



Barnstead Revitalization

Design Charrette

July 28 & 29, 2006

PLAN NH

Thank You!

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Sponsored by:

**Plan NH
Town of Barnstead, New Hampshire**

Plan NH

Barnstead Charrette

Who is Plan NH?

Plan NH, founded in 1989, is a professional association established to create a forum to bring together those focused on the built environment and interested in community development. Plan NH members include architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, bankers, contractors, historic preservationists, and others. A principle aspect of Plan NH's mission is to make a positive contribution to New Hampshire communities. One way in which Plan NH is doing this is by offering pro-bono design assistance each year to New Hampshire communities with demonstrated needs.

What is a Design Charrette?

Simply stated, a design charrette is a brainstorming session where lots of ideas are brought forth by both professional designers and local citizens, in an attempt to resolve a problem of local interest. Because of the compressed time frame, the recommendations reached are usually conceptual. Recommendations present the relationship of different plan elements, as opposed to the details of how a particular building would actually be constructed. The charrette process blends the broad experience of design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action to address a particular development issue within the community. The charrette provides an overall framework in which final solutions can be developed and gives a direction against which future decisions can be measured. The Plan NH charrettes are typically two day workshops that produce a number of design ideas and possible solutions, which are documented in booklets and presented to the town to be used as a starting point in their design process.

Why did Plan NH come to Barnstead?

Each year Plan NH invites communities to submit proposals outlining a community design opportunity. The proposals are examined and two or three are chosen for a weekend charrette consisting of volunteer

professionals to brainstorm and develop creative ideas addressing a problem of local interest. Plan NH assesses the proposals on the basis of: importance of the project to the host community, the interest in the design problem, and the probability of the project actually being implemented. Communities that are organized, have done some early work on a project, thought out their needs, and how they would implement the recommendations are favored by the selection committee.

The Barnstead Proposal

Barnstead's proposal, submitted by the town Selectmen, requested assistance with "revitalizing the center of town while preserving its rural character... [to] create an economically viable, aesthetically pleasing town center." Once a thriving commercial center and tourist destination, Barnstead began to slowly decline when the Suncook Valley Railroad ended service to the town in 1947. Today, few services or in-town employment opportunities are available to Barnstead's residents.

The proposal described several key areas for potential revitalization: 18 acres recently acquired by the town and a conservation area purchased on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department. Also, several municipal buildings in the town center are all in need of renovation and/or relocation. Another area, a 135-acre property formerly owned by Timco, Inc. and currently owned privately by a party amenable to revitalization, was identified after the proposal was accepted. Each of these areas is in the immediate vicinity of the town center.

Several points in Barnstead's proposal were particularly attractive to Plan NH:

- The availability of developable land provided an excellent opportunity for commercial revitalization.
- Town residents approved the 18-acre purchase and have expressed strong desire for improvements to the town center, as discussed in Barnstead's recent Master Plan.
- The Barnstead Economic and Commercial Group has been actively studying economic and commercial necessities.
- The town recently approved a temporary growth prohibition intended to "buy time" in which the town can make the improvements it desires.

The Charrette Process



The Plan NH charrette process includes one day of our design team listening to members of the community and town officials as well as making site observations. The second day involves an intense brainstorming of ideas culminating in the generation of sketches, concepts, and implementation strategies

Plan NH members, town officials, and community members met in the Town Hall over the course of two days in late July 2006. On Friday morning, the Plan NH team met with representatives from the Board of Selectmen and the Barnstead Commercial and Economic

Group to discuss the town's needs at length. The group then toured Barnstead downtown core and recreation area. This gave the charrette team an opportunity to walk the entire area to experience the circulation patterns and routes, to view existing buildings and land uses, and to get a first-hand look at the amenities and assets of the town.

On Friday afternoon and evening, Plan NH held two public listening sessions at which members of the community raised concerns and describe their wishes for the town's future. This sharing of local knowledge is critical, as it provides the design team with an understanding of the town's actual needs, opportunities, and constraints.

On Saturday morning, the design team members convened to strategize. Taking the information they had gathered during the listening sessions and the site walk and review of the town ordinances and master plans the group identified several revitalization topics. The Plan NH charrette team formed several groups to address each planning topic through discussion, recommendations and drawings, plans and sketches as well as recommendations were presented later that afternoon at a well-attended public forum.



Team walking tour of the recreation area



Team walking tour of the downtown corridor



Jeff Taylor of Plan NH presents charrette recommendations



Charrette team working together



Barnstead citizens participating

Commercial Activity

In its heyday, the late 19th and early 20th century, Barnstead featured a variety of businesses and amenities: several shoe factories, a textile mill, a hotel, large shops, a boardinghouse, and even a “house of ill repute.” Once the train stopped running to the town, however, commerce in Barnstead gradually declined.

Today the town center lacks restaurants, stores, and professional offices, though a general store and a handmade furniture shop at the intersection of Depot and South Barnstead Roads will both open in the near future. A small diner has opened at the same intersection. Small, home-based businesses such as auto repair, dog grooming, and day care exist throughout Barnstead, but are almost all located outside of the town center.

A 135-acre property formerly owned by the Timco Co. lies adjacent to Rte. 126. The company sold recently ceased operations. A small percentage of the warehouses and offices on that property are occupied by light industry and storage, approximately 100 acres are open land.

Nearly all Barnstead residents work outside the town, and must leave town for all services and purchases – e.g. dentist, banking, pizza on a Friday night – as well. They expressed interest in having those amenities available right in Barnstead so they wouldn’t have to travel as far and could enjoy their own, small, thriving town center

Social and Recreational Activity

Residents also seek communal gathering places. Elderly residents expressed a desire for a senior center; a woman who organizes Old Home Day said that town committees need places to meet and store equipment. Others suggested that Barnstead should have community gardens, theater space, and a historical museum.

Expanded recreational opportunities was another common theme. In addition to multi-use paths through town, people called for marked trails in the conservation area, a skateboard park, a fairground on the Timco site, a boat launch into the river, an equestrian center, and more.

Infrastructure

A commonly cited concern was that Center Barnstead is unsafe for pedestrians. Rte. 126 has no sidewalks, and the road shoulders are narrow. Vehicles speed through town and create a dangerous situations for pedestrians and cyclists. Sidewalks would go a long way in helping the downtown feel like a comfortable, friendly destination. Multi-use paths connecting different areas of the town center would help as well.



No sidewalks on Rt. 126

The town’s outdated municipal buildings present another challenge. Barnstead’s Space Needs Committee recently determined that the Town Hall, Police Station, and Fire Station are all in need of major renovation and/or relocation. The town hall the possesses the classic New England character appropriate for a revitalized town center, but is too small for Barnstead’s needs. The Fire Station, adjacent to the town hall, is a warehouse-type structure that does not fit in with the aesthetics of a desirable town center. Also, fire trucks require much parking and turnaround space in front of the station, which detracts from the pedestrian scale of the street.



Cemetery behind Fire Station



Center Barnstead Christian Church



Barnstead Town Hall



Barnstead Fire Station



Civil War memorial in center of town



Gazebo adjacent to Town Hall



WHAT WE HEARD

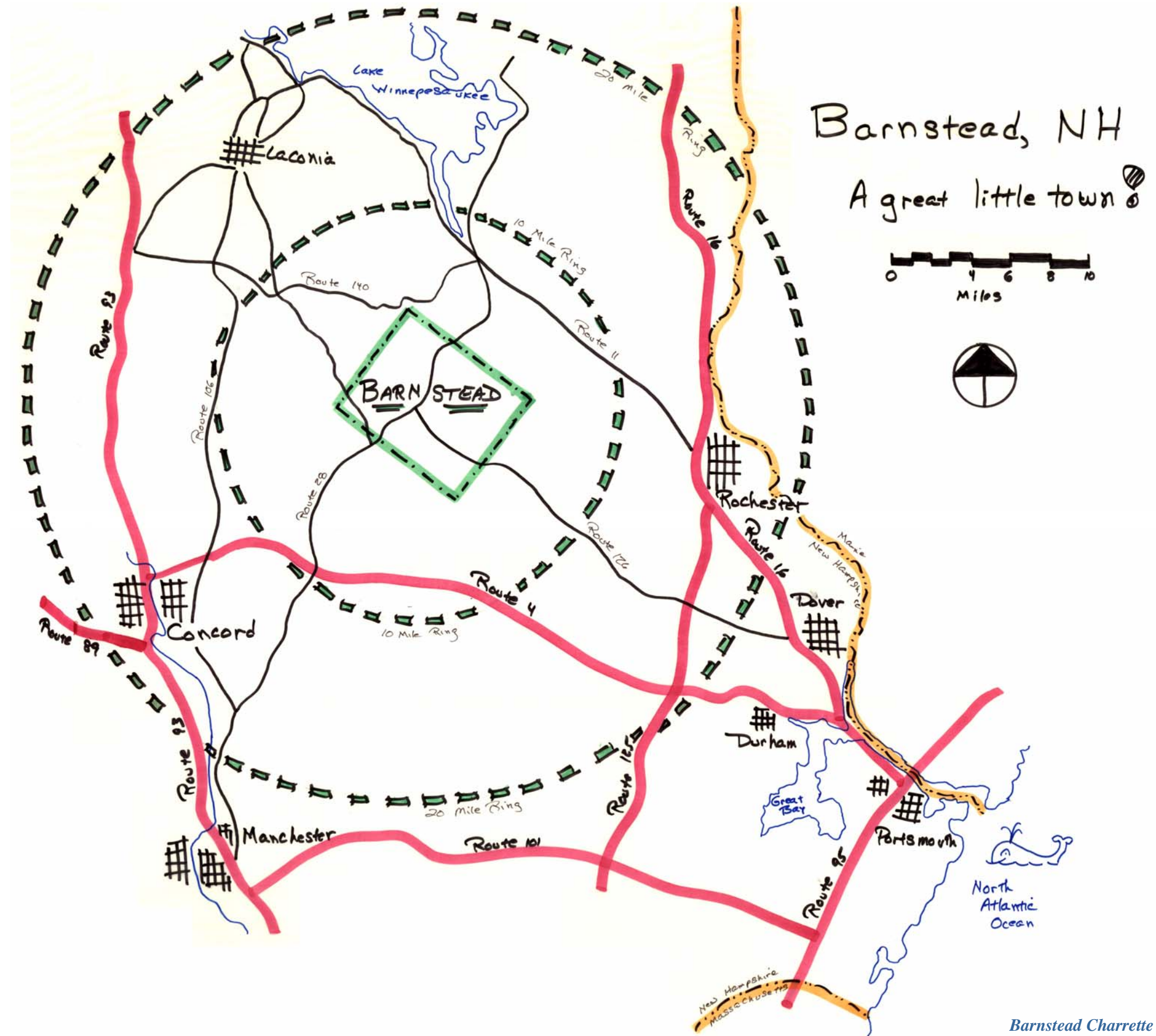
Suggestions from the public ranged widely, including everything from an eco-village to a Wal-Mart. We have organized them loosely into Community, Economics, Infrastructure, and Recreation categories, and summarize them below. The most popular, feasible, and useful ideas are what we incorporated into the recommendations presented in this report.

- Not pedestrian friendly
- Need to slow traffic, trucks
- Need to let people know Barnstead is here, "Welcome to Barnstead" sign at Rt. 28
- Need to give people a reason to come
- Improve character of village area
- Community center
- Senior housing
- Space for town committees to meet and store materials
- Co-housing; eco-village
- Mixed-use development (residential, commercial)
- Major annual festival
- Outdoor theater
- Historical museum
- Professional offices (doctor, lawyer)
- Space for businesses now operated out of homes (business incubator?)
- Farmers' and artisans' market
- Major retail establishment; chain restaurant
- Town support for businesses via signs, website
- Alternative energy
- Tax incentives to businesses
- Sidewalks and benches
- Traffic calming
- Need new town hall, police and fire stations
- Improved aesthetics - standard for homes and businesses
- Town green
- Recreation center, skateboard park
- Recreation center
- Formal paths in LCHIP conservation area
- Tree identification in LCHIP area
- Multi-use paths through town (bicycles, walking, etc.)
- Skateboard park
- Fairground at Timco property
- Community gardens
- Environmental education facility
- Equestrian center
- Better river access; increased river usage
- Enhance aesthetic quality and accessibility of center cemetery

Context

Barnstead is located “30 miles from everywhere,” within commuting distance to larger employment centers such as Concord, Manchester, Laconia, and even Boston. Its accessibility to both recreation and employment, as well as its high-quality schools and full-time police and fire services, have given it one of the highest growth rates in New Hampshire and the Northeast. From 1990 to 2000 Barnstead grew by over 25% from 3100 to 3886 residents. Families, in particular, are drawn to Barnstead.

The town’s proximity to other metropolitan centers is both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, it is drawing more residents to Barnstead and potentially raising the tax base and social capital available for town enhancement. On the other, it means that residents can easily go elsewhere for basic goods and services rather than demanding those amenities in Barnstead itself. Rapid growth can also damage town character



Competition

About 10,000 vehicles pass the turn-off to Center Barnstead from Rt. 28 every day, but nothing – no sign at Rte. 126, special events, shops, etc. – beckons them to make that turn and come into Center Barnstead. Making Barnstead a destination in its own right would be an excellent sign of progress for the town – not to mention a major catalyst of future positive development, however that effort faces clear challenges. New Hampshire does not lack either for quaint municipalities with small, pleasing town centers or for large, vacant areas of land for potential industrial development. 12 sites similar to the Timco property, for instance, exist within 25 miles of Barnstead. To attract attention from beyond its borders, Barnstead must do something to set itself apart.

Existing Conditions

The design team characterized each area of the town center as asset, opportunity, underdeveloped, or evolving. **Assets** are those buildings or areas the team saw as positive signs for Barnstead. The general store, woodworking shop, post office, library, cemetery, church, and conservation area provide a solid foundation from which Barnstead can develop. The house undergoing a major renovation also made the team optimistic: if a homeowner is willing to invest in a new foundation, she must have faith that the town center is worth staying in for quite a while.

Opportunities

The opportunities for development and improvement were the focus for the charrette team: the 18-acre parcel, the current Town Hall, Fire Station, and Police Station areas, the riverbanks, and the roadsides. **Evolving** areas are those that the team hopes will be positively affected by improvements elsewhere in the town center – for instance, small businesses moving into existing structures. Finally, **underdeveloped** areas are those that detract from the quality of center Barnstead. The diner next to the woodworking shop and the very cluttered, dilapidated house on South Barnstead Rd. are the only two sites identified as liabilities.



Charrette Team Recommendations

The team agreed on several key points before beginning its designs:

- Existing businesses should be supported to the fullest extent even as new ones are created.
- Barnstead needs something *uniquely compelling* to attract people to the town.
- Large-scale retail or housing development is inappropriate for Center Barnstead.
- Don't overlap services and features with other towns. For instance, Barnstead Parade already has a great concert area; 12 other near-empty industrial sites exist within 25 miles.

Within those parameters, the team arrived at a variety of ideas about how to take advantage of Barnstead's assets and help the town revitalize its center.

Site Planning Ideas for Recreation Area



Under-used picnic area

The Parks and Recreation Department has already made plans to improve the conservation area. Their ideas and ours include the following:

- Clear and mark the existing trails and picnic area along the riverside
- Create interpretive signage and features to be placed along trails and sitting areas
- Construct a roof over the hockey rink , build a warming hut/ skate rental structure
- Build an amphitheater with in existing former gravel pit

- Create an environmental education center
- Clear an area for easy small boat access to the river
- Skate park
- Playground



Site Planning Ideas for the 18-Acre Town Parcel

The 18-acre Parcel provides space for a wide variety of town needs: commerce, common social space, aesthetic enhancement, affordable housing, and more. The two drawings here depict large- and small-scale versions of the Plan NH team’s vision for this area. Some of its notable features:

- A new Town Hall is constructed adjacent to the existing one, which has been converted into a community center.
- The area presently occupied by the fire station becomes a classic New England town green.
- Live/work buildings at the far edge of the parcel provide affordable housing for single people or small families above and of- fice/retail space below.
- The statue currently in front of the church is moved to the town green, where it more logically and aesthetically belongs.

Community gardens are created.

The design team had more than one idea on where to place the new fire and police stations. One argument was for placing them directly on Rte. 126 for easy access to all highways, and to inspire community interest and pride. Concern about noise, the long set-back required for truck turnaround, and aesthetic disharmony, however, led the team to instead place them just off Rte. 126 on Shackford Corner Rd. The stations would be adjacent to critical highways and close enough to 126 to be clearly part of town happenings, but tucked off the main road so as not to interfere with the character of the main streetscape.





Village Center
 Center Barnstead, N. H.
 Plan NH Charrette



29 July 2006



Sketch of new Town Hall (left) and converted Community center (existing Town Hall, right) both adjacent to a new access road to the 18 acre Parcel.

20 – 21. Site Planning Ideas for Town Center

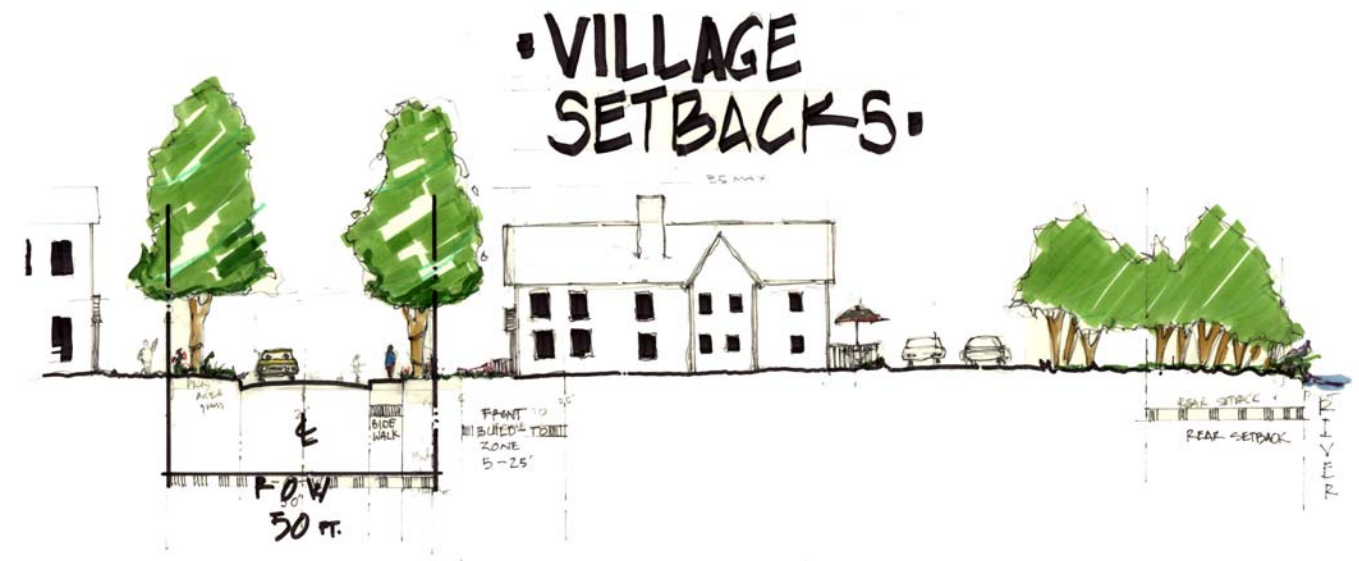
The team understood that Center Barnstead would benefit greatly from sidewalks. The Department of Transportation offers funding for sidewalk construction as a safety measure, and Center Barnstead would likely qualify for this support. Other ‘traffic calming’ strategies such as building medians in the road would also help slow traffic and make the town center more pedestrian-friendly. If any substantial commerce de-



veloped in the town center, parking space would also become an issue. The team decided that tucking it back from Rte. 126 within new development on the 18 acres would be most appropriate.

Aesthetically, setbacks from the road are a concern. Buildings placed close to the street create the comfortable, sociable feeling associated with vital communities. The opposite is true when buildings are set back. Current zoning regulations in Barnstead require a setback, that discourages typical “Main Street” development close to the street and sidewalk. This regulation would need to be amended for the town envisioned by Plan NH to take shape.

The streetscape itself provides another opportunity for improvement. Flowers, benches, and signs would make Barnstead look more attractive and cared-for while also providing amenities to pedestrians. The Barnstead in Bloom group has already begun the beautification process and should be encouraged to continue.

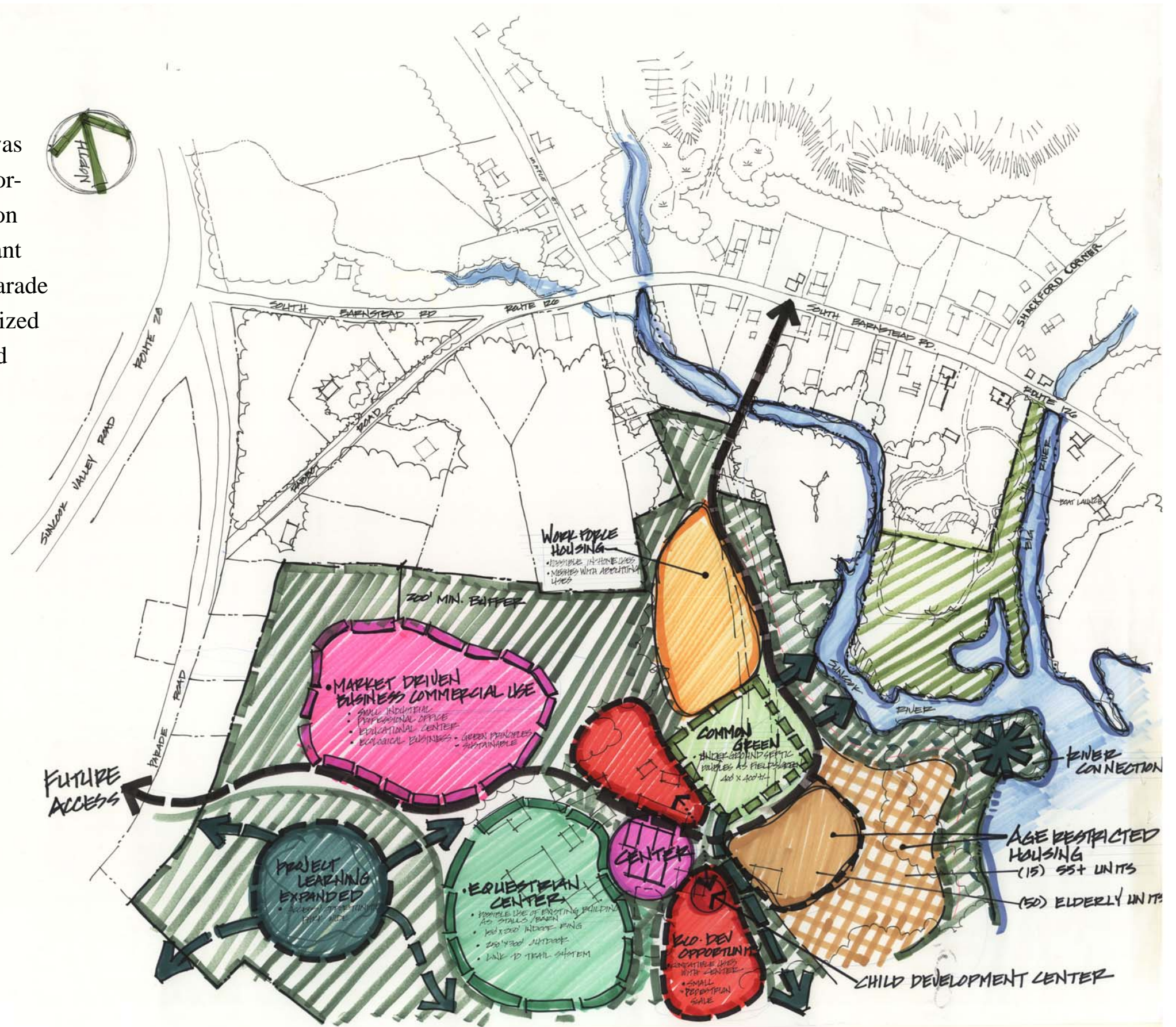




Proposed new professional offices at the site of the former Morocco Mills. Currently the site of the bus parking depot, adjacent to the Suncook River.

Timco Concept Plan

Conceptual diagram for possible uses for the Timco property. A mixed use development was suggested with a variety of housing options organized around a 'town common'. Connection and public access to the river was an important aspect of the plan. New connections from Parade Road and South Barnstead road were recognized as a vital part of the circulation system to and around the site.

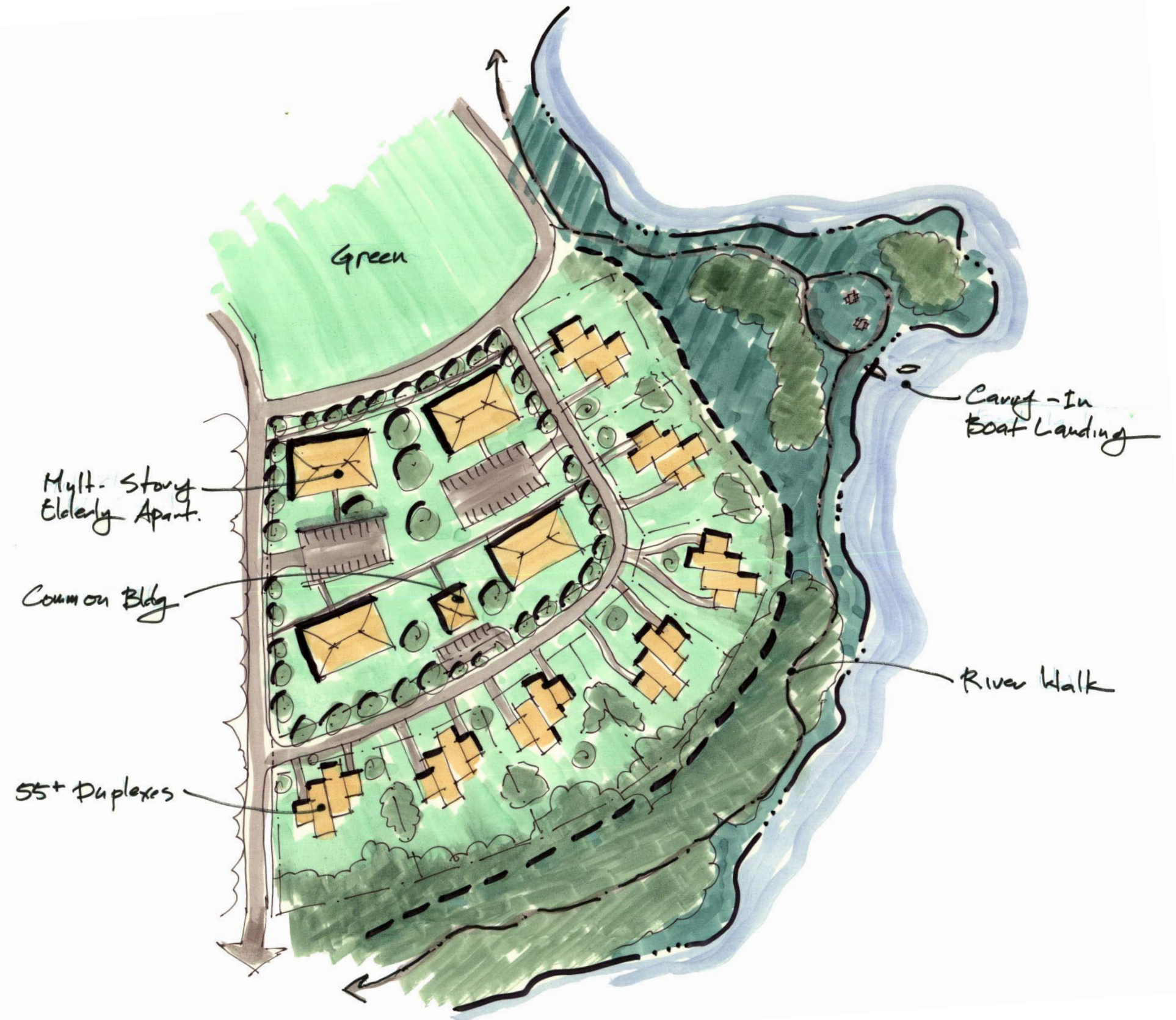


Site Planning ideas for Timco, Inc. Property

The size of the Timco property allows for ample new commercial, residential, and recreational opportunities there – the site can accommodate many, if not most, of the desires expressed by Barnstead community members.

The design proposed by Plan NH features a variety of structures arranged loosely around a central green space and buffered on three sides by undeveloped land.

- Housing occupies most of the eastern side of the property. Elderly housing – a need identified by the town – sits adjacent to duplexes for the 55-and-older population. Both have views of the riverwalk and boat launch to be constructed. Workforce housing, designed for single people or small families, occupies the far side of the space.
 - Horseback riding is a common activity in the Barnstead area, and there is high demand for facilities. An equestrian center at the Timco site would draw interest from many surrounding towns.
 - An environmental educational center would be constructed in the southwestern corner of the property and serve as a starting point for nature-based ‘explorations’ along the river and into the conservation area.
- The rest of the property is devoted to market-driven economic development. A child development center was suggested as a possibility.





Setting Barnstead Apart

Barnstead needs to distinguish itself from other New Hampshire towns in order to attract visitors and new businesses. Small towns in New Hampshire with identifying natural or man-made characteristics such as waterfalls, lilacs or covered bridges enjoy a sense of place, making them memorable to the wider community.

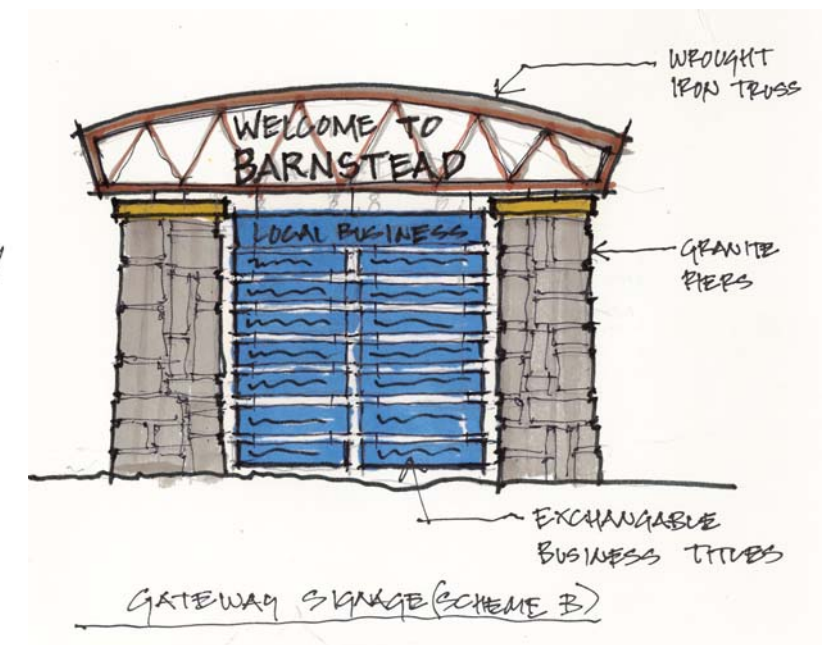
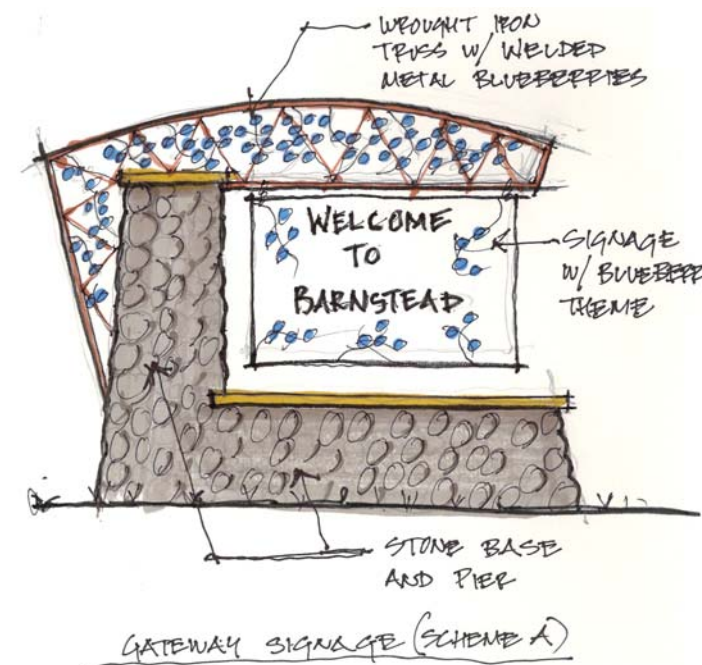
The team brainstormed several ideas about how to attract more visitors to Barnstead:

- **Identification:** Currently there is no signage to direct passers-by on Rt. 126 to Center Barnstead. Attractive signage should be placed at the intersection of Rt. 126 and South Barnstead Road. Plans for this signage are currently in the works by a group of Barnstead citizens.
- **Recreation:** Barnstead has not realized its potential as a recreational area. Its two rivers are already paddled and fished, but these activities could be encouraged to a greater degree with better access, gear and outfitting shops (a kayak and canoe rental shop does already exist at Rt. 126 and Parade Road).
- **Accommodations:** Cafes and inns could also develop to feed and house outdoor enthusiasts.
- **Cultural Events:** the town could develop a major annual event such as a blueberry festival to draw attention to itself and its emerging assets.

Zoning Recommendations

Altering its zoning ordinances would help Barnstead achieve its objectives. For instance:

- The Village District should be defined through geographic boundaries and not arbitrary tax maps, as is the case now.
- An Historic District would ensure that the design of new construction is consistent with that of existing buildings.
- A flexible building zone would allow key characteristics of high-quality downtown areas: well-defined space, verticality, narrow streets, short front setbacks, and well-defined edges between properties and the sidewalk.
- Allowing high density and mixed use in the core area would support commerce, infill development, and housing opportunities for younger people.



Improvements Cost Analysis

The cost analysis addresses the major improvements to the Barnstead Village area identified during the charrette. The cost cover construction only and are general in nature based on current construction practices. These costs are given to be used as an order of magnitude guide only, and not for final budgeting purposes.

Estimate of Probable Costs				
LOCATION	QUAN	UNIT	UNIT COST	TOTAL COST
Barnstead Village Center				
Town Hall	6000	sf	\$125.00	\$750,000.00
Public Safety facility	18000	sf	\$150.00	\$2,700,000.00
Community Center Rehab.	1	ea	\$65,000.00	\$65,000.00
Recreation office (old police sta.)	1	ea	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00
Sidewalk instalation, both sides	1	ea	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00
New road paving	1	ea	\$84,000.00	\$84,000.00
			TOTAL	\$3,814,000.00

Next Steps

The recommendations clearly involve the decisions and consensus of many public agencies and stakeholders. Sorting out what should and could be done first is a critical step towards implementation. Often it is the small improvements that are the catalysts for bigger changes. The flowing list, developed by the charrette team, includes action items which are easily accomplished in the near future along with long range tasks. Resources for services and funding are also listed below.

1. Start

- Improve signage to village from rt. 126
- Meet with landowners and stakeholders to encourage involvement and gain consensus
- Institute a façade improvement program for the Village Core
- Work with DOT to develop street improvements that best serve the community and the Village objectives
- Institute low cost sidewalk and streetscape enhancements such as plantings, flowers, signage, crosswalk painting.
- Begin discussions and negotiations for potential public/private partnerships
- Seek areas to make continued incremental steps towards the vision of a pedestrian oriented village core with unique retail establishments, residences, and businesses

2. Financing

- NHDOT TE/CMAQ Program, Municipal Highway Aid, and 10 Year Plan
- RBOG—Rural Development (Rural Business Opportunity Grant)
- CDBG - Community Development Block Grant
- EDA
- Belknap County Economic Development Council – Tri-County CAP

3. Resources

- **NH Department of Transportation** a source of public funding for state road improvements

Ms. Carol Murray, Commissioner
 Ms. Nancy Mayville, Project Manager
 Mr. Robert Barry, Administrator Municipal Highways
 Mr. Ram Maddali TE/CMAQ Coordinator
 NHDOT
 Hazen Drive
 Concord, NH 03301

- **Rural Development Administration** provides low interest loans and grants for municipal projects

Mr. Rob McCarthy
 U.S. Rural Development Administration
 Ferry Street
 Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Division of Historic Resources** may be used as a source for historic property advice and expertise

Mr. Jim Garvin
 State Architectural Historian
 NH Division of Historic Resources
 19 Pillsbury Street
 Concord, NH 03001

- **NH Business Finance Authority** is a source for tax-exempt bonding and other subsidies for private and non-profit investment

Mr., Jack Donovan
NH Business Finance Authority
14 Dixon Avenue
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Community Development Finance Authority** is a source for tax credits for publicly supported projects

Mr. Paul Denton
NH Community Development Finance Authority
14 Dixon Avenue
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Community Development Block Grant Program** provides grants and loans to projects which assist low to moderate income residents.

Ms. Pat Garvin
NH Community Development Block Grant Program
14 Dixon Avenue
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Municipal Bond Bank** provides low interest funds for publicly bonded projects

Mr. George Zoukee
NH Municipal Bond Bank
10 Park Street
Concord, NH 03301

- **Belknap County Economic Development Council**

Ms. Eliza Leadbeater
2 Airport Road
Gilford, NH 03249