



Reference Document to:

# Berwick Downtown Vision Plan

On Behalf of:

**Envisioning**  
Downtown Berwick  
Vision Committee



Prepared by:



February - 2014



# Berwick Downtown Vision Plan

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Letter of Transmittal .....	5
1.	Introduction .....	7
2.	Vision Plan .....	17
3.	Vision Plan Themes .....	35
4.	Vision Plan Objectives .....	49
	Suggested Short Term Goals .....	50
	Suggested Long Term Goals .....	51
5.	Plan References .....	53

*Under Separate Cover*  
Appendices

1. Downtown Existing Conditions
2. Downtown Concept Development
3. Summary of Vision Plan



## TRANSMITTAL LETTER

Ms. Jessica Sheldon and Mr. Frank Underwood  
DVC Committee Co-Chairs  
Town of Berwick  
Department of Planning  
11 Sullivan Street  
P.O. Box 696  
Berwick, Maine 03901

January 27, 2013

Jessica and Frank,

Please find enclosed the Final Vision Report prepared for the Berwick Downtown Vision Committee. This plan is the result of a year-long process of inventory, analysis, data collection and design with direct input from the people that live in Berwick from beginning to end. As you know we held many meetings and public workshops, and received input and guidance from key participants such as members of the board of selectmen, members of the Planning Board, and members of the Berwick Historical Society, Patrick Venne the Town manager and John Stoll, Town Planner.

The preparation of the plan materials and final report document was shaped and guided by DVC members, Jessica Sheldon, Frank Underwood, James Bellissimo, Kevin Gray, Paul and Pat Boisvert, Kimberly Meyers, Serena Galleshaw, and Judy Haley. Special thanks go to the Citizens and Stakeholders that participated in the DVC Charrette's held on May 4, 2013, and June 22, 2013.

The document should be considered a beginning, and not an end. The Vision Plan only begins to form the platform for what may happen next. I have included a hard copy as well as cds for your use and distribution. Please let us know if you have any follow-up questions or require additional information.

Sincerely



Donald S. Leighton  
Senior Vice President



## PART 1. - INTRODUCTION

In 1991, the Berwick Comprehensive Planning Committee created “Village Plan 2010”, promoting a Downtown Revitalization Area, with a Village Center Mixed Use District. The plan included, among other components, adding sidewalks to several streets, with pedestrian scale street lights.

By 2004 planning efforts in the community went further and sought to provide definition of Berwick’s Village Center and create a more tightly defined The Village, aka; Village Area, which abutts a portion of the Salmon Falls River, and is centered on the main Prime Tannery Site. This Village Area, as shown in (Figure 1-1), includes both C-I and R-1 districts and the SCI overlay district. The Village Center, (Figure 1-2), lies within the Village Area and comprises the C-I and SCI District. The Village Center is the primary focus of the Vision Study.

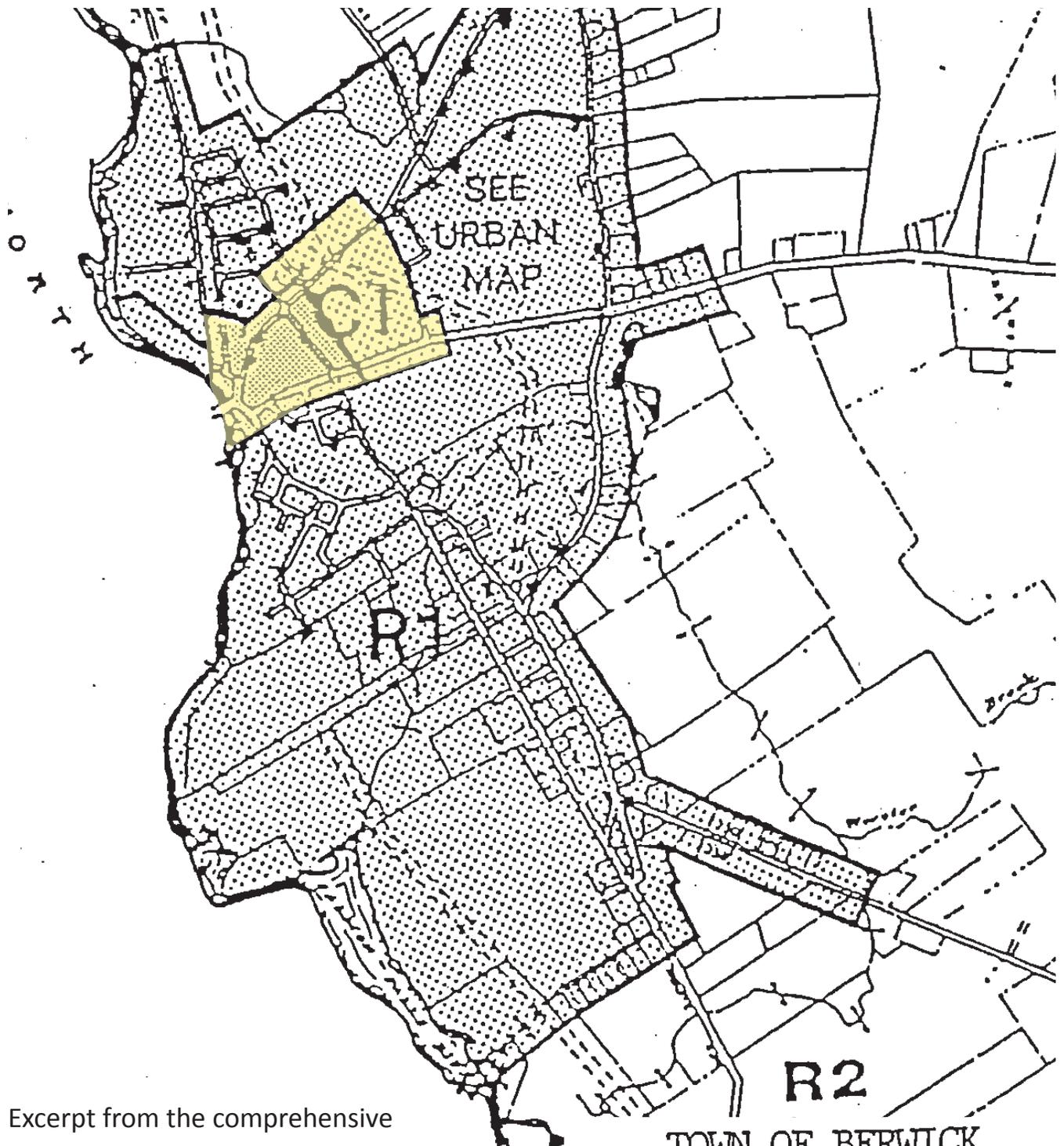
The Berwick Downtown Vision Committee (DVC) was created through a Town Warrant Article in June of 2012 which authorized funding for technical assistance to develop a Vision Plan for the Downtown area. The intent that the Vision process was to primarily solicit public input on the Village Center and would ultimately lead to a 2013 update of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, which was last updated in 2004.

An initial kick-off meeting of an informal Downtown Vision Committee was held on September 19, 2012. After five (5) monthly meetings of the informal group it was recognized that a formal “steering” group should be formed to move the program forward. In March the Board of Selectmen formally appointed a seven (7) member Downtown Vision Committee, DVC. Behind the DVC Steering Committee momentum began building. The Planning and Design firm GLA, the Landscape Division of BETA Group, Inc., was retained in December 2012 to provide direct support, working with the DVC to enter into a public process to develop a Vision Report with a plan for the Village Center.

In April 2013 a Berwick Community Questionnaire developed by the Committee was mailed and posted on-line. Over the course of a month, over 505 people responded (approximately 8% of the voting population in Town). On May 1st the DVC organized a public input session or Charrette that was open to the public. The session included break out groups and town walking tours with interactive sessions built around developing priorities with regard to village character and areas of focus. Throughout the months of May and June the DVC held numerous awareness meetings and educational '101' sessions designed to promote conversations and understanding of the Vision Process. As a follow-up to the 1st Charrette, the DVC organized a second, 2-part Charrette which was held on June 22nd and June 24th, 2013.

The Visioning process, which began September 19, 2012, compiles the workshops, Charrettes, and public input sessions and combines the input with the Downtown Vision Committee's work. The results are presented in the supporting Vision Plan reference document that follows.

# TOWN MAP



Excerpt from the comprehensive plan highlighting the Village Center



TOWN OF BERWICK

Village Center

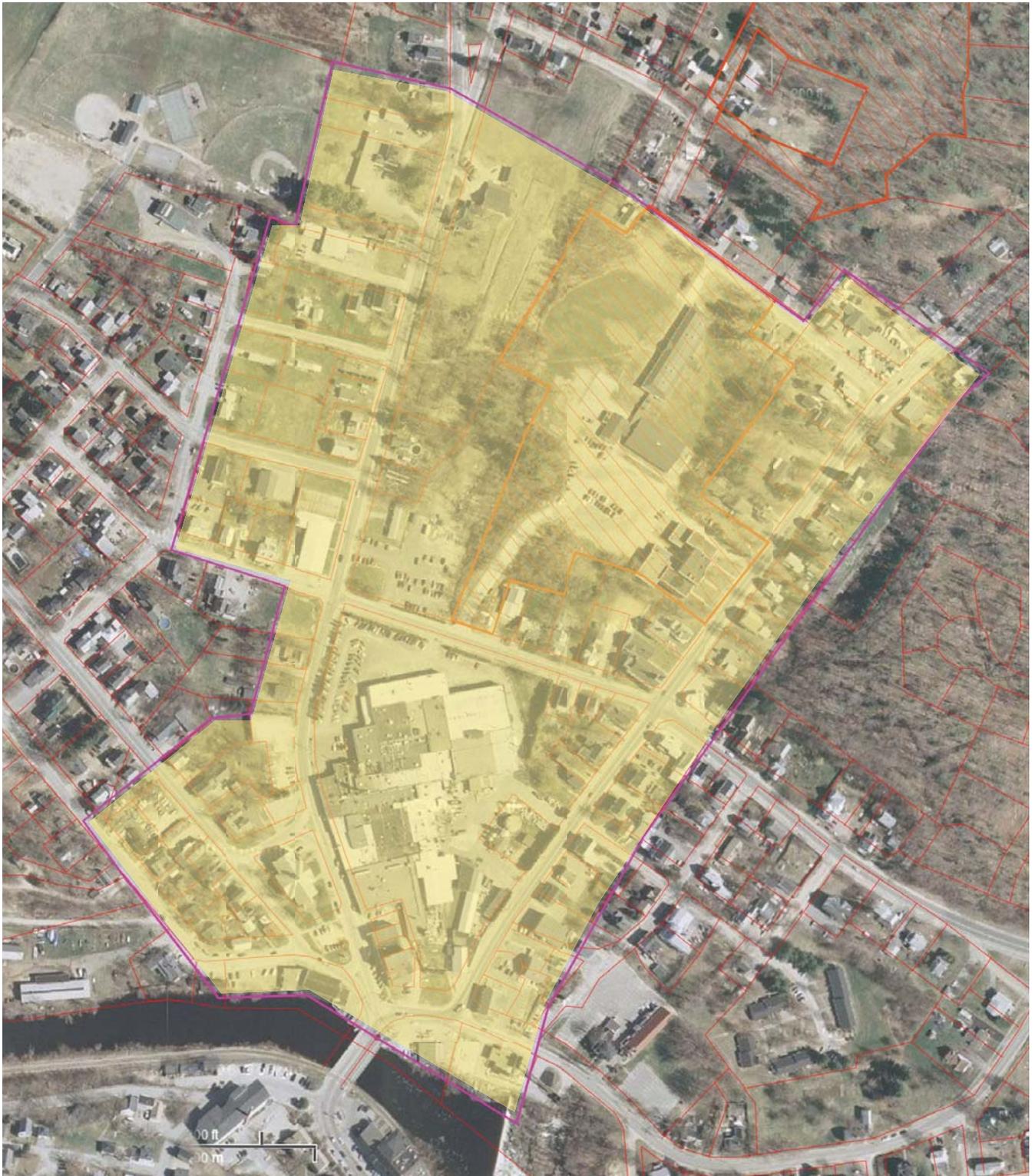


The Village  
AKA: Village Area

Figure 1-1



# VILLAGE CENTER



Aerial photo with shaded overlay of the current Village Center

Figure 1-2



## VISION PLAN '101'

### “To Develop And Present to The Citizens Of Berwick A Downtown Vision Report” **Berwick Downtown Vision Committee finalized the above Mission Statement at the November 2012 monthly group meeting**

Berwick wishes to re-establish itself as a thriving village that will see restored vibrancy and commerce in its downtown and maintain a rural character.

The Village Center will be restored and reestablished as the heart of the town, with re-development, infill development and new construction physically knitting the two sides of town presently geographically separated by the central Prime Tannery lot, (in charrettes referred to as the “east and west” village districts). These districts serve the social, civic, and commerce needs of residents, nearby neighbors and tourists. The Village Center shall, through the adoption of regulations, zoning and comprehensive plan updates, mandate development within a defined walkable Village Area. This targeted approval will thereby protect Berwick’s farmland, open space and forest areas. Berwick will look to the Salmon Falls River, the river’s edge, and to conserve surrounding natural lands, to become the cornerstone of an increasingly diverse economic base. A base that is built around entrepreneurial energy, small businesses, local amenities and attractions. The Village Center will become a place in which people can find work, a place to live, and a place with access to both active and passive recreation areas, all within an easy drive to larger metropolitan areas including, Portsmouth, Boston, and Portland.

In 2007 Grow Smart Maine published a study entitled “Charting Maine’s Future-An Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places”. The study, conducted by the Brookings Institute, highlights what many people in Berwick already know to be true on a local level: Maine is changing in dramatic, unexpected ways, generating both opportunities and anxiety. Traditional industries, commerce and employment opportunities have changed, or are gone. The passage of time without a clear path to prosperity has set the stage for continued loss of economic base, worker frustration and a steady migration of youthful talent to out-of state employers.

The Vision Plan looks past the anxiety, and toward opportunity. Also noted in “Charting Maine’s Future” there is a growing global and national recognition that economic viability, ecological integrity, and community vitality often happen concurrently, and thus ultimately depend on each other.

There is no single, concise definition for a vision. A sustainable prosperity is based on creating opportunity at all levels, through a process of developing economic diversity and creating a positive, progressive environment. Resiliency, or “Character” has been argued to be based on human connections. Therefore, it stands to bear that public investment in strategically identified public improvements will enhance or further define the special qualities of a community or place. In this case, Berwick can and will in turn create a more connected, vibrant and livable community.

Berwick, like many small towns in the United States is at a crossroads. The aging population of longtime residents watch their children leave town, first for schooling, and then for jobs in other places. These departures indicate that the commercial and retail business core is slowly shrinking in a chicken and egg cycle of waning employment opportunities and thinning workforce capacity and abilities. The closure of the Prime Tannery in 2007 is perhaps the most recognized event that punctuates this trend. This event brought about the loss of hundreds (350) of jobs and had a ripple effect impacting local businesses in both Maine and New Hampshire.

The loss of Prime Tannery, and the large contiguous land holdings and multiple buildings that remain should represent the brightest of opportunities for Berwick. Most people should recognize that without Prime operating there is opportunity for re-development. People may over look or under-value this



Examples of public investment: wide sidewalks, planters, amphitheaters, pavilions, and docks.

**Figure 1-4**

opportunity for re-investment in Berwick, not only in a financial sense, but in a re-investment sense in the form of civic and cultural investment. This means investment by the citizens, for the town, in the form of re-establishing a town center with purpose, and vibrancy as the heart of the Village Center.

The work of the Downtown Vision Committee was to look closely at what Berwick was, what Berwick has, where Berwick wants to be, and propose how best to get there. Berwick has already proven to be rich in character, resiliency and creativity. As such it is the coming together of such characteristics and people in the Visioning process that has resulted in a truly multi-faceted approach to developing a vision for the future. It is unlikely that the health and the vibrancy of the downtown can be restored overnight by a developer ‘from away’. There is no silver bullet to the challenges of the downtown. Therefore, it is without question that the key to becoming what Berwick wishes to be in the future rests in the hands of the citizens, town leaders, and businesses.

Many communities have found that since the downturn in the economy in 2008, that public sector (municipal) investment has to lead the way to attracting new businesses. This is achieved by providing opportunities for expansion to existing businesses, and generating activity in the housing sector. Increasingly, the type of investment made by municipalities is one that contributes to ‘quality of place’. Such investment includes public parks, pedestrian amenities, bike paths, building facade enhancements, utility betterment, site furnishings, and waterfront access. Simultaneously this will establish economic capacity to do business by inviting, fostering and supporting the local workforce. It is a convergence of municipal investments, technology advancements, a targeted business focus, a skilled work force, and “business’ tax incentives that will incite an outlined Vision Plan.



Examples of public investment: pocket park, bike racks, ornamental lighting, street trees, paving, and site amenities

**Figure 1-5**



## DVC VISION STATEMENT

Berwick is a rural, riverside town that appreciates the importance of a connected, actively engaged community and proudly cultivates, its unique strengths and small town character by:

- Promoting small businesses and creative outlets where local talent, entrepreneurship, and agriculture flourish;
- Fostering a healthy relationship with land and river through conservation, environmentally minded development, substantial and functional green space, and responsible recreation;
- Creating a safe, friendly downtown where youth, families, and community come together.



Perspective view of the revitalized downtown.

Figure 2-1a

## A GREENER PLAN:

The ‘big picture’ goal is to have a greener plan for Berwick that looks beyond the vacant tannery in the center of town. But what does that mean? Admittedly there are multiple definitions to the word ‘Green’. In the case of Berwick, a greener plan means laying the foundation for the future through a plan, with supporting Policies and Action Items that when implemented lead to a viable and sustainable Village Center. Greener means taking steps to ensure focused and incentivized investments in existing building rehabilitation, infill development, and new development that occurs within a well-defined Village Center. Such an action will then in-turn reduce pressure on less than sustainable suburban and rural development, and thereby will help protect the ‘rural character’ of the community.

Protection and conservation of large tracts of rural land will help ensure that one of the Village Centers largest assets, the Salmon Falls River, continues to show improvement in regard to water quality and recreational opportunity. In 2010 the Piscatagua Region Estuary Partnership (PREP) in conjunction with the Salmon Falls River Watershed Collaborative, and with other multiple agencies across Maine and New Hampshire developed and implemented an Action Plan to protect clean water. The Salmon Falls River waterway, was recently identified by the U.S. Forest Service as ‘the second most threatened in the nation’ citing foreseeable strong development pressure on the river’s watersheds through suburbanization of lands outlying downtown areas.

The most responsible way to further development is often through gray field development or in other words the re-development of existing sites. These sites are already served by roads, electric, water and sewer, and are within a walkable downtown area. This type of development is considered being a good neighbor. It often respects architectural history, promotes density, and fosters synergies that enhance urban human interaction creating a social and civic network or heartbeat of the community. This connection in many communities has been lost, as is depicted, when a well known convenience store takes over the local market and other local commerce moves away from Main Street.

Today's citizens demand convenience and ease of access. Getting people to park, get out of their cars and walk is good for business. Investment in a downtown area needs to foster other new or renovation projects, that when combined with others, has a significant physical and economic impact, again due in part to a proximity effect. This simply means that in the future there needs to be more reasons to walk in the downtown.

## **A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT:**

The river and its immediate banks represent opportunities for green space in the form of a river walk, active and passive parks with pavilions, recreational trails, canoe and kayak launch facilities. At a point about 300 yards south from the Rt. 9 bridge over the Salmon Falls River, there is an opportunity to locate a pedestrian bridge crossing to Somersworth. This link would open a new door to the flow of commerce between the two communities, as well as vastly expand the significance of the proposed trail system. In addition to physical access to the river, visual access from the Downtown and surrounding streets to the river is critical.

The redevelopment of appropriate riverside buildings into cafés, restaurants, or outfitter shops will capitalize on the waterfront setting. Promotion of the safe use of the river for public recreation such as boating, and fishing through the creation of a public access point will highlight the fact that Berwick is actually a waterfront community, and as such is a destination.



View of Salmon Falls River

**Figure 2-1b**



Conceptual design plan for the Prime Tannery site and surrounds based on public input

## 40% GREENSPACE

A plan depicting 40% Greenspace (Figure 2-1c) was developed based on citizen sketches received by the DVC and then refined through the charrette process. The plan depicts early concepts exploring the creation of enhanced public access and public space along the river. The plan envisions the rehabilitation of, improvements to and re-development of buildings along the waterfront, and the creation of linear parks along the river's edge. The plan carries the idea of public open space into the Prime Tannery land, creating

Figure 2-1c

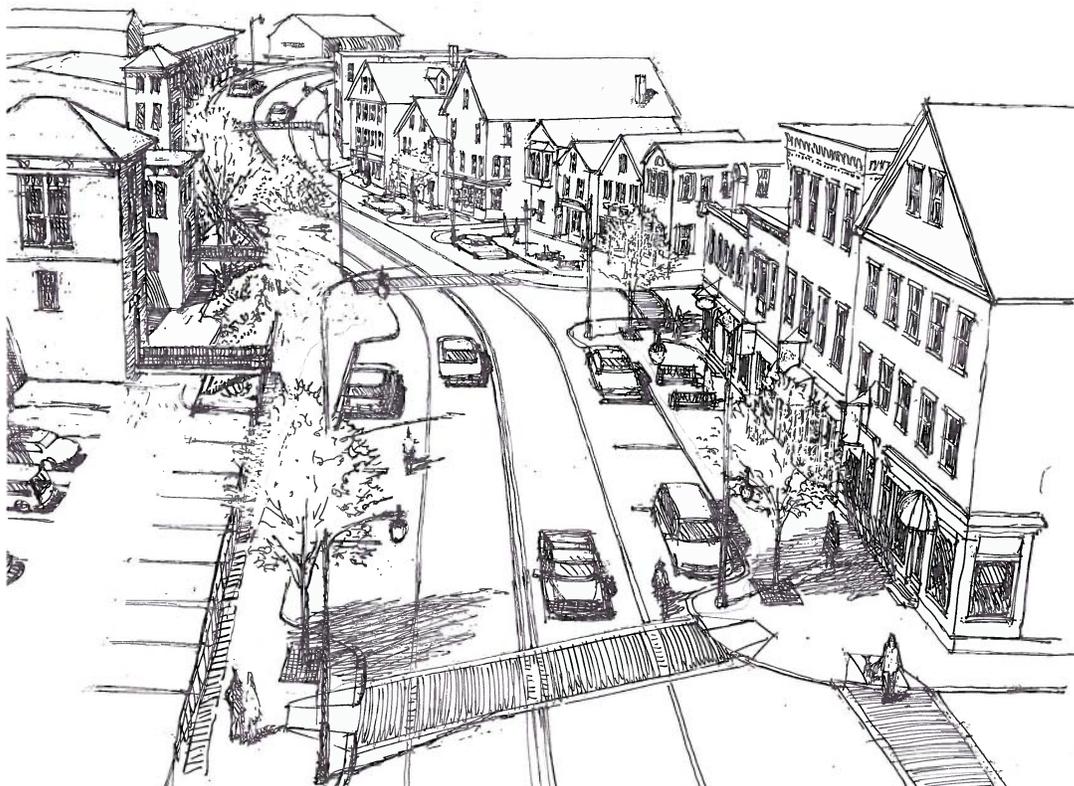
green space at the center of the parcel, with a central multi-use walkway running through the space, linking the riverfront through the park. This concept then suggests making trail connections to the north, past the Estabrook school and eventually connecting to the Library. Making important connections between identified destinations and creating a walkable downtown that is not dominated by vehicular traffic are underlying themes of the plan.

Balancing the needs of vehicular traffic circulation with other modes of transportation such as busses and all other user groups such as bicyclists and pedestrians is an important component of developing a vibrant Downtown. The construction of streetscapes that purposefully includes wide, walkable sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes or shared travel (Sharrows) lanes, public transportation stops, frequent and safe crosswalks, median islands, curb-line bump-outs, street parking, and narrow travel lanes has been characterized as the creation of Complete Streets. The Complete Street Coalition was formed in 2005 by the American Society of Landscape Architects, The American Planning Association, The Institute of Traffic Engineers, and The National Association of Realtors. Since that time communities across the country that have adopted Complete Street policies and implemented them in their own communities have observed improved social interaction, a communally enhanced sense of place, evidence of people enjoying a healthier lifestyle through walking and biking, and an increase in property values along Complete Street Corridors. The construction of Complete Streets has been found to make sound economic sense, as the road corridor emphasizes a balance of user groups, thus promoting accessible and efficient connections. Transportation choices increase capacity, reduce congestion, and improve air quality. As walkability is enhanced, Businesses interest in being located in the Downtown has been shown to increase, thus establishing a central 'core' of buildings that are active and engage the sidewalks.

The plan depicts rehabilitated buildings that contribute to the overall character of the downtown. The plan also shows a perimeter of new mixed use infill redevelopment framing the central green space. The concept seeks to enhance curbside parking, and create interior parking lots in order to encourage walkability and minimize gaps in the building facades. The arrangement of buildings shown takes advantage of the natural topography of the site, and promotes opportunities for solar gain and natural lighting for the newly built spaces. The buildings are arranged in a manner that would encourage walk-through connections from the street sidewalk through to the green. Utilities, trash, and recycling would be located in the alley ways or enclosed in trash rooms within the building footprint. The plan is designed to promote connectivity both into and through the Prime Tannery site.

## TAKE A WALK

Walking away from the edge of the river into the Village Center should be safe and convenient. The public interest continues to focus on creating a Downtown, with well-organized streets free from excessive speed, and traffic signal impacts such as vehicular congestion, with safe crosswalks and pedestrian friendly sidewalks. Charrette concepts that were developed to envision traffic solutions included changes to the Wilson Street / Sullivan Street Intersection, a possible re-alignment of Wilson Street, creation of new streets, the reduction of left turn movements in the Downtown, and the introduction of roundabouts. (Refer to Figures Appendix A - Alternatives 1-4). Different types of street parking are envisioned, in addition to interior parking lots, which are to be set in behind buildings. Street trees located along the sidewalks provide shade. Plantings will be designed to enhance water quality through LID stormwater management techniques. Quality site furniture such as benches, tables, bike racks and trash cans will enhance the sidewalks and promote use. A central gathering spot such as a kiosk or gazebo could also serve as an enhancement



Proposed streetscape concept depicting curbside bump-outs, wide sidewalks, on-street parking, modular paver cross walks, street trees, ornamental lighting and fencing. Note the scale and diversity of building types in regard to stories, rooflines, and orientation to the street.

Figure 2-2

## **BUILDING VALUE**

Along the streets of the Downtown, the Vision Plan should recognize building rehabilitation, particularly related to identified 'Buildings of Value.' This will encourage both infill development and new development of properties. Build-outs should be configured in a manner that provide a streetscape with human scale, context, and visual continuity without overly wide 'gaps' in the building facades. New buildings should be required to be more than a single story in height, and likely should not exceed four, though there is an argument to be made that increased density and height applied to the right parts of the Village Center would have a net positive effect. Buildings could be sited with high regard to solar orientation and with architectural 'slight-of-hand' techniques such as seen in (Figure 2-3b) below, where a level of the building is fully contained within the Mansard roof, or where natural topography allows extra height with relative ease. Historic images indicate that buildings of three and four stories were common in the downtown.



**Figure 2-3a**



**Figure 2-3b**

In the past, downtowns were characterized by vertically mixed uses. This is the intent of the DVC, where layers of user groups are envisioned as most desirable to generate a truly vibrant downtown. While the preferred appearance of new buildings is one that will fit the overall context of the Village with regard to overall form, scale and articulation, it is desirable that the buildings are more smartly or more progressively designed from start to finish. This can be accomplished with regard to placement on the site, resulting in buildings with human spaces at their entrances and centers or edges; places to meet and interact; with concealed parking areas and then the buildings themselves purposefully built; with careful attention paid to the exterior materials and finishes, such as transparency at the street level, the incorporation of natural light, the use of alternative and renewable heating and cooling systems.

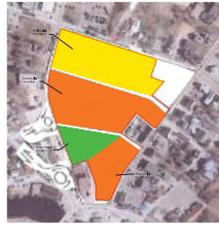
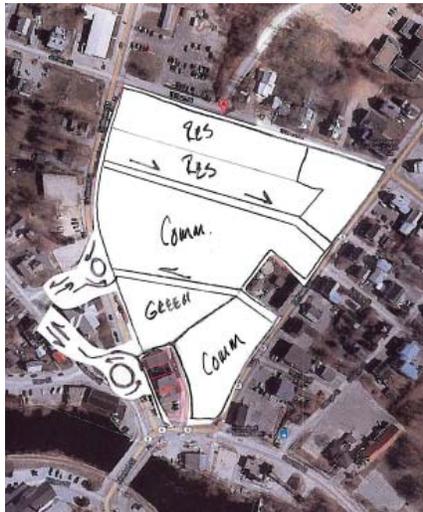
## LOOK INTO YOUR HEART, WHAT DO YOU SEE?

At a DVC meeting in February 2013, attendees were asked to develop a slogan or brand for the town. This question was again put forward in the mailed out surveys, asking respondents to complete a welcome sign by providing a town slogan or motto. The process was interesting in that the results provided both ‘glass half full’ and ‘glass half empty’ perspectives. One noteworthy response that contained insight into the frustrations arising from loss of the biggest employer and the resultant vacant buildings was: “*Berwick, The Town that Used to Be*”. However, another provided a response that reflected on the past in a way that might predict the future and offered: “*A Little Town that Means a lot*” – a nice slogan that portrayed a more positive view of Berwick, and perhaps one that offers a path to the future.

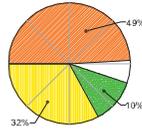
It is most noted that no Visioning work can be considered complete without addressing the Prime Tannery Properties, particularly the largest central 7.7 acre parcel. In public response to the question put forward: “What one action or change would be most significant toward creating a sustainable and vibrant Village Center?” The majority of respondents referenced addressing the Prime Tannery properties, and with good reason. The Prime Tannery land holdings consist of five (5) primary lots totaling 11.69 acres in the heart of the Village Center. Over the course of the Visioning process the DVC received over 25 sketches and dozens of letters regarding the site, all putting forth different concepts for the area.

The citizen sketches were analyzed to understand the various uses people had envisioned for the parcel. A common theme of residential-commercial green was observed. The areas were then tabulated and presented on pie charts. Included in the analysis the refined concept sketch was developed for each of the three primary theme sketch plans identified. These depict 10% green space, 40% green space, and 75% green space, (see Figure 2-4).

An interesting aspect of the analysis is that Berwick, unlike many other communities, does have this rather large, single parcel in the heart of the Village Center. In scale of that, there are re-use options that simply don’t exist for other towns. For example, plans were submitted depicting the entire Prime Lot as park space, with infill and new development framing the edges of the park. Several ball fields would fit within the 8 or so acres, with room for passive recreation amenities as well. The absence of activity, or the feeling of an empty park when fields are not in use, was a decided negative to the large green space in group conversations.



PROJECT AREA	382,672 SF	
COMMERCIAL:	189,119	49%
RESIDENTIAL:	124,146	32%
NEW DEVELOPMENT:	-0-	
GREEN SPACE:	38,580	10%
PARKING:	-0-	
OTHER:		9%



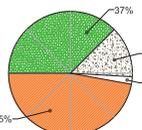
10% GREEN SPACE



Figure 2-4a



PROJECT AREA:	382,672 SF	
COMMERCIAL:	173,011	45%
RESIDENTIAL:	-0-	
NEW DEVELOPMENT:	-0-	
GREEN SPACE:	142,547	37%
PARKING:	61,307	16%
OTHER:		2%



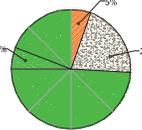
40% GREEN SPACE



Figure 2-4b



PROJECT AREA:	382,672 SF	
COMMERCIAL:	17,461	5%
RESIDENTIAL:	-0-	
NEW DEVELOPMENT:	-0-	
GREEN SPACE:	283,585	74%
PARKING:	78,388	21%
OTHER:		5%



75% GREEN SPACE



Figure 2-4c

Figure 2-4

In the ensuing meetings and discussions, it became clear that there is support for the creation of a public green-space of approximately 3.5 acres as reflected on the 40% green space concept plan. This concept is configured to allow a thru-parcel multi-use trail connection to Wilson Street and then to a trail system into the Penney Pond area and beyond. This green-space park may be made available to the public through a use easement on private land rather than out-right ownership by the Town. In any case such as a small outdoor amphitheater/performance space, a plaza, open grassy areas, hard surface walking paths, public art, large shade trees, an open air pavilion, benches, picnic tables, ornamental lighting, a small play area, and perhaps a water feature that could double as a skating rink, and if environmental conditions permit could exist. Consideration could also be given to day-lighting the stream coursing through the park, that is currently underground in closed pipes. With the 40% green area as the central feature, development would then be organized to occur around the edges of the green space, fronting along both existing and proposed streets.

At the conceptual level, this pattern of re-development of the site creates a frame of buildings around the green space. The premise being that the buildings would have pass-through arches or alleyways and on the interior side would open outward into the space, with outdoor cafés, open air dining, merchandise displays and room in the park for exhibits and demonstrations. Off street parking lots would also make up this perimeter ring of build out around the park. Above the first floor retail and commercial level, second, third and fourth floor levels of buildings would be well suited to have subtle balconies, terraces, or at a minimum take advantage of ideal solar orientation and natural day-lighting opportunities. “Green roof” and “rain garden” technologies should also be considered.



**Figure 2-5a**



An example of mixed use development in Southern Maine. Desirable elements are the articulated building facade, ground floor retail stores, and parking both underneath and inside an enclosed courtyard. Note the use of glass, brick, metal, and wood in the exterior facade. A kayak rack sits at the corner of the parking lot.

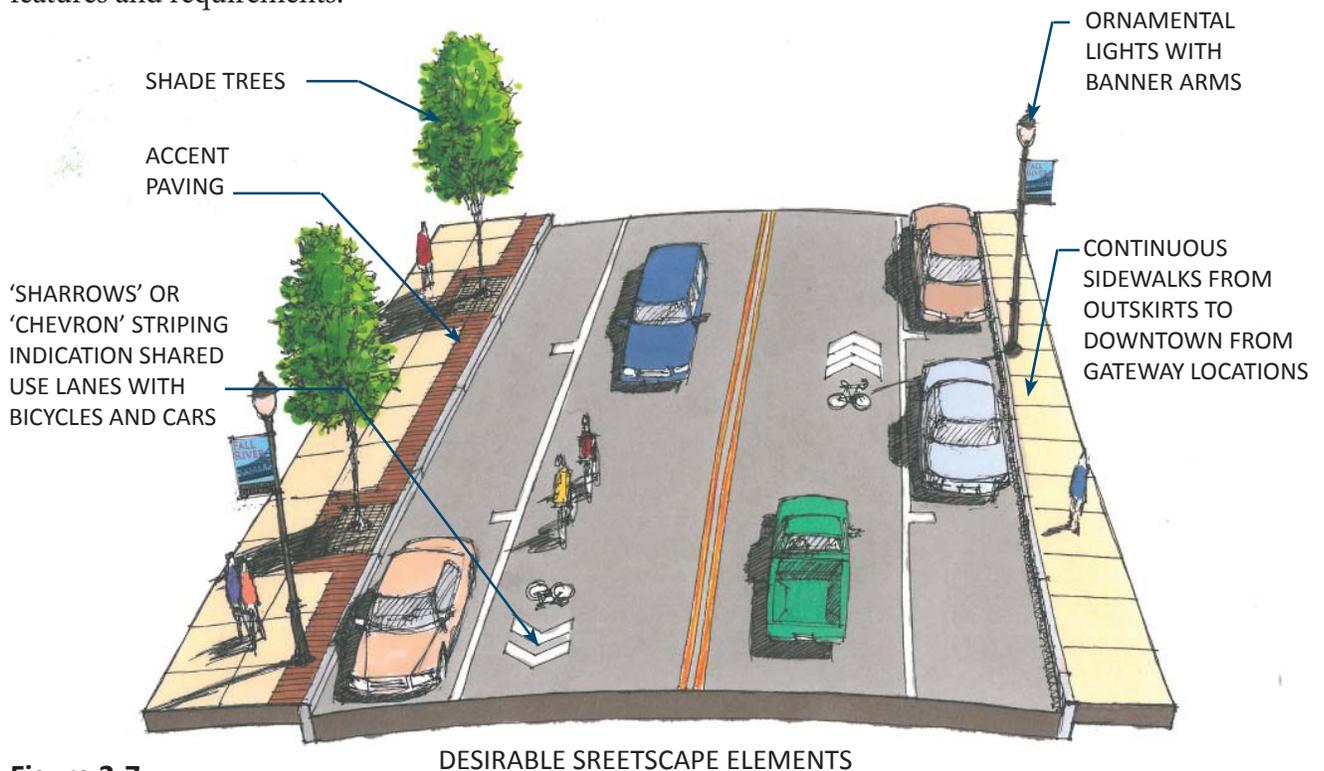
**Figure 2-5b**

The envisioned uses of the buildings within the largest central Prime parcel include residential/commercial uses on the first floor, with offices and some housing above. Creating flexibility, particularly in regard to housing was regarded as highly important, as having multiple living scenarios appeal to a broader base: singles wishing to stay in Berwick, young couples without children, small families, and older people in the process of downsizing and seeking to remain in the community. Ideas developed include the creation of ‘Live-Work’ studio spaces, single bedroom rental apartment units and larger two bedroom apartment units with condominium style ownership, as well as assisted living facilities. The objective was to have an integrated appearance for any housing built, without discernible visual cues such as monolithic facades, or large footprint structures. Rooflines and building heights need to vary. Building foot prints should be articulated, and features such as covered entrances, decks, stairs, terraces, walks, balconies etc. need to be incorporated and be integral to the building design. The form of the buildings should arise from the local vernacular architecture, and be in scale with the associated development. This approach to reflect what the town wants and should drive the need to provide a ‘Form Based Code’ with overlay district specific to these build out features and requirements.



A covered alleyway conceals utilities and provides connections from the street to the interior spaces and beyond.

**Figure2-6**



**Figure 2-7**

It is desirable and should be aligned with the Vision Plan to rehabilitate and re-purpose suitable Prime Buildings. A decision to move forward with a Form Based Code ordinance is significant. This component of the plan would seek to recognize the role and history of the tannery in the community, and build upon it. Many comments received early in the Visioning process advocated ‘razing the tannery’ and ‘eliminating the eyesore’. With a suitable inventory and feasibility study, recommendations should be developed regarding identifying ‘buildings of value’ on the Prime lot, and in doing so the town would be laying the groundwork



Conceptual sketch depicting new development adjacent to the Prime Tannery smoke stack.

The Prime Tannery smoke stack has already been identified as a ‘touchstone’ of the community, and is envisioned to be a signature element in the downtown that in a way becomes a “memorial” to the past.

Figure 2-8

## CONNECTIONS

The Vision Plan objective is to re-establish a thriving Village Center, with restored vibrancy and commerce. The Vision is for a true Town Center, where friends and neighbors happen to meet, where visitors stop to eat lunch, where kids can safely walk. The re-development of the Prime Tannery Site shall be the ‘bridge’ between the East and West sides of the Village, and as such shall be the ‘hub’ of the Village Center, with a central green-space around which new development is organized. This ‘green’ center will symbolize the Town’s renewal and reflect the civic pride found in the community, and from this new hub, both physical and ideological connections shall arise.



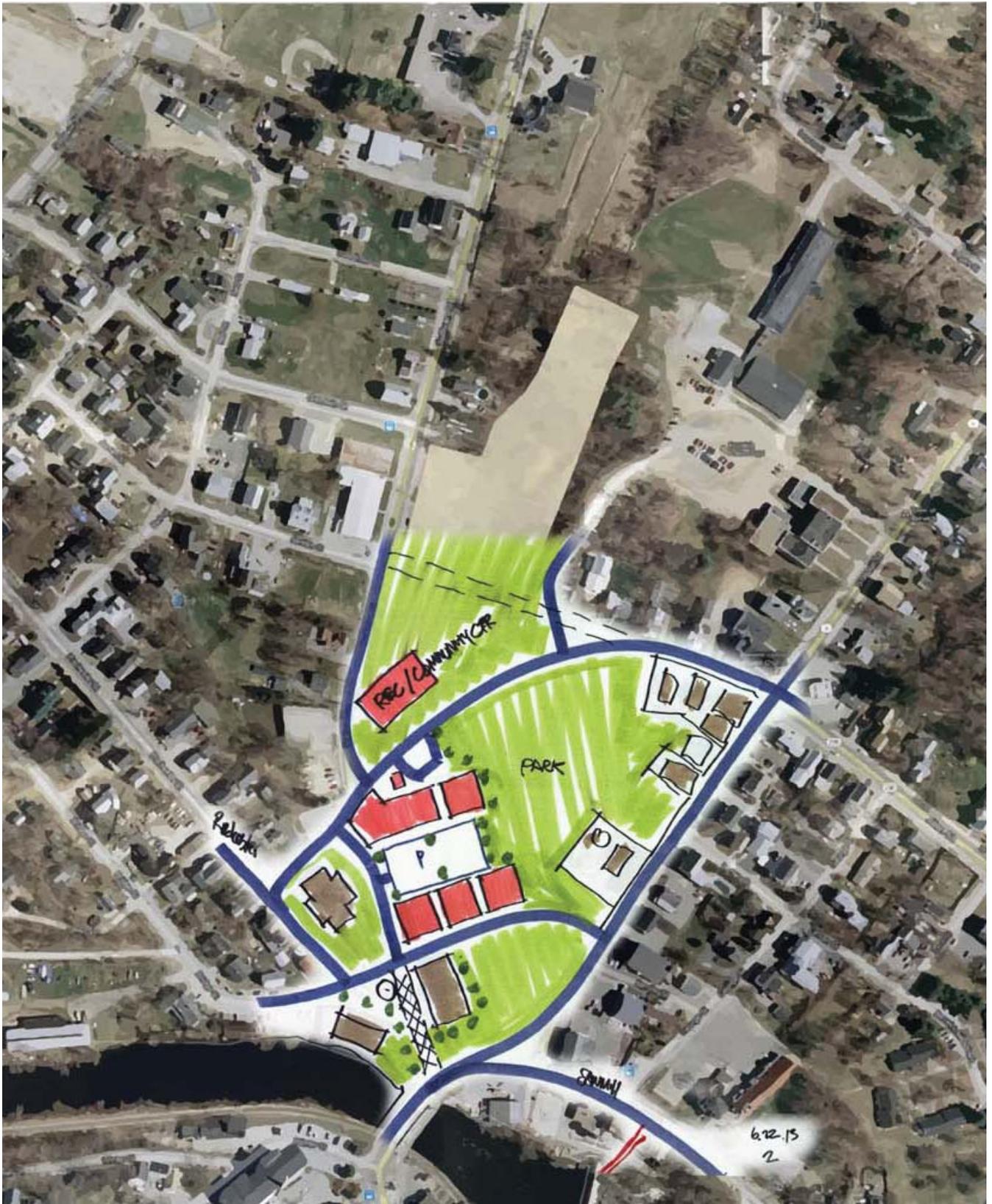
Perspective view of the 40% greenspace plan.

Figure 2-9

## HEADING NORTH

Wilson Street frames the northern edge of the largest Prime parcel. As noted earlier, a Wilson Street re-alignment concept was explored to uncover vehicular circulation solutions that can result in improved traffic flow between Route 9 and Rochester Street. The Vision Plan identified a need for a safe, mid-block pedestrian crossing to provide the essential walkable link from the waterfront to other inland destinations such as the recreational fields, Estabrook School, and the Library, (see Figure 3-6).

Through the Visioning process there was a growing desire to create a center or community gathering spot, which offers a point of community engagement and a network of resources housed in a multi-purpose facility that people can readily access. The concept of the Community Resource Center emerged. The Vision being the creation of a centralized building with suitable grounds. The Center can be utilized to provide recreational opportunities, conduct educational classes, provide daycare, host multi-generational platforms such as a teen center, adult center and senior center, and perhaps contain rent-able 'function hall' spaces available to host gatherings. This facility conceptually was sited in the area of Wilson Street. The general location provides desirable trail connections to the recreational fields, connections north to the Library and south to the waterfront, with plenty of space for off street parking. The advanced work of the Vision Committee in Charrette #2 earmarked the Estabrook School as perhaps the best site for the Center, as a re-use project, building on the value of the open recreational fields, ample parking, central location and trail opportunities.



A concept sketch developed at the second charrette designed to simplify traffic movement by creating more direct connections and eliminating the first left turn off of the bridge into Sullivan Square.

Figure 2-10

## THE AGE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

As the United States reaches the end of the Industrial age and is transitioning into a knowledge based economy, entrepreneurial networks and a culture that promotes innovation is becoming essential to establishing a economic base in the future. In a recent issue of Maine magazine, Ben Polito of PIKA Energy noted ‘the Internet has democratized where you can innovate’,.....essentially saying why not here?..... why not now? So then the opportunity is here. Statewide, the quest is well underway in transforming a natural resource based economy into a Knowledge and Innovation Economy.

Author Richard Louv, in his book *The Nature Principle*, coined the term ‘Nature Deficit Disorder’ to describe our modern lifestyle, and then captured the challenges of feeling alive in an increasingly technological focused era. Maine in general, and specifically Berwick is poised to attract great new talent, or capture ‘boomerang’ talent looking to return to the state (and town) they grew up in. Natural beauty and recreational opportunities are abundant across the state, so the decision on where to live or locate a business in part becomes a decision about ‘sense of place’ or ‘quality of life’, as characterized by both people and community. The task then, is to ‘read the tea leaves’ and build toward a future where innovation and adaptation create a sustainable economy, thus **Berwick becomes a ‘Place of Choice’ for both businesses and workers.**

## FINDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

From an economic opportunity standpoint the Vision Plan then has a few givens;

- Berwick must capitalize on differentiators, or things that set the Downtown apart from other small to mid-size towns in southern Maine, and New Hampshire. For that matter, Berwick must market itself based on this profile because the qualities, opportunities and character of the Village Center is a big part of this.
- Berwick features close proximity to and easy commutes to Portland and the greater Portsmouth area. Amtrak and freight trains running between Boston and Portland pass through the eastern side of town on a daily basis. Some type of utilization of these expanding rail services needs to be monitored and pursued.
- The Village Center sits along a beautiful river, and is rich with significant architectural buildings with character.
- The Village Center has commercial lots of various sizes, with opportunities for re-development and infill. The very center of town occupied by several large lots is capable of hosting many types of businesses, with generous horizontal and vertical build-out opportunities.
- The Downtown is served by a waste water treatment plant with great capacity, which is a benefit to many specialty businesses. Thus a targeted outreach campaign to capitalize on this infrastructure asset is needed.
- Increasingly where people work is less important than their ability to connect with the business world. High Speed Broadband Internet is essential for any community to be visible in modern business markets.
- It is recommended that the Town review, update and establish Policies and Action Items to focus on creating economic opportunities.



## VISION PLAN THEMES

The Vision Planning Process through public discussions uncovered what many initially thought were new ideas. As the process evolved it became clear in some case the ideas were not so much new as they were simply just good ideas.

The 2004 amendments to the 1991 and 2002 Comprehensive Plan identified many concepts and polices across all sectors of the Town Government. There are 16 pages of Table II, Polices and Implementation Strategies. These documents are still relevant to this Vision Plan.

For example Item #68 reads; “Enhance the Village Center as a destination for pedestrian use and enjoyment by integrating local circulation , access and parking into an overall coordinated overall plan.”

Reading on, #68.1 adds more specifics, stating “ Clean up the Salmon Falls River in Town and install a permanent path and all weather benches along Berwick and Bow Streets where feasible”.

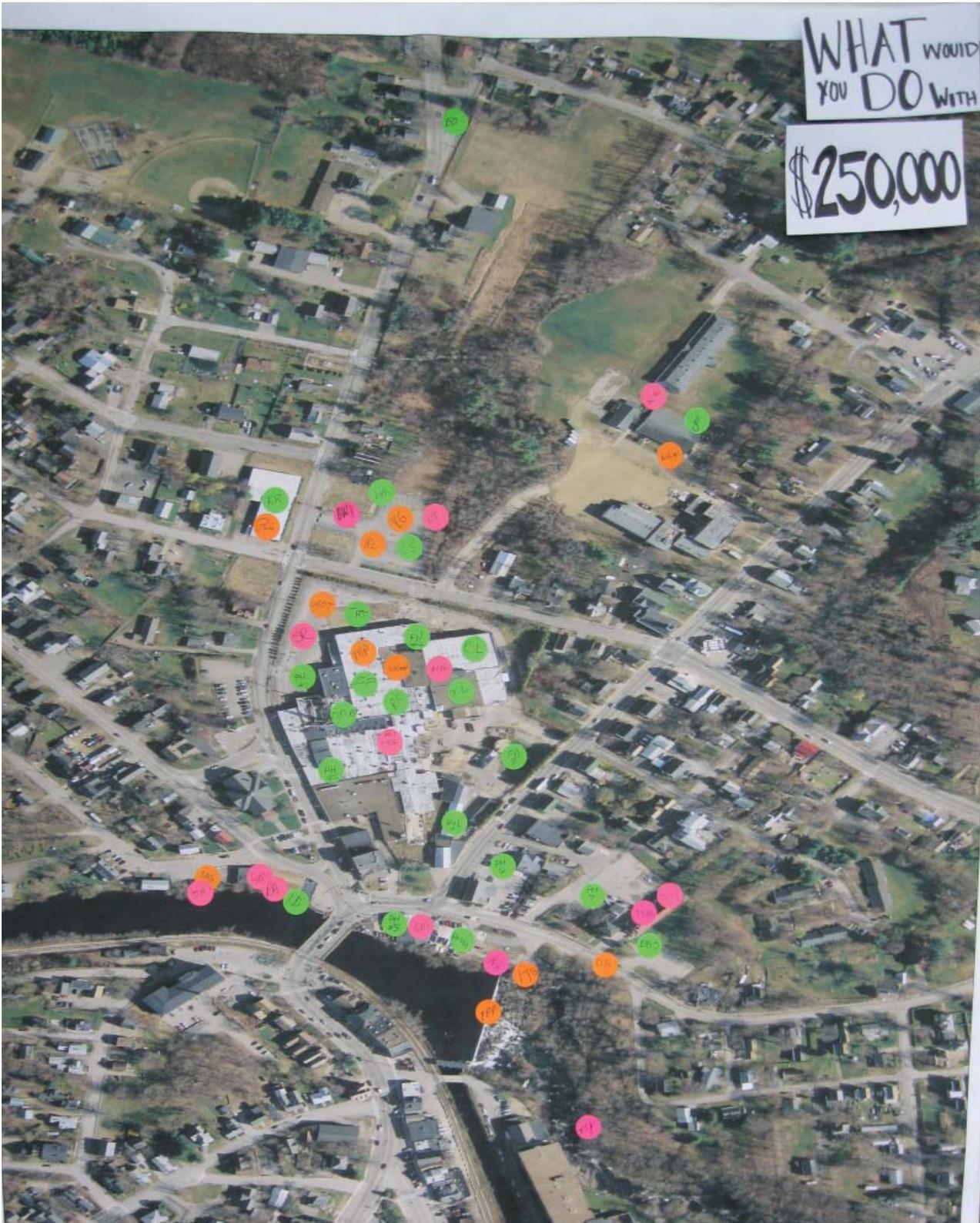
These same themes in a large part remained the same in 2004, with some updates as listed below:

Ideas that make a Downtown Special:

- Connections to the water
- Walkable Downtown
- Places for informal gathering
- Complete Streets
- Encourage Higher Density Development in the Village Center
- Build wide, interconnected sidewalks
- Provide canopy cover, shade trees
- Ornamental Lighting
- Promote the Village Center as the focal point of the entire Town.

**The challenge ahead with 2014 Visioning is to convert the 2004 list and infuse it into action.**

**The following pages look at some of the core components of the Vision Plan Themes in greater detail to enhance understanding and affirm plans of action.**



Public input 'votes' on where best the town might invest monies in the Village Center to foster revitalization.

Figure 3-1

## THE SALMON FALLS RIVER

Berwick has lost track of its waterfront, and the commercial and recreational opportunities it represents. It is an asset and a resource that has often been cited in the past. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan called for investment and riverfront clean up. Earlier the river was the centerpiece of a park system in 1992 as envisioned by resident Kimberly Myers, who saw a system of natural, linear parks radiating from Berwick with trails to the north and south along the river. It is clear that the waterfront has been talked about in the past, but there has been a noticeable lack of focus with no measurable public improvements. Perhaps the river water quality was not good enough, or the interest was not there. Those conditions are changing. In April 2012, The Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative gained national notoriety, claiming the U.S. Water prize for awareness and activism for a river designated most at risk. Now, in late 2013, with water quality concerns in sharp focus, the interest is clearly here, and as such the establishment of both physical and visual access to the waterfront is a central component of the Vision for Downtown. This desire for access to the river is also occurring on the Somersworth side of the river with a new 2800' linear preserve currently underway upstream from the Rochester Street Bridge.



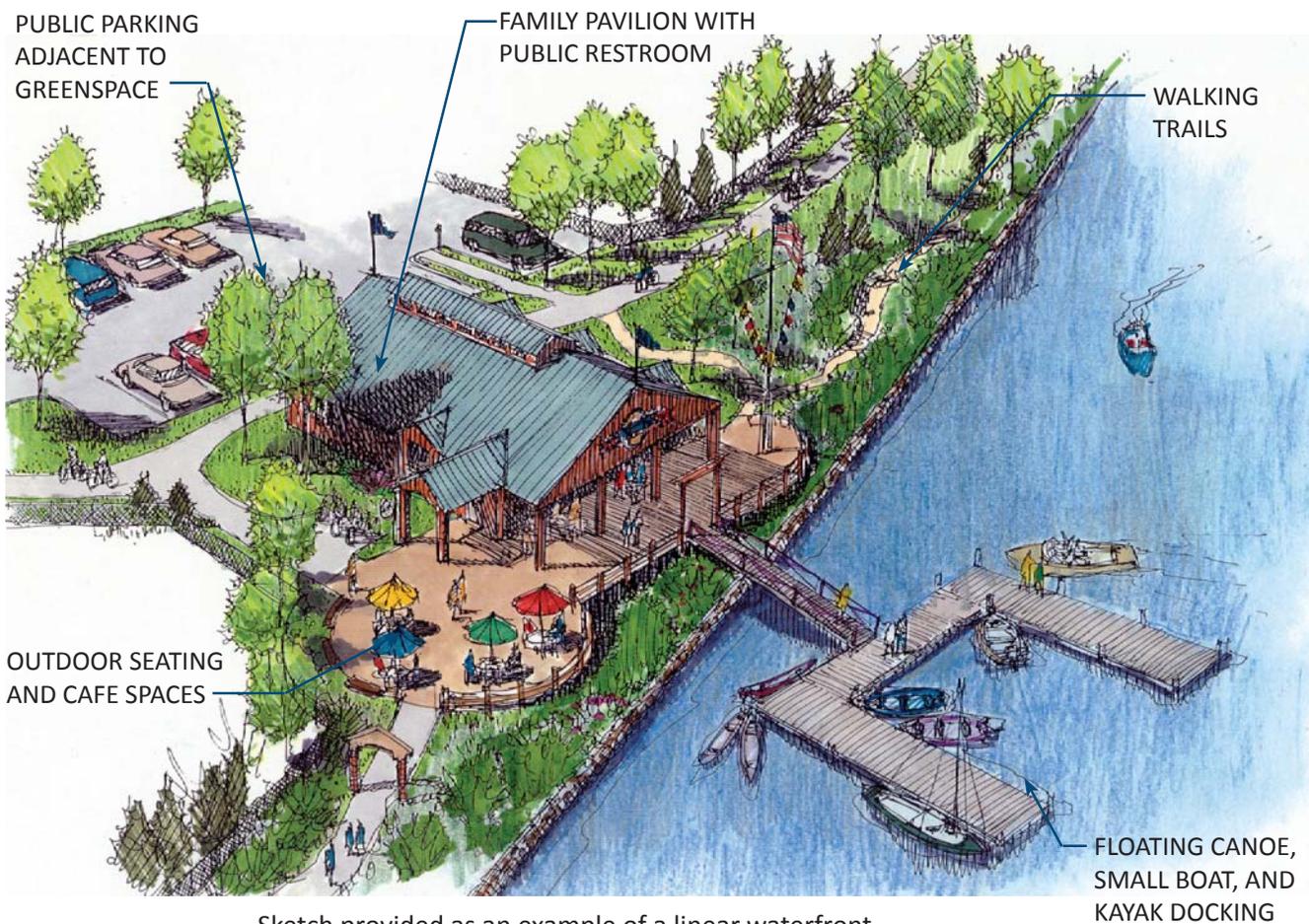
Visual access from the downtown to the river is tenuous at best.

Figure -3-2

## WATERFRONT GREENSPACE CONCEPTS



**Figures 3-3** Redevelopment of the waterfront should include active uses and strong physical and visual connections to the downtown.



Sketch provided as an example of a linear waterfront park and possible associated amenities.

**Figures 3-4**

## BUILDINGS WITH CHARACTER

Berwick is rich with houses that contribute positively to the overall character of the town. Berwick was traditionally the more rural side of the river, (see Figure 1-3). As such in Berwick one still finds a pattern of large lots with tall wood frame houses with attached ells and barns, with ample space for gardens, or small orchards, all within the ‘walkable’ Village Area. The heart of the Village has several commercial buildings that have appeal, both historically and aesthetically in terms of proportion, scale and detail. They are primarily located in Sullivan Square, and are complemented by civic and institutional buildings such as Town Hall and the Catholic Church on Sawmill Road. The Prime Tannery site also has buildings that are of interest, with the real focus on the Tannery smokestack that rises above all other buildings in town. Typically the most important buildings, and in this case the stack, should be conserved as they are authentic and an important part of the character of the town, and contribute to the visual ‘quality of place’. A logical next step in the planning process is to develop a list of Buildings of Significance in Town.



Figure 3-4a



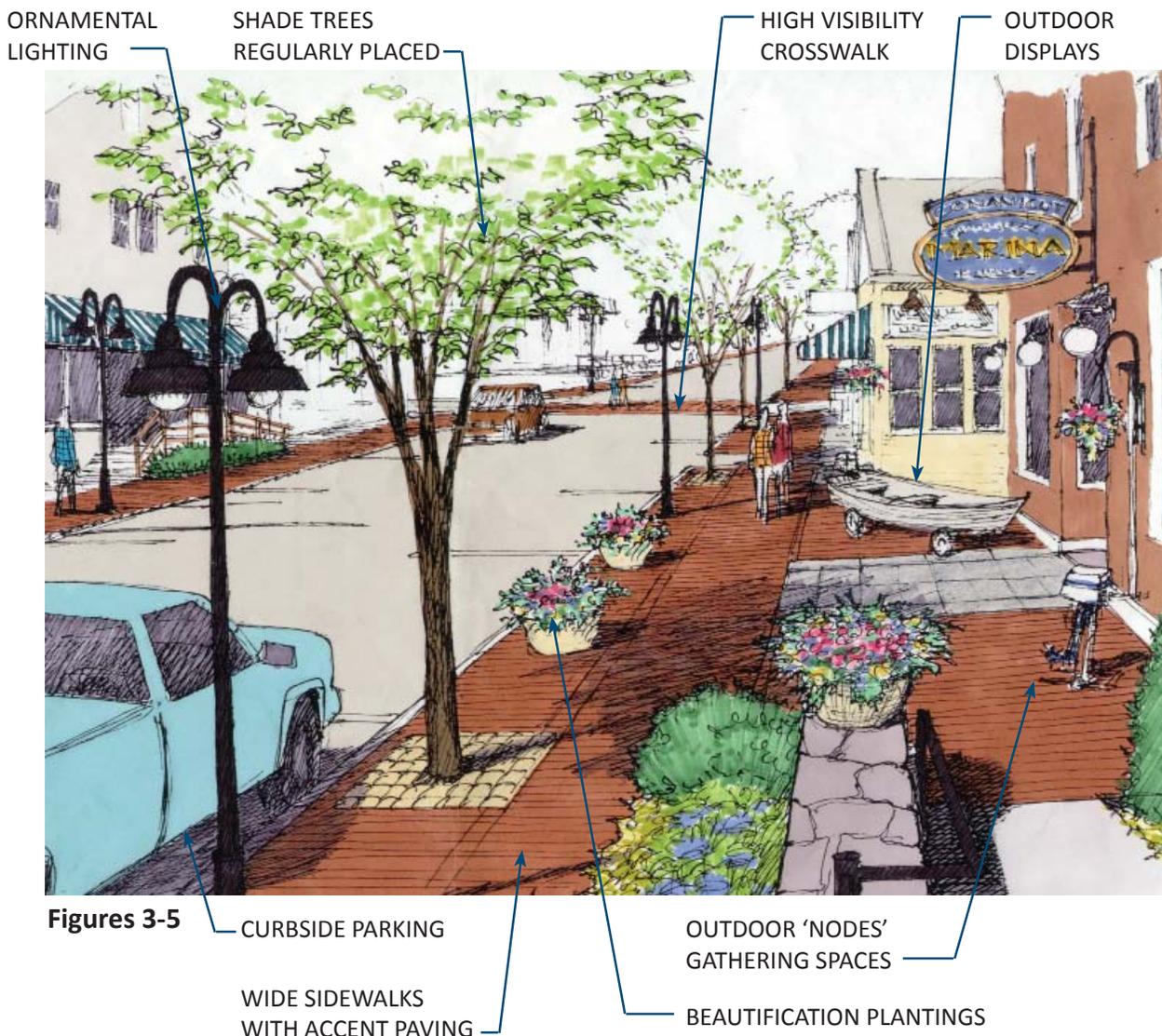
Figure 3-4b

## STREETS, TRAILS AND SIDEWALKS

Increasingly there is a national interest in walking for health reasons. For a downtown area, walking is not only healthy, but it is good for business, (*see WalkBoston.com*). Getting people out of their cars and keeping them within the Village Center will focus revenue into the downtown. This will limit the diffusion of commerce into outlying businesses which perpetuates sprawling development patterns. Patrons need to be able to park and walk to several businesses, banks, grocery stores and ideally, civic and institutional destinations as well, such as the Post Office, the Library and Town Hall. Walkability is a key component of any viable downtown. Sidewalks need to be pedestrian friendly in the downtown and need to connect to other sidewalks, radiating out from the center of town. People in the neighborhoods need to be able

## EXAMPLE OF DESIRABLE STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

to walk into the Downtown safely. Families with children in baby strollers should not be forced off the sidewalk into the street due to restricted widths. Good urban sidewalks should be at least 96” wide, with minimum clearances of 60” without obstructions such as hydrants, utility poles and sign posts. Sidewalks and pedestrian walkways should be raised above the road surface. The vertical separation engenders a feeling of comfort for the pedestrian. Regularly placed street trees provide shade and definition as well. In some parts of town, the tree canopy frames the street, creating human scaled spaces and calming the traffic. The road surface itself plays a large role in walkability: street widths correspond to vehicle speed – the wider the road, the faster vehicles move. One way traffic patterns tend to promote speed. Lane widths and shoulders contribute to what drivers interpret as reasonable speed. Overly wide lanes encourage faster speeds. Well marked and safely located crosswalks are integral to linking sidewalks to destinations. Traffic calming measures such as bump-outs, travel lane ‘diets’, bike lanes and speed tables can provide reduced



crossing distances and will modulate traffic speed. A complete streets design approach is essential to balancing the needs of all user groups.

Berwick, in large part, has limited sidewalk connectivity, difficult pedestrian crossings, and wide roads. The central part of the Village is defined by wide streets with one way circulation, flowing through wide highway ramp style intersections that were designed to promote traffic flow, not walkability. However, in the width lies opportunity: sidewalks can be widened, and traffic lanes reduced. Intersections can be more tightly aligned, resulting in safer pedestrian crossings. One-way traffic corridors should be evaluated and measures taken to reduce speed and negative impacts to walkers and bicyclists. Berwick also has land resources that can support trails in place of sidewalks. Trails in many cases may result in a more pleasant pedestrian experience than walking curbside. For example, the Library is currently not connected to the Downtown by sidewalks, but there is an opportunity to connect through Town owned land to the Downtown via a Penny Pond trail system. Likewise, a riverfront trail and a pedestrian bridge to Somersworth would undoubtedly be a very popular way to move between the two communities. Urban or downtown trails require more structure than traditional hiking trails. Typically these trails are 6'-10' wide, accessible by service and emergency vehicles, and where necessary, illuminated. Often identified as multi-use trails, these wide trails can accommodate many non-motorized users beyond pedestrians, such as joggers, walkers with baby strollers, and bicyclists.



WIDE SIDEWALKS ALLOW FOR CAFE TABLES, BENCHES, AND OUTDOOR DISPLAYS. MODULAR PAVERS SUCH AS BRICK WOULD ADD INTEREST

**Figures 3-5a**



12' WIDE SIDEWALK WITH STREET TREES WITHIN COBBLESTONE SURROUNDS. NOTE BUMP-OUT AT CROSSWALK

**Figures 3-5b**



Figure 3-6

## LIGHTING AND OVERHEAD POWER LINES

The reconstruction on the Somersworth-Berwick bridge will introduce ornamental lighting to the Downtown. This concept should be embraced and expanded. Currently the Downtown is illuminated by ‘cobra head’ lights, most commonly mounted to utility poles. This type of lighting is increasingly associated with light pollution, or the generation of excessive light resulting in a high level of ambient light. It is most suited for high speed vehicular corridors, with large parking lots and commercial business, and is not scaled for pedestrians or downtown settings. Mounted above the lights are the electric, cable, telephone and data lines. Combined, all can create visual clutter and detract from the character of a Downtown, by limiting the placement and spacing of street trees, and by interrupting the visibility of building facades, or compromising views and open space.

Relocating all utilities underground is a monumental task, but is a goal that shouldn’t be forgotten, particularly when it comes to redevelopment in the Village Center. CMP has completed a Phase 1 level work plan for installing power underground to the Prime Tannery area.



EXISTING OVERHEAD WIRES AND THE PLACEMENT OF UTILITY POLES RESTRICT THE INSTALLATION OF STREET TREES IN SIDE WALKS

**Figure 3-7a**



EXISTING ‘COBRA-HEAD’ LIGHT MOUNTED ON UTILITY POLE WITH MULTIPLE LAYERS OF UTILITIES OBSCURES THE FACADES OF BUILDINGS

**Figure 3-7b**

The Vision should include establishing free standing ornamental lighting in key areas of the Village Center, with appropriately scaled fixtures and poles. Lighting should be dark sky friendly, should be shielded, directed downward and efficient to operate. Light ‘trespass’ into second floor spaces and neighborhoods should be eliminated. Increasingly LED technologies allow for extended lifecycles and reduced maintenance costs while providing flexible illumination through timers, dimmers, sensors and switches that allow for lower light levels at prescribed times and or locations as needed. Light posts can be outfitted with brackets to be augmented with banners and hanging baskets which add detail and interest to the streetscape.

As previously stated many communities desire to place their utilities underground, but often budget constraints prohibit that investment on a town-wide basis. Relocation of all utilities underground is the ultimate goal, recognizing that it will be through a phased approach, with new development and redevelopment leading the way, and under-grounding utilities as a requirement for any such new work. As envisioned, a downtown with free standing lighting will promote the relocation and installation of under-grounded utilities, or at a minimum the back-of-house relocation of overhead utilities.



NEW URBAN STREET WITH DARK SKY FRIENDLY LIGHT FIXTURES MOUNTED 22’ ABOVE THE STREET SURFACE, ALL UTILITIES ARE UNDERGROUND.

**Figure 3-8**



**Figure 3-9**

VARIOUS LIGHTING CONFIGURATIONS AND ENHANCEMENTS



## SITE FURNITURE AND AMENITIES

Site furniture is essential to encouraging people to leave their cars and walk. Furniture affords opportunities for human interactions and helps create an interesting and varied pedestrian experience. Site furniture should include bike racks, both backed and backless benches, dog waste bag refuse stations, drinking fountains, ash urns and litter receptacles. Most manufacturers produce ‘families of furniture’ each component constructed in the same style. Options include woven wire, slats, and rods affording different variations on an aesthetic. Manufacturers such as DuMor, Victor Stanley, and Landscape Forms offer extensive furniture lines in a broad range of colors. Special consideration should be given to selecting litter receptacles with domes, shrouds or covers to limit the amount of rain water that can enter the liner can; liner sizes should be coordinated with the maintenance and trash collection system and schedule. Increasingly, communities are using solar powered compactors for trash and recycling, less frequent pick ups equals less fuel and maintenance costs. Street furniture should be arranged to orchestrate pedestrian activities and movement. Pedestrian circulation definition can be accomplished by placing furniture, fences, or bollards strategically and adding chains between the bollards in particularly challenging areas requiring greater control of pedestrian movement. In special areas the use of illuminated bollards may be useful to enhance safety.



A FENCED AND PLANTED CAFE BUFFER ZONE.  
**Figure 3-11**



BACKED BENCH AGAINST A  
STOREFRONT

**Figure 3-12a**



A BACKLESS BENCH ACTS AS A BUFFER AND  
SEPARATES PARKING FROM SIDEWALK

**Figure 3-12b**



OUTDOOR SEATING AREAS CAN DOUBLE AS PERFORMANCE SPACES



INTERPRETIVE KIOSK AREA FEATURING A MAP OF THE TOWN, WITH GRANITE SEAT BLOCKS, AND BOLLARDS



SCULPTURAL BIKE RACKS



MATCHING TRASH RECEPTACLE AND BIKE RACK



STREET TREE GRATES, METAL BOLLARDS, AND PLANTINGS



SOLAR POWERED TRASH COMPACTOR

Figures 3-13

(Establish policies and action items)



## OBJECTIVES

The sketches, plans, perspectives and photos that make up this report begin to outline a Vision for the future.

Past reports, studies, and comprehensive plans have developed similar recommendations to those contained herein. The gap between the idea phase and action phase is Implementation or the Policy phase for the creation of Action Plans. The following pages outline both short and long term goals for the community based on the Vision process.



## **SUGGESTED SHORT TERM GOALS TO BE COMPLETE BY 2016** (Next 1-3 Years)

1. Obtain acceptance and adoption of the Vision Plan Report by the Board of Selectmen.
2. Establish a more in-depth understanding (beyond the ASTM Phase I Assessments) of the potential environmental contamination and associated liabilities that could be present on the various the Prime Tannery properties and in other locations 'off-site' from the Tannery.
3. Based on a comprehensive Due-Diligence process of the above, pursue ownership, a partnership, or a joint development agreement with the Owners of the Prime Tannery.
4. Engage in Business Prototyping analysis of the Prime Tannery Parcels.
5. Develop a firm vision of the Town's Economic Development Goals particularly in the Village Center.
6. Conduct a feasibility study to assess the hydro-power opportunities on the Salmon Falls River.
7. Prepare targeted marketing and outreach to businesses that 'fit' with Vision Plan Concepts. For example, develop a marketing package to engage micro-breweries that would be attracted to Berwick because of the Waste Water plant's capacity.
8. Engage a consultant to develop a plan to put the proper technology in place to support the Economic Development Goals. Prepare a plan for the projected needs, establish high speed broadband connection. Assess the type of technological infrastructure that best meets the needs and where it needs to be: Broadband, Fiber Optics, Wireless, Smart grid service, etc.
9. Design, Permit and Construct a 4-season wide multi-use trail connecting Wilson Street/Police Station to the Library.
10. Commission a Traffic Study and collaborate with MDOT to develop a comprehensive vehicular circulation plan that includes broader transportation solutions such as KACTS and the Railroad.
11. Conduct a Feasibility Study for the adaptive reuse of the Estabrook School Structure as a Community Resource Center.

## **SUGGESTED LONG TERM GOALS TO BE COMPLETE BY 2018** (Next 3-5 Years)

1. Develop updates to the Zoning Ordinance that ensure the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and Vision Plan are achieved. Create ordinances that promote density within the Village Center. For example, advance ordinances that support village sustainability such as ordinances for the creation of legal In-Law Apartments, identification and protections for ‘Buildings of Value’, and establish permissible ‘Live-Work’ spaces.
2. Develop Form Based Code Overlay District for the Village Center.
3. Provide Tax incentives or other mechanisms that promote the conservation of the Village Character. Provide incentives for rehabilitation, improvements and weatherization of existing structures in the Village.
4. Identify funding and establish High Speed Broad Band Internet Connection for the Village Center.
5. Establish a Growth Boundary to limit sprawl and to first focus on maintaining and establishing businesses within the Village Center and secondarily on directing housing in the Village Area, thus truly protecting the outlying rural areas and thereby encouraging local agriculture.
6. Inventory and develop a comprehensive plan to add sidewalks, particularly in areas that are not served by sidewalks.
7. Relocate overhead utilities to underground within the Village Center
8. Design, Permit and construct a pedestrian bridge to Somersworth.
9. Develop a Street Tree Planting Program: provide trees or planting assistance to residents.
10. Secure access, design permit and begin construction of the Lower Salmon Falls River “preserve” (linear park) and trail system





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## THANK YOU

This report is a result of the tireless work and input from the Berwick Downtown Vision Committee, the volunteer members of which sought to develop a community-wide conversation about the future of Berwick. The committee members sought broad public input, solicited citizen ideas, drawings, sketches, engaged in conversations, held workshops, organized Charrettes, hosted interactive and informational sessions, and reached out to state agencies, local intuitions and Berwick's neighboring communities to develop input. Along the way, many small businesses and agencies provided different types of support and ideas to facilitate the process.

- North Berwick
- South Berwick
- Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission
- Berwick Historical Society
- Credere Associates, LLC.
- Somersworth Chamber of Commerce
- RootSprout Media
- Deb and Duke's
- Kennebunk Savings Bank
- The Tea Totaler Teahouse/Cafe
- Hall Brothers Roofing
- Timeless Framing



