

Hancock County Courthouse

*Alternative Location
Proposal Progress Update*

October 21st, 2024

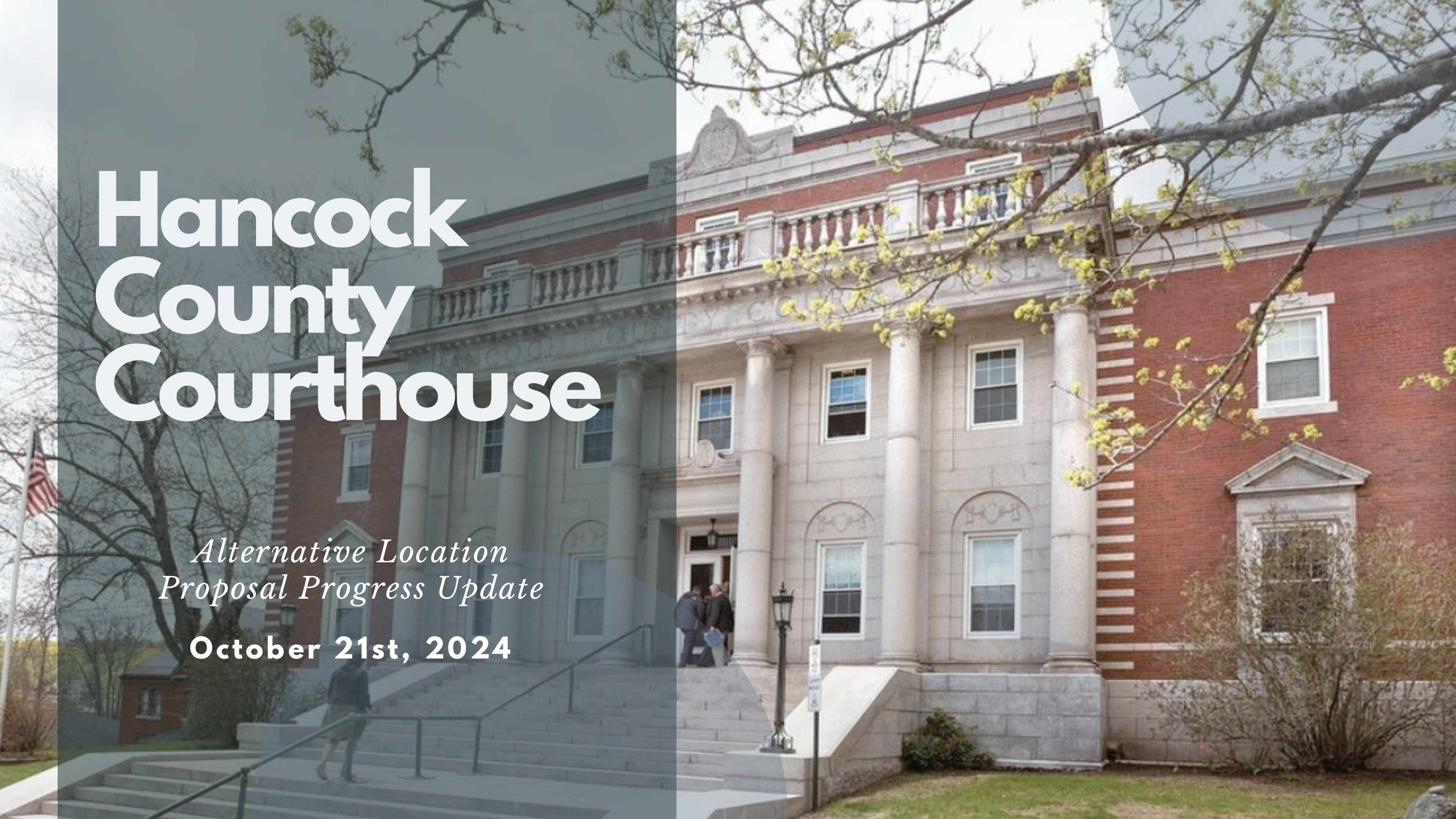




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Background

Background:

- In Spring 2024, the state proposed a site on Surry Road for a future courthouse location for Hancock County, identifying this as the county in most need of a modern facility in Maine. The proposal faced significant opposition due to the area's designation as a Neighborhood Zone, prompting the state to consider other potential locations in addition to Surry Road.
- Since then, the City of Ellsworth and the State Judiciary have conducted multiple community workshops and staff/council meetings to seriously consider the opposition to the Surry Road location and explore alternative sites. While a potentially viable alternative (Wardwell property) has been identified, substantial challenges remain in ensuring adequate access to meet the needs of the state, city, and future courthouse users.

General Timeline for Alternative Courthouse Consideration



Alternative Location Process



*Concept Picture generated by ChatGPT's DallE3 with prompt terms "Belfast Courthouse with Ellsworth Style Cupola"

Request For Information (RFI) released on September 9th with the following criteria:

- A location that allows proximity to Ellsworth's central urban core.
- A location that provides reasonable access to public transportation, walkability, and visibility & accessibility from major routes.
- A parcel of at least five (5) contiguous buildable acres with room for a building footprint of at least 30,000 square feet and parking space for 125 public and 33 staff vehicles.
- Southern exposure with rooftop solar potential.
- 3-Phase electric.
- Public water and sewer.
- Paved road with 200 feet of frontage on a significant roadway.

Limitations of the Current Courthouse as a Potential Site

- Does not meet modern standards for courthouse design and accessibility.
- Retrofitting the current location to meet those needs better would be more expensive and still fall short.
- The ownership structure of the current facility and expansion opportunities are not clear.
- The new courthouse will be built to meet modern standards but also to provide room for future growth.
- Significant investment and collaboration into the future use of the Old Courthouse complex will need to be considered by city, state, and county partners to ensure it meets future growth needs of Ellsworth and the region when an alternative location is built.



12 Submissions Received

9

Proposals in Ellsworth

1

Proposal in Trenton

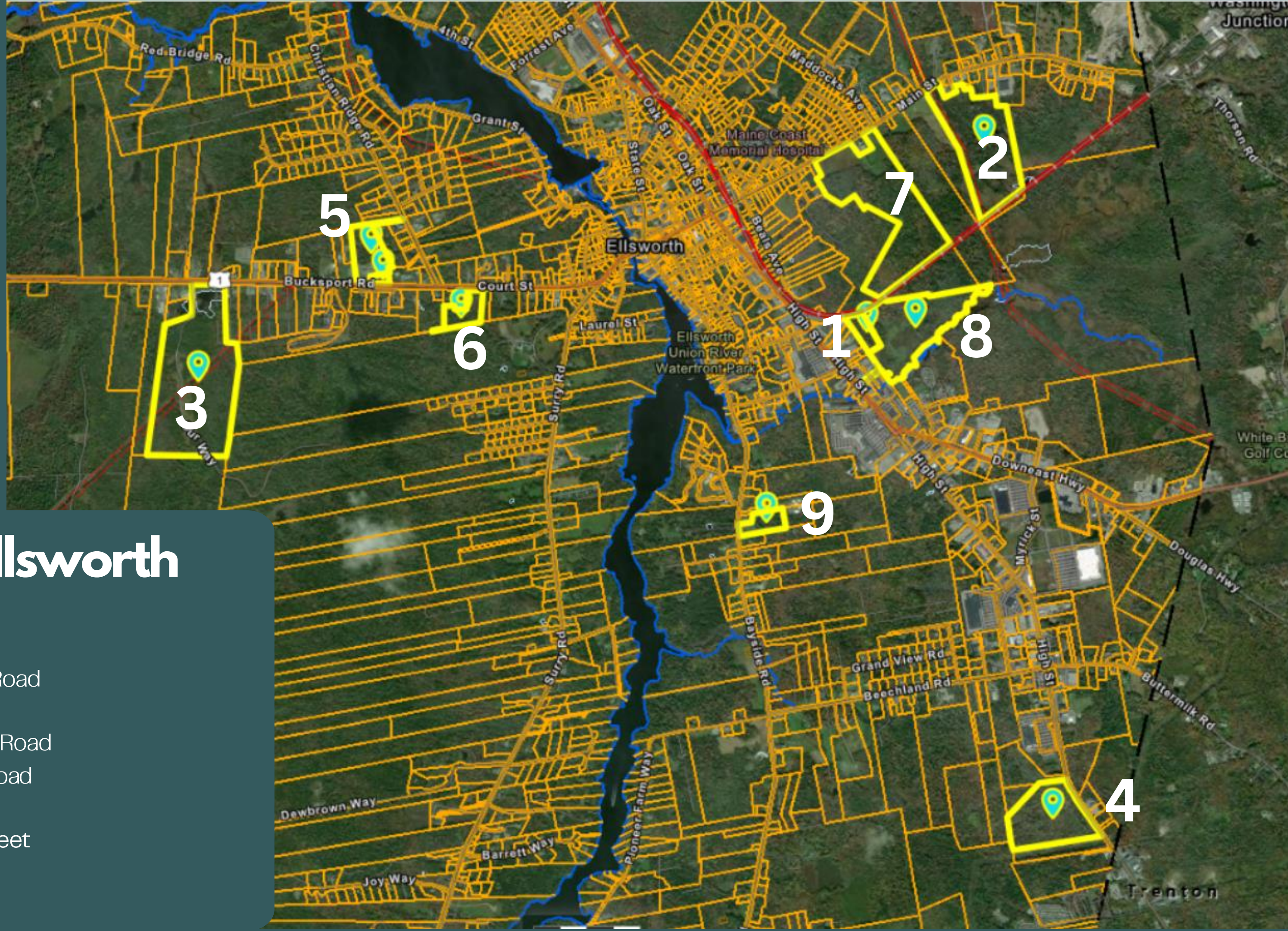
2

Site Suggestions in Ellsworth



Alternative Locations in Ellsworth

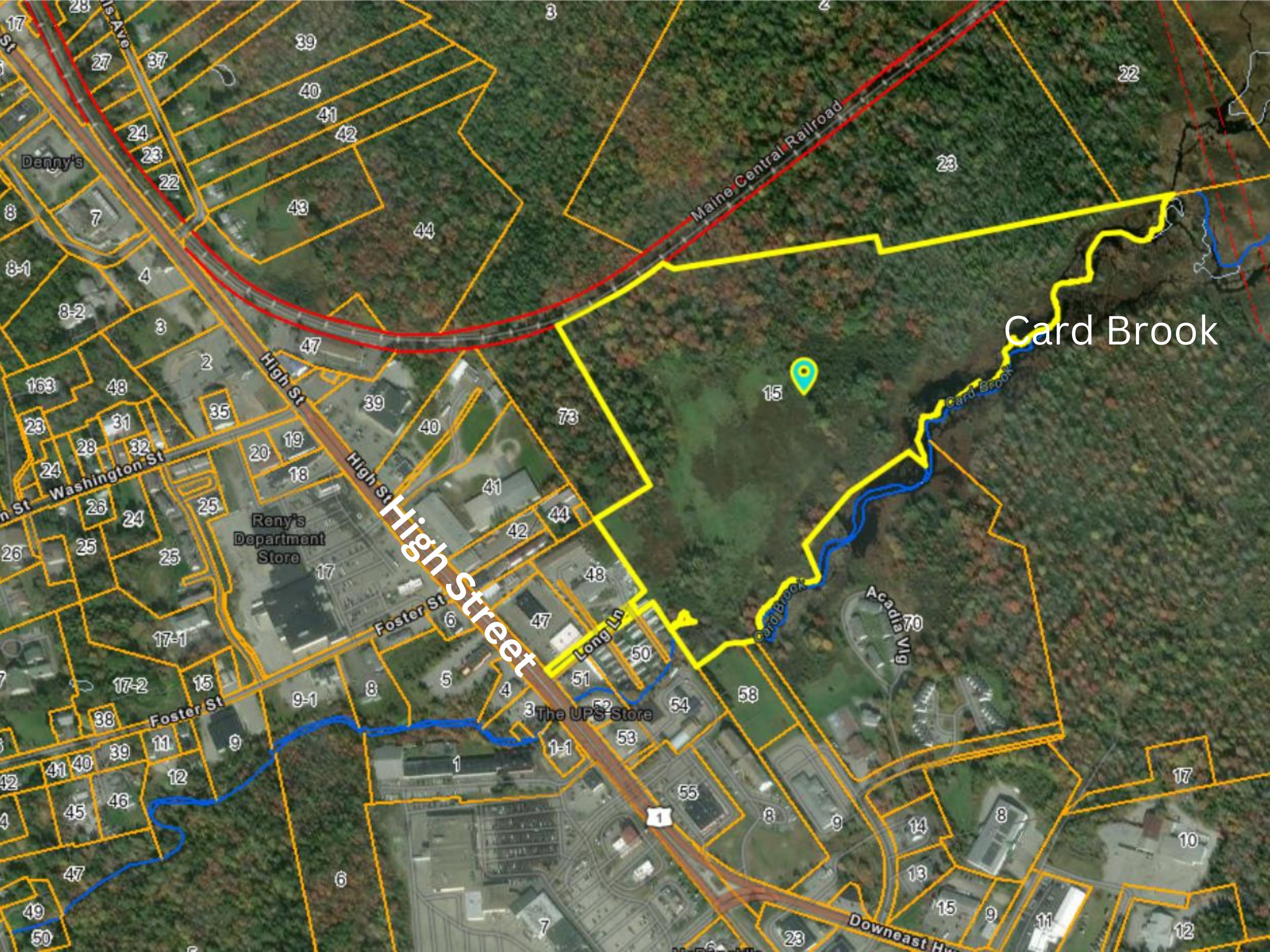
1. ADAMS – Near High Street
2. GRANT – Main Street
3. JORDAN – 300 Bucksport Road
4. MACQUINN – High Street
5. PENDERGIST – Bucksport Road
6. PIAZZA – 128 Bucksport Road
7. WARDWELL – Main Street
8. WARDWELL – Near High Street
9. JONES – 100 Bayside Road



WARDWELL

Property

High Street

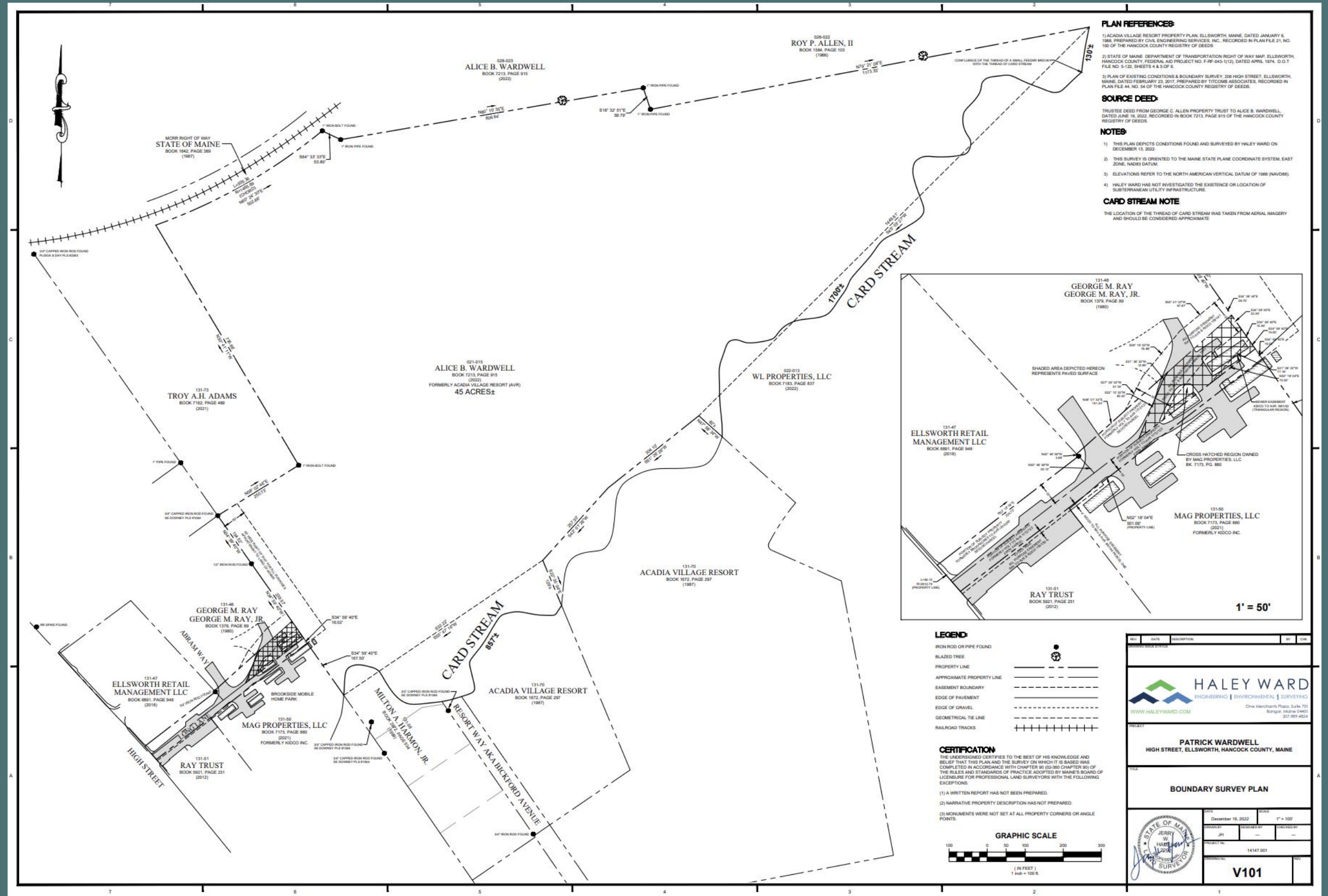


Card Brook

- Through community workshops, meetings with City Council/staff, and others, the Wardwell property on High Street emerges as preferred alternative location.
- State Judiciary also expressed interest in the Wardwell property with caveats on access and timeline for securing site.

Wardwell Property CONS

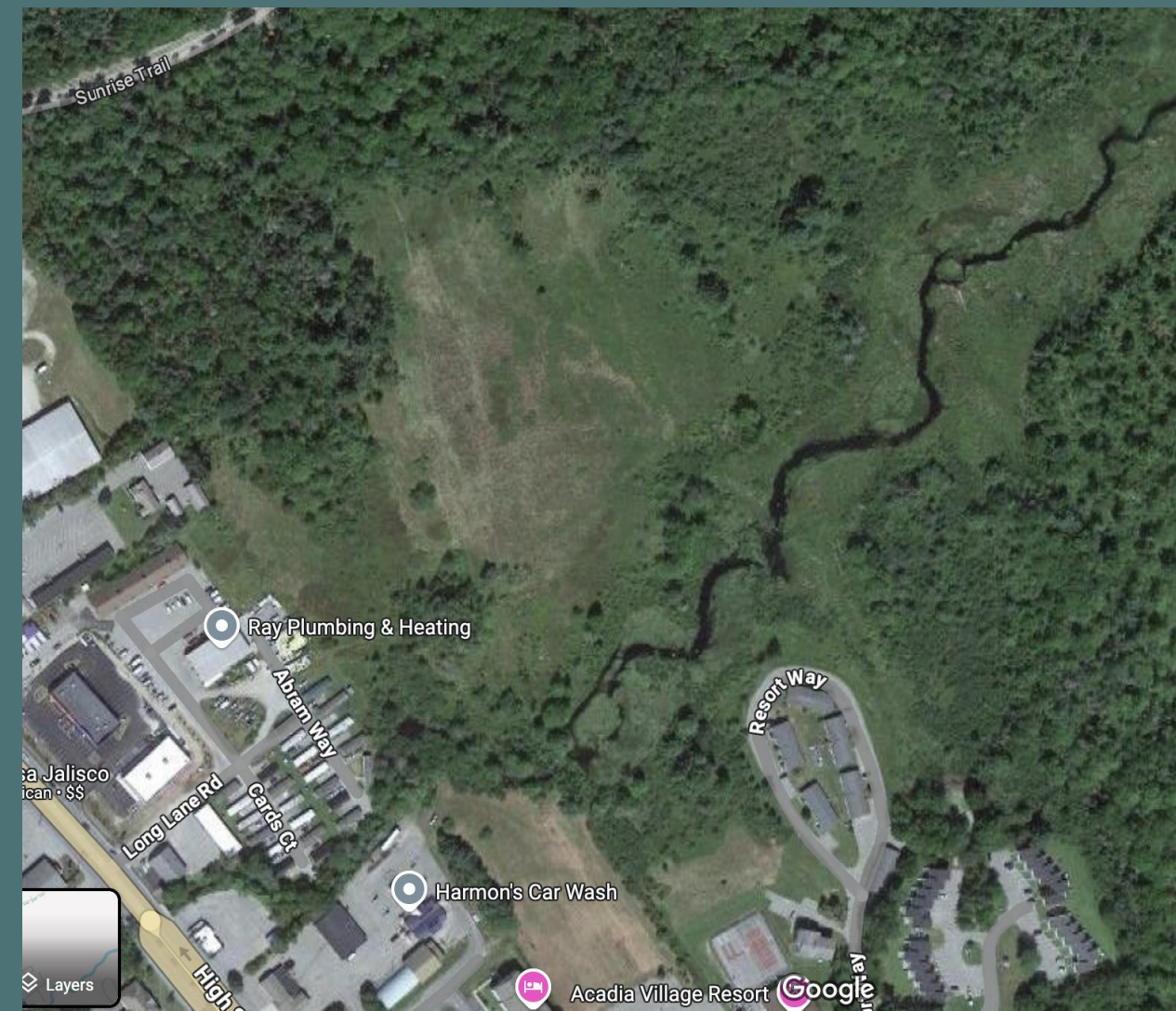
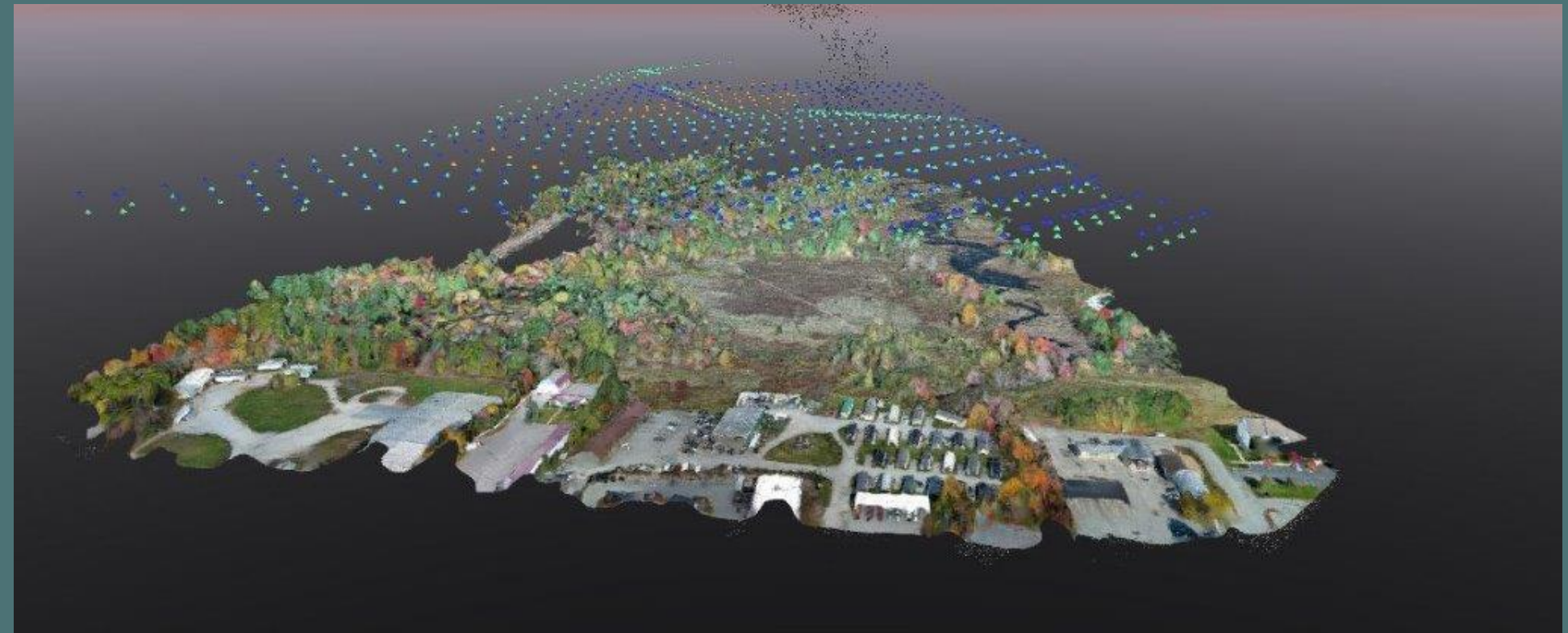
- ❑ No clear access at the lighted intersection on Long Lane.
- ❑ Would require additional city funds above what the Surry Rd. location would require to create such access.
- ❑ Timeline creates unique city/state development pressures.
- ❑ Additional funding pressures on Ellsworth residents.



Wardwell Property

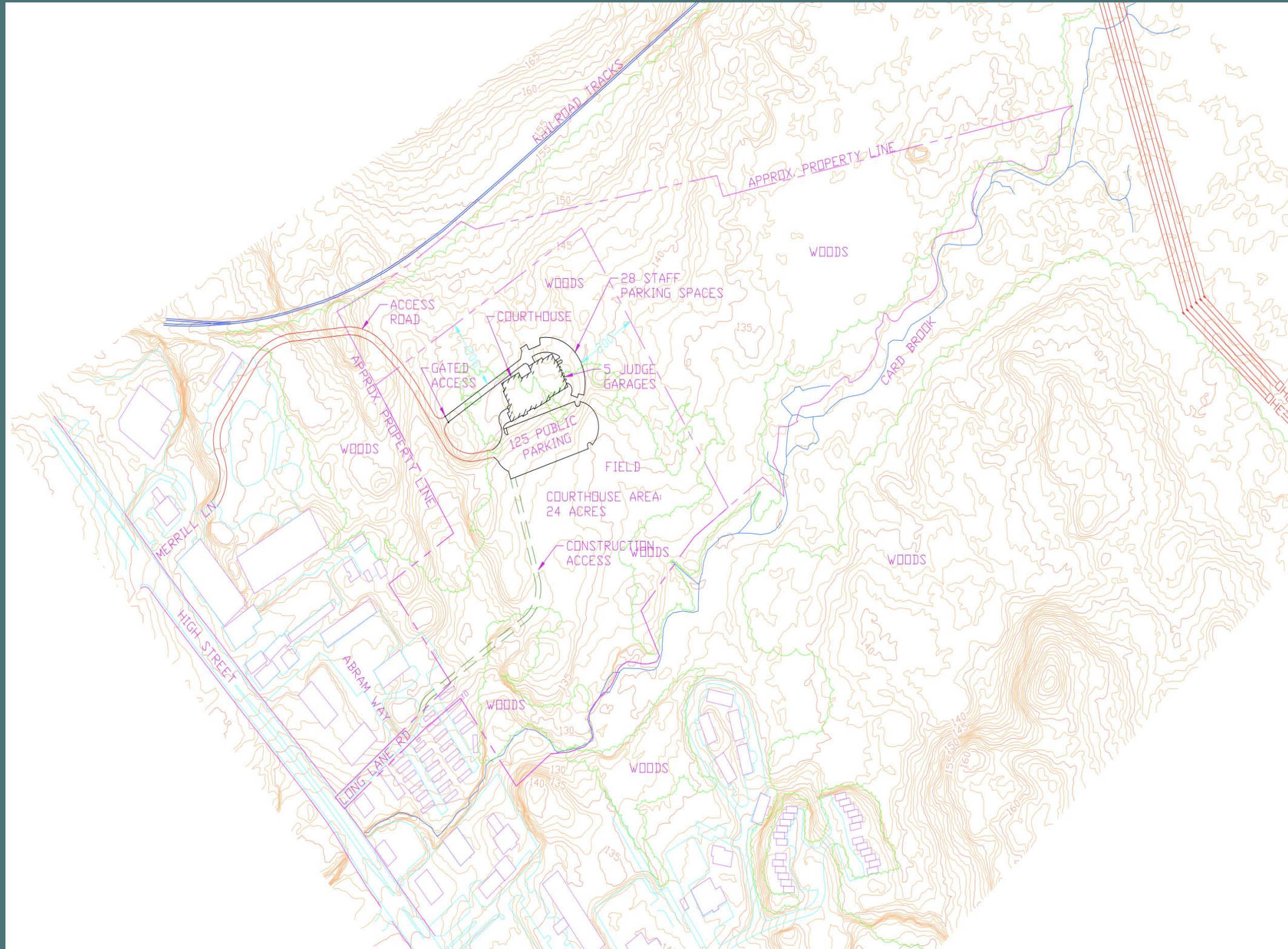
PROS

- ❑ Closer to the Main/High Street traffic corridor than Surry Rd.
- ❑ Meets all the State's criteria for a site except for road access.
- ❑ Amazing potential for wilderness preservation and an idyllic setting for court business while located close to the city's High Street commercial corridor.
- ❑ Best in class courthouse partnership with the City of Ellsworth/State Judiciary on how to work together to meet common needs.
- ❑ Potential for increased citizen access to the Rail Trail to Machias, Maine and beyond.
- ❑ Potential for additional housing & commercial development on other connected Wardwell properties.
- ❑ Potential for mitigating traffic impacts on the city by creating a future Main/High Street bypass.
- ❑ Both the Wardwell and Allen property owners are interested in helping this be for the future of Ellsworth.



Wardwell Property

Access Issues



- Currently there is significant public (City of Ellsworth) and private (Wardwell ownership) access to this property via Long Lane.
- A construction access road could be established with minimal difficulty and cost by the Ellsworth Highway Department and local construction companies by early Spring of 2025 or sooner if needed.
- However, Long Lane is not at a traffic light, which would be preferable by the State for access to the courthouse and future development potential.
- Previous studies may have proposed road development in this area which we are looking into.
- Abutting property owners have been notified and are interested in an easement/access payment/transference arrangement that could be further specified should the State remain open to this alternative.
- The City could raise funds quickly for the purchase through a City Council approved Bond Anticipation Note (BAN), later converted to a Bond.
 - This was done for the purchase of a \$1.2 million school administration building earlier this year.



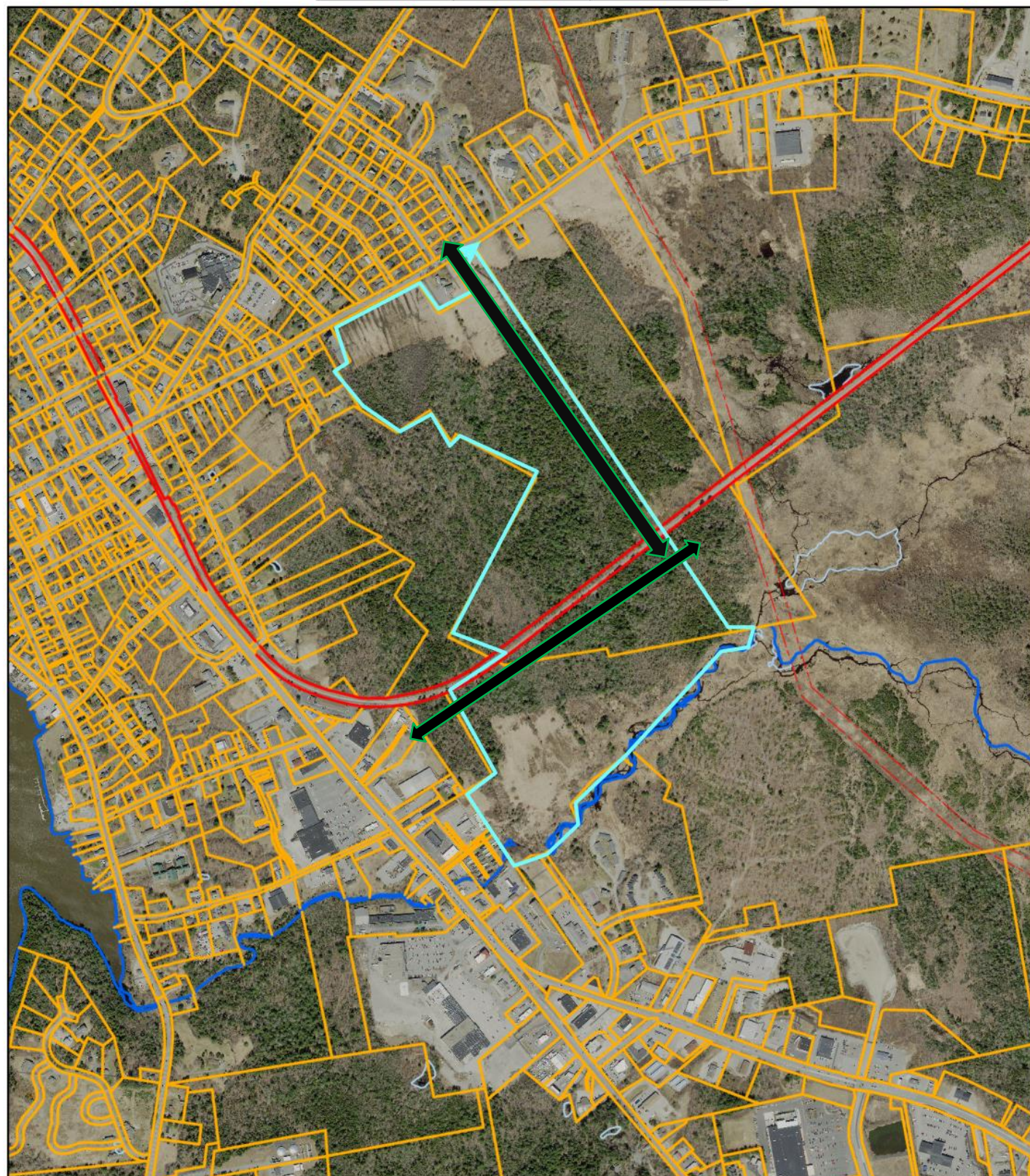
City of Ellsworth, ME

1 inch = 1074 Feet



www.cai-tech.com

July 22, 2024



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Wardwell Properties

Future Potential

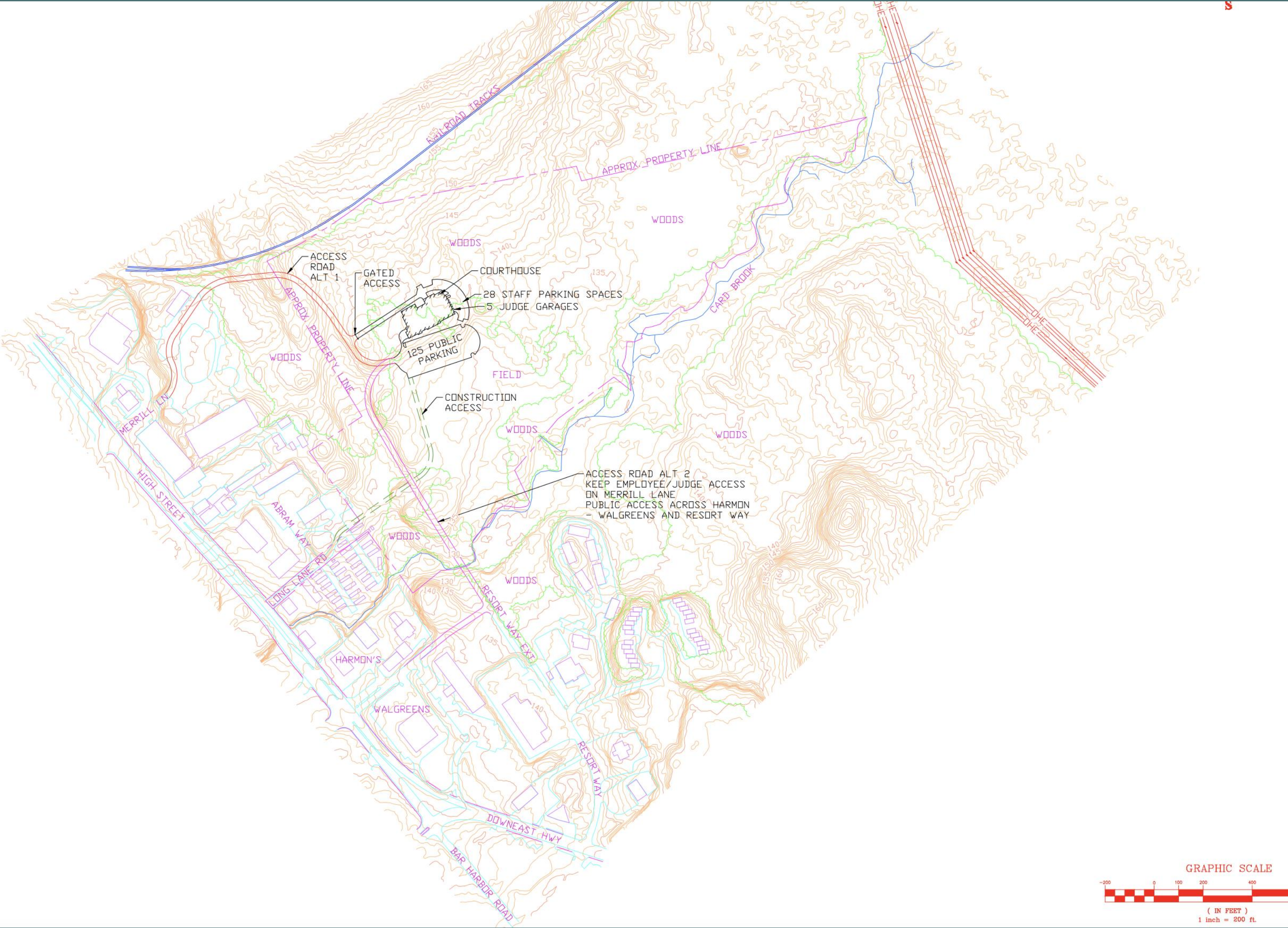
- Jumpstarts the development of an alternative access road to ease congestion on the High Street corridor, avoiding the Beals Avenue residential area.
- Facilitates smart development to address future housing and commercial needs, in alignment with the upcoming Comprehensive Plan.
- Expands the tax base in areas best suited for growth, while minimizing urban sprawl outside the core.
- Improves access to the rail trail and Card Brook.
- Increases Ellsworth's appeal to families and professionals seeking proximity to both the urban center and the natural environment.
- Helps drive additional year-round business in Ellsworth downtown areas.
- Demonstrates a “Proof of Concept” for how Ellsworth can collaborate with government agencies (MEDOT/USDOT) to address future transportation and housing needs in the region.



NEXT STEPS

- Schedule additional community/council workshop solely focused on Wardwell courthouse plan.
- Environmental Study Finalization of area
- Work with landowners who have expressed openness to land acquisition/swap for courthouse build
- Cost estimate and funding source analysis for creating access road off
- Meet with County to discuss plans for Old Courthouse should the alternative location move forward

Alternative
Resort Way
Access



Additional Wardwell Property Photos



Additional Wardwell Property Photos



Additional Wardwell Property Photos



Additional Wardwell Property Photos

