

# West Webster Hamlet

## Revitalization Plan Executive Summary

June 2023



## **Plan Support by the Genesee Transportation Council (GTC)**

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While the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) participated on the steering committee, this does not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of NYSDOT.

Many community members contributed significant time and effort to help develop the West Webster Hamlet Revitalization Plan. Their passion, commitment, enthusiasm, and hard work were greatly appreciated.

## **Steering Committee**

Josh Artuso - Webster Director of Economic Development

Jody Binnix, AICP - Genesee Transportation Council

Matt Chatfield, RLA, AICP - Webster Economic Development Alliance

Tom Flaherty - Webster Town Supervisor

Mary Herington, PE - Webster Town Engineer

Lora Leon - New York State Department of Transportation

Thomas Polech - Monroe County Department of Transportation

Pat Stephens - Webster Highway Superintendent

## **Project Partners**

Genesee Transportation Council

Monroe County Department of Transportation

New York State Department of Transportation

Town of Webster

Webster Economic Development Alliance

## **Planning Consultants**

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# Introduction & Boundary

The Town of Webster, in cooperation with the Webster Economic Development Alliance, pursued a revitalization plan to strengthen the identity of the West Webster Hamlet as a neighborhood center. This plan addressed two geographic areas including both the West Webster Hamlet and the adjacent Route 404/Empire Boulevard Corridor.

The primary objective of this plan was to identify strategies and recommendations to improve pedestrian safety and bolster economic opportunities in the Hamlet. Under the guidance of the project steering committee and the citizen advisory committee (CAC), the project team developed recommendations to:

- Expand pedestrian and bicycle facilities, particularly along Old Ridge Road;
- Improve pedestrian and vehicular safety along the Route 404 Corridor;
- Enhance intersection of Ridge Road and Bay Road including detailed recommended improvements for land use, development and design, and transportation; and
- Identify improvements to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to adjacent neighborhoods, shopping destinations and adjacent recreational resources.

## Project Guidance

The project team worked closely with a **Steering Committee**, which was the primary guiding force for the development of the plan. The steering committee included representation from the Genesee Transportation Council, New York State Department of Transportation, Monroe County Department of Transportation, Town of Webster Engineering, Community Development and Highway Departments, Webster Town Staff, and other key stakeholders.

A **Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)** was also put together to provide important feedback and guidance during the planning process. The project team met with the CAC several times during development of the plan.

The project team also held multiple rounds of public engagement during the plan's development. These meetings were open to the general public and provided community members, residents, and business and property owners an avenue to provide valuable feedback. These meetings are further detailed later in this plan.

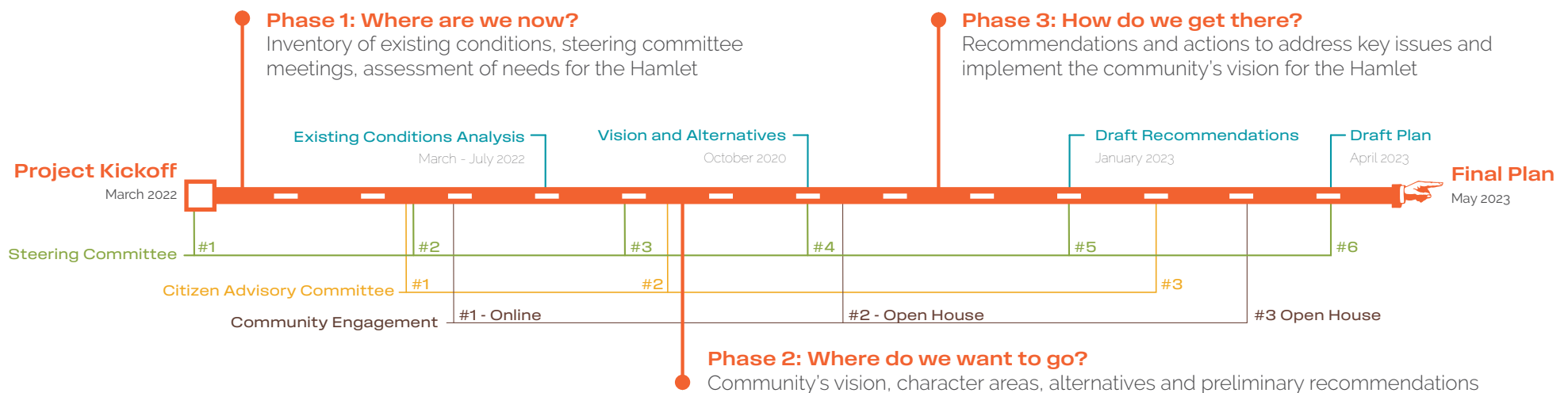






Figure 1: Hamlet Revitalization Boundary Source: Ingalls Planning & Design

## Project Boundary

One of the first tasks for the project was to identify a project boundary. As depicted in the boundary map on above, properties with frontage along the study area roads were included. The Town and the Webster Economic Development Alliance identified a collection of streets that were to be included in the study ranging from local and residential streets, State roads and County roads. These streets include:

- NYS Route 404/Empire Boulevard;
- County Road 14/Gravel Road;
- Ridge Road/Old Ridge Road;
- Bay Road;
- Maple Drive;
- Cherry Hill Lane; and
- Cane Patch.

The four corners of Ridge Road and Gravel Road represent the heart of the Hamlet of West Webster and, as such, it is roughly the center of the project's study area.

## NYS Route 404/Empire Boulevard

One of the significant challenges of this project lay in understanding and reconciling the relationship between the Gravel/Ridge Road area and Empire Boulevard. As shown on the map above, Empire Boulevard bends around Gravel and Ridge Road, carrying or diverting traffic around the Hamlet's center. This configuration has likely made it difficult for the Hamlet to develop economically. This study provides transportation and gateway recommendations that better engage Ridge Road and Gravel Road while improving safety along Empire Boulevard.



# Existing Conditions Assessment

The existing conditions assessment includes data and analysis related to a number of factors and topics affecting the Hamlet of West Webster. Existing conditions reviewed and assessed as part of this Corridor Study including but not limited to the following:

- Previous plans and studies;
- Existing land use and zoning;
- Hamlet built environment; and
- Transportation analysis including vehicle analysis, bicycle facilities and analysis and pedestrian facilities.

The summary and assessment of these conditions served as the foundation for identifying the Hamlet's issues and opportunities. Additionally, these conditions helped identify needs related to land use and development and transportation and streetscaping.

## Hamlet History - How We Got Here

From blacksmiths, cobblers and gunsmiths, to marine repair, plumbing supply, barber shops and a basket factory, the Hamlet of West Webster has a storied past as a center of commerce and activity within the Webster community. Esther Dunn's 1971 exhaustive publication entitled "Webster Through the Years" describes a thriving node with a full contingent of social, public and economic uses, making it a destination for nearby residents and a complement, if not friendly competitor, to the incorporated Village of Webster three miles to the east.

Although its boundaries were never officially memorialized and remain elusive to this day, the corner of Ridge Road and Gravel Road has been the "Four-Corners" and heartbeat of the Hamlet since the 1820s. The Four Corners and directly adjacent properties have been anchored by local businesses since the early days, including taverns, grocery stores, hotels, hardware stores, a post office and more. Residents have shared fond memories of ice skating at the old Fire Hall parking lot, parade watching at Four-Corners, evenings at the Heritage House and trips to the corner store. However, its history of robust economic and social activity has given way to decline as the Hamlet has struggled for relevance since the later part of the 20th Century. A person driving through the area would find it difficult to put their finger on a single culprit, as its struggles are broad and shaped by a myriad of societal, economic, land use and policy challenges.

One element rising above is the Hamlet's remarkable 'sense of place'. When visiting or driving through the Hamlet's Four Corners one can sense the brief arrival at a Place; this is, or was, 'somewhere'. Over time, the Hamlet's identity of place has eroded; its taverns, eateries, general store, post office, elementary school and other daily destinations having since closed. The Hamlet's one visibly defining element that remains is the urban form of the Four Corners, with buildings shaping the space Urban Planners refer to as the 'public realm'. Sustaining this form will be imperative to the settlement's resurgence and maintaining West Webster as a true destination in our community.

## Issues and Opportunities

Several issues and opportunities were identified early on in the process and were considered throughout the duration of the planning process. Below are some of the significant issues and opportunities:

- Properties in disrepair and states of disinvestment, particularly at the Four Corners intersection of Gravel Road and Ridge Road.
- The intersections where treatments are needed including the intersection of Gravel Road and Empire Boulevard and the intersection of Ridge Road and Empire Boulevard;
- The lack of connected sidewalks and pedestrian facilities;
- A need for community spaces, street trees and improved landscaping; and
- The opportunity to capitalize on momentum of successful businesses and redevelop some vacant and under-utilized properties and spaces.

These important issues and opportunities were included on a comprehensive map - shown on the opposite page to help tie together the analysis of existing conditions with the alternatives and recommendations in later sections of the plan.



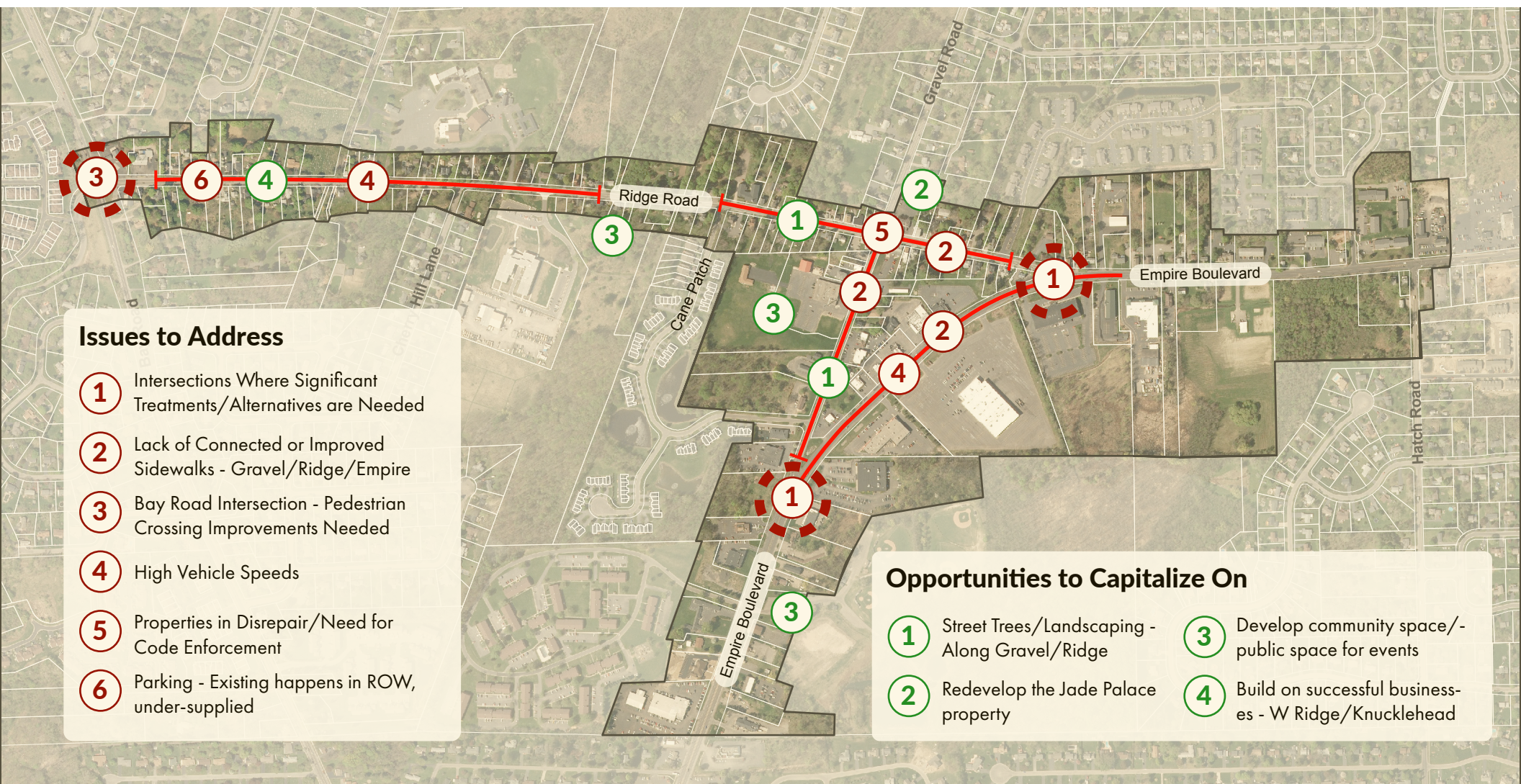


Figure 15: Issues & Opportunities  
Source: Ingalls Planning & Design

# Public Engagement & Hamlet Vision

## Public Engagement Process

The project team sought input and feedback from the Webster community throughout the planning process, which included three rounds of engagement. Key issues and opportunities were identified early on. The Hamlet's vision was developed and crafted based on community input in round 2 and feedback on recommendations was provided in round 3. The initial round of public engagement was carried out remotely through a project website in order to start building momentum and interest in the project on a wide-scale online initiative. This first round of engagement resulted in more than 100 comments by more than 1,600 unique visitors to the site. Both the second and third rounds of engagement were conducted via in-person open house meetings where community members could drop in at any time during a 2-hour window to provide feedback. Both in-person meetings were well-attended with the first garnering interest from over 70 community members.

## Our Vision

The vision statement below includes language and ideas that came directly from community members, key stakeholders, and steering committee members. The objective is to convey a balanced vision that is both far-reaching and realistic. The project team and steering committee determined the need for an over-arching vision statement and several accompanying tenets that will more specifically help West Webster achieve said vision. This will help ensure that the most pressing challenges and opportunities can be prioritized and addressed.

*"West Webster is a compact and walkable Hamlet. The Hamlet celebrates its storied history while providing a modern blend of successful small businesses, parks and green space and a variety of homes. Walking and biking feel comfortable and safe in the Hamlet. The gateways into the Hamlet help bring identity and a sense of arrival into West Webster."*





# Tenets for the Hamlet Vision

The vision's tenets were developed to address very specific issues and opportunities that have been identified and considered throughout the process of this plan. These tenets concern various topics and are written as active statements that aim to inspire guidance in future decision-making for the Hamlet. While the vision provides an over-arching direction to the Hamlet, these tenets will more specifically help Webster achieve this vision.

## **1. We Will...enhance and maintain important gateways into the Hamlet.**

Much of the discussion during this study focused on improving and enhancing the existing gateways into the Hamlet. The three gateways that were identified are the intersection of Bay Road and Old Ridge Road; the intersection of Empire Boulevard and Gravel Road; and the intersection of Empire Boulevard and Old Ridge Road. These are the three gateways that the Town should prioritize for improvements. Improving the gateways could range from physically improving the intersections to installing thematic signage and public art pieces to contribute to a sense of place for the Hamlet.

## **2. We will...provide sidewalk and trail connections that are safe, comfortable, and intuitive to all users.**

During the development of this study, there was significant discussion with and feedback from community members on the need to improve and expand public pedestrian facilities. The Town should pursue and emphasize projects that will improve pedestrian facilities including sidewalks, crosswalks, trails and walking paths, and others.

## **3. We Will...require building and site design that contribute to a walkable and bikeable environment.**

In addition to improving sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities, the Hamlet's built environment should also contribute to a walkable and bikeable environment for West Webster. The current built environment in the Hamlet includes development that is mostly auto-dependent and suburban in nature with the exception of the Hamlet's core area near the four corners of Gravel Road and Old Ridge Road. The Town should encourage development in the Hamlet that orients to the street and engages the pedestrian realm.

## **4. We Will...encourage mixed-use development that allows more flexibility in the Hamlet area.**

Mixed-use development should be encouraged throughout the Hamlet, but particularly in the Hamlet's core near the four corners of Gravel Road and Old Ridge Road. Mixed-use development coupled with design and development guidelines, will contribute to a walkable and compact Hamlet environment.

## **5. We Will...acknowledge and promote the Hamlet's rich history.**

The Hamlet has a rich history of transportation, entertainment and motion pictures. The history of West Webster should be considered for future projects including public art and signage.



# Alternatives, Recommendations & Implementation

The recommendations that were developed from this plan started from a thorough analysis of existing conditions before progressing through ideas and suggestions from members of the community. Along the way there was significant feedback and guidance from the project steering committee which helped to hone and craft the final recommendations as they appear in the plan. In addition to recommendations, this plan includes a future land use analysis and map to better prepare the Town of Webster for future zoning and regulatory changes.

Below is a brief summary of the future land use analysis and recommendations for the West Webster Hamlet Revitalization Plan.

## Future Land Use for the Hamlet

One of the goals of this study was to build community consensus on future land use and development in the West Webster Hamlet. Future land use categories began to emerge during discussions at early meetings with both the project steering committee and the citizen advisory committee (CAC). They include Mixed Residential, Mixed-Use Hamlet, Mixed-Use Transition, Mixed-Use Corridor and Commercial.

## Hamlet-Wide Recommendations

The following recommendations will apply to more generally to the Hamlet of West Webster:

- Implement the Hamlet Theme Through Various Treatments and Methods
- Pursue Public Art Installations That are Reminiscent of the Hamlet Theme
- Expand and Improve Town Code Enforcement in the Hamlet
- Establish the Hamlet as a Priority Investment Zone

## Implementation

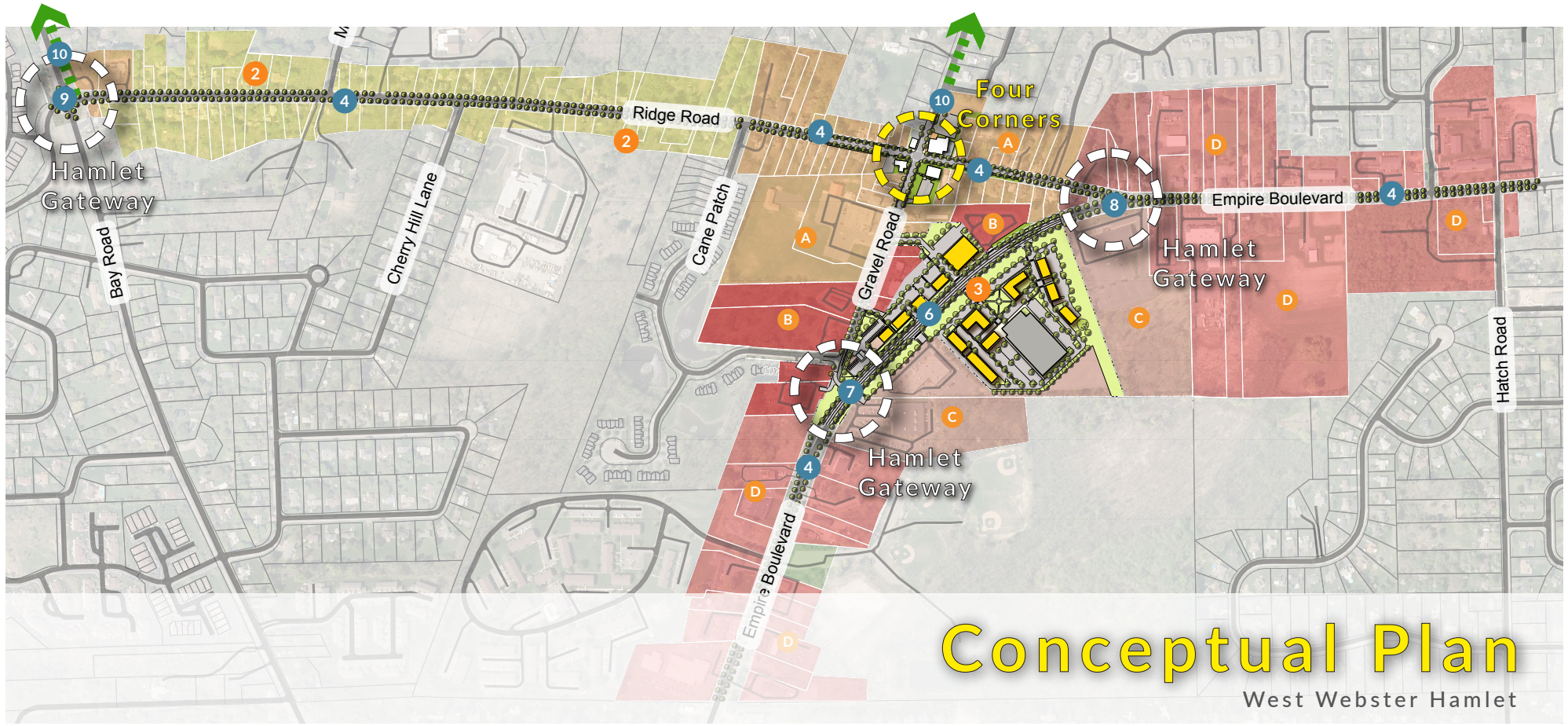
The implementation section identifies two prioritized recommendations that should be pursued first (#1 and #4). The remainder of the implementation matrix details cost estimates, potential funding sources, involved parties for all recommendations and possible project timelines for each recommendation. Please see the project report for the complete implementation matrix.

The two 'priority projects' to indicate that their implementation should be prioritized more highly upon completion of the plan. As 'priority projects' these two projects include timeframes that are more immediate and additional details such as project phasing and more detailed cost estimates.



*The report contains several visual graphics to convey potential redevelopment scenarios for locations in the Hamlet, such as the Four Corners shown above.*





# Conceptual Plan

West Webster Hamlet

## Land Use & Development

- 1 **Refine and Adopt Hamlet Mixed Use District**
  - A Mixed-Use Hamlet
  - B Mixed-Use Transition
  - C Mixed-Use Corridor
  - D Commercial
- 2 **Develop a Mixed Residential District**
- 3 **Adopt Green Infrastructure Requirements and Practices**

## Transportation & Streetscape

- 4 **Implement Preferred Streetscape Improvements**
- 5 **Install ADA-Compliant Curb Ramps and Mid-Block Crossings**
- 6 **Implement Access Management Practices for Empire Boulevard**
- 7 **Redesign the Intersection of Gravel Road and Empire Boulevard**
- 8 **Redesign the Intersection of Ridge Road and Empire Boulevard**
- 9 **Pursue Pedestrian Improvements and Reduce Lanes on Bay Road Near the Intersection with Ridge Road**
- 10 **Pursue Trail Connections to Existing Route 104 Trail**