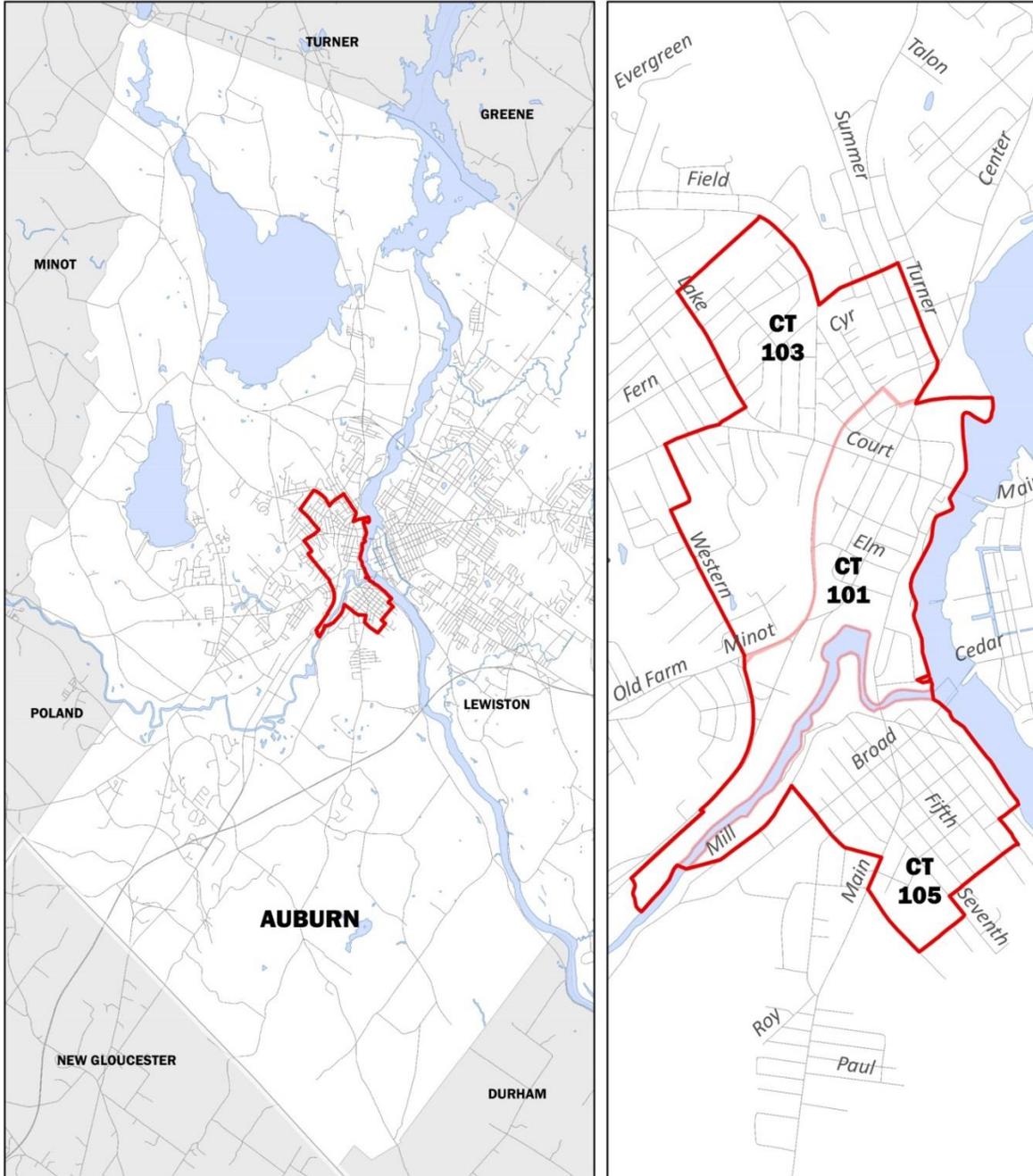


# Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy

## Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Area

### AUBURN, ME



REVISED DRAFT  
September 1, 2015

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# **Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Area Auburn, Maine**

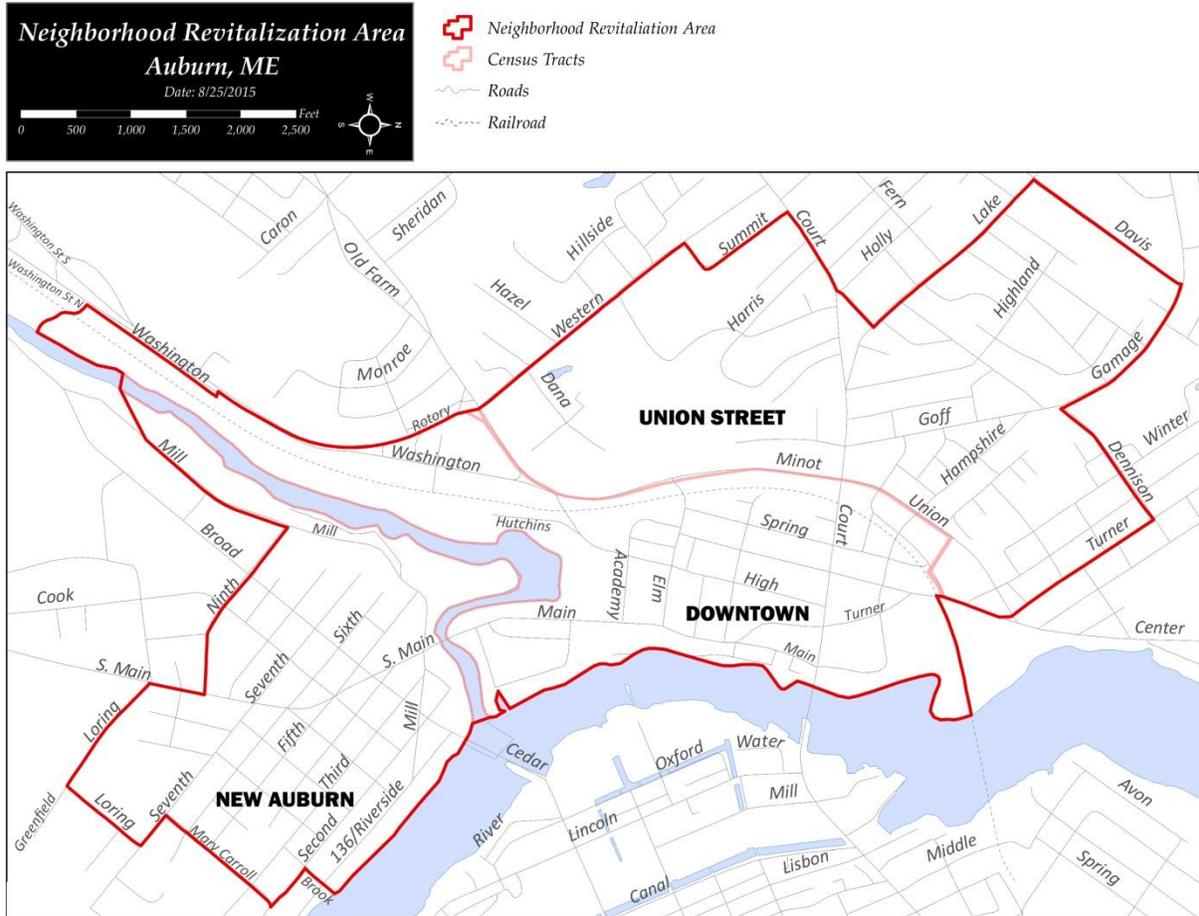
## **I. Purpose of the Revitalization Strategy**

This neighborhood revitalization strategy is intended to organize the City's ongoing activities as well as proposed future activities in the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street area into a coordinated program that will focus a comprehensive action program on the revitalization area thereby resulting in the improvement of this part of the City. The City has a number of ongoing activities that relate to this area as well as proposals for new initiatives. As part of the City's Consolidated Plan, the City proposes focusing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funded activities on these neighborhoods. The revitalization strategy is designed to build on those ongoing activities and current plans, supplemented by new activities, to bring about a concentrated focus on improving the economic vitality, housing, and infrastructure of the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street area.

## **II. The Neighborhood Revitalization Area**

The City of Auburn's designated "Neighborhood Revitalization Area" that is the focus of this revitalization strategy includes the City's three older in-town neighborhoods; the Downtown, the mixed-use portion of New Auburn, and the Union Street neighborhood (see Figure 1). The Neighborhood Revitalization Area encompasses Census Tracts 101, 103, and 105 and is the focus area for Community Development Block Grant and HOME funded activities for the five-year period from 2015 to 2019.

**Figure 1**  
**Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street**  
**Neighborhood Revitalization Area**



The three intown neighborhoods included in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area have very high proportions of old and substandard housing and of poverty and social problems. They are part of the historic core of the community with significant employment. The continued revitalization of these neighborhoods is important to the overall success of the City in the years ahead. The following provide some basic information about the characteristics of the revitalization area:

- The Neighborhood Revitalization Area has approximately 27% of the City's population but 50% of the people who live in poverty.
- Almost half of the children in the area under 18 are growing up in poverty.
- Almost 75% of the housing units in the area are in buildings that were built before World War II. Many of the units are not properly weatherized, have old electrical and plumbing systems and have difficult access for the elderly or disabled. Many units still have lead paint.
- Only a little more than a quarter of the housing in the area is owner-occupied.
- There is a high percentage of absentee ownership of rental units.
- The Neighborhood Revitalization Area has a higher crime rate than the rest of the City.
- Residents of the neighborhood express concerns about walking at night near dimly lit parks and about the difficulty of walking in the neighborhood in general.
- The Neighborhood Revitalization Area had 3,350 jobs in 2011 but employment has been declining. This has been somewhat offset by an increase in better paying jobs in Downtown.

### III. Overview of Past Plans and Studies

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The City of Auburn has an extensive ongoing planning program. Many of the City's adopted plans and studies deal in part with the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street area and can provide the basis for the revitalization strategy. But none of these prior efforts provide a comprehensive, holistic program for improving the area. The following sections provide brief overviews of a number of plans and studies that are relevant to the focus area and summarize the key policy recommendations of each plan or study that could be incorporated into the comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy.

#### The HUD Consolidated Plan (2015)

The City recently prepared its 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan that establishes the community's priorities for the use of HUD Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnership Funds. The Consolidated Plan proposes focusing the City's efforts on three in-town neighborhoods, Downtown, New Auburn, and the Union Street area. The Plan identifies eight high-priority goals and 1 low-priority goal as follows:

- The high priority goals are to:
  - A. Support people in their efforts to transition out of poverty
  - B. Prevent deterioration of housing stock
  - C. Promote jobs and development
  - D. Make neighborhood streets safer and more walkable
  - E. Prevent homelessness
  - F. Increase owner occupancy
  - G. Improve parks and establish community gardens
  - H. Support construction of new affordable housing units
- The low priority goal is to:
  - A. Support fair housing

The Strategic Plan that is part of the Consolidated Plan lays out a program for achieving each goal. The following elements of the Strategic Plan are potentially relevant to the neighborhood revitalization strategy and should be considered for inclusion:

- High Priority A Support people in their efforts to transition out of poverty
  - Focus on helping young people growing up in poverty to get the personal and educational skills needed to live a healthy and productive adult life
    - Expand programming for at-risk teenagers that helps them

- learn work skills, graduate from high school
    - Create youth apprenticeship opportunities with local businesses
  - Support low-income adults to successfully provide for themselves and their families through education and development of employment skills including mentoring, work readiness, and job training programs
- High Priority B Prevent deterioration of housing stock
  - Provide grants, deferred loans, and low-interest loans for the rehabilitation of owner and rental housing that is occupied by low and moderate income households
  - Provide matching funds to implement the 3-year federal grant to reduce childhood lead poisoning
  - Provide Community Development staff support to the Lewiston-Auburn Lead Subcommittee to assist with implementation of the *5-year Strategic Action Plan for the Reduction of Childhood Lead Poisoning in the Cities of Auburn and Lewiston*
  - Financially support code enforcement activities that result in improvements to the housing stock
  - Provide financial assistance to encourage exterior, as well as health and safety, improvements
- High Priority C Promote jobs and development
  - Assist small businesses to start up, succeed, and grow through:
    - Loans and grants to upgrade and adapt buildings in the target area
- High Priority D Make neighborhood streets safer and more walkable
  - Provide infrastructure funds on a 50% match of City capital improvement funds for lighting, sidewalks, landscaping improvements in target areas
- High Priority E Prevent homelessness
  - Support homeless people first with housing, then with services to help them provide for themselves and their families through work readiness training and job skill development
- High Priority F Increase owner occupancy
  - Make it easier for renters to become homeowners
    - Provide financial help for down payments and financial counseling for low-moderate income renter households seeking to purchase a first home in Auburn

- Find alternative mortgage financing for New Americans and other residents to be able to move up to homeownership, and work with Auburn Housing Authority to identify potential owners
  - High Priority G Improve parks and establish community gardens
    - Enhance physical infrastructure of key in-town parks
      - Improve lighting at Union Street
      - Extend the Riverwalk into New Auburn
      - Improve walkways to and from parks
    - Provide opportunities for growing fresh healthy foods by establishing community gardens in the Downtown, Union Street and New Auburn target areas
  - High Priority H Support construction of new affordable housing units
    - Provide financial assistance to developers of high-quality affordable mixed income housing in the target areas of Auburn

### **The Auburn Downtown Master Plan (1998)**

The City developed the Auburn Downtown Master Plan in the late 1990s. The Plan has guided development and public investment in the downtown area for the past fifteen years. Many of the recommendation of the Master Plan have been implemented but there are still a few activities recommended in the Master Plan that need to be pursued. These include:

- The Plan recommended converting the Great Falls School into a community cultural center that could expand into a regional center for visual, performing and cultural arts.
- In conjunction with the reuse of the school, the Plan proposed acquiring properties on the opposite side of Academy Street that would allow additional parking to be developed in conjunction with a “forecourt” linking the building to the parking. This forecourt could become a gathering space as well as a sculpture garden.
- The Plan recommended that the area behind the Main Street buildings be developed as hard surface open space with formal plantings and temporary docks that could be used by a small cruise boat and by a canoe and kayak rental operation.

### **The 2010 Update of the Comprehensive Plan including the New Auburn Master Plan**

The City adopted an update to its Comprehensive Plan in 2010. While the focus of the Plan is primarily citywide, it contains a number of recommendations that are applicable

to and/or are specific to the Neighborhood Revitalization Area. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan includes a New Auburn Master Plan that contains many recommendations relative to the New Auburn portion of the Neighborhood Revitalization Area. The City has implemented some of the recommendations in the two plans and is in the process of carrying out other proposals. The following recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan and New Auburn Master Plan are potentially relevant to the neighborhood revitalization strategy:

- Continue funding efforts to eliminate the remaining Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) (A.3.1.d)
- Implement existing CSO removal projects and make funding for these projects a priority (A.6.1.a)
- Urge the Auburn Sewer District to reallocate funds to support the upgrading of older central sewer lines (B.2.2.b)
- Work with the Androscoggin Land Trust and other conservation organizations to purchase land and/or conservation easements along critical portions of the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin Rivers (A.3.1.b and A.3.2.c)
- Undertake a comprehensive review of pedestrian access and develop a cost-effective and appropriate pedestrian plan that focuses on sidewalk connectivity in urban areas (C.2.3.d)
- Adopt a renovation code that continues to allow exceptions to new construction standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings (D.1.2.c)
- Identify and develop additional recreational and boat access along the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin Rivers (E.1.2.c)
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access along the Route 4 Corridor including developing safe pedestrian crossings at major intersections, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities in street reconstruction projects, and exploring a mid-block crossing to connect Pettengill Park and the surrounding neighborhood to Downtown (G.2.1.c)
- Improve Turner Street as a “complete street” providing local vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian and transit access to the downtown and the mall area (G.2.6.b)
- Establish Elm Street as the primary route from Main Street and the downtown neighborhoods to Minot Ave. (G.2.9.a)
- Extend the Main Street streetscape improvements along all of Main Street and Mill Street into New Auburn
- Study the reconfiguration of traffic flow in New Auburn (G.2.9.d)
- Provide creative parking solutions to meet the needs of downtown neighborhoods and businesses (G.2.9.e)
- Develop a greenbelt bicycle/pedestrian connection between Pettengill Park and West Pitch Park (G.2.9.f)

- Develop a greenbelt bicycle/pedestrian connection from West Pitch Park to Moulton Field and New Auburn(G.2.9.g)
- Improve or reconstruct local residential streets to incorporate design elements that slow traffic and discourage their use by through traffic (G.2.12.a)
- Maintain the older owner-occupied housing stock by continuing to provide financial assistance to qualified property owners to maintain and improve their homes (H.2.1.a)
- Consider adopting a property maintenance code for multifamily housing (H.2.1.b)
- Adopt a renovation code as part of the building code (H.2.1.b)
- Review and revise the City’s fire code to provide flexibility in rehabilitating older buildings (H.2.1.b)
- Conduct regular ongoing code enforcement inspections for multifamily housing (H.2.1.b)
- Continue to provide rehabilitation assistance to owners of rental property who provide affordable apartments (H.2.1.b)
- Provide funding for people to buy and upgrade small multifamily properties to promote owner-occupied multifamily housing (H.2.1.b)
- Revise the zoning requirements to allow existing single-family homes in older single-family neighborhoods to be improved and expanded (H.2.2.a)
- Revise the zoning requirements to allow infill development that is in character with the neighborhood in older single-family neighborhoods (H.2.2.a)
- Revise the zoning requirements to allow existing buildings in urban mixed-use neighborhoods to be improved and expanded (H.2.3.a)
- Revise the zoning requirements to allow redevelopment and infill development in urban mixed-use neighborhoods that is in character with the neighborhood (H.2.3.a)
- Revise the zoning requirements in the downtown neighborhood to allow improvement of existing buildings as well as redevelopment and infill development (H.2.4.a)
- Support the continued development of subsidized and other affordable housing (H.2.6.b)
- Encourage the inclusion of affordable units within new housing projects through density bonuses and reduced infrastructure requirements (H.2.6.c)
- Continue to use the Community Development funding to purchase and invest in foreclosed properties (H.2.6.e)
- Establish a traditional downtown business district (I.1.1.a)
- Allow the reconfiguration of space within existing buildings for residential purposes without consideration of density or lot size limitations as long as there is adequate parking and green space and the reuse protects neighboring

properties (LUP 5)

- Revise the zoning in the downtown and New Auburn neighborhoods as proposed in the Future Land use Plan

The following additional recommendations are drawn from the New Auburn Master Plan and therefore apply only to the New Auburn portion of the Neighborhood Revitalization Area:

- Undertake a New Auburn Village Center District Revitalization Plan (see the discussion of the New Auburn Village Center Study)
- Revise the zoning to establish a village center development district
- Establish a riverfront open space district
- Extend the Main Street streetscape improvements to the Lown Peace Bridge
- Develop a plan for improved traffic flow
- Establish a planned development district in conjunction with the proposed traffic improvements
- Establish and maintain safe pedestrian crossings with well-marked and signed crosswalks
- Install new sidewalks with a focus on connecting residential streets to community destinations (see list in Table 2 in the Master Plan)
- Narrow the travel lanes on South Main Street and Broad Street to allow the installation of sidewalks and esplanades
- Install neckdowns where appropriate and ADA compliant ramps at intersections
- Establish a greenbelt around the community including along the rivers

### **The New Auburn Village Center Study (2014)**

The New Auburn Master Plan that was adopted by the City as part of the update of the Comprehensive Plan recommended that the City develop a New Auburn Village Center District Revitalization Plan. In response to this recommendation the City developed the New Auburn Village Center Study. The Plan contains a vision for the redevelopment of the commercial core of New Auburn involving a major reconfiguration of the street pattern and traffic flow within the area including the creation of larger development sites that can accommodate urban-style redevelopment. The following is a brief summary of the key recommendations:

- Relocate the Lown Peace Bridge to the intersection of Riverside Drive and Mill Street
- Create a “Riverway” or new local street linking Broad Street to Mill Street near South Main Street roughly following the curve of the river to both serve as a street and reduce the extent of the floodplain

- Create an expanded park and “Riverwalk” between the new Riverway and the river
- Close portions of Riverside Drive, Second Street, and Third Street to enhance redevelopment opportunities and create shared parking areas
- Revise the zoning to require buildings to be located close to the street and sidewalk in the traditional manner
- Revise the zoning to increase the allowed residential density to up to 18-21 units per acre

### **The Androscoggin River Greenway Plan (2013)**

The new Greenway Plan creates a more well-defined and implementable working plan for the creation of the Androscoggin River Greenway as envisioned in the 1990s. A number of the proposed improvements are located within the Neighborhood Revitalization Area. The following are brief descriptions of the possible improvements:

- Connection from the South Main Street Bridge to the Lown Peace Bridge either via an off-road trail along the river (see discussion of the New Auburn Riverwalk above) or improvements to South Main Street, Mill Street and Broad Street
- Connection from the existing trail in Moulton Park across the Little Androscoggin River to the sidewalk at the Barker Mill and connecting with the Barker Mill Trail along the Little Andy
- Extension of the “complete streets” improvements on Main Street to Court Street
- Improved hand-carry boat access at Little Andy Park in New Auburn

### **The Athletic Fields Needs Assessment – Phase One (2014)**

In 2014, the City conducted Phase One of an assessment of the need for traditional athletic facilities (baseball, football, softball, basketball, soccer, tennis, and track & field). Phase One of the study inventoried the existing facilities serving the community and compared (or benchmarked) the level of service offered in Auburn versus other Maine communities and recreational standards. Phase One does not include any recommendations for improvements; these will be addressed in Phase Two of the project.

### **Bridging the Gaps (2013)**

Bridging the Gaps is a long-range facilities plan for bicycling and walking in Auburn, Lewiston, Lisbon, and Sabattus. The plan primarily provides “engineering” information on various types of facilities, when they are appropriate, and their typical costs. The plan includes a “vision” for potential bicycling facilities in 2035. This includes the Riverwalk trail, the connection from Moulton Park across the Little Andy

to the Barker Mill Trail as well as on-road bicycle lanes on the major streets in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area including Main Street, South Main Street, Broad Street, Court Street, Minot Ave, Union Street, Turner Street, and Mill Street. It also envisions bike lanes on other streets in the area including Hampshire Street, Spring Street, Elm Street and Mechanics Row. A number of these facilities already exist.

### **Clean Water Act Master Plan – Fifteen Year Update (2015)**

In 1998, the City of Lewiston, the Auburn Sewer District, and the Lewiston Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority developed a Clean Water Act Master Plan to manage the combined sewer overflows (CSOs). In 2000, an agreement was negotiated with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection based on the Master Plan. The Master Plan has been updated at five-year intervals since 2000. The current update is the fifteen year update and documents the progress in reducing CSOs and lays out a continued plan to address this issue.

The Master Plan Update lays out the following planned improvements to the Auburn Sewer District's collection system many of which involve the Neighborhood Revitalization Area. These improvements will be funded through the revenue generated by the sewer rate increase adopted in the fall of 2014. The estimated five-year cost for this program is approximately \$2.5 million.

- The closing of CSO #005 Miller Street in 2015 thereby leaving only one remaining CSO
- The removal of the ten remaining public catch basins that are still connected to the sanitary sewer
- The institution of a program to identify and correct sources of inflow and infiltration into the sanitary sewer system. Remediation work will include relining of cracked sewer mains, repair of leaky manholes, and repairs of any remaining sewer defects

If these improvements do not adequately curb wet-weather flows, the district will consider using a potential CSO storage facility along Riverside Street.

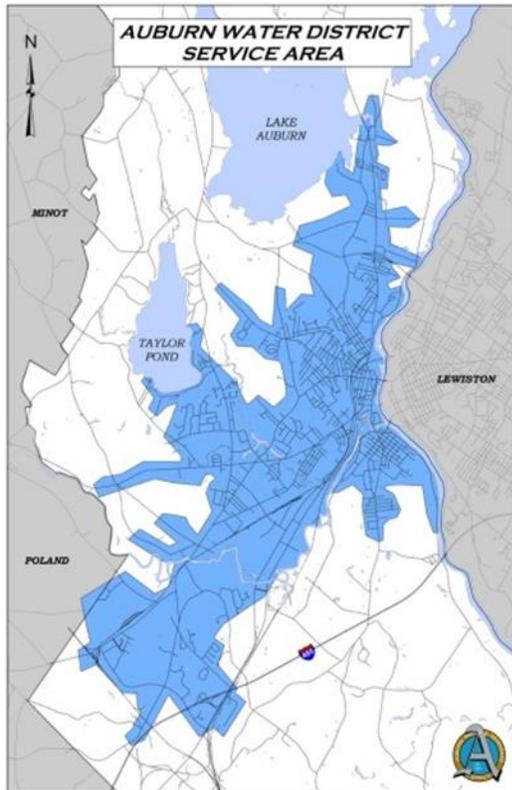
## IV. Current Conditions in the Neighborhood

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This section provides an overview of the existing conditions in the neighborhood with respect to the infrastructure, housing stock, and historic resources.

### Water System

The Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area is fully served by the public water system. The water system is operated by the Auburn Water District.



The Auburn Water District is a quasi-municipal water utility providing public drinking water and fire protection services to the citizens of the City of Auburn. Water comes from Lake Auburn, is treated, and then pumped through a distribution system consisting of approximately 135 miles of water main and 556 fire hydrants. The system also consists of 3 storage reservoirs and a standpipe which provide for a combined storage volume of 7.4 million gallons. The storage capacity allows the system to meet peak system demands while also providing a reserve for fire demands or emergencies.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Area is completely served by a network of water mains of various sizes. Many of the mains in the area are quite old. The Water District has a long-range program of replacing and

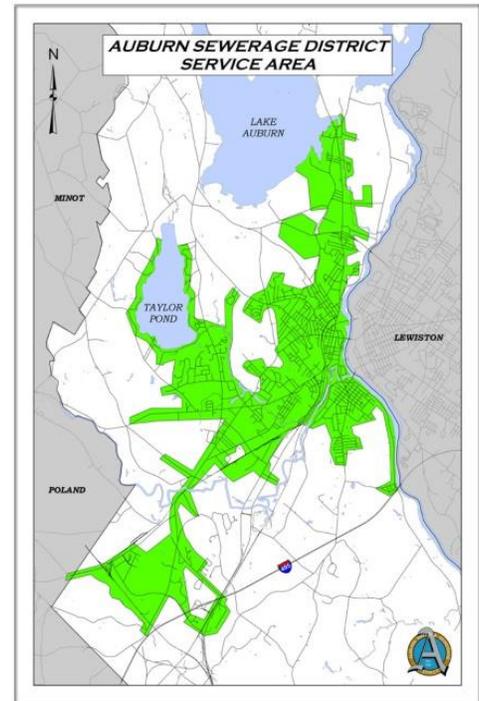
upgrading the water distribution system in this part of the City to provide reliable supply and improve fire protection.

### Sewer System

The Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area is fully served by the City's public sewer system. The sewer system is operated by the Auburn Sewer District. The Auburn Sewerage District is a quasi-municipal utility providing sewer collection services to over 5,300 residential, commercial, and industrial customers located within the City of Auburn. The District operates the sewage collection system in Auburn and conveys the wastes under the Androscoggin River to the Lewiston-Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority (LAWPCA) located on the banks of the

Androscoggin River in Lewiston for treatment.

The Sewer District operates and maintains 23 wastewater pump stations, over 2,000 manholes, and 135 miles of sanitary sewers. Within the Neighborhood Revitalization Area, local sewer collection mains convey the wastewater to several large diameter gravity interceptors that ultimately connect to the siphon pipes that carry the sewage under the river. Many of the sewers in the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area are very old and in need of replacement and upgrading. The Sewer District installs new sewers to improve the system and avoid problems with the old mains whenever the City or Water District is doing work on any of the streets in the area.



### Stormwater System

Much of the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area was previously served by a combined sewer system in which both sewage and stormwater were conveyed in the same pipe. As a result, untreated sewage was discharged to the Androscoggin River through combined sewer overflows (CSOs) during storm periods. The City in conjunction with the Sewer District has undertaken a major program to separate the sewer systems and eliminate the CSOs. Work on this program is almost complete. The City has spent almost \$18 million on the CSO mitigation program through 2014. There are still ten public catch basins connected to the system and additional work needs to be done to reduce inflow and infiltration (I&I) into the sewer system. The District anticipates spending approximately \$2.3 million over the next five years to reduce I&I.

### Pedestrian Facilities

The Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area has an extensive pedestrian network. Almost all of the streets within the area have sidewalks on both sides of the streets with designated crosswalks along the major routes. In addition, the Riverwalk, a paved pedestrian and bicycle trail runs along the Androscoggin River from behind the Hilton Garden Inn near Great Falls in Downtown to Bonney Park. The path crosses underneath Court Street and continues behind Festival Plaza. Canoe rentals are available here for group reservations in the summer to

explore the river on the water. The Riverwalk meanders along the Androscoggin River and provides beautiful views of the Twin Cities, gardens, outdoor art, and benches. The trail continues to a T intersection in Bonney Park. In one direction, the path continues across Main Street into Moulton Park while in the other, the path continues across the former railroad trestle into Lewiston’s Railroad Park, the site of numerous festivals and events. The condition of the sidewalks throughout the revitalization area varies and the City has been investing in upgrading and replacing the existing sidewalks.

## Bicycle Facilities

Other than the Riverwalk discussed above, there are currently limited dedicated bicycle facilities in the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area. The City has recently created marked bicycle lanes on Main Street from Academy Street southerly into New Auburn and continuing on one side of Mill Street and Broad Street to the Bernard Lown Peace Bridge. There are also dedicated bicycle lanes on Elm Street between Main Street and High Street. Bicycle racks and locking posts are available at many of the public buildings in the revitalization area.

## Recreation Facilities and Open Space

The Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization area contains municipal recreation facilities that serve both city/region-wide needs as well as community/neighborhood needs. The Riverwalk (see Pedestrian Facilities) provides a major riverfront recreational facility along more than a mile of riverfront. Edward Little High School provides both indoor and outdoor facilities that are available for community use. In addition to these two major facilities, the area includes the



following recreational and open space areas:

- Bonney Park located between Main Street and the river is the southern terminus of the Riverwalk, the park also has a playscape.
- Chestnut Street Park includes play structures, a multi-use field, and a winter ice skating facility.
- Festival Park is a downtown plaza for outdoor performances and a gathering place for residents with seating areas.
- Little Andy Park is a small riverfront park in New Auburn with a playground and carry-in canoe launch.
- Moulton Park behind the former high school provides open space and play fields.
- Raymond Park is a small triangular park in New Auburn with a large plat structure and benches.

- Union Street Gully includes outdoor basketball and horseshoe pits.

In addition to these municipal facilities, both the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club facilities are located in the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area.

### **Transit Service**

Citylink is Auburn and Lewiston's public transportation provider. Citylink operates five bus routes in Auburn. Service is provided five days a week from 6:00 AM to 7:45 PM generally with one hour headways. More limited service is provided on Saturdays on some of the routes. Four of the five Auburn routes provide service to the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street area and interconnect at the Auburn Bus Hub located in Great Falls Plaza in Downtown. The routes are designed to target low-income areas, senior housing, compact residential neighborhoods, commercial and retail locations, and some of the industrial parks. Residents of most of the revitalization area have access to one or more of the bus routes enabling them to travel to both downtown Auburn and Lewiston, the region's hospitals in Lewiston, and to most shopping and service areas within the Auburn community.

### **Housing Stock**

There are approximately 3,300 housing units in the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area. The majority of the units (76.7%) are located in multifamily buildings (see Table 1). Almost three-quarters of the units are renter-occupied while the remainder is owner-occupied. The housing stock in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area is very old; three-quarters was built prior to WW II. As a result, many of the units are not properly weatherized, have old electrical and plumbing systems, and have difficult access for the elderly or disabled. Many units still have lead paint. Rent levels are relatively low as well. The combination of low rent levels and high maintenance costs for old buildings leads to issues of housing deterioration and poor conditions.

**Table 1: Auburn Target Area Existing Housing Stock**

Total housing units	3,306	100%
Single-family units (including mobile homes)	769	23.3%
Multi-family units	2,537	76.7%
Built 2000 or later	47	1.4%
Built 1970-2000	319	9.6%
Built 1940-1970	466	14.1%
Built 1939 or earlier	2,474	74.8%
Total occupied	2,924	88.4%
Owner occupied	733	25.1
Renter occupied	2,191	74.9

Source: US Census, 2012 5-year ACS

According to the Auburn Code Enforcement Office there are approximately 341 vacant dwellings units in abandoned buildings (see Table 2). Most of these units (309) are deemed to be suitable for rehabilitation.

**Table 2: Vacant and Suitable for Rehab**

Abandoned vacant units	341
Suitable for rehabilitation	309
Not suitable for rehabilitation	32

Source: City of Auburn Code Enforcement

## Historic Districts

There are two National Register historic districts within the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area. The Main Street Historic District includes portions of Main Street, Vine Street and Elm Street. The district includes 16 historic residential properties with a mix of nineteenth and early twentieth century residential building styles. The second historic district is the Auburn Commercial Historic District which encompasses the Main Street/Court Street area. The district includes a total of 13 buildings, 9 of which are historic.

## V. Opportunities and Challenges for Neighborhood Improvement

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### Economic

The City faces a number of issues as it works to improve the economic conditions within the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area:

- Downtown's economic role has evolved over the last twenty-five years and is now seeing growth in higher-paying service and professional employment. Creating an environment in the Downtown that supports continued job growth and private reinvestment will be important.
- The commercial area of New Auburn has seen its economic role as a neighborhood commercial center decrease over the past decade or two. New Auburn has the opportunity to develop a new, more diverse economic role but this will require significant investment, both public and private, to enable this area to evolve into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century village center. This will mean capitalizing on the river frontages, revising the street pattern to address traffic issues, creating opportunities for redevelopment, and providing adequate parking to support more intensive use of this area.
- The older areas around both Downtown and the New Auburn village center have something of a mixed-use character with both residential and non-residential activities. These areas offer the potential for small, local businesses as well as home occupations to grow and prosper with proper support while expanding the range of services available to residents.
- Many of the residents of the Neighborhood Revitalization Area lack the skills and experience to obtain meaningful employment. Improving the employability and job skills of neighborhood residents, especially younger people, will be important to the revitalization of the area.

### Housing

The City faces a number of issues with respect to housing within the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area. A major issue is maintaining and improving the condition of the existing housing stock including:

- Bringing older housing up to contemporary standards. Many of the housing units in the area are located in older buildings that are not energy efficient, have older heating and plumbing systems, and have not been well maintained
- Ensuring that multifamily housing is appropriately maintained. A significant share of the rental housing in the area is owned by absentee landlords who have struggled to maintain their properties

- Supporting homeowners in efforts to maintain their homes. Many of the owners of owner-occupied properties are elderly and/or have limited incomes making it difficult for them to invest in maintaining and improving their homes

At the same time, the Neighborhood Revitalization Areas is a potentially very desirable area in which to live for a wide range of households. It is close to services, has areas adjacent to the rivers, and has older buildings with character in reasonably intact urban neighborhoods. This creates the potential for reinvestment in new market rate and subsidized housing in the area if the “market” sees improvements in the area.

## **Infrastructure**

The City faces the need for two broad categories of infrastructure investments in the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area. On one hand, the basic infrastructure serving the area including the water and sewer systems, stormwater system, streets and sidewalks, and lighting are old (very old in some cases) and in need of replacement or improvement. There is still a need to complete the “overboard discharge” abatement program to remove stormwater from the sanitary sewer system and to reduce inflow and infiltration into sewers. On the other hand, the City faces the need to invest in “new infrastructure” that will make the Neighborhood Revitalization Area a more desirable place to live, work, and recreate and that will attract private investment in the area. This includes investments in the street system to improve traffic flow especially in New Auburn and to create “complete streets” that are appropriate for all users including motor vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, and transit. It may include creative approaches for improving the supply of parking to serve both existing uses as well as redevelopment within the neighborhood. It also includes providing improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, improved parks and green spaces including river access, and upgrading lighting so people feel safe in the neighborhood.

## VI. Possible Improvement Elements

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The Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area faces a number of challenges but there are also a number of opportunities for improvement. The primary objective of the neighborhood revitalization strategy is to develop a coordinated, comprehensive plan that organizes and focuses the City's ongoing and future activities in the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area. This section sets out the potential elements for improving the economic conditions within this part of the City, improving and expanding the housing stock, and improving the infrastructure in the neighborhood. This includes activities that are currently underway as well as activities that are identified in various City and regional plans that could be undertaken in the next five years or so assuming that funding is available. The following possible elements of a revitalization strategy for the neighborhoods are drawn primarily from existing City plans and programs. In the following section, program elements drawn from this list of possible activities are organized into a comprehensive strategy to allow the City to "focus" its activities on this section of the City.

### Possible Economic Elements

The following activities to improve the economy of the Neighborhood Revitalization Area could be included in the revitalization strategy:

- The City will use CDBG/HOME funds to expand programming for at-risk teenagers that helps them learn work skills, graduate from high school.
- The City will create youth apprenticeship opportunities with local businesses through the Community Development program.
- The City should support retraining programs for people who are displaced through the loss of manufacturing jobs.
- The City will use CDBG/HOME funds to assist small businesses to start up, succeed, and grow through loans and grants to upgrade and adapt buildings in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area and consider increasing the size of these loans and grants.
- The City will work with property owners and developers to provide creative parking solutions to meet the needs of downtown neighborhoods and businesses.
- The City will develop the area behind the Main Street buildings as hard surface open space with formal plantings and temporary docks that can be used by a small cruise boat and by a canoe and kayak rental operation.
- The City will adopt new land use regulations for the Downtown and New Auburn area using a "Form-Based Code" to encourage investment in these parts of the City.

- The City will initiate a “Model Street-Model Block” program in the Downtown and New Auburn neighborhoods to focus City efforts on a block-by-block revitalization approach using a “complete streets” template with a new form based code approach to land use regulation.
- The City will explore the creation of a whitewater feature in conjunction with the relicensing of the Lower Barker Hydroelectric Project.
- The City will upgrade the lighting in Festival Plaza to improve efficiency and allow better use of this space.
- The City should strongly support the improvement of Edward Little High School to provide a quality education for Auburn’s students.

### **Possible Housing Elements**

The following housing activities could be included in the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy to focus on two broad areas: 1) improving the quality of the existing housing stock in the neighborhood and 2) supporting the construction of new housing in the area:

#### **Improvements to the Existing Housing Stock**

- The City will establish a program to make residents, property owners and business owners in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area aware of the various assistance programs available through the City and other agencies or programs.
- The City will continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to provide grants, deferred loans, and low-interest loans for the rehabilitation of owner and rental housing in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area that is occupied by low and moderate income households.
- The City will continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to provide matching funds to implement the 3-year federal grant to reduce childhood lead poisoning including issues related to lead in plumbing.
- The City will continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to provide financial assistance to encourage exterior improvements to buildings in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area as well as to make health and safety improvements.
- The City will continue to provide financial help for down payments and financial counseling for low-moderate income renter households seeking to purchase a first home in Auburn through the Community Development program.
- The City will work to find alternative mortgage financing for New Americans and other residents to be able to move up to homeownership and work with the Auburn Housing Authority to identify potential home buyers.
- The City will continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to support code enforcement activities that result in improvements to the housing stock.
- The City will conduct regular ongoing code enforcement inspections for

multifamily housing.

- The City will update its codes to facilitate the renovation of older properties including:
  - Adopting a renovation code that continues to allow exceptions to new construction standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.
  - Adopting a renovation code as part of the building code.
  - Reviewing and revising the City’s fire code to provide flexibility in rehabilitating older buildings.
  - Considering adopting a property maintenance code for multifamily housing.
- The City will provide funding for people to buy and upgrade small multifamily properties to promote owner-occupied multifamily housing.
- The City is in the process of revising its zoning regulations to allow existing single-family homes in older single-family neighborhoods to be improved and expanded and to allow infill development that is in character with the neighborhood in older single-family neighborhoods as well as allowing existing buildings to be improved and expanded.
- The City should consider disposing of tax-acquired property at little or no cost to buyers who will agree to invest in the rehabilitation of the property.
- The City should explore the creation of a “volunteer service program” that will provide assistance to seniors and other qualified households to maintain their homes.
- The City should consider a life safety improvement grant and loan program to assist property owners when life safety requirements create a hurdle for changing the use of a property or making an investment that will create additional value and thus property taxes over time.

### **Support for Housing Construction**

- The City will use CDBG and HOME funding to provide financial assistance to developers of high-quality affordable mixed income housing in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area.
- The City will revise its zoning standards to encourage the inclusion of affordable units within new housing projects through density bonuses and reduced infrastructure requirements.
- The City will allow the reconfiguration of space within existing buildings for residential purposes without consideration of density or lot size limitations as long as there is adequate parking and green space and the reuse protects neighboring properties.
- The City will revise the zoning in the New Auburn Village area to increase the allowed residential density to up to 18-21 units per acre.

## Possible Infrastructure Elements

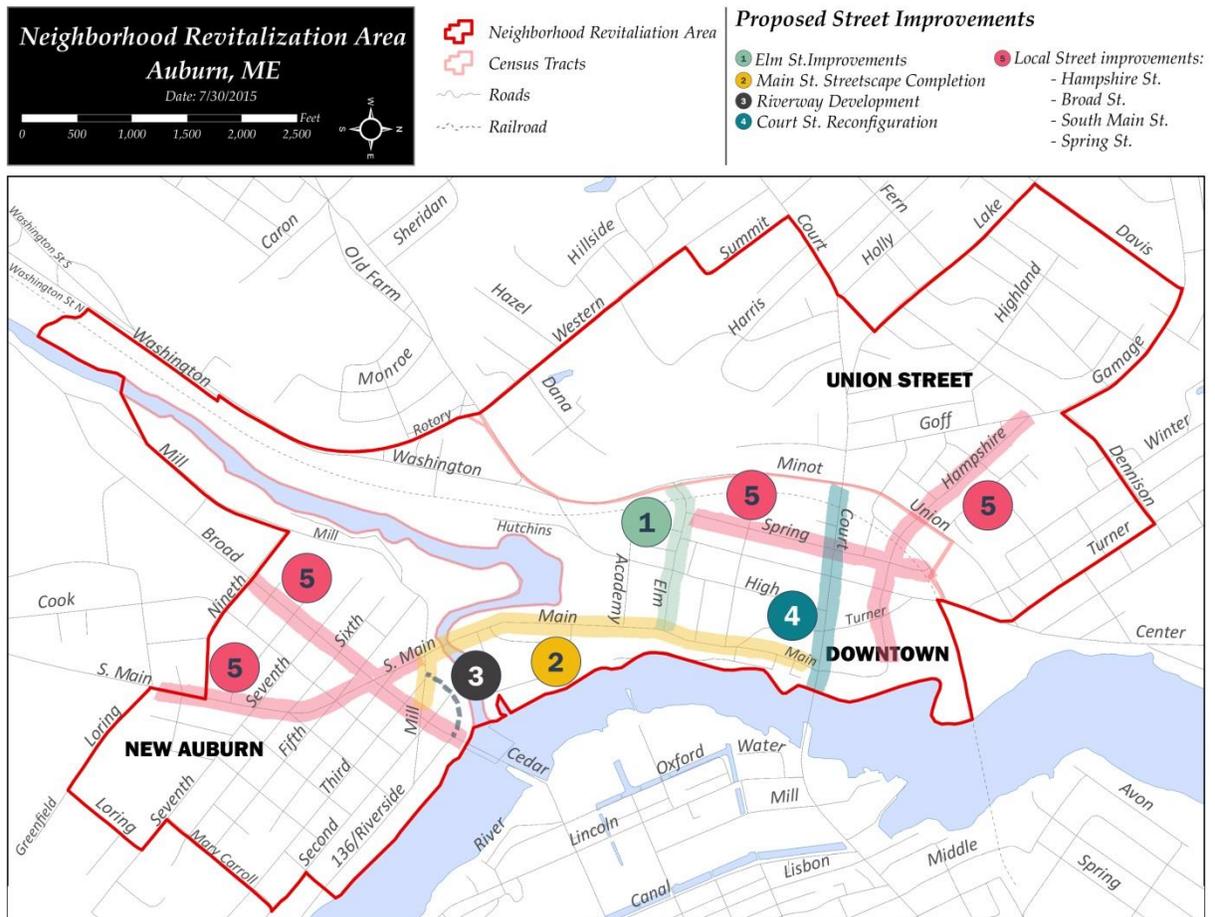
The following infrastructure improvement activities could be included in the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy to address two broad needs: 1) updating the existing infrastructure in the area as appropriate and, 2) creating new or expanded infrastructure to improve the area:

### Streets and Traffic Improvements (see Figure 2)

- The City is working with the Maine DOT and ATRC to establish Elm Street as the primary route from Main Street and the downtown neighborhoods to Minot Avenue. This project will involve changes at the intersections of Elm Street with both Main Street and Minot Avenue, the reconfiguration of Elm Street as a “complete street” with sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides, and the creation of a new crosswalk across Minot Avenue at the Elm Street intersection as well as related changes on surrounding streets to encourage traffic to use Elm Street.
- The City installed “complete street” style improvements on a portion of Main Street between Downtown and New Auburn. The City plans to extend the Main Street streetscape improvements along all of Main Street and Mill Street into New Auburn.
- A major objective of the City has been to encourage the rebirth of the commercial area of New Auburn. A key part of the City’s strategy is for improved traffic flow in this part of New Auburn. The City developed a concept for improvements as part of the New Auburn Village Center Plan and is currently moving forward with an engineering study for the proposed “Riverway” or new local street linking Broad Street to Mill Street near South Main Street roughly following the curve of the river to both serve as a street and to reduce the extent of the floodplain. Following completion of the engineering study, the City will seek to fund the project and move forward with construction.
- In conjunction with the development of the Riverway, the City proposes to close portions of Riverside Drive, Second Street, and Third Street to enhance redevelopment opportunities and create shared parking areas to support new activities in this part of New Auburn.
- The New Auburn Village Center Plan also proposes relocating the Lown Peace Bridge downstream to the intersection of Riverside Drive and Mill Street to remove this traffic from the middle of the commercial area. This is a long-term objective.
- The Comprehensive Plan recommends improving or reconstructing local residential streets to incorporate design elements that slow traffic and discourage their use by through traffic. This approach will be used in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area when street work is undertaken.

- The City is working to obtain approval from the MeDOT to revamp Court Street to create a “complete street” with 3 travel lanes and on-street parking. The City could move forward with this project in the near future if the MeDOT agrees with the concept.
- The City is seeking funding through ATRC for other street improvement projects within the Neighborhood Revitalization Area including:
  - Reconstructing Hampshire Street
  - Resurfacing Broad Street
  - Reconstructing South Main Street from Broad Street to Bolster Street
  - Resurfacing Spring Street from Troy Street to Elm Street
- As part of a long-range, citywide project, the City is planning to convert existing street lights to LED fixtures to both save energy and provide improved lighting.

Figure 2



### Water, Sewers and Stormwater Improvements (see Figure 3)

- The Auburn Water and Sewer District plans to replace or line a number of aging water mains in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area including:

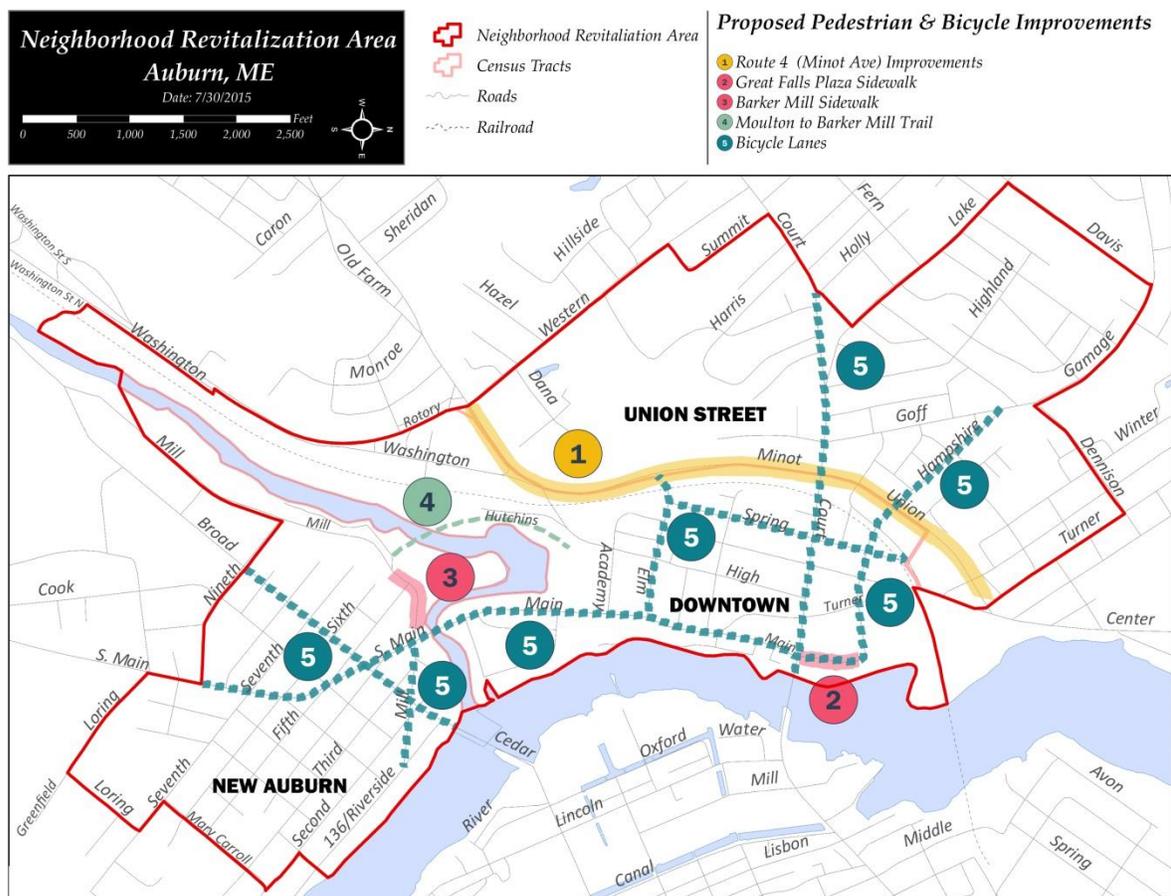
- South Main Street from Outer Cook Street to Seventh Street
- The entire length of Ninth Street
- Sixth Street from Mill Street to Broad Street
- Fifth Street from Cook Street to the dead end
- Fourth Street from South Main Street to Mary Carroll
- Third Street from Mill Street to Dunn Street
- Third Street from Roak Street to Mary Carroll
- Second Street from Mill Street to Dunn Street
- Seventh Street from South Main Street to Mary Carroll
- Loring Avenue from South Main Street to Mary Carroll
- Lake Street from Haskell Street to Davis Street
- The entire length of Beacon Street
- Highland Ave. from Court Street to Western Prom
- Highland Ave. from Western Prom to Shepley Street
- The entire length of James Street
- Charles Street from James Street to Goff Street
- The entire length of Grant Street
- Willow Street from Goff Street to Webster Street
- Pine Street from Willow Street to Pearl Street
- Pearl Street from School Street to Hampshire Street
- School Street from Union Street to above Pearl Street
- The entire length of Bearce Street
- The entire length of Temple Street
- The entire length of Carroll Street
- Dennison Street from Gamage Street to Winter Street
- Spring Street from Hampshire Street to Court Street
- School Street from Spring Street towards Troy Street
- The Auburn Water and Sewer District replaces old sewers whenever the City or State will be doing a construction project on a street with an old sewer (see street projects below).
- The Auburn Sewer and Water District is in the final phase of its program to eliminate the Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and plans to remove one of the two remaining CSOs and the ten remaining public catch basins connected to the sanitary sewer system. The District also plans to do additional work to reduce inflow and infiltration (I&I) into the sewer system. The District anticipates spending approximately \$2.3 million over the next five years to reduce I&I.
- The Comprehensive Plan recommends urging the Auburn Sewer District to reallocate funds to support the upgrading of older central sewer lines as the CSO abatement program winds down.



proposes narrowing the travel lanes on South Main Street and Broad Street to allow the installation of sidewalks and esplanades.

- The regional pedestrian and bicycle plan, Bridging the Gaps, envisions an interconnected system of bicycle facilities throughout the region. Within the Neighborhood Revitalization Area these facilities include the Riverwalk trail, a new connection from Moulton Park across the Little Andy to the Barker Mill Trail as well as on-road lanes on the major streets in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area including Main Street, South Main Street, Broad Street, Court Street, Minot Ave, Union Street, and Mill Street. The Plan also envisions bike lanes on other streets in the area including Hampshire Street, Spring Street, Elm Street, and Mechanics Row. A number of these facilities already exist but the others will need to be developed over time.
- The City should install bicycle facilities such as bike racks and storage in conjunction with public buildings and facilities used by the public and in the Downtown and New Auburn commercial areas.

Figure 4



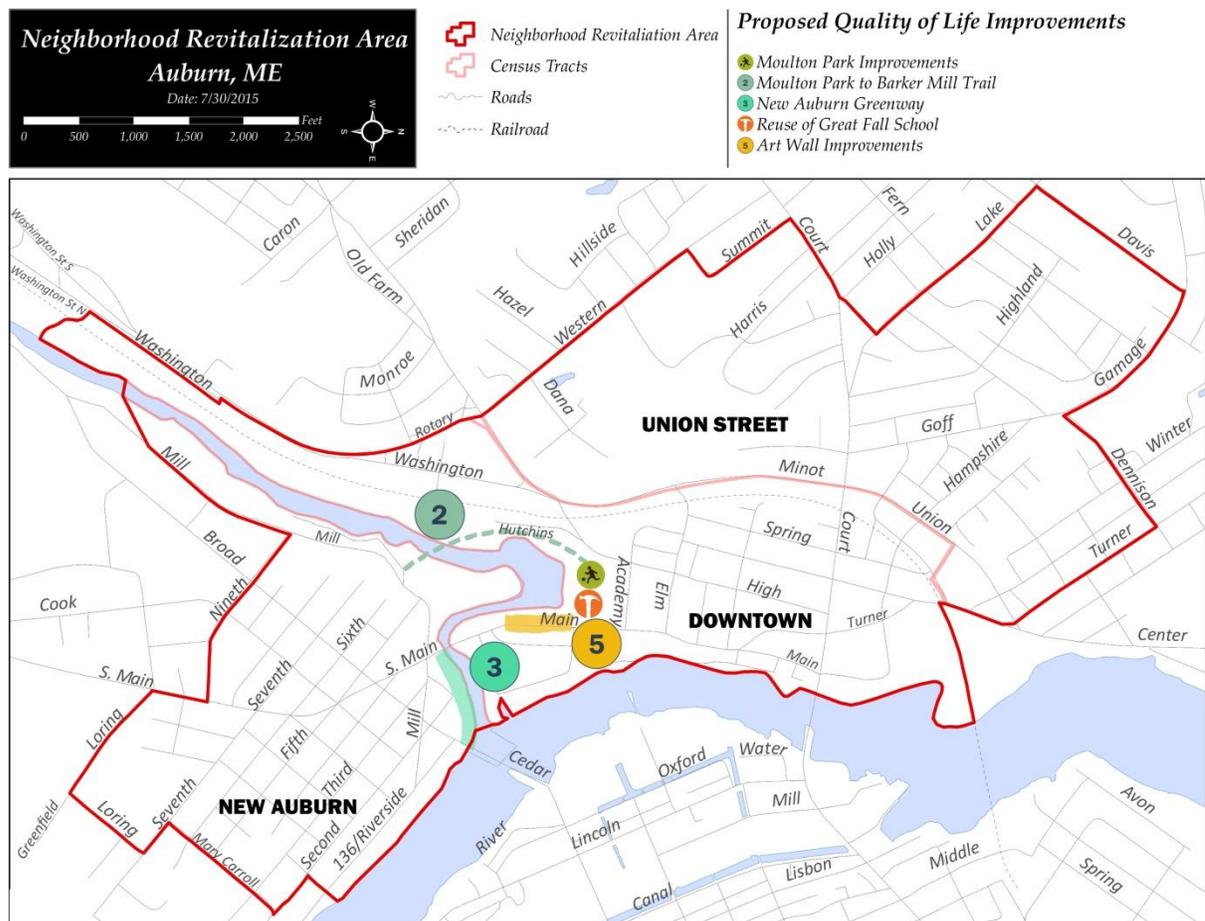
### Quality of Life Improvements (see Figure 5)

- The City intends to continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to match City capital improvement funds for lighting, sidewalk, and landscaping improvements in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area.
- The Consolidated Plan identifies the following projects to enhance the physical infrastructure of key in-town parks including:
  - Improving the lighting at Union Street
  - Extending the Riverwalk into New Auburn (see pedestrian improvements above)
  - Improving the walkways to and from the intown parks
- Moulton Park is an underutilized facility. The City plans to renovate Moulton Park but the details of this project are still to be determined.
- A missing link in the pedestrian network is the connection from the terminus of the Riverwalk in Moulton Park extending across the Little Andy to the Barker Mill Trail and New Auburn on the other side of the river.
- Making better use of the river frontages in New Auburn is a theme in the Comprehensive Plan, the New Auburn Master Plan and the New Auburn Village Center Plan. The Village Center Plan developed the general concept into a proposal to create an expanded park and “Riverwalk” (New Auburn Greenway) between the new Riverway (see street improvements) and the river. The City is currently in the process of doing the design for this expanded facility that will also improve the flood protection in the commercial area. This facility will provide a bike/ped connection from the South Main Street Bridge to the Lown Peace Bridge as well as providing additional water access. The City will move forward with the development of this facility as funding allows.
- The Comprehensive Plan proposes developing a greenbelt bicycle/pedestrian connection between Pettengill Park and West Pitch Park.
- The City will explore establishing community gardens in the Downtown, Union Street and New Auburn target areas as part of the Community Development program.
- The City will work with property owners and developers to provide creative parking solutions to meet the needs of downtown neighborhoods and businesses.
- The City plans to explore converting the Great Falls School into a community cultural center that could expand into a regional center for visual, performing and cultural arts. In conjunction with the reuse of the school, the City will explore acquiring properties on the opposite side of Academy Street that would allow additional parking to be developed in conjunction with a “forecourt” linking the building to the parking. This forecourt could be become a gathering space as well as a sculpture garden.
- Citylink will explore improvements to its transit service based on the 2015 update

of the transit plan when that is completed.

- The City will continue to provide funding to be used to acquire and demolish abandoned buildings that are not suitable for rehabilitation or that are located in in the designated transition districts.
- The City plans to undertake a program to improve Greenway signage.
- The City intends to make lighting improvements adjacent to Moulton Field to improve public safety.
- The City anticipates doing renovations to the Main Street Art Wall along the portion of Main Street that links the Downtown and New Auburn.
- The City should support efforts to convert the former St. Louis Church in New Auburn into a community arts and cultural center.

Figure 5



## VII. Coordinated Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy

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The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy takes many of the possible economic, housing, and infrastructure elements set out in the previous section and organizes them into a coordinated strategy for improving the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Neighborhood Revitalization Area. The status of the various activities varies. Some of the activities are underway or are part of ongoing programs. Some activities are funded through the operating budget or CIP while the funding for others is uncertain and needs to be determined. The City is fully committed to implementing some of the activities in the strategy while others will need further discussion before a decision is made to implement them. In some cases, implementation of activities is dependent on the availability of outside funding and/or the inclusion of funding in future CIPs. By including the following activities in the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, the City acknowledges and accepts that many of these activities are drawn from plans and studies that have been previously approved by City Councils but does so with the understanding that the decision to move forward with the implementation of each individual activity will be subject to additional City Council discussion including opportunities for public involvement and Council approval.

The strategy is organized into three categories:

- Short-Term/High Priority Activities – These are activities that either are ongoing or should be undertaken in the next two years if funding is available
- Mid-Term/Medium Priority Activities – These are activities that should be undertaken within the next five years if funding is available
- Longer-Term/Lower Priority Activities – These are activities that may take longer than five years to complete or that are a low priority for action

Within each of the three categories, the strategy looks at the economic improvement projects, housing activities, and infrastructure improvements that should occur within that timeframe if funding is available.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy is set out in the following table.

## Short-Term/High Priority Activities

### Economic Improvement Activities

- Use CDBG/HOME funds to expand programming for at-risk teenagers that helps them learn work skills, graduate from high school.
- Create youth apprenticeship opportunities with local businesses through the Community Development program.
- Use CDBG/HOME funds to assist small businesses to start up, succeed, and grow through loans and grants to upgrade and adapt buildings in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area and consider increasing the size of these loans and grants.
- Adopt new land use regulations for the Downtown and New Auburn area using a “Form-Based Code” to encourage investment in these parts of the City.
- Initiate a “Model Street-Model Block” program in the Downtown and New Auburn neighborhoods to focus City efforts on a block-by-block revitalization approach using a “complete streets” template with a new form based code approach to land use regulation.
- Upgrade the lighting in Festival Plaza to improve efficiency and allow better use of this space.

### Housing Improvement Activities

- Establish a program to make residents, property owners and business owners in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area aware of the various assistance programs available through the City and other agencies or programs.
- Continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to provide grants, deferred loans, and low-interest loans for the rehabilitation of owner and rental housing in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area that is occupied by low and moderate income households.
- Continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to provide matching funds to implement the 3-year federal grant to reduce childhood lead poisoning including issues related to lead in plumbing.
- Continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to provide financial assistance to encourage exterior improvements to buildings in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area as well as to make health and safety improvements.
- Continue to provide financial help for down payments and financial counseling for low-moderate income renter households seeking to purchase a first home in Auburn through the Community Development program.

## Housing Improvement Activities continued...

- Work to find alternative mortgage financing for New Americans and other residents to be able to move up to homeownership and work with the Auburn Housing Authority to identify potential home buyers.
- Continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to support code enforcement activities that result in improvements to the housing stock.
- Use CDBG and HOME funding to provide financial assistance to developers of high-quality affordable mixed income housing in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area.
- Revise the zoning in the New Auburn Village area to increase the allowed residential density to up to 18-21 units per acre.
- Consider disposing of tax-acquired property at little or no cost to buyers who will agree to invest in the rehabilitation of the property.
- Consider creating a life safety improvement grant and loan program to assist property owners when life safety requirements create a hurdle for changing the use of a property or making an investment that will create additional value and thus property taxes over time.

## Infrastructure Improvements

- Establish Elm Street as the primary route from Main Street and the downtown neighborhoods to Minot Ave. This project will involve changes at the intersections of Elm Street with both Main Street and Minot Ave., the reconfiguration of Elm Street as a “complete street” with sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides, and the creation of a new crosswalk across Minot Ave. at the Elm Street intersection as well as related changes on surrounding streets to encourage traffic to use Elm Street.
- Complete the engineering study for the proposed “Riverway” or new local street linking Broad Street to Mill Street near South Main Street roughly following the curve of the river to both serve as a street and to reduce the extent of the floodplain.
- Continue to work with the MeDOT to obtain approval to revamp Court Street to create a “complete street” with 3 travel lanes and on-street parking.
- The Auburn Water and Sewer District will abandon 800 feet of the 6” water main in Dennison Street from Gamage Street to Winter Street and transfer services to the 24” main.
- The Auburn Sewer and Water District is will remove one of the two remaining CSOs and the ten remaining public catch basins connected to the sanitary sewer system.
- Complete sidewalk and streetscape improvements on Minot Avenue.

## Infrastructure Improvements continued...

- Establish Elm Street as the primary route from Main Street and the downtown neighborhoods to Minot Ave. This project will involve changes at the intersections of Elm Street with both Main Street and Minot Ave., the reconfiguration of Elm Street as a “complete street” with sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides, and the creation of a new crosswalk across Minot Ave. at the Elm Street intersection as well as related changes on surrounding streets to encourage traffic to use Elm Street.
- Complete the engineering study for the proposed “Riverway” or new local street linking Broad Street to Mill Street near South Main Street roughly following the curve of the river to both serve as a street and to reduce the extent of the floodplain.
- Continue to work with the MeDOT to obtain approval to revamp Court Street to create a “complete street” with 3 travel lanes and on-street parking.
- The Auburn Water and Sewer District will abandon 800 feet of the 6” water main in Dennison Street from Gamage Street to Winter Street and transfer services to the 24” main.
- The Auburn Sewer and Water District is will remove one of the two remaining CSOs and the ten remaining public catch basins connected to the sanitary sewer system.
- Complete sidewalk and streetscape improvements on Minot Avenue.
- Continue to use CDBG/HOME funds to match City capital improvement funds for lighting, sidewalk, and landscaping improvements in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area.
- Improve the lighting at Union Street in the vicinity of the park.
- Improve the walkways to and from the intown parks.
- Complete the design for the creation an expanded park and “Riverwalk” (New Auburn Greenway) between the new Riverway (see street improvements) and the river.
- Continue to provide funding to be used to acquire and demolish abandoned buildings that are not suitable for rehabilitation or that are located in in the designated transition districts.
- Undertake a program to improve Greenway signage.
- Make lighting improvements adjacent to Moulton Field to improve public safety.
- Explore establishing community gardens in the Downtown, Union Street and New Auburn target areas as part of the Community Development program.
- Explore converting the Great Falls School into a community cultural center that could expand into a regional center for visual, performing and cultural art.

## Mid-Term/Medium Priority Activities

### Economic Improvement Activities

- Work with property owners and developers to provide creative parking solutions to meet the needs of downtown neighborhoods and businesses.

### Housing Improvement Activities

- Conduct regular ongoing code enforcement inspections for multifamily housing.
- Update the City codes to facilitate the renovation of older properties including:
  - Adopting a renovation code that continues to allow exceptions to new construction standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings
  - Adopting a renovation code as part of the building code (H.2.1.b)
  - Reviewing and revising the City's fire code to provide flexibility in rehabilitating older buildings (H.2.1.b)
  - Considering adopting a property maintenance code for multifamily housing
- Revise the City's zoning standards to encourage the inclusion of affordable units within new housing projects through density bonuses and reduced infrastructure requirements.
- Allow the reconfiguration of space within existing buildings for residential purposes without consideration of density or lot size limitations as long as there is adequate parking and green space and the reuse protects neighboring properties.

### Infrastructure Improvements

- Extend the Main Street streetscape improvements along all of Main Street and Mill Street into New Auburn.
- Following completion of the engineering study for the New Auburn "Riverway", seek funding for the project and move forward with construction.
- In conjunction with the development of the Riverway, close portions of Riverside Drive, Second Street, and Third Street to enhance redevelopment opportunities and create shared parking areas to support new activities in this part of New Auburn.
- If the MeDOT agrees with the concept of revamping Court Street as a "complete street", move forward with the project.

## Infrastructure Improvements continued...

- Undertake street improvement projects within the Neighborhood Revitalization Area if funding through ATRC is available including:
  - Reconstructing Hampshire Street
  - Resurfacing Broad Street
  - Reconstructing South Main Street from Broad Street to Bolster Street
  - Resurfacing Spring Street from Troy Street to Elm Street
- As part of a long-range, citywide project, convert existing street lights in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area to LED fixtures to both save energy and provide improved lighting.
- The Auburn Sewer and Water District will undertake a five-year program to reduce inflow and infiltration (I&I) into the sewer system.
- Construct a sidewalk on the riverside of the street at Great Falls Plaza.
- Construct a sidewalk on Mill Street in front of the Barker Mill.
- Develop a new pedestrian/bicycle trail connection from Moulton Park across the Little Andy to the Barker Mill Trail.
- Install bicycle facilities such as bike racks and storage in conjunction with public buildings and facilities used by the public and the Downtown and New Auburn commercial areas.
- Seek funding for the development of the New Auburn Greenway and begin construction as funding allows.
- Work with property owners and developers to provide creative parking solutions to meet the needs of downtown neighborhoods and businesses.
- Citylink will explore improvements to its transit service based on the 2015 update of the transit plan when that is completed.
- Make renovations to the Main Street Art Wall along the portion of Main Street that links the Downtown and New Auburn.
- Support efforts to convert the former St. Louis Church in New Auburn into a community arts and cultural center.

## Longer-Term/Lower Priority Activities

### Economic Improvement Activities

- Develop the area behind the Main Street buildings as hard surface open space with formal plantings and temporary docks that could be used by a canoe and kayak rental operation.
- Explore the creation of a whitewater feature in conjunction with the relicensing of the Lower Barker Hydroelectric Project.
- Strongly support the improvement of Edward Little High School to provide a quality education for Auburn's students.

### Housing Improvement Activities

- Provide funding for people to buy and upgrade small multifamily properties to promote owner-occupied multifamily housing.
- Revise the City's zoning regulations to allow existing single-family homes in older single-family neighborhoods to be improved and expanded and to allow infill development that is in character with the neighborhood in older single-family neighborhoods as well as allowing existing buildings to be improved and expanded.
- Explore the creation of a "volunteer service program" that will provide assistance to seniors and other qualified households to maintain their homes.

### Infrastructure Improvements

- Study the feasibility of relocating the Lown Peace Bridge downstream to the intersection of Riverside Drive and Mill Street to remove this traffic from the middle of the commercial area.
- When the City improves or reconstructs local residential streets in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area, incorporate design elements that slow traffic and discourage their use by through traffic.
- The Auburn Water and Sewer District plans to replace or line a number of aging water mains in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area including:
  - South Main Street from Outer Cook Street to Seventh Street
  - The entire length of Ninth Street
  - Sixth Street from Mill Street to Broad Street
  - Fifth Street from Cook Street to the dead end
  - Fourth Street from South Main Street to Mary Carroll
  - Third Street from Mill Street to Dunn Street
  - Third Street from Roak Street to Mary Carroll
  - Second Street from Mill Street to Dunn Street

## Infrastructure Improvements continued...

- Seventh Street from South Main Street to Mary Carroll
- Loring Avenue from South Main Street to Mary Carroll
- Lake Street from Haskell Street to Davis Street
- The entire length of Beacon Street
- Highland Ave. from Court Street to Western Prom
- Highland Ave. from Western Prom to Shepley Street
- The entire length of James Street
- Charles Street from James Street to Goff Street
- The entire length of Grant Street
- Willow Street from Goff Street to Webster Street
- Pine Street from Willow Street to Pearl Street
- Pearl Street from School Street to Hampshire Street
- School Street from Union Street to above Pearl Street
- The entire length of Bearce Street
- The entire length of Temple Street
- The entire length of Carroll Street
- Spring Street from Hampshire Street to Court Street
- School Street from Spring Street towards Troy Street
- The Auburn Water and Sewer District will replace old sewers in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area whenever the City or State will be doing a construction project on a street with an old sewer.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access along the Route 4 Corridor including developing safe pedestrian crossings at major intersections, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities in street reconstruction projects and exploring a mid-block crossing to connect Pettengill Park and the surrounding neighborhood to Downtown.
- Establish and maintain safe pedestrian crossings in New Auburn with well-marked and signed crosswalks.
- As part of the project to reconstruct South Main Street, narrow the travel lanes on South Main Street and Broad Street to allow the installation of sidewalks and esplanades.
- As part of the regional interconnected system of bicycle facilities establish on-road bicycle lanes on the major streets in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area including Main Street, South Main Street, Broad Street, Court Street, Minot Ave, Union Street, and Mill Street as well as on other streets in the area including Hampshire Street, Spring Street, Elm Street, and Mechanics Row.
- Develop a plan for the renovation of Moulton Park.
- Develop a greenbelt bicycle/pedestrian connection between Pettengill Park and West Pitch Park.

## VIII. Five-Year Benchmarks

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The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy for the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street Area establishes a comprehensive program for improving the economic conditions, housing conditions and infrastructure within the neighborhoods. While some of the proposed activities will have an immediate impact on the area, others will take years to show a meaningful impact. The following benchmarks have been established to allow the City to assess the progress being made to improve the overall quality of the revitalization area. The benchmarks are based on five year targets – accomplishments by 2020 with annual targets for some activities. The City has looked at establishing a citywide Neighborhood Indicators Project to track changes in the City over time. The following benchmarks could be the start of such a program:

- Valuation Benchmark – The total assessed value of all taxable property (real estate and personal property) within the revitalization area increases by at least the same rate year-to-year as the total assessed valuation of all taxable property in the City.
- Economic Improvement Benchmark – The median household income in the three Census Tracts that make up the Neighborhood Revitalization Area is substantially less than the citywide median. An objective of this strategy is to improve the incomes of residents of the area. A way to measure whether this is occurring is by comparing the gap between the citywide median household income and the median income in the three Census Tracts that comprise the revitalization area. The benchmark is that the percent of the citywide median household income in each of the three Census Tracts will be increased by 10% over the next five years (or 2% per year). For example, the Downtown Census Tract 101 has a median household income that is only 37% of the citywide median. There for the five-year target is to increase the Downtown median income to 47% of the citywide median by 2020.
- Housing Improvement Benchmarks – The Neighborhood Revitalization Area has the potential for the creation of additional housing units both through new construction and through the conversion of buildings to provide modern living units. The benchmarks for this objective are that at least 80 new housing units will be created in the area by 2020 and that at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the new units will be “market-rate” units.

- Infrastructure Benchmark – Addressing the discharge of untreated sewage to the river as a result of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) has been a major focus of the City and the Auburn Sewer and Water District for the past 15 years. That effort is nearing completion. Completing this effort is an objective of this strategy. The benchmark for this objective is that the District will be able to reduce the wet-weather flows in the sanitary sewer system by 2020 to a level that does not require additional stormwater storage facilities to be constructed.

## IX. Public Involvement

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This Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy is based primarily on a range of City plans and studies that have been developed over the past five years in most cases. Each of the efforts had extensive public involvement processes which are briefly described below. These prior efforts were augmented by a public process to synthesize the prior work into this strategy.

### Past activities

- Consolidated Plan – The Consolidated Plan was developed through an extensive community involvement process. The process was overseen by the Auburn Citizen’s Advisory Committee that met ten times. The committee meetings were open to the public and time was provided at each meeting for public comments. The committee held two neighborhood meetings to ask about the most important needs facing the community. Bates College students conducted an in-person neighborhood survey in the target area. The results of the neighborhood meetings and survey were used by the Advisory Committee to establish the priorities set forth in the Consolidated Plan.
- Comprehensive Plan – The preparation of the update of the Comprehensive Plan was overseen by a citizens committee that met over a two-year period. The meetings were open to the public and many residents attended meetings and participated in the process. The committee held five community visioning sessions, a teen visioning session, and conducted an on-line visioning survey to help develop the Vision that guided the preparation of the goals and objectives of the Plan. The committee held a number of workshops to get public feedback on the draft goals and objectives as the Plan was being developed.
- New Auburn Master Plan – The Master Plan for New Auburn was prepared by the New Auburn Master Plan Committee that was comprised of 27 neighborhood residents, business people, and property owners. The committee held a public “kick-off” meeting to identify the issues facing New Auburn. During the development of the Master Plan the committee invited neighborhood residents to its regular meetings and held workshops to review the preliminary recommendations.
- New Auburn Village Center Study – This project was guided by a Steering Committee comprised of stakeholders representing a range of interests in the area, the community at large, and City staff. The committee met 8 times over a year and held three public workshops at various points in the planning process to get feedback from the new Auburn community on the proposals as they were developing.

## Current activities

An internal staff committee assisted by Planning Decisions reviewed the various planning efforts that relate to or potentially impact the Downtown/New Auburn/Union Street area. The relative sections of these documents were extracted and possible elements of a neighborhood revitalization strategy were organized by broad category – economic improvements, housing improvements, and infrastructure improvements. This working document was used as the basis for a community meeting held on August 5, 2015 at Auburn Hall. The meeting was attended by residents of the neighborhoods, business owners, housing developers, two City Councilors, and City staff. At the meeting the possible strategy elements were reviewed and discussed. A number of other activities were identified by the group (see meeting notes). Suggestions were made as to what should be addressed in the strategy such as including benchmarks for measure improvement in the area over time. As a result of the input at the community meeting, a number of activities were added to the strategy and the overall format and contents of the strategy were altered.

The City Council held a workshop on the draft of the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy on Monday, August 17, 2015. Mark Eyerman of Planning Decisions presented an overview of the revitalization strategy. Following the presentation the members of the City Council discussed the draft and asked a number of questions about it. An opportunity for public comment on the draft was provided. Following the public input, the Mayor and members of the Council made a number of suggestions/requests for revisions to the draft and asked the staff to consider other benchmarks dealing with valuation to enable progress to be monitored in the future. As a result of the feedback from the workshop, a number of revisions were made to the draft of the strategy.

## Appendix A

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### NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN COMMUNITY MEETING RECORD 8-5-2015

#### ATTENDANCE

##### Consultant:

Mark Eyerman

##### Public:

Larry Pelletier, 129 Second Street  
Natalie Ray, 111 Taywood Road  
Rick Whiting, 24 Beaver Road  
Ethan Boxer-Macomber, Portland  
John Henderson, 84 Summer Street  
Bob Grieshaber, 217 Main Street  
Peter & Yvette Cyr, 126 Sixth Street

##### City Councilors:

Belinda Gerry  
Tizz Crowley

##### City Staff:

Howard Kroll  
Denis D'Auteuil  
Eric Cousens  
Doug Green  
Alan Manoian  
Reine Mynahan

Mark Eyerman explained the purpose of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, and went through each item of the handout *Possible Elements of a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy for the Downtown, New Auburn and Union Street Area* including an infrastructure strategy, housing strategy, and economic strategy. Mark then opened the meeting for input.

##### Comments:

- Concern that many of the strategies were funded by the CDBG/HOME Programs
- Consider how private investment can be leveraged to more fully utilize existing buildings
- Balance the money and actions within each target area
- Revise the order of strategies with economic coming first, then housing, then infrastructure
- Prioritize improvements that raise property values/grow property values to create new resources
- Make property owners aware of programs and resources for fixing their properties
- Concern about code issues/unregistered vehicles
- Consider ways to track progress
- Senior programs
- Measure performance/outcomes/could be population growth
- Create grids in target areas/record changes to see where we've been and where we are going
- Education as a component of this plan
- Parking for bicycles
- Keep theater vital/focus on appropriate use of building
- Identify marketable properties that are available
- Strategic planning for vacant properties
- Give tax acquired properties away with condition of building a new home
- New high school is missing in the plan
- Workforce development/collaborate with school/community college/keeping up skill level of residents
- Create volunteer pool for grassroots revitalization/someone to mobilize/bring back pride
- Keep an open mind/St. Louis School as a cultural center
- Parking for bikes/conflict with bikes on the road/reach out to each other
- Some people have a value problem with their property/can't borrow money

Respectfully submitted

Reine Mynahan  
Community Development Director