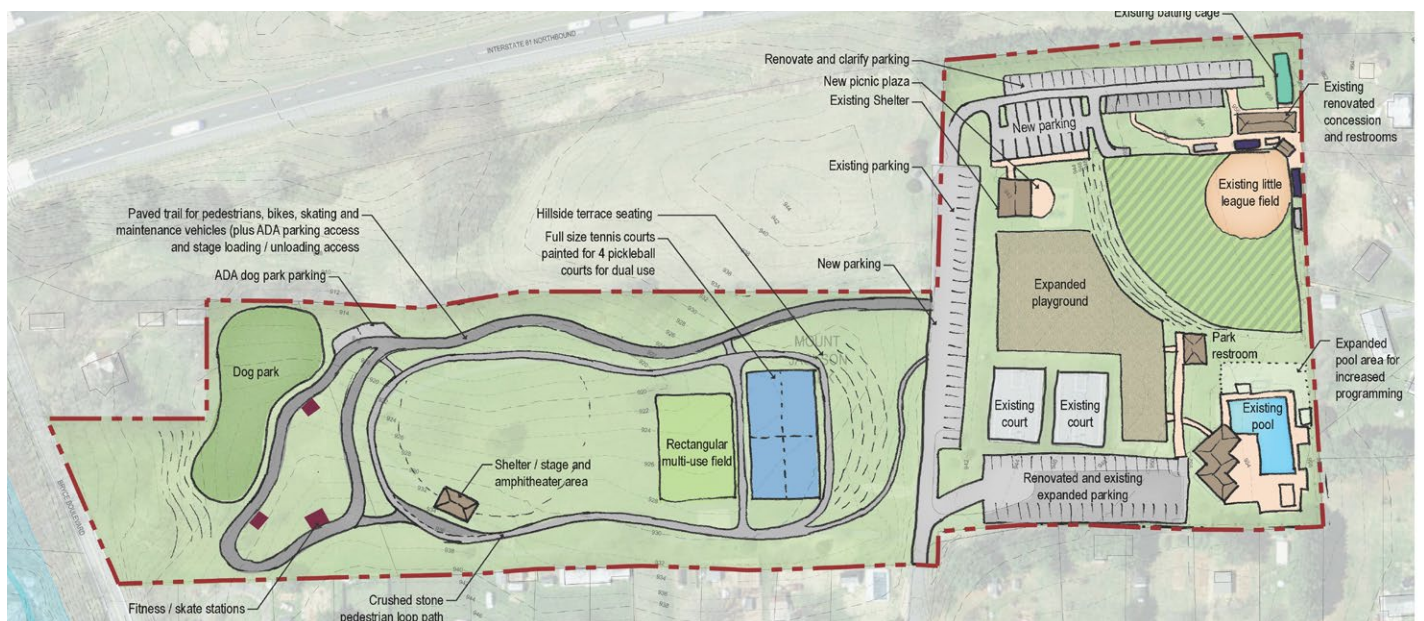


Town Park Options and Survey

In September 2023, the Town of Mount Jackson asked residents to complete a survey regarding how they currently use the Town Park and what additions they'd like to see in the future. Most of the 94 respondents visit the park between once a week and once a month and the majority get to the park by car. The two biggest draws to the park are the playground and the pool, followed by the walking trail and the picnic shelter. The suggested amenities that are most desired are permanent restrooms, an indoor aquatic facility, a splash pad, additional shade, and a dog park (all over 40% of responses). Write-in answers for what can be improved in the park included more swings, activities for teenagers, more seating, improve the surface of the walking path, and better play equipment. From those comments, the design team compiled two concepts for the park (prior to the addition of the 4 acre Baker parcel adjacent I-81):



Town Park Concept 1 (December 2023)



Town Park Concept 2 (December 2023)



Baker Parcel Options and Survey

The design team developed two concepts for the 4-acre Baker Parcel, acquired by the Town in the summer of 2024. Utilizing information from the 2023 survey, recommendations from the design team, and the Town's preferences, the site program was finalized. Key elements of the program include a driveway connection between the proposed south parking lot and the north parking lot, a picnic pavilion, event lawn, pedestrian paths, a disc golf course area, and vegetative screening along I-81.



Baker Parcel Concept 1 (August 2024)



Baker Parcel Concept 2 (August 2024)



Town Park– Master Plan

During the January 25th, 2024 meeting, feedback on the Park Concept Plans was reviewed. The following design decisions were made to guide the development of the Park Master Plan:

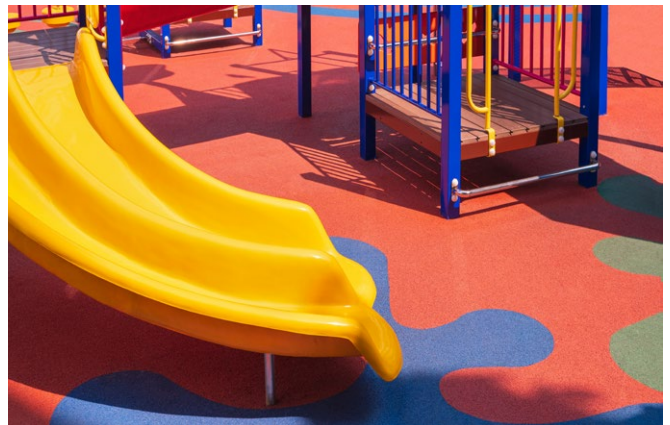
1. Add a Park entrance from Bryce Boulevard to access the southern end of the Park. The new entrance road may or may not connect to the northern portion of the Park. First option will be to use the western edge of the park for the vehicular access road. Grades may restrict parking. Secondary option will be to use eastern edge for vehicular access and add a visual screening barrier (vegetation preferred) between the park and the residential properties.
2. The little league field will stay where it is, parking will be improved and added close to the field.
3. Existing t-ball field will be renovated for better drainage and safety, seating and shade areas will be added.
4. One full-sized tennis court with a shared-use as 4 pickleball courts. Court will need 8' permanent fence on at least 3 sides (with an option for a shorter 4' tall fence section on one side if there are no dangers from errant balls).
5. Permanent restrooms with running water and doors that can be locked during non-park hours for the northern portion of the park. For the southern section of the Park, potentially a vault toilet, "fancy" portable toilet, or plumbed toilet in conjunction with the upgrades to the residential property on the south edge of Park.
6. Consolidate playground spaces, re-use equipment in good condition, add inclusive options and areas for 2-5 year olds. Playground surfacing will be poured rubber with reinforced areas in high-use spots.
7. Better lighting and security cameras will be added.
8. Add parking near little league field, pool, southern end of park, and along new vehicular access road.



Pickleball Courts /Tennis Court combination



Restroom building



Playground with poured rubber safety surface



Town Park Master Plan

9. There will be two trail types: 1) a crushed stone ADA-compliant walking path (6' width), preferably in a loop with bench seating, and 2) a paved 8' wide skate/bike/roll path (could also function as emergency and maintenance vehicle access, if needed) with skateable features adjacent.
10. Remove fitness stations and add skateable features that can be used for seating, stretching, and playing
11. Additional picnic shelter or multi-use covered stage area will be located in the center of the Park. There will be a large turf grass area adjacent to the pavilion so that it can function as an event space.
12. More/improved seating options for adults while kids are at playground or ball field.
13. No indoor aquatic center or pool dome.
14. Dog park will be considered at a different park location (Kings Park)
15. Splash pad or water play area outside pool enclosure, likely will be located to the south of pool area. Maintenance needs to have vehicular access to the pool pump.
16. Master Plan will show a pool replacement (6-lanes, increased deck space, kiddie pool, and shade structures).



Splash Pad for all ages and abilities



Skate spot feature / art installation



Picnic / Performance Pavilion



Crushed walking stone path

Baker Parcel Master Plan

In the summer of 2024, following the Town's acquisition of the Baker Parcel, further guidance was provided to shape the park's program. The following design decisions were made to direct the development of the Baker Parcel:

1. A disc golf course will be added, incorporating multiple holes that follow the natural terrain. The layout will minimize conflicts with other park activities and maintain a buffer between pedestrian paths and disc golf play areas.
2. A picnic pavilion will be centrally located within the park, adjacent to an event lawn. It will provide shaded seating for gatherings and function as a multi-use space for events and informal recreation.
3. A stormwater management basin will be incorporated into the park's design to manage runoff, with opportunities for native plantings around the basin to enhance aesthetics and ecological function. The basin will be located in an area that efficiently collects water while minimizing impact on park activities.
4. An evergreen tree buffer will be planted along the park's boundary adjacent to I-81 to provide visual and noise screening.



Disc golf course



Picnic pavilion



Photo Credit: NC State Extension

Stormwater management bioretention with native plants.



Evergreen buffer





Community Center Park Master Plan

The Community Center site is a combination of private and public parcels, and is the location for the Mount Jackson Community Center, home of CREW (Community Resources for Education and Wellness). In October of 2023, the CREW group met and compiled the following priority list for the site (in order of priority):

1. Multi-use athletics field (where baseball backstop located); use about 2 acres.
 - a. Youth baseball practice, T-ball, softball, flag football, soccer, and kickball
 - b. Artificial surface preferred
2. Perimeter walking/running track
 - a. Outdoor fitness equipment – determine if needed to complement the track
3. Garden
 - a. Kitchen, teaching, herbs, memorial, community
4. Covered picnic table area
 - a. Good rental income, builds community
5. Outdoor courts
 - a. Pickleball – medium high priority, sand volleyball, outdoor ping pong, chess
6. Barbeque Pit
 - a. Extension of the kitchen, complement to the covered picnic tables
7. Rejected or very low priority uses:
 - a. Soccer games because of complex south of Mt. Jackson
 - b. Frisbee golf – takes up too much space for little use; Toms Brook park has one
 - c. Outdoor basketball court
 - d. Tennis – too much space required; Woodstock park offers tennis
 - e. Outdoor Shuffleboard – low public interest
 - f. Playground – offered at other parks
 - g. Water park – too much cost and space
 - h. Stage/outdoor amphitheater – probably low use; PAC plan should consider
 - i. Horseshoe pits – cornhole has replaced its popularity; Firepit – liability concerns
8. Required Infrastructure
 - a. Outdoor bathrooms, lighting and power, water and sewer, parking, storage

On January 25th, 2024, CREW members and stakeholders met to discuss the outdoor components of the site. The priority list from October, 2023 was refined and revised into the following program:

1. Add an indoor Aquatics Center
 - a. In October 2024, Town Council and CREW members decided to remove the Aquatics Center from the plan. The proposed community building was downsized considerably and could include a fitness room, therapeutic pool, locker rooms, and a meeting room.
2. Reimagine existing gravel area into defined parking area. Consider permeable pavers. Add parking for aquatics center and other site uses.



Renovated parking lot with permeable pavers



Community Center Park Master Plan

3. Perimeter walking path (ADA-compliant) with benches and stretching assistance equipment.

4. Community garden space, potentially a kitchen and herb garden, children's garden, pollinator garden, shade garden, and/or teaching garden. Add areas for art installation throughout garden and along pathways.

5. Covered picnic table area (possibly with swings). This could be located within the garden space.

6. Multi-use rectangular field (for soccer, frisbee, events, etc.). Town should consider artificial turf if this field is receiving a lot of intense use. Other sports fields will be located elsewhere in the Town.



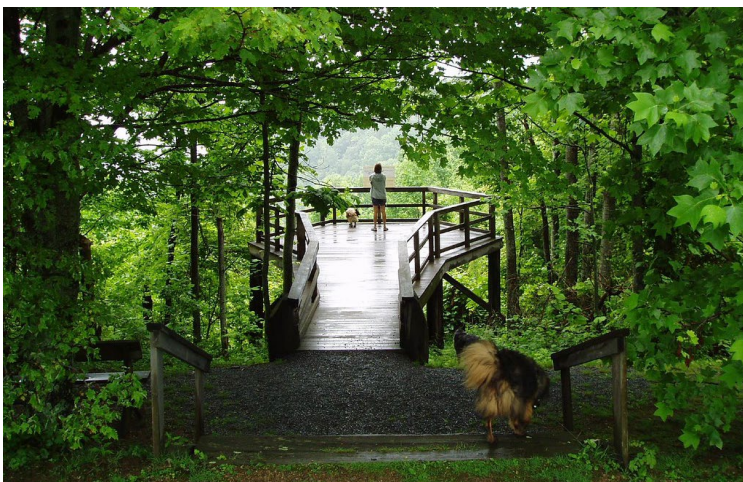
Shade structure



Community Building Precedent



Community Gardens



Trailside river overlook



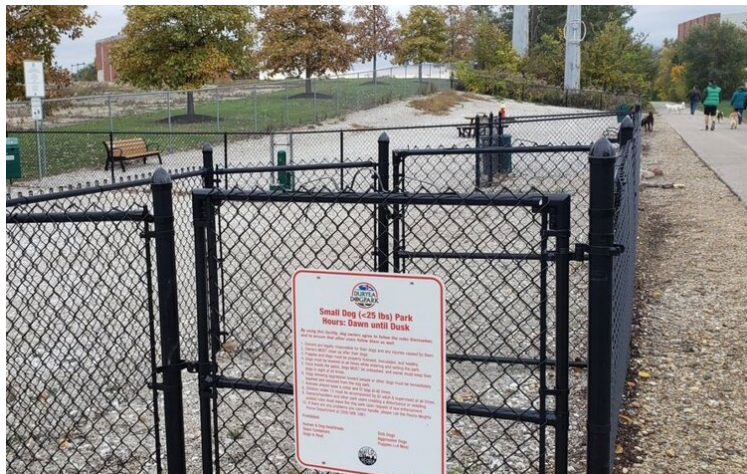
Pollinator Garden





Dog Park Master Plan

One of the items that was consistently mentioned in the September 2023 town-wide survey was inclusion of a dog park. It was determined that Town Park was not the ideal location for this amenity. The triangular-shaped parcel along Orkney Drive/King Street provides a great opportunity for a dog park that will be easily walkable to most of the town residents. This amenity will also include roadway improvements and a sidewalk extension along King Street.



SECTION THREE: **PHOTO-SIMULATIONS**



Photo-simulation- Wunder Street



Existing Condition: Lower Wunder Street



Concept: Lower Wunder Street one-way with sidewalk & curb and gutter.



Photo-simulation - Community Center



Existing Condition: Community Center site



Concept: Renovated parking, native plant gardens, and shade pavilion.

Photo-simulation



Existing Condition: Playground at Town Park



Concept: New enlarged playground with flat rubber surfacing

