

TOWN OF KITTERY COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE

A WORKFORCE HOUSING COALITION DESIGN CHARRETTE

September 30th and October 4th, 2024



WORKFORCE
HOUSING COALITION
— OF THE GREATER SEACOAST —

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Welcome!

The Workforce Housing Coalition first joined the Town of Kittery for a design charrette in 2011. This was our third visit back, and we were excited to work with the town to imagine creative outcomes for their current Business Park Zone.

Staff from the Town of Kittery contacted the Workforce Housing Coalition to conduct a charrette as part of a larger effort around rezoning and use of the Business Park Zone. The design team came into this charrette with the understanding that the conversation around this area was ongoing. The primary goal of this charrette was to understand the values and preferences of the community, and to create designs that reflected what we heard.

At the end of the process, our team came away with two designs, both of which center the need for gentle density and environmental protection in the area. While our charrette processes sometimes focus on ensuring that a potential project can be feasibly built, the process for this particular charrette focused more on possibility than feasibility. The creation of housing in the current Business Park Zone will require that the area be rezoned to allow for housing development. With this knowledge in mind, the design team attempted to create designs that fit community preferences while also respecting town housing goals.

Workforce Housing Coalition



Mission Statement

Our mission is to educate and engage communities and municipalities to advance diverse housing options. We envision an ample supply of affordable, desirable housing throughout the Seacoast region of New Hampshire, providing opportunities for members of the workforce, including our teachers, firefighters, police officers, small business owners, artists, chefs, caregivers, bankers, and all families and individuals, to put down roots and create a more diverse and equitable community that benefits us all.

What is Affordable and Workforce Housing?

“Little a” affordable housing:

Housing where no more than 30% of income goes to all-in housing costs (utilities, rent/mortgage, etc.). This is not tied to a specific income level.

“Capital A” Affordable Housing:

Funding programs that tie the rental cost of housing to a specific area median income. E.g. Affordable to someone making 40% of the area median income.

Workforce Housing:

Generally referring to housing that is available to individuals and families making 60% of area median income.

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Charrette Team

Design Team

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- Tom Emerson, StudioB-E Architecture
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- Hershey Hirschkop, Fair Tide
- Bob White, RWLA
- Jeff Clifford, Retired Civil Engineer
- Ryan McCarthy, Tide Water Civil
- Chris Kehl, Kennebunk Savings
- Joel Anders, Traffic Engineer
- Dan Anderson, Anderson Porter Design
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Workforce Housing Coalition:

- Nick Taylor
- Taylor Cray

Town of Kittery:

- Kendra Amaral
- Jason Garnham
- Maxim Zakian



Charrette Mission and Process

The Workforce Housing Coalition's signature design charrettes are dedicated to transforming the way people work together. Each charrette is a hypothetical thought exercise that harnesses the talents and energies of volunteer architects, engineers, developers, planners, and other housing industry professionals.

The charrette process relies on the realistic challenges presented by a real site, but encourages the community and the volunteers to ask, "what if?" We ask community members to describe their ideal community, and our volunteers bring these ideas to life.

Charrette Goals:

- Gather community input about the project.
- Envision possible outcomes for the project based on that input.

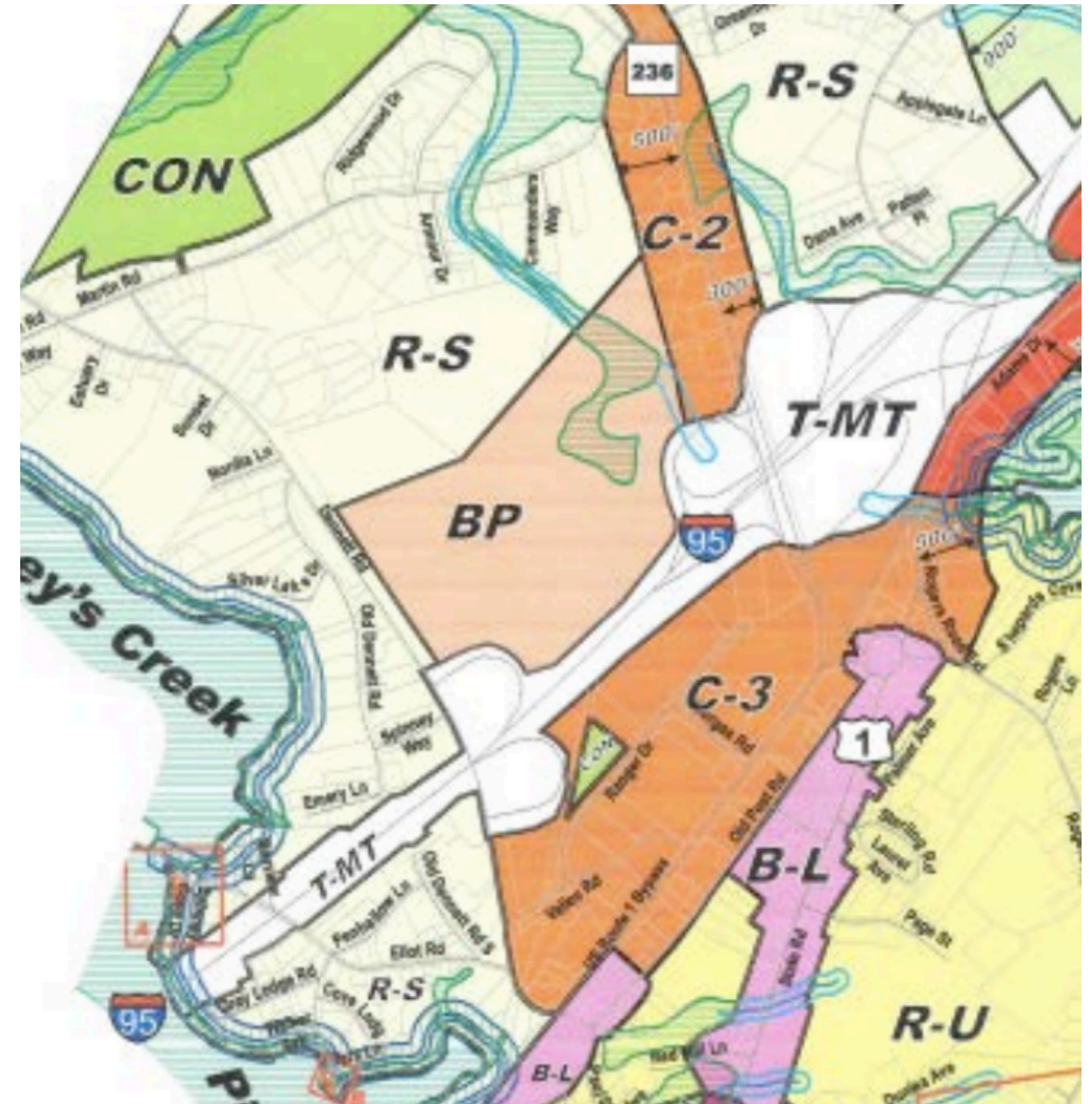


The Property: Business Park Zone

The Business Park Zone (outlined in light orange [BP] on the map) is a 90-acre parcel of land located between Martin Road, Dennett Road, Route 236, and Interstate 95 (I-95).

Business Park Zoning itself allows for “office or industrial development on parcels that are served by utilities and easily accessed from major roadways” (ie. industrial warehouse, corporate distribution center, etc.).

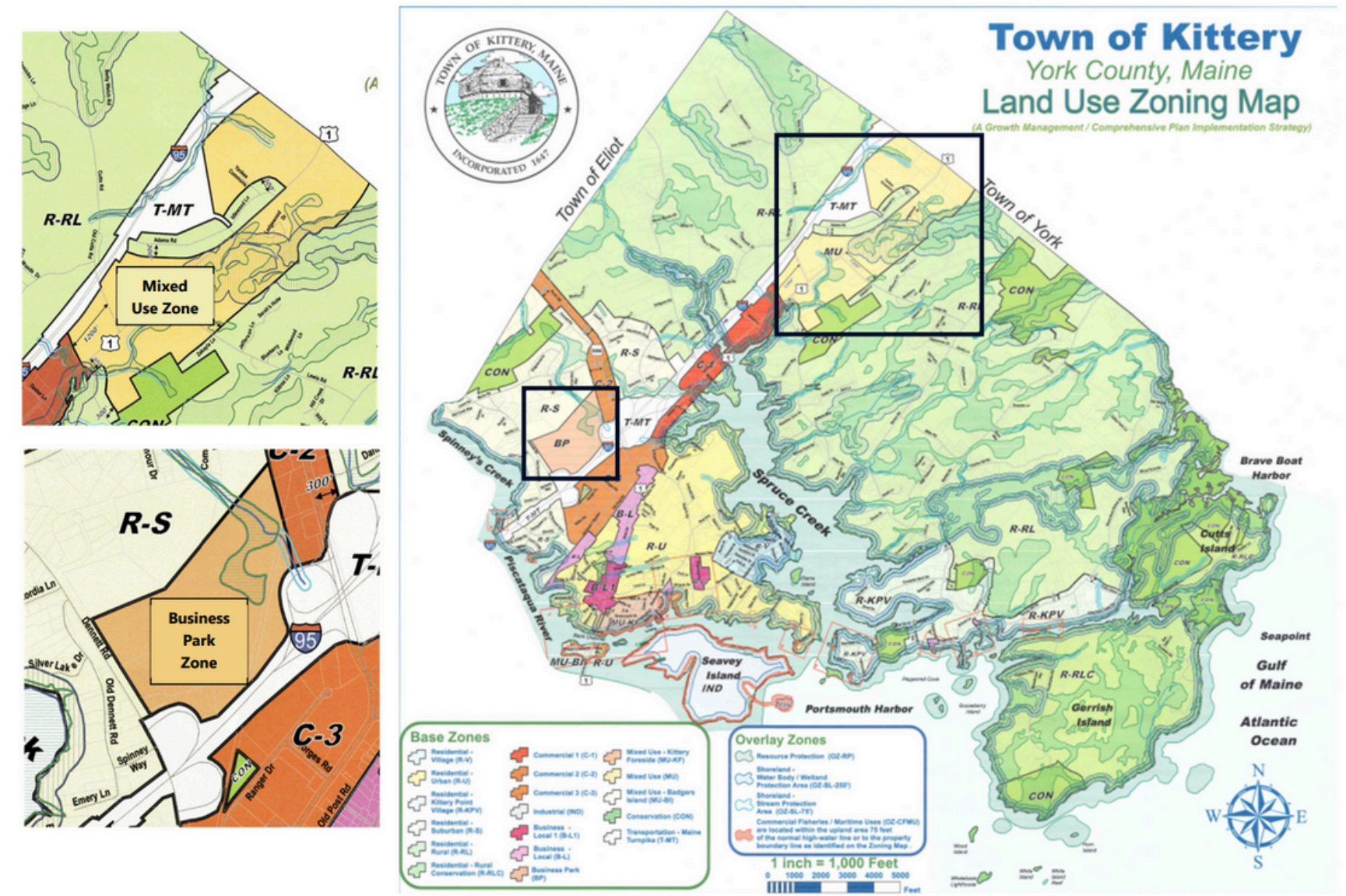
The town of Kittery has conducted multiple studies to inform the use of the Business Park Zone. Three of these studies have greatly informed the work for this charrette, and will be outlined on the following pages.



The Market Study

The findings of the market study showed an increased need for housing in Kittery, and identified the Business Park Zone as an area that is well-positioned for residential or mixed-use development due to its proximity to transportation services and connection to town water and sewer.

Market Analysis | Town of Kittery



[Link to full Market Study](#)

Study Areas

The Town of Kittery has two zones that are currently being considered for rezoning. These two zones are profiled below, with a map on the following page.

Business Park Zone

The Business Park Zone consists of approximately 100 acres over 4 parcels, 90% of which is undeveloped. It is served directly by Dennett Road to the south, Route 236 to the north, and Martin Road to the west. In 2018, the Town rezoned the area to a Mixed Use neighborhood to meet market trends. In 2022, the Town reverted the zoning back to Business Park due to a citizen petition following a proposed development of 900 residential units and commercial development.

Mixed Use Zone

This zone is located at the northern portion of Route 1, starting at Haley Road and extending North to the border with the Town of York. It is comprised of approximately 46 parcels covering approximately 440 acres of land. The zone has challenging required performance standards, which may inhibit development. Recent developments include mixed residential and commercial space, townhomes, other commercial/service uses, and a proposed hotel.

The Housing Needs Assessment

The Housing Needs Assessment, conducted by the Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission, recommended a few changes that can be made to promote housing development in Kittery.

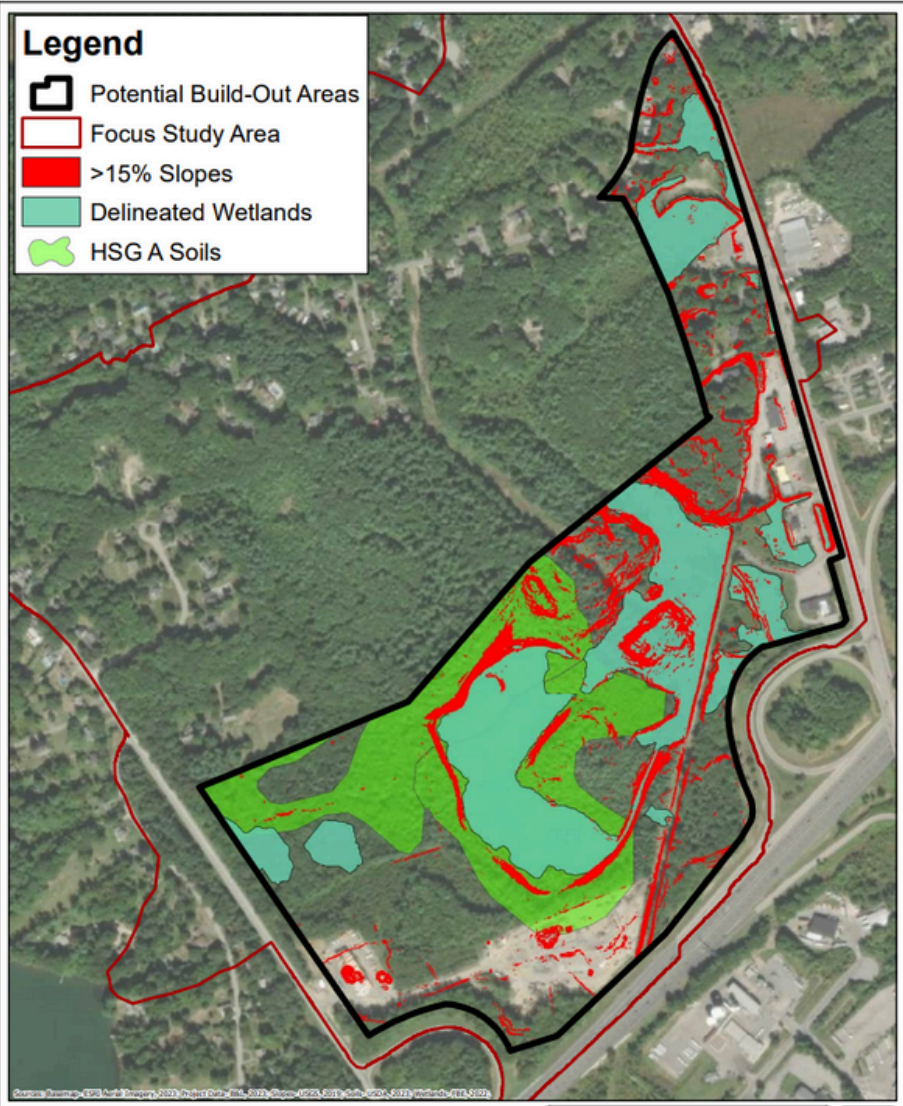
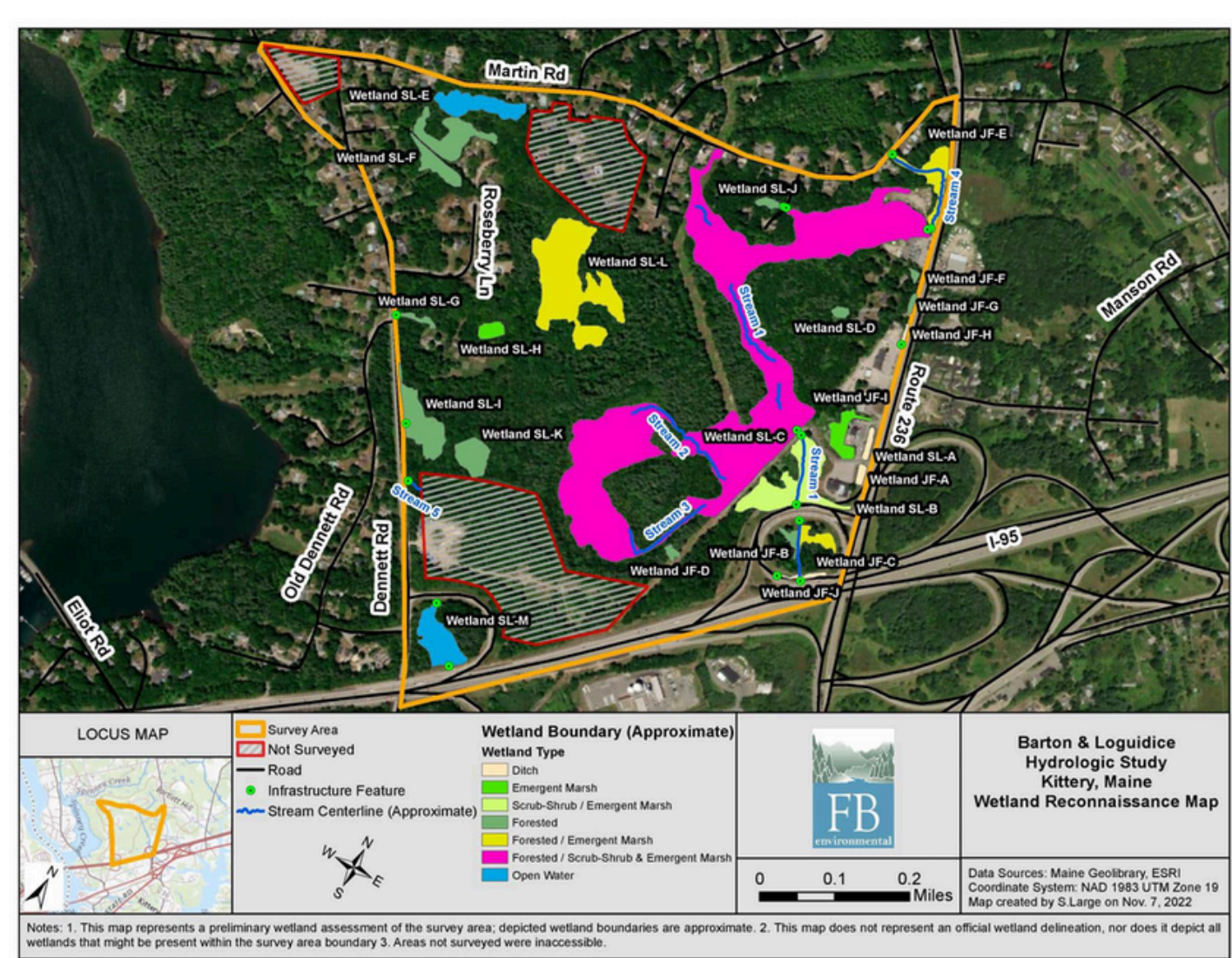
8.1 Recommendation #1: Make it easier to build in the region

8.2 Recommendation #2: Provide support for housing production

These recommendations can be implemented through a variety of local changes. Building can be made easier through changes to zoning regulation that allow for more density, such as the alteration of single-family zoning to allow for duplexes and triplexes within existing buildings. Housing production can be supported through financing options at a local, state, and federal level. The Housing Needs Assessment outlines each of these recommendations in further detail.

The Hydrological Study

The hydrological study provides a detailed exploration of existing wetlands and flooding conditions in the Business Park Zone and surrounding areas. It also provides options for Low Impact Development and other strategies that can be used to mitigate groundwater table rise and flooding impacts on existing and new developments in the area.



The maps to the left show the current wetlands and developable areas in the Business Park Zone.

These maps helped to inform the design team's creation of wetland overlay maps for the mapping of their designs.

The Zoning

Business Park Zone

Kittery's Business Park Zone was created in the 1990's to encourage office or industrial development on parcels that are served by utilities and easily accessed from major roadways.

The property in question for this charrette was zoned Business Park until 2018, when it was rezoned to Neighborhood Mixed Use zoning, which allows for the development of multi-unit buildings and commercial space. Under this zoning a 280-unit apartment development, the Seacoast Residences, was approved. Construction of the project, which sits directly adjacent to highway I-95, was completed in 2024. Under the current zoning, the Seacoast Residences are technically “nonconforming”, as multifamily housing is not permitted within Business Park Zoning.

In 2022, following a proposal for a 900-unit mixed-use development on the property, residents of Kittery pushed for a rezoning of the area through a citizen's petition. The Town Council approved the citizen's petition, and the area was rezoned back to its original Business Park zoning.

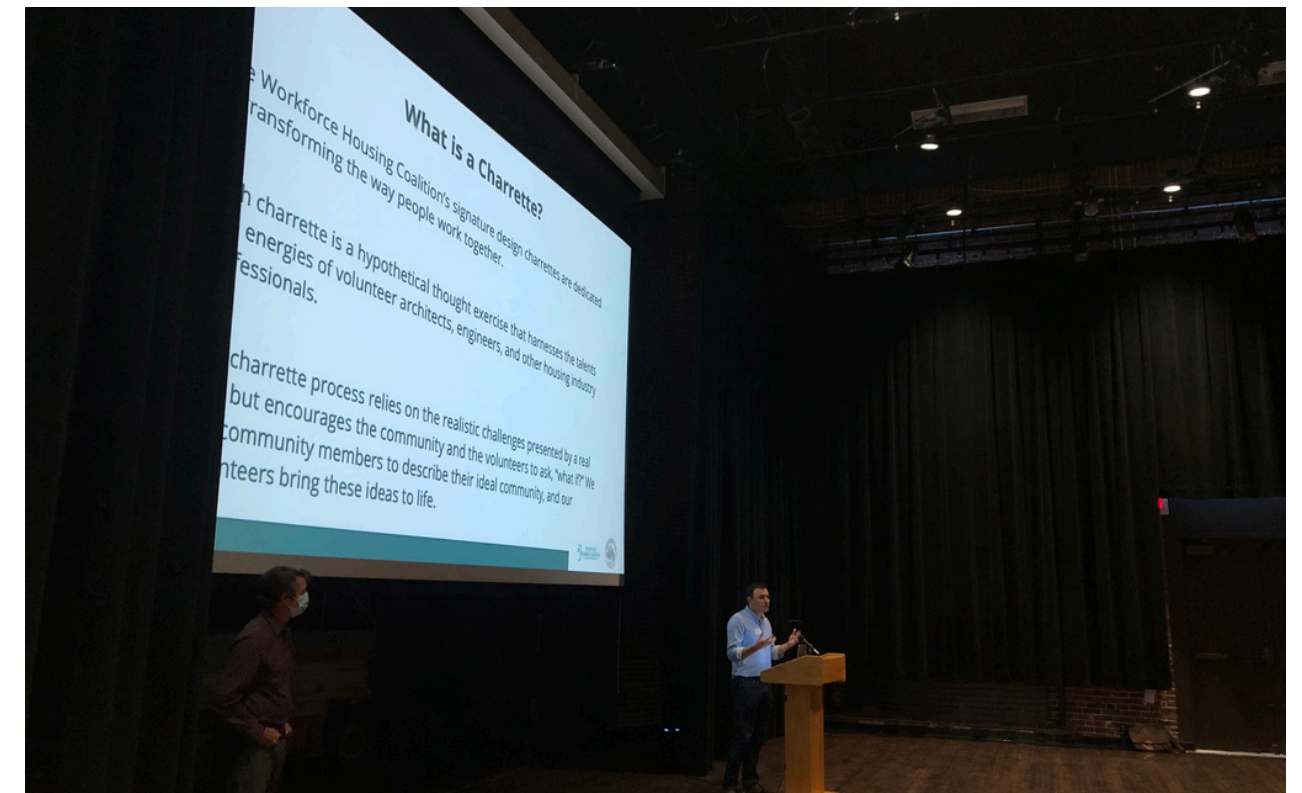
Business Park Zoning allows for the creation of “office and industrial development”. Housing and climate goals for the Town of Kittery prioritize the use of this space for other purposes, hence the need to explore options such as housing for this area.

Community Listening Session

Community listening sessions are the backbone of charrette work. In a group conversation, members of the public and the design team are invited to explore a series of questions, with the end goal being an understanding of community values and public comfort level with different potential design options for a certain area or property.

During this listening session, we began with a short presentation to provide an overview of the current zoning in the area, the research that had been done to inform this charrette, and the charrette process in general. We then moved into another room to have small group conversations around a series of questions, and to discuss a few examples of housing types that could potentially fit into the community context of the area while also meeting town goals.

We centered our group discussion around the values that community members hold, and how they would like to see those values reflected in housing development in their community. This question was supplemented by two optional and anonymous questions that could be answered on provided index cards. The group discussion and index card answers are outlined on the following pages of this report.



What We Asked and What We Heard

Group Discussion Question:

What values do you hold that you would like to see in housing development built in this space?

We got a variety of answers to this question, but a few elements in particular were repeated across many answers. Community members and abutters outlined:

- An appreciation for the neighborhood feel of their current community.
- A need to respect the natural environment in the area.
- A want for affordability in housing development.



What We Asked and What We Heard

Anonymous Index Card Question:

What doubts and/or reservations do you have about housing development in the current Business Park Zone?

As is illustrated by the graphic at right, many of the index cards identified:

- Fears about density and new housing not fitting in well within the existing neighborhood.
- The need for attractive design and housing types that didn't overwhelm the current neighborhoods.
- Concern that the natural environment in the space would be harmed by new housing development.



What We Asked and What We Heard

Anonymous Index Card Question:

What would it take for you to become an advocate for housing development in the current Business Park Zone?

The responses to this question were varied and identified a significant level of hesitancy around building in this area. Some elements that folks identified as potentially helping to make them advocates for the project were:

- Affordability in the cost of rent and mortgage.
- Respect for the natural environment in the area.
- Intentional creation of a neighborhood through design and community-oriented spaces.



Housing Types Feedback

During the community listening session, each small group also discussed a few different housing types. The goal of this conversation was to identify which styles of housing may feel comfortable for residents of the existing neighborhood.

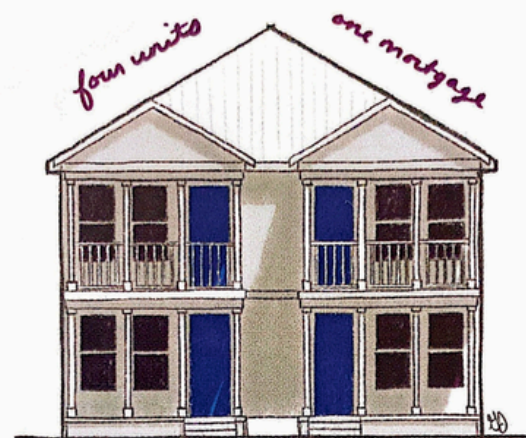
The groups were given five different housing styles and asked to identify the pros and cons they saw in each one. The design team then used this feedback when creating their final designs, attempting to base their housing designs on something similar to the preferred housing types from this exercise.

Housing Types:



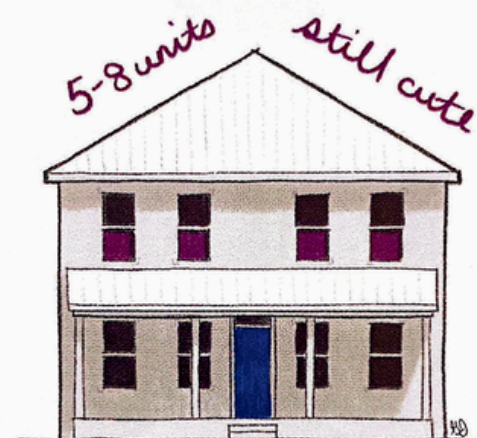
free simple
TOWNHOUSE

Attached on both sides,
tuck-under garage.



purpose-built
APARTMENT HOUSE

Triplex or fourplex camouflaged as
a big house.



small
APARTMENT BLDG

Stealth density. Now entering
the deep end.



5-9 unit
COTTAGE COURT

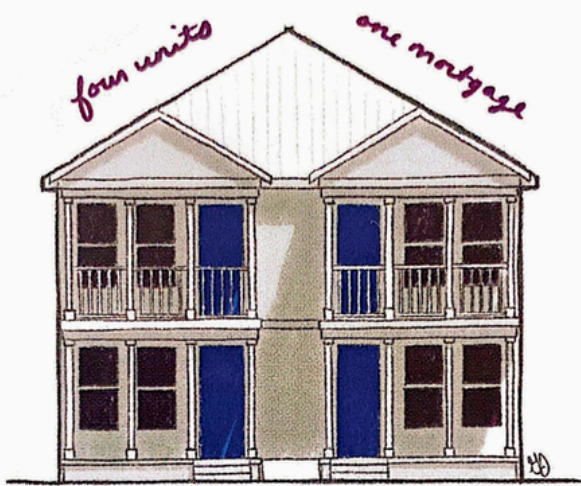
Rentals worth downsizing for.
Live like you're on vacation.



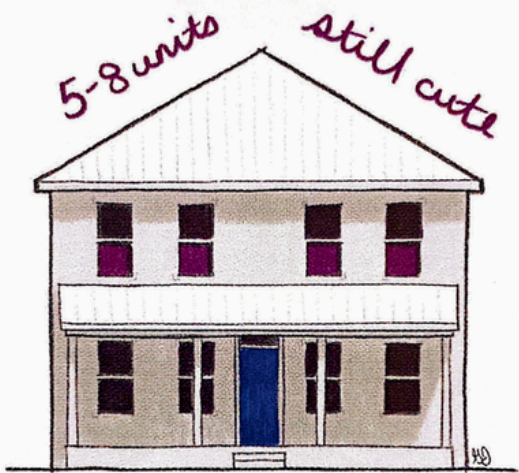
large, 4-12 unit
MAINSTREET MIXED

High value, cost, and complexity.
Not for the faint of heart.

Housing Types Feedback



purpose-built
APARTMENT HOUSE
Triplex or fourplex camouflaged as a big house.



small
APARTMENT BLDG
Stealth density. Now entering the deep end.

Pros	Cons
Looks like a single-family home.	Feels similar to a motel.
	Multi-family housing.
	May attract people who do not want to stay in Kittery long-term.

Pros	Cons
Could help support density with mixed building types. 3-4 units per building is comfortable density.	Not a single-family home.
Integrates well with existing buildings and neighborhood - good use for the zone.	
Units could be more affordable.	

The Apartment House and Small Apartment Building options provide similar styles of housing at differing levels of density.

The Apartment House is built like a traditional single-family home, but houses multiple units within it. Tenants rent individual apartments and benefit from the community environment that can be created in this style of living.

The Small Apartment Building can also be made to resemble a single-family home, though it creates space for more units than the Apartment House. Tenants also rent individual units in this style of housing.

Housing Types Feedback



free simple
TOWNHOUSE

Attached on both sides,
tuck-under garage.

Pros	Cons
2-3 stories.	Too dense, buildings could be too close together.
Not a big apartment building.	Not enough yard and privacy.
Could support “secret density”.	Too tall.
Allows for open space around the building.	May attract people who do not want to stay in Kittery long-term.
Feels like single-family housing.	
Design is more appealing than others that were shown.	

The Townhouse provides a unique option for housing solutions. As a taller building, the Townhouse can be home to multiple apartments in one building, allowing for “secret density”, as one participant noted. Townhouses build up (multiple floors) where other buildings might build out (units side-by-side) to create the same number of units, meaning that this building creates potential for more units within a smaller footprint. This style of design also allows for more potential yard space or green space around the building.

Housing Types Feedback



5-9 unit

COTTAGE COURT

Rentals worth downsizing for.
Live like you're on vacation.

Pros	Cons
Shared common spaces and room for open space.	Site planning will matter a lot when creating this design.
Good density, can help to build community.	Hard to imagine smaller, for-sale homes as affordable.
For-sale, smaller units are attractive.	

Both the Cottage Court and Mainstreet Mixed housing types provide higher-density options with a focus on aesthetics and neighborhood appeal.

Cottage Court housing focuses on smaller units, which are often single-family rentals or for-sale units that are naturally more affordable due to their smaller footprint.



Large, 4-12 unit

MAINSTREET MIXED

High value, cost, and complexity.
Not for the faint of heart.

Pros	Cons
Could encourage smaller, more energy-efficient and affordable units.	Can't be the only housing type - tend to be boxy and unattractive / not fit the neighborhood.
Can support a mini-downtown and community building.	Commercial may not fill up as the need is not necessarily there.
Mixed-use could provide services for residents living above and for the whole neighborhood.	There is no need for another downtown area.

Mainstreet Mixed provides a mixed-use option that allows for rental units to be created on the top floor while the ground-level of the building can be home to cafes, hair salons, daycare centers, and other businesses that serve the local community.

Additional Housing Types

Some potential housing options for both designs were pulled from other, existing neighborhoods and housing typologies that the design team was aware of.

The example at the top (provided by a member of the design team) shows a dense neighborhood with small, single-family homes and a few multi-unit options. Shared, central parking in this example minimizes the need for larger parking areas, allowing for more green space in the design.

The example on the bottom is Moorehouse Place, a York Housing Authority building in York, Maine. This building is home to forty-two units, ranging in size from one to three bedrooms. The design style of this building was mentioned by some community members during the community listening session, leading the design team to explore potentially replicating elements of it in their designs.



Design Process:

After collecting feedback from the community, the design team explored a variety of different housing options to meet the needs of the community, while centering the preferences identified during the community listening session.

Based on the feedback we received and the context of the property, the design team focused on missing middle housing options as those that would best fit the environment and community preferences.

Missing Middle Housing

Missing middle housing is housing designed to fill the gap between traditional single-family homes and larger apartment buildings. Some examples of missing middle housing include duplexes, triplexes, courtyard apartments, townhouses, and cottage style homes. These housing designs allow neighborhoods to increase density, and subsequently affordability, while allowing for a smoother transition between single-family homes and large apartment buildings.



Neighborhoods

As part of the research the design team did for this charrette, we looked at other neighborhoods in Kittery that could act as models for the creation of housing in this area.

The neighborhoods pictured to the right all currently exist in Kittery. These neighborhoods provide examples of a comfortable level of higher density housing in Kittery. Kittery Foreside (pictured at bottom) is a well-loved neighborhood in the heart of Kittery, and is home to many different styles of multifamily and mixed-use housing.

While an exact replica of these neighborhoods might not work for the property in question, it was helpful for the design team to be able to reference these neighborhoods to get an idea of what already exists in Kittery.



Affordability Considerations

During the community listening session, we received a few requests to create affordable, single-family homes on this property. This sparked a larger conversation around the drivers of affordability in housing development, and the difficulty that exists when attempting to create housing options that are attainable for folks in need of lower-cost housing.

There are many factors that impact the cost of housing development. When talking about housing costs, we sometimes refer to the 5 L's: Lumber, Labor, Land, Lending, and Laws. Each of these elements plays a role in the eventual cost to the individual renting or purchasing a home, apartment, or condo.

Often, building more units allows the cost of things like land, labor, and lumber to be spread across multiple units instead of all being reflected in the cost of a single home. This means that the eventual cost to the consumer will be lower than it would be if all costs were tied to an individual, single-family home.

Drivers of Affordability

Allowable density and available financing programs are the key drivers of housing affordability. Increased density allows for the fixed costs (ie. land) and costs that are more efficient at scale (ie. materials, labor) to be spread out over more homes or units, allowing the price of each individual home to decrease.



LUMBER
Development costs



LABOR
Workforce availability



LAND
Finite, but intensity of use is variable



Lending
Financing

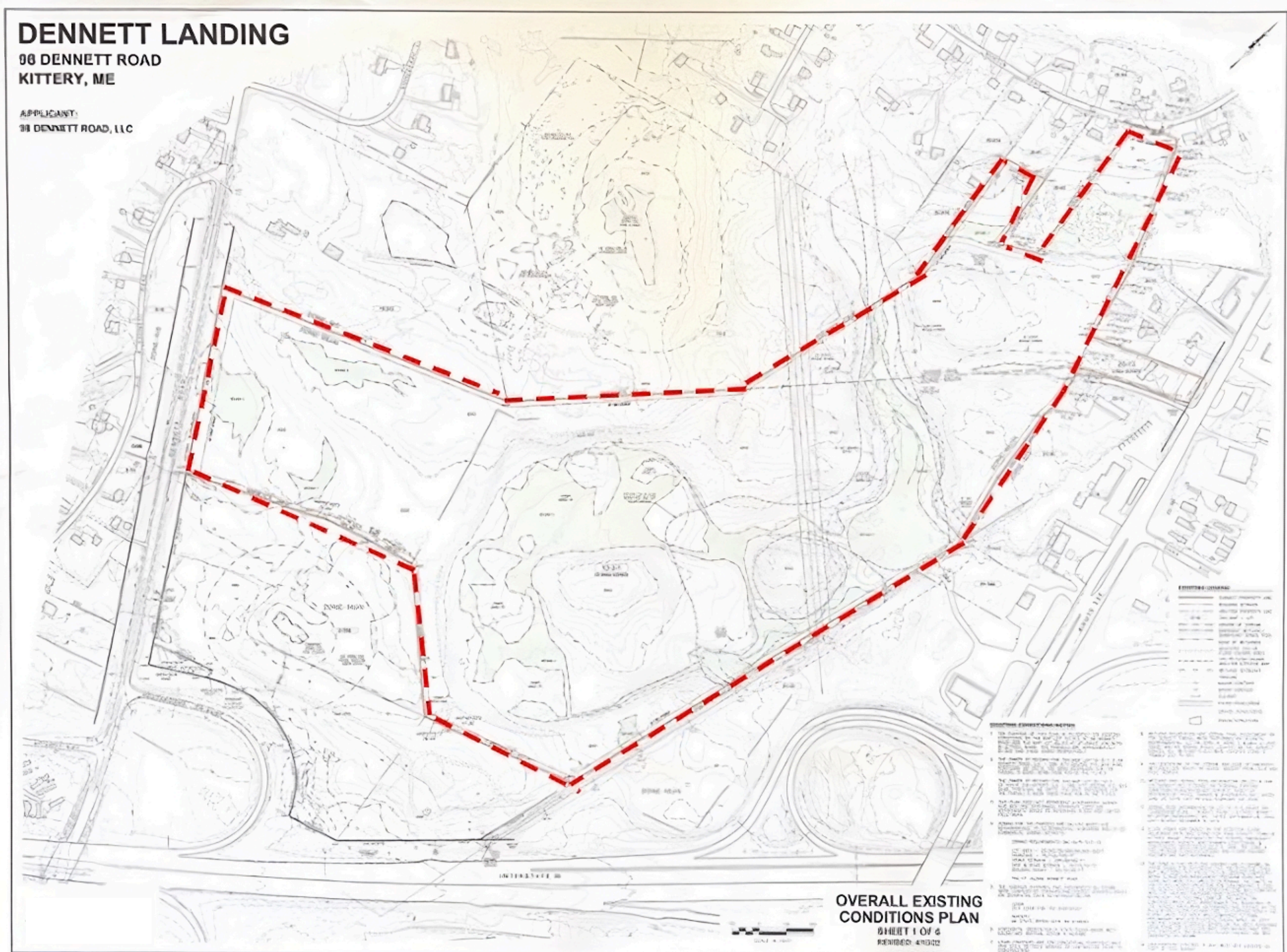


LAWS
Regulatory practices

The Site

The area outlined in red is the available area that the design team had to work with. For the design work, we used maps that the Town of Kittery had available from a proposed project in this area. These maps were originally created by Hoyle Tanner, and were commissioned by the property owners for a potential project.

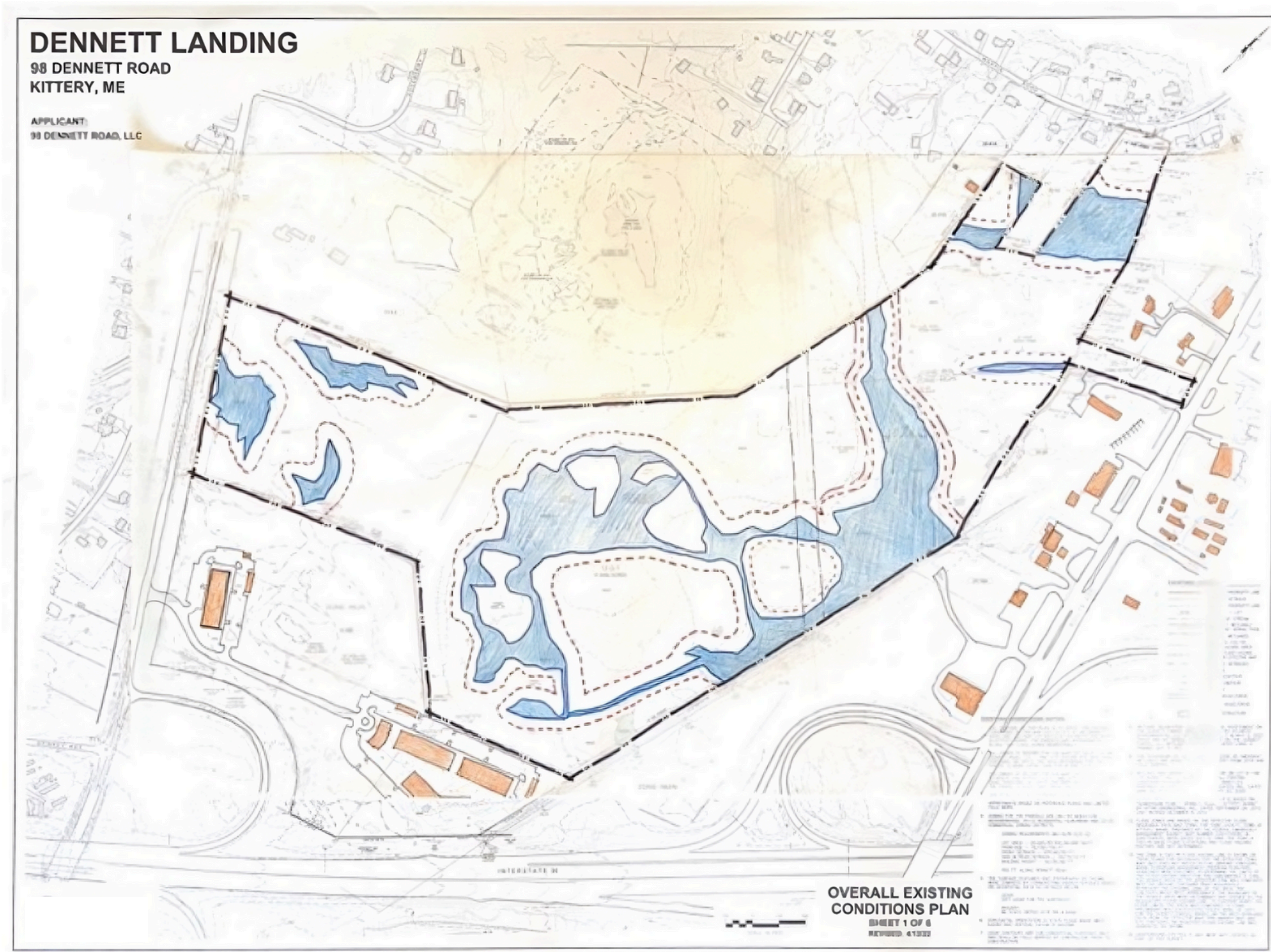
The next few pages will outline two designs that the charrette team came up with using the available maps and existing environmental constraints on the property. These designs aim to create attractive, multifamily housing that does not overwhelm the existing neighborhood and respects the natural environment.



The Site

This map shows the available area with the wetlands marked in blue. The design team worked to create two designs that proposed different levels of density while respecting the existing wetlands on the property.

This map also shows some of the existing structures on and around the property (marked in light brown). Existing structures include the Seacoast Residences, an apartment building located adjacent to highway I-95.

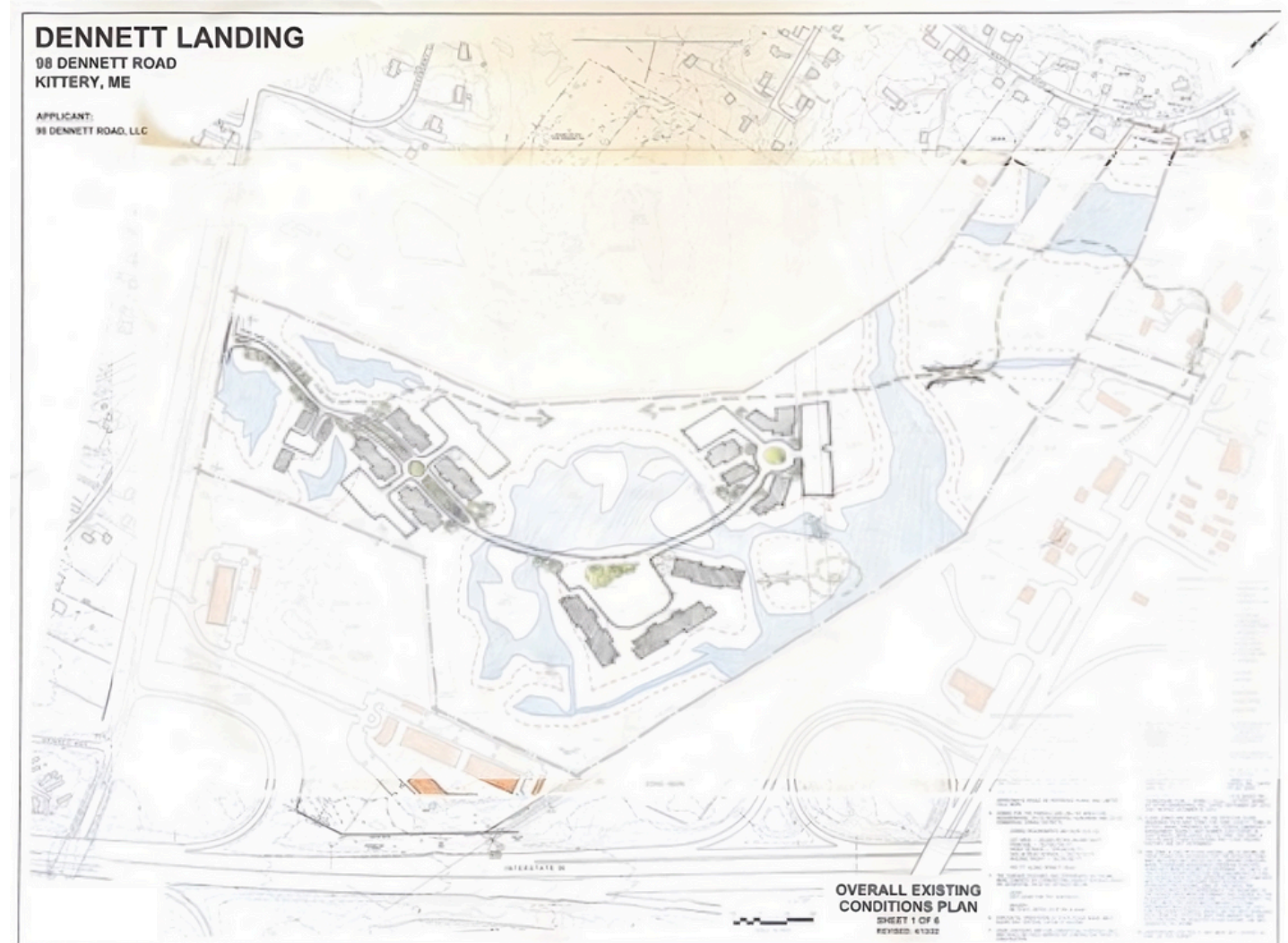


Designs:

The design team came up with two designs based on the available property, community feedback, and the need for a variety of housing types.

Both designs incorporate smaller, higher density housing options that respect the existing wetlands in the space. The designs aim to maximize the amount of natural space available to the community, and to be respectful of existing neighbors.

Please note that all designs created for the purposes of this charrette are created for the purpose of the creative exercise and are not guaranteed to be built. While elements of these designs may inspire future development, the intended purpose of the charrette is to think creatively and work collaboratively within a community.

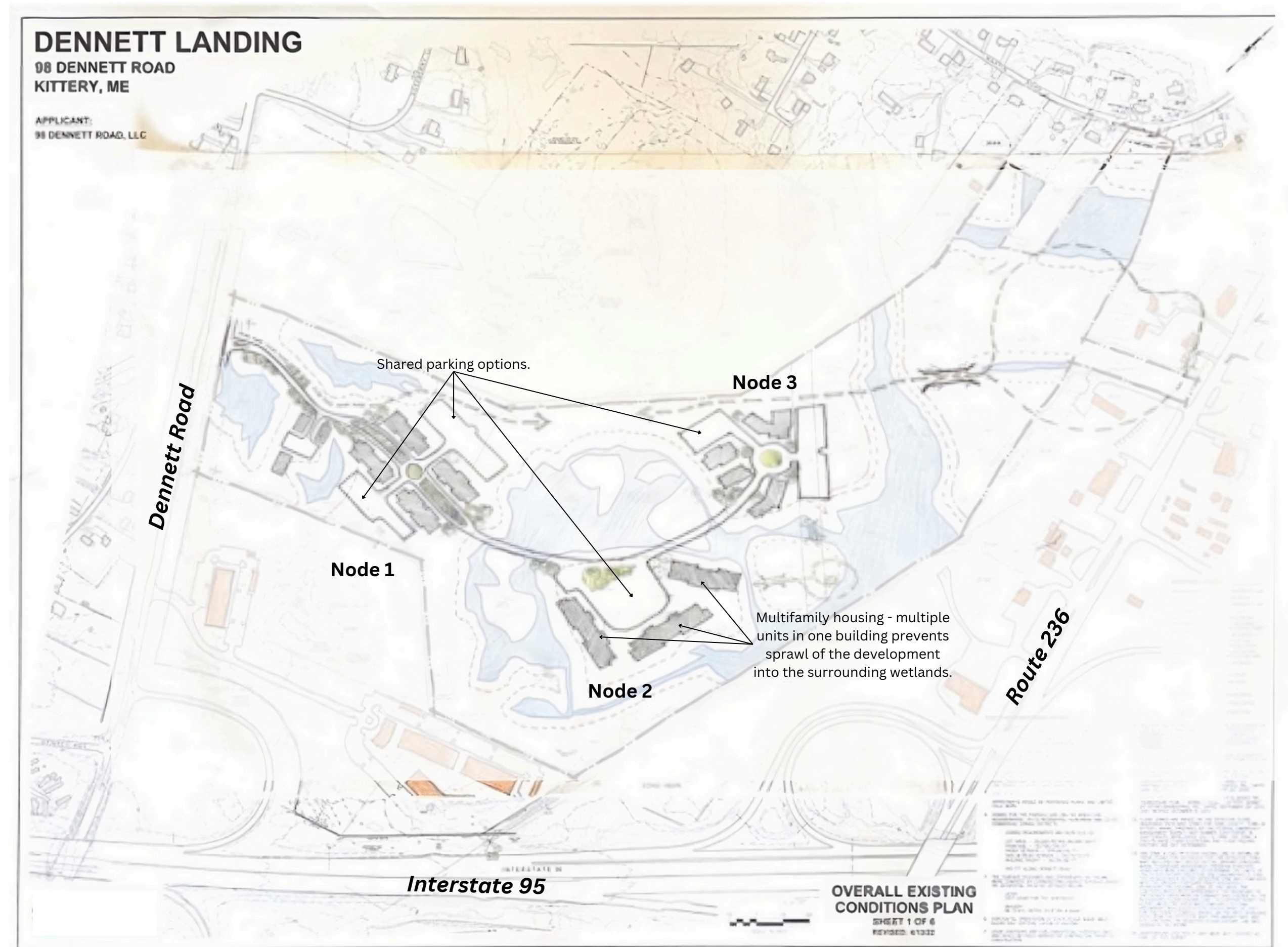


Design #1

The first design that the team came up with incorporates three separate areas, or “nodes” across the property, with a roadway connecting them.

Each node in the design contains multiple buildings, all of which are multifamily. The style of building shown in this design could house multiple units within one building, allowing for density without the need to create multiple smaller buildings. This prevents the need for the a potential development to sprawl and take up space in the wetlands.

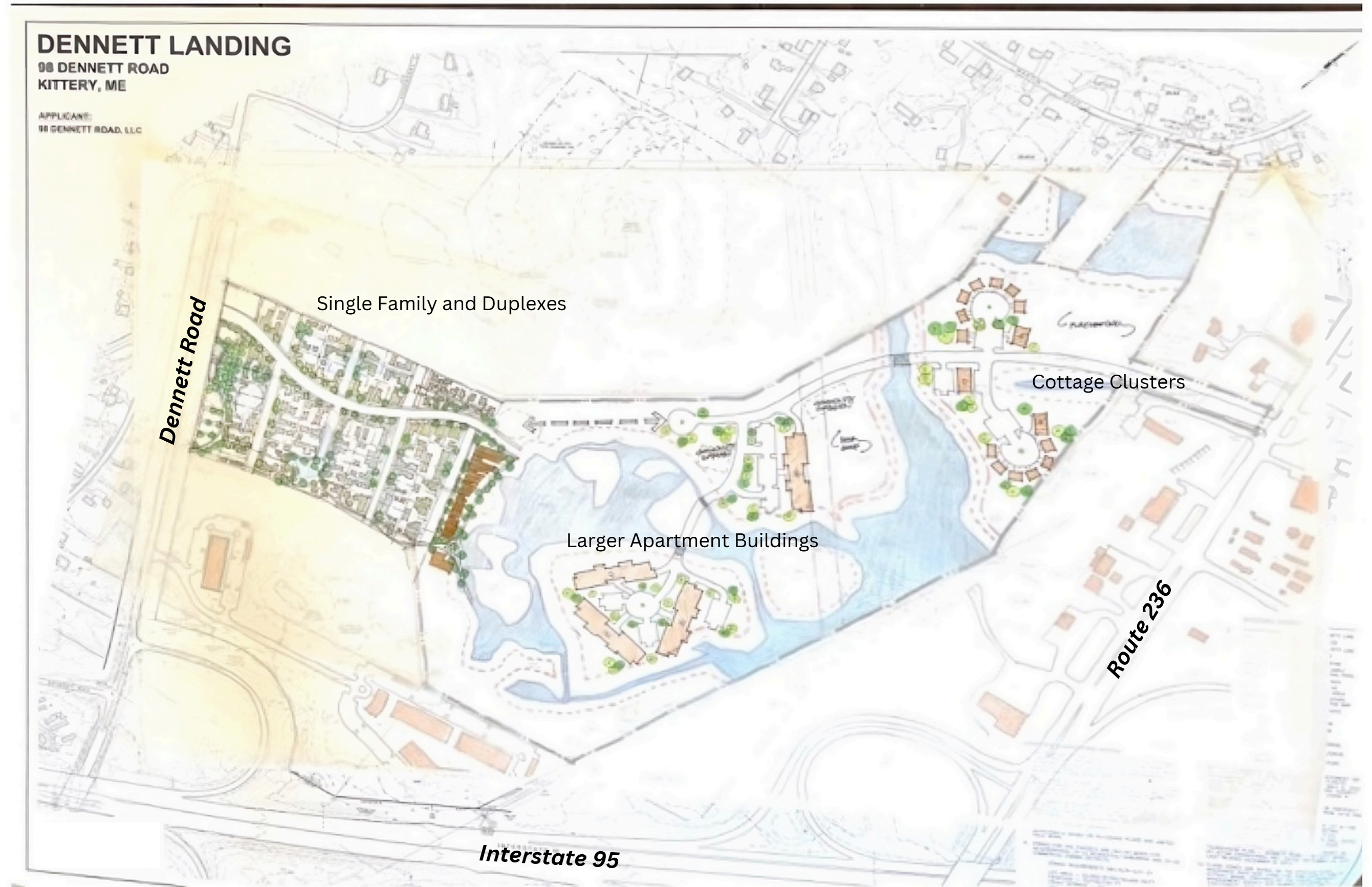
While the design team did extensively discuss finances during this charrette, this style of housing development would create more units within the project, potentially allow each unit to be rented at a more affordable rate.



Design #2

This design explores differing levels of visible density. The neighborhood closest to Martin Road is a cluster of smaller homes, potentially single-family or duplexes. The other areas, or “nodes” of the design are more similar to the first design, with the exception of the cottage-style clusters closest to Route 236.

The variety of housing types in this design could provide a variety of affordability levels as well. The smaller homes, including those in the cottage clusters at the far end of the design, could potentially be for-sale options. The cost of these homes could financially offset slightly lower rents in the larger, apartment-style buildings.





The image to the left is a more detailed look at the denser housing options outlined in the second design. This is an area of the design that could most easily make space for single family homes or duplexes. The intention in this aspect of the design was to explore the possibility of a denser neighborhood with individual homes, similar to those outlined in the R-U and Kittery Foreside neighborhood images seen earlier in the report. This style of development takes up more space, potentially encroaching on the surrounding wetlands. The single-family style of the buildings, however, was attractive to some community members who came to the report-out of the design team's work.

The image to the right shows the far side of the second design. The larger, apartment-style buildings are very similar to those outlined in the first design, with shared parking areas and traffic circles to slow traffic around the buildings. The design team intentionally created space in this part of the design for community gardens and green space around the larger apartment buildings. The cottage court style housing also offers shared parking in the center of the buildings, with green space around the outside.



Takeaways:

Site Conditions & Costs

The site's topography and hydrologic conditions create smaller pockets of buildable land that are spread throughout the site and separated from each other. This fragmentation of buildable areas increases the costs to build roads and utilities on the site.

The design teams addressed this, in part, by incorporating dead-end streets and driveways into their concepts. However, Town and WHC staff understand that a street connecting Dennett Road to Route 236 may be desired by the community. A through-road would increase project costs, which would mean that more units might be needed for a project to be viable.

Affordability and Housing Types

As sketched in Design #2, detached single-family housing consumes more land and may result in more environmental impacts on a per unit basis than other housing types. Detached single-family housing also costs more to build per unit than most other housing types. This means that less affordable housing - or open space - would be provided in a project that is predominantly detached or single-family housing types.

Both designs sketched during the charrette support inclusion of some affordable units. It should be noted that to offer more affordable units generally requires the construction of more units overall for a project to be financially viable.

Recommendations:

Zoning Changes:

As noted earlier in this report, Business Park Zoning does not allow for the development of single or multifamily housing. For housing to be built on this property, a zoning change would be necessary. The Town of Kittery has a variety of other zoning options available, many of which would be suitable for this area. A few options include:

- Neighborhood Mixed Use Zoning
- Residential Urban
- Residential Suburban

Other zoning options are available in Kittery, but these three in particular allow for the type of multifamily development that could create more affordable options.

Continued Community Engagement:

Due to the complex nature of this property, and its history with neighbors and community members, continued community engagement will be a vital aspect of the process for any development that happens in this area of Kittery. The Town of Kittery has worked to ensure that neighbors and community members are engaged in conversation around this property. Community listening session and processes such as the charrette allow community members to provide feedback and ideas. The Workforce Housing Coalition encourages the continuation of these types of conversations, and was fortunate to be able to participate in this process.

Thank you to our sponsors, volunteers, and all who made this possible!

The charrette in the Kittery Business Park Zone provided an opportunity to bring together community members, town staff and leadership, the owners of the property, and an incredible team of volunteers who lent their time and expertise to the design process. None of this would have been possible without these folks, and we are so grateful to have been able to work with them. While this is only one aspect of a much larger conversation and process around the Business Park Zone, we hope the charrette process and the work of the design team can help the community find a solution that fits their needs.

