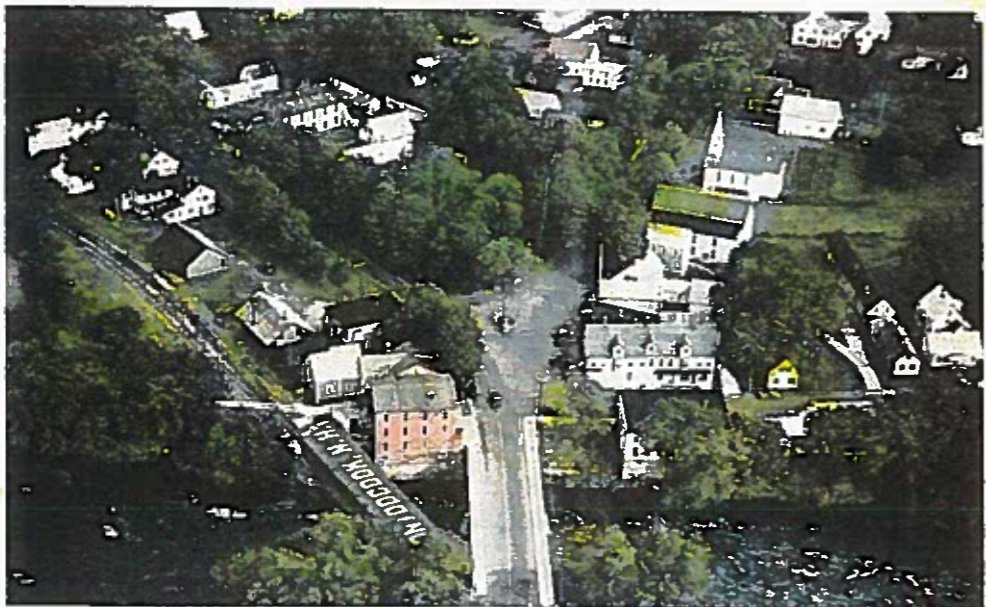


CONTOOCCOOK VILLAGE CHARRETTE



Published by Reed's Drug Store Aerial View of Contocook, N. H. 1946-7 Hand Colored



R. R. Station, Contocook, N. H.

TOWN OF
HOPKINTON

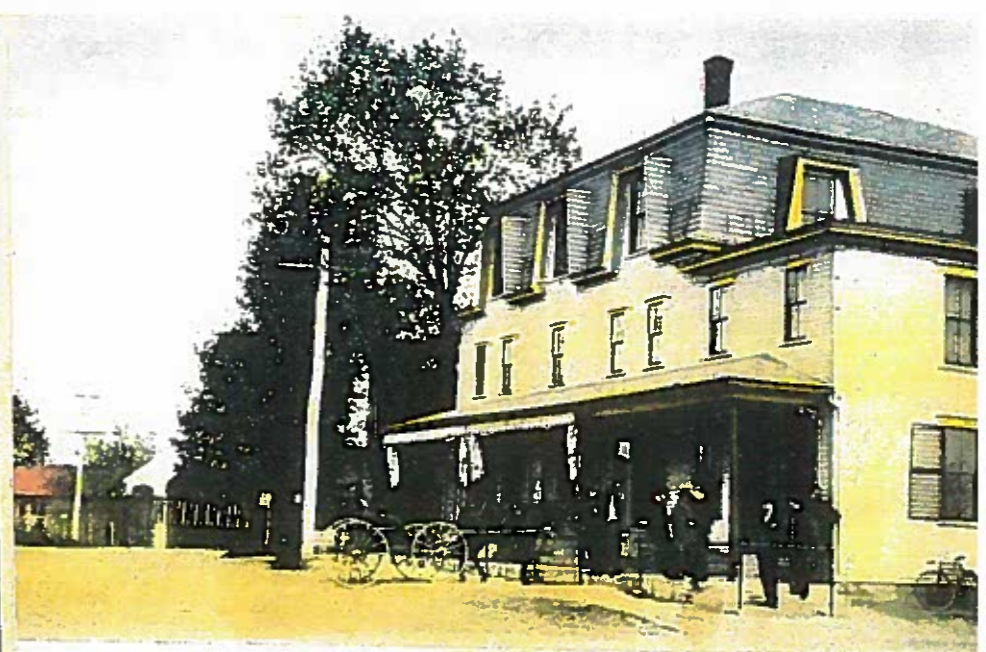
JANUARY 21 & 22
2000



Fountain Square,
Contocook, N. H.



Contocook, N.H.



Post Office and General Store of Curtice & Co., Contocook, N. H.

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Thanks go out to all of the town members who came and shared their thoughts and views:

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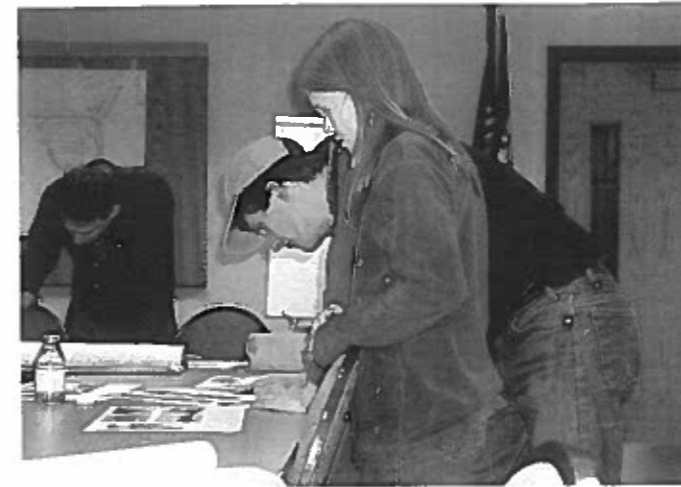
We would also like to acknowledge and thank all of the residents in Contoocook for their hospitality and enthusiasm.

...and to any others who attended and helped with the charrette, but whose names we may have missed,

Thank You!!!

Contoocook Village, Hopkinton, New Hampshire Design Charrette

January 21 & 22, 2000



Sponsored by: The Hopkinton Selectmen and the
Hopkinton Economic Development Committee

Hosted by: Merrimack County Telephone

Contoocook Village Charrette

January 21 & 22, 2000

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. Conclusions present the relationship of different plan elements, 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 citizens' detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action to deal with a particular issues 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 can be measured.

How Did Contoocook End Up With A Charrette?

Normally, design charrettes of this type are sponsored by *Plan NH*, a professional association for those working in the *built environment*. The organization includes architects, planners, engineers, bankers, contractors, 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 to spur 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* is doing this is by offering, on a regular basis, free design assistance to communities with demonstrated needs. Plan NH sponsors 3 design charrettes annually, the last three being in Antrim, Contoocook and Newport. As always, there are more good ideas and need than Plan NH can support.

The Town of Hopkinton and the Hopkinton Economic Development Committee recognized the value in gathering together design experts and town members to explore future directions for downtown Contoocook. The Town has discussed many different issues to do with downtown Contoocook but have not been able to bring these issues together into a working vision for the entire area. With that in mind, the Economic Development Committee organized a two day charrette attended by a range of local officials, design team members, most of whom have strong ties to the town, and dozens of town residents to answer questions about what is important in Contoocook, what are the current conditions of the downtown area and what does the town want to see in the future.

The Process

Community members and about a dozen design professionals met in the warmth of the Merrimack County Telephone Company conference room for two chilly days in mid-January to talk about Contoocook Village, its strengths, weaknesses and their visions for its future. Design team members were, for the most part, locals themselves. Professionals at the meeting included architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, real estate planners, community development professionals, and marketing and economic development specialists.

The professional expertise and local knowledge of this group were far-reaching. However broad-based community input is still the key element in making a design charrette truly successful. Local residents are all town experts and the design team relies on this valuable input to develop viable suggestions. With that in mind, the design team and residents joined forces to talk about Contoocook Village.

The design team and a few town leaders gathered at the telephone company on Friday morning to talk about the town and the project at hand. The group then went on a site walk through the village to explore the downtown area and become familiarized with the project area from a pedestrian's point of view. This was important given that most of the design team had generally viewed Contoocook through the front window of their cars.

In the early afternoon, the design team and over 40 residents gathered together for the first of two listening sessions. Another 40 attended Friday night's meeting. During the course of the weekend, the design team listened to residents talk about their town at two public meetings on Friday afternoon and evening, while walking around town, at breaks and at dinner. Residents had a lot to say, and gave direction to the thoughts and perceptions of the design team members



Site Walk on Friday Morning

What We Heard/What We Saw

The public meetings provided town members with a chance to voice their opinions and discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of Contoocook Village.

Most of the discussion about Contoocook focused on the following points:

- **Appreciate What Is Already There!** The Contoocook River, covered bridge and depot area are great assets and the village should make better use of these resources
- **Traffic.** Traffic is a problem downtown. Trucking is an especially important issue.
- **Pedestrian Safety.** Pedestrian safety and traffic concerns go hand in hand.
- **Parking.** Make sure the town maintains parking while still promoting pedestrian use.
- **Encourage Trips Through the Village.** Improve the aesthetics of downtown and make it more walkable.

First and foremost remember that Contoocook Village is a great place; a place where many people would love to live. Don't forget that Contoocook has a lot of character and the goal is to building upon and enhance the good sides of the Village not tear it down and build it up again.

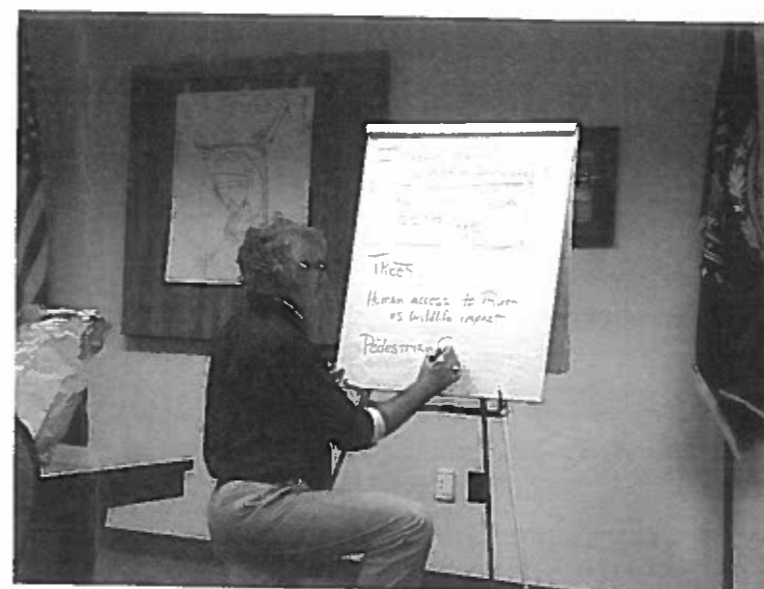
The village is full of important public spaces and buildings. The Community Center is a hugely important town resource. Make sure the town maintains the activities of the center. Whether these services will continue at the Community Center's present location or move out towards the library remains a question. Another suggestion is to make better use of the depot area and the covered bridge. Build upon the greenway association's ideas and make this area a public greenspace.

In general, the **village needs better sidewalks and more trees.** Its not easy being a pedestrian in the village and town members would like to see tree lined streets again, similar to what existed in the first half of the twentieth century. One specific area identified is the corner by Mr. Mikes. This spot serves an important purpose in town, but what can be done to make this important corner more pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing? While pedestrian improvements are greatly needed, also keep in mind that the village also needs parking. If any parking is taken away for sidewalks, there must be other parking areas put in place ahead of time.

Traffic is a problem both by Fountain Square and by the Fire Station. The town should address these issues and consider redesign options. The traffic by Fountain Square is too fast, there is too much trucking and it is too dangerous for pedestrians. The intersection of Kearsarge Street, Pine Street and Park Street isn't ideal for vehicles or pedestrians either. The triangle island in the middle of this intersection is difficult to maneuver, especially for trucks, and could be improved.

Discussions generally focused on three areas or activity centers of the Village. These include the **Fountain Square area, the Depot area, and Fire Station area.** The Fountain Square area is a central focus area for the Village. Two state highways, Routes 103 and 127 converge at this point and a major part of the Village's economic vitality is located in this area. Town members think this area has too much truck traffic, is difficult to walk through, could use additional parking, and needs a facelift. The Depot area is directly adjacent to Fountain Square and ideally would be a key component of any long term improvements to the village core. A great deal of town effort has already been coordinated through the Contoocook Greenway Association. Town members realize that they are lucky to have a historic rail depot and covered bridge right in the heart of its downtown. The site has a lot of potential and could help bring the river more into focus. The third general area discussed at the public meetings is the intersection around the fire station and telephone company. The island with the town's war memorial is in an awkward position and there is not a very good pedestrian link between the Fountain Square area, the fire station and the town's new library. These general considerations set the tone for Friday afternoon and Saturday morning's design work.

An important theme sustained throughout the discussions at the charrette centered on the importance of building upon the qualities and resources already found within Contoocook. A key to enhancing downtown Contoocook is to maintain the activity zones already there, and find ways of connecting and expanding upon these hot spots.



Scenes From Friday's Public Meetings

CONTOOCCOOK VILLAGE PRECINCT



- Single Family
- Multi-family
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Government / Institutional

Scale 1:1200 (1"=100')



This map created by the
Leland & Associates Appraisal Planning
for the Contoocook Village Charrette
January 2000

This map is intended for planning purposes only and
may not fully represent geographic conditions
Data sources:
Digital tax map data provided by the
Town of Hopkinton

Contoocook Today

Land Use.

Most of the downtown village area is residential, mixed use, and commercial development. The area is lucky to have agricultural lands surrounding the northern part of the village. Much of the commercial development fairly concentrated near fountain square and along Park Street across the river.

The Depot and surrounding property represents an excellent opportunity to develop a public park area. Similarly, the vacant space between the Fire Station and the Contoocook River would be a wonderful spot for a public park and river walk area. The town should maintain public ownership of these areas and use them more directly for public purposes.



View of Covered Bridge Looking Toward Fire Station Area

Contoocook's Conditions

Household income level data show that only 5.7 percent of households in Contoocook earn less than \$15,000 annually. This compares to 13.6% of all Concord households. On the other end of the scale, 24.4 percent of town households earn more than \$100,000 annually, as compared to only 7.4% of Concord households. Contoocook's average income is comparatively high with over 71% of households in town earning at least \$40,000 a year.

The town has a strong tax base and should realize it is quite well compared to many other towns in New Hampshire. The 1999 tax assessment statistics show that Hopkinton has a tax base of \$358.7 million, this compares to \$81.1 million in Bradford, \$113.10 million in Warner and \$1,613.4 million in Concord. The tax rate is fairly consistent with other nearby towns. Hopkinton's tax rate in 1999 is \$25.33, Bradford's is \$24.36, Warner's is \$27.38 and Concord has a tax rate of \$32.36.

There are approximately 5050 residents in town. The population breakdown shows that about 23 percent are under seventeen and about 8 percent are between the age of 18-24. The large percentage of residents fall between the ages of 25-54 (44%), with the remainder, 25% in the 55 and older group. While comparable to Concord's breakdown, it does appear that Hopkinton has a slightly older population on average.

The apartment vacancy rate is very low at less than 5%; not a renter's market. Average rental prices are rising. The vacancy rate for the retail market is also very low and has traditionally been low for some time. Average storefront rents are generally between \$400 - 600 and major uses in the village include convenience retail, restaurants, telecommunications, and financial/insurance/real estate. Commercial properties generally have a low turnover.

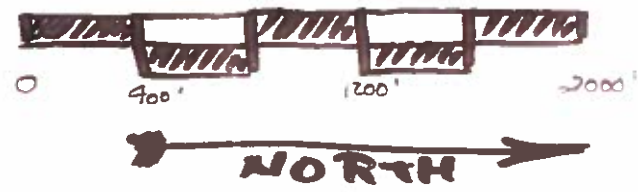
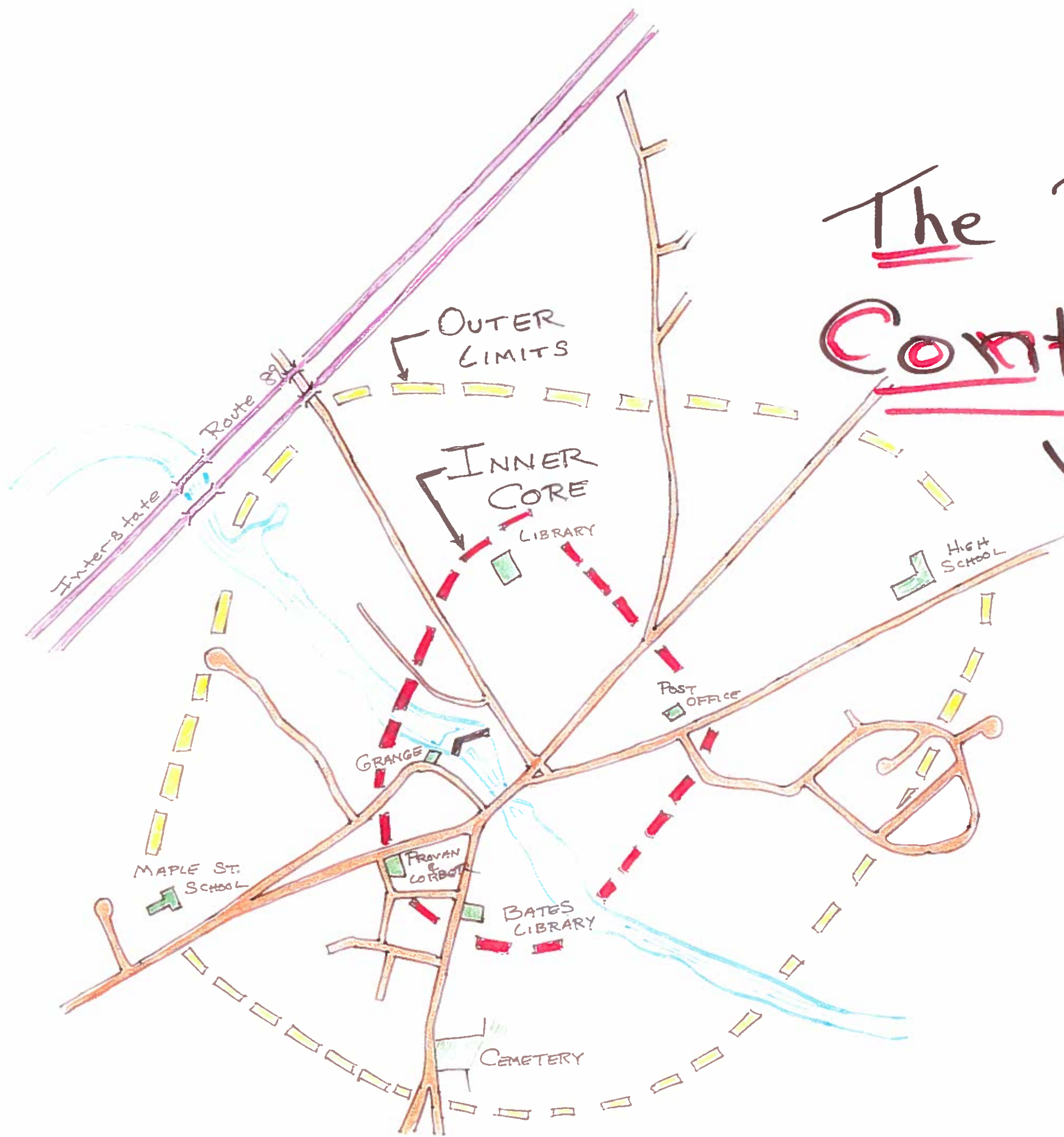


The Depot Today



View of Maple Street

The Rings of Contoocook Village



Rings of Contoocook

Contoocook is a village within the Town of Hopkinton. The business center of town, Contoocook contains much of the town's activity. The schools are here, as are many businesses and municipal services. While the entire town of Hopkinton is important in its own right, the purpose and focus of this charrette was to look specifically at Contoocook Village and central areas within the village.

Villages are central places. They are where people come together. Over time, as transportation has shifted from horses and foot traffic to cars and trucks, many towns find that adjustments need to be made. The type, speed and volume of 'traffic' has changed and designs that worked in the 19th century do not work any longer. The realities of faster and greater volumes of traffic should be paired with the need to accommodate pedestrians safely.

Village centers that work have pursued efforts to make them safe for vehicles and pedestrians alike. Villages are walking places. You drive to them, and can then safely walk to a variety of locations. People walk at different speeds but in general can cover 1000 feet ever 5 minutes. The design team used this general figure to determine focus areas for activity centers (or rings) in the village.

There are activity generators in every community. Schools, parks, gateways and shopping all serve as focal points of the town. In Contoocook, the design team defined the village's activity centers in terms of an inner ring and an outer ring. The inner core is the heart of the community, easily walkable within 10 minutes, with much of its economic and social energy contained within its limits.

In Contoocook this is an area encompassed by a boundary drawn from the Library on Pine Street to the Colonial Plaza on Park Avenue across the river to the old Bates Library on Main Street down to the Community Center of Maple Street. The outer core or outer limits of the Contoocook 'downtown' area expands out a bit farther. This ring circles from the high school, to the Maple Street School, to the cemetery and around to I 89. These inner and outer cores represent the heart of the community and are great places to focus attention on redevelopment and enhancements. Make sure these areas, especially within the inner core, are linked together for pedestrians as well as vehicles.

Streetscapes

A major focus of the charrette is to improve upon the village's streetscape. The well-designed streetscape should have strong pedestrian links between parking areas and retail areas. Pedestrian routes linking activity centers would provide town members with a pleasant alternative to driving downtown. Safely linking the downtown area with public areas would also encourage people to take walks through town. This might lead to chance encounters with neighbors and friends and would help redefine downtown as a central gathering place for the community. Maintaining a constant rhythm and scale to buildings is also an important goal. Contoocook's downtown has a nice scale and the town has done well to maintain many of the central buildings.

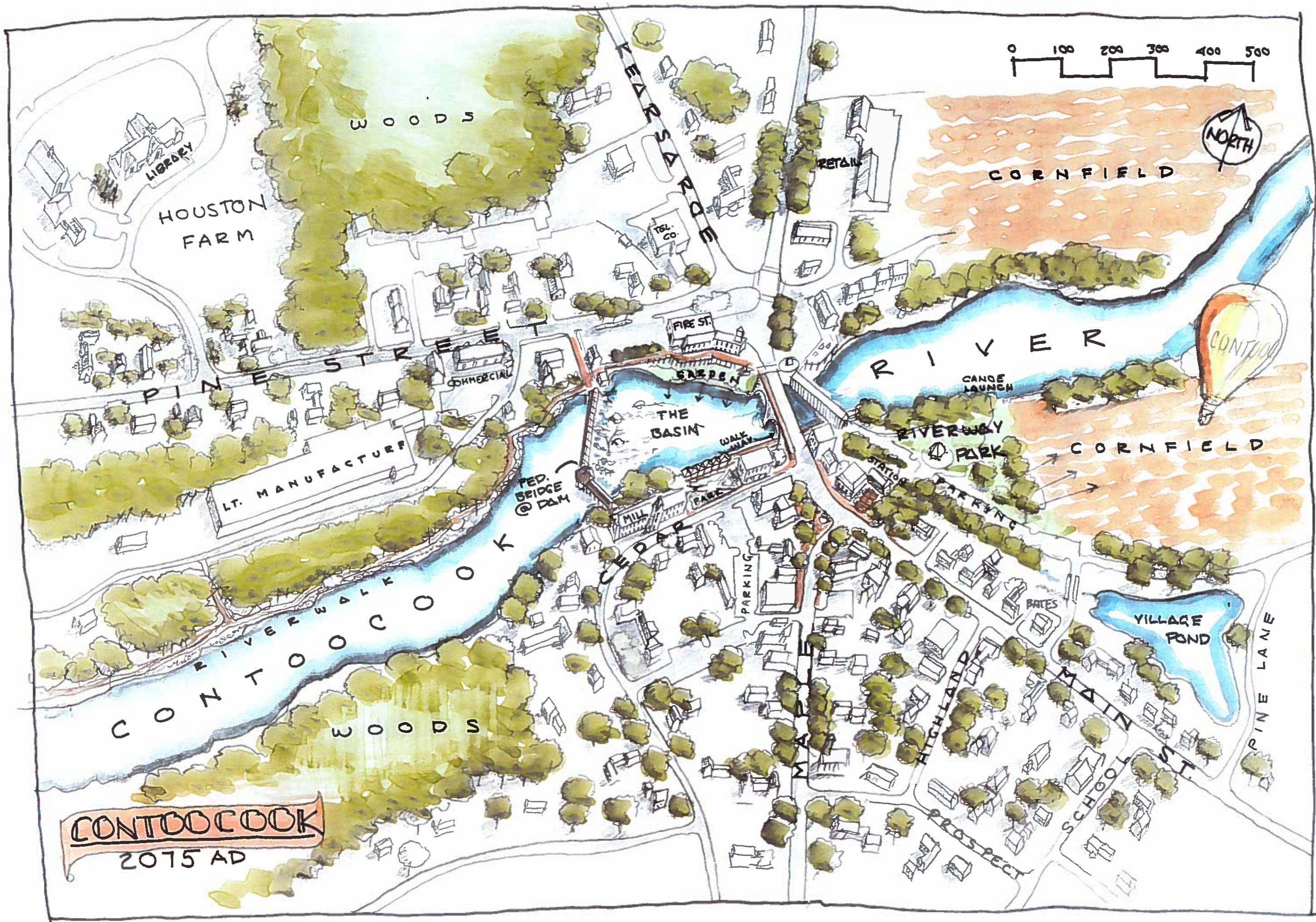
Contoocook in the Future

Design Principles

The downtown area is the heart of Contoocook. This area speaks to the history of the village and represents its value system. Design work and downtown enhancement efforts should be completed with the following principles in mind.

- **Counteract forces that are drawing activity out of downtown.** Remember that every business move out of downtown will diminish the likelihood of any economic rejuvenation in this area. Maintaining the businesses that are there must be a priority. Downtown Contoocook has a lot of basic qualities that make up a solid community center, including the river, plans for a public park, public buildings, and retail shopping. Build upon this foundation and improve the connections that draw these resources in together.
- **Draw activities into the downtown that make economic sense.** Downtown Contoocook will never look exactly as it did in generations past, but looking at historic photographs provides a good example of many the same characteristics envied today. Downtown used to be lined with tall shade trees, sidewalks and a seemed to enjoy a slower pace. Today, trucking, increased reliance on vehicles, and convenience stores are part of Contoocook's present reality. While these things of the past that enhance the aesthetic and social characteristics of a true downtown area.
- **Vehicles and pedestrians need to co-exist downtown.** Some areas of downtown do provide some access for pedestrians. However, they lack cohesiveness. The intersection of Main Street and Maple Street is exceptionally unfriendly to pedestrians. Efforts here need to focus on connecting downtown assets, adding sidewalks, and making the area easy to use. For a downtown to be sustainable and viable, people need to be able to move freely and safely. Also consider that the more aesthetically appealing the improvements (i.e. adding in trees, greenery), the more people will want to spend time downtown. Remember too, that traffic downtown is not a bad thing. Traffic is needed to support economic activity downtown, and without car traffic businesses would be hard pressed to survive. The key is to give fellow town residents more reason to stop downtown to do their shopping in Contoocook instead of in Concord.
- **Vacant and underutilized space, both land and buildings, work against the downtown's role as a core.** A downtown is defined as the business center or commercial center of town. Any vacant buildings or land in this central core detracts from its ability to serve as a hub. The current vacancy rate downtown is quite low. However, there are a few underutilized buildings that could add more to the downtown economically.

Contoocook needs some planning to make sure that the town has safe sidewalks, convenient parking and an attractive streetscape. These features will improve the compatibility of pedestrians and vehicles and will help keep local dollars in town. Keep in mind that efforts are more effective when coordinated. Consider combining 3 or 4 demand elements to achieve a critical mass.



The Long View - Contoocook in 2075

Town members had a lot to say about Contoocook, But what will the village look like in 10 years, or 30 years or maybe even 75 years? Will current national trends of increasing traffic, chain stores and easy vehicular access continue in town or will the village take a look back, possibly incorporating some of the qualities found in town a generation or two ago. Looking at historic pictures of the downtown area clearly show tree lined streets, sidewalks, green space and a slower pace. These qualities are certainly attainable if it fits into the town's vision.

The long term vision includes the following basic goals;

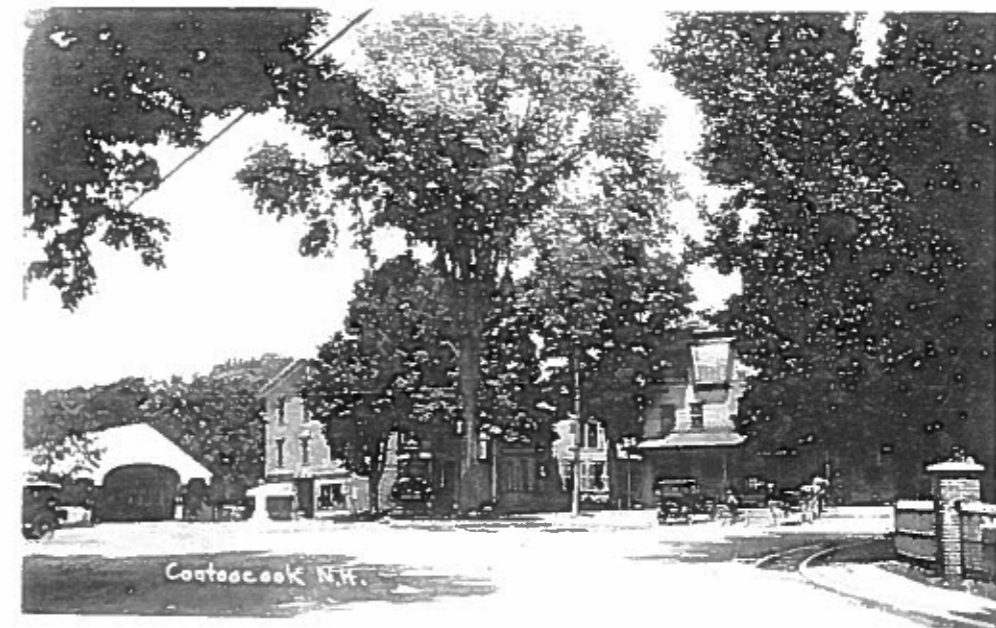
- Vibrant village core surrounded by greenspace
- Interconnected activity centers
- Strong focus on the river
- Strong pedestrian links with tree-lined streets
- Designated green spaces along river; agricultural lands remain intact

Based on what the design team heard at the public meetings, the 75 year vision of Contoocook shows a village that is full of activity, is surrounded by green space and working agricultural fields, has interconnected activity centers and makes better use of the river. This vision ties together the library on Pine Street with Fountain Square through a pedestrian bridge across the river. This plan maintains the rural qualities of the surrounding area and directs growth to the downtown area. Residential homes still line the side streets, and these streets are full of shade trees. Commercial/light manufacturing remain in existing areas, but the space between the river and the manufacturing site has green space available for a river walk. Parking is moved from on-street to lot parking. Parking is added by the Depot and behind the existing Community Center.



Many of these individual plans will be discussed in more detail later in the report. The purpose here is to tie these individual pieces together to show what the town could look like with planning, local time and talent, and long term follow-through. It is especially important to realize that these visions will not happen unless the town takes stock of its current zoning and land use regulations and identifies strategies to preserve its existing open space. As mentioned at the charrette, if a fire swept through downtown, destroyed buildings could not be built back to the same specifications. Town zoning regulations, including set backs, parking requirements, and the like would hinder efforts and would in essence change the character of the downtown for good. This inconsistency between zoning and vision is present in many different communities and poses a real threat to a town's ability to control its future. It is strongly recommended that Hopkinton revisit its zoning regulations to identify, and work to incorporate, the necessary changes.

Remember too that the town has prime agricultural land in close proximity to its downtown. If this land is important and valued as open space, make sure that effort is taken to preserve it in the future. These lands will probably be ripe for development as the town grows. Often, agricultural lands are natural for home development because the land is relatively flat and has already been cleared. Proactive measures are needed to make sure these lands do not become developed. Look into the possibility of an agricultural easement or purchase of development rights. The goal here would be to insure that these lands could be maintained as working agricultural lands in perpetuity.



DEPOT PHASE

- Shared access / driveway with Bank
- Off-street parking lot
- Riverfront park
- Plantings / landscaping throughout

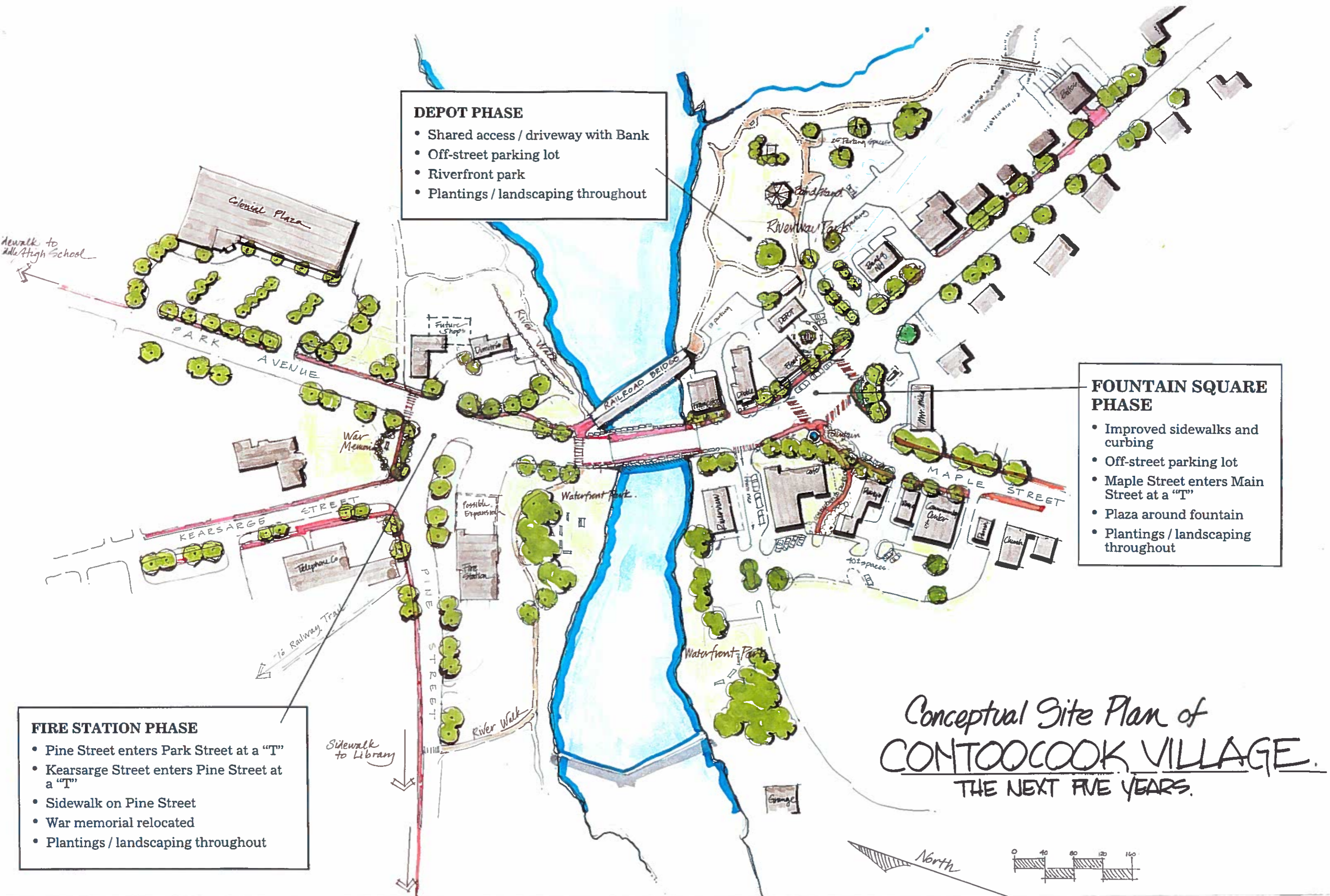
FOUNTAIN SQUARE PHASE

- Improved sidewalks and curbing
- Off-street parking lot
- Maple Street enters Main Street at a "T"
- Plaza around fountain
- Plantings / landscaping throughout

FIRE STATION PHASE

- Pine Street enters Park Street at a "T"
- Kearsarge Street enters Pine Street at a "T"
- Sidewalk on Pine Street
- War memorial relocated
- Plantings / landscaping throughout

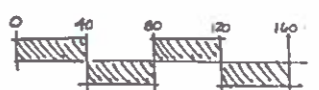
Conceptual Site Plan of
CONTOOCCOOK VILLAGE.
THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.



Sidewalk to High School

Sidewalk to Library

North



Vision for Contoocook in the Next 5 Years

The following pages apply basic design principles into a variety of general improvement schemes for Contoocook. They should be viewed as examples, not as specific directives. They should be considered as illustrative and used to stimulate thinking. One of the central issues discussed at the charrette was the need to improve the look of downtown. Attractive and inviting gateways are extremely important. If the town wants to encourage local residents to spend more time downtown, it must make sure people are naturally drawn into to the area.

All of the plans detailed in this report reflect similar goals:

- Welcome people to town and provide them with easy access to parks, green space and local businesses.
- Improve upon pedestrian safety in the inner core, both by adding sidewalks and by slowing down existing traffic and trucking.
- Capture much more of the local buying power. Even though many residents commute to Concord, it does not mean that these commuters need to do their shopping in Concord. Contoocook can do a better job of tapping the local market.

The 5 year plan described here focuses on the inner ring. The general area stretches from the Colonial Plaza on Park Avenue to the Library on Pine Street, across the river to the old Bates Library on Main Street down to the Community Center of Maple Street.

The short term plan describes conceptual plans for four types of improvements. These include;

- sidewalk improvements
- traffic changes
- green space development/enhancements
- and parking improvements

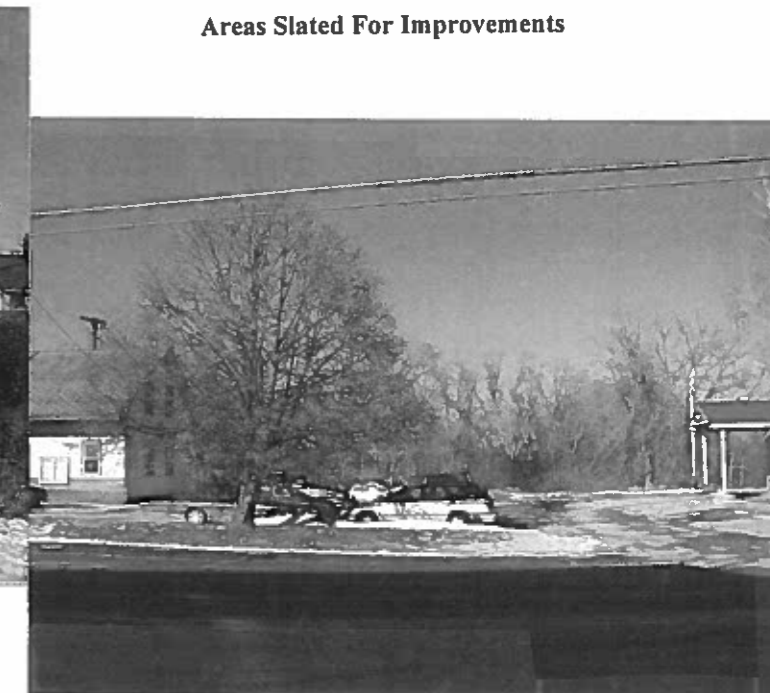
Plans for **sidewalk improvements** go closely in hand with changes in traffic circulation. The goal is to invite more pedestrian traffic into the downtown area, calm the vehicular and truck traffic in this area and in general, make the area easier for pedestrians and vehicles to coexist. General suggestions include adding or enhancing pedestrian access to the high school, to the library and to the downtown area. Sidewalks do exist in some areas but the overall connections between areas is somewhat spotty. One example is on Pine Street. There is a sidewalk from Fountain Square across the bridge towards the telephone company, and there is a sidewalk from the Library to the telephone company but the two do not meet. These sidewalks need to be connected or there needs to be some type of pedestrian access developed along the waterfront to make it easier for people to walk between Fountain Square and the Library. Everything within the inner circle is a 5 or 10 minute walk, making this a very feasible area to walk. The Highschool also needs to be tied in by running a sidewalk from the Pine Street area up Park Street to the school.

Traffic changes are also presented. Two specific areas identified include Fountain Square and the intersection of Kearsarge Street and Pine Street. Fountain Square currently is an island in a mass of pavement. Looking back at historic photographs and post cards from the early part of the 20th century, Fountain Square was a central feature of Main Street and downtown. The square had a stone barrier, the fountain and a large shade tree in the middle of it all. Today, Fountain Square has lost much of its visual appeal and does little to slow down the traffic of today, which of course is much heavier and much faster than it has ever been before. A change is needed to rejuvenate the spirit of Fountain Square and to calm the traffic passing through.

A second area in need of change is the Pine Street and Kearsarge Street intersection. Currently the war memorial sits in an island and traffic moves around it from all directions. This current design is not particularly efficient or safe. Redesign efforts would help make this area more usable for both pedestrians and vehicles and would allow pedestrians to visit the war memorial without having to cut through passing traffic.

A third area of improvement suggested falls under the general concept of adding **green space**. This includes both public park areas and adding greenery to street edges and corners. Public parks and open space near the river is an excellent way to get people back into downtown. Public meeting spaces are lacking downtown and should be a priority for the town. Another low cost, and highly desirable addition would be to reline the streets with trees and add greenery to corners that now contain mostly pavement.

A fourth area of improvement deals with **parking**. Downtown always need convenient parking. There is some on-street parking along Main Street and Maple Street and some parking in front of businesses within the main area of Fountain Square. However, much of this parking comes at the expense of adequate sidewalks and other parking backs right into traffic. One solution is to consolidate parking into one or two areas within this area of Fountain Square. One area would be near the depot and the other would be located behind the existing Community Center. From the public discussion sessions, it was clear that residents would like to see these parking areas developed before any on street parking is taken away.



Areas Slated For Improvements

Depot & Riverway Park

• Create a Riverfront Park

• Provide off-street parking

• Install improved sidewalks / landscaping throughout

• Develop shared access with bank



Phases of Development - Actions

With the overall picture of short term improvements in mind, the next task is to take a closer look at three areas of downtown identified earlier; Fountain Square, The Depot, and the Fire Station. Each drawing explains the general tasks identified to start making changes to the inner core.

Depot and Riverway Park Phase

The Depot area is located adjacent to Fountain Square. This area has been the subject of a great deal of local interest. Efforts are underway to re-develop the area behind the depot as a "Riverway Park". The Contoocook Riverway Association has been spearheading efforts to develop a plan and seek support.

This type of redevelopment fits very well with proposals to enhance Fountain Square. The two projects together would greatly enhance the entire downtown area. Downtown would be a place for afternoon walks, chance encounters and would be a source of public pride. Some general suggestions include the following;

- **Support the Riverway Association in developing Contoocook's Riverway Park (new canoe launch, network of walking trails, new gazebo).**
- **Add 25 space public parking in far lot behind the bank and 8 space parking directly in back of the bank.**
- **Add 12 space public parking near the covered bridge**
- **Complete landscaping and a new plaza area in 1,200 + square feet of space in front of the Depot.**
- **Install sidewalks with curbing along Main Street. Sidewalks will be separate from the travel lanes and will continue from the Depot area up Main Street towards Bates Library.**

The town should remember that the Contoocook River is a hugely important resource for downtown and the town should take advantage of its presence. The proposed Riverway Park would provide walking trails, a canoe launch, a public bandstand and access to the railroad bridge. As it exists today, the railroad bridge does not have high billing in the downtown area. It is easy to drive by in a vehicle, but isn't presented to pedestrians in a clear or attractive way. Establishing a park on the one side of the bridge will encourage people to explore the area, and will show off the bridge to the public.

A small parking lot (+/- 12 spaces) would be developed behind the Depot, Fleet Bank and the apartment building to serve the needs of the park and to provide additional parking for downtown businesses. This parking lot also provides easy access to the railroad bridge. Currently part of

this back lot is used for apartment parking and to house a dumpster. The area could be greatly enhanced so that the new space invites people into the park area, while still providing the necessary parking for tenants. This new public lot would provide easy access to the walking trails, canoe launch, and the Depot.

The current paved area in front of the Depot and between the Depot and the Bank of New Hampshire would be landscaped to beautify the area and to provide for handicapped parking. Parking adjacent to the Bank of New Hampshire would be redeveloped as an entry and exit point for another public parking area behind the bank. In this way, the bank would retain its needed parking and there would be additional space available to access the band stand area and the walking trails. The old Bates Library, slated to become the Town Clerk's office, would also be incorporated into the plan by developing a pedestrian bridge over the existing gully to connect with walking trails to the park. This would provide additional parking opportunities and linkages between a public building and public green space.

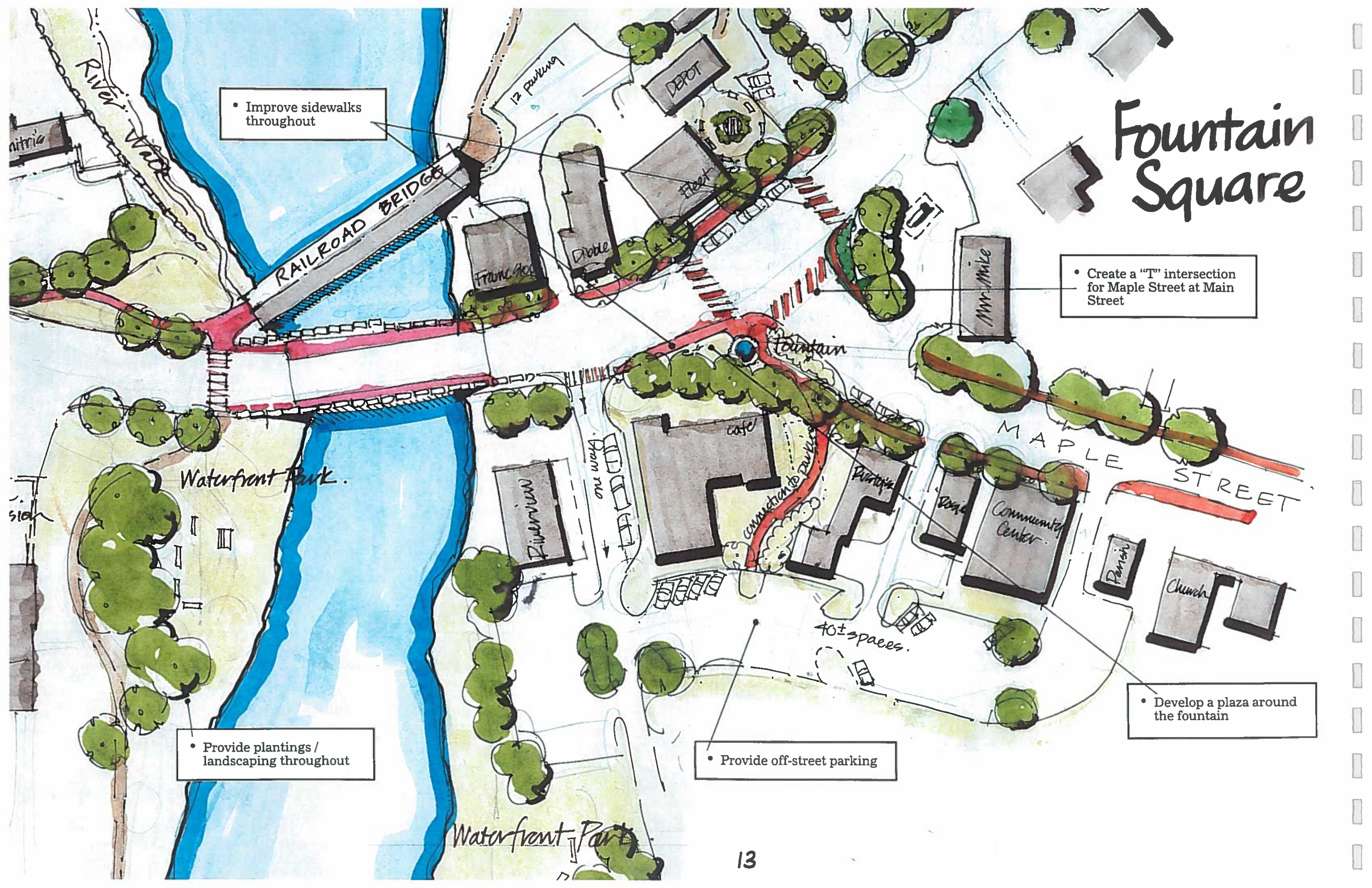
This section of Main Street itself would also be slated for improvements. As it exists now the streetscape is dominated by either moving or parked vehicles. The space intended as a sidewalk is for all practical purposes taken away if vehicles are parked along Main Street. The current pavement width along Main Street does not allow for a separate sidewalk, parallel parking and travel lanes.

In an effort to improve this situation, it is suggested that a better defined sidewalk be constructed with curbing and a green space to distinguish the sidewalk from the roadway. There is only room for a sidewalk on one side of the street, parking on one side of the street and two 12 foot travel lanes. If possible, leave a thin strip of green between the sidewalk and road to plant trees. Having this physical separation from the roadway will enhance the street for pedestrians and make the entrance into downtown from a vehicle more attractive. It will also make the roadway appear narrower, which in turn will encourage traffic to move slower as it enters the downtown area.



Boston & Maine Station, Contoocook, N. H.

Fountain Square



• Improve sidewalks throughout

• Create a "T" intersection for Maple Street at Main Street

• Provide plantings / landscaping throughout

• Provide off-street parking

• Develop a plaza around the fountain

Fountain Square

The heart of the downtown, Fountain Square needs to be recaptured and enhanced. Below are general principles discussed in the plans.

- **Change the existing alignment of Maple Street and Main Street to a new T-Intersection**
- **Add in direct crosswalks across the new T-Intersection**
- **Make the fountain a part of a new public green space and plaza near the café.**
- **Relocate on-street parking to convenient 40 space off-street parking and add in a pedestrian walkway near the café that will connect the new fountain plaza with the new parking area.**
- **Improve sidewalks all along Main Street and up Maple Street**
- **Add landscaping and greenery along streets - Make the downtown look more like it used to.**

The current alignment allows vehicles to travel along Main Street and turn from and onto Maple Street without a stop. Speeds are too high and safety is an issue. To change this the intersection needs to be narrowed and made into a T or more standard intersection.

A first suggestion is to take out the area of pavement between the fountain and the café area. This pavement would be replaced with green space, trees and benches. In this scenario, Fountain Square would be a part of this new public green space instead of a traffic island. This change could bring about a number of different improvements.

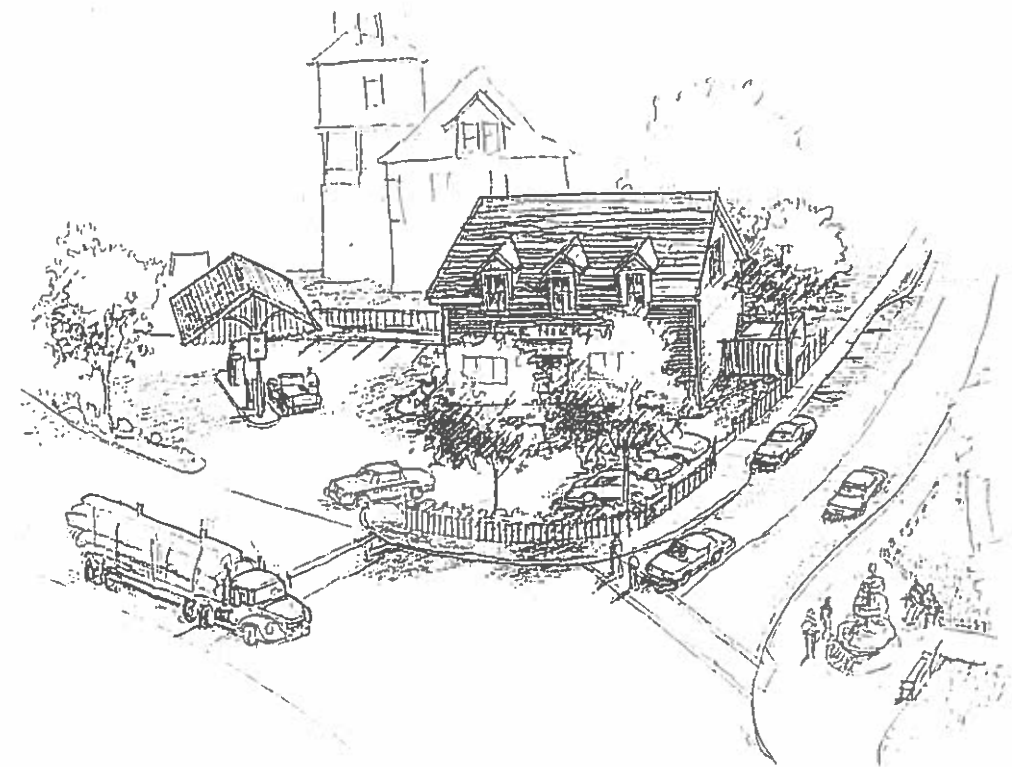
First of all, with a new T alignment to the intersection, traffic from Maple Street would have to stop before entering Main Street. Since a fair amount of traffic from Maple Street consists of thru-trucking, this would improve the current safety hazard for pedestrians. The new alignment would still provide adequate turning space for large truck. In addition, changing the look of the intersection would allow for a direct pedestrian crosswalks across both sides of Main Street and across Maple Street. This would be a great improvement over the existing crosswalks and would allow people to safely walk through this area.

In order to incorporate the fountain into a new green space, some on-street parking (a dozen spaces or so) would need to be removed. This does not pose a real problem, and could in many ways improve upon the current parking situation. The current parking spaces in this area force cars to back into traffic along Main Street. Relocating some downtown parking to central lots that is easily accessible from both Main Street and Maple Street would still provide convenience and would be much more aesthetically pleasing. The only parking that would remain within the intersection of Main Street and Maple Street would be in front of Fleet Bank along Main Street heading north. However the current diagonal parking would be replaced with parallel parking to improve safe entry and exit.

One area that lend itself quite well for parking is a lot behind the Community Center. Currently this lot is a residential and the town would need to research the expense of purchasing the lot. This site is appealing because it would provide easy access from Maple Street, with an access point by the Community Center. It would also provide access from Main Street along Cedar Street. A pedestrian way could be easily placed between Rusty's and the café to link public parking with downtown shops and the green space around the fountain. This site has room for approximately 40 spaces which more than makes up for any parking taken for the public green space and new intersection.

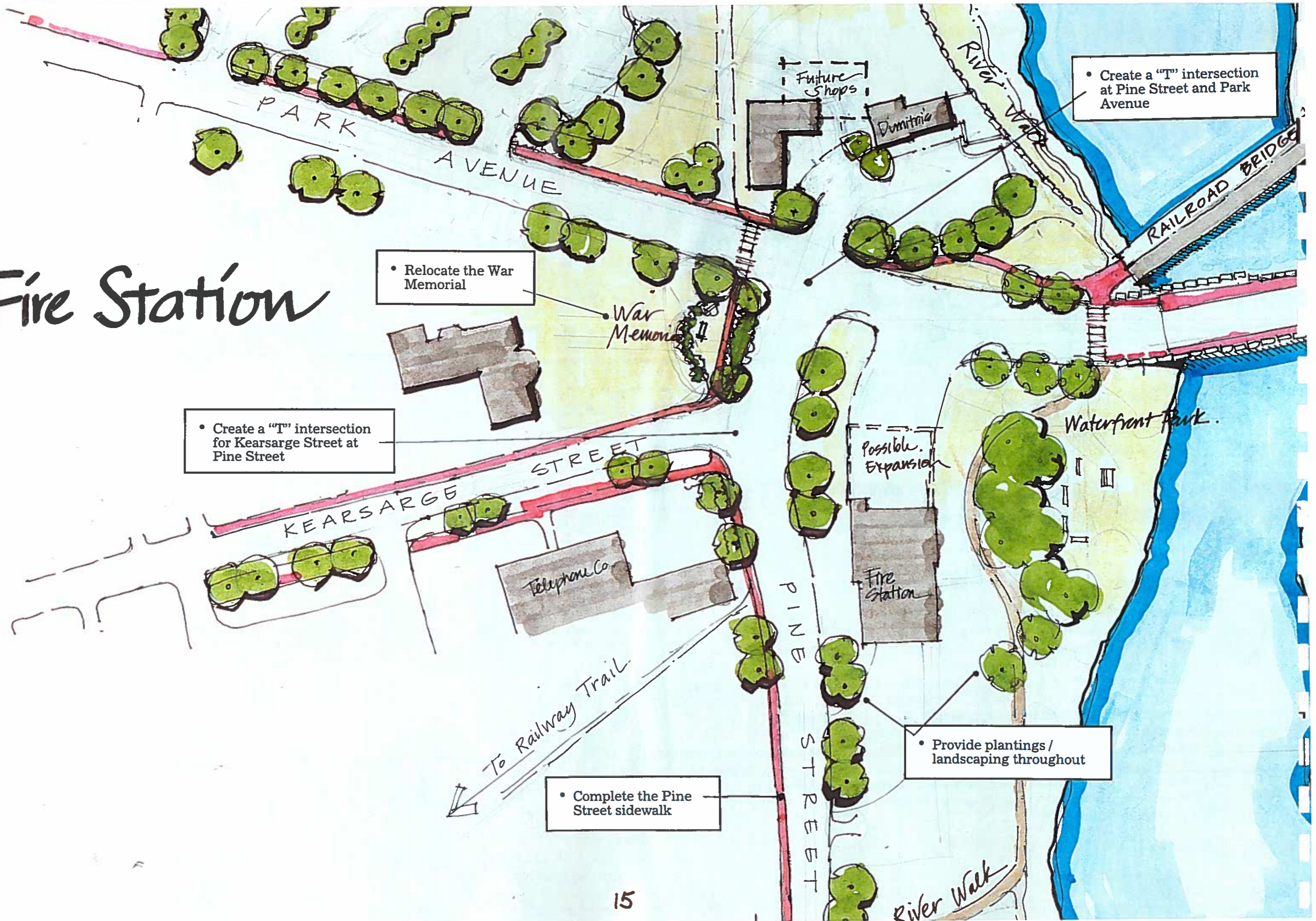
A final broad suggestion within this area is to add additional greenery. This could happen in many areas. First of all, plant some trees along Maple Street and Main Street. Fifty foot shade trees will not happen over night but unless effort is put forth now, the reality of having beautiful tree lined streets only be put off. Second, take a very good look at the Mr. Mikes corner of the Maple Street and Main Street intersection. There is too much pavement on this corner, too many opportunities for entry and exit and it is not in keeping with an attractive downtown streetscape. In the short term, add plantings and look into the possibility of setting the existing sign farther back on the lot. Add more curbing to clarify the end of the roadway, the sidewalks and the entry/exit points to Mr. Mikes.

The drawing below depicts a rendering of what this intersection could look like in the future. This picture shows a downtown area that is attractive, still adequately serves vehicles, provides clear pedestrian walkways and has the look of a small New England town.



Rendering Of Fountain Square In The Future

Fire Station



• Create a "T" intersection at Pine Street and Park Avenue

• Relocate the War Memorial

• Create a "T" intersection for Kearsarge Street at Pine Street

• Provide plantings / landscaping throughout

• Complete the Pine Street sidewalk

Fire Station Area

The Fire Station area across the bridge from Fountain Square is a third general area of proposed improvements. A major piece to enhancing this site is to realign the current intersection of Kearsarge Street, Pine Street and Park Avenue. The goal is to simplify traffic flow and make the intersection more usable and safe for pedestrians.

Suggestions for improvements include;

- **Simplify traffic flow between Pine Street and Park Avenue; Make Kearsarge Street and Pine Street a T-Intersection.**
- **Redesign the war memorial triangle as an edge of a street instead of a traffic island.**
- **Add sidewalks along Park Avenue towards the High School; Connect existing sidewalk up Pine Street to improve links with the Library; and add sidewalks up Kearsarge Avenue.**
- **Add crosswalks Across park Avenue and Kearsarge Street to improve pedestrian links between the highschool and library**
- **Make the area between the fire station and river a public park area. Add plantings and landscaping throughout.**
- **Better incorporate Houston Farm into the village's inner core.**

Kearsarge Street would be taken out of the direct intersection with Pine Street and Park Avenue and would become a T intersection with only Pine Street. Pine Street would then intersect with Park Avenue at a T. In this way, the war memorial would no longer be an island in the middle of a complicated intersection. Instead, this area would be incorporated into the adjacent property and would be linked to the shopping center across Park Avenue with a crosswalk. This new alignment will still allow enough room for larger vehicles and truck traffic to maneuver.

Simplifying this intersection is important because of its awkward design for motorized traffic and because it would make the area between the high school and the library much easier for pedestrians. One of the major goals of downtown enhancement is to improve the overall pedestrians linkages. The link between the school and the library is an important one and this intersection is a hurdle that needs to be addressed before the entire stretch could be considered safe for pedestrians. Furthermore, the War Memorial is a community resource that realistically can not be appreciated because of its difficult location. Given that this site is in the middle of a traffic island, very few if any people in town would take the time or effort required to walk by and appreciate the memorial.

This side of the river could also benefit from added green space, trees, landscaping and sidewalks. The vacant land adjacent to the Fire Station would make an excellent location for a waterfront park. This public space would help bring the river into focus as a major town asset. A riverwalk would also highlight the river and would encourage people to walk, instead of drive, to downtown. Ideally the riverwalk, along with Pine Street sidewalks, would bridge the library and Houston Farm area on Pine Street with the entire downtown area.

War Memorial



The future of one or more of the buildings on Houston Farm (police station, barns) is a subject of some discussion in town. The exact final use remains undetermined, and while the charrette did not develop one specific set of directives for this site, it did provide context which decision-makers in town can use in determining its future. It is clear that at some point soon, this area will need town investment. The general view is that the big barn should be preserved if at all possible. The town should consider securing local funds to make the improvements needed to the building. The future of the existing police station is more in question.

In general, remember that Houston Farm as a cornerstone of Contocook's downtown area. The current police station, playing fields and library all hold extremely important roles in town and are an easy 5 to 10 minute walk from most other locations across the river. As the downtown area becomes more pedestrian friendly, this will only strengthen the link between the Houston Farm/library area and the business center.



Houston Farm Area

Recommendations and Resources

The residents of Contoocook are the only ones really suited to make decisions about what will work and what won't work in their community. The hope is that this charrette has sprouted a few new thoughts and built upon, or clarified ideas that the town had already considered. The town showed a great deal of interest and enthusiasm in the process and it is clear that there is the town is in a great position to get started.

It is important to keep in mind that the options discussed at the charrette and in this report are only points for discussion and are not set in stone. The most important thing to understand is the basic design principles behind any revitalization strategy the town pursues. Contoocook wants to re-energize the downtown area. They want the downtown to be a hub of activity for both businesses and for town residents. A place to meet, walk and enjoy the river. The downtown should tap into more of the local purchasing power.

As the town decides how to move forward, it might be helpful to restate some of the principles that have guided the design team.

With only limited funds available, it is crucial to invest them where you'll get the biggest return on your investment.

Simple improvements are sometimes overlooked but can have lasting impacts on a community. Gateway improvements such signs, trees, new sidewalks and curbing can make a big difference. Think of investing in places that represent the heart of Contoocook and those that drivers see as they enter town. The more attractive the gateways look to people as they drive by, the more likely they will be to stop and check it out. Don't forget about the Contoocook River! Look for ways to invite people into back into the downtown area.

Respect the existing structure and integrity of the downtown.

Contoocook has some key public features within the inner core of the Village (i.e., Community Center, library) and many are within easy walking distance of each other. This is a great benefit. Make sure these public resources stay downtown and look for ways to improve pedestrian access. Aim to maintain historic buildings, add public green space, foster existing efforts of the Contoocook Greenway Association, and support initiatives to make downtown more pedestrian friendly. Look at town zoning to make sure that any new structures are designed with an eye towards the scale and location of existing structures. Make sure that building setbacks are consistent.

Connect Contoocook's activity centers.

The stronger the connection between the activity centers, the closer all will appear to be in the heart of downtown. Tie these town resources together. Improvements can be made in stages. Even a small improvement will show the whole community that there is a plan and a serious commitment to make these improvements happen.

Respect the qualities of the built environment already there.

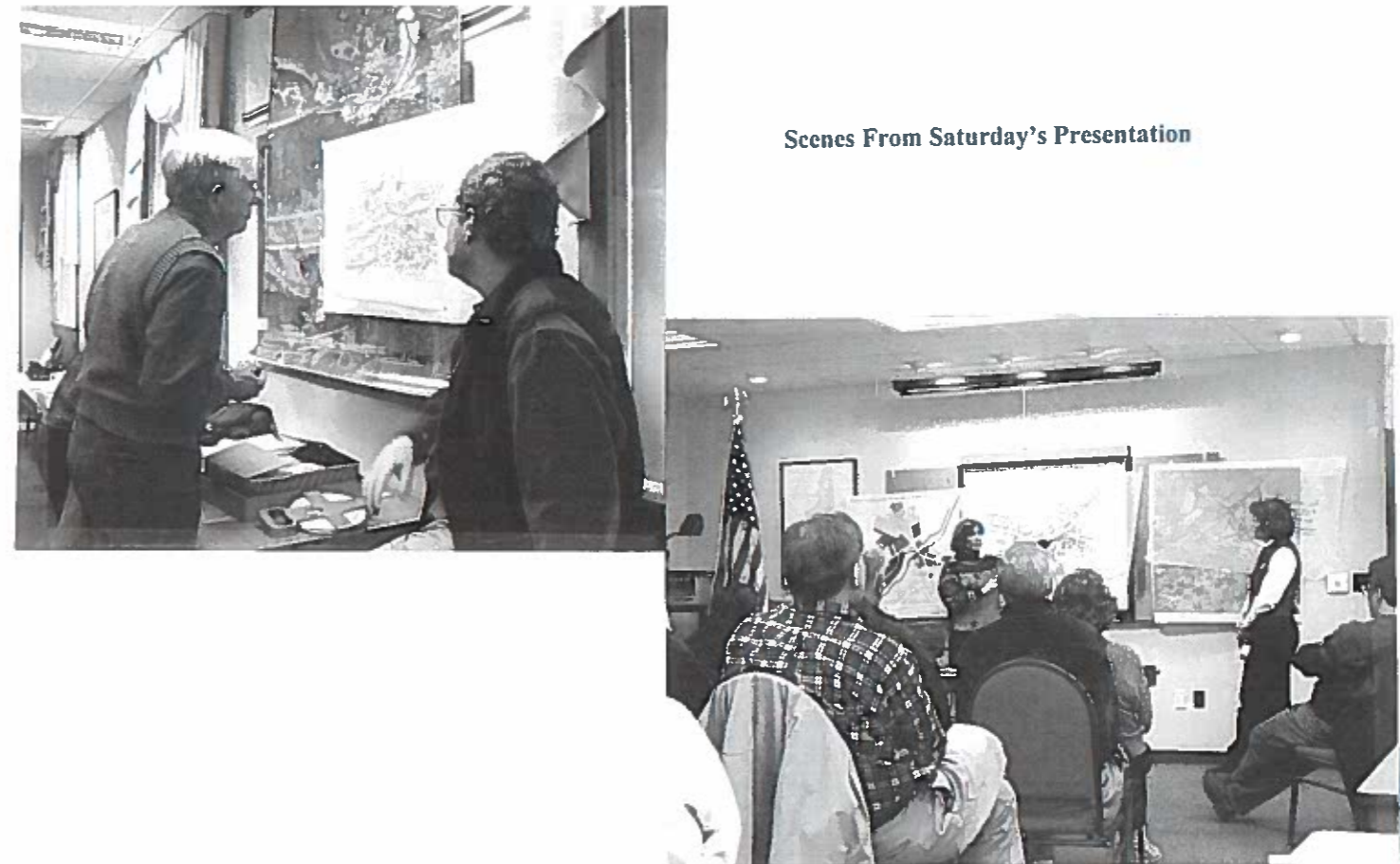
Reinforce the characteristics already present in downtown. Building setbacks, building height and massing should reflect other downtown development. Keep the character of Contoocook historic district in tact. Also revisit zoning regulations to make sure that the zoning language reflects the downtown's goals for the future. Remember that zoning regulations should reflect what the town *wants* to see downtown so that buildings, if needed, are able to be rebuilt as they exist today.

Satisfy the needs of the community and attract outsiders into downtown.

The in-town citizens need reasons to go downtown, and more importantly get out of their cars. Some of these reasons are already there and improving upon the pedestrian linkages, adding public space and slowing down truck traffic will all help get people to spend more time in town.

Get Started!

There is a lot to do and there is no time like the present to get going. Small improvements can happen in the very near future. Examples include organizing volunteers to plant trees, or cut the brush away from a riverfront bench so that a person can see the river again. Little things can make a big difference and can get community members enthused and interested in making bigger changes a reality. Decide what is key and start to work on it. Community members told the design team that major goals are to revitalize downtown, make the area safer for pedestrians, and make the downtown a place where town residents can sit, talk, walk and feel part of a community. If these are the desired ends, focus efforts on ways of getting there.



Cost Estimates and Plans

These cost estimates describe preliminary estimates for each of the three main areas discussed earlier in the text; The Depot area, Fountain Square and the Fire Station area. These improvements do not include cost of land acquisition (in the case of parking improvements), but instead provide the town with material costs once a local decision is made to move forward with the project.

Depot/Riverway Park

Add in new parking area, improve look of plaza in front of the Depot, add in pedestrian paths (unpaved), gazebo, general park area improvements.

Main Street Sidewalk (from Bank of New Hampshire to Bates Library)	<u>\$26,130</u>
390 lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing	
New Driveway and Parking area behind Bank of New Hampshire	<u>\$12,000</u>
3,600 square feet of driveway to access both the far parking lot of 25 cars and the smaller parking lot of 7-8 cars directly behind the bank	
8,000 square foot parking area (25 cars)	<u>\$32,000</u>
2,500 to 3,000 square foot parking area (7-8 cars) directly behind bank	<u>\$12,000</u>
Park Area Improvements	
900-1000 lineal feet of gravel walkway	<u>\$4,500</u>
1 Gazebo	<u>\$10,000</u>
Depot Plaza	
1,200 square feet of landscaping, etc for new plaza in front of the Depot	<u>\$2,400</u>
2,500 square foot parking area behind Depot and Dibble Property (by railroad bridge)	<u>\$10,000</u>
Lump Sum for 20 trees	<u>\$5,700</u>
TOTAL ESTIMATE	\$114,730

Fountain Square

Add in sidewalks, improve intersection by making Maple Street come into a T intersection with Main Street, narrow Fountain Square travel lane, turn the fountain area into a park, public space and add in public parking behind the Community Center.

Main Street - sidewalks on both sides of Fountain Square along Main Street	<u>\$34,840</u>
180 Lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing in front of Fleet Bank and Depot;	
50 lineal feet in front of Frame Shop (near Railroad Bridge)	
190 lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing in front of Café and Fountain Square;	
100 lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing in corner in front of Mr. Mikes	
Maple Street	<u>\$27,805</u>
175 lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing in front of Community Center & Church.	
240 lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing on opposite side of Maple Street	
New Parking area	<u>\$48,000</u>
Lump sum for 12000 square foot parking area (40 cars)	

Pedestrian walkway	<u>\$4,600</u>
100 lineal feet of walkway (between the café and Rusty's) connecting the fountain area with the new public parking area.	
Fountain Square Improvements (public space) - 2,000 square feet of paved area turned into a public meeting space containing the fountain.	<u>\$4,000</u>
Lump sum for 24 trees throughout the intersection	<u>\$6,840</u>
Lump sum for drainage improvements	<u>\$30,000</u>

TOTAL ESTIMATE \$156,085

Fire Station

Sidewalk improvements on three streets and new T intersection in area that currently has 3 streets merging together. Also Lump sums for fill/landscaping in areas to form T intersection and landscaping for riverway park area)

Pine Street	<u>\$6,700</u>
100 Lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing to connect with existing sidewalk	
Kearsarge Street	<u>\$20,100</u>
300 Lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing to connect with War Memorial site	
Park Street	<u>\$31,155</u>
315 Lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing to connect with crosswalk to War Memorial site; and another 150 lineal feet of sidewalk/granite curbing to connect with Railroad Bridge	
Lump Sum for monument landscaping	<u>\$9,500</u>
some pavement removed in one area, and put into another area. (area approx. 4,800 square feet of old roadway that needs to be replaced by landscaped park area AND approximately 1,600 square feet of existing park area that will form part of new intersection.)	
Lump sum for fire station landscaping (area approx. 1,600 square feet)	
Lump sum for riverway park landscaping (area approx. 20,000 square feet)	<u>\$35,000</u>
Lump sum for riverway park trail to connect with Pine St. sidewalk (350-400 lineal feet)	<u>\$1,600</u>
Lump sum for 25 trees	<u>\$7,125</u>
Lump sum for drainage improvements	<u>\$50,000</u>

TOTAL ESTIMATE \$161,180

Notes: (1) Used Brick Pavers for Sidewalk estimates
(2) Landscaping includes loam, seed, bark mulch and shrubs
(3) Drainage Improvements are estimates only

Good Luck!!!

Thanks for Having Us

The Design Team

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The Rural Development Administration is a good source of grants and low interest loans for rural communities

The Economic Development Administration may be able to help with funds for projects that will create jobs.

The regional planning commission is a good source for technical assistance on planning and zoning issues. They may be able to assist with grant preparation.

The regional development council has low interest loans funds, and can help with the preparation of applications for economic development projects.

The Municipal Bond Bank packages small town bond issues into aggregate proposals to secure lower interest rates

The Housing Finance Authority is the source for both planning and development funds for projects that create housing for low income groups and the elderly.

The Office of State Planning distributes funding for projects which can demonstrate an ability to meet the needs of low and moderate income individuals.

The Authority provides financial and technical assistance to community development corporations, worker cooperatives, and certain municipal entities.





Fountain square,
Contoocook, N. H.



A Bird's-Eye View of Contoocook, N. H.



BRIDGE ON CONTOOCOOK
RIVER
PROSPERITY ACCURATE



RR 64 CONTOOCOOK, N.H.