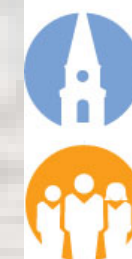


# Winchester, NH Design Charrette

June 20 & 21, 2008



**PLAN NH**

Visioning *for* Sustainable Communities

A Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment

# Winchester Charrette Acknowledgements

Sincere Thanks go out to those individuals who donated their professional and personal time to make this charrette a success. Also, many thanks to the citizens and town officials who shared their thoughts and knowledge with us.



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Charrette Booklet Printed by:



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# Plan NH Visits Winchester, NH

June 20 & 21, 2008

## Who is Plan NH?

**Plan NH** is a professional association for those working in the *built environment*. The organization includes architects, planners, engineers, bankers, construction managers, historic preservationists, and others who concern themselves with buildings and communities. It was established to create a forum for bringing together these different professional groups and as a catalyst for spurring interest in community development. Part 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 through the offer of free design assistance to communities with demonstrated needs.

## So what is a Design Charrette, anyway?

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 conclusions reached are usually conceptual. They discuss how different plan elements should relate to each other, as opposed to the details of how a particular building would actually be constructed.

At their best, Charrettes blend the broad experience of design professionals with local citizen's knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action that deals with a particular issue of concern to that community. The Charrette provides an overall framework within which final solutions can be developed. It sets a tone and gives a direction against which future decisions may be measured.



## How did the Plan NH Charrette come to Winchester?

In February of 2008, the Town of Winchester submitted a proposal to **Plan NH** for design assistance. Of the Twelve proposals submitted, Winchester was one of three communities selected for a Charrette.

**Plan NH** is interested in providing design assistance to communities that seem ready to move forward with a project, where there appears to be the organizational expertise and where there is the ability to move forward with recommendations that surface in the course of the weekend event. **Plan NH** is looking for community problems that may have transferability to other communities.





# The Charrette Process & Executive Summary

Winchester Town Officials and community residents gathered with the **Plan NH** Charrette team on a Friday afternoon in June of 2008 to discuss the details of the task in front of us. Design professionals on the team included architects, landscape architects, planners, civil engineers, cost estimators, and Real Estate professionals. The critical piece that the Charrette Team lacked, which only the local residents could offer, was the knowledge of the Town of Winchester.

With that in mind, the team and residents began formulating the future of a new town center for Winchester.

The team started by walking the downtown area to familiarize themselves with the current conditions of the numerous sites and buildings, as well as learn of the past and present history of the town. The Main Street hosts a mixture of commercial, residential, and civic buildings. There are historic civic buildings that presently are in disrepair or underutilized that can and should be the cornerstone of revitalizing the downtown area. The commercial and mixed use buildings along the east bank of the Ashuelot River are often referred to as an eyesore.

***Local residents are the experts on the community — what makes sense, what history has brought forth, what will pass at the local board meetings — the design team relies on resident input and knowledge to develop viable suggestions and proposals.***

Our walk began at the Mobil station. To the east of the Mobil station is the empty historic brick building that once housed a bank. On the west side of Main Street across from the Mobil station is an 11 unit wood framed residential building next to an abandoned restaurant building to the north. Moving south on Main Street is the former post office that houses a tattoo parlor, and 2 residences above. Next is the “Amarosa Building” with vacant retail space on the ground level that once housed a hardware store and residences above. Continuing south is “Grandpa’s Flea Market” with residences above. A vacant lot opening Main Street to the Ashuelot River is owned by the conservation commission and is planned for a park. The Mt. Pisgah Diner is a staple of Main Street south of the future park. Next is a commercial building that was built in the late 80’s. It houses a real estate office and Gartner Refrigeration and MFG, Inc. The Win Win Chinese take out is housed in a building that goes back to the late 1800’s. Mr. G’s Liquidation Center is housed in one of the original Main Street buildings. The original brick façade is presently covered with wood. Still in the business district, next are a few residential rental properties. Most of these buildings date back to the late 1800’s. The historical ordinance needs to be updated, however the town still has control over the exterior of the rental properties. At this point the sidewalk ends beyond these residences continuing south on the west side of Main Street.. A dirt path



continues to a bridge approximately a 1/4 mile from the intersection of Route 10 and 119. Beyond the bridge the Central Business District turns into Commercial. At this point in time the state will not widen this bridge to allow sidewalks to continue from the downtown. Commercial is blended with residential in this area. There are no sidewalks or crosswalks in this area. Varied retail and commercial businesses are in this area mixed with a few residences, restaurant, bank, radio station, medical office and elderly services. North of the Route 10 bridge on the east side of Main Street, there is the VFW club with open land. Behind the VFW is a Pavilion that can be rented as well as snowmobile trails that connect into a trail system that extends to Canada. The VFW is often used for community functions. The next parcel is a large residence on 5 acres. Next is the Ellen Lambert Murphy Memorial Community Center. An independent Co-Op owns the center, but it is often used by the town. Next is the United Church Parsonage and the United Church of Winchester. At the corner of Parker Street and Main Street is a park and gazebo. Beyond the park on Parker Street is the police, fire and ambulance services. The Conant Public Library built in 1890 comes next. After the library is the town hall. On the opposite corner on Richmond Road and Main Street is the Universalist Heritage Center. Presently the learning daycare center operates out of the basement.

The last part of the tour is to examine the Tannery site, the former A.C Lawrence Leather site. The site is a vacant 18-1/2 acre parcel that is located about 1/2 mile north of the town hall on the west side of the Ashuelot River. The Tannery site is a recently restored Brownfield's site with no structures. There is direct access to the site from Route 10, however, it is presently a non-operational bridge. At this time, the only access is from Howard Street via the Elm Street Bridge. This site is key to productive and economic use, as well as a catalyst for other development opportunities on Main Street.







# Winchester's Proposal

"Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how." -- Edward T. McMahon, The Conservation Fund

The Town of Winchester's Board of Selectmen, in conjunction with the Winchester Economic Development Committee, is looking for cohesive design assistance for the town's central business district along Main Street and redevelopment ideas for the former AC Lawrence Leather Company site, known as the Tannery site. Town officials and residences are motivated to create an inviting town center that will entice visitors, stimulate economic growth and create an atmosphere where residence will enjoy gathering. The Tannery site holds many opportunities for economic development with innovative design.

A number of mixed use buildings along the west side of Main Street stand vacant while well meaning landlords have difficulty putting funds into the upkeep without hope of tenants. Along with recreational opportunities, the Tannery site holds great potential for mixed use or appropriate industrial development which will help Winchester's tax base and spur future economic growth.

A 2007 Citizens Survey of residents found that 95% were in support of Winchester having a policy of actively encouraging economic growth. The two top suggestions were attracting commercial business and revitalizing downtown.

***In order for Winchester to become a prosperous, distinctive, and inclusive community we will: support and retain existing local businesses, target and market to needed or desirable businesses in the downtown and the town at large, revitalize the downtown into a safe, attractive and unique destination for residents and visitors, conserve and utilize public space for passive and active recreation, and improve infrastructure to support existing and future needs. The future Winchester will be a town that embraces its history and rural character. While embracing our past we will also be looking forward, using new technologies and providing the right atmosphere to create a strong and diverse economic base and a vibrant and thriving downtown; a future Winchester that residents take pride in calling home.***





# The Listening Sessions

During the public sessions, residents identified specific issues, and desires for Winchester's downtown and the Tannery site

## Positive Aspects of Winchester:

- ◆ Rural Character
- ◆ Covered bridge
- ◆ State park
- ◆ 10,000 cars /day traffic through town
- ◆ Speedway
- ◆ Warm and engaging community
- ◆ Best drinking water in the state
- ◆ Great historical buildings: Town Hall, Library, Universalist Church, Sheraton House Museum
- ◆ Promote sociability with monthly bean suppers
- ◆ Annual pickle festival
- ◆ Beaches at the lake, Campground
- ◆ The Ashuelot River
- ◆ Workforce Housing
- ◆ Good After –school programs
- ◆ Drive-in Theater
- ◆ Elm Center for Kids
- ◆ Close proximity to larger towns (within 20 Minutes)
- ◆ Variety of clubs and organizations
- ◆ Mrs. Persis F.E. Albee, The first “Avon Lady”
- ◆ The first Unitarian Movement started in Winchester
- ◆ The Kelley Diary Farm



## Obstacles/Problem Issues:

- ◆ Lack of professional businesses
- ◆ Lack of a good tax base
- ◆ Lack of long range planning
- ◆ Town needs to be more walkable
- ◆ Visual state of downtown leaves a bad impression
- ◆ Small voter turnout
- ◆ Lack of pride on Main Street
- ◆ Absentee landlords
- ◆ Building code issues are neglected
- ◆ Resistance to change
- ◆ Having to travel out of town for entertainment
- ◆ Infrastructure needs to improved
- ◆ Public hearings are poorly attended

## Wish List:

- ◆ Good Restaurants
- ◆ Dentist, CPA, engineers, and lawyers offices in town
- ◆ Hotel
- ◆ Parking lot
- ◆ Fast food restaurants
- ◆ Weekly events and activities to promote Social Capital
- ◆ A good web-master
- ◆ A good PR Program for the town
- ◆ Welcome Center
- ◆ Local Medical Care
- ◆ Slow traffic downtown
- ◆ Video store
- ◆ Coffee shop, tea room
- ◆ Medium-high end retirement housing
- ◆ Staffing for Community Center
- ◆ Teen Center
- ◆ Get young people more involved in the town
- ◆ Regional transportation between Keene and Brattleboro
- ◆ Riverwalk
- ◆ Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Ice-cream Store
- ◆ Good downtown signage
- ◆ Create curb appeal downtown
- ◆ Crosswalks
- ◆ Synchronize signals
- ◆ Sidewalks
- ◆ Connect river to downtown
- ◆ Public boat ramp on lake
- ◆ Zoning to control messy yards
- ◆ Skate park
- ◆ Funeral Home
- ◆ Performing Arts Center
- ◆ Sports Bar
- ◆ Community News Letter
- ◆ Reinstate the town Newspaper
- ◆ Museum that connects to history of town









# Charrette Team Proposals and Recommendations

**We have heard the opinions and the input from the residents. We have walked the area and have seen the conditions with which we must deal. Now, we are prepared to present our findings and recommendations to the citizens of Winchester.**

As a team we began by inventorying all the parcels and buildings within the downtown area and beyond. We then broke down each area into segments and looked at redevelopment and revitalization within each segment while still tying into the framework of the entire town center.

In the big picture framework of redevelopment and revitalization, we need to concentrate on architectural enhancements and streetscapes. Shift the center line of Route 10 east for larger sidewalks. Use creative and colorful plantings. Create café settings in various places along the sidewalk to develop gathering spots for citizens and visitors and create social capital and destination venues. Streetscape includes strategically placed trees and various plantings. A Riverwalk should run through the downtown on each side of the river in different places as shown and extend north and south to allow pedestrians easy access to all the services and housing. The rail bed should be developed into a multi-use trail for bikes, walking, snowmobiles, snowshoes, etc..

Starting from the south, property reuse includes: Utilizing the property behind the VFW as a Flea Market and Farmers Market. The Shipman Property has the potential as a Performing Arts facility. The ELMM Center could be redeveloped as a Commercial Business center or an Artisan Co-op Center. The Old Bank building could be developed into a space for a Chamber of Commerce office or a Visitors Center. The old Unitarian Church that presently houses a daycare, could house a new Teen Center. A Hall of Fame and Historical Center could also be built within the old church. The hillside east of the church building could be developed into an outdoor amphitheater. Over the Elm Street Bridge, convert the old fire station into a Business Incubator facility which is proposed for start-up and small businesses that can share office staff, phone and other type services, as well as common space such as conference rooms. The Mr. G's building should be brought back to it's original façade that exposes the original brick



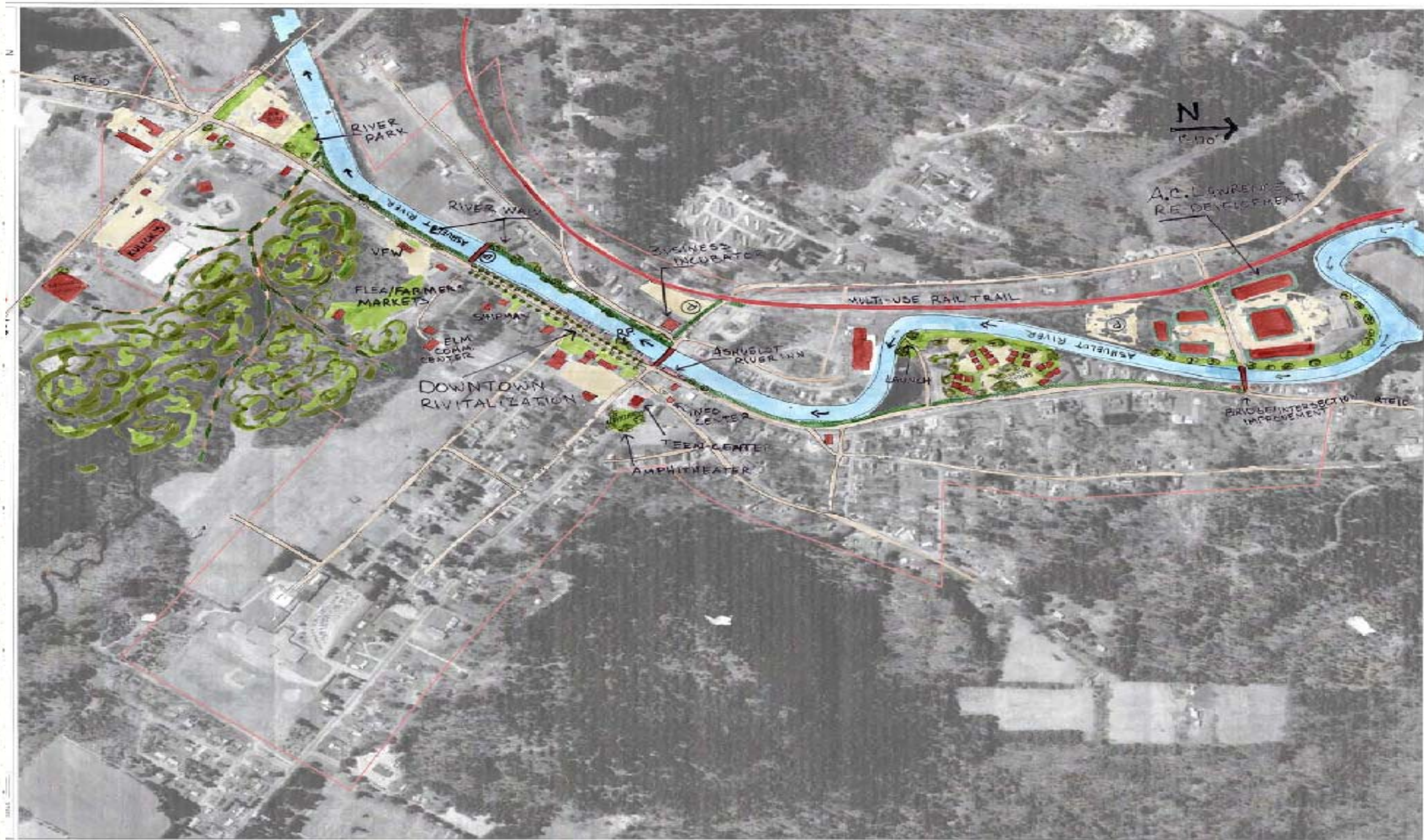
design to allow storefronts to be installed. South of Mr. G's, turn the row houses into multi-use with retail shops and businesses on the street level and residential on the upper floors. The white apartment building north of the Elm Street Bridge could be converted to an Inn with a tea room and beer garden along the river's edge.

The Ashuelot River is a natural resource that has been hidden for many years. We propose to open up the river and expose it to the different downtown venues in as many places as possible. Both sides of the river need to be cleaned up of brush and non-essential trees to open up visual connections to the east



and west. Parks with benches, sitting and gathering spaces along the river will create activities, destination points and a sense of place for the whole community and visitors to experience and enjoy. A lighting program will need to be implemented for safety and security.















# Charrette Team Proposals and Recommendations, Cont.

Pedestrian and vehicle traffic must coexist in a safe environment for any successful and vibrant town center. Parking within a walkable downtown is also an important feature that needs to be strategically planned. We propose head-in parking on the west side of Main Street and parallel parking on the east side, with streetscape, sidewalks, trees and bump outs to slow traffic and create a different environment that tells drivers that they are in the downtown area. There needs to be a concern for pedestrians, bikes, and the high volume of traffic and how to safely blend all three. A bike lane can be incorporated in-between the parking lane and the through lane of traffic. Raised islands within the medians can be installed with plantings to also create that “different place” feel to slow vehicle traffic through downtown. Bump-outs at the crosswalks are good for calming traffic while giving pedestrians a shorter distance to cross the street. Rerouting truck traffic from the Elm Street bridge will also make the area safer. A new covered pedestrian bridge over the Ashuelot River across from the VFW is proposed. Widening of the Elm Street Bridge is incorporated in the redevelopment of the housing building into an Inn. The sidewalk at the diner needs to be reworked to make room for trees. Real Estate may need to be purchased to allow for Main Street to be widened with streetscape and sidewalks to be constructed as proposed. Street lighting to enhance the downtown experience needs to be incorporated into the streetscape design. Directional signage is also a very important element that is essential in directing pedestrians and drivers around the area.

Strategically placed parking lots are designed to get vehicles off the street and behind Main Street and also promote a walkable experience that will encourage pedestrians to visit the different shops and businesses that will be downtown.

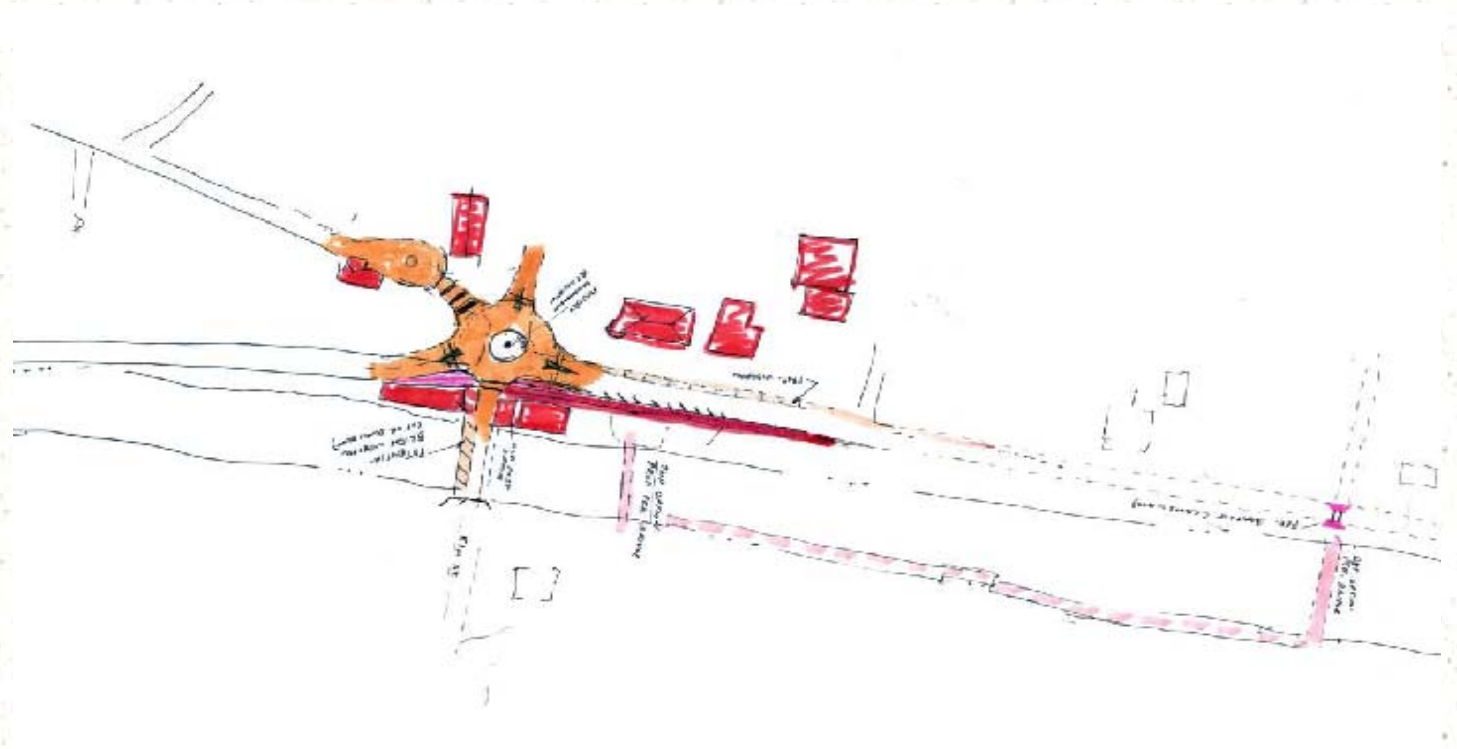


A round-about at the Main Street and Elm Street intersection was also explored as a possible traffic calming and control measure. More study on this design will need to be done. Several roundabouts have been built within the last few years in the area and have become a popular design to help with traffic and pedestrian movements.

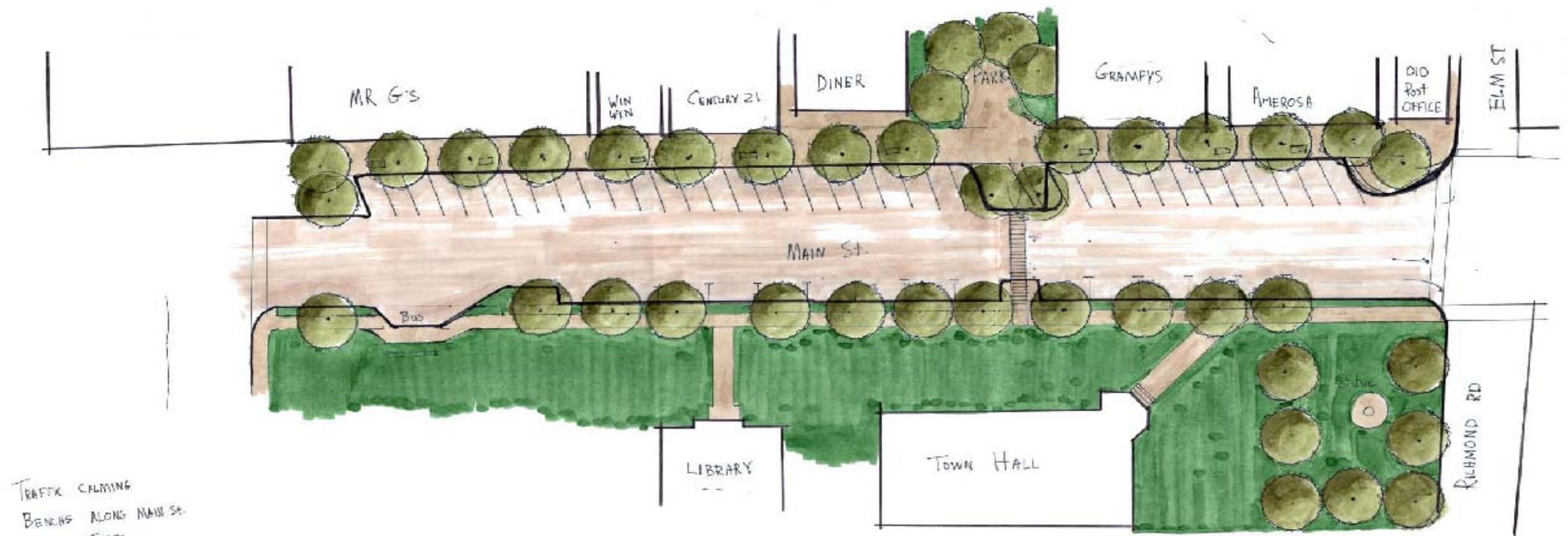
The Tannery site has the highest potential to be redeveloped into a business park. The river gives an opportunity to create Vistas at strategically placed intervals that will promote a pedestrian friendly place that will easily tie into the connections that will be created to downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Development of this site should incorporate sustainable principles as well as alternative energy elements. An ecologically designed park will be good for the environment, good for the town, and will make the development more attractive to businesses and potential investors.

With multiple buildings, the development can be phased so one or two buildings can be built at a time as tenants or building owners are found. This will allow for a more successful financial package for the developer. The buildings can be set up as multi-tenant and used as office, storage and or small manufacturing spaces. A hotel is proposed on the site adjacent to the south.

The bridge that connects to Route 10 from the Tannery site needs to be rebuilt for heavy vehicle traffic. DOT has money set aside for this project. Matching funds from the town or from a developer of this site is necessary for this project to happen. The reconstruction of this bridge in conjunction with the Tannery site redevelopment, will also take traffic burden from the downtown, as the only way to the site is over the Elm Street bridge. Properties may need to be purchased for the widening of the bridge to Route 10 from the Tannery site.





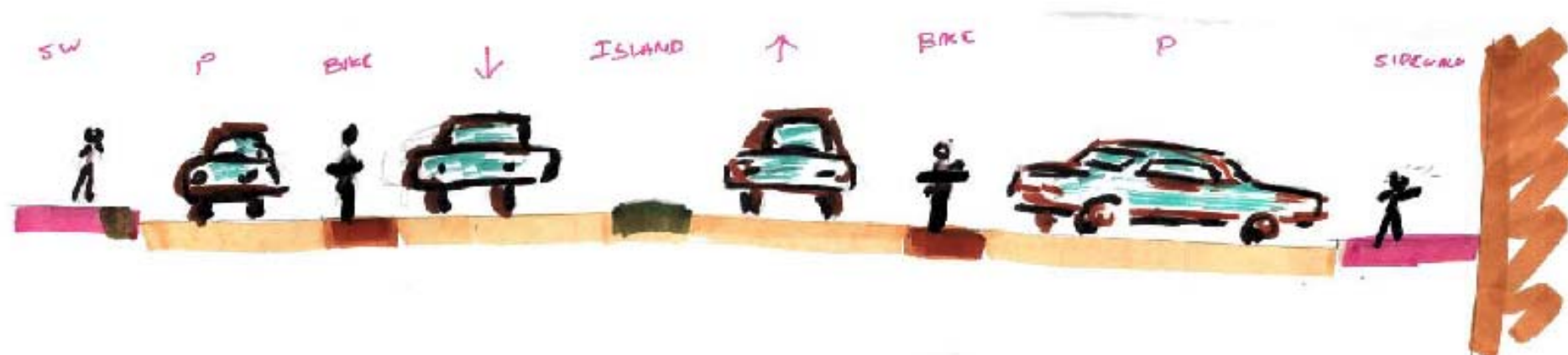
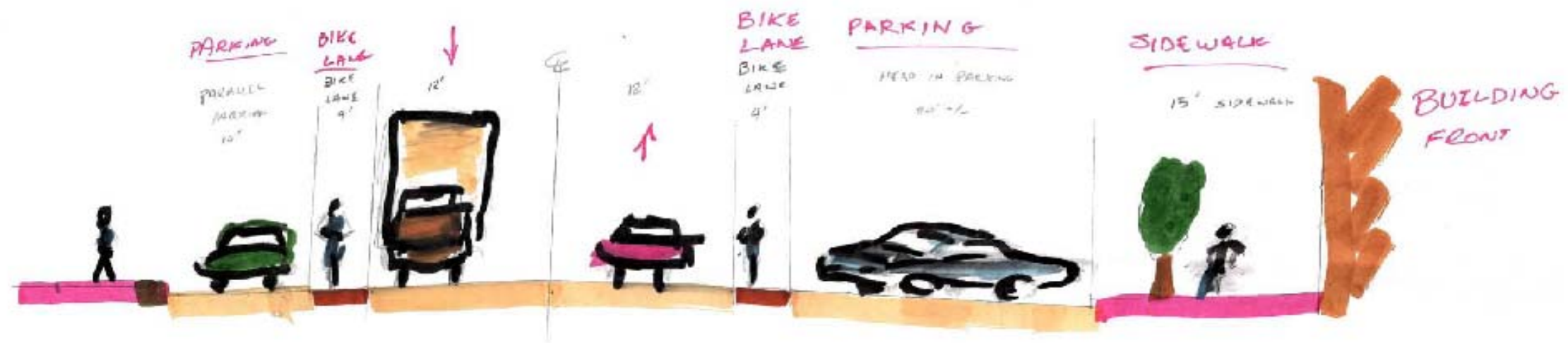


TRAFFIC CALMING  
 BENCHES ALONG MAIN ST.  
 STREET TREES  
 INCREASE SIDEWALK WIDTH

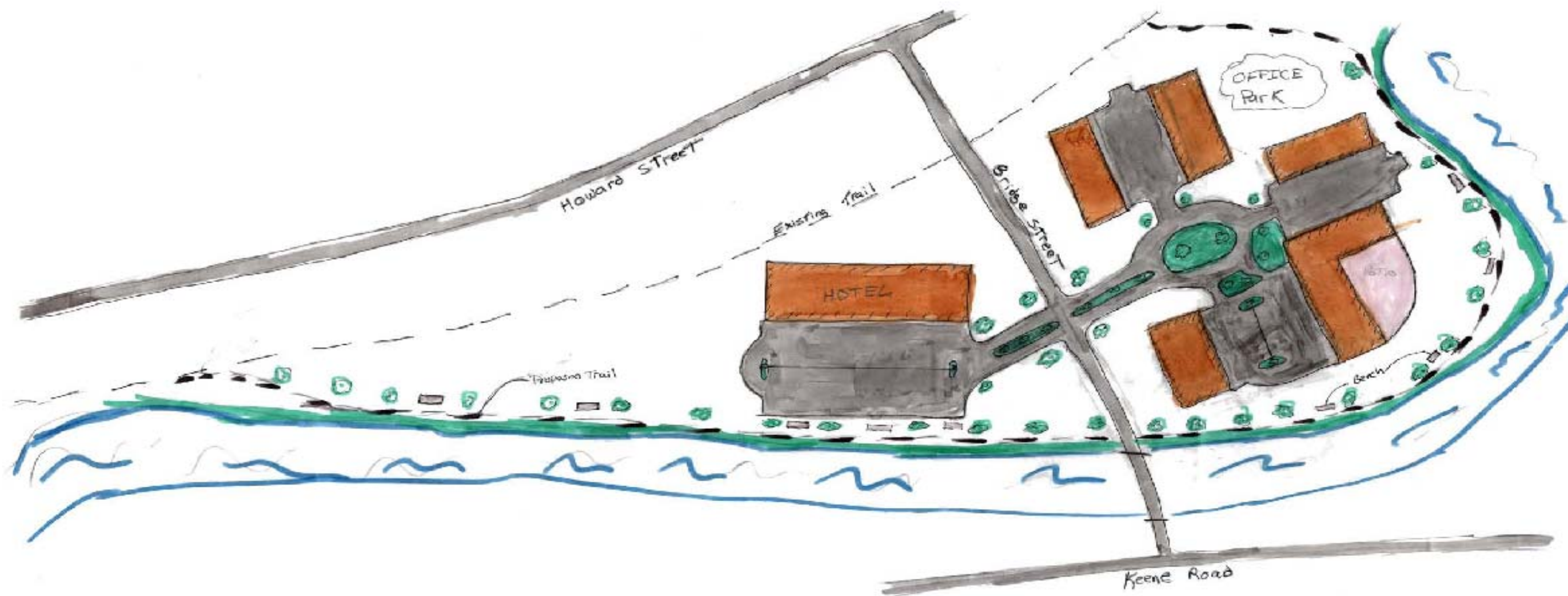
## Downtown Streetscape











## A.C. LAWRENCE RE-DEVELOPMENT











# Conclusions, Funding, Next Steps

## Conclusions & Next Steps

The Winchester Charrette provided a process through which stakeholders, both public and private, might become aware of many possibilities for improving their Downtown. From this exercise, stakeholders should emerge with an understanding of the factors that influence or impede economic prosperity in their town, and they will be better positioned to grow their investment within the context of an overall vision for the area.

A charrette is intended to be a creative stimulus – a brain storming event – which yields both practical design and redevelopment ideas. Stakeholders, including the Town officials, should take the most reasonable elements of this charrette and devise a comprehensive strategy for improving the Downtown of Winchester and the redevelopment of the Tannery site..

A long-range development strategy should be established. Because stakeholders will have different investment time-tables, it will be advisable to identify projects that can be implemented in stages, over time. When various sectors of the market become advantageous for development, certain elements of the Downtown Task Force Plan should be ready to launch.

Listed elsewhere in this report are traditional and non-traditional funding resources; in addition, there are strategies to offset portions of the public development phase, such as establishing a TIF (tax incremental financing) district. For the private sector, the Community Revitalization Tax Incentive may be useful.

### **Recommendations for immediate next steps:**

- Activate a Downtown Task Force, using the list of stakeholders who attended the charrette to get it started. The goal will be to keep momentum going by establishing regular meeting dates, with benchmarks for accomplishments outlined.
- Develop a good action plan with a list of priorities, both public and private, for Downtown and surrounding neighborhood improvements. Use the recommendations in this report as a starting point.
- The public priorities, including streetscape and landscape improvements, will require consensus building, advocacy, and leadership from the Task Force.
- The private sector will want to work in tandem with public improvements, so the prioritized action plan will be a valuable planning tool. Regular press coverage will build credibility and help sustain momentum; it may serve to attract additional investment as well as volunteers.

## Tools for Implementation

There is a wealth of sources of funding and expertise to explore. When applying for grants and foundation monies, many of the funders require plans or a detailed program to be in place as an assurance that projects will be completed to qualify for funds.

### Expertise:

NH office of Environment and Planning (OEP)  
NH office of Travel & Tourism  
Division of Economic Development (DRED)  
Division of Historical Resources  
NH Council on the Arts  
Small Business Administration (SBA)  
NH Preservation Alliance

### Funding

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)  
Economic Development Administration  
NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)  
Conservation License Plate Funds  
Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)  
Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA)  
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)  
Town Trust Funds



## **Foundations and Private Funding Sources:**

**Wal-Mart Good Works** – [www.walmartfoundation.org](http://www.walmartfoundation.org)

**The Home Depot** – Community Impact Grants,  
<http://corporate.homedepot.com/wps/portal/!ut/p/.cmd/cs/.ce/70A/.s/70121/s.70A/70121>

**The Timberland Company** – Community Involvement Program,  
<http://www.timberland.com/corp/index.jsp?page=communityInvolvement>

**The Ford Foundation**, <http://www.fordfound.org/>

**PSNH** – Community Giving program, [http://www.psnh.com/Community/Support/corp\\_giving.asp](http://www.psnh.com/Community/Support/corp_giving.asp)

**The Allstate Foundation** -  
<http://www.allstate.com/Community/PageRender.asp?Page=foundation.html>

**The Verizon Foundation** - <http://foundation.verizon.com/>

**Merck Family Fund** - <http://www.merckff.org/index.html>

**The Madeline G. von Weber Trust** - Funds projects in community development, neighborhood development, human services and the performing arts. Contact: Madeline G. von Weber Trust, c/o James d. Dow, 95 Market St., Manchester, NH 03101.

**New England Grassroots Environment Fund** - <http://www.grassrootsfund.org/>

**Transportation Enhancement Act Program** - Project categories include: facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians; safety and educational activities for bicyclists and pedestrians; acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites; scenic or historic highway programs; landscaping and other scenic beautification; historic preservation; rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities; preservation of abandoned railway corridors; control and removal of outdoor advertising; archaeological planning and research; environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highways or vehicles; and establishing transportation museums.—  
<http://www.nh.gov/dot/municipalhighways/tecmaq/index.htm>

**Waste Management Charitable Giving Program** - Support for Environment, Education, and Community Impact Programs - <http://www.wm.com/WM/community/Giving.asp>

**Enterprise Community Partners** - <http://www.enterprisecommunity.org/>

**ORTON FAMILY FOUNDATION**, [www.orton.org](http://www.orton.org)

**Heart & Soul Community Planning**

**Submission Deadline: March , 2009**

**Open to:** Communities in select New England and Rocky Mountain states. Partnership opportunity for four communities to receive funding and technical assistance on major community visioning and planning projects.

We also suggest the town consider enacting RSA 79-E, Community Revitalization Tax Incentives. Signed into law in 2006, this makes it possible for a property owners wanting to substantially rehabilitate a building in a downtown or village center, may apply to the local governing body for a period of temporary tax relief.

**Winchester has what it takes to realize its objectives to revitalize and reinvigorate the town. Your talent, energy, commitment, and spirit along with your accomplishments to date are an excellent spring board to continue to move forward**





# Budget Costs for Development

<b>Ashuelot River Inn</b>	
Demolition	\$ 245,000.00
New Construction/Renovation (14,250SF 2fls. w/basement)	\$2,375,000.00
Elm Street Bridge	\$1,900,000.00
<b>Renovate Fire Station for Business Incubator (8,000 SF)</b>	<b>\$ 800,000.00</b>
<b>Parking lot at old Lumber Yard (75 Parking Spots)</b>	<b>\$ 90,000.00</b>
<b>Bank Building Renovation (5,000SF @ \$75.00/SF)</b>	<b>\$ 375,000.00</b>
<b>Riverwalk</b>	
Rivers Edge Cleanup	\$ 100,000.00
Riverwalk (6,000LF)	\$ 850,000.00
New covered pedestrian bridge	\$ 500,000.00
<b>Outdoor Amphitheatre</b>	<b>\$1,000,000.00</b>
<b>Tannery Site Redevelopment</b>	
New Construction (48,000SF @ \$250.00/SF)	\$12,000,000.00
Site final cleanup	\$ 500,000.00
Bridge reconstruction	\$ 1,200,000.00
Route 10 intersection	\$ 350,000.00
<b>Main Street reconstruction, streetscape, sidewalks, lighting,</b>	<b>\$ 1,500,000.00</b>





**Special Thanks to Plan NH's Corporate Sponsors  
As well as the people and local businesses that Donated Money, Food, and  
In-kind Services to make this Charrette possible**



**In-kind Donations:**

Winchester School  
ELMMCC  
Keene Sentinel  
Weathered Roads  
Winchester Economic/  
Revitalization Committee

**Food**

Arlington Grange  
Cheshire Chicks  
Kulick's  
Mr. G's  
Mr. Mike's  
P—Square  
Piccadilly Farm  
Winchester Learning Center

**Monetary Donations**

Ahern & George, LLC  
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Margaret & Scott Sharra  
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Margaret Shannon  
Tri-Valley Broadcast  
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Winchester Roll Products  
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Hurl Rock Motel, Inc.  
Jane Pisapia  
K, Heidleman, Inc.  
Ken & Karen Berthiaume  
Winchester Speed Park  
Jackie Harrison