

# The Knightville / Mill Creek - Downtown South Portland Community Design Workshop

Final Report – Public Meeting  
May 25, 2005 – South Portland Public Library



**The Knightville / Mill Creek - Downtown South Portland  
Community Design Workshop  
FINAL REPORT – May 25, 2005**

*This Workshop made possible through the  
generosity of:*

*Major Underwriters*

- Blake, Hall & Allen Insurance
  - Maine Bank & Trust
- Saco – Biddeford Savings
- Waterfront Market Association

*Sponsors*

- Ainsworth, Thelin, Chamberlain & Raftice
  - Michael Drinan
  - Mill Cove Studio
- Port Grooming & Pet Care

*Additional Support from*

- Hannaford's
- Key Bank at Mill Creek
  - Shaw's
- Community Development Block Grant Program

*With In-Kind Support from:*

- Brown Elementary School
- Buttered Biscuit
- City of South Portland Planning Office
- Maine Sign
- One Fifty Ate
- Tim Horton's

*Workshop Organizers:*

- Knightville Neighborhood Association
- City of South Portland Planning Office

*Workshop Consultants:*

- Alan Holt, adjunct professor, Muskie School  
*Holt & Lachman Architects + Planners*
- Muskie School of Public Service -  
Community Planning & Development Program  
*(Planning Workshop Class – 2005)*
- Michael Charek, Architect

# Knightsville & Mill Creek – The Regional Scale



## Regional Circle (5 miles)

*A full spectrum of what Maine has to offer:*

- Maine's most urban center
  - University, Colleges, Hospitals, Premier Cultural Institutions, Business Center
- Interstate north/south
- State highways north/south/west
- International harbor
- International Jetport
- Islands Transit
- State Parks, beaches & marshes
- Nature preserves
- Farmland

# Development of Knightville - 1890



Knightville as:

- crossroads
- gateway
- downtown
- neighborhood

Strong boundaries:

- coastline
- Mill Creek inlet
- Broadway

Map of Knightville – ca. 1890

# Development of Knightville - 1914



## Development Pattern:

- radial arterials
- small blocks on plat map – “paper streets”
- main streets fill in first

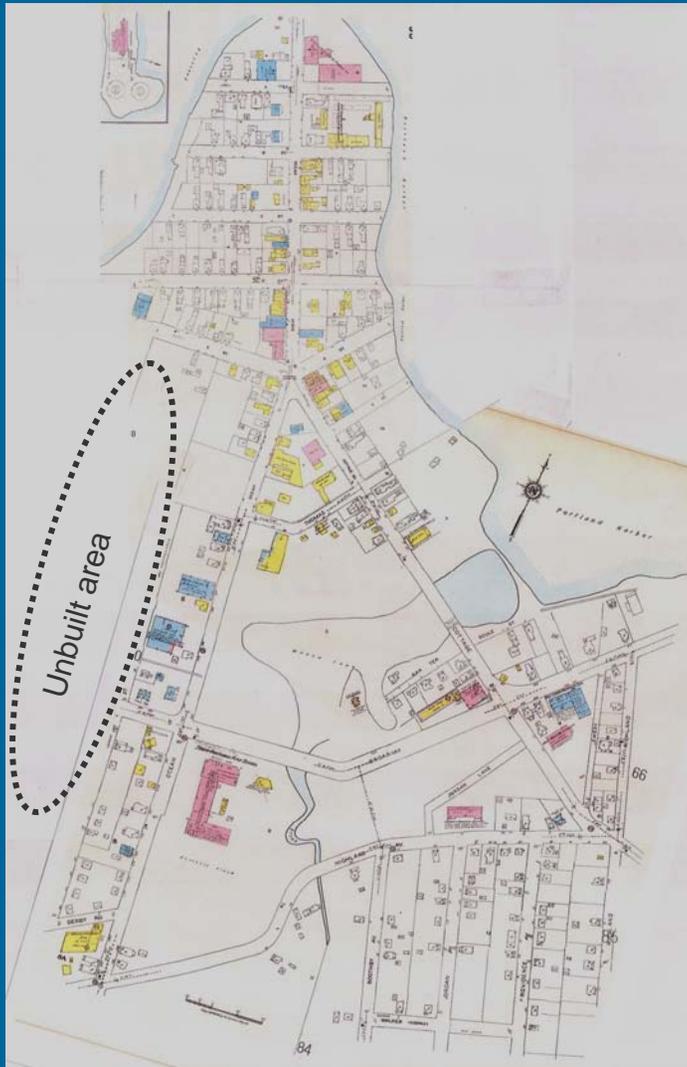
1916 Million Dollar Bridge reinforces basic neighborhood pattern

Map of Knightville – ca. 1914

# Development of Knightville - 1953

## Development Pattern:

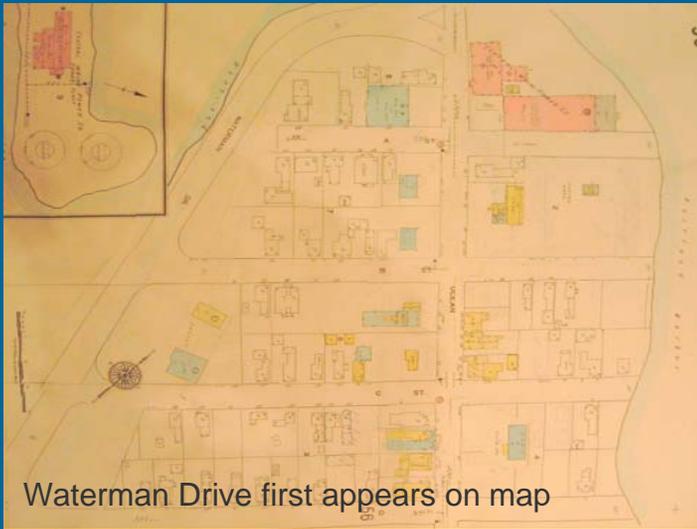
- Broadway is connected
- Mill Creek Pond is beginning to emerge
- Development up Ocean Street
- Schools are built
- Area to the west of Ocean Street is still unbuilt



Sanborn Map – 1953

The basic development pattern of the past 100 years remain unchanged

# Development of Knightville - 1955



Waterman Drive first appears on map

## Development Pattern:

- Waterman Drive is built as an auto connector to the shopping center
- Mill Creek Shopping Center is built (Maine's first shopping center)
- Mill Creek emerges as a regional shopping destination

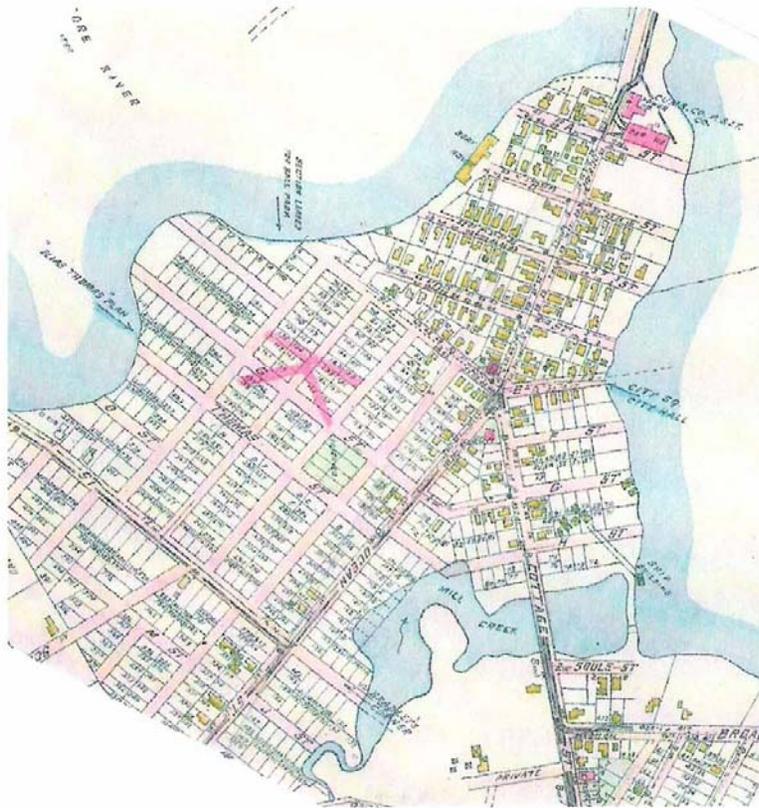


Mill Creek Shopping Center

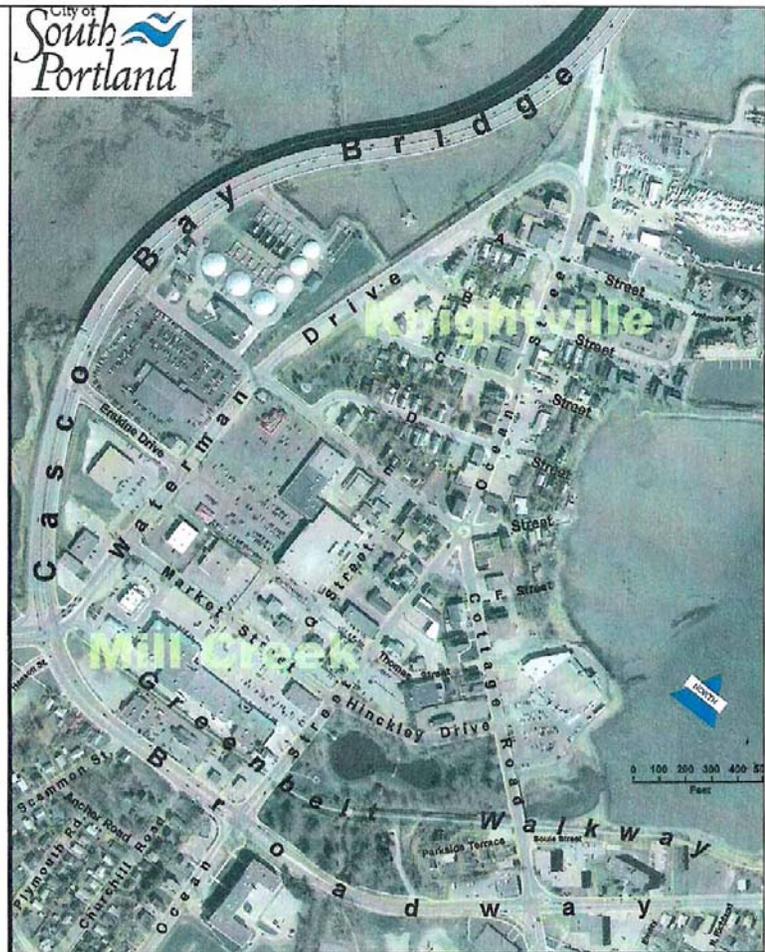
## Sanborn Maps – 1955

The auto changes the 100 year development pattern for Knightville

# Knightville & Mill Creek today

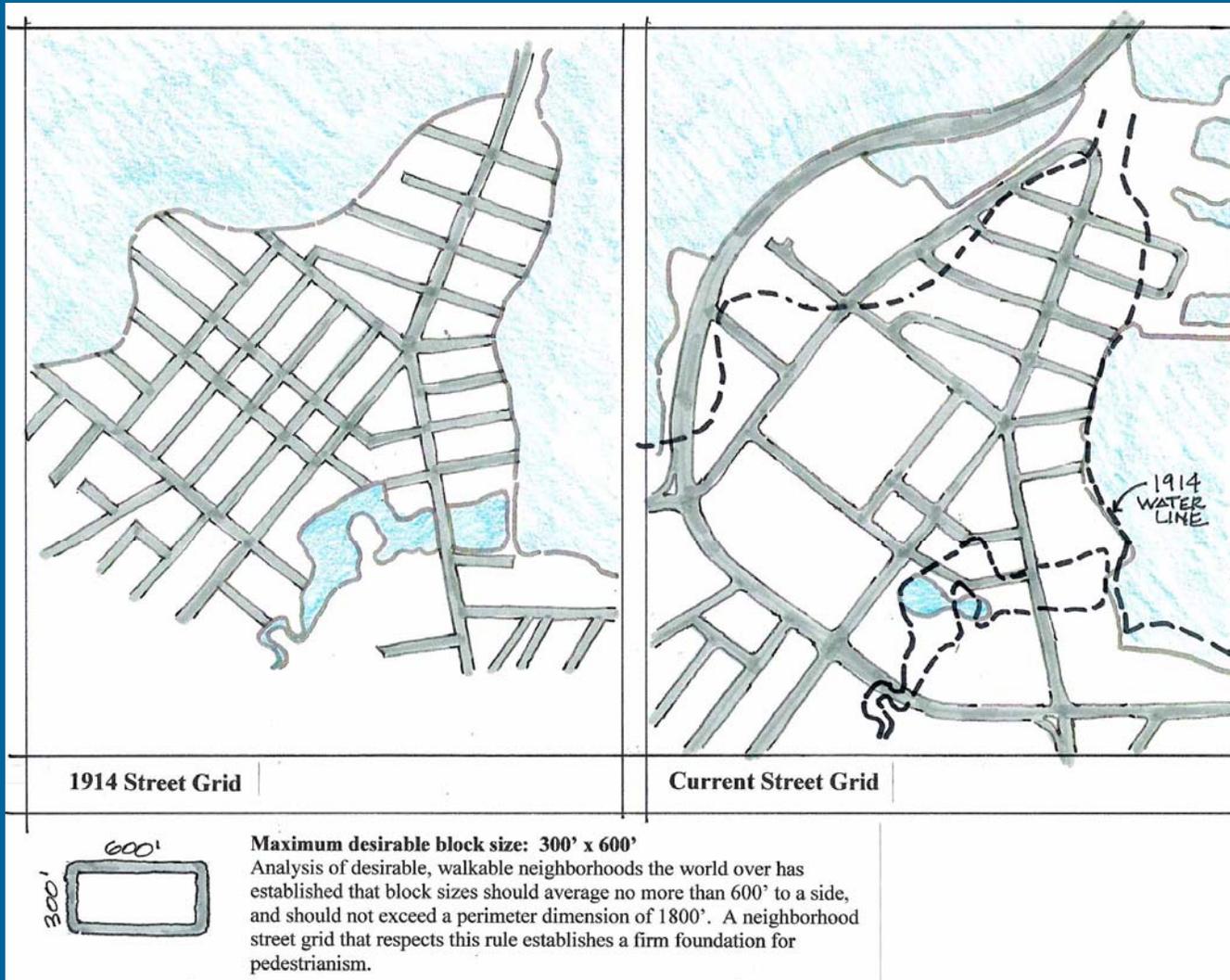


1914 map of Knightville



Current aerial photograph of Knightville

# Knightsville & Mill Creek today - Transformation of the Framework



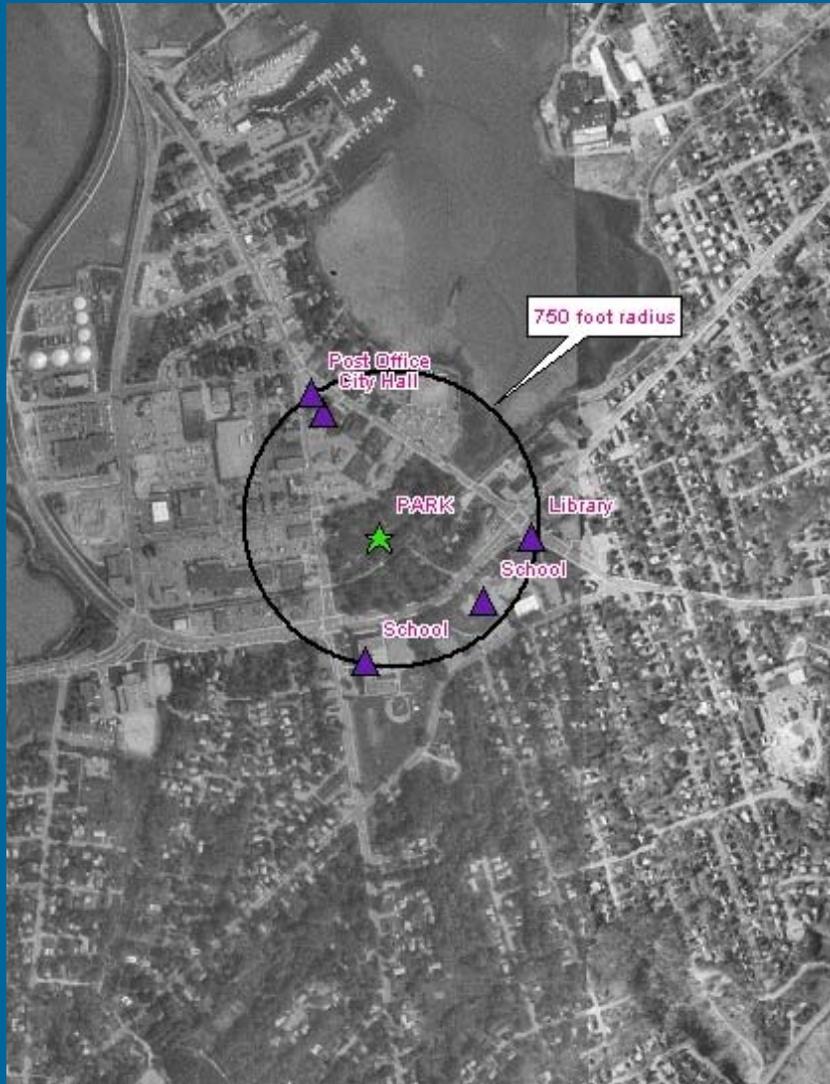
# Knightsville & Mill Creek today – Neighborhood Framework



## Framework for Neighborhood:

- Street grid and block size
- Public Open Space
- Water's Edge
- Trails
- Public Buildings

# Knightsville & Mill Creek today – The 2 Minute Walk



## First Pedestrian Circle: 750'

- Distance people will walk from parked cars to the entrance of their destination.
- 41 acres

## The Civic Core:

- Mill Creek Park
- City Hall
- Post Office
- Library
- Middle School
- Elementary School

# Knightsville & Mill Creek today – The 5 Minute Walk



## Surrounding Neighborhoods

### Second Pedestrian Circle: 1500'

- The five minute walk. This defines a neighborhood, a village from the core to the periphery, or an employment area with a center containing a commuter pick-up point.
- 162 acres

# Knightsville & Mill Creek today – The 10 Minute Walk

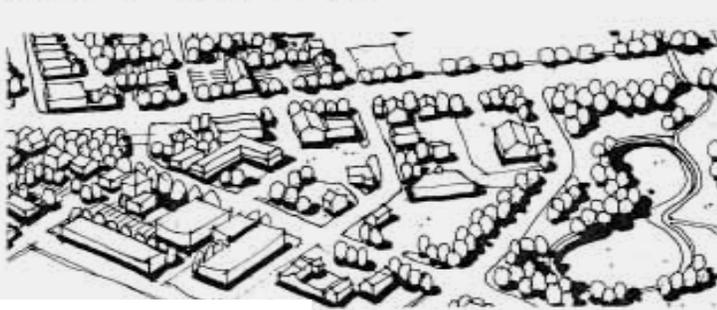


## Third Pedestrian Circle: 2600'

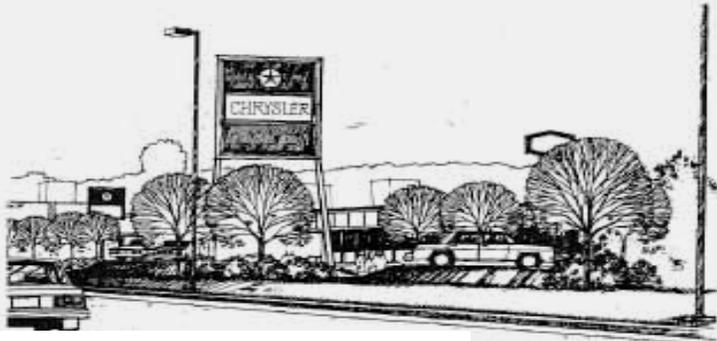
- The ten minute walk. The distance between home and the neighborhood school.
- 500 acres

Knightsville offers the mix of uses, public amenities, and the physical layout to serve as a village center

# Knightsville & Mill Creek – Three Districts + a residential neighborhood



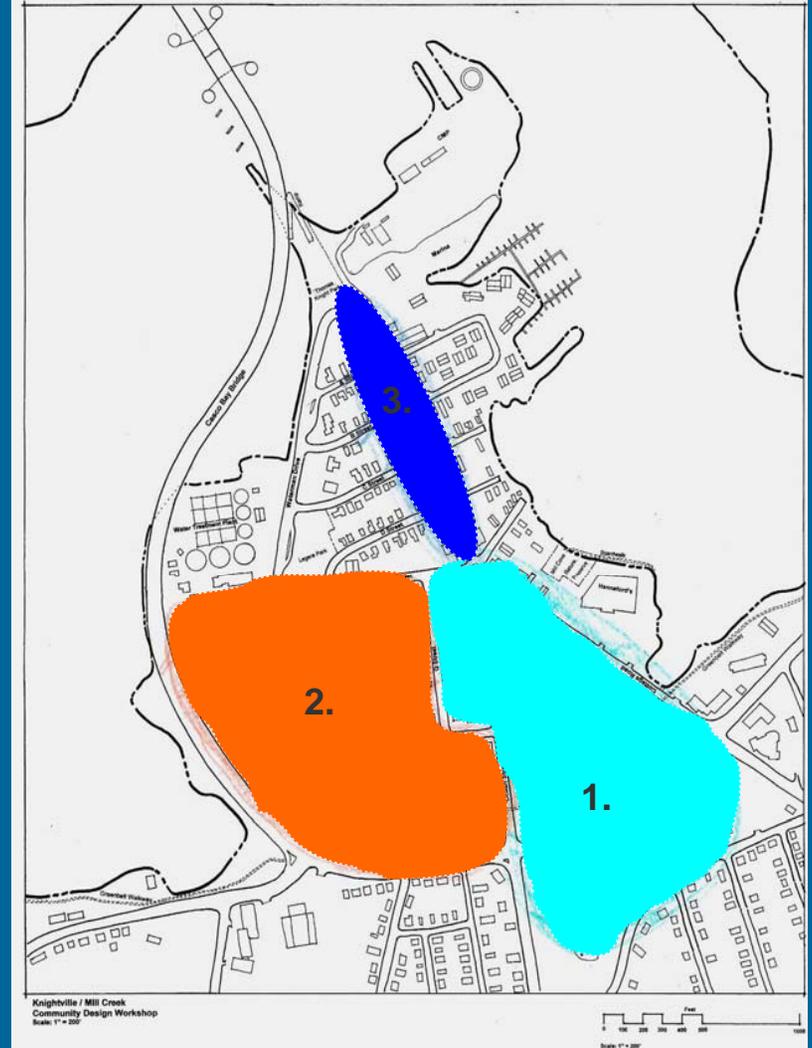
1. The Civic Core



2. The Mill Creek Shopping District



3. The Traditional Downtown District



# Knightsville & Mill Creek – The Civic Core



Legion Square



City Hall & Post Office



South Portland Public Library



Mill Creek Park



Brown Elementary School



Greenbelt Walkway



Mahoney Middle School

How can these public assets work together to create a stronger civic identity?  
How can they be linked to be pedestrian friendly and accessible for everyone?

# Knightsville & Mill Creek – The Mill Creek Shopping District



How can the district be made more attractive, walkable, and vibrant?  
How can the dominance of the car/parking be tamed yet accommodate traffic?  
How can the area be knit into the surrounding neighborhood?

# Knightsville & Mill Creek – The traditional Downtown District



What principles should guide development in the old downtown?  
What are the appropriate building forms and scale?  
Are there opportunities for strategic redevelopment?

# Knightville & Mill Creek – Thomas Knight Park



View from Knight Park looking toward Knightville.  
Original streetcar lines in place

How can Knight Park realize its full potential as a great public space?

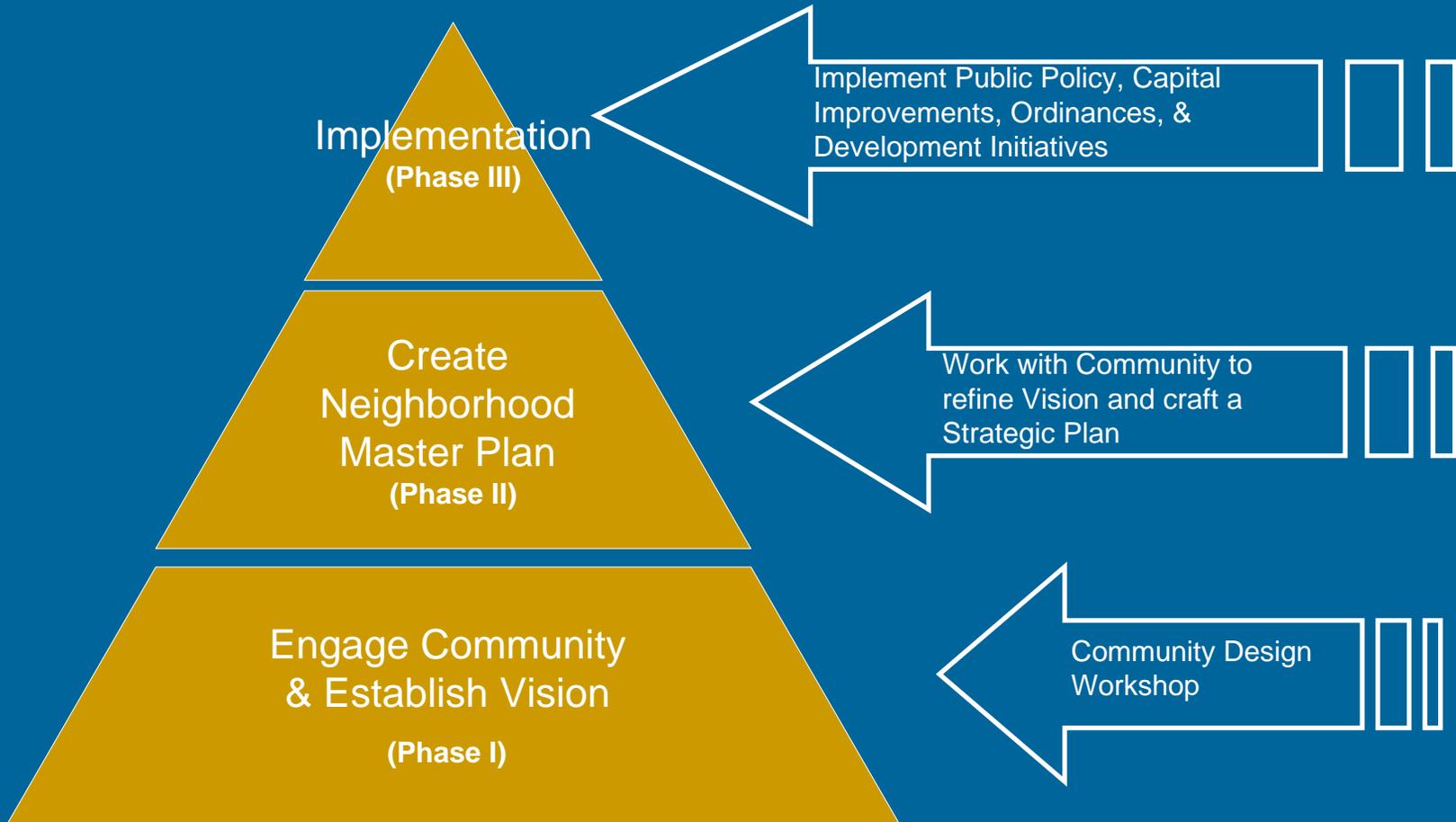


Views under bridge – site of new boat facility



From pedestrian ramp – looking across harbor toward CMP property

# Community Design Workshop – The First Step



# Community Design Workshop – The Goals

- Establish a Vision for the future of the Knightville / Mill Creek Neighborhood
  - Gather a spectrum of ideas and opinions for future development
  - Identify and Prioritize desired new or improved public infrastructure
  - Outline Principles to guide development within the area
  - Lay a foundation for Neighborhood Planning to implement a Vision

# Community Design Workshop – The Participants & Process

101 people attended the Workshop including:

- Neighborhood residents, property owners, and business owners
- 20 design professionals (architects and landscape architects)
- Muskie School Graduate Planning Students (serving as facilitators)
- Public officials and City Staff



Morning Orientation Session for all participants



# Community Design Workshop – The Participants & Process

Participants worked in Design Teams:

- 10 Teams with 10 people (average) per team
- Each team has cross-section of neighborhood residents, business people, policy makers
- Each team has two volunteer architects as a resource, and a trained facilitator



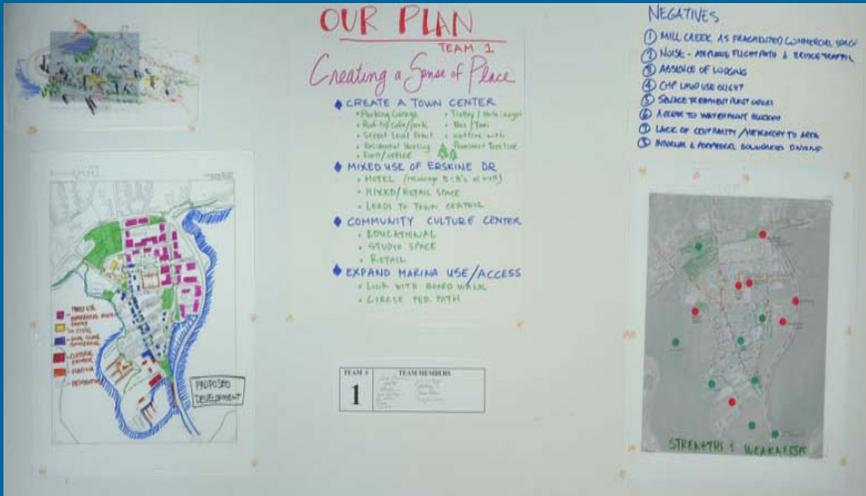
# Community Design Workshop – The Participants & Process

Each Team produced a Final Report Board which included:

- Assessment of neighborhood strengths and weaknesses
- Overall Vision Plan for the neighborhood
- Sketch details
- Summary Sheet of Main Concerns



# Community Design Workshop – Examples of Team Boards



Team 1



Team 4



# Community Design Workshop – Assets & Liabilities Map (examples)



What do you like **best** about your neighborhood?

- **Parks & Open Spaces** (GREEN DOTS) (Mill Creek Park, Knight Park, Legere Park, Waterman esplanade, shore access)
- **Neighborhood Assets** (BLUE DOTS) (Residential streets, Greenbelt Walkway)
- **Civic Assets** (YELLOW DOTS) (Schools, Library, City Hall, Post Office, Legion Square)

What do you like **least** about your neighborhood?

- **Broadway** (RED DOTS) (Broadway & Intersections separate Knightville from key neighborhood assets)
- **Waterman Drive** (Pedestrian hostile between Broadway & E Street)
- **Vast surface parking lots** (Particularly at Shaw's)
- **Key parcels are underutilized** (@ Waterman, and @ Ocean)
- CMP site
- Power line Towers

Team 6

# Community Design Workshop – Assets & Liabilities Map (examples)



Team 3

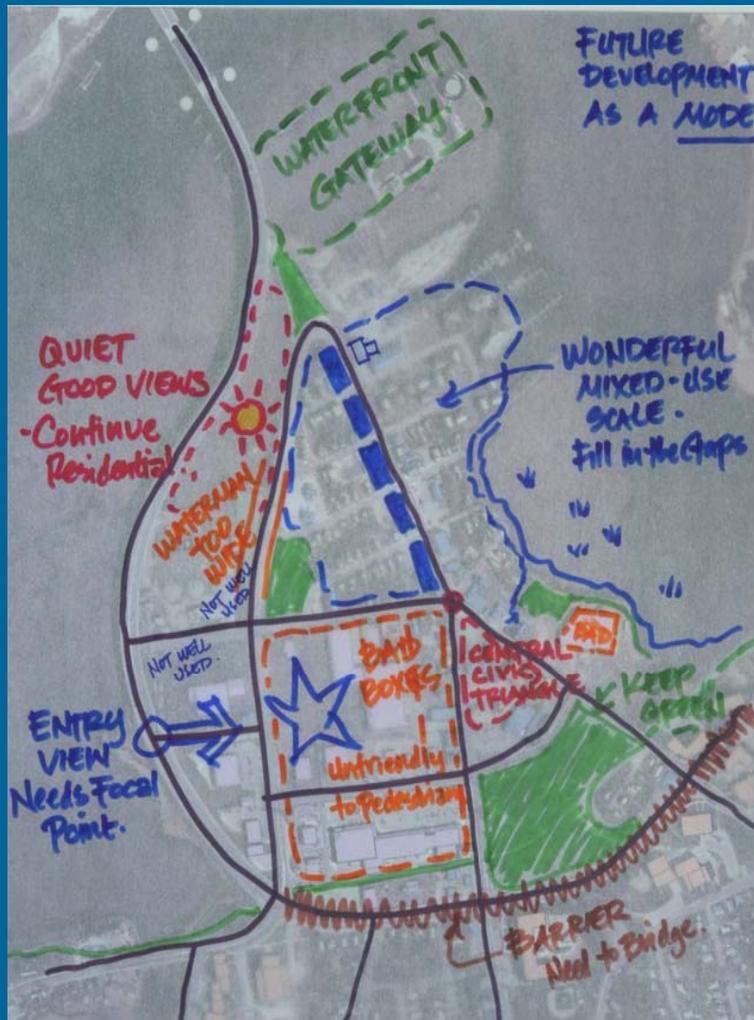
What do you like **best** about your neighborhood?

- **Parks & Open Spaces** (GREEN MARKER) (Mill Creek Park, Knight Park, Legere Park, Waterman esplanade, shore access, Greenbelt Walkway, Erskine Park, Mill Creek Nature Preserve)
- **Landmarks** (BLUE MARKER) (Historic brick buildings @ Snow Squall, Knight Park, Legere Park, Legion Square, City Hall, Library, Schools, School grounds)
- **Residential Neighborhood**

What do you like **least** about your neighborhood? (ALL SHOWN IN RED MARKER)

- **Broadway** (Broadway & Intersections separate Knightville from key neighborhood assets)
- **Vast surface parking lots** (Particularly at Shaw's)
- **Key parcels are underutilized or misused** ("Missing Teeth" on Ocean Street, Hannaford site should be public space)
- **Superblocks in Mill Creek**
- **Water Treatment Plant**

# Community Design Workshop – Assets & Liabilities Map (examples)



What do you like best about your neighborhood?

- **Parks & Open Spaces** (GREEN MARKER) (Mill Creek Park, Knight Park, Legere Park, Greenbelt Walkway, Mill Creek Nature Preserve, Boardwalk behind Hannaford's)
- **Traditional Mixed-Use Downtown** (BLUE MARKER) (Good use and scale to Downtown, adjacent to traditional residential neighborhood)
- **Civic Triangle** (RED MARKER) (Legion Square, Post Office, City Hall)

What do you like least about your neighborhood?

- **Broadway** (BROWN MARKER) (Broadway acts a barrier)
- **Big Box Development at Mill Creek** (Unfriendly to pedestrians, and presents poor gateway experience to district. Erskine Drive needs better focal point)
- **Waterman Drive is too wide** (Adjacent esplanade is not well used)
- **Hannaford's site should be public space or building**

Team 7

# Community Design Workshop – Assets & Liabilities (Conclusions)

## General Agreements among all Teams:

Five most important positive qualities to build on:

- Abundance of Parks and Open Space.
- Critical mass of Civic Buildings.
- Traditional mixed-use character and scale of the Downtown.
- Traditional residential neighborhood pattern and scale.
- Connection to the Waterfront.

Five most serious problems to overcome:

- Broadway creates a barrier between the Civic Assets, and isolates Knightville from adjacent neighborhoods.
- The Mill Creek “Box” Commercial development is unattractive, hostile to pedestrians, and does not link well to Knightville.
- The Green Spaces are not well linked to each other.
- Key parcels are underutilized, or should be used for a greater public purpose.
- Access to and development of the waterfront is hampered.

# Community Design Workshop – Emerging Urban Design Principles

- Bridge the Broadway Barrier
- Link Open Spaces
- Integrate Mill Creek
- Strengthen Civic Identity
- Preserve and enhance Knightville's Downtown Character
- Capitalize on the Waterfront Location

# Community Design Workshop – Bridge the Broadway Barrier



Every team presented some idea for bridging Broadway. Ideas included:

- “Big Dig” tunnel
- Pedestrian bridges
- Boulevard medians
- Curb Extensions

# Community Design Workshop – Bridge the Broadway Barrier

✓ *Ideas to explore*



Boulevard Medians



Permanent pavement crosswalks



Curb extensions at crossings



Refuge islands for pedestrians

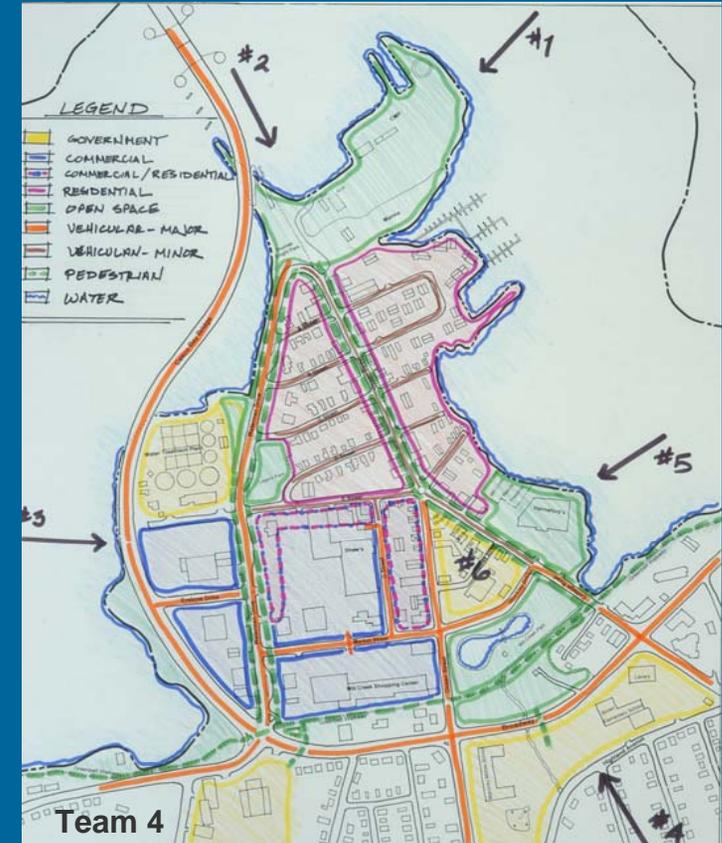
# Community Design Workshop – Link Open Spaces

✓ Develop pedestrian links (trails, boardwalks, streetscapes) between existing green spaces

6 Teams showed new linkage between green spaces



4 teams suggested a new connecting trail or boardwalk along the eastern shoreline.



2 teams emphasized strong streetscape connections along Ocean and Waterman to connect green spaces.

# Community Design Workshop – Link Open Spaces

✓ *Develop attractions in key open spaces to encourage pedestrian linkage*



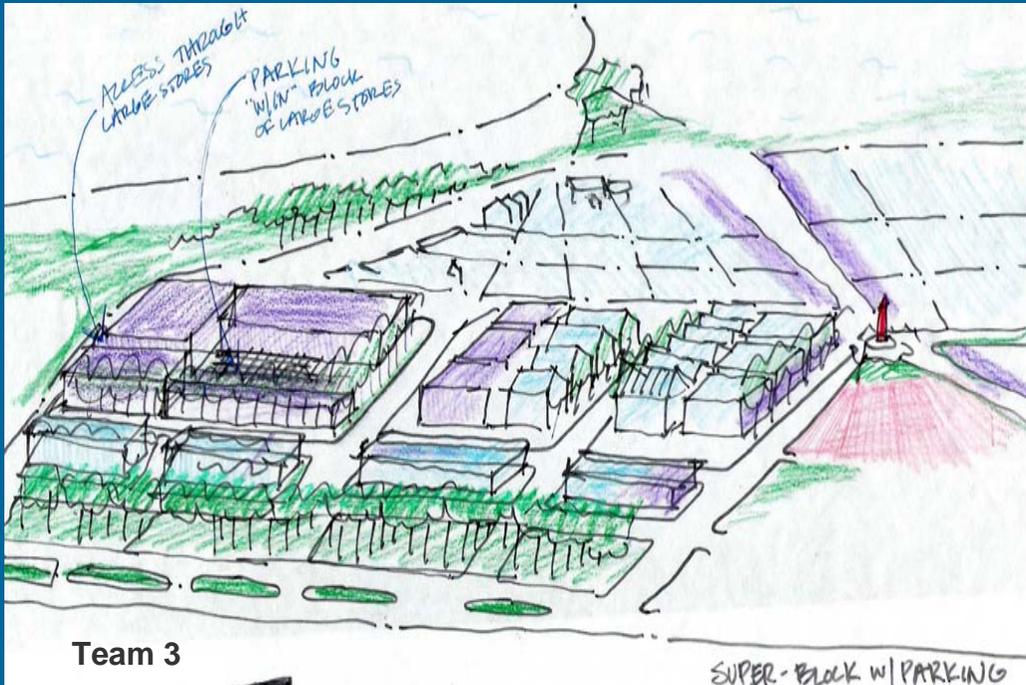
Team 2 shows an amphitheater in a new park location: the Hannaford's site. In all, six teams suggested a new, public use for this site (open space, new City Hall, and a botanical garden with housing)



Team 6 shows an amphitheater in Knight Park. Waterman Drive is landscaped to strengthen the link to the new attraction. Other ideas for a park attraction included a Farmer's Market, and a water taxi.

Several teams suggested attractions for parks (or new locations for parks) to strengthen linkages.

# Community Design Workshop – Integrate Mill Creek



- All Teams suggested raising standards for landscaping parking lots
- Eight teams broke up “superblocks” with new roads to reduce scale
- Eight teams showed new street edge, mixed-use development along existing parking lots
- Eight teams placed parking in interior of new blocks, or suggested development of structured parking.

New commercial development (shown in purple) lines edges of the new block with parking to the interior. Also note landscape medians in Broadway, and landscaping along boulevard.

# Community Design Workshop – Integrate Mill Creek



Team 2 & 10 (left) introduce a single, new street to continue Erskine Drive into Knightville. New development or park space shapes the resulting streetscape. These two sketches depict a minimal approach to introducing a new block pattern to Mill Creek.



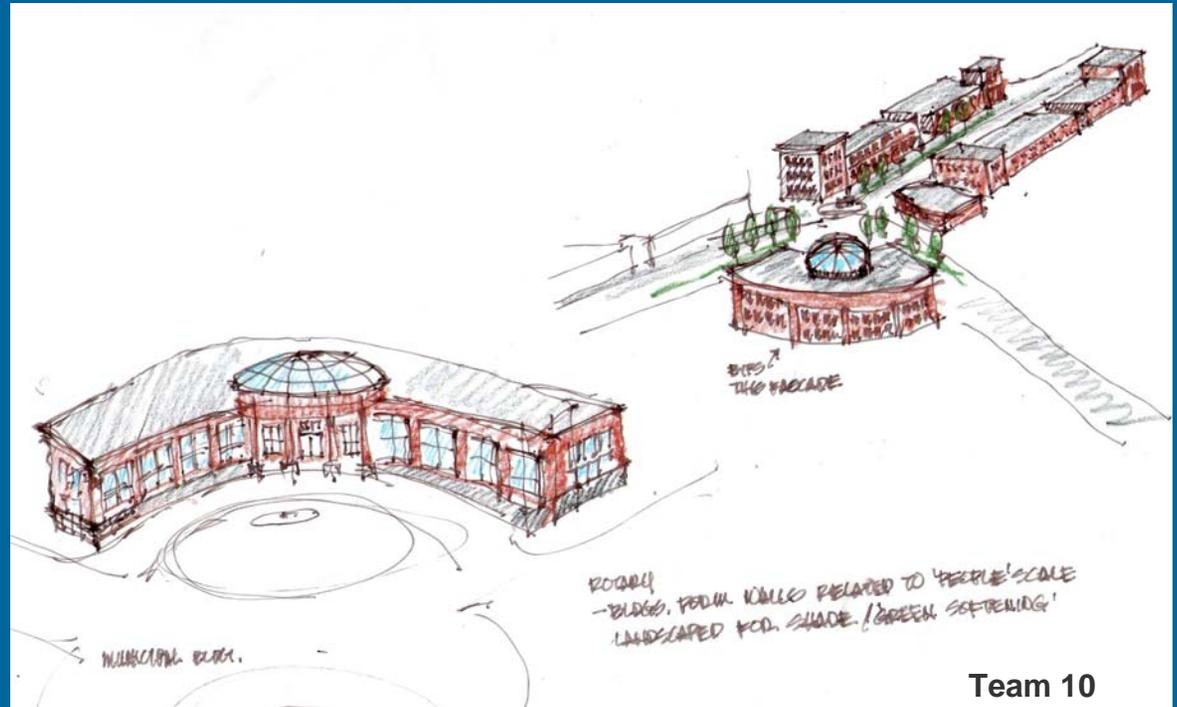
Team 3 (above) shows the most radical approach to breaking up the superblock. This team returned to the 1914 street pattern, creating a number of very small blocks (200' x 200'), creating a small-scale, mixed-use neighborhood with on-street parking. The one remaining big block tucks parking to the interior.



# Community Design Workshop – Strengthen Civic Identity



Team 2



Team 10

Several teams highlighted the opportunity that a new City Hall offers to strengthening Civic identity, and to knitting the civic core together. The teams recommend that the siting and design of a new civic building, or any addition to existing civic buildings, should be considered within the framework of the “Civic Triangle.”

# Community Design Workshop – Enhance Downtown Character

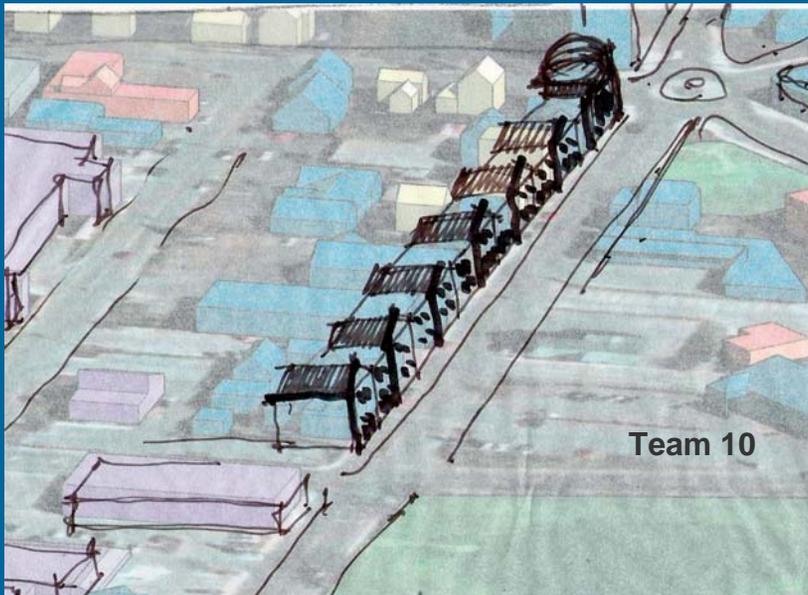
✓ *Infill key parcels along the traditional downtown “main street”*



All teams counted the traditional, mixed-use development pattern of the old downtown as a strong asset. Most teams encouraged infill development on key parcels – the “missing teeth” along Ocean Street and Waterman Drive.

# Community Design Workshop – Enhance Downtown Character

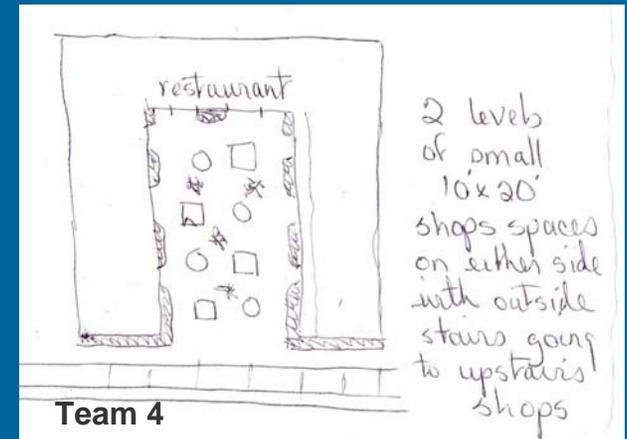
✓ *Expand the downtown development pattern to upper Ocean Street*



Several teams suggested that the traditional downtown pattern should be encouraged to continue up Ocean Street to Mill Creek Park. Building height and intensity of use should be increased.

# Community Design Workshop – Enhance Downtown Character

✓ Design streetscapes and encourage uses that enliven street life



Many teams encouraged careful streetscape designs to enhance pedestrian activity and link the downtown with the Civic Core and parks. Several suggested business such as sidewalk cafes, coffee shops, galleries and artists studios to enliven street life.

# Community Design Workshop – Capitalize on Waterfront Location

✓ *Develop regional attractions on key waterfront sites*

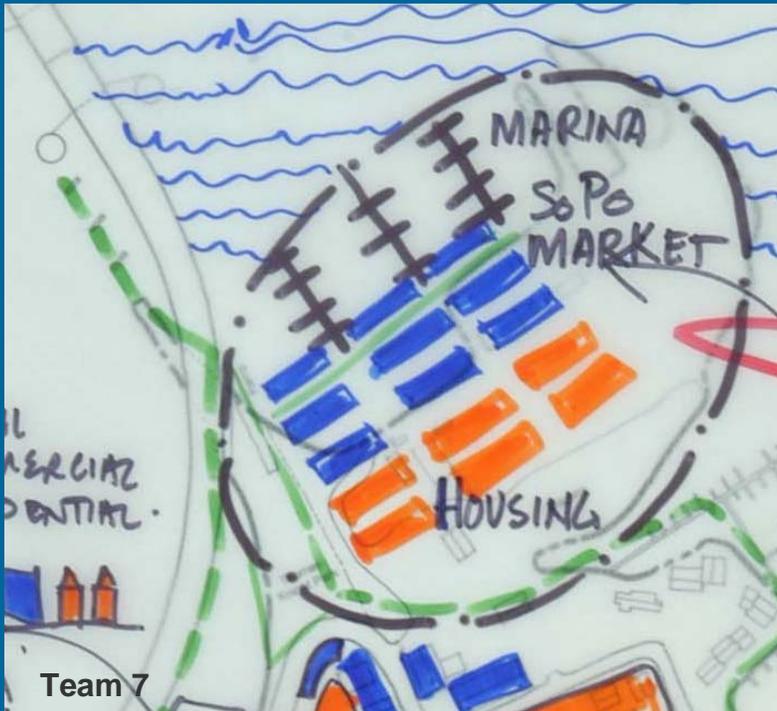


Many teams identified several waterfront parcels as key locations for redevelopment including the CMP site, Southport Marina, and Thomas Knight Park. Four teams suggested a Hotel with an expanded marina. Other ideas that could have regional “draw” included a public market, and an amphitheater.



# Community Design Workshop – Capitalize on Waterfront Location

✓ *Develop more housing on the waterfront*

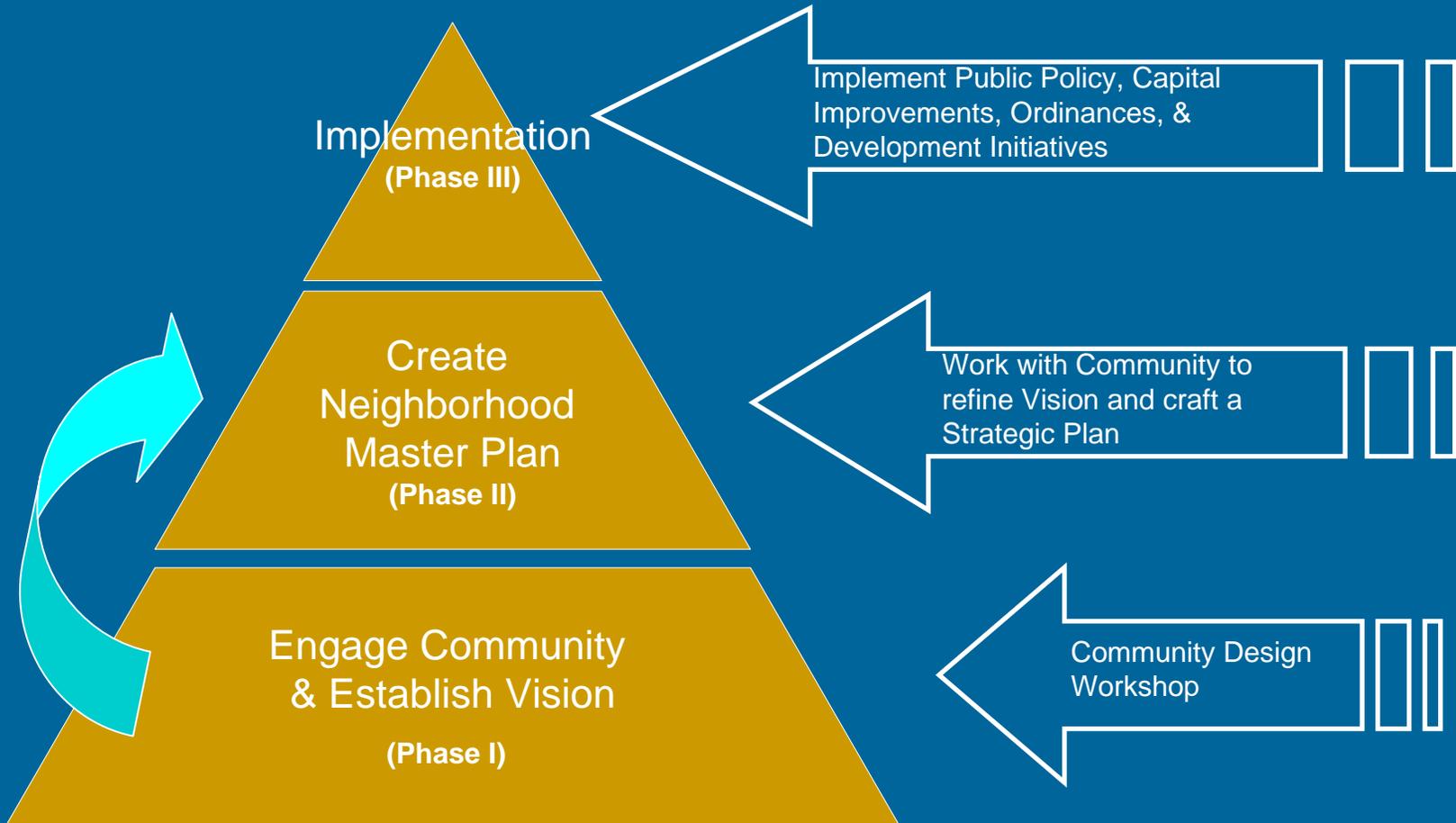


Several teams emphasized the opportunity to develop housing on waterfront locations to provide a bigger residential base for the neighborhood.

# Community Design Workshop – Emerging Principles & Ideas

- Bridge the Broadway Barrier
  - ✓ Redesign the road/intersections to be pedestrian friendly and visually attractive
  - ✓ Strengthen streetscape to draw pedestrians along Cottage and across Broadway
- Link Open Spaces
  - ✓ Develop pedestrian links (trails, boardwalks, streetscapes) between existing green spaces
  - ✓ Develop attractions in key open spaces to encourage pedestrian linkage
- Integrate Mill Creek
  - ✓ Increase landscape buffers on parking lot edges
  - ✓ Encourage new development along street edges in existing parking lots
  - ✓ Place parking behind buildings in the interior of the blocks
  - ✓ Introduce new roads to reconnect the street grid to the historic Knightville block pattern
- Strengthen Civic Identity
  - ✓ Relate potential designs and siting for City Hall to the context of the Civic Core
  - ✓ Develop a streetscape plan to link all civic buildings and give the district an identity
- Preserve and enhance Knightville's Downtown Character
  - ✓ Infill key parcels along the traditional downtown "main street"
  - ✓ Expand the downtown development pattern to Upper Ocean Street
  - ✓ Design streetscapes and encourage uses that enliven street life
- Capitalize on the Waterfront Location
  - ✓ Develop a regional attractions on key waterfront sites
  - ✓ Develop more housing on the waterfront

# Building on the Vision – We need your help move to the next level



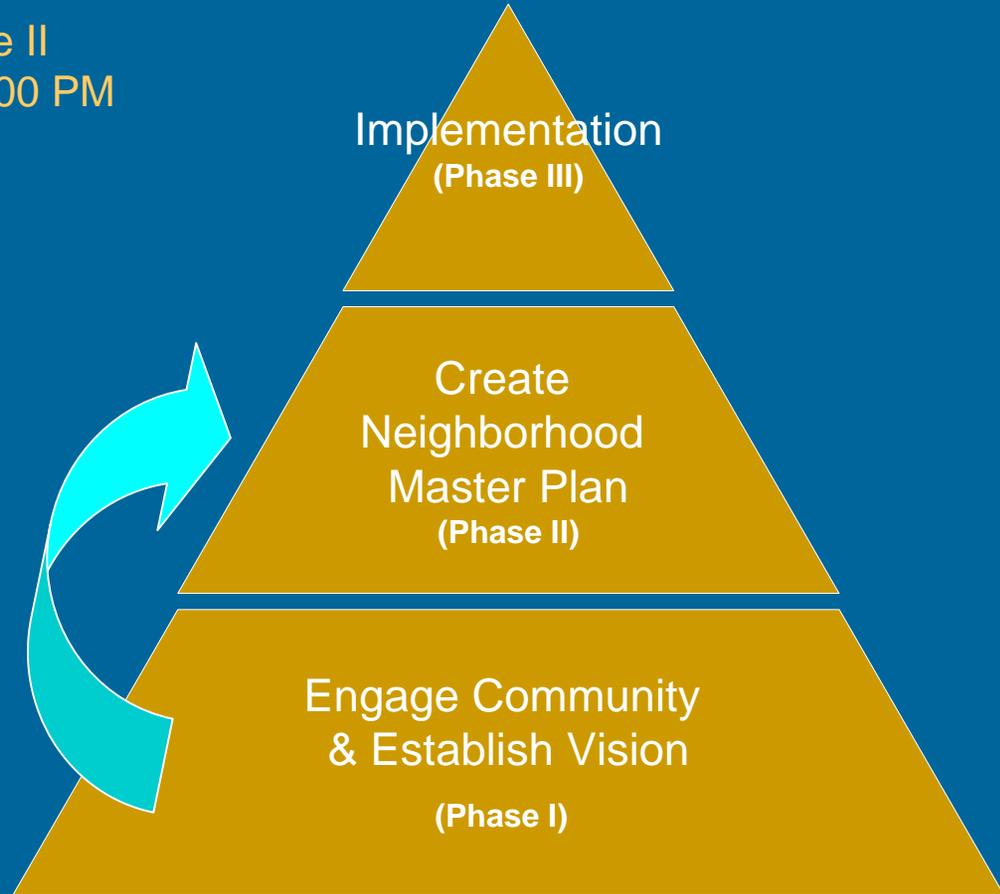
# Building on the Vision – We need your help move to the next level

**Steering Committee – Phase II**  
Kickoff Meeting – June 15, 7:00 PM

Location: TBA

- Are you interested in serving on the Steering Committee?

- Do you want to stay informed as future planning meetings take place?



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