

# *Littleton, New Hampshire*

## *Design Charrette*



*September 21 & 22, 2012*



Thank You:



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Committee Chair and owner of Tannery Marketplace

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Littleton Businessman and Tannery Historian,

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Select Board Chair,

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Littleton Town Manager.

**Bob O’Conner**  
Channel 2 Local Access Cable Channel

**Chad Stearns**  
Executive Director of the Littleton Chamber of Commerce



Acknowledgements

*Sincerest thanks go to the individuals and groups who donated their professional expertise and personal time to make the Littleton Charrette a success. Also, many thanks to the citizens, businesses and town officials who shared their time, energy, knowledge and services with us*



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#### Sponsors



#### Hosted By



#### Contributing Community Members

Coffee Pot Restaurant   Eastgate Motor Inn   Exit 41 Travel Inn  
 Littleton Diner   Littleton Food Coop   Littleton Historical Society  
 Littleton Motel   Marghie Seymour   Meadow Leasing  
 Topic Of The Town Restaurant



# *Plan NH*

## *Littleton Charrette*

### **Who is Plan NH?**

Plan NH, founded in 1989, is a professional association established to create a forum to bring together those focused on the built environment and interested in community development. Plan NH members include architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, bankers, contractors, historic preservationists, and others. A principle aspect of Plan NH's mission is to make a positive contribution to New Hampshire communities. One way in which Plan NH is doing this is by offering pro-bono design assistance each year to New Hampshire communities with demonstrated needs.

### **What is a Design Charrette?**

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 recommendations reached are usually conceptual. Recommendations present the relationship of different plan elements, as opposed to the details of how a particular building would actually be constructed. The Charrette process blends the broad experience of design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action to address a particular development issue within the community. The Charrette provides an overall framework in which final solutions can be developed and gives a direction against which future decisions can be measured. The Plan NH Charrettes are typically two day workshops that produce a number of design ideas and possible solutions, which are documented in booklets and presented to the town to be used as a starting point in their design process.

### **Why did Plan NH come to Littleton?**

Each year Plan NH invites communities to submit proposals outlining a community design opportunity. The proposals are examined and a handful are chosen for a weekend charrette consisting of volunteer professionals to brainstorm and develop creative ideas addressing a problem of local interest. Plan NH assesses the proposals on the basis of: importance of the project to the host community, interest in the design problem, and probability of the project actually being implemented. Communities that are organized, have done some early work on a project, thought out its needs, and how it would implement the recommendations are favored by the selection committee.

*Historic photos from Saranac Buck Glove Company*





## *The Charrette Process*

The Plan NH charrette process includes one day of our design team listening to members of the community and town officials as well as making site observations. The second day involves an intense brainstorming of ideas culminating in the generation of sketches, concepts, and implementation strategies

Plan NH members, town officials, and community members met in the Tannery Mill Market-Place over the course of two days in late September 2012. On Friday afternoon, the Plan NH team met with representatives from the Town and Littleton citizens to discuss the town's needs at length. The group then toured Littleton's downtown core and Saranac Street area. This gave the charrette team an opportunity to walk the entire area to experience the circulation patterns and routes, view existing buildings and land uses, and get a first-hand look at the amenities and assets of the town.

On Friday afternoon and evening, Plan NH held two public listening sessions at which members of the community raised concerns and describe their wishes for the area's future. This sharing of local knowledge is critical, as it provides the design team with a understanding of the town's actual needs, opportunities, and constraints.

On Saturday morning, the design team members convened to strategize. Taking the information they had gathered during the listening sessions and the site walks along with a review of the town ordinances and master plans the group identified several critical planning topics. The Plan NH Charrette Team formed several groups to address each planning topic through discussion, recommendations and drawings plans and sketches as well as recommendations were presented later that afternoon at a well-attended public forum.



*Littleton citizens gather for Listening Sessions*



*Charrette Team strategizes plan concepts*



*Concepts are presented to the public*



## *The Littleton Proposal*

Littleton's proposal, submitted by the Town of Littleton, requested assistance in looking at the a neighborhood along Saranac Street, located just behind the downtown core, on the edge of the north side of the Ammonoosuc River. The goal of the project as stated is to "...reinvigorate one of Littleton's historic commercial/residential neighborhoods.." The proposal also stated the importance of reconnecting pedestrian and vehicular traffic to the downtown district and the newly constructed Riverwalk on the opposite side of the river. There are currently two foot bridges over the river that connect the north and south sides.

Saranac Street is home to the Tannery Marketplace which is located in the former Saranac Buck Glove Company that manufactured gloves from the mid 1800's until the 1970's. The 1873 mill building is now used for leased office and retail space. The street is presently zoned commercial and contains a mix of residential and commercial uses. Several properties are currently on the market and in decline.

The revitalization of this neighborhood would benefit Littleton in several ways. The proximity of Saranac to the vibrant downtown commercial core, and the spectacular natural resource of the Ammonoosuc River makes this project particularly attractive for economic development projects. The redevelopment of this area would provide opportunities for:

- Enhancement of Littleton's economic vitality through ongoing reinvestment in the downtown core
- Preservation of historic assets
- Improved river environment through low impact development strategies
- Improved public safety and access to the river.

Several points in Littleton's proposal were particularly attractive to Plan NH:

- The existing viability of the downtown area provided an excellent opportunity for commercial revitalization.

- Opportunities for recreational use along the scenic Ammonoosuc River.
- The town has successfully invested in improving the downtown in the past several years demonstrating an initiative to actively support and pursue the goals of the Saranac Street redevelopment project.



*Top: Covered Pedestrian Bridge*

*Mid. Left: Looking west on Saranac St.*

*Mid. Right: Tannery Mill from south side of river.*

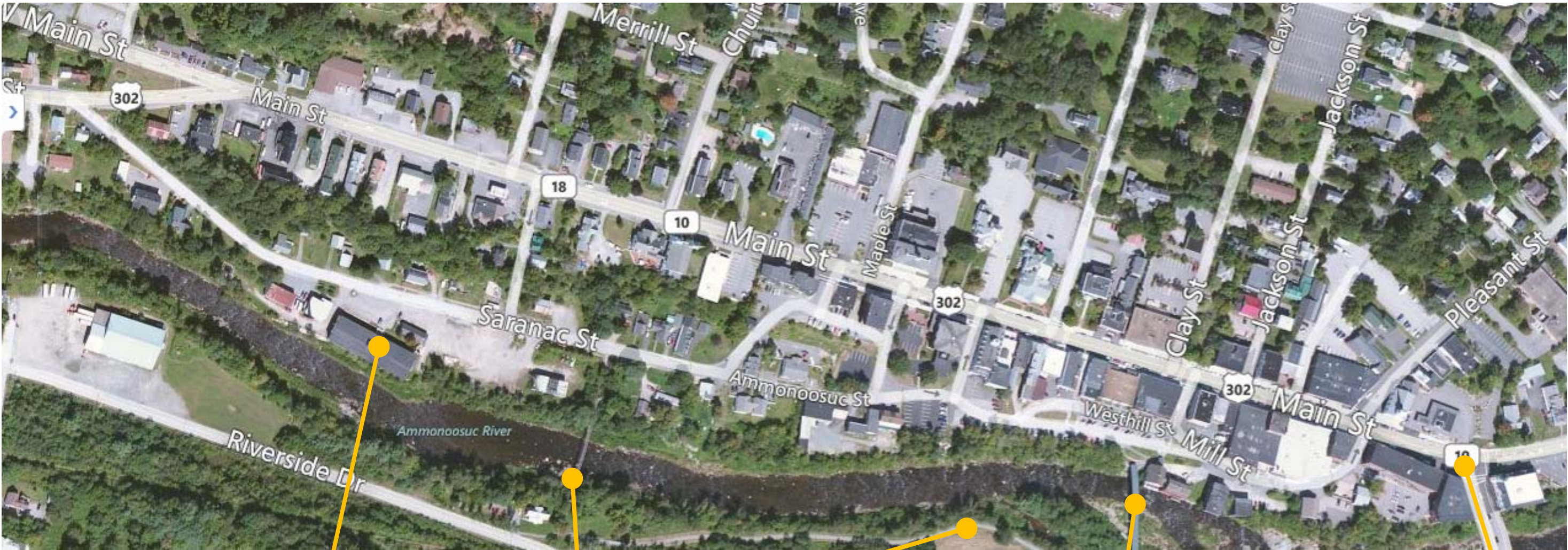
*Bottom Left: Littleton Downtown Main Street*

*Bottom Right: Bike path on south side of river*





# Charrette Study Area



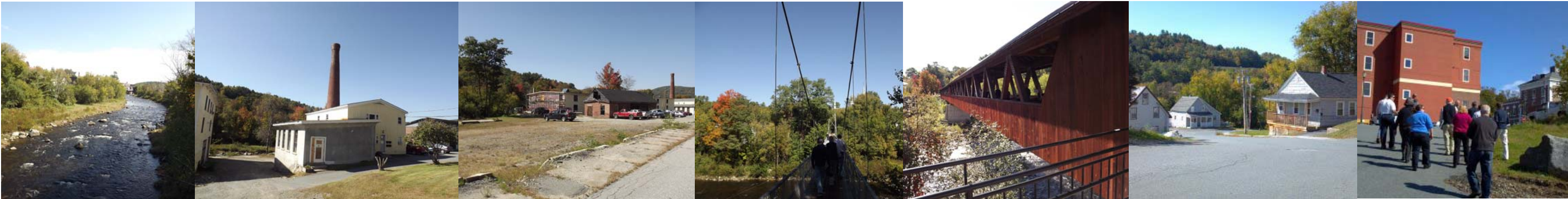
Tannery Mill Market Place

Suspension  
Pedestrian Bridge

Bike Path

Covered  
Pedestrian Bridge

Cottage Street  
Intersection





## *Summary of Comments at Listening Sessions*



During the two listening sessions the design team collected many suggestions and important information from the local citizens. Much of the discussion and comments focused on improving the pedestrian and vehicular circulation and access between Saranac Street and Main Street. Many suggestions heard during the two listening sessions centered on to developing mixed use neighborhood with recreational and tourism attractions.



The charrette team also heard several discussions on the question of how to attract the shoppers to Saranac Street and Main Street retail businesses, who are otherwise destined to the big boxes and strip malls of Meadow Street. Signage, wayfinding and gateways were suggested. Other ideas included a museum or recreational facility for children, a loop path for walking, biking and x-country skiing, artist center with live/work units.

Vehicular traffic issues and parking were also a concern and improved circulation on the 'back side' of Main Street. Issues around safe pedestrian access between Saranac and Main Street were also raised.

Officially Saranac Street ends and becomes Ammonoosuc St. just east of the suspension bridge. There are several small streets (Mill, Green, Ammonoosuc Ave. West Hill) between this point and Cottage Street. During the Listening sessions it became clear that these streets, directly behind the downtown area of Main Street, should also be included in the redevelopment discussion.



*Areas of Mill Street, Green Street and Ammonoosuc Street that should be included in the study area*



## LISTENING SESSIONS: WHAT WE HEARD

### Friday Lunch Meeting

- Riverwalk extension north
- More parking for downtown (decks)
- Preliminary Design for B of NH parking deck
- Market? Tannery – 4 res, 17 commercial
- Property values are going down
- Shoreline protection exemption needs to be applied for by the town for riverside development
- Improve traffic circulation
- Parking
- Create views to river – create plan and review cutting guidelines
- Pedestrian access – walkability
- Wayfinding/sidewalks/signage
- Enviro-concerns at mill sites
- Rails to trails: connect industrial park to Cottage Street
- Need children's museum
- Riverwalk expansion =- Woodsville to Whitefield on both sides. Access on East Side over existing sewer line

#### **POSITIVE**

- Land available on both sides
- River is asset: highlight
- Plan needs to bring *action*
- Bring *new* services/offering – different community from others in Lakes Region
- Links – including on west side of river
- Market area as destination
- Tannery Marketplace and its owners are motivated

- Riverwalk
- Beauty of river
- Some possible exciting interest in development

#### **NEGATIVE (need to be addressed)**

- Some uses don't fit area
- Traffic and pedestrian flow and access issues
- Parking
- Not easy access from exit 43
- Market rate rental – residential (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)
- Ex infrastructure (or redevelopment) allow for expansion
- TIF district

### Public Listening Session I (2:00 PM)

- Opportunity for park at abutting property/properties? (Planning Board Idea)
- Make area *unique* – build off asset of river and mill building -> different from Main Street
- Urban Exemption needed per Shoreland Protection Act
- Tourists need wayfinding to Main Street
- Park becomes “gateway” to downtown
- Open views to river
- Traffic issues /circulation issues – access
- Saranac Street – link to river
- New construction could take advantage of new energy options, ie solar
- Ex. Infrastructure
- Storm drain issues – still a combined system
- Sidewalks non-existent or need work
- Truck traffic off Maine Street???
- ART



## . LISTENING SESSIONS: WHAT WE HEARD (cont.)

- Museum
- Performance space
- Galleries/retail
- Live/work
- Restaurants
- Educational facility
- Hospitality
- Culinary
- Arts
- Tourist bus traffic – need space for drop off, and parking while buses wait
- Improvements/redevelopment need to generate \$\$\$\$
- Bike path improved = rental @ Bike shop
- Rail trail on the back burner – rights issues
- Promote sports tournaments to bring in outsiders
- Soccer fields
- Baseball
- Hockey arena
- Need another family=friendly hotel like Hampton Inn
- While in town, what to do at night??
- Observatory – a big one! Can actually see the stars at night!
- Need playground off of Main Street to let kids run
- Exploit beauty of setting
- Build off our successes
- Make Main Street walkable
- Energize community/region

- Support expanded marketing message for Littleton and the area
- Create momentum and real action

### **PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION II (7:00 PM)**

- Truck traffic – route thru industrial park
- Shuttles to take visitors from parking to downtown
- Attract people to downtown from Meadow St.
- Gateway at Saranac/Main
- Exit 42 access more parking – avoid Main Street
- A lot of pedestrian traffic but dangerous or uneven sidewalks
- Vacant parcel adjacent to Tannery Mill use for parking
- Promote health benefits of walking
- Circulation from south (Mill Street) to Tannery Mill marketplace is very difficult
- Intersection Saranac/Main tough – cannot turn left on Saranac
- Mixed use – live/work
- Attraction for children- museums, etc.
- XC ski trail loop
- Well-known retailer to Saranac?
- Bridge Street bridge replaced by industrial park bridge in 1980's
- Attract snow machine traffic



## *Charrette Team Recommendations*



The citizens of the Town of Littleton, in particular the Saranac Street Revitalization Committee, recognize the opportunity to revitalize and reinvent this neighborhood area. Successful development is dependent on community engagement and input. PlanNH was founded on this principle and understands that local knowledge is indispensable, as well as critical, to any community planning efforts. The charrette de-

signers, together with local participants, developed several preliminary suggestions and concepts in order to start the conversation about the redevelopment of the Saranac Street neighborhood.

Capitalizing on the unique character of the Saranac Street area, which includes: its proximity to the downtown core, it's adjacency of the Ammonoosuc River, and its historical importance to the town, is the key to economic development and sustainability. In order to fully explore the possibilities for redevelopment the charrette team ignored the zoning regulations and property boundaries in the area. All ideas and suggestions were on the table.

Through the exercise of digesting the information and citizen input, professional expertise, and creative thinking conceptual plans were developed. These plans were based on a couple of key, overriding recommendations:

**The Saranac Street District:** A redevelopment master plan must include the entire stretch from Meadow Street to Cottage Street. For over 200 years, a series of individual development efforts have taken place resulting in a “balkanized” situation. The town needs to start thinking of this area as a district, as a whole.

**Celebrate the River:** Littleton is very proud of the Ammonoosuc River and the river-

walk, However there are not many places in the study area that ones is able to actually see the river or have access to it. This is true even along the riverwalk on the south side. The concepts should take this into consideration and open up views and access if safely possible.

**The DES Should Not Thwart Plans:** The concern over the DES Shoreline Protection Act should not stop redevelopment efforts. There is language In the Act that supports urban places like Littleton that were built on water bodies. There is a process that allows exemptions within certain parameters and under certain conditions. .

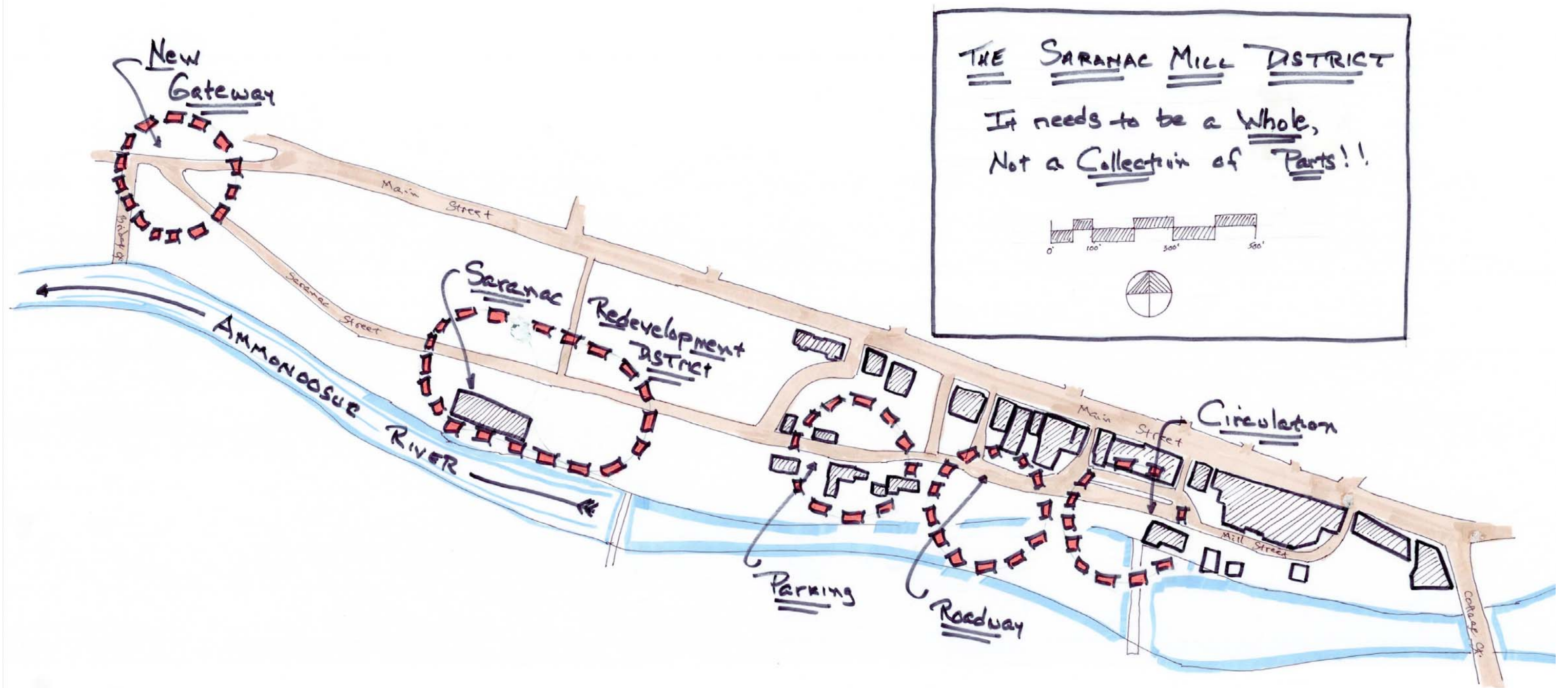
**Complement, not Compete with Main Street:** The downtown core of Main Street is a thriving economic corridor. Any new development in the Saranac Street District should complement the activities on Main Street and not detract from businesses there.

**Develop in Phases:** As in every development project, money is always at the core. The charrette team recommends developing an overall district-wide plan, and phasing the redevelopment. This would alleviate the need for massive funding resources.

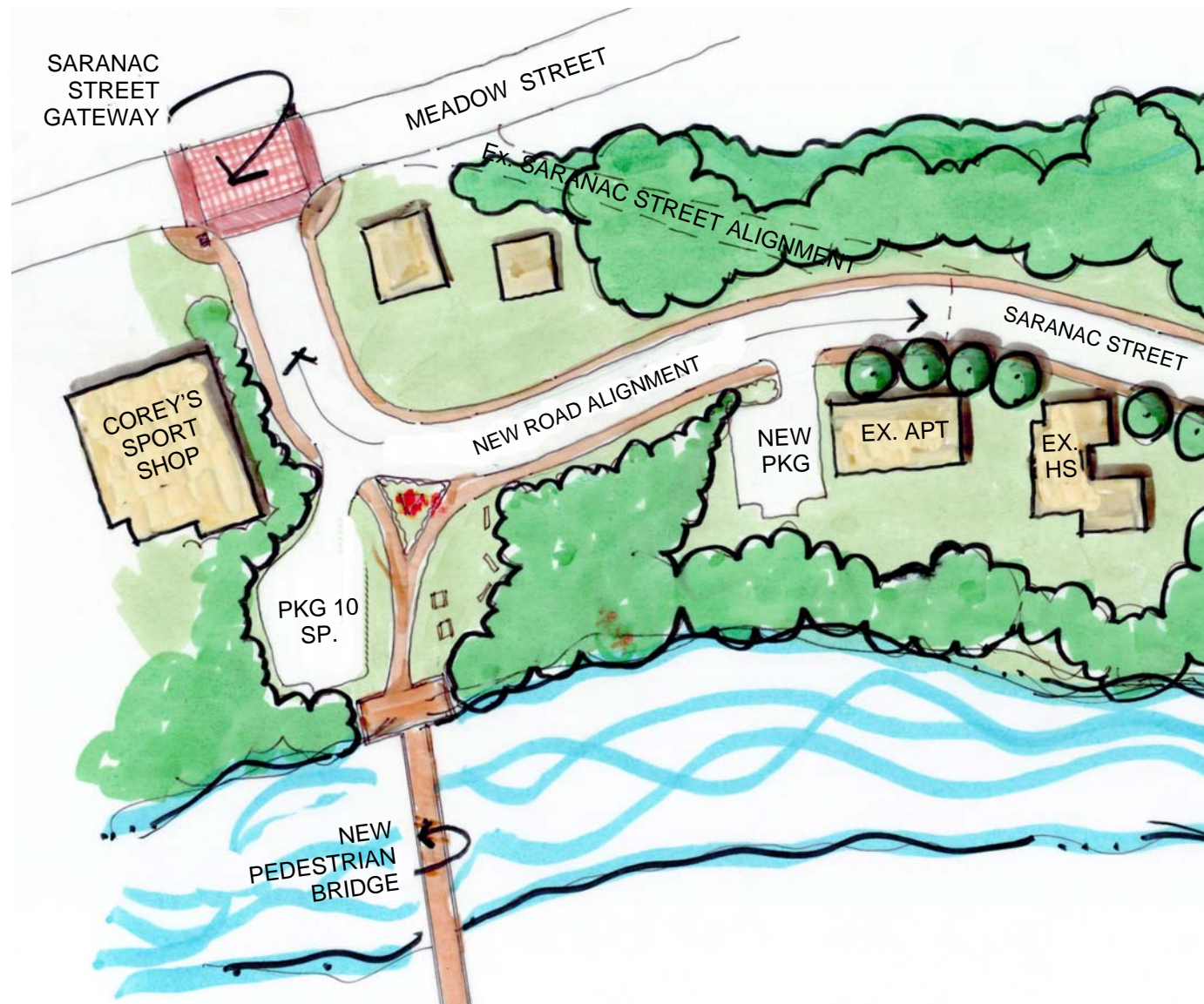
The conceptual plans and sketches developed by the charrette team, and presented to the local citizens, addressed several physical issues and presented new ideas for redevelopment. These concepts included:

- Reconfiguring the intersection at Saranac and Meadow to allow for a safer and more prominent entrance to the district.
- More coherent and efficient parking and vehicular circulation.
- Safer, more welcoming pedestrian circulation and gateways to the district. Encourage walkable development.
- Mixed use residential and commercial development
- Visual and physical access to the River, and Riverwalk



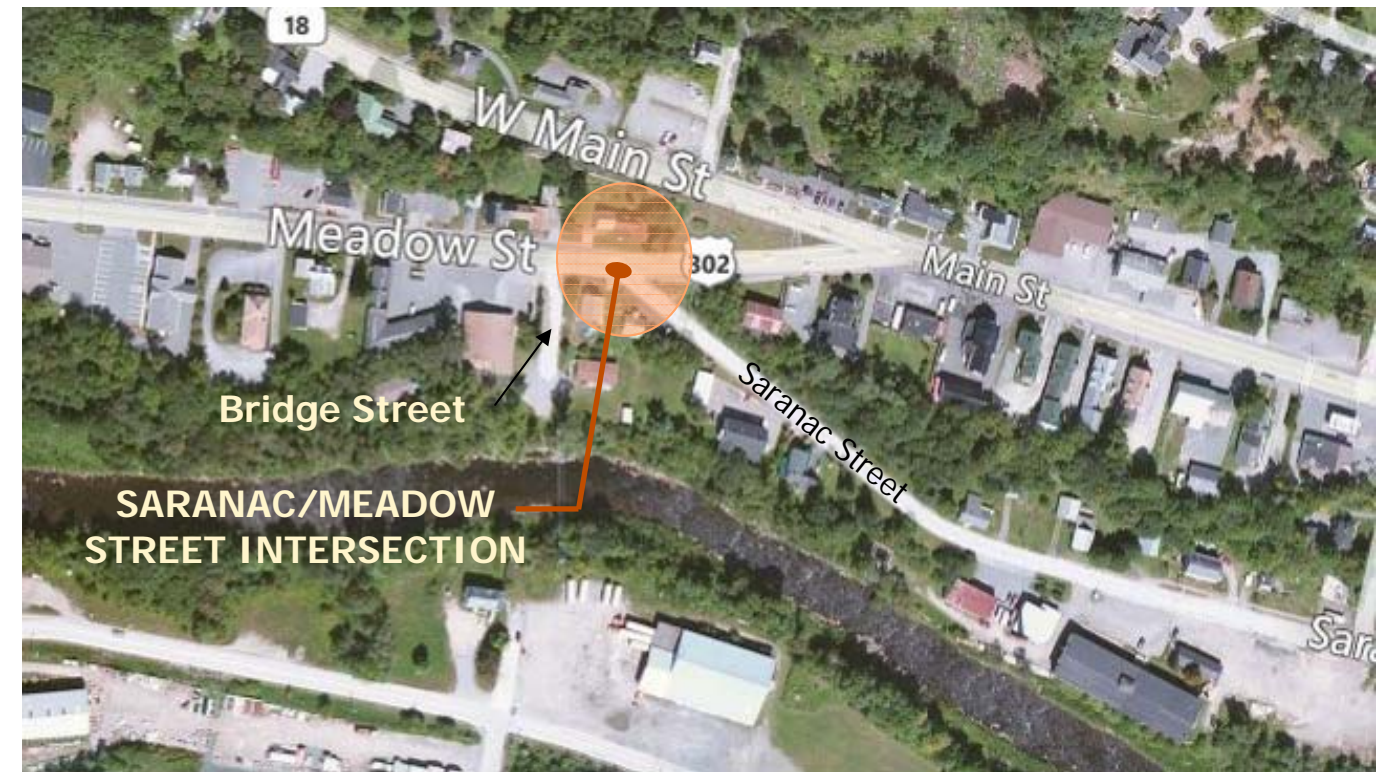






## Saranac Street / Meadow Street Intersection

The existing intersection at Saranac and Meadow Streets is the western most entrance to Saranac Street neighborhood. Currently the intersection configuration presents an unsafe, and a difficult traffic maneuver for westbound traffic on Saranac and Meadow, and is not easily visible to vehicle traffic. The existing intersection could be improved by realigning the west end of Saranac Street. The charrette team explored the concept realigning the west end of Saranac Street to connect with Bridge Street. Bridge Street, at one time, provided a vehicular river crossing, however the bridge was abandoned and demolished during the 1980's. The north end of the street, from the former bridge abutment to Meadow St. still exists and could provide a connection from Saranac to Meadow. The existing bridge abutments could also provide infrastructure for a new pedestrian bridge across the river. The design team also suggested a gateway statement at the intersection to improve visibility to the neighborhood.



GATEWAY SKETCH AT BRIDGE AND MEADOW STREET



## EAST VIEW SARANAC STREET

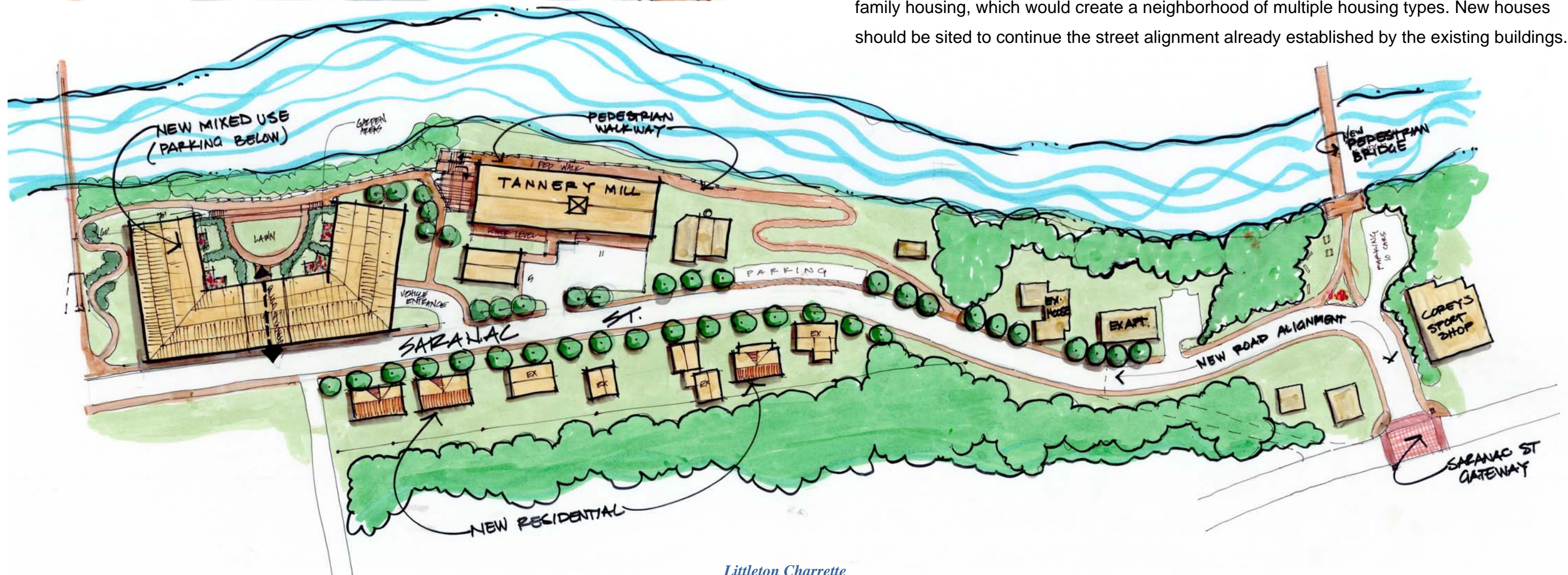


## Tannery Mill Redevelopment

The Tannery Mill redevelopment concept includes a new mixed use development in the vacant lot adjacent to the Mill. The plan illustrates a building that has an attractive pedestrian scale street face, as well as a more private river-oriented side. Smaller gardens and private spaces on the river side could provide access to a new river walkway. Pedestrian access along the road from the Meadow Street gateway, with access to river behind buildings, could become part of a riverwalk loop connecting to, and extending, the bike path from the south side of the river.

The new development, as well as the Tannery Mill, could offer live/work space for artists and/or entrepreneurs. Ground level units could be used as office, commercial and support retail such as restaurants and cafes, while upper stories could contain residential units.

Across from the Mill on Saranac Street are existing residential buildings. These houses have wonderful architectural form and should be retained, remodeled, and used as architectural models for more infill housing. The north side of Saranac at this point could be kept as single family housing, which would create a neighborhood of multiple housing types. New houses should be sited to continue the street alignment already established by the existing buildings.





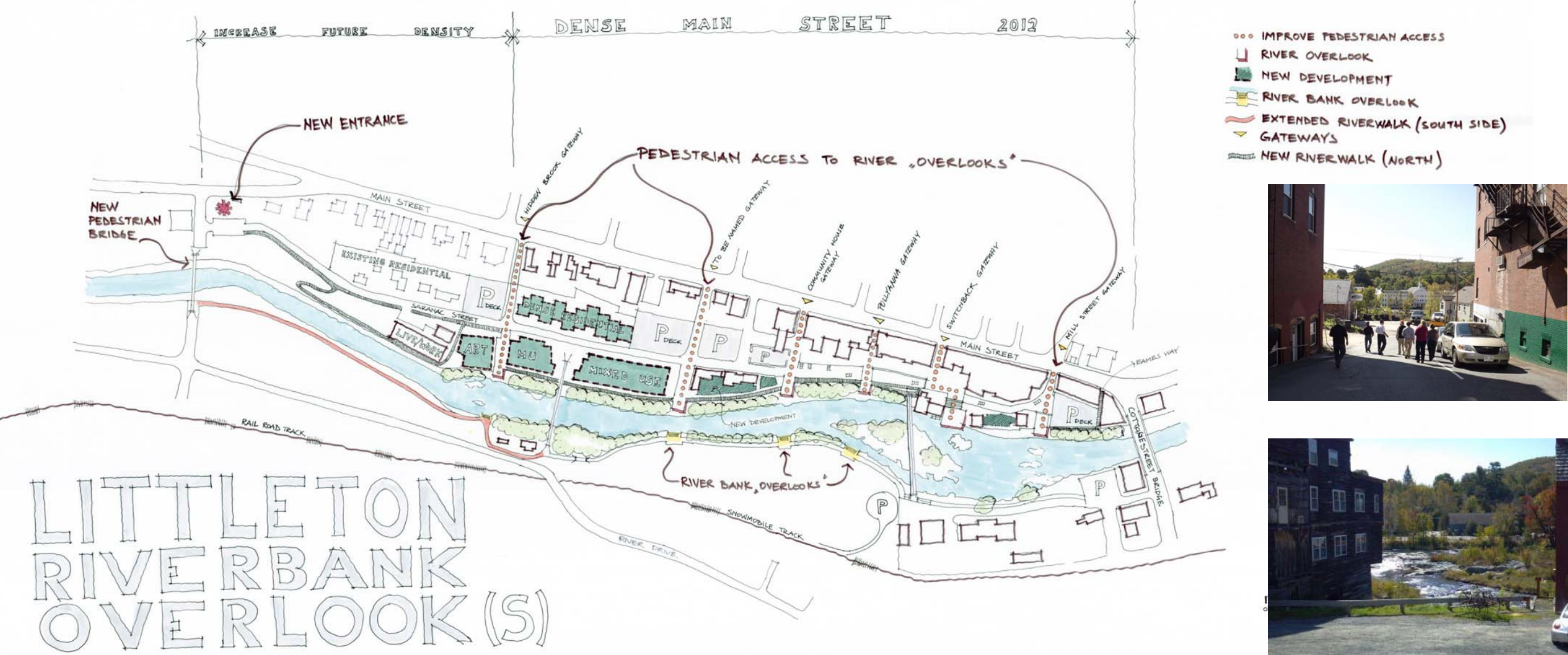
Celebrate the Ammonoosuc River

The Ammonoosuc River is an extraordinary natural asset running through downtown Littleton, yet there is little visual or physical access to this resource. The opportunity to take advantage of this unique feature should be part of any redevelopment plan for the study area. The team observed, during the several walking tours of the Saranac district, that there are very few places, aside from the pedestrian bridges, that one can get a glimpse of the river.

The concept of linking pedestrian circulation from Main Street to the river was seen as an important aspect of an overall plan by the charrette team. There are several access points from Main Street leading to the study area. Improving the pedestrian circulation is a vital part of the redevelopment planning. Improving the existing links, and extending these connections to the River, to terminate in overlook nodes, could create a strong Main St/Ammonoosuc River

connection. These pedestrian ways will most likely cross property boundaries and easements may be necessary. Gateways for each of the passageways could become a unique design feature of the downtown area.

The redevelopment of the Saranac Street area would most likely encourage the density and activity of Main Street that exists from Cottage Street to Hidden Brook, to continue west toward Meadow Street. The pedestrian connections will become an important aspect of the neighborhood, and will encourage less driving and more walking and biking. Connecting to the existing Riverwalk across the river could make a wonderful walking, biking, skiing, snowmobile loop and connection from one part of town to the other.





## Organize East End

The eastern end of the charrette study area, from the suspension bridge to Cottage Street that includes the network of small streets, lacks an organized travel pattern for both vehicles and pedestrians. The traffic patterns here are complicated by a substantial grade change from Main Street towards the river. Much of this area is currently used for parking for Main Street. The parking lot configuration however, is disorganized, resulting in inefficient use of space and a lack of scale. Creating a new, organized, purposeful circulation and parking plan would help to give

this area a sense of place. This would encourage the back side of some of the Main Street properties to become active with retail and commercial uses. Taking some clues from established businesses in this area, the team suggested that this area could become a center for art on the riverfront. It will be critically important to preserve the vitality of the commercial activity in the downtown; the ultimate uses in this district must complement, not compete, with Main Street businesses.





Improvements Cost Analysis

The cost analysis addresses the major improvements to the Saranac Street area identified during the charrette. The costs cover construction only and are general in nature based on current construction practices. These costs are given to be used as an order of magnitude guide only and not for final budgeting purposes.

Littleton Charrette Cost Analysis					
	Task	Funding	LF/SF	Cost/ unit	Extended Cost
Phase 1	<b>Straighten Saranac Street through to Ammonoosuc</b>	<b>Possible Funding: TIF</b>			
	Entire Length of Saranac to Grist Mill	Road Reconstruction with sidewalk & storm sewer	3040	\$500	\$1,520,000
	Connect Saranac St to Main St through existing AHEAD housing	New Road/Site preparation/Grading	260	\$600	\$156,000
	Re-landscape lots 241&242 (243 remains as parking?)		33600	\$10	\$336,000
	Relocate or replace AHEAD housing to lot 225 across from Kiln	New construction	10000	\$150	\$1,500,000
			<b>Phase 1 Total</b>		<b>\$3,512,000</b>
Phase 2	<b>Mill Street/Grist Mill Parking &amp; Circulation</b>	<b>Possible Funding: TIF</b>			
	Re-work intersection at east end of Mill Street				\$100,000
	Grist Mill parking deck	TIF	1200	\$125	\$150,000
	Landscaping between parking and river				\$50,000
			<b>Phase 2 Total</b>		<b>\$300,000</b>
Phase 3	<b>Extend Saranac to Bridge and rework Bridge/W. Main/Meadow/Saranac intersections</b>	<b>Possible Funding: Town of Littleton</b>			
	Saranac St. Extension to Bridge St.	Land acquisition lots 245, 246			\$250,000
	Saranac St. Extension to Bridge St.	New Road with sidewalk	400	\$600	\$240,000
	New Gateway at Bridge St/W Main/new Saranac	Steel arch, plantings, curb and pavement treatment	0	\$0	\$250,000
			<b>Phase 3 Total</b>		<b>\$740,000</b>
Phase 4	<b>New Construction in Saranac Mill District</b>	<b>Possible Funding: USDA Rural Development grants</b>			
	Land acquisition				\$350,000
	demolish Kiln, shed, various outbuildings	Demo	5000	\$10	\$50,000
	Mixed use/condos: 32 units at old furniture store	New construction	40000	\$225	\$9,000,000
	Parking Garage at lot 225: 100'x 125'x2 floors=25,000SF/80 spaces	New construction	25000	\$75	\$1,875,000
			<b>Phase 4 Total</b>		<b>\$11,275,000</b>
Phase 5	<b>Extend Riverwalk on both sides of river</b>	<b>Possible Funding: DOT Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA)</b>			
	South side of river from Ken Cullen cable bridge to Bridge St	Ledge pack gravel path	1400	\$160	\$224,000
	Pedestrian/Snowmobile bridge at Bridge Street		120	\$5,000	\$600,000
	Cantilivered wooden walkway on river side of Tannery building	Heavy timber construction	200	\$500	\$100,000
	Cable Bridge to sewer plant	Pervious Paving path 8' width w/ granite curb	400	\$300	\$120,000
			<b>Phase 5 Total</b>		<b>\$1,044,000</b>
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16,871,000</b>
Phase 6	<b>Future Private development</b>	<b>Funded by Private Investment</b>			
	Rebuild failing buildings next to Grist Mill	Demo& rebuild as housing or mixed-use; historical style	30000	\$300	\$9,000,000
	New children's museum at Yellow Freight site	Demo & new construction	10000	\$225	\$2,250,000



## *Public Funding Resources*

- **NH Department of Transportation** a source of public funding for state road improvements, as well as safety and sidewalk improvements

Christopher Clement, Commissioner  
Bill Watson, Planning and Community Assistance Bureau  
NHDOT  
Hazen Drive  
Concord, NH 03301

- **Rural Development Administration** provides low interest loans and grants for municipal projects as well as financing for some private development

Molly Lambert, U.S. Rural Development Administration,  
City Center, 3rd Floor  
89 Main St.  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
802-828-6080

- **NH Division of Historic Resources** may be used as a source for historic property advice and expertise, any use of historic tax credits must be approved by this agency.

Elizabeth Muzzey, Director  
NH Division of Historical Resources  
19 Pillsbury Street  
Concord, NH 03001.  
603-271-8850

- **NH Business Finance Authority** is a source for tax-exempt bonding and other subsidies for private and non-profit investment

Jack Donovan, Executive Director  
NH Business Finance Authority  
2 Pillsbury St., Suite 201  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-415-0190

- **NH Community Development Finance Authority** is a source for tax credits for publicly supported projects

Ms. Kathy Bogel-Shields  
NH Community Development Finance Authority  
14 Dixon Avenue, Suite 102  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-226-2170

- **NH Community Development Block Grant Program** provides grants and loans to projects which assist low to moderate income residents.

Ms. Alice Veenstra  
NH Community Development Block Grant Program  
14 Dixon Avenue  
Concord, NH 03301

- **NH Municipal Bond Bank** provides low interest funds for publicly bonded projects

Ms. Sheila St Germain  
NH Municipal Bond Bank  
25 Triangle Park Drive  
Suite 102  
Concord, NH 03301

**Transportation Enhancement Act Program** Project categories include: facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians; safety and educational activities for bicyclists and pedestrians; acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites; scenic or historic highway programs; landscaping and other scenic beautification; historic preservation; rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities; preservation of abandoned railway corridors; control and removal of outdoor advertising; archaeological planning and research; environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highways or vehicles; and establishing transportation museums.— <http://www.nh.gov/dot/municipalhighways/tecmaq/index.htm>