

PITTSFIELD, NH

Design Charrette



October 15-16, 1999

PLAN NH

The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment



CREDITS

Sincere thanks go out to those individuals who donated their professional and personal time to the charrette:

Kyle Barker
8 Kearsarge St
Concord, NH 03301

Claire Wilkins
PO Box 176
Gilmanton, NH 03237

Jim Garvin
Architectural Historian
Division of Historical Resources
19 Pillsbury St
Concord, NH 03301

Jeffrey Taylor
Director
Office of State Planning
2 ½ Beacon St.
Concord, NH 03301

Laura Pfister
Office of State Planning
2 ½ Beacon St.
Concord, NH 03301

Jack Mettee
Appledore Engineering
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Matt Walsh
Central New Hampshire Region Planning
Commission
12 Cross Street
Penacook, NH 03303

Bill Schoonmaker
Schoonmaker Architects
Durham, NH 03524

Peter Levasseur
JSA Inc. Architects
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Jeff Donohoe
RKG Associates
Durham, NH 03824

Kim Hazarvartian
Transportation Engineering, Planning and
Policy
201 Loudon Road, Suite 100
Concord, NH 03301

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

Laura Ahearn

Larry Berkson

Kathy Bleckmann

Gilbert Bleckmann

Scott Brown

Steve Catalano

Nancy Christie

Martha Donovan

Carol Farraro

Doris Federspiel

Ralph Federspiel

Tom Freese

Wayne Gallop

Jason LaFlamme

Theresa LaFlamme

Elizabeth LaRocca

John Lenaerts

Richard Milloy

Pat Morris

Marge Morris

Art Morse

Susan Muenzinger

John Muenzinger

Alan Perkins

Helen Schoppmeyer

Lisa Southwick

Marilyn Thyng

Jim Thyng

John Topouzoglou

Scott Ward

Ray Webber, III

Fred Welch

Arnold Wells

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the St. Stevens Episcopal Church for the wonderful dinner and the Town of Pittsfield 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!!!

**Pittsfield,
New Hampshire
Design
Charrette
October 15-16, 1999**



**Sponsored by:
PLAN NH,
Pittsfield Chamber of Commerce,
Pittsfield Downtown Study Committee,
Pittsfield Economic Development Commission,
and the Town of Pittsfield**

Plan NH Visits Pittsfield

October 15-16, 1999

Who is Plan NH?

Plan NH is a professional association for those working in the built environment. It 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.

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 issue of concern to that community. The charrette provides an overall framework within which final solutions can be developed. It sets a tone and gives a direction against which future decisions can be measured.

Why did the Plan NH charrette come to Pittsfield?

Each year Plan NH invites communities to enter proposals into a competition for a weekend of donated design services to be used in solving a problem of local interest. Plan NH looks for projects that are important to the host community, projects that present an interesting design problem, and projects which seem to have a high probability of actually being implemented. A community that is organized and has done some early work on a project scores well. A proposal from a community that has not really thought out its needs or how it would implement the recommendations from the charrette does not fair as well.

The Proposal

In early 1999, the Town of Pittsfield, along with dozens of other communities, submitted proposals to Plan NH seeking advice and design services. Pittsfield's proposal focused on revitalization strategies for a section of downtown Pittsfield around the central intersection of NH Route 107, Carroll Street, Depot Street, and Broadway. The town asked for recommendations for economic reinvestment, parking, and parcel purchase/combinations. Pittsfield was one of three communities selected to receive a charrette in 1999. Charrettes were also held in Antrim and Newport earlier in the year.

The Process

Community members and about a dozen professionals met at Pittsfield's Town Hall for two days in mid October to talk about Pittsfield's downtown, its strengths, weaknesses and visions for the future. Design team members included architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, historic preservation professionals, community development professionals, and marketing and economic development specialists.

The professional expertise of this group was far-reaching, but did lack one crucial piece of information that only town members could provide. Local residents are the town experts and the design team relies on resident input and knowledge to develop viable suggestions. With that in mind, the design team and residents joined forces and the town experts talked with the design experts about their community: The Town of Pittsfield.

The design team and town leaders gathered in the town hall on Friday morning to talk about the town and the project at hand. Knowing that there is no replacement for first hand information and experience, town members took the design team on a site walk to explore the downtown area and become familiarized with the project area. The charrette's original focus centered only on Depot Square, Cram Avenue and Broadway Street. While this section of town retained first billing, it became clear that Drake Field was also important piece of Pittsfield's downtown. For that matter, so was the gateway into town near Main Street, the area around the schools and the 7+ acres between the Public Works building and Cram Avenue. Town members and the design team all agreed that the charrette broaden its original scope and look at the entire downtown area of Pittsfield. If economic revitalization is the aim, then the pieces that make up the key building blocks of Pittsfield's identity and activity generators must all be considered in the mix.

With this idea in mind, 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. Town members had a lot to say, and many of the early ideas identified by design team members were similar to some ideas that town members had thought about as well.

What We Heard/What We Saw

Residents had a lot to say about their community. The public meetings provided town members with a chance to voice their opinions and discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of Pittsfield.

Most of the discussion focused on the following points:

Pittsfield's vibrancy. The town has a lot of assets and they need to be saved, dusted off and shown off.

Pittsfield has traffic circulation problems around Depot Square.

Pittsfield has parking problems.

Pittsfield has some demographic constraints that must be kept in mind when exploring options for revitalization.

Pittsfield needs jobs.

Pittsfield needs to focus on small scale improvements.



Friday Afternoon's Listening Session

Other concerns that surfaced included the number of apartments in town and the lack of business. Many town members felt that too many of Pittsfield's older, larger homes have been subdivided into apartments, many of which are low income rentals. Town members also expressed a concern about the lack of elderly housing, and more specifically, the fear that new elderly housing would eventually turn into even more low income housing.

The town has also seen itself change from a manufacturing community to a bedroom community in the last few decades. Many see this as a problem and something that has taken the lifeblood out of town. Some would like to see more manufacturing brought back in Pittsfield. Others saw Pittsfield's role as a bedroom community as a possibility for growth as well. Pittsfield is home to many commuters, and existing (and any future) businesses should make sure their products or services are available to people before and after work hours.

Another major concern included the need to get vehicle traffic off of NH 28 and into downtown. The town would like to establish a NH 28 Business Route to increase exposure of the downtown area to passing motorists. There was also talk of pursuing a Scenic and Cultural Byway designation of Route 107 as another way to generate energy and focus for the town, and to receive additional outside attention and consideration.



Friday Evening's Listening Session

Pittsfield is a community that has seen economic growth come and go. Small town life has changed and the days of downtown manufacturing plants forming the core of a local economy are waning. Pittsfield has a lot of single parent families and a lot of lower income families. Pittsfield has a high ratio of multi-family to single family dwellings and a shortage of elderly housing. The town has seen its economic vitality deteriorate, and community members understand that their downtown needs new energy and renewed focus.

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

EXISTING LAND USE



Pittsfield Today

Zoning

Zoning regulations should reflect town goals to rejuvenate the downtown, improve the downtown streetscape, and attract redevelopment. To these ends, Matt Walsh from Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, completed a review of zoning in Pittsfield with suggestions for improving zoning downtown to better reflect town goals. Below is a brief summary of current conditions. *Appendix 1* provides a detailed look at current zoning regulations and recommended actions to enhance the zoning ordinance.

Pittsfield is a community searching to find ways to preserve its unique downtown character while encouraging economic growth. A potential key to promoting economic development while retain its rural character is downtown revitalization. For the purposes of the charrette, the downtown is encompassed by the area of land bordered by the Suncook River and Clark Street. This area is very important to Pittsfield. It contains several historic sites, numerous nineteenth century buildings, as well as the majority of the business base of the community. By using the charrette process, the community was able to identify these strengths and weaknesses to assist the group in identifying zoning and other land use tools that could preserve the downtown character while promoting appropriate economic development.

Existing Land Use and Zoning Scheme. After creating an existing land use map for the downtown, it was determined that a variety of land uses exist in downtown Pittsfield. Specifically, most residential uses were located in the area of Joy Street, Bridge Street, and Chestnut Street. Most mixed uses were located along Main Street. Commercial development was located along Main Street and at Depot Square. Governmental and institutional properties were located along Main Street, Park Street, and Elm Street. Overall, there were very little active light industrial uses in the Downtown area. The group could only identify 5 light industrial properties, two of which were abandoned or unoccupied. The group concluded that a variety of uses in the downtown area was “healthy” and necessary for future economic development. However, Pittsfield may be better served to locate any future industrial use outside of its downtown.

Land use in downtown Pittsfield is currently governed by three zoning districts – a commercial district, an urban district, and a light industrial district. Both the urban and commercial districts require a minimum lot size of a quarter acre, with ten-foot setbacks for all sides, except the rear where a 35-foot set back is required. The light industrial district requires a one-acre lot size, with twenty-five foot setbacks for all sides, except the rear, which requires a 35-foot set back.

With respect to parking, Pittsfield currently does not permit off site parking. Restaurants, theaters and churches are required to provide 1 parking spot per five seats. Retail uses and office buildings are required to provide 1 space per 200 feet of cumulative floor area.

Pittsfield's Conditions

Pittsfield is a hard-working town with a number of lower income families. Household income level data show that over 19 percent of households in Pittsfield earn less than \$15,000 annually. This compares to 13.6% of all Concord households. On the other end of the scale, only 2.6% of town households earn more than \$100,000 annually, as compared to 7.4% of Concord households.

While Pittsfield's average income is comparatively low, its property tax rate is relatively high. Residents face one of the highest tax rates in the area. However, properties generally have a low assessed values, meaning that even with high property tax rates, the town works with one of the lowest tax bases in the region. Pittsfield's tax rate is \$36.74 per \$1000 of assessed value, compared to \$25.88 in Epsom and \$31.62 in Barnstead. Pittsfield's tax base is about \$112.54 Million, compared to \$156.93 Million in Epsom and \$140.45 in Barnstead.

The apartment vacancy rate is surprisingly low, with less than 5% vacancy; not a renter's market. Average rental prices start at around \$450-500 for a one bedroom apartment and between \$650-750 for a two bedroom apartment. Non-complex rental rates are about \$50 to \$100 lower.



Depot Square

A brief review of the retail market shows that the business vacancy rate is also low, with less than 10% vacancy. There has been recent development in town and storefront rents are low, at only \$400-600 per month including heat. While the vacancy rate is low, there is some concern about the underutilization of storefronts downtown. There are a number of part-time businesses in town, and two key retail sites within Depot Square are underutilized (from an economic perspective). The Pittsfield Players use a building across from the theater for storage and the Maxfields Corner building currently houses the Pittsfield Youth Workshop. Both of these groups are exceptional community resources and should be encouraged. However, from an economic development perspective, these storefronts could be used to house a business instead. Town members should explore alternate or more suitable spaces for both the Pittsfield Youth Workshop and for the Player's Theater storage.

ACTIVITY ZONES

Activity Centers

There are activity centers in every community. Schools, parks, gateways and shopping districts are all activity generators and focal points of the town. In Pittsfield, the activity centers include the schools, Drake Field, Clark Pond, Depot Square and Main Street. What's missing are the links between these activity zones.

These centers represent the heart of the community and are great places to focus attention for economic revitalization. Some of Pittsfield's target audience already filters through these centers. The goal is to get them to stop and stay a bit longer, do more of their shopping, and look at their downtown as a place to enjoy.

Pittsfield is lucky that its activity centers are close together. Drake Field, Main Street and Depot Square are only minutes apart by foot. Improving pedestrian links will draw these centers closer together in people's minds and will help redefine a feeling of downtown.



Pittsfield in the Future

Design Principles

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

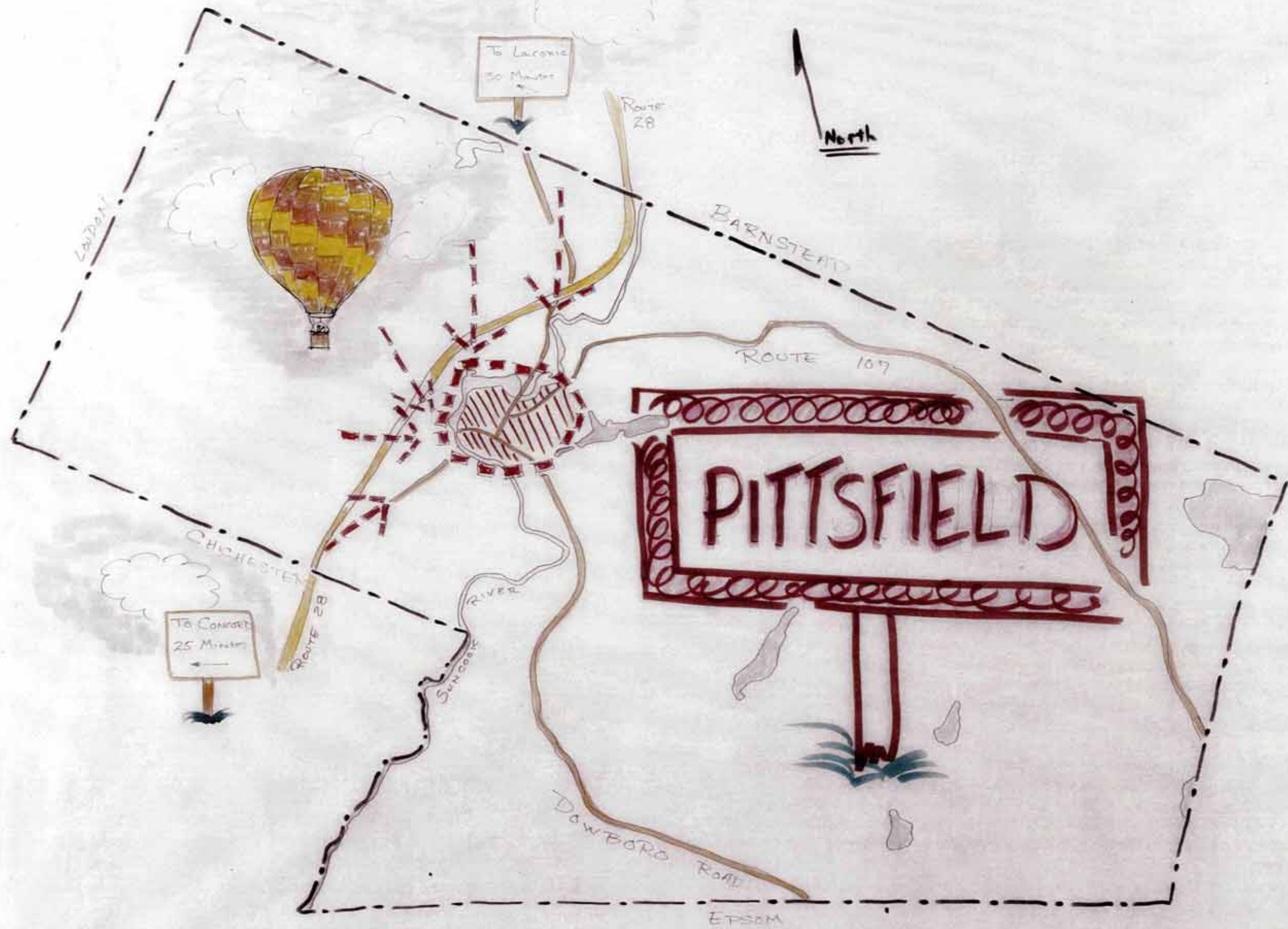
- **Counteract forces that are drawing activity out of downtown.** Remember that every business move out of downtown will diminish the likelihood of any economic rejuvenation in this area. Maintaining the businesses that are there must be a priority. Downtown Pittsfield has a lot of basic qualities that make up a solid community center, including town parks, 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 will never look, or be, as it was before. The national economy has changed dramatically and many things that were economically feasible 30 or 40 years ago are not today. Pittsfield has many of the pieces needed to move forward. The heart of town can be a small scale commercial, professional, institutional, and residential center. Focus on developing these pieces, rather than on attracting new manufacturing into downtown.
- **Vehicles and pedestrians need to co-exist downtown.** Many areas of downtown do provide some access for pedestrians. However, a few basic pieces are lacking. The Maxfield Corner intersection is fairly unfriendly to pedestrians. Efforts here need to focus on connecting the activity centers downtown 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 on Main Street, Carroll Street and around Maxfield Corner, businesses would be hard pressed to survive. The key is to give them reasons to stop and reasons to do some of their shopping here in Pittsfield 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 and would help develop a critical mass of services.

Pittsfield 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 market this area as a destination. Keep in mind that efforts are more effective when coordinated. Consider combining 3 or 4 demand elements to achieve a critical mass.



Scenes from Saturday





Marketing Strategies

The first rule of marketing is that there needs to be something to show off! Pittsfield has the balloon festival and this is a wonderful start. Now the town needs to build off of this energy and find other reasons to draw in people from surrounding areas. Hosting other festivals will help generate activity and momentum. Portsmouth has been very successful in generating activity and one important reason why is that they have many different festivals to draw people into downtown. Remember too that a 'New England Village' is marketable to the world and Pittsfield has many of the very qualities that make up a quintessential New Hampshire town.



View of the Suncook River Near Drake Field

Get people in from Route 28 by establishing a Business 28. The town has already submitted a letter to the Department of Transportation requesting this designation and a state road sign directing people to Business 28 from Route 28. This is a great start and the town should be commended for its quick follow-up.

Promotional efforts should focus both on day-trippers in New Hampshire and from out-of-state who are just passing by. It is important to provide reasons for people to stop and get out of their cars. Specific ideas suggested by town members included continuing and expanding the town wide yard sale. This has been quite successful in the past and should be encouraged and supported.

Another excellent idea suggested by a town member is to create a Theater Festival. The concept is to host a festival where community theater groups would perform their plays and participate in a statewide competition. Many towns throughout the state have theater groups and this type of planned event would provide an excellent opportunity to market an interesting and unusual attraction.



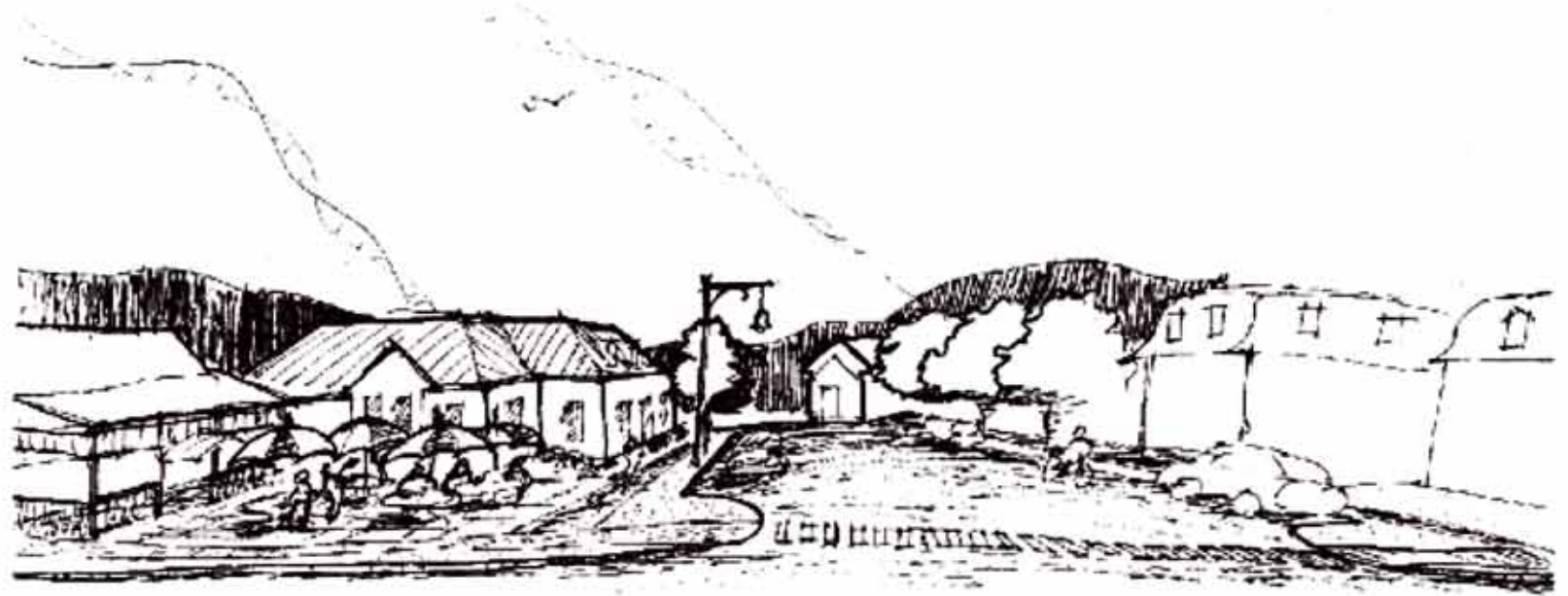
Pittsfield Players Theater

Remember too that it is important to market to locals. Doing this will help improve residents' confidence about their town. Boosting this local pride will show on the outside too, both in how town members take care of their homes and businesses as well as in how they present and talk about their town to outsiders.

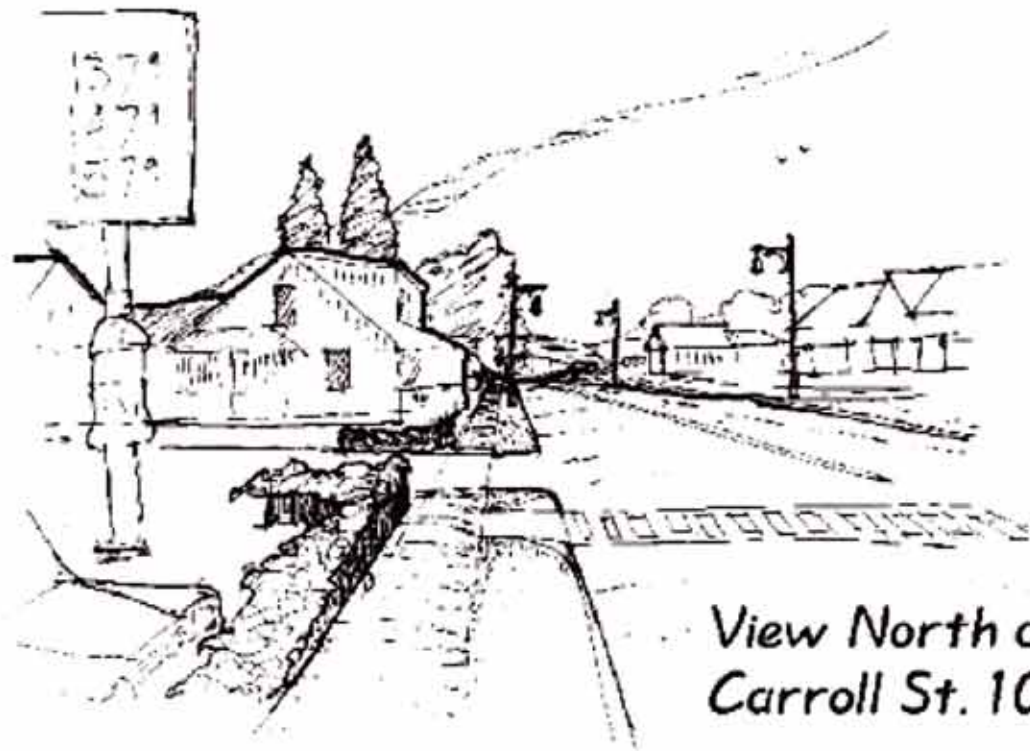
To attract businesses, one suggestion is to develop an inventory of available properties in town including complete descriptions, pictures, pricing and key features and work with a commercial broker(s) to advertise the properties. It is also important to get your message about Pittsfield OUT. Work with the Department of Resources and Economic Development and brokers, use the Internet, do self promotion, and find endorsements. Be creative in your promotion efforts. Other more expensive options to consider might include trade shows, paid advertisements, promotional items, targeted mailings, and direct contacts.

It is clear that what the town lacks in financial resources it more than makes up for in people power. The amount of volunteer support found in this small town is admirable. This foundation is absolutely necessary to make things happen and to sustain any real change and Pittsfield should be proud to know that so many of its residents are willing to lend a hand.

STREETSCAPES



View Along Cram Ave.



*View North on
Carroll St. 107*



Streetscape/Traffic Analysis

Traffic is not that bad. Realistically all you might need is a crossing guard at bad times of day to make sure kids can get to and from school. A signal, or even a four way stop, is not needed at this point. If any improvements are done in this intersection, set up the area properly and put conduit underneath the pavement to prepare for any future needs. It is much easier to put this framework in place now, when other small improvements are made, than to do it all later.

Another suggestion was to construct a round-about at this intersection with a fountain in the middle. This idea is based loosely on a fountain known to be at this intersection at the turn of the century. The design team concluded that a roundabout might be nice aesthetically but not needed traffic wise.

General suggestions at or near this intersection include the following;

Decrease the width of the intersection,

Increase the definition of the intersection,

Extend the median in front of Broadway,

Take Broadway out of the 5 way intersection to make it a four way corner (Depot St., Carroll Street (both sides), and Catamount Street),

Put in period luminaires (street lights),

Put the utilities underground,

Improve the streetscape/infrastructure,

Install better signs to direct people traveling south along NH 107. It isn't clear that NH 107 South turns to the left.



Sitewalk on Friday Morning

The town should remember that all of these improvements must be maintained and the town needs plans and a commitment for upkeep. The town should concentrate on making the intersection simple, clean, orderly, and well maintained. Basic focal points for these improvements include the following:

Take out Broadway Street entrance. This will also make the bicycle and recreation plans easier to develop in the future;

Improve the vegetative buffer between street and sidewalks, etc.;

Improve the streetscape by removing the "doghouse" or outbuilding from the Maxfield Corner building. This would improve pedestrian use of the area as well;

The right-of-way entrance is separate for Rite Aid and the supermarket. If possible, it would be preferable to have only 1 entrance.

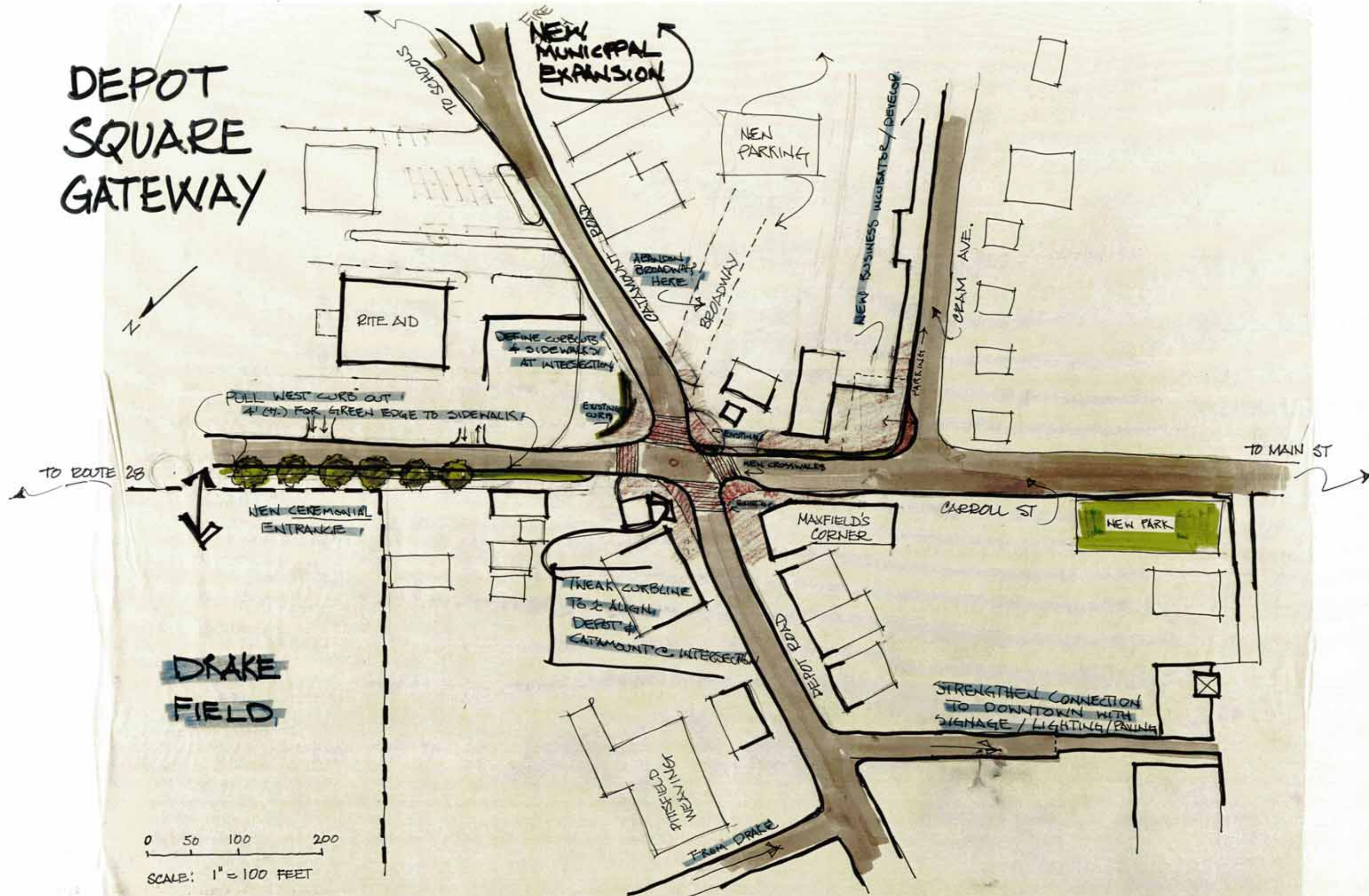
Merchants say parking is a problem because current parking spots are not close enough to stores. However, the town should not remove existing buildings just to create new parking. Instead it should be thinking about plans for future development. The town needs shared parking that is centrally located near businesses, the park, etc., not individual parking provided for each business. Newburyport has done a good job of creating this type of parking situation and might be a good model to explore. Remember too, that the town needs to have well-designed parking downtown. Pittsfield needs central parking that connects downtown businesses, Drake Field, public buildings, recreation facilities, and schools, not just space that allows for 2 spaces here and 3 spaces there.

When you think about where to begin, go for the low tech solutions first. Improve the streetscape, define crosswalks more clearly, improve pedestrian links, better define curbs and better define the division between curbs and the road. Better define where traffic can go and where it can't go. A few inexpensive changes might include installing directional signs, and designing the curbline so that a signal could be put in later if needed.

A quick look at the traffic counts in this area shows that the downtown does see a fair amount of traffic pass through the area. Main Street, just east of Elm Street, had an average daily traffic count of 5400 in 1994, declining slightly to 4900 in 1998. Carroll Street, just north of Main Street had an average daily traffic count of 3700 in 1997. Route 107 heading south near the intersection with Tilton Hill Road has an average daily traffic count of 4000 (1997).

The streetscape could be improved to enhance 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. Pittsfield's downtown has a nice scale and the town has done well to maintain many of the central buildings.

DEPOT SQUARE GATEWAY



0 50 100 200

SCALE: 1" = 100 FEET

Gateway Proposals

The following pages apply basic design principles into a variety of general re-development schemes for Pittsfield. They should be viewed as examples, not as 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 gateways into downtown. Attractive and inviting gateways are extremely important. If the town wants to attract visitors it must make sure people are naturally drawn into town through the major gateways to the community. With this in mind, the design team focused efforts on two specific gateways; the Depot Square/Cram gateway, and the Main Street/Tannery gateway.

Cram Triangle/Depot Square /Drake Field

All of the plans detailed in this report reflect similar goals. One goal is to welcome people to town and provide them with easy access to parks and green space and local businesses. The other is to capture much more of the local buying power. Even though Pittsfield is becoming more of a bedroom community of Concord, it does not mean that these commuters need to do all of their shopping in Concord. Pittsfield can do a better job of tapping the local market and finding services that make sense for a small downtown area.

The Cram Triangle/Depot Square gateway strategy discusses these goals by providing strategies for improving the streetscape, promoting business development and making this area the core of downtown activity. Starting on Carroll Street, one suggestion is to develop a new ceremonial entrance into Drake Field. Drake Field is a wonderful resource that needs to be promoted to visitors and locals alike. Making it more accessible is a good first step. Along these lines, the town might also want to consider pulling out the curb about 4 feet to add in a green edge between the sidewalk and the road. Planting trees and adding in more greenery will also improve this "gateway" into Depot Square.



View Looking into Depot Square

Once in Depot Square, the town should reconsider the entire look of this intersection. First, abandon Broadway so that it no longer is part of this intersection. The end of Broadway could be added as new downtown parking. With four instead of five routes joining at this intersection, tweak the curb lines and align Depot Street, Carroll Street and Catamount Road so that they are more perpendicular. Many of the existing curb lines are set back too far, allowing for too much pavement and too little definition between the sidewalks and the road. Bringing the curb lines out more on the corners will provide more separation and will improve the look of the intersection.

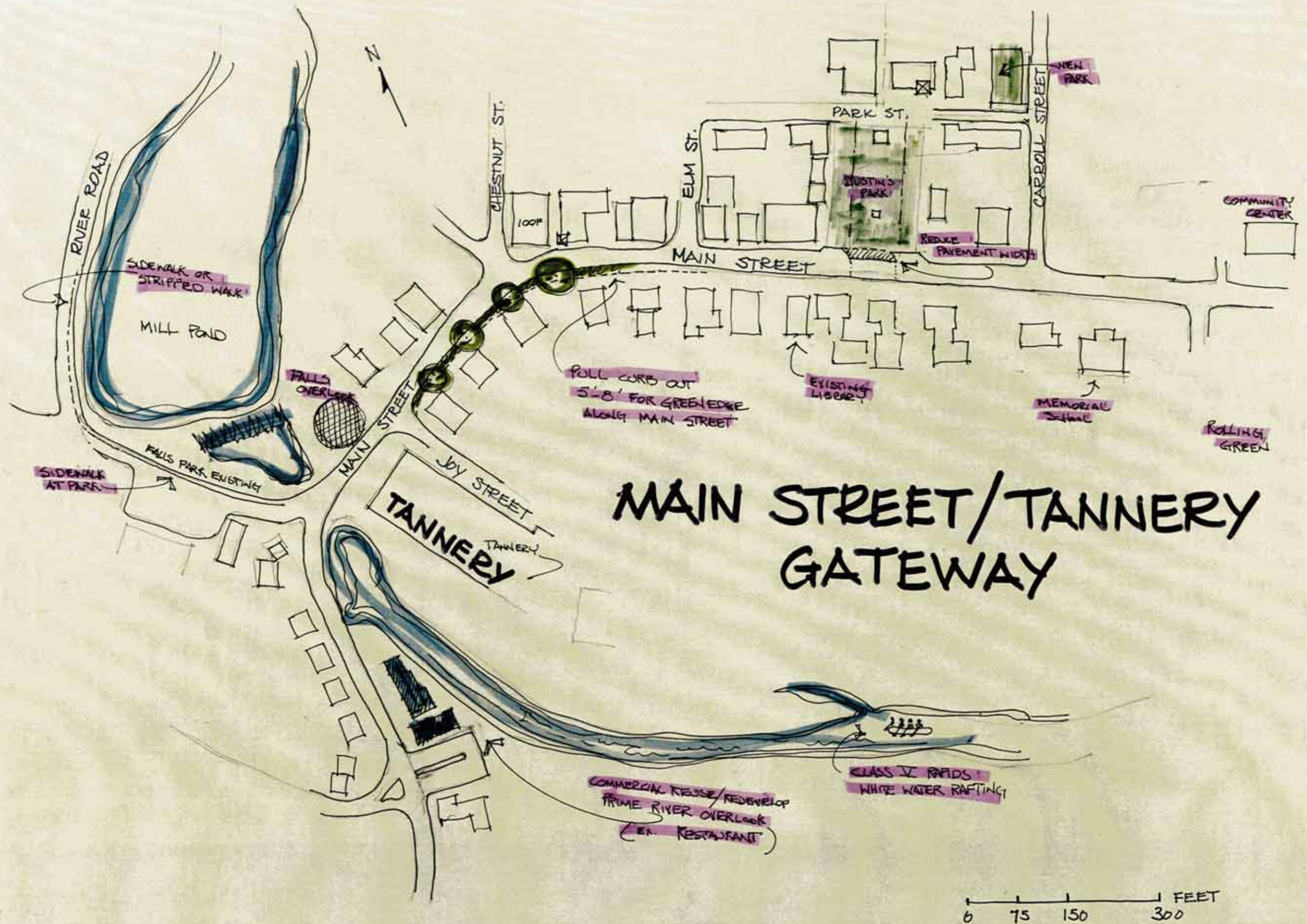
Once realigned, add new crosswalks at each corner of this intersection. With better alignment, pedestrian travel will be easier. Also remember to strengthen the connection to downtown by adding consistent lighting, signage and new paving. Providing a consistent look will improve its appearance and will promote use.



Depot Square Today



Historic Picture of Depot Square



Main Street/Tannery Gateway

A second gateway area that the town might want to focus on is the Tannery/Main Street area near the falls. This area has great potential but lacks a cohesive look. There are a few buildings that the town might want to consider razing or redeveloping. This river front area would be a great commercial redevelopment site. One possible idea would be a new restaurant overlooking the river. Other suggestions include putting in a overlook at the town owned property that abuts the falls. Also consider putting in a sidewalk on the current park that overlooks the falls. This is a beautiful site and a sidewalk would improve the ability of pedestrians to enjoy the area.

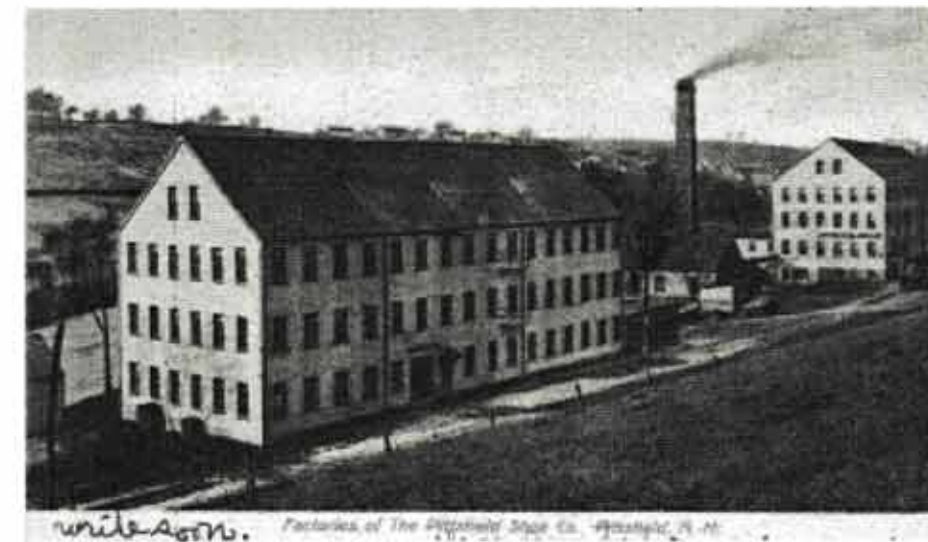


View of Falls Near Main Street

Along the east side of Mill Pond consider putting a sidewalk or striping along the roadway to separate a pedestrian walkway. This is a pretty area; one that should be made more accessible to pedestrians in town. Don't overlook the potential of the river itself. Below the falls area, there would be a great opportunity to develop and promote rafting. The river's beauty is a natural draw for residents and visitors alike. Increasing access to and around the river will promote the area's increased use and appreciation. Also remember to use the river as a backdrop for fairs, similar to the existing balloon rally. The setting at Drake Field is perfect for any number of events.



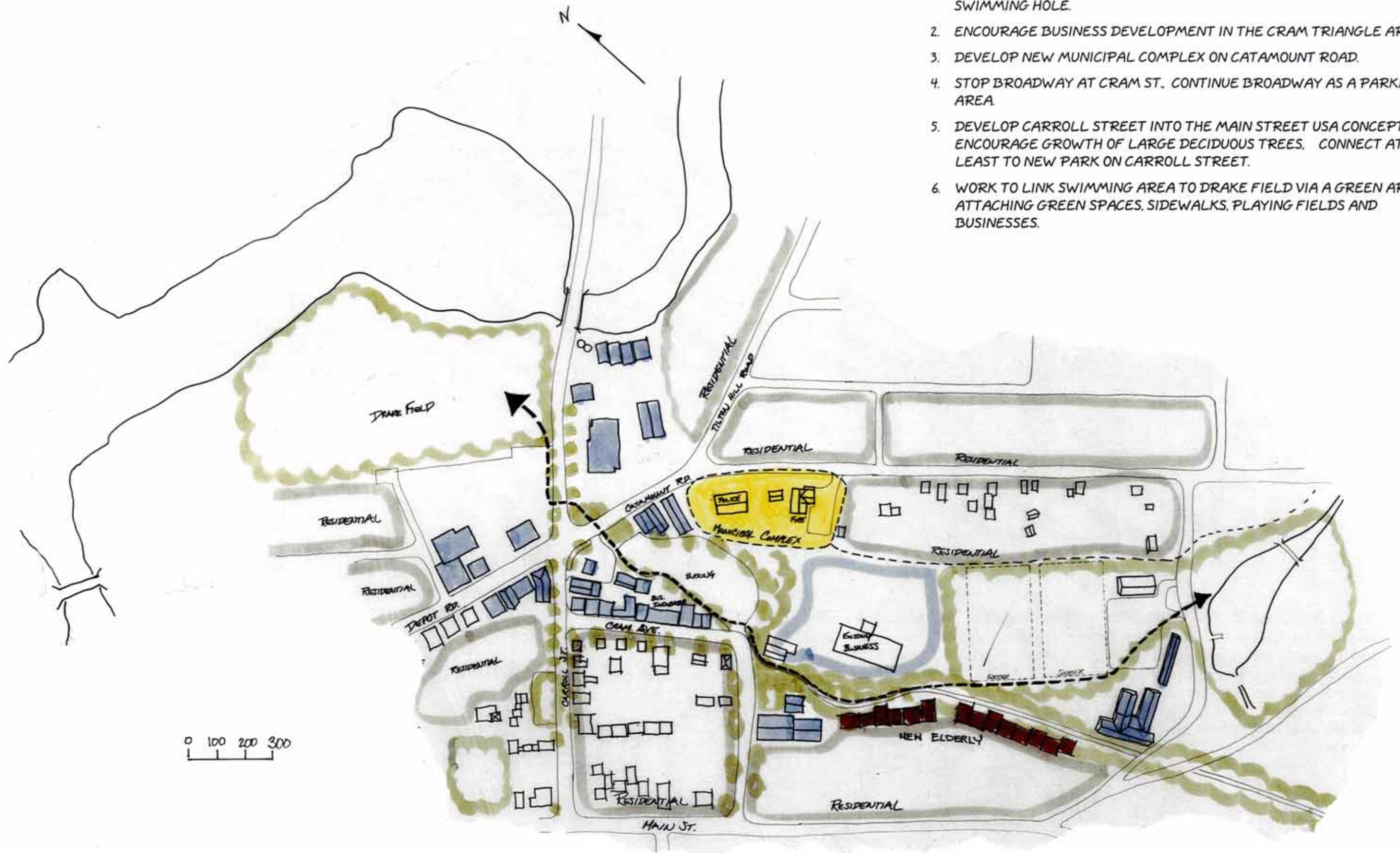
Views of Main Street



Historic Postcard of the Pittsfield Shoe Company

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1. INCORPORATE NEEDED NEW SOCCER FIELDS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO SWIMMING HOLE.
2. ENCOURAGE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN THE CRAM TRIANGLE AREA.
3. DEVELOP NEW MUNICIPAL COMPLEX ON CATAMOUNT ROAD.
4. STOP BROADWAY AT CRAM ST. CONTINUE BROADWAY AS A PARKING AREA.
5. DEVELOP CARROLL STREET INTO THE MAIN STREET USA CONCEPT. ENCOURAGE GROWTH OF LARGE DECIDUOUS TREES. CONNECT AT LEAST TO NEW PARK ON CARROLL STREET.
6. WORK TO LINK SWIMMING AREA TO DRAKE FIELD VIA A GREEN AREA ATTACHING GREEN SPACES, SIDEWALKS, PLAYING FIELDS AND BUSINESSES.



Development Strategies

Pittsfield's success will revolve around connecting and expanding upon existing activity generators. Enhancing the look of downtown streets, improving links between recreational areas, developing a centralized municipal complex, and encouraging development in underutilized areas are all general strategies for improvement.

Specifically, Pittsfield might want to look at the following short term goals. The Cram Triangle site is currently underutilized. This site would be in an excellent location for a small business incubator. Part of redefining this area would also be to stop Broadway at Cram Street and turn the rest of Broadway into a parking area. Public parking able to serve many different activity centers is needed downtown. The current use of Broadway is minimal at best, and its entry into the intersection of Catamount Road, Depot Road and Carroll Street is unattractive and confusing. Taking out this intersection and using the space for parking and green space would serve to both fill an existing void and improve upon a site that is in need of attention.



Drake Field

Town members discussed the need to expand upon existing recreational resources. Pittsfield needs more playing fields. Drake Field is well used, but the town is outgrowing its capacity. One suggestion is to incorporate new playing fields in the 7.5 acre lot "Box Shop" area behind existing businesses (north of Main Street and south of Catamount Road). This site is close to Clark Pond, the town swimming hole, and it would be relatively easy to connect these recreational areas with green space. Eventually all the town green spaces should be linked so that there is a green area connecting Clark Pond to new playing fields, past a new parking area (currently Broadway), and on to Drake Field.

Town members also highlighted the need for additional elderly housing. One potential site for a new publicly funded development could be near the new playing fields. The site is close to many different activity centers, (playing fields, schools, Community Center, etc.) and would offer residents easy access to downtown.



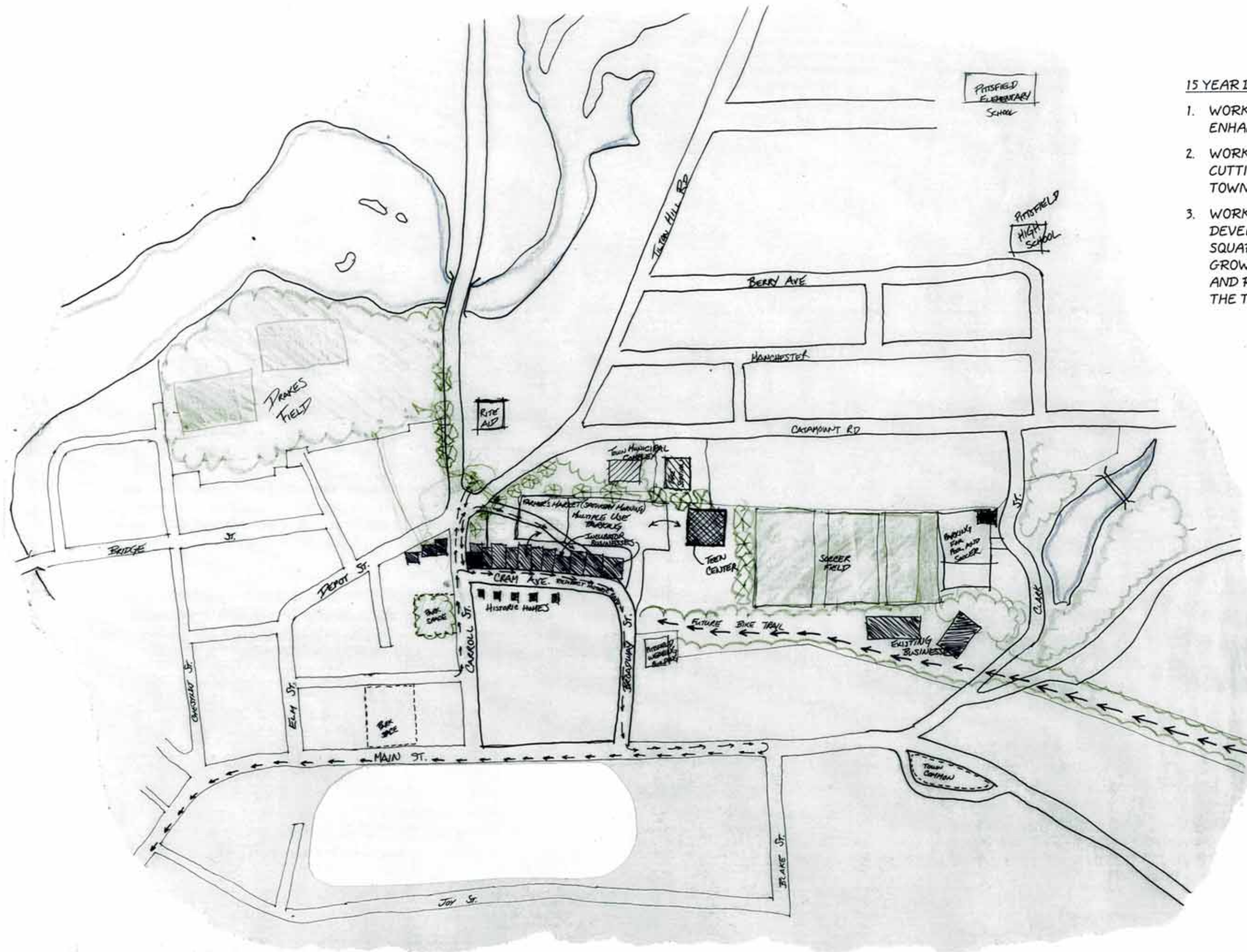
View of Cram Triangle From Broadway Ave

The municipal buildings in town are located on both Catamount Road and on Main Street. Pittsfield might want to think about concentrating the fire and police stations in one complex area on Catamount Road. The fire station is currently housed in this area, and if the Public Service of New Hampshire building becomes vacant, it might make a logical location for the police station.

Develop Carroll Street under a 'Main Street USA' framework. Encourage growth of large deciduous trees. Connect the new park, currently under construction, with downtown by planting trees and continuing the concept of attached green spaces. Trees will visually connect downtown places and will make the area more attractive and enjoyable to be around.



Broadway Ave. From Cram Triangle



15 YEAR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1. WORK TO INCORPORATE CHANGES TO ENHANCE HISTORIC TRAIL
2. WORK TO ELIMINATE BUSINESSES CUTTING OFF FIRE STATION FROM TOWN SWIMMING HOLE AREAS.
3. WORK TO ESTABLISH BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN THE DEPOT SQUARE THAT ENCOURAGES GROWTH, PRESENCE IN COMMUNITY, AND RESPONSIBILITY AS PART OF THE TOWN.

15 Year Strategies

Many of the short term strategies will be developed, enhanced and changed through time. As specifics are worked out in the new few years, a handful of general long term development strategies are offered as a general guide to short term initiatives. These are suggestions and are not meant as specific directives.

Look to improve the connections of the fire station, and possibly the future police station, with Depot Square and the rest of downtown. The existing businesses located between the PSNH building and Broadway may be better located in other areas. These sites are visually unappealing and create a separation between municipal services and the rest of downtown.

Also consider moving the public works department from its current location near Clark Pond out of town. Activities surrounding a town swimming hole and schools do not work well with those of the public works department. Consider placing a teen center or community recreation center in land behind the fire department or possibly in the existing public works building.

Parking will be needed as re-development continues. Parking should serve town needs on both weekdays and weekends; not just 9 to 5, Monday - Friday. Use proposed parking near Cram Avenue and Broadway as a site for town farmers markets on weekends. Also consider developing a new lot near Clark Pond and the proposed playing fields located on the opposite side of Clark Street.



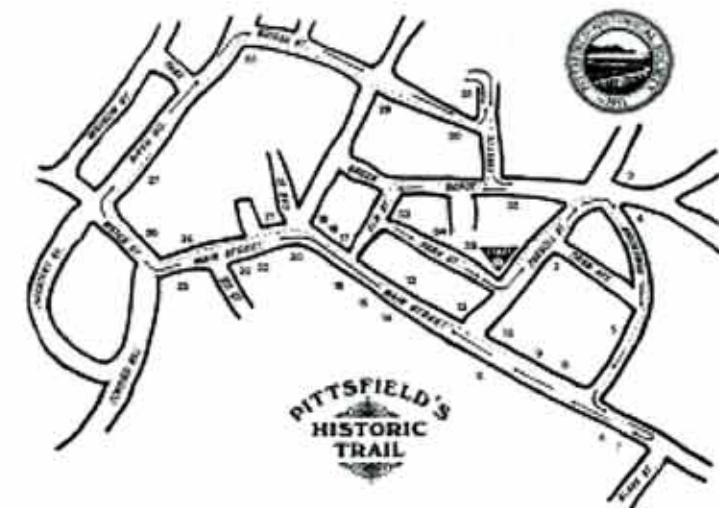
View of Cram Avenue and Broadway Intersection

Don't let go of the current push to develop a bike trail! A bike or recreational trail would be a great addition to Pittsfield. Remember to connect existing and new green and open spaces. As new town spaces are developed, be it a park, playing fields or bike trails, make sure they link together.

A last suggestion is to consider changing the routing of the historic trail. Currently the trail guides visitors through Broadway Street. This area is in desperate need of time and attention and does not reflect the best that Pittsfield has to offer. Change the map so that it reroutes people back through Cram Avenue instead.



One of Pittsfield's Historic Trail Signs



Recommendations and Resources

The residents of Pittsfield are the only ones really suited to make decisions about what will work and what won't work in their community. PlanNH hopes that this charrette has sprouted a few new thoughts and built upon, or clarified ideas that the town had already considered. The town has a lot of locally generated momentum and 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. Pittsfield wants to re-energize the downtown area. They want the downtown to be a hub of activity and they want it to contribute more to the local economy.

As with most towns, Pittsfield has a limited tax base, and is looking for creative ways to pay for these improvements. 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 as signs, trees, new sidewalks and curbing can make a big difference. Think of investing in places that represent the heart of Pittsfield 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 Drake Field! Look for ways to invite people into Drake Field. It is a beautiful park and is something to be proud of and show off.

Respect the existing structure and integrity of the downtown.

Pittsfield has some key public features downtown (i.e. parks, library, post office) 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. 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. Aim to maintain the historic district, public green space, and foster efforts that make downtown more pedestrian friendly.

Connect Pittsfield'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 Pittsfield historic district in tact. Also revisit zoning regulations to make sure that the zoning language reflects the downtown's goals for the future.

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

Pittsfield has a great yearly attraction that gets people to stop near downtown area; The Balloon Rally. Build on this! This attraction is great and should be marketed fully. Make the downtown more attractive from Drake Field and make Drake Field more visible and more a part of downtown. Right now visitors can see Drake Field and see the Suncook River, but do not see a way to use them. Drake Field needs a welcome mat. The in-town citizens also need reasons to go downtown instead of heading to Concord to do all their shopping. Improving the look of downtown is a good start in this direction.

Get Started!

There is a lot to do and there is no time like the present to get going. Small improvements, like getting Business Route 28 designated and signed are a good place to start. The fact that the dialogue with the Department of Transportation has already begun is a good indication that the town has the leadership to move forward. Decide what is key and start to work on it. Community members told the design team that primary goals are to revitalize downtown, bring in reasons for people to stop and stay awhile, and persuade people to call Pittsfield home and invest in their community. If these are the desired ends, focus efforts on ways of getting there.



Cost Estimates and Plans

Cost estimates for many of the long term plans are preliminary. Below are rough estimates for improvements to Depot Square and the Drake Field and Main Street gateways into to downtown. Basic improvements include adding sidewalks, curbing, and landscaping.

One of the first initiatives should be to make some initial improvements to Depot Square or a key area within Depot Square (Maxfield's Corner). The site would stretch from near the Theater on Depot Street around Maxfield's Corner to the intersection of Carroll Street and Cram Avenue (approximately 300 feet). This corner has long been a major hub of downtown Pittsfield. Improving this area will be a good start for kicking off downtown revitalization and will show residents that Pittsfield is serious about redefining the look of Depot Square and other important areas in town. This type of improvement is also good to start with because it is relatively affordable and can be accomplished in the very near future.

Depot Square Area

Just Maxfield Corner

- **Sidewalks:** 300 feet * 8 feet wide (brick) = 2,400 square feet. 2,400 square feet * \$5/square foot = \$12,000
- **Granite Curbing:** \$20 per lineal foot * 300 feet = \$6,000
- **Plantings:** 4 - 6 trees * \$300 per tree = \$1,200 - \$1,800

Estimate for repairing Maxfield Corner: approximately \$20,000

Realign Entire Depot Square Intersection (Enhance 4 corners to make pedestrian friendly)

- **Common excavation** of Existing sidewalk/curbing for all corners = \$5.50 per cubic yard. 75-85 cubic yards * \$5.50 per cubic yard = \$500.
- **New Sidewalks:** 300 feet for each corner * 8 foot wide (brick) = 2,400 square feet. 2,400 square feet * \$5/square foot = \$12,000 for each corner * 4 corners = \$48,000
- **Granite Curbing:** \$20 per lineal foot * 1200 feet = \$24,000
- **Trees/Landscaping/Loam and Seed** for new corners = say \$ 6000
- **Antique Lighting** fixtures on 10 foot posts. \$1,500 per light * 20 lights = \$30,000
- 1,200 feet **underground conduit** for lighting fixtures, etc. (@ \$9 per lineal foot = \$10,800. This estimate does not include costs for undergrounding actual utilities.

Estimate for realigning and improving Depot Square: approximately \$120,000* [**Also think about doing one corner at a time (like Maxfield Corner or the RiteAid Corner) to make the project more financially manageable for the town*].

Broadway Intersection - Removal only

- **Common Excavation of Existing pavement/curbing** = 50 cubic yards @ \$5.50 per cubic yard = \$275 to \$300.
- **Landscaping/Loam and Seed** for Broadway area = say \$ 2000

Estimate for removal of intersection: approximately \$2,300 - \$3,000

Gateways Improvements

Drake Field Area

Pull out west curb 4' from existing location and add in green edge and new sidewalks. (Link up to possible sidewalk improvements in Depot Square)

- **Common excavation** of existing sidewalk/curbing for 300 feet along west side of Carroll Street at \$5.50 per cubic yard. 50 cubic yards * \$5.50 per cubic yard = \$275-300.
- **New Sidewalks:** 300 feet * 4 foot wide (brick) = 1,200 square feet. 1,200 square feet * \$5/square foot = \$6000. OR 6" Concrete sidewalks (4 feet wide) = \$27 per square yard. 133 square yards * \$27 = \$3,600
- **Granite Curbing:** \$20 per lineal foot * 300 feet = \$6,000
- **Maple Trees.** 10 - 15 four inch diameter maples @ \$450 each plus fill and landscaping = say \$ 7000

Drake Field Gateway: Approximately \$17,000 to \$20,000

Main Street/Tannery Area

Pull out curb 5'-8' for greenline along southern side of Main Street

- **Common excavation** of existing sidewalk/curbing for 500 feet along south side of Main Street at \$5.50 per cubic yard. About 150 cubic yards * \$5.50 per cubic yard = \$825-1,000.
- **New Sidewalks:** 500 feet * 4 foot wide (brick) = 2,000 square feet. 2,000 square feet * \$5/square foot = \$10,000. OR 6" Concrete sidewalks (4 feet wide) = \$27 per square yard. 222 square yards * \$27 = \$6,000
- **Granite Curbing:** \$20 per lineal foot * 500 feet = \$10,000
- **Maple Trees.** 20 four inch diameter maples @ \$450 each = say \$ 9000

Main Street Gateway: Approximately \$36,000

Remember to look to the community for in-kind support, be it labor, materials or equipment. Pittsfield has shown that it is very generous with its time and talent. Making use of these in-kind resources on improvement projects will lower the actual dollar costs and be a great way to generate local interest and enthusiasm.

Good Luck!!!

Thanks for Having Us

The PlanNH Design Team

Contacts and Resources

Bill Konrad
Rural Development Administration
Concord, NH
223-6045

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

Rita Potter
Economic Development Administration
Concord, NH
225-1624

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

Michael Tardiff
Central NH Regional Planning Commission
Pembroke, NH
753-9374

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.

William Cannon
Capital Regional Development Council
Concord, NH
228-1872

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

George Zoukee, Executive Director
Municipal Bond Bank
Concord, NH
271-2595

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

Christopher Miller
NH Housing Finance Authority
Bedford, NH
472-8623

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.

Pat Herlihy
Community Development Block Grant Program
Office of State Planning
Concord, NH
271-2155

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

Rob Nichols
Community Development Finance Authority
Concord, NH
226-2170

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



Published by C. M. Paige

Boston & Maine Station, Pittsfield, N. H.



Published by C. M. Paige

Our Passenger Train approaching Station, Pittsfield, N. H.

Appendix 1 - Specific Zoning Recommendations to Meet Identified Needs

Action 1: Rename the Commercial Zone and Revise Permitted Uses

After analysis of the zoning ordinance, it is recommended that Pittsfield rename the Commercial District to "Mixed Use Downtown District". The group felt that new title would better embody the character of the downtown area, which consists of commercial, residential, institutional, and mixed uses. Recommend uses changes (Table 1, page 4-5) in the district were as follows:

| Land Use | Current Status | Recommended Action | Rationale |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Gas / Service Stations | Not Permitted | Allow by Special Exception | Currently, 3 Service Stations are located in the downtown as non-conforming uses |
| Motel / Hotel / Inn | Not Permitted | Permit by Right | Such a use could help to strengthen Downtown |
| Marine Facilities | Permitted | Make use not permitted | Use not in character with Downtown, more appropriate in light industrial district. |
| Multifamily Dwelling | Not Permitted | Permit by Special Exception | Multifamily Dwellings are part of the diversity needed to support downtown businesses |
| Nursery / Day Care | Not Permitted | Permit by Right | Day care is important to communities, and would be good planning to locate it in downtown near schools and future recreational facilities. Could also benefit local business (parents could pick up children and staple items on way home from work simultaneously) |
| Rest Homes / Elderly Housing | Not Permitted | Permit by Right | It is important to locate the elderly near community services. |
| Single Family Dwellings | Not Permitted | Permit by Right | Currently, several single family homes in downtown. These should be preserved. |
| Veterinary Clinic | Not Permitted | Permit by Right | Use is in character with the downtown |
| Autobody Repair Shop | Permitted | Make use not permitted | Use not in character with downtown, more appropriate in a light industrial district. |

Action 2: Rename the Urban District and Revise Permitted Uses

The group also recommended that the Town rename the "Urban District" to "Village Residential District". The group felt the proposed name would be more appropriate for the character of the community, as village implies a smaller rural feel more consistent with the community. The group also felt that some of the uses in the district should be adjusted to better fit the character of the area.

The following are recommended changes for selected uses in the Urban Zone (proposed to be renamed to Village Residential Zone).

| Land Use | Current Status | Recommended Action | Rationale |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Combined Business/Dwelling | Permitted by Special Exception | Allow by Right | Currently, home occupations, which are very similar to combined uses, are permitted. Therefore, it may be appropriate to allow mixed uses as a permitted use. |
| Manufactured Homes | Permitted | Make use not permitted | Such uses are typically not characteristic with Village Zones. |
| Marine Facilities | Permitted | Make use not permitted | Use not in character with a residential area, more appropriate as light industrial district. |
| Multifamily Dwelling | Not Permitted | Permit by Special Exception | Multifamily dwellings are part of the diversity needed to support downtown businesses |
| Retail Sales | Permitted | Make permitted by Special Exception | Retail Sales are typically not consistent with the character of primarily residential areas |
| Repair Shops | Permitted | Permit only as a home occupation | Full scale repair shops as primary uses are not consistent with the character of residential neighborhoods |

Action 3: Remove the Light Industrial Zoning District between Fairview Ave and the Suncook River and replace with a mix of revised "Mixed Use Downtown" and "Village Residential" Districts.

Water the sewer availability was the main reason why the Town located light industrial development in the downtown area back when zoning was first conceived in the community in 1988. Currently, the area of light industrial land in the downtown is very under utilized. The majority of the development is vacant and some contains abandoned structures. The group was very concerned about potential negative social, environmental, and traffic impacts of possible future light industrial development in this area. The group also found the existing development to be unattractive and not in line with the character of the area. Citing these reasons, the group recommended that this area be divided in half and rezoned. The group proposed that the area adjacent to Depot Square be rezoned to "Mixed Use Downtown District". This would allow the existing commercial uses, such as Rite Aid and "Twin M" Grocery Store to remain as conforming uses. The remaining portion of land should be rezoned to "Village Residential". This would support the future development of elderly housing and community recreational facilities, as proposed by the group. See the map provided for better detail on zoning changes.

The Town, in conjunction of this rezoning, should consider establishing a Tax Increment Finance District (TIFD) at the intersections of Loudon Road and Route 28 and Route 107 and Route 28 where land would still remain zoned for light industrial uses. Designation of these two areas as TIFDs would encourage nodal development of light industrial uses, thus keeping truck traffic out of the down town while helping to pay for the expansion of water, sewer, and road infrastructure to attract new industry in those two areas.



Action 4: Review and Revise Current Parking Standards

In order to foster economic development, the group recommended that the parking standards for retail uses, restaurants, churches, and downtown business be revised. Currently, businesses are required to provide on site parking based on square footage ratios. This requirement ranges from 1 space per 5 seats for restaurants and churches to 1 space per 200 feet of gross floor area for retail and other business uses. Unfortunately, existing lot sizes and the configuration of buildings on lots in the downtown area often make on site parking not feasible. Furthermore, no off site parking provisions are provided in the Zoning Ordinance. Because of these circumstances, the group recommended that the parking standards for downtown businesses and mixed uses be revised. It is recommended that a provision be added to the ordinance that would allow the Town to require contributions (a.k.a. impact fees) to be collected from businesses expanding in the downtown which cannot meet the required parking standards. The fee should be based on the average cost of building 1 parking spot (including engineering, cost of land, cost of material, and cost of labor). Contributions for new businesses or expansion of businesses would be computed by multiplying the average cost of construction of a parking space by the number of spaces that businesses could not accommodate on site. Moneys gathered from the impact fee system would be used to build more public parking in the downtown which would be owned and maintained by the Town. Such language would be Table 3 Minimum Parking Standards (page 6 of the Pittsfield Zoning Ordinance). Furthermore, this revision to the Zoning Ordinance should be cited in the Site Plan Review Regulations.

Action 5: Historic District Ordinance

As mentioned previously, Pittsfield is fortunate to have several historic structures with attractive architecture dated to the early nineteenth century. In order to preserve this architecture, a historic district ordinance should be drafted to encompass much of the downtown area. The group stressed that it is important that such an ordinance be balanced so that the unique architecture is preserved without over infringing on future economic development potential of historic structures.

Action 6: Revision to Expansion of Nonconforming Structures and Uses

Currently, the property owners may increase nonconforming structures and uses up to 25% without approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. This causes greater nonconformity that may create additional aesthetic, planning, and community safety or welfare issues in the future. Therefore, it is recommended that expansion of nonconforming uses and structures require Zoning Board approval.



Published by C. M. Fiske Town Hall, Pittsford, N. H.



Pittsford N.H.
Spetner Old Academy

Amos

