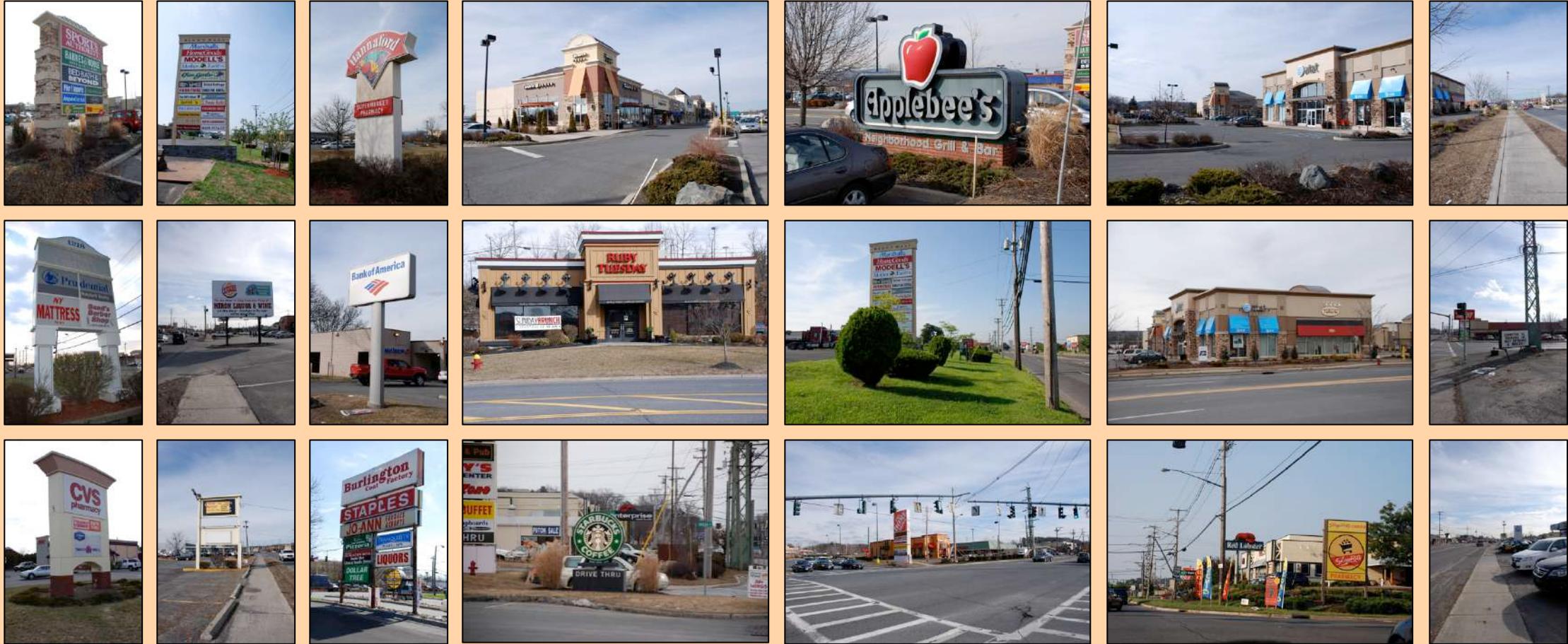


U.S. ROUTE 9W CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT PLAN

TOWN OF ULSTER, NEW YORK



PREPARED BY THE TOWN OF ULSTER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE
WITH PLANIT MAIN STREET, INC.
ADOPTED BY THE TOWN OF ULSTER TOWN BOARD ON APRIL 24, 2014



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THIS PLAN IS INTENDED TO SERVE AS A POLICY STATEMENT FOR RECOMMENDED STREETLIGHT, SIDEWALK, STREET TREE AND SIGN IMPROVEMENTS ALONG THE U.S. ROUTE 9W CORRIDOR IN THE TOWN OF ULSTER, ULSTER COUNTY, NEW YORK. THE “PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT FIGURES” INCLUDED HEREIN ARE MEANT TO ILLUSTRATE TOWN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE *GENERAL PLACEMENT* OF STREET LIGHT AND SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS. THE ILLUSTRATIONS CONTAINED HEREIN ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR MORE DETAILED TRAFFIC ANALYSIS AND ENGINEERING STUDIES, WHICH WILL RESULT IN A FINAL DESIGN REPORT SPECIFYING THE EXACT LOCATION AND DESIGN OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TOWN BOARD

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Eric Kitchen, Deputy Supervisor
Joel B. Brink, Councilman
John Morrow, Councilman
Rocco “Rocky” Secreto, Councilman

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Route 9W Corridor, within the Town of Ulster, is one of the largest commercial retail centers within Ulster County, New York. While this commercial retail strip is economically vibrant with a wide array of restaurants, retail centers and service businesses - it is visually unappealing.

The unappealing aspects of the corridor are defined by a proliferation of overhead utilities, willy nilly placement of signs and the lack of any uniformity in building or site design. These conditions are, in part, the result of strip retail development that occurred prior to the adoption of a Zoning Law or Sign Regulations for the Town of Ulster.

The Town of Ulster Planning Board and Town Board have succeeded in enhancing the aesthetics of this strip retail corridor in recent years (on a site-by-site basis) through the Site Plan review process. Through this process, sidewalks and trees have been planted along the corridor and the layout, design and appearance of retail centers were enhanced.

Even with these modest successes there is a need for a concerted effort to create a design vocabulary for the corridor – one that helps to give the U.S. Route 9W Corridor some form of order and a unique identity, which will help differentiate it from other commercial retail corridors in the region.

This Corridor Enhancement Plan focuses on those improvements within the U.S. Route 9W Corridor (e.g. streetlights, sidewalks, street trees and signs), which can be used to introduce some uniform design elements that clearly define the edge of the corridor, enhance pedestrian safety and make it more aesthetically pleasing.

The Town of Ulster is under no illusion of transforming this suburban commercial corridor into an urban center. Rather it seeks to bring a sense of order to the visual environment within the corridor through a combination of public and private sector improvements.

Some of recommended improvements (such as sidewalks along the east side of NYS Route 9W) are already in the planning stage. Many of the needed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) are already in place to allow the construction of sidewalks within the bounds of private properties abutting the U.S. Route 9W right-of-way. Other improvements – such as the installation of new streetlights with banners along the corridor – are discussed and illustrated for the first time within this Plan.

Section 2 – Corridor Improvements includes a brief discussion concerning streetlights, sidewalks, street trees and signs. This section includes “Existing Conditions” and “Proposed Improvements” sheets. Section 3.0 – Sample Illustrations provides “before and after” illustrations of specific areas showing how things would look like if the recommendations contained herein are implemented.



2.0 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The Town of Ulster Town Board appointed a Comprehensive Plan Review Committee to help implement the recommendations of the Town of Ulster’s Comprehensive Plan. One of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan was to “Create a Pedestrian Circulation Master Plan for the U.S. Route 9W corridor” and another was to “Adopt Design Guidelines for the Regional Commercial and Highway Commercial Zoning Districts.”

Through the Committee discussions, there was a realization that these goals could best be achieved by looking at the U.S. Route 9W corridor in a holistic manner. This Corridor Enhancement Plan for the U.S. Route 9W corridor addresses pedestrian circulation and design-related issues.

2.1 Streetlights

Like most strip retail corridors in the America, the streetlights along U.S. Route 9W consists of cobra lights mounted on wooden utility poles. These lights do little to give U.S. Route 9W a unique sense of place. The placement of all the streetlights on one side of the corridor (e.g. east side between Boices Lane and NYS 199/299) also results in a poor distribution of lighting along the corridor. Higher lighting levels are used on the east side of the corridor in order to distribute the light to the west side of the corridor.

Streetlights should be situated on both sides of the corridor with the lighting poles staggered to provide a more even distribution of lighting along the street. The placement of streetlights on both sides can be used to define the edge of the street, which helps to provide a sense of order. If banners are added to decorative street poles, the streetlights can be used to convey an image of the business district or to celebrate seasonal events.

2.2 Sidewalks

Sidewalks are provided on the west side of the U.S. Route 9W corridor from Boices Lane to Old Neighborhood Road. There are no sidewalks along the east side, but there are plans for sidewalks on the east side of the street. In recent years, the Town Board has obtained Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) from property owners, which allow for the placement of sidewalks along the east side of the street (see Figure 1). Most of the MOUs are now in place to allow for the uninterrupted construction of new sidewalks between Boices Lane and the southern Hudson Valley Mall entrance. Where feasible, a five (5) foot concrete sidewalk separated from the edge of the street by installing a 6-inch curb and providing a 3.28 feet (or 1-meter) grass median is recommended. Where there is no room for a grass median, the five (5) foot concrete sidewalk should be separated from the road edge with a 6-inch curb. The Town Board should pursue NYSDOT *Transportation Enhancement Program* grants (80/20 match) to fund sidewalks and streetlights within the U.S. Route 9W corridor.





Proposal:
To install curbing and sidewalks along entire length of the east side of U.S. Route 9W to facilitate a pedestrian connection on this side of the corridor.

Relocate the bulky telecommunications cables behind the buildings in the linear strip of green space, which exists between the buildings on Route 9W and the malls.

Proposal:
Create a design vocabulary for the U.S. Route 9W corridor, which includes street trees, period style lighting and the installation of curbing and sidewalks on east side of corridor.

Relocating telephone and cable lines behind buildings would substantially reduce the clutter of overhead utilities.

Problem:
The U.S. Route 9W corridor is not pedestrian friendly and is visually unappealing. There are few sidewalks along the eastern side of the corridor and the combination of overhead utilities pole signs and billboards along the corridor create visual clutter that is unsightly. There is a need to soften the appearance of this important gateway into the Town of Ulster.

Problem:
Having almost all the streetlights on one side of the street creates a lopsided appearance of the corridor. This is also not an effective means of evenly distributing light to both sides of the street.

Proposal.
Install streetlights on both sides of the street and stagger lighting poles to form an even distribution of lighting along the U.S. Route 9W corridor.



LEGEND

- Existing Street Lamp
- Existing MOU

Existing Conditions
- Figure 1



Proposal.

Work with Central Hudson Gas & Electric and telephone and cable providers to reduce visual clutter of overhead cables and install period lighting.

There is an opportunity to relocate the bulky telecommunication cables within linear green strip, which lies between stores on U.S. Route 9W and the malls. This will require coordination with local utilities.

Proposal:

Install new streetlights on both sides of U.S. Route 9W. This action will involve the removal of some fixtures on the east side of the corridor, coupled with the installation of new fixtures on the west side of the corridor.

The new streetlights should be staggered to form an even distribution of lighting along street.

Problem:

There are no design elements, which help to form a unique identity of the U.S. Route 9W corridor in the Town of Ulster.

The installation of streetlights w/ banners, sidewalks and street trees will provide common design elements, which can then be used as a base for creating a unique identity for the corridor.

Problem:

While there are sidewalks along the western side of U.S. Route 9W, there are none on the east side.

The Town of Ulster has secured Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) from developers to secure easements for sidewalks on the east side of the corridor. Once the remaining segments are secure, these sidewalk segments should be constructed.



2.3 Street Trees and Landscaping

Street trees are recommended along the corridor on the far side of the sidewalk (i.e. side of sidewalk furthest from road edge). A variety of utility friendly varieties should be used, which are placed in a manner to create a clear edge along the sidewalk.

The sample illustration on Page 6 of this Plan shows the recommended placement and spacing of street trees within the U.S. Route 9 W corridor. Placing the trees on far side of the sidewalk will reduce the likelihood of trees being harmed by road salts or being hit by snow plows. Street trees and low lying plantings should be used to soften the streetscape and add greenery to the corridor. However, no plantings should be planted in line-of-sight of driveways. The Ulster Crossings Mall is an example of where landscaping was used to define the street edge. It is also an excellent example of how landscaping can be used to screen off-street loading areas and utilities from public view.

The photos to the right show how landscaping can successfully be employed in the design of strip retail centers. The top photo shows the Olive Garden within the Kings Mall, where new landscaped islands, street trees and downlit lighting poles were recently installed. The Planning Board secured these improvements along with an MOU for sidewalks during its review of the Site Plan amendment application for the Olive Garden within the Kings Mall. These improvements have helped to make the plaza more inviting.

The bottom two photos show the Ulster Crossing Mall (aka Benderson Development), wherein the use of a berm, low lying plantings, and a row of coniferous trees were used successfully to screen utilities and off-street loading docks from public view.

2.4 Sign Control

Sign control is one of the most important actions the Town can take to enhance the aesthetics of the U.S. Route 9W Corridor. The careful design and placement of signs can dramatically improve community appearance.

Today, too many oversized, badly located, and poorly planned pole signs create a willy nilly appearance along the corridor. Stand-alone pole signs and billboards should be amortized and replaced to reduce visual clutter. Such signs should be replaced with monument signs, where feasible, but should not be placed in line-of-sight of driveways. Shopping center signs (such as the Burlington Coat Factory sign) should also be replaced with more aesthetically pleasing monument signs such as the Ulster Crossings Mall sign. The Town Board should amend its Sign Regulations in order to better regulate the placement and maintenance of signs.¹ Doing so will result in a more attractive business district, which will attract more customers.

¹ Recommended revisions to Article VII of the Town of Ulster Zoning Law are provided in Appendix A.



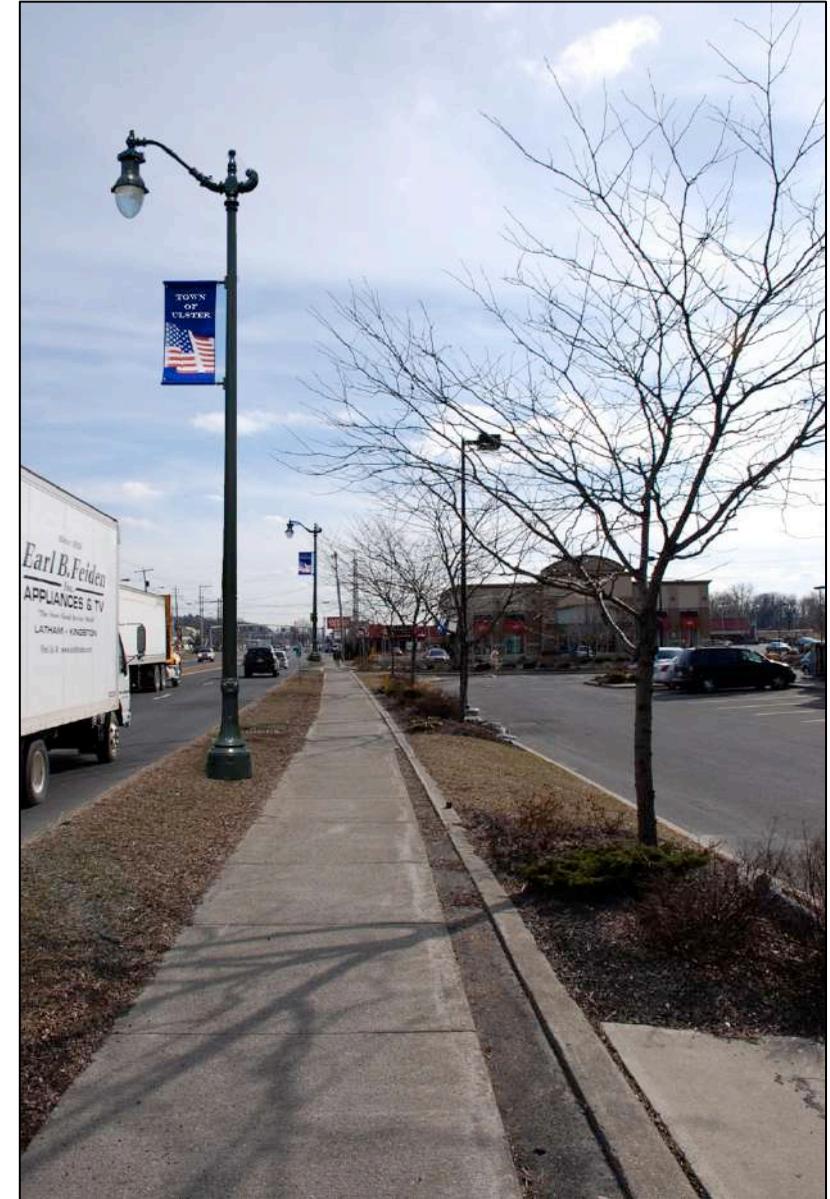
3.0 SAMPLE ILLUSTRATIONS

In this Section, “before and after” illustrations are provided to show the implementation of the recommendations for sidewalk, streetlight, street tree and sign improvements along certain segments of the U.S. Route 9W corridor.

These illustrations show how the corridor could be transformed by reducing visual clutter and providing a sense of order through the introduction of streetlights and street trees along with the careful placement of signs within the corridor.

There are a wide variety of streetlights that could be used from period fixtures to very contemporary fixtures. Various examples are used in the sample illustrations for consideration by the Town Board.

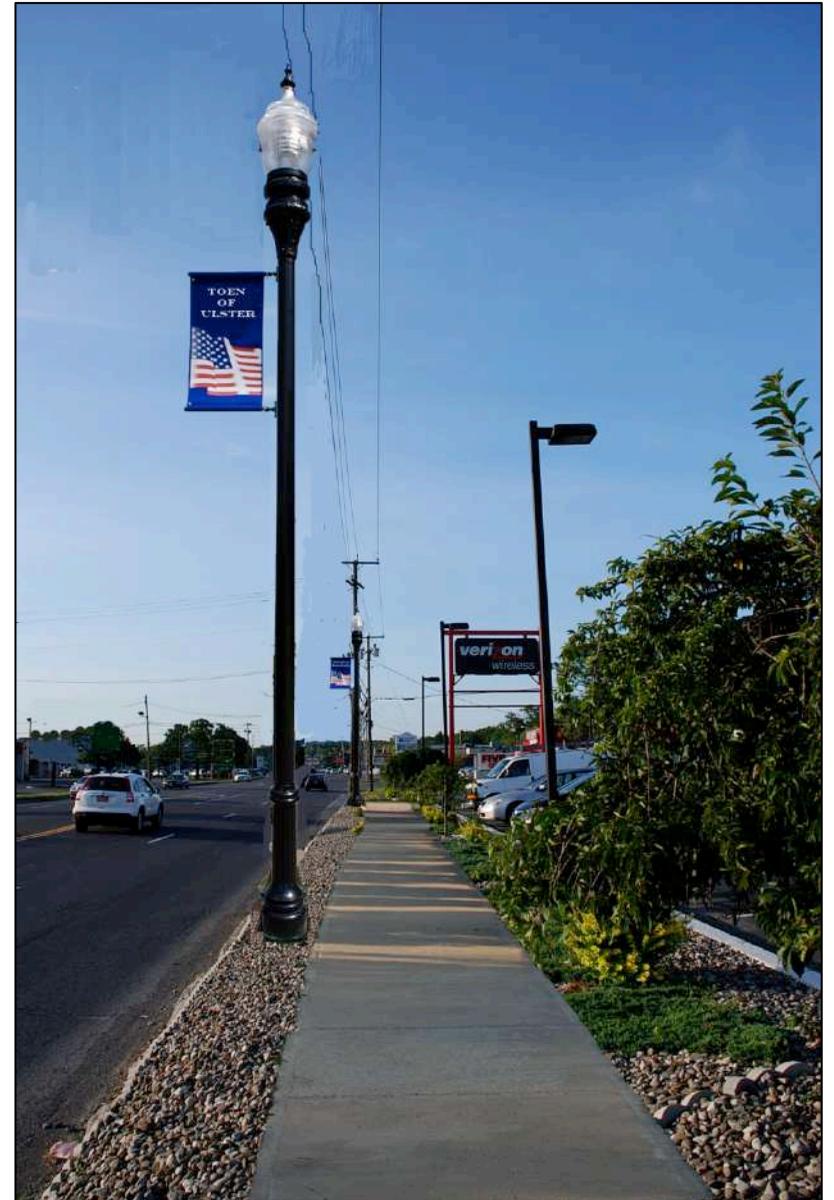
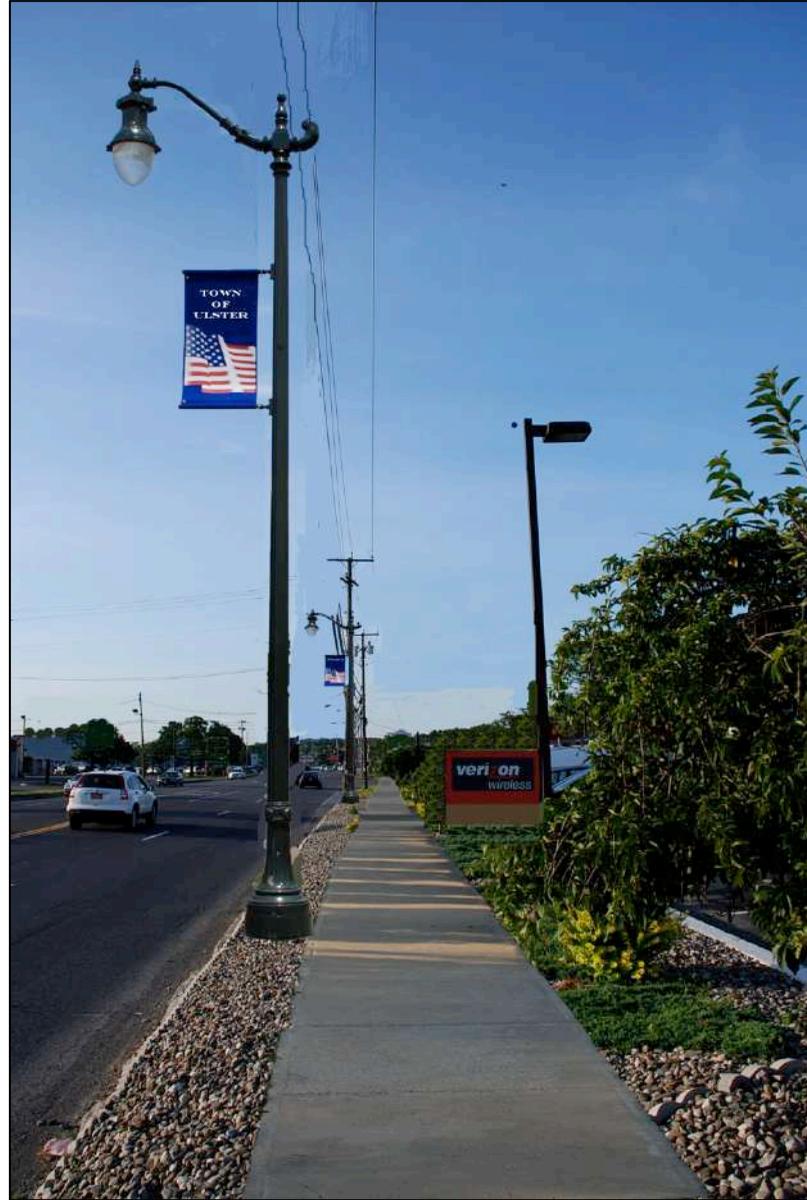
It is not the intent to choose the appropriate streetlight for the U.S. Route 9W corridor, but rather to provide some insights into how street lights could be used to help to better define the business district.



Above (Left to Right): View of existing conditions on U.S. Route 9W corridor looking south from the vicinity of the Applebee’s Restaurant toward the Talbots retail store within the Ulster Crossings Mall; and same view with the addition of period lighting poles with banners. The new lighting poles help to define the edge of the street while helping to provide a sense of enclosure within the pedestrian environment.



Above (Left to Right): View of existing conditions along the U.S. Route 9W corridor looking north from northwest corner of Boices Lane-U.S. Route 9W; same view showing new period streetlights with banners facing out toward the street; same view showing contemporary solar streetlights with banners facing in toward the sidewalk. Regardless of the type of fixture, the streetlights help to define the edge of the street and provide a sense of order along the U.S. Route 9W Corridor.



Above (Left to Right): View of existing conditions on U.S. Route 9W corridor looking north from Kings Mall on east side of U.S. Route 9W; same view showing new period streetlights with banners, a new sidewalk, relocation of telephone and cable lines (see Appendix A) replacement of Verizon pole sign with monument sign and removal of billboard and pole signs on left side of photo; and same view with new period lighting with banner with the Verizon pole sign, but billboard on left side of photo removed. These illustrations show how streetlights, sidewalks and sign regulation affect the appearance of the corridor.



Clockwise: View of existing conditions on U.S. Route 9W corridor looking south from VW Car Dealership toward the CVS Pharmacy; same view with the introduction of period streetlights with banners; and another view with a different style of streetlights with banners. This segment of U.S. Route 9W is very bleak and the edge of the street is very poorly defined.

Things that contribute to the bleak appearance include: paved median between curb and sidewalk and lack of streetlights and street trees. The first sample illustration provides for a grass median and streetlights with banner to help define the edge of the street. Due to the constraints of the site, street trees were not included in the illustration.

However, even the grass median and streetlights alone help to improve the appearance of the corridor while providing a sense of order and clear corridor edge.





Above (Left to Right): View of existing conditions on U.S. Route 9W corridor looking south from Hannaford Plaza on west side of U.S. Route 9W; same view showing period streetlights with banners facing out toward the street. The streetlights help to define the edge of the street. In this section of U.S. Route 9W, street trees are recommended along the sidewalk to provide shade and a sense of enclosure.

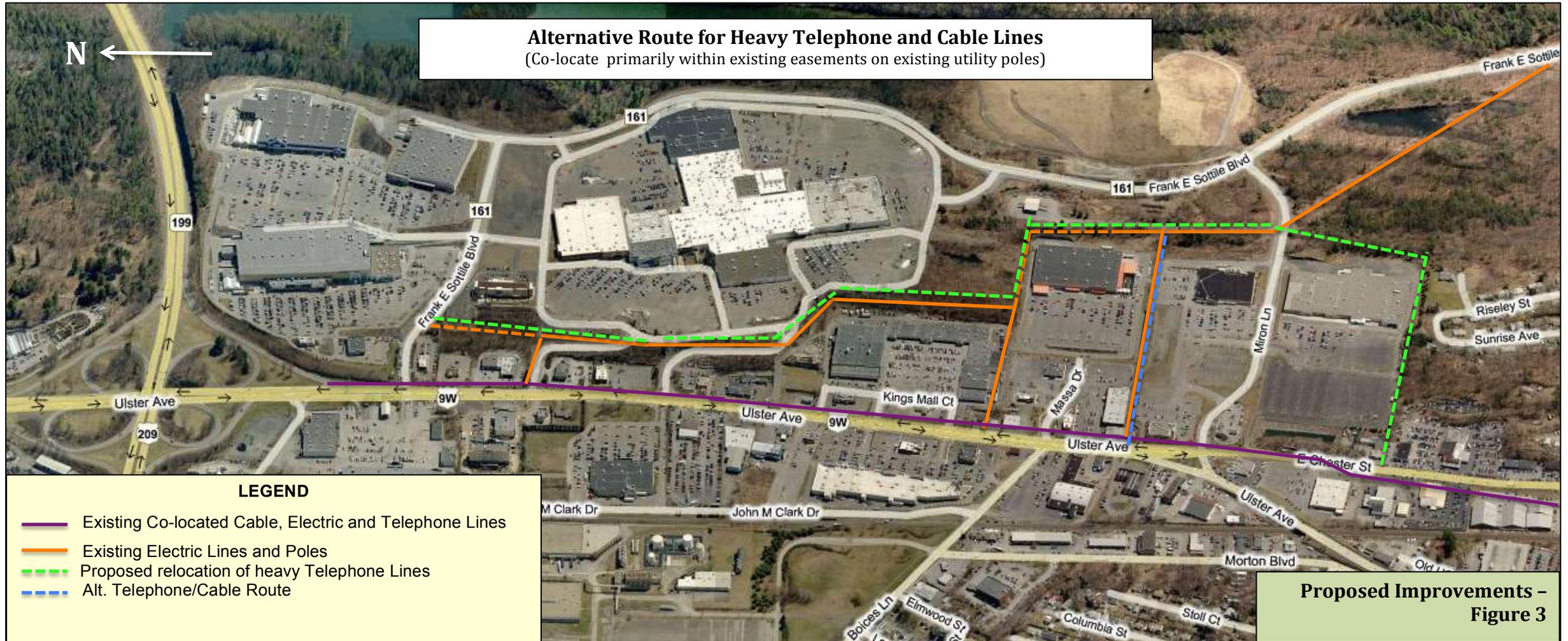
4.0 OTHER STREETLIGHT EXAMPLES



Above (Left to Right): A very contemporary solar streetlight in China; a unique streetlight from Scotland and streetlight from an undisclosed location. Each of these examples show how streetlights can be used to help define a sense of place while also providing the functional role of providing needed lighting.

APPENDIX A

ALTERNATE ROUTE FOR TELEPHONE AND CABLE LINES ON EAST SIDE OF ROUTE 9W



APPENDIX B
PHASE II RECOMMENDATIONS



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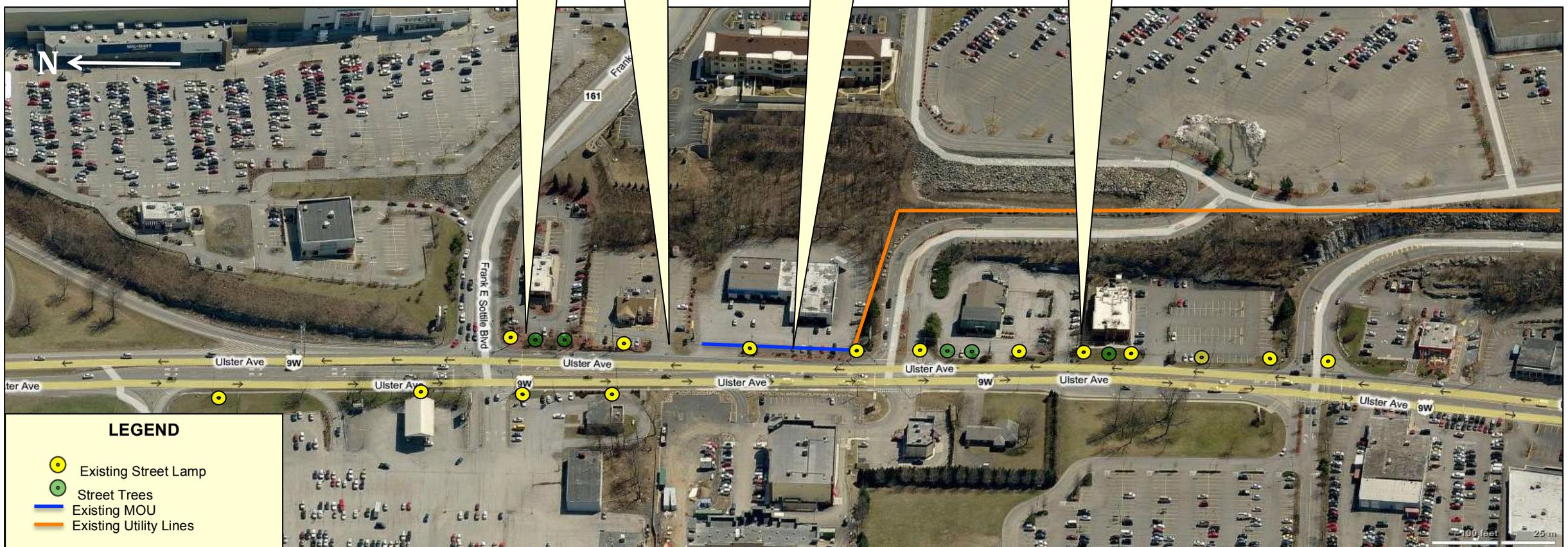
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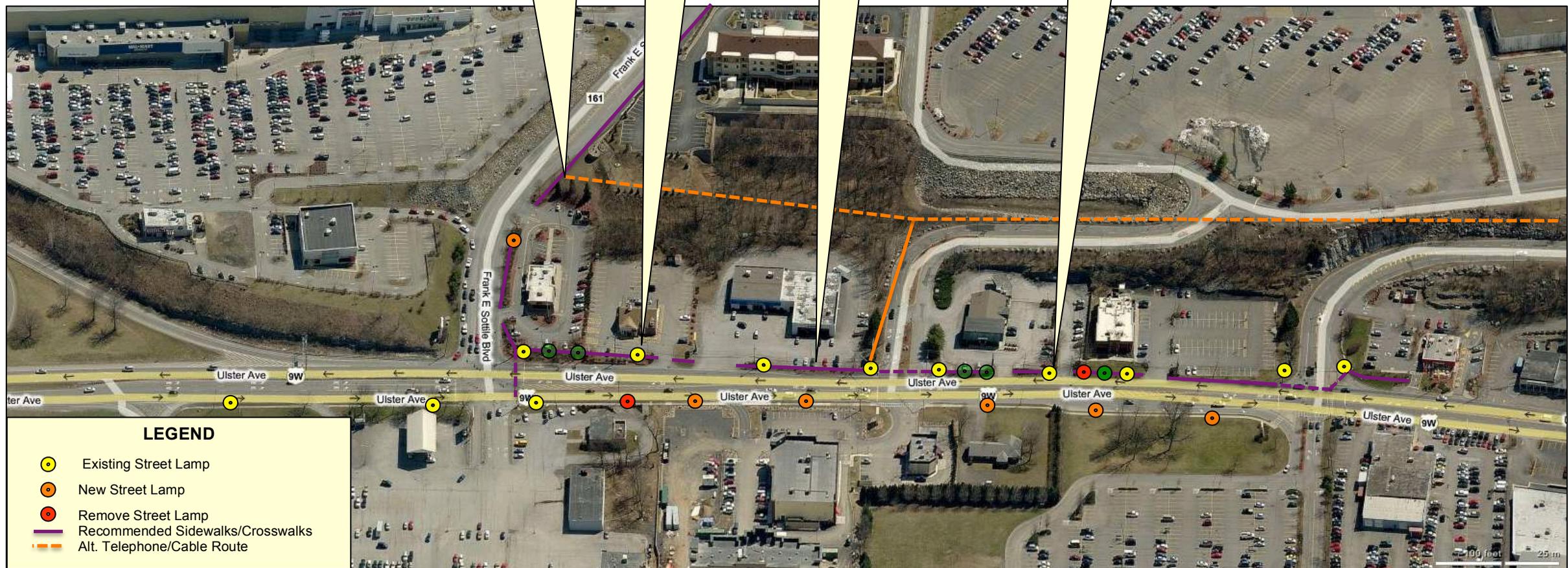
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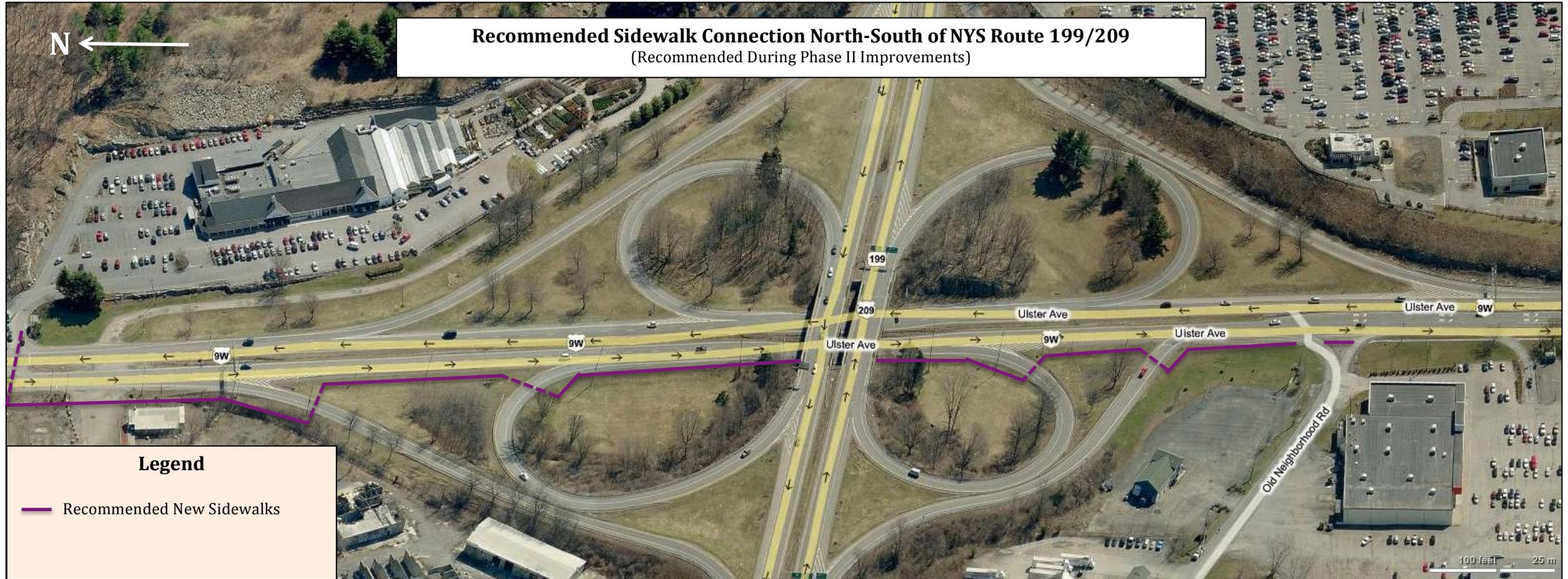
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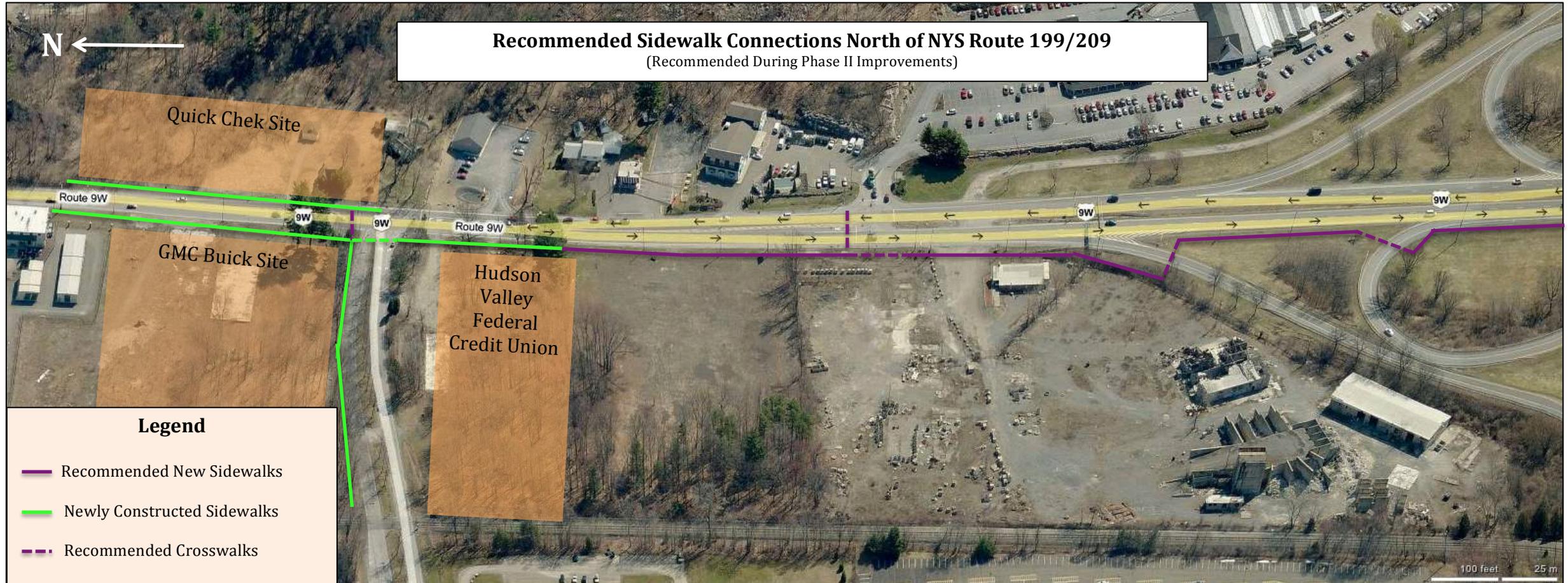
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Note: The location of crosswalks along the State Highways and ramps are shown for illustrative purposes only and will need to be reviewed and approved by the New York State Department of Transportation's Traffic Engineering and Safety Department.



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APPENDIX C
PHASE III RECOMMENDATIONS



APPENDIX D
ARTICLE VII SIGN REGULATIONS RECOMMENDED REVISIONS

APPENDIX E
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING