

**Safe Routes To Schools
Master Plan For Sunnyside School**

Shelton, Connecticut



**Final Report
Prepared: July 6, 2009**

Acknowledgements

The Safe Routes to Schools Master Plan for Sunnyside School, Shelton,
Connecticut, Was Made Possible Through the Cooperation and Support of the

Following People and Organizations as the SRTS TEAM

Mark Lauretti, <i>Mayor</i>	<u><i>City of Shelton</i></u>
Sharon Okoye, <i>Safe Routes To Schools State Coordinator</i>	<u><i>Connecticut Department of Transportation</i></u>
Freeman Burr, <i>Superintendent</i>	<u><i>Shelton Public Schools</i></u>
Lorraine Rossner, <i>Assistant Superintendent</i>	<u><i>Shelton Public Schools</i></u>
Anne Hamilton, <i>Principal</i>	<u><i>Sunnyside Elementary School</i></u>
Lauren Cisero, <i>President</i>	<u><i>Sunnyside PTA</i></u>
Lori Servero	<u><i>Sunnyside PTA</i></u>
Robert Kulacz, P.E., <i>City Engineer</i>	<u><i>City of Shelton</i></u>
Sergeant Peter Zaksewicz, <i>Traffic Division, Shelton Police Department</i>	<u><i>City of Shelton</i></u>
Mathew Fulda, <i>Regional Planner/GIS Specialist</i>	<u><i>Valley Council of Governments</i></u>
Richard Dunne, <i>Executive Director</i>	<u><i>Valley Council of Governments</i></u>
David Elder, <i>Senior Regional Planner/GIS Specialist</i>	<u><i>Valley Council of Governments</i></u>

INDEX

Coverpage	1
Acknowledgements	2
Vision	4
The Program	4
School Profile	5
Survey Results	6
Key Locations/Corrective Implementation Plan	7
The Partners	8
Public Input Process	8
Engineering	9
Education	10
Enforcement	11
Encouragement	12
Evaluation	12

VISION

- Improve Safety
 - Teaching children pedestrian and bicycle safety
 - Making Physical improvements in the routes to schools that help reduce pedestrian and bicycle crashes on the way to and from school
- Improve Security
 - Identify locations and routes for children to avoid
- Enhance children's well-being
 - Encourage walking or biking to school
 - Reduce obesity in children
 - Improve air quality
- Reduce traffic congestion
 - By 5-10% on local roadways during the school day
 - By 5-10% all children's trips to school by car or school bus
- Improve community
 - Encourage healthy and active lifestyles
 - Reduce Fuel Consumption
 - Enhance community accessibility and involvement

THE PROGRAM

The Sunnyside School Program is modeled on the "Safe Routes To Schools" program, an international program encouraging safer walking and biking routes to school and providing safety and educational training to students about walking and biking. This program utilizes the "5E's." They are:

Engineering-Identify needed operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools to help reduce speed and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, establish safer crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

Education-Teach children bicycle and walking safety, driver safety campaigns

Enforcement-Ensure traffic laws are obeyed with (i.e. speed enforcement, crossing guard programs)

Encouragement-using special events and activities to help promote walking and bicycling

Evaluation-Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends to document effectiveness

SCHOOL PROFILE

Sunnyside Elementary School is located in Shelton, Connecticut on State Route 110 (River Rd.). The school services children from Kindergarten to 6th grade with a current enrollment of 281 students. With many neighborhoods in the immediate surrounding area, Sunnyside Elementary School is an ideal candidate for the Safe Routes to School Project. Improvements to the bus/parking area, signalization, sidewalks, crosswalks, and greater supervision the number of students walking and riding to this school could increase dramatically.

Sunnyside School allows children to both walk and ride to school, but there are currently only 12 walkers. For the 2008-2009 school year, the approximate percentages of by mode of arrival are as follows, Bus 75%, Walk 4-5% and Dropped off by Parents 20%.

There are three distinct neighborhood pockets that surround and contain Sunnyside School. For the purpose of this document we have identified these pockets as being the neighborhood pocket to west, south, and east, with the school located at the convergence of all three (figure 2). Each neighborhood pocket faces similar, but different obstacles towards safe pedestrian or biking access to the school. In brief, (details for each improvement are specified further in this Master Plan), the neighborhood pocket to the west (figure's 3 &4) is devoid of sidewalks and in order to access the school, it is necessary to cross the intersection of Laurel Heights Rd., Sunnyside Drive, and State Route 110/River Rd.-(Figure 3) which pitches at a steep slope towards state route 110. Sidewalks, crosswalks, a crossing guard, and a pedestrian activated signal are improvements recommended for this neighborhood pocket.

The neighborhood pocket to the south (figure 5) is also devoid of any sidewalks and there is no dedicated pedestrian means of accessing the school without walking in the street right of way. Sidewalks to connect to the short stretch of sidewalks in front of the school are recommended improvements for this southerly neighborhood pocket.

To the east (figure 6), the Sunnyside Drive neighborhood pocket, contains sidewalks that are narrow and are in significant disrepair. The existing sidewalks are at points 2.5 feet wide or less, and are visibly crumbling. The neighborhood residents who walk with their children have concerns that the sidewalks are not wide enough for safe passing and as result, many children walk in the street right of way. The recommended improvements for this neighborhood pocket are new sidewalks, sidewalk widening, and sidewalk reconstruction.

There are many factors contributing to the lack of students walking or riding to school, the largest being that River Road, a busy State Route, runs directly in front of the school and lacks any type of signalization, sidewalks, crosswalks or supervision. These facts make many parents apprehensive to allow their children to walk or ride to school. Along with traffic concerns, the

bus entrance/exit route and student drop off/pick up areas is also very unsafe. Parents are forced to enter and exit through the bus egress, creating yet another unsafe area that dissuades parents to allow their children to walk. During morning and afternoon drop off/pick up times, the school stations staff members throughout the bus unloading/loading areas to ensure the students safety. There are also rules about parents and teachers entering/leaving the bus area during the designated times. However, back-ups and stacking still occur in the pick-up/drop-off loading zone which also creates stacking and congestion on RTE 110/River Road.

Sunnyside School in cooperation with the local Police Department and First Student, the contracted bus company provide, a Bus Safety Program each year, along with the DARE program, which help to educate students about the dangers of strangers. Through these programs, students are taught how to avoid situations that may be detrimental to their safety, as well as strategies and procedures for dealing with potentially dangerous situations.

SURVEY RESULTS:

In accordance with the Safe Routes to School Project, the Valley Council of Governments administered a survey to all parents of Sunnyside Elementary School students. The survey was taken from the Connecticut Department of Transportation: Safe Routes to School Master Plan Guidelines. With help from school administration, specifically Principal Anne Hamilton, a total of 149 surveys were completed and returned. Although 149 surveys is slightly higher than 50% of the total enrolment, parents with more than one child enrolled at Sunnyside only completed one survey. After adjusting the numbers to account for multi-children families, the number of total students represented in the surveys was 219 or 78% of the total enrollment.

The surveys addressed factors including distance from the school, mode of transportation to and from school, concerns about students walking and riding, as well as other pertinent information. After collecting the surveys, the Valley Council of Governments compiled all data into a database for analysis.

One reason Sunnyside Elementary School was selected for this project is the close proximity of neighborhoods to the school. It was apparent that Sunnyside School location would be a very suitable School for the SRTS program because of the large number of elementary school aged children in the surrounding neighborhoods. It was therefore presumed that improvements to the area around the school could result a large increase in walking and riding. This was confirmed when analyzing the data, which showed a total of 93 respondents (62%) live within a one mile radius of the school.

According to the school principal, approximately 12 students regularly walk to school, this number was confirmed by the surveys which indicated that 12 of the parents stated that they currently allow their children to walk or ride to school. One question in the survey asked whether the parent would ever allow their child to walk to school and although only 12 students currently walk, 52 parents responded that they would allow their children to walk to school.

The survey also asked respondents their opinions on current conditions about the area surrounding the school and whether or not improvements would change their current position on allowing their child to walk or ride. According to the survey results, the speed of traffic on River Road is a major deterrent in allowing children to walk to school. Of the 149 surveys, 114 parents or 77% believed that the excessive speed of traffic in front of the school was a major problem. However, 41 respondents stated that improved traffic calming measures would affect their decision to allow their children to walk. In addition to the speed of traffic, 107 respondents stated that the amount of traffic is another major factor in their decision to not allow their children to walk to school. Much like the concerns over the speed of traffic, 38 of the parents stated that if this factor were improved they would allow their children to walk or ride.

Another major concern of the respondents is the condition and prevalence sidewalks in the area surrounding the school. Currently, the only sidewalks in the surrounding area are located on Sunnyside Drive, however these sidewalks are in a state of disrepair and need to be widened and or reconstructed in order to promote safe access. According to the survey results, 102 respondents stated that the presence and condition of sidewalks was a factor in their decision to not allow their children to walk to school. However, 50 of the respondents answered that if improvements to both the condition and presence of sidewalks were made, they would allow their children to walk to school.

KEY LOCATION ISSUES and CORRECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

River Road, CT Route 110, is a minor arterial street in Shelton on which Sunnyside Elementary School is located. The school is located between Constitution Blvd to the South and Grove Street to the north , a section that had a 2007 average daily traffic count (ADT) of 12400 vehicles with a posted speed limit of 35 mph.

Parents and residents have expressed concern on several occasions that travel speed on this road routinely exceeds the speed limit, making it unsafe for the children and residents to walk or ride along the road or cross the street. Additionally, there are several sections where there are no sidewalks. Construction of new sidewalks would create connectivity to the sections of existing sidewalks.

A key issue is that sidewalks are completely absent in the neighborhood just south of the school where many children who attend the school live. Additionally, there are no sidewalks along route 110 near the school which leaves little options for walking or riding to school for this large neighborhood just one block away.

The eastern neighborhood, surrounding Sunnyside



Drive, is another area of concern because although sidewalks exist for portions of the neighborhood they are in disrepair and are very narrow. Widening these sidewalks would eliminate the need for children and community residents to walk in the street.

To the west of the school, across State Route 110/River Road is a large neighborhood with many elementary aged children. However, even though this neighborhood is close enough to the school that children are eligible to walk, there are no sidewalks and they must cross State Route 110/River Road in order to get to the school (see photo #1). There are several recommended improvements to make walking to school an option for this neighborhood. Sidewalks should be installed along East Knollwood Terrace and Colony Street. These sidewalks should connect to a new sidewalk along the southern side of Laurel Heights Road. Secondly, a new signal, with a pedestrian phase should be installed at the intersection of State Route 110/River Road that includes a Pedestrian phase push button activated signal. The new signal and sidewalks will include new pavement markings.

Other physical improvements that need to be made include the addition of sidewalk ramps at several intersections and additional traffic calming measures such as raised crossings, tree plantings, curb bumpouts, etc.

Also identified as deficiencies are a lack of programs to educate children on bicycle and walking safety, constant enforcement of traffic laws, and encouragement of students to walk and bicycle to school. A need to evaluate the effectiveness of the Safe Routes to School program is required.

THE PARTNERS

The success of the program is greatly dependant on the team members. For this project, the team shall consist of the school administrations, PTA members, School Districts transportation office, Department of Public Works (Traffic Engineer and the City Engineer), the Police Department, the Mayor of the City of Shelton, the Valley Council of Governments (VCOG), and community residents.

Public Input Process

Interviews were held with parents of children who live in the community surrounding Sunnyside School and whose children and/or grandchildren attend the school.

Early facilitation meetings were held with district administration and the Sunnyside School principal. These meetings covered the goals and objectives of the program.

The VCOG Planning staff met with the City Mayor, the City's Public Works Department, the Shelton Police Department, and the City Engineer to collect existing data related to traffic counts, traffic accidents, and any other data relevant to the location of Sunnyside School.

The VCOG and City Officials attended the year end PTA meeting and presented the compiled data and proposed improvements to the PTA. Collectively the partners prioritized the proposed improvements and endorsed the individual projects.

THE SOLUTIONS

ENGINEERING

Pedestrian Crossings

A new traffic signal, with a push-button-activated phase, at Laurel Heights Road and River Road intersection would provide for safer crossing of RTE 110 River Road from those residents and students West of River Road.

Bicycle Lanes-The width and topography of River Road/RTE 110 is well suited for the installation of a bicycle lane. The bicycle lane would greatly encourage students living north and south of Sunnyside School to bike to school and interrelate with students that live in the neighborhoods' north of Sunnyside Drive.

New sidewalks

A significant portion of the neighborhoods surrounding Sunnyside Elementary have sidewalks ranging from 2-3' feet in width. There are several sections that do not have sidewalks and installing sidewalks at these locations would create connectivity to the existing sidewalks.

Widen Sidewalks

Significant portions of the neighborhood's surrounding Sunnyside Elementary have small, narrow, or dilapidated sidewalks. The existing sidewalks are unsafe and do not allow enough room for safe maneuvering by pedestrians without moving into the street right of way. Widening the existing sidewalks would allow for safer pedestrian movement at these locations.

Other Engineering Measures

The existing student pick-up/drop-off loading zone of Sunnyside school presents several obstacles to safe movements for both vehicular traffic and children (and teachers) during the pick-up/drop-off periods in the morning and afternoon. A conceptual design of a reconfigured drop-off/Pick-up loading zone was developed by the District's Transportation Coordinator and further developed by the City Engineer. The plan includes additional signage and a reconfigured entrance/exit patterns to separate bus traffic from parent drop-off/pick-up traffic. This would allow for children to be dropped-off and picked-up directly in front of the school's entrance. Additionally, the current configuration results in stacking of traffic on route 110 during the hours when buses are turning in and out of the school parking lot.

EDUCATION

Presently, the City of Shelton Police Department provides two School Resource Officers for education programs for the District including Sunnyside Elementary School. The existing programs include, but are not limited to, Bus Safety programs, Bike Safety programs, and the DARE program. Through the collaboration effort in developing this plan, the Police Department has committed to provide additional Safe Routes to School Educational Programs that will support this Plan and add a new program directly related to education on walking and riding to school. The Police Department will continue to support this program and encourage local organizations and schools to utilize this service.

ENFORCEMENT

The City has committed to funding a dedicated crossing guard at the intersection of RTE 110 and Sunnyside Drive during morning and afternoon hours when school is in session. The addition of a crossing guard has several benefits with or without the signalized pedestrian signal. During the hours the children cross RTE 110 or approach the School from the neighborhoods on the same side of the street as the school, the guard can stop traffic for safer pedestrian crossing, additionally, the guard presence acts as traffic calming measure during the hours that children are walking or riding to or from school.

The Police Department annually holds safe biking and pedestrian classes during a week within the school year. The Police Department has a mobile speed display signs that often placed on River Road. The Department will continue to use and expand on these types of enforcement measures.

ENCOURAGEMENT

The PTA and Shelton Public Schools will be encouraged to take part in and sponsor programs such as the "Annual Walk To School Week." Community groups, parents of walkers, and PTA members will encourage and support systems of parent-led walk-to-school groups for neighborhood pockets.

Additionally, non-infrastructure activities with the goal of encouraging waling and riding will be implemented by the school. The activities will include, but are not limited to, monthly walk-or-ride to school days, rewards for wearing helmets, school led walking field trips, and an annual crossing guard appreciation day.

EVALUATION

A parent survey and classroom survey were developed to gather data on current behaviors and attitudes. Evaluation will continue into the following years by monitoring the number of dedicated, and sporadic, walkers and riders. The Sunnyside School currently tracks the modes by which children arrive and depart and this practice will continue to record the change in modal choice. The Valley Council of Governments will collect modal choice records and cross-

reference the responses to those collected through user surveys at the time the 2008-2009 SRTS application was submitted.

Each year following an implemented infrastructure project, the Valley Council of Governments, with the Sunnyside School Administration will conduct follow-up surveys to gather changes in parent attitudes towards walking and riding to school. These surveys will help in determining the success and attainment of the goals of the Sunnyside School's Safe Routes to School Master Plan.

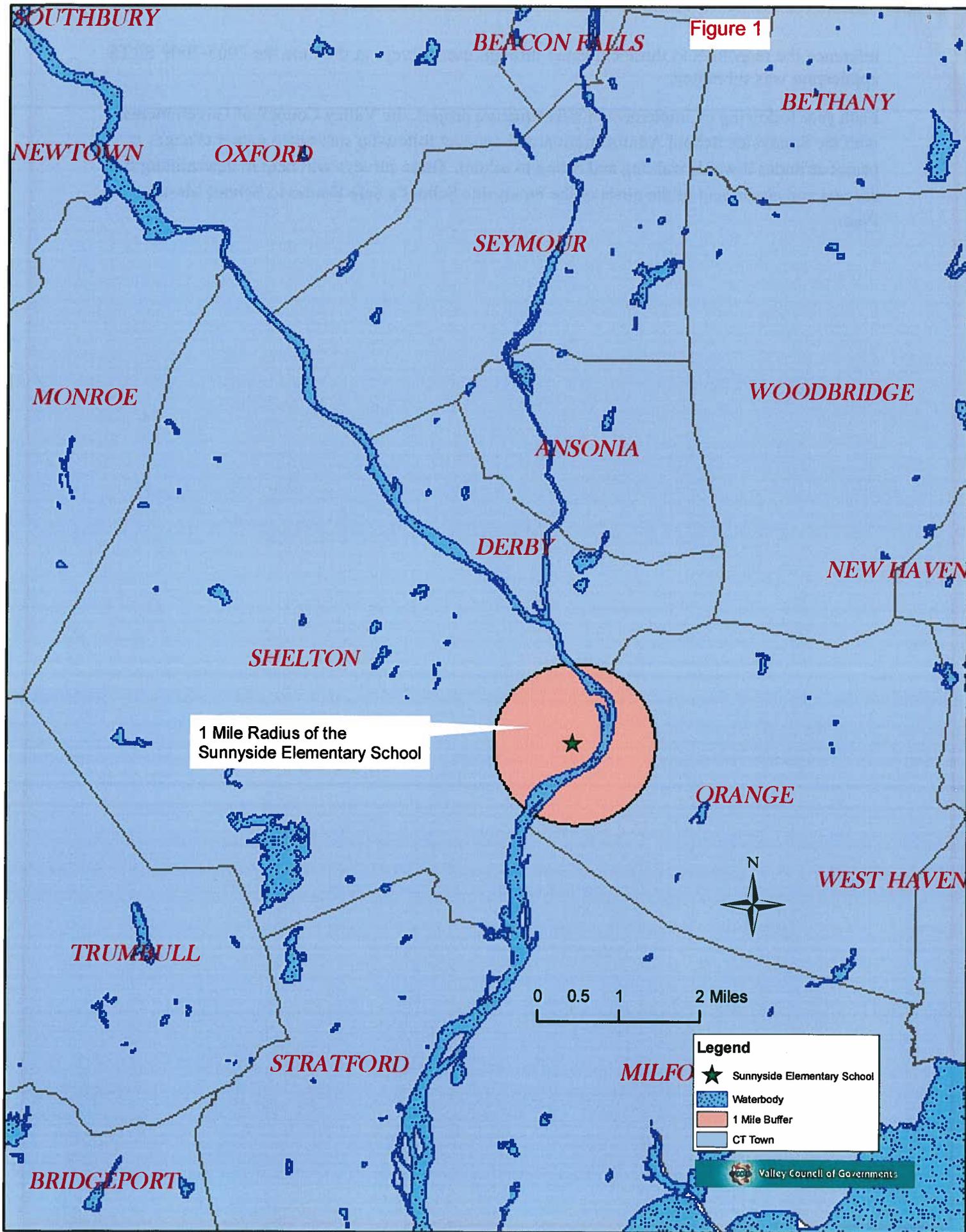
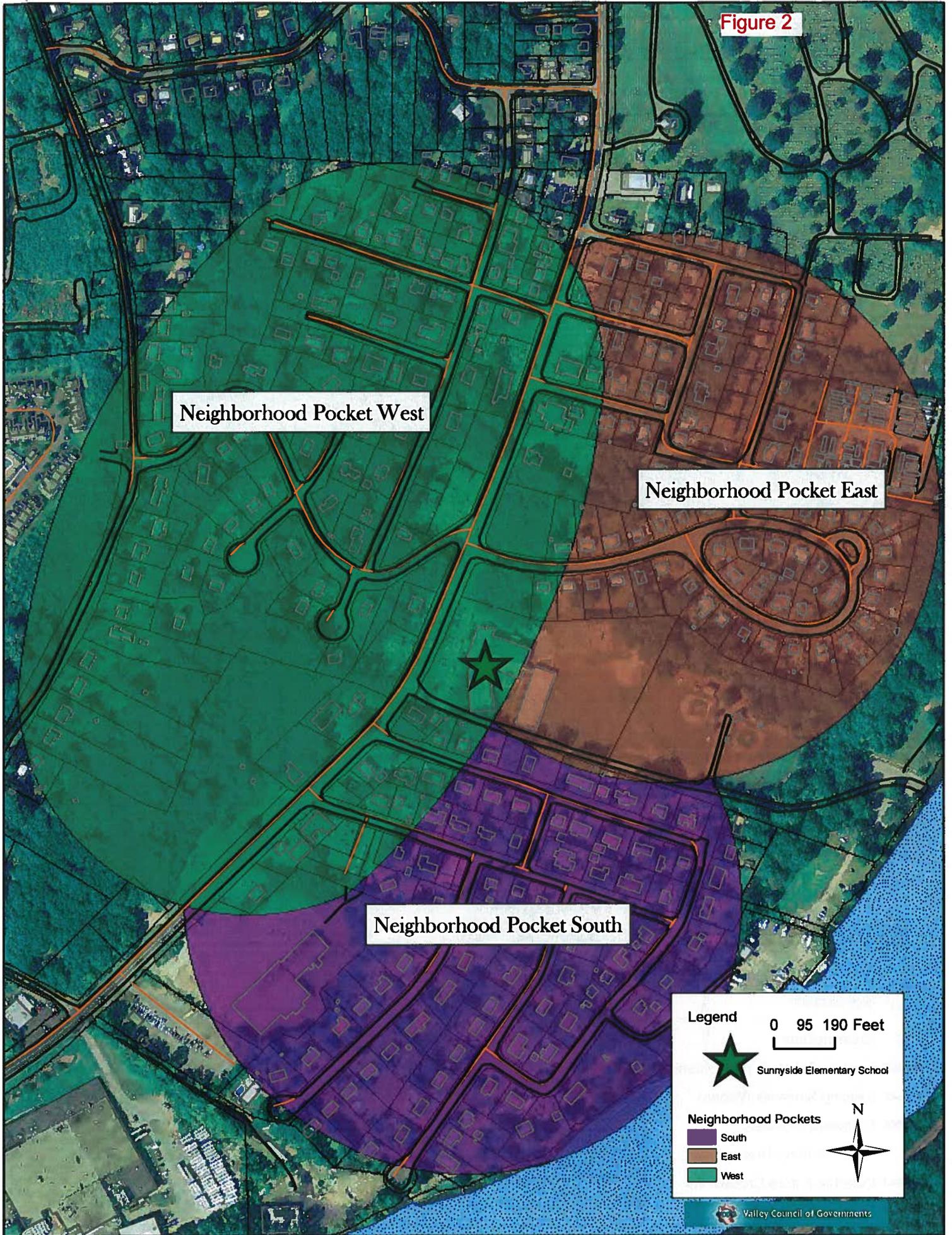


Figure 2



Neighborhood Pocket West

Neighborhood Pocket East

Neighborhood Pocket South

Legend

0 95 190 Feet



Sunnyside Elementary School

Neighborhood Pockets

- South
- East
- West



Neighborhood Pocket West Improvements

Figure 1 of 2

Figure 3

New Sidewalk on Laurel Heights Rd

Crossing Guard to be present during morning and afternoon arrival and departure

New Traffic Signal with Pedestrian Push-Button Activated Phase

110

Legend 0 25 50 Feet

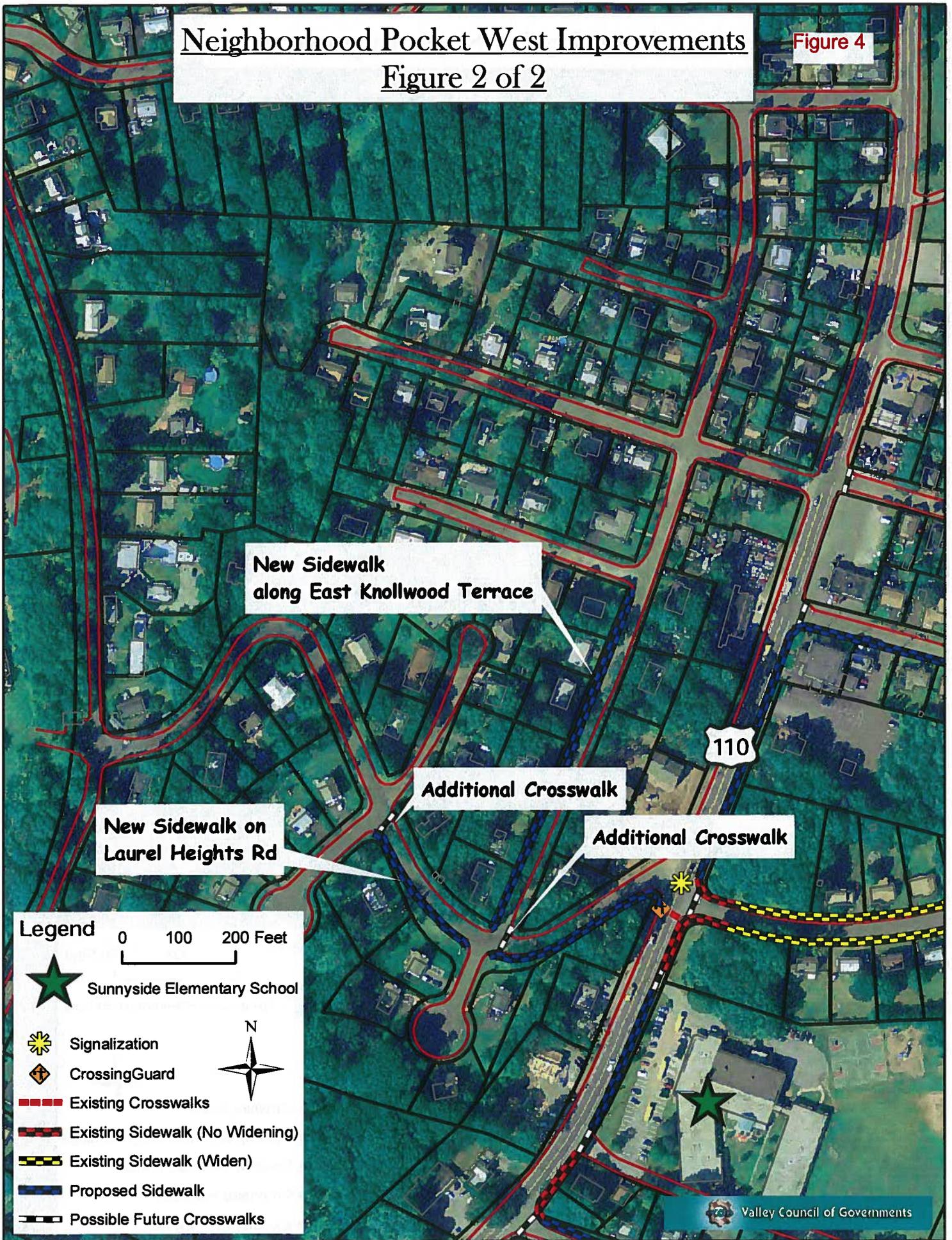
-  Sunnyside Elementary School
-  Signalization
-  Crossing Guard
-  Existing Sidewalk (No Widening)
-  Existing Sidewalk (Widen)
-  Proposed Sidewalk
-  RTE 110/River Road
-  Possible Future Crosswalks
-  Existing Crosswalks



Neighborhood Pocket West Improvements

Figure 2 of 2

Figure 4



**New Sidewalk
along East Knollwood Terrace**

**New Sidewalk on
Laurel Heights Rd**

Additional Crosswalk

Additional Crosswalk

Legend

0 100 200 Feet

Sunnyside Elementary School

Signalization

CrossingGuard

Existing Crosswalks

Existing Sidewalk (No Widening)

Existing Sidewalk (Widen)

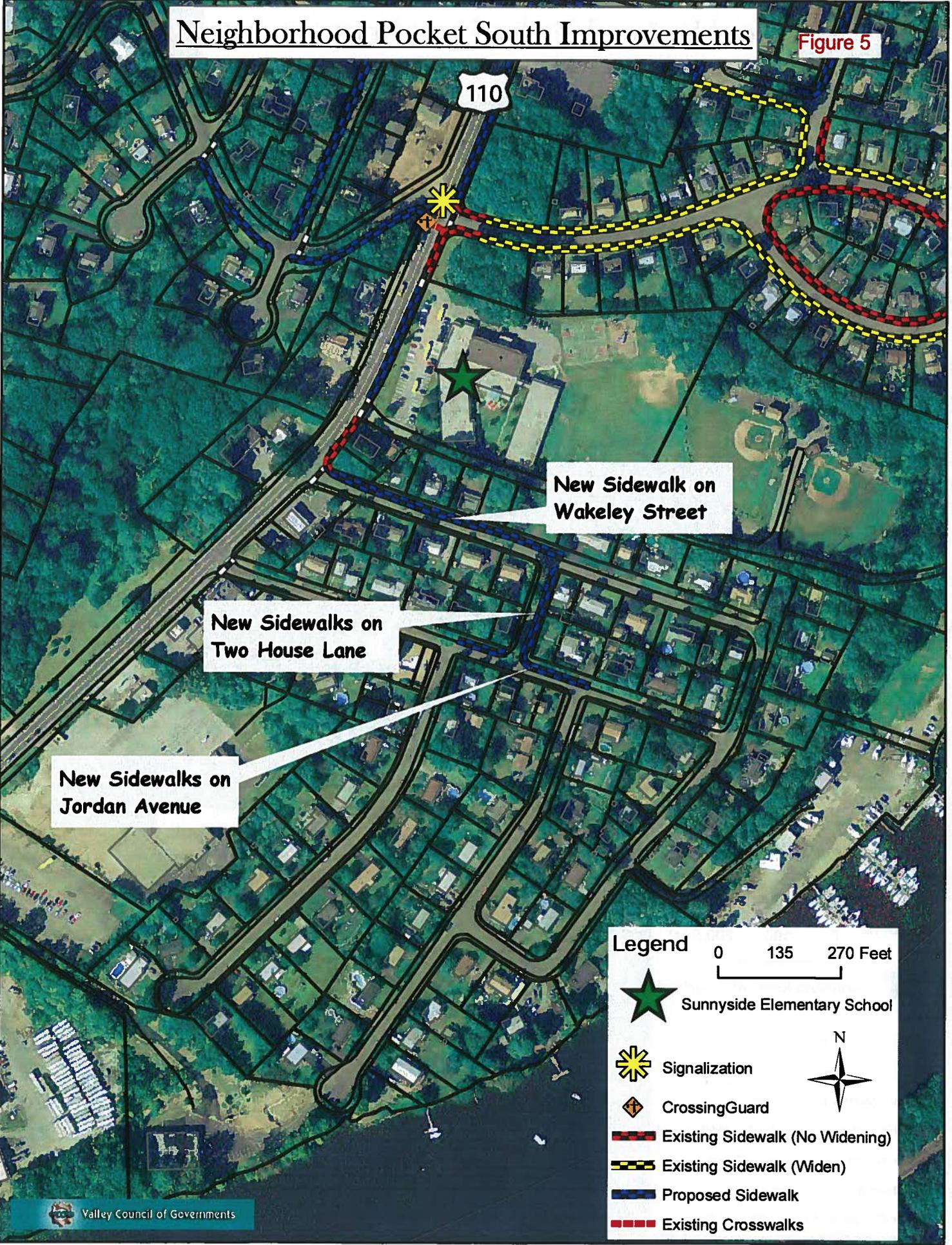
Proposed Sidewalk

Possible Future Crosswalks

N

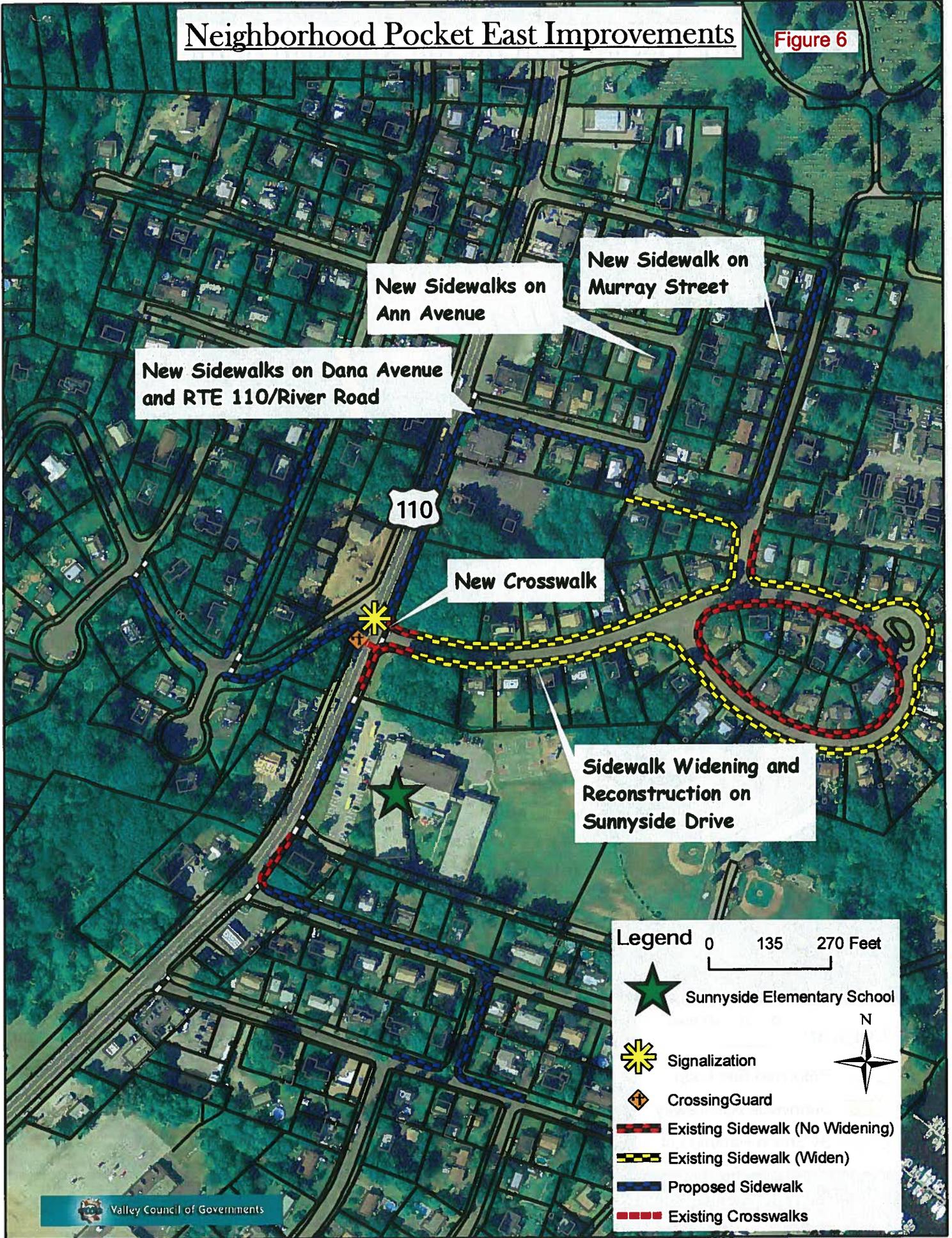
Neighborhood Pocket South Improvements

Figure 5



Neighborhood Pocket East Improvements

Figure 6



Concept Design Plan for the Redesign of the Pick-Up/Drop-Off Loading Zone

Figure 7



Legend 0 20 40 Feet

— Proposed Bus Loop

— Sunnyside Accessway

— 34 Space Parking Lot