



PLYMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Plymouth Community Design Charrette

May 29-30, 2026



PLAN NH
Visioning for Sustainable Communities

Plymouth Community Design Charrette Acknowledgements

Thank you to the individuals who donated their time, energy, and expertise for this Charrette. We would like to give extra thanks to all the community members who shared their insights about Plymouth.

The Plan NH Team

Tiffany Tononi McNamara,
Executive Director
Plan NH

Anna Wells,
Program Coordinator
Plan NH

Cassie Cashin,
Charrette Co-Leader
Nashua RPC

Jason Plourde,
Charrette Co-Leader
BETA Group

Julia Mistretta,
Report Writer
UNH Student

Taylor Barry,
Report Writer
UNH Student

Bob White
Robert White Landscape
Architecture

C.R. Willeke
New Hampshire Department
of Transportation

Chris Kennedy
MA+KE Architects

Crystal Kidd
Resilience Planning & Design

Dan Schandel
VHB

Darren Winham
Town of Exeter, NH

Jackie Kaehler
GZA GeoEnvironmental

Kevin Aitken
Wiemann Lamphere Architects

Kevin Russell
New Hampshire Department
of Transportation

Laura Black
NH Division of Historical
Resources

Mike Pritchard
AIA

Randy Knowles
The Dubai Group

Sarah Wrightsman
New Hampshire Housing

Sue Cagle
UNH Cooperative Extension

Town Staff

Joseph Perez
Director of Planning & Economic Development

Avery Opland
Planner

Additional Thank Yous

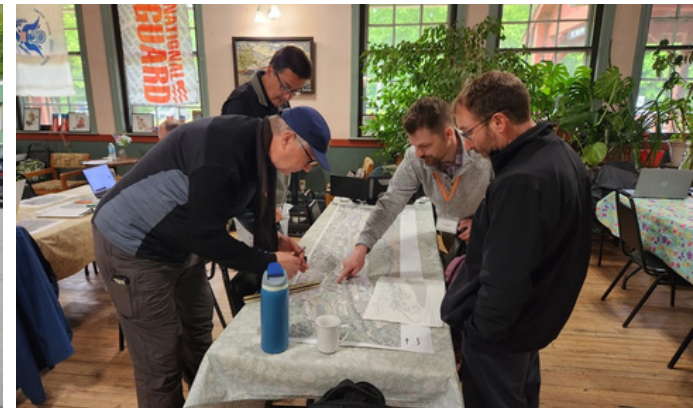
Town of Plymouth

Plymouth Regional Senior Center

Plymouth Economic Development Committee

Railroad Square area stakeholders

Input Session Participants



Who is Plan NH?

Plan New Hampshire (Plan NH), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989. Plan NH has a vision of a New Hampshire that is vibrant and healthy for its people, its economies, and the environment. To achieve that vision, Plan NH's mission is to foster excellence in planning, design, and development of New Hampshire's built environment, because we believe that what we build, where we build, and how we build has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

Plan NH champions principles and ideas that balance the built environment - including buildings, roads, bridges, memorials, public sculptures, and more, with:

- the needs of people, including where they live, how they get about, what services are necessary, and what they value;
- maintaining a “sense of place” for our towns, cities, and villages that makes them unique, including preserving historic assets, open spaces, agriculture, and farming; and protecting our air, water, flora, and fauna.

Among our signature programs is the Community Design Charrette Program, a participatory exercise that brings professionals from our membership together with New Hampshire communities to explore design ideas, usually around a village center or other significant neighborhood or community asset. Through recommendations made by our volunteer team, Plan NH demonstrates the role and importance of the principles and ideas noted above in concrete, real examples.



What is a Charrette?

Simply stated, a Charrette is a brief yet intense, brainstorming session in which ideas are brought together for the purpose of defining potential planning recommendations and possible design solutions for an identified need. For Plan NH, this focus is usually related to a village center or other significant neighborhood or asset in a community.

Plan NH's Community Design Charrettes take place over the course of two days: eight hours on a Friday for seeing the project area and listening to community members, and then another eight hours the next day for brainstorming, crafting recommended solutions, and presenting to the community.

The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with each other and with local community members to collect information needed to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge. Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of discovery: discovering who the community is, what they value, and what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of a Plan NH Charrette are general and overarching planning and design recommendations, rather than specific directions. Plan NH does not dictate, but suggests. Most often, the outcome of a Plan NH Charrette is described as a *vision* or an expression of how things might be, based on what the team saw, heard, and learned.



Hampton, NH - October 2025



Nashua, NH - May 2025



Manchester, NH - April 2025



Newmarket, NH - October 2024

Charrettes blend the broad experience of planning and design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their own community to develop recommendations that address challenges and opportunities in the project at hand. These recommendations provide a framework within which more detailed solutions and plans of action can be developed.

Why did Plan NH come to Plymouth?

The Town of Plymouth submitted an application to Plan NH in June 2025 to envision the possibilities of the Railroad Square area with the input of the whole community. The site serves as an important connection between downtown Plymouth, Main Street, and the Pemigewasset River, offering an opportunity to strengthen connections among these distinct areas and create a more cohesive, vibrant destination for the community.

Charrette recommendations sought to address several goals from Plymouth's Master Plan, including but not limited to:

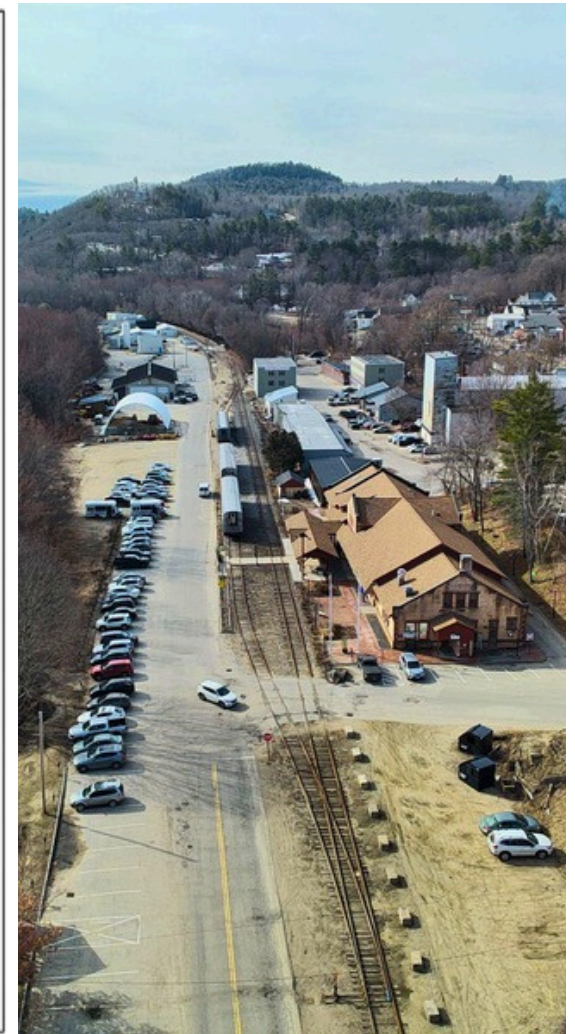
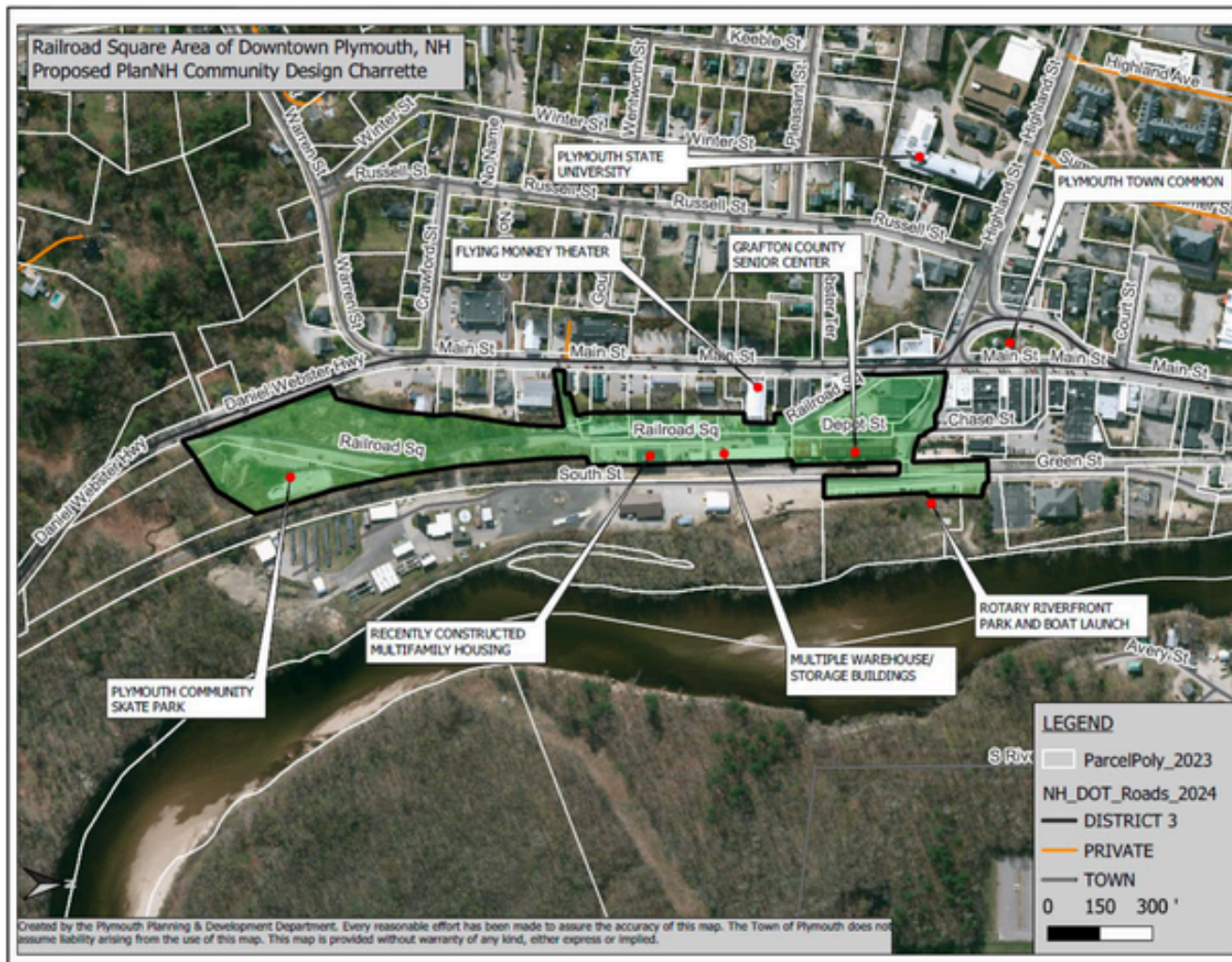
- 1 Increase utilization of the Pemigewasset River as a recreational and economic asset, bridging the physical gap between the water and the village.**
- 2 Improve non-vehicular travel (walking and biking) by formalizing paths that are currently unpaved or poorly defined.**
- 3 Plan for the 100-year and 500-year floodplains and integrate with the Town's recent stormwater drainage improvement projects.**

In its application, the Town of Plymouth also suggested emphasizing the historic features of the area while highlighting the proximity of downtown to the Pemigewasset River to strengthen the sense of pride and place that already exists in Plymouth.



Why did Plan NH come to Plymouth?

The map below highlights the Depot Street/Railroad Square Area that the Charrette team was asked to consider, along with the relevant connections to Main Street and the Pemigewasset River. The charrette was conducted in the project area at the Plymouth Regional Senior Center, pictured to the right.



Site Tour Observations



What the Plan NH team saw during our walking tour of the project area:

On Friday morning, the Charrette Team set off from the Plymouth Regional Senior Center along the length of Railroad Square Road. The team circled back on Main Street (US Route 3 and NH Route 25), stopping on Chase and Green Streets before returning to the Senior Center. In these areas, we observed and evaluated a variety of community assets as well as challenges relating to access, connectivity, aesthetics, functionality, transportation, and redevelopment. Noted sites along the walking tour include:

- **Plymouth Regional Senior Center**
- **Rotary Amphitheater at Riverside Park**
- **Adjacent public cartop and carry-in boat launch**
- **Wide variety of longtime and newer businesses throughout the area east of Main Street**
- **Informal outdoor art installation area**
- **Plymouth Skate + Bike Park**
- **Sanctioned “free walls” for graffiti art**
- **Large retention pond at the northeast corner of US 3/NH25 and Railroad Square Road**
- **Cluster of successful thrift stores operated by Bridge House**
- **Parking lots at 36 Main Street and Chase Street**

What Plymouth Leaders Told Plan NH

What Plan NH Heard from Community Leaders - Stakeholder Input Session

After the walking tour was complete, the team met with community leaders, including board/commission members, Plymouth State University staff, local business owners, and abutting property owners. We learned about the challenges and opportunities from their perspectives as those who live and work in the Town of Plymouth on a daily basis. Many of the challenges mentioned are intertwined in terms of their causes and potential solutions.

- Current traffic flow is disorderly and confusing
- Differing names used for several streets
- Occasional pungent odor in the area that many attributed to the Wastewater and Sewer Treatment Plant
- History of not including stakeholder voices in Town-sponsored projects
- Not enough parking for employees and the public during popular events
- Connection to Main Street is lacking for pedestrians
- Frequent water pooling/flooding, stormwater management feels ineffective
- Confusion over whose responsibility it is to maintain the roads (paving, drainage, pothole repair, etc.) with private property owners doing much of the work
- Community members tend to speed on the Railroad Square roads
- Existing housing is inadequate and does not match the Town's aesthetic
- Desire to see connections made between trails in Plymouth and neighboring trail systems



What Plymouth Residents Told Plan NH

What Plan NH Heard from Residents - Public Input Sessions and Pre-Charrette Outreach

After the Stakeholder Input Session, Plan NH held two Public Input Sessions, providing an opportunity for community members to share their ideas, concerns, and hopes for the future of Plymouth. During these sessions, participants were asked three guiding questions about the project area:

- **What do you see?**
- **What do you want to see?**
- **What else do you think we should know?**

These questions encourage participants to reflect on the community's existing strengths and challenges while also sharing their vision for the future.

The sessions encouraged participation from everyone in attendance and focused on the challenges and opportunities in the project area. Residents shared their perspectives on how to build upon the wonderful assets Plymouth already has, and the vibrancy and enthusiasm of the community was evident to the Charrette team. We were excited to explore the possibilities for Plymouth's future alongside its residents.

In addition to the public listening sessions, members of the Plymouth Economic Development Committee (EDC) conducted **pre-charrette outreach during the two months leading up to the Charrette**. The EDC gathered community input through an online survey, tabling at various locations, social media, and flyers distributed throughout the community. In total, input was received from 146 community members, including 91 survey responses and 55 responses gathered through in-person engagement activities.



What Plymouth Residents Told Plan NH

(Continued)

Across the public listening sessions and pre-charrette outreach, core themes that emerged from this input included:

Assets

- **River:** Public access to the riverfront promotes water recreation while providing a gathering space for community events.
- **Senior Center:** Its physical structure reflects the area's past while programming promotes community building.
- **Local Businesses:** Existing local businesses add value to the economy, especially considering that they are within walking distance to the downtown area.
- **Skate Park:** This is a key recreation opportunity for young people in the community.
- **Alternate Route:** The Railroad Square area provides cars, bikes, and people with the ability to avoid Main Street when traffic is high.

Challenges

- **Lack of Connectivity:** The poor condition of walking routes in the Railroad Square area makes navigation difficult. A lack of signage adds to feelings of disconnection.
- **Condition:** The lack of upkeep in the Railroad Square area, both of infrastructure and vegetation, makes the area feel unwelcoming. Additionally, there is a lack of places to sit such as benches and picnic tables.
- **Utilization:** There are missed opportunities for community building and usage in this area.
- **Parking:** There is concern about a shortage of prime parking spaces downtown during peak hours. Any parking enhancements in the Railroad Square area should therefore be considered in the context of their potential impact on downtown parking availability.

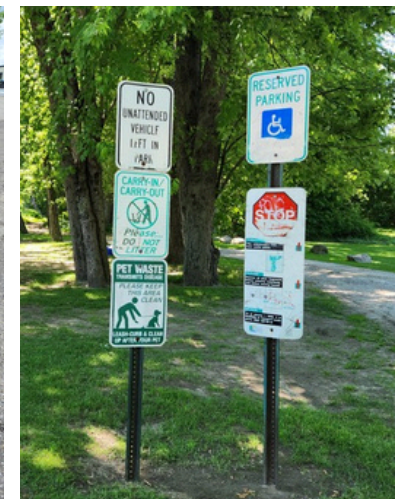


What Plymouth Residents Told Plan NH

(Continued)

Future Visions

- **Housing:** The public expressed concern that there was insufficient housing in the area. There were concerns about affordability and a desire to continue the village/downtown feel architecturally through the area.
- **Recreation:** Generally, the public requested that the riverfront area undergo a clean-up with support for native landscaping. Additionally, it was requested that the existing walking paths along the Pemigewasset be expanded, potentially creating a walking loop. It was suggested that the riverfront area and Skate Park be expanded for more recreational opportunities through the installation of picnic tables and playground equipment. People also expressed a desire for improvements to the boat launch, areas for swimming, and community events during all seasons.
- **Business:** Incorporating existing businesses into economic development within the Railroad Square area was a major goal among the public. Generally, residents would like to see the development of small, locally owned businesses rather than large ones. Suggestions included developing restaurant seating that faces the river, enhancing ecotourism, and connecting businesses to those on Main Street.
- **Infrastructure:** A common theme was developing more cohesive driving, biking, and walking pathways through the area with parking considerations. Concerns about stormwater management were also raised due to frequent flooding.
- **Village Aesthetic:** Residents expressed strong support for improvements in the Railroad Square area, specifically in a way that is compatible with a village-like visual aesthetic and the history of the area.

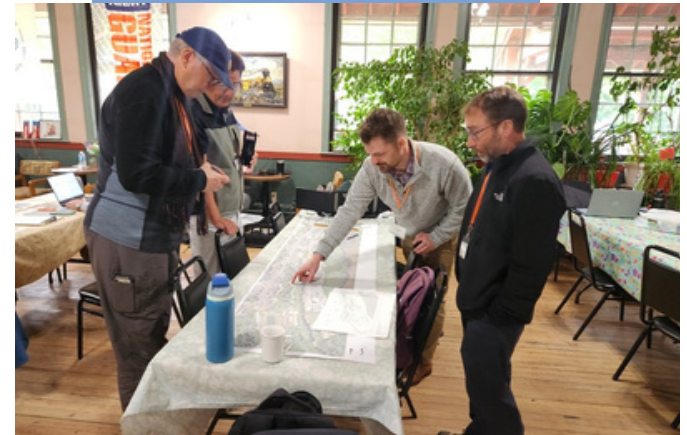


Recommendations

Based on what the Plan NH Charrette Team learned during our walking tour and stakeholder and community listening sessions, we developed a series of customized recommendations meant to address the concerns and opportunities we heard about the project area. These recommendations were presented to the community in person on Saturday, May 30, 2026.

The following is a list of the recommendation areas developed by the Charrette Team as potential ways to advance the community's vision. More detail on each recommendation area is provided on the following pages.

- 1 Riverfront and Recreation**
- 2 Activation**
- 3 Transportation Improvements**
- 4 Parking Improvements**
- 5 Development**
- 6 Connectivity & Wayfinding**
- 7 Economic Development**
- 8 Housing**

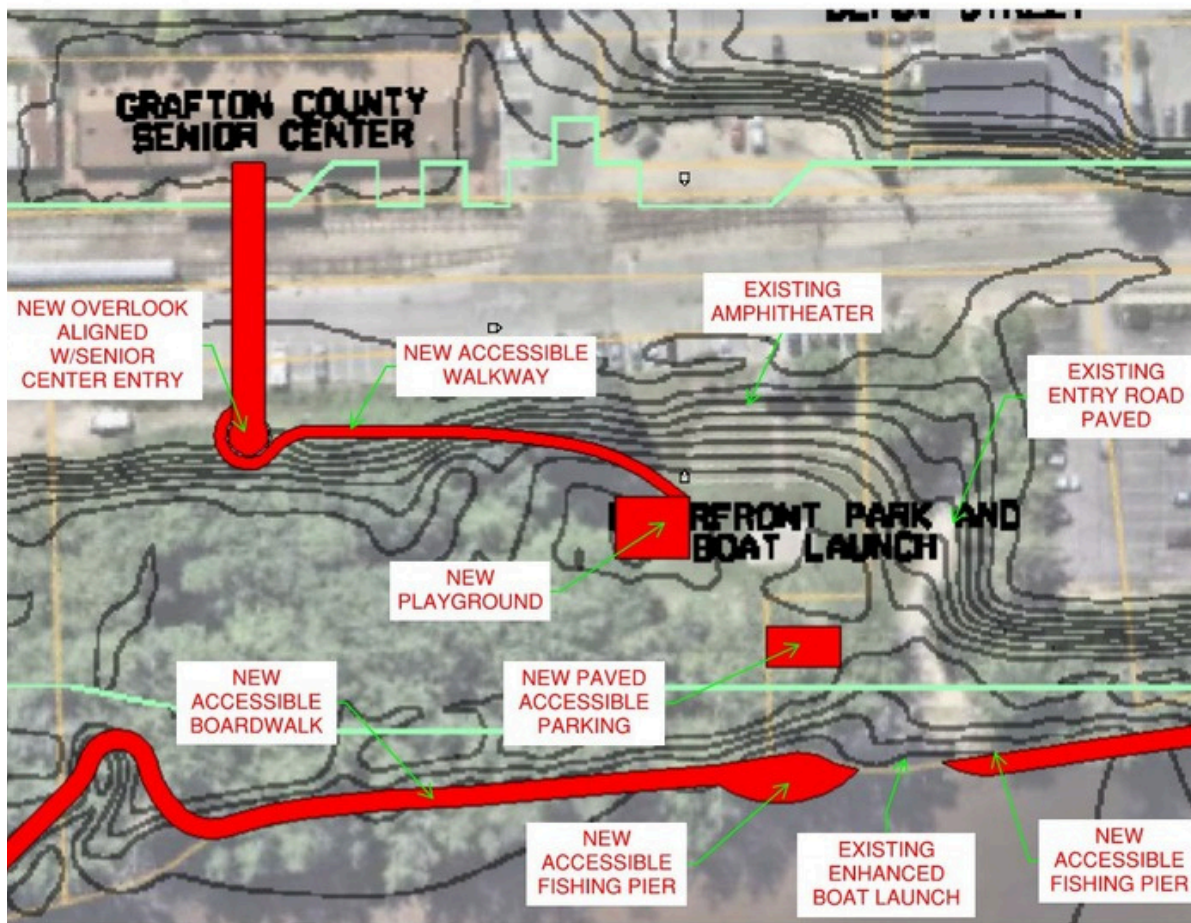


These projects would improve public access, recreation, and safety along the riverfront through a series of coordinated upgrades. A new accessible boardwalk could connect to the Heritage Trail and be constructed with durable materials designed to withstand periodic flooding. This connection would strengthen the relationship between the riverfront, the trail system, and nearby community destinations.



Riverfront and Recreation

The existing Rotary Amphitheater at Riverside Walk can be enhanced to support more flexible and inclusive programming. Suggested improvements include a new Pemigewasset River overlook with an accessible walkway centered on the Senior Center, creating a welcoming vantage point for visitors of all ages and abilities. A new playground adjacent to the stage area can provide recreation opportunities for children during events, helping make the amphitheater area more family-friendly.



Graphic developed by Kevin Aitken



Above images of the existing Amphitheater and Boat Launch along the Pemigewasset River.

Riverfront and Recreation

Access to the riverfront area can be improved by paving the existing entry drive and extending it to new accessible parking. Public use of the riverfront can be expanded through the installation of a new accessible fishing pier and enhancements to the existing public cartop and carry-in boat launch, supporting a broader range of water-based recreation opportunities.

Lighting can be added along the boardwalk, at the amphitheater, and at the overlook to enhance usability, visibility, and safety. A new restroom building can further support broader programming at the amphitheater and adjacent riverfront area, making conditions better suited to accommodate community events, daily visitors, and expanded recreational use.

Example Images



Concord, MA



Ripon, WI



Concord, MA



Adirondack Rail Trail, NY



Tiadaghton State Forest, PA

Activation

Activation is a strategy intended to use approachable opportunities to transform an underused area into vibrant, welcoming community hub. Activation relies upon small-scale activities and events to encourage social interaction, boost the economy, and foster a sense of ownership among residents. During the stakeholder and public sessions, one concern was that community members did not know where they were allowed to go in the Railroad Square area. Activation events would resolve this issue by highlighting community assets while marking the opening of newly developed areas.

One potential method of activation would be to create an outdoor classroom for education about the Pemigewasset River watershed as depicted below.



Outdoor Classroom graphic developed by Mike Pritchard using AI assistance.



Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, Holderness, NH



Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams, Winona Lake, IN

Activation

Proximity to the Pemigewasset River provides an opportunity to connect Railroad Square to Plymouth's outdoor identity through recreation, trails, water activities, and the natural environment. Community members noted the popularity of summer tubing and kayaking on the river. Railroad Square could build on this existing activity by serving as a hub for summer recreation and river-related activities such as a regatta or nearby railbike services.

Additional seasonal activation could help bring people into the area throughout the year while giving the Town an opportunity to test ideas and build community interest before making larger, long-term investments. Potential uses could include an enhanced outdoor amphitheater for summer movie nights and winter bonfires, creating a more active and welcoming destination in every season.



Regatta, Movie Nights, and Community Bonfire graphics developed by Mike Pritchard using AI assistance.



Granite State Railway located in Lincoln, NH



Lake Potanipo Rail Trail in Brookline, NH



Rail Trail Photo Op in Goffstown, NH

Activation

The Railroad Square area has a unique character, acting as a small industrial buffer between the river and downtown. Moving toward downtown, Plymouth's identity becomes more modern and community-focused, reflecting education, local businesses, culture, housing, and civic life. This progression could help guide the character of Plymouth's activation zones, allowing each

area to have a distinct purpose and feel while contributing to a cohesive community identity. Future activation ideas could include an indoor farmers market at the Plymouth Regional Senior Center and an outdoor rock climbing wall behind the Flying Monkey, providing opportunities for year-round recreation and community gathering.



Farmers market and climbing wall graphics developed by Mike Pritchard using AI assistance.



Activation

In addition to the highlighted events, specific actions that can be taken to increase activation include:

- **Review the request/permit process for utilizing the Amphitheater** for events to make the process as transparent as possible. Community members noted that they were unsure how the process works or what type of events were allowed.
- **Review barriers and process for temporary uses** to support opportunities for temporary businesses: food trucks, craft vendors, and pop-up businesses.
- **Plan strategic activation events** that celebrate successes and inform the broader community as segments are completed, for example an art walk to celebrate completion of a trail section.
- **Work with existing businesses along Main Street and Railroad Square Road** so that activation events improve connectivity between the downtown and the riverfront. For example, Main Street events can include activities along the riverfront to build connection and vice versa.
- Explore options to **partner with local organizations** such as the senior center and youth center to build inclusion and potential for activating those spaces at times when they are currently not in use.

Community events are important! And it is critical that events be widely communicated to the public in a timely manner to ensure that activation reaches a broad audience.

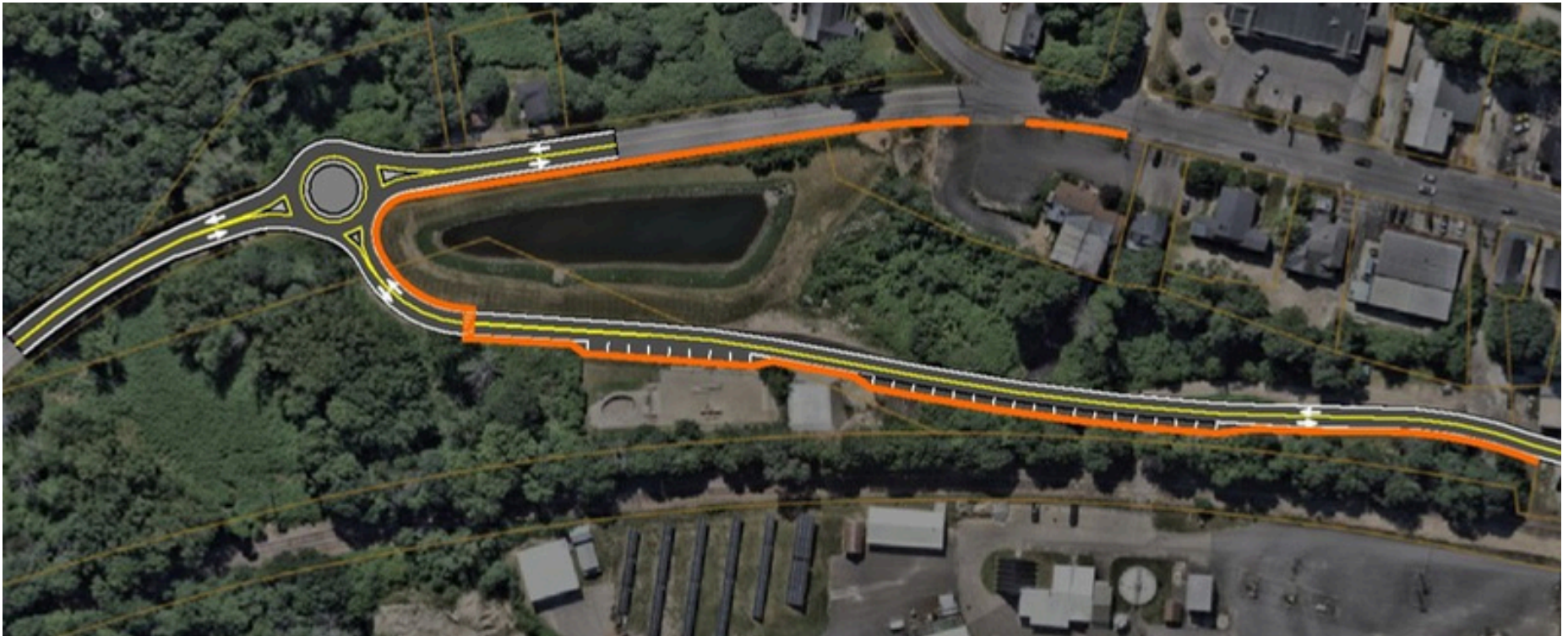


The Skate Park in Plymouth, NH

Transportation Improvements

A single-lane roundabout is possible at the intersection of Railroad Square Road and US Route 3/NH Route 25, near the Skate Park of Plymouth. This intersection currently functions as a conventional T-type unsignalized intersection with the minor street under stop control. Community members expressed concerns related to vehicle speeds, safety, and connectivity. A roundabout could help address these concerns, simultaneously creating a more recognizable gateway as motorists approach downtown. This concept also provides an opportunity to improve access to the Railroad Square area.

In addition, the current sidewalk along US Route 3/NH Route 25 ends approximately 800 feet north of the Railroad Square Road intersection, leaving a gap in the pedestrian network. To improve connectivity, this sidewalk should be completed leading to the Skate Park as indicated in orange below.



Graphic depicting a proposed roundabout, improved parking, and complete sidewalk connectivity developed by Dan Schandel.

Transportation Improvements

Prior to developing the Railroad Square area, it would be advantageous for the Town of Plymouth to research and clarify the classification of the roads in the area. Confirming the status of Railroad Square Road would help establish the respective rights and responsibilities related to maintenance, right-of-way, and roadway assets, including drainage, sewer lines, pavement, signage, and other infrastructure. For example, there could be a “Class V Highway Easement” over the land owned by abutters in the Railroad Square area. These determinations should be clearly documented for future reference and to provide greater clarity for the Town and adjacent property owners.

With appropriate maintenance and improvements, Railroad Square Road could be redesigned to address ponding, increase public parking, and provide safer, more convenient non-motorized connections for pedestrians and bicyclists, such as shoulders, sidewalks, and proper wayfinding signage. These improvements could provide visitors with additional ways to access downtown Plymouth while also improving connections to the Town’s Skate Park and amenities on the riverfront.



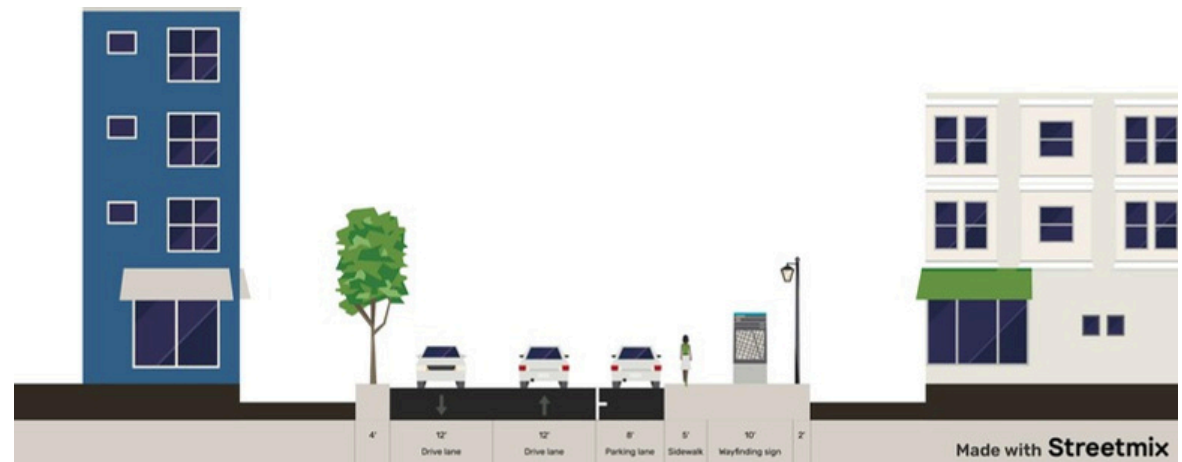
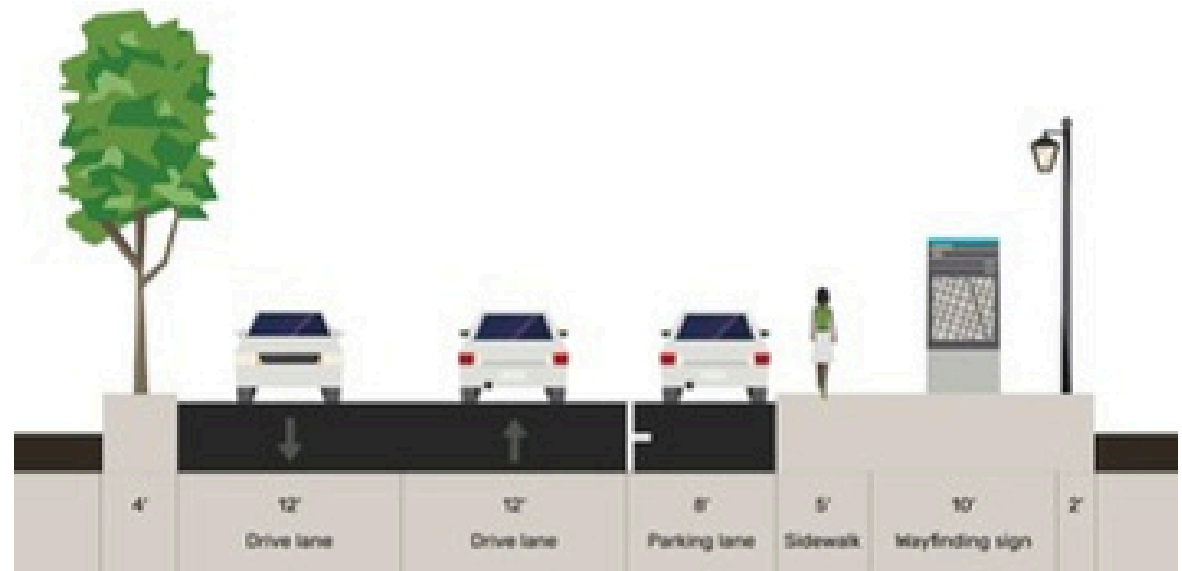
Aerial image of current conditions of Railroad Square Road at the time of the charrette.

Transportation Improvements

The Plan NH team explored the formalization and paving of Railroad Square Road between the business district and US Route 3/NH Route 25. Paving this segment would help establish a clear public identity for the corridor and support access to the Skate Park and adjacent uses. Before any paving work is undertaken, drainage conditions should be addressed through closed drainage solutions and geotechnical investigation of the existing roadway subgrade.

The roadway concept developed by the Charrette team for Railroad Square Road included two 11-foot wide travel lanes and on-street parking in select areas, with the potential to provide approximately 15 parking spaces along the corridor. This configuration would help slow traffic, create a more formal streetscape, and support public access to the Skate Park and surrounding destinations.

Additionally, a new sidewalk along the proposed paved section of Railroad Square Road would support a looped pedestrian network that connects with Main Street.



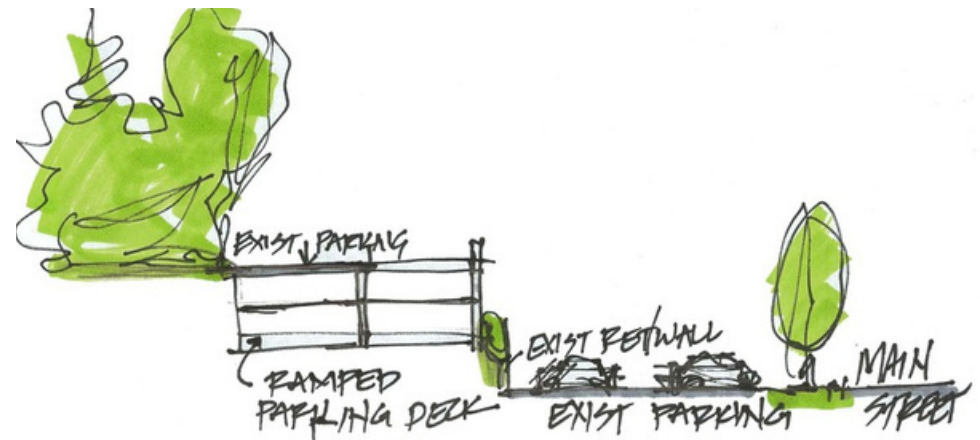
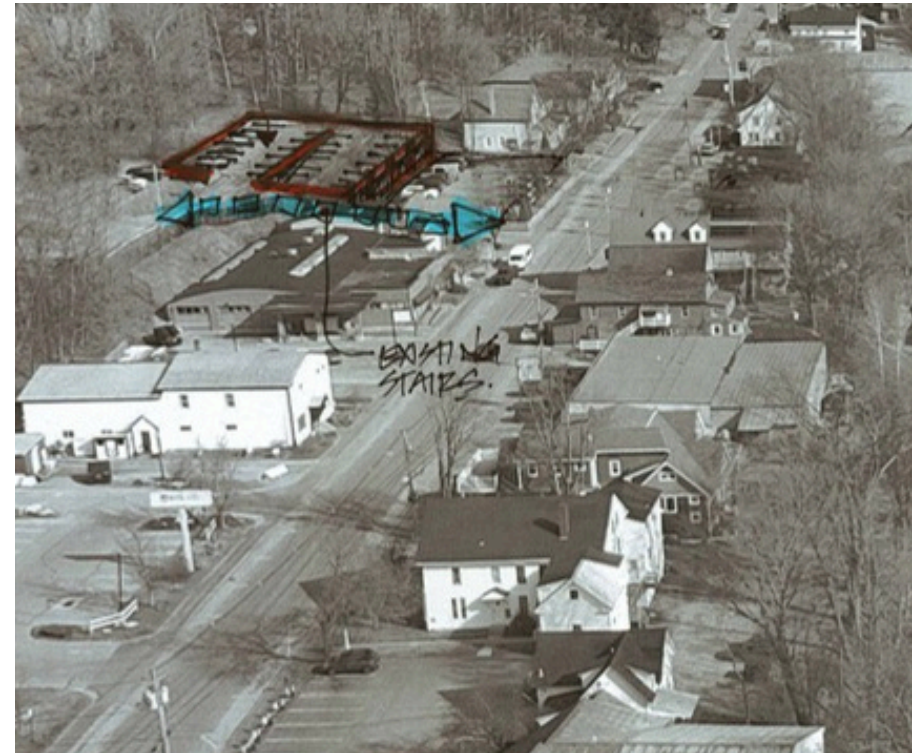
Graphics developed by Kevin Russell using Streetmix

Parking Improvements

During the stakeholder and public information sessions, one widespread concern was a shortage of prime parking downtown during peak hours. This deficiency is especially true when the Flying Monkey Theatre holds shows. Therefore, the Charrette volunteers identified a property at 36 Main Street for a potential parking deck. The property across from The Flying Monkey is owned by Mid-State Community Development Corporation (CDC) and currently contains a surface parking lot. Should the Town move forward with this parking deck alternative, the following options should be considered:

- Land lease
 - Town builds structure
 - Designate spots for CDC or future owner/user
- Purchase property
 - Town builds structure
 - Designate spots for CDC or future owner/user
 - Parking revenue share
- Town manages parking, collects revenue, and maintains insurance

By building into the existing grade, a two-story parking deck could support approximately 70-80 parking spaces. Upon development, the existing pedestrian staircase from the upper neighborhood to the businesses on Main Street should be preserved. The graphics, developed by Randy Knowles, show a cross section and sketch of how the structure could sit back from the Main Street and have less visual impact than a parking structure built at the edge of Main Street.

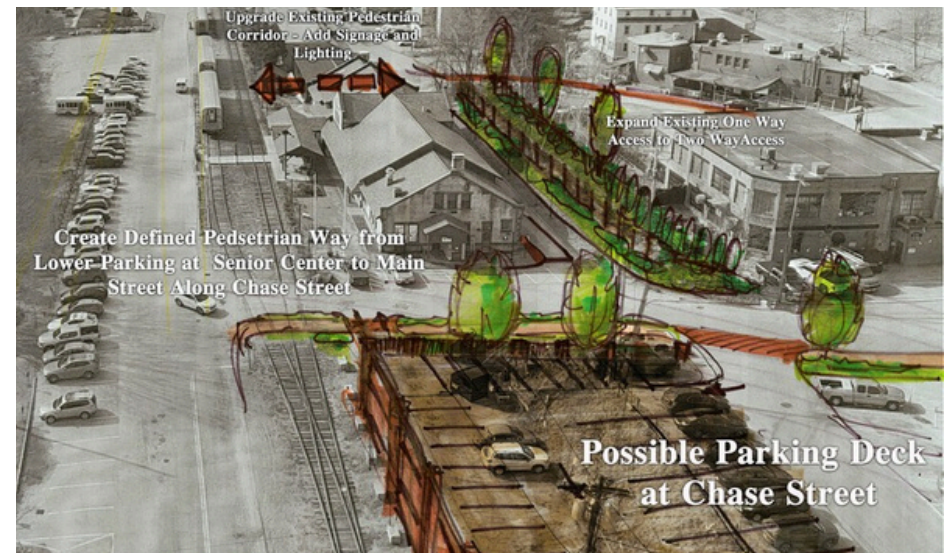
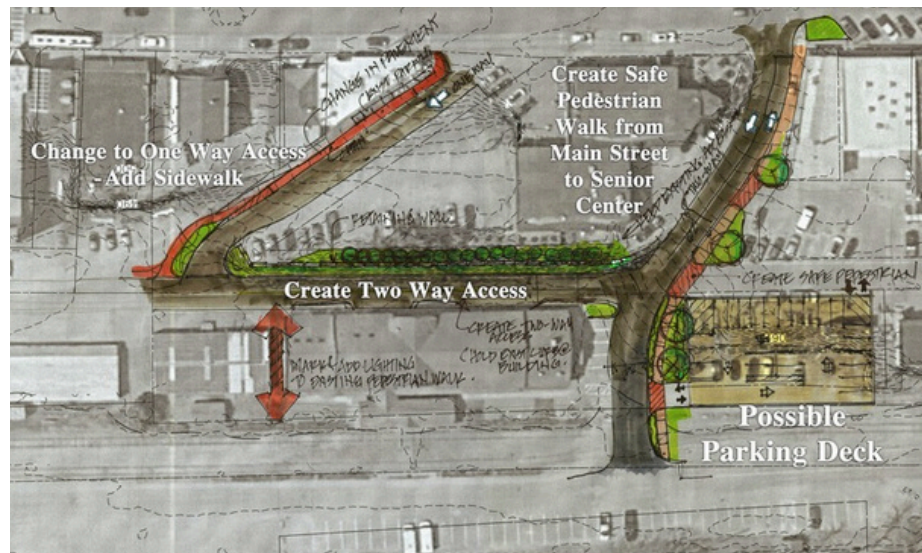


Graphics depicting proposed parking deck developed by Randy Knowles.

Parking Improvements

Connections between Main Street and the parking area at the Senior Center are poorly delineated. Expanding the existing one-way Depot Street that runs parallel to the Senior Center to a two-way access road would improve vehicular circulation. Holding the curb along the Senior Center and installing a landscape retaining wall on the opposite side should allow for two 11-foot wide travel lanes and maintain an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant pedestrian sidewalk. Reconstructing Highland Street to add a raised 8-foot-wide sidewalk with curbing and revising the existing drainage would create a safe delineated pedestrian connection from Main Street to the parking area at the Senior Center. Reclaiming green space and adding street trees along the street will help visually delineate the connection to the Pemi River from Main Street. Reconstruction of the Railroad Square access road, making it one way down from Main Street and adding a curbed sidewalk will create an additional safe pedestrian route. Upgrading the pedestrian access to the south of the Senior Center with the addition of signage and lighting would re-enforce the connection to the parking along the Pemi River and make it safer for pedestrians.

The existing privately owned parking area on Chase Street north of the Senior Center is another location where a parking deck could be constructed. An at grade entrance from Chase Street and another from Highland Street could yield another 20-24 prime parking spaces for merchants.

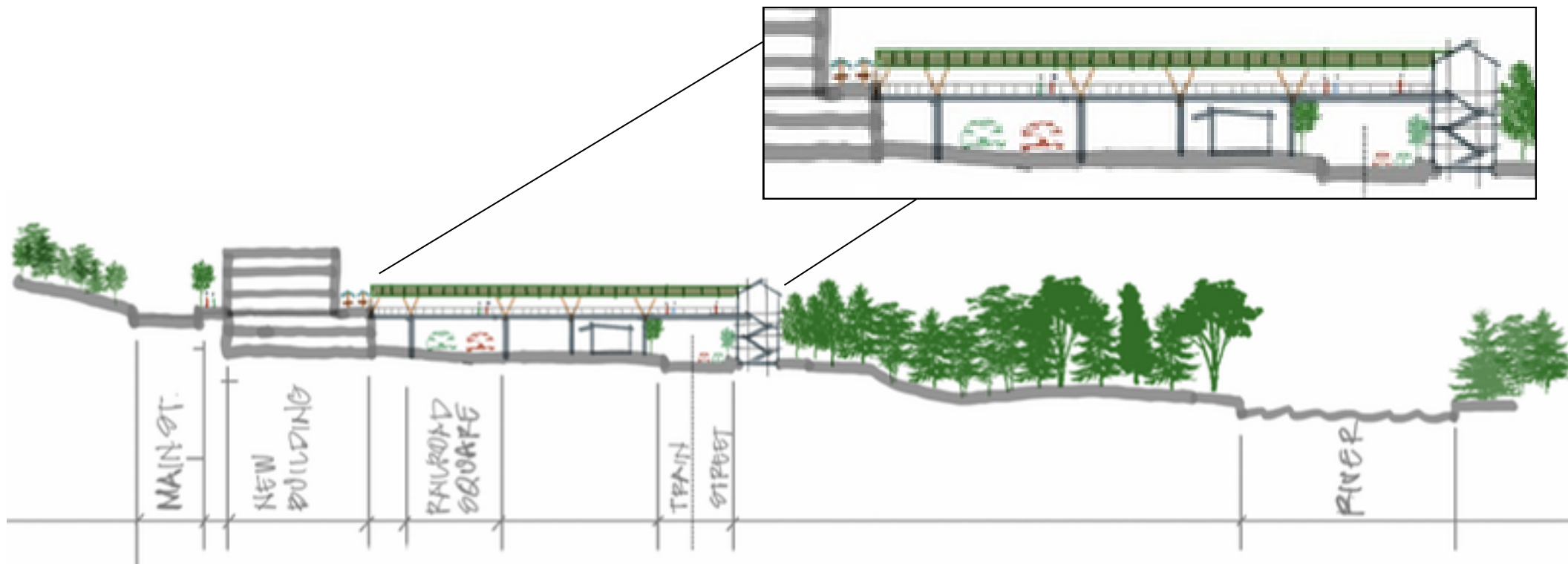


Graphics depicting proposed parking improvements including a parking deck at Chase Street and traffic flow adjustments developed by Randy Knowles.

Parking Improvements

One of the team's collective efforts throughout the design period of the Charrette was to connect Main Street with Depot Street and over to the Pemigewasset riverfront.

During the public sessions on day one, many comments were made about the steepness of the grade from Main Street down to the parking area along the railroad tracks. The diagram below shows that access to Main Street from the parking area along the railroad tracks/riverfront could be accomplished by creating a level elevated walkway from Main Street to a set of stairs and an elevator located between the Pemigewasset River and the railroad tracks. The location of the staircase and elevator could also be expanded to include public restrooms, which could be utilized by people attending events at the amphitheater as well as people walking on trails along the riverfront.



Graphic developed by Chris Kennedy

Parking Improvements

If expanded by about 10 feet, the paved area behind the Senior Center can be made wide enough to double the parking, allowing better access to the Pemigewasset River and nearby businesses. Building out parking on both sides of the lot in this way will function as a chicane, a traffic calming design that forces vehicles to curve and reduce their speed.

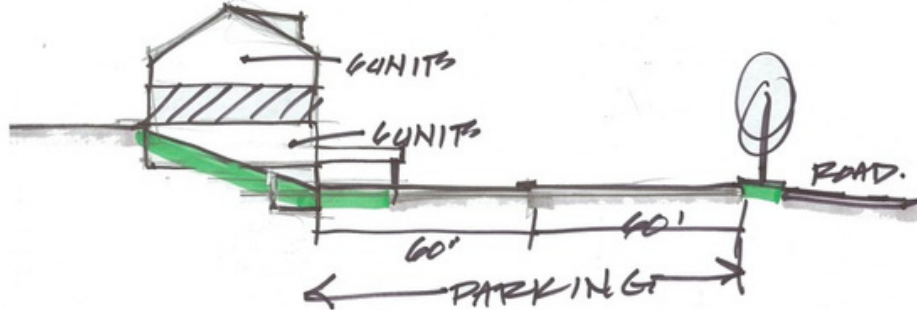
Behind Tenney Mountain Music, across the train tracks, there is potential for riverfront housing. Parking could be installed underneath the units to align with the floodplain so employees and visitors in this area may have enough parking as well.



Graphic developed by Bob White

Mixed-Use Development

Charrette volunteers identified the location at 5 Main Street/32 Railroad Square Road as a potential mixed-use opportunity. With a lot line adjustment, the property could be developed into a multi-story building. On the main floor, there could be 6,000 sq ft of retail space. The top floor could hold six lofted residential units while the bottom-floor could hold six additional housing units. On top of the parking lot with a 4% grade, a deck could be added to the back of the building with parking offered underneath. This opportunity illustrates how the sloped topography from Main Street to the Pemigewasset River can be taken advantage of to facilitate positive infrastructural developments that fits the brand of Plymouth.



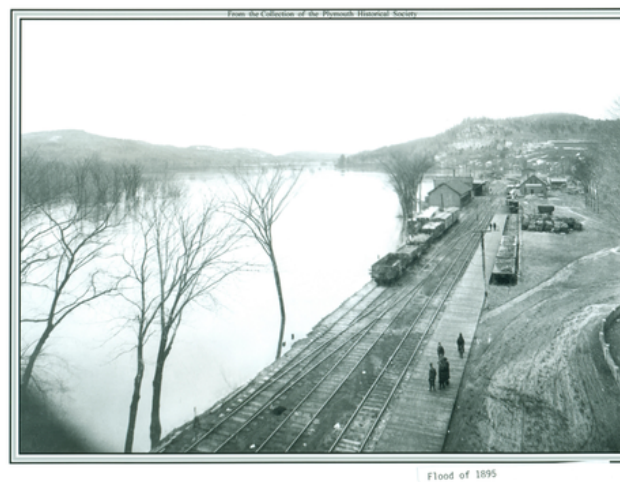
Graphics developed by Randy Knowles

Connectivity and Wayfinding

Establishing connectivity is a top goal for this area. Wayfinding is a broad term used to describe the different ways that people orient themselves in a physical setting and navigate from place to place. Wayfinding supports connectivity, allowing the intended outcomes of newly designed infrastructure to be fully realized. This concept is something that the community has suggested is currently lacking in the area.

The Charrette team recommends using a consistent wayfinding brand up on Main Street and throughout the project area to support the connectivity between Main Street and the Railroad Square area, which is also a challenge the community reported.

Choosing a “brand” or identity for the area will be a critical task of the Town, as it will guide the signage that supports “activating” the new infrastructure and uses. Interestingly, this particular area has been characterized by numerous historic uses through time; and also overlapping in time. Plans for future use of this area will surely continue that pattern. To give the area a “sense of place,” the Town could choose a wayfinding brand that defines a current and future identity by speaking to the area’s past. Topics of research can also be pulled from these historical themes for targeted interpretive panels throughout area.



Graphics sourced from The Plymouth Historical Society

Connectivity and Wayfinding

Wayfinding generally consists of a package or system of components, with various similarly designed elements intended for different uses and purposes. Wayfinding systems can range in size, variety, and complexity depending on the needs of a community. One form of wayfinding signage are informational kiosks, which help orient pedestrians.

Vehicular signage is auto-oriented, developed in a way that promotes wayfinding along roads at a font size that can be read by passing drivers.

Pedestrian signage can be much more detailed than vehicular signage. Details include maps and the average time, in minutes, that it will take to walk to the highlighted landmark.

Examples of auto-oriented (right) and pedestrian-oriented (left) wayfinding signage in Concord, NH:



An informational kiosk from Concord, NH with a map on one side (left) and interpretive panels on the other (right)

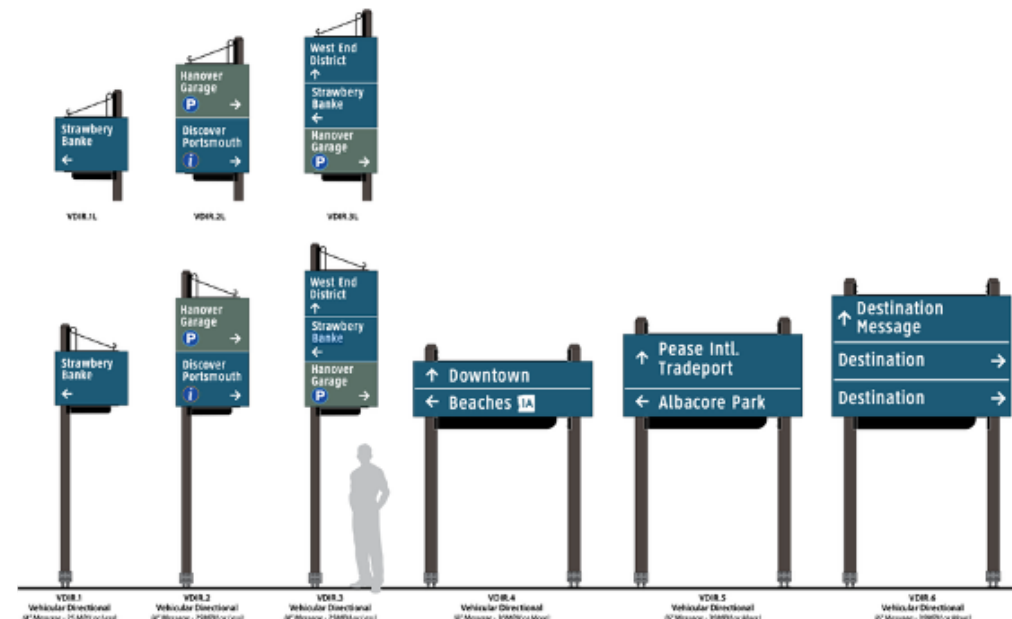
Connectivity and Wayfinding

Directional wayfinding along sidewalks or pathways indicate roadways, local businesses, and other key town features. The Town of Meredith, NH (top left) has a consistent branding system on white, wooden signs complete with the signature symbol of a hand pointing in the direction of the highlighted feature. Other directional wayfinding signs are simplified at the end of roadways to identify key Town features along those roadways. In the Town of Meredith, NH (top right), signage indicates the presence of Community Park.

In 2014, the City of Portsmouth, NH underwent efforts to improve connectivity. The project began with a Wayfinding Analysis Report, which had four phases:

- Phase 1 (2014): fabrication and installation of consistent and visible parking signs and directionals, interior and exterior enhancements to the parking garage.
- Phase 2 (2015): vehicular signage directing drivers to key visitor destinations within the downtown core.
- Phase 3 (2020): focused on vehicular signage to destinations outside of the downtown core.
- Final/Current Phase (2025): include signage that facilitates pedestrian movement within the downtown core.

The report included illustrations of possible signage, complete with different scales and sizes depending on its purpose. The illustrations, which could be adopted to fit Plymouth's character, are represented here.



Connectivity and Wayfinding

Education: Educational information can be incorporated into wayfinding components or installed separately to complement wayfinding and other activities in the area. Throughout the public sessions, it was heard that the Water and Sewer Treatment Plant was seen as an unpopular and underappreciated asset within the Railroad Square area. Suggestions arose to educate the public about the Treatment Plant rather than “hide it” in the facility’s current location. One way to “embrace” the Water and Sewer Treatment Plant would be through informational signage detailing the history and current usage of the facility.



Educational panel highlighting the historical significance of a bridge along a rail trail in Concord, NH

Connectivity and Wayfinding

Lighting: One concern heard during the stakeholder and public information sessions was a lack of wide-spread, comprehensive lighting in the Railroad Square area. The Charrette team not only recommends that the Town of Plymouth install lighting, but also that the fixtures meet the following criteria:

- Consistently matches the branding period of the Railroad Square area
- Reflects pedestrian/ vehicular scale
- Reflects chosen time period/identity or choose visually neutral, unobtrusive design
- Avoids false history
- Determines balance between pedestrian and auto-centric scale
- Addresses light levels/light pollution issues



Existing Lighting in the Railroad Square area at the time of the charrette.

Connectivity and Wayfinding

Public Art: Murals, sculptures, light installations, and performance art are some examples of public art that can be part of the visual aesthetic of the area.

Beyond beautifying neighborhoods, murals boost local economies, attract tourism, and foster collaboration among artists, residents, and businesses, strengthening the cultural fabric of a community.

Plymouth has a strong existing art scene with its graffiti park and rock sculpture area. Future development could expand upon the existing art scene, incorporating work from the high school, PSU, and residents in a collaborative manner.



Nashua, NH



Lancaster, NH



Meredith, NH

Connectivity and Wayfinding

Summary:

- Name the area and/or codify an identity for consistent branding
 - Ex. Railroad Square Area or “From River to Railroad”
- Decide what types of wayfinding components will work best for Plymouth’s goals for the area
- Extend wayfinding and branding to Main Street for connectivity
- Incorporate educational historic interpretation
- Install consistent, sustainable lighting
- Incorporate public art installations
 - Graffiti Park
 - Rock Sculptures



Images of the existing graffiti park and sculpture park in the Railroad Square area.

Economic Development

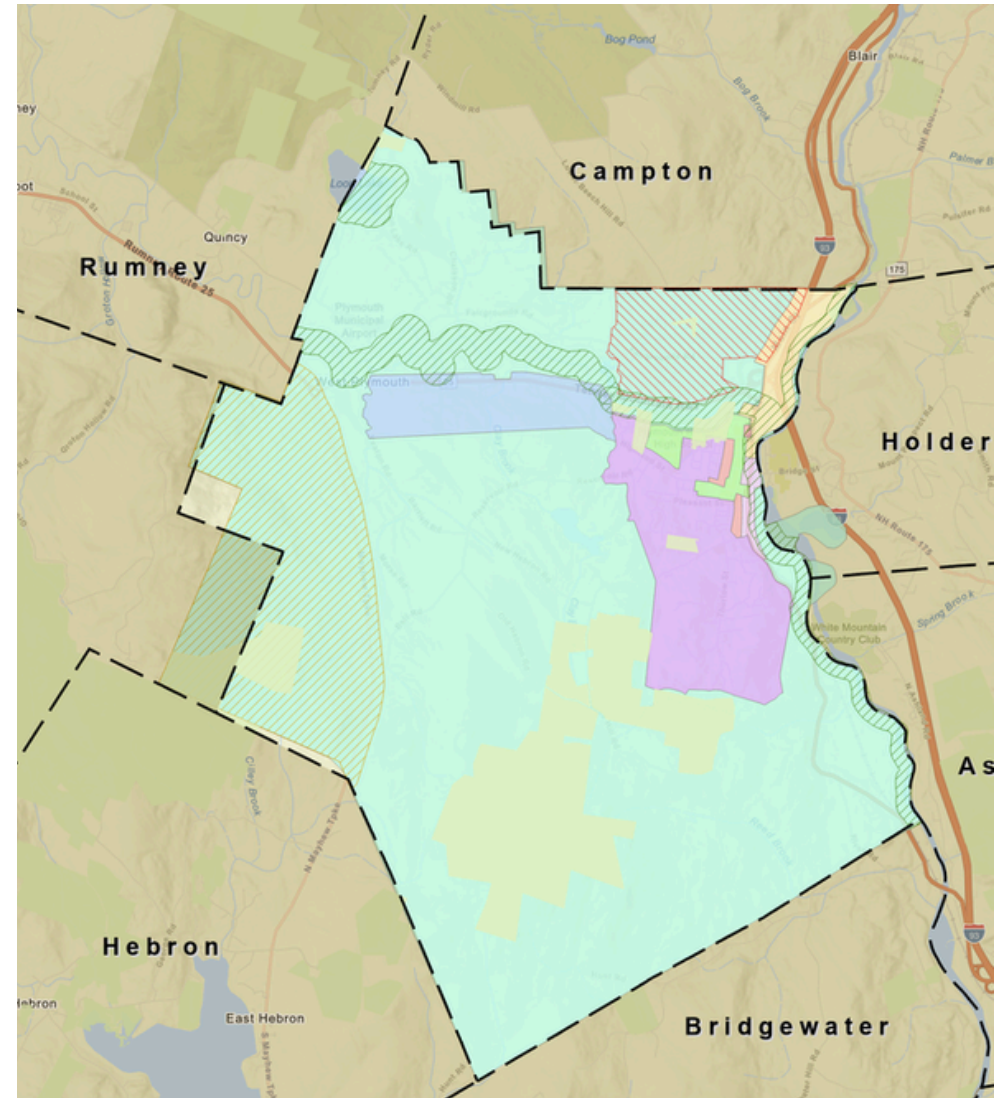
The Town can raise funds for community development projects in several different ways:

1. Capital Improvement Projects require the Town to pay for the projects and is a method of scheduling payments for large-scale improvements.

2. Zoning tools can be used to encourage private investment by removing barriers, creating opportunities for redevelopment, and providing financial incentives that benefit the Town and private property owners.

Examples include:

- Increasing the allowable building height
- Increasing allowable building coverage
- Decreasing required setbacks
- Increasing the number of units allowed per development

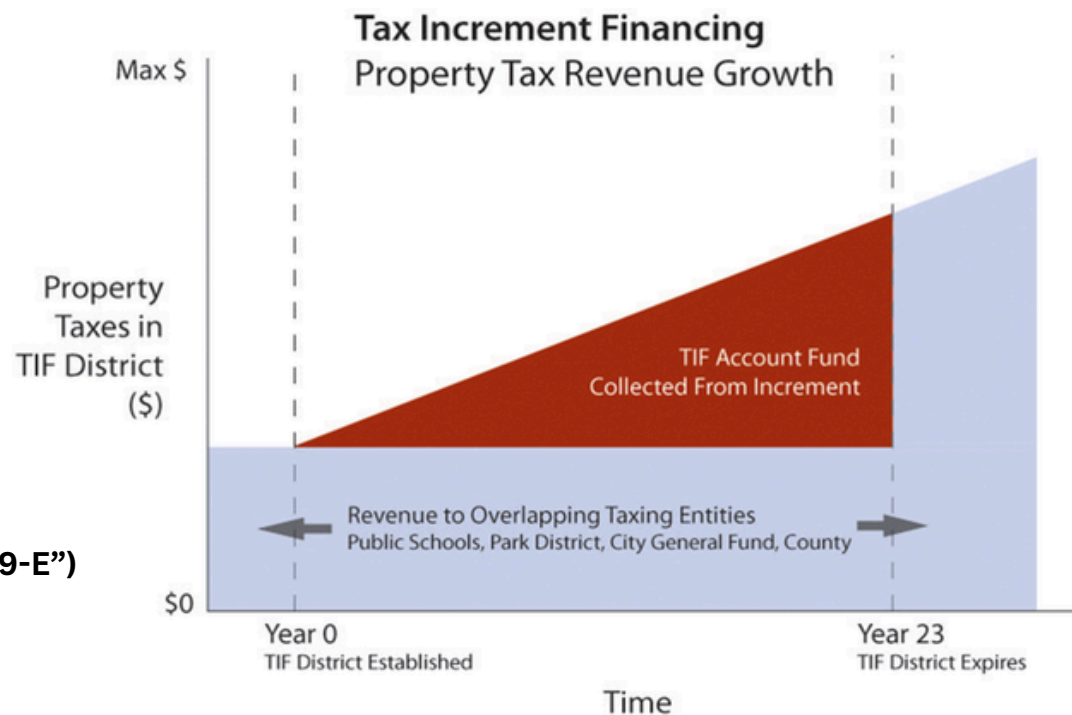


Existing Zoning Map of Plymouth, Sourced from ArcGIS

Economic Development

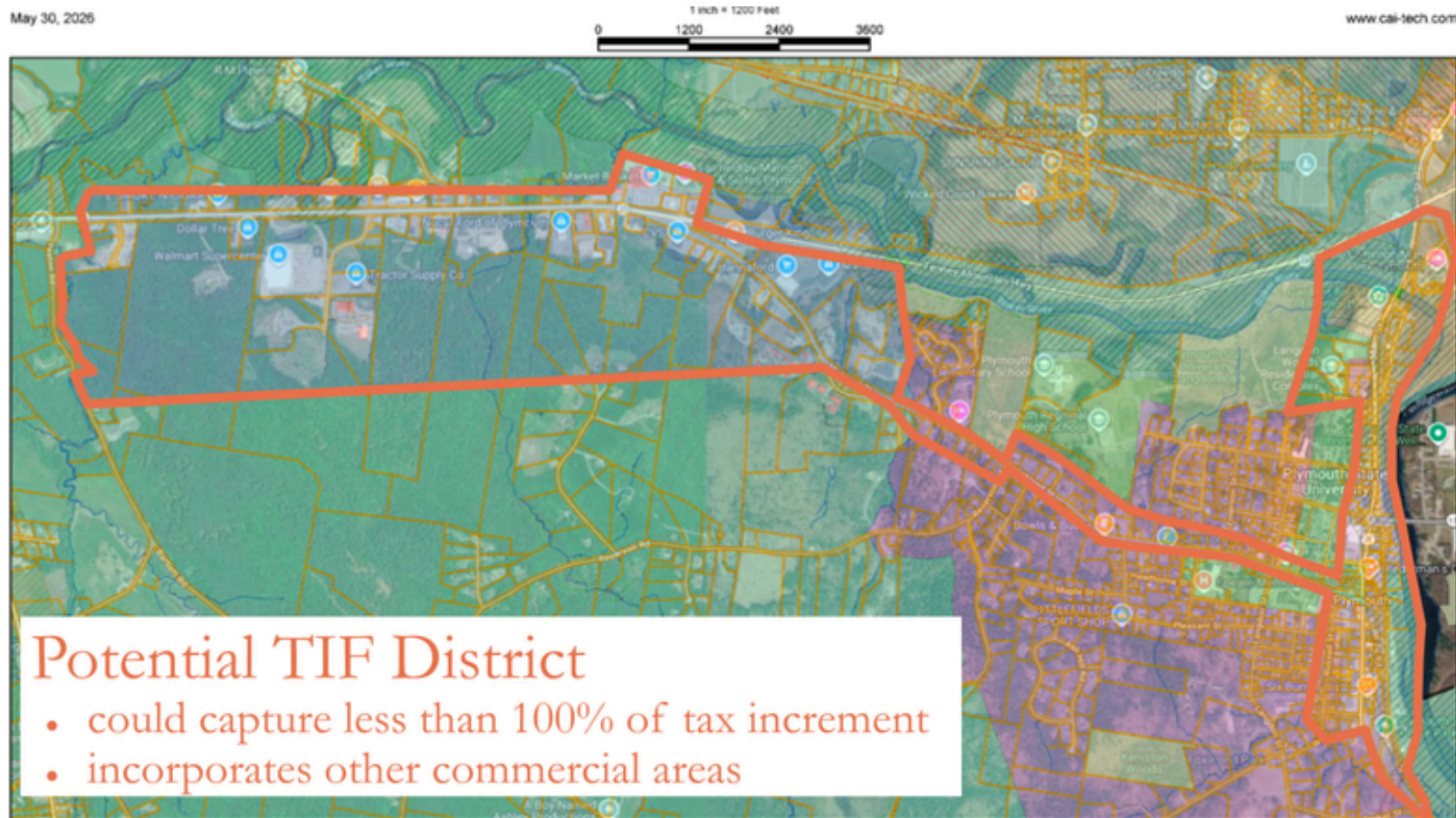
3. Overlay District(s)

- A **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District** is a designated area within a community created to help fund infrastructure improvements. As new facilities are built and property values rise, the additional (incremental) tax revenue generated by that growth contributes to the cost of the improvements.
 - Plymouth can decide what portion of the new revenue can go toward paying off the TIF versus being deposited into the general fund right away, giving some flexibility in how quickly the district pays for itself.
 - Once new tax dollars are used to pay for the improvements, the TIF dissolves and all future tax dollars revert to the general fund, benefiting all taxpayers.
 - It is important to begin improvements only once the bond payment is assured.
- **Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (“79-E”)**
 - Public benefit achieved by investment in voters-approved development.
 - Taxable value remains at pre-development level between the time of substantial improvement for length of Select Board-approved timeframe.
 - At conclusion of length of incentive, property is taxed at full current value.



Economic Development

New Hampshire state law requires a TIF District to be made up of connected parcels of land. Plymouth's proposed TIF would therefore need to link its three commercial districts together into one contiguous area: Village Commercial (VC), Highway Commercial (HC), and Industrial Commercial Development (ICD). Since these three districts are not adjacent to one another, the plan must include the parcels along Highland Street as a connector, effectively bridging the ICD to the VC and HC districts. This connection would allow all three commercial areas to be combined into a single TIF District, making the entire area eligible for the infrastructure funding and development benefits previously described.



Potential TIF District

Housing

Housing Opportunity Zone (79-E:4-c)

Housing Opportunity Zones (HOZs) are a relatively new program outlined in RSA 79-E:4-c. The statute allows municipalities to create an HOZ anywhere in the community to improve existing properties or encourage the creation of new housing units.

Property owners with an eligible project in a designated HOZ may be granted tax relief of up to 7 years if the development includes no workforce housing (as defined by RSA 674:58) or 15 years if the development includes workforce housing. The state law does not prescribe affordability requirements, but municipalities may further establish criteria for the public benefits, goals, and measures that promote housing affordability.

Because the program is relatively new, Housing Opportunity Zones are largely untested in New Hampshire. Only one community, Conway, has adopted a Housing Opportunity Zone, which has not yet been used by a developer.



Housing in the Railroad Square area at the time of the charrette.



Possible residential opportunities for mixed use properties throughout the project area and along Main Street.

Housing

Form-Based Code

Form-based codes (FBC) are a land development regulation with a goal of achieving a specific “form” by prioritizing a building’s physical shape, scale, and relationship to the street over the use. Form-based codes are often used in downtown areas, village districts, historic districts, and to guide infill development in existing neighborhoods. Form-based codes can help to encourage missing middle housing, like duplexes and small multifamily homes, increase certainty and clarity of property owners, regulate infill development and redevelopment, continue historic development patterns in existing neighborhoods, and encourage mixed-use development.

Form-based codes generally include building form standards and public space standards, presented with written descriptions and diagrams to illustrate the community’s intentions. Plymouth residents expressed a desire for a “village” or “neighborhood” look in the target area – a FBC would support this goal.



An example of form-based code recommended for Lancaster, NH during a project between UNH Cooperative Extension and New Hampshire Housing

Housing

Only a few municipalities in New Hampshire have adopted a form-based code, including Dover, Enfield, Keene, Lancaster, Milford, Newmarket, Portsmouth, Somersworth, and Stratham.

The images below and to the right illustrate a project where the Town of Newmarket brought in a consultant to work with the community to create a FBC. The community went through a deck of cards to identify the types of housing that they did and did not like, placing those examples on a map. This Newmarket effort serves as a positive example of community engagement.



Images from “Form Based Code for Newmarket, NH” Report by Ivy Vann Town Planning

Housing

Design Standards

There are a variety of ways that municipalities can incorporate design guidelines into their regulations. For example, Exeter created a Mixed-Use Neighborhood District (MUND), which includes design guidelines related to frontage, façade, landscaping, screening, lighting, rooflines, and more. Exeter's MUND also provides incentives – increased height and density and reduced parking requirements – in exchange for a small percent of units being affordable to households earning 80% of the area median income.

Should Plymouth adopt design standards in the future, the Town could look to existing content from its 1999 Main Street Design Guidelines report.

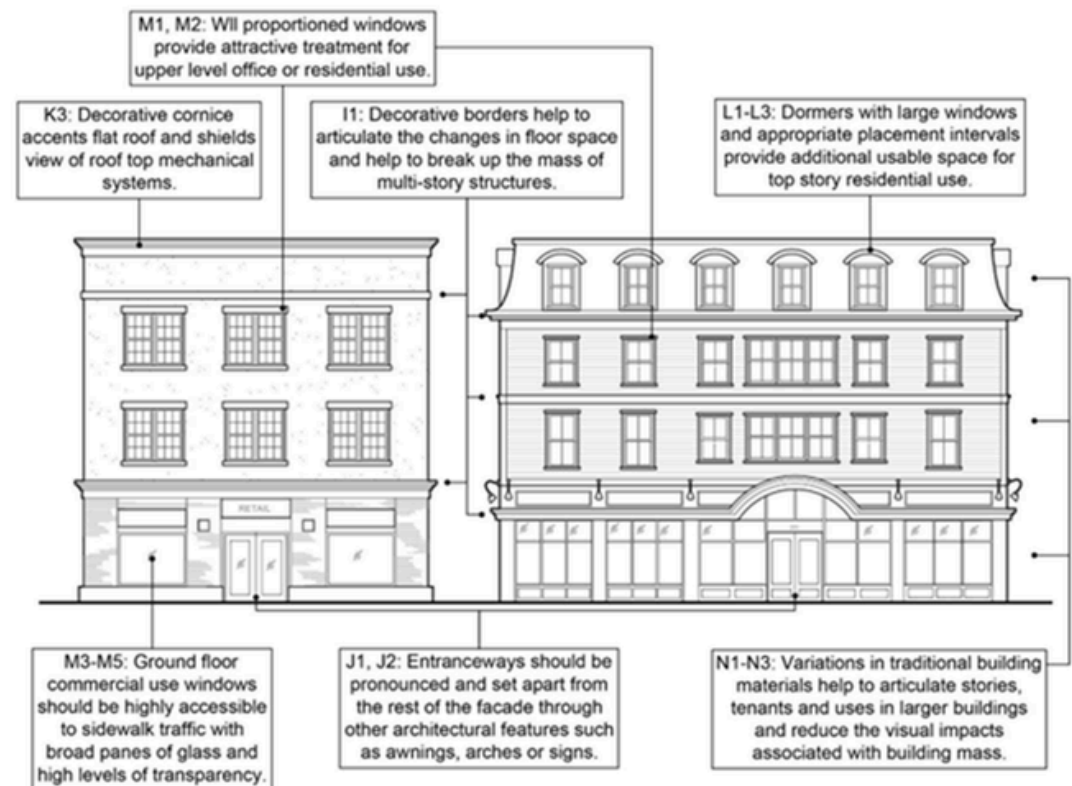


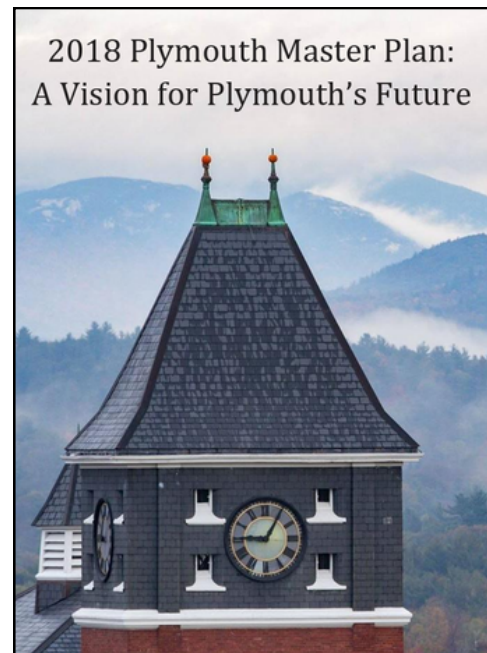
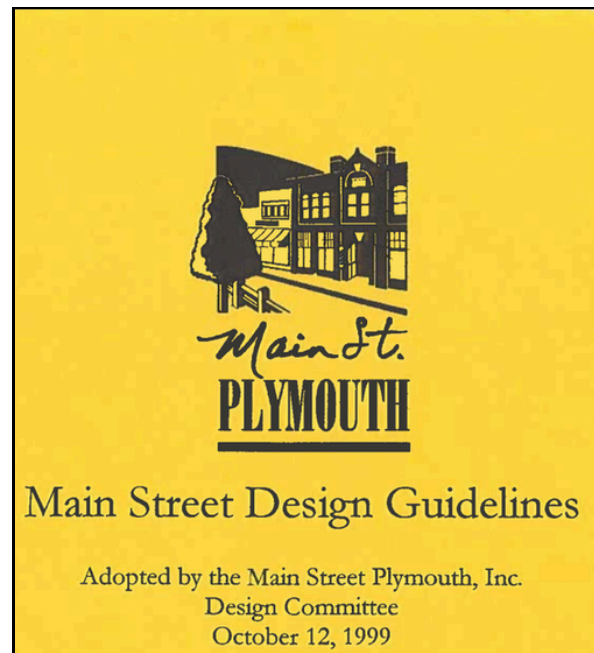
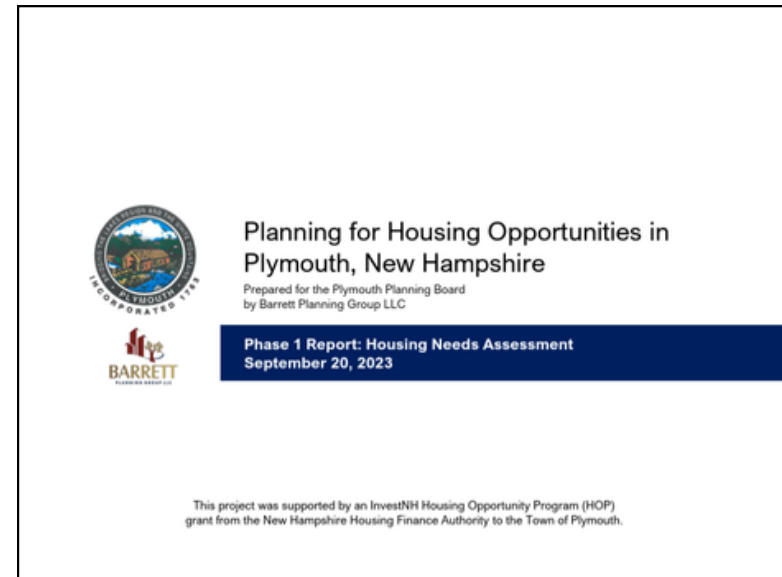
Figure 6.19.5.7

An overview of Exeter's Mixed-Use Neighborhood District (MUND)

Leverage What has Already Been Done

Many analyses and studies have been done within (or adjacent to) this Target Area in the past 27 years, and Plan NH's will soon be added to this collection. These past studies should also be leveraged when implementing Charrette recommendations:

- Stormwater Asset Management Report (2025)
- Planning for Housing Opportunities in Plymouth Phase I & II (2023)
- Town of Plymouth Master Plan (2018)
- Plymouth Downtown Parking Study (2017)
- Main Street Plymouth Design Guidelines (1999)



Visioning for the Future: It's Up to You!

Improvements are possible!

It's the visioning, planning, and implementation process that allows the community to shape that change and your future.

- You have a wealth of great concepts and ideas
- Build on community momentum
- Continue to invite people into the process
- Connect with peers
- Celebrate wins, big and small!
- Revisit and reset

Keep the momentum moving forward!

Engage your neighbors and work together to implement the future you want to see in Plymouth.



"Let Plymouth be the river town that it is."

-Member of the Public

Resources

Connectivity & Wayfinding:

- [Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide](#)
- [National Endowment for the Arts, Our Town](#)
- [New Hampshire State Council on the Arts Grants](#)
- [UNH Cooperative Extension, Characteristics of a Vibrant Downtown](#)
- [The Trust for Public Land: The Field Guide for Parks and Creative Placemaking](#)
- [New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Historic Preservation Grants](#)

Economic Development:

- [UNH Cooperative Extension](#)
- [Regional Economic Development Center](#)
- [New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority](#)

Trails & Regional Connectivity:

- [Rails to Trails Conservancy](#)
- [NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources](#)
- [National Recreation and Parks Association: Safe Routes to Parks Action](#)

Other Resources/Funding Opportunities

- [AARP Livable Communities Resources & Grants](#)
- [New Hampshire Charitable Foundation](#)
- [National Parks Service: National Preservation Standards](#)

Housing, Planning, & Zoning:

- [Plan NH Community Design Charrette Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Housing Grant Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Housing Toolbox](#)
- [Housing Champion Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority Planning Grants](#)
- [New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Planning Grants](#)
- [A Municipal Guide to RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive](#)

Transportation, Traffic Calming, Parking:

- [NH Department of Transportation Transportation Alternatives Program](#)
- [Rockingham Planning Commission](#)
- [DOT Navigator](#)



Funding Acknowledgement

InvestNH

As part of Governor Sununu's \$100 million InvestNH initiative, a total of \$7.9 million was allocated to the Municipal Planning and Zoning Grants Program to increase opportunities for housing development. The NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs contracted with New Hampshire Housing to administer this program.

HOP Grant

The Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) grant program was launched in August 2022 as a partnership of New Hampshire Housing, UNH Cooperative Extension, and Plan NH. The HOP grant program provided funding to municipalities to study zoning or other regulatory barriers to affordable housing, identify potential changes to local land use regulations, and update those regulations based on their findings. In total, 104 HOP grants were awarded to 73 communities.

In 2025, New Hampshire Housing and Plan NH strategized to leverage Plan NH's signature community design Charrette program to further support communities tackling the housing crisis. The Plymouth Community Design Charrette is one of six no-cost Charrettes available to grantee communities as part of the HOP Grant Program.





PLAN NH
Visioning for Sustainable Communities

www.plannh.org

Plan NH | P.O. Box 1105, Portsmouth, NH, 03802 | 603-452-7526 | info@plannh.org