

Georgia South Village

Transportation Master Plan

May 17, 2019



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Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction





Figure 1: South Village Master Plan Study Area

Introduction

The Georgia South Village Master Plan is the culmination of a collaborative effort between the Town of Georgia, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) to articulate and prioritize transportation and land use strategies that will help to foster the development of a dense, mixed-use, walkable village setting in Georgia’s South Village district. Through technical evaluation and multiple rounds of stakeholder input, a suite of recommendations and an implementation plan were developed and are presented in this Master Plan.

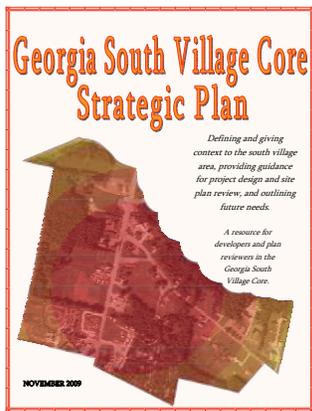
The Master Plan study area includes Georgia’s South Village Zoning District, beginning near the intersection of US 7 and Meadowood Drive, and extends north past the I-89 Exit 18 Southbound on and off ramps to the Georgia Public Library. The study area covered in this Master Plan is shown in Figure 1.

1.1 Project Background

The vision of a vibrant and livable South Village District is the result of many years of planning and public engagement led by the Town of Georgia and the NRPC. The South Village area is intended to complement the historic Georgia Center village by providing a second village center with higher density, complementary land uses, connected street and sidewalk networks, and engaging streetscape characteristics.

A number of studies have been conducted over the past 15 years that have identified recommendations for the South Village area. These studies were reviewed at the outset of this Master Planning process and are summarized below:

- The **2003 Georgia Village Plan**¹ laid out the initial framework for a conceptual Town Center in the South Village. This plan recommended changes to the Town Plan, updates to the Zoning Regulations, and encourages the creation of a Master Plan. The need for outdoor gathering spaces, and concentrated, diverse development at a scale that aligns with the surrounding Town of Georgia was emphasized in the plan.
- In 2006, the **Georgia Town Center Economic Feasibility Study and Master Plan**² was completed to better understand the growth potential given the preferred recommendations specified in the 2003 Village Plan. This study found that the scale of development proposed in the 2003 study was inflated and not economically feasible in 20 years. The previous growth assumption of 15 million square feet of new commercial and industrial space was unrealistic. Instead, this economic feasibility study proposed new industrial and commercial growth of 400,000 to 600,000 square feet over 20 years, assuming that water and sewer access becomes publicly available during this timeframe.



- The **Georgia South Village Strategic Plan**³, developed in 2009 by the Georgia Planning Commission, articulated the purpose of the South Village Core District as providing a “concentrated core settlement of small scale commercial, civic, and residential uses in a traditional Vermont village setting”. Development in the District should be guided by smart growth principles which maintains historic development patterns, accommodates transportation mode choice, protects environmental resources, and balances growth with the availability of public utilities and services. This plan also provided standards for building form to be used in the South Village. These standards included two- to three-story buildings with fenestration along the ground floor and Vermont-style pitched roofs. Streetscapes with little to no building setback, inclusion of streets trees, and wide sidewalks are also prescribed by this plan.

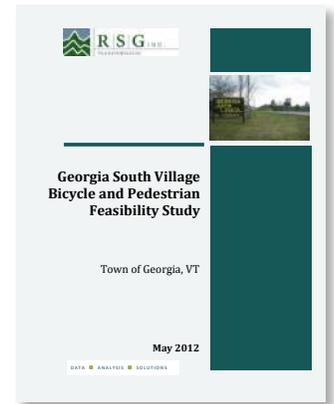
¹ Georgia Village Plan: A Vision for the Future, Lamoureux & Dickinson Consulting Engineers and SE Group. Vermont. April 2003.

² Georgia Town Center Economic Feasibility Study and Master Plan, Crane Associates, LLC. Vermont. 2006.

³ Georgia South Village Strategic Plan, Georgia Planning Commission. Georgia, VT. November 2009.

- In 2012, the **Georgia South Village Bicycle and Pedestrian Feasibility Study**⁴ was completed and recommended specific paving and sidewalk improvements along US 7 and VT 104A. These improvements included constructing sidewalks on Ballard Road, US 7, and VT 104A, pavement reclamation of VT 104A with new striping to include five-foot shoulders, and installation of shelters and bike racks at the existing Exit 18 Park and Ride.
- The **US Route 7 / VT 104A Intersection and VT 104A Bridge No. B1 over Arrowhead Mountain Lake Scoping Study**⁵ was completed in 2013 and examined three alternatives at the intersection of US 7 and VT 104A: 1) No Build, 2) Signalized Intersection, and 3) a Single-lane Roundabout. The roundabout was recommended as the preferred alternative due to its traffic calming benefits and superior safety enhancements while operating comparably to the signalized intersection.
- The Town of Georgia's **2013 Development Regulations**⁶ laid out design criteria and guidelines for the South Village Core in Section 3.7. These regulations built upon the recommendation from the 2009 South Village Strategic Plan, encouraging buildings close to the street with aesthetically pleasing architecture and signage, pedestrian scale lot lighting, and compact development patterns. Special attention was also paid to accessibility and mobility for all modes of travel. Criterion 4 ensures that all permitted development allows for the Town to build a safe and more robust public road network. Under this criterion, proposed streets must connect to an adjacent parcel and align with the 2009 Conceptual Future Road Layout which was developed as part of the 2009 Georgia South Village Strategic Plan.
- **Town of Georgia, Vermont 2017 Comprehensive Municipal Plan**⁷ is the most recent planning document reviewed for this Master Plan. This document provides the legal framework for any project taking place in the Town of Georgia. The following Economic Development Policies are particularly relevant to the Georgia South Village Master Plan:
 - *B-1) To promote a diversified and stable economy by encouraging compatible industrial and commercial development...*
 - *B-2) To provide necessary infrastructure to accommodate more intensive land uses within areas designated for such growth...*
 - *B-5) To enhance and protect the vitality of Villages and population centers as important community assets.*

The Municipal Plan recommends that a study of the South Village Zoning District assess changes to Development Regulations and Zoning, as well as investigate future use of form-based code and/or design standards in this area.



⁴ Georgia South Village Bicycle and Pedestrian Feasibility Study, RSG, Inc. Vermont. May 2012.

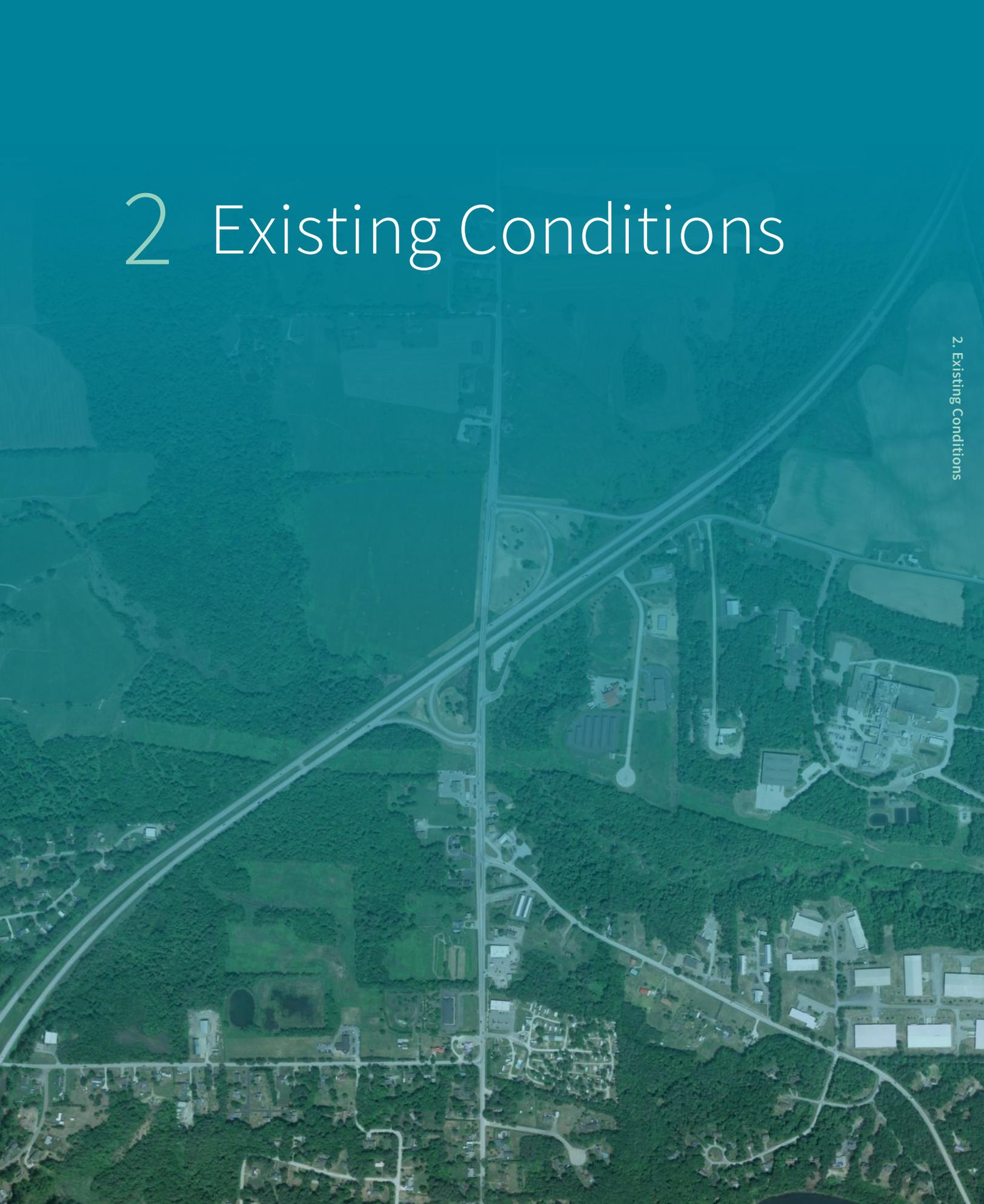
⁵ US Route 7 / VT 104A Intersection and VT 104A Bridge No. B1 over Arrowhead Mountain Lake Scoping Report, VHB. Vermont. 13 September 2013.

⁶ Town of Georgia Development Regulations, Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Vermont. 14 October 2013.

⁷ Town of Georgia, Vermont 2017 Comprehensive Municipal Plan, Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Vermont. Adopted 9 January 2017.

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2 Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions

The Georgia South Village Transportation Master Plan focused on the area around US 7 between the Georgia Public Library to the north and Meadowood Drive to the south. The project area extends east and west from US 7 as shown in Figure 1. The project area includes the intersections of US 7 and Ballard Road, US 7 and VT 104A, US 7 and I-89 Northbound Ramps, and US 7 and Skunk Hill Road. In the South Village, US 7 is a two-lane roadway with a speed limit of 40 miles per hour (mph) and left turn lanes at VT 104A and the I-89 ramps. The following sections describe this area in greater detail regarding traffic operations, safety, land use, and natural resources.

2.1 Existing Transportation Network

2.1.1 Description of Roadways

The major roadways analyzed as part of this Master Plan are US 7, VT 104A, and Ballard Road. The key characteristics of these roads are presented below.



2.1.2 Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes along US 7 vary greatly throughout the project area, mainly due to the interchange bringing large pulses of traffic through small sections of the South Village roadway network. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) along US 7 is shown for each segment in Table 1.

Table 1 | Average Annual Daily Traffic Along US 7⁸



Current traffic data is available through the VTrans Transportation Data Management System for the intersections of US 7 and VT 104A, US 7 and I-89 Northbound and Southbound Ramps, and US 7 and Skunk Hill Road. These volumes were brought to an existing conditions year of 2018 using VTrans standard Design Hour Volume methods. Design Hourly Volume (DHV) criteria allow roads to be designed for the 30th highest hourly volume of the year. Historical data from the closest, most comparable VTrans Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) stations in the South Village area were reviewed to establish appropriate DHV adjustment factors. These traffic volumes were used to conduct a traffic analysis of the existing conditions. The results of the analysis are provided in Table 2 for both the weekday morning and evening peak hours.

Table 2 | 2018 Weekday Morning and Evening Peak Hour Traffic Operations

INTERSECTION	PEAK HOUR	OVERALL LEVEL OF SERVICE	AVERAGE VEHICLE DELAY (seconds)	MAXIMUM APPROACH v/c*
US 7 and VT 104A	Weekday AM	C	10.8	0.75
	Weekday PM	B	9.8	0.74
US 7 and I-89 NB Ramps	Weekday AM	A	3.2	0.32
	Weekday PM	C	51.6	1.20
US 7 and Skunk Hill Road	Weekday AM	B	1.1	0.32
	Weekday PM	A	0.5	0.34
US 7 and I-89 SB Ramps	Weekday AM	A	3.9	0.38
	Weekday PM	B	4.7	0.51

*volume to capacity ratio

⁸2015 (Route Log) AADTs - State Highways, Vermont Agency of Transportation, 2016.

2.1.3 Safety Analysis

A comprehensive safety analysis was completed to evaluate historic crash data trends and identify designated High Crash Locations (HCLs) within the project area. Based on a review of the 2012-2016 VTrans High Crash Location Report⁹, there were two HCL segments identified in the project area. The two HCL segments are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3 | 2012-2016 High Crash Location Summary

ROUTE	MILEMARKER	AADT	CRASHES	INJURIES	PROPERTY DAMAGE ONLY	CRITICAL RATE	ACTUAL RATE	RATIO (ACTUAL/CRITICAL)	RANKING
Sections									
US-7	0.68 - 0.98	6200	8	4	4	2.069	2.357	1.139	612
US-7	1.08 - 1.38	7362	27	3	24	1.984	6.669	3.377	22

Individual crash data along US 7, VT 104A, Ballard Road, and the I-89 Exit 18 ramps were examined for the period of 2012 to 2016. In these 5 years, there were 90 total reported crashes in the South Village district. Of these 90 crashes, 26% occurred along a roadway segment while 24% occurred at an intersection. This is likely due to the frequent need to stop along US 7 for vehicles turning into and out of the numerous driveways along US 7 through the project area. A map summarizes the crash data in Figure 2, while detailed crash data are provided in the Appendix.

2.2 Existing Land Use

The existing land use pattern along US 7 through Georgia’s South Village District reflects the incremental suburbanization of this formerly rural highway corridor that has been underway since the 1970s.

Currently, South Village has a mixed development pattern of agricultural, residential and commercial uses that lacks coordination and cohesion. Widely variable lot size and width along with inconsistent building placement, height, scale and form conflict with traditional Vermont village center aesthetics. Several commercial buildings are located more than 50 feet back from the road right-of-way, while others are set back less than 10 feet as a result of the adoption of zoning and its various iterations in subsequent years.



Figure 2

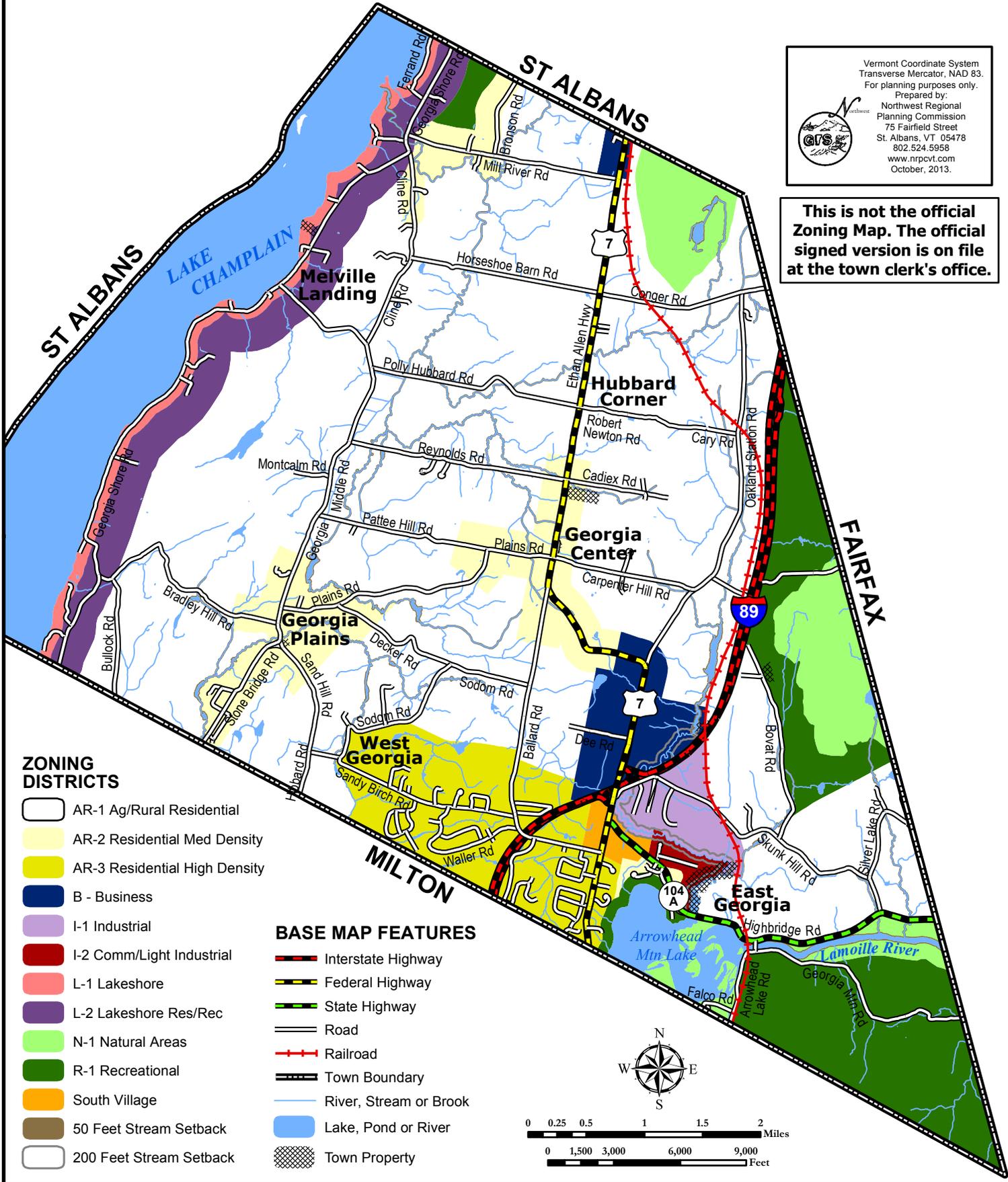
⁹High Crash Location Report: Intersections and Segments (2012-2016), Vermont Agency of Transportation, 2017.

ZONING MAP

TOWN OF GEORGIA, VERMONT

Vermont Coordinate System
 Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.
 For planning purposes only.
 Prepared by:
 Northwest Regional
 Planning Commission
 75 Fairfield Street
 St. Albans, VT 05478
 802.524.5958
 www.nrpcvt.com
 October, 2013.

**This is not the official
 Zoning Map. The official
 signed version is on file
 at the town clerk's office.**

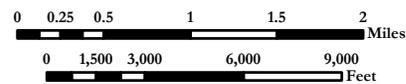


ZONING DISTRICTS

- AR-1 Ag/Rural Residential
- AR-2 Residential Med Density
- AR-3 Residential High Density
- B - Business
- I-1 Industrial
- I-2 Comm/Light Industrial
- L-1 Lakeshore
- L-2 Lakeshore Res/Rec
- N-1 Natural Areas
- R-1 Recreational
- South Village
- 50 Feet Stream Setback
- 200 Feet Stream Setback

BASE MAP FEATURES

- Interstate Highway
- Federal Highway
- State Highway
- Road
- Railroad
- Town Boundary
- River, Stream or Brook
- Lake, Pond or River
- Town Property



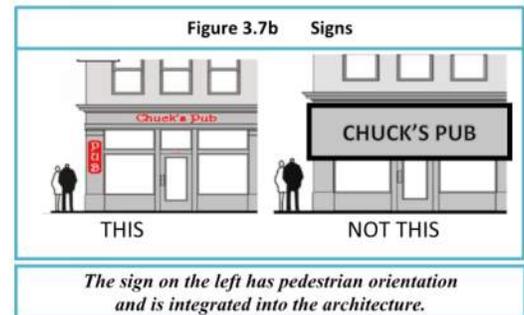
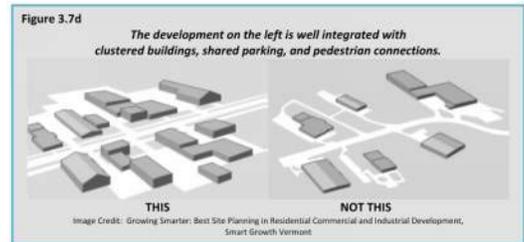
The built form is auto-oriented with vehicular access and parking areas dominating the street frontage on most commercial properties. Although more recently developed sites were required to locate parking to the side rather than in front of the building, parking areas still abut the street. In addition, several commercial properties have excessively wide curb cuts (50 feet wide or more) or uncontrolled access from the highway. There is little to no streetscaping or front yard landscaping on commercial properties to screen and soften the visual impact of vehicular access and parking.

Designed with a 40-mph speed limit, US 7 prioritizes efficient flow of through traffic to and from the interstate rather than functioning as a main street in a village setting, where pedestrian and local traffic movements would be given priority. There is not an existing sidewalk network in the South Village district, although three discontinuous sidewalk segments have been built along US 7. Each of these segments is on private property outside of the highway right-of-way in accordance with zoning requirements as part of recent development projects (Dollar General, People’s Trust Company, and Maplefields).

2.3 Current Zoning

The currently adopted South Village Core zoning district significantly altered the development standards for this area with the intention of implementing recommendations from the 2009 South Village Core Strategic Plan. The stated intent of the district is to provide “a concentrated core settlement of small-scale commercial, governmental, and residential uses in a traditional Vermont village setting.” The adopted zoning seeks to create the village character by requiring new buildings to be: (a) sited close to the street using a 15-foot maximum setback; and (b) multi-story with a minimum of 2 habitable stories.

Georgia’s Development Regulations incorporate design guidelines for the South Village Core zoning district so that future development will conform to the desired character described in the 2009 Strategic Plan. Several commercial projects have been subject to these standards since their adoption and their influence on building and site design is evident. For example, the recently constructed Dollar General remains suburban highway commercial in character (single-story, single-use building with a site dominated by parking), but the building placement (shallow setback and side parking lot), the building design (faux second story and shopfront windows, cornice treatment, variation in cladding materials to mimic structural and architectural elements), and construction of a front sidewalk are concessions to the desired village center character.



South Village District Land Use Recommendations
(Source: 2013 Town of Georgia Development Regulations)



The intent and standards of the adopted South Village Core zoning district and the associated design guidelines attempt to guide development in a specific direction and transform the existing development pattern. However, other factors are at work counteracting the stated intent of the zoning district, including: (a) the sewer infrastructure needed to support development at village densities is not in place; (b) the current function and character of US 7 is a thoroughfare highway and not a pedestrian-oriented village main street; (c) the zoning continues to allow for buildings with a footprint of up to 20,000 square feet that are larger than typical village-scale buildings; and (d) the recent projects that have further reinforced a suburban commercial development pattern.

These factors, particularly the lack of water and wastewater infrastructure, limit the rigor with which the town can apply the design guidelines and still accommodate desired economic development. For example, the guidelines call for mixed-use (residential and non-residential) development, but the envisioned residential uses may not be possible on many properties due to a lack of septic capacity. Given the slow, incremental rate of development in South Village for decades, it is also not clear that the market will support the form and density of non-residential development envisioned in the 2009 Strategic Plan, particularly without considerable public investment in infrastructure to facilitate that private development.

2.4 Natural Resources

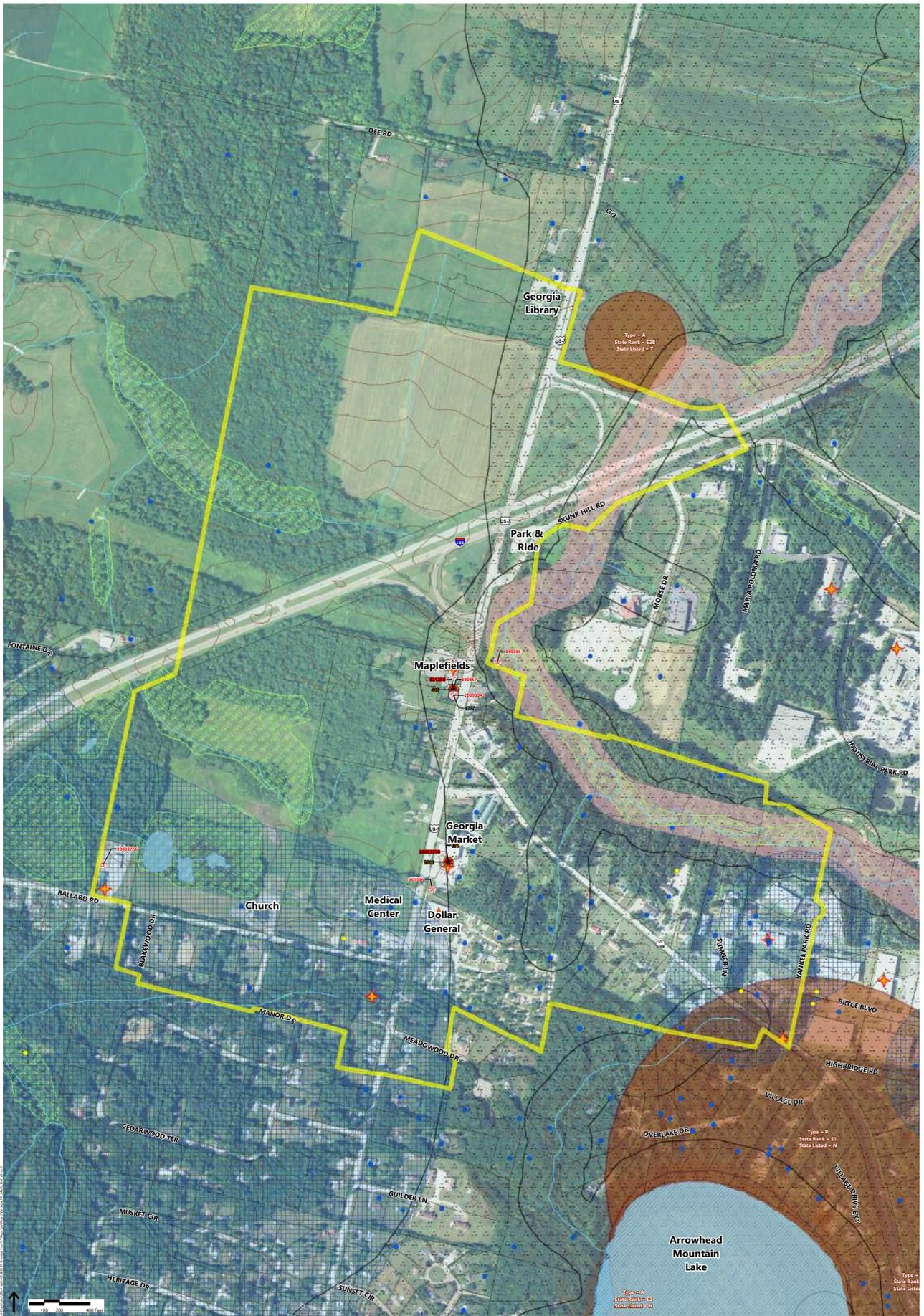
A review of natural resources within the project area was conducted and an overview is provided below. Information regarding the location of these resources was gathered from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Online Natural Resources Atlas¹⁰ and summarized in a map provided in Figure 3.

Rivers/Streams: The Deer Brook is located northeast of VT 104A. This stream flows southeast to Arrowhead Mountain Lake. Northwest of the US 7 / VT 104A intersection, the Deer Brook has experienced erosion from excess runoff and a large gully has formed.

Wetlands: Class 2 Wetlands are located along Deer Brook and in the area between I-89 and Ballard Road. Various Wetland Advisory Areas also exist in these areas.

Soils: The majority of soils within the South Village District are Prime Agricultural Soils. Most are Statewide or Prime (b).

Hazardous Sites: Georgia Market and Maplefields are categorized as active hazardous sites because of the presence of gas stations.



Georgia South Village Transportation Master Plan | Georgia, Vermont

Figure 3

Natural Resource Map

Sources:
 National Imagery by USGS (Collected in 2016)
 VCGI (Vermont Center for Geographic Information - Various Dates)
 AED (Vermont Agency of Natural Resources - Various Dates)
 FWD (Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department - 2018)
 VTState (Vermont Agency of Transportation - 2020)
 FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency - 1981)

- Project Area
- Public Well (ANR)
- Private Well (ANR)
- Hazardous Waste Site (ANR)
- Active
- Closed
- Unknown
- ▲ VT Brownfield (ANR)
- ▲ RCRA - VT
- ▲ Underground Storage Tank (ANR)
- ▲ Active
- ▲ Pulled
- ▲ Unknown
- Landfill (ANR)
- Closed*
- Active*
- Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (ANR)
- River Corridor (ANR)
- Ground Water Protection Area (ANR)
- Surface Water Protection Area (ANR)
- Rare, Threatened or Endangered Species (FWD)
- Significant Natural Community (FWD)
- Uncommon Species (FWD)
- 100 Year Flood Zone (FEMA)
- VHD Stream (VCGI)
- VHD Waterbody (VCGI)
- Team Boundary (VCGI)
- Parcel Boundary (VCGI)
- 10ft Contours

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3 Public Participation





A Local Concerns Meeting and Design Charette were held on April 9, 2018 at the Georgia Public Library.

Public Participation

Public involvement was vital to the success of this plan. Georgia residents and business-owners use these facilities every day and provided invaluable insights into the day-to-day operations of the South Village area. Three public meetings were held to gather local input and present the alternatives that were developed based on the initial feedback.

- A **Steering Committee**, consisting of Georgia Town staff, Planning Commission and Selectboard members, Northwest Regional Planning Commission representatives, VTrans staff, and technical consultant team members, served as the main development and review body for this Master Plan. The committee met regularly to review existing conditions, develop alternatives, discuss the alternatives evaluation, and translate preferred alternatives into recommendations and priorities based on public input.
- The **Local Concerns Meeting** was held at the Georgia Town Library on April 9, 2018 as part of a regularly scheduled Georgia Selectboard Meeting. This meeting was very well attended and provided an overview of the study area and goals of the project. Following a presentation of the existing conditions, the public was asked to share their concerns and ideas for potential improvements in this area. The meeting concluded with an interactive session giving the public the opportunity to sketch their ideas onto project maps to inform the alternatives development process. The sentiment received from this meeting was very positive and showed the public's excitement to remain

engaged in the process of envisioning the South Village District into a more walkable, livable, and mixed-use area. Without encouraging too much density, residents expressed their desire for public gathering spaces, more opportunities for restaurants and retail establishments, and the ability to walk safely to these proposed uses. Meeting materials can be found in the Appendix.

- The **Alternatives Presentation Meeting** was held on July 25, 2018 and presented the alternatives discussed in Section 3.5. This was an interactive meeting and included live voting for the attendees' preferred alternatives. At this meeting, some alternatives emerged as clear favorites while others required further refinement and discussion with the project Steering Committee. Various short-term enhancements were discussed as options on the way to the final preferred alternatives. Meeting materials can be found in the Appendix.
- On November 29, 2018, the draft concept plan was presented to numerous **VTrans stakeholders** for feedback on how the recommendations relate to construction responsibilities, stormwater regulations, access management, maintenance, and consistency with previously planned projects. This meeting was an opportunity for the Town to articulate their vision to VTrans, receive input on what is possible within current VTrans standards, and discuss options for future development in the South Village. One recommendation that was received from VTrans was to examine the possibility of reclassifying US 7 in this vicinity as a Class 1 Town Highway. Class 1 Town Highway designation would allow the town to effectively take over this segment of US 7, with particular responsibility for any changes to the streetscape along US 7. VTrans also provided guidance on how the Town and NRPC can begin to find funding and plan for implementing elements of the preferred concept plan.
- A third **public meeting** was held on February 20, 2019 to present the draft preferred concept plan to the public and Selectboard as well as collect additional feedback on the preferred treatment at the intersection of US 7 and VT 104A. At this meeting, it was expressed by the public that this intersection is of the highest concern in the project area. A large focus of this meeting was also the need for a Town decision on public water and wastewater service being offered in this area. Without water and wastewater service here, it is unlikely that the proposed development would not be feasible.
- On **Town Meeting Day**, which was held on March 5, 2019, an informal poll was conducted to solicit additional feedback on the intersection of US 7 and VT 104A. A total of 113 votes were cast in this poll. The results showed that 55 people (48.7%) prefer a signal, 53 people (46.9%) prefer a roundabout, and 5 people (4.4%) do not have a preference.
- The Georgia Selectboard, at their April 23, 2019 **Selectboard Meeting**, unanimously endorsed the Georgia South Village Transportation Master Plan. The Selectboard decided to include the signalized intersection at US 7 and VT 104A as the preferred alternative to be included in this plan at this meeting.

4 Alternatives Analysis



Alternatives Analysis

Alternatives were developed for various areas of interest in the village area based on stakeholder input and an evaluation of existing conditions and previous studies. The study area was broken up into particular areas of interest during the alternatives analysis process so that the steering committee and public could look at each area independently and develop alternatives for each area of interest. The alternatives for each area were presented to the public for feedback and were ranked based on preference at the Alternatives Presentation Meeting. The project team then compiled the package of recommended improvements into one cohesive, long-term vision and plan. The alternatives and associated analyses are described in the following sections.

4.1 Baseline Improvements

A set of improvements were identified early in the master planning process that the Town would like to see completed, regardless of other alternatives and recommendations made in the study area. These were compiled into a list of baseline improvements which do not need to go through the alternatives evaluation process. Included in this list are the shortening or removal of the median islands north of Exit 18 near the Georgia Public Library, the construction of a sidewalk on at least one side of US 7 through the South Village, the construction of a sidewalk on Ballard Road, and drainage improvements throughout the study area. These improvements are described further in Chapter 5 and are shown on the preferred concept plan and implementation matrix presented in that chapter.

4.2 Land Use Development Pattern

4.2.1 Alternative 1 – Village Center along US 7

The first alternative presented for the land use and development pattern in the South Village district is the potential for focusing the village center along US 7. This form would encourage dense development along US 7 with parking provided both along US 7 and behind the buildings. To accommodate the on-street parking, frequent pedestrian crossings, narrower lanes, and streetscape amenities such as street trees included in this alternative, it is likely that the Town would need to take on ownership and maintenance of this segment of US 7 as a Class 1 Town Highway.

By taking over maintenance jurisdiction for this +/- 0.5 mile segment of US 7, thereby making it a Class 1 Town Highway, the Town of Georgia would assume responsibility for routine maintenance for this segment of roadway. These maintenance responsibilities include plowing, pavement management, striping, culvert and drainage maintenance, and traffic signal maintenance. If Georgia were to take this on, VTrans would reimburse the Town for this additional length of Class 1 Town Highway at approximately \$11,000 per mile. Based on VTrans’ Cost Analysis for State Highway Reclassification to Class 1 Town Highway worksheet, the net annual cost to the Town, considering maintenance costs and reimbursements from VTrans, would be approximately \$6,000 per year. The reclassification worksheet can be found in the Appendix.

A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 4.

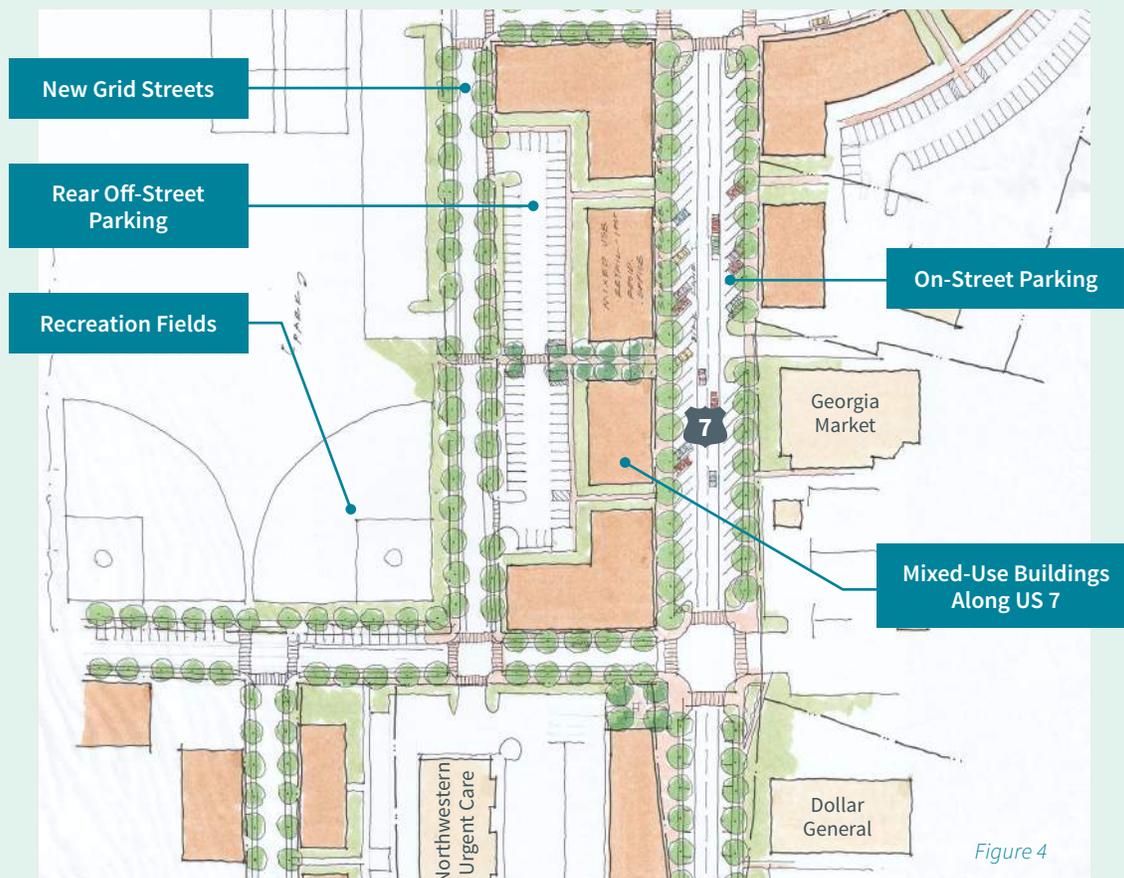


Figure 4

4.2.2 Alternative 2 – Village Center off US 7

The second land use and development pattern proposes a village center located off of and parallel to US 7. This proposed design encourages denser, mixed-use development and parking to be constructed on a grid street network off of US 7. This grid street network would be required in order to provide roadway frontage for new development as well as create the opportunity for on-street parking and multi-modal friendly amenities. This building form proposes a village green to be built on the Fairbanks property on US 7. There is potential for on-street parking along US 7 to be provided adjacent to the village green. As with Alternative 1, it is likely that the Town would need to take on ownership and maintenance of this segment of US 7 as a Class 1 Town Highway to accommodate the on-street parking, frequent pedestrian crossings, narrow lanes, and streetscape amenities such as street trees.

A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 5.

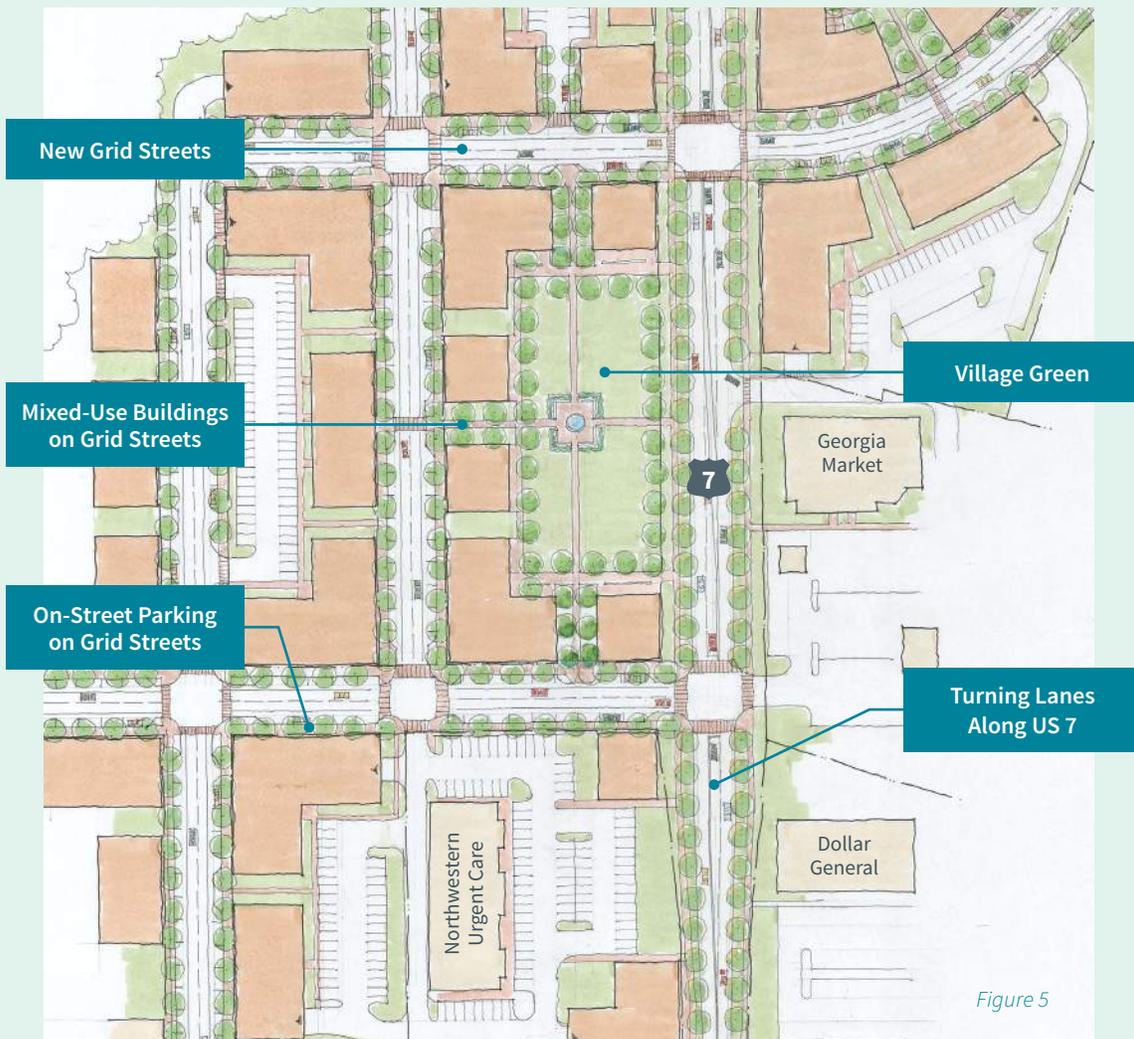


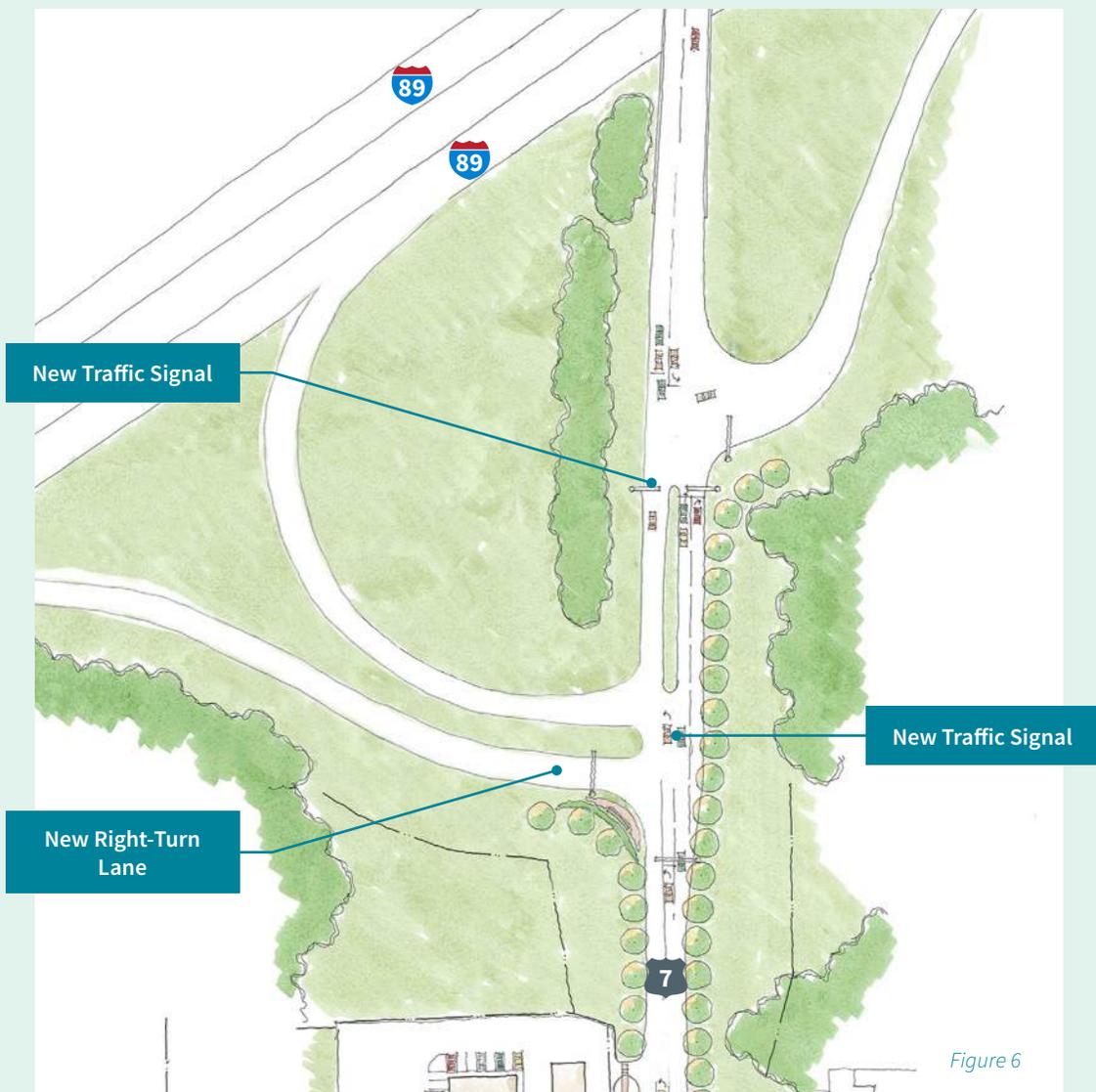
Figure 5

4.3 US 7 / I-89 Exit 18 Interchange

4.3.1 Alternative 1 – Signalize Existing Exit 18 Northbound Ramps

The first alternative generally maintains the existing geometry of the northbound Exit 18 ramps and calls for the construction of a pair of coordinated traffic signals at the northbound on- and off-ramps and at Skunk Hill Road. In addition to the signal installation, a right turn lane would be formalized on the Exit 18 off-ramp to provide additional operational capacity. The two coordinated intersections are anticipated to operate at a Level of Service B in the 2026 weekday evening peak hour.

A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 6.



4.3.2 Alternative 2 – Reconfigure and Signalize Exit 18 Northbound Ramps

A second alternative was studied at the Exit 18 northbound ramps which included a significant realignment of both the on- and off-ramps. In this alternative, it is proposed that the northbound off-ramp be realigned to intersect US 7 directly across from Skunk Hill Road. A relocated northbound on-ramp would then be constructed off Skunk Hill Road and reconnect with Interstate 89 north of the current merge area. In this scenario, the off ramp would be shortened compared to existing conditions, resulting in lowered capacity. The off ramp is still expected to operate adequately, and queues are anticipated to remain reasonable. The reconfigured intersection is anticipated to operate at a Level of Service B in the 2026 weekday evening peak hour.

A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 7.



4.3.3 Traffic Operations

Traffic analyses were completed to compare the operational effectiveness of the two alternatives versus the No Build scenario. A description of the Level of Service, average delay, and volume to capacity ratios in the 2026 weekday morning and evening peak hours at the intersection of US 7 and Interstate 89 Northbound ramps are shown in Table 4. Copies of the full traffic analysis are provided in the Appendix.

SCENARIO	PEAK HOUR	OVERALL LEVEL OF SERVICE	AVERAGE VEHICLE DELAY (seconds)	VOLUME TO CAPACITY RATIO
No Build	Weekday AM	B	11.3	0.75
	Weekday PM	E	48.5	1.18
Signalize Current Intersection Geometry	Weekday AM	A	5.8	0.43
	Weekday PM	B	14.1	0.55
Reconfigure Intersection Geometry and Signalize	Weekday AM	A	7.4	0.55
	Weekday PM	B	11.7	0.63

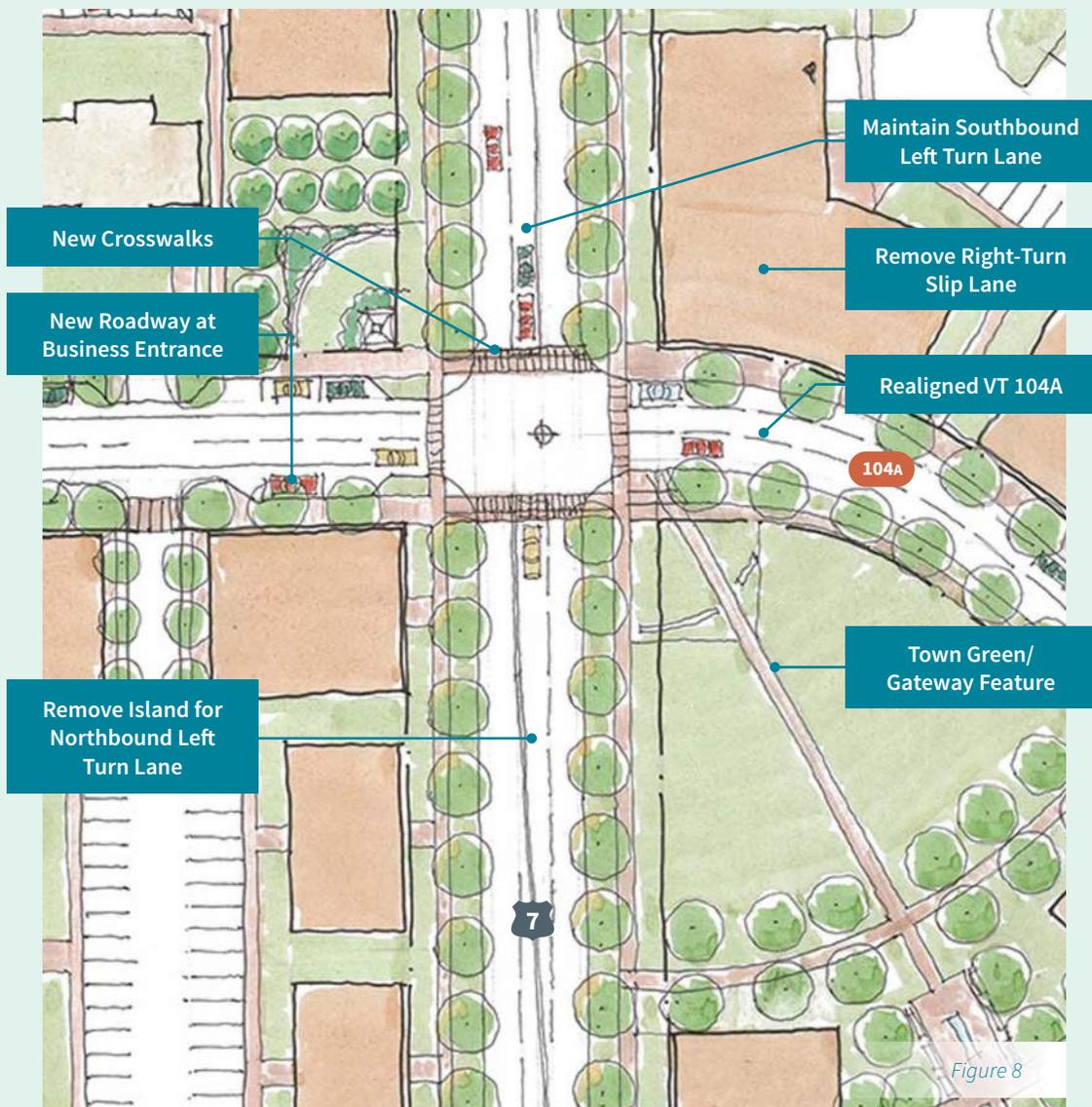
Table 4: 2026 US 7 and Interstate 89 Northbound Ramps Alternatives Traffic Operations

4.4 US 7 / VT 104A Intersection

4.4.1 Alternative 1 – Signal

The first alternative studied at the intersection of US 7 and VT 104A is the conversion to a signalized intersection. The eight-hour vehicular volume, four-hour vehicular volume, and peak hour signal warrants are met with current traffic volumes. In addition to signalizing the US 7, VT 104A, and driveway approaches to the intersection, it is recommended that the channelized westbound right turn lane be removed and incorporated into the VT 104A approach. The signalized configuration is expected to operate overall at a Level of Service A with total average delay of 9 seconds.

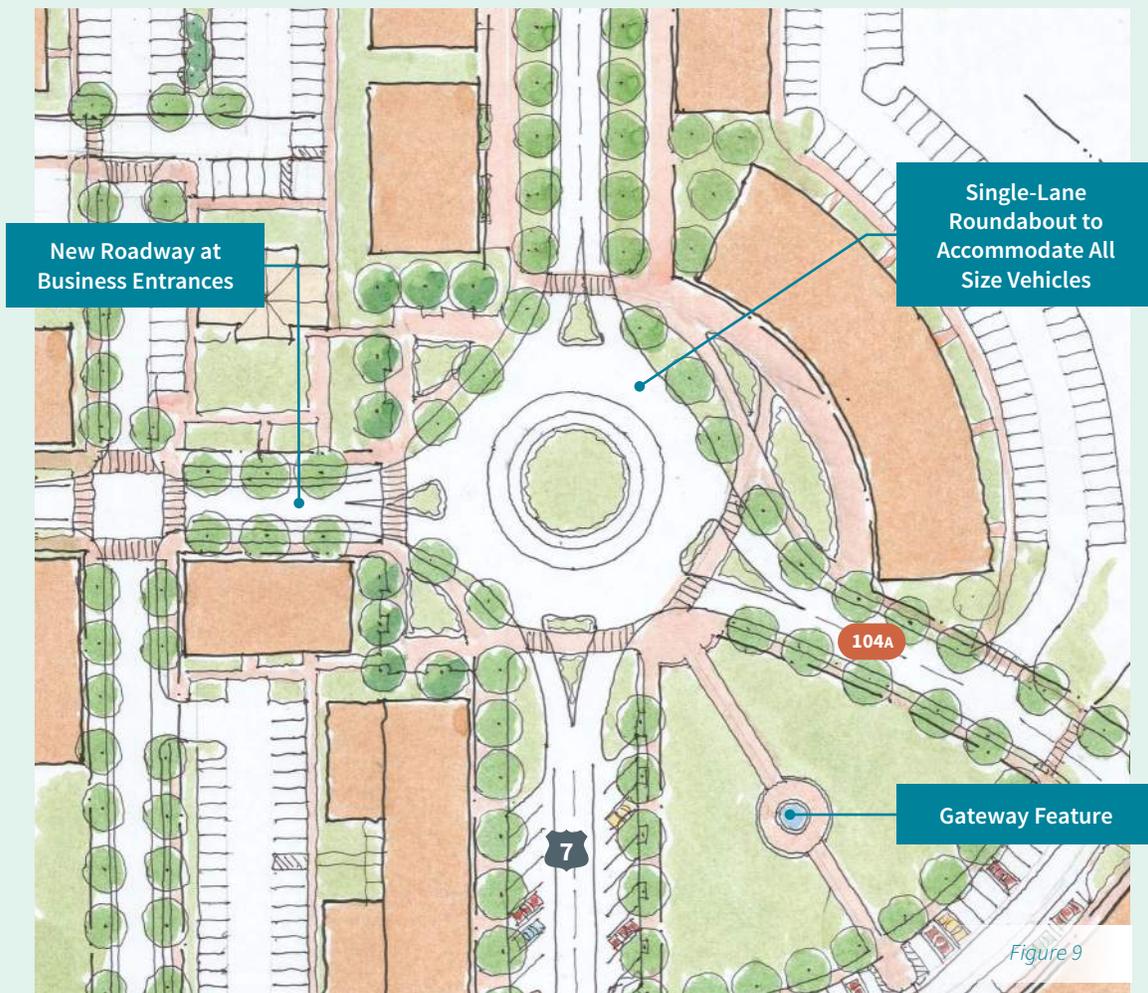
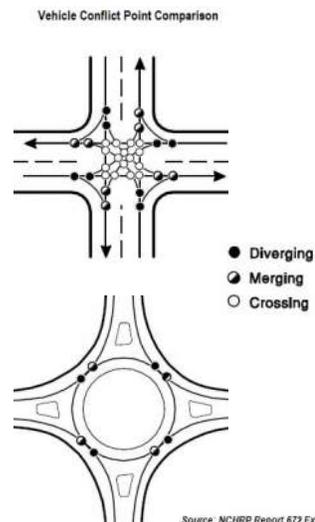
A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 8.



4.4.2 Alternative 2 – Roundabout

The second alternative analyzed for the US 7/VT 104A intersection includes the construction of a 130-foot diameter roundabout centered in the current intersection geometry with single lane approaches from all existing roadways in the intersection. This roundabout was sized to accommodate the truck traffic which exists along this portion of US 7. Although trucks are expected to be accommodated by the travel lane, a mountable truck apron would be included around the center island for easier maneuverability for large trucks. Roundabouts are known for their traffic calming and safety benefits which can be advantageous in the gateway to a village district as they can slow down vehicles entering the district. The roundabout is anticipated to operate at a Level of Service A.

A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 9.



4.4.3 Traffic Operations

Traffic analyses were completed to compare the operational effectiveness of the two alternatives versus the No Build scenario. A description of the Level of Service, average delay, and volume to capacity ratios in the 2026 weekday morning and evening peak hours at the intersection of US 7 and VT 104A are shown in Table 5. Copies of the full traffic analysis are provided in the Appendix.

SCENARIO	PEAK HOUR	OVERALL LEVEL OF SERVICE	AVERAGE VEHICLE DELAY (seconds)	VOLUME TO CAPACITY RATIO
No Build	Weekday AM	A	9.8	0.74
	Weekday PM	B	13.1	0.84
Signalized Intersection	Weekday AM	B	13.0	0.70
	Weekday PM	A	9.3	0.53
Roundabout	Weekday AM	A	7.6	0.62
	Weekday PM	A	6.5	0.48

Table 5: 2026 US 7 and VT 104A Alternatives Traffic Operations

4.5 US 7 / Ballard Road Intersection

4.5.1 Alternative 1 – Enhanced Stop-controlled Intersection

The intersection of US 7 and Ballard Road is currently an unsignalized intersection with stop control on the minor approaches. The first alternative involves minor geometric improvements such as a tightening of the curb radii on all approaches to lower speeds of turning vehicles, the construction of an eastbound right turn lane on Ballard Road to improve the flow of traffic in the weekday morning peak hour, and the addition of crosswalks along the Ballard Road and northern US 7 approaches. VTrans has a maintenance facility located on Ballard Road so the curb radii will be tightened but will be designed such that it can accommodate the vehicles used at this facility. These improvements are intended to improve both safety and operations for vehicles and pedestrians.

A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 10.

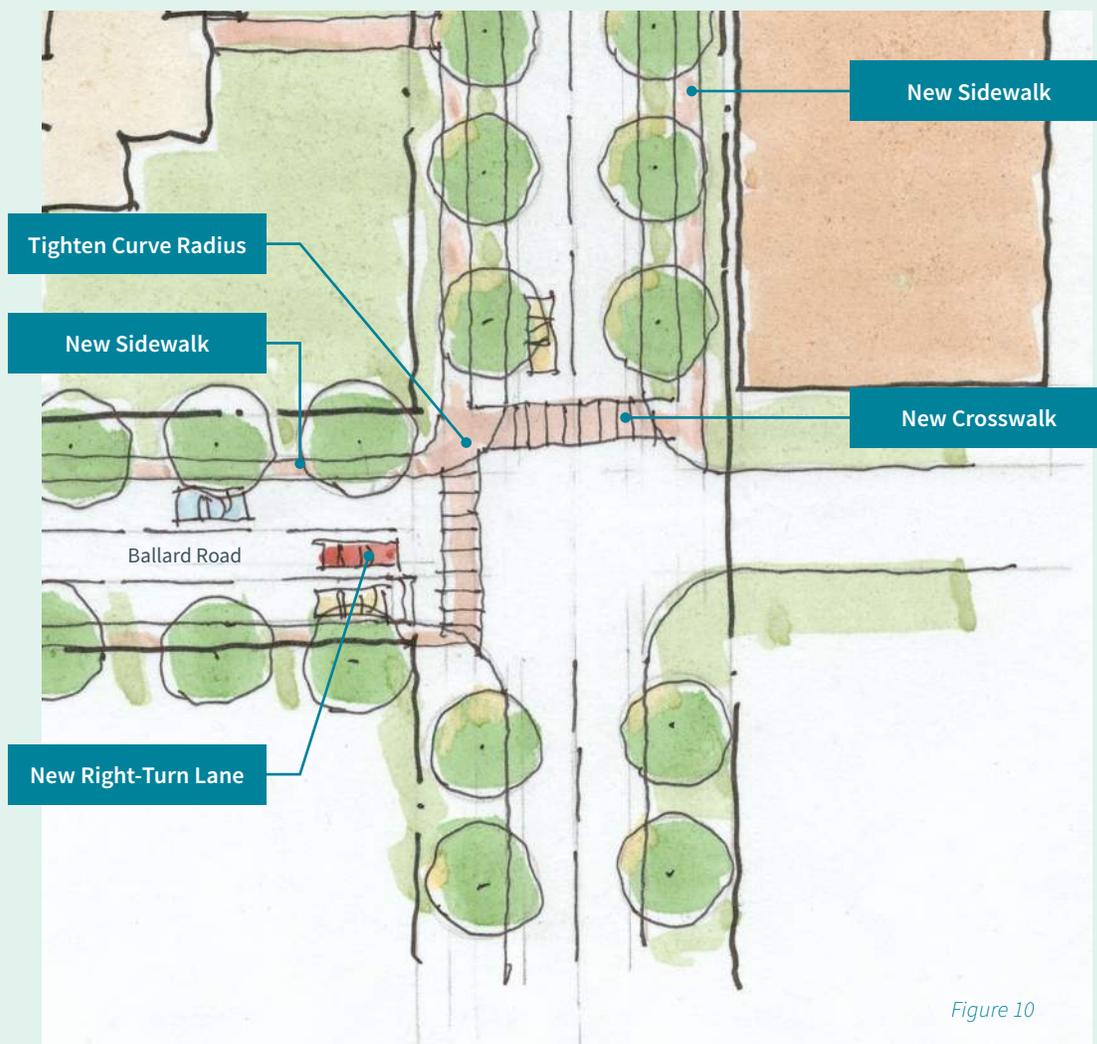


Figure 10

4.5.2 Alternative 2 – Roundabout

The second alternative is the construction of a single lane roundabout in place of the current stop-controlled intersection. As previously mentioned, roundabouts provide traffic calming and safety enhancements to an intersection. The intersection of US 7 and Ballard Road is the entryway to the South Village from Milton and other points south and presents the opportunity for a gateway feature on the southern entrance to the district. This roundabout would include crosswalks on all approaches and, like the roundabout at US 7 and VT 104A, is sized to accommodate all anticipated vehicle sizes and would include a mountable truck apron.

A graphic of this alternative is shown in Figure 11.

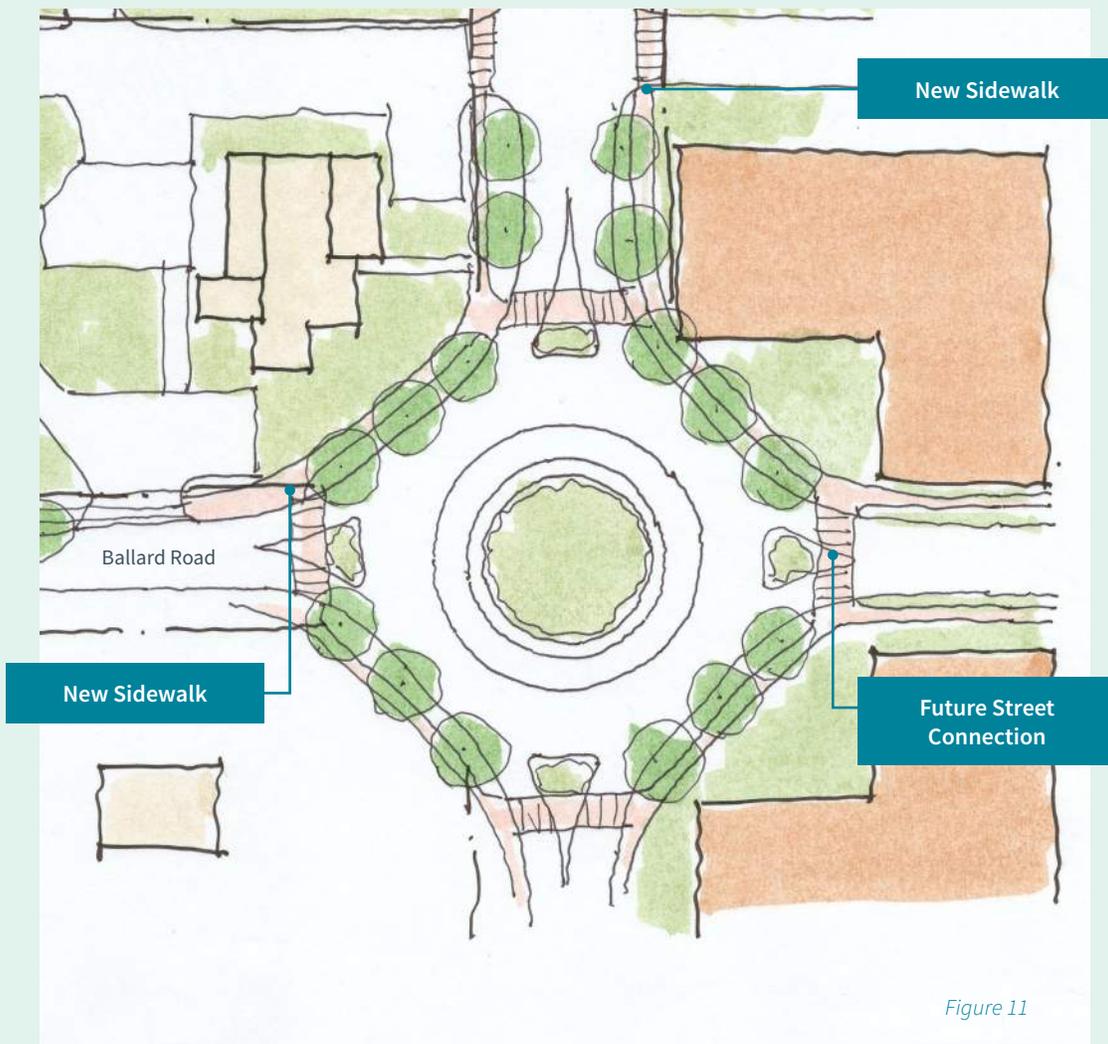


Figure 11

4.5.3 Alternative 3 – Signalized Intersection

The third alternative requires additional coordination with private property owners and more robust construction. This alternative involves the creation of a formal access roadway into the recently sold Campground property. As this parcel is redeveloped, it is recommended that the access road be built such that it intersects with US 7 across from Ballard Road, creating a perpendicular four-leg intersection. It is also suggested that the current Dollar General driveway be closed and combined with the new access roadway under the alternative. Based on the proposed retail and housing mixed-use development, it is anticipated that this intersection will meet at least one signal warrant. This alternative is intended to improve access management along US 7 and improve safety and access to and from Ballard Road, Dollar General, and other future development. This intersection would have a configuration similar to Alternative 1, with signal equipment constructed for both vehicles and pedestrians.

4.6 Exit 18 Park and Ride

4.6.1 Alternative 1 – Expand in Place

The current Exit 18 Park and Ride has 42 parking spaces and has been identified as needing more capacity to meet the current and anticipated future demand. The existing facility cannot accommodate bus movements and is also lacking many of the amenities recommended by VTrans for Park and Rides, including electric vehicle charging ports, a formalized bus shelter, and lighting. The first alternative for addressing the previously identified issues is to expand the Park and Ride in its existing location. The Park and Ride has been expanded once before and little space is available but there is space for expanding slightly to the south and west. This expansion would include new spaces, repaving and striping, and the inclusion of additional amenities.

4.6.2 Alternative 2 – Relocate and Expand

The second, more robust alternative is to relocate the Park and Ride and reconstruct the facility with increased capacity and include all amenities recommended by VTrans. Various locations have been discussed including the vegetated space inside of the I-89 Southbound on-ramp, behind the public library, or other locations within the South Village in close proximity to the Interstate. For this Master Plan, the location which was investigated was the existing green space within the I-89 Southbound Ramp, east of US 7. This location has been discussed with VTrans and it is recommended that their Park and Ride program further evaluate this site for a potential facility. Conversations with the Town have also indicated interest in developing a Park and Ride, state or locally owned, behind the Public Library parking lot. The Georgia Selectboard is in the process of evaluating options for this location.



5 Preferred Concept Plan

Preferred Concept Plan

The Preferred Concept Plan and Implementation Plan are the final products of the existing conditions assessment, alternatives evaluation, and public outreach. The suite of improvements recommended are the locally and technically preferred alternatives along with the previously identified baseline improvements. This Master Plan also proposes changes to the current zoning and development regulations in order to facilitate the development patterns specified in this and previous plans. Based on public, stakeholder, and VTrans input, the preferred alternatives were selected and compiled into a cohesive plan for the South Village district. Each element is described in greater detail in the following sections. The Implementation Plan outlines the proposed improvement, a description, the anticipated partners required for implementation, and a cost estimate for design and construction.

5.1 Land Use Recommendations

The South Village Core zoning district should be revised to more effectively implement the 2009 Strategic Plan and this updated South Village Master Plan. Recommended refinements to the zoning are detailed in the memo included in the Appendix and summarized below:

- **Revise the purpose statement of the South Village Core zoning district** to clarify that a compact settlement patterned on a traditional Vermont village center is the desired future form for development in the district. The adopted purpose statement states that a concentrated core settlement in a traditional Vermont village setting currently exists rather than acknowledging the existing suburban highway commercial development pattern.
- **Restructure the allowed uses in the South Village Core zoning district** to better reflect the mix of uses envisioned in the 2009 Strategic Plan and this updated South Village Master Plan. Encourage small-scale shops, services, restaurants and offices to locate in South Village by making them permitted rather than conditional uses. Allow multi-family housing with 5 units or more as a conditional use. Discourage or prohibit auto-oriented uses.
- **Amend the South Village Core zoning district's dimensional standards** to replicate the building scale and pattern of a traditional Vermont village center. This would include reducing the maximum building footprint and adding minimum lot size and

frontage requirements. Acknowledge and work with the existing suburban and highway commercial development pattern by eliminating the two-story height requirement and replacing it with standards intended to encourage building designs that reflect the form of buildings found in traditional Vermont village centers (thus avoiding the “box” buildings the two-story requirement was intended to prevent). Establish minimum and maximum front setbacks to create a regular pattern of building placement and foster a more comfortable pedestrian environment.

- **Simplify and consolidate the review standards** that apply in the South Village Core zoning district.
- **Provide for administrative approval of minor site plans** to further streamline the permitting process in the district and encourage businesses to locate or expand in South Village.
- **Add more specificity regarding building form and design** to the South Village Core Design Criteria and Guidelines. This should include a prohibition on corporate or franchise architecture and requirements related to breaking up the mass of large buildings and incorporating architectural elements into building facades.
- **Potential for Implementation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District** in the South Village District to help finance public infrastructure spending and spur property redevelopment. A TIF District operates by capturing a portion of the incremental tax revenue increases resulting from development within the district to cover the costs associated with public infrastructure improvements serving the district. To establish a TIF District, the Town needs to develop a detailed TIF Plan and seek approval from both the Town Selectboard and the Vermont Economic Progress Council.

5.2 Transportation System Recommendations

The baseline improvements are a set of recommendations that are relatively straightforward to implement and were identified as high priority to advance. These baseline improvements include the following recommendations.

- **Shorten or Remove the medians in front of the Georgia Public Library** to reduce obstacles to the left turn into the library from northbound US 7. These islands currently extend beyond the edge of the driveway and create conflicts for any turning traffic, especially school buses, attempting to maneuver into the driveway.
- **Signalize and add a right turn lane to the Interstate 89 northbound off-ramp** to improve operations, particularly during the weekday evening peak hour. The inclusion of these elements is also intended to improve safety for left turning traffic onto the northbound on-ramp and out of the northbound off-ramp.

- **Remove the VT 104A right turn slip lane** to improve safety and reduce conflicts related to the geometric configuration of the intersection. This intersection is part of a High Crash Location segment and a contributing factor to multiple crashes is the improper use of this slip lane.
- **Construct a sidewalk along the east side of US 7** from Ballard Road to VT 104A. This would connect the existing sidewalk discontinuity and initiate creation of a pedestrian network in the South Village. Recent development along US 7 has resulted in numerous, disconnected pieces of sidewalk which can lead to a false sense of safety for pedestrians. Constructing a sidewalk on at least one side of US 7 is the first step in promoting walkability along the corridor.
- **Construct a sidewalk along the north side of Ballard Road** from US 7 to the Redeeming Grace Church, which would connect many residences to the US 7 corridor. This is an important leg of the pedestrian network in bringing residents to what will be a denser, mixed-use area in the future.
- **Address stormwater drainage issues causing gully erosion in the Deer Brook.** The project team has collaborated with a consultant team concurrently studying Deer Brook with the aim of reducing runoff which has contributed to the creation of a large gully northwest of the intersection of US 7 and VT 104A.

Preferred alternatives were identified for all options presented in Chapter 4. The preferred alternatives for each design element are shown in the following figures. An implementation plan is also presented in the following section which presents a description of the recommendation, the estimated cost, the anticipated partners required for implementation, and a priority for short, mid, or long-term implementation. The recommendations presented in this plan were endorsed by the Georgia Selectboard on April 23, 2019. Most of the proposed improvements will still require formal approval of final design by VTrans while US 7 remains a State owned highway.



Figure 12: Stormwater Treatment Options

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IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

- 1 New Traffic Signal and Crosswalks:** Tighten radii to reduce speeds, add crosswalks
- 2 Ballard Road Turn Lane:** New dedicated turn lane
- 3 Ballard Road Sidewalk:** US 7 to Redeeming Grace Church
- 4 Grid Street Network:** To be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development
- 5 US 7 Streetscape:** Three-lane section with center turning lanes, crosswalks, sidewalks, on-street parking adjacent to Village Green and landscaping
- 6 "Fairbanks" Town Green:** Public gathering space to be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development
- 7 Connector Street:** To be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development
- 8 Gateway Park:** Public gathering space to be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development
- 9 VT 104A Streetscape:** Two-lane section with sidewalks and landscaping
- 10 US 7/VT 104A Intersection Upgrade:** New traffic signal

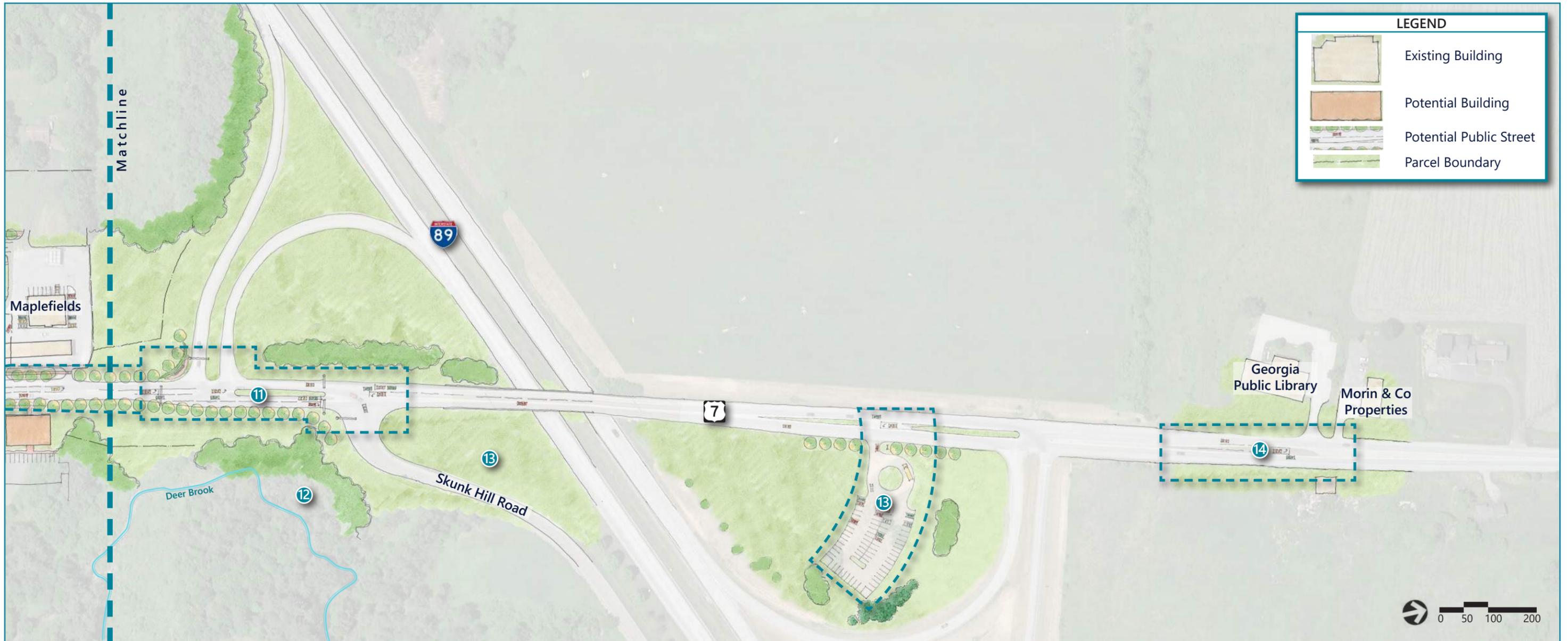


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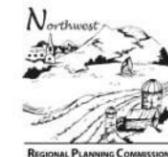
IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

- 11 189 Exit 18 Northbound Ramps & Skunk Hill Road Intersections:** Install new coordinated signal system at ramps and Skunk Hill Road, upgrade approaches
- 12 Stormwater and Drainage:** Address drainage and bank erosion at the Deer Brook Gully
- 13 Relocate and Expand Park & Ride:** Locate within existing highway right-of-way
- 14 Reduce Median at Public Library:** To improve vehicular access for northbound vehicles



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5.3 Implementation Plan

Concept #	Improvement	Description	Partners*	Estimated Cost**	Timeline
3	Ballard Road Sidewalk	Five-foot uncurbed concrete sidewalk from US 7 to Redeeming Grace Church	Town of Georgia Adjacent Property Owners	\$300,000	Short-Term
12	Drainage Improvements	To be coordinated with NRPC, Stone Environmental, and other stakeholders	Town of Georgia NRPC Adjacent Property Owners	TBD	Short-Term
14	Public Library Median	Reduce median length to improve turning movement access for northbound vehicles into the library	Town of Georgia Vtrans	\$20,000	Short-Term
1	US 7 / Ballard Road Intersection Upgrade	New traffic signal, tighten radii to reduce speeds, add crosswalks on Ballard Road and on Southbound US 7 approach	Town of Georgia VTrans Adjacent Property Owners	\$440,000	Mid-Term
2	Ballard Road Turn Lane	New 100-foot dedicated left turn lane	Town of Georgia Adjacent Property Owners	\$40,000	Mid-Term
10	US 7 / VT 104A Intersection Upgrade	Remove VT 104A right turn slip lane and install new traffic signal	Town of Georgia VTrans Adjacent Property Owners	\$700,000	Mid-Term
13	Park and Ride	Remove existing Park and Ride and relocate within existing highway right-of-way	Town of Georgia Vtrans	\$900,000	Mid-Term
4	Grid Street Network	One mile of new roadway to be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development	Town of Georgia Future Developers Adjacent Property Owners	\$5,300,000	Long-Term
5	US 7 Streetscape	Three-lane section with center turning lanes, crosswalks, sidewalks, on-street parking adjacent to park, and landscaping from VT 104A - Ballard Road. Sidewalks on US 7 can be implemented as a more short-term project. The longer term streetscape should be completed in coordination with potential water and wastewater infrastructure.	Town of Georgia VTrans Adjacent Property Owners	\$2,000,000	Long-Term
6	Town Green	Public gathering space along US 7 to be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development	Town of Georgia Future Developers Adjacent Property Owners	\$300,000 - \$1,000,000	Long-Term
7	Connector Street	Connector street between US 7 and VT 104A to be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development	Town of Georgia Future Developers Adjacent Property Owners	\$900,000	Long-Term
8	Gateway Park	Public gathering space between the connector street and VT 104A to be constructed in coordination with adjacent land development	Town of Georgia Future Developers Adjacent Property Owners	\$300,000 - \$1,000,000	Long-Term
9	VT 104A Streetscape	Two-lane section with sidewalks and landscaping from US 7 to Yankee Park Road	Town of Georgia Adjacent Property Owners	\$1,900,000	Long-Term
11	I-89 NB Ramps and Skunk Hill Road Intersection Upgrade	New connected traffic signal and left turn lane on I-89NB off ramp	Town of Georgia VTrans FHWA	\$900,000	Long-Term

*Costs do not include property or ROW acquisition

**VTrans: Vermont Agency of Transportation

**FHWA: Federal Highway Administration

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