

Principles & Vision

Visual Quality
Pedestrian & Vehicular
Neighborhoods
Marketing
Financing



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The Downtown Master Plan Committee was convened in September 2008, as the Comprehensive Plan update was in the final stages of adoption by the Town Council. One of the key objectives of the Comprehensive Plan is, “In partnership with local organizations, make the Downtown more attractive, inviting and the ‘hub’ of community activity.” A Key Action to meet that objective is to develop a new master plan for downtown, “relating economic, housing, and infrastructure improvements,” and consider “traffic, bicycle and pedestrian patterns, alternatives to divert through-traffic away from Maine Street, enhance use of upper-story space, preserve historic architecture, and make new construction and renovations fit the character of the historic downtown”.

Chaired by Margo Knight, Town Councilor for District 6 (Downtown), the Town Council appointed Downtown Master Plan Committee (DMPC) was comprised of representatives from downtown businesses, downtown property-owners and residents, at-large residents, Bowdoin College, and liaisons from other Town committees (Village Review Board, Planning Board, and Bicycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee). Department staff of Planning and Development, and Economic and Community Development assisted the committee.

The Committee reviewed the previous Downtown Master Development Plan, completed in 1997, the 2000 Mall Management Plan, the 2001 Downtown Brunswick Parking Study, the 2006 Brunswick Maine Street Station Master Plan, and the 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

Very quickly, the Committee decided to divide into five focus areas of study: **Visual Quality, Pedestrian and Vehicular Movement, Neighborhoods, Marketing, and Financing.** Underlying all of these focus areas was a commitment by the committee to environmental and community sustainability. Meeting twice a month, the Committee alternated meeting as a whole to interview experts and meetings of the different focus area groups to craft the Plan’s vision and proposals for actions.

As the Committee was planning the next step in the process, that is, testing visions with the public, an opportunity presented itself. The Maine Department of Transportation provided planning grants for the communities participating in the Gateway One Corridor Plan implementation focusing on traffic movement, land use and infrastructure along Route 1 from Brunswick to Stockton Springs, and awarded Brunswick the first community grant.

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“It isn’t ‘Here is the blueprint.’ It’s more, ‘Here is the vision.’ It’s really that we want to make this town - the downtown area - a place to live, to work, to shop, and for people to gather all year round.”

-- Margo Knight, Chair, Downtown Master Plan Committee and District #6 Brunswick Town Councilor

OUR DOWNTOWN VISION



Visual Quality

The entire length of Maine Street and inner Pleasant Street is connected harmoniously through sidewalks and landscaping to create a unified, pedestrian-friendly whole. The sides of Maine Street are connected with well-landscaped islands or pedestrian refuges. The amenities on the Mall, such as lighting and electrical outlets, are improved, while the natural features of this special place are still protected. Way-finding kiosks and maps, directing pedestrians and drivers to downtown businesses and attractions, are created and installed in convenient, appropriate places. A system of public-private collaboration exists to maintain downtown plantings, public spaces, and commercial areas.



Pedestrian and Vehicular Movement

Downtown is a pedestrian- and bike-friendly area with ample, easy-to-find parking, improved pedestrian crossings, and traffic-calming mechanisms. Together these create a roadway with fewer driver distractions. Through-traffic is minimized by directing it to appropriate alternative streets and highways. With the development of Maine Street Station, downtown is a transportation hub, with service provided by Amtrak and excursion trains, commercial bus lines, a local bus route, taxis, car and bike rentals.



Neighborhoods

Downtown residential neighborhoods are an economic asset to Brunswick, providing tax revenue and pedestrian traffic to downtown businesses and attractions. Housing options are increased, while preserving valued features of neighborhoods. The use of upper story space is enhanced, preserving historic architecture and making new construction and renovations fit the character of the historic downtown. Residential and non-residential development in neighborhoods generates pedestrian traffic and new businesses. It is of an appropriate scale and designed to minimize the impact on the neighborhood. The pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between neighborhoods and around downtown is enhanced by sidewalks, “sharrows”, lighting, and way-finding signage. Cut-through traffic is minimized by improving appropriate traffic arteries. Because of their livability and convenience, downtown neighborhoods are easily marketed and attract new families and individuals.



Marketing

Marketing strategies are aimed at countering the negative effects of the BNAS closing, maintaining the vibrancy of the Downtown, and fostering business retention and attraction. The mix of

shops, restaurants and commerce is strengthened through the continued close relationships between the Brunswick Downtown Association and the Town’s Department of Economic and Community Development. Brunswick is designated a Main Street Maine community, increasing access to downtown experts and resources. In addition, close working relationships to promote downtown assets are reinforced between local businesses, college and arts communities, support organizations and neighborhood associations. A stronger, unified web presence is created and maintained, showcasing Town assets. In and out of state tourism is increased, as well as residents’ awareness of the Town’s assets - our “pearls.”

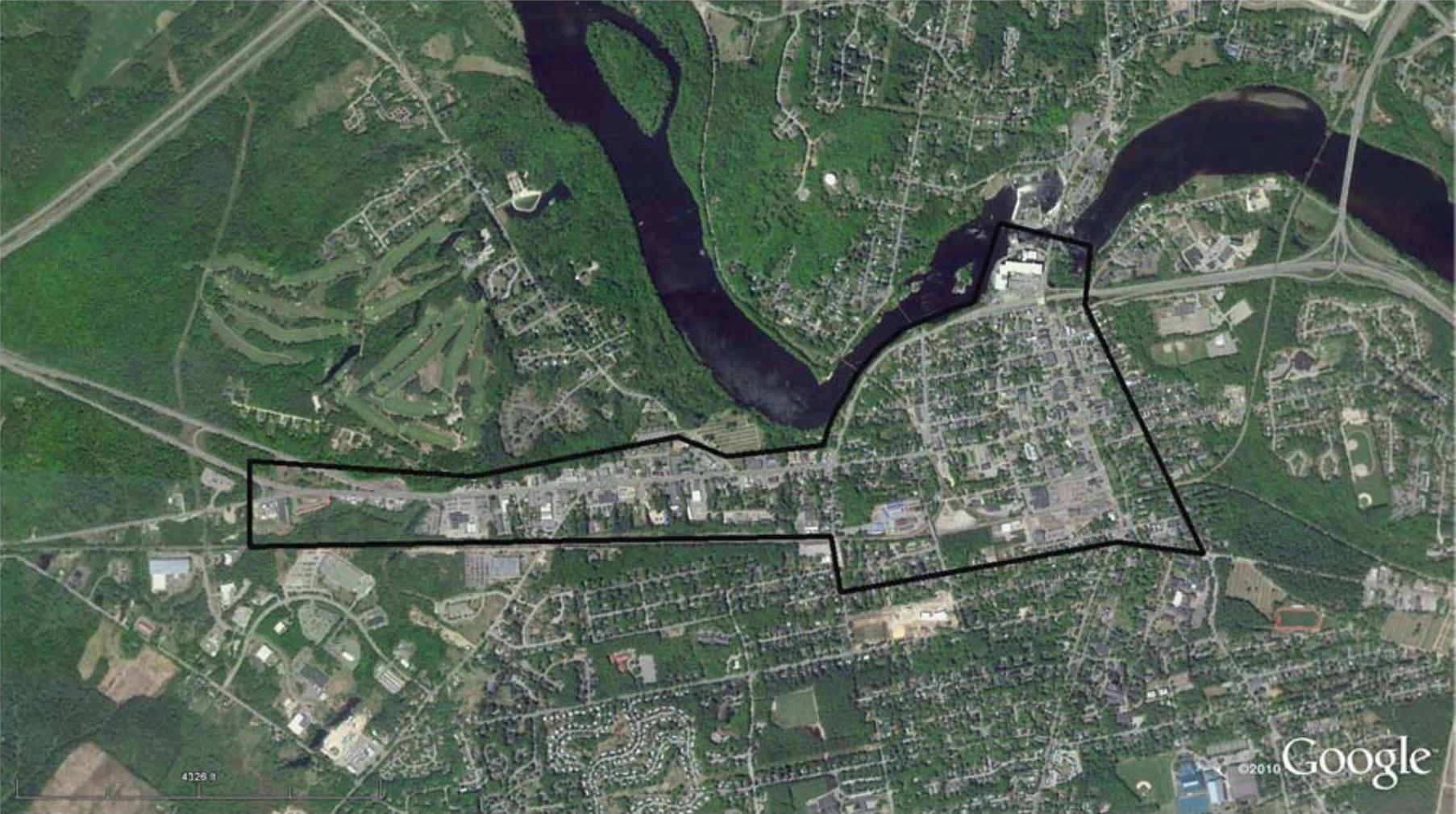


Financing

Financial incentives exist to attract and retain downtown businesses and promote a healthy mix of commercial uses downtown. Funding for downtown infrastructure and improvements are provided through a range of appropriate avenues, such as tax increment financing, grants, impact fees, special tax assessments, and charitable donations.

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Downtown Master Plan: Planning Area



The Department of Planning and Development successfully made the case that combining that study with the Downtown Master Plan work would offer a holistic overview to traffic, economic, and community planning in Brunswick. Councilor Benet Pols (District 7), the Brunswick liaison to the Gateway One Corridor group, joined the Downtown Master Plan Committee and the Committee's charge was adjusted going forward to include the new area. This enabled the committee to explore opportunities to enhance the relationship between all these areas of Downtown so that they can be harmonious and mutually supportive.

The Town approved the use of grants from Maine Department of Transportation (Gateway One Corridor funding) and the Brunswick Development Corporation, as well as other department funding, to hire a consultant to assist the expanded Downtown Master Plan Committee in the areas of public outreach, plan recommendations and the drafting of the final document. The new geographic area now encompassed all Pleasant Street, Mill Street, Northwest Brunswick Neighborhood, Maine Street from Fort Andross to Bath Road, and Federal Street.

A consultant selection committee was formed, requests for qualifications sought, interviews held and a consultant selected. The Committee selected the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) to assist the Committee and Town staff.

PPS facilitated a series of “placemaking” workshops with staff, Committee members, residents and business owners, as well as individual and group interviews with businesses and key stakeholders over a 3-week time frame in June 2010. The actual results are included in Appendix D of this document. In addition, PPS assisted the Committee in developing and tabulating a community survey about Brunswick places and amenities located throughout the expanded study area. More than 100 citizens participated in the workshops and interviews and more than 80 responded to the community survey. Results of the survey are provided in Appendix C.

Input received through this extensive public process informed the work of the Committee during the last phase of the process—creating short-term and long-term recommendations for the Downtown and the outer Pleasant Street/Mill Street (Gateway One Corridor study area for Brunswick). Recommendations grouped within the Committee's initial focus areas of Visual Quality, Pedestrian and Vehicular Movement, Neighborhoods, Marketing and Financing are included in the following Analysis and Recommendations section of this document.



Sheltered bike rack example
Ball State University, Loren Degg, 2005