

II. DESIGN CONCEPT BY AREA

This section presents the design scheme for Farmington Avenue as it relates to the six sub-areas. Each section summarizes the key problems of the area, and presents the key recommendations in terms of street design; streetscape and placemaking; and zoning and urban design.

EAST GATEWAY – UNION STATION TO ASYLUM PLACE/FLOWER

This is the connection between downtown and Union Station, on one hand and Farmington Avenue and Asylum Hill on the other. It passes under I-84 and the railroad tracks. This area has been termed “no man’s land” given its stark character, extensive roadway traffic, vacant sites, and lack of a sense of gateway to either downtown or Farmington Avenue.

Key Design Problems

- Lack of sense of arrival to Farmington Avenue (or to downtown);
- Fast moving traffic, heavily congested during peak periods;
- Difficult pedestrian circulation, with narrow sidewalks and difficult to cross streets;
- Buildings lack pedestrian interest at street level;
- Confusing vehicle circulation patterns;
- Vacant city-owned site acts as additional separator between Farmington Avenue and downtown;
- Underpasses for I-84 and at railroad station unattractive and uninviting.

Existing Zoning

This area is zoned B2, the zone has minimum and maximum density limitations (minimum 3.0; maximum 7.0), in order to promote development dense enough to create an urban ambiance, but not quite as dense as downtown. Residential uses are permitted only at higher densities, consistent with the goal of promoting urban-style downtown housing. Automobile uses are also permitted.



Key Opportunities Street Design Features

- Transform roadway into a three-lane section with central median, between Flower and Broad.
- Install a raised planted median.
- Provide striped bike lane at curb in both directions between Broad and Flower.
- Provide a designated right turn only lane from eastbound Farmington onto Broad.
- Make Asylum Avenue between Spring/Garden and Cogswell one way west bound at all times with east bound traffic turning right onto Broad and left onto Farmington.
- Extend the bike lanes between Broad and Spring/Garden Street with the west bound bike lane following Asylum Avenue and Broad Street.
- Improve and organize street signage in the area to facilitate vehicular flow.

Streetscape and Placemaking

Gateway

- Create a Gateway feature in the triangle park east of Broad Street.
- Introduce other gateway elements – banners, signs, landscaping.

Public Spaces

- Create mini-plazas on both sides of Broad Street – in front of the YWCA and of the future development on the city-owned vacant site.

Sidewalks

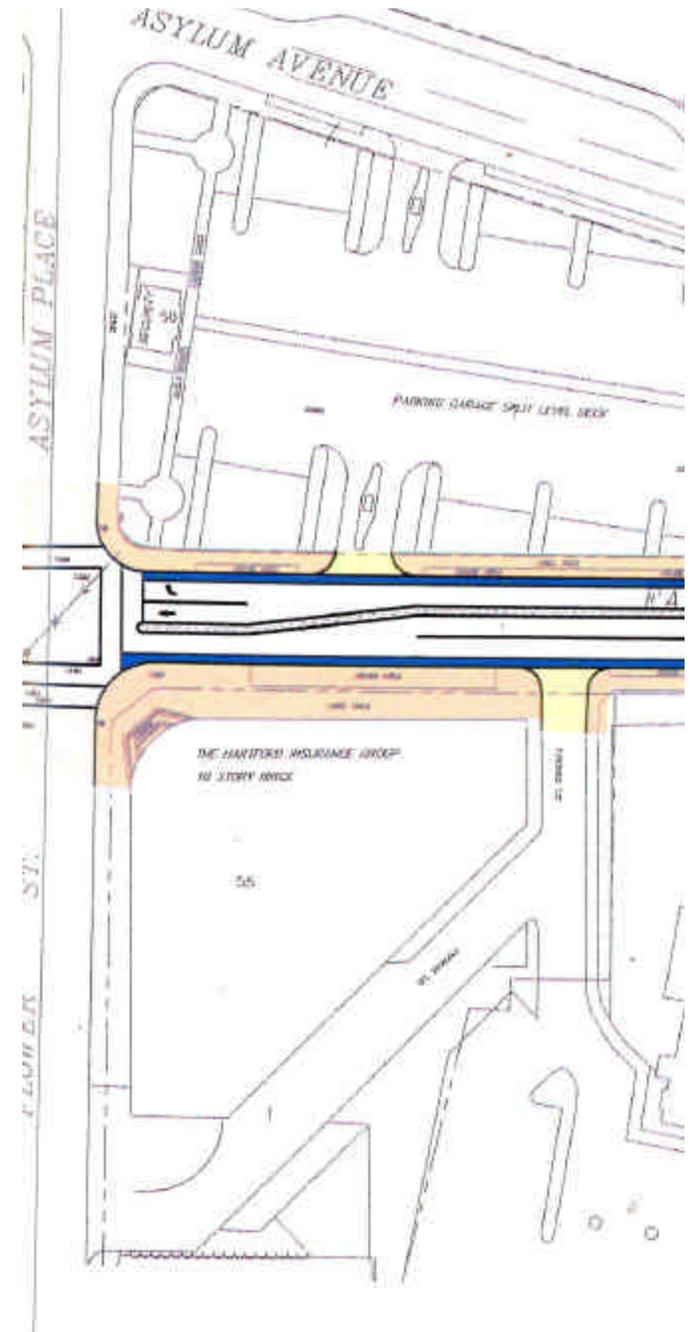
- Widen sidewalks potentially by reducing lane widths.

Crosswalks

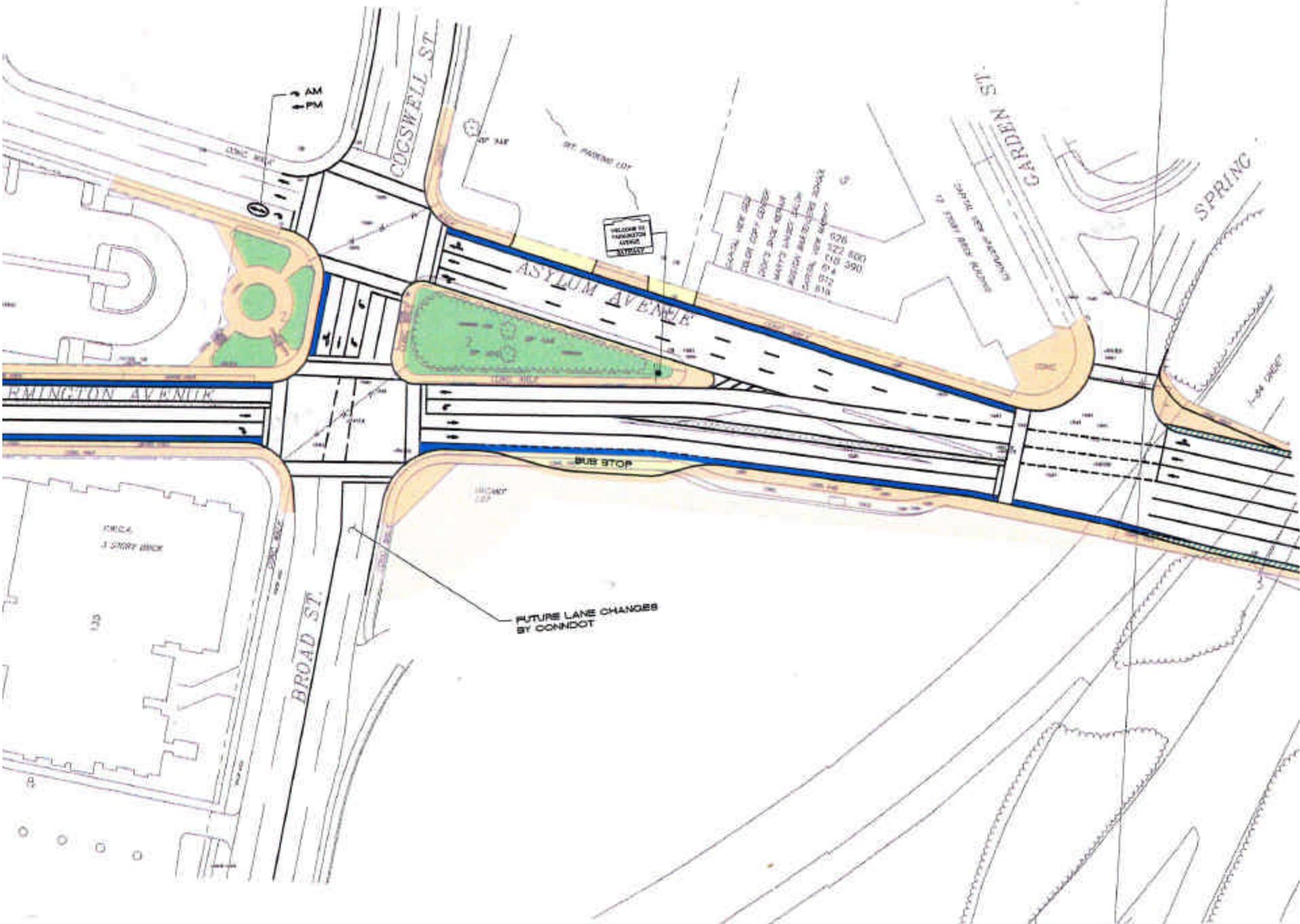
- Install raised crosswalks on Asylum Street.

Bus stops

- Clearly mark bus stops with better signage.
- Provide shelters, seating and other amenities at bus stops.



EAST GATEWAY



Parking

- Do not allow on-street parking.

Zoning and Urban Design

- Maintain current zoning in the district, except that automotive uses should be eliminated.
- Based on additional community planning, revise the current zoning and introduce appropriate standards for building design promoting a pedestrian-friendly environment such as:
- Require building entrances to face Farmington Avenue;
- Require front facades to be built at the front building line;
- Require a minimum percentage of the front wall to be designed with retail spaces with display windows.

AETNA/INSTITUTIONAL ZONE –ASYLUM PLACE TO SIGOURNEY

Connecting Farmington’s Great Institutions with the Avenue

This section of Farmington Avenue is characterized by a variety of institutional and business uses. The area is dominated by the headquarters of Aetna / ING with its huge formal front lawn and St. Joseph’s Cathedral. Other offices and financial institutions add to the area’s more formal institutional character.

Key Design Problems

- Fast vehicular traffic;
- Lack of connection between institutions and the street;
- Little of interest for pedestrians;
- Very little pedestrian traffic and activity;
- Existing crosswalks too far apart, encouraging jaywalking;
- Underutilization of Aetna lawn as a public space.

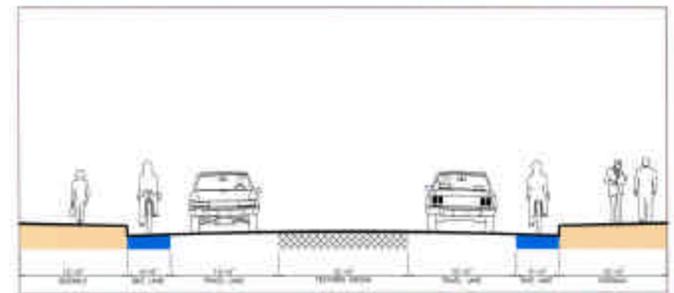
Existing Zoning

The existing R01 zoning in this area allows for larger scale, higher density office and residential buildings, and is entirely appropriate for this mix of uses. Additionally, the R01 provides an appropriate transition between the B2 Downtown Development Perimeter to the east and the R01 and R02 zoning to the west.

Key Opportunities

Street Design Feature

- Transform roadway into a shifting two-lane section with central turn lane/median.
- Provide a flush textured median for left-turns with a few raised and planted sections.
- Introduce a road-shift to provide a parking lane in front of the Cathedral.
- Provide striped bike lanes at curb.



Streetscape and Placemaking

Public Spaces

- Create transit centers in front of Aetna and adjacent to Trinity Church's parking lot.
- Encourage more events, amenities, and activities for the Aetna lawn (such as street-vendors which used to be there)

Sidewalks

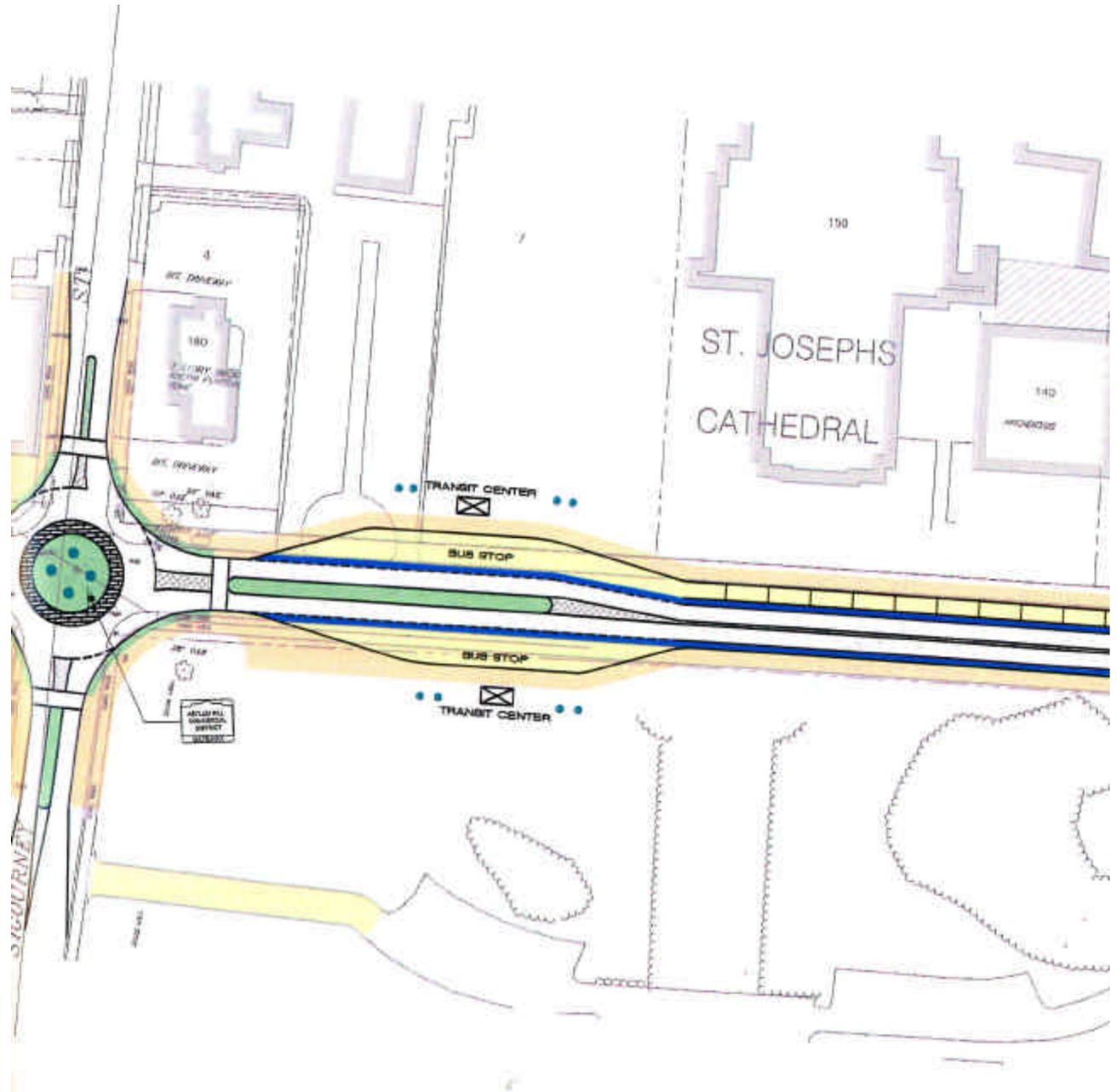
- Upgrade and repave sidewalks.
- Define sidewalks and possibly add some additional trees along the Aetna lawn.

Bus Stops

- Clearly mark bus stops with better signage.
- Provide shelters, seating and other amenities at bus stops

Parking

- Provide parallel parking in front of St. Joseph's Cathedral.
- Relocate Aetna's formal driveway to further south on Sigourney Street to eliminate a potential conflict with the proposed roundabout.



AETNA/INSTITUTIONAL



ASYLUM HILL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT – SIGOURNEY TO FOREST

An Attractive Shopping Area Serving the Community

The area of Farmington Avenue from Sigourney to Forest is the Asylum Hill neighborhood shopping district, as well as containing a mix of residential uses. Although there is a lot of intrusion of automobile-oriented businesses in this area, Asylum Hill generally has a less suburban layout and older, more significant architecture. Structures include multi-story apartment buildings with ground floor retail facing Farmington Avenue as well as a number of preserved historic buildings being re-used for a combination of housing, commercial and office space.

Key Design Problems

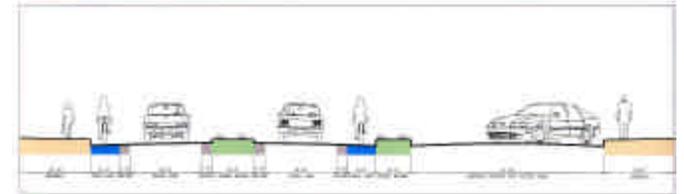
- Disjointed and chaotic appearance;
- Congested traffic during peak hours, fast-moving during off-peak;
- Difficult, disconnected pedestrian circulation with sidewalks away from store windows;
- Walls and fences interrupt pedestrian flow;
- Narrow sidewalks in poor condition;
- Frequent wide driveways and curb-cuts, leading to unattractive front parking areas;
- Signage often unattractive and chaotic.

Existing Zoning

The current zoning for the Sigourney to Forest stretch is predominantly B4, intermixed with a few lots zoned RO1 and B3. The B4 zoning is geared toward the creation of a pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood-oriented shopping environment. The two RO1 zones along the avenue are the locations of several apartment buildings, and the Taco Bell is the only B3-zoned lot.



Commercial street front in Asylum Hill.



Key Opportunities

Street Design Features

- Transform the roadway into a three-lane section with a center turn lane/median.
- Provide a flush textured median with raised planted sections where appropriate.
- Build a modern roundabout at Sigourney Street.
- Build a side access road with diagonal parking on both sides of the street where possible.
- Install landscaped islands buffering side access roads.
- Provide striped bike lanes at curb.

Streetscape and Placemaking

Public Spaces

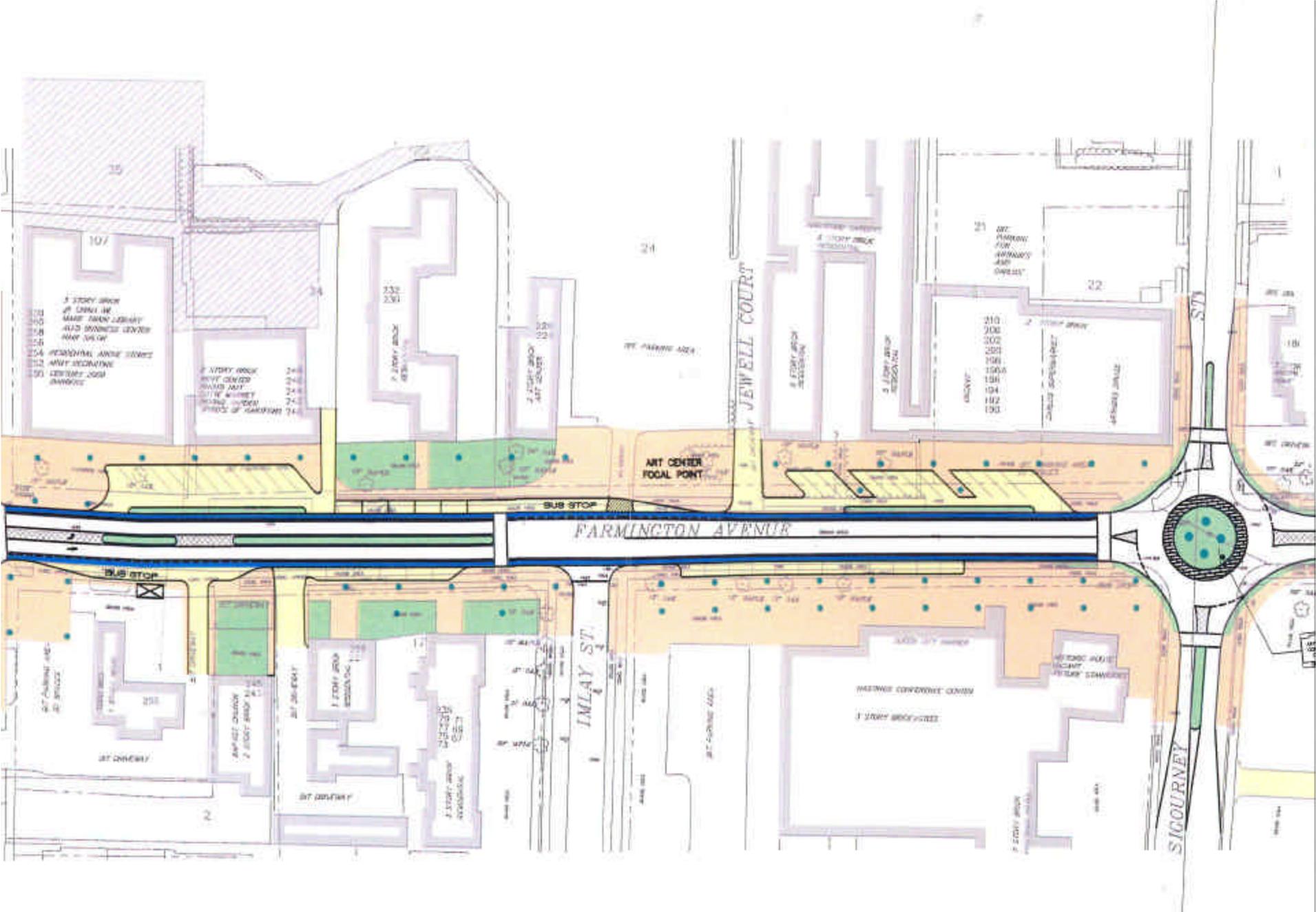
- Create mini-plazas on the west side of the Sigourney Street roundabout.
- Create mini-plazas with pedestrian amenities and special features on the four corners of the Laurel Street intersection.

Sidewalks

- Create wider sidewalks in front of retail stores.
- Assure continuity of sidewalks.
- Eliminate often poorly maintained grass strip between the sidewalk and the curb where appropriate.



ASYLUM HILL





Asylum Hill. Illustrative plan with new corner plazas.



New pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Crosswalks

- Install raised crosswalks and speed-tables at Forest and Farmington and on residential side streets.
- Create safety islands at crosswalks near roundabout, an integral feature in urban roundabouts.

Bus Stops

- Clearly mark bus stops with better signage.
- Provide shelters, seating and other amenities at bus stops .

Parking

- Consolidate rear parking lots and provide access from side streets in order to reduce curb cuts on Farmington Avenue.
- Provide sufficient lighting in rear parking lots.
- Provide diagonal or parallel parking in front of businesses where appropriate with or without side access roads.
- Provide diagonal parking on side streets where appropriate.

Zoning and Urban Design

- Rezone areas zoned B3 to B4 prohibiting automobile uses to promote a neighborhood-style commercial district.
- Impose standards for building design promoting a pedestrian-friendly environment such as:
 - Require building entrances to face Farmington Avenue;
 - Require front facades to be built at the front building line;
 - Require a minimum percentage of the front wall to be outfitted with windows;
 - Permit awnings over retail windows.
- Encourage sidewalk cafes and other pedestrian-friendly businesses.
- Preserve the scale and contextual character of the buildings:
- Impose height and lot coverage limitations.
- Prohibit installation of aluminum or vinyl siding on existing structures.
- Preserve and re-use historic buildings.
- Rezone R01 district to R02 to preserve existing densities and character.

CENTRAL RESIDENTIAL AND CULTURAL ZONE – FOREST TO DENISON

A Celebration of Farmington's Cultural and Architectural Heritage

With the handsomely renovated Clemens Place apartment complex and historic house museums, this zone is the most apparent remnant of Farmington Avenue's history as Hartford's "mansion row". The area features remarkable historic architecture and is graced by ample front lawns, many mature trees and large amount of green space.

Key Design Problems

- Fast moving vehicular traffic;
- Lack of visibility of cultural institutions from the street;
- Poorly sited and marked entrances to cultural institutions;
- Little of interest for pedestrians;
- Very little pedestrian traffic and activity;
- Lack of crosswalks encourages jaywalking;
- Signal lights too far from crosswalks;

Existing Zoning

The zoning in this area is R02 and R01. R02 zoning allows for residential and office uses at low density while R01 zoning allows higher residential density with lower requirements for open space. The R02 zoning includes three historic homes from the 19th century: the Mark Twain House, the Harriet Beecher Stowe House and the Day-Chamberlain House.

Key Opportunities

Street Design Features

- Transform roadway to a three-lane section with central left-turn lane/median where appropriate.
- Install raised planted median with shrubs and landscaping alternating with flush textured median.
- Build a modern roundabout at Woodland Street.
- Provide striped bike lanes at curb.



Streetscape and Placemaking

Public Spaces

- Create a formal entrance to the Mark Twain House parking and visitor center.
- Create a flexible space for public events at Clemens' Green by re-landscaping and providing event infrastructure.
- Introduce unifying banners and signs for institutions and events.

Sidewalks

- Upgrade and repave sidewalks.
- Plant trees where necessary.

Crosswalks

- Provide raised crosswalks at Forest and Farmington, as well as residential side streets.
- Install a speed-table with a raised crosswalk at the formal entrance for the Mark Twain House connecting to transit area.
- Create safety islands at crosswalks near Woodland Street roundabout.

Bus Stops

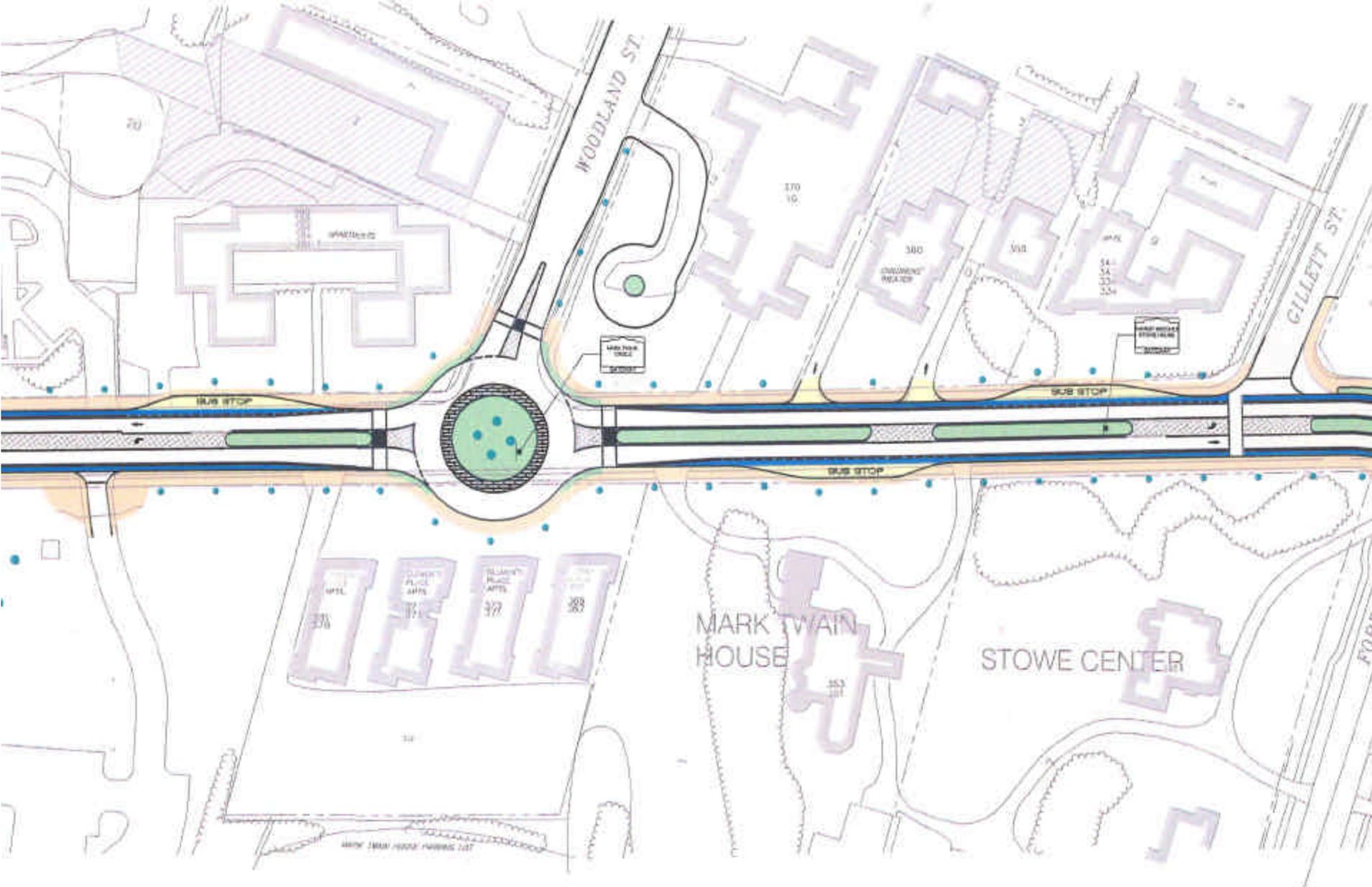
- Clearly mark bus stops with better signage.
- Provide shelters, seating and other amenities at bus stops and consider a bus shelter in keeping with design of Mark Twain House.

Parking

- Eliminate on-street parking.
- Provide access to residential parking near roundabout by joint use of the Mark Twain parking lot drive.



RESIDENTIAL/CULTURAL







Zoning and Urban Design

- Preserve the scale and contextual character of the buildings, with requirements such as:
- Impose height and lot coverage limitations.
- Prohibit installation of aluminum or vinyl siding on existing structures.
- Reduce allowable F.A.R. to 1.0.
- Eliminate brew pubs, bars, restaurants, fast-food restaurants, and convenience stores from the list of allowable R02 uses.
- Create a new overlay zoning district promoting the preservation of historic homes in the area.
- Rezone R01 district to R02 to preserve existing densities and character.