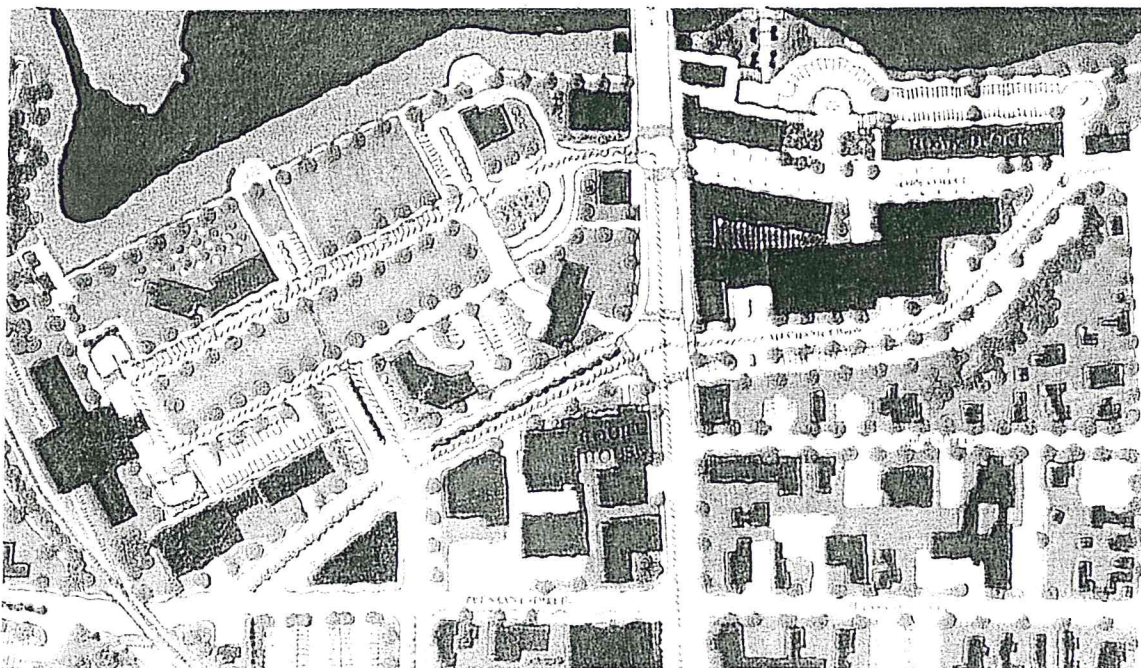


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# ***Auburn Downtown Master Plan***



*Prepared for*

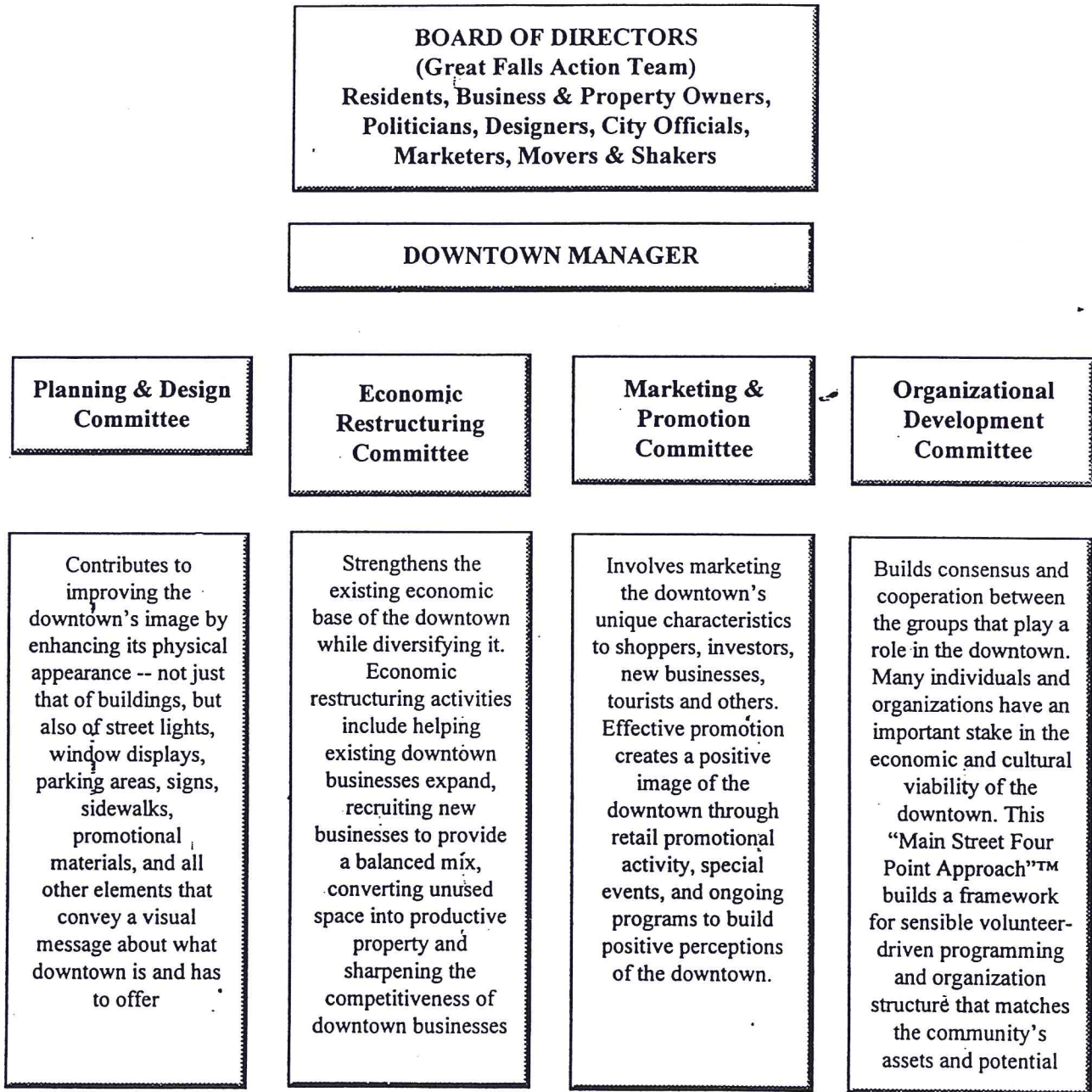
*City of Auburn, Maine*

*by*

*The Cavendish Partnership  
Douglas J. Kennedy & Associates  
Wilbur Smith Associates  
Banwell Architects*

*August 30, 1998*

# Downtown Auburn's Downtown Revitalization Strategy<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> This format "The Main Street Four Point Approach"<sup>TM</sup> was developed by the National Main Street Center© - National Trust for Historic Preservation and was excerpted from **Making Downtowns Come Alive**, a publication of the National Main Street Center.

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# 1

## ***Section One: Introduction***

The Mayor of Auburn, in consultation with the City Council, identified the need better to: understand the market forces effecting downtown, analyze and improve existing parking and traffic conditions and to develop design and beautification improvements. To this end, the Mayor and the City Council created the Great Falls Action Team (GFAT) to oversee the downtown master planning process. GFAT had a number of meetings and identified issues that should be addressed in a master planning process including: fostering the development of historic properties, the future market(s) for the downtown, consolidation of government services and the development of ideas for public/private partnerships. Findings and recommendations from the GFAT meetings provided the basis for a "Request for Proposals." The City advertised and solicited proposals from local and regional consulting teams to prepare the Downtown Master Plan. Following interviews, with several of the teams that responded to the RFP, the City selected a team consisting of The Cavendish Partnership, Douglas J. Kennedy & Associates, Banwell Architects and Wilbur Smith Associates.

### ***City's Goals and Objectives***

Based on the GFAT recommendations the City developed the following goals and objectives. The City then requested proposals from consulting teams that addressed the following objectives with recommendations for short-term and long-term implementation strategies.

- ▶ **Market Analysis** - The City sees a market analysis as pivotal to the future of the downtown. It is important for the City to understand what types of land uses it should be promoting and businesses it should attract so that stagnation of the downtown does not occur. Economic vitality is important to this area.
- ▶ **Parking Analysis** - The City currently controls two major surface parking lots: Great Falls with approximately 300 spaces, and Main Street with approximately 45 spaces. There are a number of smaller lots in the area as well. With redevelopment, the creation of additional parking, including viability and location of a parking garage for the study area is of interest.
- ▶ **Traffic Circulation** - The downtown is bisected by Court Street which carries approximately 30,000 vehicles per day, with two minor arterials - Main Street and Turner Street - which also feed this area. It is important to know how traffic circulation patterns could be affected by recommended changes, should all or part of the Downtown Master Plan be implemented, and what the remedies might be. The traffic circulation plan should include a component that addresses the interaction



between pedestrian and vehicular conflict. This component will include identification of those areas and recommended corrective actions.

- ▶ **Design and Beautification** - With the help of Community Development Block Grant funds the City has been developing a River Front Walkway in the downtown. The City has also been acquiring and demolishing buildings where and when appropriate to create view corridors to the River. These issues coupled with the need to foster the historic properties and identifying areas for government consolidation are important to the design considerations for the landscape that will accentuate both the existing and planned portions of the downtown. The master plan should include recommendations that will make the City more livable incorporating streetscape improvements, trees, furnishings, surfaces and lighting.
- ▶ **Cost Analysis** - A cost analysis is needed for all of the recommendations so that the City will have the ability to prioritize any future actions based on the plan.

## ***Scope of Services***

To address the City's needs, the City and consulting team prepared the following scope of services.

### ***Market Analysis***

**Objective:** To determine the existing market(s) in the downtown and provide a 'vision' of what market potentials exist now and in the future. Based upon the market analysis' and the market vision establish a practical plan for implementation and execution. Identify steps and opportunities for public sectors to take to encourage private sector investment and partnerships. Evaluate the impact, benefit and potential of downtown events and festivals such as, The Great Falls Balloon Festival and Liberty Festival.

#### **Tasks:**

##### **Gather and Review Existing Data/Studies**

-including interviews with downtown contacts, field reviews of data and studies, and review of the surrounding area.

##### **Interviews/Focus Groups**

-including stakeholders (downtown workers, visitors, customers, residents), process participants, city staff, business/property owners, area real estate brokers, area development professionals, commercial lending professionals, etc. Focus groups will concentrate on (1) internal market and development issues to the downtown and (2) market and development issues relating to tourism.

##### **Field Observation**

-including walking tours of the downtown and 'windshield' surveys of other commercial/shopping areas (Lewiston, Center Street, Auburn Mall Area and other outlying business concentrations).

##### **Surveys**

-including a survey to assess the downtown market, assets, deficiencies, needed improvements, downtown perceptions and thoughts. The distribution of the surveys will be varied but include,

at a minimum, the groups represented in Task 1.2. In addition, surveys of residents of the broader Auburn market area and tourist survey will be conducted by mail.

#### **Comparable City Research/Interviews**

-identification of several urban projects in the northeast that have applicability to the Auburn situation. Projects will be thoroughly investigated to understand how they were started, who were the critical players, what were the sources of capital, what market assumptions were made, what were the keys to the project's success and how successful the project was/is. If possible, representatives of one or two projects will be invited to meet with the action Team.

#### **Market/Economic Analysis**

-including analyses to identify the scope of the market, determine basic trends in the area, and provide a projection base for making findings and recommendations. Essential analyses to be performed at a minimum are; Market Area Delineation, Demographic Analyses and Projections, Economic Analyses, Employment and Wages, Residency Demographics and Characteristics, Sales Inventory and Projection and Trend Examination.

#### **Findings/Recommendations**

-including all analyses data and reports, interviews and surveys results and field observation findings. Recommendations will include a well-defined and detailed action plan steps identifying short and long term development and improvements, parties responsible for and involved in implementation, projected time frames and costs. Maps and charts indicating current space and property use will be provided. The market analysis will be sufficient to provide information to prospective developers and investors in the downtown. Findings will also provide a fiscal assessment of the recommendations, if fully realized.

#### **Collateral Materials**

-development of marketing materials, including a summary of the market analysis, findings and recommendations, to be used in presentations to potential developers, banks, business people, stakeholders, etc. Collateral materials will include 500 copies of an 11-x 17" - four color printed brochure and a slide show, specifically developed for Auburn.

#### **Products:**

- Interviews Results
- Focus Group Results
- Surveys Results
- Comparable City Research Findings
- Market/Economic Analysis
- Findings and Recommendations Report
- Collateral Materials

### ***Parking/Traffic Analysis and Improvement Strategy***

**Objective:** To analyze existing traffic and parking conditions (public and private) and the impact they have upon the downtown, including peak times during public events and festivals in general terms. Develop and assess several alternatives and improvements intended to improve traffic circulation, parking availability/accessibility, safe and convenient pedestrian/bicycle movement, and enhance aesthetic and open space opportunities. Put forth recommendations to improve existing

parking and traffic conditions including general design concepts, costs, benefits, implementation responsibilities and priorities.

### **Tasks:**

#### **Existing Conditions**

-collect, review and analyze information pertaining to the existing traffic and parking systems and conditions in the study area. This will also include a review of significant non-study area systems that affect or may affect the downtown. In addition to parking and traffic systems an analysis of bicycle/pedestrian plans and networks and public transit systems will be performed.

#### **Traffic**

-analyze collected information to determine existing and future levels of service for downtown roadways and principal intersections. Data to be reviewed and reported will include average daily traffic (ADT), available peak hour and available turning movement counts. Growth factors for area roadways will be developed using the LACTS travel demand model. Existing and future (including the development of the Bates Mill) potential problems will be identified and analyzed.

#### **Parking**

-conduct an inventory of all existing (private and public) on and off-street parking, noting location, capacities, condition, cost, use limitations and usage. A mail-back survey of a representative sample of current monthly parking subscribers will be performed to determine current satisfaction/concerns with location, cost and availability. Existing parking configurations will be assessed to determine if additional parking can be gained by reconfiguration. In addition, possible parking garage locations and configurations will be analyzed on a conceptual basis.

#### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Network**

-analyze the quality and role of existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian networks/facilities in the study area. Particular attention will be paid to connections to/from the converted rail trestle, riverfront access pedestrian crossings on Court Street and access to/from the Longley Bridge. A review of existing and recommended pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.) and amenities (benches, lighting, etc.) will also be conducted.

#### **Public Transit**

-including the collection of ridership and route information from the public buses and taxi services for the downtown study area. An assessment of the current level of transit service and usage. Meet with LATC and taxi company representatives to learn user needs (including origins and destinations), to identify opportunities and constraints on transit service levels in the downtown. Review and evaluate recommendations in the LACTS Travel Demand Management Study to identify relevant actions. Recommendations will include potential service and/or route enhancements/improvements as well as, amenity improvements such as, bus shelters, signage, etc.

#### **Alternative Concepts**

-analysis of the implications of up to three identified alternative development concepts on the transportation and parking systems. (Remainder of 2.2)

### **Recommendations**

-including detailed costs estimates, benefits, responsibilities for implementation and priorities. Potential funding sources for each improvement will be identified. Opportunities for public-private partnerships will also be included.

### **Products:**

- Results of Review of Existing Conditions
- Alternative Concepts and Findings
- Recommendation Report

## ***Design and Beautifloatlon Study/Plan***

**Objective:** To accentuate, develop and improve public and private assets in the downtown. Assets include public open and recreational spaces, public buildings, amenities, public events and festivals, streetscapes, the river, and private buildings, particularly historic properties. Utilizing these assets as keys to the creation and realization of the downtown 'vision' is desired.

### **Tasks:**

#### **Review**

-development of a thorough understanding of the key design and beautification issues currently in the downtown and those that are desired. Issues will include design, operations, maintenance, costs, opportunities and constraints. Also, key will be an examination of current building and zoning codes. Walking tours of the downtown, Great Falls School, Auburn Public Library, City Building, the riverfront and significant historical sites/buildings will be included. Findings will be documented in writing and photographs and distributed to the Action Team.

#### **Base Map Preparation**

-utilizing existing mapping, aerial photography and field observations develop a base map of the study area. The map will include, at a minimum, property lines, buildings, vegetation massing, important natural and manmade features, roadways and sidewalks. The map will be produced in ink on Mylar film at an appropriate scale.

#### **Downtown Inventory and Analysis**

-preparation of a series of maps and graphics that inventory existing conditions, including; land/building use, zoning, historic structures, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, view corridors and view sheds, light and shade studies, landmarks, parking and loading areas, neighborhood edges, public spaces, and recreational spaces.

#### **Public and Historic Buildings**

-review existing space and needs study for the Great Falls School, Auburn Public Library and City Building. In consultation with City, identify potential locations for new public buildings and reuse of existing buildings with consideration of service needs, downtown needs and impact. Review historic and significant structures in the study area to determine current and potential uses. Also identify buildings which may better serve the development of abutting buildings or spaces, rather than continue in their current use. For all buildings, identify and analyze constraints and opportunities affecting downtown development and implementation of the master plan. All information will be represented in writing and graphically illustrated for

planning and presentation purposes.

### **Recommendations and Designs**

-based on preceding tasks develop recommendations for the design and improvement of public spaces and buildings in the downtown. Design recommendations will include a desired typical streetscape (sidewalks, light, trees, etc.), consistent or connective building features, gateway treatments, signage (public and private) and other features to create a 'sense of place'. Building recommendations will include alternative reuse opportunities of public and private buildings, identification of constraints, alternative locations of public buildings and design suggestions. Open/public space, riverfront, recreational and aesthetic recommendations will include location alternatives/opportunities, connective/consistent design features, signage, establishment of corridors and linkages, and focal points. Building and Zoning code modifications will address changes necessary to accommodate final recommendations and improvements.

### **Products:**

- Results of Key Issues Identification
- Base Map
- Downtown Inventory and Analysis Report
- Results of Public and Historic Buildings Review
- Recommendations and Designs Report

## ***Conceptual Plans and Alternatives***

**Objective:** To present alternatives for downtown redevelopment and improvement based upon the findings and recommendations from Tasks A-C.

### **Tasks:**

#### **Investigation**

-minimum of four alternative plans which respond to the needs and opportunities identified in the market analysis, parking/traffic analysis, and design and a beautification plan. Also included will be investigation and presentation of the possibilities for new government buildings and/or government consolidation and parking garage and hotel concepts. Each of the conceptual plans will have components that address short and long term improvements. Accompanying the plans will be exhibits for streetscape and riverfront improvements including; lighting, street furnishings, signage and landscaping.

#### **Presentation**

-formal presentation of the several concepts and alternatives to the Action Team, invited guests, stakeholders and end users. The concepts will be presented in text, plan and three dimensionally. The presentation will build on previous presentations and discussions and will include additional text, tables, charts, photographs, and plans illustrating the positive and negative aspects of each of the conceptual plans. Accompanying a slide presentation will be a written summary of the findings to date. In addition, resources and materials will be prepared for distribution to the public and broadcast and print media.

### **Products:**

- Conceptual Plans and Alternatives
- Presentation Materials

## **Public Information, Participation and Celebration**

**Objective:** To involve and inform the public and all process participants during each part of the process. To enlist and encourage participation in order that the final product will be reflective of the community/downtown needs and desired vision. To celebrate the process and its results in a positive manner.

### **Tasks:**

#### **Kick-Off**

-including a process kickoff announcement and celebration, outlining the process, scope and anticipated products. A kickoff meeting with staff and the Action Team will also be conducted to begin the process and establish expectations.

#### **Market Analysis**

-participation by stakeholders, end users, residents and property owners in developing the market conditions and projections. Involvement will occur via interviews, surveys, focus groups and at least one public meeting. Information will be distributed through the surveys, media and development of collateral materials.

#### **Parking/Traffic Analysis**

-presentation and feedback on findings and conceptual alternatives to city staff and the Action Team. Input from area transportation officials and downtown stakeholders will also be included.

#### **Design and Beautification Study/Plan**

-including a meeting with city staff and the Action Team to establish existing and desired design, use and beautification issues. Also a formal presentation to review recommended design and beautification improvements and the results of the market analysis, traffic and parking analysis will be provided.

### **Products**

- Market Analysis Report & Collateral Materials
- Parking and Traffic Analysis Report
- Design and Beautification Plan

## **Final Plans and Deliverables**

**Objective:** Prepare concise and exciting presentation materials that will inspire continued public, political and private sector support and involvement.

#### **Conceptual Plans and Alternatives**

-review with staff, Action Team, stakeholders and public conceptual plans and alternatives. A public presentation with accompanying materials and information will also be provided.

### **Public Celebration**

-a reflection of Auburn's past and inspiration for the future. Included will be a multimedia presentation documenting the planning process, recommended improvements, implementation strategies and expected outcomes.

### **Products:**

- Final Vision and Master Plan
- All Study Reports, Findings and Recommendations

## ***Report Format***

The report is designed to be flexible. Each chapter can be used independently highlighting specific information regarding: the market, transportation, design and beautification and action planning; or collectively forming a comprehensive analysis and implementation strategy for the downtown. The report has been bound into a loose leaf notebook for ease of removing and copying sections and it is also hoped that as the report is used, supplemental information will be added. The appendix contains useful information that the City might use in implementing the plan.

## ***Acknowledgments***

The findings and recommendations contained in this report are the result of six months of intensive public interaction and debate in form of: workshops, focus groups, interviews with the interested citizens, the downtown business community, civic organizations, public officials and the City's professional staff. Attendance at the public workshops exceeded expectations and the final presentation/celebration of the plan was attended by more than one thousand people. Auburn is fully invested in the Downtown Master Plan, it can take credit for its creation and should take responsibility for its implementation and success.

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# 2

## ***Market Analysis***

### ***Introduction and Scope of Work***

The following report is part of an ongoing effort to foster a series of improvements in downtown Auburn, Maine. In a combined effort with The Cavendish Partnership, Banwell Architects, Wilber-Smith and the City of Auburn, DOUGLAS J. KENNEDY & ASSOCIATES has assessed current downtown economic activity, analyzed the performance of the downtown and developed recommendations for improvement. This report summarizes the major findings of an analysis designed to assess the current economy of the downtown and to identify strategies that will allow the downtown to work toward economic.

This report covers four basic elements:

- ▶ *Fact-Finding* - Where does the downtown stand now? What are its markets? How well is it doing in those markets?
- ▶ *Analysis* - What potential is there for growth and retail sales in the downtown's markets? What are the short and long term opportunities?
- ▶ *Public Input* – Interviews with a number of local and regional contacts were an essential element of the process . . . along with focus group discussions. Significant findings are summarized in the report.
- ▶ *Recommendations* - What new uses can be supported by the downtown? What are the market based strategies that should be pursued? How can Auburn recruit new uses?

The report and its findings are based on a broad-based data gathering and analysis effort. From a data perspective, a range of federal, state, local and private documents were used to provide a quantitative basis for the findings. These are cited in the report. Just as importantly, a series of interviews with Auburn and other regional contacts were completed to provide a direct link with market realities. Finally, two successful surveys were completed which provided a strong basis for findings and recommendations. The City of Auburn played a critical role in arranging interviews, collecting background data and refining the materials used for this analysis.



## ***Fact Finding***

### ***Downtown Market Area***

Traditionally, downtowns in the northeast have enjoyed well-defined trade areas—the geographic areas from which they regularly drew their customer base. In a traditional setting, a central town or city with a commercial base drew not only on its own residents, but also on the residents of surrounding, rural communities. The limits of any town's trade area depended on the extent of its commercial offerings and their distance to other, competitive centers.

Downtowns still have trade areas, but current market realities have changed the traditional trade balance, and these areas are not so clearly defined as in the past. Business owners can no longer assume that nearby residents will automatically do their shopping in the downtown area.

Without question, the introduction of shopping centers over the past 50 years has had the most impact on traditional trade areas. By drawing former downtown shoppers to centralized shopping locations, shopping centers have forced downtowns to compete more aggressively for customers. Significant concentrations of shopping center space outside of downtown Auburn and Lewiston have had an obvious impact on traditional downtowns throughout the region. The ongoing introduction of 'big-box' stores has also had an impact. Clearly, most of the retail activity in Auburn now takes place in the area of the Auburn Mall.

Less obvious are the impact of mail order and other non-traditional forms of retailing, including television and 'on-line services.' The convenience that these retailing approaches offer also draws shoppers away from downtowns. Where downtowns formerly dealt with a single market, they must now compete with a number of retail centers and numerous retailing approaches. This loss of local shoppers is a serious concern

At the same time that competition has increased for downtowns, growth in travel activity in Maine over the years has greatly increased the size of the potential customer market. Millions of people move through the state on an annual basis, each of who represent a potential downtown shopper. Finally, many downtowns have recognized that one of their strongest assets is the people who work there—office workers, storeowners, and service people - who are in the downtown every day.

Downtowns have found that they can better serve their market by redefining their trade areas. Recognizing that their potential customer base is diverse, both in terms of geography and demographics, downtowns can more effectively attract and retain new customers by catering to the shopping, service and cultural needs of each group. This approach makes sense for Auburn.

Access is an important component of markets – Auburn's location gives it good access to several communities in Androscoggin County, as well as to major northeastern metropolitan markets via the interstate system. The following are significant:

- ▶ For most Old Auburn residents, walking access to downtown stores is possible. This is a significant advantage over any other shopping concentration in the region.
- ▶ The interstate and state route system in the area provides direct connections to a number of rural towns in the immediate area.

- ▶ The Maine Turnpike (I-495) along with Route 202 makes it easy for travelers to get to Auburn. At the same time, these routes provide an easy travel routes for local residents to do their shopping elsewhere – such as the Auburn Mall area or more remote centers such as Freeport or Portland.

In the past, downtown Auburn's competition came from other urbanized concentrations in the region. While these traditional shopping areas still provide some competition, it is the shopping centers located in and around these communities which currently provide the most direct competition. Interviews with an assortment of business contacts, retailers and others in Auburn along with field observations makes it clear that the downtown lost its primary retail market a long time ago – *downtown Auburn now plays a minimal retail role in the region.*

Based on these factors, four potential trade areas have been defined for the downtown. They are:

***Old Auburn/Walking Market*** - the residential area including and immediately surrounding the downtown. This is a densely populated area with a current population of about 1,950 persons. Households income levels are well below the median and are estimated to be about \$18,500.<sup>1</sup>

***Employee Market*** - Auburn remains one of Androscoggin County's important employment centers. Auburn's employers, who consist of retail businesses, service businesses, government offices, private office operations and other concerns, create a substantial concentration of potential customers during working hours. While a number of major employers in the area are not located in the downtown, it is clear that employment creates additional market potential for downtown businesses. It is estimated that the current employment base in the downtown is 1,075 persons.<sup>2</sup> Based on 'public' survey results, the average household income among downtown workers may exceed \$45,000.

***Traditional Market*** – the downtown retains some hold on the traditional market area surrounding the city. While this geographic extent of this market may have decreased in response to competition, the market remains important to commercial businesses.

- ▶ A report prepared in 1977 indicated that 78 percent of downtown Auburn's market was generated by residents of Auburn and Lewiston. Further, report findings stated that an additional 8 percent was generated by residents of other Androscoggin County communities while the remaining 14 percent was generated by persons from outside of the county. The report went on to define the *primary* market area as the Lewiston/Auburn SMSA and the *secondary* market area to be the remainder of Androscoggin County.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ A 1996 retail study did not define a primary market area but did use Androscoggin County as an analysis area.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ The 'public' survey – described elsewhere in this report – was oriented toward persons who visit downtown Auburn on a regular basis. 78 percent of the respondents to that survey were

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<sup>1</sup> Figures based on data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Auburn Downtown Building Use Summary*, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> See the Gladstone Associates Study, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> See the Bray Agency Study, 1996.

residents of either Auburn or Lewiston. An additional 13 percent of the respondents were residents of communities with the Lewiston/Auburn MSA.

Overall, it remains reasonable to define the current traditional trade area as the Lewiston/Auburn MSA. This *does* vary on a business by business basis. However, an analysis of this area will effectively portray the trends most important to businesses within the downtown. The current population of this market is about 90,940 persons.<sup>5</sup>

*Travel Markets* - a brief visit to Auburn along with a series of interviews with local contacts make it clear that the downtown is not a significant travel attraction. Nevertheless, with a location in easy range of several major northeastern metro markets, Auburn is an easy day or weekend trip objective. While not a regional destination, it is apparent that the city could position itself to tap into the travel market. While the travel market potentially extends throughout the U.S. and Canada (as well as internationally) it is apparent that it principally consists of persons from metropolitan areas through the northeast and Mid-Atlantic States.

## ***The Downtown Today***

An assessment of downtown's potential future requires a review of what is already there. Specifically, it's important to complete an inventory of current downtown uses—with a focus on commercial businesses. In addition to providing an information base upon which to estimate current sales levels and assess business activity, a land use inventory provides a good basis for comparison—How does Auburn's downtown compare with its competitors? Just as importantly, the inventory of uses provides a base upon which to move forward with recommendations. Successful downtowns use current successes to move forward toward new ones. As such, it is important to fully understand the retail markets in which the downtown already has some success, and to identify those in which the downtown has no presence.

The inventory of commercial space covers the downtown as defined by the City of Auburn, which has served as the base for the entire study effort.

In 1993, an inventory of downtown retail/service, office and residential square footage was completed.<sup>6</sup> The inventory included: Active Retail/Service space; Vacant Retail/Service space; Active Office space; Vacant Office space and residential space. A summary of the findings of the inventory (for commercial space only) is shown in the table below.

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<sup>5</sup> 1997 estimate by Demographics-on-Call.

<sup>6</sup> See *Auburn Downtown Building Use Summary*, 1993.

**Commercial Building Space Inventory: Downtown Auburn (1993)**

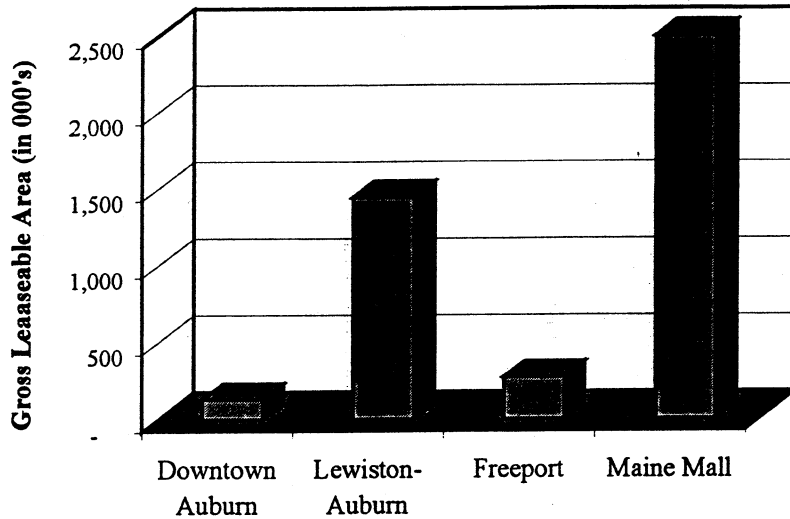
	<i>Floor Area (Square Feet)</i>				<b>Totals</b>
	<i>Active Retail/Service</i>	<i>Vacant Retail/Service</i>	<i>Active Office</i>	<i>Vacant Office</i>	
South of Court Street	90,848	6,895	150,133	17,920	265,796
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>3%</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>7%</i>	
North of Court Street	43,078	28,607	250,532	25,785	348,002
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>7%</i>	
Downtown Totals	133,926	35,502	400,665	43,705	613,798
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>65%</i>	<i>7%</i>	

The 1993 inventory showed a total of over 600,000 square feet of commercial space, 72 percent of which was devoted to office space – downtown’s major commercial space user. No major changes have occurred since that year. At the time of the inventory, approximately 13 percent of the available commercial space was vacant. Observers indicate that this percentage has decreased in the past few years. Also note that most of the downtown’s commercial space is located *north* of Court Street. At the time of the inventory there were 18 retail businesses north of the Court Street and five retail businesses to the south of Court Street. Finally, the inventory indicates that there was a total of approximately 390,000 square feet of residential space in the downtown. Over 65 percent of this space was located *south* of Court Street.

With just under 134,000 square feet of retail/service area, downtown Auburn is a small player in the regional commercial scene. This is shown in the graphic below, which compares retail/service space in the study area with retail/service space in shopping centers and freestanding stores in Lewiston/Auburn, Freeport and the Maine Mall (South Portland).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Sources include the 1993 Building Inventory and the Shopping Center Directory.

## Retail/Service Square Footage Comparison



From a retail-commercial perspective, downtown Auburn has insufficient space to be considered a significant factor in the region.

Downtown or shopping center retail/service space can typically be placed in one of three major categories: Convenience Retail; Shoppers Retail and; Services. These are briefly defined below:

**Convenience Retail** – retail businesses that serve everyday needs, such as grocery stores, convenience stores, eating/drinking places, drug stores or hardware stores. Typically consumers don't comparison shop for these items. As such, these stores don't necessarily need to be part of grouping of stores.

**Shoppers Retail** – retail businesses that serve comparison shopping needs. Typically, these are items that consumers will 'shop-around' for, visiting several stores and comparing several similar items before making a purchase. This includes: Department Stores; Specialty Foods, Apparel, Furniture and Specialty Shops. Clustering is often important for these stores, as shoppers like to make comparisons.

**Services** – businesses that offer services to shoppers such as beauty shops/barber shops, banks, recreational facilities, etc.

To serve a community's full range of commercial needs, a downtown or shopping center needs to offer all three types of space. Further, there needs to be enough space devoted to each to offer the consumer some choices, particularly in the Shoppers Retail category. At present, it is apparent that downtown Auburn's retail space is oriented toward convenience retail. However, several specialized shoppers retail businesses remain.

## ***Economic Conditions***

Trends in the economy have an obvious impact on commercial markets—employment and wages are the base upon which consumers can make expenditures. As employment and wages increase,

consumers have more resources with which to make expenditures. This is particularly true for shoppers' goods and recreational/cultural expenditures - purchases that may often be completed with discretionary income. Local/regional employment and wage trends have evident implications for the employment, downtown and traditional trade areas. To the extent that the regional economic direction reflects national trends, they also have implications for the travel market.

### ***Employment and Wages***

The following table compares labor force, employment and unemployment trends in the Lewiston/Auburn MSA and Maine.

#### **Labor Force, Employment & Unemployment: Lewiston/Auburn MSA and Maine**

	<b>Lewiston/Auburn MSA</b>			<b>Maine</b>		
	<i>Labor Force</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>Labor Force</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
<i>1985</i>	553,000	523,000	5.4%	40,100	37,300	7.0%
<i>1990</i>	634,000	601,000	5.2%	50,600	47,100	6.9%
<i>1991</i>	643,000	594,000	7.6%	50,800	46,000	9.4%
<i>1992</i>	651,000	604,000	7.2%	51,000	46,600	8.6%
<i>1993</i>	631,000	581,000	7.9%	50,000	45,700	8.6%
<i>1994</i>	612,000	567,000	7.4%	49,100	45,300	7.7%
<i>1995</i>	641,900	605,100	5.7%	51,000	48,100	5.7%
<i>1996</i>	660,533	627,108	5.1%	52,400	49,400	5.7%
<i>1997</i>	667,608	635,858	4.8%	52,583	49,942	5.0%
<i>1998*</i>	644,600	614,600	4.7%	50,700	48,300	4.7%
<i>Change 1990 - '97</i>	1.7%	2.3%		0.2%	2.5%	

**Note:** 1998 figures for April, all other figures annual averages.

**Source:** Maine Department of Labor

Over the years, the Lewiston/Auburn MSA has maintained a lower unemployment rate and shown more growth in terms of total labor than the state as a whole. The strength of the local economy is particularly evident in recent low unemployment rates.

Comparative employment trends for Auburn and the Lewiston/Auburn MSA are shown in the table below.

## Employment Trends: Auburn and Lewiston/Auburn MSA

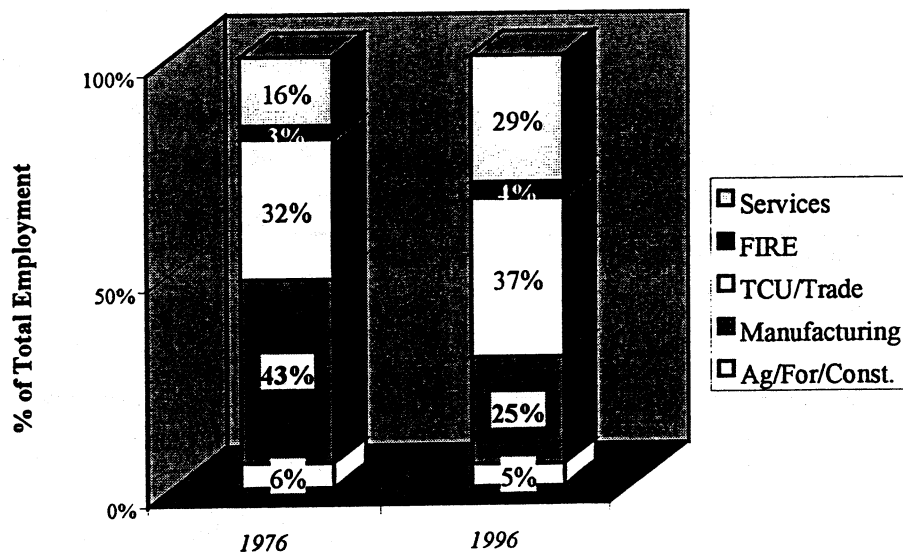
	Total Employment									Change 1990-97
	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	
Auburn City	10,036	11,995	11,735	11,948	11,727	11,375	12,081	12,391	12,527	4.4%
<i>% Change</i>		19.5%	-2.2%	1.8%	-1.8%	-3.0%	6.2%	2.6%	1.1%	
Lewiston/ Auburn MSA	37,300	47,100	46,000	46,600	45,700	45,300	48,100	49,400	49,942	
<i>% Change</i>		26.3%	-2.3%	1.3%	-1.9%	-0.9%	6.2%	2.7%	1.1%	6.0%

Source: Maine Department of Labor

Since 1990, employment in Auburn has grown by 4.4 percent; a period when MSA employment grew by 6.0 percent. With 25 percent of the MSA's total employment, *Auburn has clearly maintained its role as a center of economic activity.* This is significant, as local employment keeps many local workers – and their dollars – in the city and serves to draw additional dollars to community in the form of commuting workers.

The Lewiston/Auburn area economy has changed dramatically during the past 20 years. This is shown in the graphic below which shows the *percentage* distribution of Lewiston/Auburn MSA workers by major industry group.

### Distribution of Workers by Major Industry Group: Lewiston/Auburn MSA (1976-1996)



The most dramatic change in the regional economy is the decline in Manufacturing as a major source of employment. Where Manufacturing formerly employed close to half of all workers, it now employs only one in four. As Manufacturing has declined, Services has become an important source of new jobs.

## Summary

Several points regarding the regional economy are important:

- ▶ A substantial number of new jobs have been created in recent years. However, many of these new jobs offer only moderate pay scales. Contacts indicate that many are 'back-office' and telemarketing positions.
- ▶ Typically, regions experiencing significant increases in employment also experience population increases – this is not occurring in the Lewiston/Auburn area. Local contacts indicate that many of the workers taking these jobs are choosing to live in other communities. Should this trend change, the area can look forward to some substantial growth.

## Tourism Trends in the Auburn and the Region

Conversations with state, regional and local tourism officials indicate that the State of Maine and regional promotional organizations have compiled few recent surveys or statistics specific to tourism and its economic impacts. The latest detailed study from the Maine Office of Tourism is "*The Economic Impact of Tourist Expenditures on the State of Maine*" for the year 1991, published in 1992/3. An additional study by Longwoods summarized Maine travel activity in 1996, and its 1997 summer advertising campaign.

Tourism trends have been identified based upon phone conversations with tourism officials and the information listed below, most of which is published on the Internet by Maine Business Online. While most of the statistics include local residents, the demographic information presented helps lend perspective to the data.

### Maine Information Centers, Mail and Telephone Inquiries

<i>Maine Information Center Visitors, Mail and 800 # Phone Inquiries</i>						
	<i>Info Center</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mail</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>Visitors</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Inquiries</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Inquiries</i>	<i>Change</i>
1990	1,123,967		62,711		41,355	
1991	1,046,797	-7%	52,640	-16%	64,986	57%
1992	1,034,895	-1%	50,084	-5%	65,019	0%
1993	953,070	-8%	47,458	-5%	133,209	105%
1994	897,625	-6%	41,451	-13%	197,933	49%
1995	1,014,939	13%	36,893	-11%	191,633	-3%
1996	986,159	-3%	32,628	-12%	152,935	-20%
Annual Avg.	1,008,207		46,266		121,010	

Tourists are showing a great deal of interest in getting information about visiting Maine, although the ways in which they seek information has changed in recent years. The convenience and cost effectiveness of dialing the toll-free number has become more popular than mailing in an inquiry. Maine tourism information is also available on the Internet. The information centers continue to be a major resource for visitors already in the state, serving an average of over one million visitors every year.



July and August are by far the two busiest months at the information centers, with approximately 44 percent of the visits occurring during those months in 1996. About 22 percent of the visits occurred in the fall (September and October) in 1996 and roughly 17 percent coming in the spring (May and June) for that year. The remaining six months of the year (January through April and October through December) combined totaled 17 percent.

Annual visitation trends for state parks and Acadia National Park are shown in the table below.

### Maine State and National Park Visitors

<i>State Parks and Acadia National Park Visitors &amp; Campers</i>				
	<i>State Parks</i>	<i>% Change</i>	<i>Acadia Nat'l. Park</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1990	2,280,833		2,646,179	
1991	2,255,422	-1%	2,728,433	3%
1992	1,933,257	-14%	2,634,689	-3%
1993	2,051,757	6%	2,908,610	10%
1994	1,853,632	-10%	2,967,325	2%
1995	2,082,027	12%	3,097,954	4%
1996	1,854,417	-11%	2,957,407	-5%
<b>Annual avg.</b>	<b>2,044,478</b>		<b>2,848,657</b>	

The data in the table indicates that visitors are drawn in large numbers to the natural beauty of Maine, as illustrated by the popularity of the state's parks. State-owned parks attract over two million guests annually on average, while Acadia National Park draws almost three million visitors every year.

July and August accounted for about 55 percent of the state park visitation total for 1996. June was also a strong month, account for roughly 14 percent of the total. May, September and October account for a combined total of about 23 percent. The remaining eight percent is spread out among the remaining five months. Acadia National Park exhibited similar trends in visitation, with the exception of September placing ahead of June for visitation.

Statewide taxable restaurant and lodging sales trends are shown in the table below.

### Maine Taxable Restaurant and Lodging Sales

<i>Taxable Restaurant and Lodging Sales</i>		
<i>Combined (000)</i>		
	<i>Total Sales</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1990	\$1,168,096	
1991	\$1,290,124	10%
1992	\$1,347,120	4%
1993	\$1,389,480	3%
1994	\$1,466,973	6%
1995	\$1,532,536	4%
1996	\$1,575,377	3%
<b>Annual avg.</b>	<b>\$1,395,672</b>	

The combined state taxable restaurant and lodging sales figures break down seasonally along these lines, based on 1996 figures: spring (March - May) accounts for 19 percent; summer (June - August) for 39 percent; fall (September - November) for 25 percent; and winter (December through February) for 17 percent. Lodging-only figures are addressed below.

**Taxable Lodging Sales**

<i>Taxable Lodging Sales Only (000)</i>		
	<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1990	\$274,974	
1991	\$304,786	11%
1992	\$278,402	-9%
1993	\$318,811	15%
1994	\$320,086	0%
1995	\$348,300	9%
1996	\$362,308	4%
Annual Avg.	\$315,381	

The lodging sales totals shown above generally can be divided on a seasonal basis in the following way, based upon the 1996 figures: spring (March - May) accounts for 14 percent; summer (June - August) for 53 percent; fall (September - November) for 24 percent; and winter (December through February) for 9 percent.

Combined, taxable restaurant and lodging sales have shown consistent growth during this decade. Lodging sales alone, except for a single-digit rate of decline in 1992, have shown steady growth, with the figure from 1996 representing 14.7 percent more than the 1990 total. It should be noted that the figures presented in the tables are actual dollars for each year, and have not been adjusted for inflation.

Annual employment for the Maine lodging industry is shown in the following table.

**Maine Lodging Employment**

<i>Estimated Annual Average Lodging Employment</i>		
	<i>Avg. Number Employed</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1990	9,266	
1991	9,158	-1%
1992	9,316	2%
1993	9,492	2%
1994	9,867	4%
1995	9,458	-4%
1996	9,767	3%
Annual Avg.	9,475	

The twelve-month average for employment in the state's lodging industry has increased only slightly since 1990, with about 2.3 percent more persons working in the industry in 1996 than in 1990. This suggests that the lodging sales growth discussed in this report may be attributed as

much to inflation as to an increased volume of guests. The employment table indicates that lodging traffic for the state is relatively flat and stable.

Measured on a monthly basis, state lodging employment figures for the months of July and August are generally double the numbers for the months of January, February, March, April, November and December. In May, June, September and October, employment figures generally run at about 65 percent to 85 percent of the July and August figures.

Traffic counts at Maine border crossings are shown in the following table.

**Maine Turnpike Traffic Counts, and Border Crossings**

<i>Maine Turnpike Traffic, and U.S. Non-resident Border Crossings</i>				
	<i>Turnpike Traffic (# vehicles)</i>	<i>% Change</i>	<i>Border Crossings (non-res.)</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1990	27,558,000		11,051,784	
1991	27,498,000	0%	12,180,629	10%
1992	28,532,000	4%	11,655,611	-4%
1993	28,990,000	2%	10,668,980	-8%
1994	30,393,000	5%	8,401,290	-21%
1995	32,041,000	5%	6,329,841	-25%
1996	32,432,000	1%	5,597,623	-12%
Annual Avg.	29,634,857		9,412,251	

The Maine Turnpike has experienced fairly steady traffic volume increases, with over 30 million vehicles in each of the last three years reported. The number of Canadian visitors traveling through Maine's border crossings has declined steadily since its peak in 1992. The decrease in Canadian traffic, which was down by almost 50 percent in 1996 as compared to 1990, can be attributed to a number of factors, including currency exchange rates.

Turnpike traffic is heaviest during July (11%) and August (12%), and lightest in January (6%) and February (6%). The border-crossing traffic count is relatively consistent for ten months of the year, with July and August peaking at 20 to 49 percent above the other months during 1996.

Data from a survey of taxable lodging sales in Androscoggin economic survey area are shown in the table below

## Androscoggin Economic Survey Area Taxable Lodging Sales

	<i>Androscoggin Area Taxable Lodging Sales (000)</i>	
	<i>Total Sales</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1990	\$22,583	
1991	\$23,173	3%
1992	\$24,293	5%
1993	\$27,362	13%
1994	NA	NA
1995	\$28,790	5%
1996	\$31,156	8%
Annual Avg.	\$26,226	

Annual lodging sales figures for the Androscoggin economic survey area, including Auburn, indicate steady growth in dollar volume. However, the figures are not adjusted for inflation which, based on the consumer price index for the same time period, would generally account for annual increases of three to four percent. The actual volume of business for the area appears to be flat.

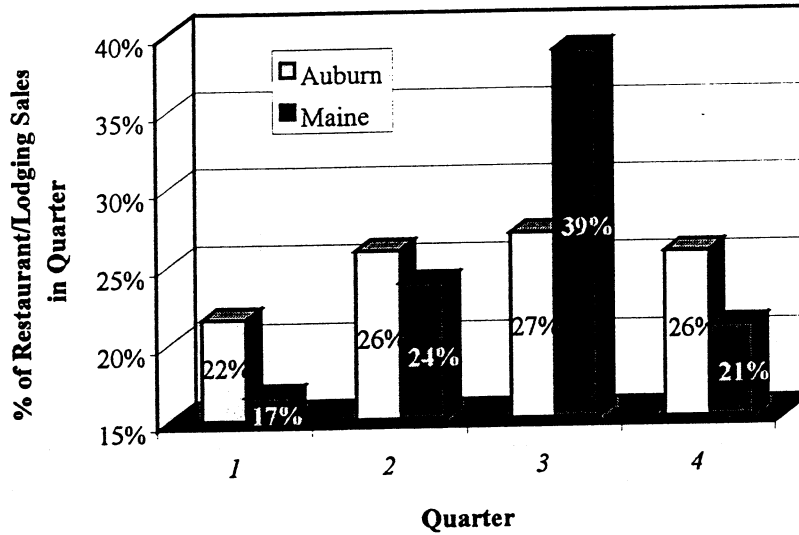
The seasonal breakdown for these figures, based on 1996 numbers, follows: spring (March - May) accounts for 22 percent; summer (June - August) for 25 percent; fall (September - November) for 16 percent; and winter (December through February) for 37 percent.

### ***Auburn Area Tourism Activity***

We have analyzed Auburn area tourism activity using restaurant/lodging taxable sales data available from the State of Maine. Typically, communities that experience a great deal of tourism activity display major variation in taxable revenues throughout the year – a summer destination experiences well above average revenues during the summer quarter while a winter destination experiences well above average revenues during the winter quarter. The graphic below compares quarterly restaurant/lodging taxable sales activity in Auburn and Maine. The comparison is in terms of percentage of annual activity occurring in each quarter.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Average of data for 1995 and 1996.

## Restaurant/Lodging Taxable Sales Activity Comparison: Auburn and Maine



For the state as a whole, heavy summer tourism activity results in a well above average percentage of restaurant/lodging revenues being generated in the summer quarter (3). A relatively small percentage of total revenues are generated during the winter quarter (1). Auburn's pattern of revenues differs substantially from that for the state as a whole – revenues tend to be distributed relatively evenly throughout the year – an indication that there is no influx of travel activity at any time during the year. Clearly, *Auburn is not 'capturing' its share of Maine's tourism/travel activity.*

### **Summary**

For the state as a whole, tourism appears to be relatively flat, experiencing some slight increases in most years, balanced by slight declines in others. While the Androscoggin County area appears to fit that same trend in general, it does not appear to attract guests for the same reasons or during the same seasonal time frames as the state trends indicate. Androscoggin area seasonal lodging sales figures vary greatly from the statewide averages listed above. While the local region has its busiest period in the winter, the state's busiest season by far is the summer. The spring represents a much larger share of the local business as compared to the state numbers, while the fall is smaller on the local level.

These numbers suggest that visitors traveling to the Androscoggin area are not typical of those being attracted by other regions of the state. The numbers also support anecdotal evidence related by local lodging operators in phone conversations, in which business travelers are said to account for a large portion of the business, supplemented by activities in the spring at Bates College, and general tourist business in the summer. The fall foliage season, renowned to be a busy time for lodging establishments throughout northern New England, is said to have little impact locally.

The only readily-apparent local telephone number available to tourists seeking information regarding the Auburn area is that of the Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce (not a toll-

free number) for those who know in which county the city is located. The state tourism office has a toll-free number, as noted above; however, a call to the telephone operator information line for such numbers (800-555-1212) in April of 1998 resulted in the operator telling the caller no 800 number was listed.

The clear conclusion of the tax revenue analysis and conversations with local contacts is that Auburn attracts little tourism/travel activity. With the exception of annual festivals, major weekends at Bates College and the occasional tourist with an interest in the city, Auburn is not 'on the map' for most tourists. Rather, it is simply a community off the turnpike, located between the coast and mountains.

Auburn's low travel 'profile' should be viewed as an opportunity – any additional penetration into the travel market will yield significant benefits for local business people.

# Analyses

## Market Area Demographics

Consumer expenditures are guided by basic demographic factors. Gender, age, income, household type and ethnicity all factor into buying patterns. A basic knowledge of these factors in any trade area is enormously helpful in estimating its buying power. Further, a projection of demographic trends is instrumental in estimating potential, future buying power. Demographic trends will have a significant effect on commercial markets and retailing in the coming years. For instance: Nationwide by 2010, the number of persons in the prime home buying and furnishing years aged 25 to 34 will fall by about 6 million from 1995. At the same time, the population in the peak earning but slower consuming, middle-aged years of 45 to 54 will rise by nearly 41 million.<sup>9</sup>

For many downtowns, the traditional market area is *the* primary area from which it must draw its retail sales, service dollars and recreational/cultural expenditures. As such, demographic trends are a clear indication of sales potential. A number of statistics for the trade area are shown below. Please note that these demographics include all persons living within the Lewiston/Auburn MSA. The statistics do not include seasonal homeowners or travelers.

Historic, current and projected population change in the trade area is compared with similar figures for the City of Auburn and Maine in the table below.

### Historic, Current and Projected Population: Trade Area, Auburn, Maine

	1980	1990	1997	Projected 2002
Trade Area	90,722	95,343	90,941	87,564
% Change		5.1%	-4.6%	-3.7%
	1980	1990	1995	
Auburn	23,128	24,309	36,960	
% Change		5.1%	52.0%	
Maine	1,125,043	1,227,928	1,241,382	
% Change		9.1%	1.1%	

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census,  
Maine Department of Human Services, Demographics-on-Call

Recent trends suggest that the trade area has, and will continue to lose population. However, it appears likely that this trend will slow if the regional population continues to generate new jobs. Inevitably, an increase in employment will draw new residents to almost any market.

<sup>9</sup> From: *Reinventing Real Estate*, Urban Land Institute, 1995.

Historic, current and projected change in the number of trade area households is shown in the table below. Average household size is also shown:

**Households, Change and Average Size: Trade Area**

	1980	1990	1997	2002
Households	32,194	36,413	35,145	33,939
<i>Absolute Change</i>		4,219	(1,268)	(1,206)
<i>% Change</i>		13.1%	-3.5%	-3.4%
Avg. HH Size	2.71	2.53	2.50	2.49

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Demographics-on-Call

Consistent with population projections the number of households in the trade area is expected to decrease. In contrast with trends in many other northeastern markets, the average size of trade area households continues to decrease – albeit slowly. This suggests that the population is aging.

Distribution of the population by age is a good market indicator, as persons in varying age groups display markedly different spending patterns. The current distribution of the trade area population by age is shown in the following table, along with a projection for a point five years in the future.

**Population Distribution by Age Group: Trade Area**

<i>Age</i>	1997		2002		<i>Change</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
0-17	23,167	25.5%	21,738	24.8%	-1,429	-0.6%
18-24	8,994	9.9%	9,028	10.3%	+34	0.4%
25-44	27,073	29.8%	24,017	27.4%	-3,057	-2.3%
45-64	18,624	20.5%	20,160	23.0%	+1,536	2.5%
65-84	11,175	12.3%	10,606	12.1%	-569	-0.2%
85+	1,908	2.1%	2,016	2.3%	+108	0.2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>90,941</b>		<b>87,564</b>		<b>-3,377</b>	

Source: Demographics-on-Call

Like most northeastern markets, there will be a strong increase in the number of persons aged 45 to 64 years. This is a factor of the aging of the ‘Baby Boom,’ the major age group in the population. As ‘Generation X’ ages, the number of persons aged 25 to 44 years will decrease. The effect of the ‘Echo Boom’ is mildly evident in the increase in the number of persons aged 18 to 24 years.

Trade area data has also been presented in terms of households by income bracket. This is shown below in terms of the current (1997) and projected (2002) distribution.



## Household by Income: Trade Area

Income Bracket	Number of Households by Income Bracket				
	1997		2002		Change 1997-'02
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	
\$0-9,999	4,604	13.1%	3,869	11.4%	(735)
\$10-14,999	3,163	9.0%	2,987	8.8%	(176)
\$15-24,999	5,904	16.8%	5,430	16.0%	(474)
\$25-34,999	5,940	16.9%	4,955	14.6%	(984)
\$35-49,999	6,888	19.6%	6,584	19.4%	(304)
\$50-74,999	5,834	16.6%	6,211	18.3%	377
\$75-99,999	1,546	4.4%	2,206	6.5%	660
\$100-149,999	949	2.7%	1,358	4.0%	409
\$150,000+	281	0.8%	305	0.9%	24
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35,145</b>		<b>33,939</b>		<b>(1,206)</b>

Source: Demographics-on-Call

Currently, approximately 39 percent of the trade area's households are in the lower (Less than \$25,000) income bracket, approximately 36 percent are in the moderate (\$25,000 to \$50,000) income bracket and the remainder (25 Percent) are in a higher (\$50,000 or more) income bracket. Not surprisingly, the number of lower income households will decrease during the next five years, while the number of higher income households will increase. However, this is in part a factor of inflation rather than the expectation of strong, real income gains. The *median household income* in the trade area will increase from the current \$31,365 to a projected \$34,291 in 2002. This is an annual rate of increase of only 1.8 percent – a rate of increase that will barely keep pace with inflation.

### Travel Markets

The growth of the travel market has been well documented in the media. Put simply, pleasure travel has become one of the nation's major industries, and an aging population is expected to put even more emphasis on travel during the coming years. Pleasure and recreational travel are particularly important—and competitive—in the northeast, where metropolitan markets provide a large base of potential travelers. Since travel activity in the region involves millions of people, it is difficult to pin down the market's demographic characteristics. However, a number of facts regarding this market are relevant to Auburn:

- ▶ A number of contacts noted that the Lewiston/Auburn has limited lodging capacity, restricting the number of travelers who can spend the night in the area, and making it difficult for the county to attract significant meeting/convention business. An inventory of lodging facilities indicates that there are 15 facilities with a total bed capacity of 636 in the two communities. A substantial segment of this lodging base is of relatively low quality. (See the *Auburn Area Lodging Market Assessment* Section of this Report).

- ▶ Androscoggin County is not a 'name' travel destination. Nevertheless, its combination of attractions and rural 'charm' make it the kind of place that travelers from urban areas like to visit. Further, both Auburn and Lewiston have a number of natural, cultural and recreational features that would be of interest to travelers.

In assessing the travel market, it is also important to keep in mind several trends:

*Trip Duration* - increasingly, travelers are replacing the traditional two week vacation with a number of short trips over the course of a year. This tends to keep travelers closer to home, and is helpful to a location like Auburn which is located within an easy driving range of the northeast's largest metropolitan market.

*Eco-Tourism* - an increasing segment of the travel market is interested in discovering more about the environment in the places they travel. At the extreme end, travelers spend their entire vacation studying/observing a particular ecology. However, for most travelers, eco-tourism might mean spending a few hours finding out about wildlife or plant species. The ecology of the Androscoggin River could be of interest to these people.

*Cultural Tourism* - travelers are also increasingly interested in the customs, ethnicity, industries and other unique elements of the places they visit. Auburn's unique history could serve as a real attraction to these travelers.

*Bus Tours* - the bus tour business has shown steady growth in recent years. Most observers attribute this to an aging population. Experience has shown that any attraction or community that can convince bus tour operators that bus travelers will find interesting sights or shopping can typically assure themselves of a steady flow of bus business during tourist seasons.

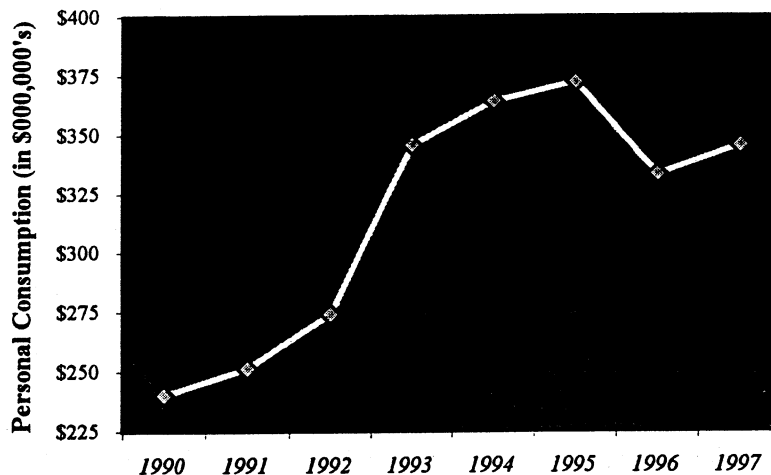
Clearly, the region's visitors range broadly in terms of age, income, household type and other demographics factors. However, persons who have the time and financial means to travel are typically of above average income. Right now, Auburn is not a travel destination point. However, its location within an easy drive of several major metro areas puts it in a good position to tap into the regional market.

## ***Retail Performance***

Like business persons in most northeastern downtowns, downtown Auburn businesses are fighting a tough battle as shopping centers, big boxes and suburban service providers compete for retail dollars. Recent performance is summarized below.

Personal Consumption sales in Auburn have increased since 1990. This is shown in the graphic below.

## Personal Consumption: Auburn (1990 – 1997)



Note: Figures are for the entire City.  
Source: State of Maine Revenue Services

Overall, sales increased by about 43 percent. Increases were strong during the early part of the 1990's

### ***Retail Potential***

With a variety of data sources it is possible to make current estimates and projections of the retail sales potential of a defined area. In this instance, current estimates and projections have been developed for the traditional trade area. These values are based on number of factors including:

*Demographics* - basic demographic values such as population, households, household composition, household income and age distribution are significant indicators of retail sales potential.

*Buying Patterns* - regional and national buying trends are also significant factors. Over time, various retail categories will go up and down depending on consumer needs and desires.

*Growth and Change* - the demographic characteristics of a defined area will change with or without growth—populations age, income levels change, etc. Strong growth (or decline) can also have a substantial impact on retail sales expectations.

In assessing retail keep in mind that the estimates only deal with the retail spending of full-time residents of the trade area. Spending at local stores is certainly affected by two opposing factors: Spending by full-time residents *outside* of the trade area, and; Spending by non-residents (travelers, second homeowners) *inside* the trade area.

- ▶ The estimates and projections have only been completed for retail categories which are typically found in a shopping center - or downtown, although not appropriate in all locations. A number of retail categories, such as auto sales, gasoline sales, catalog sales have not been included. These categories have been totaled in the 'other retail' grouping.

- ▶ The estimates and projections refer to the *total* retail spending potential of persons living in the two trade areas, including spending in many other locations. It is apparent that only a segment of these dollars are spent in downtown. One of the goals of any downtown program is to increase the 'capture rate' of these dollars.

## ***Trade Area Spending***

The table below shows spending estimates for the trade area, on several bases: 1) Total, estimated spending by category in 1997; 2) Total, projected spending by category in 2002; 3) Estimated, per household spending by category in 1997, and; 4) Projected, per household spending by category in 2002. In addition, the table shows the annual, percentage change in spending by category, as well as totals for the selected categories.<sup>10</sup> Note that the figures in the table reflect the *full spending potential of residents of the trade area*. These dollars are expended in a number of locations, including downtown Auburn, other stores within the trade area, and stores outside of the trade area. In reality, the downtown 'captures' a small percentage of these total sales.

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<sup>10</sup> Spending estimates developed by DOUGLAS J. KENNEDY & ASSOCIATES in conjunction with Demographics-on-Call.

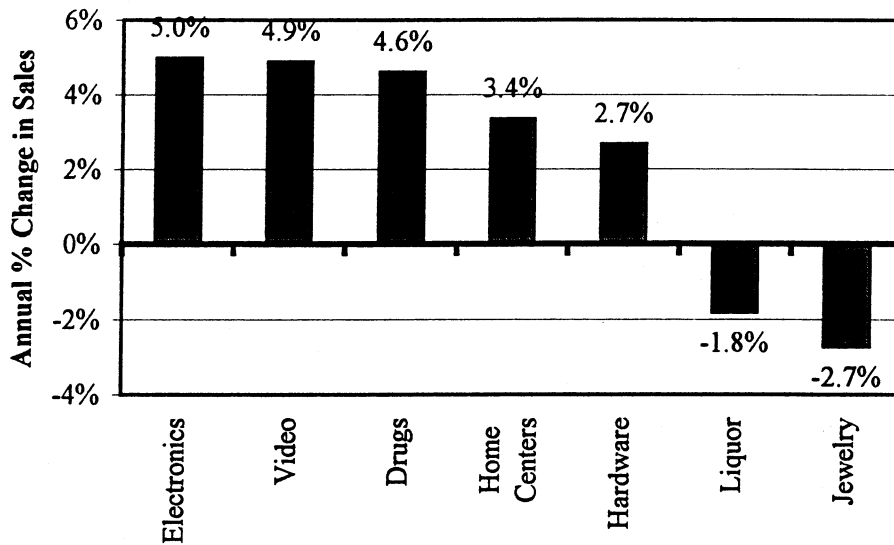
**Estimated Retail Spending in Selected Categories:  
Traditional Trade Area**

	<i>Estimated Sales Potential (in \$000's)</i>		<i>Estimated Sales Per HH (\$\$'s)</i>		<i>Annual Sales % Change</i>
	<i>1997</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>2002</i>	
Apparel	32,161	30,377	775	760	-1.13%
Appliance	2,653	2,923	86	99	1.96%
Convenience	33,322	32,358	1,065	1,069	-0.59%
Department Store	32,404	32,078	812	834	-0.20%
Drug Store	29,202	36,581	977	1,270	4.61%
Electronics Store	16,462	20,995	452	595	4.98%
Fast-Food Restaurant	36,245	34,367	821	805	-1.06%
Full Service Restaurant	36,945	34,518	813	783	-1.35%
Furniture	12,465	12,241	316	324	-0.36%
Grocery	152,107	158,119	4,049	4,337	0.78%
Hardware	7,187	8,201	240	279	2.67%
Home Centers Store	39,930	47,086	1,388	1,678	3.35%
Jewelry Store	7,080	6,168	160	146	-2.72%
Liquor Store	9,344	8,532	170	158	-1.80%
Mass Merchandiser	54,745	55,838	1,483	1,564	0.40%
Photo Store	700	696	23	24	-0.11%
Shoe Store	6,439	7,308	172	203	2.56%
Sporting Goods Store	7,442	7,806	269	290	0.96%
Toy Store	5,834	5,712	134	134	-0.42%
Variety Store	3,006	3,161	79	85	1.01%
Video Store	2,367	3,004	80	104	4.88%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>528,040</b>	<b>548,069</b>	<b>16,361</b>	<b>17,543</b>	<b>0.75%</b>
<b>All Other Stores</b>	<b>611,326</b>	<b>626,954</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>0.51%</b>
<b>Retail Total</b>	<b>1,139,366</b>	<b>1,175,023</b>	<b>16,872</b>	<b>17,967</b>	<b>0.62%</b>

The current retail potential of residents in the traditional trade area is just under \$530 million. Spending in the selected categories is expected to increase by about \$20 million between 1997 and 2002, an annual rate of increase of 0.75 percent.

While there will be an overall increase, a more detailed analysis of the data reveals that there will be 'winners' and 'losers' among the selected retail categories. This is shown graphically below, for the largest percentage gainers and losers. The graphic shows projected, annual, *percentage* change in sales.

## Retail Winners and Losers: Traditional Market Area



Based on the projections, there is solid potential for expansion in electronic stores, video stores, drug stores, home center stores and hardware stores in the trade area. However, prospects are not strong for liquor and jewelry stores.

## ***Fiscal and Economic Impacts***

Downtown improvement generates significant economic and fiscal benefits; both locally and regionally. Several of the major benefits of the balloon festival and the downtown plan are summarized below:

### ***The Balloon Festival***

- The Balloon Festival is the single largest generator of 'people activity in Auburn's downtown on an annual basis. In the most recent year for which data is available (1997), it was estimated that between 115,000 and 120,000 persons visited the downtown area.
- 32.6 percent of the festival participants were from outside of Androscoggin County and 4.1 percent of all participants stayed in local hotels and other lodging facilities.
- It is estimated that festival participants generated direct spending in the amount of \$984,400 at the 1997 festival. In addition, on-site non-profits and organizer spending totaled almost \$280,000, for total *direct spending* of approximately \$1.26 million. <sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> From *Great Falls Balloon Festival On-Site Economic Impact Study*, Report written and analyzed by Rachel Desgrosseillers, August 22-24, 1997.

## ***The Downtown Plan***

The downtown plan proposes a significant amount of new commercial building space in the downtown area – primarily to be composed of office and retail/service space. This new building space has significant economic implications, both from public fiscal and employment perspectives. These are summarized below.

- New commercial buildings will generate substantial new tax dollars for the city. While the tax implications of any project will vary dependent on the quality of construction, interior finishes, fixtures and other items, it is possible to estimate the typical dollar value of taxes to be generated. Based on the current city tax rate, a new commercial building with 10,000 square feet of floor area will generate \$26,700 in property taxes, on an annual basis.<sup>12</sup>
- A new office building containing 10,000 square feet of floor area will create approximately 33 new jobs in the downtown area.<sup>13</sup>
- A new retail/service building containing 10,000 square feet of floor area will create approximately 13 new jobs in the downtown area.<sup>14</sup>

## ***Auburn Area Lodging Market Assessment***

Throughout the market analysis process, local and regional contacts noted the lack of quality lodging facilities in Auburn and the immediately surrounding area. Most contacts felt that this is a serious deficiency and the Auburn misses many economic development opportunities because of its lack of lodging facilities. Local industries don't feel that they have a place to lodge employees and clients. Without question, *the city's opportunity to 'capture' the tourism market is limited by the lack of hotel rooms.*

The following report section reviews some of the background factors in the local lodging market.

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<sup>12</sup> Tax rate from Auburn Assessor's Office.

<sup>13</sup> Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers.

## ***Available Rooms***

An inventory of Auburn lodging facilities (and number of rooms) is shown in the table below.

### **Auburn Lodging Facilities**

<b><i>Facility</i></b>	<b><i>Number of Rooms</i></b>
Auburn Inn	114
Bel Aire Motel	16
Coastline Inn	72
Pineland Motel	24
Sleepy Time	6
Sunset Motel	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>

Six lodging establishments, totaling 259 rooms currently operate year-round in Auburn. The City has no hotel accommodations in the downtown district. The closest lodging establishment (Coastline Inn) to the downtown is one mile away and contains 72 rooms.

An inventory of lodging facilities/rooms in Lewiston is shown in the table below.

### **Lewiston Lodging Facilities**

<b><i>Facility</i></b>	<b><i>Number of Rooms</i></b>
Motel 6	66
Holiday Motel	25
Super 8	50
Chalet Motel	74
Farnham House	5
Maine Motel	6
Mom & Dad's	6
Ramada	117
Redwood Motel	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>377</b>

Nine lodging establishments totaling 377 rooms operate in Lewiston. As with Auburn, Lewiston has no "Class-A" accommodations. The most expensive and most complete lodging facility in the two cities is the Ramada Inn and Conference Center. Nightly rates at the Ramada range from a low of \$69 for a standard room, to a high of \$148 for a suite. The Ramada's amenities are the most extensive in the two cities and include the following: a restaurant and lounge; an indoor pool and fitness center; conference rooms; a business center and in-room modem lines. In addition to



Ramada, the Motel 6 and Super 8 Motel chains operate in Lewiston. Both of these chains provide limited services at lower rates than the Ramada. Four independent motels and two bed-and-breakfast inns also operate within Lewiston. Nightly rates, other than those previously mentioned for the Ramada, generally range from \$30 to \$40. Most observers feel that the Ramada is the highest quality facility in the Lewiston-Auburn area, primarily because it offers an on-site restaurant and limited meeting capabilities. The Motel 6 offers budget rates with relatively high quality rooms.

In contrast with Lewiston-Auburn, the Portland area has a broad range of lodging offerings, ranging from budget priced to deluxe. Many of the major national chains have a presence in the area, and the business or pleasure traveler can typically find a room that meets his/her preferences.

### ***Major Market Factors***

A series of interviews with area lodging operators reveals the following regarding the area market:

- ▶ The annual Balloon Festival fills the city's rooms, but other civic festivals and events have a small impact on the lodging business. Bates College also fills most rooms during its graduation and reunion weekends. Visiting athletic teams from other colleges also use local lodging, usually for one night at a time. Auburn also sees a small amount of overflow business from Portland and other points south during the summer.
- ▶ Neither Auburn nor Lewiston has a "Class-A" hotel facility in its lodging inventory. Auburn's lodging accommodations tend to appeal to the budget-conscious, and provide a basic, no-frills experience. One establishment is part of a small chain of three Maine inns; the other five lodges are independent. One facility has a restaurant on-site, but it is currently closed while the hotel seeks an operator to lease the dining facilities; the other five lodges have no dining facilities. None of the facilities has indoor recreation facilities. Nightly rates generally range from \$30 to \$60.
- ▶ The two larger establishments in the area see the business traveler as their largest and most consistent market year-round with group business for commercial guests an important part of their business. Tourists make up a large portion of the market during the summer. Business was up last year, following several years of flat or declining occupancy.
- ▶ The smaller "mom-and-pop" sole proprietor motels further outside of the downtown generally rent rooms for about \$30 a night or \$50 to \$100 per week during the winter months. The most profitable time for these motels is the summer tourist season, July through September. Business generally has declined for these establishments in recent years.
- ▶ Lewiston lodging establishments generally draw from the same market of guests as the Auburn lodges, and experience the same business cycles as their neighbors. The Ramada is a partial exception, as its facilities allow it to draw additional business for groups, and small conferences and conventions.

## ***Local Business and the Lodging Market***

A phone sampling of local (Lewiston and Auburn) businesses yielded common opinions regarding lodging arrangements for corporate guests:

- ▶ Guests of local businesses stay both in town and out of town. While the contacted businesses reported a preference for keeping their guests in town, they also cited the limited number of local lodging options as a drawback. The main reason cited for lodging guests out of town is the higher quality of accommodations available elsewhere.
- ▶ For many of their employees, recruits, and sales representatives, local businesses typically arrange lodging in one of the nearby chain establishments (Ramada, Quality, Super 8, Motel 6), or a bed & breakfast inn, in Lewiston. For major clients, executives, and VIPs, they typically arrange lodging in Freeport or Portland at a deluxe hotel.
- ▶ For businesses whose guests make arrangements on their own, their choice of lodging accommodation varies with the season. During the winter months these guests generally tend to arrange lodging near the office, often at one of the chain establishments. During the summer months they reportedly tend to stay in Portland, or along the coast, at one of the finer hotels, and willingly make a longer drive to the office.
- ▶ Area businesses indicated that they welcome and would use 'better accommodations,' if they existed in Auburn, as they are typically forced to use out of town facilities. Specifically, they indicated that a deluxe hotel - with a restaurant, indoor pool, and other quality amenities - would be appropriate for these guests. *The primary reason cited for guests staying out of town is the quality of the accommodations*, rather than any side attractions that other sites offer. A secondary consideration is coordinating flight times and transportation from the Portland airport; flexible and convenient shuttle service to the Portland airport would make a high-quality Auburn lodging option even more attractive to area businesses.

# **Public Input**

## **Surveys**

The collection of background market information included the creation, distribution and analysis of two public surveys. An effective downtown market study should incorporate input from persons not directly involved in the project, including downtown residents, workers, shoppers and others. These persons use downtown on a daily basis and typically can provide a good picture of usage patterns within the area. Just as importantly, they often have strong opinions regarding what is right and wrong with a downtown and what actions will result in improvement. In addition, it is important to gather data regarding regional perceptions of the downtown – from people who don't necessarily visit the downtown on a day to day basis. How do people in area communities view the downtown; What features draw them to the downtown and what new features would they like to see?

Two distinct survey efforts were undertaken to draw information from both of these groups:

- ▶ The 'Public Survey' was designed to elicit responses from frequent downtown visitors – workers, residents, shoppers, etc. – who know the downtown well and who have strong opinions regarding its future. This survey was available to any downtown visitor who would fill out a survey form.
- ▶ The 'Phone Survey' drew upon responses from a random sample of residents of Androscoggin County. Respondents were contacted by phone and – if they chose to participate – were asked a series of questions regarding their use and perceptions of downtown.

In each instance, a draft set of questions was developed and reviewed with Auburn City staff. The questions were then formalized in a survey instrument and disseminated either on paper or phone – dependent on the survey. Responses were then recorded on a statistical database for analysis. Summarized responses to the two surveys are provided below:

### **The Public Survey**

The public survey instrument (see Appendix) was designed to incorporate multiple choice and short answers regarding respondent residence, personal and household demographics, shopping habits in and outside of the downtown area, views regarding downtown improvement needs. Survey distribution was handled in four ways, as listed below.<sup>15</sup> Drop-off boxes were made available at each chosen location for survey respondents to return the completed survey forms. Survey locations were as follows:

1. Surveys were distributed at two banks in Auburn, Peoples Heritage Bank and Mechanics Savings Bank. Patrons and employees of each bank completed the survey.
2. Multiple copies of the survey were dropped off at a number of downtown stores, services and restaurants. These included Austin's Fine Food and Wine, Roger's Haircutters, Capers Restaurant, Orphan Annie's, Reid's Guns & Cigars, and TJs Restaurant.

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<sup>15</sup> Individual survey forms were coded to indicate the source of each returned survey.

3. Surveys were distributed at public locations including the Library, Post Office, City Hall, and Courthouse.
4. Surveys were distributed to attendees at the public workshop on March 19 in Auburn.

The survey was undertaken during the period from March 9 to 23, 1998. Overall, the survey response was strong, with 194 completed surveys returned. Similar efforts in other cities have typically resulted in 75 to 125 returned surveys. With a total of 1,200 surveys distributed, the 'response rate' was 16 percent.<sup>16</sup> The returned surveys provided a substantial amount of background data regarding how downtown Auburn is currently used, frequency of visits to downtown, shopping habits of visitors, and the improvements people would like to see. In total, approximately 1,200 surveys were made available in downtown Auburn over a period of two weeks, March 9 through 23.

Survey results are summarized below:

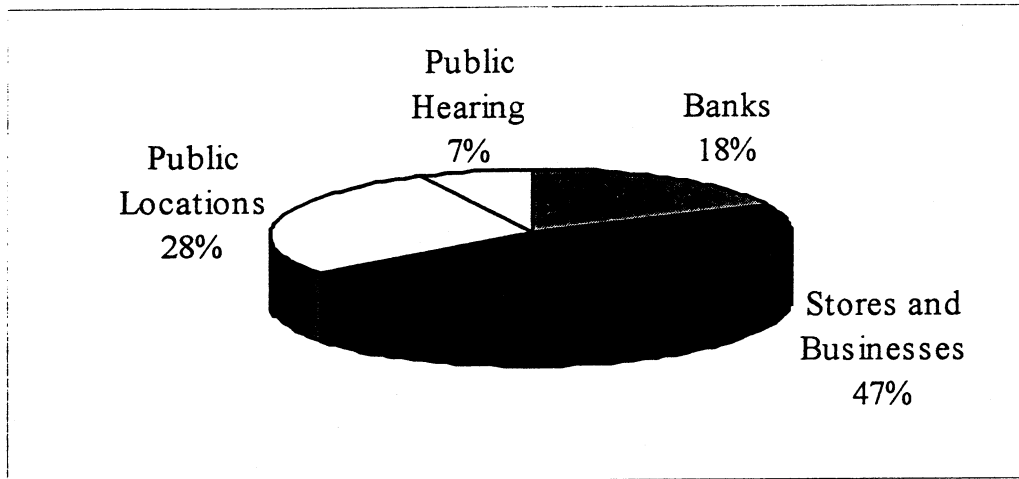
Overall, the response to the survey was good, resulting in a response rate of 16 percent. A total of 194 surveys were completed, which provided a substantial amount of background data regarding how downtown Auburn is currently used, frequency of visits to downtown, shopping habits of visitors, and what improvements people would like to see. In total, approximately 1,200 surveys were made available in downtown Auburn over a period of two weeks, March 9 through 23. Survey results are summarized below:

- ▶ 194 surveys were returned. Response breakdown from the four survey drop-off locations is graphically presented below.

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<sup>16</sup> Note that this survey was available to anyone who visited one of the drop-off locations. Thus, the results do not represent a statistical sample of the population. Nevertheless, survey results are valuable as they shed light on respondents' uses and opinions regarding downtown Auburn.

**Survey Response: By Drop-Off Source**



Combined, shoppers who picked up surveys at stores/services/restaurants and public locations around downtown Auburn accounted for 75 percent of the returned surveys. As such, the returns reflect the views of those who 'do business' in the downtown.

- ▶ Predictably, the great majority of the survey responses were from residents of Auburn and Lewiston where 77 percent of the survey respondents live. The table shows the distribution of survey respondents by home location.

**Survey Response: Respondents' Residence**

<i>Respondents' Town (Zip Code)</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Auburn	115	60%
Lewiston (04240)	34	18%
Poland Springs (04274)	6	3%
Turner (04282)	6	3%
Minot (04258)	5	3%
Greene (04236)	4	2%
Lisbon Falls (04252)	3	2%
Sabattus (04280)	2	1%
Gray (04039)	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>93%</b>

- ▶ 57 percent of the survey respondents were female, while 43 percent were male. While this does not reflect the gender distribution in the area, experience with other, similar surveys indicates that females usually constitute the majority of respondents. Further, females tend to take care of most household shopping and service needs. As such, the response reflects the attitudes of those who typically use commercial services in the downtown.

- ▶ The median age of survey respondents was 42.0 years, while the average age of survey respondents was 42.6 years.
- ▶ The average household size of survey respondents was 2.84 persons. This is larger than the average for the Lewiston-Auburn MSA, which is currently 2.50 persons.<sup>17</sup> Of the 188 survey responses for household size, 67 (or 35.6 percent) survey respondents had a household size of 2 persons. The table below shows responses for household size.

**Survey Response: Household Size**

<i>Household Size</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
1 person	26	13.8%
2 persons	67	35.6%
3 persons	33	17.6%
4 persons	39	20.7%
5 persons	18	9.6%
6 persons	5	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	

- ▶ Although most survey respondents did not supply specifics regarding total household income (respondents were given the option of indicating their household income range), the returns indicate that the average household income of survey respondents was in the area of \$47,800. Among survey respondents who indicated that they worked in downtown Auburn (a total of 86 survey respondents), the average household income was \$49,200. The median households income in the Lewiston –Auburn MSA is currently about \$31,365.
- ▶ Most survey respondents visit downtown Auburn on a regular basis, as shown in the following table:

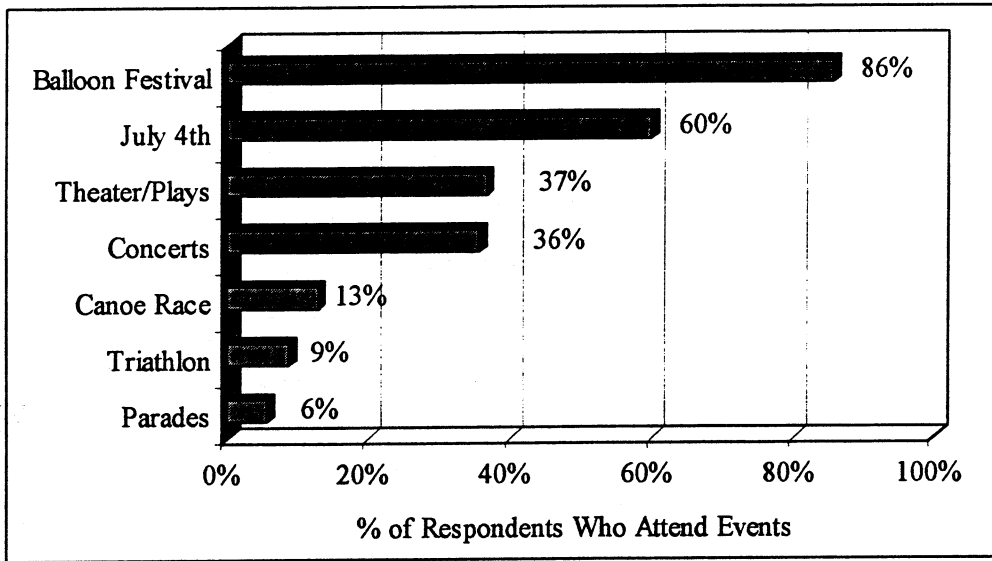
**Survey Response: Frequency of Visits to Downtown Auburn**

<i>Frequency of Visit</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Less Than Once a Week	29	15%
Once a Week	17	9%
2-3 Times a Week	42	22%
4 or More Times a Week	101	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>	

- ▶ A variety of cultural, recreational, and festival events take place in downtown Auburn on an annual basis. Respondents were asked to report on which of these events they have attended, with results shown in the following graphic.

<sup>17</sup> Source: Demographics on Call.

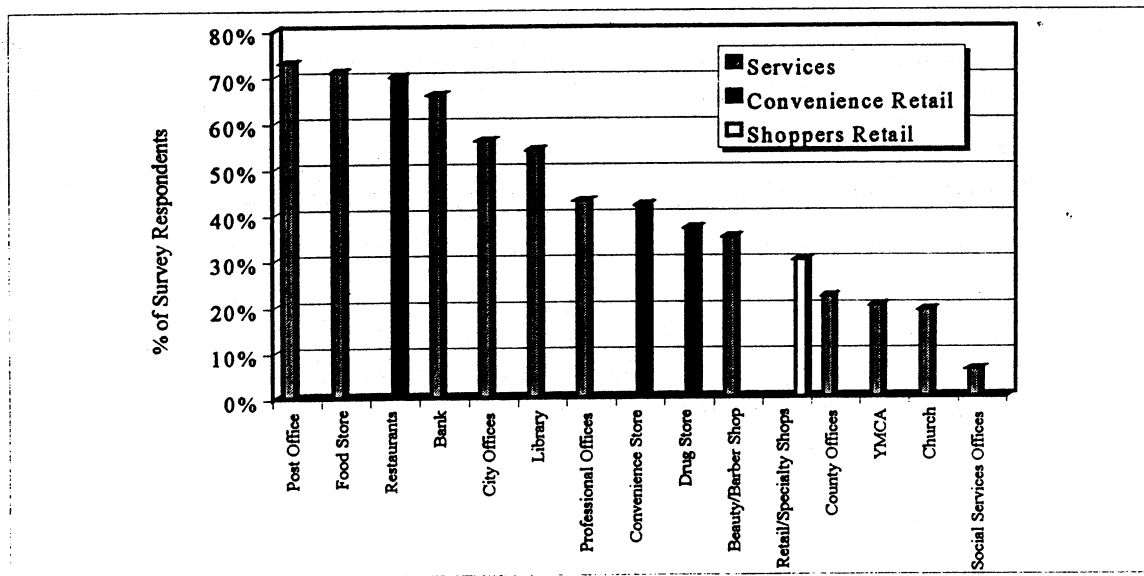
**Survey Response: Percentage of Respondents Attending Selected Downtown Events**



86 percent of the survey respondents visited downtown Auburn to attend the Balloon Festival. The July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend was the second most popular event, with 60 percent of the survey respondents attending. Theater/Plays and Concerts follow in popularity, with 37 and 36 percent, respectively.

- ▶ Respondents were asked to indicate what businesses or other locations they typically visit when visiting downtown Auburn. The graphic below shows the locations most frequently noted by respondents. Note that the locations visited have been broken down into the major categories: Services, Convenience Retail, and Shoppers Retail.

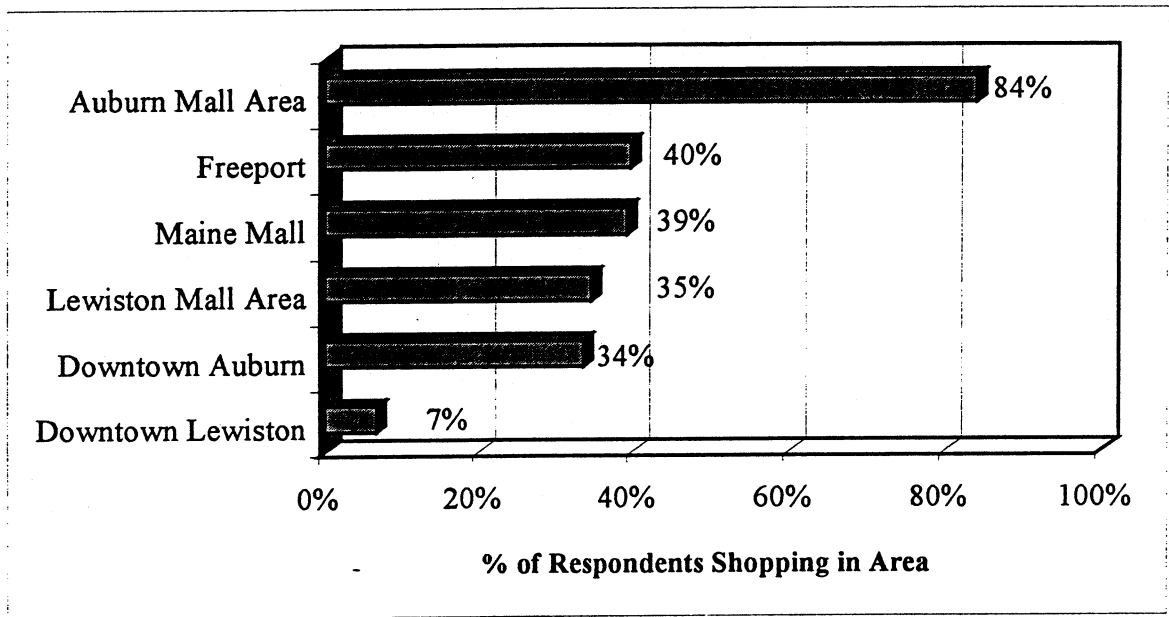
**Survey Response: Where Visitors Go in Downtown Auburn**



Downtown Auburn is used primarily for Services and Convenience Retail activity. Only one Shoppers Retail use – Retail/Specialty Shops – was a typical place to visit for approximately 30 percent of survey respondents. Only six percent indicated that they visit Social Services Offices on a regular basis.

- ▶ Survey respondents were asked where they regularly shop. 84 percent shop in the Auburn Mall area while only seven percent shop in downtown Lewiston. The following graphic shows the shopping locations where survey respondents regularly shop.

**Survey Response: Where Survey Respondents Regularly Shop**



- ▶ A majority of the survey respondents indicated that they grocery shop in either Auburn or Lewiston. The table below illustrates the four grocery most frequently used by survey respondents.

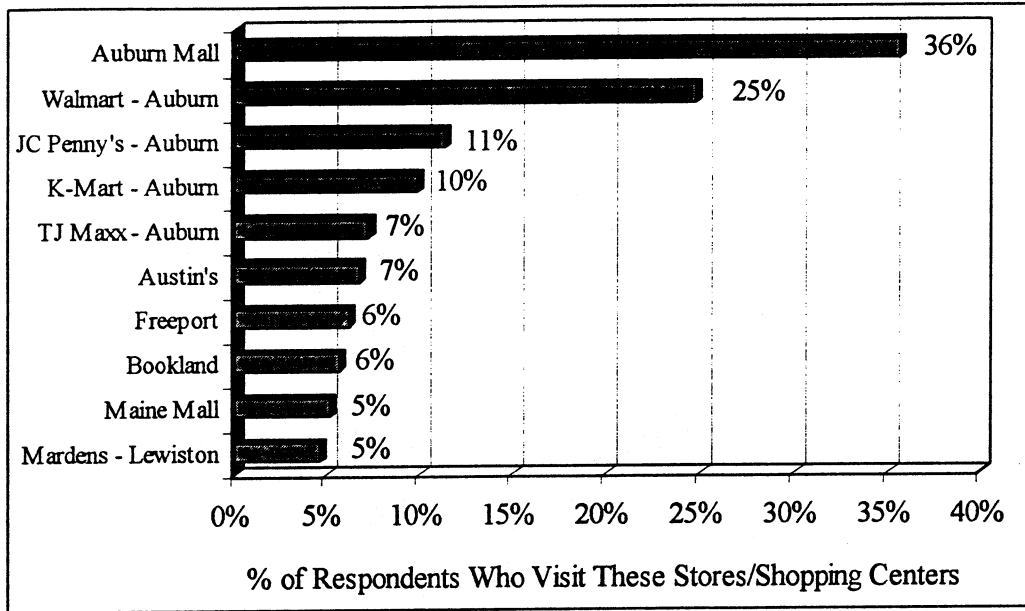
**Survey Response: Where Respondents Grocery Shop**

<i>Grocery Shopping Centers</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>% of Total Responses</i>
Shop n Save - Auburn	96	49%
Shaw's - Auburn	42	22%
Shop n Save - Lewiston	18	9%
Shaw's - Lewiston	14	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>87%</b>

- ▶ Survey respondents were asked what two stores or shopping centers they visit most frequently (other than grocery stores). The results are shown in the following graphic.



**Survey Response: Frequently Visited Stores/Shopping Centers**



- ▶ Survey respondents offered a wide variety of recommendations for new stores, services, and businesses in the downtown area. The following table lists the recommendations mentioned by three percent or more of all respondents.

**Survey Response: Recommended New Stores, Services and Businesses**

<i>Store Type</i>	<i>Number of Mentions</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Restaurant	45	23%
Specialty Store	33	17%
Parking	23	12%
Women's clothing	15	8%
Coffee Shop	13	7%
Men's Clothing	13	7%
Book Store	10	5%
Office Building	8	4%
Discount Store	7	4%
Movie Theater	6	3%
Activities for Children	6	3%
Museum/Art Gallery	6	3%
Home Depot (hardware)	6	3%
Government Offices	6	3%
Computer (electronic) Store	5	3%
Convenience Store	5	3%
Antique Store	5	3%

- ▶ Survey respondents offered a wide variety of recommendations for new cultural/recreational facilities in the downtown. The following table lists the recommendations mentioned by two percent or more of all respondents.

**Survey Response: Recommended New Cultural/Recreational Facilities**

<i>Store/Facility Type</i>	<i>Number of Mentions</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Performing Arts Center	23	12%
Park	18	9%
Walking/Riding Paths	15	8%
Movie Theater	13	7%
Concerts	13	7%
Library	12	6%
Amphitheater	11	6%
Historical View/Museum	11	6%
Seasonal Festivals	9	5%
Youth Programs	9	5%
Restaurants	8	4%
Convention/Civic Center	6	3%
Night Club/Bar	4	2%
Kids Stores	3	2%
Gym	3	2%
Community Center	3	2%

***The Phone Survey***

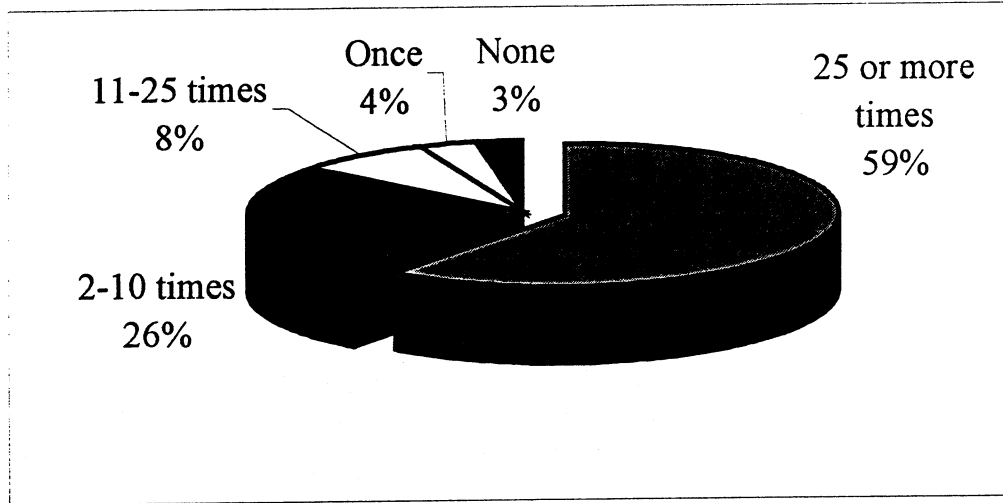
While the ‘public’ survey provided information from persons who often visit the downtown, the study methodology called for a second survey, one that would more accurately portray the shopping patterns and downtown visitation patterns of people throughout the Auburn area. This ‘phone’ survey provided a more scientifically valid ‘sampling’ of the area population, and thus a more accurate portrayal of regional trends.

To that end, a survey instrument was prepared and completed with the assistance of Granite State Marketing Research, Inc. (GSMRI). The survey instrument (see Appendix) was designed to incorporate multiple choice and short answers regarding shopping habits in the study area, recommended downtown improvement needs, and background household demographic data. GSMRI randomly phoned 225 Androscoggin County residents from area telephone books. Only those respondents aged 18 years or more were surveyed.

With 225 completed surveys, the responses provided a substantial amount of background data regarding how downtown Auburn is currently used, frequency of visits to downtown, and what improvements people would like to see. Survey results are summarized below:

- ▶ Overall, 59 percent of the survey respondents visited downtown Auburn at least 25 times within the past year. The response breakdown for frequency of trips to downtown Auburn is graphically presented below.

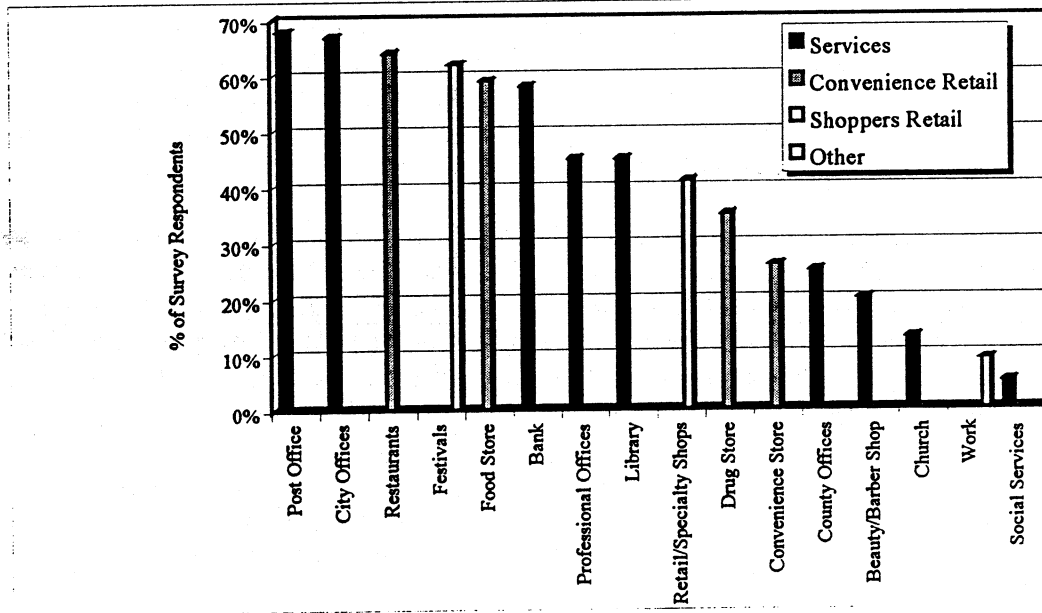
**Survey Response: By Frequency of Visits to Downtown Auburn**



Combined, respondents who visit downtown Auburn at least 11 times within the past year accounted for 67 percent of the completed surveys. As such, the returns reflect the views of people who spend time in downtown Auburn with some frequency.

- ▶ Respondents were asked to indicate what businesses or other locations they typically visit when they go to downtown Auburn. The following graphic shows the locations most frequently listed by respondents. Note that the places visited have been broken down into four major categories: Services, Convenience Retail, Shoppers Retail, and other.

**Survey Response: Where Visitors Go in Downtown Auburn**



Survey respondents most frequently mentioned the Post Office and City Offices as places to visit in downtown. In addition, restaurants, festivals (Balloon, Liberty, etc.) and food stores were frequently cited.

- ▶ 220 survey respondents answered to a question asking whether or not they travel through downtown Auburn regularly, with 86 percent responding in the affirmative.
- ▶ Survey respondents offered a wide variety of recommendations for new stores, businesses and cultural/recreational facilities in the downtown area. The following table lists the recommendations mentioned by four percent or more of all respondents.

**Survey Response: Recommended New Stores, Businesses and Cultural Facilities**

<i>Store/Facility Type</i>	<i>Number of Mentions</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Restaurant	60	27%
Specialty Shop	46	20%
Parking/Parking Garage	35	16%
Clothing Store	29	13%
Kids Programs/YMCA	25	11%
Bookstore	18	8%
Community Theater	15	7%
Furniture/Hardware/Automotive	14	6%
Art Museum	12	5%
Café	12	5%
Bike Lane/Walking Path	12	5%
Pharmacy	11	5%
Playground	10	4%
Festivals/Craft	10	4%
Park	10	4%
Bar	9	4%
Craft Store/Fair	8	4%

- ▶ Predictably, the great majority of the survey responses were from residents of Auburn, Lewiston and the immediate surrounding communities, as shown in the following table.

**Survey Response: Respondents' Residence**

<i>Respondents' Town (Zip Code)</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Auburn (04210)	168	75%
Lewiston (04240)	24	11%
Lisbon (04250)	9	4%
Lisbon Falls (04252)	5	2%
Livermore Falls (04254)	4	2%
Turner (04282)	4	2%
Auburn-Great Falls: PO 1-920 (04212)	3	1%
Auburn: PO 3001-3900 (04211)	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>98%</b>

- ▶ 58 percent of the survey respondents were female, while 42 percent were male, reflecting the higher likelihood of finding females at home for a phone survey.

The median age of survey respondents was 50.0 years and the average age was 50.8 years.

The survey respondents were provided the option of indicating their household income range. There were a total of 188 survey responses for the household income question with responses indicating that the average household income of survey respondents was in the area of \$34,400. A cross-tabulation between survey respondents that work in downtown Auburn and household income resulted in 47 responses. The average household income of respondents who work in downtown Auburn was \$38,500.

## Downtown Auburn Survey

Please take the time to complete this survey, which will assist us in planning for the downtown's future. You may return the completed survey to the box that has been provided, or mail to **Great Falls Action Committee, c/o City of Auburn-Lee Jay Feldman, 45 Spring St., Auburn, ME 04210**

**THANKS!!**

- 1 What is your home Zip Code? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2 What is your gender? Male  Female  Your age? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3 Total number of persons in your household (include yourself): \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4 What is the total income of your household? \$\_\_\_\_\_ (Check the range if you'd rather not be specific:) \$0-24,999  \$25,000-\$49,999  \$50,000-\$74,999   
\$75,000+
  
- 5 How often do you visit downtown Auburn?  
Less than once a week  Once a week  2-3 times a week  4 or more times a week
  
- 6 What cultural, recreational or festival events have you attended in downtown Auburn? Check all that apply:  

Balloon Festival <input type="checkbox"/>	Concerts <input type="checkbox"/>	July 4 <sup>th</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>
	Triathlon <input type="checkbox"/>	
Canoe Race <input type="checkbox"/>	Theater/Plays <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) _____
  
- 7 What types of stores, businesses or other places do you use when you come to downtown Auburn? Check all that apply:  

Food Store <input type="checkbox"/>	Drug Store <input type="checkbox"/>	County Offices/Courthouse <input type="checkbox"/>	Church <input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Office <input type="checkbox"/>	Bank <input type="checkbox"/>	Beauty/Barber shop <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Social Service Offices <input type="checkbox"/>		
Convenience Store <input type="checkbox"/>	Retail/Specialty Stores <input type="checkbox"/>	Restaurant/Take-Out <input type="checkbox"/>	Library <input type="checkbox"/>
City Offices <input type="checkbox"/>	YMCA <input type="checkbox"/>	Post Office <input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____
  
- 8 Do you work in downtown Auburn? Yes  Not employed  What is the Zip Code where you work? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 9 Where do you regularly shop? Check all that apply:  

Downtown Auburn <input type="checkbox"/>	Downtown Lewiston <input type="checkbox"/>	Auburn <input type="checkbox"/>
Mall Area <input type="checkbox"/>		
Lewiston Mall Area <input type="checkbox"/>	Maine Mall (Portland) <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Freeport <input type="checkbox"/>	
  
- 10 Where do you do most of your grocery shopping? Store name \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11 Other than grocery shopping, what two stores or shopping centers do you visit most frequently?

Store/Shopping Center \_\_\_\_\_ Location

Store/Shopping Center \_\_\_\_\_ Location

12 What kinds of new stores, services, and other businesses do you think would most improve downtown Auburn? Please be specific: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13 What kinds of new cultural/recreational facilities do you think would most improve downtown Auburn? Please be specific: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14 Other than new businesses, what steps should be taken to improve downtown Auburn?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please use the other side of this form if you need more space.**

### Auburn Downtown Phone Survey

The City of Auburn is analyzing the downtown area for future development potential. We would appreciate your cooperation in answering the following questions that will assist us in learning more about the demographics and shopping habits of downtown visitors.

During the past year, how many times did you visit downtown Auburn?

- 1a. None
- 1b. Once
- 1c. 2-10 times
- 1d. 11-25 times
- 1e. 25 or more times

What types of stores, businesses or other places do you visit when you come to downtown Auburn?

- 2a. Food Store
- 2b. Drug Store
- 2c. County Office/Courthouse
- 2d. Church
- 2e. Professional Office
- 2f. Bank
- 2g. Beauty/Barber Shop
- 2h. Social Service Office
- 2i. Convenience Store
- 2j. Retail/Specialty Store
- 2k. Restaurant/Take-Out
- 2l. Library
- 2m. City Offices
- 2n. Post Office
- 2o. Work
- 2p. Festivals

Do you drive through downtown Auburn regularly?                      3a. Yes                      3b. No

What kind of new stores, services, businesses, and cultural/recreational facilities do you think would most improve downtown Auburn? (NO MORE THAN FOUR)

- 4a. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4b. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4c. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4d. \_\_\_\_\_

- 5. What is your home zip code?                      \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. What is your work zip code?                      \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. What is your age?                      \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Gender                      8a. Male                      8b. Female

What is the total income of your household?

- 9a. \$0-\$24,999
- 9b. \$25,000-\$49,999
- 9c. \$50,000-\$74,999
- 9d. \$75,000 +



## ***Focus Groups***

Focus group discussions are a helpful exercise in comprehensive market research and planning efforts. The premise behind a focus group is to obtain public input on either specific ideas or general planning and marketing issues in a setting where people are not confined by time and can feel comfortable to speak freely. The setting also provides an opportunity for synergy to form from participants' exposure to each other persons' ideas.

### ***Format***

Two focus group sessions with a maximum of 10 people were organized. To encourage open dialogue, elected city officials and city employees were not invited. Participants were chosen from a list, provided by the city, compiled of people who had, in the past, shown an interest in the planning process. Each person was invited via telephone. The following day a confirmation letter was mailed listing the two discussion questions corresponding to the assigned focus session.<sup>18</sup> The discussion questions were forwarded in advance in order to give participants sufficient time to collect their thoughts and to be able to present them to the focus group in an organized manner. The two pairs of questions are listed below:

#### ***Tuesday June 9th, 2 PM***

- ▶ *Do you agree that a combined city hall and library is a good idea? Should it include school administrative offices?*
- ▶ *Should Auburn have a role in the development of a convention center?*

#### ***Wednesday June 10th, 9:30 AM***

- ▶ *What is the strength of support for creating a city green for activities like the balloon festival?*
- ▶ *Should pedestrians or automobiles have priority in the downtown? -Including Court Street?*

The focus groups were held at the 'old' Packard Drug Store on Court St. For each session the chairs for the participants were arranged in a 3/4 circle around the facilitator. The facilitator primarily spoke with the group as the assistant took notes. When appropriate the facilitator would use a pad and easel for noteworthy thoughts from those in attendance.

Participants were given time to socialize and view the proposed downtown plans before formal introductions and the initiation of the focus discussions. The discussions consumed approximately 45 minutes of conversation time per question. Typically initial thoughts lead to vibrant conversation and in some instances consensus building.

### ***The Facilitator***

Douglas J. Kennedy facilitated both sessions. His primary role, as facilitator, was to foster and manage constructive participant conversation and to avoid leading and coaching answers the city

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<sup>18</sup> A copy of the letter is provided in the appendix

officials or hired planners may wish to hear. In order to generate valuable conversation that touches all bases, the facilitator must play up all angles of devil's advocate, from liberal to conservative and antagonist to protagonists. A second, equally important, role for the facilitator is to ensure all participants have opportunities to be heard.

### *The Participants*

A total of ten participants were invited to the Tuesday discussion while nine were invited for Wednesday's session. Attendees are listed below.<sup>19</sup> In addition to Mr. Kennedy, Jason Wilber was present for both sessions both to provide logistical support and to serve as a note taker.

#### *Tuesday June 9th, 2 PM*

Roger Blais  
Noel Smith  
Brian Bolduc  
Dan Poulin  
Richard Martin

#### *Wednesday June 10th, 9:30 AM*

Brenda Hathaway  
Pauline Caouette-Moore  
Lee Griswold  
Guy Gagnon  
Barton Kelsea  
Denis Mailhot  
Austin Conrad  
Penny Appleby

### *Highlights*

The following is a listing of major points offered by focus group participants:

#### *Question One:*

*Do you agree that a combined city hall and library is a good idea? Should it include school administrative offices?*

- ▶ The library is beautiful, an icon of the city and must stay at its current location
- ▶ The library is too small, not enough parking
- ▶ Acknowledge that the library does not generate spending in downtown
- ▶ The library, if merged under one roof with City Hall, may be hampered by association with city government in efforts to raise private funding
- ▶ Separate city and school administration buildings lead to duplication of services, leading to inefficiencies and higher than necessary costs.

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<sup>19</sup> All of those who were invited had eagerly agreed to attend. Therefore any absence was unexpected.

- ▶ City Hall is too small, not enough parking
- ▶ City Hall, if moved, must remain in downtown Auburn as a symbol of its commitment to the revitalization of downtown, for centralized convenience and as a possible source of customers for local business
- ▶ City Hall and the School Administrative building should be combined on a new site in downtown riverfront area (Main Street)
- ▶ To gain support for the new City Hall/School Administration building it should be packaged with either: a parking garage, a private developer or a new Post Office
- ▶ Would not be offended by a mixed use City Hall in which commercial space was built in, as long as it is tasteful, well defined and modest in size.
- ▶ Liked the idea of the city leasing the new building to save on maintenance costs
- ▶ The new City Hall must be more than a new building, it must sincerely improve the economy downtown and/or improve the operating efficiency for the city
- ▶ New school offices on Main Street will increase night traffic, which will help spur downtown evening business
- ▶ The library could, via private funding, annex the current city hall for space and enjoy much needed parking.

The group felt supported the consolidated City Hall, School Administration and Post Office building on Main Street as the best solution. They recognized that in order to sell the project to voters it must be proven in some manner to be cost effective. They suggested two ideas: 1) Show it to have a dramatic effect for the downtown economy or; 2) Show it as an opportunity for the city to achieve lower annual operating costs. A new city hall will not be approved with an above average tax increase or without a parking garage. As for the library, a majority of the proactive comments came from one individual and were not necessarily reflective of the majority.

*Question 2:*

*Should Auburn have a role in the development of a convention center?*

- ▶ Relations between the two cities appear to be at an “all-time” high
- ▶ The area is typically conservative and not visionary
- ▶ See Auburn potentially benefiting more than Lewiston
- ▶ Realize that both Auburn and Lewiston must be healthy to succeed
- ▶ Concerned with the edge Portland would have if it builds a convention center in terms of infrastructure (airport, hotels, entertainment and restaurants)
- ▶ Believe Auburn must help itself before it commits money to another project

The general consensus was that Auburn must begin the downtown revitalization process before it can consider assisting a Lewiston Convention Center. Some felt strongly that it would never be successful and ultimately a waste of money and resources, while others could see the success but at this point in time intertwined with too many variables. Opinions remained unchanged when a future scenario situation was depicted in which Auburn was successfully redeveloped a solid market feasibility study in place and the city’s contribution to the convention center would be the last piece.

*Question 3:*

*What is the strength of support for creating a city green for activities like the balloon festival?*

- ▶ Currently the strength of support for a city green is strong for the Balloon Festival and events such as the Liberty Festival, Festival du Joie and proposed Arts Festival.
- ▶ To lose the balloon festival to another venue would be devastating for downtown because the festival attracts people who never come to the downtown area...downtown would lose a great source of exposure.
- ▶ There is concern regarding the ability of the private sector to continue to raise money and the area to produce enough volunteers to continue the festivals.
- ▶ Participants liked the idea of city assistance, possibly a parks and festival manager, however the city must keep taxes low
- ▶ Felt there would be vocal opposition to any tax increases
- ▶ Festivals aside, maintaining green space is essential in sustaining a successful downtown
- ▶ Green space should be call "white" space too...need ice skating, hockey and possibly cross country skiing
- ▶ Need regularly scheduled activities such as a farmer's market, flea markets etc.

The group as a whole felt city green space, in every form, was essential in creating an environment conducive for business and living. A large city green was viewed as favorable and strength of support strong. However, many participants felt there would be a vocal opposition in favor of utilizing land for lower taxes and less government. Several ideas were put forward regarding adding more annual festival events and smaller scale activities to operate on the city green and Main Street, including a farmer's market, flea market, antique sales and entertainment. Several participants noted that a consistent schedule of downtown events would go a long way toward increasing downtown activity levels. Several participants proposed that the city take over event management to relieve tired volunteers and private donors. Conversely, skeptics noted that lowering taxes was the major priority. There also was support make use of city green space in the winter for ice skating, hockey and winter festivals. Finally, everyone agreed that the river is an asset to the city and access, both physical and visual, is key to downtown redevelopment.

*Question 4:*

*Should pedestrians or automobiles have priority in the downtown? -Including Court Street?*

- ▶ People should have the right of way, make it pedestrian friendly
- ▶ Recognize that cars/trucks rule the road and believe public attitude must change
- ▶ Observed that traffic moves from 35 mph to near 60 mph over the bridge
- ▶ Local traffic laws could be more strictly enforced
- ▶ Would like to see bicycle police patrols
- ▶ Reroute commercial traffic to avoid downtown or at least confine it to travel on one road.
- ▶ Make Mechanic's Row a two way street
- ▶ Place orange "yield barrels" at all major crosswalks
- ▶ Repaint all road lines, especially at crosswalks
- ▶ Fix stop traffic buttons at lights so they permit truly safe crossing
- ▶ Concern with pedestrian safety at all crossings on Court Street and the intersection of Turner and Union Bypass
- ▶ Begin a public awareness campaign through local media to change the local mentality that automobiles rule downtown Auburn

A conclusion that pedestrians need more protection and more assistance in downtown Auburn was easily reached by all in attendance. Given this early consensus, much of the session time was spent discussing how the city should proceed. Most participants quickly named common solutions such as repainting the crosswalks, fixing the traffic lights and rerouting commercial traffic. The group also suggested more police enforcement of current laws and the placement of "yield pedestrian" barrels. The group believed slowing traffic down to be an important goal and a worthy sacrifice. A few participants wanted to eliminate parking and widen the Court Street corridor, but still have traffic move slower and be pedestrian friendly. The group noted that the mentality of commuters is a large part of the problem. They suggested change could be implemented through a public service campaign and increased traffic law enforcement.

*Example Focus Group Confirmation Letter*

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June 2, 1998

*Address*

Dear Participant:

This letter is to confirm the scheduled focus group discussion to be held on June 10, 1997 at the old Packard drug store on Court Street in Auburn at 9:30 am. The City of Auburn, the Cavendish Partnership and Douglas J. Kennedy & Associates thanks you for taking time from your busy day to attend. The facilitated meeting will run no longer than two hours. During that time we plan to address the two questions listed below. Please take some time to consider these issues and be prepared to present your opinion.

- What is the strength of support for creating a city green for activities like the balloon festival?
- Should pedestrians or automobiles have priority in the downtown? - Including Court Street?

*If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to call us at (603) 643-2543. When you do call, be aware that the phone will be answered as "Sno E.," but rest assured you have the correct number.*

Sincerely,

Doug Kennedy

Jason Wilber

jw

## ***Findings***

The major findings and concepts resulting from the market analysis follow. Specific recommendation and implementation items are found in Chapter 5.

### ***The Current Situation***

Several major findings have been developed regarding the current market situation in downtown Auburn:

*Retailing* – retailing currently has a marginal presence in the downtown core. Retailing does have a presence along the western edge of the downtown. However, this is generally in a freestanding, strip-type format. One significant exception is the Shop’N Save plaza, which clearly serves as the neighborhood retail center for the residents of Old Auburn.

While there are clearly a number of retail establishments in the downtown, there is no significant core or any single notable concentration of shops. With the exception of several specialized businesses, most of downtown’s retail space is oriented toward convenience shopping – serving the day-to-day needs of downtown residents and workers. Non-residents may visit the downtown for a particular need, but are quite unlikely to make a ‘shopping trip’ to area.

Real shoppers’ retail moved out of the downtown a long time ago. As such, the current situation has been in place for some time. In the short run, it is unlikely that the downtown can become a major player in the regional retailing scene.

*Travel Market* – the downtown has minimal capture in the travel market. Auburn is neither on the coast nor in the lakes/mountains regions of Maine. As such, it is not ‘on the scope’ of most destination travelers. While it is apparent that many travelers pass by the downtown, few have any reason to visit, nor are even aware of its presence. The major exception to this is the annual festivals, which have been quite successful in drawing in visitors from the outside.

Again, it is unlikely that Auburn will soon be a major player in the regional travel scene. Nevertheless, it is clear that the downtown has a number of features, historical elements and cultural attractions, all of which would be of interest to area travelers.

*Clear Consumer Preferences* – virtually every form of public contact – interviews, public presentations, focus groups, public and phone surveys – made it obvious that area residents and workers have clear ideas about what they would like downtown Auburn to be.

*Overall, it is apparent that people would like the downtown to become an active place, one that always has ‘people activity and which offers a variety of recreational, cultural and retail/commercial opportunities.* In both surveys, the items which respondents most requested in the downtown were: Arts & Performing Facilities, Restaurants, Shops, Parks & Green Space and Parking.

*Building and Infrastructure Limitations* – current buildings and support infrastructure limit the amount of new commercial and civic activity that can now happen in the downtown. The limita-

tions of downtown parking are well documented and are more acute to the south of Court Street. The vehicular circulation system clearly moves cars, but creates barriers for pedestrians and severely undercuts the 'pedestrian friendliness' of the downtown. Finally, there are currently no major spaces available for new uses. While there are vacant spaces in the downtown, none of these are ready to accommodate a major new use.

These 'situations' do point out some of downtown's problems, but also provide clear indications for the steps required for improvement.

## ***The Positives and the Problems***

Downtown Auburn has several distinct problems and several distinct opportunities. A summary of these points follows:

### **Problems**

- ▶ *It's a downtown.* Every downtown, no matter how successful, must deal with some problems. Downtowns compete against shopping centers and suburban office complexes that have plenty of parking, good access, and layouts that make it clear exactly what is there. In contrast it is often difficult to drive into a downtown and to find a place to park. Further, stores and services can be difficult to find. For the consumer whose primary criterion is convenience, downtowns are often not the first choice. The mix of uses and ambiance of downtown must be strong enough to make people want to work or shop there.
- ▶ *Identity.* Downtown Auburn lacks an identity – both to the travelling public and to the population in the Lewiston-Auburn area. As noted in another section of this report, Maine travelers are typically unaware of Auburn – even though many drive right by. The phone survey of households in the Lewiston-Auburn market indicated that many people in the area couldn't identify the downtown. These findings make it clear that there is not enough going on in the downtown – it lacks the range of uses required to make it an attraction in and of itself.
- ▶ *Critical Mass.* Successful downtowns combine a number of elements. While the downtown does not need to be massive, there must be enough 'people activity' to make visitors feel that 'something is happening.' Downtown Auburn combines a variety of uses, buildings, and physical features. However, there is not enough of any one element to create critical mass. More downtown employment, more commercial activity and other elements are required to 'put the downtown on the map.'

### **Opportunities**

- ▶ *Density/Small Core* – many downtowns must attempt to deal with a large, low density physical area in which to create improvement. In contrast, downtown Auburn has a relatively small commercial core which, to the immediate south of Court Street, already has good density. The challenge will be to build on this core.
- ▶ *Scenic Characteristics* – few U.S. downtowns have an adjacent physical feature like Great Falls. This is an outstanding feature which can serve as one of downtown's anchors and which, if marketed aggressively, can create an downtown identity among tourists.



- ▶ *Undeveloped Land* – the downtown has a number of undeveloped tracts of land adjacent and within its core area. These create opportunities for new commercial development and for improvement of basic, support infrastructure.
- ▶ *Distinct Market Potentials* – surveys indicate that the Lewiston-Auburn area residents are looking for specific items in an improved downtown. These include: Arts & Performing Facilities, Restaurants, Shops, Parks & Green Space and Parking.

# ***Appendix***

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## ***Comparable City Research***

### ***Introduction***

Communities throughout the U.S. have made valiant efforts to revitalize and improve their downtowns. While not all have met with success – and most fall into the large area between success and failure – it is clear that many lessons have been learned regarding what works . . . and what doesn't.

*Every* downtown has unique characteristics. Nevertheless, it is clear that successful ideas and strategies can be applied in a number of situations. For that reason, an evaluation of downtowns programs in 'comparable cities' has been completed as part of the planning process for Auburn's downtown. Four cities – Burlington, Vermont; Manchester, New Hampshire; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Nashua, New Hampshire - were chosen for evaluation based on a number of factors:

- ▶ Northern New England Location
- ▶ Comparable size in terms of population
- ▶ An adjacent water feature (river or lake)
- ▶ Similar problems
- ▶ Success – and lessons to be learned

A summary of our findings in these four communities follows:

### ***Burlington, Vermont***

#### ***Starting Point***

In 1983 Burlington's Board of Aldermen, in support of an initiative of Mayor Bernard Sanders, established a Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) with a resolution stating: "The City's present role in economic development should be expanded in scope and focus, and the City must develop and implement a comprehensive community/economic development strategy."

The role of the new agency was to provide an organized and planned approach to community and economic development focused on housing, waterfront development, and neighborhood revitalization. The initial annual report from the agency states: "The CEDO has been charged with the responsibility to develop, coordinate, implement, and administer programs and activities." Communicating with affected citizens and businesses was an integral part of the CEDO's process of negotiating development projects and initiating public/private partnerships. The mayor appointed a former Vermont town manager as the director of CEDO.

### *Key Players*

The government of the City of Burlington created a municipal department (CEDO) to administer economic initiatives. CEDO initiated and administered programs regarding housing, employment, neighborhood preservation, and waterfront revitalization. CEDO in turn worked closely with other existing (and some subsequently created) departments within city government, including those overseeing housing, streets, traffic, transportation, electricity, planning, parks, health services, police, and schools.

CEDO staff members participated in several appropriate professional organizations, hired consultants for specific projects, and received regular support from volunteers. The department also provided administrative support for the city's six Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, organized citizen's groups with neighborhood-specific goals. CEDO remains a key department promoting organized economic growth in Burlington today.

Key individuals in the process include former Mayor Bernard Sanders and current Mayor Peter Clavelle. Peter Clavelle was appointed Burlington's first director of the CEDO in 1983. Following six years with CEDO, he was elected mayor for two terms (1989-93), during which time the city adopted a formal plan for waterfront revitalization and purchased sixty acres of waterfront land for municipal use. Following two years out of office, Mayor Clavelle was elected again in 1995 and 1997. Michael Monte was a part of the original CEDO staff, and succeeded Peter Clavelle as director. He later joined a consulting firm created by Clavelle in 1993, and still works on city projects in that capacity today.

Private associations also participate in the process with municipal departments. The Burlington Downtown Partnership is an active public/private collaboration between CEDO, the Church Street Marketplace Commission, and the Downtown Burlington Development Association.

### *Sources of Capital*

Initially, CEDO activities were funded entirely through federal grants, entitlements, and loan guarantee funds. The department secured nearly \$2.4 million in federal funds for its abbreviated first year, and received nearly four times that amount for the following year. Federal sources included Community Block Development Grants, Urban Development Action Grants, other programs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

CEDO currently leverages allocations of money and secures funding for its programs from a variety of local, state, and federal sources, such as the City of Burlington, Vermont Economic Development Authority, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Community Block Development Grants.

### *Market Assumptions Made*

As noted above the mayor, with the support of the aldermen and the electorate, adopted the approach that the economic vitality of the city needed stimulation and guidance from the local gov-

ernment, and that funding and technical support for these activities were available from the federal government.

Left unaided, many businesses were finding it difficult to flourish and expand while others, left unchecked, were considering changes that could result in detrimental effects to the city in the long term. The vision articulated by city government included a balance between economic development and residential stability, featuring a variety of social, commercial and cultural opportunities.

The city determined that a coordinated effort addressing key issues such as traffic, parking, public access, private enterprise, and community issues would result in an attractive and active city anchored by a healthy downtown and waterfront district. Population growth in the region, the regular influx of new students attending local colleges and the innate attractive qualities of the area led the city to take an active regulatory approach to inevitable growth.

### *Keys to Success*

Current Mayor Peter Clavelle, the original director of the Community and Economic Development Office, writes that Burlington has had a vision of the city as a “sustainable community” (one which meets present needs while preserving the ability of later generations to meet their needs) for almost twenty years. “In Burlington, we’ve spent the better part of the last two decades refining and working toward this vision. Our strategy has involved generating new sources of public revenue, encouraging appropriate development and job creation, producing perpetually affordable housing, ensuring a publicly controlled and accessible waterfront, reducing energy consumption, requiring the recycling of solid waste, and removing barriers preventing our citizens from enjoying the fruits of economic growth.”

A key element of continuing this approach has been support from the community as a whole through the election of public officials committed to these policies and this level of governmental involvement. With little exception, from Mayor Bernard Sanders, who created the CEDO, to Mayor Peter Clavelle, who initially directed the agency and is currently serving his fourth two-year term as mayor, the citizens have supported political leaders who promote active municipal participation in, and administration of, downtown revitalization programs and projects.

The waterfront revitalization effort illustrates another key component of success: a Pre-Development Agreement negotiated between CEDO and a private developer regarding the city’s waterfront. The agreement outlined an approach for public/private collaboration for development. The private developer agreed to maintain appropriate points of public access to the waterfront, convey land to the city for a public waterfront park, and to participate in public meetings to help guide the private development plans. The city, in turn, sought federal funding for municipal improvements to the area’s infrastructure necessary for the success of waterfront redevelopment. The city also worked with existing tenants of waterfront property for relocation and secured additional lands for public spaces.

### *Measures of Success*

Burlington is well regarded as a progressive and desirable city in which to work and to live. The local government, with support and cooperation from its citizens, has created visible and tangible improvements to the downtown district and the waterfront. The government is responsive to citizen input, and has created an atmosphere of consensus, accomplishment, and progress.

Burlington's Community and Economic Development Office has, from its early days to the present, received local, state, and national recognition for its programs and activities. The agency has a clearly defined role and mission, and is proficient at allocating its funds and administering its programs.

The city's Church Street Marketplace Commission received one of five national Great American Main Street Awards from the National Main Street Center, an agency of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Burlington is a member city of this organization, which provides technical support and networking opportunities for participating municipalities.

The mayor's office is currently spearheading an effort to rehabilitate the Burlington Square Mall and develop a new department store, and is arranging private financing while seeking state support for the project. The proposed state bill would provide funding for development and downtown transportation programs through a new sales tax.

## ***Manchester, New Hampshire***

### *Starting Point*

Manchester's downtown redevelopment is rooted in the recession and the New Hampshire State banking crisis of 1990-91. Manchester is the financial capital of the state, and the federal closure of banks with headquarters downtown, and the ensuing commercial credit crunch, united local business leaders and city government to pursue the revitalization of the city center.

### *Key Players*

The Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce created a Downtown Business Association (DBA), comprised of local business members, which set out to create a concept and consensus for the redevelopment of the downtown area. The Chamber's new DBA worked with the city government's existing Manchester Housing and Redevelopment Authority to devise priorities for improvement and methods for implementing improvements. The two associations received support from the city government, and the resulting cooperative effort led to a comprehensive concept and detailed layout for the revitalization of downtown Manchester, through the creation of a new non-profit organization called Intown Manchester Management, Inc. The organization is a quasi-governmental group, acting as an agent for the city, but lacking any true regulatory authority.

### *Sources of Capital*

Initial efforts included a great deal of volunteered time supplementing dues-supported activities of the local Chamber of Commerce. The City of Manchester also supplied funds for the hiring of the planning firm that prepared the detailed development plan. Funding for implementing the plan is raised through local taxes by establishment of an assessment district discussed in detail later in this report.

### *Market Assumptions Made*

Local businessmen and city government based the effort on the premise that the infrastructure of Manchester provides an appealing and appropriate center for commercial, cultural, and social activity. Existing businesses believed that they could continue to be successful in downtown Manchester if public spaces were developed and managed attractively, and if sufficient complementary activities were available to attract visitors and additional new businesses. The group also determined that the commercial core and the industrial mill yard needed to be considered as one district, not separately.

### *Keys to Success*

The volunteer members of the Chamber of Commerce involved in the Downtown Business Association, in cooperation with city government, determined that a new agency needed to be created and dedicated specifically to addressing the redevelopment effort. The executive director of that agency says that three items addressed prior to his hiring are the critical factors to the success experienced thus far.

1. The plan for what should be done was completed first. The Chamber of Commerce, the DBA, the Housing and Redevelopment Authority and city government worked with an urban planning agency to create the concept, prioritize the components, and detail the revitalization effort. This plan was completed in 1993, and is still referred to today.
2. Given the newly created concept and plan, a new organization was created to administer the plan, as existing agencies and local government were not prepared to add those responsibilities. The legal form of a non-profit organization called Intown Manchester Management was established by January 1996.
3. A funding mechanism for the new non-profit organization was established. An assessment district was created, encompassing the geographic area to be served by the new organization. All commercial real estate owners of that district, including owners of residential apartment properties comprised of four or more units, were assessed an additional tax of 69 cents per thousand dollars of evaluation (which was raised to 79 cents the following year); this tax is collected by the city, and then allocated to Intown Manchester Management to administer the downtown development plans. The organization raises additional funds through grants and corporate sponsorship solicitation.

After creating a detailed plan of action, establishing a non-profit association to administer the plan, and devising an equitable way to fund the association through an assessment district, an ex-

ecutive director with prior experience in downtown revitalization projects was hired in April 1996, following a national search.

Intown Manchester Management is a quasi-governmental agency set up to promote the development of downtown Manchester and acts as a contracted agent for the city on a number of development and service issues in the downtown district. It is a non-profit organization created by the City of Manchester and funded by local business taxes, and solicits additional program funding from corporate sponsorship and government grants.

Intown Manchester Management operates partially under the methods of the national Main Street program in regard to building renovation and aesthetics. Manchester is one of the largest cities in the Main Street program, which provides the organization with technical support and networking information. Manchester is also one of the smallest members of the International Downtown Association.

Working on a base annual budget of about \$250,000 per year from the assessment district taxes, the organization receives tremendous additional support from a volunteer civic movement called "For Manchester". This group provides volunteer manpower, citizen input to downtown activities, and considerable constituent maintenance support in terms of newsletters and mailing lists.

#### *Measures of Success*

With substantial input and cooperation from "For Manchester", Intown Management has coordinated the creation of a farmers market, which is the centerpiece for several summer events and activities, and the construction and operation of an attractive outdoor public skating rink, which serves as a winter attraction and activity centerpiece.

The organization first focused on improving physical aspects of the downtown district, creating attractive public spaces, and undertaking major projects like the ice rink. Intown Manchester Management is now turning more of its attention to service issues, while continuing to promote and monitor the physical attractiveness of the area.

Intown Manchester, using guidelines and ideas gathered from the Main Street program, has developed non-binding standards for commercial signs and storefronts, and spends up to 25 percent of its base budget and time assisting local businesses with grants for improvements consistent with the goals of the district. A big part of this service includes arranging technical support at reasonable rates from local engineers and architects. Additional time and funds have been committed to controlling graffiti in the area and planting trees in the district, two items the city government budget does not address.

Improving access to, and recreational opportunities around, the Merrimack River waterfront are two items under study at this time. There is little public access to the river from within the city at this time, as industrial buildings are located right on the riverfront. Most of the buildings are in use, and parking is limited near the waterfront.

However, the city is creating a 'riverwalk' and a soccer field was recently completed near the river. Opportunities exist for improved access, parking, and facilities through the purchase of an electric plant and real estate owned by Public Service Company of New Hampshire, and potential

renovation of an abandoned mill yard section. The city and Intown Manchester Management are investigating these options.

The City of Manchester and property owners in the downtown assessment district will decide the effectiveness of the program within the next year. As with many organizations of this sort, Intown Manchester Management was created with a “sunset provision”, limiting its existence to three years. The life of the organization may be extended and the tax assessed to fund it may be continued by approval of those served by its activities. Neighboring businesses have expressed interest in expanding the district.

## ***Portsmouth, New Hampshire***

### *Starting Point*

Portsmouth’s downtown revitalization began informally in the early 1970s. The City Planning Director, who has been in local government for eighteen years, says there was no one specific event or program or agency or association that was responsible for the revitalization of the downtown area. The redevelopment has been a true community effort over the course of almost three decades, and continues to evolve today. The planner says nothing along these lines is quick, and a community must be patient.

### *Key Players*

The City of Portsmouth has played a role all along, beginning with securing a Community Development Block Grant from HUD, and continues to receive and administer federal grant money for housing assistance. A large variety of municipal departments have contributed to the effort, and many of the department heads have been in local government for almost two decades. The city has also maintained an improving cooperative effort with state government over the closure and redevelopment of the Pease Airforce Base and Trade Center. The city adopted a master plan in the early 1990s that recognized the growth over the past three decades and plots a course to continue in the future along the same lines.

Merchants and entrepreneurs have played a large role in the revitalization. Many of them “took a chance”, the planner says, on the city back when real estate was inexpensive and the population was in decline. They then developed that real estate for both commercial and residential use, expecting (and eventually receiving) good financial returns on their investments.

The citizens of the city also have played a key role, through a large number of active civic groups, including 23 current neighborhood associations. There is also a community development association active in housing issues.



### *Sources of Capital*

The city has contributed in improving infrastructure when necessary, and by applying for appropriate grants from state and federal sources. The city has also participated in several public/private development partnerships, such as the restoration of an historic music hall, which is now operated as a non-profit organization. A great deal of the redevelopment has been funded privately by citizens, merchants, and entrepreneurs. There is no singular source of capital that drove the revitalization effort. The city planner says that many people and agencies have played a role, but none has taken the leading role can claim the majority of the credit.

### *Market Assumptions Made*

The key market assumptions were made by the private entrepreneurs who invested in the city throughout the 1970s and 1980s, when the local economy seemed uncertain. They assumed much of the following could eventually provide a good economic return:

- ▶ Portsmouth is located along the ocean, which is a popular destination spot for tourists.
- ▶ With its location at the junction of Route 16 and I-95, and driving distance of an hour to Boston and an hour to Portland, the city is attractive to commuters.
- ▶ That same location and accessibility makes the city an easy draw for regional residents on a day trip.
- ▶ Many attractive qualities already existed within the city and could be preserved, such as quaint and charming architecture, an active port, a busy shipyard, and historic buildings.

On the key issue of the closure of the Pease Airforce Base in the late 1980s, the city was told to expect at least ten years before a redeveloped base would become an asset, and so the city took a relatively patient approach to its redevelopment.

### *Keys to Success*

One key to the success experienced by Portsmouth has been the active involvement of private enterprise and individual business owners, investing in the city throughout the past several years, with measured support from the government. Another key has been the mixed-use of the real estate in the area, including residential, retail, and industrial tenants. Some key developments since the 1970s cited by the city planner include:

Redevelopment of the market downtown through use of a Community Development Block Grant, preserving an historic site and creating a pedestrian marketplace.

The opening of several good restaurants in the downtown area, leading to increased activity both during the day and into the evening. Success of early restaurants led to the opening of additional restaurants. The city now grants 180 food licenses within its 16 square-mile boundaries. Similar growth has been seen more recently in the lodging business.

The private conversion of under-used and inexpensive real estate into affordable apartments, many of them within commercial buildings with active street-level stores has been important. Much of this housing is now being converted into expensive condominiums.

The preservation of the distinct charm of the downtown, not only in its architecture, but also in its community quality. It remains a place with a wide variety of basic, essential community amenities (hardware stores, post office, hair salons, used book stores, etc.), so that people spend time downtown for a variety of reasons, and don't just come and go quickly for one item.

The city has also provided key infrastructure improvements to support growth, particularly the construction of two parking facilities providing inexpensive parking (25 cents, now 50 cents) within walking distance of a large number of downtown attractions and businesses.

### *Measures of Success*

The city is well known throughout the region as a pleasant place to visit and spend a day of relaxing within a short drive from home. The economy continues to improve, merchants continue to invest and prosper, and real estate values continue to increase.

## ***Nashua, New Hampshire***

### *Starting Point*

The current Nashua downtown revitalization effort officially began in November of 1994. A previous effort, begun in 1990, dissolved after two unproductive years. The original, unsuccessful effort was similar in format to the current Manchester program, with its creation traditional chamber of commerce and merchant associations, and its existence dependent upon the financial support of private-sector businesses.

In 1994, the city government created an official municipal position of Downtown Development Specialist. With skepticism from the failed effort of two years prior, and a reluctance to commit long-term to an unknown approach, the position was originally created as a one-year experimental job. The program is now in its fourth year of existence with the same specialist.

### *Key Players*

The Nashua City government took the initiative to create a downtown development position, after private sector merchant efforts had failed. The city hired an experienced downtown development professional with regional historical knowledge from the City of Lowell, MA, which is also located in the Merrimack River valley. His role is to enlist the support of local businesses and residents for the programs he administers.

### *Sources of Capital*

For the initial one-year experiment, the salary for the downtown specialist was funded through Community Development Block Grants the city had received.

Now the City of Nashua covers the salary for the position of Downtown Development Specialist from within its existing annual municipal budget. No new taxes are levied for the position, and no assessment district was created to collect any new taxes.

The revitalization programs conducted by the Downtown Development Specialist thus far have been paid for completely with private sector funding arranged by the specialist, through networks he has created and building upon the momentum and confidence generated by the program. For the upcoming year, additional funding is being sought from federal programs related to urban development.

### *Market Assumptions Made*

Several important assumptions have been made in the Nashua downtown development program, based upon the experience and opinions of the Downtown Development Specialist.

1. Unlike Portsmouth and Portland, the city has no port, and is not located on the ocean. Inland tourists most often visit the mountains or the ocean to get away, and the City of Nashua is not equipped to compete with that. Nashua is not a quaint or charming city like those mentioned, and not destined to be a great tourist destination. The revitalization has centered instead on transforming the nature and the image of downtown from a utilitarian area that people visited to conduct some brief business when they have to, for as short a time as possible, into a pleasurable area for residents of the region to visit and spend the morning or a longer period of the day.
2. The population and the economy of the city have experienced dynamic growth in the past ten to fifteen years, resulting in two categories of city residents: the "new Nashuans" that have moved there in the past decade and a half, and the old mill town residents born and raised in the area. Both of those groups are interested in having a neighborhood feel to the city, feeling safe to walk the streets at night, and having places to go and things to do downtown. The assumption is that downtown can be active and popular with area residents, and is not dependent upon attracting tourists from afar.
3. The potential attraction to downtown visitors and merchants is the unique and personal nature of a lively downtown, as opposed to the uniform and impersonal atmosphere of strip developments and malls. The approach here is not to attract malls, but to offer an alternative to mall shopping and dining.
4. The riverfront section of town can be most effectively and attractively managed with a mixed-use approach. Existing industrial business along the river should be supported, unused buildings should be converted to attractive residential and retail buildings, and public green space should be created where possible and feasible. Each of these aspects has been and continues to be addressed.

5. In addition to making the downtown physically attractive, events geared to residents (not designed to drive lodging business) have been very successful attractions.

### *Keys to Success*

The Nashua downtown specialist cites the lack of a local political machine, and the absence active community organizations with separate agendas, as key components to the success of the programs thus far. The city was “wide open politically”, allowing him to pursue support and consensus for his programs. He also cites his experience in a similar city and knowledge of the history of the region (he is a native of Lowell, as well as a former city employee) for helping define the direction and market assumptions described above. Additionally, although Nashua’s downtown coordinator in general discounts parking complaints by merchants anyway, the city had previously built two large downtown parking garages, keeping parking from becoming an issue in the current program.

### *Measures of Success*

Several improvements were cited as success stories thus far:

- ▶ Creation of some public green space along the waterfront; more is being pursued.
- ▶ Creation of outdoor sidewalk cafes, adding a personal atmosphere.
- ▶ Return of major retailers to downtown storefronts, and the arrival of new stores.
- ▶ Virtually no street-level vacancies now, compared to roughly 20% in 1994.
- ▶ Voluntary adherence to aesthetic standards for business signs window displays.
- ▶ Growth of restaurant business throughout the downtown area.
- ▶ General increase in business activity downtown throughout the day.
- ▶ General increase in social activity downtown during the evenings.
- ▶ Additional areas targeted for attention in the near future:
  - ▶ Expanding public green space and parks areas.
  - ▶ Cultural attractions, such as a performing arts center and theater.



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# 3

## ***Section Three: Transportation Analysis & Recommendations***

### ***Introduction***

Transportation plays an increasingly important role within a community. It provides access to jobs, school, shops and recreation. How a community's transportation system develops directly impacts not only how well it functions, but how that community is perceived as well. A well designed transportation system is balanced, providing mobility for all its citizens and all types of users -- pedestrians, drivers, bicyclists, transit riders. This well balanced system should also support other community goals, such as improving quality of life, increasing accessibility, and promoting economic development.

The goal of the transportation element of this master plan is to re-establish some of the balance to the transportation system that has been lost within the downtown during the last two decades. Its roadways have functioned well at getting traffic *through* the downtown in an automobile but have created *barriers to use and enjoy* much of the downtown by other means. This is especially true of accommodations for pedestrians. The quality of the pedestrian environment is high in some places but has been severely degraded in others. It is very difficult and uninviting to cross the street in many locations throughout the downtown. For the foreseeable future, automobiles will continue to provide the vast majority of travel needs to Auburn's citizens, visitors and shoppers. A better balance is necessary, though, to create and maintain a vital and fully accessible downtown, urban environment.

The transportation scope involves an integrative approach, looking at traffic, the pedestrian environment and facilities, bicycle facilities and transit use. How the transportation system relates to urban design goals and supports other downtown goals also figured prominently.

### ***Existing Conditions***

#### ***Roadways & Traffic***

Auburn's downtown is bisected by Court Street and bounded by Minot Avenue/Union Street Bypass and the Androscoggin River. Court Street carries regional traffic to and through the downtown from Lewiston and points west. Much of this traffic is destined for elsewhere and is influenced by the location

of the only other two bridge crossings. Other prominent roadways include Main Street, Turner Street, Spring Street and Academy Street.

### Existing Roadway Volumes

Existing traffic flows on arterial roadways (Court Street, Minot Avenue and Union Street Bypass) through the downtown can be generally characterized as heavy. These heavy flows are accommodated by the high capacity of these roadways and their intersections. Figure 1 and Table 1 show the distribution of daily traffic flows within the study area (for available data). The Longley Bridge carries over 30,000 vehicles per day into and out of Court Street east of Turner Street. Center Street, the Union Street Bypass, Minot Avenue and portions of Main Street all carry over 20,000 vehicles per day. Court Street west of Turner Street carries just under 20,000 vehicles daily.

**Table 1**  
**1996 Average Daily Traffic**

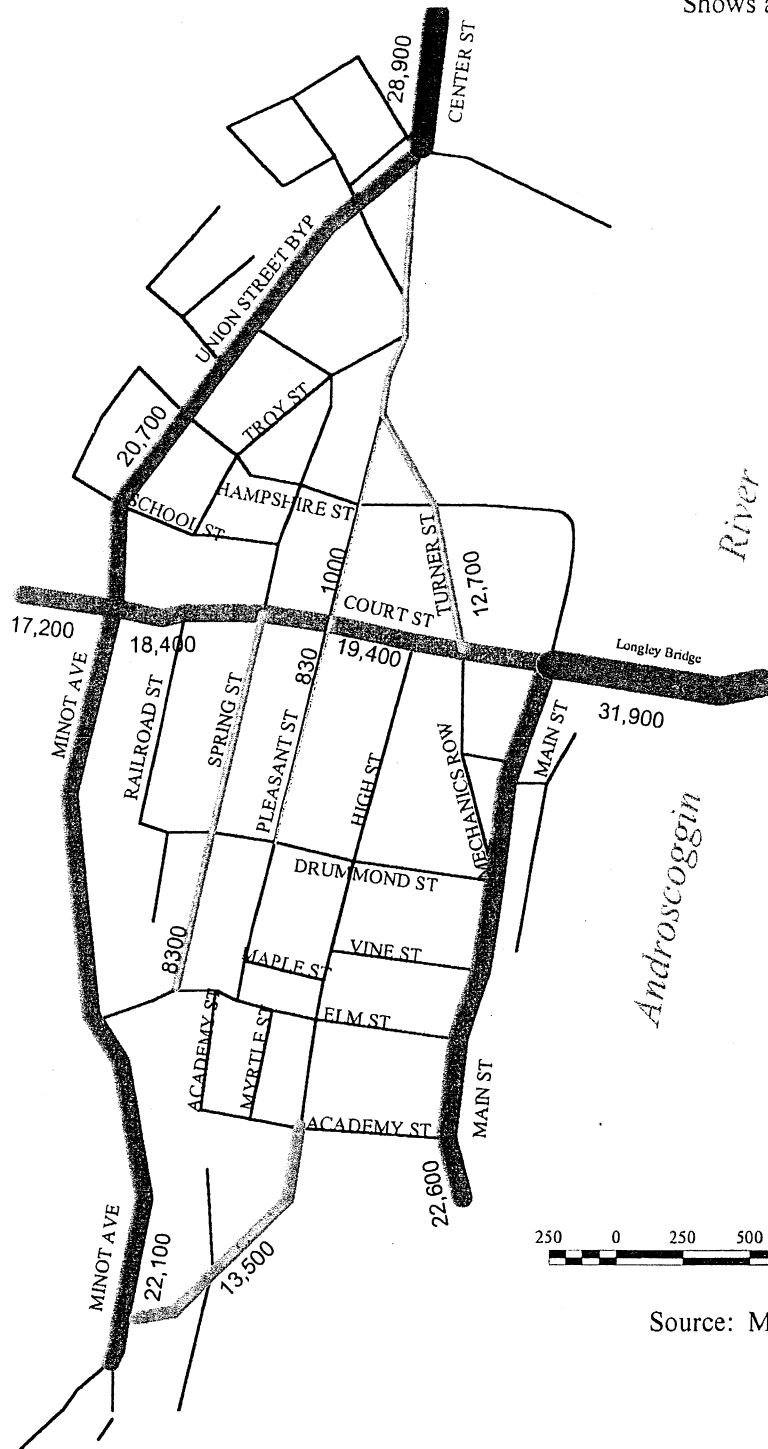
Location	1996 Average Daily Traffic Volume
High Street, east of Minot Avenue	13,500
Pleasant Street, north of Court Street	1,000
Pleasant Street, south of Court Street	830
Spring Street, north of Elm Street	8,300
Turner Street, north of Court Street	12,700
Union Street Bypass, south of Hampshire Street	20,700
Center Street, north of Turner Street	28,900
Minot Avenue, north of High Street	22,100
Court Street, at Longley Bridge	31,900
Court Street, west of High Street	19,400
Court Street, east of Union Street Bypass	18,400
Court Street, west of Union Street Bypass	17,200
Main Street, south of Academy Street	22,600

Source: MDOT, AADT Report for Androscoggin County, Bureau of Planning, 1997.

### Intersections

Intersections are where drivers generally experience the most delays in their travels and are usually the

Shows available data only.



Source: MDOT

### Auburn Downtown Master Plan 1996 Daily Traffic Volumes & Volume Bandwidths



Figure 3.1





limiting factor in how much traffic a roadway can carry (its capacity). If an intersection needs to accommodate large volumes of turning traffic (especially left turning traffic) then specific turning lanes may need to be provided for the intersection to function acceptably. These turning lanes greatly increase the amount of space that intersections require and can greatly degrade pedestrian operations, increasing the impact on . Crossing distances can become very large due to these additional turning lanes and increased turning radii at corners.

Level of service (LOS) is a grade rating from A (best) to F (worst) for how well an intersection operates. It uses the average amount of delay (expressed in seconds per vehicle) that motorists experience in getting through an intersection to determine these grades. Table 2 describes how levels of service are assigned to an intersection based on ranges of average stopped delay. In an urban area, LOS D or E may be the threshold when problems are recognized.

**Table 2  
Intersection Level of Service Definitions  
Signalized Intersections**

Level of Service	Stopped Delay per Vehicle (seconds per vehicle)
A	Less than 5.0 seconds
B	From 5.0 up to 15.0 seconds
C	From 15.0 up to 25.0 seconds
D	From 25 up to 40 seconds
E	From 40 up to 60 seconds
F	60 seconds or more

Source: 1994 Highway Capacity Manual.

Conditions can vary considerably during the course of the day at intersections. Most intersections in the downtown currently operate at an acceptable level of service (LOS) throughout the day. Figure 2 and Table 3 provide a snapshot of existing intersection LOS at eight key intersections for the morning (AM) and afternoon (PM) peak hour conditions. Five of these eight intersections remain at the same level of service for both the morning and afternoon peaks. Conditions at three intersection degrade from the morning peak to the afternoon peak. These intersection are: Center Street/Turner Street, from LOS B (AM) to D (PM); Minot Avenue/High Street, from LOS B to C; and Main Street/Academy Street, from B to F. The Main Street/Academy Street intersection during the PM peak hour is the only failing (LOS F) intersection currently of those analyzed. This is primarily due to the heavy number of left turns (650) in the PM peak hour from northbound Main Street to Academy Street as traffic goes toward Minot Avenue and the Maine Turnpike from New Auburn (the South Bridge).

**Table 3  
Intersection Level of Service  
1998 Peak Hour**

<b>Intersection Location</b>	<b>AM Level of Service</b>	<b>PM Level of Service</b>
Center Street/Turner Street/Union Street	B	D
Court Street/Minot Avenue/Union Street	C	C
Court Street/Spring Street	B	B
Court Street/Turner Street/Mechanics Row	B	B
Court Street/Main Street	B	B
Minot Avenue/Elm Street	B	B
Minot Avenue/High Street	B	C
Main Street/Academy Street	B	F

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates; LACTS; MDOT.

#### Accident Assessment

Accident data was obtained from the Maine Department of Transportation for the years 1994 to 1996. These data show numerous high accident locations as identified by the MDOT. These are locations with over 8 accidents within the three year period and have a higher than expected accident rate (Critical Rate Factor, or CRF) than similar locations in the state. A CRF of 1.0 indicates a location with the 'expected' number of accidents given the type of location (urban or rural) and amount of traffic present. Table 4 and Figure 3 detail the locations and CRF for the 16 high accident locations within the downtown.

Nine intersections in the downtown were classified as high accident locations. The Main Street/Drummond Street intersection had the highest CRF of just under 5, with 27 accidents over the three year period. Other intersections with CRF greater than 2.0 are Pleasant Street/Hampshire Street (3.53), Court Street/Railroad Street (2.96), Elm Street/High Street (2.5) and Spring Street/Hampshire Street (2.26).

**Table 4**  
**High Accident Locations**  
**1994 to 1996**

<b>Intersection</b>	<b>Number of Accidents</b>	<b>C.R.F.</b>
Main Street/Drummond Street	27	4.94
Pleasant Street/Hampshire Street	12	3.53
Court Street/Railroad Street	33	2.96
Elm Street/High Street	11	2.50
Spring Street/Hampshire Street	10	2.26
Court Street/Spring Street	49	1.45
Academy Street/High Street	9	1.38
Center Street/Turner Street/Union Street Bypass	59	1.15
Turner Street/Hampshire Street	33	1.04
<b>Roadway Segments</b>	<b>Number of Accidents</b>	<b>C.R.F.</b>
Court Street: Minot Avenue to Railroad Street	17	3.26
Main Street: south of Academy Street	29	2.94
Spring Street: Court Street to Drummond Street	11	2.19
High Street: south of Academy Street	11	1.64
Turner Street: Center Street to Summer Street	11	1.34
Court Street: Turner Street to Main Street	12	1.15
Minot Avenue: Court Street to Elm Street	29	1.05

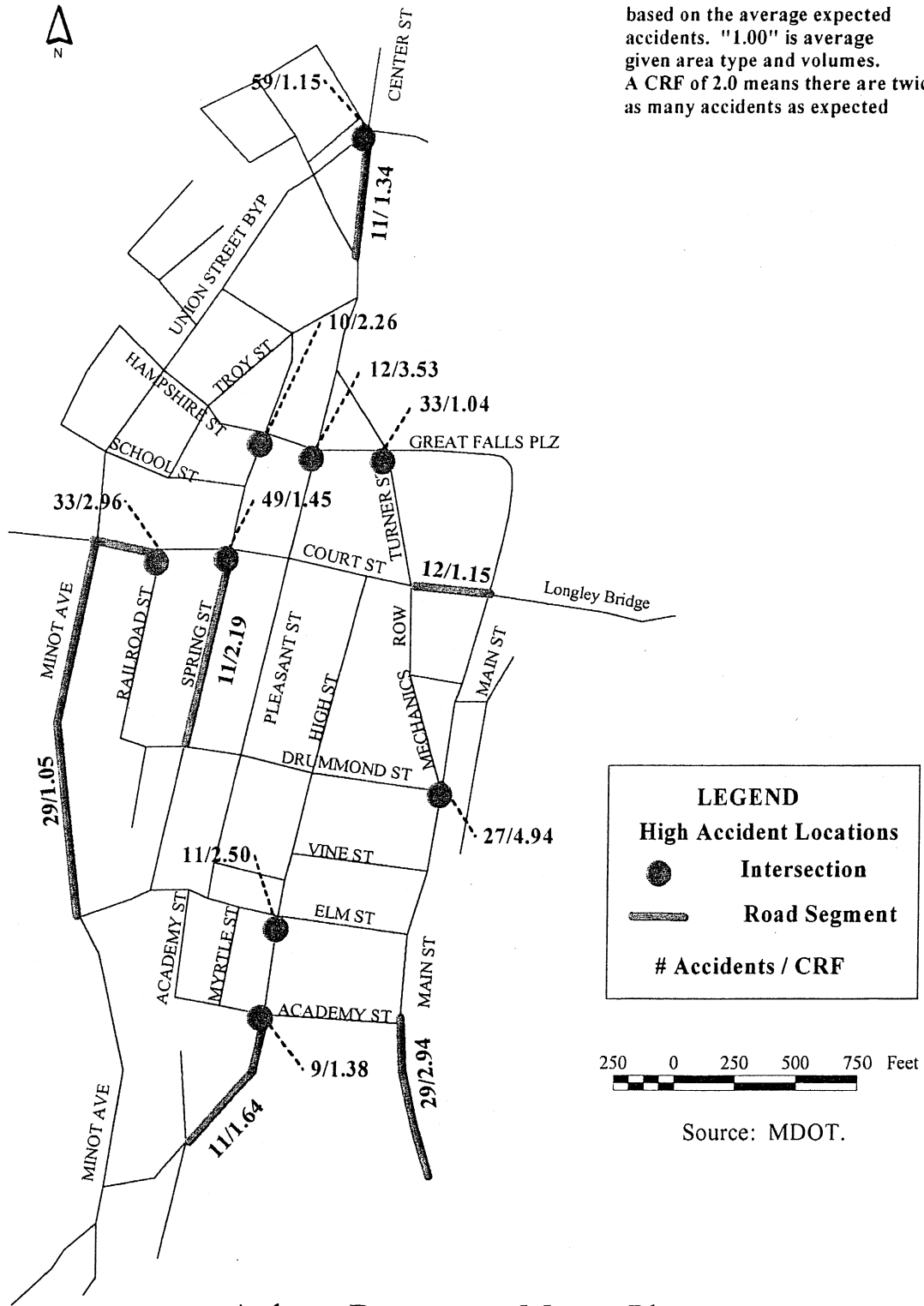
Source: MDOT, 1994-1996.

### **Access Management**

Access management is the control of entrances and exits from the driveways of roadside development. The number, location, configuration and width of driveways directly impacts the safety and capacity of roadways. Maintaining safe sight distances is also a critical element of access management. Common access management techniques include consolidating driveways, creating medians to limit and control left turns and sharing driveways between businesses. Minot Avenue currently has numerous businesses with deficient driveways. These may be redundant driveways (two driveways where one may be suitable) and driveways that are too wide.

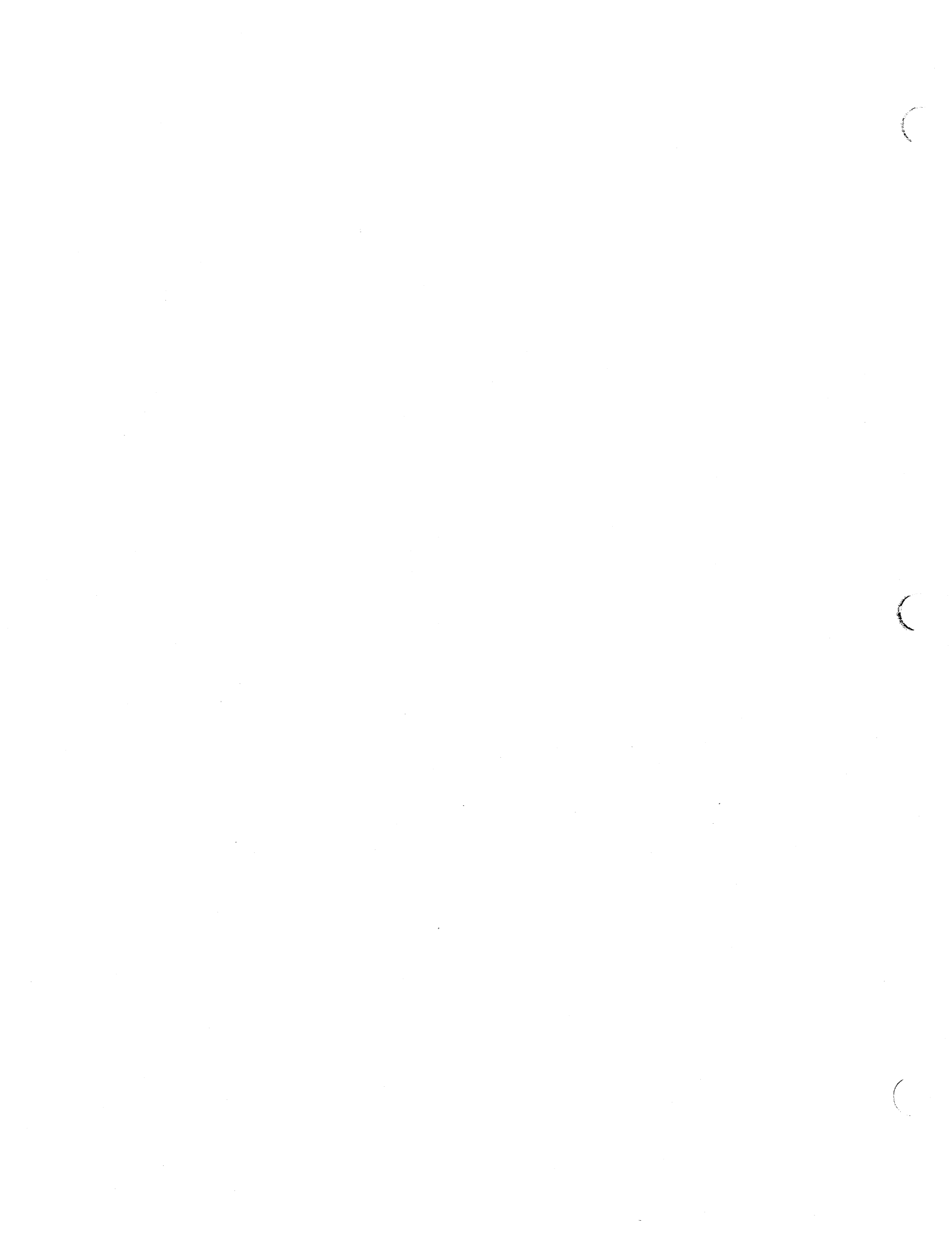


CRF is the Critical Rate Factor based on the average expected accidents. "1.00" is average given area type and volumes. A CRF of 2.0 means there are twice as many accidents as expected



Auburn Downtown Master Plan  
High Accident Locations  
1994 - 1996

Figure 3.3



## Roadway Aesthetics

While functioning well for automobiles, the major downtown streets function less well for other users such as pedestrians and bicyclists. Most intersections have pedestrian signal equipment to ease street crossings. Crossing distances are generally long with poor or no pedestrian refuges to break up the crossing. A pedestrian refuge is usually located at center medians and should be at least six feet wide for storage space for pedestrians and provide a 'refuge'. The medians that are present at intersections (Minot Avenue/Union Street and Turner Street) are generally three feet wide, capped with asphalt (no plant material to improve aesthetics) and provide little buffering for pedestrians from vehicles. Wide median areas are present along much of Union Street Bypass that are capped with asphalt and have no plant materials.

## ***Pedestrian Environment***

### **Pedestrian Activity**

Pedestrian counts were conducted March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, 1998 to gauge the current level of street crossings. These counts showed the moderate amounts of pedestrian activity occurring. Afternoon (4-6 PM) figures were significantly higher than mid-day crossings. Table 5 provides these data.

**Table 5**  
**Court Street Pedestrian Crossings**

Location	Mid-day 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM	Afternoon 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Court Street: Turner Street	23	130
Court Street: Main Street	14	78

### **Roadside Facilities**

The pedestrian environment within the downtown is mixed. Conditions walking *along* streets are generally good. Sidewalks along Court Street from the Longley Bridge to Minot Avenue will be replaced in 1999 as part of the roadway reconstruction project.

### **Intersection Crossings**

Pedestrian crossings are primarily provided at intersections where crossings can be more safely managed in conjunction with traffic flows. Pedestrian signals provide walk signals upon request by pushing the pedestrian crossing button at the intersection or are activated automatically with the correct signal phase. Crossing time is provided at the same time as (concurrent with) turning traffic at intersections. No exclusive pedestrian phases were identified. The LACTS Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (1995) surveyed pedestrians regarding the adequacy of facilities. Right-turn-on-red (turning vehicles not yielding to pedestrians) and long crossing distances were cited as problems within the downtown.

Pedestrian crossings are generally fair to poor due to a number of conditions. Crossings of major streets



such as Minot Avenue, Union Street Bypass and Court Street are characterized by long crossing distances and poor aesthetics. Turning lanes to accommodate right and left turning vehicles and large curb radii to accommodate long trucks make distances long. Distances are not broken up by adequate pedestrian refuge islands at roadway medians.

### **Off-street/Multi-Use Pathways**

An off-street pathway system currently exists along portions of the riverfront with a more enhanced system being planned. This pathway system will play a key role in the creation of the downtown as a destination. Existing pathways exist along the river in the Great Falls Plaza area and at the new railroad trestle pathway and park (Bonney Park) crossing the Androscoggin River. Planned pathways will connect Great Falls Plaza to the Bonney Park and further extend southwest along the former Grand Trunk Railroad line.

### **Parking Lots**

The function and image of pedestrian connections within parking lots are important. Surface parking lots are a dominant element in the downtown due to their number and location. The image that parking currently presents to the downtown employee, shopper or visitor is poor. Pedestrian connections are virtually non-existent in the Great Falls Plaza lot, providing little guidance to pedestrians how to reach their destination. Some parking row separators in the Great Falls Plaza parking area do provide sidewalks between parking aisles. Very little landscaping exists within the parking area and provides little shade and aesthetics. Its lots are almost exclusively oriented to vehicles with little accommodation for drivers and occupants once they leave their vehicle. The smaller public parking lot on Main Street and Mechanics Row does provide good lot landscaping with shrubs and numerous trees that provide shade and significantly enhance lot aesthetics.

### ***Bicycle Facilities***

The LACTS Bicycle Plan identifies few on-road or off-road bicycle facilities within the study area. The one facility listed in the Plan in the study area is the railroad trestle at Bonney Park connecting to Lewiston and to the proposed rail-to-trail along the former Grand Trunk Railroad line.

One measure of rating roadways for bicycling is to calculate a 'suitability rating'. The rating results in a number from 1 (good for children cyclists) to 5 (poor even for advanced cyclists) based on a number of factors. Key characteristics that determine how well they accommodate cyclists are peak hour traffic volumes, traffic speeds and combined width of the outside travel lane including paved shoulder, if any. Other factors that also influence suitability are the percentage of trucks on a roadway and the presence and rate of turnover of on-street parking. The higher the percentage of trucks, the poorer the conditions; the higher the turnover rate of on-street parking the poorer the conditions.

Major roadways (Minot Avenue, Union Street Bypass and Court Street) in the downtown provide fair to poor accommodation for cyclists. On Minot Avenue and Union Street Bypass, outside travel lanes are approximately 14' (minimum width for 'wide outside curb lane' facility) and have moderate peak hour volumes of traffic, often with high speeds (over 35 mph, observed). Volumes are slightly higher on Court Street during the peak hour

Sample suitability ratings are provided for three roadway segments: Minot Avenue from High Street to Court Street; Court Street from Turner Street to Spring Street and Main Street from Academy to

Mechanics Row. These sample ratings only use the three primary suitability indicators, curb lane width, speed and traffic volume to emphasize the interaction of these three variables on the bicycling environment.

**Table 6  
Sample Bicycle Suitability Ratings**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Curb lane width (rating)</b>	<b>Observed Speed - mph (rating)</b>	<b>Peak hour volume - curb lane (rating)</b>	<b>Suitability Rating</b>
Minot Avenue: High Street to Court Street	14.0' (2.5)	40+ (4.0)	300 (2.0)	<b>2.8</b>
Court Street: Turner Street to Spring Street	11' (5.0)	35 (2.0)	350 (2.0)	<b>3.0</b>
Main Street: Academy Street to Mechanics Row	14' (2.5)	35 (2.0)	225 (1.5)	<b>2.0</b>

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates; adapted from Sorton and Walsh, "Urban and Suburban Bicycle Compatibility Street Evaluation Using Bicycle Stress Level", TRB, 1994.

The sample ratings above show the interaction of the three variables. The lower the score, the better for cyclists. Narrow lanes widths and higher volumes contribute to Court Street's rating of 3.0, indicating suitability for more advanced cyclists. Minot Avenue's rating of 2.8 shows slightly better conditions due to increased outside lane widths but has higher travel speeds. Factoring in truck percentage would have further reduced these segments' suitability. Main Street rated suitable for moderately experienced cyclists with a rating of 2.0. This is due to its pavement width and lower traffic volumes.

### ***Parking***

Similar to most downtowns, parking in Auburn is one of the dominant land uses, visually and by area. Large surface lots occupy a significant amount of area downtown. In the commercial area, off-street parking serves the majority of parking needs. In residential areas, on-street parking serves as overflow for limited off-street/driveway parking for multi-unit apartment buildings.

#### **On-street parking**

On-street parking is provided along most non-arterial streets. There is no parking along Minot Avenue and Union Street Bypass in the downtown. Several sections of Court Street provide parking in front of stores. This is predominantly one hour parking.

#### **Off-street parking**

Large parking lots anchor the downtown at Great Falls Plaza and Shop N Save. The Great Falls Plaza lots have a combination of public and private parking. The public parking is divided into monthly permit

parking and time-restricted parking areas. This parking serves the elder high-rise (resident parking), county courthouse parking (workers and jurors), downtown workers (permit parking), shoppers and visitors (4 hour, 2 hour, 1 hour, 30 minute and 15 minute parking). Private parking areas are provided adjacent to the buildings. Table 7 details the distribution of parking spaces to each category.

**Table 7  
Major Downtown Off-Street Parking Areas**

<b>Type of Parking</b>	<b>Great Falls Plaza</b>	<b>Main Street*</b>	<b>Shop N Save</b>
Private	70	106	180
15 Minute	32	-	-
30 Minute	24	-	-
1 Hour	38	24	-
2 Hour	76	35	-
4 Hour	22	-	-
Permit	236	63	-
Jury	36	-	-
Esplanade - Reserved	<u>53</u>	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>180</b>

\* 'Main Street' includes lots located behind Main Street adjacent to the river and the lot at the corner of Court and Mechanics Row.

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates.

### ***Transit***

Transit accessibility to the downtown is generally good to fair, with four bus routes traversing Court Street near Great Falls Plaza then radiating outward. Service is provided on weekdays, Monday to Friday. All routes start from and end at the bus station in downtown Lewiston, a 'pulse' transfer point. Regular fares are \$1.00 per ride with a modest discount offered for purchase of a eleven ride card for \$10.00. Half and three quarters fares are offered to seniors and students, respectively. No monthly passes are sold. Free transfers between routes are only allowed at the Lewiston station.

The primary Auburn route ('Auburn Malls', #6) operates a full day schedule. Its first run begins at 7:00 AM; the last run leaves at 4:45 PM, with no service from 8:00 AM until the 9:45 AM run. The service is half hourly for most of the day except mid-morning (every hour). Other routes are 'New Auburn' (#3), 'Gamage Avenue' (#4) and 'Minot Avenue' (#7). These routes have less frequency (hourly) and fewer hours of operation.

Service hours and frequency for shoppers or daytime visitors are good. Commuters that work until 4:30 PM also have good coverage. Those that work until 5:00 PM or after would have no service options. Several routes offer early morning runs to serve employees of larger manufacturers outside the

downtown. Downtown time-coordinated stops are located in Great Falls Plaza (#6) and the Roak Block (#3).

Ridership data indicates that few workers use transit to commute. Recent route structure changes were implemented to increase the frequency of mid-day service. This resulted in a reduction in hours that would most likely service employees, in the hours near 5:00 PM. Last runs for the day begin at 4:45 PM, making it difficult for employees working until 4:30 or 5:00 PM to use transit.

The changes recently implemented do make the downtown more accessible for visitors and shoppers. Frequency at mid-day hours was increased. Other changes implemented were a 'Bus 'n Buy' program, new route schedules and information kiosks. One of these kiosks is located in Great Falls Plaza. Current participants include Shop 'n Save downtown. Initial response has been favorable (personal communication, Jeremy Evans, LACTS Director). These marketing programs will greatly enhance the visibility of transit and improve its image within Lewiston-Auburn.

### **Forecasted Roadway Volumes**

A travel demand model was created in the downtown to evaluate the impact of population and employment growth and traffic circulation changes in the downtown. The model developed was adapted from regional model developed and maintained by LACTS, the transportation planning agency. This model translates population, employment into automobile trips which are loaded onto a transportation network. From the network loadings, measures such as level of service for roadways and intersections can be developed.

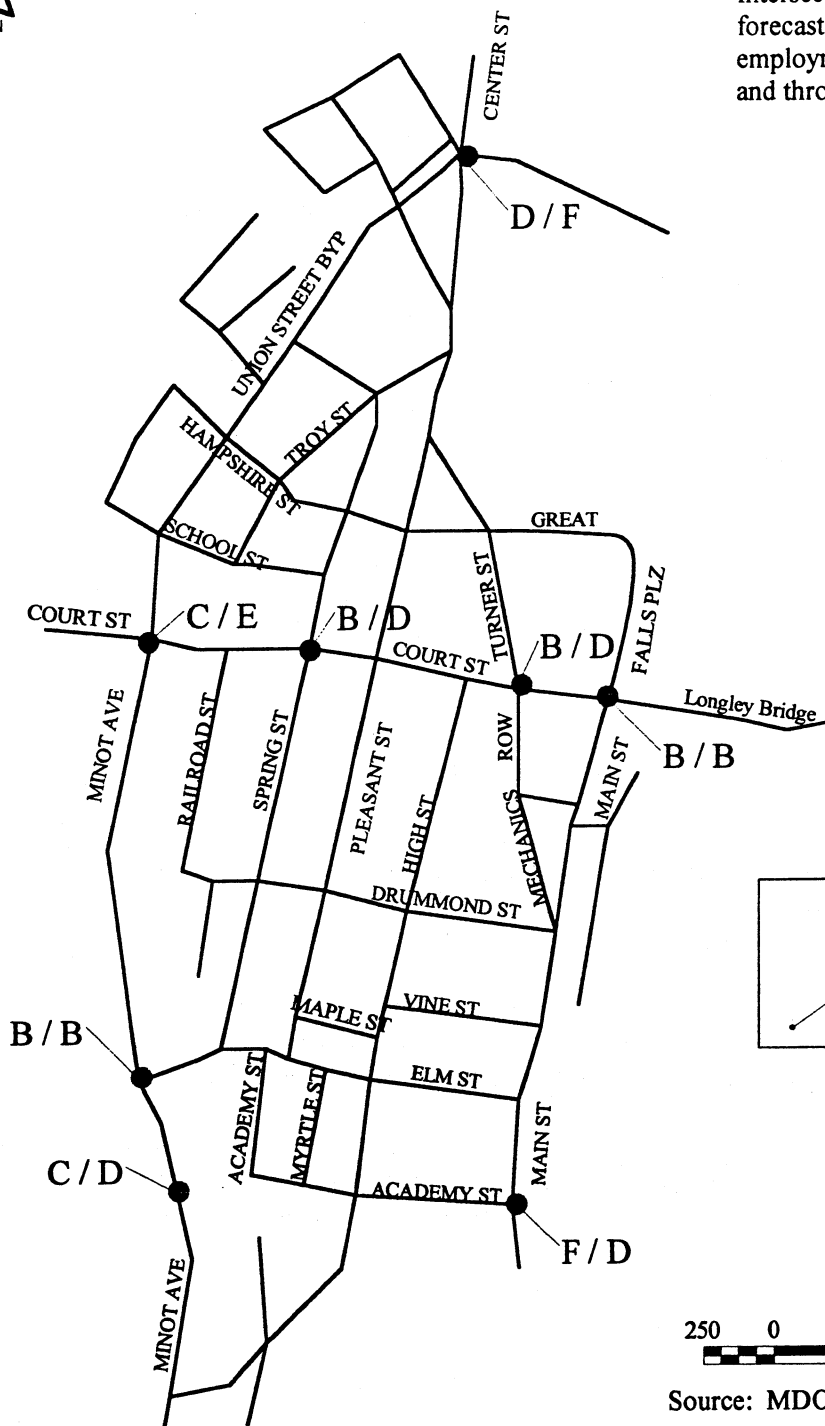
For the purposes of this planning effort, aggressive (or near worst case) forecasts were developed to assess traffic impacts on intersections. In general, through-traffic through the downtown was assumed to grow 35% over the next 20 years. Modest growth in population and employment inherent in the regional model were added in relation to a goal of this plan — to add significant numbers of workers into the downtown. A thousand total employees, both retail and non-retail, were added to the employment base in the study area. Moderate growth in housing units was also assumed.

Network changes were made to the existing network to test their implications. These changes include: conversion of Mechanics Row to two way; extension of Academy Street and dead-ending High Street near Academy. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 8 and Figure 4.

As expected, significant traffic growth based on these assumptions will deteriorate conditions at several intersections but still lead to acceptable operations at most. Improved operations at Main Street - Academy Street are expected to improve the LOS despite increased traffic.

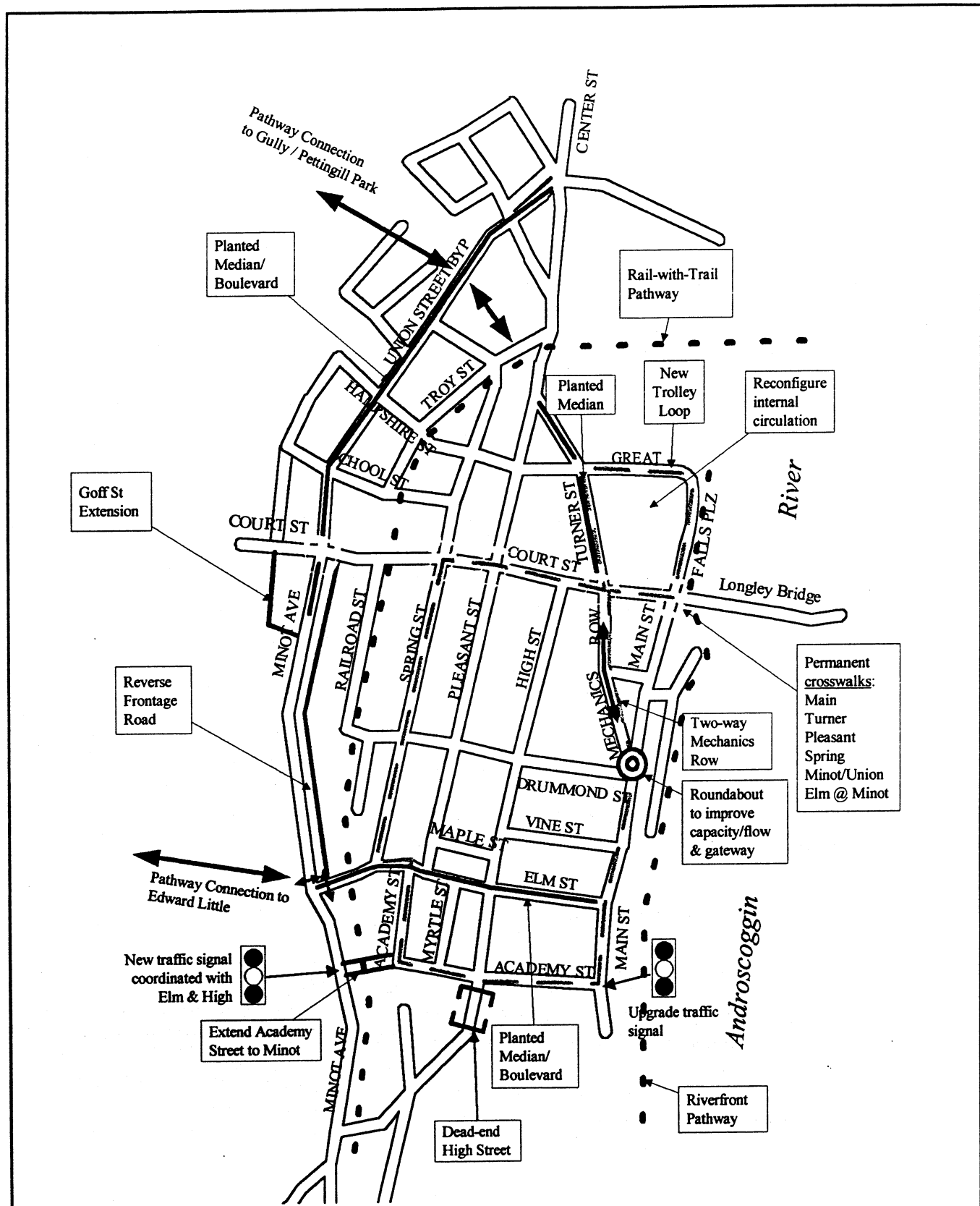


Intersection LOS is based on forecasts assuming 'aggressive' employment growth downtown and through-traffic growth.



Auburn Downtown Master Plan  
1998 & 2018 Level of Service  
Afternoon Peak Hour

Figure 3.4



Auburn Downtown Master Plan  
 Conceptual Transportation Improvements

Figure 3.5



**Table 8**  
**Intersection Level of Service**  
**1998 Peak Hour**

Intersection Location	1998 PM LOS	2018 PM LOS
Center Street/Turner Street/Union Street	D	F
Court Street/Minot Avenue/Union Street	C	E
Court Street/Spring Street	B	D
Court Street/Turner Street/Mechanics Row	B	D
Court Street/Main Street	B	B
Minot Avenue/Elm Street	B	B
Minot Avenue/High Street (Elm Street in 2018)	C	D
Main Street/Academy Street	F	D

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates.

## ***Recommendations***

Transportation recommendations were developed to support overall downtown goals of increasing its vitality, improving the aesthetics and improving overall circulation within the downtown. These recommendations span the areas of roadway and intersection improvements, transit improvements, bicycle and pedestrian system improvements and parking improvements. Many of these recommendations will require more detailed planning, design, and feasibility analysis prior to implementation.

### ***Roadway and Streetscape***

#### ***Court Street Reconstruction Project-related Recommendations***

The Maine Department of Transportation is currently revising plans for the reconstruction of Court Street. This project is expected to be completed in 1999. Much of the preparation work for this is currently underway. These plans were closely reviewed to accommodate proposed circulation changes and to improve the pedestrian environment. Pedestrian improvements included reducing crossing distances, revising signal timings, using permanent crosswalk paving materials and creating enhanced medians to provide better pedestrian refuge islands and to improve roadway aesthetics. Using permanent crosswalks will provide better visibility of pedestrians at crossing locations and will reduce the need to re-stripe crosswalk markings yearly.

#### **Key Intersections**

Court Street Project Intersections

- ▶ **Court Street - Main Street.** Create channelized island at Great Falls Plaza entrance across from Main Street. This island will segregate right-turning traffic from through-traffic and facilitate pedestrian crossings of Main Street by providing a pedestrian refuge across Main Street and the driveway, reducing effective crossing distances. The driveway median should be increased to 6 feet to include plantings to improve the aesthetics of the driveway entrance in addition to roadside plantings. The channelized island - widened median configuration will allow the stop bars at the Great Falls Plaza driveway approach to Main Street to be moved forward, reducing start-up and clearance times making the intersection more efficient. A reduction in curb radius is also recommended at the southwest corner to reduce crossing distance and reduce turning vehicle speeds. This is anticipated to be a low volume turning movement.
- ▶ **Court Street - Turner Street - Mechanics Row.** The key change proposed at this intersection is the introduction of a two-way Mechanics Row. This provides the opportunity to improve vehicle and pedestrian circulation within the downtown. This will require a new traffic signal phase at the intersection with Court and Turner Streets, reducing the amount of green time for other phases. To compensate, it is recommended that the Turner Street intersection leg have two exclusive left turn lanes and one through-right turn lane. This will modify the current configuration, removing the channelized island. Some reduction in pedestrian crossing distance can be accomplished by increasing the width of the median on Turner Street to between six to eight feet and significantly reducing the turning radius at the Court Street westbound approach. Large turning trucks should be directed to the Union Street Bypass. The introduction of the Mechanics Row phase allows for an improved crosswalk across Court Street, concurrent with the Mechanics Row traffic signal green phase. This will reduce the crossing conflicts with turning traffic. At the Mechanics Row approach, two lanes, a left turn lane and a through-right turn lane, are recommended.
- ▶ **Court Street - Spring Street.** Recommended changes to the MDOT are creating a leading exclusive-permissive left turn phase for westbound traffic into the Shop N Save plaza and adding a crosswalk across Court Street east of Spring Street.
- ▶ **Court Street - Minot Avenue - Union Street Bypass.** Minor changes are proposed to marginally improve pedestrian crossings. The curb radius on the northwest corner should be reduced (Goff Hill is signed for 'No Trucks'). The median at the Union Street Bypass and Minot Avenue approaches should be increased to between six to seven feet to allow for a planted median and increased pedestrian refuge. Improved landscaping at corner lots should also be encouraged. These changes will help reduce the negative visual impact of this very large intersection.

#### Non-Court Street Project Intersections

- ▶ **Main Street - Academy Street.** Changes in signal equipment and phasing can provide improved Level of Service from the current LOS F in the PM peak hour to LOS D. Changes include conversion from a lag to a lead left turn phase. This will extend the protected left turn phase for the northbound Main Street approach and create more free right turn time for the Academy Street approach. This new signal equipment will be able to respond to varying conditions.
- ▶ **Main Street - Elm Street.** A planted center median is proposed for the length of Elm Street. The median, extending to the intersection, will provide a pedestrian refuge for crossing Elm Street.



- ▶ **Main Street - Mechanics Row.** This three legged intersection will have Main Street to Mechanics Row as the dominant through movement. Potential intersection controls include an all-way-stop or a roundabout. A three-way intersection presents problems due to the dominance of the Main Street - Mechanics Row movement, with level of service forecasted to be poor. A roundabout has significant capacity and efficiency advantages. Costs, though, are significantly more. One feature of roundabouts is their improved aesthetics over stop signs or traffic signals. Roundabouts can be a prominent part of a 'gateway' project for the downtown as well. Roundabouts provide opportunities for major landscaping and public art to be incorporated into their design. Drummond Street is a high accident location and any design should address this. Consideration should be given to limiting movements into and out of Drummond Street to right turns in and right turns out only. This may require channelizing the exit onto Main Street.
  
- ▶ **Minot Avenue - Academy Street.** Extending Academy Street to Minot Avenue will allow the de-emphasis or elimination of the High Street - Minot Avenue intersection. This intersection will need to be part of a coordinated system with the Minot Avenue - Elm Street signal
  
- ▶ **Minot Avenue - Elm Street.** Consideration should be given to keeping this intersection open to maximize circulation options downtown (unless needed for closure due to new at-grade railroad crossing at Academy). The intersection should be reconfigured to improve its aesthetics. The turning radius for the right turn from Elm Street onto Minot Avenue should be re-evaluated. The current radius greatly increases the crossing distance. A pedestrian crossing continuing from Elm Street to the path leading to Edward Little High School should be provided. The crosswalk across Minot Avenue should be made of permanent materials. Additional landscaping should be provided at this intersection. A short portion of missing sidewalk should be constructed on the west side of Minot Avenue north of Elm Street. This section would complete the sidewalk link to the pathway on this side of the roadway.

### **Roadway Segments**

- ▶ **Mechanics Row.** Mechanics Row is recommended to be converted from one-way to two-way. This will ease traffic on Main Street from Mechanics Row to Court Street and Court Street between Main Street and Turner Street. Traffic that turned left from Main Street onto Court to continue onto Turner Street will now have a more direct route. As described above, this will add a signal phase to the Court Street/Turner Street intersection.
  
- ▶ **Academy Street.** Academy Street is recommended to be extended to Minot Avenue so that a more direct and efficient connection is provided for its traffic. This will require an additional at-grade railroad crossing. This will create a new signalized intersection with Minot Avenue.
  
- ▶ **Goff Street Extension.** Goff Street is recommended to be extended to Minot Avenue. At its intersection with Minot Avenue, it is recommended that it accommodate entering and exiting right turns only.
  
- ▶ **Access Management.** Access management should be aggressively pursued along the major arterial roadways of Minot Avenue, Union Street Bypass and Court Street as redevelopment occurs.

Emphasis should be placed on driveway location and spacing, driveway width, shared driveways, parking lot interconnections and the number of driveways. Driveways should not be too close together, too close to intersections or too wide. An in-depth review of access management guidelines should be conducted.

- ▶ Reverse Frontage Road (behind Minot Avenue). In conjunction with redevelopment of properties along Minot Avenue, it is recommended that the concept of a reverse frontage road be developed to serve adjacent properties. This road would provide circulation between businesses and uses along the Minot Avenue without re-entering the roadway. Driveways can be consolidated to improve sight distances and the safety of Minot Avenue traffic. This should be implemented in conjunction with redevelopment and be a part of the site plan review approval process.

## ***Parking***

Parking recommendations are provided for the short and long term. Short term improvements are focused on improving the aesthetics and pedestrian safety/connectivity in the Great Falls Plaza main parking lot. Medium to long term recommendations are related to increasing the available parking in residential areas in 'Old Auburn' and the structured parking recommended for Great Falls Plaza and Main Street/Mechanics Row.

### **Short to Medium Term Improvements**

#### ***Great Falls Plaza***

Short to medium term improvements are recommended for the main parking area within the Great Falls Plaza parking lot. A balance will need to be reached between expense and the short term nature of the improvements. The recommended improvements are intended to retrofit the existing parking lot at a modest cost without losing too many spaces, not to perform a wholesale redesign of the lot.

Improvements include adding trees and/or landscaping to the ends of aisles, adding landscaping and/or trees between three rows of parking and providing two pedestrian ways from within the lot to buildings. These pedestrian ways would eliminate approximately 16 parking spaces. It is also recommended to swap permit-parking and 4-hour parking in one row of parking nearest the river to provide improved parking for the riverside park. This swap also gets higher turnover parking away from the roadway.

#### ***Mechanics Row***

In conjunction with the reconfiguration and reconstruction of Mechanics Row to two-way traffic, additional surface parking is shown along Mechanics Row. This lot will provide approximately 85 spaces.

#### ***Turner Street***

Additional on-street parking can be provided on the Great Falls Plaza side of Turner Street between Court Street to Hampshire Street. This will increase available parking and reduce the effective roadway width. Parking should begin after the enhanced/planted median is phased out after approximately 100 feet. The parking and the new planted median should aid in reducing excessive vehicle acceleration and speeds while still maintaining adequate capacity. It is desired for vehicles to be able to safely maneuver around vehicles pulling into and out of parallel parking spaces. During the design phase for reconfiguration, the trade-offs between the increased parking and median width will need to be addressed.

## Medium to Long Term Improvements

### Structured Parking

Conceptual parking recommendations to support downtown redevelopment include structured parking facilities in two areas, Great Falls Plaza and in the Mechanics Row/Main Street block. *Bonding for parking facilities will require a full financial feasibility analysis once development proposals become more detailed. Environmental feasibility analysis of the Great Falls Plaza area should also be conducted to facilitate private investment in the proposed facilities. This study would reduce the initial risk of private investors in determining feasibility with regard to sub-surface conditions.*

### *Great Falls Plaza*

The parking facility in Great Falls Plaza is an underground facility, planned in two phases. The expected parking footprint for each phase is 67,500 square feet per level (350' x 180') and would provide approximately 250 spaces per level. Estimated costs (based on per square foot unit costs of \$30.00) are approximately \$2.02 million per level or about \$8,100 per space. These costs *do not* include sitework, land costs, development costs or specialty finishes or equipment (RS Means, *Building Design and Construction*, 1996). Sitework and engineering costs can vary considerably due to subsurface conditions and other site constraints, especially for underground facilities. Equipment and management costs can vary considerably due to the number of access/egress points.

Projected demand for new parking due to new development in GFP is approximately 366 additional spaces based on cumulative estimates of new building square footage of 110,000 square feet (assuming four 4-story buildings at 1 parking space per 300 square feet of office/retail space). This likely overestimates total demand for new parking. This does not include parking for the proposed expanded Post Office. Surface parking for approximately 120 cars is shown in small lots around the reconfigured greenspaces. Current parking capacity of GFP is approximately 585 spaces. Permit parking accounts for 236 spaces; 70 spaces are privately owned.

Phasing of the two structures is proposed as redevelopment in the Great Falls Plaza occurs.

### *Main Street - Mechanics Row*

A second proposed parking structure would be located in the Main Street - Mechanics Row block. The structure footprint is estimated at approximately 225' x 120'. This would provide approximately 90 spaces per level. If first floor retail space is provided, approximately 270 spaces would be provided on stories 2-3-4. If four stories are devoted to parking, approximately 360 spaces can be provided. As a minimum, kiosk type uses should be provided on the first floor to establish some pedestrian oriented uses along Mechanics Row. These may include dry-cleaner drop-off and coffee/pastry shops.

Cost estimates are provided based a four level parking garage (360 spaces). Each level is proposed to be 27,000 square feet; four levels would be 108,000 square feet. Unit costs for building and materials are approximated as \$19.00 per square foot. Estimated facility cost is \$2.05 million dollars or \$5,700 per space not including sitework, land costs, development costs or specialty finishes or equipment (RS Means, *Building Design and Construction*, 1996). Sitework and engineering costs can vary considerably due to subsurface conditions and other site constraints, especially for underground facilities. Equipment and management costs can vary considerably due to the number of access/egress points.

Estimated new demand based on two new buildings (18,000 and 30,000 square feet at 1 parking space per 300 square feet of office/retail space) is 160 additional spaces. One of the new proposed uses within this block is a new City Hall. More specific parking requirements can be developed once additional uses

within the block are identified.

#### *'Old Auburn' Residential Parking*

Parking improvements for the 'Old Auburn' residential section of downtown aim to ease the current residential parking capacity problem. There is a strong reliance on on-street parking to meet resident parking demand. This is due to the large number of apartment units that have been created in the larger buildings in the area and inadequate off-street parking. A recommended strategy is to identify a small grouping of marginal properties internal to adjacent blocks. Their lots can be used to provide much needed parking.

### ***Transit***

#### **Fixed Route Bus Service**

A key goal of the downtown master plan is to create a critical mass of employment and activity to support revitalized downtown businesses. A key anchor for this employment base will be office workers. Office workers most likely to ride transit work fairly regular hours. Recent changes in 'The Bus' have eliminated service after 4:45 PM. Important considerations in the use of transit by commuters are reliability and flexibility. Current service hours lack flexibility for commuters but provide increased hours for the system's primary users, the transit dependent. As the employment base in expanded in downtown Lewiston and Auburn, service hours should be re-examined as a key component of reducing the traffic impacts of new development.

Another action that can increase transit usage is "cashing out" parking. Employers provide a monthly transportation stipend to employees to use. Employees can use the allotment as they see fit to purchase bus passes or to continue to purchase a monthly permit parking. Other actions include expanding the Bus N Buy program to downtown merchants, providing a bus shelter within Great Falls Plaza or along Turner Street (adjacent to the Plaza), improving the signage and scheduling information provided at transit stops and increasing outreach efforts to downtown employers.

#### **Trolley Service**

A local trolley service can greatly increase circulation options for workers, shoppers and visitors between downtown activity centers. The trolley should connect Great Falls Plaza, a new Main Street Municipal Center/Roak Block, the Great Falls Performing Arts Center and Shop n Save. Fares should be free or greatly reduced (25 to 50 cents) to spur usage. This will require underwriting by the City and/or downtown business community. Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality funds may be available if benefits to traffic and/or air quality can be demonstrated. Frequency should be every 15 minutes when operational. Hours should be during the morning, mid-day, afternoon and evening hours at least when performances are scheduled at the GFPAC or other cultural activities scheduled.

Should the convention center plans in Lewiston develop, frequent trolley links to the center should also be explored. Service should also be planned to a proposed passenger rail facility should passenger rail service be restored. The terminal is proposed for the north side of Great Falls Plaza in conjunction with the hotel facility.

#### **Passenger Rail Service**

Plans for restoration of passenger rail service are taking shape within Maine. Initial efforts (the next five

years) are focused toward providing start-up service in high tourist locations, primarily along congested coastal corridors. Auburn and Lewiston should maintain close contact with State officials regarding this process. This plan identifies a preferred location for a rail platform/station within the Great Falls Plaza area in conjunction with a hotel development. This step is important to indicate to the MDOT that Auburn is seriously interested in rail service and will be able to respond quickly should the opportunity arise for service. Important for this service will be the creation of a regional 'destination'. Downtown revitalization efforts within Auburn and Lewiston will play a key role in forming this 'destination' and determining the feasibility of this service.

The platform/station developed should provide for integration of transportation at the site including automobile access and parking, bus/trolley service, taxis, bicycle access and storage and pedestrian access.

### ***Bicycle Improvements***

Improved bicycle access to the downtown will be provided by several programmed projects. These include the conversion of the former Grand Trunk rail line to a multi-use path. All roadway projects, where feasible, should accommodate bicycles. This includes providing, as a minimum, wide curb lane facilities (14' minimum, 15' preferred) on urban roadways. Signal timings and loop detectors should also be designed with cyclists in mind.

Secure bicycle parking is recommended to be provided at major activity centers. These include Great Falls Plaza, Main Street in the vicinity of the Roak Block, Great Falls School, riverfront focal points and at all new parking structures to be developed. Secure parking is essential at destinations to increase the use of bicycling for commuting, shopping and recreational trips.

### ***Off-Road Pathways***

An off-road pathway is proposed to create a transportation and recreational link around the downtown. The pathway would share the right-of-way with the active rail corridor that runs through the downtown. The path would link Great Falls to the Bonney Park rail trestle and the former Grand Trunk rail line being converted to a pathway.

Key to implementation of this effort will be to forge an effective relationship with the rail operator and resolving joint-use and roadway crossing issues. Rail-with-trail projects (where trails are adjacent to active rail lines) have been done successfully elsewhere but careful planning and design is paramount. The proposed pathway will cross several busy roadways including Court Street east of Minot Avenue. This crossing is approaching the threshold for automobile traffic where grade separation (over or under pass) should be considered. The location is also a high vehicle accident location and would further complicate the movements in the area. A grade separated crossing, if deemed necessary, will considerably increase costs, especially given the presence of the active rail line, wheelchair accessibility requirements and site constraints.

Important connections for this pathway to make include to the boat launch area, Great Falls Plaza, The Gully/Pettingill Park, Edward Little pathway, Great Falls Performing Arts Center and Bonney Park.

It is recommended that a planning and feasibility study be conducted to further explore this exciting potential downtown amenity.

## Cost Estimates

Table 9 contains cost estimates for the recommendations requiring construction, acquisition or operation of transportation facilities or services.

**Table 9**  
**Cost Estimates: Transportation Improvements**

Location	Type	Estimated Cost
Main Street - Mechanics Row.	Intersection - roundabout/gateway	\$225,000 (1)
Mechanics Row	Widen to two way, 30' granite curb sidewalks, 5' concrete lighting, 12 fixtures @ \$3,800 ea	\$ 91,550 (2) \$ 26,600 \$ 24,100 <u>\$ 45,600</u> \$187,850
Academy Street	Extend to Minot Avenue -- new rail crossing -- road extension, 350' long, 42' wide -- signal system -- granite curb -- sidewalk, asphalt	\$180,000 (3) \$157,200 \$ 40,000 \$ 11,000 <u>\$ 5,200</u> \$393,400
Court Street - Mechanics Row	Traffic signal, add for new approach	\$ 15,000
Main Street - Academy Street	Upgrade traffic signal equipment	\$ 20,000
Goff Street Extension	Extend street to Minot Avenue (assumes 300')	\$80,000 (2)
Train station	Rail platform at rail station (minimum needed)	\$100,000
Downtown	Trolley Service -- capital -- operating, per year, 200 days	\$100,000 \$ 40,000
Grand Trunk Multi-use Path	Bikeway/Pedestrian Trail (funded)	\$274,000 (4)
Riverfront pathway system	Pedestrian Trail, Bonney Park to Longley Br.	
Great Falls Plaza	Parking Improvements -- Retrofit of existing parking to improve aesthetics	\$ 15,000
Great Falls Plaza	Long Term Parking -- Phase 1, Underground, per level, 250 cars -- Phase 2, Underground, per level, 250 cars	\$2,020,000 (5) \$2,020,000 (5)
Main Street - Mechanics Row	Parking Garage, 360 spaces maximum	\$2,050,000 (5)
Mechanics Row	Surface parking, 85 spaces at \$3000 ea	\$ 255,000 (6)

(1) Based on costs for similar roundabout in South Portland. Does not include landscaping or art work.

(2) Based on unit costs of:

Bituminous pavement \$55/square yard, including base materials

Source: MDOT Sewall AQ Project, 1995.

Sidewalk, concrete      \$29/sq. meter (MDOT)

Sidewalk, asphalt      \$15/sq. meter (MDOT)

Granite curb      \$50/meter (MDOT)

All construction cost estimates based on these unit cost figures.

(3) Based on cost to rehabilitate Elm Street rail crossing, 1998/99 TIP, MDOT.

(4) Included in 1998/99 TIP, MDOT.

(5) Based on per square foot cost estimates by RS Means, 1996 for parking structure only. Does not include sitework, development costs, engineering/design and specialty finishes or equipment. Requires full financial and environmental feasibility studies.

(6) The Parking Handbook for Small Communities, 1994, ITE and National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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# 4

## ***Section Four: Design and Beautification Analysis***

### ***Overview of Planning and Design Process***

The following report provides the ground work for a variety of physical improvements to downtown Auburn, Maine. In a combined effort with Douglas J. Kennedy & Associates, Wilbur Smith Associates and Banwell Architects, The Cavendish Partnership inventoried and analyzed conditions in the existing downtown, facilitated a public information and involvement program, developed several alternative concepts and prepared a final master plan for the downtown. This report should be viewed as a guide for future private and public sector development initiatives.

The specific focus and goal of this study is to improve conditions for pedestrians, where appropriate identify view corridors to the river, foster the development of historic properties, identify areas for government consolidation and recommend streetscape improvements.

### ***Downtown Inventory & Analysis***

#### ***Base Mapping***

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping is currently being prepared for the City. The mapping was not available when this report was prepared. The base map that was prepared for the downtown study area was compiled from several data sources, including: City Tax Maps, USGS Maps, Aerial Photography, City Zoning and Land Use Maps. It was difficult matching data sources, therefore the mapping should only be used for broad scale planning and promotional purposes. When the GIS mapping is completed the information from this report should be rectified and transferred to the GIS mapping.

#### ***Project Area***

The project area extends north of the Railroad Bridge; south to the intersection of Union Street and High Street; east to Minot Avenue/Edward Little High School and approximately one block east of Union Street Extension; the western boundary is the western shoreline of the Androscoggin River.





## **Land Use and Zoning Analysis**

Using information from the City assessor's office, the comprehensive plan, zoning and tax mapping and limited field verification the project team prepared the following Land Use and Zoning map. The intent of the map is to graphically illustrate the zoning districts, building and land use. The mapping included the following land/building use categories and zones:

Multi-Family Residential	Single Family Residential
Commercial	Industrial
Educational	Retail
Institutional	Religious
Governmental	Vacant

General Business Zone    Central Business Zone    Multi-Family Urban Zone

In analyzing existing zoning and land use it is evident that the *City's current regulations have profoundly influenced the character and density of the study area.*

Regulations for the **General Business Zone** (Blue)- which is primarily in the vicinity of Minot Avenue and Union Street Extension encourages "strip development". This type of development is oriented toward highway commercial development, emphasizing direct highway access and easy access to parking. *The General Business Zone has contributed to the loss of downtown businesses by encouraging investment on the outskirts of the traditional downtown core.* This zone, by virtue of its location serves as the gateway to the City and the downtown. To improve the appearance of this area it is recommended that the City adopt design review ordinances that address building facades and heights, access, parking, landscape, lighting and signage. Efforts should be made to coordinate with the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) in limiting curb cuts and encouraging the development of service access roads behind businesses on Union Street Extension and Minot Avenue. Finally, the City in cooperation with the MDOT, should develop detailed plans to improve the appearance of the area including a street tree planting program, seasonal plantings in the asphalt medians, combining or eliminating many of the existing signs. Creating entrance features or gateways (plantings, signs, art, sculpture etc.) at major entrances to the downtown.

Regulations for the **Multi-Family Urban Zone** (Mauve) have created an area of the City which is too dense. *The unit per acre density requirements have created a situation in which many buildings have been over subdivided leaving inadequate open and parking space.* This has resulted in a loss of the "character" of this historic neighborhood. The lack of open space is also a result of the winter parking regulations that do not allow residents to use on-street parking for extended periods during storm events forcing them to park cars in their gardens. This policy should be reevaluated to determine if the no parking ban could be more tailored to actual snow conditions. Minor policy changes would result in some of the limited open space around buildings used for parking being rededicated to gardens for families to enjoy. This would improve the character and aesthetics of the neighborhood. Adjusting the winter parking regulations will not fully address the lack of parking in this zone. Centralized parking areas should be created wherever possible on a block by block basis. These parking areas should be in the middle of the block with parking behind the buildings on the street. By developing parking behind the buildings rather than demolishing buildings on the street, the historic settlement pattern of the neighborhood is preserved and enhanced.

The City should also address what uses are allowed within this zone. *Zoning policies should be adopted that preserve the historic character and settlement pattern of the neighborhood while at the same time allowing the maximum amount of flexibility inside the buildings.* Regulations that encourage a mix of uses, particularly on ground floors like home occupations, artisans in residence, professional offices, small scale hospitality operations should be adopted. Second stories of buildings could still serve as single and multi-family residences. These changes may be dependent on off-premise, remote and centralized parking areas.

The **Central Business Zone** (Pink) is not as uniformly developed as the other two zones in the study area. This zone has a number of distinctive historic buildings, and in contrast, a variety of new types of development and large open spaces dedicated to parking. With the exception of the historic district this area appears to be on the verge of becoming suburbanized, and an extension of the General Business District. In order to arrest this trend it will be important for the City to exercise all of its power, authority and influence in discouraging the further loss of historic buildings and developing alternatives to seas of surface parking within the core of the City. The City should adopt definitive design guidelines for this zone that address the character and style of new buildings, signage, parking, landscaping and lighting. Over the long term areas that are now large open surface parking lots should be developed with new buildings or structured parking. In addition to physical design guidelines, the City should create incentives for creating ground floor uses that are “people generators” - restaurants, galleries, boutiques, shops, office service centers. Parking regulations should be structured so that it is easy and inexpensive to park long term in more remote areas and convenient but more expensive to park in short-term parking areas.

## **Site Analysis**

Using information from the Historical Society, City assessor’s office, the comprehensive plan, zoning & tax mapping and field investigations the project team prepared the following map. The intent of the map is to graphically illustrate important features that may play an important role in making planning and design decisions. The mapping included the following features:

Flood Plain / Flood Way	Rivers, Streams and Ponds
Vegetation	Sloping Areas
Historic Structures	Historic District Boundaries
Non-Historic Structures	View Corridors and View Sheds
Downtown Gateways	Downtown Landmarks
Neighborhood Edges	Space Defining Elements
Shady Areas	Primary Traffic Routes
Collector Streets	Parking Areas

Several important findings were derived from this analysis.

**Flood Plain /Flood Way** Based on historical photographs and field observations during periods of flooding it was evident that development along the Androscoggin River, south of the falls was limited to recreational and open space uses. Flooding also limits development potential adjacent to the Little Androscoggin River.

**Rivers, Streams and Ponds** The Androscoggin River is the City’s most unique and underutilized resource. The City and the private sector have not taken full advantage of the river as a visual, recreational or economic development resource. The City’s initiative to create a pedestrian trail

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## **Site Analysis**

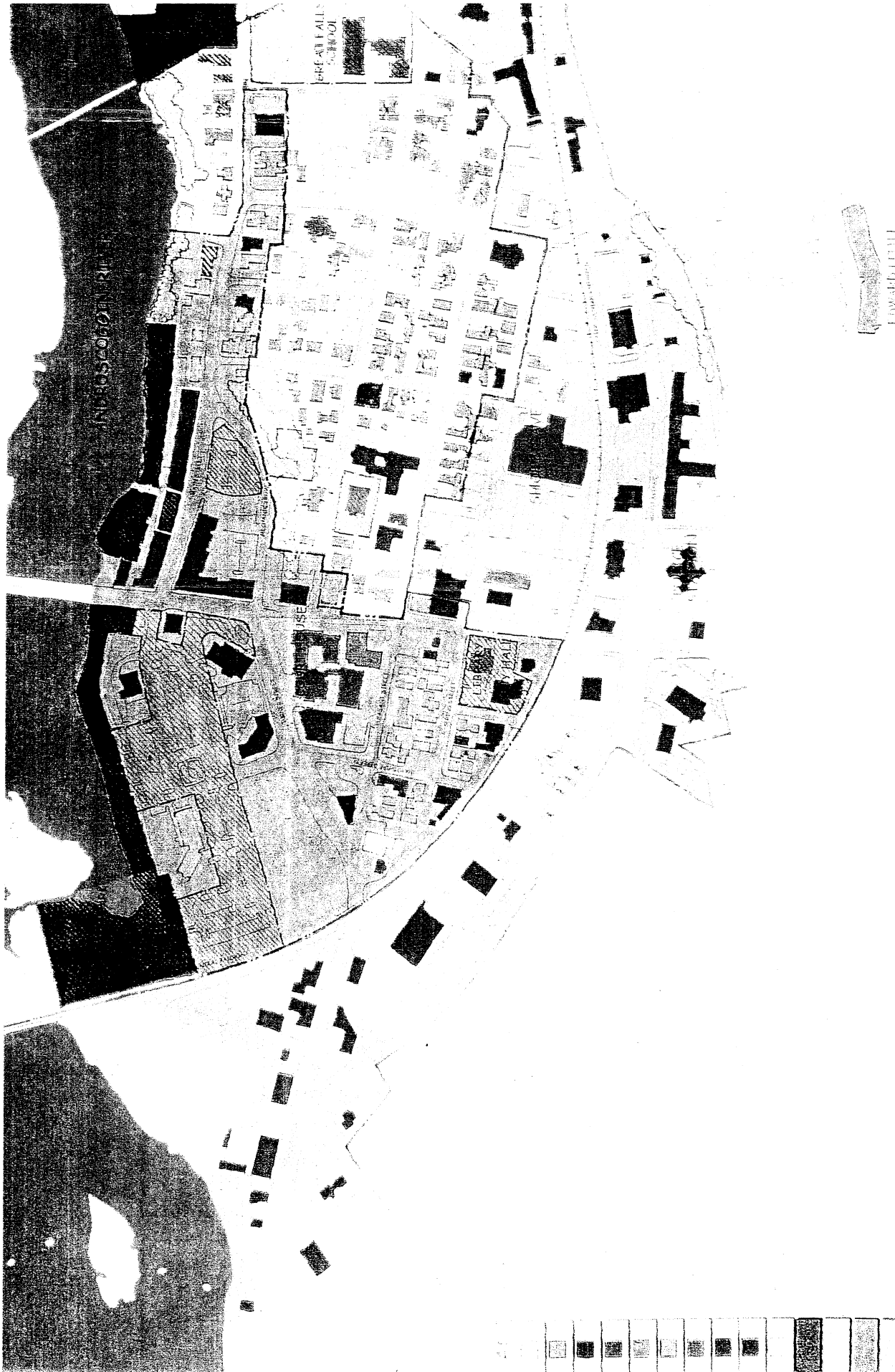
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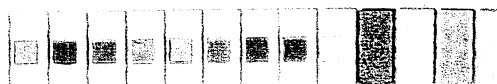


GREAT FALLS SCHOOL

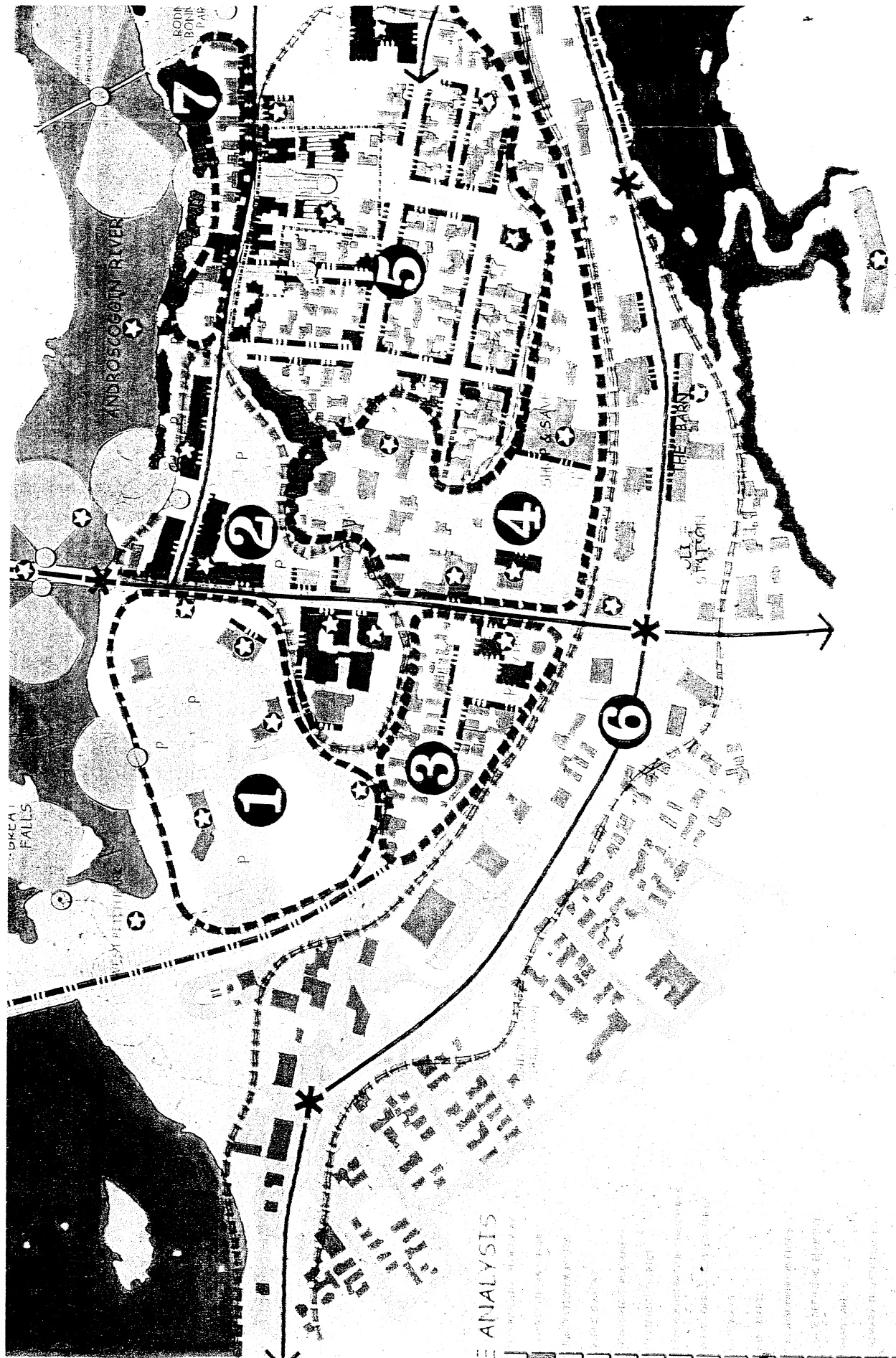
INDEPENDENCE PARK

USE

W. 10th ST



LEGEND



**SITE ANALYSIS**

- 1. [Symbol: Dashed line] Proposed boundary
- 2. [Symbol: Solid line] Existing boundary
- 3. [Symbol: Star in circle] Existing building
- 4. [Symbol: Star in circle] Proposed building
- 5. [Symbol: Star in circle] Existing parking
- 6. [Symbol: Star in circle] Proposed parking
- 7. [Symbol: Star in circle] Existing green space
- 8. [Symbol: Star in circle] Proposed green space
- 9. [Symbol: Star in circle] Existing water
- 10. [Symbol: Star in circle] Proposed water
- 11. [Symbol: Star in circle] Existing road
- 12. [Symbol: Star in circle] Proposed road
- 13. [Symbol: Star in circle] Existing utility
- 14. [Symbol: Star in circle] Proposed utility
- 15. [Symbol: Star in circle] Existing site
- 16. [Symbol: Star in circle] Proposed site

along the River's edge is a step in the right direction, but it should also create direct linkages to Main Street and other parts of the City ---essentially draw workers, residents and visitors to the waterfront.

**Vegetation** Within the downtown area there is very little vegetation. The City should begin a street tree program as part of its capital improvements. If the City is able to develop a comprehensive open space and greenway program, trees could play an important role in defining the character of the trail system and the downtown. West Pitch Park and the area north of the tressel should be connected via a tunnel. West Pitch Park should be upgraded (cleanup, benches, lighting, trash receptacles) and lands to the north of the tressel should be acquired for open space, creating a significant and unimpeded riverfront park from north of the tressel to the mouth of the Little Androscoggin River. Adding vegetation to the downtown will make it a more attractive place to live, shop and work and will add value to downtown properties.

**Sloping Areas & View Corridors** The escarpment that parrallels the river and runs through the downtown affords great views of the River and the Lewiston skyline. Views of the river and Lewiston should be protected and enhanced. If the City has an opportunity to purchase substandard properties or buildings that enhance the views across and to the river it should do so.

## ***Building Analysis***

There are several fundamental issues that must be overcome to reestablish a vital and thriving downtown including: improving the maintenance and appearance of existing buildings and streets, selective demolition of buildings that are beyond reasonable reinvestment. For example: the river frontage is too valuable a resource for the entire community to be taken up by tenements. Fortunately, Downtown Auburn has many resources and opportunities for implementation of a revitalization program, including:

- ▶ **Real** historic buildings and a townscape that set a fine standard of materials, scale and sense of place
- ▶ An outstanding natural setting and recreational potential
- ▶ A large volume of local, regional and tourist automobile traffic adjacent to, and through the study area
- ▶ Established entertainment attractions theater, balloon festival
- ▶ Several government/institutional organizations that are actively considering building improvements (library, city hall, historical society, Great Falls School, Post Office).

Based on the project team's analysis there appear to be a number of outstanding opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing buildings and the introduction of new buildings within the downtown including:

**Auburn City Hall.** This former grammar school is a large, flexible building that could be rehabilitated and used for many uses including: a discovery museum, science-history-learning center or expanded library facilities. Suggestions are made in the master plan to connect the building with the library and create a new public entrance and facade on Court Street.



**Auburn Public Library.** The existing public library is a landmark building on the Court Street. The building should be retained and preserved, ideally with continued public use either as a library with additions and/or City Hall, or in some other capacity highlighting the culture and history of Auburn.

**Auburn Hall.** This building is another key piece of the remaining historic fabric of Court Street which should be protected, restored and reused. The one-time City Hall could serve as a small place of assembly and a centerpiece of a new in-town hotel, dinner theater, bed and breakfast or it could continue as retail.

**Great Falls School.** The master plan presents a consensus opinion that Great Falls School be redeveloped as a cultural center for dramatics, music and visual arts. This use is supported by the downtown's potential to become more oriented toward entertainment and tourism.

**Androscoggin Courthouse.** Every effort should be made to insure continued use and maintenance of the building for county use. This is a very important historic building and location for employment in downtown Auburn.

**Auburn YMCA.** This is another important community resource that is a very positive force in the downtown and should be strongly encouraged to remain at its present location.

**Engine House.** With improvement in the downtown economy, it may be possible to reattempt to use the Engine House for hospitality or commercial use. It is a fine historical landmark the should be protected and preserved.

**Foss House/Women's Literary Union.** The landmark Foss House is undoubtedly in need of conservation and restoration. Its legacy as the WLU offers many interesting possibilities for cultural, entertainment and/or hospitality uses. The fact that WLU is located so close to the Great Falls School suggests potential coordination with arts organizations to possibly house visiting artists.

**Horace Monroe House.** This remarkable house offers tremendous potential for adaptive reuse for bed and breakfast, fine dining, etc. As an office, this (and other very large historic houses) could provide excellent workspace.

**Various Major Historic Houses.** The study area offer potential for increasing diversity and economic vitality. Office, live-work, hospitality, and entertainment uses will all support the overall goal of revitalization and attract potential residents to commit to the study area.

**Various Minor Houses.** Demolition of existing single and multifamily residential structures to eliminate blight and/or provide parking has been suggested. It is our opinion that this be considered only as a last resort in truly desperate situations. Our reasons for this are as follows:

- ▶ Minor "background" buildings are vital for establishing and sustaining historic character and texture. Historic structures cannot be replaced.
- ▶ It is very seldom that a "better" building or occupancy is built in place of demolished work.
- ▶ Rehabilitation work can be incremental and require less of an initial investment.
- ▶ It is more environmentally sound and energy efficient to use existing building materials

An alternate approach might be:

- ▶ Amend ordinances to include on-street parking
- ▶ Limit occupancy of houses to availability of parking.
- ▶ Develop an "Urban Homesteading" program with financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation.

**New Buildings.** Several new buildings are proposed in the Master Plan. In addition to commercial office space intended to bolster the working population in the downtown and support a service economy, hotel space and transportation hubs are called for.

*Public Investment* would be required for construction of several new institutional buildings:

- ▶ **City Hall** - The present City Hall is undersized and overcrowded. A new service oriented accessible City office building could possibly be combined with other private development initiatives in the Main Street area. (See Master Plan)
- ▶ **Auburn Library** - Similarly, this facility is presently undersized, over crowded and hard to access, could be expanded with additions into the existing City Hall building or a new building could be constructed adjacent to the present library. (See Master Plan)

Other new sites downtown that would contribute to vitality and oriented amenities are:

- ▶ **Androscoggin County Historical Society.** Now housed in the courthouse in a charming but obscure quarters, has potential to become a destination for local and regional tourist markets. This facility might be combined with a new library, city hall or a discovery museum.
- ▶ **Structured Parking.** Structured parking is called for in the Master Plan. It is vitally important that such building have appropriate materials, lighting, size, etc. to fit in the existing environment. Ideally, service/commercial space developed at the perimeter of structures to screen autos and enhance the street level environment would be included.

## ***Historical Photographs & Post Cards of Downtown***

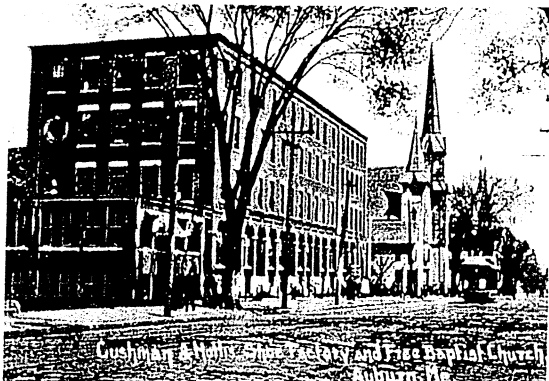


Figure 4:



Figure 5:



Figure 6:

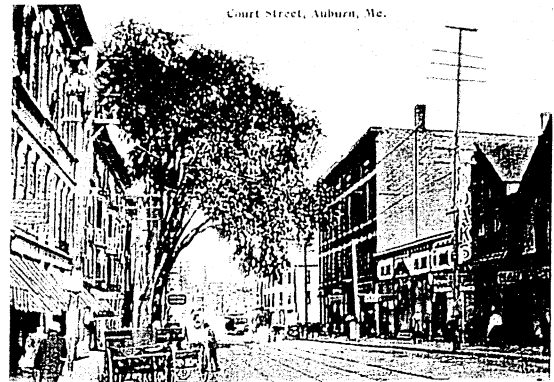


Figure 7:

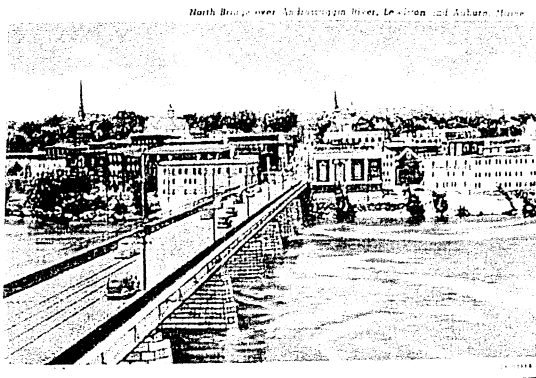


Figure 8:



Figure 9:

## ***Building & Site Aesthetics***

It is possible to provide some general comments regarding aesthetic issues that should be observed in considering restoration and redevelopment. More detailed recommendations regarding these issues are covered by materials included in the appendix.

- ▶ **Scale.** Presently, one of the most attractive aspects of the remaining historic buildings and streetscape in the study area is the variety of building styles and types within the overall context of a low-rise, pedestrian scaled environment. This should be carefully protected and nurtured.
- ▶ **Colors.** Colors are always difficult sources of controversy in the master planning and regulatory process. Generally, dark/masonry/earth tones on Main Street and Great Falls Plaza. Lighter and brighter colors at residential neighborhoods and out lying mills and warehouses, etc. See additional information in the appendix.
- ▶ **Building Materials.** Building materials are similarly problematic regarding the planning and regulatory process. Main Street and the Great Falls Plaza have been and should continue as masonry, cast iron, small scale additive elements. More recent modern construction with lightweight materials and colors are notably unsuccessful. Wooden houses with a variety of styles provide irreplaceable quality and texture.

- ▶ **Signage.** Signage must be carefully considered with the overall plan. Quality graphics, materials and lighting in sympathy with the historic context.
- ▶ **Lighting.** Lighting can add tremendous appeal and interest. Additional study should be devoted to development of a complete lighting program ranging from streets to building and landscape lighting.
- ▶ **Gateways.** One of the major findings from the market research was that people did not know where the downtown is. There are a number of areas that could be developed as gateways to the downtown signifying arrival. These areas are at the major arteries into the downtown. They include: Court Street & Minot Avenue, Turner Street & Union Street Extension, High Street & Minot Avenue and the Longely Bridge. Each area is unique and will require a design solution tailored to the specific area. They should also have some common elements so that they are recognizable and part of a larger theme that defines the downtown.
- ▶ **Landmarks.** Landmarks are an important element in any downtown. They are often used for orientation, they highlight the City's heritage and can both be a sense of community pride and shame. The Court House, Auburn Hall, Great Falls, the Roak Block, the Library come to mind as landmarks of great community pride. Steps should be taken to preserve and enhance these and other prominent landmarks. Some of Auburn's prominent buildings, neighborhoods and landscapes that are vacant or have fallen into a state of neglect shape the community's and a visitors negative image of the City. These landmarks create disinvestment in downtown and adversely effect the business climate. The City should take an aggressive role in making sure that the City's landmarks do not fall into disrepair or worse, are demolished.
- ▶ **Neighborhood Edges & Space Defining Elements.** Downtown Auburn's uniqueness and character is attributed to two major elements - the falls and its historic buildings. It is unlikely that the City will ever lose the falls. What makes cities different from suburbia and the countryside is the density of activity and building mass in relation to open space. The street trees that once lined the streets of Auburn softened the city scape and created great spaces. During the period of "Urban Renewal" Auburn lost a number of its historic buildings and beautiful urban spaces. It lost some of its unique cultural, architectural and historical resources and replaced them with a suburban development - buildings that could be anywhere, spaces made for cars, instead of people, and a disregard for existing development patterns. If Auburn is to continue to attract tourists and new investment in the downtown the City should take steps to carefully evaluate the long term effects of demolishing buildings and becoming suburbanized. Downtown Auburn's heritage is its future.
- ▶ **Micro Climate.** Climate affects everything we do in northern New England--how we shop, where we shop, what side of the street we walk on, etc. Unlike shopping malls downtowns cannot control their climate, but they can take several steps in mitigating the effects adverse weather conditions. For example, in Auburn's downtown has many streets that have an east-west orientation. On the north side of these streets the snow melts slower because it is in shade the majority of the day. Could we direct the public works department to prioritize the clearing of snow in shady areas? Conversely, on the south side of these buildings we have areas that are in sunlight. Could we encourage developers to include atriums and sun spaces in buildings with southern exposures? Perhaps, winter winds could be blocked by

including landscaped wind breaks in parking areas. Covered parking could be significant incentive to working and shopping in the downtown. Are there opportunities to create winter recreational events in the downtown ---ice skating?

- ▶ **Major Traffic Routes, Collector Streets & Parking Areas.** Major traffic and parking recommendations are covered in a separate report, "Transportation Analysis and Recommendations" in Section Two. Aside from the functional aspects of transportation planning it is important that streets and parking areas are designed to meet an aesthetic standard. Streets properly designed can provide visual clues as to the level of service, speed and significance of the artery. For example, a major boulevard like Union Street Bypass should not only be wider than Pleasant Street but should be different aesthetically, landscape elements, pedestrian features, lighting and signage should be more prominent, accounting for the increased speed and function of the road. Whereas, Pleasant Street should be designed to accommodate slower moving traffic and pedestrians. The aesthetic should be more detailed and the design elements less prominent. The City needs to classify its arterials and streets and develop different aesthetic design standards for each, including: landscaping, lighting, signage, curbing and numbers of curb cuts, type, color and location of site furnishings.

## ***Developing the Master Plan***

Development of the master plan was an inclusionary process. Input from the general public, business and religious community, land and building owners, renters, shoppers, government officials and civic leaders was sought at every step of the master planning process. A storefront project office was staffed on a part-time basis on Court Street to solicit opinion and display drawings. Public planning workshops were held to review the progress of the work as each phase was completed. Written and telephone surveys were conducted to solicit ideas and opinions. As the plans were refined focus groups were arranged to review specific ideas. The Mayor, the Great Falls Action Team and City staff played a significant role in formulating the plan. Stakeholder's developed the plan and have the ultimate responsibility of implementing it. The following documents the highlights of the planning process.

### ***Workshop #1***

The first workshop was held in March. The mayor personally invited over one hundred individuals to attend the workshop. Advertisements announcing the Workshop were placed in newspapers and posters were strategically placed around the City. All workshop participants were asked to register so that they could be placed on a mailing list and kept apprised of future events. The workshop was divided into two parts. The project team presented their analysis of the market, transportation, design and beautification for the downtown in a slide presentation. Following the slide presentation participants recessed for refreshments and had an opportunity to view exhibits and discuss the exhibits with other participants. For the second part of the workshop participants were led through a series of "creative problem solving exercises" in which they described their concerns and visions for the downtown. Their comments and questions were recorded on "flip charts". Before adjournment participants were told how they may contact the City's professional staff and project team (via fax, e-mail and a toll free telephone number) directly with additional comments and questions. Approximately 90 people attended the first workshop.

# ADAPT

## Auburn Downtown Action Plan for Tomorrow

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Dear Citizen/Downtown Stakeholder,

***ADAPT is here!*** The Auburn Downtown Action Plan for Tomorrow is underway. The City of Auburn, through its Great Falls Action Team, is planning for the future of downtown Auburn. Throughout the planning process the City is committed to seeking and receiving input from citizens and stakeholders in the downtown. The goal is to create a plan and vision for the downtown that is reflective of the community.

***We need your help!*** Over the next three months we will be hosting three planning workshops. The workshops will focus on developing design, marketing, traffic, parking and improvement strategies for the downtown. It is important that those who will be impacted by potential changes have an opportunity to participate in the planning process. The first workshop is scheduled for

**ADAPT Workshop**  
**Thursday, March 19, 1998**  
**7:00 - 9:00 PM**  
**High Street Congregational Church**

***This is not just another study!*** We are on a fast track. It is our hope to begin implementing recommendations as early as July, 1998. The City has hired an experienced consulting firm, with a track record for getting things done in downtowns like ours, to assist us. However, your ideas and involvement are critical to our success.

***PLEASE*** plan on attending our first workshop and help us develop strategies that will yield immediate and sustainable changes to the economics, living, and working conditions of our downtown. Thank you.

Sincerely Yours,

*Lee Young*  
Mayor Lee Young

# „ Downtown Planning Workshop

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March 19, 1998

7:00 P.M.

High Street Congregational Church

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# ADAPT

DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN *for* TOMORROW

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# ADAPT

Published by AUBURN DOWNTOWN ACTION TEAM for TOMORROW  
Edited by The Cavendish Partnership

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION MOVING FORWARD

AUBURN, MAINE. Over the next three months ADAPT will be hosting three two-hour planning workshops. The workshops will focus on developing design, marketing and organizational strategies for downtown. The City has hired a top notch consulting team, with a great track record in revitalizing downtowns, to facilitate the process. They have scheduled three two-hour workshops for March, April and May. At the first workshop, which took place on March 19 at the High Street Congregational Church, the consulting team presented

useful downtown marketing, traffic and design information. Following the presentation and a break for refreshments residents, business and property owners and others offered their own insights regarding opportunities and constraints of the downtown. At the second-workshop, to be held at the High Street Congregational Church at 7:00 P.M., April 29 the consulting team will present the findings of the market study and three conceptual downtown master plans.

of the downtown does not occur.

**Parking Analysis:** The City currently controls two major surface parking lots: Great Falls with approximately 300 parking spaces and Main Street with approximately 45 spaces. The City owns many smaller lots in the area as well.

The City would like to develop a better understanding of its parking needs and determine whether a parking garage would be feasible.

**Design and Beautification:** The City has been developing the Riverfront Walkway in the Downtown. The City has also been acquiring and demolishing buildings where and when appropriate to create view corridors to the River. These issues coupled with the need to foster historic properties and identify areas for government and consolidation are important design considerations to be considered. The plan should also include recommendation for streetscape improvements.

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### Mayor Young Outlines Goals

The Mayor and the Great Falls Action Team prepared the following outline of their goals for the project.

**Market Analysis:** The City sees a market analysis as pivotal to the future of the downtown. The City wants to understand what types of land uses it should be promoting so that stagnation



# The "Second" Workshop April 29 High Street Congregational Church 7:00 P.M.

## City Hires Team

The City hired a team of consultants with expertise in: market analysis, urban and waterfront design, traffic planning, landscape architecture, architecture, historic preservation and public participation to help them develop a revitalization strategy for the downtown.

Members of the team have been working together on similar projects since 1978. The team draws from the expertise of four outstanding regional firms: The Cavendish Partnership with offices in Vermont and New York; Douglas J. Kennedy & Associates from Hanover, New Hampshire, Banwell Architects with offices in Vermont and New Hampshire and Wilbur Smith Associates from Portland.

The team has prepared plans for more than 50 downtowns. In 85% of the downtowns they have worked on improvements have been completed within five years. Recent examples include: Milford and Hanover, New Hampshire; Burlington and Randolph, Vermont; Shelburne Falls and Palmer, Massachusetts and Rochester, New York.

If you have some ideas, you would like to share with the team. Call them toll-free at: 1-800-206-PLAN. Stephen.

## Workshop # 2 Agenda

7:00 Introduction: Mayor Young  
7:05 Overview of Planning Process  
7:10 Slide Presentation - 3 Concepts  
7:30 Break for Refreshments  
7:45 Review Sessions (20 Min. Each)  
9:00 Adjourn

## Market Analysis Update



The following are some major results from the downtown survey that we conducted during the first half of March. Note that we did not base this survey on a random sampling technique. It was available to any visitor to the downtown. Surveys were placed in many downtown locations, including: businesses and public locations. In addition, attendees at the first public workshop returned many surveys on March 19. Major results follow:

• We made approximately 1,200 surveys available. 194 completed

surveys were returned, for a 'response rate' of 16%. This is a strong response. Similar efforts in other cities have typically resulted in 75 to 125 surveys. • 85 percent of the respondents came from Auburn, Lewiston, Poland Spring, Turner, Minot, Greene, Lisbon Falls or Subuttus. Auburn and Lewiston residents accounted for 77 percent of all respondents.

• 57 percent of respondents were female, while the remainder 43 percent was male. This is typical of downtown surveys where most of the respondents are usually females.

• The average respondent was 42.6 years, while the median was 42.

• The average respondent has 2.84 persons in their household.

• The average household income among all respondents was approximately \$47,800.

• The average household income among respondents who work in the downtown was approximately \$49,200.

• More than half of the respondents (53 percent) suggested that they visited the downtown more than four times a week.

• The following percentages of all respondents indicated they had visited the Auburn downtown to attend the listed cultural/recreational events: Balloon Festival-86%; July 4th Celebration-60%; Theater/Plays-37% And Canoe Race-13%.

• The following are the most frequently mentioned reasons why respondents visit the downtown. The percentage figures suggest the percentage of all respondents who mentioned the reason. Food Store-71%, Post Office-73 %, and Bank-66%; City Offices-56%; Library 54%; Professional Offices 43%.

• Almost 45% of the respondents indicated that they work in the downtown, 24% indicated they work at a non-Auburn location and 20% indicated they are not currently employed.

• Shop n' Save in Auburn and Shaws in

Auburn are the most popular grocery shopping locations for a total of 71% of the survey respondents. Shop n'Save in Lewiston and Shaws in Lewiston accounted for an additional 16 percent of this question.

36 % of the respondents indicated that most of their non-grocery shopping occurs at the Auburn Mall. Other popular shopping locations include: WalMart-Auburn 23%; J.C. Pennys-Auburn 11%; Kmart Auburn 22% and T.J. Max-Auburn -9%.

The following were the most frequently suggested stores, services and businesses for downtown Auburn: restaurant, speciality stores, parking, women's clothing, coffee shop, men's clothing and book stores.

The following were the most frequently suggested cultural/recreational facilities for downtown Auburn: performing arts center, park, walking-riding paths, movie theater, concerts, library, amphitheater, historical museum, seasonal festivals and youth programs.

## Transportation Notes



Edward MacLachlan.

Auburn's downtown faces many competing demands on its transportation system. Successful solutions will find the right balance between these competing demands. Transportation topics that are being addressed in ADAPT include:

- ▶ Pedestrian Circulation

- ▶ Traffic Circulation
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Linkages to Area Bicycle, Pedestrian and Transit Networks

A primary goal of the planning effort is to enhance the pedestrian crossings of Court Street. The heavy stream of through-traffic in the downtown makes street crossings an unpleasant experience and deters many from trying. The traffic and wide street create a barrier between the two sides of the downtown. Reducing the heavy impacts of the Court Street traffic is essential to the success of the plan.

We are exploring options for changing traffic patterns into and through the downtown. Minot Avenue and Union Street Bypass are being looked at to improve their efficiency through access management measures and to upgrade their appearance as well. Numerous high accident locations exist in the downtown. Actions to reduce accidents will also be developed.

Another important goal is to better integrate the parking into the fabric of existing and planned development. We are also evaluating potential locations for parking structures on each side of Court Street. Demand for more parking in conjunction with new developed will be assessed.

Auburn and Lewiston have been evolving pedestrian and bicycle networks with the river being the focus. Planned improvements will compliment these networks. The key to a successful downtown transportation system is to strike a balance between the various competing demands: cars, bicyclist, pedestrian and transit users. Essential to finding this difficult balance is input from Auburn's citizens

## First Workshop a Great Success



Consulting team members led approximately 90 participants through a series of visioning exercises to brainstorm possible alternatives for the downtown.

The first exercise involved using a car as a metaphor for the downtown. They likened Auburn to: a Volkswagen Bug, an Olds 98 and a Ford pick up as well as many other cars. Participants clearly favored comparisons with more utilitarian cars than sport or luxury cars.

Next, participants listed their favorite spots in the downtown. Austin's Back Room, parks, the library, Great Falls and the Little Theater were among the lists of favorite spots.

Participants then developed their wish list for the downtown. The list included such things as:

- Suggestions for painting buildings, Art Galleries, a Community Center
- More bikeways, slowing down traffic on Court Street, Preservation of Historic Buildings, more Riverfront Development, more flexible multi-use buildings, the City ownership of the Balloon site and a Performing Arts High School to name a few.

Finally, we asked that the participants describe what they would like to see in specific areas of the downtown. To aid in describing the improvements we divided the downtown in seven areas.

# 800-206-PLAN

A map describing the areas and lists of ideas for each area are available at the Planning Department in City Hall.

## Downtown Myths & Secrets

By Dolores P. Palma

### *Downtown Myths*

- 1) If we build it they will come.
- 2) If we demolish it they will come
- 3) If we complete one major project they will come
- 4) If we can't get a department store to

come back to downtown. Downtown will never be healthy again.

- 5) We can't get a department store to locate downtown. So Downtown can no longer support any kind of retail.
- 6) Competition is bad for business
- 7) For downtown businesses to be successful they must keep uniform business hours
- 8) If we build more parking they will come

### *Downtown Secrets*

1. Form partnerships
2. Know your vision
3. Be market-driven
4. Use a business plan
5. Dare to be different

6. Focus
7. Be self-sufficient
8. Return to old fashioned values
9. Be pro-business and pro-quality
10. Know the five "m's" -

**Management**

**Market Knowledge**

**Marketing**

**Maintenance**

**Money**

---

**April 29 - 7:00 PM**  
**BE THERE!**

## **Public Outreach**

Based on the comments from the first workshop members of the project team began refining their research and conducting field investigations. In addition, a project field office was established in the downtown off Court Street. The office was open on Thursdays. Members of the City's professional staff and the project team were on hand to respond to questions and conduct interviews. Exhibits from the first workshop were placed in the windows.

## **Alternative Concept Plans**

The project team organized the information gathered at the workshops and the field office and prepared three alternative concept plans for the downtown. The project team attended a work session with the GFAT committee. The alternative concepts were reviewed by GFAT. Plans were advanced based on GFAT and citizen feed back. Three alternative concept plans were prepared. Each of the plans had a different focus for the core of the downtown, but had similar themes for the outlying areas. Major differences in the three alternatives were centered around the location of a new library, the disposition of the Great Falls School, the location of City Hall and the development of Great Falls Plaza. The following plans describe the alternatives concepts. **Full size plans are available for viewing at City Hall.**

### **Alternative Concept Plan "A"**

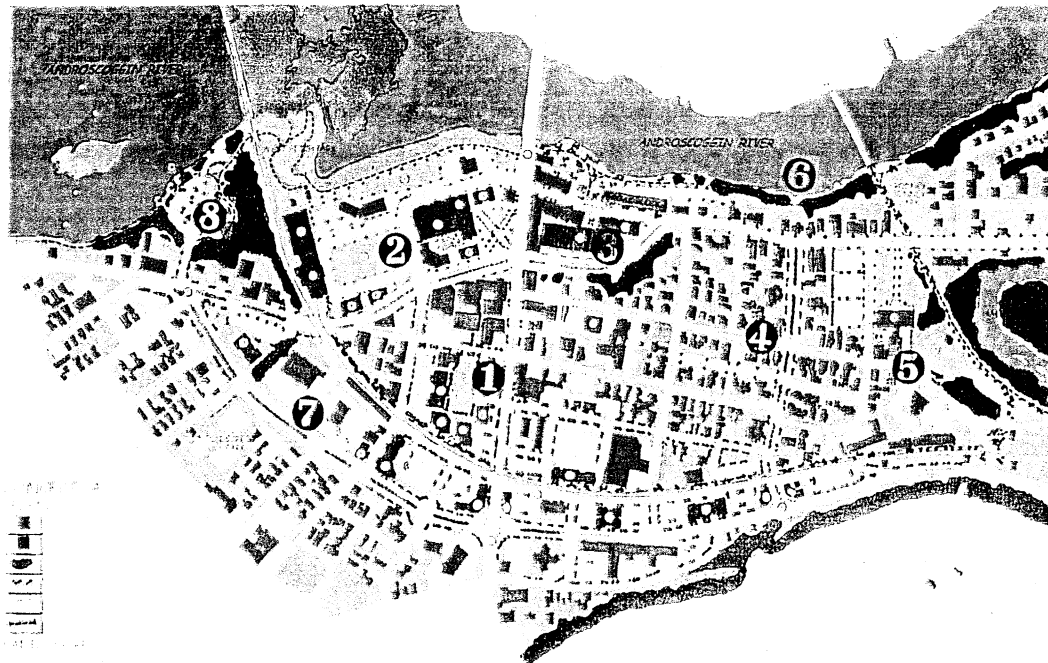


Figure 11: Alternative Concept Plan "A"

## Alternative Concept Plan “A” Highlights (Refer to Numbers on Plan)

- ▶ **Area One: Municipal Center.** The municipal center consists of the post office, a combined City Hall and library, the School Department and a museum. The buildings were arranged to form a central green space or quadrangle. The existing City Hall (the former school) is the School Department. The existing library is converted to a museum featuring regional history, children’s and other exhibits. To the north of the existing City Hall in what is now school street would be a new downtown Post Office. East of the post office, on the north side of the quadrangle is a new City Hall - Library building. This configuration would require the closure of School Street between Pleasant Street to the railroad tracks and Spring Street from Court Street to Hampshire Street. In addition, this concept would require the removal of buildings on School, Spring, Hampshire and Pleasant Streets. Two large surface parking lots would serve the municipal center. All of the buildings would share common parking, however, primary parking for the School Department and museum would be accessed from Court Street and primary parking for the Post Office and City Hall/Library would be accessed from Hampshire Street.
- ▶ **Area Two: Great Falls Plaza.** This concept depicts two development zones in the Great Falls Plaza and two public green spaces. The bank on the corner of Turner and Court Streets has been removed to provide space for a formal public green space. To the north of the park in the existing parking area are several new multi-story buildings containing restaurants, retail and commercial space on the first floors and office space above. Attached to these new buildings is a multi-story parking facility. The spaces between the buildings and parking garage would be treated as public courtyard spaces suitable for a variety of uses. Parallel to the railroad tracks is a multi-story hotel and train station, supported by a second parking structure. On axis with the center of the hotel building is a public common suitable for public events. Two commercial office buildings, paralleling Turner Street would enclose the common. Around the common would be short term on-street parking. The esplanade would be upgraded with new lighting, landscaping and site furnishings.
- ▶ **Area Three: Main Street/Mechanics Row.** Main Street is open to thru traffic but it has been pedestrianized. The emphasis is on aesthetics, pedestrian safety and convenience. Main Street would be designed so that it could be closed for special events. Across Main Street from the Roak Block (in the existing parking lots) would be a new commercial and office building. The building would be in the architectural style of the Roak Block and be attached to a multi-story parking garage. The garage would also be physically attached to other buildings on the west side of Main Street as well as Auburn Hall. The new public parking facility would be available to anyone in the downtown, but would be primary for businesses south of Court Street. Mechanics Row would become a two-way boulevard with a planted median.
- ▶ **Area Four: Old Auburn Neighborhood.** Recommendations include: the development of more flexible zoning regulations to permit commercial uses on the first floors of buildings and bed and breakfast inns, winter parking regulations that are more tailored to actual snow conditions; and design guidelines for the exterior of buildings, signs and landscaping. Annual capital improvements should include: street trees, ornamental lighting, new street signs, new sidewalks and granite curbing. Properties or buildings located in the center of blocks should be evaluated to see if they could become centralized surface parking areas. If and when these properties become available the City should make every effort to purchase

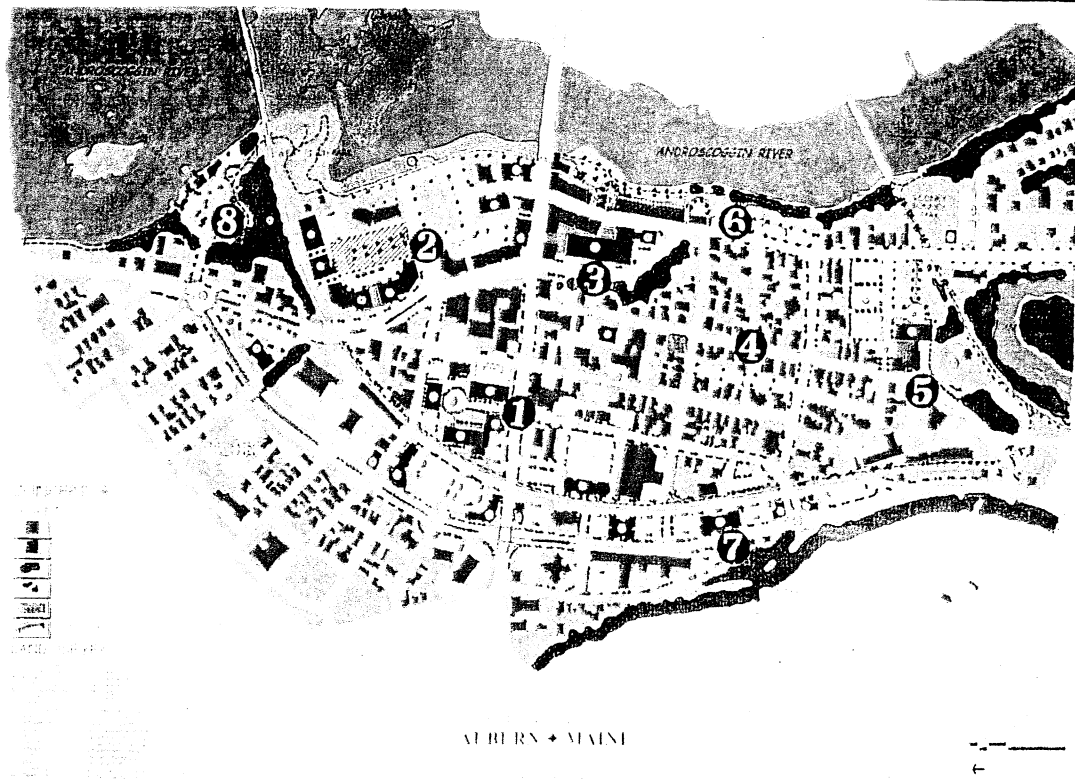
them or encourage adjacent property owners to purchase them and convert them to parking. Additional, retail/commercial space has been included in the existing Shop n' Save area. It is anticipated that these new shops and businesses would cater to the neighborhood residents. Elm Street is a boulevard with a planted median.

- ▶ **Area Five: Great Falls School.** The Great Falls School becomes the Auburn Cultural Center. The facility would be expanded to become a regional center for visual, performing and cultural arts. The entire building would be renovated. South of the building, between the recreational path and the embankment is an outdoor performance center. The outdoor performance would have a permanent stage and would be incorporated into the existing park and proposed recreational path. Across Academy Street properties would be acquired to provide additional parking. On the Academy Street side of the school would be a forecourt that would extend across the street. This hard surfaced space would become a gathering space for patrons before and after performances and exhibits. In addition, this space could also be a sculpture garden. The formal entrance to the facility would be from Main Street. On axis with the front doors is a formal path and alley of large shade trees leading up to a formal hard surfaced terrace. The great lawn could also feature annual and perennial gardens or could be used for small outdoor performances with the terrace as the stage.
- ▶ **Area Six: Androscoggin River Front.** This concept suggests modest improvements to the waterfront -- a recreational path from Court Street to the Rodney Bonney Park -- extending to the south as property or rights-of-way become available. The path could also connect through a small park on Main Street next to the Roak Block.
- ▶ **Area Seven: Minot Avenue/Union Street Extension.** An overlay zone should be created for Minot Avenue and Union Street Extension to promulgate the orderly development of the area. This thoroughfare is the entrance to the City and should be inviting and attractive. Curb cuts should be limited and private land owners should be encouraged to develop a service road behind the buildings paralleling the main road. Street trees, new lighting and banners should invite the visitor to Auburn and encourage them to visit the downtown. Thematic banners on light poles might highlight downtown events, history and attractions. The intersections of Court Street, Turner Street and Elm Street should be converted to "gateways" signifying entrances to downtown. The gateways could incorporate different surface materials, overhead structures, fountains, large-scale seasonal plantings as well as signs directing visitors to attractions in the downtown. Ideally the signs would be as clear as signs directing patrons to different terminals at a large airport. At the intersection of Union Avenue and Elm Street would be a "tourist information center" that would not only provide information on the downtown but the region and all points north. Visitors should be able to make hotel reservations, purchase ski tickets, plan trips and learn about area attractions. The center should be staffed full-time offering visitors to the area public restrooms and free coffee. Also, at this intersection are improved pedestrian crosswalks for Edward Little High School students.
- ▶ **Area Eight: West Pitch Park Expansion.** The falls could and should be regional tourist attraction as well as a key component of marketing the downtown. The existing West Pitch Park is poorly designed, severely lacking in maintenance and as a result underutilized. Pathways and seating areas should be improved, garbage and debris should be removed on a regular basis and the park should be expanded to the north of the trestle after improvements are made to the existing park. Access to the north could be through a pedestrian tunnel through the embankment leading up to the trestle. The northern parcel could become an informal riverfront park - lawns, planted areas, places to sit with

walking, rollerblading and bicycle paths connecting into other City recreational paths. In addition, the park could also be the trail head, a place to park cars, catch the bus, restrooms, drinking fountains, trail maps etc.

- ▶ **Other Features.** It is envisioned that the downtown would be linked to other parts of the City via a recreational path and trolley buses. Design review guidelines and incentives should be incorporated into the development review process. Densities and parking requirements should be directly linked to aesthetic improvements. Street trees, new signs and lighting should become an important component of every capital improvement project. In tandem with physical improvements it will be necessary to promote the downtown and actively recruit new businesses and residents.

### **Alternative Concept Plan "B"**



**Figure 13: Alternative Concept Plan "B"**

#### **Alternative Concept Plan "B" Highlights (Refer to Numbers on Plan)**

- ▶ **Area One: Offices/Museum.** Similar to Concept Plan A, this concept creates a city block bounded by the railroad tracks, Hampshire Street, Pleasant Street and Court Street. School in the location of the existing City Hall. Spring and School Streets are eliminated through the block. This concept envisions the primary access from Court Street. Buildings are oriented around a central cul-de-sac. The library and City Hall have been expanded and connected to create a single building that would house a museum in the former library and offices in the existing City Hall. City Hall and Library have been moved to the north-west corner of Court and Turner Streets (directly across from the County Courthouse) It would

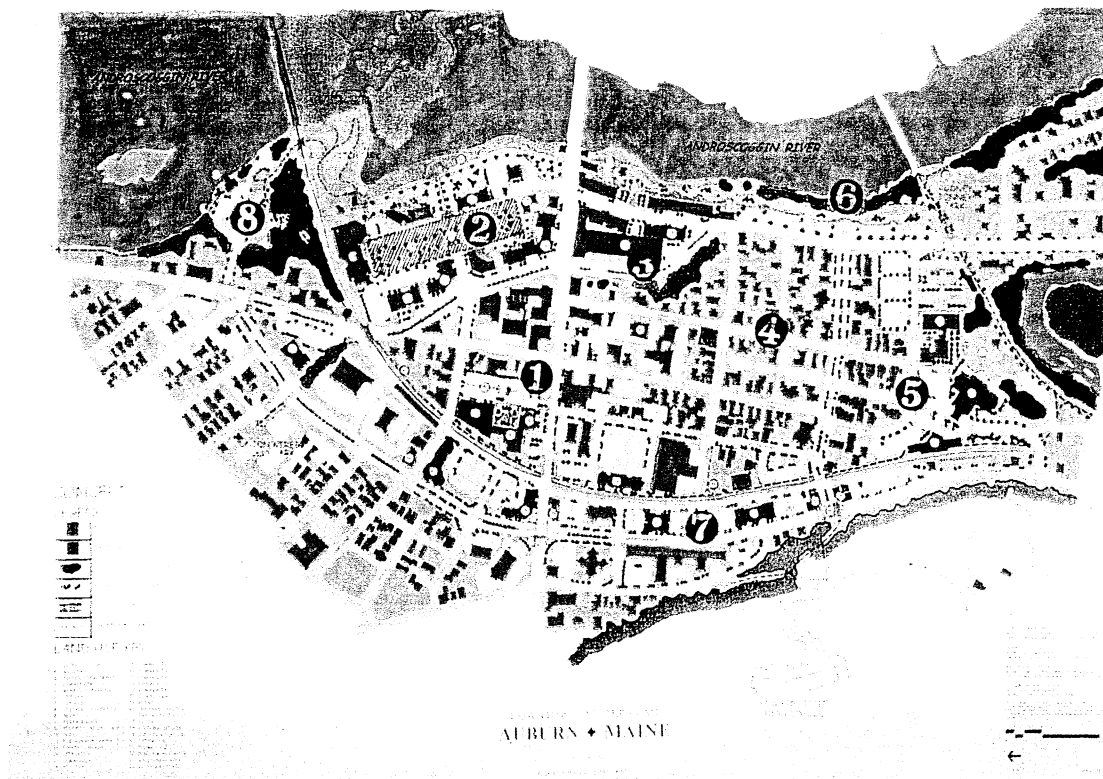
be a “landmark building” displacing the existing bank building.

- ▶ **Area Two: Great Falls Plaza.** A wall of buildings along Turner and Court Streets enclose a large interior public green space. The new City Hall/Library building forms a strong edge at the corner of Turner and Court Streets. A new mixed use building, including a hotel, extends north on Turner Street to the railroad. Paralleling the railroad track is a new downtown Post Office and an additional office building. To the west of the hotel, under a small green space is a parking garage. Above the parking garage and surrounding the small green is short-term surface parking. Behind the City Hall/Library building, perpendicular to the river is a large multi-use green space. Parallel surface parking surrounds the green space.
- ▶ **Area Three: Main Street/Mechanics Row.** In this concept, no changes are planned for Main Street and Mechanics Row. At the north end of the Roak Block a hard surfaced urban plaza is planned. A new building is planned for the existing Main Street/Mechanics Row parking lot. In the center of the block is a multi-story parking facility. The two low story buildings in the center of the block on Court Street have been removed to create Main Street access to an atrium in the center of the block. The atrium would connect Auburn Hall, Main Street and Court Street buildings to the parking garage.
- ▶ **Area Four: Old Auburn Neighborhood** As in Concept A, recommendations include: the development of more flexible zoning regulations to permit commercial uses on the first floors of buildings and bed and breakfast inns, winter parking regulations that are more tailored to actual snow conditions; and design guidelines for the exterior of buildings, signs and landscaping. Annual capital improvements should include: street trees, ornamental lighting, new street signs, new sidewalks and granite curbing. Properties or buildings located in the center of blocks should be evaluated to see if they could become centralized surface parking areas. If and when these properties become available the City should make every effort to purchase them or encourage adjacent property owners to purchase them and convert them to parking. Additional, retail/commercial space has been included in the existing Shop n’Save area. It is anticipated that these new shops and businesses would cater to the neighborhood residents. Elm Street is a boulevard with a planted median. The existing School Department is converted to the Old Auburn Neighborhood Community and Youth Center.
- ▶ **Area Five: Great Falls School.** As in Concept A, the Great Falls School becomes the Auburn Cultural Center. The facility would be expanded to become a regional center for visual, performing and cultural arts. The entire building would be renovated. South of the building, between the recreational path and the embankment is an outdoor performance center. The outdoor performance would have a permanent stage and would be incorporated into the existing park and proposed recreational path. Across Academy Street properties would be acquired to provide additional parking. On the Academy Street side of the school would be a forecourt that would extend across the street. This hard surfaced space would become a gathering space for patrons before and after performances and exhibits. In addition, this space could also be a sculpture garden. The formal entrance to the facility would be from Main Street. On axis with the front doors is a formal path and alley of large shade trees leading up to a formal hard surfaced terrace. The great lawn could also feature annual and perennial gardens or could be used for small outdoor performances with the terrace as the stage. This concept differs from “A” in that Academy Street from Main has become a cul-de-sac ending at the forecourt to the Cultural Center.



- ▶ **Area Six: Androscoggin River Front.** This concept calls for the redesign and construction of the esplanade north of Court Street. The reconstruction would include new surfaces, lighting and furnishings and several overlooks. South of the Court Street the walkway would continue at grade, essentially at the second level of the Main Street buildings. Parking behind the buildings could be either located beneath the elevated walkway or could be relocated to the south end of the Roak Block in the new parking area. To construct the new parking area, between Drummond and Elm streets, off of Main Street, would require the acquisition and demolition of several existing buildings but would provide dramatic views to the Lewiston skyline and the River. Below the new parking area is a naturalized riverfront park and recreational path connecting to Rodney Bonney Park.
- ▶ **Area Seven: Minot Avenue/Union Street Extension.** As in Concept A.
- ▶ **Area Eight: West Pitch Park Expansion.** As in Concept A.

### ***Alternative Concept Plan "C"***



**Figure 13: Alternative Plan "C"**

#### **Alternative Concept Plan "C" Highlights**

- ▶ **Area One: Municipal Center.** Similar to Concept Plans A & B, this concept creates a city block bounded by the railroad tracks, Hampshire Street, Pleasant Street and Court Street. School in the location of the existing City Hall. Spring and School Streets are eliminated through the block. City Hall, the library and school departments are all located within the block. The buildings are connected and surround a central courtyard. Parking is accessed

from both Court Street and Hampshire Street. The parking lot is perpendicular to Court and Hampshire Streets and centrally located in the block. City Hall and the Library are combined into a single wing of the complex, the school department is located in the existing City Hall building and the existing library is converted into a museum.

- ▶ **Area Two: Great Falls Plaza.** This concept combines elements of concepts A & B. Buildings are placed along Turner Street to create enclosure. A new hotel is located parallel to the railroad tracks at the north end of Great Falls Plaza. A large central green space has been created on axis with the hotel. Beneath the green space is one or two levels of parking. The bank at the corner of Court and Turner Streets has been removed, as in the other plans, and replaced with a multi-story mixed use building.
- ▶ **Area Three: Main Street/Mechanics Row.** Combines elements of Concepts A & B. Main Street has been narrowed to be more pedestrian friendly. Mechanics Row is two way with a planted median. The intersection of Mechanics Row and Main Street has been realigned to favor traffic flow on Mechanics Row.
- ▶ **Area Four: Old Auburn Neighborhood.** As in Concepts A & B
- ▶ **Area Five: Great Falls School.** In this concept a second hotel and train station have are located in close proximity to the Cultural Center. Landscape treatment around the hotel, cultural center and train station would unify the development. In this concept, the thought was to create a southern anchor to the downtown.
- ▶ **Area Six: Androscoggin River Front.** Similar to concepts A & B. In this concept the new parking and overlook area off of Main Street has been extended from Drummond to the Rodney Bonney Park -- creating a continuous system of riverfront parks from north of West Pitch Park to the Little Androscoggin River.
- ▶ **Area Seven: Minot Avenue/Union Street Extension.** As in Concepts A & B
- ▶ **Area Eight: West Pitch Park Expansion.** As in Concepts A & B

## ***Workshop #2***

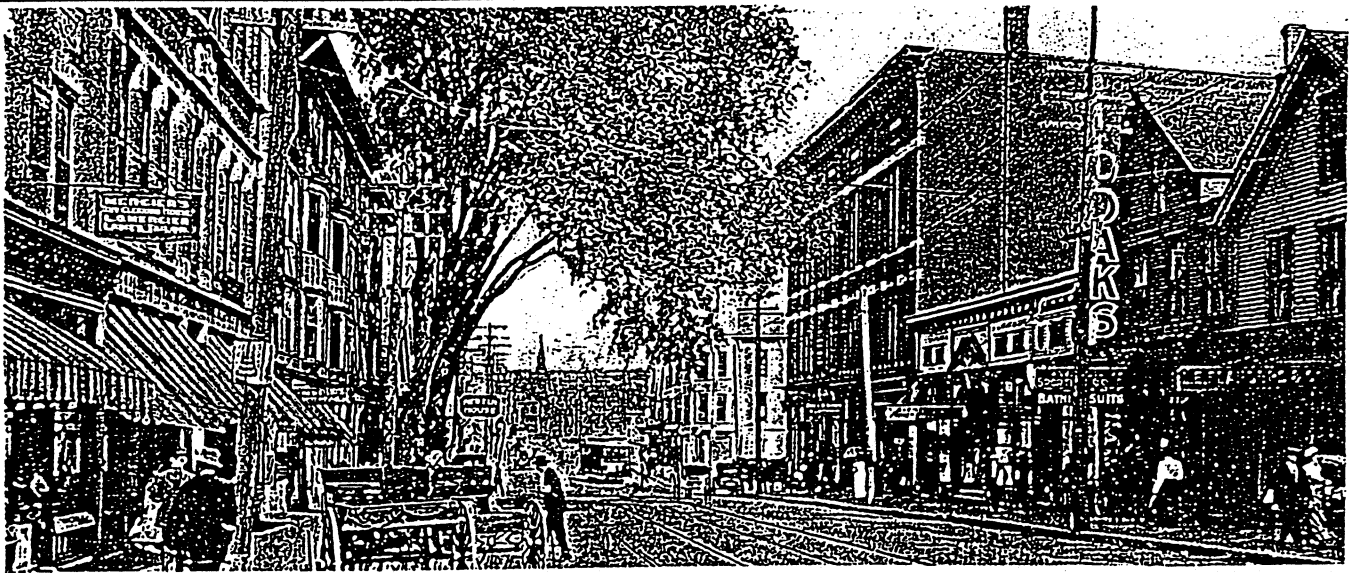
The second workshop was held in April. The Mayor personally invited over one hundred individuals to attend the workshop, advertisements announcing the workshop were placed in newspapers and posters were strategically placed around the City. All workshop participants were asked to register so that they could be placed on a mailing list and kept apprised of future events. The workshop was divided into two parts. The project team presented the three alternative concepts in a slide presentation. Following the slide presentation participants recessed for refreshments and had an opportunity to view exhibits and discuss the exhibits with other participants. For the second part of the workshop participants were divided into three groups. Each of the groups had an opportunity to view the plans and discuss of the alternatives in detail. Their comments and questions were recorded on "flip charts". Before adjournment participants were told how they may contact the City's professional staff and project team (via fax, e-mail and a toll free telephone number) directly with comments and questions. Approximately 80 people attended the second workshop.

# The SECOND Downtown Planning Workshop

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April 29, 1998 ~ 7:00-9:00 P.M.  
High Street Congregational Church

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# ADAPT

AUBURN DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN *for* TOMORROW

## ***Public Outreach***

Based on the comments from the second workshop members of the project team began refining their research and conducting interviews with businesses, civic organizations and others. In addition, visitors continued to visit the project field office in the downtown off Court Street. Members of the City's professional staff and the project team were on hand to respond to questions and conduct interviews. The Mayor presented the plans to Lewiston/Auburn civic groups. Exhibits from the first and second workshops were placed in the field office windows.

## ***Workshop #3***

The third workshop and final workshop was held on June 10, 1998. The mayor personally invited over one hundred individuals to attend the workshop, advertisements announcing the workshop were placed in newspapers and posters were strategically placed around the City. All workshop participants were asked to register so that they could be placed on a mailing list and kept apprised of future events. The workshop was divided into two parts. The project team presented their analysis and recommendations regarding the market for the downtown, transportation improvements and the overall master plan in a slide presentation. Following the slide presentation participants recessed for refreshments and had an opportunity to view exhibits and discuss the exhibits with other participants. For the second part of the workshop participants offered congratulations, comments and suggestions. Before adjournment participants were told how they may contact the City's professional staff and project team (via fax, e-mail and a toll free telephone number) directly with comments and questions. Approximately 80 people attended the second workshop.

## ***Vision Plan & Celebration***

To celebrate the completion of the Master Plan and celebrate the future of the Downtown, the City organized a street festival. The event featured live music, food, door prizes and a variety of other activities. The Master Plan, sketches of possible improvements and several other downtown exhibits were on display for the public to view and comment on. The event was scheduled from 4:30 to 7:30 PM and was attended by more than a thousand people.



**Figure 15: Photograph of Celebration**



**Figure 16: Photograph of Celebration**



Figure 17: Photograph of Celebration

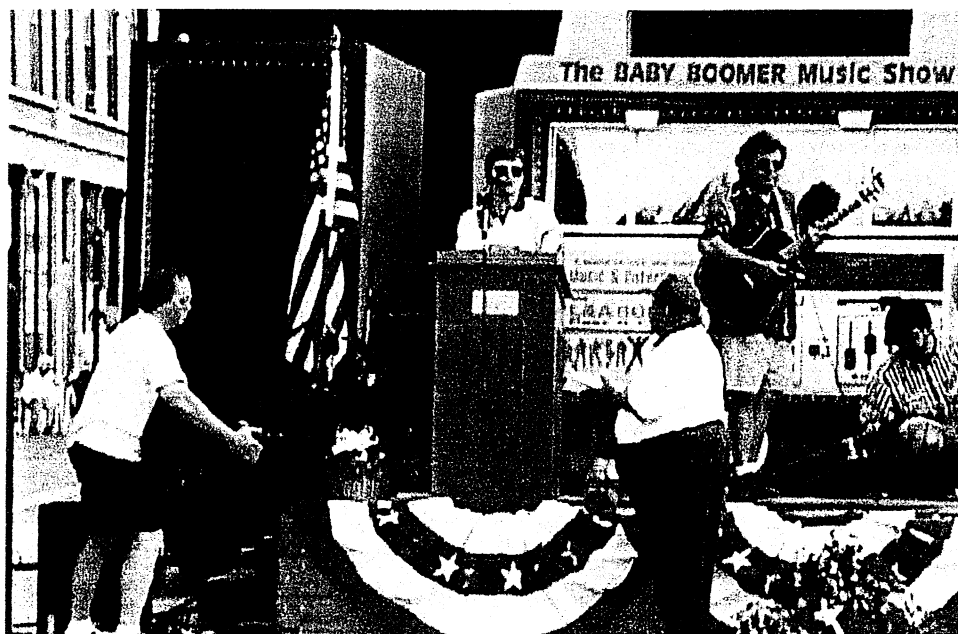


Figure 18: Photograph of Celebration

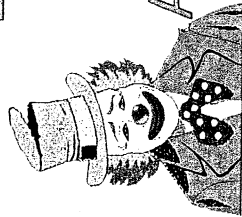
# Auburn's Downtown Action Plan for Tomorrow

## Come and Celebrate the Future of Downtown!

Wednesday, June 24 / 4:30 - 7:30 pm  
Main Street & Mechanics Row Parking Lot

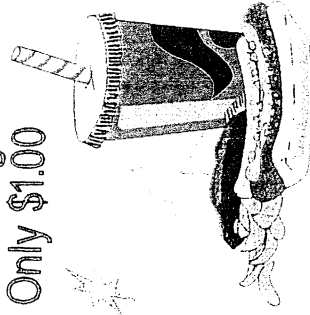
Win a door prize!

Enjoy music and  
entertainment.

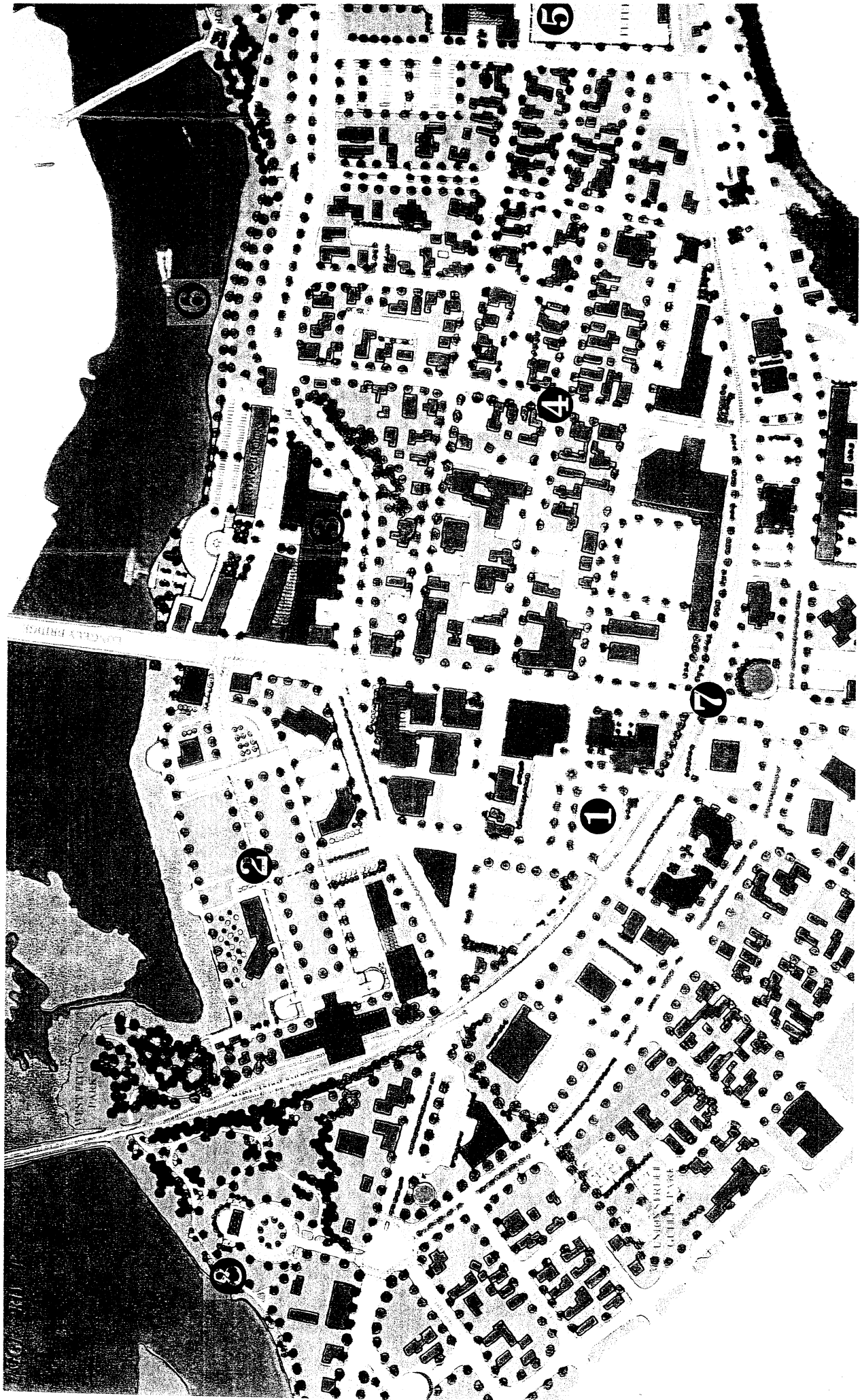


And learn about  
the future of  
Auburn's downtown.

2 Hot Dogs,  
Chips,  
Soda &  
Frozen Yogurt  
Only \$1.00



Special Thanks: L/A Music Factory, GA Downing Co., Shop'N Save,  
Pepsi-Cola, TCBY, Town & Country, L And A Snax,  
Maine Oxy-Acetylene Supply Co., & Sunday River.



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LONGLEY PARK

UNION SQUARE



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# 5

## ***Section Five: Master Plan & Implementation Strategy***

### ***Goals and Objectives***

The Downtown Auburn Revitalization Strategy consists of several key initiatives. It is based on the National Main Street Center's - Four Point Approach. To be successful each of these interlocking components (organization, marketing/promotion, economic restructuring and planning/design) must be addressed simultaneously. The downtown must be viewed as a single unified entity. Cooperation between the private and public sectors is vitally important and without it the strategy will fail. Private and public sector interests will merge to form new partnerships and alliances achieving specific marketing, organizational, economic and bricks and mortar objectives.

### ***Master Plan***

The project team organized the information gathered from workshops, interviews and direct participant contact (fax, e-mail, telephone and the field office) and prepared a final concept plan for the downtown. The project team attended a work session with the Great Falls Action Team. The final concept plan was reviewed by GFAT. The plan was then advanced to the final concept plan stage based on citizen and GFAT feed back. The final plan incorporated the "most advanced and acceptable" elements of the three alternative concepts into a single plan. A full size plan is available at City Hall.

### ***Recommended Improvements***

The following descriptions (Areas One - Eight) correspond to Figure 14: Master Plan.

#### ***Area One***

Area One refers to a triangular portion of the study area bounded by Court Street to the south, Turner Street to the West, and the railroad tracks to the east.

- ▶ Spring Street and School Street are no longer through streets

- ▶ The former City Hall building and the library have been combined into a single building. The new building will be the new Auburn Public Library. The design intent is that the library remain in this general location.
- ▶ On the northeast corner of Pleasant and Court Street is a new museum. The landmark building would be a state-wide tourist attraction featuring Maine's history and folk life, scientific exhibits for adults and children and an omni-theater.
- ▶ North of the new library is a surface parking area for use by the museum and library. The parking area would be accessed from Court Street, School Street and Hampshire Street
- ▶ The "Novelty Building" would be removed and a new building would be built in its place. Support the new mid rise building would be a surface parking area bounded by Pleasant Street, the railroad tracks and Hampshire Street.

### ***Area Two***

Area Two refers to the area known as Great Falls Plaza. It is bounded by the railroad tracks to the north, Turner Street to the east, the river to the east and Court Street to the south.

- ▶ The buildings have be arranged around a formal central common or green space which is the roof of a one or two level underground parking garage. The parking garage is accessed from Court Street and at the hotel at the northern end. It is anticipated that the common would be used for a variety of festivals and public events.
- ▶ A multi-story hotel is on the northern axis of the common. Inside the 250 room hotel are restaurants and meeting rooms, In hotel has direct access to the parking garage with entrances and exits to the parking garage in close proximity to the front entrance.
- ▶ To the east of the hotel, parallel to Turner Street are two new mixed use buildings. The buildings would have both short term surface parking and would also be able to utilize the underground parking garage.

### ***Area Three***

Area Three refers to the area bounded by Mechanics Row to the east and south the river to the west, and Court Street to the north.

- ▶ Mechanics Row is a two-way boulevard. Paralleling the road is a surface parking lot. At the intersection of Mechanics Row and Main Street is a round-about.
- ▶ City Hall and the School Department have been moved to Main Street and occupy the former private and public parking areas. It is anticipated that the mixed use building would have retail and restaurants on the first floor, City and other offices on upper floors.
- ▶ The low rise buildings to the east of Auburn Hall have been removed so that Auburn Hall can be renovated and expanded into a bed and breakfast hotel.
- ▶ In the center of the block is a multi-story parking garage. This building would have boutiques and restaurants on the first floor with parking above. The parking garage would

be physically attached and provide parking for buildings on Main and Court Streets.

- ▶ At the northern end of the Roak Block is an elevated urban plaza suitable for small gatherings and festivals.
- ▶ Behind the Roak Block and buildings on the west side of Main Street the parking has been expanded and a public boat house has been added. The boat house be suitable for small meetings and short trips up and down the river.

### ***Area Four***

Area Four refers to Old Auburn bounded by Mechanics Row and Main Street to the east, the railroad tracks to the west, Court Street to the North and Academy Street to the south.

- ▶ City should develop more flexible zoning regulations to permit a variety commercial uses on the first floors of buildings including: bed and breakfast inns, art galleries, cafes, art studios.
- ▶ Parking regulations should be modified to allow remote parking and winter parking regulations should be tailored to projected snow conditions.
- ▶ Design guidelines should be adopted for the exterior of buildings, signs and landscaping. In addition, they should reduce the number of dwelling units permitted per acre.
- ▶ The City's capital improvement program should include: street trees, ornamental lighting, new street signs, new sidewalks and granite curbing for the entire area.
- ▶ Properties or buildings located in the center of blocks should be evaluated to see if they could become centralized surface parking areas. If and when these properties become available the City should make every effort to purchase them or encourage adjacent property owners to purchase them and convert them to parking. Suggested locations for centralized parking areas are included in the master plan.
- ▶ Additional, retail/commercial space has been included in the existing Shop n'Save area. It is anticipated that these new shops and businesses would cater to the neighborhood residents.
- ▶ Elm Street should be reconstructed as a boulevard with a planted median

### ***Area Five***

Area Five refers to the area in and around the former Great Falls School.

- ▶ The Great Falls School should be converted to the Auburn Cultural Center. The facility would expanded to become a regional center for visual, performing and cultural arts.
- ▶ South of the building, between the recreational path and the embankment is an outdoor performance center. The outdoor performance would have a permanent stage and would be incorporated into the existing park and proposed recreational path.
- ▶ Across Academy Street properties would be acquired to provide additional parking. On the Academy Street side of the school would be a forecourt that would extend across the street.

This hard surfaced space would become a gathering space for patrons before and after performances and exhibits. In addition, this space could also be a sculpture garden.

- ▶ The formal entrance to the facility would be from Main Street. On axis with the front doors is a formal path and alley of large shade trees leading up to a formal hard surfaced terrace..
- ▶ The great lawn could also feature annual and perennial gardens or could be used for small outdoor performances with the terrace as the stage.
- ▶ The area to the west of the Great Falls School to the railroad tracks should be considered for redevelopment. It is could serve as an alternate passenger train station site and given its prime location may be suitable for a variety of higher and better uses.

## ***Area Six***

Area Six refers to both the riverfront and the recreational path.

- ▶ The esplanade should be redesigned to include: hard paving surfaces, river overlooks, more places to sit, maps and interpretive signage, lighting, trash receptacles and drinking fountains.
- ▶ The riverfront behind the Main Street buildings is subject to heavy flooding. It is recommended that this area be developed as hard surface open space - rip rap and wall shoreline, overlooks, seating areas, lighting, formal plantings and that temporary docks be installed to accommodate a small cruise boat for seasonal dinner trips and outings down river.
- ▶ Recommendations also include the removal of Main Street buildings on the river side from Drummond Street to Academy Street. The removal of these buildings would create unimpeded views of the river and the Lewiston skyline. In place of the buildings would be overlook parking and an extension of the esplanade. This would encourage pedestrians to walk from downtown to the Auburn Cultural center.
- ▶ Below the new overlook and esplanade area the recreational path would parallel the rivers edge. The path could be informal with seating areas and naturalized planting areas. It could also become an arboretum, displaying and identifying native vegetation and seasonal color. This area would flow into Rodney Bonney Park.
- ▶ A recreational path has been planned to circle the downtown. Starting from the existing esplanade the path would continue along the riverfront to Rodney Bonney Park. From the park it would extend along the former rail line to the roadway into the park behind the Auburn Cultural Center. It would then follow the west side of the rail line to West Pitch Park. Connections would be made to Union Street Gully Park and the proposed expanded West Pitch Park north of the trestle. The path could be designed to accommodate walkers, rollerbladers and cyclists.
- ▶ Neighborhood Center depicted in Rodney Bonney Park.

## ***Area Seven***

Area Seven refers to the Minot Avenue - Union Street Extension corridor.

- ▶ The City should create an overlay zone to promulgate an attractive and orderly development of the area. The goal should be to make this thoroughfare and entrance to the City inviting and attractive. The new zone should discourage businesses that generate short term parking and high volumes of traffic.
- ▶ Curb cuts should be limited and private land owners should be encouraged to develop a service road behind the buildings paralleling on both sides of Minot Avenue and Union Street Extension.
- ▶ Street trees, new lighting and banners should invite the visitor to Auburn and encourage them to visit the downtown. Thematic banners on light poles might highlight downtown events, history and attractions.
- ▶ The intersections of Court Street, Turner Street and Elm Street should be converted to “gateways” signifying entrances to downtown. The gateways could incorporate different surface materials, overhead structures, fountains, large-scale seasonal plantings as well as signs directing visitors to attractions in the downtown. Ideally the signs would be as clear as signs directing patrons to different terminals at a large airport.
- ▶ At the intersection of Minot Avenue and Elm Street would be a “tourist information center” that would not only provide information on the downtown but the region and all points north. Visitors should be able to make hotel reservations, purchase ski tickets, plan trips and learn about area attractions. The center should be staffed full-time offering visitors to the area public restrooms and free coffee. Also, at this intersection are improved pedestrian crosswalks for Edward Little High School students.
- ▶ The Rodney Bonney Park includes a new neighborhood center. The facility should be designed for a variety of functions. It is envisioned that during the evening hours a portion of the building might function as a teen center. During the week days programs for senior citizens and single parents might take place and on weekends it might serve as a bicycle and roller blading rental center or a place to get a warm or cold drink depending on the season.

## ***Area Eight***

Area Eight refers to the lands behind the businesses on Turner/Center Street and north of the trestle.

- ▶ This area should be developed as a passive riverfront park and a trail head for the recreational path system.
- ▶ The building depicted in the plan could house and interpretive center for the Androscoggin River valley, restrooms, a small meeting space -- rented through the Parks and Recreation Department.
- ▶ This park would be connected to West Pitch Park via a tunnel beneath the trestle.

# **Organizational Strategies**

The Great Falls Action Team (GFAT) represents a good cross-section of downtown interests and has done a remarkable job in getting people to think about the downtown - its place in Auburn's past and future. GFAT should be the foundation for a new organization whose sole purpose is the 'well being' of Auburn's downtown.

## **Building the Organization<sup>1</sup>**

*"While a Main Street program can be housed in any one of a number of agencies and organizations, the ideal vehicle is a strong independent private, non profit organization whose express purpose is downtown revitalization --with no other conflicting agenda. By becoming an independent organization, the Main Street program is almost always better able to bring together diverse interests in an objective environment and to maintain a clear focus on downtown issues. Why is creating a new non profit organization to implement the Main Street program the best option? Because the new organization can:*

- > Establish a clear focus unhindered by past history*
- > Develop a consistent program, unhampered by the constraints of local politics*
- > Unite a wide range of community interests in a neutral environment*
- > Serve as a visible symbol of renewal, new activity and a new future for the downtown"*

## **Board of Directors**

The organization should be run by a Board of Directors. The board defines the mission for the organization. The board would have ultimate responsibility and accountability for implementing the revitalization strategy. It would set the tone and direction of the organization and in broad terms oversee the work of the 'Downtown Manager' and 'Committees'. The Board would hire the Downtown Manager. As an advocate for downtown revitalization, the Board should promote the mission and the vision and have an understanding of the work of the committees. Ideally the Board would include a cross-section of: business and property owners, public officials, elected officials, real estate and finance professionals, designers (architects, landscape architects, graphic artists), residents and people representing statewide or regional interests. Essentially, the Board is Auburn's 'Downtown Think Tank'

## **Downtown Manager**

Making Downtown work is a full-time job. The ideal candidate must be tireless champion of downtown revitalization and have a broad range of people, organizational and promotional skills. The Manager is the orchestra leader, he or she will manage the day to day activities of the organization, providing hands-on involvement. The manager also provides the communication link between committees, ensuring that committee activities are focused and support the overall mission

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<sup>1</sup> The Main Street Approach - Making Downtown Come Alive, National Trust for Historic Preservation

of the organization. The manager initiates and coordinates a wide range of projects, from supervising promotional activities to assembling marketing information. The manager will also coordinate with other civic and business organizations.

The downtown manager could be an Auburn/Lewiston resident with the requisite skills, the City could hire a trained manager through the National Main Street Center or it could advertise for a manager and possibly attract a downtown manager from another community. Salaries generally range from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year depending on the person's qualifications.

## ***Committees***

The bulk work of Auburn's downtown organization will be carried out by volunteer committees. Each of the committees will have a specific focus. The National Main Street Program recommends the following committees: outreach, design, economic restructuring and promotion. (See Appendix)

### **Outreach Committee**

This committee reaches out to the community to gather human and financial resources. The committee is responsible for fund raising, membership development, volunteer recruitment, public relations and newsletters. Committee members with grant writing, word processing, desk-top publishing and networking would be helpful.

### **Design Committee**

The committee should be comprised of local business people, residents and design professionals including: architects, landscape architects and graphic designers. Key to the success of this committee will be its ability to have realistic expectations and sensitivity to design and preservation issues. Volunteer committee members should be available to provide technical assistance, develop design guidelines, assist with public improvement planning and to assist with local regulatory reviews.

### **Economic Restructuring Committee**

The primary focus of this committee is retaining and expanding existing businesses in the downtown. The committee conducts market research and based on the research develops strategies that include: activities, incentives, assistance and encouragement. It assists existing businesses in understanding how they can better meet customer needs and explore new market opportunities. Recruitment of new businesses--to improve the business mix and boost the downtown's market share. The committee may work with local real estate professionals in helping them fill vacant buildings or with regulators to streamline the permitting process.

### **Promotion Committee**

This committee defines the image of the downtown based on its market potential and community values. It promotes the downtown with retail promotions, special events and image building activities. Retail promotions focus on what goods and services are collectively available in the downtown. This committee would help organize special and holiday events like the Balloon Festival, Christmas, Thanksgiving etc. It will assess the

downtown's strengths and weaknesses. It will craft a communications plan that includes image building events, print and broadcast media advertising and printed collateral materials.

## ***Supporting Organizational Roles & Responsibilities***

### ***Public Sector***

The City should adopt policies and regulations that support the short and long term recommendations of this plan. The Mayor and City Council at every opportunity should enthusiastically demonstrate their support for the plan and understanding of the social, economic and environmental benefits of revitalizing Auburn's downtown. The City Manager should encourage continued cooperation and coordination of all department heads in implementing the plan (particularly public works, recreation, planning and development). Plan recommendations should be incorporated into the City's Capital Improvement Plan. The Community and Development Department should find ways to streamline the permitting process for downtown projects. The City should contribute some of the financial, technical and human resources necessary to develop a Downtown Organization. The City should become a member and seek assistance from the National Main Street Center. Selected elected and City officials should be encouraged to attend National Main Street Center Conferences, join organizations and subscribe to publications that focus on downtown revitalization.

### ***Private Sector***

Over the past ten years there has already been a considerable amount of private investment in the downtown. The market study and master plan identify several opportunities for significant reinvestment in downtown. The Downtown Organization should arrange meetings with local developers, real estate professionals, City officials, bankers and investment advisers to discuss the merits and weaknesses of the plan and individual project initiatives.

## ***Implementation Strategies***

Following the development of the Downtown Organization major private and public sector participants must be coordinated to identify and implement key tasks included in the plan. These concurrent tasks, dealing with a variety of projects at various stages of development, may be grouped under subheadings corresponding to the stages of typical project development: strategic planning and administration, land assembly, infrastructure improvements and project implementation. The tasks of the organization are defined as follows:

### ***Strategic Planning and Administration***

These tasks involve: development of the organization, feasibility analysis, decision making, further recruitment and/or coordination of participants, roles and schedules.



## ***Land Assembly***

*Control of development sites is a basic and inescapable precondition to project implementation.* Some of the sites identified for redevelopment in the Master Plan are under public control, some under sympathetic private control and some will require public or private negotiation and acquisition in order to make the potential development possible.

## ***Infrastructure Improvements***

As part the process of making sites available or attractive for development or as part of negotiations for project implementation, various public improvements should be carried out --ranging from open space or streetscape improvements to transportation enhancements.

## ***Project Implementation***

Finally the actual construction of projects themselves can take place on a phased basis as sites are available, participants ready and other preconditions met.

# ***Market and Economic Restructuring Strategies***

The market and economic analyses pointed to a number of improvement concepts and potential implementation strategies for downtown Auburn. This section of the report outlines those concepts, presents a discussion of potential downtown uses oriented to targeted markets and presents a summary of implementation strategies that will be effective in achieving the city's goals.

## ***Downtown Market Concepts***

Three basic market concepts have been developed for the downtown. It is important to note that these concepts are not independent - there is a great deal of interchange ability between each. However, we believe that all represent valid approaches for the downtown based on economic and market realities.

### ***Working Downtown-Office Market***

Downtown Auburn's core now principally serves as an office center with a limited set of support retail and services. In effect, the core is a place where people come to work. This is a valid downtown function, one that can be significantly expanded. Many downtowns have realized substantial improvement by simply bringing more workers to downtown - and providing them with the retail and services they need to support office functions and furnishing them with day-to-day food and retail needs. Once a critical mass of downtown workers is achieved, a market develops for more diverse commercial activity.

Our assessment of market conditions makes it clear that the Lewiston-Auburn economy is strong and growing - employment is increasing and a number of corporations have made decisions to locate a facility in the area. While a number of these facilities perform "back-office" functions,

growing employment inevitably leads to demands for more office space and support services. Further, business services are expected to be the most significant source of new service jobs over the next five to ten years. Uses like advertising, credit reporting and collections, mail and copying, building maintenance, equipment rental, temporary help, and computer services will all see growth in the coming years and could provide good users for office spaces in downtown buildings.

We propose that the downtown pursue two major goals.

- ▶ ***Create opportunities for new office space to be developed in the core area.*** Assuming no major economic disruption, there will be a market for additional office space in the next few years. In addition, the city should look for opportunities to allow entrepreneurs to start-up owner-occupied professional offices in Old Auburn.
- ▶ ***Expand the presence of the city in the core.*** City Hall and its ancillary operations are among the major attractions in the downtown. In addition to the people who work there, these functions attract a substantial amount of people traffic. By relocating city functions to the core area, the city will have made a statement that it is committed to the downtown, and automatically generate a significant amount of the new traffic and commercial activity.

A number of uses will complement the broadening of the downtown's office-working market. These include:

**Restaurants/Food Service** - our research indicates that downtown workers want "faster" food, a good delicatessen, one or more additional quality restaurants and a cafe/coffee shop that serves breakfast.

**Services** - as noted above, there will be increasing demand for office services as the number of office workers grows. In addition, several local contacts noted the need for an office products store.

**Retail** - several potential new retail businesses will complement the office market, including Book Store/Cafe, Newspaper/Newstand, Gifts, Video.

**Lodging** - increasing corporate and office presence in the area is, and will continue to expand the area lodging market. Two types of lodging facilities will help support an increased office presence in the downtown as well as existing, unmet lodging needs: 1) Mid/Upper Level Hotel; 2) Quality Bed and Breakfast operations in restored older buildings.

### **Entertainment/Culture/Arts/Recreation Market**

It is apparent that the population of the Lewiston-Auburn area responds positively to events in the downtown. Attendance at Auburn's Balloon Festival and other summer events is strong and growing. Just as significantly, all of our contacts with the area population - concluding interviews, surveys, public presentations and casual conversations - made it clear that people are more than willing to visit downtown if there is something fun, educational, cultural or "happening" going on. Given this strong level of demand, it is critical that the city take advantage of the situation and create more opportunities for Entertainment, Culture, Arts and Recreation to take place downtown.

Strong demand for Entertainment, Culture, Arts and Recreation is not unique to the Auburn area

market. As the baby boom ages, their time available for leisure, their financial resources and disposal and their appetites for experiences rather than acquisitions will grow. Further, as parents of the “echo boom” interest is strong in educating and exposing children to positive cultural influences.

Two initiatives are important here:

- ▶ ***Build on elements that already exist in the downtown***. These include the Great Falls, area and local scenery, the riverfront and a number of local arts, theater and cultural groups.
- ▶ ***Recognize the market***. The Lewiston-Auburn area has an improving economy but should not be mistaken for an affluent market. Efforts to tap into the population’s demand for Entertainment, Culture, Arts and Recreation should be oriented toward the preferences of the moderate-income group.

A number of potential uses will work to improve the downtown’s identity for Entertainment, Culture, Arts and Recreation:

- ▶ Performing Arts Center
- ▶ Restaurants/Night Clubs
- ▶ Amphitheater
- ▶ Walkways
- ▶ Boating and Boat Rentals
- ▶ Increased Green Space
- ▶ Live and Work Spaces for Artists and Craftspersons
- ▶ Shops
- ▶ Crafts
- ▶ Antique Retailers
- ▶ Galleries
- ▶ Book Store

### **Convention and Travel Markets**

Throughout the period of our study of downtown Auburn, the potential for the development of a major convention center directly across the river in Lewiston has been on the table. As of the date of this writing, there are serious questions as to whether or not this project will occur. Nevertheless, the proposal alone brings to light one of Lewiston-Auburn’s serious shortcomings - the inability to attract travelers to the area. In the event that a convention center - or other major facility oriented toward the non-local population - were to operate in the area, it is evident that it would introduce a substantial number of new people to the area.

It is unrealistic to think that Auburn can become a major regional travel destination. However, if the city can begin to capture even a small segment of the Maine travel market, the commercial market

will be substantially improved. We believe that Auburn has several features that are attractive to the travel market. Any downtown attempting to market itself to the travel market must keep the following in mind:

- ▶ ***The downtown must be positioned to be attractive to travelers.*** This will entail a complete listing of features and facilities that may be attractive to travelers, as well as promotional materials that present the downtown and its attractions. Different promotional pieces could focus on history, environment, the economy, natural features, recreation, culture, etc.
- ▶ ***Develop services and additional attractions that will provide the required level of services for travelers.*** All travelers need places to eat, public restrooms, a place to sleep and a place to pick up information. Further, they need signage systems that tell them where to go. Just as significantly, they need to be made to feel welcome.

Several development ideas and uses will be important for capturing and retaining the travel market:

- ▶ **Lodging** - the assessment in Chapter 2 of this report makes it clear that Auburn's lodging offerings are weak, and do not offer travelers the range of options to which they have become accustomed. There is a clear need for a mid-market hotel and higher quality bed and breakfasts in the downtown.
- ▶ **Eating** - any travel destination offers a range of eating opportunities. Downtown Auburn needs high quality restaurants, night clubs and faster food businesses.
- ▶ **Entertainment** - the downtown needs recreational opportunities - boat rentals on the river, an interpretive walk along the waterfront, opportunities for roller-blading, a green area for picnics, permanent festival space.
- ▶ **Retail** - a range of retail businesses can support the travel market - specialty shops, crafts stores, art galleries, gift stores.

### **Use Recommendations**

Recommended new uses for the downtown are assessed below, based on the findings of the market analysis. The use recommendations are organized based on their primary orientation toward specific markets. This is intended to assist in developing strategies for increasing market share in each market. However, it is not intended to suggest that a use listed under a particular market can only serve that market - clearly, successful businesses find ways to appeal to a variety of markets, thus rounding out their clientele.

The use recommendations are based on a variety of factors, including:

**Demographics** - the current and projected future age and income distribution and household makeup of Auburn's market contribute significantly to its expected retail spending patterns.

**Consumer Buying Trends** - while basic demographics are strong predictors of spending, it is apparent that consumers' tastes and preferences change. Perceptions of the state of the economy and the need to 'keep-up' will affect spending over time. For instance, significant increases in restaurant spending during the 1980's have slowed with more households starting to eat at home.

**Competition** - even strong category increases in spending don't help in a market that is saturated by a particular kind of store. The recommendations are sensitive to existing stores in the area and the kinds of uses that are most likely to work in the downtown. It does not make sense to duplicate stores located in the immediate area of the downtown.

In reviewing the recommended uses, please keep the following in mind:

- ▶ Without question, there are store types and businesses beyond those listed below that will find support in downtown. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to assess the potential of every possible retail store - of which there are an infinite variety. Rather, the intent of the analysis is to point out basic business categories that are likely to find market support. Many successful variations on these basic themes also have good market potential.
- ▶ The existence of a market for a retail category does not guarantee success. It is the entrepreneurial capabilities of the business owner that will determine whether or not a business venture is successful. Retail stores for which there is no apparent market have been successful when the owner know their market, manages well and provides a product that people want. Similarly, stores for which there is an evident market fail if not managed, stocked and marketed properly.

#### **Downtown Residents and Employee Markets - Use Recommendations**

There is substantial overlap in the needs for these two markets. Essentially, the focus for both is on day to day needs - for employees, this means lunch and perhaps some quick shopping or services needs that can be filled before work, during the lunch hour or on the way home. Shopping is focused on day to day needs - groceries, drugs and basic services. Entertainment, such as a video store or movies might also be important to these markets.

- ▶ A bakery - this could be combined with a cafe/coffee shop that could serve breakfast trade as well as baked good trade. Several downtown businesses now cover parts of this market. However, one specialized business would add more interest to the downtown.
- ▶ A video store. This is clearly a growth market.
- ▶ Business services are expected to be the most significant source of new service jobs over the next five to ten years. Uses like advertising, credit reporting and collections, mail and copying, building maintenance, equipment rental, temporary help, and computer services will all see growth in the coming years and could provide good users for office spaces in downtown buildings.
- ▶ Used clothing is a retail growth category in the region, both at the lower and mid to high end. It could be worthwhile considering a multi-consignment operations as a short or long term use of underutilized downtown space.

#### **Traditional Trade Area Market - Use Recommendations**

The traditional market has become the most difficult for downtowns to tap. Consumers have become accustomed to looking to shopping centers, big boxes and malls for their basic shopping needs. Few regional residents can even remember doing any shopping in downtown Auburn. From a strategic perspective, success in serving other markets (particularly the travel market) increases

downtown traffic to a point where traditional retailers can consider a downtown location.

- ▶ There is market growth in the arts and crafts supply area.
- ▶ Specialty food stores could be attractive to the traditional market, particularly if there are sufficient numbers and variety to be an attraction in their own right.
- ▶ Electronics stores will show strong growth during the next five to ten years. Typically, this area is covered successfully by chain stores (Radio Shack) in shopping center formats. However, a downtown specialty store, with emphasis on high (or low) end goods, and a strong service component, could be a potential.
- ▶ Downtown should augment its current amusement or recreational offerings. Market research makes it clear that demand will grow and that a variety of offerings will draw more consumers to the downtown.

Perhaps one of the strongest lessons to be learned from the ongoing competition between downtowns and big box retailing is that downtowns are most successful if they specialize and offer a high level of service. It is difficult for a downtown retailer to open and operate a store that offers all things to all people - maintaining inventory is arduous and financially demanding. As such, downtowns should attempt to pick specific retail categories and persuade a number of specialized retailers to cover all aspects of that category. When approached in this way, retailers can afford to carry extensive inventory in their speciality while shoppers get choice by visiting several shops.

#### **Travel Market - Use Recommendations**

Auburn currently captures only a small segment of the Maine travel market. Lack of name recognition and a major attraction have limited the city's appeal to the typical tourist. The challenge for the downtown is in two parts:

- ▶ How to further take advantage of existing attractions.
- ▶ How to create interest to bring more general travel activity to Auburn.

Overall, the challenge will be to get travelers to put Auburn "on their map".

- ▶ The recommendations will have value in attracting the broader travel market. In assessing this market, it is important to keep in mind that most travelers live in regions with extensive shopping opportunities. As such, it will be essential to provide shopping opportunities that are not routinely available in metropolitan areas - shops that reflect Auburn and the region.
- ▶ Gift shops - in keeping with travelers' interests, shops and goods should reflect local culture, resources and crafts.
- ▶ Produce and Crafts Showcase - straight retail or consignment operation which showcases and makes available for sales regional food and furnishings/craft products will be a significant attractions for travelers.

Overall, there are three principals to keep in mind when marketing retail goods to the travel market.

1) They are interested in products that are unique and can't be found where they live, 2) They look for goods that reflect local crafts, resources and culture, and 3) They want to be entertained while they shop.

Wherever possible, new uses should complement existing businesses. Virtually any store manager in any downtown can list other businesses that, because of their presence, bring additional customers to their store. When possible, seek new businesses that might have a complementary relationship with the downtown market. Successful downtowns seek to be successful in market niches, rather than attempting to be all things to all people.

### **Downtown Improvement and Recruiting**

Knowing what uses will find a market in downtown is important. It's also essential that Auburn have a strategy that will guide its efforts in establishing priorities and finding uses for downtown spaces and redeveloping the waterfront. With knowledge of the market and established priorities, recruiting efforts can be undertaken in a directed and efficient way.

The following are a number of key points regarding strategy and recruiting:

- ▶ The downtown plan offers a variety of choices for physical improvement. A number of factors are likely to come into play in setting priorities. Priorities for retailing are the following:
- ▶ Visibility - shoppers need to be able to see stores. This is often difficult in a downtown where buildings and other elements can obstruct views. However, simple actions like integrated directional signage systems, opening up alleyways, and effective building signage can be quite helpful.
- ▶ Access/Parking - make it easy for shoppers to park their car and get to their intended location. A downtown setting presents some challenges. However, as long as visitors have clear directions, and know that they are going where they want to go, they are likely to make the effort. Wherever possible, pedestrian access routes should take advantage of scenery (particularly views of the falls and river) and make the experience of getting to the downtown entertaining for the shopper.
- ▶ Activity - shoppers, and travelers in particular, like to make purchases in an active and entertaining atmosphere. Downtown improvements that create public spaces, facilities for events and other signs of people-activity should be given priority.

In keeping with the trends toward eco and cultural tourism, an effort should be made to inform tourists about Auburn's natural and cultural history. On a small scale, this could simply be informative signs and descriptions of natural settings and buildings. On a larger scale, these elements could be incorporated into a heritage-naturalist trail through the downtown area.

- ▶ In primary retail areas building owners should be encouraged to stress retail and service activity on first floors and office uses on upper floors. An early goal should be to pack as many employees into the downtown as possible.
- ▶ An efficient traffic system is a plus. However, virtually any successful downtown has traffic congestion. Plans should contain elements that slow traffic down, giving its

occupants time to see and identify stores and other elements of interest in the downtown.

- ▶ A clear and consistent sign system is a must. The graphic design components of a sign system should extend to all elements of the downtown, including: promotional brochures; highway signs; directional signs, parking identification signs; points of interest signs, etc. Shoppers and travelers are unlikely to stop unless they are sure of where they are going. A consistent sign system gives them confidence about finding their points of interest and being sure of finding a good parking space.

## **Recruiting**

The city will need to keep an active business recruitment program in place. This recruitment program will require many of the elements of regional industrial development efforts, but will have a slightly different focus as office users and retail/services businesses have a different set of needs. The recruitment program will include the following elements:

- ▶ **Marketing Materials** - have materials ready to present to a potential downtown business. These materials should provide: background on the community; background demographics and market information (elements of this report); background on improvement plans for the downtown (the downtown plan), and listing data on spaces which could be suited to the prospect.
- ▶ **Project Team** - a multi-disciplinary team should be in place which is charged with identifying, contacting and following-up with prospects. This team will actively seek out prospects, meet with them and present appropriate materials, work locally to find a suitable location and accommodate individual needs and, follow-up with the prospect until they decide to locate in the downtown.

Make sure that commercial real estate brokers are fully informed about the project team's activities. Brokers will play an important role here - both in terms of bringing potential businesses to Auburn and for generating ideas regarding the use of buildings.

- ▶ **Target Prospects** - armed with the background data and findings contained in this report, as well as the proposals included in the downtown plan, the project team will identify the types of businesses that they will seek out for the downtown. Once these priorities are set, the team should undertake field visits to their communities to identify businesses that meet their needs and who can be targeted for the recruitment process. Experience shows that businesses that have already gone through the process of starting up and reading to markets over time have the best prospects for success in a new venture.
- ▶ **Creative Media** - the city will want to get out the "good work" on its improvement plans and activities where, and whenever possible. Contact with media people throughout the region should be established for this purpose.
- ▶ **Activity and Vision** - improving the downtown is an ongoing process. There will be frustrations along the way. However, as long as the community keeps its goals in mind and maintains some level of activity - no matter how small - the effort will be a success. This sense of goals and vision is important for maintaining optimism locally and for convincing potential locators not only that downtown Auburn is the place to be now, but that it will continue to improve during the coming years.



## **Redevelopment**

The potential for public-private redevelopment effort in the downtown core offers an exciting first step potential for the city. With a substantial amount of support already in place for the city to relocate its offices and the concurrent need to provide more room for the library, the time is right to find a new location for city hall. The downtown site off Main Street offers an excellent opportunity for the development of a mixed public-private use structure.

We recommend that a structure incorporating the city offices, restaurant space, retail/service space and additional office space be located to the south of Main and Mechanics. The major preliminary steps involved in this process include the following:

- ▶ Assemble the property
- ▶ Define the parameters of the city's involvement with the project and the city's space needs withing the structure;
- ▶ Develop an RFP for soliciting private sector developers;
- ▶ Select and negotiate development terms.

## **Finance Alternatives**

The city should consider both short and long term potentials for funding downtown infra-structure improvements. While the major part of the investment in the downtown will inevitably have to be made by the private sector, it is clear that the city can help to leverage these investments by contributing a number of key infrastructure improvements. Two potential approaches to funding these improvements are summarized below:

- ▶ **Tax Increment District Financing** - Tax increment district financing uses incremental increases in tax revenue generated from increases in property values attributed to the public improvements. The theory, any new tax dollars generated because property values have increased would be dedicated to financing a project. The basis of this method is the ability to attribute increases in tax revenue directly to increases in property values as a result of a specific, public project.
- ▶ **Special Assessment District Financing** - Special assessment district financing is an approach to municipal financing in which a group of properties share the cost of financing through an annual assessment placed on top of the annual tax rate. The assessment can be looked at as an incremental increase in the tax rate.

## ***Planning and Design Implementation Strategies***

Unlike developing a shopping mall, downtown physical improvements are rarely completed in one coordinated effort. Instead, it is a long term process, working with a variety of different funding sources, organizations and individuals. Improvements can be as simple and cleaning and painting a storefront or could involve wholesale changes to a downtown including: restoration, demolition and adaptive reuse. The most important factor is constant improvement. Improvements are

generally a result of: regulatory controls, private or public initiatives or public/private partnerships. Financing improvements traditionally comes from federal and state funding, revolving loan funds, tax increment financing, special assessment districts, capital improvement funds and private foundations.

## ***Regulatory Controls***

### **Design Guidelines & Design Review**

The planning and design committee should work with city officials, local designers and property owners to develop guidelines to rehabilitate and develop downtown buildings and landscapes. Design review guidelines for the downtown should be tailored to specific building types and areas of the downtown. For example: guidelines for the Minot Avenue/Union Street Extension would be very different from those for the downtown historic district. The guidelines should be written and illustrated so that they are legally enforceable and binding. The planning and design committee should collect design and review guidelines from other northeastern cities to develop a model for Auburn.

Design review can be a voluntary or a mandatory process. The planning and design committee should develop the guidelines to be used on a voluntary basis. They could be distributed to property owners, developers and designers as part of the building permit process. If the economic restructuring committee or the city establishes a revolving loan fund for improvements preference could be given to applicants who abide by the design guidelines. Within five years of using the guidelines on a voluntary basis the city should consider adopting the guidelines as part of a formal design review process.

### **Zoning**

The downtown consists of three zones. The design and review and the marketing committees should work with city officials to evaluate the current zoning districts in light of the market research findings and the downtown master plan. The committees and the city should first focus on what is necessary to implement the plan and then develop outline zoning regulations. After the committees have established “the way it should be,” they should then evaluate the current regulations to see “the way it is.” If the committees and the city first look at the regulations as they exist today, chances are, they will end up simply making minor modifications to the existing zoning and not consider real innovation. The city and the committees should refer to Carrots and Sticks - New Zoning Downtown, published by the Urban Land Institute and written by Terry Jill Lasser. The book has a number of case studies for cities the size of Auburn and describes a variety of incentives to achieve constructive change in downtowns through zoning . . . “extending the scope of zoning beyond the original interpretation of health, safety and welfare to include urban design. Zoning can shift from an exclusively negative set of proscriptive development controls into a more positive, incentive based revitalization tool with review processes that encourage developer response and allow flexibility for mixed use development.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Design the Successful Downtown, Published by the Urban Land Institute, written by Cycil B Paumier, pp. 22

## ***Private Improvements***

### **New Buildings**

The planning and design, and economic restructuring committee should work with city officials to review each of the new building sites identified in the master plan and determine what, if any, changes to the existing regulations will have to be made to facilitate new development. The committees and city officials should meet with the involved property owners and determine if they have any interest in selling, co-developing or developing their property. If there is some interest from the property owner, the committee and the city should prepare a development strategy, including: acquisition, financing, design, permitting and development.

New sites downtown that would contribute to vitality and oriented amenities are:

- ▶ **Androscoggin County Historical Society.** Now housed in the courthouse in charming but obscure quarters, has potential to become a destination for local and regional tourist markets. This facility might be combined with a new library, city hall or a discovery museum.
- ▶ **Structured Parking.** Structured parking is called for in the Master Plan. It is vitally important that such buildings have appropriate materials, lighting, size, etc. to fit in the existing environment. Ideally, service/commercial space developed at the perimeter of structures to screen autos and enhance the street level environment would be included.

### **Building Renovations & Facade Improvements**

Building improvements are a “sure-fire” indication that the downtown is healthy. Building improvements show that property and business owners have confidence in the economy of the downtown. It is often difficult to encourage reinvestment without initially offering some incentives. The new downtown organization in cooperation with the city should establish a matching revolving loan fund to help fund improvements, including: cleaning, painting, brick work, transom restoration and awnings. If Design Review Guidelines or a Design Review Board is adopted the city, offer incentives if property and business owners improve their facades.

- ▶ **Auburn City Hall.** This former grammar school is a large, flexible building that could be rehabilitated and used for many uses including: a discovery museum, science-history-learning center or expanded library facilities. Suggestions are made in the master plan to connect the building with the library and create a new public entrance and facade on Court Street.
- ▶ **Auburn Public Library.** The existing public library is a landmark building on the Court Street. The building should be retained and preserved, ideally with continued public use either as a library with additions and/or City Hall, or in some other capacity highlighting the culture and history of Auburn.
- ▶ **Auburn Hall.** This building is another key piece of the remaining historic fabric of Court Street which should be protected, restored and reused. The one-time City Hall could serve as a small place of assembly and a centerpiece of a new in-town hotel, dinner theater, bed

and breakfast or it could continue as retail.

- ▶ **Great Falls School.** The master plan presents a consensus opinion that Great Falls School be redeveloped as a cultural center for dramatics, music and visual arts. This use is supported by the downtown's potential to become more oriented toward entertainment and tourism.
- ▶ **Androscoggin Courthouse.** Every effort should be made to insure continued use and maintenance of the building for county use. This is a very important historic building and location for employment in downtown Auburn.
- ▶ **Engine House.** With improvement in the downtown economy, it may be possible to reattempt to use the Engine House for hospitality or commercial use. It is a fine historical landmark the should be protected and preserved.
- ▶ **Foss House/Women's Literary Union.** The landmark Foss House is undoubtedly in need of conservation and restoration. Its legacy as the WLU offers many interesting possibilities for cultural, entertainment and/or hospitality uses. The fact that WLU is located so close to the Great Falls School suggests potential coordination with arts organizations to possibly house visiting artists.
- ▶ **Roak House.** This remarkable house offers tremendous potential for adaptive reuse for bed and breakfast, fine dining, etc. As an office, this (and other very large historic houses) could provide excellent work space.
- ▶ **Various Major Historic Houses.** The study area offer potential for increasing diversity and economic vitality. Office, live-work, hospitality, and entertainment uses will all support the overall goal of revitalization and attract potential residents to commit to the study area.
- ▶ **Various Minor Houses.** Demolition of existing single and multifamily residential structures to eliminate blight and/or provide parking has been suggested. It is our opinion that this be considered only as a last resort in truly desperate situations. Minor "background" buildings are vital for establishing and sustaining historic character and texture. Historic structures cannot be replaced.

## ***Parking***

- Parking recommendations are provided for the short and long term. Short term improvements are focused on improving the aesthetics and pedestrian safety/connectivity in the Great Falls Plaza main parking lot. Long term recommendations are related to increasing the available parking in residential areas in 'Old Auburn' and the structured parking recommended for Great Falls Plaza and Main Street/Mechanics Row.

### **Short to Medium Term Improvements**

- ▶ **Great Falls Plaza,** Short term improvements are recommended for the main parking area within the Great Falls Plaza parking lot. A balance will need to be reached between expense and the short term nature of the improvements. The recommended improvements are intended to retrofit the existing parking lot, not to perform a wholesale redesign of the lot.

Improvements include adding trees and/or landscaping to the ends of aisles, adding landscaping and/or trees between three rows of parking and providing two pedestrian ways

from within the lot to buildings. These pedestrian ways would eliminate approximately 16 parking spaces. It is also recommended to swap permit-parking and 4-hour parking in one row of parking nearest the river to provide improved parking for the riverside park. This swap also gets higher turnover parking away from the roadway. Figure \_\_\_ shows the recommended improvements to the lot.

After completion of the Phase 1 underground parking, medium term improvements should be completed to the south side of the Plaza. This would include providing curbing and drainage, more heavily planted areas, and elimination of the parking backing out onto the roadway.

- ▶ **Mechanics Row.** In conjunction with the reconfiguration and reconstruction of Mechanics Row to two way traffic, additional surface parking is shown along Mechanics Row. This lot will provide approximately 85 spaces.
  
- ▶ **Turner Street.** Additional on-street parking can be provided on the Great Falls Plaza side of Turner Street between Court Street to Hampshire street. This will increase available parking and reduce the effective roadway width. Parking should begin after the enhanced/planted median is phased out after approximately 100 feet. The parking and the new planted median should aid in reducing excessive vehicle acceleration and speeds while still maintaining adequate capacity. It is desired for vehicles to be able to safely maneuver around vehicles pulling into and out of parallel parking spaces.

### Long Term Improvements

- ▶ **Structured Parking.** Parking recommendations to support downtown redevelopment include two structured parking facilities. Bonding for parking facilities will require the conduct of a full financial feasibility analysis once development proposals become more detailed.
  
- ▶ **Great Falls Plaza.** The parking facility in Great Falls Plaza is an underground facility, planned in two phases. The expected parking footprint for each phase is 67,500 square feet per level (350' x 180') and would provide approximately 250 spaces per level. Estimated costs (based on per square foot unit costs of \$30.00) are approximately \$2.02 million per level or about \$8,100 per space. These costs do not include sitework, land costs, development costs or specialty finishes or equipment (RS Means, *Building Design and Construction*, 1996). Sitework costs can vary considerably due to subsurface conditions, especially for underground facilities.

Projected demand for new parking due to new development in GFP is approximately 366 spaces based on cumulative estimates of new building square footage of 110,000 square feet (assuming four 4-story buildings at 1 parking space per 300 square feet of office/retail space). This likely overestimates total demand for new parking. This does not include parking for the proposed expanded Post Office. Surface parking for approximately 120 cars is shown in small lots around the reconfigured green spaces. Current parking capacity of GFP is approximately 585 spaces. Permit parking accounts for 236 spaces; 70 spaces are privately owned.

Phasing of the two structures is proposed as redevelopment in the Great Falls Plaza occurs.

- ▶ **Main Street - Mechanics Row.** A second proposed parking structure would be located in the Main Street - Mechanics Row block. The structure footprint is estimated at approximately 225' x 120'. This would provide approximately 90 spaces per level. If first floor retail space is provided, approximately 270 spaces would be provided on stories 2-3-4. If four stories are devoted to parking, approximately 360 spaces can be provided. As a minimum, kiosk type uses should be provided on the first floor to establish some pedestrian oriented uses along Mechanics Row. These may include dry-cleaner drop-off and coffee/pastry shops.

Cost estimates are provided based a four level parking garage (360 spaces). Each level is proposed to be 27,000 square feet; four levels would be 108,000 square feet. Unit costs for building and materials are approximated as \$19.00 per square foot. Estimated facility cost is \$2.05 million dollars or \$5,700 per space not including sitework, land costs, development costs or specialty finishes or equipment (RS Means, *Building Design and Construction*, 1996).

Estimated new demand based on two new buildings (18,000 and 30,000 square feet at 1 parking space per 300 square feet of office/retail space) is 160 spaces. One of the new proposed uses within this block is a new City Hall. More specific parking requirements can be developed once additional uses within the block are identified.

- ▶ **'Old Auburn' Residential Parking.** Parking improvements for the 'Old Auburn' section of downtown aim to ease the current parking capacity problem. There is a strong reliance on on-street parking to meet resident parking demand. This is due to the large number of apartment units that have been created in the larger buildings in the area and inadequate off-street parking. A recommended strategy is to identify a small grouping of marginal properties internal to adjacent blocks. Their lots can be used to provide much needed parking.

## ***Public Improvements***

### **New Public Buildings**

Several new public buildings are proposed in the Master Plan. In addition to commercial office space intended to bolster the working population in the downtown and support a service economy, hotel space and transportation hubs are called for.

- ▶ **City Hall** - The present City Hall is undersized and overcrowded. A new service oriented accessible City office building could possibly be combined with other private development initiatives in the Main Street area. (See Master Plan)
- ▶ **Auburn Library** - Similarly, this facility is presently undersized, over crowded and hard to access, could be expanded with additions into the existing City Hall building or a new building could be constructed adjacent to the present library. (See Master Plan)

## Traffic

- ▶ **Court Street Reconstruction Project-related Recommendations** -The Maine Department of Transportation is currently revising plans for the reconstruction of Court Street. This project is expected to be completed in 1999. Much of the preparation work for this is currently underway. These plans were closely reviewed to accommodate proposed circulation changes and to improve the pedestrian environment. Pedestrian improvements included reducing crossing distances, revising signal timings, using permanent crosswalk paving materials and creating enhanced medians to provide better pedestrian refuge islands and to improve roadway aesthetics.

## Key Intersections

- ▶ **Court Street - Main Street.** Create channelized island at Great Falls Plaza entrance across from Main Street. This island will segregate right-turning traffic from through-traffic and facilitate pedestrian crossings of Main Street by providing a pedestrian refuge across Main Street and the driveway, reducing effective crossing distances. The driveway median should be increased to 6 feet to include plantings to improve the aesthetics of the driveway entrance in addition to roadside plantings. The channelized island - widened median configuration will allow the stop bars at the Great Falls Plaza driveway approach to Main Street to be moved forward, reducing start-up and clearance times making the intersection more efficient. A reduction in curb radius is also recommended at the southwest corner to reduce crossing distance and reduce turning vehicle speeds. This is anticipated to be a low volume turning movement.
- ▶ **Court Street - Turner Street - Mechanics Row.** The key change proposed at this intersection is the introduction of a two-way Mechanics Row. This provides the opportunity to improve vehicle and pedestrian circulation within the downtown. This will require a new traffic signal phase at the intersection with Court and Turner Streets, reducing the amount of green time for other phases. To compensate, it is recommended that the Turner Street intersection leg have two exclusive left turn lanes and one through-right turn lane. This will modify the current configuration, removing the channelized island. Some reduction in pedestrian crossing distance can be accomplished by increasing the width of the median on Turner Street to six to eight feet and significantly reducing the turning radius at the Court Street westbound approach. Large turning trucks should be directed to the Union Street Bypass. The introduction of the Mechanics Row phase allows for a new crosswalk across Court Street, concurrent with the Mechanics Row traffic signal green phase. At the Mechanics Row approach, an exclusive left turn lane and a through-right turn lane are recommended.
- ▶ **Court Street - Spring Street.** Recommended changes to the MDOT are creating a leading exclusive-permissive left turn phase for westbound traffic into the Shop n Save plaza and adding a crosswalk across Court Street east of Spring Street.
- ▶ **Court Street - Minot Street - Union Street Bypass.** Minor changes are proposed to marginally improve pedestrian crossings. The curb radius on the northwest corner should be reduced (Goff Hill is signed for 'No Trucks'). The median at the Union Street Bypass and Minot Avenue approaches should be increased to six to seven feet to allow for a planted median and increased pedestrian refuge. Improved landscaping at corner lots should also

be encouraged. These changes will help reduce the negative visual impact of this very large intersection.

- ▶ **Main Street - Academy Street.** Changes in signal phasing can provide improved Level of Service from the current LOS F in the PM peak hour to LOS D. Changes include conversion from a lag to a lead left turn phase. This will extend the protected left turn phase for the northbound Main Street approach and create more free right turn time for the Academy Street approach. New signal equipment that can respond to varying conditions should be acquired.
- ▶ **Main Street - Elm Street.** A planted center median is proposed for the length of Elm Street. The median, extending to the intersection, will provide a pedestrian refuge for crossing Elm Street.
- ▶ **Main Street - Mechanics Row.** This three legged intersection will have Main Street to Mechanics Row as the dominant through movement. Potential intersection controls include an all-way-stop or a roundabout. A three-way intersection presents problems due to the dominance of the Main Street - Mechanics Row movement, with level of service forecasted to be poor. A roundabout has significant capacity and efficiency advantages. Costs, though, are significantly more. One feature of roundabouts is their improved aesthetics over stop signs or traffic signals. Roundabouts can be a
- ▶ **Minot Avenue - Academy Street.** Extending Academy Street to Minot Avenue will allow the de-emphasis or elimination of the High Street - Minot Avenue intersection. This intersection will need to be part of a coordinated system with the Minot Avenue - Elm Street signal
- ▶ **Minot Avenue - Elm Street.** Consideration should be given to keeping this intersection open to maximize circulation options downtown (unless needed for closure due to new at-grade railroad crossing at Academy). The intersection should be reconfigured to improve its aesthetics. The turning radius for the right turn from Elm Street onto Minot Avenue should be re-evaluated. The current radius greatly increases the crossing distance. A pedestrian crossing continuing from Elm Street to the path leading to Edward Little should be provided. The crosswalk across Minot Avenue should be made of permanent materials. Additional landscaping should be provided at this intersection.

### **Roadway Segments**

- ▶ **Mechanics Row.** Mechanics Row is recommended to be converted from one-way to two-way. This will ease traffic on Main Street from Mechanics Row to Court Street and Court Street between Main Street and Turner Street. Traffic that turned left from Main Street onto Court to continue onto Turner Street will now have a more direct route. As described above, this will add a signal phase to the Court Street/Turner Street intersection.
- ▶ **Academy Street.** Academy Street is recommended to be extended to Minot Avenue so that a more direct and efficient connection is provided for its traffic. This will require an additional at-grade railroad crossing. This will create a new signalized intersection with Minot Avenue.
- ▶ **Goff Street** is recommended to be extended to Minot Avenue. It is recommended that it accommodate right turn entering and exiting traffic only.



- ▶ **Reverse Frontage Road.** In conjunction with redevelopment of properties along Minot Avenue, it is recommended that the concept of a reverse frontage road be developed to serve adjacent properties. This road would provide circulation between businesses and uses along the Minot Avenue without re-entering the roadway. Driveways can be consolidated to improve sight distances and the safety of Minot Avenue traffic.

## Transit

- ▶ **Fixed Route Service.** A key goal of the downtown master plan is to create a critical mass of employment and activity to support revitalized downtown businesses. A key anchor for this employment base will be office workers. Office workers most likely to ride transit work fairly regular hours. Recent changes in 'The Bus' have eliminated service after 4:45 PM. Important considerations in the use of transit by commuters are reliability and flexibility. Current service hours lack flexibility for commuters but provide increased hours for the system's primary users, the transit dependent. As the employment base in expanded in downtown Lewiston and Auburn, service hours should be re-examined as a key component of reducing the traffic impacts of new development.

Another action that can increase transit usage is "cashing out" parking. Employers provide a monthly transportation stipend to employees to use. Employees can use the allotment as they see fit to purchase bus passes or to continue to purchase a monthly permit parking.

- ▶ **Trolley Service.** A trolley service can greatly increase circulation options for workers, shoppers and visitors between downtown activity centers. The trolley should connect Great Falls Plaza, a new Main Street Municipal Center/Road Block, the Great Falls Performing Arts Center and Shop n Save. Fares should be free or greatly reduced (25 to 50 cents) to spur usage. This will require underwriting by the City and/or downtown business community. Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality funds may be available if benefits to traffic and/or air quality can be demonstrated. Frequency should be every 15 minutes when operational. Hours should be during the morning, mid-day, afternoon and evening hours at least when performances are scheduled at the GFPAC or other cultural activities scheduled.

Should the convention center plans in Lewiston develop, frequent trolley links to the center should also be explored. Service should also be planned to a proposed passenger rail facility should passenger rail service be restored. The terminal is proposed for the north side of Great Falls Plaza in conjunction with the hotel facility.

- ▶ **Bicycle Improvements.** Improved bicycle access to the downtown will be provided by several programmed projects. These include the conversion of the former Grand Trunk rail line to a multi-use path. All roadway projects, where feasible, should accommodate bicycles. This includes providing, as a minimum, wide curb lane facilities (14' minimum, 15' preferred) on urban roadways. Signal timings and loop detectors should also be designed with cyclists in mind.

Secure bicycle parking is recommended to be provided at major activity centers. These include Great Falls Plaza, Main Street in the vicinity of the Road Block, Great Falls School,

riverfront focal points and at all new parking structures to be developed. Secure parking is essential at destinations to increase the use of bicycling for commuting, shopping and recreational trips.

### **Streetscape Improvements**

“To create a successful downtown, the form, appearance, and arrangement of the diverse elements that make up the urban environment must be orchestrated to create a sense of overall organization, a pleasing visual image; a sense of vitality, and a convenient setting for human activity. Downtown can be designed to encourage pedestrian movement, to provide for special activities, and to promote social interaction. If these objectives are pursued, even if they are not perfectly accomplished, downtown can become a more successful for people and more attractive focus for investments in new development and renovation.”<sup>3</sup> Throughout the downtown streetscape improvements are suggested including: lighting, curbs, sidewalks, trash receptacles, kiosks, benches, drinking fountains, bollards and banners to make the downtown more attractive and pedestrian friendly.

### **Streetscape Improvement Costs**

Specific designs for streetscape improvements are not included within the scope of this project. For planning purposes the following should be considered for capital improvement planning:

#### ***Streetscape Improvements in the Downtown Core - \$450.00 / Linear Foot***

This would include a concrete sidewalk with a brick band along the curb, granite curbing, ornamental lighting at sixty feet on center, trees at forty feet on center, tree guards and tree grates, benches, trash receptacles every one hundred feet. This cost also includes demolition, traffic control, miscellaneous design, survey, construction services and a contingency.

#### ***Streetscape Improvements in Residential Areas - Like Old Auburn - \$175 / Linear Foot***

This would include four foot wide concrete walks, granite curbs, ornamental lights at ninety feet on center, trees at forty feet on center, two foot wide grass median between walk and curb. This cost also includes demolition, traffic control, miscellaneous design, survey, construction services and a contingency.

### ***Public-Private Partnerships***

In order for the recommendations in this report to be implemented it is critical that both the private and public sector become involved. In some instances it may be advantageous for the public and private sectors to join forces. The new city hall building which includes mixed uses including: a parking garage, offices, retail and a restaurant may be an opportunity to create a “Public-Private Partnership.” Sharing the benefits and costs of a project like city hall could benefit both the private sector and the development community. In downtown development private development can often be leveraged to access federal and state funds . . . and in some cases may be the only way to make a project financially feasible.

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<sup>3</sup> *Designing the Successful*, Published by the Urban Land Institute, by Cyril B Paumier

## ***Financing Public Improvements***

- ▶ **Tax Increment District Financing** - Tax increment district financing uses incremental increases in tax revenue generated from increases in property values attributed to the public improvements. The theory, any new tax dollars generated because property values have increased would be dedicated to financing a project. The basis of this method is the ability to attribute increases in tax revenue directly to increases in property values as a result of a specific, public project.
- ▶ **Special Assessment District Financing** - Special assessment district financing is an approach to municipal financing in which a group of properties share the cost of financing through an annual assessment placed on top of the annual tax rate. The assessment can be looked at as an incremental increase in the tax rate.
- ▶ **Capital Improvement Funding** - the city can invest directly in improvements for road, streetscape, open space and other improvements.
- ▶ **Federal Grant Programs** - even though Auburn is an entitlement city it should review its eligibility for any of the following programs.

**Housing and Urban Development** - The mission of the Department of Housing and Urban Development is 'to help people create communities of opportunity.' When most people think of HUD, they think housing. The mission is much broader, it is involved in building libraries, centers for the elderly, providing child care, establishing after-school programs, fighting crime, and improving streets and water and sewer systems. Many of these efforts have been funded through the Community Development Block Grant Program, which is the nations seventh largest program. Cdbg-funded projects have become an integral part of virtually every community in the nation. Over the past three years HUD has taken significant steps to streamline the program, increase citizens' participation, simplify regulations and encourage coordination with other HUD programs. With special initiatives the program provides communities with resources to address local concerns in a coordinated, well-planned and systematic manner.

**Downtown Grant Revitalization Program** - may be able to be used to address "slums & blight" conditions in the downtown. Eligible activities include: sidewalk, street and other public facility repairs, facade grants, and the removal of blighted buildings.

**Housing Assistance Grant Program** - may be able to be used to rehabilitate single-family and multi-family housing units which are occupied by low to moderate income people. This program may be able to be used to rehabilitate the upper stories of buildings in the core of the downtown as well as the Old Auburn neighborhood.

**Economic Development Infrastructure Grant Program** - may be able to be used by the city to develop or rehabilitate public infrastructure so that existing and new businesses can retain or create jobs for low to moderate income people.

**Micro Loan Grant Program** - may be able to be used by the City to provide low interest loans to assist existing businesses and new businesses that retain or create jobs for low to moderate income people. This program can be used to attract specific types of businesses

in the downtown.

► **Other grant programs include:**

**Land and Water Conservation Fund** - administered by the Maine Department of Conservation, which can be used for the acquisition, development and renovation of public outdoor recreation facilities. Towns must either own the land or use the grant funds to purchase it. Match requirements are 75% for a school project, and 50% for a non-school project.

**Maine Trails Funding Program** - administered by the Maine Department of Conservation, provides funds for trail construction for bicycle and pedestrian use.

**Urban Forestry Grant** - provides grant money for tree planting programs.

► **Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) Programs** - The MDOT provides funds to municipalities from a variety of programs, some of which could be used to support downtown improvements. These programs include:

**Biennial Program.** Many reconstruction, paving and safety improvement projects are funded through the MDOT's Biennial Transportation Improvement Program (BTIP). Gorham works with PACTS and the MDOT to set regional funding priorities for this program. The City can work to ensure that the momentum for traffic relief routes continue and that other funds for downtown improvements are made available.

**Enhancement Program.** This program provides funding for bicycle, pedestrian, historic, trail, landscaping and other similar ancillary activities.

**Gateway Program.** This program provides up to \$5,000 per City for the construction of "gateway" enhancements to welcome visitors.

**CMAQ Program.** The Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality program provides support for transportation projects that reduce congestion and improve air quality. Some traffic signal projects may qualify but the program is primarily used for alternative modes such as bus, carpool/vanpool and rail projects.

► **Loan Programs** - There are a number of low interest loan programs that can be used by municipalities as well as developers. Such programs could be used to finance redevelopment in the downtown. These programs include the Maine Municipal Bond Bank which makes low interest loans to communities, the CDBG Development fund (loans up to \$100,000 or 40% of total project cost), the CDBG Interim Finance Program (short term loans for retention of housing and job opportunities for low to moderate income people), and Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) Business Development Programs (a range of loan programs for private businesses)

► **Other Federal Programs - Used to Fund Downtown Development & Business Growth**

**General Services Administration** - The U.S. General Services Administration recently announced a program to work with downtown associations. The new "*Good Neighbor Program*," promotes public-private partnerships between downtown improvement districts and the GSA. The GSA program is in partnership with the National Main Street Program and the National Council for Urban Economic Development in addition, the President recently signed *Executive Order No. 13006* that calls for federal agencies to locate their facilities not only in established downtowns, but also to consider locating buildings in historic properties within historic districts

**Special Purpose Grants** - is not an authorized program. The Chair or Ranking Member of the Committee earmarks money for specific projects. HUD has been under a considerable amount of pressure to reduce spending recently, and the last appropriation was in 1995.

**Economic Development Loan Fund** - In 1993, HUD's Community Planning and Development - CPD. began reinventing its existing Economic Development Loan Fund as a tool for community revitalization. In FY 94 and 95, the Loan Fund had its most productive years guaranteeing more than \$2.1 billion in loans to create jobs in large and small communities throughout the United States. It is a powerful tool for economic development. The strength of the guaranteed Loan Fund is that it permits communities to use federally-guaranteed loans, rather the CDBG funds to leverage private funds for the purposes of economic development and community revitalization. This enables communities to use their scarce CDBG dollars for activities. Since they created the program, HUD has never called on the Treasury to pay back defaulted loans.

**Economic Development Initiative** - EDI is a new initiative that provides grant funds to enhance the security of the Loan Fund and/or strengthen the economic feasibility of assisted projects. Enacted and implemented for the first time in 1994, EDI enables localities to carry out economic development activities. They can leverage public and private dollars to create jobs and other benefits, especially for low and moderate income persons, and reduce the risk of potential future defaults on Loan Fund supported projects.

**Community and Individual Investment Corporation** - In 1996 EDI funds will support the creation of Community and Individual Investment Corporations. CIIC's are intended to provide ongoing credit for small business development in Enterprise Zones, Enterprise Communities and other CDBG-eligible communities. The program complements ongoing activity of existing community development financial institutions. It provides a new opportunity to stimulate asset-building among low to moderate income persons and return those investments to the community as investments in housing, community, and economic development. A unique feature of the CIIC is that the community residents will have an economic stake in the venture by purchasing shares in the corporation.

**Enterprise Zones and Enterprise Communities** -The central theme of the administration's agenda is the "*Empowerment Zones (EZ) and Enterprise Communities (EC) Program*." These programs provide communities with incentives and other tools to enable them to carry out strategic comprehensive strategic plans for revitalization.

The U.S. Department of Commerce - **Economic Development Administration's** (EDA) PublicWorks Impact Program is designed to help communities with unemployment more than 8.5% The program can be used to pay for planning, design and construction of

downtown public improvements including: infrastructure, streets, sidewalks, street furnishings, landscaping and signs. The program must be targeted to labor intensive activities and underemployed residents of the project area. Construction must begin within 120 days of the grant award. Senator Leahy's office is trying to get the eligibility requirements changed for EDA so that more New England communities would qualify for their programs.

The **Small Business Administration** offers a variety of programs for small businesses. "Small businesses" are generally companies of a certain employment size--for example, manufacturing companies of 500 employees or less; wholesale companies of 100 or less; and retail and service companies with five million in sales or less. This standard would qualify nearly all Maine's downtown businesses. The U.S. Small Business Administration's office administers the following programs.

**SBA 504** - SBA 504 provides direct loans to businesses through the sale of debentures by a "certified development corporation." These loans are guaranteed by the federal government. Loans are for up to 40% of a project, not to exceed \$750,000. The funds can be used for the acquisition of land, buildings and improvements, and machinery and equipment. Interest rates are fixed at the time of debenture sale and approximate the cost of comparable term borrowing of the U.S. Government plus 1.75%. Terms are 10 or 20 years.

**SBA "7A" Guarantee** - The SBA can guarantee up to 80% of a loan to a small business, not exceed \$750,000. A business can use the funds for land, buildings, machinery and equipment, and working capital. Interest rates and terms are negotiated with the lending institution, which actually applies for the guarantee based on your business plan. In Maine, several banks are "certified" or "preferred" lenders. Preferred lenders have quasi approval authority without SBA review, while certified lenders are guaranteed an SBA review of an application within three business days. The guarantee on a loan submitted under the Preferred Lenders Program is limited to 80%.

**Low Documentation Loan Program (LoDoc)** LowDoc streamlines the 7A loan application process for loans less than \$100,000. The approval process includes a two-page application form and focuses on character, credit and business experience.

**Export Working Capital Program** - The SBA can guarantee up to 89% of a loan to a business for working capital to export products or services. Interest rates are negotiated between the lender and exporter and terms are generally up to one year depending on the cash cycle for repayment.

**Contract Loan Program** - The Contract Loan Program provides a short-term line of credit to finance the estimated labor and material costs incurred for a specific contract. The SBA can guarantee up to 85% of a bank loan up to \$750,000, or 90% of a loan up to \$155,000. The term is usually 12-18 months or less. Interest rates are negotiated with the lending institution. Businesses assign the contract proceeds as part of the collateral necessary to secure the loan. Business must have been operating for at least 12 months to be eligible.

**Seasonal Line of Credit** -The Small Business Administration can guarantee a line of credit given to overcome seasonal cash flow shortfalls. Guarantees are up to 85% of a

loan up to \$750,000, or 90% of a loan up to \$155,000. Interest rates are negotiated with the lending institution and terms cannot exceed 12 months. Businesses must have been in existence for at least 12 months and demonstrated seasonal fluctuations.

# Five Year Action Plan

Prioritized Implementation Strategy: Organization											
Priority			Action	Participants	Possible Funding Resources	Schedule				Costs	
L	M	H				98	99	00	01		02
		X	Reconvene the GFAT Committee to Review the Master Plan Discuss a New Downtown Organization	Mayor, GFAT, Committee, City Staff	None Required	X					\$0
		X	GFAT confirms or modifies mission. List goals & objectives of new organization, Prepares operating budget. (± \$50k)	Mayor, GFAT, Committee, City Staff	None Required	X					\$0
		X	GFAT solicits initial funding from City and downtown businesses	Mayor, GFAT, Committee, City Staff	None Required	X					\$0
		X	GFAT Secures Funds, Hires Downtown Manager, Changes Name, Prepares Outreach Plan	Mayor, GFAT, Committee, City Staff	General Fund, CDBG, Downtown Development Corporation		X				\$75,000
		X	GFAT Sets Up Committee Structure	Mayor, GFAT, Committee, City Staff	Non Required		X				\$0
		X	GFAT Recruits for Volunteers for Committees	Mayor, GFAT, Committee, City Staff	City, Downtown Development Corporation		X				\$0



**Prioritized Implementation Strategy: Planning and Design**

Priority		Action	Participants	Possible Funding Resources	Schedule			
L	M				H	98	99	00
X		Bicycle-Pedestrian path plan	City, LACTS, MDOT, business	LACTS Work Plan, City, Rec. Trails Program		X		
	X	Elm Street boulevard design	City	City		X		
		Main Street roundabout/gateway	City, LACTS	CIP, planning grant, gateway funds (MDOT), design competition, staff time		X		
		City Hall	City/Private Sector	City Bond, Private Sector, CDBG, ISTEA (If Parking Garage or Intermodal Ctr)		X	X	
		Library/Meeting Space	City/Library	City, Private Foundations, CDBG		X	X	X
	X	Great Falls School/Arts Center	City/Private Sector/State	City/Private Sector/Private Foundations				X
	X	Festival Plaza	City	City		X		
	X	Minot Ave./Union Street Bypass Access Mgt. Plan	City, LACTS	LACTS Work Plan, City		X		
		Parking garage feasibility - Main/Mechanic	City, private	CIP, private		X		
	X	Parking structure feasibility - GFP	City, private	CIP, private, state grants (time frame depends on redevelopment plans/partners)			X	
	X	'Old Auburn' residential parking	City, neighborhood	City staff time			X	
	X	Trolley service planning	City, businesses, neighborhoods	City staff time, L.A.T.C		X		
	X	Rail service restoration planning	City, LACTS, MDOT, Passenger Rail Authority, DECD	Staff time			X	

	X	Enhanced transit stop planning (shelters, signage)	City, LATIC	Staff time	X		
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Prioritized Implementation Strategy: Transportation										
L	M	H	Action	Participants	Possible Funding Resources	Schedule				
						98	99	00	01	02
		X	Court St. reconstruction	MDOT, City, LACTS	Funded for construction in '99 with federal, state, City.		X			
		X	Convert Mechanics Row to two-way traffic	MDOT, City	MDOT, CDBG, CIP, impact fees.		X			
	X		Extend Academy Street to Minot	MDOT, LACTS, City, neighborhood	MDOT, CIP,					
X			Bicycle-Pedestrian path	City, LACTS, CABPAC	Rec. Trails Program, Enhancements, CIP					X
	X		Elm Street Boulevard	City, Neighborhood						
		X	Reconfigure Minot Ave. - Elm St. intersection	City, MDOT	CIP, Enhancements, STP (next resurfacing)			X		
X			Goff St. extension	City, neighborhood, businesses	CIP, part of redevelopment along Minot Ave.					X
		X	Great Falls Plaza short term parking improvements	City, businesses	CIP, private, CDBG		X	X		
		X	Mechanics Row parking lot	City, businesses	CIP, CDBG, private		X	X		
		X	Great Falls Plaza long term parking improvements	City, developers	CIP, CDBG, private, TIF (implementation based on feasibility study and partners)					
		X	Main-Mechanic Street parking structure	City, State, business	CIP, CDBG, private, TIF (implementation based on feasibility study and partners)					
	X		'Old Auburn' residential parking	City, neighborhood	CIP, CDBG					X

	X		Trolley Service	City, LATC	CMAQ, private, CIP			X	X	X
X			Train platform	City, State, LACTS, rail authority	CMAQ, private, state (implementation depends on feasibility/ridership)					

STP (Surface Transportation Program). This historically has been 'highway' funds including new construction, reconstruction and resurfacing of roadways. Can also be 'flexed' for bicycle, pedestrian, transit and other transportation projects. LACTS develops a prioritized list of transportation projects every two years.

Enhancements. Ten percent set aside of a State's STP funds for non-highway type projects including bicycle, pedestrian, trail, preservation of historic transportation facilities and other projects. Funds are competitive at the statewide level.

CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation-Air Quality). Special state allocation for projects in southern portion of state in 'non-attainment' for air quality (ozone). Projects must have demonstrable effects on reducing pollutants/congestion reduction.

