

4. THE VISION



The Revive and Renew 163/32 Investment Plan is a place-based vision for how Montville can strengthen its identity, improve the function and appearance of its principal corridors, and channel future growth into a limited number of locations where public investment, private development, and community life can reinforce one another. The preceding chapters established that Montville has a meaningful opportunity to capture a larger share of regional housing and commercial demand, but that opportunity will depend on more than market conditions alone. It will also depend on whether the Town can create more coherent, visible and attractive places through public realm improvements, targeted infrastructure investment, supportive zoning, and coordinated implementation over time.

This chapter presents the physical vision that emerged from that analysis. It begins with the importance of placemaking and community identity as a guiding framework for the plan and then explains how the consultant team evaluated a broader set of potential activity nodes along the Route 32 and Route 163 corridors. Town Center, the Cove District (Route 32 between Pink Row and Beit Street), and Palmertown Village are the three opportunity nodes with the greatest potential to anchor future investment. This chapter presents a physical vision for each of those nodes, along with the Bank Paper Mill brownfield opportunity site, including the role each area is intended to play, the types of investments recommended, and the way these places can work together as part of a more vibrant and connected corridor strategy for Montville.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACEMAKING, COMMUNITY, & IDENTITY

A central premise of the Investment Plan is that Montville's future competitiveness will depend not only on whether growth occurs, but on the quality and character of the places where that growth is directed. For much of the Route 32 and Route 163 corridors, existing development patterns are functional but fragmented, with limited visual coherence, inconsistent or non-existent pedestrian conditions, and relatively few places that read as recognizable places of civic or community life. As a result, even where land is available or market opportunity exists, the corridors do not always communicate a clear sense of arrival or identity. This plan therefore treats placemaking as a core economic and community-building strategy and a means for making Montville's key corridors more attractive, more usable, and more meaningful to residents, visitors, and investors alike.

This emphasis on placemaking emerged consistently through the public engagement process. Across multiple engagement formats, participants expressed a desire for more active and inviting public spaces, stronger civic identity, improved corridor safety and aesthetics, and new development that feels specific to Montville and its agri-industrial history rather than generic. In the Town Center in particular, community participants strongly associated the area with the potential for a more visible community hub, including programmed open space, a town green or gathering place, and a mix of civic, cultural, and commercial activity. Community members also expressed a clear preference for village-like character, traditional streetscape elements, and context-sensitive forms of mixed-use and medium-density housing rather than high-density apartment developments. These responses suggest that the community is not simply looking for more development but rather for places that feel identifiable, welcoming, and distinctly Montville.

Placemaking is also important because it provides a framework for organizing future growth in a way that is more strategic and easier to implement. By concentrating attention on a limited number of nodes rather than dispersing change along the full length of both corridors, the Town can better align zoning updates, infrastructure investment, redevelopment priorities, and public-private partnerships around places with the greatest potential to function as centers. This node-based approach also supports a stronger sense of community identity by giving different areas of the corridor clear and complementary roles: civic and mixed-use activity in the Town Center, denser mixed-use multifamily and riverfront park access at the Cove, and village-scale neighborhood-serving development in Palmertown. In this way, placemaking helps translate broad community goals, including housing choice, public space, walkability, local culture, and economic vitality into a physical vision that can guide both public action and private investment over time.

Of the 11 candidate sites, 3 opportunity nodes rose clearly to the top:

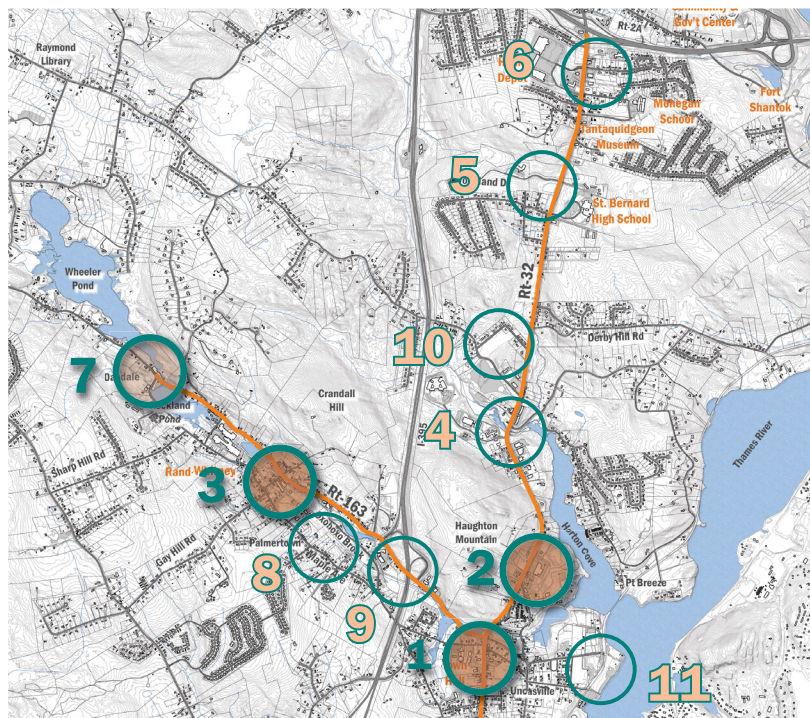
- *Town Center – Montville’s strongest opportunity for a visible mixed-use hub*
- *The Cove District – A mixed-use and recreation-oriented district with major housing and trail potential*
- *Palmertown Village – a modest village-scale node linked to Oxoboxo Brook and heritage trails*



THE OPPORTUNITY NODES

A central task of the Revive and Renew 163/32 Investment Plan was to determine where the Town should focus its efforts to position itself to strengthen vibrancy and community identity and capture a greater share of future regional housing and commercial investment. The consultant team identified 11 potential candidate nodes along Route 32 and Route 163 and evaluated them as possible locations for targeted public and private investment.

Figure 4-1: Potential Candidate Nodes



1. Town Center
2. The Cove District
3. Palmertown Village
4. Animal Hospital / Public Safety
5. St. Bernard
6. Gateway North
7. The Watertower
8. Maple Ave. / Roselund Hill
9. 163 / 395
10. Center Plaza
11. Thames Riverfront

Source: Pirie Associates Architects

To compare the 11 candidate nodes consistently, the consultant team used an evaluation framework organized around three broad themes: development feasibility, placemaking potential, and catalytic impact for unlocking future phases. Within these three themes, the team considered the following factors:

Site and physical readiness, including parcel availability, number and size of underutilized or vacant parcels, ownership patterns, and likely demolition or environmental constraints.

Zoning and land use, including whether existing zoning supports mixed-use or multifamily development.

Infrastructure and access, including water and sewer, roadway access, and potential environmental constraints.

Market and activation potential, including corridor visibility, connectivity, and the presence of existing civic, retail, or service anchors that could help build critical mass.

Placemaking and mobility, including walkability, pedestrian safety, complete-streets potential, trail and waterfront connections, and the ability to create a recognizable place.

Community and identity value, including alignment with public feedback, historic or scenic value, and the potential to reinforce a stronger sense of place for Montville.

Implementation potential, including the presence of public land, partnership opportunities, alignment with state and regional funding programs, and the likelihood of visible progress within three to five years.

The consultant team then applied these criteria to all 11 candidate nodes along with a more detailed site-by-site assessment. This process made it possible to compare sites systematically while still recognizing that some locations performed well for one reason and less well or poorly for other reasons.

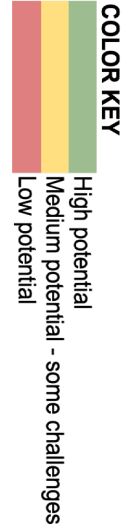


Figure 4-2: Comparative Assessment of Potential Opportunity Nodes

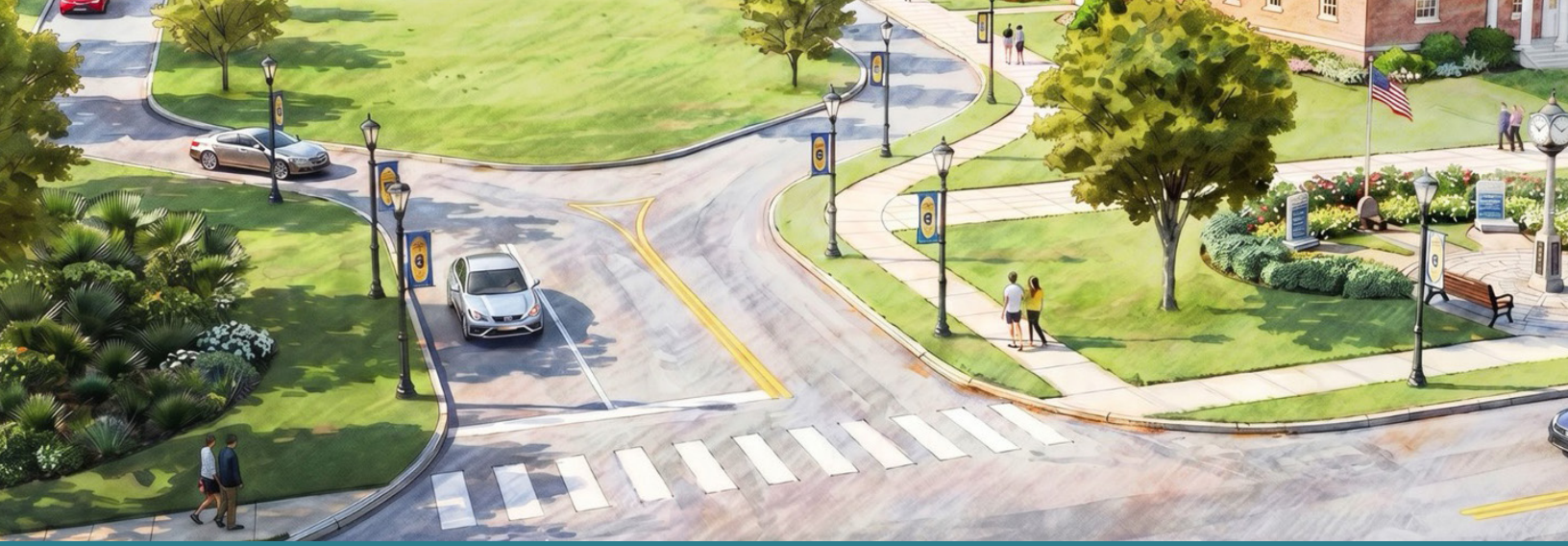
	Site 1 Town Center	Site 2 Palmertown Village	Site 3 The Cove District	Site 4 Hospital/Public Safety Animal	Site 5 St. Bernard	Site 6 Gateway North	Site 7 The Watertower	Site 8 Maple Ave. / Roselund Hill	Site 9 163 / 395	Site 10 Center Plaza	Site 11 Thames Riverfront
Site Availability Are there vacant, underutilized, or publicly owned parcels?											
Size Is the site large enough for impactful development?											
Zoning Compatibility Does existing zoning allow mixed-use or desired uses?											
Existing Infrastructure Capacity Are wastewater and other infrastructure in place or easily upgraded?											
Proximity to Public Services and Transit Is the site near public transportation, fire/police, town offices, or schools?											
Potential to Accommodate Significant Multi-Family Residential Uses Does the site have the potential to accommodate significant missing middle housing units as identified in the											
Opportunity to Create or Enhance a Mixed-Use Node Can development here support a walkable mix of housing, retail, civic, and green space?											
Community Identity and Placemaking Potential Can this area be shaped into a district with a unique identity (e.g., retail hub, civic hub, mixed-use village hub)?											
Connectivity and Walkability Can the site support safe and accessible pedestrian and bike routes? Are there barriers such as infeasible safe pedestrian crossings or challenging topography?											
Public Realm and Open Space Opportunity Does the site offer space for new public space or linkages to existing green assets?											
Partnership and Funding Potential Does this site lend itself to public private partnerships, developer interest, or available public funding sources											

Source: BJH Advisors

The assessment showed that three locations consistently rose to the top:

1. **The Town Center**, which emerged as the strongest overall node because it functions as Montville's traditional civic and historic core, has a high concentration of existing activity, includes important public assets, and offers a strong potential for placemaking, adaptive reuse, mixed-use development, and public-realm investment.
2. **The Cove District**, which ranked highly because of its visibility along Route 32, strong housing capacity and potentially available parcels, access to open space and waterfront-related amenities, location along underserved but present public transportation networks, and ability to evolve into a new mixed-use node that is easily connected to the Town Center and Oxoboxo Brook.
3. **Palmertown Village**, which stood out as a smaller but still important opportunity because of its historic village character, its ability to support walkable village-scale development, and its potential to build around planned and prospective housing while reinforcing a distinct neighborhood identity.

In addition to these three opportunity nodes, the Bank Paper Mill property was identified as a distinct brownfield opportunity site. Although it was not evaluated as a preliminary mixed-use node in the same way as the three opportunity nodes, it represents an important redevelopment opportunity because of its history and long-term potential as a recreational asset, in addition to serving as a gateway to Montville's historic core. In the longer term, this site may also be able to accommodate residential development.



THE NODE VISIONS: PLAN OVERVIEW & TARGETED INVESTMENTS

Taken together, the three nodes provide a connected framework rather than a series of isolated redevelopment sites. The Town Center is envisioned as the principal civic and mixed-use hub, with 140 proposed residential units and a concentration of public spaces and community facilities. The Cove District is proposed as a denser mixed-use and recreation-oriented district centered on the existing Center of Montville shopping center, with approximately 275 to 290 planned residential units and strong trail and water-access connections. Palmertown Village is the most modest in scale, with 124 proposed residential units, including the 52-unit Palmer Brothers Mill redevelopment, and is intended to retain and strengthen its historic village pattern while expanding brookside open space and heritage trail access.

The Town Center

Figure 4-3: Town Center Vision Plan



Source: Pirie Associates Architects

KEY

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 TOWN HALL | 14 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE |
| 2 LIBRARY ANNEX | 15 NEW TOWN HALL ENTRY & LAWN |
| 3 EXISTING COMMERCIAL | 16 CHURCH PARKING |
| 4 TOWN GREEN | 17 COMMUNITY GARDEN |
| 5 SENIOR CENTER | 18 RESTORED RIPARIAN PARK |
| 6 NEW TRUCK ACCESS ROAD | 19 PARKING |
| 7 ST. JOHN'S CHURCH | 20 BUS STOP |
| 8 INNOVATION CENTER | 21 TREE LINED SIDEWALK W/ PARKING |
| 9 PLAZA | 22 BAND SHELL |
| 10 MIXED-USE MED DENSITY | 23 WAR MEMORIAL & FLAGS |
| 11 TOWNHOMES | 24 RIPARIAN PARK PLAZA |
| 12 PLAYGROUND | 25 RAISED CROSSWALK |
| 13 GRAND STAIR & PLAZA | |

LEGEND

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| CIVIC | TOWNHOMES |
| COMMERCIAL (EXISTING) | RIPARIAN RESTORATION |
| ARTS & CULTURE | MULTI-USE PATH |
| MIXED-USE MED DENSITY | OXOBOXO HERITAGE TRAIL |
| MIXED-USE (FUTURE) | RAPID FLASH BEACON |

140 RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Key Public Realm Investments

At the center of the vision for the Town Center is a new Town Green (4), anticipated as the principal gathering space in the node and as the defining public space for Montville as a whole. Rather than functioning as passive open space alone, the Town Green is intended to support everyday use, informal gathering, civic events, and community programming.

In addition to the Town Green, key civic and public realm elements for the Town Center include:

- Bandshell (22) to support performances and community programming.
- New Town Hall Entry (15) and Town Hall Lawn (23) to strengthen the civic structure presence.
- Enhanced war memorial in front of Town Hall, as shown in the second rendering.
- Potential adaptive reuse of the Old Town Hall as a public library annex on the south side of Town Green.
- Re-centering the Senior Center with landscape improvements and a community garden.
- Improved connections between the Town Green and the open spaces around St. John's Church, while maintaining and enhancing the church's integrity as a functioning parish and an historic landmark.

These elements are intended to work together as a civic ensemble rather than as separate site improvements. In this sense, the Town Center is designed as a place where public life, civic identity, and historic context are brought into a more coherent and visible whole.

Housing and Mixed-Use Development

New housing is an important component of the Town Center vision because it can help support retail and cultural vibrancy, expand housing choice, and reinforce the area as a mixed-use district. The housing program is intended to introduce new residents in building types that align with both market opportunity and community preferences for context-sensitive, medium-density, village-oriented growth. The Town Center vision includes 140 new residential units in mixed-use medium density apartments and townhomes.

The planned housing components include:

- New townhomes west of St. John's Church (11), providing home ownership opportunities in a walkable setting.
- Mixed-use medium-density apartments along Maple Avenue north of the Town Green (10).
- Architectural direction for the Maple Avenue buildings that draws from the historic character of the Oxoboxo Lofts and traditional New England character rather than a generic suburban apartment model.

Connectivity and Access

A major strength of the Town Center concept is that it links the civic core to surrounding natural assets and to the broader corridor network. This makes the Town Center not only a destination, but also a key point of connection within the larger plan area.

Important access and connectivity improvements include:

- Grand Stairs and Plaza (13), linking the Town Green to the lower path system.
- Multi-use path connections to the Oxoboxo Brook and a new riparian park (18, 24), with further connection north toward the Cove District.
- Tree-lined sidewalks and new parking (21, 3) for the commercial area on the east side of Route 32 across from Town Hall and the Town Green.
- New truck access road (6), routing heavy trucks from Maple Avenue to Route 163 while avoiding the center of the Town Center.

Together, these improvements would strengthen pedestrian comfort, improve access to existing businesses, and reduce conflicts between civic space and truck traffic. They also make the Town Center one of the clearest early implementation priorities in the overall corridor strategy.

Figure 4-4: Town Center Rendering #1



Source: Pirie Associates Architects

Figure 4-5: Town Center Rendering #2



Source: Pirie Associates Architects

The Cove District

Figure 4-6: The Cove District Vision Plan



Source: Pirie Associates Architects

KEY

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 EXISTING COMMERCIAL | 9 PINK ROW - BEIT ST |
| 2 HORTON COVE PARK | 10 CONNECTION |
| 3 APARTMENT MED DENSITY | ALAMEDA WALKWAY / MULTI- |
| 4 MIXED-USE MED DENSITY | 11 USE TRAIL |
| 5 PUBLIC PARKING | 12 10' SIDEWALKS |
| 6 PARKING | 13 PROMONOTORY / LOOK OUT |
| 7 TRAILHEAD | 14 BUS STOP |
| 8 MONTVILLE WWP | INDOOR/OUTDOOR RETAIL |

LEGEND

- | | |
|---|--|
| COMMERCIAL (EXISTING) | TRAILS |
| MIXED-USE MED DENSITY | MULTI USE TRAIL |
| APARTMENT MED DENSITY | OXOBOXO HERITAGE TRAIL |
| | RAPID FLASH BEACON |

275-290 RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Public Realm and Existing Center Improvements

The existing Center of Montville shopping center (1) remains the commercial anchor of this node, but with substantial public realm and site improvements. The intent is not to replace the existing center, but to reposition it as part of a more walkable, transit-connected, and better-landscaped mixed-use district.

Key public realm improvements include:

- Retention of the existing Center of Montville shopping center (1) with enhanced parking lots by incorporation of new Town landscape standards.
- Transforming the oversized roadway shoulder into 10-foot wide, tree-lined sidewalks.
- Creating a two-sided tree-lined walkway linking the commercial area to the multi-use path and the open-space network.

These changes would help transform the area from a conventional auto-oriented commercial site into a more integrated district where commercial uses, housing, and pedestrian movement, and connections to recreational assets support one another.

Housing and Mixed-Use Development

The Cove District vision introduces substantial new housing in a compact mixed-use format to support corridor activity and help meet regional housing demand. Infill medium-density mixed-use apartments are planned throughout the node, delivering approximately 275 to 290 new residential units, representing the largest housing concentration among the three opportunity nodes.

The housing program is intended to:

- Frame the corridor, naturally slow the pace of automobile traffic, and reinforce the commercial spine.
- Place more residents within walking distance of shops, services, and trails.
- Expand housing supply in a format more consistent with medium-density mixed-use development than with high-density apartment towers.

This strategy reflects both market opportunity and public input. Survey results suggested that the Cove District should have a mixed-use program, but with a particularly strong recreation and open-space orientation rather than a more civic or institutional role. This housing typology is also well-suited to the underserved 24 – 40 age cohort, which is among the fastest growing age cohorts in Montville.

Haughton (Horton) Cove Park and Trail Connections

A defining feature of the vision for the Cove District is the creation of Haughton Cove Park (2), a new public open space centered on water access, trails, and views.

Key open-space and trail elements include:

- Haughton Cove Park (2) as the recreation anchor of the node.
- Trails and walkways to a promontory and lookout over Haughton Cove and the Thames River (7, 12).
- Expanded greenway, trail, and path connections to Haughton Cove, Oxoboxo Brook, the Town Center, and the Thames River waterfront.

These improvements respond directly to community feedback, which associated the Cove District most strongly with trails, passive recreation, fishing, and water-related activities. They also help make the Cove District a place where environmental assets and redevelopment reinforce one another rather than compete.

Connectivity and Corridor Role

The Cove District plays a critical role in the larger corridor network by linking the Town Center, Haughton Cove, and the Oxoboxo Brook greenway. It also has the potential through public transportation to link residents to work opportunities beyond the corridor itself in Norwich to the north and New London/Groton to the south.

Over time, the strongest long-term vision for the Cove District is not just redevelopment at one site, but the creation of a connected district that ties the Town Center, the Cove, and the river together through coordinated public realm and open-space investments.

Figure 4-7: The Cove District Rendering



Source: Pirie Associates Architects

Palmertown Village

Figure 4-8: Palmertown Village Vision Plan



Source: Pirie Associates Architects

KEY

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 EXISTING COMMERCIAL | 8 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE |
| 2 OXBO XO GREEN | 9 PARKING |
| 3 APARTMENTS (FUTURE) | 10 OXBO XO HERITAGE TRAIL |
| 4 TREE LINED SIDEWALK W/
PARKING | 11 POST OFFICE (EXISTING) |
| 5 MIXED-USE LOW DENSITY | 12 TRAILHEAD |
| 6 MIXED-USE MED DENSITY | 13 PLAYGROUND |
| 7 TOWNHOMES | 14 DAM REMOVAL / RIVER
RESTORATION |

LEGEND

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| COMMERCIAL (EXISTING) | APARTMENTS (FUTURE) |
| TOWNHOMES | RIPARIAN RESTORATION |
| MIXED-USE LOW DENSITY | OXBO XO HERITAGE TRAIL |
| MIXED-USE MED DENSITY | |

124 RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Palmertown Village is envisioned as a modest village-style node along Route 163 that builds on its historic setting, planned reinvestment sites, and the presence of Oxoboxo Brook. Among the Route 163 opportunity areas, it offers the best opportunity for a smaller-scale, neighborhood-serving mixed-use district that can accommodate incremental growth without losing its historic village character.

Unlike the Town Center and the Cove, Palmertown is not intended to become a larger civic or higher-intensity mixed-use hub. Its role is to retain a village scale, reinforce the small historic commercial core, expand access to the brook, and introduce new housing in forms that fit the area's compact pattern. That direction is consistent with community feedback favoring smaller-scale housing types, neighborhood-serving uses, and a village pattern rather than large-format redevelopment.

Public Realm and Village Core

The north side of Route 163 contains the existing historic commercial hub (1), which remains the center of Palmertown Village. The plan preserves this area and reinforces its village role rather than replacing it with a larger or more suburban format.

Because Route 163 is narrow through this area, the public realm strategy is intentionally modest and carefully scaled. The key improvements include:

- Retention of the historic commercial hub (1) as the focal point of the node.
- Tree-lined sidewalk on the north side of the commercial district (4), scaled to the narrow Route 163 frontage.
- Mixed-use low-density residential buildings (5) fronting and reinforcing the commercial district at a village scale.

This approach closely matches community preferences for Palmertown, where respondents favored townhouses, 2–3 family residential structures, coffee shops, restaurants, grocery, retail, and services in a smaller-scale setting.

Housing and Mixed-Use Development

Palmertown introduces new housing, but in forms that remain consistent with its historic village setting. The housing program is intended to be incremental, context-sensitive, and tied closely to both the commercial core and the brookside landscape.

The housing components include:

- Mixed-use low-density residential (5) along the north side of Route 163.
- Townhouses (7) south of Route 163 but north of Oxoboxo Brook.
- Additional mixed-use medium-density residential on the south side of the brook.
- Planned renovation and repurposing of the historic Palmer Brothers Mill at 14 Bridge Street into a 52-unit apartment development.

In total, Palmertown would include 124 residential units, consisting of 72 new units in the broader concept area plus the 52 units planned at the Palmer Brothers Mill site. This mix allows Palmertown to accommodate new residents without losing the smaller-scale character that defines the node.

Brook, Park, and Heritage Connections

A defining feature of the Palmertown vision is its relationship to Oxoboxo Brook. Rather than treating the brook as a backdrop, the plan makes it a central organizing feature of the node's public realm and identity.

Key open-space and environmental components include:

- Riparian park and playground on the north side of Oxoboxo Brook (2, 13).
- New pedestrian bridge (8), parallel to the existing Bridge Street Bridge, linking the two banks of the brook.
- Oxoboxo Heritage Trail (10), connecting Palmertown eastward to the Town Center and the Cove District and westward to the schools and Camp Oakdale.
- Proposed dam removal and river restoration (14) at Palmertown, similar to dam removal downstream at Oxoboxo Lofts, in order to restore brook and provide flood mitigation opportunities.

These investments would improve recreational access, strengthen environmental restoration, and make Palmertown a more connected part of the broader trail and open-space network.

Connectivity and Implementation Role

Palmertown plays an important connective role within the broader Route 163 / Route 32 strategy. Although it is smaller in scale than the Town Center or the Cove, it helps extend the corridor vision westward by linking historic village fabric, new housing, brookside open space, and trail access in one compact node. It also acts to connect the extensive single-family residential areas to the west through a village node, offering a subtle transition to the more densely developed Town Center and the Cove District.

Bank Paper Mill Brownfield Site

Figure 4-9: Bank Paper Mill Brownfield Site Vision Plan



Source: Pirie Associates Architects

KEY

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 WATER TOWER & PLAZA | 6 BROOK PLAZA |
| 2 ORIGINAL MILL BUILDING | - SEATING, LANDSCAPING |
| - OXOBOXO BROOK HISTORY | 7 PLAYGROUND |
| - CAFE | 8 NATURALISTIC SKATEPARK |
| - RESTROOMS | 9 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE |
| 3 EXISTING WATER TOWER | 10 PUBLIC PARKING |
| - NEW STAIR TO VIEWPOINT | 11 TRAILS |
| 4 TREE LINED SIDEWALK | 12 RIVER RESTORATION |
| 5 WHEELER POND DAM | |

LEGEND

- | | |
|---|---|
| CULTURAL | SHARED USE TRAIL |
| RIPARIAN RESTORATION | RAPID FLASH BEACON |

As part of the Investment Plan's requirement to include a redevelopment vision for at least one brownfield site, the consultant team evaluated sites along the Route 32 and Route 163 corridors and identified only limited brownfield opportunities, with the Bank Paper Mill site standing out as the most prominent candidate for reuse. The vision for this site reimagines it not simply as a former industrial property, but as a combined recreational asset along the Oxoboxo Brook and an eastern gateway to Montville's historic core, including Palmertown and the Town Center. In the longer term, this site may also accommodate residential development.

The concept emphasizes preservation, public access, environmental improvement, and adaptive reuse. Rather than clearing the site entirely, the vision retains key historic features and builds a new public destination around them, linking heritage interpretation with outdoor recreation and brookside access.

Key components of the concept include:

- Preservation of the historic water tower on Route 163 (1) as a visual landmark at the site entrance.
- Preservation and restoration of the original mill building (2) for history exhibits, a cafe, and public restrooms.
- Creation of Brook Plaza (6) along the Oxoboxo adjacent to the mill building, with seating and landscaping.
- Addition of a naturalistic skate park (8) as an active recreation feature integrated into the landscape.
- Construction of a new pedestrian bridge (9) across the Oxoboxo to connect the mill site to new parkland and the existing water tower (3).
- Potential reuse of the existing water tower (3) as a publicly accessible viewpoint, supported by a new stair connection.
- Trailheads and trail connections along the Oxoboxo to strengthen the site's role within the broader open-space network.
- Supporting elements shown in the concept, including tree-lined sidewalks, public parking, playground space, and river restoration features.

In planning terms, this concept is important because it demonstrates how a brownfield site in Montville can be repositioned as a civic, recreational, and heritage asset rather than treated solely as a redevelopment parcel, though it may also accommodate residential development in the longer term. It also strengthens the broader corridor strategy by creating a visible eastern gateway to Palmertown and the Town Center while expanding public access to the Oxoboxo Brook and reinforcing the historic identity of this part of Montville.