Milton Civic Center Design:
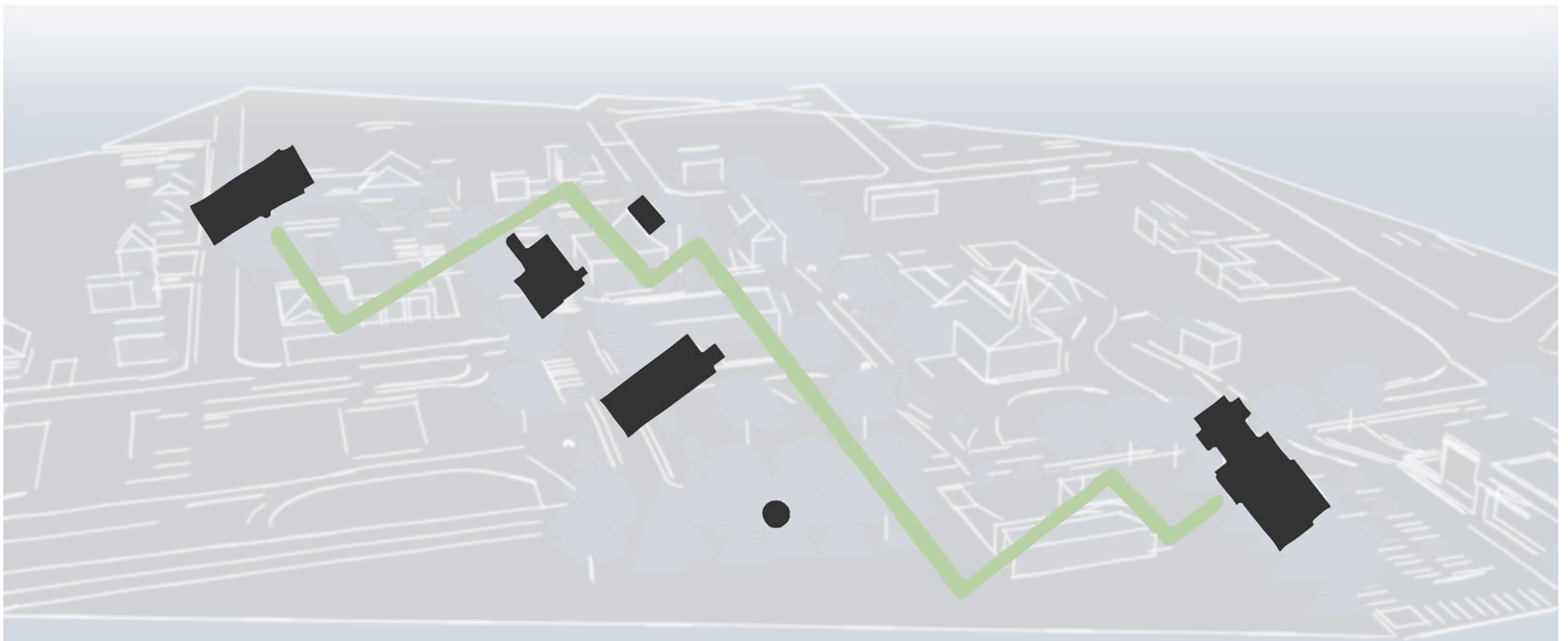## Envisioning a focus of community life

MAY 2015

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Executive Summary

In this report, we are looking at how to improve community life in Milton, Massachusetts through the development of a civic center. We start by looking at questions and ideas from Milton's most recent Master Plan, published in December 2014. The area in Milton where many of their municipal buildings are located does not currently function efficiently. The buildings and uses do not feel connected or create a cohesive environment to foster community life. The problem includes physical barriers and disconnections as well as social barriers created by gaps in programming and lack of opportunities for community gathering. To solve these problems we looked for solutions to the form and the function of the area. We propose combining urban design elements, such as a Civic Center Greenway, and programming elements, such as farmers' markets, to transform the area into a successful and high functioning Civic Center.

Looking across Canton Avenue, Gazebo in the foreground, Town Hall in the background

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Milton Fire Department Headquarters, circa 1890
Source: Milton Architecture (2000)

Introduction

Figure 1: Milton in the Greater Boston area
Source: MassGIS and edited by Evan Sullivan

Project Background

The project "Milton Civic Center: Envisioning a Center for Community Life" stems from Milton's new Master Plan completed in December 2014. As Tufts University graduate students in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning's (UEP) Field Projects course, we are addressing points in the Master Plan aimed at improving the municipal center of Milton. During the Master Planning process, residents expressed a desire for more opportunities for community gathering. Our project looks at how the area including the Milton Town Hall, Fire Station, Police Station, Council on Aging and the Library can be developed to meet the desire of residents. These municipal buildings are located in close proximity off of Canton Ave., but do not feel connected as one visits the area. To address this concern, we worked with the Milton Planning Department and Master Plan consultants to introduce a more cohesive community center to Milton.

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Problem Statement

The municipal center of Milton does not successfully promote community gathering or create a feeling of one cohesive and connected center. We looked at how the existing conditions of the municipal center could be changed or adapted to create a civic center and address the needs for:

- More programming space for youth, adults and seniors;
- A new Fire Station and how to convert the former Fire Station to new uses;
- Space needed for municipal activities (Town Hall);
- Parking and vehicle circulation; and
- Use of the open space surrounding the Fire Station and Town Hall.
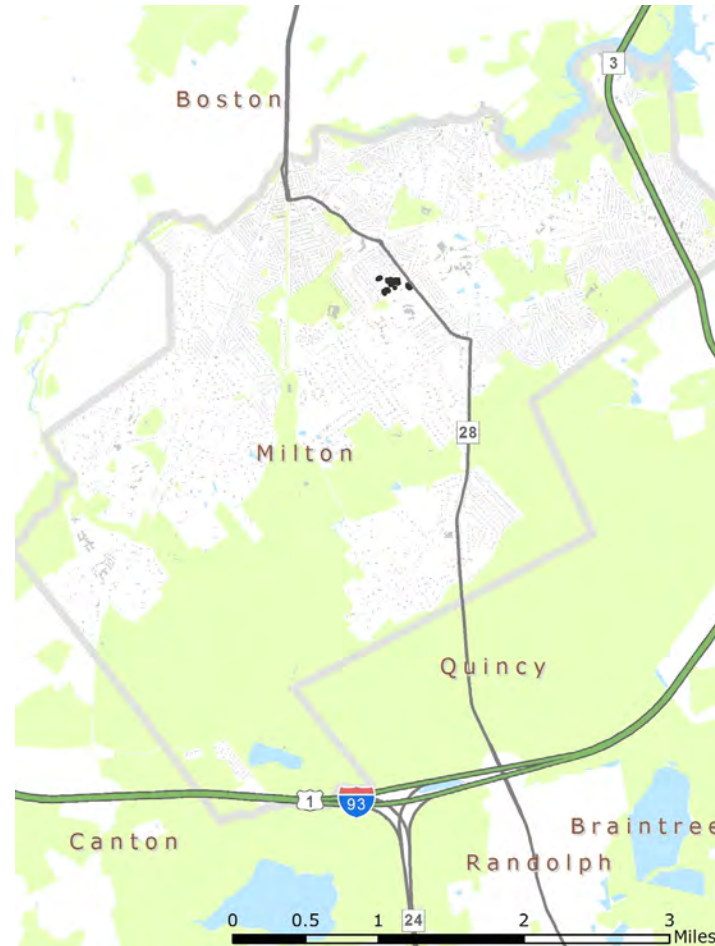
Figure 2: Site area shaded in black within Milton
Source: MassGIS and edited by Evan Sullivan

Our objective is to create a model with recommendations on how to implement and achieve the goals and ideas for a successful town center or civic center outlined in the Milton Master Plan. In order to fulfill this objective, we strove to answer the following questions:

- What are key design elements of a successful civic center?
- What are key programming elements of a successful civic center? and
- How can these design and program elements be applied to Milton's Civic Center?

Demographics

Milton experienced its largest population growth of 75.6% from 1920 to 1930 (from 9,382 to 16,434) and its second largest population growth of 19.7% from 1940 to 1950 (from 18,708 to 22,395). Since the mid 20th century, Milton's population has grown relatively slowly. In 1990, the total population was 25,725 and in 2010 the population was 27,003, a 4.7% increase. Milton town records show that the population in June 2013 was 27,000. In August 2014, the population was 26,048, which reflects a decrease of 952 people in a little over a year.

Based on the 2010 Census report, the minority population is 6,102, or 22.6% of the total population. The total number of households is 9,274, of which 73.7% are families, 26.3% are non-family households and 5.2% are female-headed households with children.

In 2010, people over the age of 65 years represented 15.4% of the total population, while about 42% of the total population was between 35 and 64 years old. Compared with 1990 data, there was a 7.5% decrease in residents over 65 years of age.

The population density of Milton (2,076 people per sq. mile) is higher than that of Norfolk County, the county of which Milton is part (1,679 people per sq. mile) and of Massachusetts (835 people per sq. mile). The median household income is $104,357, which is also higher than Norfolk County ($81,889) and Massachusetts ($62,859). More than half of the households in Milton (53.1%) earn more than $100,000 a year.

Looking over the demographics of Milton, it was important to understand for whom we were planning the civic center area. The high percentage of families in Milton means the space needed to be inviting to children. There is also a large senior population in Milton, with the Council on Aging in the civic center area. The planning needed to apply to a large age range. While the density in Milton is higher than that of Norfolk County and Massachusetts, it is not an urban area. The three commercial squares in Milton provide the higher density of restaurants and shopping. The civic center area is surrounded by single-family homes and is near East Milton Square, but not within walking distance.

Figure 3: Civic Center site layout
Source: MassGIS and edited by Evan Sullivan

Labels visible on the map: Council On Aging, Chemical Building, First Congregational, Fire Department, Town Hall, Library, Gazebo, First Parish

Scale: 0   0.05   0.1 Miles

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Methods

Figure 4: Master Plan summary of Civic Center ideas
Source: Milton Master Plan, Volume I

Master Plan Consultation

The Milton Master Plan provided ideas and background information on the Civic Center area as well as public and resident input and preferences. We used the Milton Master Plan for information on Milton and specifics for the civic center. The plan addresses the needs and preferences of Milton residents and provides ideas for a civic center. We have built on these ideas and provided recommendations and visual representations for a successful Milton Civic Center based on the Master Plan and information gathered in the literature review and research. The Master Plan served as our starting point for the project. We looked for sections specifically addressing a civic center as well as other objectives we felt could be met through the development of the civic center.

We did not conduct interviews or surveys with residents of Milton. The Master Plan is very comprehensive and included information about residents' preferences and ideas from community engagement events. We felt the Master Plan provided the information we would be looking to gather from residents and contacting community members again so soon after the Master Plan process would not provide us with new or additional information not already discussed.

Literature Review and Research

We used a literature review to gather background information on civic centers and successful cases in towns similar to Milton. Our research focused on design and programming elements of successful civic centers. We organized our information into four categories: Design for the Community Context, Clustering Land Uses, Signage and Branding and Promotion. We gathered information to help us answer our key questions listed in Table 2 on page 21.

Figure 5: Looking east on Canton Avenue towards First Parish and Town Hall area, 1872
Source: Milton Architecture (2000)

Analysis

Figure 6: Civic Center Site
Source: MassGIS and edited by Evan Sullivan

Figure 7: Civic Center Site
Source: MassGIS and edited by Evan Sullivan
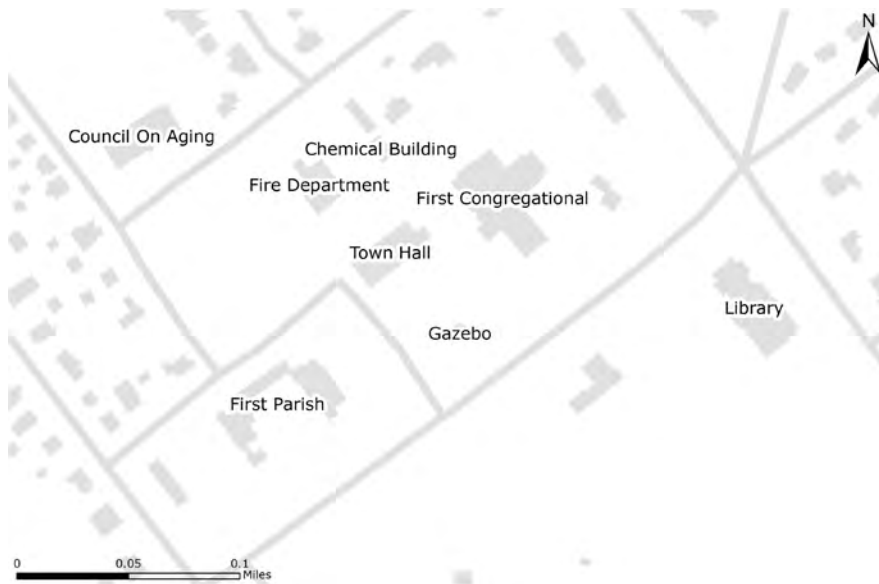
Site Description

Due to the overall scope and mission of our research, our project site was constrained to the buildings and institutions within close proximity to Milton's Town Hall. Although various definitions of Milton's Civic Center do exist, we've defined this area specifically as Milton's Civic Center. The area contains non-profits, religious organizations, two private daycare providers, and municipal offices and services.

The Civic Center is mostly surrounded by single-family homes, although the Police Department and Public High School are also near the Civic Center but outside our project boundary and scope as we defined it. . The Police Station is separated from our focus area by a steep and wooded hill down from the south side of Canton Ave. Streets of single-family houses separate the High School from our focus area. It is suggested that representatives of both the Police Department and High School be members of any advisory or planning committee created for the Civic Center.

The centerpiece of the Civic Center site is Milton's Town Hall. Built in 1970, it stands two stories tall in a clean geometric style. The building features a main façade, on a green space occupied by a gazebo, and looks towards Canton Avenue. Many of the town's department offices are housed in Town Hall as well as public and private meetings. Town Hall is bordered to the east and west by churches and to the north by the Fire Department.

Figure 8: Town Hall

A large green space and gazebo structure (built in 1990) in front of Town Hall borders Canton Ave. The gazebo is officially named the Lira Bandstand, dedicated to two former residents of Milton - a husband and wife couple named Hugo and Edith Lira. The gazebo and green space around it are visible from most areas along Canton Ave, as well as the two nearby churches and Town Hall.

Figure 9: Gazebo

Directly northwest of Town Hall is Milton's Fire Department Headquarters. Constructed in 1888, the building has Richardson Romanesque Revival features, with rough-cut red stone and brick. It stands three stories with a prominent tower. The Fire Station provides shelter to one of Milton's three fire engines as well as the town's only fire ladder. The building has undergone renovations to accommodate the growing needs of town's fire department. Due to the age of the building and need for more space, Milton's fire department is interested in procuring a new building to better equip its evolving fire fighting needs.

Figure 10: Fire Department

Adjacent to the Fire Department Headquarters is the Chemical Building (built in 1881). The structure's unique name is the result of historical legacy, when it previously housed the department's first mobile firefighting equipment that utilized chemical extinguishing agents to put out fires. The overall prominence and footprint of this structure is much smaller than the current headquarters, although it shares a similar architectural style. The building houses local fire department memorabilia and a historic fire engine. The building opens its doors to the public several times a year to feature its historic pieces but the building has numerous issues with ADA compliance.

Figure 11: Chemical Building

To the southwest of Town Hall is First Parish (built in 1787). It is the oldest structure in Milton's Civic Center. Its historic New England style and prominent spire have been icons of the town's municipal center for hundreds of years. As a result of numerous additions, the building spans its property in an encompassing horseshoe-like configuration towards Canton Ave. First Parish houses several groups besides its own Unitarian congregation, notably Muslim and Jewish congregations that also use the church as a place of worship. A daycare center is also housed in part of the building.

Figure 12: First Parish Church

The northernmost structure in the Civic Center area is the Council on Aging (built in 1999). The building serves as a headquarters for the council and hosts popular programming and support services for Milton's seniors. The site is not entirely obvious to a casual observer and maintains a low vertical profile. The architectural style is reminiscent of a large, modern, one-family, one-story residential home.

Figure 13: Counil on Aging

To the northeast of Town Hall and across Canton Ave from the Public Library is First Congregational (built in 1834). Reminiscent of First Parish, First Congregational also features traditional New England architecture and operates a daycare. The church rents several interior spaces of varying size for private functions.

Figure 14: First Congregational Church

The Milton Public Library is the southern most building included in our study. The Library (built in 1902, expanded in 2009) faces Canton Avenue with a Beaux-Arts neoclassical stone and brick construction. The rear of the building is visibly modified with a modern addition that complements the Library's anchor structure built in 1902. The Library offers multigenerational programming and provides a quiet workspace for all residents, from high school students to home-based professionals. The Library is the Civic Center's most popular and heavily used amenity.

Figure 15: Public Library

Challenges

Our Issues Map (see Figure 17) outlines the challenges of our projects site. The goal of our project is to make the area feel cohesive and connect the four municipal buildings in black. The white diagonal line connecting the buildings on the Issues Map shows how they create a diagonal line when viewed from above, as the crow flies. We needed to figure out how to make visitors to the site feel that diagonal connection as they walk from one area to the next as well.

One of the challenges of the existing conditions is the lack of a connected and complete sidewalk network. The Library is separated from the other buildings by Canton Ave. This road can see heavy vehicle traffic at rush hour and during peak times. There are not currently any crosswalks leading across Canton Ave. unless a pedestrian walks to the main intersections. This makes the path from the Library to Town Hall (or vice versa) less apparent and efficient. Once around Town Hall, the sidewalk network only leads into the building and does not connect other buildings or to residential streets behind Town Hall. The Council on Aging is off of Walnut St., which is wide without sidewalks. The lack of sidewalks throughout the site only further segregates the different destinations.

The scattered parking also acts as visual barriers breaking up the space and making it harder to perceive as a connected area. There is no designated bike parking to support modes of transportation other than vehicles. During after-school hours there is an increase in students and children in the area. Many cars idle in the parking lots and around Town Hall waiting to pick up the children. This causes some issues with circulation and perceived parking capacity.

There are patches of green space throughout the site that do not seem to function with purpose or efficiency. The lawn surrounding the gazebo, the lawn behind the existing Fire Station and the lawn to the east of the existing Fire Station are disconnected and underutilized.

Figure 16: Walnut Street, looking southwest towards Council on Aging
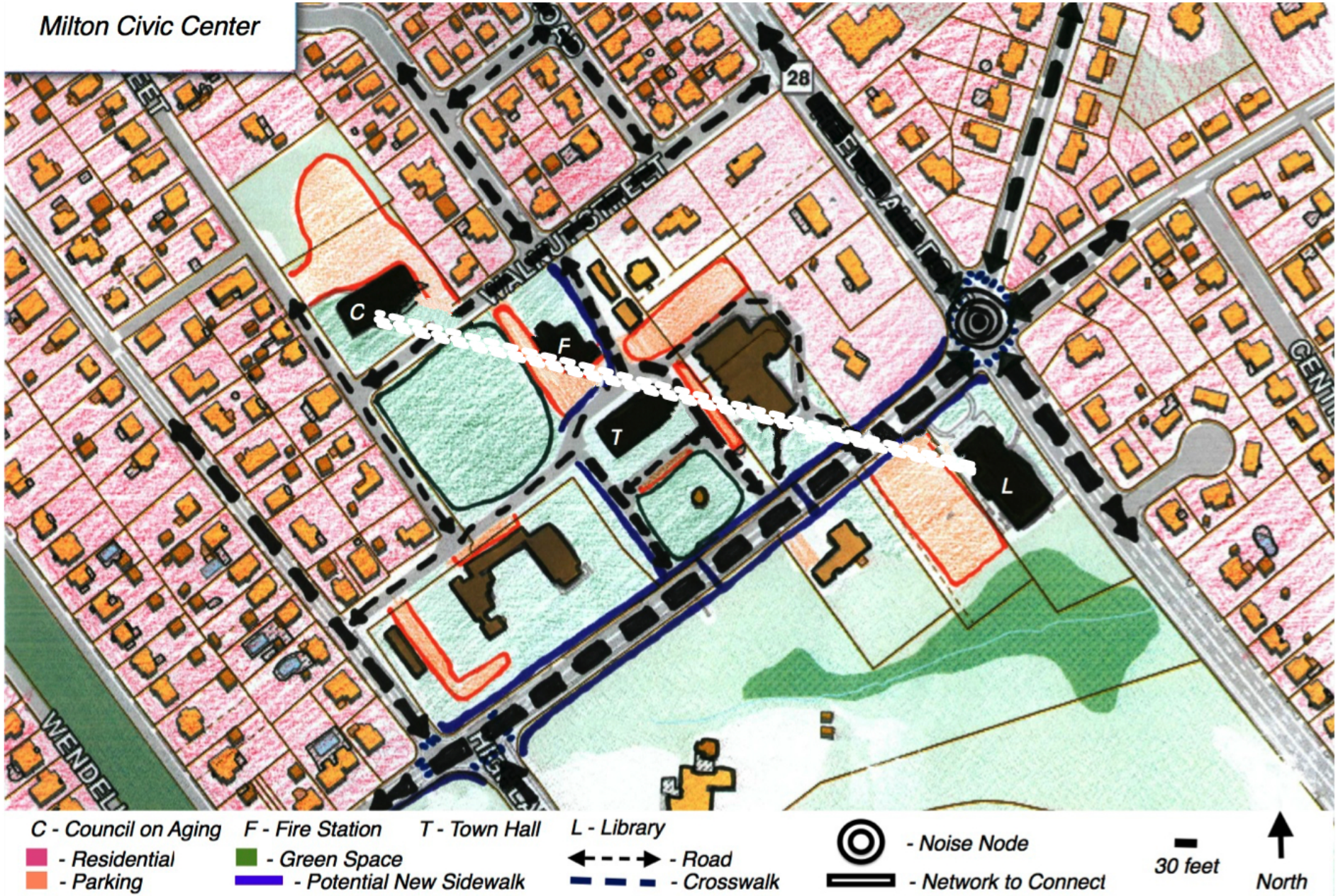
Figure 17: Issues Map
Source: Milton GIS website and edited by Anna Krane
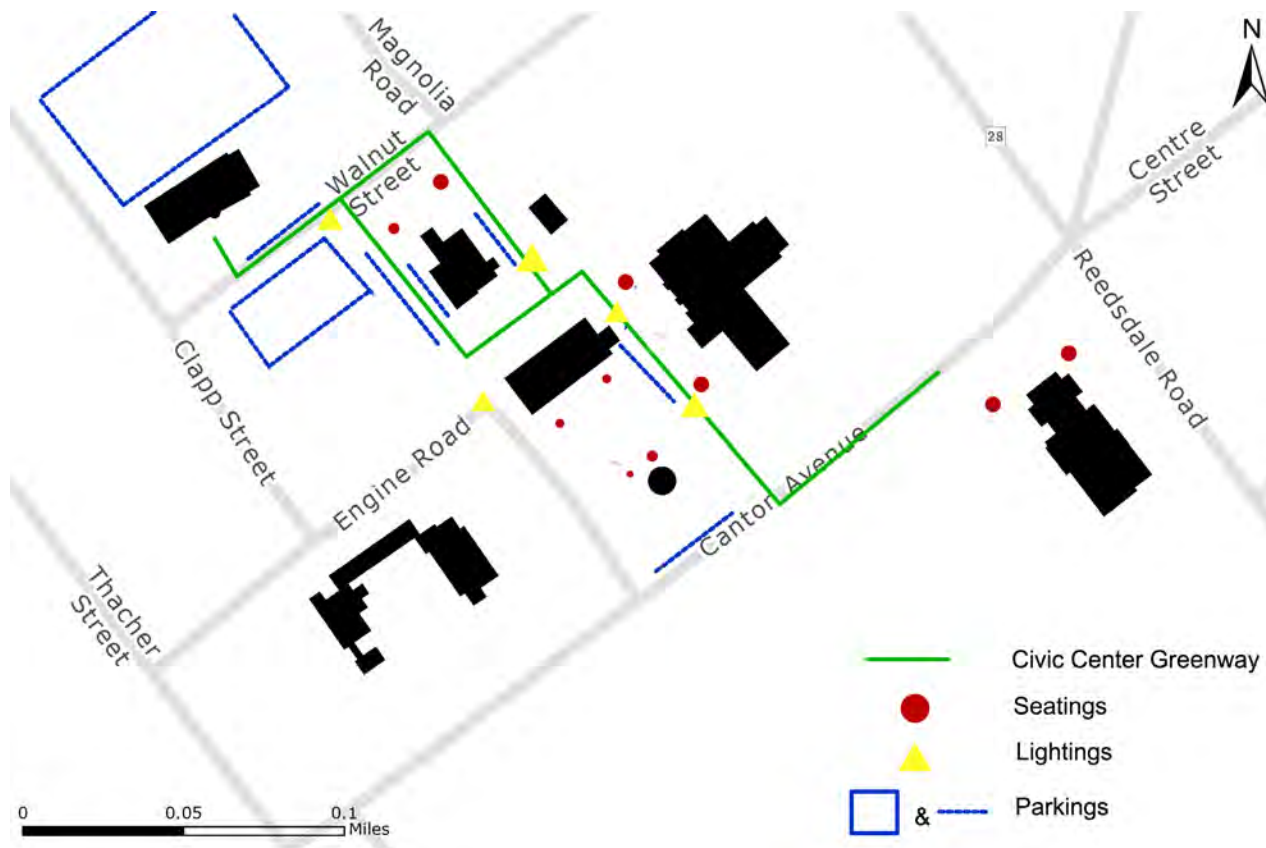
Figure 18: Urban design concept map
Source: Mass GIS and edited by Yaqi Shen

Urban Design Opportunities

Urban design strategies and elements can be used to create visual cues and physical connections between the destinations on the site (see Figure 18). They can also be used to help foster programming and gathering opportunities. We started with the opportunity line for a path and increased sidewalk network. Then we highlighted possible areas for different seating options and lighting additions. Finally, we looked at vehicle circulation and parking throughout the site. Parking will need to be increased as programming in the area is, so how can we provide more spaces without further segregating the area?

Programming Opportunities

Programming provides a route to connect the site in terms of function (see Figure 19). Building on a previously expressed need and a topic of study by the Town of Milton Planning Department, we looked at the possibility of building a new Fire Station and where that could be placed. A new fire station would allow the existing Fire Station to be converted and used for programming. The open space in front of Town Hall surrounding the gazebo provided an opportunity for farmers' markets, food trucks, and social events. Existing green space along Walnut St. could be used to create a playground for the area.
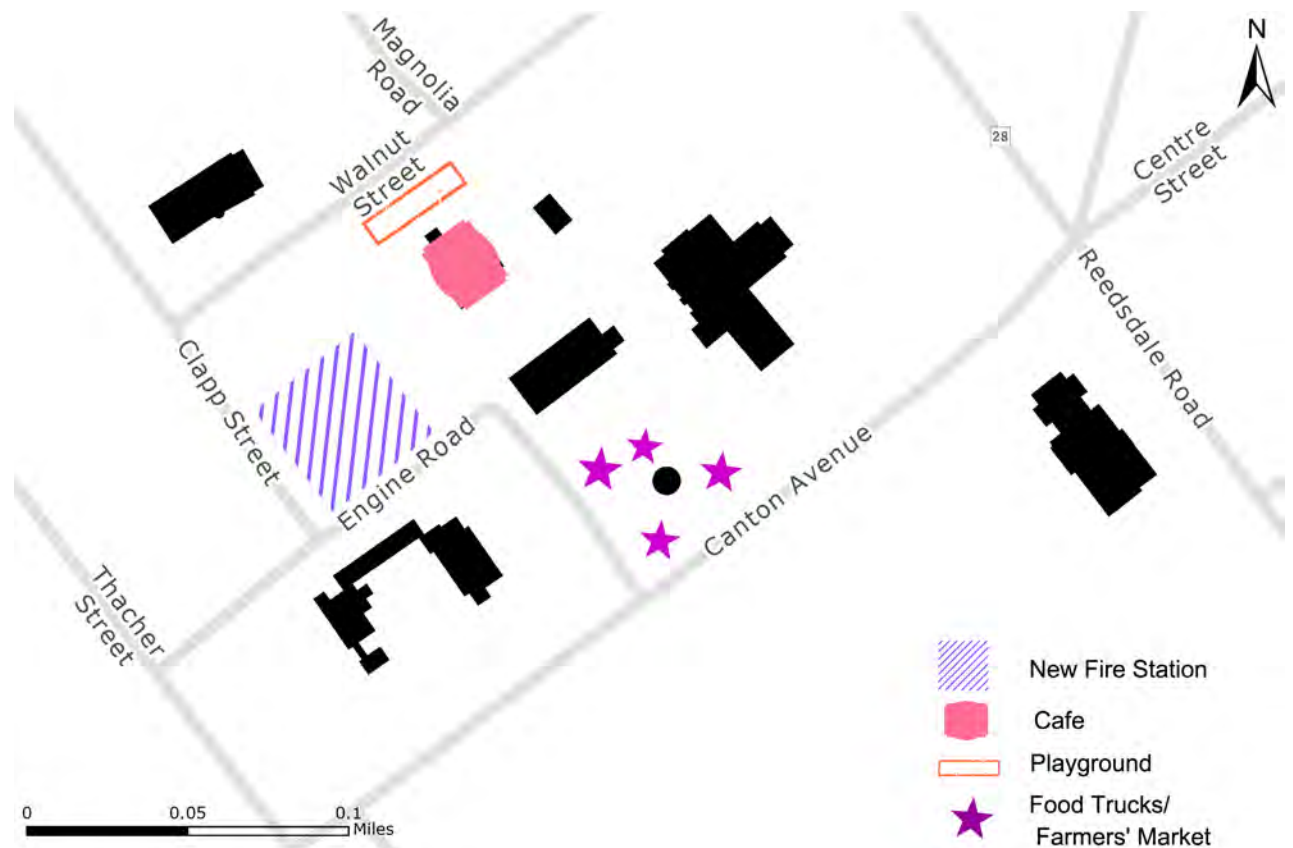

Figure 19: Programming concept map
Source: Mass GIS and edited by Yaqi Shen

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Goals from the Master Plan

Looking through the Master Plan, we were able to pull out important information pertaining to the development of a civic center and fostering community life. The Master Plan had multiple categories or themes that thread through the entire plan for all of Milton. We categorized our goals and themes for the civic center based on some of these categories as well: Transportation and Circulation, Health and Wellness, Economic Development and Residents' Ideas.

Throughout all of these categories are two underlying themes about future development in Milton. In our project we are working to increase and improve connections both physically and socially. Physically we wanted to connect the buildings and landscape of the civic center area and socially we wanted to connect members of the community and resources. We also focused on how to plan for a multi-generational Milton through spatial design and programing for events that support all of Milton's residents, young and old.

Table 1: Goals from the Master Plan

GOALS FROM THE MASTER PLAN	
TRANSPORTATION/ CIRCULATION	o Improve and maintain transportation facilities for all modes (walking, biking, vehicle) o Develop pedestrian network to connect municipal buildings o Address parking capacity issues

HEALTH AND WELLNESS	o Support Healthy Lifestyle
	  • Promote walking, biking, and outdoor activities
	o Community Gathering and Social Capital
	  • Increase community use of existing municipal facilities
	  • Plan for intergenerational activities and programing

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	o Revitalize Commercial Districts
	  • Reuse of Historical fire station
	  • Expand use of gazebo in front of Town Hall
	  • Provide access to food/coffee through café or restaurant
	o Efficient use and programming of municipal building and open space

RESIDENTS' IDEAS	o Make better use of outdoor spaces o Improve pedestrian and bike connection o Benches for friendly gathering o Encourage multi-cultural use of the gazebo o Farmers markets o Include restaurants/café o Central playground o Make area car free (with parking on edges) o Community garden

Key Themes from the Literature Review

We organized the information from our research into design and programming elements of successful civic centers into four themes:

- Designing for Community Context;

- Clustering Land Uses;

- Signage;

- Branding and Promotion.

Each theme contains elements that can be used in the development of the civic center to achieve goals from the Master Plan outlined in the previous section.

Designing for Community Context includes ideas about the planning stages for development: recognizing the target area context, including regional context, demographic information and historical background. These elements are important to understanding how to create a sense of place specific to the town hosting the development. In the case of Milton, it is realizing the difference between developing the municipal center and developing a commercial center. The scale of the development and the environment created stems from the desires of the community and planners. For Milton, we focused on creating a walkable area with small-scale economic development and a focus on programming opportunities.

Figure 20: Informal gathering spaces
Source: Milton Architecture (2000)

Figure 21: Chemical Building, late 1800's
Source: Milton Master Plan

Designing for Community Context included multi-generational planning, which is a main goal from the Master Plan. This includes creating environments that foster opportunities for members of different generations to interact through informal and formal gathering. Opportunities to combine child care and elder care, playgrounds with equipment for children and adults or events planned by high school students and senior community members are all ways to create a multi-generational environment.

Clustering of Land Uses is very important when establishing a sense of place in an area. Providing multiple reasons for people to visit a place draws in more community members and promotes spending longer periods of time there.

Signage is an element of wayfinding. It allows people to navigate an area they are unfamiliar with or can be used to connect buildings that are separated in a space. It is important to understand the target audience of the signage. Signs aimed at catching the attention of vehicle drivers will be oriented differently and usually larger than signs aimed at pedestrians. Signs can enhance an area if they complement the design and structures around them, but signs can also take away from or compete with their surroundings. Understanding the goals and context of the signs allows them to be utilized with positive effects.

Branding and Promotion is important when changing or redeveloping an area, as in the case with Milton. Since there are new opportunities through programing and space in the civic center redevelopment, it will be critical to reach the audience intended to use the space. A good option to reach residents is by connecting the new civic center with the town through website and town newsletters or newspapers. To reach multiple generations, multiple methods should be used. Partnerships with schools in the area is a good way to reach younger generations and families. Online promotion helps to reach teenagers and adults, while traditional mailing or partnerships with senior centers is the best way to reach the aging population.

Table 2: Literature Review Findings

Key themes	Literature Review	Target Goals Achieved
Design for Community Context	o Urbanism • Create Social benefits (café/restaurant) • Improve livability o Multigenerational Planning • Key components apply to all generation • New coalition building opportunities • Civic participation & engagement • Universal design principle: visibility & accessibility for all ages	o Community gathering and social capital o Promote outdoor activities o Promote informal and formal gathering o Improve and maintain transportation facilities for all modes o Residents' ideas
Clustering Land Uses	o Efficient land use design o Strengthen relationship between amenities in area o Municipal uses & events combined with commercial uses & events • Seasonal farmers market	o Economic development • Café, rental space o Make better use of outdoor space (Farmers Market) o Promote walking, biking, and outdoor events o Increase community use of existing municipal facilities
Signage	o Preserve, recapture, or establish character or sense of place o Potential positive of signs • Reflect or enhance surroundings • Matches the character of the business • Conveys references or directional information	o Transportation/circulation • Develop pedestrian network to connect municipal buildings • Destinations along path o Create cohesive environment and civic center area
Branding and Promotion	o The town as a brand o Combination of multiple modes of outreach o Advertise strengths of civic center amenities to residents and visitors	o Economic development o Promote outdoor or indoor activities

Recommendations

Proposed Design

The proposed design turns the existing municipal center in Milton into a thriving Civic Center promoting and facilitating community gathering. The first step to creating the Civic Center is to connect the different spaces (Library, Town Hall, Fire Station and Council on Aging). We are proposing "Civic Center Greenway" as a connecting path. The Civic Center Greenway is a bicycle and pedestrian path connecting the Library and the Council on Aging, while animating other uses along the way.

Figure 25: Before and after, road in front of Fire Department

Figure 26: Before and after, area in front of Chemical Building

We propose building a new Fire Station to the west of the existing Fire Station and using the existing building as civic center for a café and additional programming. We have not designed the new fire station, but sectioned off an area of 175' x 150' for the new building. We used plans of other existing three-bay Fire Stations to determine the area we set aside for the new building.

The existing Fire Station will become the base of the Civic Center area. Retrofitting the existing Fire Station to accommodate a café and community meeting space will allow the history and character of the area to remain. In the open space behind the Civic Center we propose creating the community playground. The area will be accessible from the Civic Center Greenway as well as from the new Civic Center in the repurposed Fire Station.

There is currently a row of parking in front of the Chemical Building, to the east of the existing Fire Station. We propose making the historical Chemical Building more of a destination by removing the row of parking and replacing it with the path leading to the front of the building as well as providing centralized bicycle parking.

To get from the new Civic Center to the Council on Aging, one has to cross Walnut St., which currently does not have any sidewalks or crosswalks. Walnut St. is also very wide for a low traffic residential area. We are proposing narrowing the street by adding sidewalks and some parallel parking along Walnut St. across from the Council on Aging. Continuing the Civic Center Greenway to the front of the Council on Aging will connect the spaces. It will also create an area more inviting to pedestrians. To make the Council on Aging feel even more connected to the Civic Center area, we propose adding a path from Walnut St. to the front door. Moving the main entrance of the Council on Aging from the back where the parking lot is, to the front where the Civic Center Greenway is will make the building more inviting especially to those who do not drive and park in the back parking lot.

Figure 27: Before and after, Walnut St.

Figure 28: Before and after, Canton Ave.

In terms of urban design, one of the biggest changes that can be made to the area is connecting the sidewalk network. We suggest the Civic Center Greenway as a path to connect all of the main municipal destinations in the area, but the path still needs to be accessible. Completing traditional sidewalk networks connecting to the path from other areas such as the high school, police station and neighborhood roads, will also help to bring people to the area and create a sense of place.

Our programming and design will bring more people to the area, which will cause an increase in vehicle traffic. We recommend expanding the existing parking lot to the west of the existing Fire Station. Extending the parking lot over a grassed open space area is a hard decision to make, however we feel this is the best area for the expansion. The existing parking lot to the west of the Fire Station already segregates the area visually, so this is the best perceived area for the parking lot. Currently the site between Canton Ave. and Walnut St. has 52 municipally owned parking spaces. Our parking design changes the location and orientation of some of those spaces as well as providing an additional 70 parking spaces to the site. The parking lots located at the Library and Council on Aging were not included in this count. We feel that these lots can capture overflow parking for large events held at the Civic Center.

We also propose adding more bicycle parking to the area. Two main locations were designated for bicycle parking, but there is also space and opportunity for additional bike racks throughout the site. We would like to create a space that welcomes other modes of transportation and brings visitors from surrounding areas.
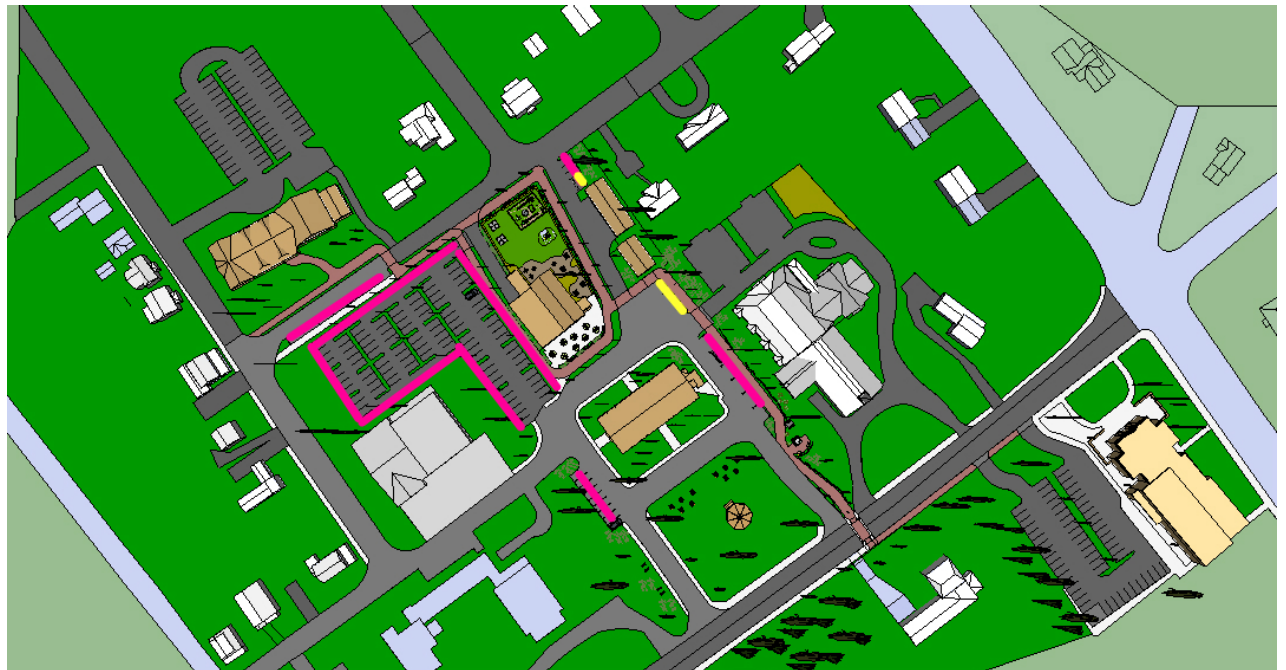

Figure 29: Site plan view, with vehicle parking highlighted in pink and bicycle parking highlighted in yellow

Programming

Most of the new programming we recommend centers around the idea of a new Fire Station. The existing Fire Station is then repurposed into the Milton Civic Center. The new Civic Center is roughly 8,000 square feet, which provides space for many different uses. The first floor where the fire engines were previously stored provides the perfect opportunity for the many lobby and café area. The high ceiling creates an environment welcoming to crowds and activity. This main area also provides a space for a Historical Fire Department display. The display could house memorabilia currently in the Chemical Building, which is not open to the public on a daily basis. The display will provide an attraction as well as pay homage to the historical uses of the building. The remainder of the new Civic Center provides space for community meetings and events. Community members, organizations or businesses can rent out space for parties, events or meetings.

Behind the new Civic Center we propose developing the "central playground" mentioned in the Master

Figure 30: Rendering of café in front of new Civic Center in repurposed Fire Department Headquarters building

Plan. We propose this location because it will be directly connected to the new Civic Center and further develop the sense of place at the core. The playground will be roughly 7,350 square feet. Our design of the playground area includes picnic tables and seating as well as playground equipment for toddlers, children, adults and seniors. The playground is another programming opportunity to increase interactions between different generations.

The Chemical Building is a unique asset to the area. The historical building offers an opportunity for a Fire Department Museum. While there are currently ADA issues that prevent the building from being open to the public on a regular basis, there are still programming opportunities. The first floor houses a historical fire engine, which would be open to more public visits. We propose moving the historical memorabilia currently displayed upstairs to the new Civic Center for display until the building becomes ADA compliant. If the building is not altered to meet ADA standards, Milton can use the upstairs for municipal storage or meeting space.

Figure 31: Before and after, playground behind renovated Fire Department building

Farmers markets and food trucks are a great way to organize opportunities for community gathering. The green space surrounding the gazebo in front of Town Hall is a perfect space for these events. The location along Canton Ave. will provide exposure to many people traveling through the area. This exposure can be used for advertising before the events using large banners and during events as the tents and trucks will be visible. We propose closing the road directly in front of Town Hall during events and allowing the food trucks to line up and serve visitors. This location for the food trucks provides enough space for people to line up and order and is also located in close proximity to the tables and seating proposed on the lawn.

Figure 32: Before and after, playground behind renovated Fire Department building
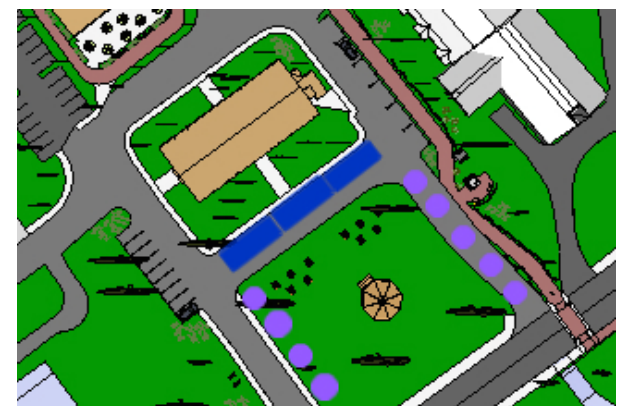

Figure 33: Site plan highlighting food truck and tent locations

We propose using the road to the east of Town Hall between the path and the building for the farmers' tents and stands. This allows the lawn space to remain for crowds to mingle and sit. The gazebo could also be used for musical concerts during this time. Closing the two streets will still allow vehicles, people and bicycles to efficiently circulate in the area and access the main parking lots. Vehicles will be able to access the parking lot to the east of the existing fire station using Engine Rd. or from Walnut St.

When considering programming opportunities, the focus should be on planning multigenerational activities. This idea was a main theme throughout the Master Plan and one we feel can be easily achieved through events and programming at the Civic Center. To launch multigenerational planning from the beginning, one idea for the Civic Center building is to have a mural painting event. Municipal officials can plan this event, but we suggest creating an advisory committee including representatives from the Milton Art Center, the Council on Aging and students from the high school. The

committee will work together to create the design for the mural and then on the day of the event people would be able to paint different sections. All community members and residents will be invited to engage together and paint an inside wall of the Civic Center in the main lobby and café area. The mural will then represent all ages and populations that make up Milton.

Wayfinding

In order to make the municipal area feel like a cohesive civic center site, we propose using different wayfinding strategies. The first step to connecting the buildings is the Civic Center Greenway outlined in the Proposed Design Section. We recommend that the path be constructed of brick or stamped concrete to differentiate it from the traditional sidewalk network. The different material pattern and color helps to create a sense of place and signals to the bicyclist or pedestrian that this path has a purpose. The path leads to destinations and flows only through the civic center area. Connecting the traditional sidewalk network to the path will bring people to

Figure 34: Existing sign along Canton Ave.

Figure 35: Examples of pedestrian-oriented wayfinding
Source: Town of Danville, CA and edited by Yaqi Shen

the area. The change in material from the sidewalk to the path is a cue that you have entered a new space.

In transforming the area into a walkable and pedestrian-oriented site, it is important to have pedestrian-scale lighting. Building on the theme of signs in the area, we propose using wrought iron signs and lampposts. We propose adding banners to the lampposts with the Civic Center Greenway logo to act as a visual cue to visitors that they have entered the Civic Center area of Milton (See Figures 34 and 35). These banners can also include maps with "You Are Here" arrows to show people the configuration of the space and destinations.

Playing off of the maps on the lampposts, directional signs can be added to the corners or intersections along the path or around the Civic Center area (See Figure 35). These directional signs can include arrows pointing toward the different destinations (Town Hall, Café, Library, Council on Aging, Playground, Civic Center, Chemical Building, etc.).

As people navigate the area and the Civic Center Greenway, we propose providing different seating opportunities. Single benches along the path can provide resting points for pedestrians moving from one building to the next. Having benches facing each other can allow people in the area to gather and have conversations. We propose benches and tables in front of Town Hall near the gazebo to allow people to sit and eat outside anytime or during farmers' market and food truck events. We also propose a patio with seating in front of the new Civic Center to extend the café outside creating a "third space." Around the playground area picnic benches allow families and friends to congregate. We also propose some moveable seating in this area. The flexible seating allows people to sit where they would like and groups to move around the area and accommodate different numbers of people. Providing these seating options creates diverse pockets of places throughout the entire site. It also stimulates and allows for different kinds and sizes of informal and formal gatherings.

Figure 36: Movable cafe seating

Figure 37: Bench seating along path

Figure 38: Different types of seating in playground area

Promotion

Our design recommendations extend beyond physical form and function. There are several strategies that can be married with design improvements to catalyze and maintain public life in Milton's Civic Center. These strategies better orient the land use and programming efforts suggested in our design recommendations.

Should Milton's Civic Center evolve, it needs to be represented as a destination that includes public and private resources. Promotion of this idea through branding and various media formats will help visitors and residents recognize the Civic Center's new opportunities available to them. Some formats for this include:

• Public advertising, featured in other areas of Milton would draw new and sustained interest in particular events and services.

• Online presence through a dedicated website, where individuals are able to access updated events, parking, maps, and Civic Center partner information at home or on a mobile device.

• Freely distributed pamphlets that highlight specific themes and upcoming Civic Center calendar events.

Managing Milton's Civic Center and effectively cross-pollinating the area's programming and resources as suggested in our design proposal would require collaboration between Milton's public, private, and non-profit institutions. An advisory committee should be established to enable member institutions to communicate their needs, propose and coordinate programming ideas, and negotiate concerns about competing resources. We also recommend including members of the community on the committee, from high school students to seniors. A uniform approach through these various channels would provide the operational strength behind our design recommendations.

Conclusion

We have proposed using urban design elements and programming to develop a municipal civic center and foster community life in Milton, Massachusetts. Using strategies for multi-generational programing and to design an inviting space for all members of the Milton community, we are able to meet goals outlined in the Master Plan. By connecting the buildings in the municipal area using the Civic Center Greenway, we transform the underperforming and underutilized site into a cohesive and successful environment for community gathering.

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Literature Review

Four overall themes can be derived from the literature review on successful civic centers: Design for Community Context, Clustering Land Uses, Signage, and Branding and Promotion. Each theme outlines design and/or programming elements that are important to high-functioning civic center and planning for successful civic centers.

A. DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Design for Community Context outlines important steps and aspect of the pre-planning phase for a civic center or municipal development. The community context can help to outline the scale of the development, the potential users and/or the opportunities to further community building. Outlined below are important elements to consider about the place the development will take place from the demographics of the community to the physical layout and surroundings.

1. Multilayered context (Soule, 2011)

To understand our target area context, it is important to gather information on the regional context of the potential development, town demographic information and historic background of the area. The background context can then be layered to solidify the importance of the development in a specific town. For success the civic center needs to function as part of the community and blend with the needs of residents and visitors.

"Helping a community begin to understand its historic, cultural, economic, and social context is an essential foundation for developing and building sense of place" (Soule, 2011, p. 2)

    1.1. Include existing uses surrounding the site in the planning phase

    1.2. Design a civic center based on the community characteristics (population, demographic, and linguistic)

    1.3. Preservation of historic structures is seen as a long term investment in Simsbury, CT Main St. area and

Winchester, MA CBD

        • Civic beauty reaffirms sense of place (Simsbury, Ct and Winchester, MA)

        • Reinforce ideas that community values (such as feeling traditional or bucolic)

2. Urbanism: scaled to fit all types of development (Toth, 2012)

Urbanism is a way to scale and orient the site development. Different densities of uses, buildings, parking and open space create different environments and programming opportunities.

    2.1. Create social benefits (café, restaurant) and improve livability

"True, urbanism reaches is fullest value at higher densities. But the social benefits of having a small center where one can walk to eat breakfast, grab a quart of milk, or hang out and chat with others around a cup of coffee can be achieved even in application of urbanism principles in small – and new – rural villages" (Toth, 2012).

2.2.   Creating a walkable environment is a strategy to bolster commercial activity and site area interest (Winchester, MA)

- Pods of New Urbanism residential development should to be within walking distance of activity centers.

- Livable street design is equally important in all residential places, regardless of population density.

3. Multigenerational Planning (Abu Ghazaleh, 2011)

3.1. Key components of community apply to all generations

- Safe, walkable neighborhoods, range of services nearby (child care, senior center, park, food stores, health care, etc.),

- Opportunity for civic engagement,

- Adequate transportation options.

3.2.   New coalition building opportunities

- Combining child care and elder care

"Studies of such structured interaction between young children and the elderly show children become more helpful, empathize with older people, and develop better self-control as a result" (Abu Ghazaleh, 2011, p. 7)

- Recognize interdependence of generations

Planners can emphasize how generations affect each other to create quality and comfortable community for all.

3.3.   Civic participation and engagement

- Increase public participation

- "Futures Festival" workshop: engage all ages through murals, models, photographs, theatrical displays, other communication media

- Create planning committee involving high school students and seniors as members

3.4. Smart Growth principles

- Centrally locating common destinations (schools, grocery stores, libraries, recreation amenities, playgrounds)

- Promote healthy lifestyle: Bike lanes, sidewalks, parks, open space, recreational space

- "Walk to School Event" Richmond, VA: School district allowed students to chart walking routes for future events

- Complete Streets: Traffic calming solutions, curb extensions, median crosswalks, wider sidewalks

3.5. Universal Design (UD) principles

- V isibility
- People of all ages and ability can access and navigate area freely without barriers
- Zero step entries, wide doorways, street signs, reduced speed limits, sufficient lighting

3.6. Leverage diverse funding streams, interdepartmental collaboration and partnerships with community groups and private organizations (APA, 2015).

- Health related goals have impact on equity of town
- Opportunity to bring different residents and organizations together with common goal
- Can gain community support by allowing community organizations to take ownership of aspect of plan

B. CLUSTERING LAND USES

Two cases from Winchester, MA and Simsbury, CT, which provided successful experience by clustering land uses.

1. Winchester, MA has central business district strategy to encourage mixing land uses near the town's center

   - Commercial and residential areas clustered with civic buildings in to promote efficient land use design - strengthens relationship between amenities
   - New zoning bylaws within CBD are less strict in order to fast track mixing land uses

2. Simsbury, CT "Main St." area and civic area clustered with civic resources and small shopping plazas

   - Seasonal farmers market
   - Town Clerk (Town Hall), Fire Department, and Public Library all in "town center"

C. SIGNAGE

Signage is also an important part of civic center design. The successful signage design and engagement will affect driver/pedestrian/bicyclist behavior, create a cohesive space and enhance surroundings.

1. "Context Sensitive Signage Design" (Morris, 2001)

   1.1. Factors that affect driver behavior and sign effectiveness

   - Visibility: how distinguishable a sign is from its background/surroundings
   - Legibility
   - Recognition or readability: is the sign understandable, can a reader make sense of it

1.2.	Sign deficiencies

•Too much information or irrelevant information

•Too many competing signs

•Missing navigational information

• Poor placement

• Poor legibility

1.3.	Signs can be used as urban design technique to help preserve, recapture, or establish character or sense of place

• Signs differ based on context

• Can stimulate creativity or be bound by standards

1.4.	Potential negatives of signs

• Blocking public views or landmarks

• Out of scale with surroundings

• Contradictory to architecture of buildings

• Overly dominant (location, shape, color, movement)

• Inconsistent (if many signs in area)

1.5.	Potential positives of signs

•Promotes creativity and graphic design

•Reflect or enhance surroundings

•Matches the character of the business

• Conveys references or directional information

1.6.	Sign design principles

• Pedestrian oriented districts: signs oriented to (located and sized) to be viewed by people on foot

• Blend with architectural features of building more less impact

• Breaking free from architecture allows building to be more individualized

• Freestanding signs

- Fit within landscape design
- Low mounting walls, masonry bases, shrubs and groundcover can help sign fit background

1.7. How to approach signage
- Look at relationship between buildings and street /sidewalks
- When buildings line street closely, an envelope is created and individual store's signs add layer to relationship through detail and individuality
- When buildings are pushed back from street, signs need to be larger with less refined detail, can help to bring pedestrian life off of sidewalk
- Additional resources include a public Performing Arts Center, restaurants, stores, private schools, art galleries, and grocers help form an attractive corridor

D. BRANDING AND PROMOTION

1. The Town as a brand

1.1   Promotional print pamphlets, promotional online presence, promotional/unified social media experience (Simsbury, CT)
- Simsbury, CT uses grant money to publish print and digital media
- Advertises strengths of civic center amenities to residents and visitors
- Encourages streamlined programming and advertising with civic resources and private businesses