



**TOWN OF BRUNSWICK**  
**DOWNTOWN BRUNSWICK AND OUTER**  
**PLEASANT STREET CORRIDOR**  
**MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**  
28 FEDERAL STREET, BRUNSWICK, ME 04011-1583

**Jane Millett**  
*Councilor – District 6*

**John Perreault**, Vice Chair  
*Councilor – District 4*

**Margo Knight**  
*Citizen at Large*

**Paul Dostie**  
*Resident - Downtown*

**Anne “Vicky” Marr**  
*Creative Economy/Non-profit*

**Jacqueline Ellis**  
*Citizen at Large*

**Debora King**  
*BDA Member*

**Toby Tarpinian**  
*Business Owner - Downtown*

**Kathy Wilson**  
*Resident – Pleasant Street*

**Vacant**  
*Business Owner – Pleasant Street*

**RETREAT AGENDA**  
**MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2014**  
**6:00 P.M.**  
**PILGRIM HOUSE**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR CHAPEL**  
**9 CLEVELAND STREET**  
*(Note: change in location, 1/8/14)*

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. 2013 Accomplishments**
- 3. Maine Street “Plan A” traffic analysis discussion (Tom Errico)**
- 4. Discussion of Design Section of the MDF Resource Team Report to BDA (Debora King/Claudia Knox)**
- 5. 2014 Committee Goals Brainstorming**
  - a. Parking Utilization Survey – Next Steps**
- 6. MPIC Next Steps**

**Downtown and Outer Pleasant Street Corridor Master Plan Implementation Committee**  
**Report to Brunswick Town Council**  
**April 1, 2013**

Members:

Margo Knight, Town Councilor, District 6, Chair (Neighborhoods)  
John Perreault, Town Councilor, District 4, Vice Chair (Ped. & Vehicular)  
Anna Breinich, Director of Planning and Development, Committee Staff  
Newell Augur, At-large Member (Finance & Marketing)  
Paul Dostie, Downtown Resident (Neighborhoods)  
Ann "Vicky" Marr, Non-Profit and Creative Economy Representative (Neighborhoods)  
Mike Lyne, BDA Representative (Visual Quality)  
Jaki Ellis, At-large Member (Ped. & Vehicular)  
Toby Tarpinian, Downtown Business Owner (Visual Quality)  
Katherine Wilson, Outer Pleasant Street Resident (Ped. & Vehicular)  
David Flaherty, Outer Pleasant Street Business Owner (Finance & Marketing)

Accomplishments since June 2012

Visual Quality

- The subcommittee continues to work closely with the BDA Design Committee and Brunswick Public Art Committee.
- BDA has partnered with the Parks and Recreation Department to use seasonal staff to clean Maine Street several times a week.
- Local citizens independently paid for and installed artistic lighting on Maine Street for the holidays and one is a year-round installation.

Neighborhoods

- Programming downtown gathering places with special events throughout the year: BDA events, Five River Arts Art Walks, MCHPP "Sing for Your Supper," "Movies in the Park"
- New gathering places were created for the new Town Christmas tree and the Spanish War Memorial.

Pedestrian & Vehicular Movement

- MPIC hosted two public workshops and an online survey about concept plans the committee believed included aspects that would calm traffic movement and increase bicyclist and pedestrian safety.
- Convened an ad hoc parking subcommittee to address concerns of Maine Street business owners about loss of parking; resulted in parking ordinance changes approved last year.
- Approved Maine Street raised crosswalk locations: Lincoln to Bank streets and Cumberland to Center streets.
- The subcommittee continues to work closely with the Brunswick Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

- Won an EPA Sustainable Building Blocks Parking Audit award; consultants will be in town April 3 & 4, with public sessions scheduled.
- Applied for Maine DOT Safe Routes to School Program (should hear soon on decision).

#### Marketing & Finance

- BDA continues to work with Amtrak and NNEPRA to market Brunswick to Downeaster Riders.
- A group of citizens with the BDA Design Committee is pursuing a National Trust Downtown Historic designation for Brunswick, which will provide tax credits and grant opportunities for development.

#### Priorities for Next Six Months

#### Visual Quality

- Continue to work closely with the BDA Design Committee and the Brunswick Public Arts Committee on projects: Brunswick Station, Ft. Andross, and banners.

#### Neighborhoods

- Investigate again the feasibility of a town-wide building inspection program for structure with three or more rental units.

#### Pedestrian & Vehicular

- Work on a new plan, "Plan A," as a basis for the next Maine Street plan to take out for public input.
- Develop interpretive walking loops for Downtown.
- Widen pedestrian safety and traffic improvement focus to include outer Pleasant Street.
- Continue to pursue the feasibility of roundabouts on Maine and Pleasant streets.
- Continue to pursue converting inner Pleasant Street to two-way.
- Implement best practices learned from EPA Parking Audit Report.

#### Finance & Marketing

- Install way-finding signage and mapping, historical markers throughout downtown.
- Continue to identify other funding sources.

January 9, 2014

Anna Breinich, AICP  
Director of Planning and Development  
Town of Brunswick  
28 Federal Street  
Brunswick, ME 04011

Re: Maine Street Improvement Plan Traffic Peer Review, Brunswick, ME

Anna,

Per your request we have conducted a traffic peer review of improvements proposed along Maine Street between Pleasant Street and Mill Street. The focus of our review was based upon a Conceptual Traffic Layout plan prepared by SiteLines, PA dated June 7, 2013. The following represents our comments based upon a field investigation and specific review items noted in our scope of work proposal.

- In general I find the details of the plan to be excellent and a good example of a Complete Streets project. General plan comments are noted below.
  - The plan limits of work should include the crosswalk on Maine Street on the south side of Pleasant Street. This is an important crosswalk in the multi-modal function of the Maine Street/Pleasant Street intersection.
  - The center island on Maine Street south of the Pleasant Street intersection should be expanded given the reduction of the number of southbound through lanes. There may be opportunities to provide a raised refuge area for the crosswalk noted in the above bullet.
  - The pedestrian signal phasing at the Pleasant Street intersection does not provide sufficient time for a full Maine Street crossing. Additionally, the pedestrian signals do not permit pedestrians to cross from the center island to the northwest corner, when no vehicle conflict exists. The traffic signals phasing plan should be revised to allow for better pedestrian mobility.
  - All sidewalk ramps will need to be upgraded to be ADA compliant including the provision of detectable warning panels.
  - The Pleasant Street approach to Maine Street is being adjusted with the reduction of one travel lane. It is unclear where the additional lane width is being allocated to (the curb to curb width appears unchanged).
  - A curb extension/bump out should be provided on the side of the Maine Bank ATM. During the final design process, the extent of this curb extension will need to consider fire truck movements from Town Hall Place. Our analysis indicates the curb line can be extended into Maine Street without impacting fire truck movements.
  - The crosswalk at Town Hall Place is somewhat conflicting from a traffic control perspective. It functions as both an uncontrolled mid-block crosswalk, but

*An Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity Employer M/F/D/V*

southbound traffic is controlled by a traffic signal, linked to the Pleasant Street intersection. While historically no problems have been reported, I am concerned that the mixed message (vehicles reacting to green signal heads – indicative of right-of-way – and pedestrians expecting vehicles to yield may contribute to a vehicle/pedestrian crash). At this time I would suggest that no changes to the crossing be implemented. In the future a warning sign system that restricts pedestrian crossing (prohibits crossings when signal is green, through a dynamic message sign, is suggested). Lastly, I would note that the possible future relocation of the Fire Station to another location would allow elimination of the confusing traffic control.

- It is my recommendation that the Bank of America ATM driveway be closed such that a curb extension/bump out can be provided. I recognize that this requires circulation changes on the bank site, but this change should be considered for future efforts.
  - On the east side of the crosswalk opposite Bank of America, a minor curb extension/bump out should be considered. Turning movements from the driveway will limit the extent of the curb-extension and a detailed analysis will need to be conducted during final design.
  - The center island at the Gilman Avenue crosswalk should be expanded to shadow the proposed left-turn lane.
  - A review of the Maine Street improvement changes on the signalized intersection with Route 1 was performed. In the southbound direction little or no traffic impact is anticipated. Currently one travel lane departs the Mason Street intersection and one lane will remain under the plan. In the northbound direction there may be some impact to vehicles destined to Route 1 southbound. Under existing conditions, one Maine Street lane is destined towards Topsham and one lane is destined to Route 1 southbound. If northbound traffic queues from the signal extending past Mason Street, vehicles destined to Route 1 will not be able to access the left-turn lane and thus vehicle queues will increase on Maine Street. Based upon approximated traffic volumes a traffic analysis indicates the change will not disrupt conditions at the traffic signal and along Maine Street. Long queues are predicted on the Route 1 off-ramp, but traffic flow on Maine Street following the change is predicted to be acceptable. I would note that the analysis is based upon a optimize traffic signal phasing and timing plan and therefore adjustment to the signal is suggested as part of the design. Additionally, special signage and pavement markings should be considered at the Mason Street intersection to ensure blockage of the intersection does not occur.
- We have conducted traffic modeling analyses along Maine Street in the study area to determine how the proposed changes will impact traffic mobility. Limited traffic volume data is available at the unsignalized locations. We conducted 15-minute traffic counts at these locations and converted them to a 1-hour equivalent. The following presents our findings as it relates to specific items requested for review.

- *The impact on traffic flow through downtown if only one lane is available* – According to the traffic models traffic flow on Maine Street is not significantly impacted by having one through lane in each direction and providing left-turn lanes at intersections. The one exception is increased delay can be expected on the northbound Maine Street approach at Pleasant Street where one through lane is being eliminated. Level of service is estimated to be reduced from current D conditions to E with the change. I would note that my visual observations of the intersection noted that motorists tend to favor one travel lane and therefore the noted degradation in level of service may be overstated. To test this change the Town could easily close one of the lanes temporarily (through barrels and signage) and monitor conditions. I have worked with many communities in establishing monitoring programs to ensure the proposed change does not create unacceptable conditions (Other changes in the corridor could also be tested through a monitoring study).
  
- *The performance of the proposed turn lanes and adequacy of the queue lengths shown* – The traffic model indicates that adequate turn lane storage will be provided. This conclusion is based on 15-minute traffic volumes collected recently during the weekday PM peak hour. It should be noted that some of the dedicated left-turns that are “back-to-back” could be converted to a two-way left-turn and thus storage areas would be shared. Two such locations exist in the corridor, between Town Hall Place and Cumberland Street and between Gilman Avenue and Dunlap Street.
  
- *The impact of reducing the left-turn lanes from east-bound Pleasant Street to north-bound Maine Street from two to one lane* – The traffic model indicates the Maine Street/Pleasant Street intersection will operate at an unacceptable level of service following the change. With the elimination of one left turn lane on Pleasant Street, additional capacity pressure will be placed on the Maine Street approaches particularly the northbound approach. Two analyses were reviewed for assessing traffic operation in an in depth manner. According to Synchro, the intersection operates at level of service C under existing lane configurations. Level of service declines to E with the proposed changes. Some movements will decline to level of service F. In addition to Synchro, SimTraffic (a micro-simulation computer program) results were reviewed. SimTraffic conclusions indicate the Pleasant Street approach currently operates poorly and will continue to operate poorly. Overall intersection delays do increase with the change, although not significantly. Under existing conditions, the SimTraffic model allocated most of the left turning volume to a single left turn lane (unequal lane distribution) on the Pleasant Street approach. Field visits seem to support this assumption. Our general conclusion is that longer delays and queues can be expected during peak periods with the change, although in my professional opinion not a significant degradation is expected given existing lane usage.

- *The impact of having one lane on the ability to make left turns from intersecting side streets* – Longer delays can be expected from the side streets with the proposed changes. Left-turn movements from side streets are currently difficult today and according to the traffic model would worsen due to increased vehicle density and reduced gap frequency. The Lincoln Street/Bank Street intersection would incur significant delays with the change. The traffic model estimates significantly longer delays. My professional experience in the conversion of four-lane to three lane facilities is that the degradation is not as severe as the model predicts partly because vehicle speeds are reduced, which eases the ability to make left-turn maneuvers. I would note that as delays become problematic, motorists will alter their routing to avoid congested areas. In this case, I would expect left-turning vehicles to utilize parallel routes (Federal Street and Union Street), where possible. A shift in traffic volume can be expected.
  
- *Review the design for truck movements* – An Auto-turn analysis was conducted to ensure the proposed geometry will allow for adequate truck movements. Attached are graphics that illustrate truck movements at key constrained locations. For this analysis we have assumed use of a single-unit truck (WB-40). As noted on the attached graphics the following locations will have vehicle turning movement concerns.
  - Right turn movements from Bank Street will require the elimination of one parking space on Maine Street.
  - Right turn movements onto Bank Street will require reducing the corner curb extension. Additionally, the center island will need to be painted or of a mountable material.
  - Left-turns from Lincoln Street will require modifications to the center island and stop bar location. The island will need to be either painted or of a mountable material and the stop bar for the left-turn lane should be relocated away from the intersection. Details should be determined during final design.
  
- *Provide insight on bicycle-traffic interaction from an engineering perspective* – The proposed design does not provide specific bicycle accommodations. It does improve bicycle safety by adding additional space between the diagonal parking stalls and through traffic. With that said, diagonal parking does create a difficult environment for bicyclists. The good news is that vehicle speeds should be calmed and this should improve overall safety. Overall the plan improves bicycle safety. I would suggest that the following items be considered:
  - I do not support the installation of bicycle lanes for Maine Street given the head-in diagonal parking configuration (I do prefer back-in angle parking from a bicyclist safety perspective). Given the need for extra separation space between bicyclist and parked vehicles, I do not believe sufficient space is available (some travel lanes could be reduced, but the added width would not provide a bicycle lane width that I would find safe).

*An Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity Employer M/F/D/V*

- Shared Lane markings should be installed to help guide bicyclists to a safe area, away from the initial backing maneuvers of the diagonal parked vehicles. The exact location of the markings, including the white edge line, should be determined during final design.
  - On the Pleasant Street approach, provisions for bicycles making a left-turn should be included. The dedicated right-turn lane does present some safety issues that should be addressed via pavement markings and signage. This should also be considered for Mason Street.
  - In some cases curb extensions may constrain bicycle travel and as such should be designed accordingly. In my review of the plan, I did not identify locations where this was an issue, but this should be reviewed during final design.
- *Provide insight on pedestrian-traffic interaction from an engineering perspective* – Pedestrian safety will be improved with the plan. Reduced crossing distances, protected refuge spaces, reduce travel lanes, and slower vehicle speeds, will make Maine Street a safer and more inviting street for pedestrians. No specific adjustments, other than those outlined previously, are suggested. I would note that the Town recently installed raised crosswalks as part of calming traffic speeds. Although I haven't reviewed them in detail, it is important that advisory speed signs and warning pavement markings and signs be part of the installation. The final design should consider such features.
- Per your request I have reviewed the Technical Memorandum prepared by Michael Wallwork evaluating a roundabout intersection design at the Maine Street/Pleasant Street intersection. Mr. Wallwork evaluated both single and double lane roundabouts. To be compatible with the proposed Maine Street improvements, a single lane roundabout would be the only feasible option. His analysis indicates the intersection would work at a very acceptable level of service B, although long queues are projected for the northbound Maine Street approach. My general conclusion is that the proposed Maine Street improvements do not preclude the implementation of a roundabout, other than limiting the number of lanes and capacity (only one lane).

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Best regards,



Tom Errico, P.E.  
Senior Associate  
Traffic Engineering Director

*An Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity Employer M/F/D/V*



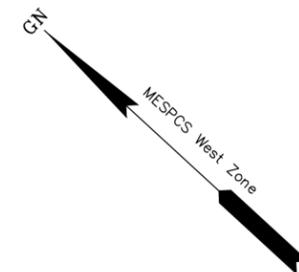
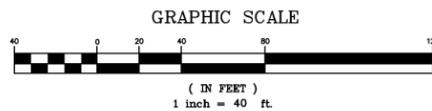
PARKING TABULATIONS FOR AREA OF RE-CONSTRUCTION  
 PARKING SPACES SHOWN ARE EXISTING/PROPOSED  
 EXISTING PARKING SPACES: 112  
 PROPOSED PARKING SPACES: 106  
 NET LOSS OF SPACES: 6\*

\*7 SPACES HAVE BEEN MITIGATED BY TOWN OF BRUNSWICK BY FINDING PARKING FOR TOWN EMPLOYEES.

NOTES:

1. SURVEY INFORMATION BY ROBERT SPIVEY, PLS.
2. AERIAL SHOWN FROM GOOGLE EARTH.
3. (5) (3266) (352326) (3) (5) (1\*63) (66) (2) (1) (7) (67) (5) (67) (1) (5) (7) (3) (7) (7)
4. ALL CENTER ISLANDS IN MAINE STREET TO BE "FLUSH CONCRETE" ISLANDS.
5. LOCATION OF RAISED CROSSWALKS PER INFORMATION PROVIDED BY TOWN.

THIS CONCEPT PLAN IS INTENDED TO SHOW POTENTIAL CHANGES TO PARKING AND TRAFFIC LANES CONSISTENT WITH CONCEPTUAL IMPROVEMENTS SHOWN ARE INTENDED FOR DISCUSSION AND ARE NOT INTENDED FOR TECHNICAL REVIEW OR CONSTRUCTION.



- 2. 06-07-13 REVISED PER TOWN PLANNER COMMENTS (CYN)
- 1. 04-29-13 SUBMITTED TO TOWN PLANNER (CYN)

CONCEPTUAL TRAFFIC LAYOUT

LOWER MAINE STREET  
 BRUNSWICK, MAINE

PREPARED FOR:  
 THE TOWN OF BRUNSWICK

**SITELINES, PA**  
 ENGINEERS • PLANNERS • SURVEYORS  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
 8 CUMBERLAND STREET, BRUNSWICK, ME 04011  
 207.725.1200 www.sitelinespa.com

FIELD WK: SPIVEY	SCALE: 1" = 40'	SHEET:
DRN BY: RPL	JOB #: 1699-08	<b>1</b>
CHD BY: CYN	MAP/LOT:	
DATE: 02-22-13	FILE: 1699-08-SITEPLAN-RAISED-ISLAND	





PARKING TABULATIONS FOR AREA OF RE-CONSTRUCTION  
 PARKING SPACES SHOWN ARE EXISTING/PROPOSED  
 EXISTING PARKING SPACES: 112  
 PROPOSED PARKING SPACES: 106  
 NET LOSS OF SPACES: 6\*

\*7 SPACES HAVE BEEN MITIGATED BY TOWN OF BRUNSWICK BY FINDING PARKING FOR TOWN EMPLOYEES.

NOTES:

1. SURVEY INFORMATION BY ROBERT SPIVEY, PLS.
2. AERIAL SHOWN FROM GOOGLE EARTH.
3. (5) (3266) (352326) (3) (5) (163) (66) (2) (1) (7) (67) (5) (67) (1) (5) (7) (3) (1) (7) (1)
4. ALL CENTER ISLANDS IN MAINE STREET TO BE "FLUSH CONCRETE" ISLANDS.
5. LOCATION OF RAISED CROSSWALKS PER INFORMATION PROVIDED BY TOWN.

2. 06-07-13 REVISED PER TOWN PLANNER COMMENTS (CYN)
1. 04-29-13 SUBMITTED TO TOWN PLANNER (CYN)

CONCEPTUAL TRAFFIC LAYOUT

LOWER MAINE STREET  
 BRUNSWICK, MAINE

PREPARED FOR:  
 THE TOWN OF BRUNSWICK

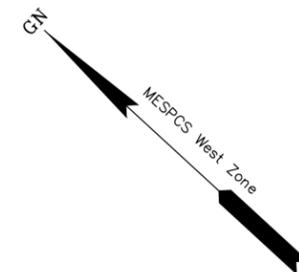
**SITELINES, PA**  
 ENGINEERS • PLANNERS • SURVEYORS  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
 8 CUMBERLAND STREET, BRUNSWICK, ME 04011  
 207.725.1200 www.sitelinespa.com

FIELD WK: SPIVEY	SCALE: 1" = 40'	SHEET:
DRN BY: RPL	JOB #: 1699-08	<b>1</b>
CHD BY: CYN	MAP/PLOT:	
DATE: 02-22-13	FILE: 1699-08-SITEPLAN-RAISED-ISLAND	

GRAPHIC SCALE



( IN FEET )  
 1 inch = 40 ft.



THIS CONCEPT PLAN IS INTENDED TO SHOW POTENTIAL CHANGES TO PARKING AND TRAFFIC LANES CONSISTENT WITH CONCEPTUAL IMPROVEMENTS SHOWN ARE INTENDED FOR DISCUSSION AND ARE NOT INTENDED FOR TECHNICAL REVIEW OR CONSTRUCTION.

# Brunswick Downtown Association Resource Team Visit

Draft Report      04/29/2013



*The pedestrian and vehicular environments in downtown Brunswick.*

## Design

### Introduction

We are all designers. Everything we see in the built environment is designed. Design is the visual part of the Main Street approach, and thus the most tangible aspect of Main Street as a place. Design includes much more than the historic buildings that are the primary focus of the Main Street Approach (economic redevelopment through the preservation and re-use of historic downtown buildings remains the fundamental goal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center and the Maine Downtown Center). All of the elements of the historic main street storefront and streetscape fall under the design heading. *(Note: in order to avoid confusion, references to the National Trust's Main Street Program will be noted as Main Street; references to Brunswick's primary downtown street will be, of course, Maine Street; and references to the generic concept of a town or city's primary commercial street will be simply main street. The author will make every effort to be consistent, but cannot guarantee he will nail it every time!)*

The Design Committee is charged with convincing downtown business and property owners that in order for them to succeed and stay in business, they need to follow the Main Street Approach, which includes making decisions with regard to their buildings and surroundings that are for a common good, a shared goal. Committee members must educate others about design; provide good design advice; work with Town officials and local leaders and organizations to plan for future growth and development in downtown Brunswick; and motivate residents and business owners to make and accept changes. It's a huge and important job.

You've off to a great start! It has been a pleasure to experience and evaluate the Brunswick design community and its work, in the context of a remarkable collection of historic buildings that have been well-preserved and well-used. The Town provides an strong base upon which to build a Main Street Program. The BDA is well on its way to doing that.

## Design Issues in Downtown Brunswick

Brunswick, the BDA, and all those with whom the Resource Team has met in these three days have obviously made a big and favorable impression on us. Based on our interviews and less formal conversations, and on our team deliberations, several important downtown design issues became evident to us. In the remainder of this report, we provide a description of each issue, along with observations, suggestions and recommendations, which focus on important challenges and opportunities facing your Town.



*The Lincoln Block, one of the key contributing buildings in the proposed historic district.*

### 1. A Downtown Brunswick National Register Historic District

#### *The Proposed Downtown Historic District*

The Federal Street Historic District, which was listed on the National Register in 1975, represents primarily Bowdoin College and the substantial homes of Brunswick's civic, commercial, industrial and educational leaders along Federal Street, Park Row and Maine Street. The businesses and institutions that provided these leaders with their livelihood are located just outside the district along Maine Street from the Bowdoin campus to the Androscoggin River. As part of establishing the Main Street Program in Brunswick through the BDA, the downtown commercial area was evaluated to determine if it is eligible for the National Register (meaning the historic buildings of the area meet certain standardized eligibility requirements).

A downtown National Register District is a fundamental component of most of Maine's Main Street communities because of the recognition that listing brings, and because it makes rehabilitation projects involving buildings that contribute to the significance of the district eligible for state and federal tax credits of between 20 and 50 percent of the cost of rehabilitating them. In addition, designation as a historic district usually results in increased property values and rents, which incentivize reinvestment in downtown buildings and businesses.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), the state agency that administers the National Register program in Maine, has determined that 34 buildings and one landscape along both sides of Main Street from Mason Street on the north to Pleasant and School streets on the south together are eligible for listing on the National Register as a locally-significant historic district. BDA members and other local volunteers, with assistance from the MHPC and the Maine Downtown Center have begun preparing the documentation for the official National Register nomination form. The district could be listed on the National Register by the end of 2013. Once the district is officially listed, contributing buildings become eligible for the rehabilitation tax credits.

It is our strongest design recommendation that the BDA pursue National Register District designation for the downtown and, while the listing process is underway, undertake an educational process to make district business and property owners aware of the federal and state rehabilitation tax credits and assist them with planning certifiable projects and filing the necessary applications once the district is officially listed.

### ***Observations***

- The core of Brunswick's downtown has architecture of sufficient quality to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a locally-significant historic district.
- Owners of properties and businesses within the District could benefit from NR designation through the use of federal and state rehabilitation tax credits.

### ***Recommendations***

- Prepare and submit nomination documentation to obtain National Register designation for a Brunswick Downtown Commercial Historic District.
- Conduct public meetings to educate the public on the benefits of National Register designation.
- Conduct workshops to educate owners of properties and businesses within the District with regard to available federal and state historic preservation tax credits.

## **2. Facade and Storefront Design/Rehabilitation**



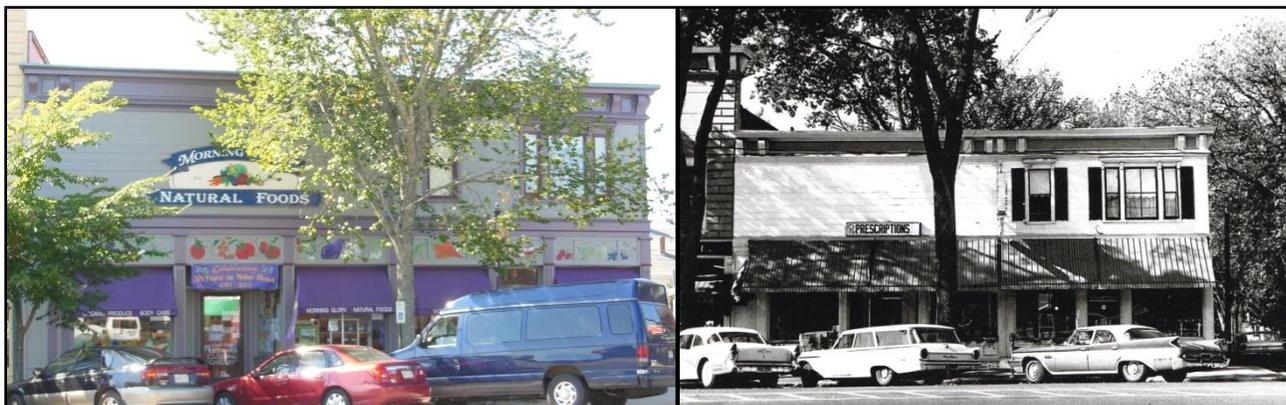
*Image of the Lincoln Block showing intact upper story and variety of facade treatments from nearly original on the left to a variety of modern treatments center and right.*

Commercial building facades are the foundation of the Main Street Program. They and their storefronts are the dominant visual elements of a traditional downtown. Preserving them, and the businesses that make them tenable, is the fundamental goal of the program. Therefore it is a key goal of the BDA Design Committee to facilitate the rehabilitation of these buildings and their facades.

Brunswick has a fairly typical collection of facades. A few are nearly original in appearance. Riley's Insurance is one good example. Most of the facades have been through some degree of renovation. In many cases, it's only the storefront that has been modified. Then there is a small number of facades that have been drastically altered, with both the storefront and the upper stories changed. Sometimes most of the original facade elements are still intact under the modern materials; and sometimes they were removed or heavily damaged.

It is testimony to the overall quality of Brunswick's downtown facades that there are far more examples of the first two categories than of the third on Maine Street today. In fact, the preliminary Research List created by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission staff in support of the determination of eligibility for the proposed Brunswick Commercial Historic District nomination identifies only one out of 35 buildings as being non-contributing, i. e. the structure no longer retains enough of its original character to contribute to the overall architectural character and quality of the district.

The high priority issue is the need for a facade design and rehabilitation assistance program, with financial incentives to help business and building owners with the costs of rehabilitating their facades or storefronts. To take advantage of the program, owners would be required to use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and associated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings in executing their projects. The BDADC would administer the program, beginning with an initial consultation with the owner to make sure he/she is willing and able to undertake a rehabilitation according to program guidelines.



*Contemporary and historical views of 60 - 62 Maine Street facade.*

With a facade program in place, and an approved application, the Committee would assist the owner with finding a design professional, usually an architect, to provide a concept sketch. Typically the Committee would provide a grant or matching grant for this work up to a certain maximum cost. The Committee would approve an application, and then the architect would proceed with the preparation of drawings for construction. With approvals from the Village Review Board and building permits in hand, the project would proceed into construction. The facade program can be used for the additional design services and for actual bricks and mortar.

The Committee would establish a minimum and maximum grant or loan amount for design services, and a range for construction work. We suggest a construction cost range of \$500 to \$50,000. This range supports the Main Street Program's incremental approach, encouraging small, simple, easily managed projects like painting or a new awning, while also being able to contribute in a meaningful way to a complete facade restoration project.

The facade program should be coordinated with the historic preservation tax credit programs (easy to do as long as project is based on the Secretary's Standards and Guidelines, which are used to evaluate tax credit projects at both the state and federal levels). There are several potential funding sources for the facade program, some of which are described in Issue #4 below, including private donors (members and friends of the BDA), local programs such as TIF's, and the federal CDBG grant program.

A well-designed and administered facade rehab program is a fundamental part of the Main Street approach. The program promotes taking advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in the downtown district by directing the attention of the community to all of its physical elements. We recommend that work begin immediately to set up and fund the program, with the goal of having it in place and ready to help downtown building owners by this coming summer. It would be great to have new paint, signs, or awnings, in place to greet your summer visitors! *Keep in mind that any owner interested in taking advantage of the tax credits will need to wait until the downtown historic district is officially listed on the National Register to begin either design or construction work.*



*The Tondreau Block features fine examples of Colonial Revival storefronts.*

*A good example of a contemporary storefront incorporating some traditional storefront design principles.*

### **Observations**

- Downtown Brunswick has a strong core of traditional commercial buildings with sufficient character and detail remaining in place to be considered eligible for listing on the National Register.
- District buildings reflect the commercial history of the community and deserve to be preserved and appropriately used.
- Most of Brunswick's downtown facades and storefronts can benefit from some degree of rehabilitation.
- Only a few facades will require heroic efforts to recapture their original, historic character.

### **Recommendations**

- Document the quality and degree of alteration of downtown facades as part of the building inventory process.
- Develop and implement a facade rehabilitation program, managed by the Design Committee and using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings for reviewing applications.
- The Committee should seek one or two high-profile but small-scale projects that can be completed quickly to initiate the program and set a standard of success.

- Use several funding sources, if possible, to establish a significant loan/grant pool and to avoid depending on a single source.
- Celebrate completed projects by recognizing everyone involved, including funders.
- Keep and publicize project statistics to demonstrate the value of each project.

### **3. Village Review Zone/Board/Ordinance**

In order to provide some degree of protection of the buildings and landscapes of the Federal Street Historic District, and other parts of the town with historic resources, Brunswick established a Village Review Zone (VRZ) which is focused on the downtown and the close-in older/original residential, industrial, commercial and institutional areas of Brunswick. The town then created a Village Review Board (VRB) to administer this zone.

#### ***The Village Review Board***

The VRB has the broad purpose of promoting the economic, cultural, educational and general welfare of the Town of Brunswick by:

- Applying design standards.
- Developing administrative methods including a review process and objective standards.
- Promoting economic development by enhancing the attractiveness of the Town.
- Fostering civic pride in the Town's history, development patterns, and historic resources.
- Promoting and protecting neighborhood character.
- Promoting and protecting significant features of the historic patterns of development.
- Stabilizing and improving property values.

In its day-to-day deliberations, the VRB reviews new construction, additions, alterations, relocations, or demolitions within the VRZ. The VRB can approve, approve with conditions, or deny applications. Demolition applications go through some additional procedures with ultimate approval or denial in the hands of the Planning Board. The VRB is charged with advising the Town Council, Planning Board, and other town bodies regarding the protection of historic sites, structures and artifacts; maintaining an inventory of architectural resources in the Town; and serving as a resource for Brunswick residents.

#### ***The Village Review Zone***

The Main Street Maine Program Brunswick Target Area is coincident with much of the Village Review Zone. The major differences are:

- the Target Area includes most of the southwest corner of the downtown (on the west side of Maine Street from Pleasant Street to Noble Street); the VRZ does not;
- the VRZ includes an area of properties now owned mostly by the College bounded by Fitch Place, Bath Road, Maine Street and Federal Street; the Target Area does not; and
- the VRZ includes much of the Northwest Brunswick Neighborhood, west of Cushing Street; the Target Area does not.

The exclusion of the southwest corner of the downtown from the VRZone reflects the low-density modern commercial development that exists in that area. However, the development potential that is and will be realized in this area suggests that Village Review should be a part of future development

there to assure a cohesive downtown character and quality and to enhance and capitalize upon the physical connection between Bowdoin College and the downtown.



212, 200, and 172-176 Maine Street are examples of buildings that are within the Main Street Brunswick Target Area but not in the Village Review Zone.

### ***The Village Review Ordinance and Design Guidelines***

The VRZ and related zoning language do not comprise a historic preservation ordinance, and the VRB is not an historic preservation commission. However, the Brunswick Design Guidelines, used by the VRB for project review, are in many ways preservation-based. Also, under certain circumstances, the Pejepscot Historical Society provides input to VRB deliberations when preservation issues are relevant (a member of the PHS has a seat on the VRB). The VRB has many of the same goals and duties that a preservation commission would, and in addition has the goals and duties of a design review board.

VRB review is based on compatibility as the guiding principle. The assumption is that if the project design meets a number of compatibility guidelines (and almost all of these guidelines can be found in many typical historic preservation ordinances), the proposed new building or alteration will be considered to be appropriate for the location.

### ***Demolition Provisions***

If there is a shortcoming in the VRZ/VRB process, it is in the demolition provisions of the ordinance language. Deliberations are not required to include a cost benefit analysis, weighing the value of what's to be built against what is to be lost. The waiting periods and moratorium process could be stronger and clearer. The moratorium process is managed by the Planning Board rather than the VRB.

### ***Observations:***

- The existing Village Review Ordinance was developed to assure compatibility of new construction and renovation with existing buildings, and protect existing buildings and neighborhood character, while providing flexibility and a simple, efficient process.
- The boundaries of the VRZ and the Main Street Program Target Area are not coincident; thus some portions of the Target Area are not subject to review.
- Demolition provisions of the Village Review Ordinance are not consistently strong.
- The Ordinance suggests areas of expertise of members.
- There are no provision for training of members.
- There is an appeal process (demolitions to Planning Board; all others to Zoning Board.)
- Some limited-scope projects can be reviewed by the Director of Planning and Development.
- The Ordinance is considered to have been largely successful thus far.

- Commercial design guidelines are less detailed and thorough than residential guidelines.
- There is some confusion relating to the roles and powers of the VRB when historic preservation issues are involved in an application.

### ***Recommendations***

- Extend boundaries of the VRZ to include the southwest corner of Maine Street commercial area; coordinate extension with recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan.
- Strengthen demolition provisions: delay/waiting period, investigation of alternatives, information on development plans, appeals process.
- Review benefits of demolition process being fully under VRB jurisdiction rather than partially under the VRB and the Planning Board.
- Require specific qualifications for knowledge/expertise of some members.
- Initiate an annual training program for VRB members (BDADC can help with this).
- Include detailed illustrated preservation guidelines for commercial buildings (use Building Improvement File, Secretary's Standards) in Brunswick Design Guidelines.
- Overlap membership of VRB and BDADC.
- Expand administrative review if appropriate.
- Consider integrating historic preservation issues and policies in the VRB authority to simplify and clarify the project review process.
- VRB should issue an annual report describing and publicizing its deliberations and activities.

## **4. Enhance Design Committee Historic Preservation Knowledge and Competencies to Inform Core Preservation Projects**

The Brunswick Downtown Association Design Committee is in a position to provide authoritative information on historic preservation subjects and to facilitate the use of this information throughout the Brunswick community. The National Trust's Main Street Design Committee Members Handbook lists education as "the most important work your committee can accomplish . . . ."

### ***Resource Center and Clearinghouse***

We suggest developing a library with relevant reference materials. As noted above, there is a need for a clearinghouse for information on preservation, design, architecture, planning, development, incentives, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use. The BDA office should house a "reading room" with comfortable tables and chairs and a computer station with a DVD player and a printer to allow people to make convenient use of the resources available (perhaps this could be done in concert with the Pejepscot Historical Society).

### ***Design Assistance***

Design Committee core competencies should include concept design assistance, especially for facade and storefront design. Educational programs on storefront design using local volunteers with design and computer graphic skills to produce simple storefront rehabilitation concept sketches would be welcomed and important tools to offer the downtown community. A scrapbook of design ideas from Brunswick and other Main Street and network communities can be used to inform table-top discussions and/or sidewalk visits with business and property owners. The library can include hands-on materials like paint, awning, and sign samples. The Committee should compile lists of local contractors, designers and craftspeople who are "with the program" (include references).

### Observations

- A few small, easily-executed storefront projects have been completed in the past few years.
- There appear to be few deeper projects that assure longevity of historic building stock.
- The Facades, Storefronts and Signage section of the Brunswick Design Guidelines does not provide sufficient detailed information on storefront design and construction nor on unique issues relative to historic commercial buildings and historic rehabilitations (tax credit projects).
- Storefront design assistance will become more necessary as downtown rehab activity increases.

### Recommendations

- Establish the BDA Design Committee as the “go to” source and clearing house for historic preservation education.
- Begin with the National Trust's Building Improvement File, then build from there.
- Establish design and preservation library at BDA office.
- The Design Committee should contribute to training of VRB members
- Collaborate with the Pejepscot Historical society on preservation training workshops for Main Street constituent groups.

## 5. Accessibility and Codes

Bringing traditional commercial buildings up to current accessibility requirements and building/life safety codes is a significant issue for downtown business and building owners. Efforts to assist with identifying and resolving these issues and providing or facilitating some level of funding compliance assistance can be valuable services offered by the Design Committee.



*Richard's is a good example of how an access issue at the front entrance was resolved with a ramp and compliant door at a rear entrance.*

### Accessibility

Providing barrier-free access to downtown businesses at the main floor, as well as to upper story businesses and residences (usually with elevators), can be difficult when owners are trying to maximize space, preserve the architectural character of their historic buildings, and avoid building rehabilitation costs that are beyond their means. Accessibility is also an issue within stores and restaurants, where the small size (especially the width) of the typical storefront can result in very

narrow aisles, no spaces for wheelchairs to be turned, and restrooms that do not meet Americans with Disabilities Act or Maine Human Rights Act requirements. Education with regard to accessibility requirements and help with financing accessibility improvements are necessary to support a concerted effort to make downtown Brunswick universally accessible.

### ***Building and Life Safety Codes***

Downtown building rehabilitation projects must adhere to locally-administered building and life safety codes. These codes are complicated and often in flux as new requirements are incorporated and efforts continue at the state level to implement a state-wide building code. We cannot deal with code issues in any detail in this report, except to say that certain aspects of both the building and life safety codes appear consistently in the rehabilitation of historic and older buildings. These codes offer considerable flexibility for historic buildings. Often the letter of a specific code provision can be altered as long as the overall intent of that provision is met. The local code officials have leeway to negotiate, though sometimes they are reluctant to do so because of concerns about liability and consistency.

The most common building code issues relate to means of egress and structural capacity, while frequently-encountered life safety code issues include emergency exits and stairways, fire separation of different uses, openings between floors, and the need for sprinkler and alarm/ detection systems. Deficiencies in these areas can usually be resolved through the application of creative thinking, collaboration, and common sense. There is now a large body of experience in dealing with code issues in historic building situations. The Design Committee should be a clearinghouse to enable Brunswick downtown business and building owners to tap this information.

### ***Observations:***

- Lack of accessibility to and safe egress from upper floors is a major obstacle to development of upper level spaces
- Even many storefronts with at grade entrances do not meet applicable accessibility requirements.
- Some sidewalks and curbs meet current ADA/MHRA requirements, many still do not.
- Building and business owners are often unaware or misinformed about ADA and codes.

### ***Recommendations***

- The BDA should work with the Town to develop accessibility guidelines that can be applied to the downtown's existing buildings, and offer implementation assistance.
- Conduct inventory (with local building officials) of accessibility characteristics of all buildings, sidewalks and parking lots in the district, and develop demonstration/prototype solutions and guidelines for achieving accessibility compliance.
- The Design Committee should become knowledgeable about the local building code, NFPA life safety code, and ADA requirements, and offer workshops, in conjunction with local code officials, design professionals and consulting firms, on applying these regulations in downtown Brunswick.
- The Design Committee should meet with local code officials to learn about the local code enforcement environment and advocate for the use of those provisions of the codes that can facilitate the rehabilitation of existing buildings while retaining their character-defining features.
- The Town and the BDA should sponsor Alpha One review of accessibility issues, challenges and opportunities; include case studies in scope (seek grant funding for this event).
- Promote a Sidewalks and Accessibility Committee.

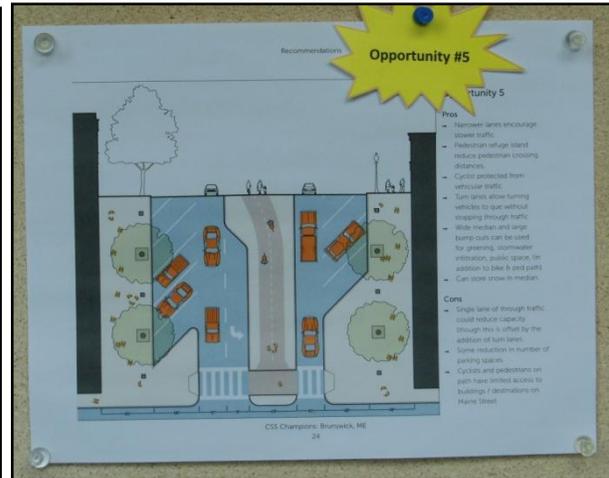
- Investigate the feasibility of connecting multiple buildings and spaces in order to spread the cost of providing elevators and additional upper story egress corridors and stairways.
- Establish grant/loan programs that include accessibility and code upgrades as allowable activities.

## 6. Collaboration

The Brunswick Downtown Association is not a new organization, but it has taken on many new roles recently, including being the Brunswick Main Street managing organization. Leadership and committee members are in the process of determining how they should develop wide-ranging knowledge and interest networks. BDA should identify affinity groups and charge the appropriate BDA liaison committee with developing a working relationship with each.



*Collaboration is essential in order to accomplish significant public improvements such as the restoration of the Swing Bridge and development of attractive approaches.*



*Collaboration will be essential to reach a consensus on a redesign of Maine Street to represent today's community values*

### Observations

- Relationships could be stronger between design related organization and boards such as:
  - Beautification interests (Brunswick Village Improvement Association)
  - Historical groups (Pejepscot Historical Society)
  - Arts groups (Five Rivers Arts Alliance)
  - Architects, engineers, graphic artists, designers
  - Builders and contractors
  - Planning groups (Village Review Board, Planning Board, Downtown Master Plan Implementation Committee)
- Overlap exists in some areas, with roles of various organizations not well defined in relation to each other.

### Recommendations

- Maintain VRB representation on the BDADC
- The BDAD should have a strong relationship with the Visual Quality Subcommittee of the Downtown Master Plan Implementation Committee.
- The BDA should be a major player in the Downtown Master Plan Implementation process.
- Coordinate BDADC efforts with beautification, historical, planning, arts and design groups.

- BDADC, VRB and Pejepsot Historical Society should coordinate and collaborate on preservation education, recognition, promotion and training initiatives (such as Historic Preservation Month activities, walking tours, photo contests, awards programs).
- Recruit artists, architects and landscape architects to sit on BDADC.
- Work with affinity groups to clearly establish roles while recognizing where overlapping areas of interest are beneficial and/or necessary.
- The BDA should be actively involved with the NorthWest Brunswick Neighborhood Association and other such groups to elevate the quality of design and the quality of life in the entire target area.

## 7. Signs

Signs are a part of *design* in any downtown and on any Main Street. Signs are applied to a building to call attention to the business within, to direct customers inside, and to create an individual identity for a business. Downtown Brunswick features a wide variety of styles and types of signs, as well as many of levels of sign design quality.

### *Positives and Negatives of Main Street Signs*

Signs can be a positive aesthetic element when coordinated with the design of individual buildings and with the overall appearance and character of the street and downtown. However, signs are relatively small and much simpler to design and install, so the design and installation of signs is sometimes left to quick and inexpensive solutions. At a larger scale, signs contribute to the image of the downtown as a whole, so competition to have signs that can be read from far away and that stand out from the many others on the street tends to drag down the visual appeal of the entire area. A sign ordinance is typically used to establish some basic standards and controls relating to the number and location of signs permitted at each site; sizes; materials; lighting; and type of message.



*A streetscape of signs is not a new thing, as these two historic views of Brunswick show.*

## *Historic, Traditional and Contemporary Signs*

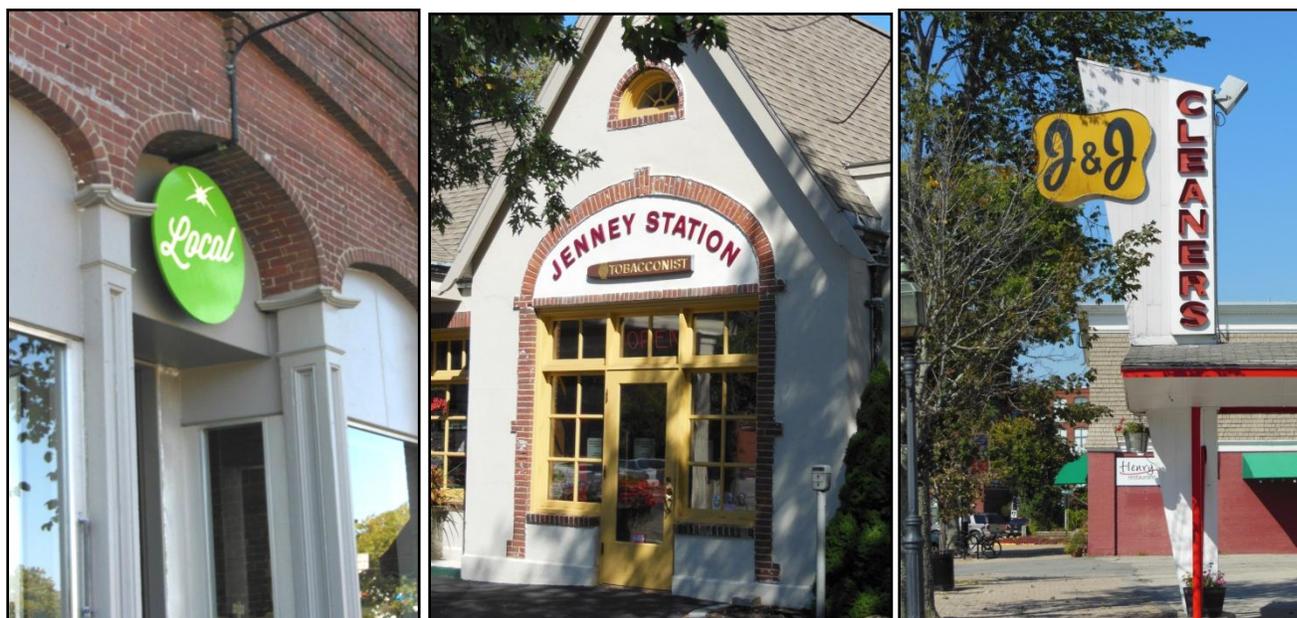


*Examples: a wonderful original storefront; traditional projecting sign; and contemporary board sign with depot lights.*

The Pejepscot Historical Society has wonderful, indexed photographs clearly showing the approach merchants have used in the past, allowing us today to see how signs were related to architectural details on traditional storefronts. Historically, downtown signs were designed to catch the attention of pedestrians on the sidewalk. Today's signs are meant to be readable by people in cars and trucks, so over time signs they have gotten bigger and brighter and more numerous. Contemporary signs to be discouraged include oversized hanging plastic signs, large-scale signs placed on the top of a building, window signs covering a significant portion of a display window, or panel signs applied to upper facades (specifically, those that cover windows and building details). Signs offered for free or at reduced cost by national distributors are not appropriate for use on Main Street.

### *Sign Quality*

Although the existing sign stock on Maine Street does not show much creativity or consideration of appropriate traditional design characteristics or materials. The entire storefront or building is a sign, in that the total facade composition represents the business(es) that occupies the building. All signs and awnings on a building should be aesthetically and functionally coordinated with the composition of the building façade and with each other. In this discussions, awnings are considered a sign type, and should be included in a facade sign plan.



*Quality signs can be of any vintage, and often become a part of the building's architecture and style.*

### ***Brunswick's Sign Ordinance***

Brunswick has a sign ordinance in place. It contains references to provisions of the Village Review Ordinance relating to signs in the Village Review Zone, which includes the Maine Street commercial core and most of the Main Street Program Target Area. However, given some of the signs that can be found on Maine Street today, it appears that current sign regulations should be strengthened. This activity should be a high priority as there are current issues that need attention now, such as:

- the use of LED “Open” signs
- the use of "screen" signs, which are films applied to glass that allow daylight into the interior but present a largely opaque surface with advertising material to the exterior (this type of sign is very popular on busses in urban areas, and on business vans, but it is not appropriate for main street storefronts)
- a general overabundance of signs in the downtown area



*This storefront features multiple signs with a coordinated color palette and complementary shapes.*



*This bank has coordinated signs but there are more of them than are needed, leading to visual clutter.*

### ***Signs in the Public Realm***

Public signs play a large part in the appearance of the downtown. Parking and directional signs tend to proliferate over time, leading to a visual clutter that detracts from even the highest quality of streetscape, architecture, and graphic design. New signs go up frequently, but old, often obsolete or meaningless signs, are not always removed.



*It often seems that traffic and parking signs go up all the time but rarely come down.*

### ***Wayfinding Signs***

Wayfinding signs, which direct customers and visitors to their destinations, are lacking in downtown Brunswick, and especially at the Visitor Center, where they are needed to orient and inform visitors arriving by train or bus. A professionally-designed and implemented wayfinding sign campaign can be coordinated with other sign programs to achieve a consistent look that reinforces the downtown image and promotes the Main Street district while providing a needed service and benefit for visitors.

### ***Observations***

- Overall quality of building signs is below expectations - unattractive and uninspiring.
- Inadequate directional signage to downtown from major roads.
- The existing sign ordinance could be improved by including more guidance with regard to traditionally-based commercial signage for the downtown area.
- “Open” signs are proliferating – flags, paper, plastic, LED (fixed and moving), banners.
- There is an overabundance of traffic and parking signs, resulting in confusion and visual blight.

### ***Recommendations***

- The Design Committee should have a role in the review of downtown sign and awning applications in association with Town committees having jurisdiction.
- Conduct a sign inventory to locate and catalog signs in the public realm (parking and street signs, etc.) of the downtown; work with the Town to minimize the number of such signs and make them more attractive, consistent, and informative.
- Relate signs to the specific personal business being advertised, and not to a specific brand or product (traditional trade or category symbol signs can be acceptable).
- Streetscapes with wide sidewalks can be enlivened by creative sandwich board signs.

- Encourage the City to write, implement, and enforce a new comprehensive sign ordinance, at least for downtown zones; assist by collecting examples of appropriate sign ordinances and offering a draft to address the specific needs of the Brunswick downtown district.
- A revised sign ordinance should continue to include awnings.
- Commission a comprehensive, professional wayfinding signage campaign/program in cooperation with the Town, the Chamber, and other interested constituent groups, using local design talent if possible.
- The Design Committee can use the Building Improvement File and other print resources, and collect good examples from Brunswick and other Main Street towns, to encourage high-quality sign and awning designs and installations.
- Sponsor sign and awning design workshops for owners, graphic artists and sign makers.
- Include sign and awning design, fabrication and installation in grant/loan programs.
- Provide a roster of recommended sign makers and an “idea book” of best practices.

## 8. Rear Entrances

The backs of business blocks represent another opportunity to attract the attention of customers, while providing a meaningful convenience for them. A rear entrance offers convenient access for existing customers, and can create new customers by offering them a climate-controlled, visually stimulating short cut from parking to the street. In addition, relatively unadorned rear exterior wall surfaces offer the prospect of additional wall and projecting signs, jewel-like window displays, awnings, and plantings in window boxes and/or in beds or planters at grade.



*Rear entrances can be identified in a variety of ways, but need to be highly visible and attractive.*

The environment surrounding the rear entrance should receive attention as well. Screening dumpsters, trash cans, and mechanical and utility equipment, tones down or eliminates potential detractors from efforts to improve rear elevations. High-quality lighting can accent the entrance while providing security for the immediate area. A rear entrance should be of simple, straightforward design to reflect its secondary nature but leave no doubt that the public is welcome to use it.

***Observations:***

- Existing rear entrances are for the most part afterthoughts, are not well-identified, and are not attractive.
- Utility and mechanical equipment detracts from many rear elevations and parking areas where rear entrances could be developed.
- There is not at present much opportunity for rear entrances on the west side of Maine Street due to building and parking lot layout, interrupted pedestrian routes, and complex property ownership patterns.

***Recommendations:***

- The Design Committee can use the Building Improvement File and other print resources, and good examples from Brunswick and elsewhere, to encourage attractive and functional rear entrances (a presentation and/or a design workshop is always a good idea)
- Conduct a rear elevation inventory to identify buildings and blocks where rear entrances are feasible and desirable (use photomontages and computer graphics with help from graphic design and/or architectural students or interns)
- Development of rear entrances on the west side of Maine Street should be a long term goal as downtown planning evolves.
- Consider having the Design Committee be a reviewer of rear entrance applications in association with Town committees having jurisdiction.
- Use window boxes and movable planters to enhance rear entrances.
- Include rear entrance improvements as allowable scope in rehab grant/loan programs.
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities can sometimes be more readily provided at rear entrances (see Issue #5 above).

**9. Parking**

During our visit, the Resource Team members heard from a variety of sources that downtown Brunswick has a parking problem. As we were only in town for a short time, "out of season" and at a time when no special events were taking place, we did not see the downtown in a "high demand" situation. Even so, we observed times when empty Maine Street parking spaces were few or non-existent. In addition, we experienced firsthand a problem with finding spaces signed for more than two hours. It is easy to conclude that there can sometimes be parking shortages; and that with any additional growth and development, there will be a need for more parking, perhaps significantly more.

***Public Parking***

There are only two public parking lots identified on the official Brunswick Maine Downtown Map to supplement substantial diagonal front-in parking on Maine Street and limited parallel parking on some side streets (there may be other public lots, but they are not identified as such on the map and they are not clearly designated as public). These lots were often full during our three-day stay in Brunswick.

***Public and Private Opportunities and Constraints***

A parking study was recently completed by a pair of Bowdoin College environmental science students. This study, which was conducted with the assistance of Town officials, found that there are 1075 public parking spots in downtown Brunswick, and 1506 private parking spaces. The authors noted that the northern and southern ends of the downtown commercial core were the most underserved areas, and that private lots owned by banks and churches were the most under-utilized parking resources.

Among the recommendations offered in the study were for the Town to negotiate with private lot owners to make these spaces available to the public when not in use by owner constituents; and to invest in signage so that those seeking public spaces can find them quickly and easily.



*Public lots need more amenities like the pass-through behind Town Hall (right) to break up large expanses of pavement and offer shady spots, and places to rest and get oriented.*

Often parking problems can be alleviated by developing “shoulder” parking areas on side streets and lots on the periphery of the downtown. Many Main Street communities have found that if the walking environment is of high quality, with attractive and well-defined sidewalks, good lighting, easily-negotiated crosswalks, and a secure route, and perhaps incentives, employees will walk, thus freeing up close-in spaces for short-term parking. Design of the parking lots themselves and the routes from the lots to downtown destinations are of great importance to creating a commercial district that welcomes and services visitors, locals, employees and employers

### ***Planning for Parking***

Parking is almost always an issue in downtown planning efforts. There are a number of planning projects recently completed or in the implementation phase in Brunswick, all of them involving the downtown. The resulting plans will be evaluated in the public arena, and each will likely reflect the others. Those working in the Main Street arena will of course have great interest in determining the actual parking need and developing action plans for meeting that need.

### ***Observations***

- There is a perceived, and likely a real, parking shortage downtown, especially at the north and south ends of the primary retail district.
- There are more private parking spaces than public spaces in the downtown area.
- There are opportunities for constructing a parking deck/garage, though the cost per space would be high and the character of the downtown would be changed (the recently-completed Downtown Master Plan calls for exploring the possibility of providing a parking deck in the primary retail district).
- Employees are parking close-in, and are generally unwilling to walk any distance.
- Small private parking lots are disorganized and poorly designed (multiple curb cuts, poor access, poor surface condition, poorly marked).
- Overall coordination of parking lots, public and private, could be improved with regard to circulation and entrances/exits.
- Landscaping and pedestrian and cyclist amenities appear to be minimal.

- Parking requirements sometimes work against downtown revitalization.
- Parking lot signs, both identification and instructional, are confusing and detract from overall appearance and user-friendliness.

### ***Recommendations***

- The Design Committee should work with the Town and downtown planning groups to develop a parking management and enforcement plan to show the downtown community how current and future parking needs can be addressed in the Main Street context.
- Consider promoting a parking ticket forgiveness program and other flexible approaches to downtown parking requirements.
- Encourage parking in shoulder areas within a 300- to 500-foot walk of destinations.
- Promote special considerations for visitors, such as a shuttle from Brunswick Station to Fort Andross (extended to the Bowdoin College unions if demand warrants).
- Upgrade landscaping in existing public lots; strengthen landscape requirements for new lots.
- We recommend that the Design Committee be a speaker in the parking dialogue and be a player in the development of a parking management plan. The Design Committee has access to many parking management success stories from other towns and cities, and can serve as a clearing house to move the dialogue forward.

## **10. Public Open Spaces (Parks & Sidewalks)**

Brunswick is fortunate to have points of interest at either end of the downtown district: significant historic, cultural, and open space resources at the southern end (Bowdoin College, First Parish Church, the Joshua Chamberlain House, and the Mall); a thriving mixed use commercial center/historic resource (Fort Andross); and several hundred feet of calm and white water frontage on the Androscoggin River at the north end. These wonderful assets represent so far-unrealized potential to be major draws for residents and visitors alike. The Downtown Master Plan contains many recommendations for taking advantage of these resources and opportunities.



*Basic streetscape elements include patterned sidewalk paving, decorative lighting, and attractive trash receptacles. The wide sidewalks and sparse furnishings make these Brunswick streetscapes look desolate unless they are packed with people.*

### ***Open Space in the Core Commercial Area***

While there is opportunity for residents and visitors to enjoy the waterfront, the Mall and the College, there is no open space available to those who venture up or down Maine Street to the core of the business district. The sidewalks are luxuriously wide, but little has been done to create an inviting pedestrian environment. "Bump outs" have been created at some intersections, but other than that, there is no public open space in the historic retail district.



*The only open developed open space on Maine Street is privately owned.*

### ***The Riverfront: Crossings and Connections***

The Downtown Master Plan, and many previous planning efforts, have focused attention on the Androscoggin Riverfront, from the Mill Street Canoe Portage on the west to the relatively recently established 250th Anniversary Park and the Androscoggin River Bicycle Path on the east. As a part of these efforts, we see two particularly important and challenging projects for the Brunswick community to tackle in the immediate future.

One is improving access to these riverfront resources for residents and visitors alike. The author walked from the center of downtown to the canoe portage, and from there along the river to the 250th Anniversary Park. Once along the river, it was almost possible to tune out the rumble of Route One traffic. However, getting there, walking along Mill Street and then crossing Route One, was not pleasant, although when I prepared to cross Route One at the foot bridge, traffic in both directions stopped immediately to let me cross. While I would never take such driver behavior for granted, the fact that I could accomplish the crossing so easily without a traffic light, or even a flashing caution light, was surprising. However, it was not an inviting, safe, comfortable, or interesting experience.



*Better connections from the downtown to remarkable amenities at its north and south ends are needed to draw people through the retail district.*

Opportunities for creative crossings are many. The Brunswick community has the talents and resources necessary to come up with inventive solutions. The most exciting adventure will be the Maine Street crossing of Route One, where something like the Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, where an abandoned railroad bridge was converted to a pedestrian crossing enhanced with magnificent linear gardens, might be appropriate (a bridge of lights? a bridge of art?). Once Route One has been tamed, work should continue to open up additional opportunities.

### ***250th Anniversary Park***

The natural setting of 250th Anniversary Park is magnificent, and those responsible for carving this amenity out of a very busy highway/street intersection are to be commended. However, it is apparent that funds available to develop the park have been minimal. This remarkable public amenity deserves better. We recommend that the community focus on a campaign to raise sufficient funds to execute a professional plan for the development of this resource. Challenges to further development include parking, access, and screening from Route 1.



*250th Anniversary Park is a diamond-in-the-rough.*

### ***The Mall***

Officially called the Lower Mall, this gracious open space serves as a green bridge between the downtown and the Bowdoin campus. It is largely undeveloped, with rows of stately, mature trees at its edges; a gazebo at the southern end; a monument at the north end; and expansive lawns over most of its surface. The Mall is a wonderful resource for the downtown, and provides a delightful contrast to the busy Maine Street and the downtown core, and a fitting backdrop for the mansions of Park Row.

We heard a variety of comments about the Mall during our visit, ranging from wanting to keep it just as it is with little space dedicated to any one use, to wanting to improve it to function better in all seasons. We heard several people suggest that a new Mall Plan is needed. We understand that there have been plans for this space prepared in the past. It is obvious that this is a very important space to the downtown and the community as a whole, people care deeply about it, and many feel it has unrealized potential as a special public place.



### ***Observations***

- Sidewalks on Maine Street are wide but undeveloped, with minimal landscaping or amenity.
- Walks on side streets are narrow and, in a few cases, in only fair condition.
- Side streets are not part of the downtown lighting program.
- The downtown riverfront is not easy to get to and is inaccessible and undeveloped along a significant portion of its length.
- The bridges are in various states of repair and use as pedestrian amenities
- Walking along the waterfront is confusing and disconnected.
- 250th Anniversary Park has tremendous, though currently unrealized, potential.
- There are no public resting or gathering spaces on Maine Street between the Mall and 250th Anniversary Park.
- Overhead utility lines detract from the overall visual environment of some public spaces.
- The Lower Mall represents a special and beloved town center green space, that some residents feel is perfect the way it is and others feel is underutilized or overused.
- The Mall can at times appear overused and at other times underutilized.
- Two of the three river bridges are not inviting for pedestrians, unfortunate given the fantastic views, proximity to the water, and opportunities for connection to Topsham they provide.

### ***Recommendations***

- Encourage high quality planting/landscaping, and street furniture programs on Maine Street.
- Make better use of wide sidewalks and bumpouts; support textured crosswalk program.
- Make sure sidewalks are clean and programmed in all seasons.
- Encourage creative sidewalk displays and signage (sandwich boards).
- Implement streetscape project (decorative lighting and paving) on side streets.
- Upgrade existing street lighting on Maine Street; re-lamp with greenest option.
- Complete a river walk from the canoe portage to the Brunswick/Topsham Bike Path, including safe, highly-visible, and attractive crossings of Route One and Maine Street.
- Include development of 250th Anniversary Park in the river walk planning and implementation.
- Hold a design composition to attract world-class landscape architects and park planners to the task of fulfilling the potential of 250th Anniversary Park to become a signature open space.
- Promote new vest pocket parks and gathering spaces on Maine Street in the commercial core (coordinate with Downtown Master Plan).
- Encourage and support the Brunswick Village Improvement Association.

- Support the Town with participation in Project Canopy and other programs to promote more climate-specific street trees and other appropriate landscaping downtown, and to assure adequate maintenance of the downtown landscape.
- Promote burying utility lines underground when opportunities arise.
- The BDADC should collaborate with other interested groups to encourage the Town to embark on a master planning effort, with a high level of community involvement, for the Lower Mall.
- The BDA should be at the forefront in supporting the preparation and implementation of a Lower Mall master plan.
- The Design Committee should facilitate an informal inventory of open space in the downtown area to assess opportunities for developing a pair of small parks. The results would be submitted to the Town for consideration in context with other planning efforts.

## 11. Public Art

The amount of pedestrian traffic in downtown Brunswick, and the strength of the Brunswick area arts community, suggest that public art installations could and should be a big part of the streetscape and the overall design environment. With local arts groups such as the Five Rivers Arts Alliance and the Bowdoin College Museum of Art and Art Department, there is no shortage of talent nor of interest in bringing a high level of public art to Maine Street.



*The Great Impasta's contribution to the parking lot adjacent to this restaurant was the only public art we found in downtown Brunswick: disappointing, especially considering the strong art community here..*

### Observations

- There is little public art in downtown Brunswick.

### Recommendations

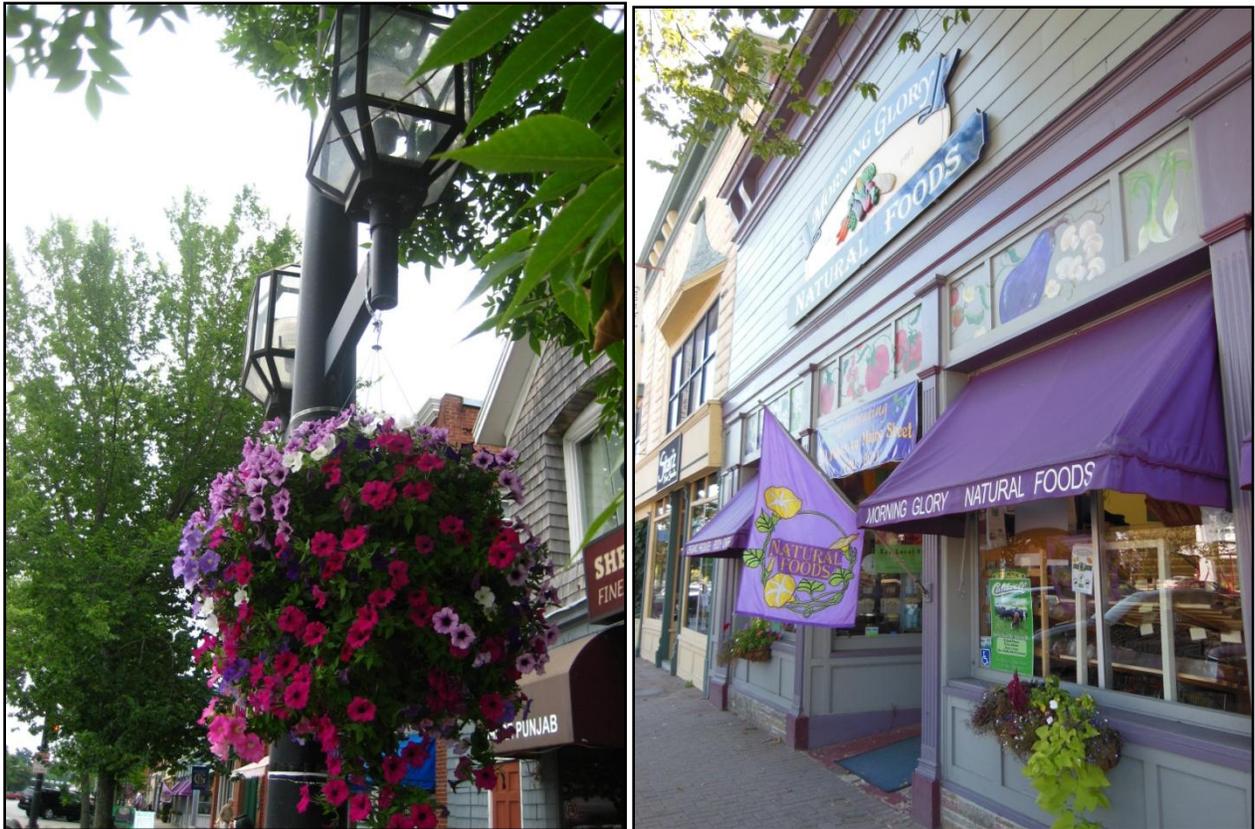
- The existing public waterfront amenities like the swing bridge and 250th Anniversary Park offer exciting opportunities for major works of public art.
- Sidewalk "bump-outs" that exist now on Maine Street and that may be created as part of the Downtown Master Plan offer highly-visible possibilities for public art installations.

- A BDA-sponsored banner program for Maine Street lamp posts from the Bowdoin Campus to the bridge would provide opportunities for local artists.
- Programs like Belfast's "Please Be Seated," in which local artists designed and installed street benches downtown, have been successful in other Main Street towns and should be considered.

## 12. Green Downtown

As part of the Maine Downtown Center's Green Downtowns initiative, the BDA will promote sustainability and green design. The Main Street program has the innate advantage of fostering a basic principle of sustainability: the greenest building is one that is already built. Re-using existing buildings represents a sustainable approach to development. Making full use of the Town's historic downtown buildings is more environmentally responsible than new construction until the time that the existing buildings are fully-utilized.

Many of the steps to greener buildings being promoted by the MDC are already described in the [Building Improvement File](#) and allow the application of state-of-the-art green design principles to historic buildings without the need to remove, damage or detract from character-defining features. These buildings already possess many inherent energy conservation features of historic structures, such as shared (party) walls, high-mass masonry construction, high ceilings, retractable awnings, and well-made operable windows.



*Hanging baskets and street trees contribute to the beauty of the streetscape and clean the air. The perfectly-fitted awnings of Morning Glory Natural Foods complement a traditional storefront, and shade the display windows from morning sunlight, keeping the interior cooler in the summer season. The awnings are removed in the winter to take advantage of heat gain from the low winter sun.*

Green Downtowns principles also apply to infrastructures, streetscapes and landscapes. Parking, traffic and transportation improvements can be designed according to sustainability precepts. Street trees and other plantings can literally and figuratively green downtown, while storm drainage and other infrastructure engineered according to green principles improve local water quality.

### ***Observations***

- Virtually all of Brunswick's historic building stock, which is relatively well-maintained, could benefit from energy audits and energy efficiency improvements
- Making older buildings energy efficient is perceived by owners and tenants as being prohibitively expensive, resulting in missed opportunities for upgrades and re-use.

### ***Recommendations***

- Use the Green Downtowns posters and other printed materials to initiate sustainable design discussions with property owners, environmental groups, and Town planners.
- The Design Committee should become a clearinghouse on the application of green design principles and techniques to existing buildings.
- The Design Committee should work with the Town, perhaps through a CDBG or BDC program (and/or a TIF option, if guidelines allow), to provide grants and/or loans for energy improvements to downtown buildings.
- The Design Committee should create a referral list of energy consultants and contractors who are familiar with applying green design principles and techniques to historic buildings.
- Apply the green downtown approach to open spaces (street tree planting, bioretention) and downtown planning components (such as transportation), and infrastructure.
- Collaborations with Environmental Studies faculty and students from Bowdoin should be encouraged to bring cutting edge green thinking to downtown.
- Grant and loan programs, funded with BDC or CDBG grants, should be used to incentivize energy improvements for Main Street buildings.
- The Committee should develop a presentation on the application of sustainable design to the continued use and adaptive re-use of Brunswick's historic buildings, or produce workshops to bring experts and property owners together.

## **Design Conclusion/Implementation**

The recommendations offered above may seem overwhelming in number and scope, placing many demands on the BDA Design Committee, in particular. Some of the recommendations are based on successes you have already achieved. Some overlap and can be combined into a few high-priority activities. Many are already high-priority recommendations in the Master Plan for Downtown Brunswick. Many are being tended to by other groups who can share the workload. Many of the recommendations are examples of the incremental approach (start small, keep quality high, implement, celebrate success!) advocated by the MDC and the National Trust Main Street Center. All will result in developing knowledge and skills, and collaborations and relationships, that will benefit everyone involved.



*These two charming storefronts feature many traditional design attributes and contribute color, vitality, variety and authenticity to Maine Street.*

Our recommendations are targeted at identifying and capitalizing on Brunswick's existing assets:

- a good, intact historic building stock;
- a unique downtown commercial street;
- a wonderful natural resource at one end of the district and a world-class educational institution at the other;
- an economy recovering from a major setback with resolution, enthusiasm and persistence, and offering unique opportunities;
- a growing stock of quality merchants and restaurants; and
- an engaged, educated, creative citizenry.

Implementation of these recommendations can move forward as the Main Street program gathers momentum and as the many planning efforts currently underway are completed and realized. All of these efforts will have an impact on the downtown. In particular, the Downtown Master Plan and the Main Street Program efforts share many goals. Both will benefit from collaboration and coordination, and from taking advantage of common interests and focused energy. Creative, positive change is sure to come to downtown Brunswick, and the community as a whole, in the next few years. The BDA Design Committee must be an active participant, as a valued collaborator and an initiator of meaningful, positive change.

The design intent of the Main Street program is to make the most of a town's historic buildings and streetscapes, getting these resources into the best condition possible, resulting in a physical environment that is enticing and appropriate for all the activities that traditionally take place downtown (and for new activities as well). With knowledge-based and creative attention to the design issues we have discussed above, the Brunswick Downtown Association can help assure that downtown provides an inviting atmosphere for commercial and social enterprise while preserving Brunswick's historic retail core for all to use and enjoy.



*It's time to get on board - there's lots to do along the way!*