



August 12, 2005

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Town of Ashland Planning Department  
10 Main Street  
Ashland, MA 01721

Steve,

We've completed a first look at the rail station site and I wanted to send you some sketches and our thoughts on what we've completed to date. I understand that you will be away much of the next few weeks. Please call me once you've had a chance to look this over.

The attached sketches for the rail station site are similar in detail to those we showed you last week for the sites in the downtown – basically establishing a likely building footprint and parking area. No proforma analysis has been done at this point.

We have some concerns about the site that I'd like to share with you and get your feedback on before we proceed further, but first let me describe our overview and the options we've sketched.

#### Overview and Assumptions

A. Any loss of parking spaces on this side (north) of the tracks would be made up by using more spaces on the other side where there seems to be an adequate supply. This would require opening the access road off of High Street next to the overpass to allow access to the station from the north. I estimate that development on the rail station site – as proposed below – would displace around 100 spaces.

B. The western edge of the parcel is hampered by lack of accessible frontage since High Street is climbing to cross over the tracks; proximity of the stair and ramp structure along the tracks; the triangular shape of the lot; and the fairly small size of this area. Access, at least at grade, would need to come from the east end of the parcel.

C. The site's prime asset is the view out over the mill pond, particularly from a second or third floor. As a general rule we would place the building on the street side of the parcel with parking in the rear.

D. To limit side-by-side curb cuts we would combine access to this site with access to the adjacent restaurant site.

#### Options

Option 1 assumes three levels of residential in a townhouse style building (24 units) which would require 36 to 48 parking spaces depending of whether 1.5 or 2.0 spaces are provided per unit. 44 spaces are shown in the concept sketch. Each unit is roughly 25 x 50 feet or 1,250 GSF.

interior urban transportation



Option 2 assumes first floor retail (as transit oriented as possible) with two floors of residential above. A second curb cut on the east side allows a one-way loop behind the building but reduces the building footprint to roughly 7,750 SF. A ratio of 3 cars per 1000 SF of retail results in a need for 23 parking spaces. The residential unit count is 12 which would require 18 to 24 parking spaces, depending on the ratio. This puts the total parking need at 41 to 47 spaces. 42 are shown on the concept sketch.

In addition to the two concept sketches, I've attached a photo of development adjacent to the Gloucester commuter rail station which could serve as a model for our site. It has two floors of residential over ground floor retail, is sited close to the road with parking provided between the rail platform and building.

One other option, Option 3 which is not drawn, would be to develop a single story strip mall. This would look similar to Option 2 in plan but require about half as much parking, leaving the remaining spaces for MBTA patrons. From an urban design perspective, a single story development is not desirable. A second level could be added for a restaurant or other use that would take advantage of the view to the mill pond. This would require a parking layout similar to Option 2.

It should be noted that we did consider development on the site to include structured parking (say first floor retail with parking above) but found the site to be too small for an efficient layout.

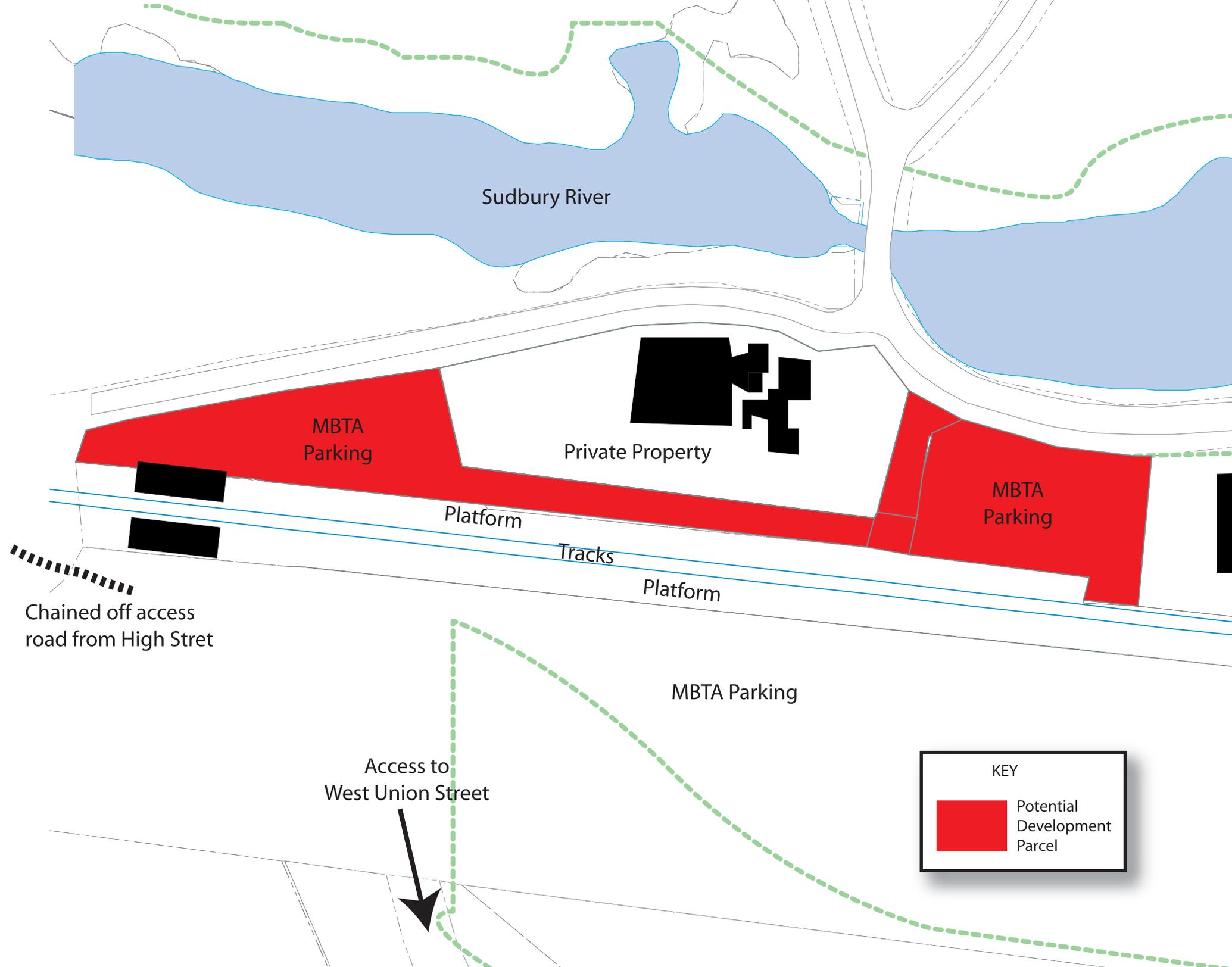
#### Concerns

1. The parcel we're looking at is fairly small and poorly configured for development; particularly the west end of the parcel. Only modest development could occur on the eastern portion of the site. This parcel would be more valuable if considered as part of a larger assembly (including at a minimum the adjacent restaurant parcel). Or, a larger development – on both sides of the tracks – could include structured parking with retail at ground level and possible connections over the tracks, connecting the two sides. Are these options to look at?
2. We're looking at this site in isolation of a master plan for the station area (and without a plan for the Gaynor property) and I'm concerned that the small-scale development possible on the site could hamper options for a future larger development. The station area needs to be planned in coordination with the Gaynor property and connection to the downtown along Megunko Road.
3. Without a critical mass of housing, the site doesn't do much. It's not close to other residential enclaves and thus not a good residential site. TOD retail would most likely be hampered by the fact that we are displacing parking spaces and forcing potential shoppers to cross over the tracks (or drive, which is rather anti-TOD), and, that the location is not great for the drive-by market needed to make such a business viable, because commuters alone are not a large enough market.

I look forward to talking with you further about this.

Sincerely,

Don Kindsvatter



Sudbury River

MBTA  
Parking

Private Property

Platform

Tracks

Platform

MBTA  
Parking

Chained off access  
road from High Stret

Access to  
West Union Street

MBTA Parking

KEY

 Potential  
Development  
Parcel

PARCEL 10

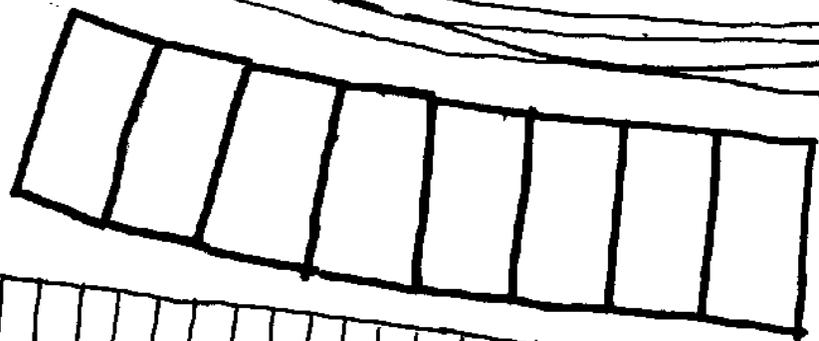
24 UNITS RESIDENTIAL

36-48 PARKING SPACES

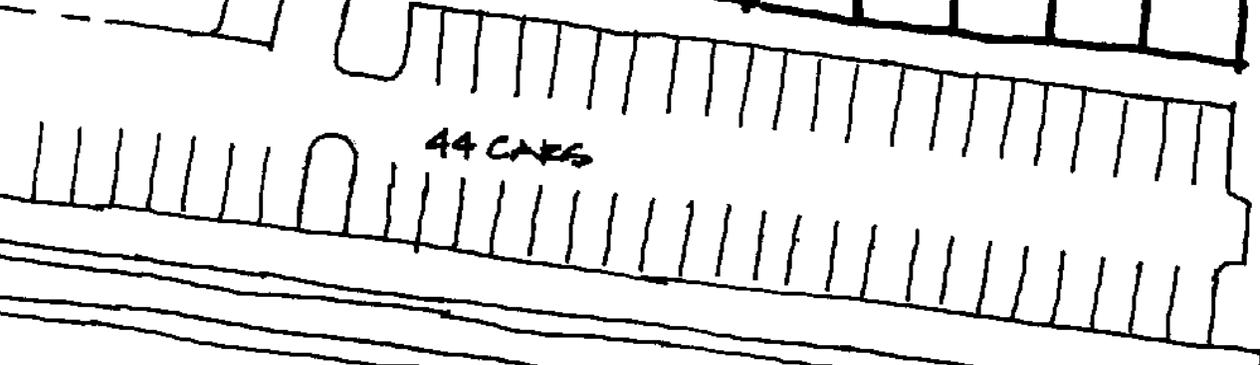
1

Pleasant Street

Property Line



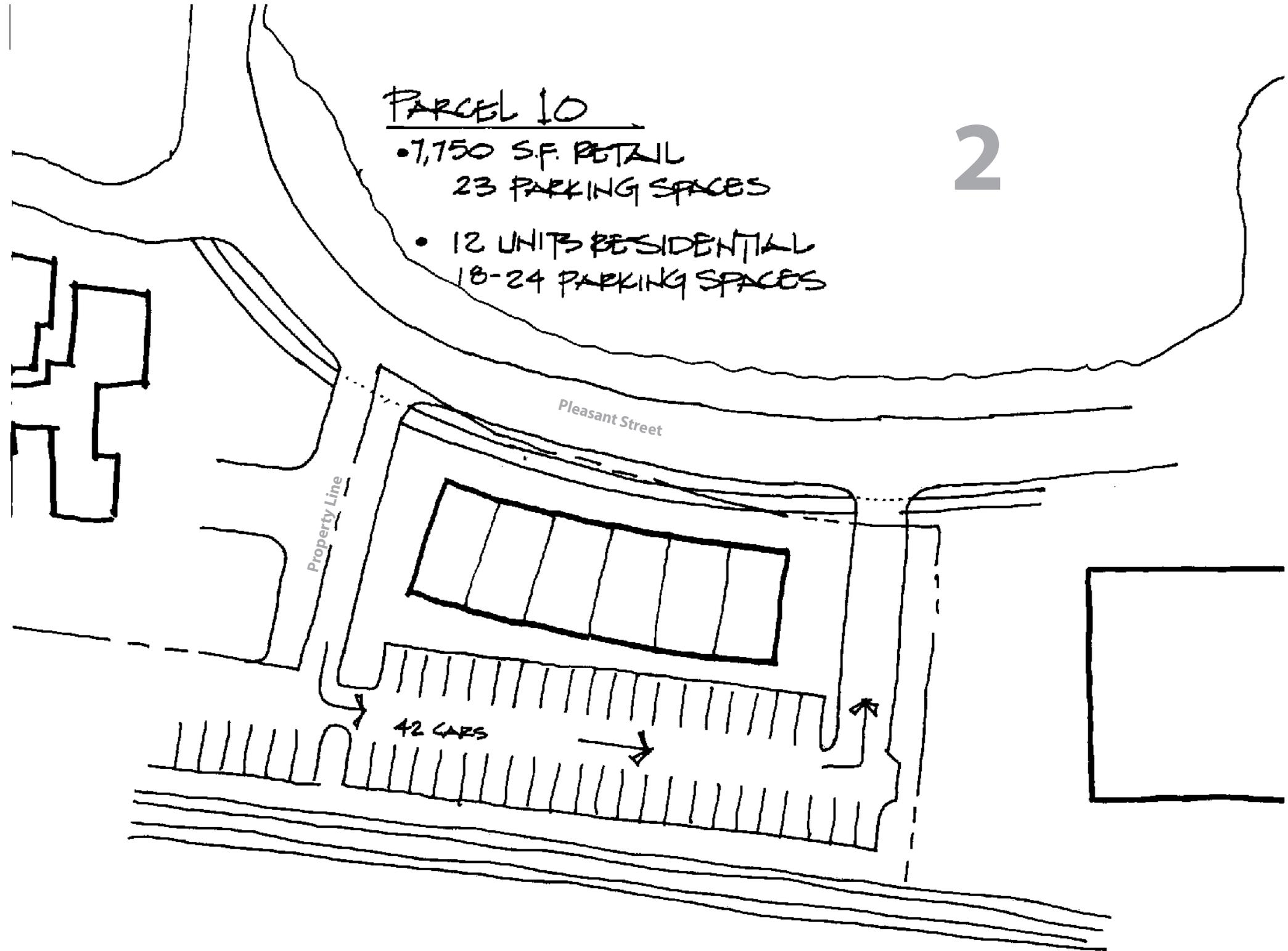
44 CARS



PARCEL 10

- 7,750 S.F. RETAIL  
23 PARKING SPACES
- 12 UNITS RESIDENTIAL  
18-24 PARKING SPACES

2





Development at Gloucester Rail Station