TO: Auburn Planning Board
FROM: Jonathan P. LaBonte, Transportation Systems Analyst
RE: Transportation System Considerations for T-4.2 Zoning Changes (Areas A, B, C, and D)
DATE: April 27, 2022

In addition to changes to the future land use map to support expanded opportunities for development of a comparable density to other areas of the city, the updated Comprehensive Plan laid out goals, objectives, and strategies to align our transportation network. This memo serves to highlight some of those sections along with specific considerations within the four areas being reviewed under the staff report from Katherine Cook to the Planning Board, dated April 12, 2022.

Below are key excerpts from the Transportation Policies section of Chapter 1 from the 2021 Auburn Comprehensive Plan update for context. Following that text, I have made some notes for consideration as you think about proposed land use ordinance changes from the Future Land Use map. Land use, economic growth, and transportation infrastructure are directly connected so establishing plans and policies that keep them aligned provides for more orderly and cost-effective development, especially from a public infrastructure standpoint.

(Key *excerpts from Auburn Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 1, G. Transportation Policies)*

Goal G.1 TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Goal G.1: Auburn supports real-estate growth patterns that fully utilize the utility of all road networks in the city, making necessary additional connections between road networks to advance this goal. Transportation network expansions are supported by land use changes that result in economically sustainable outcomes.

An important mechanism for mitigating potential traffic congestion is integrating land-use objectives complimentary transportation needs and utilizing "transportation demand management," a strategy to reduce traffic during peak travel hours. Without linking transportation capacity with future growth plans, transportation networks in Auburn may have periods of significant congestion during the AM and PM peak hour periods. The efficiency of the road network can be improved by making strategic new connections, shifting vehicle trips from peak to off-peak periods, and by increasing car- and van-pooling and public transit, including intra and intercity commuter options (bus and rail).

Objective G.1.3:
Ensure that expansions in the transportation network are justified by economically viable and sustainable land use changes.

Strategy G.1.3.a:
Expansions of land use and associated transportation outcomes include a 25-year calculation of no net new cost to the overall City tax base, i.e. the community impact of

the properties and the additional burden on utilities will be net zero due to increased assessments and utility fees.

Goal G.2 ROAD NETWORK

Goal G.2: Auburn has a well-designed–and functioning road network that safely and equitably moves all manner of users (cars, buses, bikes, and pedestrians) into and through the community while expanding traditional residential neighborhood growth patterns in Danville and New Auburn. Expansions in neighborhood growth are in keeping with traditional transportation network patterns, such as interconnected streets that provide multiple travel patterns, avoiding a rigid hierarchy of streets.

Objective G.2.10:
Encourage appropriate local road development that minimizes the impact of such development on City services.

Strategy G.2.10.c:
Limit the need for new roads by encouraging infill development within the identified growth areas. (See Chapter 2. Future Land Use Plan). Where new roads are needed for in-fill associated with the Future Land Use Plan, ordinances should be established to ensure a grid system is planned and built for the efficient delivery of public services.

Objective G.2.11:
Provide a network of safe, interconnected pedestrian and bicycle amenities.

Strategy G.2.11.a:
Undertake a comprehensive review of pedestrian and bicycle access within Auburn addressing location, need, and maintenance. (*Also see M.3.4 in Public Facilities*)

i. Develop a cost-effective and appropriate pedestrian and bicycle plan to meet the needs of urban and rural residents.
ii. Ensure that the local plan is compatible with the long-term goal of the *2008 ATRC Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* to create a regional network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails.
iii. Share information on bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and desired improvements, with the Maine Department of Transportation, L/A Trails, and the Bicycle Coalition of Maine. This will assure that planning and funding are done on a comprehensive basis.

Strategy G.2.11.b:
Require, where appropriate within designated residential and mixed-use growth areas, that all local roads include at least a 6-foot-wide sidewalk.

i. Encourage, where right-of-way widths allow, the establishment of landscaped esplanades between travel lanes and the sidewalk and commit to the planting of street trees to ensure equitable access to nature as reconstruction projects occur.

(*End excerpts)*

Overall Comments

Goal G.1 TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

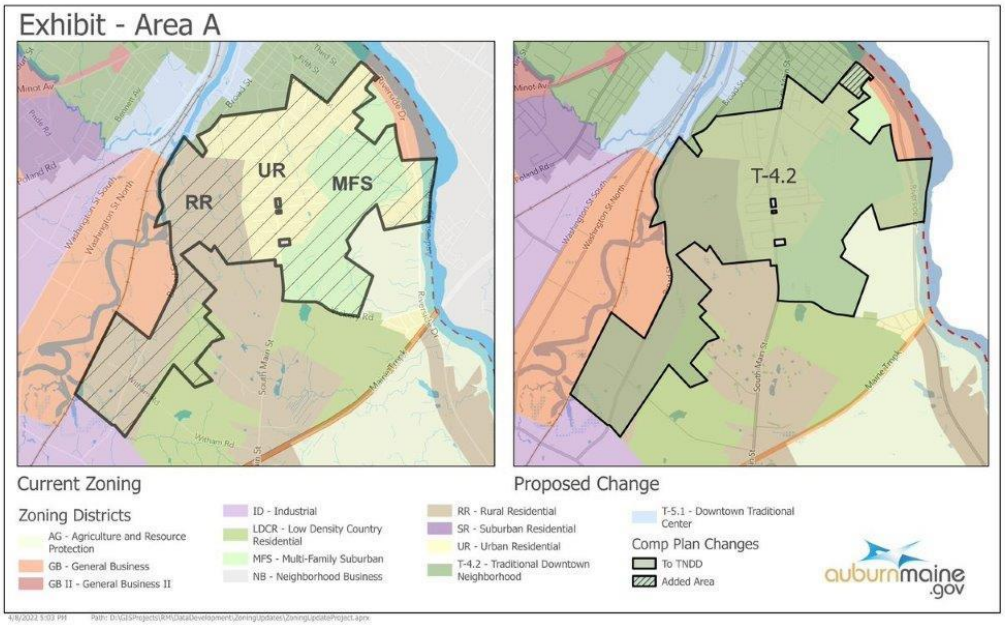
While this goal focuses primarily on nonresidential development, the scale and scope of residential development warrants a process to expand the transportation network, and overall impervious area, in a sustainable fashion. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) has been included in several Comprehensive Plan updates but has not yet been implemented through an ordinance. Revisiting walking and biking infrastructure proximate to projects, understanding true parking demand, and structuring new streets for planned connectivity would require further ordinance development to make this tool available to staff and the Planning Board during site plan reviews.

Goal G.2 ROAD NETWORK

Street grids provide for the most efficient delivery of municipal services (road maintenance in all seasons, public safety response, solid waste collection, etc). Current ordinances do not provide for a mechanism to establish connectivity between buildable lots in areas of the city where the zoning changes will allow for significant in-fill development of housing units. Furthermore, the ability to extend walking facilities beyond the current network is limited by available state and local funding and right of way, in most instances. Ordinances that integrate partnerships with developers into site plan review could allow for expanding connectivity within the street network and in walking and biking facilities, where city plans recommend their construction.

Area Specific Considerations

While not an exhaustive review of needs and opportunities relating to the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Goals and Objectives, the pages that follow highlight planning considerations that connect land use zoning changes to the transportation network envisioned.

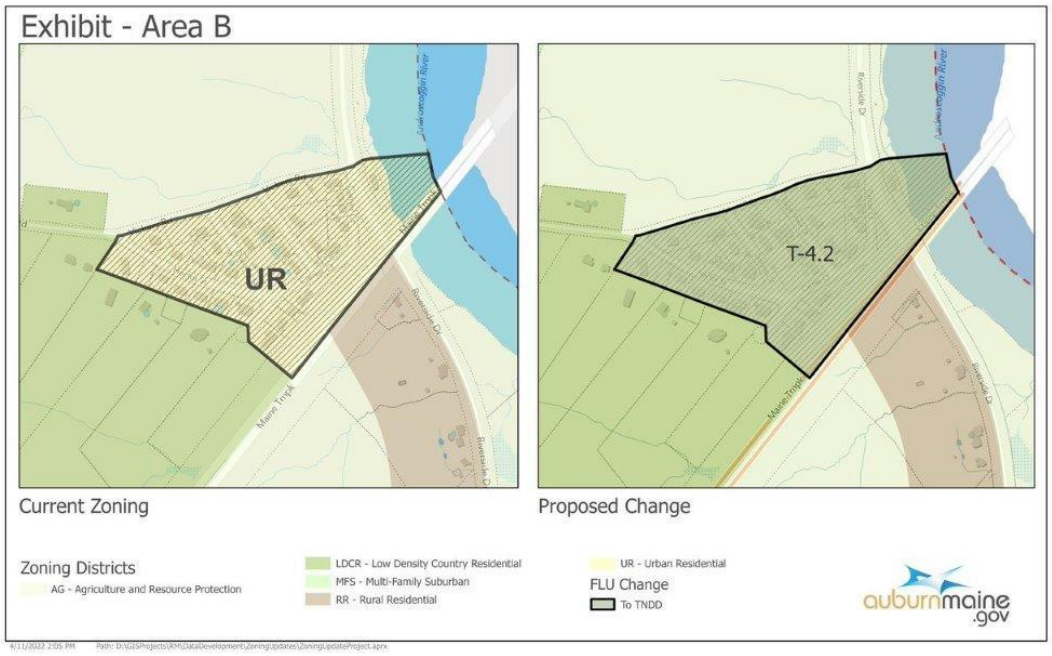


Additional residential growth at the densities allowed under T-4.2 will have an impact on the existing road network in New Auburn. While there has not been modeling of additional traffic counts in this change, travel for all users (vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians) would be impacted negatively if access management onto primary corridors is not addressed and street grid layout integrated into the site plan review process. Existing ordinances do not set an expectation for the development of public pedestrian facilities on city roads, or the provision of future right of way for their development.

The New Auburn area is dominated by streets running north to south with limited east to west connections. The Little Androscoggin and Androscoggin Rivers drove that history and the Comprehensive Plan makes specific recommendations to establish broader east-west connectivity. Ordinances that create an expectation of build out of a connected street grid, aligned with the Comprehensive Plan, should be considered. Developing a grid network will allow for priority streets to serve both local uses and regional mobility and keep through traffic out of neighborhoods.

Having reviewed, per City Charter, the most recent Five Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the availability of CIP funds to retrofit streets in the future for pedestrian connectivity, including acquisition of right of way to do so, will be cost prohibitive.

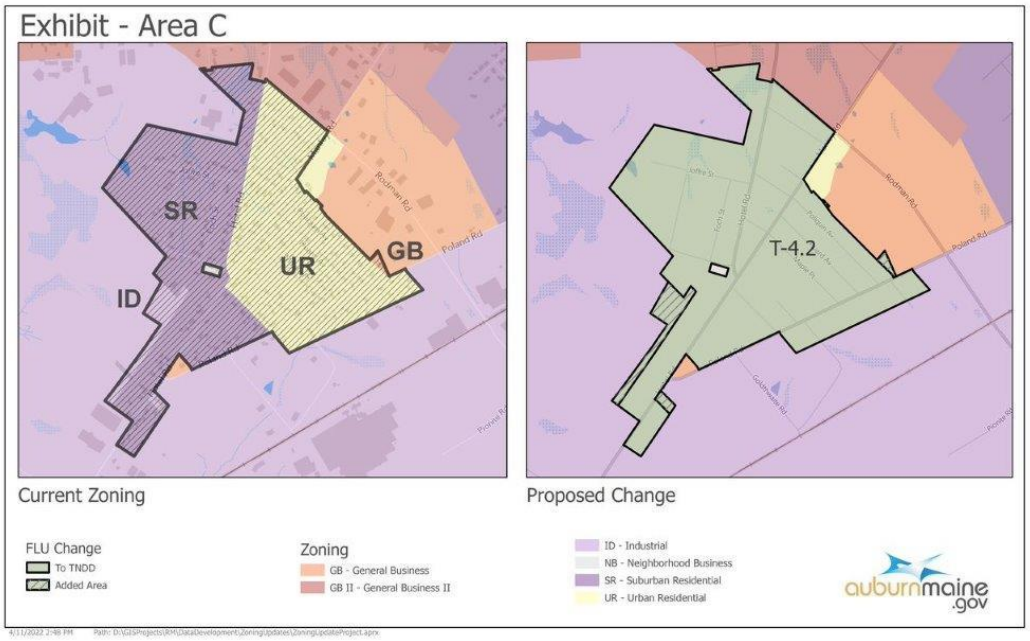
For example, streets like Mill, South Main, and Broad have some segments providing for pedestrian access but not full connectivity that would be needed to realize the Comprehensive Plan goals of building sustainable neighborhoods.



Given the relatively small geographic footprint of this zone change, and the existing full street gride within the area, there are only two example I will share regarding the potential of integrated transportation ordinance changes in this area.

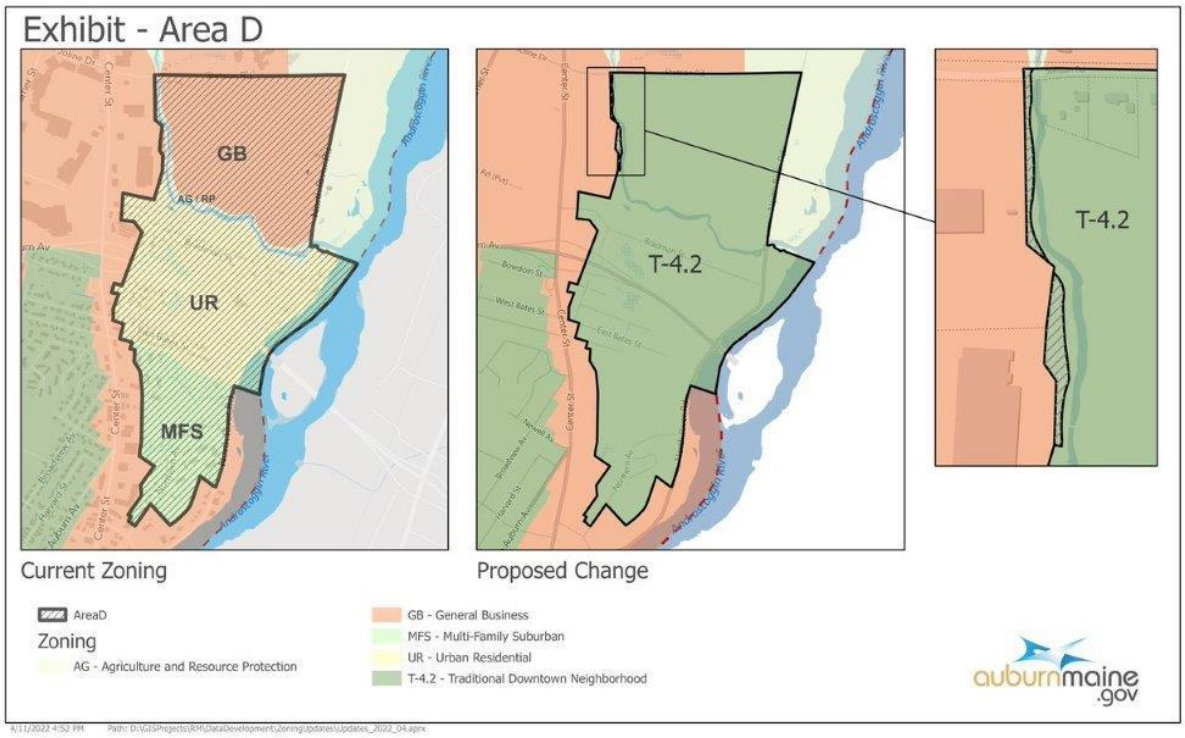
Other than Vickey Road, the remaining streets within this block are serving those living here or their visitors. Vickery Road should be considered a priority city road to secure right of way, if necessary, and plan for the development of pedestrian connectivity back to South Main Street and ultimately along Riverside Drive (Route 136) back into New Auburn village. With large open space areas available for this neighborhood at the Huston Farm and Sherwood Forest Conservation Areas, safe walking access will improve quality of life.

A final note of consideration here is the adjacency of the Maine Turnpike/I-95 right of way to this area. Model ordinances for land uses, particularly residential, along highways do exist to help plan for noise management and mitigation. With zoning changes in Area B, and perhaps other areas in the future along the Maine Turnpike, this should be on the Planning Board's radar.



While much of the street grid within this area has been constructed, significant gaps exist in the ability of residents or visitors to safely walk within this neighborhood, especially along the primary travel corridors. For example, sidewalks on Poland Road currently end east of Rodman Road, sidewalks along Manley Road currently end around the intersection with Hotel Road, and no sidewalks exist along Hotel Road.

This area of rezoning includes limited large tracts of undeveloped land and is less likely to see new street reconstruction. However, redevelopment projects would likely present opportunities for securing expansion of the pedestrian network on priority streets. Given that the T-4.2 zone allows for smaller scale commercial operations, the traffic counts of Hotel, Manley, and Poland increase the probability that those uses will occur there, where pedestrian access is severely limited.



While portions of Area D have an existing street grid partially developed (connectivity could be improved), the northern portion of this rezoning area includes significant undeveloped land that is likely to lead to the creation of new streets and growth in traffic counts seeking to access Route 4 at Stetson to the north or North River Road at the south. There is a need to revisit the 2009 Center Street Traffic Management Study to align plans for that corridor with connectivity to the east (this rezoning are) and west (Auburn Mall area), and not just to accommodate vehicles.

Pedestrian connectivity within this area is limited. For example, North River Road lacks pedestrian access and is also a corridor designated to be part of an Androscoggin Greenway. And while Stetson Road now has partial sidewalk, it does not extend to North River Road and provides no safe crossing of Center Street.

The Center Street study identified the challenges of pedestrian access along and across Center Street as a major challenge. The introduction of this higher intensity residential use will accelerate that challenge without integrating transportation plans and policies into site plan review processes.