

BERLIN-GORHAM CHARRETTE

Approaches to Berlin, New Hampshire June 14-15, 2002

Credits

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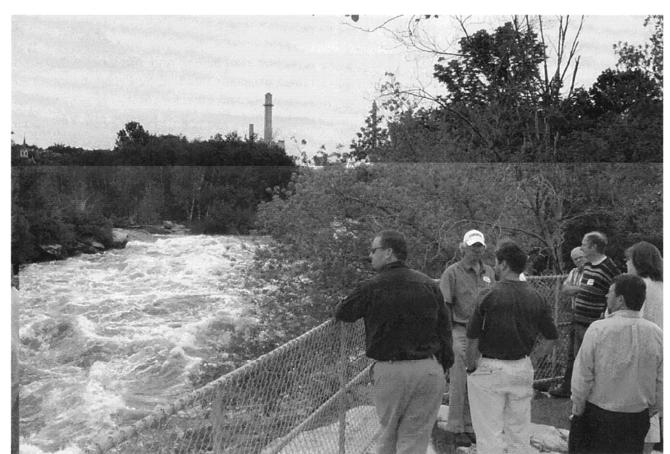


Design team hard at work Saturday morning.

Cover Illustration: Redevelopment of Glen Avenue by Tim Sappington Thanks also to the many community members who shared their visions and insights with the Plan NH team during the weekend.

Berlin-Gorham Plan NH Design Charrette June 14-15, 2002





Hosted by:
The City of Berlin
&
The Town of Gorham

Berlin-Gorham Charrette

June 14-15, 2002

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 for spurring interest in community design and development. Part of Plan NH's mission is to make a positive contribution to New Hampshire communities. One way in which Plan NH does this is through the offer of free design assistance to communities with demonstrated needs.

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, setting a tone and giving direction against which future decisions can be measured.

Why did the Plan NH charrette come to Berlin?

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 dome 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 2002, the City of Berlin, along with dozens of other communities, submitted a proposal to Plan NH seeking advice and design services. Berlin's proposal focused on the need that the community has seen to improve the visual appearance of the gateway to the downtown, specifically at this time the 0.5 mile stretch of Glen Avenue from the Cleveland Bridge to the Glen Avenue Park. For the improvement to make the fullest impact, the proposal was expanded with the cooperation of the City and the Town of Gorham to include the 3.5 miles of Rt. 16 south of the Cleveland Bridge as well. The expansion of the initial proposal was undertaken because it was acknowledged that the gateway to downtown Berlin from the south begins in Gorham with the start of the Berlin-Gorham Road, and at the moment there is nothing suggesting to potential visitors that there is anything to discover by heading north—there is nothing drawing people in, and that needed to be addressed in addition to improving the immediate approach to the downtown. Thus, the charrette had two main focuses, coming up with recommendations for improvements to be made with regards to traffic safety, access management, and landscaping both to the Berlin-Gorham Road, and to the intown approaches north of the Cleveland Bridge.

The Process

The design team, which included several architects, engineers, and planners, many of whom were local or otherwise at least somewhat familiar with the area, gathered on Friday morning for a bus tour of the area. This served to familiarize those new to the area and allow all to look specifically at possibilities for improvements on the Berlin-Gorham Road and Glen Avenue.

The design team met with community members in two open listening sessions on Friday, in the Berlin City Hall auditorium, which were well attended. The objective of the listening sessions was to take the local knowledge that community members possess of the strengths and weaknesses of their community and formulate specific problems for the design team to tackle with their broad based professional experience. It is the input of the community members that makes the recommendations that the design team can offer relevant to the community's needs and vision for itself. Many community members took advantage of the opportunity to voice their concerns about issues pertaining to the gateways to Berlin. Both sessions took a similar direction and many of the same concerns were expressed in each, and, at the end of the night on Friday, the design team had a list of suggested tasks to be accomplished for the public presentation on Saturday afternoon. The design team spent Friday afternoon and evening and Saturday morning working in smaller groups examining the project sites and coming up with different improvement scenarios.

Scenes From Berlin's Approaches



Residences on Glen Avenue



Stretch of Berlin Gorham Road Heading North



View of the Presidential Range from Glen Avenue



Beginning of the Berlin Gorham Road Today



Empty Lot on Berlin Gorham Road



Intersection of Glen Avenue and Pleasant St.

What we heard and what we saw

Community members came to the two listening sessions armed with their concerns about the two areas of concentration for the charrette. The overall aim is to present an image or series of images that will draw people north into Berlin and provide them with something to see or do once they are there, as well as to improve the area to make it a nicer place to live for those who are already here. The discussions in the listening sessions, as well as the work that was done by the design team, generally focused either on the entirety of the Berlin-Gorham Road (from the old railroad trestle to the Cleveland Bridge), with more general ideas about how the whole stretch of road could be improved, or on specifics regarding the appearance of the buildings and roadway on Glen Avenue just north of the Cleveland Bridge.

Discussion surrounding the improvement of the Berlin-Gorham Road focused on the following:

- A concern that the road is very industrial and urban in feeling. The Berlin-Gorham road, with its strip mall
 development, tends to feel more like somewhere in faceless, nameless suburbia, rather than the unique North
 Country setting that it actually is.
- There is an extensive amount of pavement, perhaps not well allocated. This accounts for much of the
 industrial, urban feel that the road has. Two travel lanes in either direction, with a turning lane that is present
 even when there is no where to turn to, seems perhaps more than is needed given the current traffic volume.
- Views of the river are few and far between. Opening up the views of the river from the road could balance the natural and built environment and make the road a more interesting and pleasant place to drive. Opening up in general could provide more recreational opportunities that could in turn attract more people.
- Lack of pedestrian and bicycle access between Berlin and Gorham. Though the distance is not great, the number of people travelling back and forth between the two communities by bicycle or on foot is small. This appears to be due to the fact that the current pedestrian experience on the road is unpleasant. The number of people using a sidewalk or bike path would be substantial if one were in place. Landscape, landscape, landscape. What has already been built there is extensive and bringing in revenue, so we don't want to get rid of it, but we don't necessarily want to look at it either.
- A desire for landscaping throughout the stretch of road. The large commercial and industrial buildings that
 have been built along the road are extensive and these businesses bring in revenue and supply jobs, so they are
 important, but there was a general consensus that maybe they could try to look a little better, and much of the
 presentation of the road could be improved with extensive landscaping.
- A desire for something to tie the stretch of road together, to give it a more "cared for" appearance. The
 thought here is that currently the road is sort of a no-man's land and needs a unifying element, whether it is
 banners, flags, hanging flowers, light posts or something else from downtown Gorham, all the way into
 downtown Berlin. This would give the whole road a more pulled together look and some ownership, as well as
 the impression that you were heading into something, rather than just leaving somewhere.
- Other concerns such as the dilapidated guardrail along the road, and the need to have a breakdown lane surfaced as well.



Scenes from Friday's listening sessions.



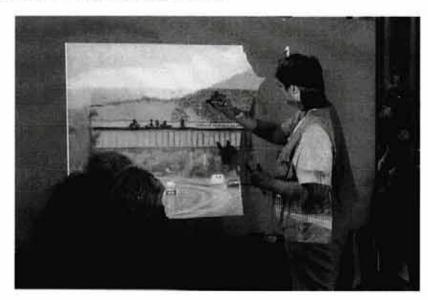


Scenes from Saturday.



Discussion regarding Glen Avenue generally focused around the following:

- A concern that the residential buildings on the west side of the road do not present a positive image of the City. Described as looking tired and worn, these buildings are visible from the stoplight at the Cleveland Bridge. For many people, stopping here may be the first time they have had a chance to really take in their surroundings having traveled up the Berlin-Gorham road rapidly. Looking around, one is aware that they are now in Berlin, as opposed to the roadway leading up to it. And there was no disputing the idea that this entrance or gateway to the city has seen better days.
- A desire to tie sidewalks and sidewalk loops together. When the sidewalk was put in on Unity street, a popular walking loop was created through the downtown, over the Mason St. Bridge, down the Unity St. sidewalk (and park), over the Cleveland Bridge and up Glen Avenue. Walkers felt that the loop was pleasant except for the section along Glen Avenue, where the sidewalk is exposed to traffic or nonexistent and the pedestrians do not always feel safe.
- A desire for more landscaping. Doing small things like placing plantings in traffic islands rather than having pavement, or having barrels with flowers or small trees was much desired.
- The potential for developing a tourist/visitor welcome center in the area. As it is the first
 place a visitor is really aware that they are within the city limits, the area was suggested as a
 prime location for a welcome kiosk, or simply just a sign that says Welcome to Berlin. The
 one that is currently in place was thought perhaps to be too far into the downtown area and
 might be better closer to the bridge..
- Community support for the businesses along the east side of this stretch of road. Although the buildings may not be the most attractive buildings possible, people appreciate the challenge of staying in business and want to make life easier and not harder for them and support what will help them stay in town.



Glen Avenue Options

From the suggestions made by community members during the listening sessions and additional considerations voiced by city officials, four general options were presented for the revitalization of the roughly half mile section of Glen Avenue. from the Cleveland Bridge north. Each of these schemes for revitalization would involve extensive amounts of time, energy and resources for completion. But underlying the idea of the possibility for major change was always the idea that there are many elements of the visions that could be undertaken at a smaller scale, one piece at a time for a more manageable and immediately accomplishable project. The four options pursue different future possibilities for the residential properties on the west side of Glen Avenue in the lots across the street from Cross Machine to Fred's. Some of the options begin to explore different futures for the commercial properties on the river side of the road as well.

Option 1: Rehabilitation of Existing Buildings

The first option for improving the appearance of this section of road is reinvesting in and rehabilitating the buildings that are currently there. This would involve providing incentives and possibly assistance for building owners to revitalize their buildings. While investing in the improvement of private property is clearly a private responsibility, many communities have found that using a limited amount of public funds to stimulate that private investment allows them to achieve a broader public objective, such as enhancing the gateway to the community. Models of low interest loans, grants to match private investment and others exist all across New Hampshire.

The buildings on the west side of the road, mainly multi-family dwellings, while currently not in prime condition, are very representative of typical Berlin residences. There is much to be said for presenting as a first impression to visitors and residents a particular image that has ties to the city's past, a past that is without question culturally rich. Playing on that fact in any way possible is to the advantage of the city. To use the heritage of the city in this simple way shows pride in the past and hope for the future of the city. New is not always better, tired as this housing may appear. Though grant funds could be sought for some or all of this work, the costs of rehabilitation would need to be closely examined, as it might not make economic sense to repair some of the dwelling units that appear to be in very poor condition.

Option 2: Partial Demolition

A second option would be to remove the buildings that are in worse repair and fix up those that are still retrievable. This has the additional benefit of opening up space between the buildings that could then be attractively landscaped, reducing the cramped feeling of the row of houses, while still maintaining some of the historical character. Again, incentives and assistance for property owners to revitalize their property would be important to make this option a reality.

Both of these options also incorporate a sidewalk and planting strip on the west side of the road from the Cleveland Bridge north and reduce the length of the curb cuts on the east side of the road so as to control access to Glen Avenue. There is also the possibility of constructing an access road for the businesses and having one or two access points only, rather than the overly free access that exists now. The construction of a sidewalk here would complete the loop through the downtown that now leaves

pedestrians coming off of the Bridge stranded and exposed to the traffic. Currently, the width of the road varies considerably, and the space for the sidewalk and planting strip could be accommodated simply by keeping the road a consistent width from the east curb. Grants could be secured for much of this option, which accomplishes the goal of improving the visual approaches at less expense and disrupts fewer families than other options. the relocation of families from homes to be acquired would require additional expenses if state or federal funds are to be used, but these are grant eligible costs.

Option 3: Complete Demolition

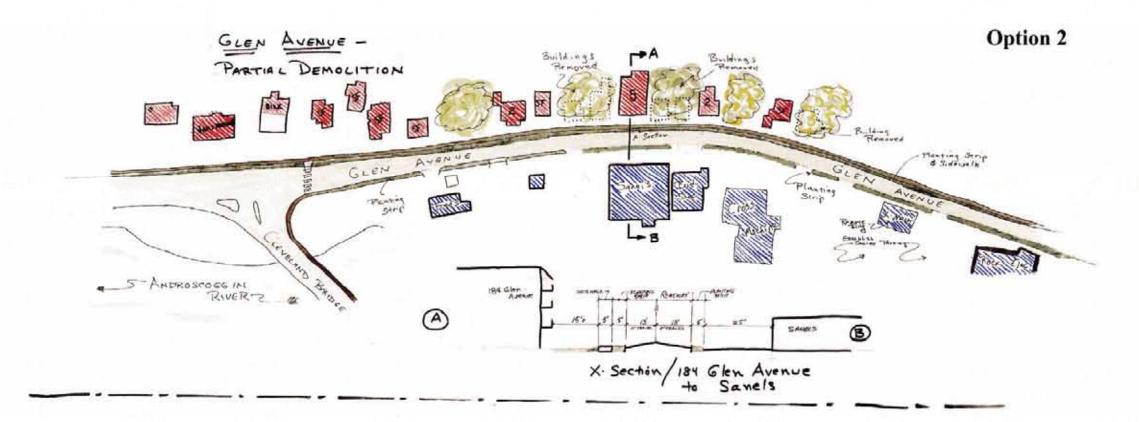
The third option for the Glen Avenue section is the complete demolition of the ten buildings on the west side of the road. This newly created empty lot could either be redeveloped as a new commercial site or could be left open. If left open, it would be important to do something to avoid the impression that buildings were taken down and then the area was forgotten about. Much of the Berlin-Gorham Road is plagued by empty lots looking abandoned and uncared for and it is certainly not beneficial to continue this feeling north into Berlin. If the site were to be redeveloped for commercial enterprises, it would be important to set standards such that what would be built there would send the right message. It would be too bad to go to all the trouble of removing the dwellings only to have loud neon signs flashing as you approach the downtown area. The City needs to consider carefully what the right type of business to go in there would be, or whether that would perhaps be a good location for some type of tourist information center or other welcoming station. In the scenario of complete demolition of the buildings, the road can also be relocated to allow more room in front of the businesses on the east side of the road, which are currently somewhat cramped between the steep river embankment and the road. Relocating the road would provide additional off street parking for customers.

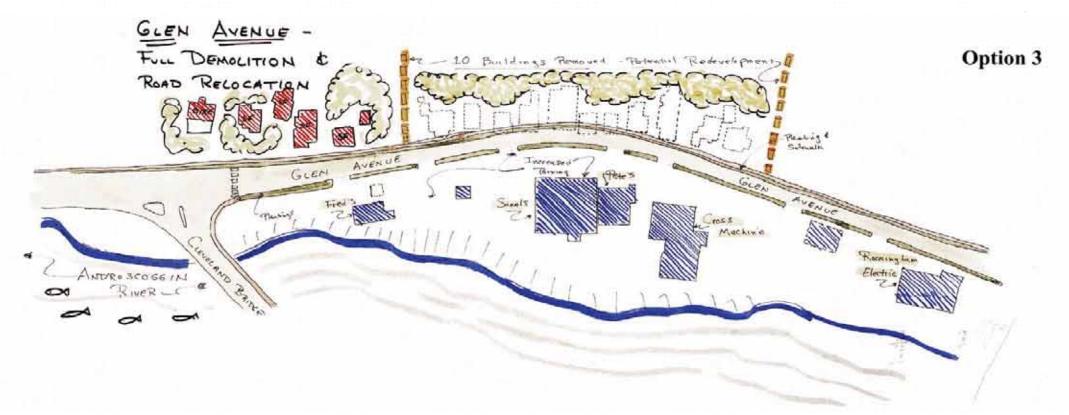
Clearly this option would have a major impact on the neighborhood. The costs could be partially offset by renting or selling the land in the existing roadway to businesses on the east side of Glen Avenue, and by redeveloping the newly created sites on the west side of the road for residential or commercial purposes. Care should be taken that deed or lease restrictions be imposed on any property that is redeveloped to assure that it does not replicate the degraded appearance that the project is attempting to eliminate.

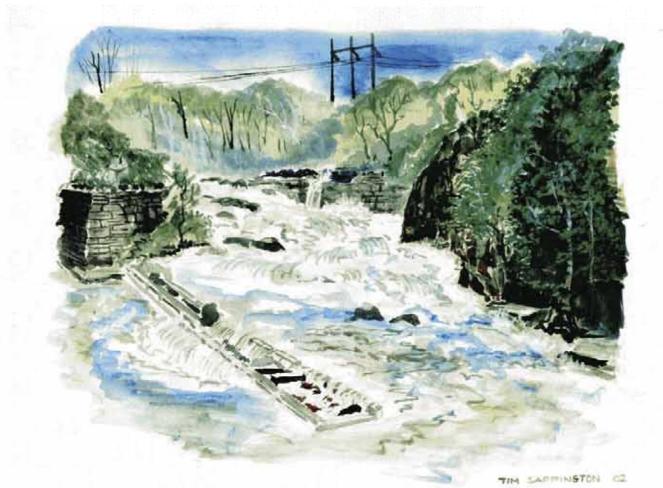
Option 4: Complete Demolition and Park Construction

This option would involve, in addition to the complete demolition of the ten residences along the west side of the road and road relocation as above, relocation of two of the businesses along the river side of Glen Avenue to make way for the construction of a park that could take advantage of the access to the historic ruins and falls. This park is yet another possibility for visitors and residents to reconnect with the river that has long been so important to the city and the region.

While this would provide an attractive new park at the entrance to the downtown, clearly this proposal would also be the most disruptive to the existing businesses and the neighborhood in general.





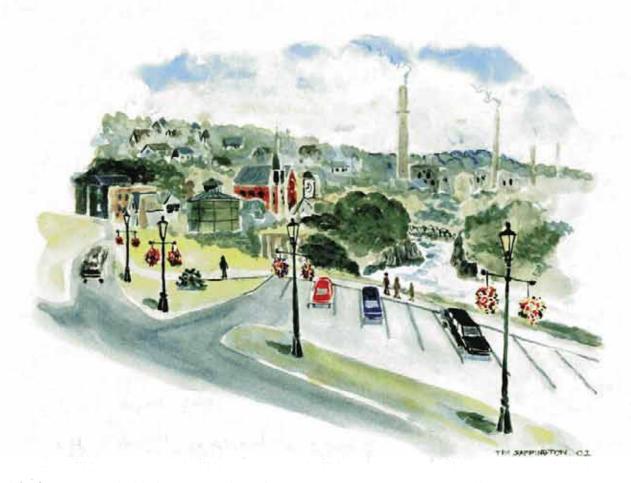


Artistic rendering of the falls, mesmerizing at both high and low water. Providing access to the view of the river not only opens up this local treasure for residents, but also gives people just passing through a reason to stop. It is important to keep in mind that in drawing people to Berlin, it is necessary not only to get them to come, but to have something to show them once they are here. It can start as simply as this view. Once they are stopped, the opportunity presents itself to tell them more about what the city has to offer.

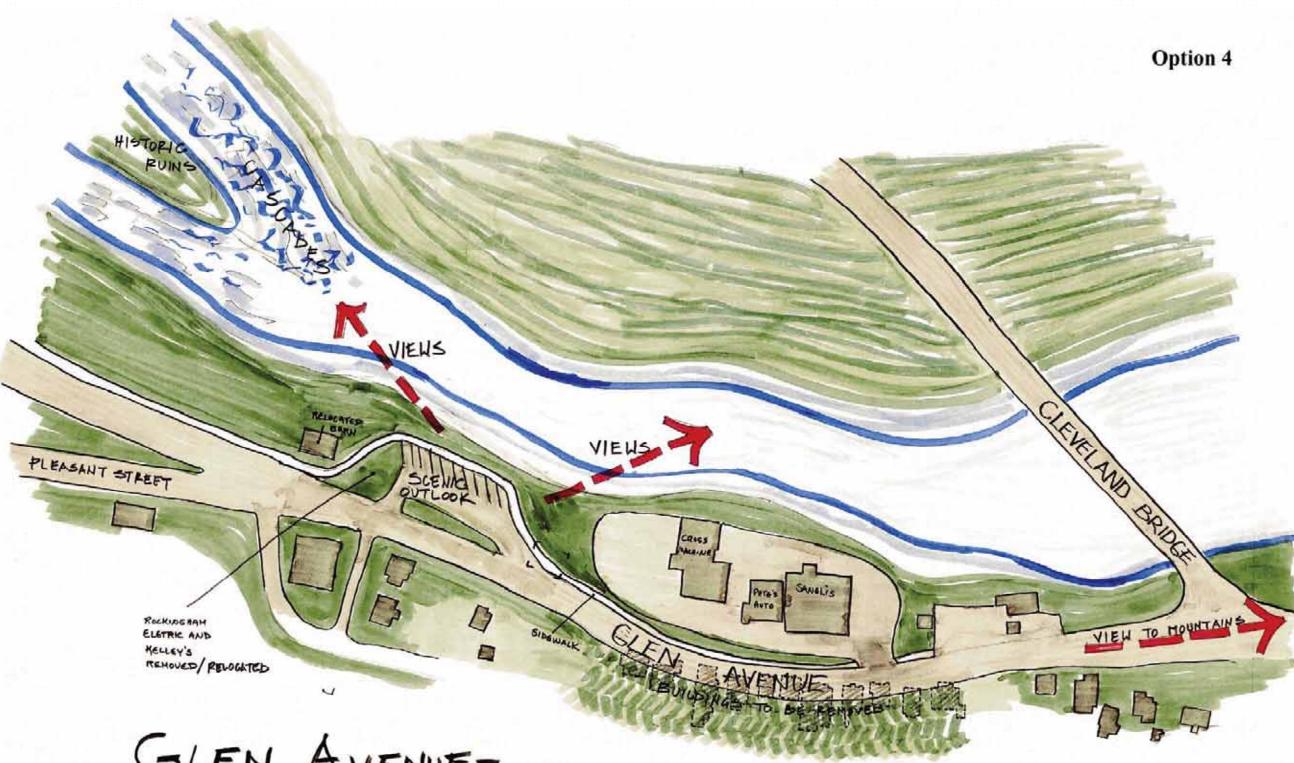
PLEASANT ST/ROUTE 16



The intersection of Glen Avenue and Pleasant Street is one place where there is more pavement than is necessary or safe. Focusing the traffic with planted islands has the benefit of added safety and improves the visual quality by adding green to the island.



Artistic rendering of a new approach to downtown Berlin. Shown are a new park with access to the falls and new appearance to the downtown. Streetlights are a relatively inexpensive way to add desirable character to an area and tie everything together—bringing the street experience back to a more human level.



GLEN AVENUE-Park & Road Relocation

Berlin-Gorham Road Options

While the focus of the design charrette evolved to explore options for improvement for approaches to Berlin beginning at the old railroad trestle bridge and continuing north, there is also a need for improvement even further away than that. For most people the decision to head into Berlin or not, is made at the lights at the intersection of Rts. 2 and 16. Currently, there are very few signs pointing in the direction of Berlin, and nothing is drawing much of the tourist traffic that moves through Gorham north into Berlin. There are lots of opportunities for putting in better signage, both at this intersection and on the roads leading up to it, to alert people to the fact that there is plenty to see just a few miles north. The task once they have decided to drive north is to give them a drive that is worth their time, which is where the discussion of the charrette begins.

Reinventing the Berlin-Gorham Road

The existing roadway consists of four travel lanes that are twelve feet wide, a median/turning lane that is fourteen feet, and shoulders that average six feet wide for a total of seventy-two to seventy-four feet of pavement. This is an enormous amount of pavement for a roadway that carries only 13,000 vehicles a day. Several sections of the turning lane are in sections where no turns are needed or available because of undevelopable adjacent land. Communities in other parts of the state are moving toward narrower roads even when they are carrying 20,000 vehicles a day. This extensive width of pavement, as well as the style of buildings and the development that have taken place along the road, gives the road a very urban and industrial feel to it. This does not mesh well with the vision that most people have of what they will experience when driving through mountain areas. The commercial activity that takes place on the road is vital to both communities, but there are many opportunities to change the atmosphere of the stretch of road to make it a more desirable place, one that people would be excited to come and explore.

The ideas that came up for changing the appearance and layout of the road included the following.

The Road Design

Option 1: Retain Four Travel Lanes

This option would keep two travel lanes in each direction, while turning the center turning lane into a median island that could be landscaped, except for left turn pockets where necessary. Reducing the amount of pavement, as well as separating the many lanes of travel visually, would have an impact on the impression that the road makes on travelers. Under this plan, the travel lanes would be reduced to eleven feet each, and the center buffer island and turning lane would be reduced to twelve feet, allowing the breakdown lane in either direction to be increased to seven feet in width and landscaping would take place outside the shoulders.

Option 2: Reduce Number of Travel Lanes

There was a great deal of enthusiasm expressed for the creation of a pedestrian and bike path along the road. This would be accomplishable if the number of travel lanes was reduced to one in either direction with a center turning lane where needed and medians or berms where no turns are necessary. Under this plan, the travel lanes would remain at twelve feet in either direction, the center turning lane would be reduced to eight feet with a two foot margin, there would be an eight foot breakdown lane in either direction, and one side of the road would accommodate a bikepath and pedestrian walkway.

To reduce the number of places where turns are necessary, it was suggested that side service roads could be put in place to access the commercial establishments along the road. Currently, most businesses have at least one entrance which is used by themselves exclusively. An access or service road to link the businesses would keep the flow of traffic steadier, perhaps reducing the need for so many travel lanes while increasing the opportunities to put in sidewalks and bike lanes, separated by planting strips from the main road.

The Name

One possibility for beginning change along the Berlin-Gorham Road is changing the name. Renaming the road as the Androscoggin Valley Parkway or the Berlin-Gorham Parkway is a simple way to change the expectations that people have for the road. A parkway name gives the road more ties to the natural environment, and a name change is a good way to get people thinking differently. Many people from out of the area are aware of the existence of the Berlin-Gorham Road because of the widespread advertising done by the car dealerships that line the road. Utilizing their preexisting networks to advertise the name change could be easily accomplished.

The Trestle

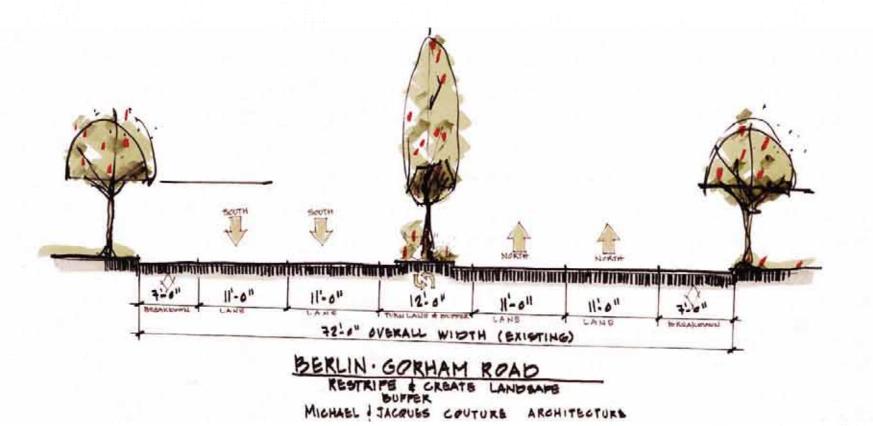
The main portion of the Berlin-Gorham Road begins after passing under the old railroad trestle, which makes the large and currently mundane structure an excellent location to advertise what lies beyond and provide some visual excitement and to create a real gateway to the parkway. Whether it is turned into the hanging gardens of the Androscoggin Valley, some piece of public art, or just a big welcome sign showing something of the heritage of the area, its prominent location provides tremendous opportunity for presentation of a positive image of what lies beyond.

The River

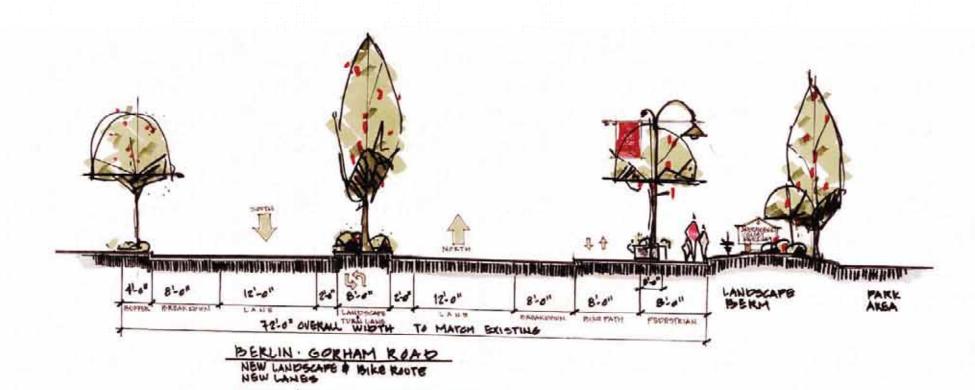
The river is an important part of the cultural landscape, as well as providing fantastic recreational opportunities. Showcasing it in every possible location is a good idea. There are several locations that would make good riverside parks, with the potential of developing new facilities to serve recreators—renting canoes, kayaks or bikes. There was enthusiasm for creating a multiuse recreational path along the east side of the river that could either run along the old railroad bed or run nearby to it and connect via a pedestrian bridge to a bikepath along the Berlin-Gorham Road.

The Bike and Boat Park

There are several sites that could be developed as a recreation headquarters for the new parkway. This idea could be pursued to whatever extent the communities wished. The basic idea would be to provide activity, not only for those who are local but also for those people that you are now drawing north into the community. In this way not only do you get them to come, you get them to stop and create memories of the place and a greater chance they will be back.

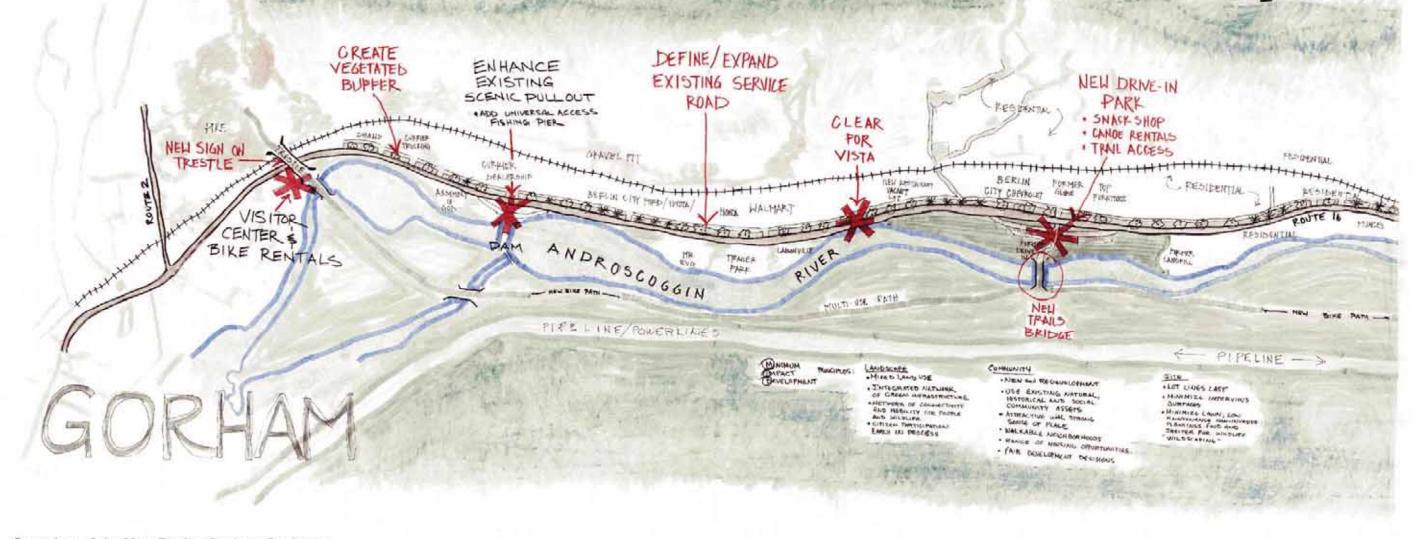


New Berlin Gorham Road Designs



MICHAEL & JACOUSE COUTURE AIA

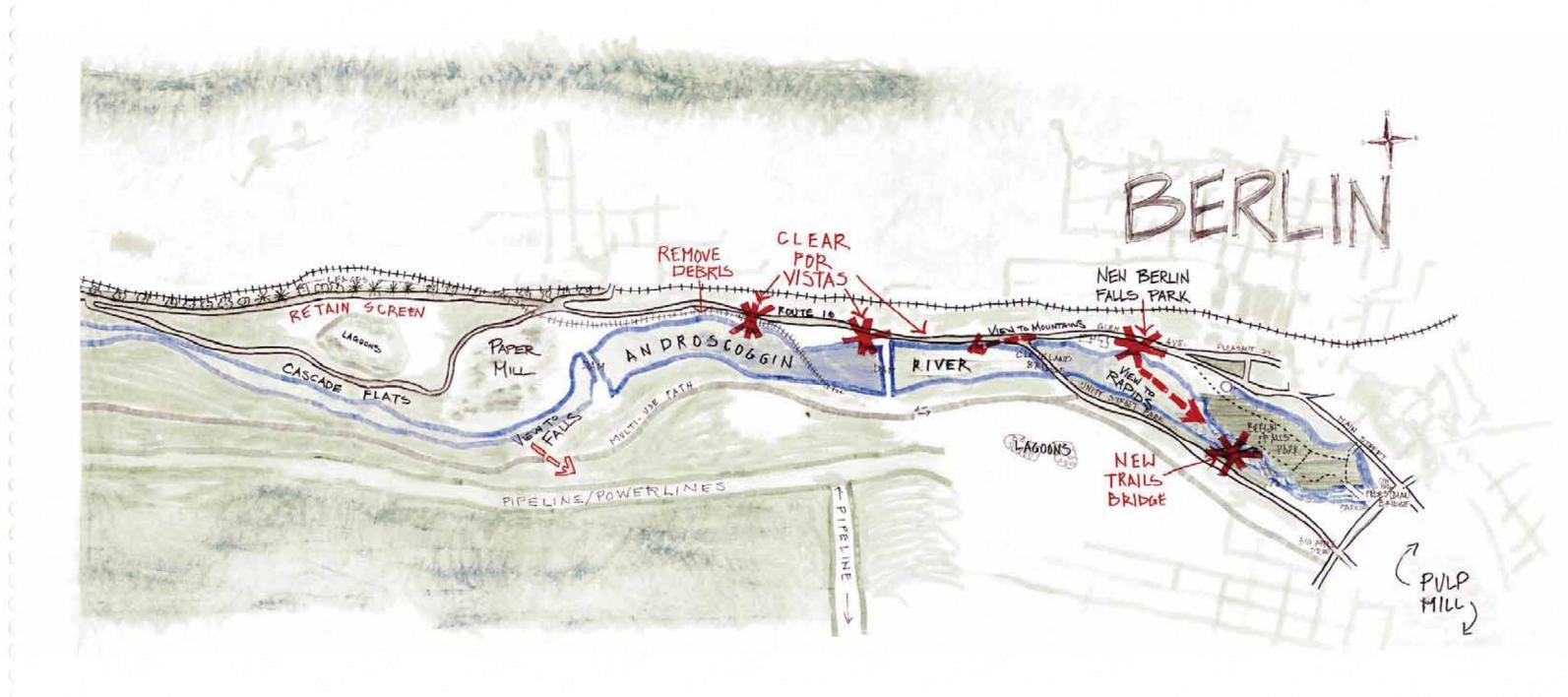
BERLIN-GORHAM PARKWAY

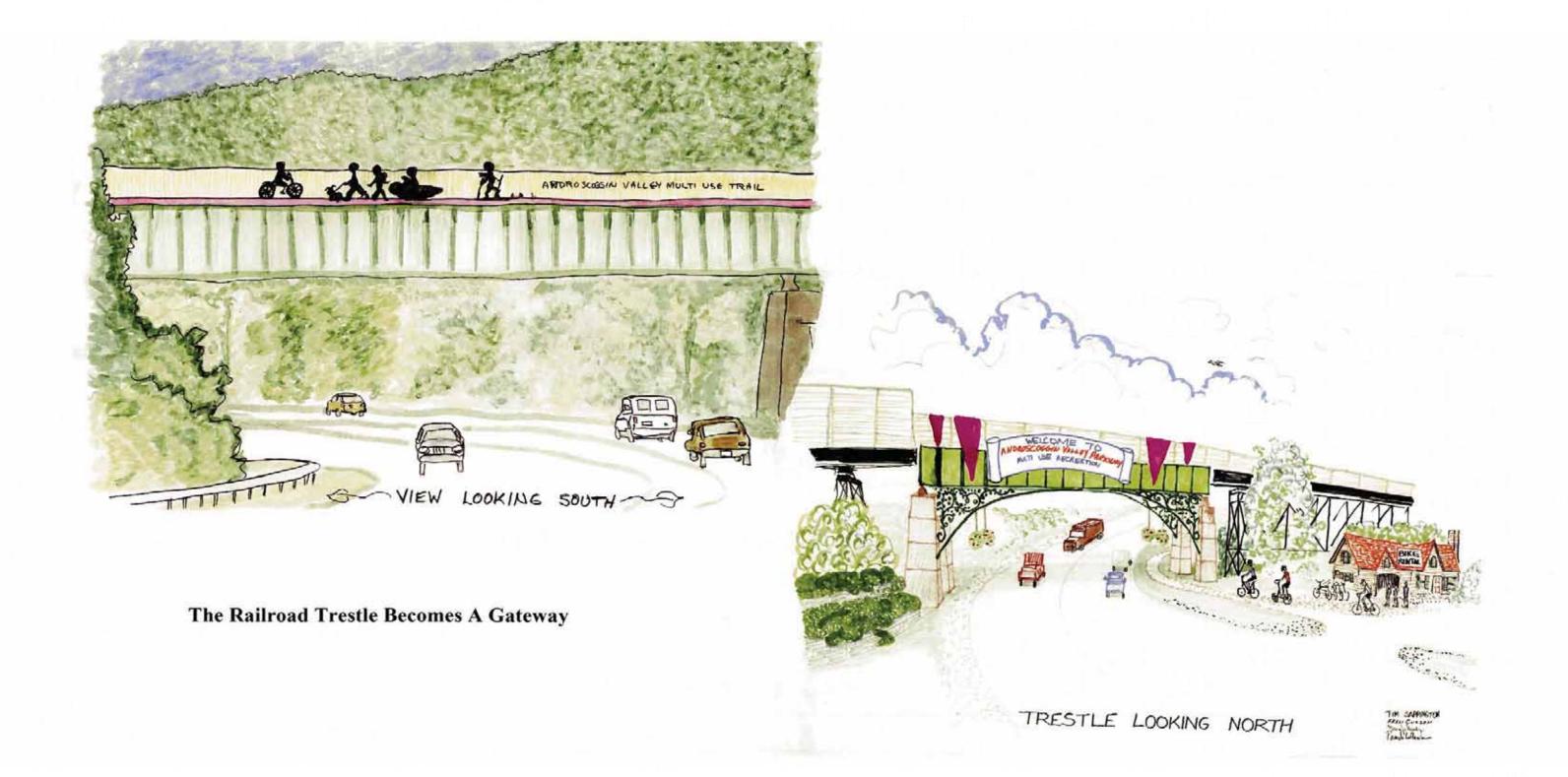


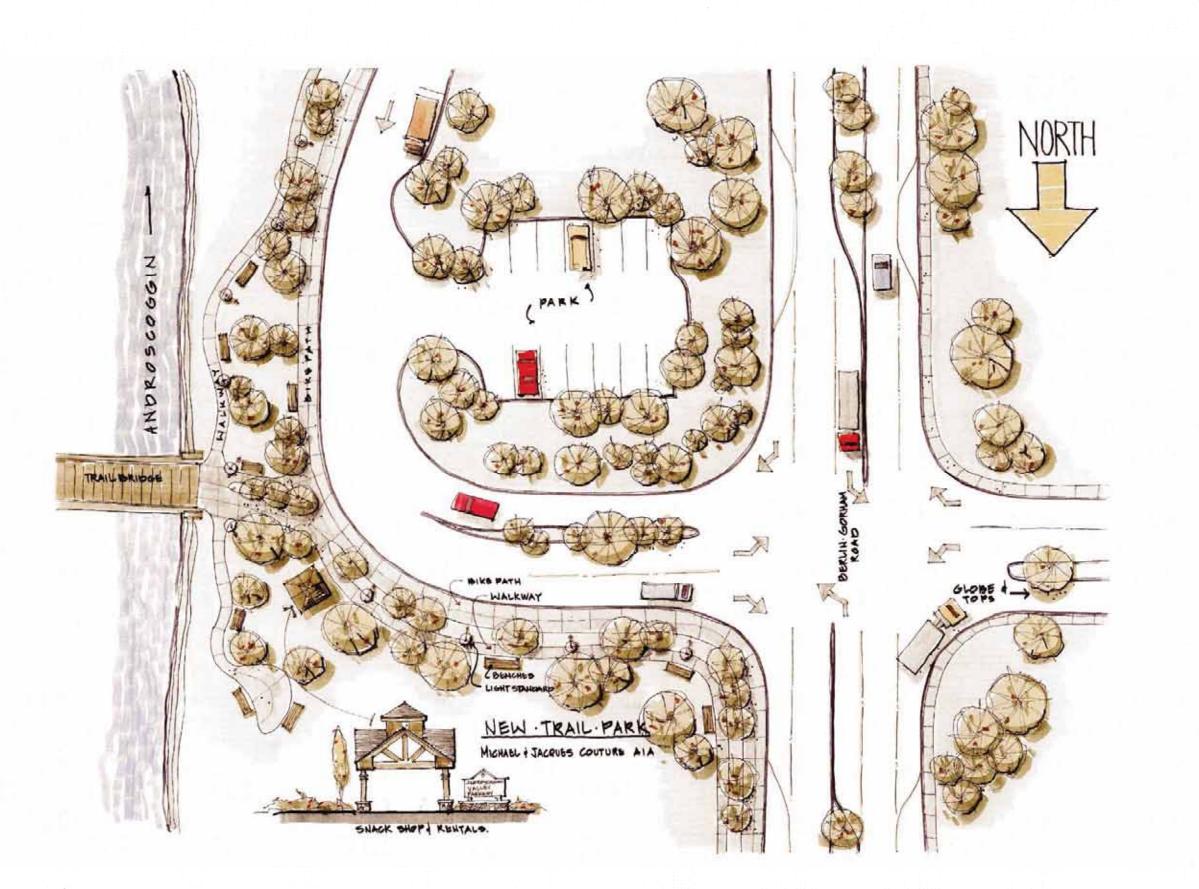
Overview of the New Berlin-Gorham Parkway

There are many opportunities along this roadway to present a positive message about Berlin and Gorham and to tie the two communities together. At present it is somewhat of a no-man's land. Decorative lighting from downtown Gorham continued all the way through to Berlin, hung with common banners celebrating a theme of the two communities or flowers or other decorative features could go a long way to giving a positive impression and to really making it look pulled together and cared about.

Again, the idea of opening the river views from the road are stressed in this plan. The river is an important part of the history of the area, as well as being a natural attraction for passers by.







A New River Park

Recommendations/Options

Many options for improvement of the visual approaches to Downtown Berlin were explored during the two day. In short:

Glen Avenue Improvements

Making room for pedestrian walkways, crosswalks and planting strips, as well as some realignment of the roadway, some alteration of access to the businesses on the east side of the road were suggested in one manifestation or another in all of the following proposals.

- Rehab: Full rehabilitation of the ten residential structures that closely line the west side of the street. The major variable with this option is whether it is an economically sound measure to be taken, given the downtrodden appearance of many of the buildings.
- Partial Demolition: This option identifies five of the ten structures that appear to be in worse repair, schedules them for acquisition by the city and slates them for demolition, thereby opening up the crowded feeling, landscaping the former lots. This needs to be confirmed with site visits, but this may prove the most practical option.
- Full Demolition: This option suggests the removal of all ten of the structures, opening up the
 entire side of the road, for either redevelopment as a residential or commercial property (or
 properties) to offset the costs of acquisition and demolition, as well as the lost revenue from
 taxes of the buildings.
- Full Demolition With Park Construction: This option goes a step further than simply full
 demolition of the residential structures, removing two of the businesses on the west side of the
 road in addition, with the potential of developing a park along the river with a view of the falls
 and historic ruins.

Berlin-Gorham Road Improvements

Think Parkway. All of the proposals for improvements focus on reevaluating how the road is
used, what the needs of the users are. Evaluation of the pavement requirements need to take
place, as does landscaping and providing better access, both visually and physically, to the river.

Summary

The residents of Berlin and Gorham are the only ones who can decide with any authority what will and what will not work for their communities. All of the ideas generated during the charrette grew out of suggestions made by community members, and Plan NH hopes that this charrette has resulted in new thoughts and visions that may change the way that the communities view the options for future development. It is important to remember that the options discussed at the charrette and in this report are only that—a limited number of options under discussion, not plans etched in stone. From here, things will change and the ideas and visions will have to adapt to changing circumstances. But there are basic design principles that should be kept in mind in any future improvements to be made.

- Clean up what you've got. It makes it a nicer place to live for those who are already here, and
 makes the location more attractive to visitors and investors.
- Buildings sometimes outlive their economic usefulness. Some buildings may be beyond economic repair and need to come down.
- Retain the character of the community and enhance it where you can. This is the North Country, not suburbia. Emphasize the uniqueness of the setting whenever you can, providing access to hills, the river and trails. Avoid the suburban feeling along the Berlin-Gorham road, by having only as much pavement as you really need and landscaping wherever you can. The river is the reason that this valley developed, emphasize its importance. The railroads are also an important tribute to the past. The cultural diversity of the area is important. And finally, the logging and paper industry are important. Find ways to pay tribute to the past in a way that will send positive messages about today and the future, both to current residents and potential visitors.



Locations with potential for immediate improvement. Above: Move fog line and install barrels with flowers. Below: Cut grass and clear brush for view to river.



Getting Started

Many of the plans presented for the revision of the gateways to Berlin's downtown are, without a doubt, extensive and expensive. They have the potential to make sweeping changes to the appearance and to the experiences to be had in the approaches to the downtown. This will require a great deal of time, money and coordinating to complete. But changes do not all have to occur on such a grand scale, and making simple, smaller changes is equally as important, if not more so. It is in taking that first step that one commits to working towards something better. Making a small change sends out a very positive message that you are serious about these improvements and willing to do what you can now, rather than waiting for the planning and execution of huge changes to occur. With that in mind, a few suggestions about immediate improvements that could be made by the city or individuals and groups were offered at the presentation of the design teams work on Saturday. The suggestions on the quick fix list were:

- Cut the grass on the west side of lower Glen Ave. The difference in appearance between the Berlin-Gorham Road (which is maintained in Gorham by the State) and Berlin is immediately noticeable. Cutting the grass will improve the appearance with minimal effort.
- Clear the brush on the east side of Glen Ave. to open up views of the river. You don't need to
 create fancy parks and boat launches to enable people to get more enjoyment out of the river. Just
 cleaning up the overgrowth, where it is not screening the old railroad debris from view, will open up
 views and change the character of the approach.
- Move the fog line (the white line at the edge of the road) and put in barrels with flowers on the
 west side of Glen Ave. Moving the fog line will give a feeling about what the road would be like if
 it were kept a constant width as proposed in a few of the options, allowing for a planting strip and
 pedestrians. In the quick and dirty scheme, the planting can be done in barrels, placing one every few
 yards with large, colorful flowers will make a big impression.
- Put in barrels with flowers at the traffic island at Kelley's. Likewise, putting flowers in barrels at
 the island will change the appearance dramatically, and simulate on a small scale what it would look
 like if plantings were in place there instead of pavement.
- Remove the pavement in the traffic islands at the Cleveland Bridge and plant flowers. Or a simpler solution would again to be putting in barrels with flowers.
- Start a volunteer program to care for the flowers/adopt a flower-bed. There's no denying that
 caring for plants takes a different kind of energy than caring for pavement. Rather than putting all
 the responsibility on the city, developing a program where residents have more personal involvement
 and input could foster more community involvement and support.

Beyond the Quick Fix

Pick a project to get started on and start! This will involve more community dialogue to decide what is best and feasible. Large scale improvements do not happen overnight, but they can and do happen. Good luck!

Cost Estimates

Glen Avenue

Option 1: Rehabilitation

The western side of Glen Avenue is comprised of ten residential structures, which in turn contain approximately twenty-one dwelling units. This option would completely rehabilitate all structures and upgrade the road by adding a sidewalk and curbing on both sides.

Rehab of 21 dwelling units @ \$25,000 each	\$525,000
2000 lineal feet (LF) of sidewalk @ \$8/LF (one side of street only)	16,000
Narrow road surface, cold plane and overlay, new curbing both sides, 2000 LF @\$165/LF	330,000
Allowance for landscaping	10,000
Total:	\$881,000

Option 2: Partial Rehabilitation, Partial Demolition

This option identifies five of the structures which appear to be in the worst condition and schedules them for acquisition and demolition. The undeveloped parcels would then be landscaped and sold to abutters.

Acquisition of five structures @ \$25,000 each	\$125,000
Demolition of five structures @ \$5,000 each	25,000
Rehabilitation of 11 dwelling units @ \$25,000 each	275,000
Grade, loam, seed five lots @\$3,500 each	17,500
2000 LF of sidewalk @ \$8/LF (one side of street only)	16,000
Narrow road surface, cold plane and overlay, new curbing both sides, 2000 LF @ \$165/LF	330,000
Allowance for landscaping	10,000
Total:	\$798,500

Option 3: Complete Acquisition/Demolition/Relocation

This option would acquire all ten residential properties on the west side of Glen Avenue, demolish them, and relocate the road partially onto the vacant sites, providing additional parking and operating space for the businesses to the east, much as was done for the businesses on lower Glen Avenue when the Cleveland Bridge was constructed in 1981-82.

Acquisition of ten structures @ \$25,000 each	\$250,000
Demolition of ten structures @ \$5,000 each	50,000
Grade, loam, seed ten lots @ \$3,500 each	35,000
2000 LF of sidewalk @ \$8/LF (one side of street only)	16,000
2000 LF of new roadway alignment, new storm drainage, curbing on both sides @ \$290/LF,	580,000

Total:

\$931,000

Option 4: Full Demolition and Park Creation

This option pursues all of the actions recommended in Option 3, but goes further in that it creates a new park overlooking the falls at the juncture of the Dead and the Androscoggin Rivers. This action would in turn require the acquisition and relocation of two existing businesses on the east side of Glen Avenue.

Acquisition of ten residential properties @ \$25,000 each	\$250,000
Demolition of ten residential properties @ \$5,000 each	50,000
Acquisition of two commercial properties, est.	250,000
Demolition of two commercial properties @ \$10,000 each	20,000
Grade, loam, seed twelve lots @ \$3,500 each	42,000
2000 LF of sidewalk @ \$8/LF (one side of street only)	16,000
2000 LF of new roadway alignment, new storm drainage, curbing on both sides @ \$290/LF,	580,000
Park development, including grading, paving and landscaping, est.	100,000
Total:	\$1,308,000

Berlin-Gorham Road

Option 1: Retain Four Travel Lanes

Four lane roadway with a center/median island and left turn pockets as necessary. The figure includes an allowance for curbing, removal of pavement, landscaping and restriping.

18,000 LF @ \$175/LF

\$3,100,000

Option 2: Reduce to Three Travel Lanes

Three lane roadway with alternating, dedicated left turn pockets as necessary, with eight foot shoulders. The figure includes an allowance for curbing, removal of pavement, storm drainage modifications, landscaping and restriping.

18,000 LF @ \$270/LF

\$4,860,000

Riverfront Boat Launch/Trailhead

The concept of a riverfront boat launch and rental site, with potential parking for multi use trail users can be developed to whatever degree the communities desire. It could be done either as a public venture, as a private development site, or as a joint public/private partnership. A detailed cost estimate has not been prepared for the drawing shown, but a recent, similar NH Fish & Game access point on Squam Lake, with 27 parking places, restrooms and a boat ramp was developed for \$216,000. Small shelters for a few picnic tables run \$12,500 and a trailhead kiosk would be roughly \$2,500.

Trestle Gateway

Similarly, the art and graphics of converting the former Boston and Maine Railroad trestle into a gateway can be pursued to whatever degree the communities desire. Certainly a modest amount of funds and some volunteer labor would go a long way to accomplishing the goal of enhancing the entrance to the Berlin-Gorham Parkway.

Allowance for materials/volunteer labor

\$30,000

Contacts and Resources

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

Mike King North Country Council Bethlehem, NH 444-6306

Bill Konrad Rural Development Administration Concord, NH 223-6045

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

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

Rita Potter Economic Development Adminsitration Concord, NH 225-1624

Peter Riviere Coos Economic Development Council Lancaster, NH

George Zoukee Executive Director, Municipal Bond Bank Concord, NH 271-2595 The Office of State Planning distributes funding for projects which can demonstrate an ability to meet the needs of low and moderate income individuals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Home Improvement Toolkit

Berlin is the only city in New Hampshire with a marketable supply of our state's's rarest commodity – available and affordable housing. Here are some tools to capitalize on that resource.

Marketing / Outreach

- Benefit from the post-9/11 national "nesting" phenomenon -- Berlin is the <u>natural</u> alternative to crowded and dangerous cities in other states
- Promote Berlin's reputation as welcoming / supportive of home ownership
- Use housing stock to attract people and families who will invest in fixing up existing homes and will become assets to the
- Use networks in the local/regional arts community to attract urban artists/musicians to purchase homes for seasonal use as their getaway places, to rest and to refresh their creativity (all the advantages of country living in a city setting)
- Emphasize local/regional recreational opportunities to prospective buyers (Live all year in Vacationland! Ski to work! Bike to shopping!")
 - Invest in well-designed, high quality advertising and marketing to effectively reach the target audiences
- Partner with Realtors and local accommodations and attractions to promote weekend home-buying trip packages

Educational & Technical Assistance

- Develop a House Doctor program to diagnose and treat common minor problems and repairs
- Mobilize volunteer handy wo/men to do small-scale maintenance and home improvements for qualifying homeowners
- Have an annual "Best Gardens" contest
- Publish a how-to rehab manual or series of fact sheets for simple owner/tenant fix-up tips
 - Use an empty storefront for a Home Care Center; provide part-time or by-appointment staffing for advice and assistance with home purchase and improvement options; host scheduled how-to workshops and other events to bring people to the center
- Set up a home-fixer library of publications and videos, with Internet access, available at the Home Care Center, City Hall, and the Library
- Bookmark and promote these web sites: www.state.nh.us/nhdhr and http://www2.er.nps.gov/tps/care/ ("Caring for your Historic Building") for access to a broad range of programs and information
- Network with (and visit) other municipal and statewide housing agencies and organizations to share information, inspiration, problems, and opportunities

Financial

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- Create mini-grants for quick cleanup/paintup/fixup projects (for homes, street trees, etc.)
- Establish a moratorium (5 years? 10 years?) on taxing rehab investments at existing houses
 - Use Community Reinvestment Act (partner with local lenders) for targeted types of home improvement funding
- Promote use of programs such as CDBG, Fannie Mae, HUD financing, USDA Rural Housing Improvement grants, etc. for rehab work
- Draw on NH Rural Development Council services to facilitate housing tool kit initiatives

Regulatory

- Take advantage of code flexibility for properties determined to be eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places Maintain and enforce quality standards for home rehab work
- Develop techniques to maximize owner-occupied rental housing and to discourage absentee ownership

Political

- Establish a municipal Heritage Commission to promote and enhance Berlin's historical assets, including its excellent variety of housing types and styles
- Support state legislation to provide mortgage credits for purchase and rehab of historic houses
- Secure adequate Internet connectivity to attract "knowledge professionals" who can live anywhere and work from home by computer ("computer commuters")