

City of Auburn, Maine

"Maine's City of Opportunity"

Office of Planning & Permitting



STAFF REPORT

To: Auburn Planning Board

From: Douglas M. Greene, AICP, RLA; City Planner

Re: Comprehensive Plan Amendments in Support of Downtown Passenger Rail Service

Date: April 8, 2014

At its March 5, 2013 meeting, the City Council passed a resolution directing the Planning Staff to align its planning and policies of the city and partnering agencies to ensure that any plans for passenger rail involve locating in Auburn's downtown as a priority over any previous or alternative locations. A starting point in achieving that directive is amending the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to reflect that goal.

The City of Auburn's 2010 Comprehensive Plan is our community vision for the next 10 to 20 years. This plan took over 2 years to complete and is the product of many public input meetings, city staff and outside technical assistance. As thorough a process as that it was, changes in council policies can and do come up, which can trigger a need to revisit an issue

Such is the case of for where future passenger rail service should be located. Passenger rail service ended in Auburn many years ago and for the last 30 years, the City's Comprehensive Plans have recommended that if passenger rail service ever were to come back, its location and focus should be at the Lewiston-Auburn Airport. While the Airport does act as an inter-modal hub for air cargo and freight and is near the interstate, locating a station for passenger rail there may not provide the benefits that a Downtown location could provide. Making this change is also important as any future study on passenger rail, if funded by State or Federal Transportation agencies will focus on where our Comprehensive plan says it should be.

There is growing interest in bringing back passenger rail to Auburn for a Portland to Montreal connection and for an Auburn to Portland commuter rail service. The question before you is whether it makes sense to amend the Comprehensive Plan to change the recommended location for passenger rail from the Airport to Downtown. Why is Downtown the best location? While the Airport and Downtown both are feasible, there may be better options on how to make these

different connections work. A key point to consider in choosing a location for passenger rail is where would the greatest benefits be achieved?

Downtown has always been the traditional location for passenger rail. Today, there are different reasons and benefits of passenger rail service to Downtown.

- Downtown passenger rail is an important part of Transit Oriented Development, which could spur investment in housing and commercial projects.
- More people will be within easy walking or driving distance to a Downtown passenger rail station.
- A Downtown passenger rail station can coordinate with and accommodate other transit modes such as bike, pedestrian, auto and bus to create a diversity of transportation options.
- Taking cars off the road and the corresponding reduction in greenhouse gases.
- Passenger rail fits in nicely with the Auburn's renewed interest in a Downtown Revitalization Strategy.

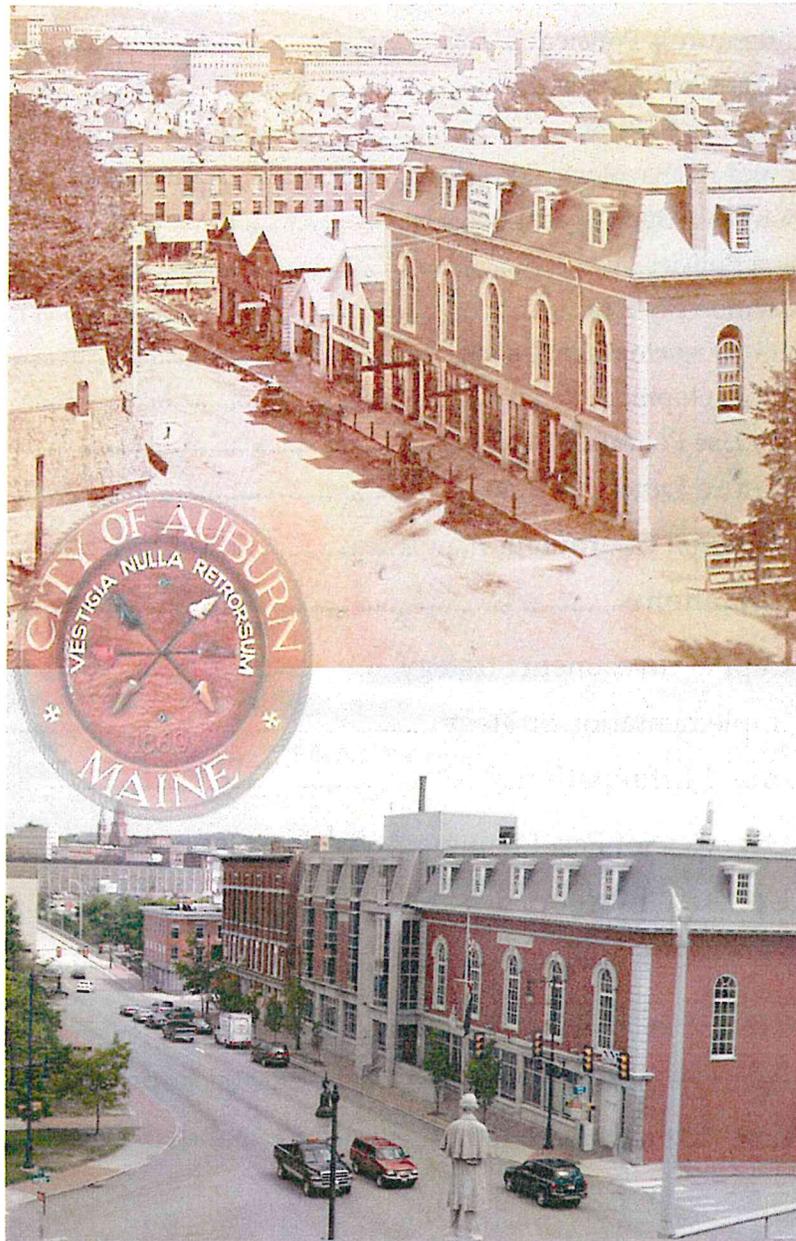
The Staff recommends the Planning Board forward a **RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL** to the City council of the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan as presented in your packet. These changes will support any future study to examine all possible passenger rail options and locations. There will need to be more work done in the future to analyze these potential options and determine where the actual best location for passenger rail might be located.



Douglas M. Greene, AICP, RLA
City Planner

C: File

CITY OF AUBURN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: 2010 UPDATE



For the complete 2010 Comprehensive Plan See:

[http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Comprehensive Plan FINAL Approved 4 19 11.pdf](http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Comprehensive%20Plan%20FINAL%20Approved%204%2019%2011.pdf)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	iii
Vision & Executive Summary.....	iv
Part A: Policies	1
Chapter 1 - Goals, Objectives, & Strategies	2
A. Natural Resources Policies.....	3
B. Water and Sewer Policies.....	20
C. Public Facilities Policies.....	23
D. Historic and Archaeological Policies.....	29
E. Recreation (and Open Space) Policies.....	32
F. Population Policies.....	36
G. Transportation Policies.....	38
H. Community Development Policies.....	55
I. Economic Development Policies.....	64
J. Other Land Use Policies.....	69
Chapter 2 - Future Land Use Plan	73
Chapter 3 - Regional Coordination.....	<u>110111</u>
Part B: Implementation.....	<u>116117</u>
Chapter 4 - Capital Investment Strategy.....	<u>117118</u>
Chapter 5 - Implementation Strategy	<u>120121</u>
Part C. Background Information.....	<u>135136</u>
Chapter 6 - Overview of Past Planning Activities.....	<u>136137</u>
Chapter 7 - Updated Inventory Sections.....	<u>139140</u>
Appendices.....	282
I. New Auburn Master Plan.....	283
II. Excerpts from the City of Auburn FY 10-14 Capital Improvement Program.....	284
III. Overview of Public Involvement (including Expanded Vision).....	298

Recreation and Environment Vision

Auburn is home to a Teen Center that provides a safe, non-judgmental, supportive environment. This center focuses on a variety of activities including arts and music, and operates a cafe for teens of all ages to enjoy. Auburn has expanded recreational amenities, including new and improved basketball courts, sports fields, and pool facilities. There are also improved, expanded, and connected sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes. There are new urban parks, including a skate park, and also a large park where students can take the family dog to play Frisbee and enjoy outdoor activities. Auburn respects and protects its natural resources. The City highlights the Androscoggin River for the recreational and tourist opportunities it provides.

Transportation Vision

Citylink bus service maintains affordable fares and provides new routes to and from schools and parks. Roads in Auburn are kept in good condition by an improved road maintenance program. The City has invested in sidewalk development, expanded the network of designated bike lanes, and improved connections to trails - all contributing to safe pedestrian and bike connections throughout the City. [A downtown multi-modal transportation hub connects pedestrians, bicyclists, bus and rail passengers to their destinations.](#)

Economic Vision

Auburn is a City that offers a variety of well-paid, skilled jobs and provides ample educational opportunities for local residents to attain these jobs. Auburn has a low tax rate. Auburn's retail development focuses on teen-centered amenities such as youth clothing and music stores.

B. LAND USE POLICIES

Chapter 2 of the 2010 Update of the Comprehensive Plan sets out a Future Land Use Plan to guide where and how growth and development should be accommodated over the next decade. The Future Land Use Plan shows, in a general sense, the desired pattern of future land use and development in the City.

The Future Land Use Plan reaffirms a central policy of prior of land use planning in the City, namely, that development in Auburn should grow out from the core and from older established neighborhoods. This policy was originally set forth in the City's first comprehensive plan over a half century ago and has continued to guide the City's land use planning since then. It is based on the fact that growth out from the downtown core and older established neighborhoods allows for the most efficient utilization of city services. This plan discourages "leapfrog" development in the outlying sections of the city where city services are not now available. The effect of continuing this longstanding policy is to guide most new development into the area south of Lake Auburn and Taylor Pond, and north of the Maine Turnpike.

4. Historic and Archeological Resources

- Update the historic preservation standards including standards for non-historic buildings in the Historic District
- Adopt a renovation code for older buildings including historic structures as part of the building code

5. Recreation (and Open Space)

- Explore the feasibility of developing a consolidated sports field complex to replace existing marginally useful facilities
- Assure continued public access the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin Rivers with improved facilities
- Assure continued public access to Taylor Pond
- Expand protected open space and rural recreational activities

6. Population

- Continue to provide a range of housing opportunities, so that Auburn continues to have a diverse population

7. Transportation

- Improve traffic flow and safety on the major road network (Center Street, Turner Road, Minot Avenue, etc.)
- Enhance the gateways to the City (Washington Street, Riverside Drive, Minot Avenue); including improved standards for development along these roads
- Provide additional access to the community, including improved Turnpike access, and a New Auburn connector road to future industrial areas
- Develop a western connector route, using existing roads, to link Exit 75 to the Mall area and communities to the west
- Explore the creation of a one-way traffic loop in downtown New Auburn in conjunction with the New Auburn Village Center concept
- Discourage the use of local/residential streets by through/cut-through traffic
- Develop a safe, interconnected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- Enhance the existing freight intermodal facility ~~and create a passenger Intermodal facility~~ at the airport including the possibility of passenger ~~rail and~~ air service
- Create a downtown Multi-modal transit facility that includes bicycle, pedestrian, bus and passenger rail service.
- Improve transit services including the local bus system

G. TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

PURPOSE

The Transportation section establishes objectives and strategies for the implementation of a safe, efficient, and effective multi-modal transportation network that supports the needs of all users and the goals of the City land use plan.

BACKGROUND

The heaviest demand on the transportation system is generated by commuters to work. Much of that demand occurs in peak travel hours in the morning and evening. Over the years the locations of employment centers in and around Auburn have changed. Jobs are no longer only located in the downtown core in mills, shops, offices, and retail stores.

Instead, employment has been dispersed to the north around the malls, to the south in industrial parks near the Turnpike interchange, as well as some staying in downtown. Many Auburn residents work in Lewiston, where the largest employers in the region are located. Many people employed in Auburn and Lewiston live in growing nearby suburban towns. Auburn is unavoidably part of a regional transportation network.

The transportation network is affected by the presence of a natural barrier, the Androscoggin River. The River separates the two largest employment centers, Lewiston and Auburn. Traffic between the two communities is channeled to four bridges that cross the River.

Connections to other cities in Maine and New England are limited. Access to the one nearby section of the regional expressway system, the Maine Turnpike, is five miles from downtown Auburn and seven miles from the malls north of downtown. With the exception of those employers located in the industrial parks near the Turnpike interchange, connections from the Turnpike to the employment and business centers of both cities are poor and need improvement.

Much of the travel demand in the region takes place in automobiles and light trucks, often with only one occupant. One way to reduce congestion is to reduce the reliance on travel by single occupant vehicles.

Transportation Goals:

Goal G.1: Auburn manages the number of vehicle trips during peak hours to better utilize the capacity of the existing road network.

Goal G.2: Auburn has a well-designed—and functioning road network that safely and efficiently moves all manner of users (cars, buses, bikes, and pedestrians) through the community while preserving the integrity of established residential neighborhoods.

Goal G.3: Auburn remains an an multi inter-modal hub providing access to rail, air, truck, and transit amenities.

One of the recurring themes in the Comprehensive Plan is the interaction between land use and transportation. This Plan seeks to divert vehicles from residential neighborhoods onto the principal traffic arteries and connector streets, where they can move efficiently. This is achieved in part by locating employment centers where they will not adversely impact nearby residential neighborhoods, and in part by insuring that major streets carry traffic efficiently so that cars are not tempted to seek shortcuts through residential neighborhoods.

VISION

Auburn's transportation network of roads, sidewalks, and bike lanes along with rail, air, and mass transit systems provide all users with safe and efficient movement throughout the community and beyond.

The road network is safe and efficient and accommodates drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. A hierarchy of roads ensures that traffic moves through the community on designated routes, providing appropriate access and suitable traffic flow. It also protects the integrity of established residential neighborhoods and gives priority to pedestrians, cyclists, and transit (bus, rail, etc.) in the densely built-up areas of the City, such as New Auburn and Downtown Auburn. Major roads efficiently move traffic through the community to significant local and regional destinations. Collector roads provide links within Auburn that alleviate traffic congestion and serve the needs of additional traffic created by community and regional growth areas. Local roads provide safe and attractive neighborhood access for all users – drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The community supports long-range transportation planning to alleviate congestion and to provide for greater regional access. Such planning focuses on the connections between land use, transportation, and public transit development; and seeks to push through-traffic out of established neighborhoods and downtowns to make walking and biking more inviting. Such planning involves the Maine Department of Transportation, the Maine Turnpike Authority, and other local and regional transportation agencies. It seeks to ensure appropriate turnpike development, ready access, and road infrastructure redevelopment projects that meet the needs of the community and the region.

Auburn prides itself on its role as a regional intermodal hub that includes high-volume rail and airfreight service. Auburn seeks to implement regional passenger/commuter hub options to expand rail and air travel opportunities that connect Greater Downtown Lewiston-Auburn north to Montreal and south to Portland and Boston.

G.3 TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Goal G.3: Auburn remains a inter- ~~multi~~-modal hub providing access to rail, air, truck, and transit amenities.

As a transportation service center, the City plays an important role in regional and state efforts to expand and improve rail, air, and truck services. The *Comprehensive Plan* supports continued City, regional, and state efforts to expand and enhance freight and passenger intermodal facilities. This includes continued support for existing rail and air facilities, and the promotion of passenger service. The *Plan* also acknowledges the City's strong ties to the turnpike, and seeks to ensure that Auburn is well positioned to benefit from local and regional turnpike development projects.

Auburn plays an integral role in regional traffic and transit services that goes beyond the services of its intermodal facility. The *Plan* encourages the City to work closely with Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) to promote regional and long-range traffic studies, ensure that Auburn streets can continue to adequately support local and commuter traffic, and provide feasible options for regional mass transit (including passenger and commuter rail, bus and rideshare programs).

Objective G.3.1:

Support the development of additional transportation infrastructure to promote continued growth in and around the Auburn freight intermodal facility, and support the siting and construction of a passenger ~~intermodal-multi-modal~~ facility at in the Auburn/Lewiston downtown area. ~~Airport.~~

Strategies to achieve this objective:

Strategy G.3.1.a:

Support the recommendations of the ATRC Long Range Transportation Plan to promote rail industry growth including:

- i. Expanding the high-speed passenger rail designation from Auburn to the western Maine border.
- ii. Working with New Hampshire and Vermont to extend the high-speed passenger rail designation to the border with Canada.
- iii. Upgrading the lines to support heavier loads to keep up with the demand of the Foreign Trade Zone
- iii.iv. Incorporate the passenger multi-modal facility (Auburn Downtown Transportation Center) into redevelopment planning of Downtown Auburn and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Strategy G.3.1.b:

Support Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) and ATRC studies to determine the feasibility and desirability of realigning the I-95 interchange (Exit 75), for the purpose of better accommodating truck traffic into and out of the industrial park area.

Strategy G.3.1.c:

Support the implementation of the 2006 Airport Master Plan Update to ensure appropriate development of airline freight services.

Objective G.3.2:

Promote appropriate local and regional mass transit opportunities.

Strategies to achieve this objective:

Strategy G.3.2.a:

Continue to study the establishment of passenger rail service in Downtown Auburn and passenger air service at the a passenger intermodal facility at the airport, paying particular attention to determining the market need for such a facilities y, and how such a facilities y would be accessed.

- i. If passenger service is viable at this-these locations, ensure that the development of a passenger facility includes adequate parking to meet projected demand, and that the facility provides adequate public transit connections to the downtown and other significant community destinations.

Strategy G.3.2.b:

Work with regional and state agencies to assess the potential for the expansion of passenger rail service from Portland to Auburn, and at some future time from Brunswick to Auburn via Lewiston. Also, encourage the state to work with SLA to upgrade rail lines and expand the current high-speed line designation from Auburn to Canada, as a step towards establishing passenger rail service from Auburn to western Maine and into New Hampshire and the Canadian provinces.

Strategy G.3.2.c:

Expand, as necessary, the local fixed-route bus service.

- i. Encourage the expansion of night and weekend bus service to provide residents and visitors with increased mobility and access to community destinations.
- ii. Encourage efficient routes that link residents to major employment centers in and around Auburn, such as the industrial parks.
- iii. Work with ATRC, as well as Lewiston and surrounding communities, to support the Lewiston Auburn Transit Committee (LATC) in its efforts to establish public/private partnerships and other creative financing mechanisms to fund additional bus service.

Strategy G.3.1.b:

Support Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) and ATRC studies to determine the feasibility and desirability of realigning the I-95 interchange (Exit 75), for the purpose of better accommodating truck traffic into and out of the industrial park area.

Strategy G.3.1.c:

Support the implementation of the 2006 Airport Master Plan Update to ensure appropriate development of airline freight services.

Objective G.3.2:

Promote appropriate local and regional mass transit opportunities.

Strategies to achieve this objective:

Strategy G.3.2.a:

Continue to study the establishment of passenger rail service in Downtown Auburn and passenger air service at the a-passenger intermodal facility at the airport, paying particular attention to determining the market need for such a facilities y, and how such a facilities y would be accessed.

- i. If passenger service is viable at this-these locations, ensure that the development of a passenger facility includes adequate parking to meet projected demand, and that the facility provides adequate public transit connections to the downtown and other significant community destinations.

Strategy G.3.2.b:

Work with regional and state agencies to assess the potential for the expansion of passenger rail service from Portland to Auburn, and at some future time from Brunswick to Auburn via Lewiston. Also, eEncourage the state to work with SLA to upgrade rail lines and expand the current high-speed line designation from Auburn to Canada, as a step towards establishing passenger rail service from Auburn to western Maine and into New Hampshire and the Canadian provinces.

Strategy G.3.2.c:

Expand, as necessary, the local fixed-route bus service.

- i. Encourage the expansion of night and weekend bus service to provide residents and visitors with increased mobility and access to community destinations.
- ii. Encourage efficient routes that link residents to major employment centers in and around Auburn, such as the industrial parks.
- iii. Work with ATRC, as well as Lewiston and surrounding communities, to support the Lewiston Auburn Transit Committee (LATC) in its efforts to establish public/private partnerships and other creative financing mechanisms to fund additional bus service.

1. PARKS AND TRAILS

Strategy B.1.a:

The City should support efforts in Turner to the north and Durham and Lisbon to the south to establish the Androscoggin Riverlands. Where feasible, the City should support efforts to link riverfront parks and trails to the project as a means of establishing a regional riverfront recreation network. The City should work towards creating public access along the length of its riverfront including trails, parks, boat launches, picnic areas and other public gathering points striving to enhance and preserve this natural resource.

Strategy B.1.b:

The City should encourage the development of a regional trail and bicycle network and work with the Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) to ensure, where feasible, that trail developments provide connections to regional networks as defined in the *2008 ATRC Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*.

2. CULTURE

Strategy B.2:

Auburn should expand its partnership with Lewiston and its regional neighbors to promote and enhance culture opportunities and around the county and encourage arts and cultural events and activities.

C. TRANSPORTATION

As a transportation service center, the City's inter-modal facility plays an important role in regional and state plans to expand and improve rail, air, and truck services. The Comprehensive Plan encourages continued development of this important economic resource. It looks to support City, regional, and state plans to expand and enhance the existing rail and air facilities and explore the potential of adding passenger service. The plan also acknowledges the City's strong ties to the turnpike and the potential for additional turnpike development to ensure that Auburn retains its role in providing regional truck transportation services.

In addition to the intermodal facility, Auburn plays an integral role in regional traffic and transit services. The Plan encourages the City to work closely with Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) to promote regional and long-range traffic studies, ensure that Auburn streets can continue to adequately support local and commuter traffic, and provide feasible options for regional mass transit including passenger rail, bus and rideshare programs.

CHAPTER 4- CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The capital investment strategy is intended to assist the City in planning for the capital investments needed to service the anticipated growth and development in the community and to implement the policies of the Comprehensive Plan in a manner that manages the fiscal impacts of those projects. The City of Auburn has an ongoing capital planning and budgeting system that addresses the community's on-going needs for capital equipment and facilities. The City's current Capital Improvement Program serves as the basis for this capital investment strategy

A. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The City conducts an annual capital planning process as provided for in the City Charter. As part of the annual budget process, the administration develops and the City Council adopts a five year Capital Improvement Program. This documents inventories the capital needs of the City on a department by department basis and establishes a current year capital spending plan for equipment and facilities together with a four year projection of spending on capital needs based.

The annual Capital Improvements Program (CIP) also includes school capital needs as well as the capital needs of L/A 911, the Auburn/Lewiston Airport, the Lewiston/Auburn Economic Growth Council, and the Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee.

The 2010-2014 CIP includes the following:

1. A summary spreadsheet of all projects and the corresponding project cost (see Appendix B).
2. A listing of all projects complete with descriptions, funding amounts, funding recommendations, and supporting information.
3. A listing of the City's equipment.
4. A listing of the City's fleet of vehicles.
5. A copy of the City's Capital Improvement Program Policy.
6. A 5-Year Financial Plan projecting valuation, expenses, and revenues. This spreadsheet demonstrates what financial affect the Capital Improvement Program presents.

B. PROJECTS NECESSARY TO ACCOMMODATE PROJECTED GROWTH

This Comprehensive Plan envisions that the City will continue to experience modest levels of residential growth. The plan also envisions that the City will continue to encourage economic growth both through reinvestment in the downtowns of Auburn and New Auburn and continued development of industrial and commercial activities in designated Growth Areas (see

Policy Reference	Activity	Primary Responsibility
	including regional considerations	
Ch1-C.2.3.d	Public works – undertake comprehensive review of pedestrian access	Community Services Department
Ch1-C.3.1.b	Schools – develop a child-centered facility plan	School Superintendent
Ch1-G.2.11.a & Ch3-B.1.b	Transportation – undertake comprehensive review of pedestrian and bicycle access including regional considerations	Planning and Permitting Department & Community Services Department
Ch1-G.2.11.c	Transportation – establish neighborhood bike routes	Planning and Permitting Department & Community Services Department
Ch1-H.2.6.d & Ch3-A.3.a	Housing – establish a housing advocacy committee	City Manager & Council
Ch1-I.2.4.a & Ch3-D.2	Economic development – develop a labor-to-business marketing plan	Economic Development Department
Ch1-I.2.4.b	Economic development – develop a skilled labor force education plan	Economic Development Department & Community Development Department
Capital Projects and Investments (Short Term)		
Ch1-A.1.1.b & Ch1-E.1.3.a	Lake Auburn – continue capital improvements	Auburn Water District (AWD)
Ch1-A.1.1.c & Ch1-E.1.3.a	Lake Auburn – develop recreational opportunities	Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission (LAWPC)
Ch1-A.6.1.a & Ch1-B.2.2.a	Stormwater & sewers – fund and implement CSO removal projects	City Manager & Council
Ch1-B.1.2.c	Water supply – assure that system can provide adequate supplies of “process water”	AWD
Ch1-B.2.1.a	Sewers – use TIFs and other funding to extend sewer system	City Manager & Council
Ch1-B.2.3.a	Sewers – support CSO Program	City Manager & Council
Ch1-B.2.3.b	Sewers – eliminate inflow/infiltration contributions of natural water	Auburn Sewerage District
Ch1-C.3.1.a	Schools – provide suitable high school facility	School Superintendent