

The Villages of Casco



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Strengthening Casco's Villages

From the planning process the team learned that Casco has intact villages, many of which have very similar patterns as others. While the villages identified have historically provided more resources — commercial activity, social institutions, and recreational space — they have become almost entirely residential.

While trails and protection of open space have been a focus, less attention has been given to protections and enhancements in the villages. Casco Village, Pike's Corner, and Webbs Mills each have formal outdoor public spaces. The historic Grange in Casco Village is no longer active and privately owned. While the villages do not have housing clustered around a central

point, they comprise little other than residential space. In the whole of Casco, there are very few local shops, particularly outside of the industrial/commercial stretch of Rt. 302. Nowhere in Casco is walkable, even within villages. To travel between villages requires personal vehicles as they are completely disconnected.

The future of the villages can be an evolution into, or back to, well-rounded centers. Pike's Corner, also referred to as the Crossroads, is one strong example of the potential for growth in Casco's Villages. There is the potential for a commercial center and municipal campus. In its geographical position near the center of Casco, any effort to connect the villages would be centralized through Pike's Corner, making the area more of a crossroads where people intersect and meet rather than an intersection where cars speed through.

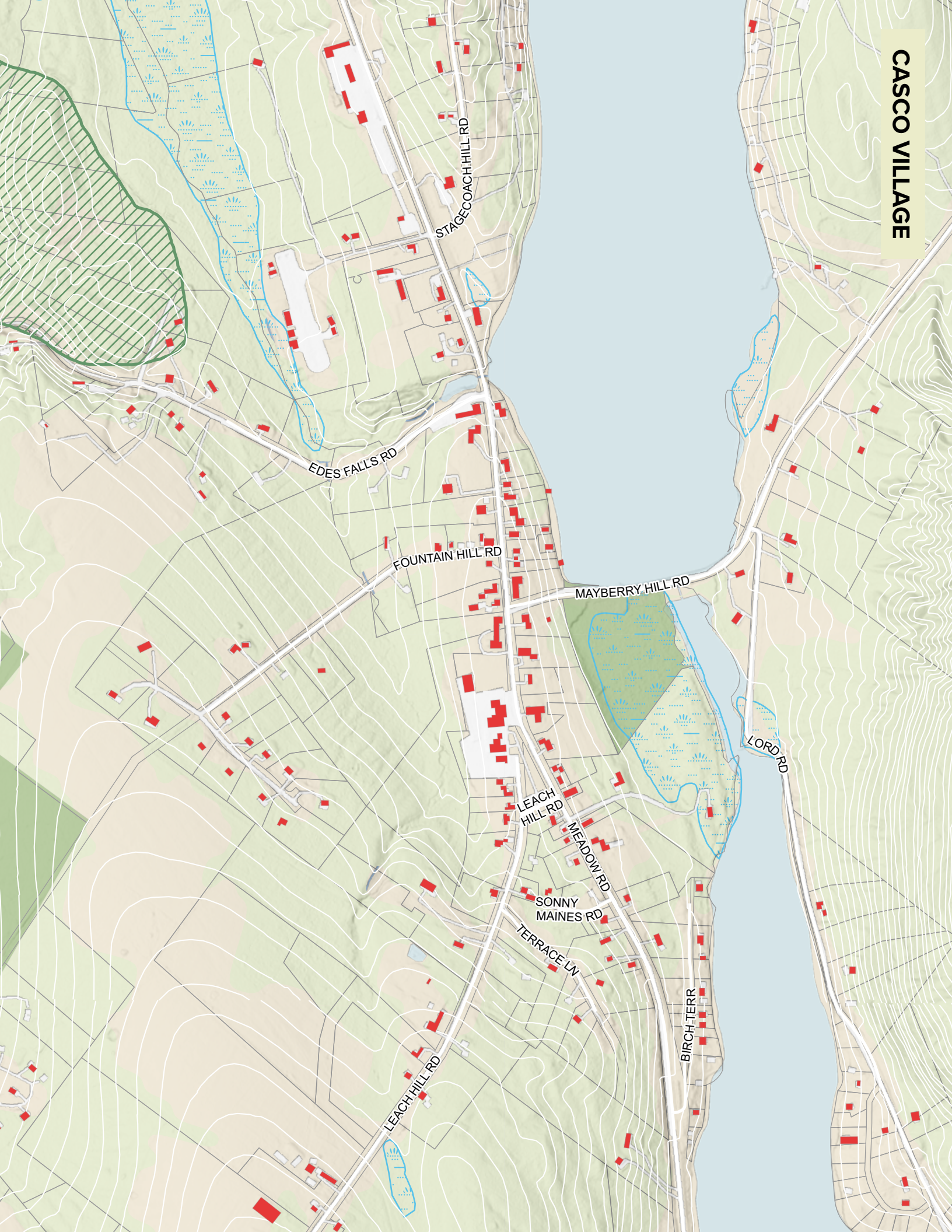




Casco Village

Casco Village is the social center of the town, home to the Community Center, Library, Casco Village Church, Village Green, and Casco Days Park where the annual Casco Days fair is hosted. The village contains one of two public beaches and some of the only sidewalks in Casco. The village is characterized by a number of historic buildings despite losses in recent years such as the historic Grange Hall.

CASCO VILLAGE





Casco Village is centered on Route 121 along the western side of Parker Pond and Pleasant Lake. Because of the concentration of social and recreational resources, the village is one of the most frequented areas of Casco. The Community Center, in particular, hosts many visitors daily where a large range of activities take place such as after school sports, senior meals, and town meetings. Residents made the importance of the space clear during the public process and added that the demand for the Community Center

exceeds the space available. There is a desire to relocate activity unrelated to recreation and social activities (i.e., Government and municipal functions) elsewhere.

The short stretch of Route 121 where the heart of the village lies is marked by a speed limit change from 50 mph to 30 mph, however, residents have noted that cars rarely slow down passing through. While there are some sidewalks, pedestrians must walk on the side of the road for sections,



putting them in danger of speeding cars. Parking takes place off-street in the municipal parking lot adjacent to the Community Center and Post Office or in driveways of individual homes.

Casco Village has one of the widest ranges of building types in the town after the Route 302 area, including an assisted living facility, large connected barns to homes, small single family homes, large churches, and civic buildings. Many of these buildings have historic roots and are

part of the village's historic aesthetic. Participants in Casco Planning Days referred to this as one of the reasons the village is special, highlighting the need to create protections to preserve the historical aesthetic, particularly as chain and non-local businesses become interested in expanding to Casco. Additionally, Casco residents noted the lack of small local shops in the village (as well as the town more generally) and their desire to see more shops and restaurants.

Webbs Mills

Webbs Mills is one of the most complete neighborhoods in Casco. Centered around the intersection of Webbs Mills Road and Route 11, Webbs Mills boasts many historic homes and has a restaurant, a sugar shack, a church, and a waterfront park.

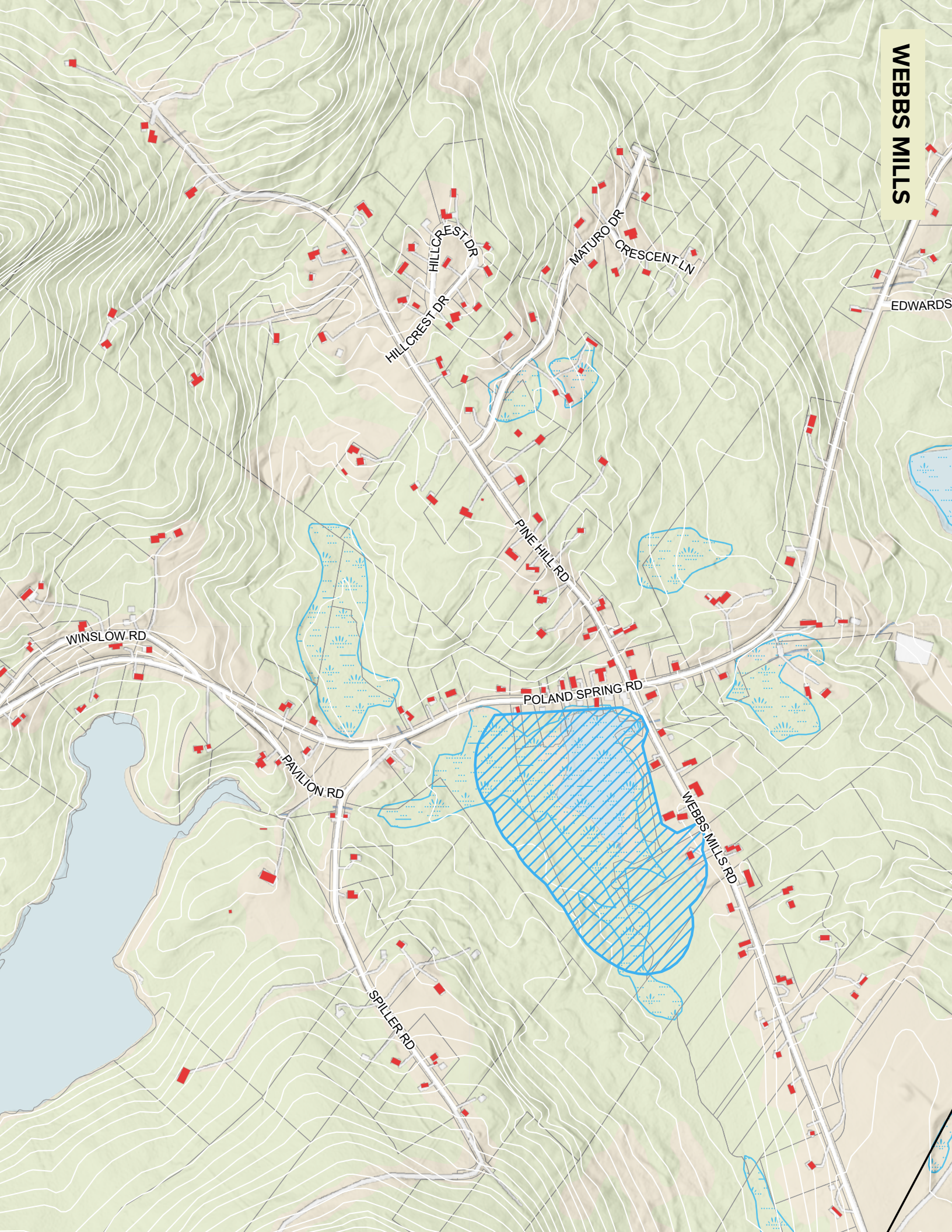
Similar to other parts of Casco, Webbs Mills residents are concerned about the speed of cars coming down Route 11. A speed change brings the limit down to 35 mph around the village's central intersection and a homemade sign asks drivers to "please slow down" as they approach. There are a handful of meeting places near the intersection. A park (soon to be expanded) on one corner has a scenic space where people can be found sitting in the gazebo, eating at the picnic table, or fishing in the pond. Another corner hosts Webbs Mills Eats and Craft Brews, which has limited indoor and outdoor dining space. Off of the intersection is Webbs Mills Free Baptist Church.

Houses in Webbs Mills tend to be single family, one to two stories, and removed from the street, although closer to the intersection are generally not as far back as in other parts of town. Webbs Mills has a mixture of historic homes with historic aesthetics and newer homes that tend to be smaller. There are several rundown buildings including one that was recently lost to a fire.



Photos: GPCOG

WEBBS MILLS





Pike's Corner

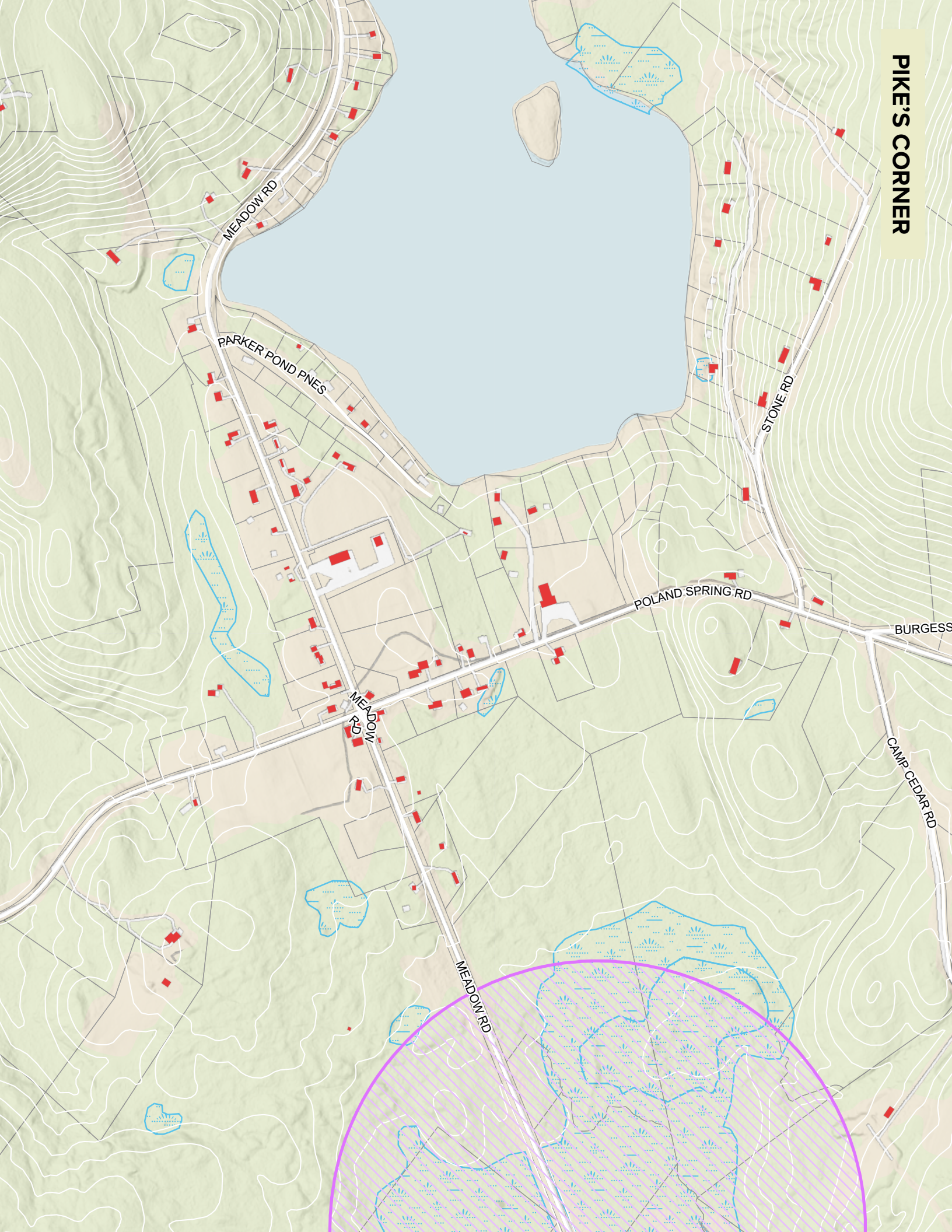
Pike's Corner is the municipal center of Casco, sitting at the intersection of Route 121 and Route 11. Pike's Corner is home to the relatively newly constructed Town Office and Fire Station as well as Kindred Farms, one of the most popular food establishments in Casco.

The town buildings in Pike's Corner are removed from the street and surrounded by a large municipal parking lot. Because they were so newly constructed, the buildings are modern but have a classically municipal style. The Town Office has a fluorescent sign on Route 121 that displays town news and meeting times. The sign is the most clear marker that the municipal center of Casco is there. Kindred Farms is closer to the street with parking behind the store front and is often busy, with cars circulating regularly. The intersection sees quite a bit of daily vehicular traffic. Because of the historic high volume of crashes at the intersection, the intersection is now controlled by

a four way stop. While the area is easy to travel through by car, residents expressed a desire for non-motorized connectivity between Pike's Corner and other villages, particularly Casco Village which is only about 1.5 miles up Route 121.

Residents and town staff recognized the potential for the plot of land recently purchased by the town which surrounds the Town Office and stretches down to the lake. The land has the capacity to transform what now exists as a dislocated collection of municipal buildings into a complete, walkable campus.

PIKE'S CORNER

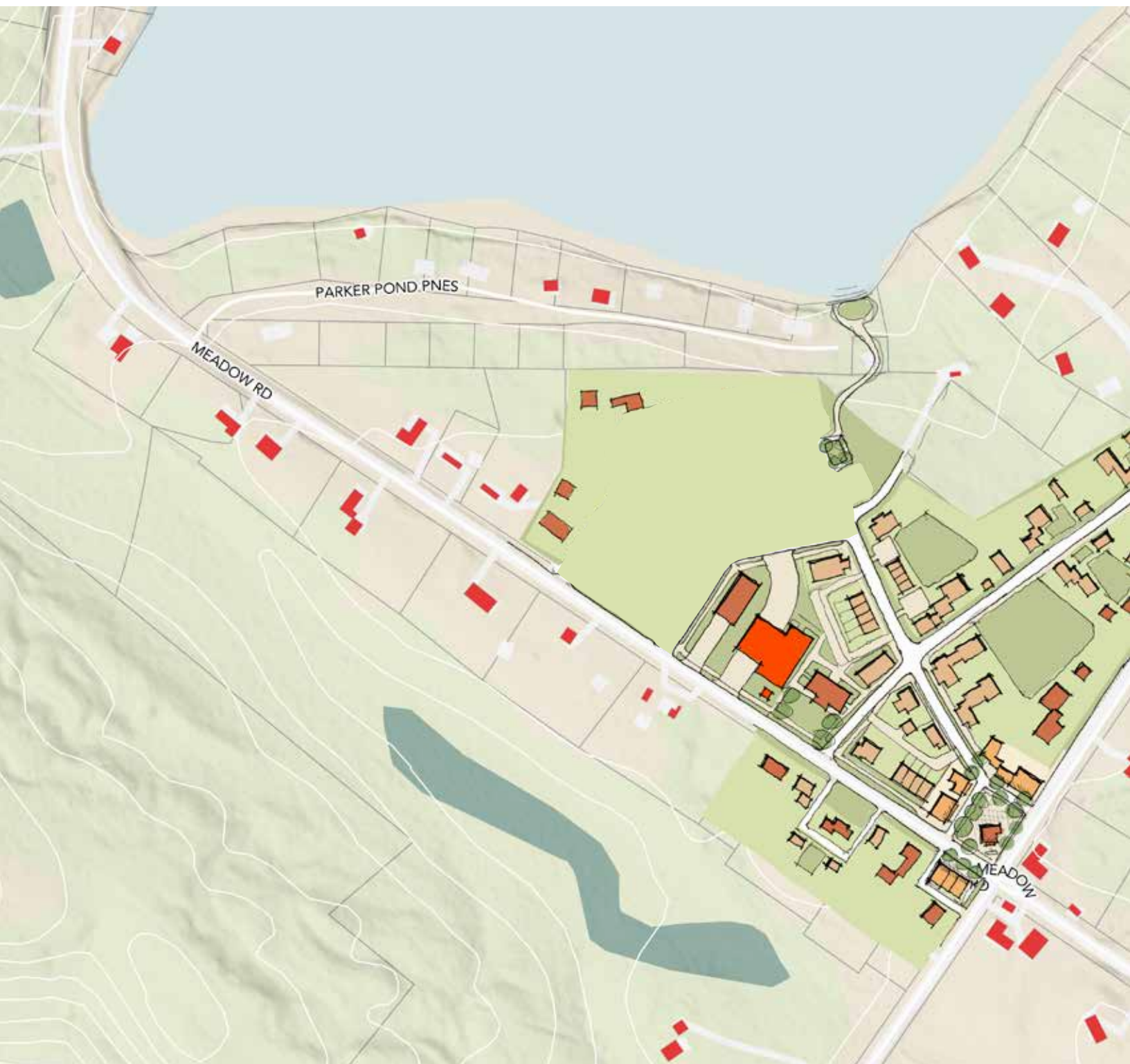




This is a conceptual drawing expressing ideas only.



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The design for Pike's Corner as presented here is one of a number that could be considered. During the planning process participants expressed various views for how this area, particularly the 11-acre parcel owned by the Town, should be used. The three most commonly heard desired uses were for open space/public space, housing, and municipal expansion. Further master planning and decision making on the part of the town (in the case of town-owned land) or private landowners will be needed to come to a consensus on the ideas expressed here to determine what this part of town should look like.

This particular rendition of Pike's Corner focuses on the possibility of a multi-generational neighborhood with supportive amenities like the town office, newly improved playground, trails and access to water, and local cafe. As the site is flat, it presents an opportunity to become a place for seniors to live as they downsize and allow them to stay in the community as they age.

These drawings were developed during Casco Planning Days to illustrate how a mix of new housing types and local businesses could be arranged around intimate village-scaled blocks and civic spaces. The block pattern allows for development to happen slowly, over time. With this pattern of connected blocks, each block could accept a modification of the design by swapping in more housing, less housing, more open space or less open space, different housing types, etc.

The ideas encompassed by this Comprehensive Plan are meant to ensure that whatever tools are needed will be in place to bring to life whatever the agreed upon vision turns out to be.

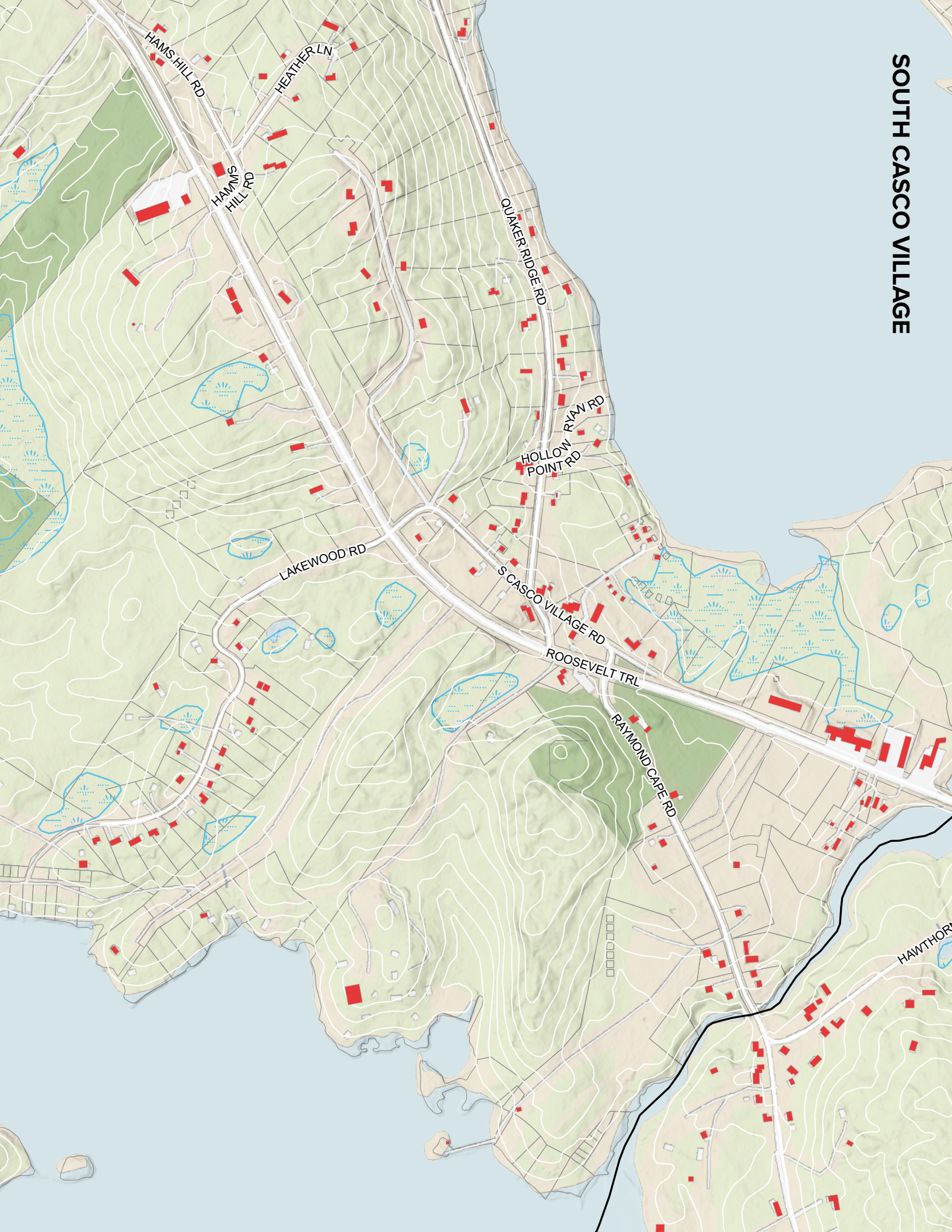
South Casco Village

South Casco, located on Route 302 at the end of Quaker Ridge Road, marks the spot of a formerly vibrant village. Today, South Casco is predominantly a residential area dotted with single family homes.

While South Casco may not appear as a robust village today, there are glimpses of the village it was in the past. South Casco had far more robust activities and industries which developed during the village's beginnings surrounding saw and corn mills. South Casco had a vibrant economy in the second half of the 19th century when the business of the mills was accompanied by the production of wood products and many shops including corn shops, a box shop, a carriage and smith shop, a coat shop, and a general store. There were reports that not only was the village populated by residents, but patrons came all the way from Portland to visit the carriage shop. By the mid 20th century, South Casco had lost many of the old buildings and the village had become less cohesive. Adding new businesses and activities within the villages should be approached thoughtfully in both use and design.



SOUTH CASCO VILLAGE



Cook's Mills

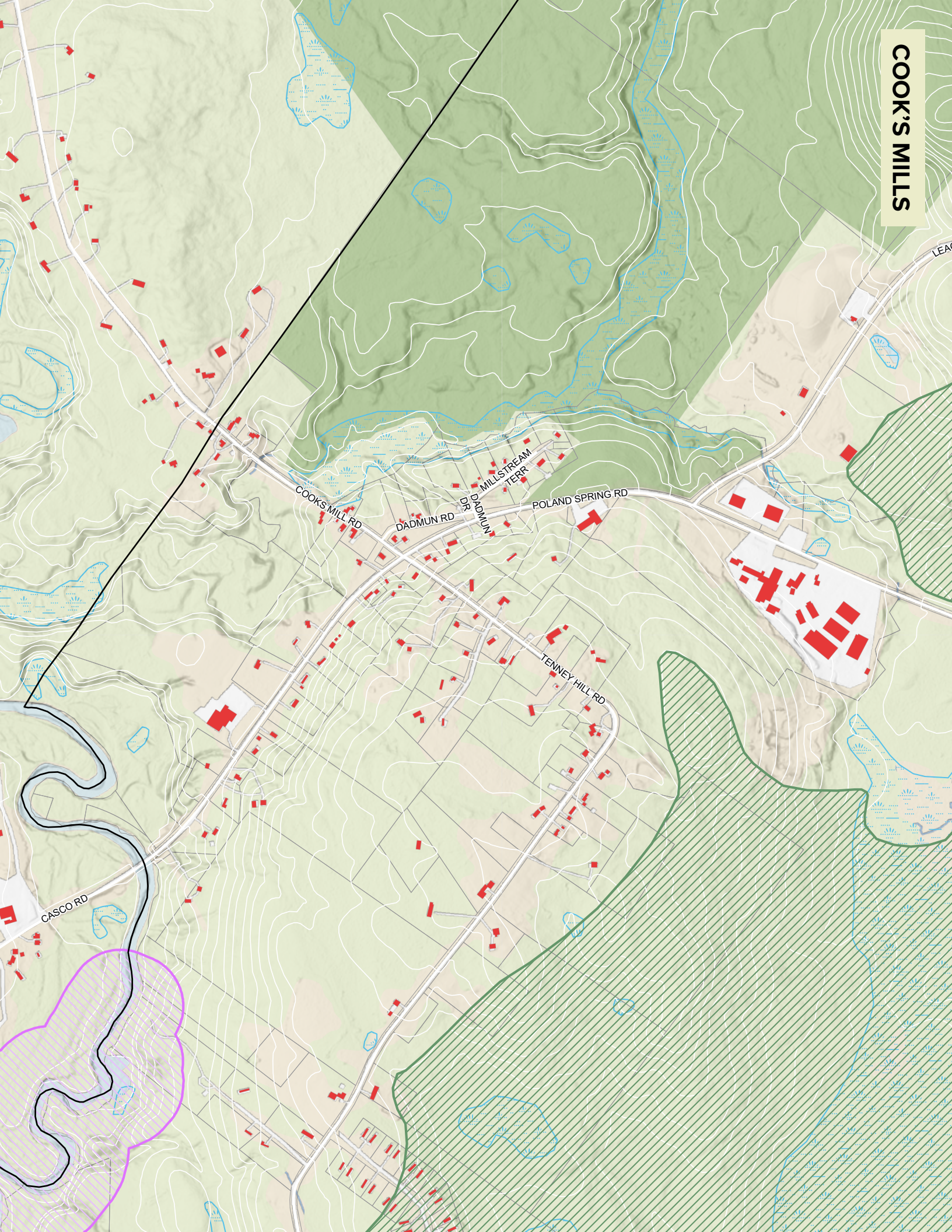
Cook's Mills is centered along Route 11 and is home to the Crooked River Elementary School. A recent reinvestment in the school could be leveraged to bring new investment in housing to the area.

Community members expressed concern about Route 11 as it passes Crooked River Elementary, particularly related to the high speed of cars driving around the bend. Residents expressed desire for the road to be made safer for students who walk to school or have to cross the street to reach the school as well as the general safety of students near the road. Potential treatments to address the speeds suggested by residents at the public planning process included planting native plants along the road.

The village has a residential population accommodated by a stock of low to moderate income housing. Turnout by Cook's Mills residents was low during the public planning process so the planning team was only able to gain limited insight into relevant issues and desires for the area.



COOK'S MILLS





Civic Buildings & Spaces

Civic buildings and spaces are essential elements of a neighborhood and continue to serve an important role in civic life and sociability today.

Casco's municipal buildings are concentrated in Pike's Corner and in Casco Village which are spaced just under one and a half miles apart on Route 121. The Casco Town Office was newly constructed in 2015 in Pike's Corner next to the fire station and municipal storage building, which the public works department currently occupies. All buildings are set significantly back from the street with a large parking lot in between. With existing buildings and a newly purchased plot of land that reaches from the Town Office to Parker Pond, Pike's Corner presents an opportunity to transform into a full municipal complex and expanded village center.

In Casco Village, civic buildings create an existing, cohesive village center. There, the Post Office and Community Center with a gym and meeting rooms sits next to the Casco Library and across from the Casco Village Church. Sidewalks in Casco Village are limited. Next to the Community Center is Casco Days park, where Casco Days is held annually, providing a year-round outdoor community gathering space. Casco has one mid-sized school, Crooked River School, located on Route 11.



Uses & Activities in the Rural Areas



FORESTS & CONSERVED LANDS

Casco has a significant number of large, rural lots comprised mostly of forests, with farms and conserved lands. Casco has 6,559 acres of forestland enrolled in the Tree Growth current use tax program, 331 acres enrolled in the Farmland current use tax program and 65 acres enrolled in the Open Space current use tax program. Casco's rural spaces draw residents and visitors for appreciation and recreation. Much of Casco's rural land is owned by a small number of private landowners. Loon Echo Land Trust own some properties and holds some easements. There's a robust network of maintained hiking, ATV, and snowmobile trails criss-crossing the rural lands, and the lakes draw visitors for water-based recreation.



RURAL FARMS

There are few rural farms in Casco. The most notable is Hancock Family Farm, a local small-scale farming operation which produces primarily for their popular CSA program and farm stand. The farm is located off of Quaker Ridge Road where farm buildings, which have a classic aesthetic, lie on a private road in the middle of the farmland. The Loon Echo Land Trust has easements on several sites that were historically agricultural lands, however none are working farms.

CAMPS & RESORTS

Casco has many camps and resorts, ranging in size and amenity. Small privately owned camps include Camp Laurel South, Netop and Camp Cedar. South of Route 302 land use is dominated by water-dependent resort recreational properties and camp types along Sebago Lake such as Point Sebago, Camp Sunshine, and Migis Lodge. Many of the larger camps are almost entirely self-contained and function as campus-like places with a combination of central gathering spaces indoor and out, kitchen and dining facilities, private and group shared lodging, lanes, pathways, office administration and retail. They tend to be off a main road, most often Route 302, and have networks of private roads. Buildings are oriented around natural features, recreational spaces and the water, and vehicular access is limited in favor of pedestrian walkways. Environmental regulations such as shoreland zoning, wetlands and stream protection districts may be applicable to any new site development.

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

Casco's suburban neighborhood developments are scattered throughout town and are characterized by single family building types set back significantly from the street on wide, disconnected lots – many of which sit on more than an acre of land. Casco also has a section of rural area zoned for manufactured housing and includes a large area of duplex lots developed in the 1960s-70s. Streets often dead-end and lack sidewalks, necessitating drivers and pedestrians share the street. Most of these developments in Casco have no neighborhood center that can be reached easily walking from homes. Much of the residential development in Casco from the 1960s to today follows a suburban pattern.

INDUSTRIAL/MUNICIPAL

Casco's industrial past continues with the Hancock Lumber Sawmill and warehouses on Route 11. It is the most intensive industry business in Casco,. There is a P&K Quarry located in a Contract Zone between Route 11 and the Heath. The Casco/Naples Bulky Waste and Transfer Station is a medium industrial municipal facility on Leach Hill Road.

