

Figure III-18: Aerial views of Focus Area III demonstrate the variety of development located on and adjacent to the corridor.

E. Focus Area III

Vision:

“Well managed corridor with pedestrian linkages and attractive commercial establishments”

Focus Area III is located to the south of Swormville, and is generally defined as the area between N. French Road and Sheridan Drive. The area includes a mix of development including suburban-scaled residential and commercial development. Along the corridor, commercial plazas range from suburban-styled plazas to stand alone commercial structures and converted residences. Although a large portion of the road frontage is developed, open parcels remain and the predominant zoning in the area is commercial. In this area, Transit Road has five lanes, sidewalks and a speed limit of 45 mph.

This focus area is in transition, which is reflected in the change in character, particularly on the Amherst side. Dense commercial development extends north to Klein Road. North of Klein Road, land use shifts to lower intensity retail, office and recreation along the corridor’s frontage. A similar shift in density occurs in residential areas adjacent to the corridor, particularly in Amherst. Although the focus area represents two fairly distinct characters, the findings and recommendations identified for the focus area apply across the board. Attention to the recommendations provided for Focus

Area IV to the south (next section) will be necessary as development pressure along the corridor continues and is likely to increase development density throughout Focus Area III, sparking changes to current land uses.

Issues:

During the planning process, concerns about high speeds were raised by members of the Technical Advisory Committee and the community at large. The high speeds combined with the relatively high number of curb cuts, decreases traffic safety and movement along this section of the corridor. Pedestrian access also suffers as a result.

The need for increased pedestrian access along the corridor and to adjacent residential areas was also identified as a priority. Although the area is primarily built up to a suburban scale and geared toward vehicular access, community members see opportunities to enhance pedestrian linkages that will encourage residents to walk to nearby services and stores. Community members also indicated that the lack of access between residential developments, for pedestrians, vehicles and others, presents difficulties in traffic flow and movement.

Responses:

- Construct a curbed, landscaped median;
- Consolidate driveways;
- Develop parallel roads to reduce dependency on



Figure III-19: These high scoring images from the Preferred Development Survey represent commercial development and roadway treatments that are appropriate for Focus Area III.



Figure III-20: The photo simulation shown in the bottom picture illustrates how the proposed cross section would appear in Focus

- Transit Road;
- Create pedestrian connections between residential and commercial areas;
 - Enhance the aesthetic appeal of the corridor;
 - Complete Youngs Road;
 - Buffer residential uses from commercial development along corridor.

Actions:

Although several key community resources are located along the corridor in this area (e.g. fire station and school), the predominant land use is and will continue to be commercial development. Currently, there is a considerable amount of residential development adjacent to the corridor in both towns. It is likely that additional residential development will occur adjacent where feasible. Planning for this segment of Transit Road centers around consolidating curb cuts, improving pedestrian access and establishing linkages between the towns and the various uses located in the area.

Recommendations for this segment are considered long range since this portion of Transit Road was recently rebuilt and would not likely be the target of any major improvements in the short term.

Medians—One Tool, Many Benefits

The design concept for this focus area includes the creation of a landscaped median. The photo simulation

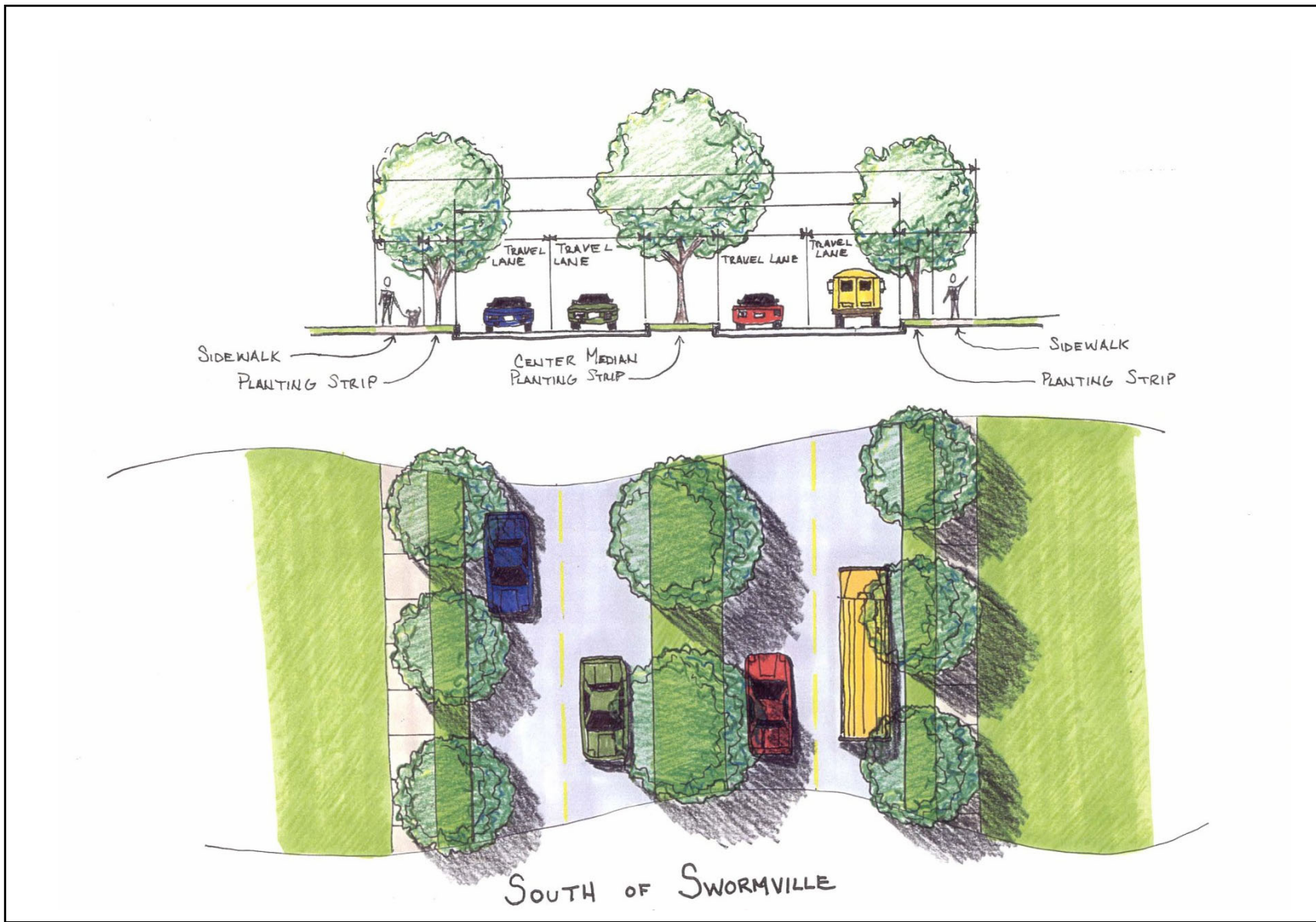


Figure III-21: The proposed cross section for Focus Area III includes sidewalks, tree lawns, 4 travel lanes, and a landscaped median.

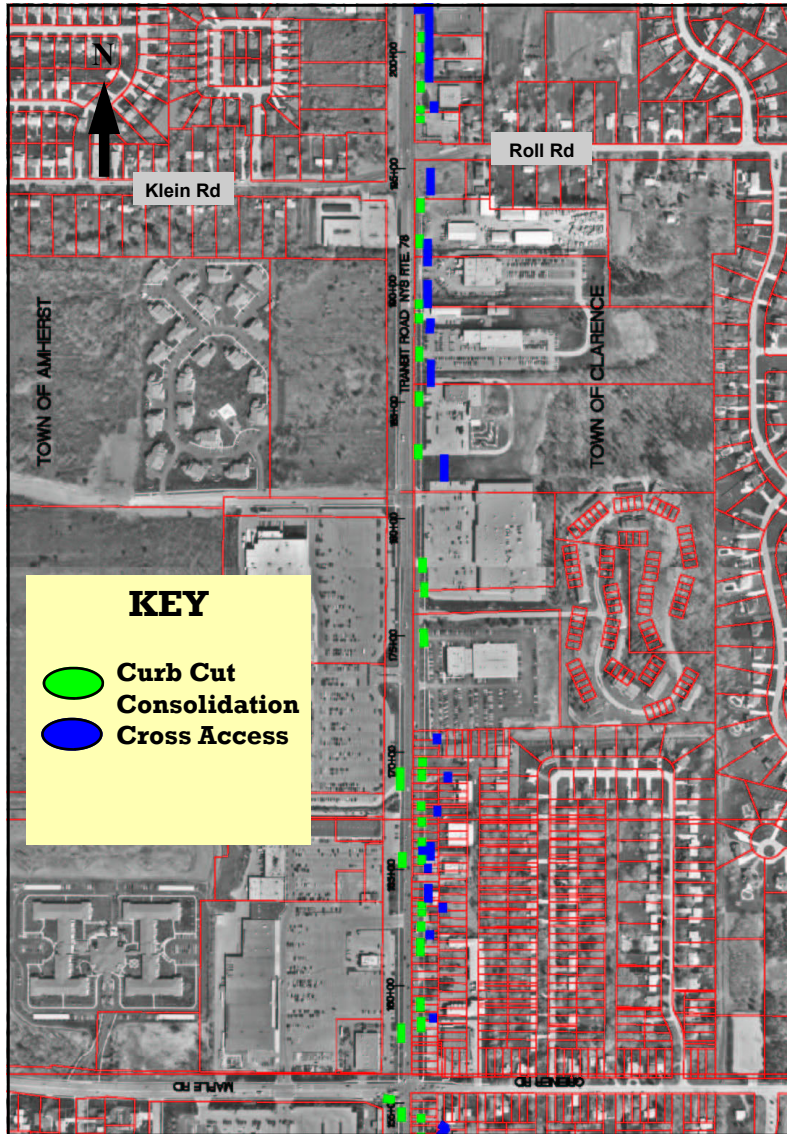


Figure III-22: Illustrative example of potential cross access and curb cut consolidation. Full drawings are located in the Figures section of the report

in Figure III-20 and the conceptual drawing in Figure III-21 illustrate what a median in this area could look like.

In general, medians promote safety and efficiency by limiting conflict points and requiring right-in, right-out driveways. In addition, they encourage the use of shared access driveways and improve the flow of traffic on the main corridor.

The installation of medians in this area would help the towns address three key concerns: safety, traffic speeds and excessive curb cuts. The current configuration includes a two way turn lane (TWTL), a continuous lane located between opposing traffic streams that provides an area for vehicles to complete left turns from both directions. Although a TWTL provides some benefits (e.g., increases capacity and reduces delay compared to undivided roadways), they create the potential for overlapping left turns and head on collisions. Consequently, they do not offer the safety benefits of non-traversable medians, which eliminate these potential conflicts.

The presence of a median would encourage existing and future development to explore ways to share common access points from Transit Road, which would result in safer travel along the corridor. The physical structure of the median also serves as a traffic calming agent because it slows motorists' travel speeds and provides a visual cue for motorists to slow down. A median would also provide a pedestrian refuge to make crossing the corridor more manageable. As a

result, pedestrian access would be improved throughout the area and a sense of connectivity between the two towns (across the corridor) could be better established.

Finally, a median would enhance the aesthetic appeal of the corridor in the focus area, by helping to provide a sense of place and introduce some landscaping to an area that currently lacks a noticeable identity.

Recommendations for median break spacing is included in the implementation section of this document as well in the draft code language provided separately.

Shared Access and Driveways—A Key to Improved Access and Safety

The efficient movement of people and access to goods and services are paramount to the overall functioning of the corridor in Focus Area III. The towns desire traffic to move at reasonable speeds through this portion of the corridor with limited interruptions in the flow of traffic. In order to accomplish this, the towns and NYSDOT should work together to consider reducing the current number of curb cuts and encourage shared access drives in all future development.

Driveway consolidation needs to consider the following: compatibility of adjacent land uses; benefit of consolidation; feasibility of construction; density of spacing; and impact to property owners. Figure III-22 shows some recommended interconnections and

shared drives that should be included if feasible as a requirement of the site plan review process.

As redevelopment and development occurs along Transit Road, opportunities for shared access should be capitalized upon to limit the number of access points along the corridor. Consolidation of existing curb cuts should be a consideration during NYSDOT improvement projects along the corridor. The reduction in the number of turning movements and conflict points will produce a safer corridor that operates more efficiently.

Transitioning Between Uses

As the density and scale of commercial development increases, transitions between neighboring uses becomes critical. Using multi-family or office development between single-family residential areas and corridor commercial development provides a gradual transition in the design and scale of structures as well as the intensity of generated traffic. Examples of this land use strategy can be found in Amherst's existing zoning map and development pattern.

In places where it is not feasible to create buffers using transitions in land use, the towns should require generous landscaping buffers on commercial properties that directly border single-family residential areas. The greenery will provide a visual separation for residents and improve the aesthetic appeal of both the commercial and residential areas.

Improving Pedestrian Access

The sidewalks available in this portion of the study area are currently underutilized. This may be a result of the large front setbacks and the limited pedestrian connection across expansive parking areas. Since existing buildings are unlikely to change setbacks in the near future, the towns should consider working with property owners to extend pedestrian connections between the sidewalk and businesses. Pedestrian accommodations through large parking areas and connections to residential areas will provide pedestrians with a safe way to travel and may provide an incentive to increase foot traffic in the area as shown in Figure III-23.



Figure III-23: Example of pedestrian accommodations provided in large parking area

The installation of other pedestrian amenities, such as benches and lighting, would also encourage increased pedestrian activity in and around the business and community resources located in this area.

Enhancing Roadway Connections

In this focus area, north and south travel is limited primarily to Transit Road. For the most part, motorists wanting to travel between residential areas adjacent to the corridor must rely on Transit Road to do so. Expanding north-south connections between uses adjacent to Transit Road would provide a more complete road system and offer motorists more options to access their destinations in this segment. Consequently, local travelers' dependence on Transit Road could decrease, thereby reducing volumes in certain areas (e.g. Covent Garden/Paradise Road, Youngs Road).