

# *Franconia Village Design Charrette*

*November 7th & 8th, 2008*



**PLAN NH**

*Visioning for Sustainable Communities*

*A Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment*



# Franconia Charrette Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go 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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With very special thanks to **Bernardette Costa** who worked very closely with the Plan NH advance team and was an invaluable resource and asset during the entire charrette process.

Charrette Booklet Printed by:





# Plan NH Visits Franconia, NH

November 7 & 8, 2008

## Who is Plan NH?

**Plan NH** is an association of professionals working in the *built environment*. The organization includes architects, planners, engineers, bankers, builders, construction managers, historic preservationists, and others who concern themselves with sustainable communities and buildings. It was established to create a forum for bringing together these different professional groups and serve as a catalyst for spurring interest in participatory community development. Part of **Plan NH's** mission is to make a positive contribution to New Hampshire communities. One way in which **Plan NH** does this is by providing design assistance to communities with demonstrated commitment and 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 in a short timeframe. 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 provides a direction against which future decisions may be measured.



## Why did the Plan NH Charrette come to Franconia?

In February of 2008, the Town of Franconia submitted a proposal to **Plan NH** for design assistance. Of the twelve proposals submitted, Franconia 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 a strong community commitment, 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 also looking for community problems that may have transferability to other communities.





# The Charrette Process & Executive Summary

Franconia Town Officials and residents gathered with the **Plan NH** Charrette team on Friday, November 7, 2008 to discuss the details of the town's proposal for the Plan NH team. Design professionals on the team included an architect, landscape architects, planners, several civil engineers, cost estimators, and real estate professionals and a representative of the District Engineer's office of the NH Department of Transportation. The critical piece that the Charrette Team lacked, which only the local residents could provide, was the intimate knowledge of the Town of Franconia.

***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.***



With that in mind, the team and residents began formulating a new vision for Franconia Village.

After an introductory meeting with town officials to orient the team to the issues and concerns of the project, the team went on a tour of the village area. This was an opportunity for the team to familiarize themselves with the layout, traffic, parking, land uses, buildings and to learn about the past and present history of the town. Franconia Village hosts a mixture of commercial, residential, and civic buildings that have undergone gradual change over the years. Two of the most notable assets of the village are the scenic views of Cannon Mountain and the Lafayette ridge and the close proximity of the Gale River to Main Street.

The tour took us south along Main Street and over the Gale River bridge at Dow Street. We were advised of the history of the Dow Academy building and the great asset that the town has in the Dow strip, including the recreational trail along the banks of the river. As the tour progressed, the team identified a few specific areas in the village area which could use some improvement. As we approached the Church Street/Route 116 bridge it was noted that there are problems with visibility and speed as vehicles approach and pass through the intersection. Many residents believe this is due to the width and vertical rise of the new bridge as it passes over the river. Turning north on Main Street, it was clear that the historic traffic and parking patterns in the commercial section of the village have begun to outgrow both the available space for parking in front of retail buildings and the ability to accommodate all of the turning movements on Main Street.



The team was impressed that nearly all of the existing retail spaces are occupied, suggesting that the local economic conditions are active and stable. We did note that some buildings could use some attention to exterior maintenance and that a more active and vibrant village center might be accomplished by encouraging some building additions or infill development. It was also clear that there has not been any consistent, long term treatment of public street amenities in the commercial core—specifically curbs, sidewalks, tree planting and street lighting.



During our walk along a portion of the Gale River path we noted the sizeable amount of space behind the commercial buildings that could be available for additional parking. The team continued north along Main Street, past Garnett Hill, The Lafayette School and to the Sugar Hill town line. We noted that the sidewalk on the easterly side of the street is fairly narrow, has minimal separation from the street travel lanes and very limited pavement shoulders. It was also pointed out that both Main and Church Streets are controlled by the state highway department. At the conclusion of our tour we headed back to Town Hall to participate in the public listening sessions.







# Franconia Village Charrette Project Area



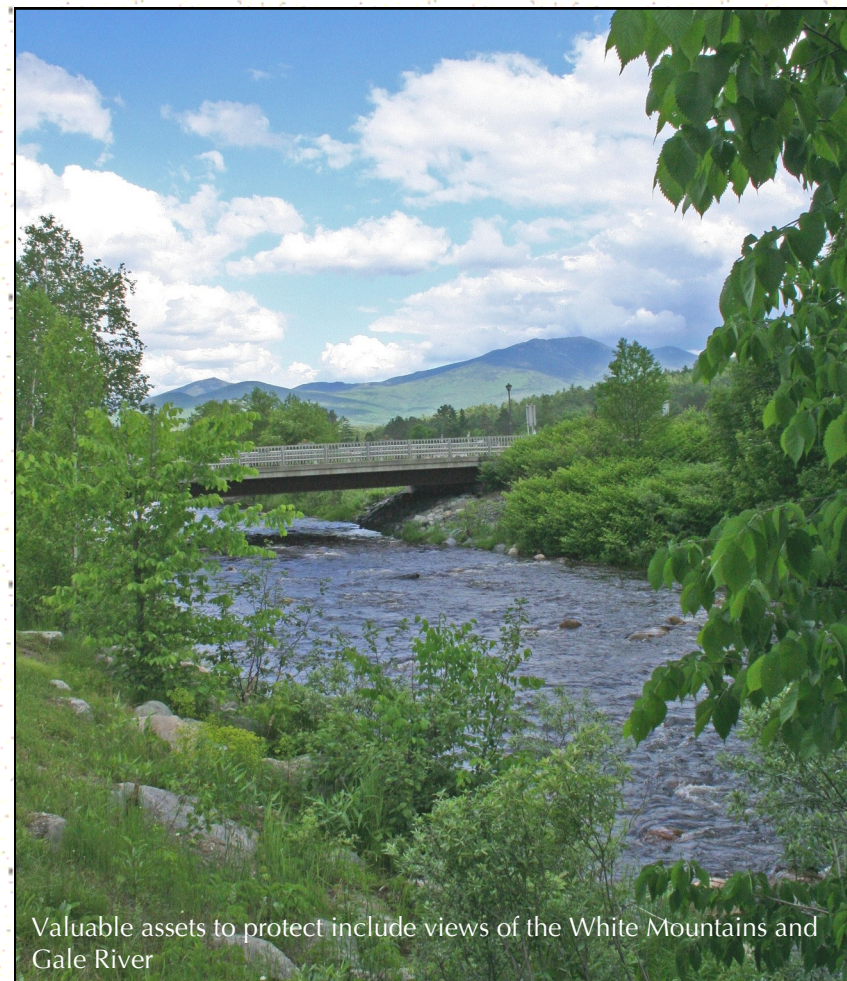


# Franconia's Proposal

The Franconia Planning Board, with the support of the Board of Selectmen, is seeking assistance in developing a cohesive plan to address a number of issues in the center of Franconia Village. The proposal to PlanNH included the following key elements:

- ❑ Designing safer parking
- ❑ Designing smoother traffic flow
- ❑ Utilizing traffic calming devices
- ❑ Creating a more walkable area for seniors and children
- ❑ Redesigning a safer intersection

The project is important to the town because many of the issues and ideas have been discussed for years and the newly adopted master plan has helped to galvanize interest in a comprehensive solution. Several of the Town's new Master Plan goals are directly connected to this charrette challenge:



Valuable assets to protect include views of the White Mountains and Gale River

- ❑ Maintain the small village commercial atmosphere
- ❑ Protect the scenic beauty, and small town character of Franconia
- ❑ Protect the integrity of Main Street and the Village
- ❑ Protect and enhance recreational opportunities throughout the town – more specifically:
  - ❑ Develop safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Routes 116 and 18
  - ❑ Enhance the walkability of Franconia's downtown and surrounding areas
  - ❑ Encourage the protection and development of multi-use/walking and hiking trails
  - ❑ Protect the Gale River Basin from overdevelopment and consider buffer zones along the waterway
  - ❑ Modernize Franconia's infrastructure by making it more vehicular friendly and safe, including making the Route 18/116 intersection safer and researching ways to construct granite curbing along Main Street to provide a safer buffer between vehicles and pedestrians.

The project is further challenged by the fact that the main intersection and streets (Routes 18 and 116) are both owned and controlled by the state department of transportation.



Adding streetscape amenities including granite curbing, trees, lighting, sidewalks, landscaping could dramatically improve both vehicular and pedestrian safety, and enhance scenic, small town character

"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 Listening Sessions

During the public sessions, residents identified a variety of specific issues, and desires for Franconia Village

## **Franconia Village – Major Assets**

- Rural, small town appearance and character
- Mountain views
- Community gathering place
- Gale River
- Recreation opportunities and the Dow Strip



## **Issues and Concerns**

### **Bike & Pedestrian Issues**

- ☐ Develop a seven mile bike loop
- ☐ Enhance the path along the Gale River
- ☐ Construct a bridge from the Library to Dow strip
- ☐ Implement “Safe Routes to Schools”
- ☐ Improve safety by increasing separation between cars/bikes/pedestrians in the village center
- ☐ Establish bike lanes on streets
- ☐ Need sidewalks on both sides of Main Street with landscaping
- ☐ More and higher visibility crosswalks in the village center

### **Vehicular Safety**

- ☐ Safety & visibility at Rt. 116 & 18 intersection

- ☐ Route 116/18 intersection reconfiguration options:
  - ☐ Concerns: too narrow in winter; speed; safety; visibility; blind approach from west
  - ☐ 4-way stop
  - ☐ Roundabout: e.g. Meredith, Plymouth
    - ☐ Will it take away from the unique character of Franconia Village?
  - ☐ Narrower intersection to reduce speed
  - ☐ Better advance signage
  - ☐ Eliminate blinking light (red/yellow beacon)
- ☐ Close exit from Mac’s nearest the intersection
- ☐ Eliminate right turn slip ramp from I-93 to Main Street heading north – in front of Mac’s
- ☐ Poor visibility in winter with snow banks – generally, and at driveways
- ☐ Visually narrow Main Street to slow down traffic

### **Parking and Circulation**

- ☐ Safety concerns of head-in, on-street parking
- ☐ Consider parallel on-street parking instead of head-in
- ☐ The Post Office driveway is too busy, combine with bank and make it one-way
- ☐ Separate the parking from the travel way
- ☐ Put all parking behind all buildings on west side of Main Street
- ☐ Better lane delineation at all driveway entrances and exits
- ☐ Compensate business owners who move parking to the rear of their buildings
- ☐ Improve layout and aesthetics of Mac’s parking lot

### **Community Appearance**

- ☐ Replant trees along Main Street which was once called Elm Street
- ☐ Improve the appearance of the river bank, landscaping and reduce visibility of the rip rap
- ☐ Move the ice rink to Dow strip



- ☐ Put all utilities underground
- ☐ All village center improvements need to take the long term view regarding improved aesthetics
- ☐ Use Gale River as a visual and recreational resource
- ☐ Improve the overall appearance of the entrance from I-93 and specifically Mac’s and the gas station
- ☐ Preserve the rural feel of the town
- ☐ Improve appearance of the gas station – particularly dumpster and used tires
- ☐ Develop a streetscape design standard for trees, benches, lighting, sidewalks, etc.
- ☐ Reduce parking and pavement in the village center
- ☐ Reduce I-93 noise and install a visual barrier to separate the highway from Main Street
- ☐ Don’t block views from the highway
- ☐ The Village Store and Post Office are the social center of the town
- ☐ Install “Welcome to Franconia Village” signs at the main entrances to the village
- ☐ Improve the appearance of the bridge with better railings, lighting and abutments



# Charrette Team Proposals and Recommendations

**We have heard the opinions and concerns of the residents. We have walked, studied, measured and observed the the physical character and working dynamics of the village center area and have observed the conditions that we need to address with a comprehensive proposal. Following are our findings and recommendations to address the Franconia Village challenge.**

After studying the town's proposal, listening to the community and making first hand observations of the study area, the charrette team began to develop a strong sense of direction on what was needed. Taking the community's desire to maintain the small town character and scenic quality of the village as paramount, the improvements needed to accomplish the goal involve a series of coordinated tasks that will shape the safety, functionality, appearance and future economic vitality of Franconia Village.

## **Pedestrian & Bicycle Circulation & Safety**

1. Fully implement a "Safe routes to school" program: link the residential area near the Dow Strip (Academy and Harvard Streets) to the elementary school via a street crossing on Church Street and a sidewalk on the **WEST** side of Main Street. This will help avoid school children having to negotiate the 116/18 intersection.
2. Allow elementary school age children to use the Main Street sidewalks for bicycle circulation.
3. Upgrade the River Walk by having volunteers complete minor tree clearing, debris removal and installation of a four foot wide stone dust path. This should be undertaken along the Dow Strip as well as behind the retail stores on Main Street from the Church Street to the Route 117 bridge.
4. Install paved shoulders along Main Street to separate traffic from sidewalks, provide space for adult bicyclists and to provide space for snow storage.
5. On Main Street, south of the intersection, move the sidewalk easterly (toward the highway) in front of church, town hall and library to provide for a widened shoulder or sidewalk along the west side of Main Street next to river and/or sidewalk.
6. Construct a pedestrian/bike bridge from the library to the Dow Strip.
7. Install/relocate heightened visibility crosswalks at the Village Store, and several other locations. Including higher contrast pavement markings and better signage.

## **Vehicular Safety, Parking and Circulation**

1. Redesign the 116/18 intersection either with a roundabout or a narrower intersection and approaches to improve visibility, reduce speed and improve pedestrian and vehicular safety. A narrower intersection would include elimination of the slip ramp in front of Mac's.
2. Define (with curbing, sidewalks and plantings) and narrow all driveway and parking lot access points on and off Main Street to better channel traffic movements.
3. Eliminate the exit movement from Mac's nearest the main intersection
4. Eliminate the entrance movement to the gas station directly from the intersection
5. Remove all head-in, on-street parking and replace it with parallel on-street parking. This can be coordinated with interconnected parking to the rear of all Main Street businesses on both sides of Main Street. The west side being of highest priority
6. Create paved shoulders or "landscape strips" next to curb to store snow in the winter, serve as amenities during non-winter seasons and to separate the travel way from pedestrians.
7. Improve the layout and aesthetics of Mac's parking lot, which also results in safer, more organized vehicular movements.

## **Community Appearance**

1. Plant trees along Main Street
2. Landscape the river bank
3. Move more of the utilities underground
4. Encourage improved appearance of commercial buildings including the gas station and Mac's
5. New street lighting
6. New lighting and railings on bridge
7. Building façade improvements





# Pedestrian & Bicycle Circulation & Safety

## PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS

### LEGEND:

- SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOL
- TOWN SIDEWALK
- PATHS
- CROSS WALK

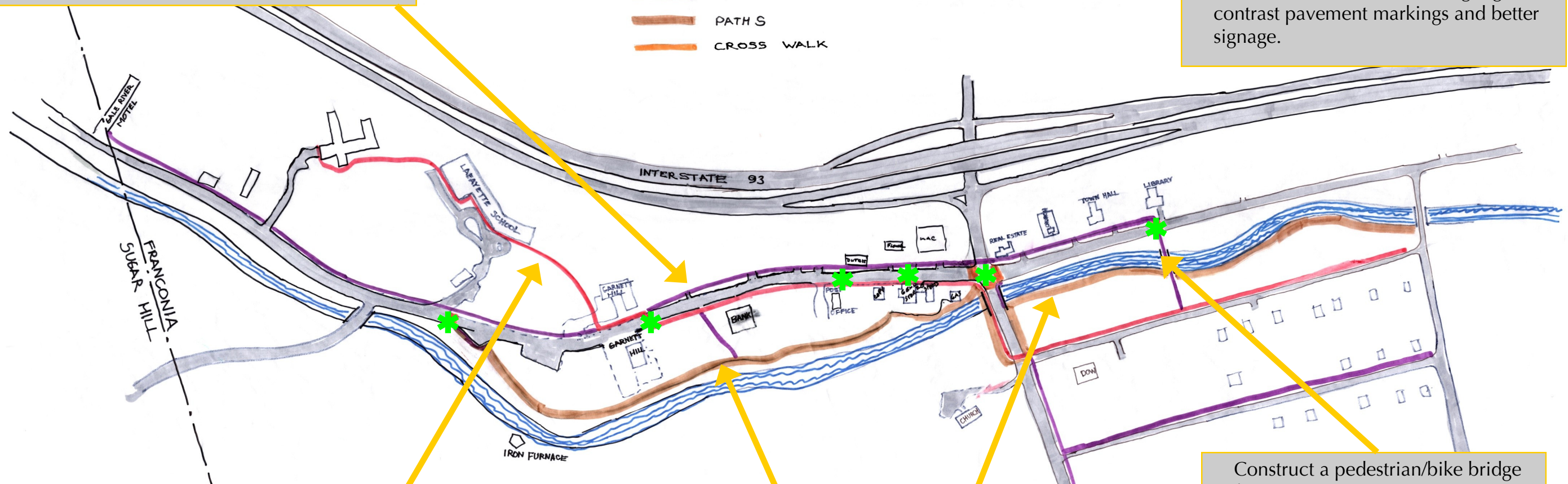
✱ Install/relocate heightened visibility crosswalks at the Village Store, and several other locations. Including higher contrast pavement markings and better signage.

Allow elementary school age children to use the Main Street sidewalks for bicycle circulation.

Construct a pedestrian/bike bridge from the Library to the Dow Strip.

Upgrade the River Walk by having volunteers complete minor tree clearing, debris removal and installation of a four foot wide stone dust path. This should be undertaken along the Dow Strip as well as behind the retail stores on Main Street from the Church Street to the Route 117 bridge.

Fully implement a "Safe routes to school" program: link the residential area near the Dow Strip (Academy and Harvard Streets) to the elementary school via a street crossing on Church Street and a sidewalk on the **WEST** side of Main Street. This will help school children avoid crossing at the 116/18 intersection.





# Pedestrian & Bicycle Circulation & Safety *(continued)*

The principal objective of safe pedestrian routes for school children is to provide the most protected walk from residential neighborhoods within the village to the school. The primary residential area in town is located in the Academy/Harvard Streets neighborhood. This is three to four thousand feet from the Lafayette School. The primary objective was to devise a route that **does not cross** the hazardous intersection of Main Street and Route 116, even though recommendations to improve this crossing are proposed in other sections of this report. The second objective was to ensure the children are at the same time **visible** at all locations along the path. For this reason we rejected the choice of locating it along the secluded river path north of Route 116 even though it is free of vehicular traffic.

The safe route to school would therefore start along Academy and Harvard Streets next to the Dow recreational fields, cross Church Street (Route 116) at Academy Street well before the bridge, cross over the bridge using the sidewalk on the north side and then turn left on Main Street. Our recommended path would then follow a new sidewalk along the westerly side of Main Street past the filling station, sports and hardware store, post office and bank. It would cross Main Street at the existing cross walk at Garnet Hill, Inc. The route would then follow an established path along the edge of the Garnett Hill parking lot, crossing a field between Garnet Hill and the school. It is our understanding that there is already a grant that can pay for approximately 2200 feet of this walk that needs to be located on the west side of Main Street.

Additional town sidewalks are also included in our proposal to flank Main Street on each side running at least to the library on the south and to the Sugar Hill border on the north. Trees and ornamental street lamps should be added just beyond the sidewalks on each side. The latter would offer additional safety and both would add considerably to the beauty of the village center. An additional feature proposed elsewhere in our report as a design option but which should be noted here is the idea of a three to four foot wide grass strip separating the pavement from the sidewalks. This would further screen pedestrians from the traffic and also provide a place for snow storage.

The recreational paths extend this concept further by taking advantage of the Gale River and the Iron Furnace historic site. While the paths along the river both north and south of Church Street extend through the village center, we would certainly encourage extending them wherever practical. The multi-season recreational value of this trail system would benefit both the local economy and amenities for residents.

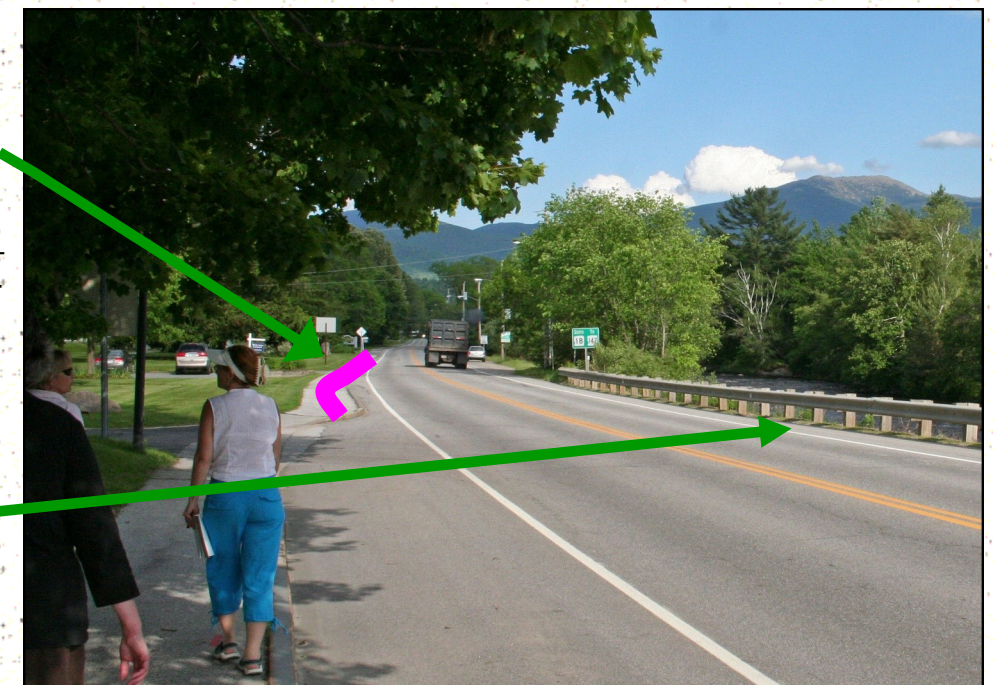
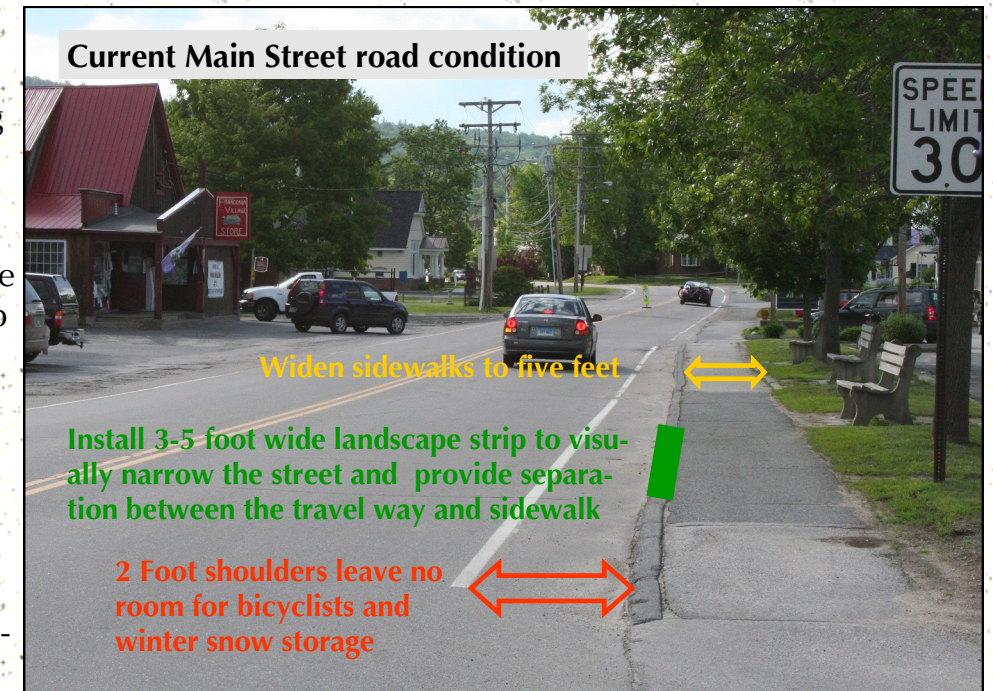
Finally, a longer term recommendation is to add a foot bridge across the Gale River opposite the Town Library. This would connect Main Street and the library to the recreational fields and the residential neighborhood beyond. It would go a long way to give the town the tight knit unified feel of a traditional New England town.

The NH Department of Transportation owns a 66 foot wide right of way along the entirety of Main Street. This width allows for ample space to provide five foot shoulders through the village as well as a landscaped strip to separate the vehicular travel lane from a five foot wide sidewalk.

- \* Install paved shoulders along Main Street to separate traffic from sidewalks, provide space for adult bicyclists and to provide space for snow storage.

- \* On Main Street, south of the intersection, move the sidewalk easterly (toward the interstate highway) in front of church, town hall and library to provide for a widened shoulder or sidewalk along the west side of Main Street next to river and/or sidewalk.

- \* The shoulder next to the guard rail is too narrow for safe bicycling





# Vehicular Safety, Parking & Circulation

**Intersection Modifications:** The public listening sessions produced a number of comments and much discussion about how to best improve visibility, pedestrian and vehicular safety and aesthetics of the Route 116/18 intersection. After hearing the community's concerns, the charrette team explored two alternatives to see how best to address those concerns; (1) a roundabout, or (2) a narrower intersection with narrower approaches.

## **Reconfigure The Existing Intersection:**

Modifications to the existing intersection include several options:

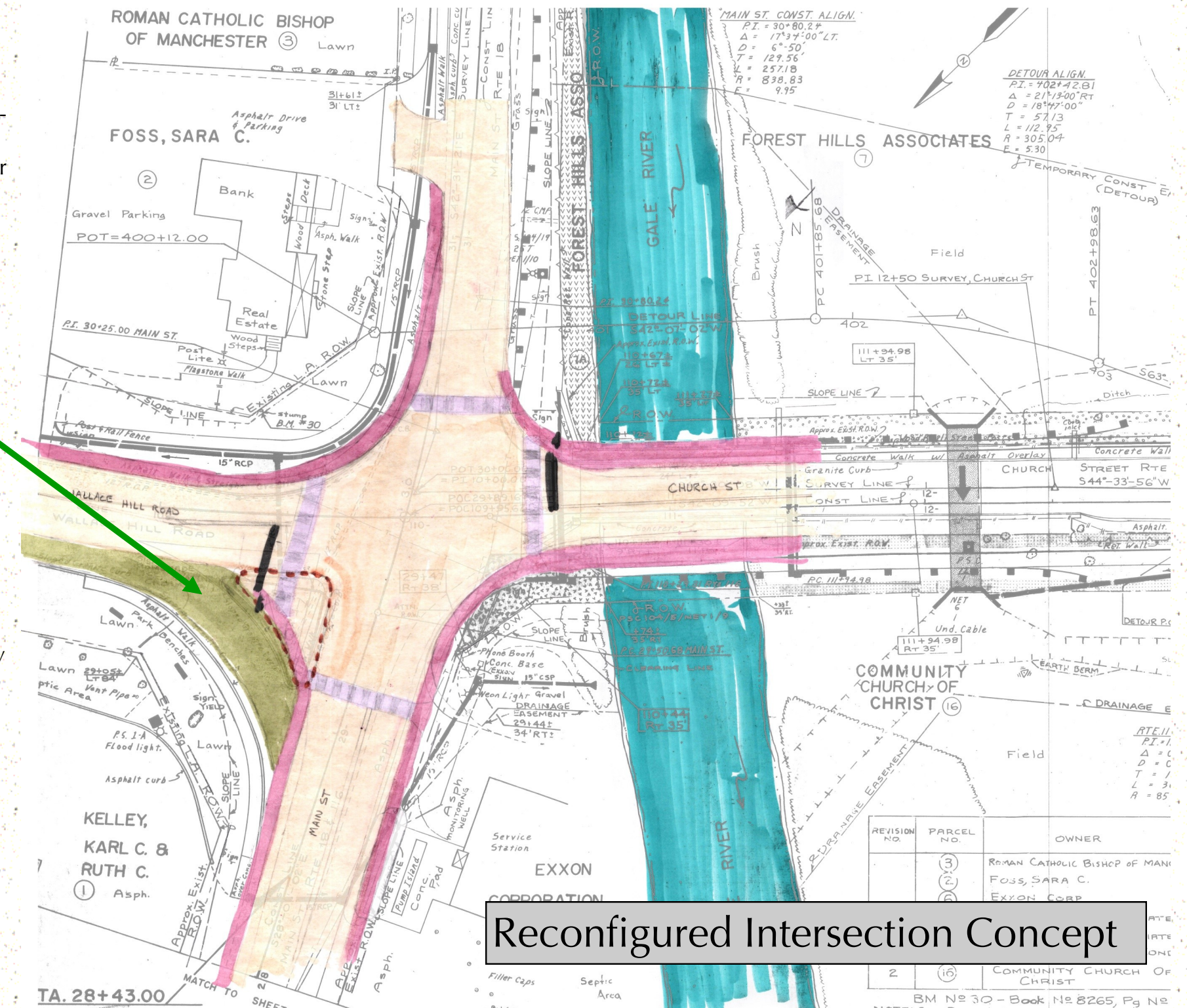
- ☐ Reduce roadway shoulder width
- ☐ Widen the sidewalk on the bridge
- ☐ Install bicycle lanes
- ☐ Eliminate the right turn slip ramp in front of Mac's

## **Advantages:**

- ☐ Lower cost alternative to a roundabout
- ☐ No impacts on abutting properties
- ☐ Narrower intersection reduces travel speeds
- ☐ Provides space for wider sidewalks

## **Disadvantages:**

- ☐ A key element of narrower intersections is to narrow the vehicular travel way and visually narrow the space available to the motorist by making smaller shoulders and placing curbing closer to the travel way. This conflicts with another charrette goal of providing wider shoulders for safe bike lanes.





# Vehicular Safety, Parking & Circulation (continued)

**Construct a Roundabout in the Intersection:** Roundabout features:

- ☐ Single lane roundabout
- ☐ Widen sidewalk on the bridge and place a raised median
- ☐ To accommodate tractor-trailers' larger turning radius, the right turns from bridge require a right turn slip ramp
- ☐ Roundabouts require all approaching vehicles to yield to vehicles in the roundabout
- ☐ Roundabouts force traffic to slow down to negotiate the curve
- ☐ Raised splitter islands also slow vehicles and improve pedestrian safety

**Advantages:**

- ☐ Roundabouts force vehicles to slow down so that they can negotiate the curvature of the circle
- ☐ Roundabouts are generally safer than 4-way intersections
- ☐ The roundabout design provides safer pedestrian crossings

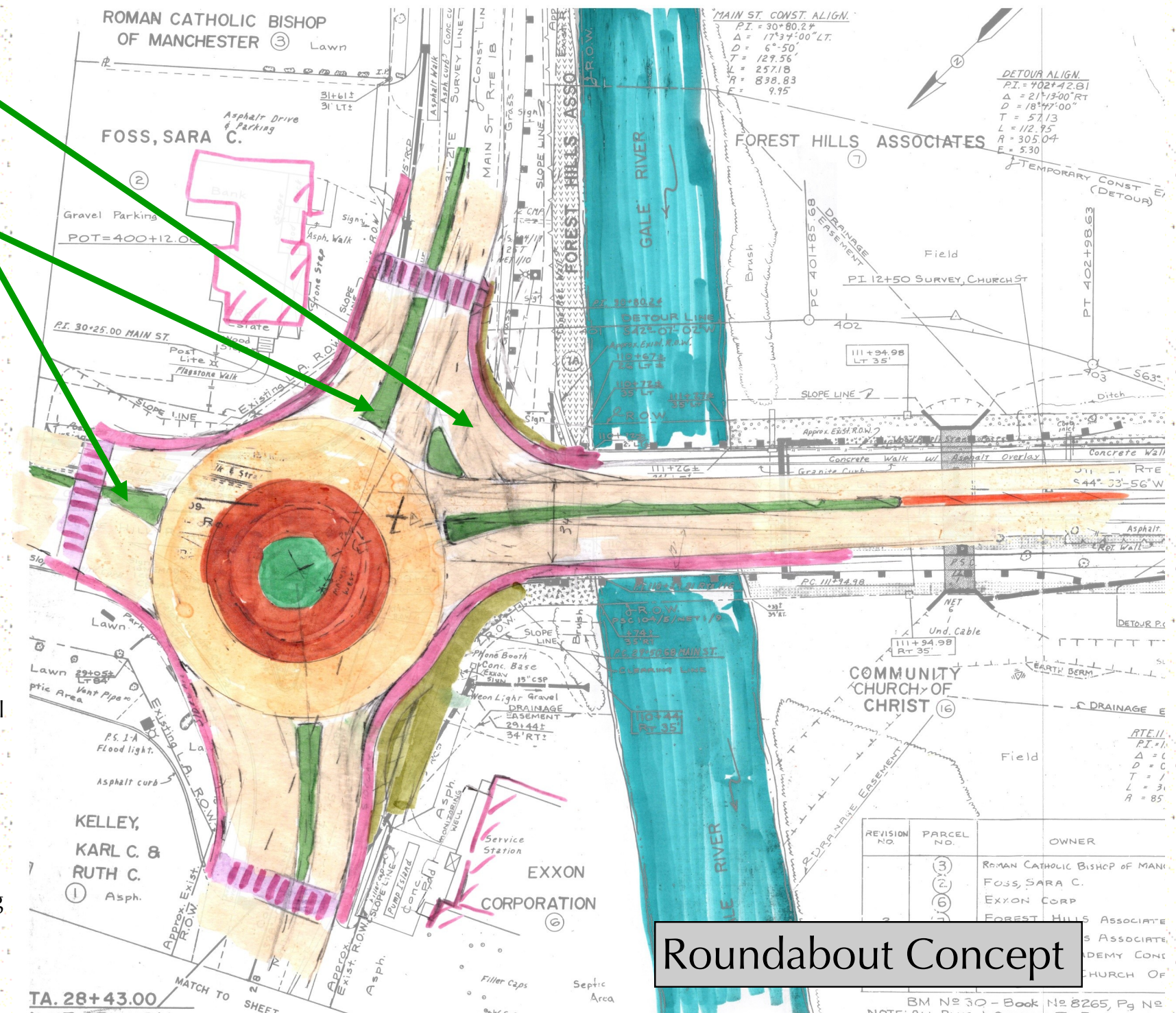
**Disadvantages:**

- ☐ Roundabouts are more costly to construct in an existing intersection due to added land acquisition costs and a larger area that must be reconstructed

**Other Options:**

There are other improvements that could also be considered independently or supplemental to the intersection options listed above.

- ☐ Modify the I-93 southbound off ramp to require westbound traffic to slow down and make a 90 degree right turn (less of a "free right" condition)
- ☐ Construct an intersection warning beacon (flashing yellow light) at the intersection warning sign on the eastbound approach of Rt. 116 west of the bridge.
- ☐ Conduct an engineering study to determine if the intersection meets Federal standards for a four-way stop:
  - ☐ 5 or more vehicle crashes in 12-months period that could be corrected by a 4-way stop;
  - ☐ At least 300 vehicles/hr. entering from Main Street for 8 hrs. on an average day with 200 vehicles, bikes, and/or pedestrians entering from Rt. 116/Wallace Hill Rd during the same 8hrs.
- ☐ If a four-way stop is not warranted, the Town could conduct an engineering study to determine if there is adequate sight distance to "flip" the stopping roadway from Rt. 116/Wallace Hill Rd. to Main Street.



**Roundabout Concept**



# Vehicular Safety, Parking & Circulation (continued)

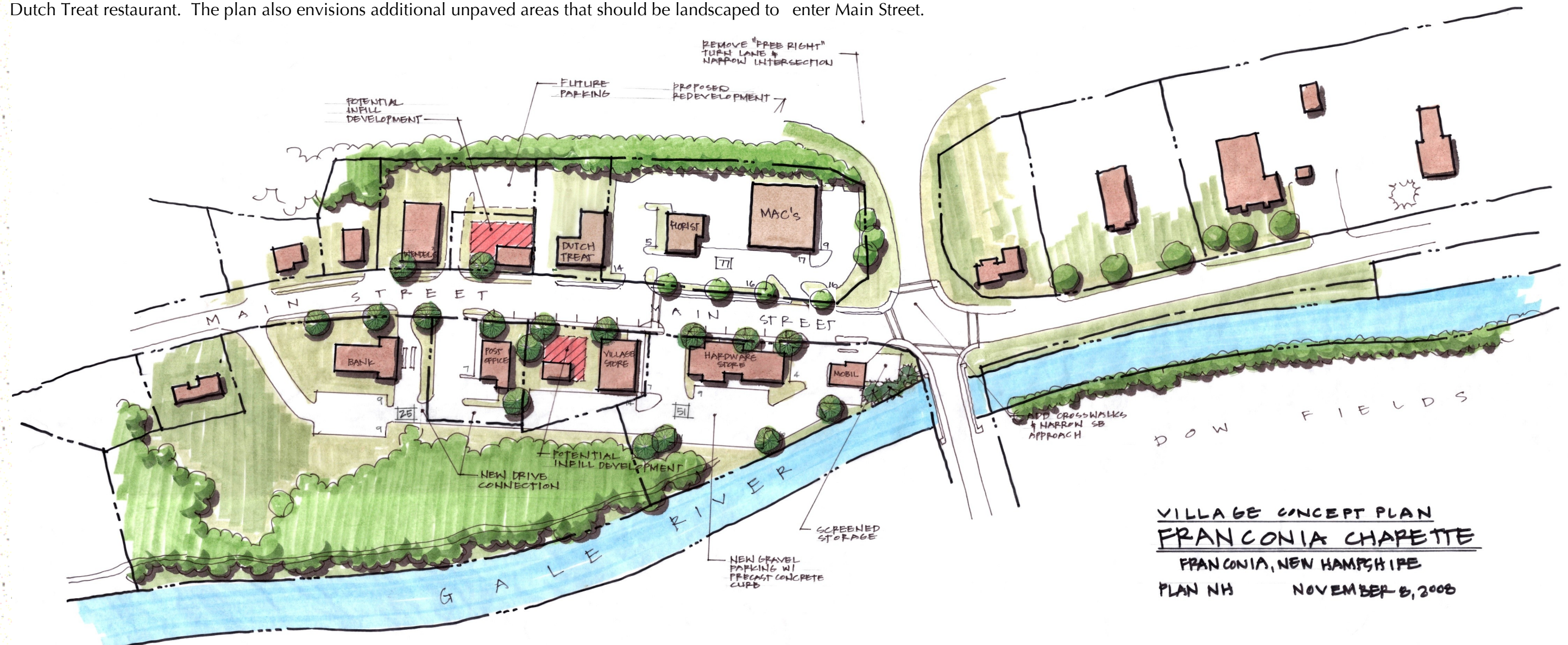
The concept plan (below) integrates many of the recommendations of the charrette team.

**Access Management:** Foremost is the need to clearly define driveway access and egress points along the entire length of Main Street. Increases in traffic volumes and vehicular turning movements have contributed to the feeling that vehicles are traveling in random, undefined patterns. Defining driveway access points (or curb cuts) with curbing, sidewalks, landscaping and narrowing the driveway widths to 12 feet for one-way and 24 feet for two-way travel will clarify turning movement locations and improve vehicular safety.

**Mac's Parking Lot:** In front of Mac's and the florist we recommend channelizing the parking lot entrance to ONE-WAY IN only with the exiting movement and a second entrance occurring next to the Dutch Treat restaurant. The plan also envisions additional unpaved areas that should be landscaped to

improve the visual quality of this corner. Included in that landscaping treatment would be the narrowing of the Rt. 116/18 intersection (if a roundabout option is not chosen) that would result in a substantial landscaped area within the public right-of-way.

**West Side of Main Street:** Similar to Mac's, the Mobile Station access point nearest the 116/18 intersection should be channelized and made a one-way EXIT only. The driveway between the Mobil and Hardware store building needs to be defined with curbing, narrowed for two-way travel to serve as the entrance to the gas station and a fully defined parking lot to the rear of the hardware store. A two-way access drive is also proposed between the hardware store and the Village Store that also provides access to the shared parking area to the rear. The redesigned rear parking lot extends behind the post office and bank, allowing full circulation between all of these retail establishments without having to re-enter Main Street.





## Vehicular Safety, Parking & Circulation (continued)

**New Parking Configuration:** With increasing traffic volumes and business activity, the extensive amount of head-in parking on the street also creates significant public safety hazards. The charrette team looked at a number of solutions to this problem and concluded that there is sufficient space in the public right-of-way to permit parallel on-street parking along the westerly side of Main Street. With new defined driveway access points and a redesigned shared parking lot to the rear of the buildings, there is ample parking for all of the needs of these buildings. It is important to note that this proposed

parking lot design needs to be built using a gravel surface with pre-cast concrete curb stops for vehicles. This is necessary due to the close proximity to the Gale River and the need to not increase storm-water runoff. It would be advisable however to consider installing a paved sidewalk along the rear of these buildings to provide business customers with a place to walk in inclement weather. The reconfigured parking area should also take into account another recommendation to upgrade the river walk behind these buildings.





# Community Appearance

The visual character of Franconia Village has a solid foundation. Most of the buildings on Main Street are of compatible scale and character but many could use some level of improvement. The

renderings on this and the preceding page provide illustrations of how the combined recommendations of this charrette could enhance the aesthetics of the village while maintaining its rural, small town character.



The renderings show the visual benefits of a uniform design of sidewalks, curbing, parallel parking, street tree planting and lighting. It also illustrates the uncluttered appearance that can be achieved by continuing the town's efforts to relocate overhead wires underground.

The rendering on this page shows a modified front façade of Mac's which was accomplished by the addition of a simple front porch to make the scale of the building consistent with other village center buildings. Also shown is an alternative bridge railing and lighting design combined with a narrower intersection and expanded street tree plantings.

Contrast these two images with the photograph below. The installation of lighting and street trees helps to frame the magnificent view of the Lafayette Ridge. The curbing and sidewalks break up the expanse of pavement that dominates the existing scene.





## Community Appearance *(continued)*



Rendering of Main Street with new curbing, sidewalks, landscaping, parallel parking, street lighting, renovated building facades and narrower Rt. 116/18 intersection.



# Community Appearance *(continued)*

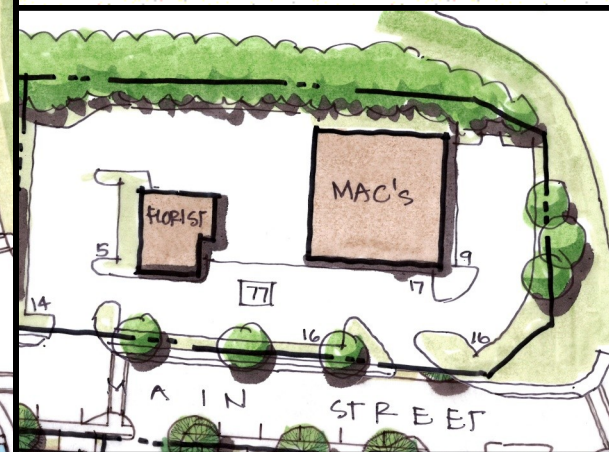
**Redevelopment potentials/Tax Base Expansion:** In the course of our investigations, the charrette team also identified three potential redevelopment opportunities that would both enhance the visual quality of the village center and add to the vitality and tax base of the community. The concept plan enlargement below highlights two properties (in pink with crosshatching) that could be expanded or redeveloped to enhance the visual character of the street if the buildings were designed to complement the existing streetscape. While considering alternative site improvements for Mac's (see inset sketch) we went a little further and said, what might happen if the entire

Mac's site could be redeveloped? One concept that we generated was to develop two new structures that are close to the street, with parking to the rear.

**Shoreland Protection:** The proximity of the village to the Gale River will need to be taken into account as the Town continues to plan and execute improvement projects for the Main Street area. The Gale River is classified as a fourth order stream and is protected by the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA) under RSA 483-B. These standards are intended to protect the fragile natural resources associated with public waters throughout the state. The protected shoreland includes the land within 250-feet of what is referred to as the reference line. For rivers this refers to the ordinary high water mark. The standards identify three zones of protection:

1. Waterfront Buffer & Primary Building Setback 50' from reference line
2. Natural Woodland Buffer 150' from reference line
3. The Protected Shoreland 250' from reference line

The standards establish setbacks for septic systems and buildings, limit tree cutting, restrict chemical applications, and limit impervious area among other things. For more detailed information regarding the CSPA visit <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wetlands/cspa/index.htm>.



**Septic Systems:** Future development of the village district needs to recognize the existing septic systems that serve the area. It appears likely that many of the septic systems serving the businesses in the village are located to the rear of the buildings. Some leachfield designs can accommodate vehicular traffic over them, others cannot.

The Town should research the location and type of existing septic facilities before proceeding with infrastructure improvements. Subjecting a leachfield to traffic loads, which it was not designed to support, can cause premature system failures. Given the existing density of development and the proximity to the river, the Town may want to consider a centralized sewage treatment system. This could also have a long term benefit to the land owners, the growth potential and tax base expansion of the village, as well as protection for the river. Community sewage systems have the advantage of taking up less space and can be maintained more efficiently than individual systems. They can also be funded by user fees for a local sewer district. We have included cost estimates for this opportunity in the budget proposal at the end of this report.



# Conclusions, Funding, Next Steps

## **Conclusions & Next Steps**

The Franconia Charrette provided a process through which stakeholders, both public and private, might become aware of many possibilities for improving the village center. From this exercise, the community should emerge with an understanding of the factors that influence or impede safety, aesthetics and 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 revitalization ideas. Stakeholders, including the Town officials, should take the most reasonable elements of this charrette and devise a comprehensive strategy for improving Franconia Village.

While we have suggested a long range implementation strategy, different factors will play into the actual implementation sequence. The Town and community at large need to maintain an eye toward the longer term objectives and maintain flexibility in the short term in order to take advantage of funding and other opportunities as they arise. Because stakeholders will have different investment time-tables, it may be advisable to identify projects that can be implemented in stages, over time.

Listed on the next few pages 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 or a special service district. For the private sector, the Community Revitalization Tax Incentive (RSA 79-E) may be useful.

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

- Create a Village 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 accomplishing priority tasks.
- Develop a good action plan with a list of priorities, both public and private, for the Village and surrounding 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. Because the two primary roads are controlled by NHDOT, close coordination with and cooperation by the District Highway Engineer will be essential. Informing and involving your state Representative and Senator may also be beneficial.
- 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 are 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 in order to qualify for funds.

### **Expertise:**

NH Office of Energy and Planning (OEP)  
NH Office of Travel & Tourism  
Division of Economic Development (within DRED)  
NH Department of Environmental Services (DES)  
NH Division of Historical Resources  
NH Council on the Arts  
U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)  
NH Preservation Alliance  
NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)

### **Funding**

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)  
Economic Development Administration  
NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)  
Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (RSA 79-E)  
Conservation License Plate Funds  
Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)  
Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA)  
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)  
Special Assessment Districts  
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 property owners wanting to substantially rehabilitate buildings in a downtown or village center to apply to the local governing body for a period of temporary tax relief.

**Franconia has what it takes to realize its objectives to improve the village center. Your talent, energy, commitment, and spirit are an excellent spring board to continue to move forward**





# Budget Estimates and Recommended Priorities

## Budget Estimates

River Side of Business Area (Bridge to Woodsville Guaranty Bank)			
Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Extension
Sidewalk w/granite curb	800 LF	\$150	\$120,000
River Walk-5' Unpaved**	2300 LF	\$35	\$80,500
Crosswalks	3 EA	\$1,500	\$4,500
Ornamental Bridge Railings	400 LF	\$300	\$120,000
Ornamental Street Lighting	13 EA	\$5,000	\$65,000
Move Utilities Underground	500 LF	\$200	\$100,000
Main St. Drainage Improvements	4 EA	\$5,000	\$20,000
Selective Cutting & Pruning @ Riverside**	6 A	\$3,000	\$18,000
Landscape Plantings	10 EA	\$600	\$6,000
Parking @ River Side of Retail	3000 SY	\$30	\$90,000
Welcome Signs	1 EA	\$4,000	\$4,000
Roadway Pavement Patching	1 LS	\$8,000	\$8,000
Access Improvements	5 EA	\$1,000	\$5,000
Interstate Highway Side of Business Area (Bridge to Woodsville Guaranty Bank)			
Sidewalk w/granite curb	800 LF	\$150	\$120,000
Ornamental Street Lighting	13 EA	\$5,000	\$65,000
Main St. Drainage Improvements	4 EA	\$5,000	\$20,000
Landscape Plantings	7 EA	\$600	\$4,200
Welcome Signs	1 EA	\$4,000	\$4,000
Roadway Pavement Patching	1 LS	\$8,000	\$8,000
Access Improvements	4 EA	\$1,000	\$4,000
South of Bridge			
Sidewalk w/granite curb	800 LF	\$150	\$120,000
River Walk-5' Unpaved**	800 LF	\$35	\$28,000
Footbridge	1 EA	\$250,000	\$250,000
Crosswalks	1 EA	\$1,500	\$1,500
Ornamental Street Lighting	8 EA	\$5,000	\$40,000
Selective Cutting & Pruning @ Riverside**	1 A	\$3,000	\$3,000
Landscape Plantings	8 EA	\$600	\$4,800
Welcome Signs	1 EA	\$4,000	\$4,000
Other Improvements			
Intersection Narrowing##	1 EA	\$175,000	\$175,000
Sewer System: Core Village Area Only.@@	1 EA	\$401,000	\$401,000
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>\$1,893,500</b>
<b>Contingency</b>		20%	<b>\$378,700</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$2,272,200</b>
** These options would be significantly reduced if volunteer labor is used to complete the work			
## Roundabout (Alternative to intersection Narrowing)		\$750,000	
@@ A larger wastewater system that serves the entire Village from the Sugar Hill Town Line to the Library is estimated at a total cost of		\$1,875,000	

## Priorities

There are a number of budget line items that can be planned, designed and implemented directly by the town. Due to the State ownership of both Routes 116 and 18, many of the improvements recommended in this plan will need to be carefully coordinated with the NH Department of Transportation (DOT). Given the safety benefits of the proposed improvements within the state's right-of-way, the town has the potential to work closely with the DOT and elected representatives in the State House to arrive at a solution that will be beneficial to the town, its residents and the state. A significant portion of the funding should be covered by highway funds as well. For these reasons, a two pronged approach is proposed: (1) projects that can be carried out locally and (2) projects that will need state design, funding and construction assistance.

### Local Initiatives

In the short term, the town needs to fully endorse the elimination of head-in parking on Main Street and pursue a coordinated parking solution for the entire village center. This will require the support of merchants and property owners and a creative funding solution that is equitable to all stakeholders. While that effort is proceeding, the town should seek additional Safe Routes to Schools funding to implement the sidewalk improvements recommended through this charrette. They will need to be implemented in concert with the new parking arrangement. Another short range project that could be a great community participation effort is the formalization and upgrade of the river walk running from the Dow Avenue bridge to the Iron Furnace & Lafayette School. Another near-term effort should be made to develop new welcome signs at the main entrances to Franconia Village.

Longer term, local initiatives need to pursue a building façade improvement program, funding and construction of the new footbridge over the Gale River and the planning and design for stormwater and sewer systems for the core of the village. A sewer system cost estimate has been developed for the commercial core of the village. This improvement would greatly enhance the potential for tax base expansion on several underutilized lots, reduce the impacts on the Gale River and create greater potential for shared and compact parking arrangements in the village core. As an alternative, a sewer system that serves the entire village, from the Sugar Hill town line to the Library, would provide even greater environmental and economic benefits, albeit at a much larger cost.

### State Supported Initiatives

The redesign and reconstruction of the Route 116/18 intersection, combined with shoulder widening, curbing and landscape separation between the travel way and sidewalks need to be developed through close cooperation between the Town and DOT. The Town should begin discussions immediately with DOT and their State legislators to pursue design and funding of these changes that are critical to the provision of safe travel and circulation throughout the Village. The DOT has a number of categorical funding sources that could be available to move this project forward.





*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*



#### **Donations of Goods and Services**

Bishop's Farm Bed & Breakfast  
Cannon Mt. View Restaurant and Motel  
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Franconia Business Connection  
Franconia Inn  
Plough Wind Antiques  
Sugar Hill Inn  
Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank

#### **Assistance in Planning the Charrette**

Bob's Mobile  
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Franconia Notch Vacations  
Franconia Sport Shop  
Franconia Village Store  
Gale River Motel  
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