

Envision Downtown: *Lisbon 2030*

Lisbon, Lisbon Falls, Lisbon Village

Final Report

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Town of
Lisbon

Department of Economic &
Community Development

Scott A. Benson, Director

July, 2011

Dear Reader:

In 2008, the Town of Lisbon and its department of Economic and Community Development established the Lisbon Revitalization Committee, a volunteer-based group assembled for the purpose of working with public and private-sector members of the community to identify a long-term vision for the town and to create a strategic planning roadmap of how to "get there from here".

Though it touched on several elements of the community – from recreation to public safety to education and beyond - one of the primary outcomes of this work was the commitment to take a focused approach towards revitalization of the town's traditional commercial districts, or downtowns. Over several meetings held in 2008 and 2009, residents, business and property owners and others began to articulate a long-term vision for these areas. In response, the Revitalization Committee began to better educate itself – first by establishing an affiliation with the Maine Downtown Center, an organization dedicated to advancing preservation-based economic development in Maine's downtowns – about the revitalization 'tools' they and their fellow stakeholders will need to one day make this vision a reality.

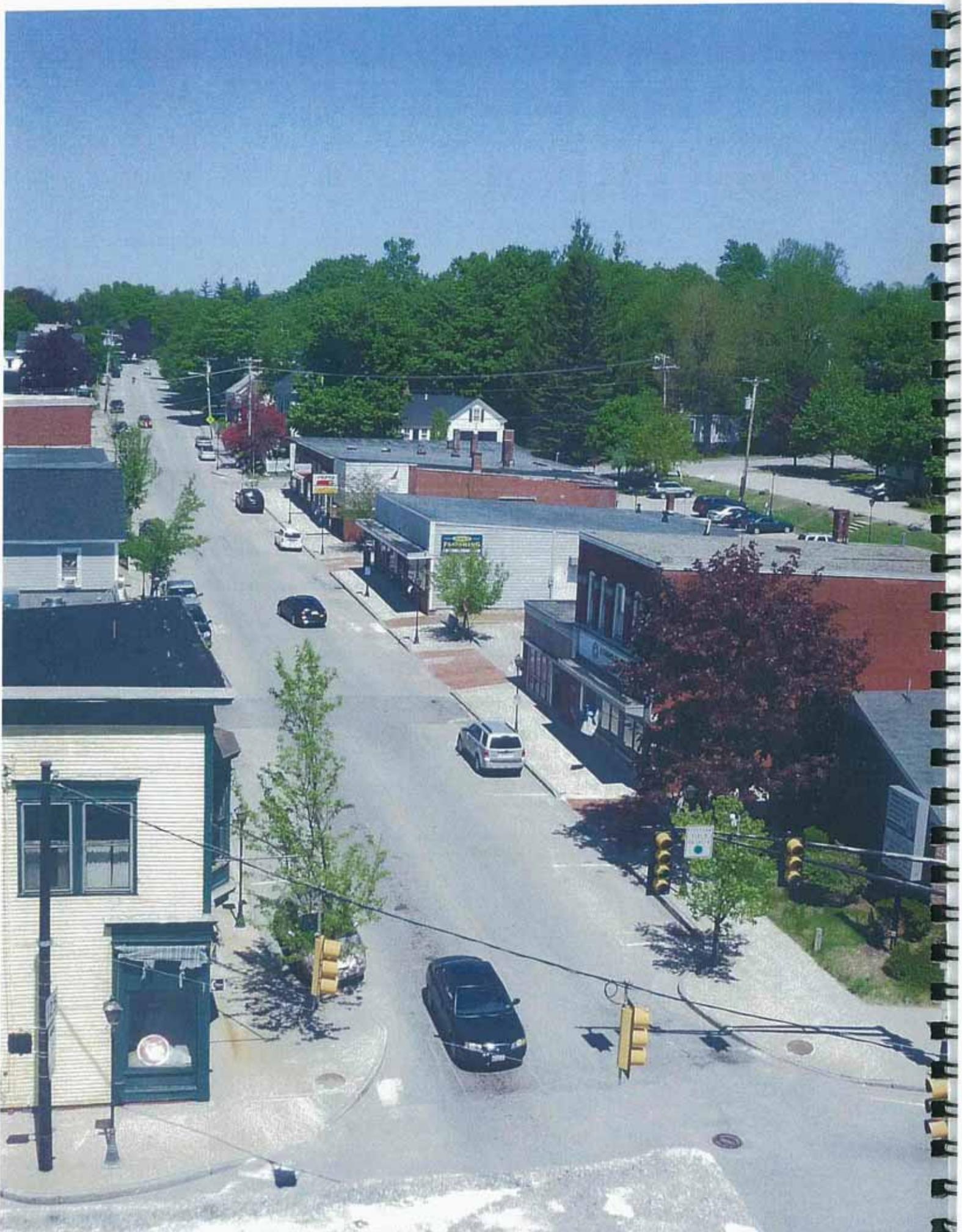
This document is intended to memorialize those important steps in this journey, and to propel these efforts to the next stage. Through a planning grant awarded by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the town was able to enlist the consulting services of the professionals of Ekistics Planning & Design, who have now woven together a summary of the community's visioning sessions with a helpful inventory of the aforementioned 'tools' which could aid in revitalization. The consultants' close their report with a 'short list' of potential short-term revitalization projects which, if undertaken with purpose and vigor, should create the kind of momentum needed to realize the broader vision of the town's stakeholders.

I trust you will find this report both informative and thought-provoking. It is my sincere hope that it will also inspire you to become involved in shaping the future of your downtown areas.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Benson
Director

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1.0 Introduction

Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.

- Japanese Proverb

Downtowns are the vital social and economic engine of many rural municipalities across the country. Although the commercial taxes from downtowns in rural municipalities are relatively small in comparison to overall revenue, the indirect benefits of downtowns are immense; influencing housing demand, tourism demand, community satisfaction, the creative economy, and overall civic prosperity. The quality of a downtown is the litmus test for the quality of any community.

Downtown revitalization is a proven catalyst for regional economic growth by improving the physical, social, organizational, and promotional infrastructure of the downtown. Public investment in downtown Lisbon Falls will be a catalyst for private investment and will have direct and indirect pay-offs.

Envision Downtown Lisbon 2030 outlines a 20-year vision for downtown revitalization, some catalytic projects for downtown and a downtown improvement toolbox. The vision builds on previous planning efforts like the *2000 Downtown Lisbon Falls Economic Revitalization Strategy* and the *Lisbon Comprehensive Plan*.

The visioning process was initiated by The Lisbon Revitalization Committee which hosted a series of public Community Visioning Sessions between December 2008 and May 2009. The topics that were discussed included parks/recreation, public services, education/cultural, economic/community development, housing/agriculture/land use, municipal services and infrastructure.

The outcomes of those public sessions related to downtown revitalization have been compiled into this vision document to provide a summarized roadmap for downtown revitalization. The vision focuses on a *four point approach* for downtown revitalization including organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring.

The vision presented in this document is not a substitute for a full downtown master plan; a more comprehensive downtown plan will be needed at a later date. Instead, this document is a summary of the community vision, the potential revitalization projects, and the tools which could aid in revitalization.

Furthermore, the strength of this document lies in it's potential application not just to the downtown Lisbon Falls area, but to all other areas of town as well, including Lisbon Center and Lisbon Village. While historically these three parts of town have evolved and expanded along different lines and have different histories, they may collectively take advantage of the efforts outlined in this document including the establishment of a National Trust Main Street program. Despite their differences, for the purposes of this document, the three individual villages (Lisbon Falls, Lisbon Center, and Lisbon Village) will be collectively referred to as Lisbon.

The Hazards of Unplanned Growth

Without a vision a community can only react to local or external pressures. Community uncertainty translates into investment uncertainty, and developers or new businesses will go to great lengths to avoid uncertainty. A vision represents a measure of certainty, and with certainty comes security and investment.

There are many examples of communities which have evolved by unplanned growth. Unplanned growth often results in development along the path of least



resistance. This can result in strip development, generic buildings and businesses which are untied to the community, and unbalanced growth with the majority of activity taking place outside the town center leading suburban tract development and car oriented cities.

The unplanned town leads to strip-commercial sprawl, the proliferation of franchise businesses, too much commercially zoned land, disregard for the pedestrian, the migration of anchor businesses (like banks and professional offices) from the downtown, and a loss of connectivity between the downtown and the surrounding community. Unplanned corridors create a poor first impression, favor cars over people, and suck the vitality from the towns and communities they border.

Many communities have had to deal with the proliferation of franchise business (with self-serving design standards) and big box retail stores. On top of the loss of sense of place and degradation of local vernacular, some studies have found that "for every job a big box creates, one and a half local jobs are lost and that many of the jobs pay less and offer fewer benefits" (Arendt, 2010).

Without community design standards, unplanned growth can seriously degrade the quality of traditional neighborhoods; putting them at risk of having to accept minimum standards of development. Zoning provides some measure of security; albeit, the very minimum standards which often don't recognize the special qualities of place which make a community unique.

In contrast, the well planned downtown

- ▶ is a destination spot- a gathering of civic, business, cultural, and social events
- ▶ stimulates economic development because they are special places in their own right
- ▶ are accessible by pedestrians, bikes and cars
- ▶ represent the face of a community
- ▶ balance multiple community objectives instead of single, individual, objectives
- ▶ define a standard of development for the rest of the town and don't accept lower standards

It is the goal of this document to guide Lisbon towards a downtown plan for healthy strategic growth.

Vision Process

In an effort to shape a community vision for downtown Lisbon Falls, the Lisbon Revitali-



Lisbon Falls Community Actions

Communication	Suggested Tool to use from Lisbon Falls Toolbox	Priority			
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Murals to be painted on downtown buildings	BID / Civic Branding & Identity		■		
Develop and enforce a Signage Ordinance	Civic Branding & Identity / Signage & Wayfinding	■			
Replace existing "Village Gateway" sign on 196	Signage & Wayfinding			■	
Directional / Promotional Signage to be replaced at 196 and School Street	Signage & Wayfinding			■	

Organizational, Programming, & Recruitment	Suggested Tool to use from Lisbon Falls Toolbox	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Develop and enforce a Street Light Ordinance	Design Guidelines	■			
Consider implementing a Façade Improvement Grant for all Lisbon businesses	Façade Improvement Program				
Bring a Farmer's Market to the downtown area	Festivals and Events		■		
Improve volunteerism	Support for Volunteer Organization				

Physical Improvements	Suggested Tool to use from Lisbon Falls Toolbox	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Lisbon has identified street lights, sidewalks, and furnishings to be replaced	Streetscape Improvements			■	
Repair downtown pocket parks and provide for better ongoing maintenance	Streetscape Improvements / BID / Green Villages			■	
Screen backside of Main Street buildings from Route 196	Streetscape Improvements / BID / Green Villages		■		
Improve downtown parking opportunities	Street and Parking Improvements			■	
Reuse former ballfield adjacent to Worumbo Mill as a park area for summer concert series and other events	Waterfront / Riverfront Improvements			■	
Design and provide a new "Village Gateway" landsape and signage for Route 196	Civic Branding & Identity / Signage & Wayfinding			■	
Connect Androscoggin Trail System to downtown	Trails and Open Space Master Plan	■			
Provide interpretive signage and wayfinding for Androscoggin / Lisbon Falls trailhead	Trails and Open Space Master Plan / Civic Signage & Wayfinding Strategy		■		
Construct new planter boxes for downtown through the volunteer efforts of the local school	Streetscape Improvements		■		
Marion T. Morse Recreation Center:					
Needs new landscape plan including Gazebo, planting plan, and ornamental fencing	Green Villages			■	
Is looking to expand the building with potential for green roof or LEED construction	Tax Incentive Funding				■
Would like to enhance pedestrian connection to Main Street	Streetscape Improvements				■

Priorities based upon existing funding and community support vs. required organization and funding for implementation

zation Committee was formed in 2008 to help Lisbon reach its aspiration to become a Main Street Maine Community. The committee held three public open houses between December of 2008 and May of 2009 in order to gather ideas and input on a vision for downtown Lisbon. The topics that were discussed included parks/recreation, public services, education/cultural, economic/ community development, housing/agriculture/land use, municipal services, and infrastructure. The summary results of those public sessions are documented in this vision document in Table 1.1. *Ekistics Planning & Design* was retained by the town to help assemble the vision into one cohesive document.

Lisbon Falls Downtown Vision

Like many early-century Maine communities, Lisbon Falls thrived and grew around a river. From the town's inception, the Androscoggin River has played a key role as the economic engine which powered and built factories and industries- giving rise to the growth of the town. However, due to the nature of the 19th Century technologies which harnessed the Androscoggin, the interface between the river and the downtown is now that of crumbling walls, hard brick edifices, gravel flats, and forgotten machinery. The Lisbon waterfront is a disordered jumble obscured from the heart of town by out dated husks of buildings.

If there is one overarching design consideration behind the social, cultural, and economic revitalization of downtown, it is to reconnect with the river. For too long the river has been hidden from view, and with the debilitation of the historic mill along its banks (due to fire and changing economic climates), it has ceased to play a significant role in the economy of Lisbon. Through workshops, civic discussion, and many other strategies outlined herein, Lisbon is set to take on the task of reconnecting its two hearts- the downtown and the river.

The downtown area is perfectly situated at the juncture of several vectors; the Androscoggin River, The Lisbon Trail System, Route 196, and the train transportation corridor; all of which can play a strong role in the cultural and economic development of downtown. Harnessing these factors, tying them together, and utilizing their properties to create a unique, viable, and significant downtown is the aim of this endeavor.

It is the objective of this document, a culmination of several planning strategies, workshops, and earlier designs, to serve as an aid and facilitator for the Town of Lisbon to reconnect with the river, improve Lisbon Falls, and jumpstart its eco-



conomic growth. This will be accomplished through thoughtful planning and design, coupled with a toolbox of strategies, and a focus on a few key areas identified in this document.

The revitalization of its downtown core will be accomplished by connecting to the river, reinvesting in downtown sites, and providing an overall design which will have a good balance of cars, pedestrians, active transportation and transit; be a good place to live and work with high quality design of both building and landscape; and enforce progressive smart development that is site sensitive and adds to the character of the town.

Lisbon is not paving new ground; it is relying upon tried and trusted methods. Many of Maine's coastal and river towns have developed similar community design standards to protect their local sense of place while revitalizing their downtowns. The positive results have been noticeable.

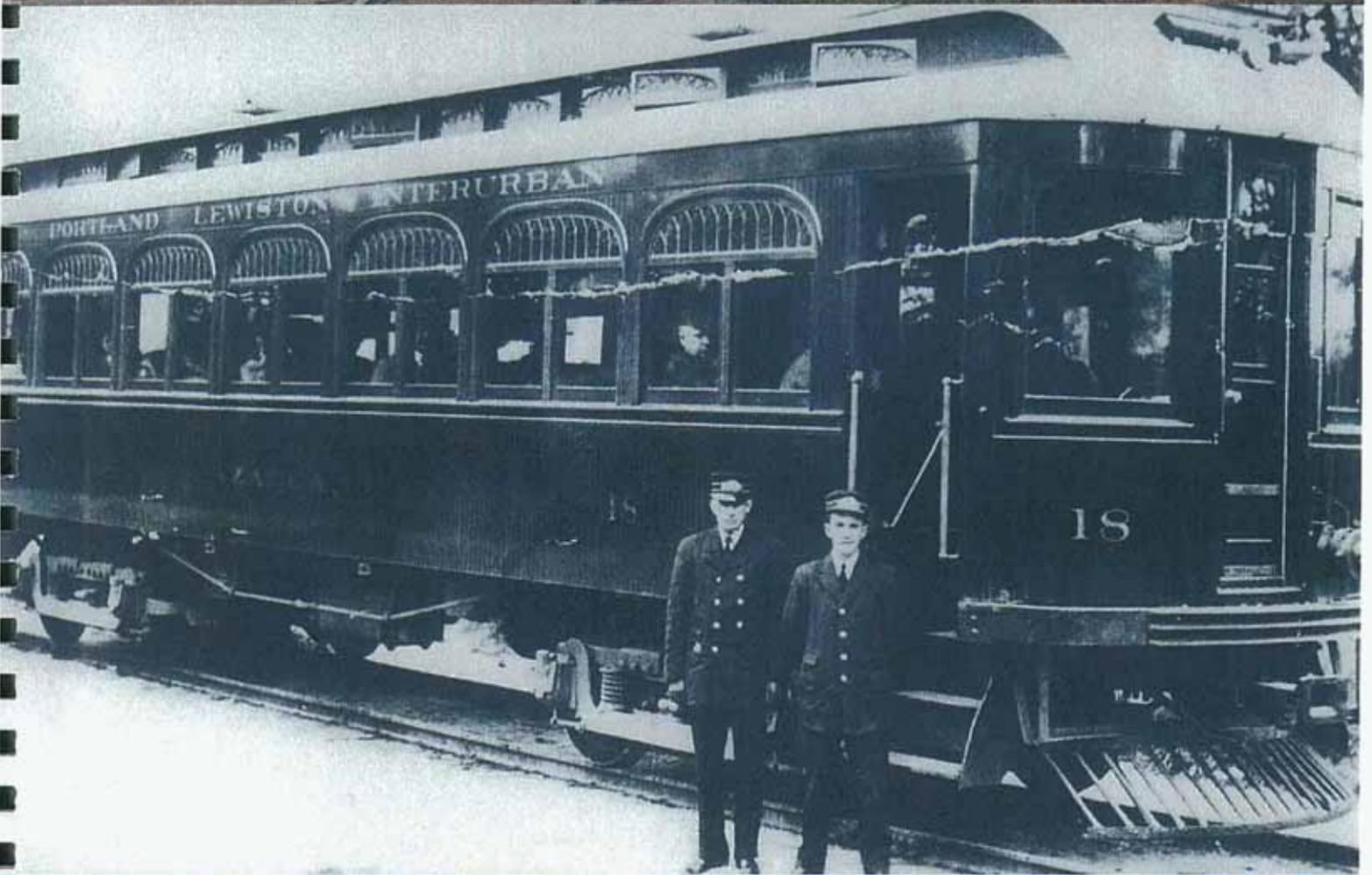
Like any revitalization project of this magnitude one key to success lies in the willingness and drive of the community to see positive change occur. This report is not a stand alone item floating in a sea of uninterested parties. It is the culmination of several workshops, the active participation of the community, and the drive of the town's elected government. This is a movement. This report exists within the context of ongoing and active projects, and several earlier successful revitalization projects.

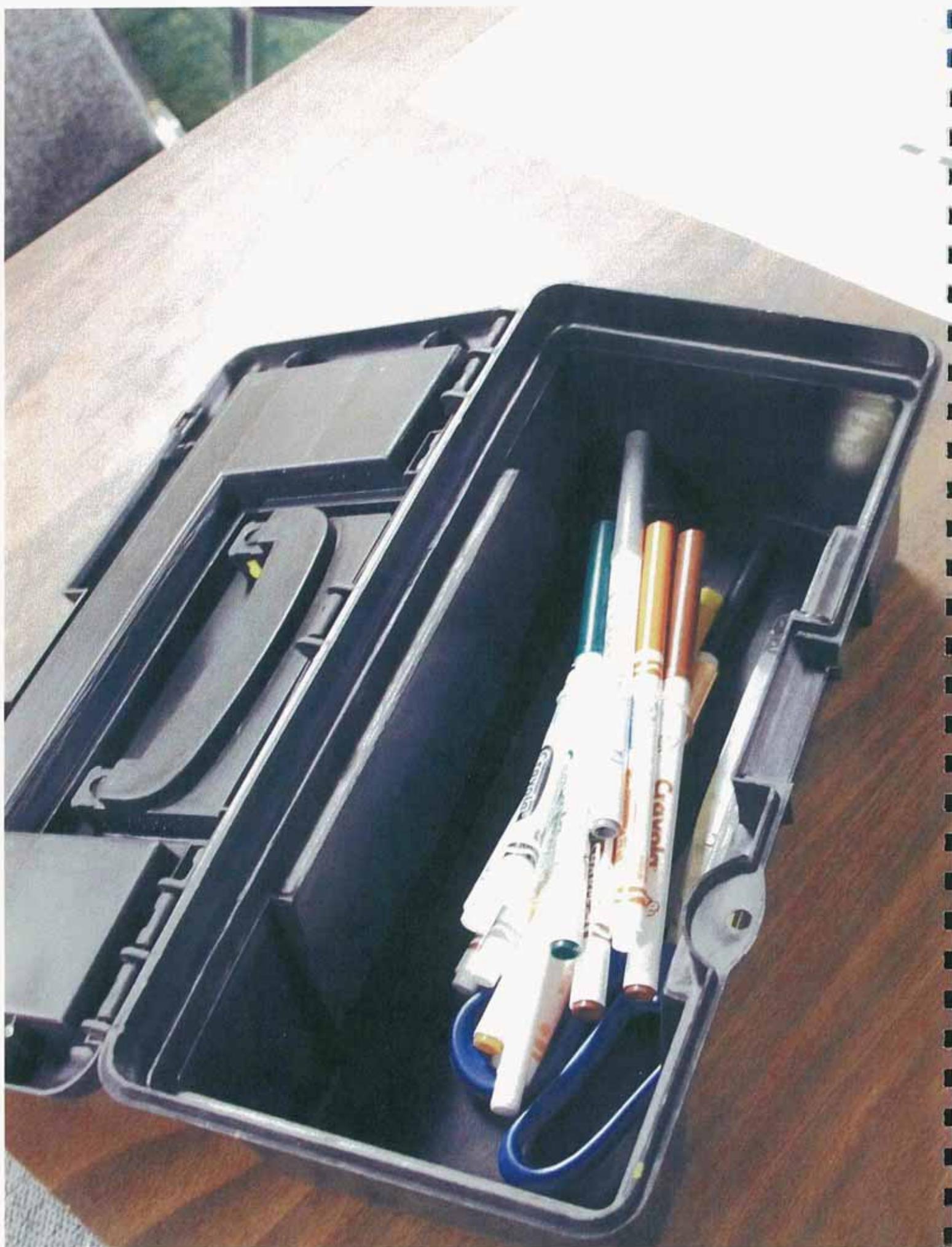
Lisbon was recently honored with the first Downtown Achievement Award for an Outstanding Maine Downtown Network Community. Lisbon was also recognized for excellence in downtown revitalization at a statewide historic preservation conference. Furthermore, Lisbon's own elected officials have been recognized and awarded for their support of these revitalization efforts.

These awards follow on the heels of the establishment and ongoing expansions of beautification initiatives, the maturation of the Promotions Committee which has established a series of annual public events, and of course the near 30 year tradition of the Moxie Festival- the largest Summertime Parade in the State with a family canoe race, a road race, a Native American pow wow, and over 40,000 visitors from across the globe.

Lisbon is steeped in revitalization activities and ongoing efforts. The Town of Lisbon is involved, dedicated, and actively moving forward with goals, visions, and implementation strategies. Envision Downtown: Lisbon 2030, is a tool for further identifying, refining, and beginning the implementation of existing and new strategies.

C. R. R. Depot, Lisbon Falls, Maine.





2.0 Vision Toolbox

The rung of a ladder was never meant to rest upon, but only to hold a man's foot long enough to enable him to put the other somewhat higher.

- Thomas Henry

The Measures to achieve *Envision Lisbon 2030* have been divided into a four point approach¹ used by the *National Trust for Historic Preservation* and the *Maine Development Foundation*. "Main Street" is a national movement that has helped over 2000 communities revitalize their downtowns in the last three decades. The "four point approach" encourages communities and government to work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort based on 4 categories: organization, design, promotion and economic structuring.

The Lisbon Revitalization Committee is organizing itself to enable the Town to become part of the *Main Street Maine* program. The following is a list of tools which exist in 2011 to help Lisbon realize its 20-year vision and adhere to the Four-Point Approach and Eight Guiding Principles of the Main Street program. Additional government programs and grants may become available in the coming years which will help realize the vision goals.

Organization

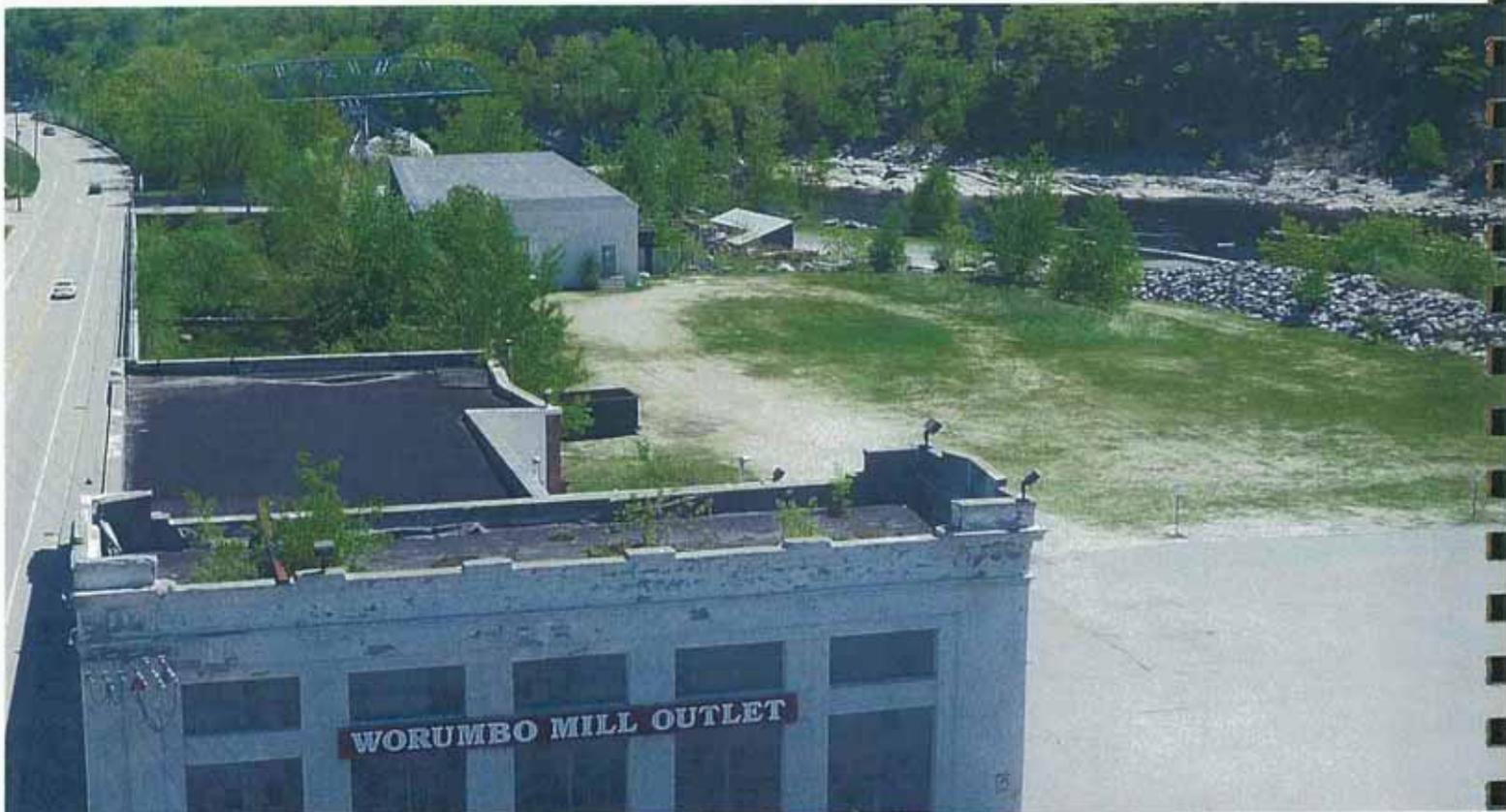
Before any undertaking can begin, an appropriate amount of planning and structuring must be invested in both the short term and long term goals of the project. Merchants, property owners, local government officials, community

¹ <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/>

residents, and civic leaders must agree to support goals for revitalization and join together in a partnership. The following groups are part of the revitalization effort, and as such, are an important part of the revitalization toolkit.

The Committee

A committee serves an important role in any great project as the facilitator and gatekeeper of ideas and actions. Comprised of interested individuals, a committee becomes the focal point and standard bearer of a movement. Committee membership should be comprised of volunteer, elected, and/or appointed individuals, often chaired by a salaried position who's duty is to understand the full scope of the project's aims and endeavors, understand the legal, physical and financial hurdles involved in completion, and is responsible for organizing meetings and distributing information as necessary. A new effort known as the *Lisbon Downtown Network* will soon address the organization and economic restructuring responsibilities required as part of the National Trust Main Street program. Its purpose is to create consensus and cooperation between all groups and individuals who have an interest in the revitalization of the main street community. This committee will engage the community's public sector, private sector, and government to engage and support the changes needed to revitalize Lisbon's downtown. The group should be the first point of contact and strategic arm of any and all revitalization efforts.



The Community

Just as a church is more than just the structure, so too is a town more than just a collection of buildings. Rather, a town is its people. Any economic and infrastructural investment which the town chooses to undertake in its downtown area must necessarily involve the goodwill of the people. Through public documentation and information distribution the public needs to be made aware of Lisbon's plan for growth and development. Every community member should be given the opportunity to guide and participate in the downtown revitalization.

Volunteers

Workshop participants often mentioned that many valued community initiatives are the result of volunteer groups who initiate, donate, fundraise and volunteer time to make things happen. Often, municipal or other government support contributes financially to volunteer efforts. Funding to promote the capacity of volunteer groups are a wise investment for the municipality, enabling it to build communities and support community initiatives at a favorable cost. In some cases, community groups may be able to leverage grant funding for projects that is not available to government, and so make an extra valuable ally for project implementation.



Any strong community requires the presence of involved citizens with vested interests in the welfare of their town. Well organized volunteerism is an excellent way of finding and focusing interested parties who can energize a community and become a self sustaining and vital brain-trust. Broad based volunteerism from local businesses, church groups, community groups, and from members of the local government are good ways to strengthen internal bonds and promote civic interest and responsibility.

Heritage Groups

Heritage groups, dedicated to preserving the historic character of Lisbon Falls, can be a great help shaping **Civic Branding and Identity** which gives a localized authentic feel to the area, as well as, preserving and celebrating distinct cultural attractions.

Design

Capitalizing on its best assets — such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets — is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer. Design activities also include instilling good maintenance practices in the commercial district, enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

Lisbon has many great existing amenities and groups hard at work to create a sense of identity, and community. A design strategy for Lisbon would use these assets to identify opportunities for: new business development, improved infrastructure, improved pedestrian and vehicle access, landscape features, art, interpretive and interactive displays, recreation, etc; weaving them together into a cohesive whole. An interpretive master plan would give organization to existing projects and future ideas, prioritizing and ensuring that each works together



towards a common goal. Design allows the community to harness these assets and give them renewed energy, allowing them to tackle their goals resulting in a more powerful overall outcome.

Design Guidelines

Through the land use by-law, and the design guidelines contained within it, the municipality manages the appearance and use of new construction and building renovations. Standards for architecture and site works affect site use, access, building form, door and window treatments, signage, parking, and landscape. The municipality will also manage the location of new businesses and development according to their established Comprehensive Plan Update (June 2007).



Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian traffic is key to the vitality of main streets. Heavy traffic, large vehicles, fast moving traffic, and the absence of sidewalks in many places combine to create unsafe conditions for pedestrians in some locations. Streetscape improvements should incorporate **'traffic calming'** measures as an immediate contribution toward a safer pedestrian environment. Planting of street trees, the provision of parallel parking, curbed sidewalks, and street furnishings may help to create the impression of a narrower street corridor, and thereby slow traffic, and define safer crossing locations.





Streetscape Improvements

Upgrading aims to promote pedestrian use and refine the appearance of village core areas. Enhancements should focus on providing a safe, accessible, and comfortable setting for people of all ages. Before improvements to the streetscape are made, any concerns with street-side parking and access to off street parking lots or driveways may need to be resolved. Upgrading of main street areas and adjacent public open spaces can often include curb and gutter, sidewalks, street tree planting, ornamental lighting, and sidewalk furnishings. If sufficient space is available, street side cafes or small parks may be created to help enliven the street. Sculpture, historic artifacts or other special features can be incorporated as further attractions to the area.

Streets and Parking Improvements

Functional challenges with local streets may need to be addressed to improve safety or enhance traffic flow. Village parking should strive to be safe, convenient, attractive, and available in sufficient quantity. The obvious shortcomings in many communities are the appearance and safe configuration of parking areas. Undefined parking areas adjacent to the street often occupy excess space that could be renovated to enhance the appearance of the streetscape. Angle parking located adjacent to busy streets poses a safety concern, and a strategy to eliminate such parking and compensate for any lost parking should be developed for each core area. Plans for alterations to streets and on-street parking need to be coordinated with the state Department of Transportation.





Active Transport Orientation

Core developments should reduce local automobile traffic and facilitate future transit infrastructure. Trail and sidewalk plans for linkages to likely future transit hubs, be they rail or road based, should be implemented. Existing car pool parking sites near the entrances to villages should be upgraded to improve their visual appearance, and the safety and security of patrons and their vehicles.

Trails and Open Space Master Plan

A coordinated plan for the development of trails, sidewalks and park spaces would focus on providing a continuous network that enhances pedestrian access to desired destinations, including important community facilities, recreation and leisure spaces, and waterfront areas. Local systems should be coordinated with adjacent communities, museum sites and regional systems such as the Androscoggin River which has access points and maps from Umbagog Lake in New Hampshire and Maine to Merrymeeting Bay in the Atlantic. The modes of trail use to be accommodated can have a significant impact on the design of the system; in some rural communities the demand for all terrain vehicle trails may need to be addressed. Plans must be able to respond to the potential long term needs of a community.

It is important to note that the Town has recently completed a master plan for trails and has successfully build two legs of a trail system, with a third and final leg scheduled for later this year. This final piece of trail will connect the larger system to the Lisbon Falls area.



Green Villages

Historic images of many villages show stately elm trees shading main streets and punctuating the surrounding countryside. In most areas the heavy tree losses of recent decades have not yet been made up with new growth of either disease resistant elms or other suitable native trees. For aesthetic, ecological, and practical reasons the large scale replacement of street trees is merited. A program of tree replacement and on going management of trees should be designed and implemented. The existing stock of street trees should be assessed and appropriate care provided. Suitable locations where trees can thrive – and therefore require less care – should be targeted for planting. Programs to encourage tree planting by local residents may be a feasible way to restore tree populations. Planting must be mindful of needs for infrastructure maintenance, yet strive to achieve a look and feel consistent with historic village character. In some areas tree planting will help to dampen the impact of visually intrusive features. Mass planting or naturalization may help to reduce maintenance requirements in some civic open spaces.

The ongoing development and maintenance of park spaces, natural areas, and cemeteries also contribute to the appearance of most communities. Plans for public open spaces should address the need for green in communities, and help to shade and cool sport and recreation facilities. No-mow programs may help reduce grounds maintenance requirements and allow the development of forested areas where they complement normal use.



Waterfront/Riverfront Improvements

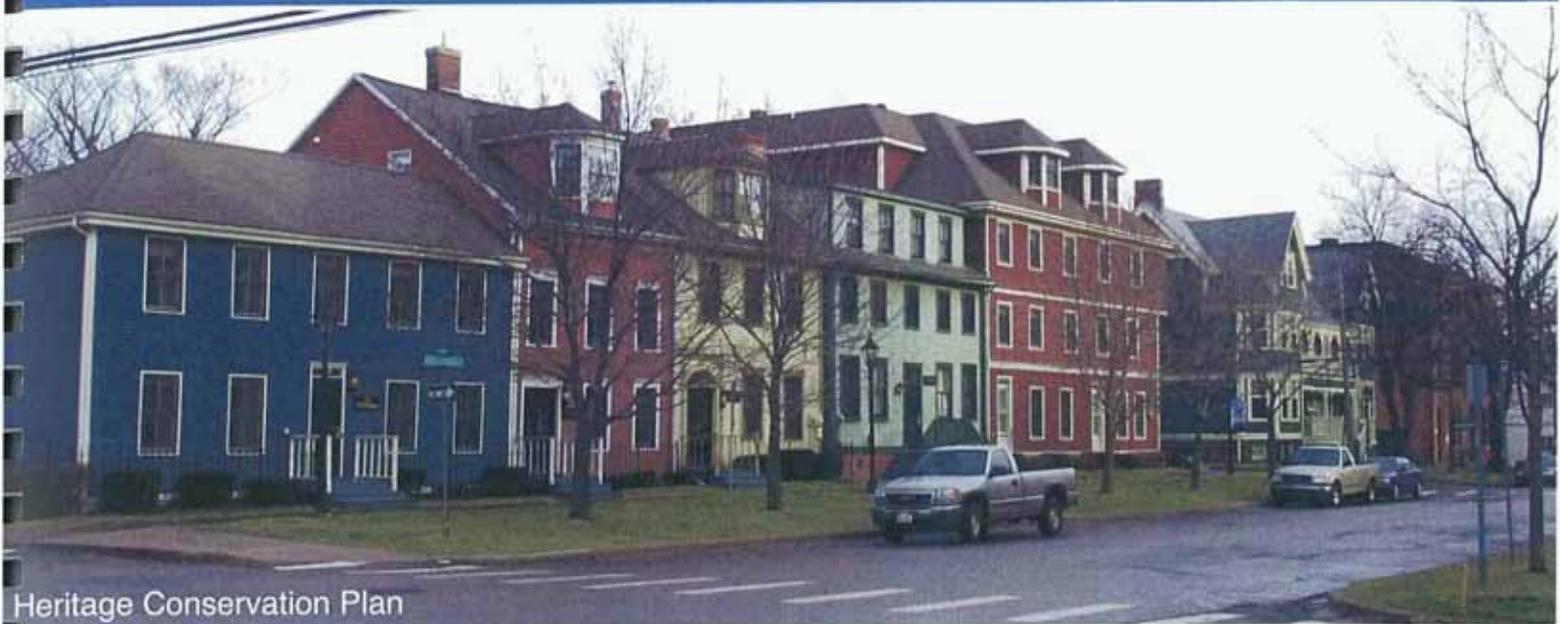
The Androscoggin River has played an important role in the origin of the community, but over time a stronger orientation toward the street has diminished the visible presence of rivers and lakes. Waterfront improvements aim to reconnect communities to the water by promoting the safe enjoyment of local rivers and lakes. There are significant opportunities to provide for the development of views to the water, physical access to shorelines and the water, and the development of water based recreation.

In core areas and elsewhere the presence of streams and water bodies should be celebrated. Simple signage identifying the water body should be provided. Waterside park spaces should be provided in appropriate locations to facilitate enjoyment of, and access to the water. One focus of local trail development should be the provision of access to rivers and lakes. Substantial park space should be acquired to provide waterside access where possible. Where impressive vistas occur along the roadside, safe pull off areas and simple park amenities should be provided.

Heritage Conservation Program

Lisbon has significant historic structures. In some places the concentration of quality historic buildings is a defining characteristic. The conservation of these structures as a valued part of the community and the local economy should be supported through a heritage conservation program to support the timely and appropriate maintenance of qualifying historic structures.

There are numerous funding and tax incentives available through the State and National Trust for Historic Preservation for both individuals and groups. Other forms of funding can be found through the Economic and Com-



Heritage Conservation Plan

munity Development grant program, Preserve America, and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

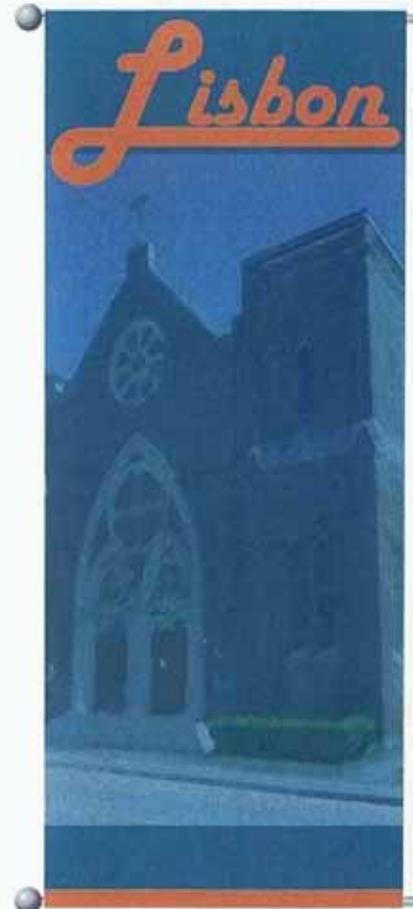
Scenic Rural Routes

Scenic local highways linking villages in the municipality are an asset to be managed and developed for the benefit of adjacent communities and village core areas. Highways should be developed as scenic rural routes that accommodate cycling and automobile touring, and help to feed activity into core areas.

A vision and plan for highways could be developed cooperatively with adjacent municipalities and the Androscoggin Land Trust to provide a cohesive route through its "Androscoggin Greenway" program. Areas of incompatible character should be remediated and scenic stops, historic sites, and wildlife viewing opportunities highlighted. As a planning study for the future of Rt 196 has been put forward by the State of Maine's DOT, it is recommended that strict attention should be paid to how evolving traffic patterns and potential highway upgrades could positively or negatively affect the character and functionality of downtown Lisbon. Obviously a town depends on traffic for its economic vitality, but too much traffic can have the exact opposite effect- making areas uncomfortable and pedestrian unfriendly- encouraging shoppers to go where the driving is easiest: out of town.

Promotion

By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and





marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

Promotion can come in many forms but should harness local identity and reinvigorate community pride. A positive unified image and atmosphere will attract shoppers, investors, and other businesses to the area.

Civic Branding & Identity

Effective branding will support the growth and development of business, tourism and communities within Lisbon. Successful corporations have invested heavily in their brands to establish a competitive advantage, enhance their position in the market, and drive consumer identification. Similarly, many competitive communities have invested heavily in brand development and brand recognition. This includes a civic color scheme, logo, tag-line and other brand guidelines.

The process of articulating community identity should provide a meaningful representation of a coherent image and marketable brand for Lisbon. Like their corporate counterparts, the civic brand should be simple, recognizable, and meaningful.

The brand identity would then be reflected in graphics programs, merchandising, promotional materials, web site, street signage, and wayfinding/

interpretive signage. Signature landscape elements throughout the municipality - key views, landmarks, rivers and lakes, historic sites - should be managed to cultivate an awareness of what makes Lisbon a special place.

To this end, a civic branding strategy should be created as a first step to define the brand for Lisbon so that additional graphic materials (signage, websites, stationary and letterhead, etc.) can build on the brand.

Civic Signage & Wayfinding Strategy

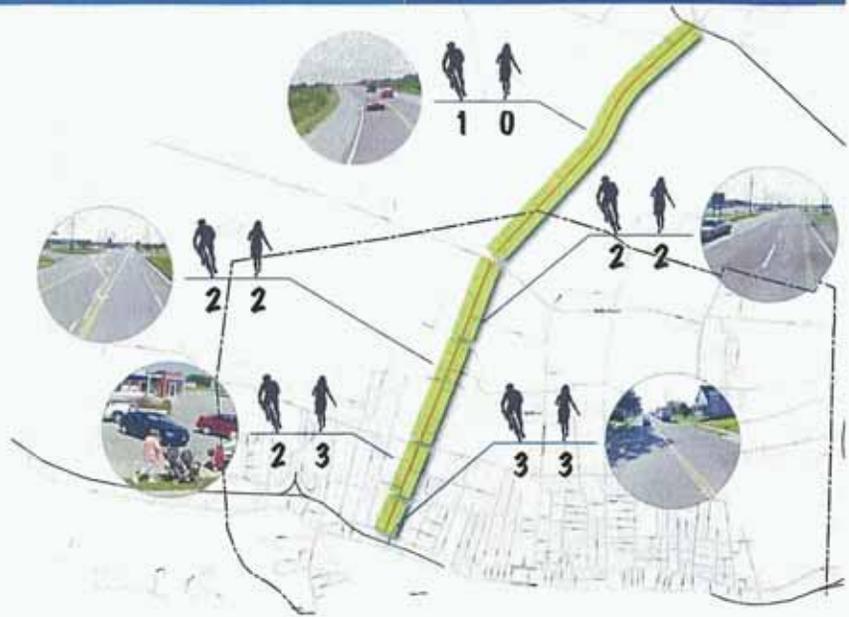
A system of community signing should be developed to identify, welcome, and reflect the special qualities of Lisbon. Some community signing is already in place, and should be replaced with a more comprehensive strategy once it is developed. The signage should reinforce the brand.

A signing program within the municipality will foster increased awareness of, and pride in, local industry and promote high standards for signage. Standards or templates for signage could be developed in consultation with commercial businesses. Umbrella organizations could support the implementation of signage by coordinating a discount for bulk manufacture and erection of signs. A strategy for business signage could help to reduce or replace scattered roadside signs advertising local services and products.

Related to signage, wayfinding works to help people find attractions and amenities within the area. A coordinated use of signage, mapping, managed views, and landmarks helps people find their destination. Central areas in each hub might include a wayside pull off and kiosk to highlight the available services, products and local events.

Heritage Plan & Walking Tours

Community heritage interpretive plans should form part of a larger framework for heritage interpretation in the municipality, and build upon the knowledge of local heritage groups and experts. A strategy to highlight the historic and cultural character of Lisbon could use a variety of interpretive media to inform and inspire residents and visitors (interpretive panels, sculptures, museums, outdoor displays and landscape spaces). Physical improvements in the community could draw attention to historic sites or traditional activities, and conserve or reinterpret the material culture of the past. The rich history of the area from pre-historic to recent times provides an impor-



tant resource for the community and attraction for visitors. The existing museums and groups with an interest in local history have made significant headway in conserving and presenting local history.



Digital Tourism Strategy

Technology can be a very powerful ally. There are many historic interpretive sites, museums, and organizations that have embraced today's technology. It has become another avenue to communicate, and breathe life into, important stories in the form of personal accounts, visual footage, etc. A cohesive strategy would realize the possibilities, bringing Lisbon to the forefront in communication. Telling the story of Lisbon could take on many forms. Tapping into the international community via the internet would be another way to market and attract people who might have otherwise missed this beautiful area.

A digital tourism strategy would draw on the existing wealth of knowledge within Lisbon and work hand in hand with the various other plans outlined in this toolbox. Given the near universal reach of the internet, and given that it is often the first point of reference and research for travelers, the uniqueness of Lisbon's culture, events, and geography should be displayed and conveyed online.

Festivals and Events

Special events to celebrate local culture and traditions help to build community, make communities more vibrant places, and support the local economy. Physical upgrades to communities should provide benefits for everyday users and also contribute to the success of local festivals. In many cases





there will be a link between local events and the community identity which should be fostered for mutual benefit. A catalogue of existing festivals and festival opportunities would assist efforts to coordinate and develop new events. Cross promotion of festivals may help to increase the success of festivals and promote the development of a suite of complementary events in the municipality.

In this regard, it is obvious that the civic will and infrastructure already exists to promote festivities and events. The Moxie Festival, an annual Summer event, quadruples the population of Lisbon each year for three days and brings tourist dollars from all over the world. Festivals are money making opportunities for small businesses and should be encouraged whenever possible. That Lisbon is currently home to one of Maine's largest parades and annual events, should generate the impetus for others to follow. The presence of several thousand tourists and visitors each summer should / could be leveraged to further promote other facets of the community and region.

Economic Restructuring

The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business, recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses, to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

Helping local business is a key goal of main street revitalization. Economic restructuring achieves this by helping existing businesses improve their assets and by attracting new business that will strengthen the community market place.

Façade Improvement Program

These programs encourage improvements to the exterior appearance of commercial buildings within a designated area by providing a financial incentive. The programs assist building owners to maintain and upgrade their properties in a manner that benefits their enterprise and the surrounding business district. Upgrades usually need to meet predetermined architectural standards to qualify for cost sharing. These standards typically require upgrades to windows, siding, and signage to better reflect the historic character of the building and the streetscape. Planned improvements should facilitate the use of local labour and materials.

Tax Increment Financing

Funding of this type allows the municipality to promote economic development by setting aside a portion of the new property tax revenue from increases in assessed values within a designated TIF (Tax increment financing) district. TIF revenues could leverage private sector redevelopment investment with the use of credit enhancement, provide revenues to support municipal infrastructure improvements from sewer and water to streetscape, and allow the municipality to match individual contributions towards facade improvements. To qualify for funding, improvements would fall into a series of requirements targeted towards maintaining the historical presence, such as the use of local materials and builders, and the use of green technologies, to name a few.

Business Recruitment

The development potential of properties could be illustrated to provide a tool for marketing key buildings or locations where core areas require revitalization. Illustrations would include a business case along with plan and three dimensional illustrations to highlight development opportunity to the community and to potential investors. This process of developing these materials may highlight obstacles to development that could be addressed by the property owner or municipality to facilitate development. A portfolio of development opportunity sites in the municipality could be used to support local economic development activities. Business recruitment efforts could target gaps in the retail environment that affect the development of core areas.

BID Business Improvement Districts

The creation of business improvement districts is a vehicle for organizing and funding activity within a designated commercial area. All businesses within an area become members of the association, and then work together to achieve their collective aims for improvement. BIDs can be found in towns and cities throughout the United States.

3.0 Vision 2030

If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.

- Lawrence J. Peter

In addition to the tools available to the Town for downtown revitalization (outlined in Chapter 2), there are specific and generalized projects well suited as revitalization catalysts for Lisbon Falls. As was outlined in the vision, connecting downtown back to the riverfront is a strategic long-term vision. This could include:

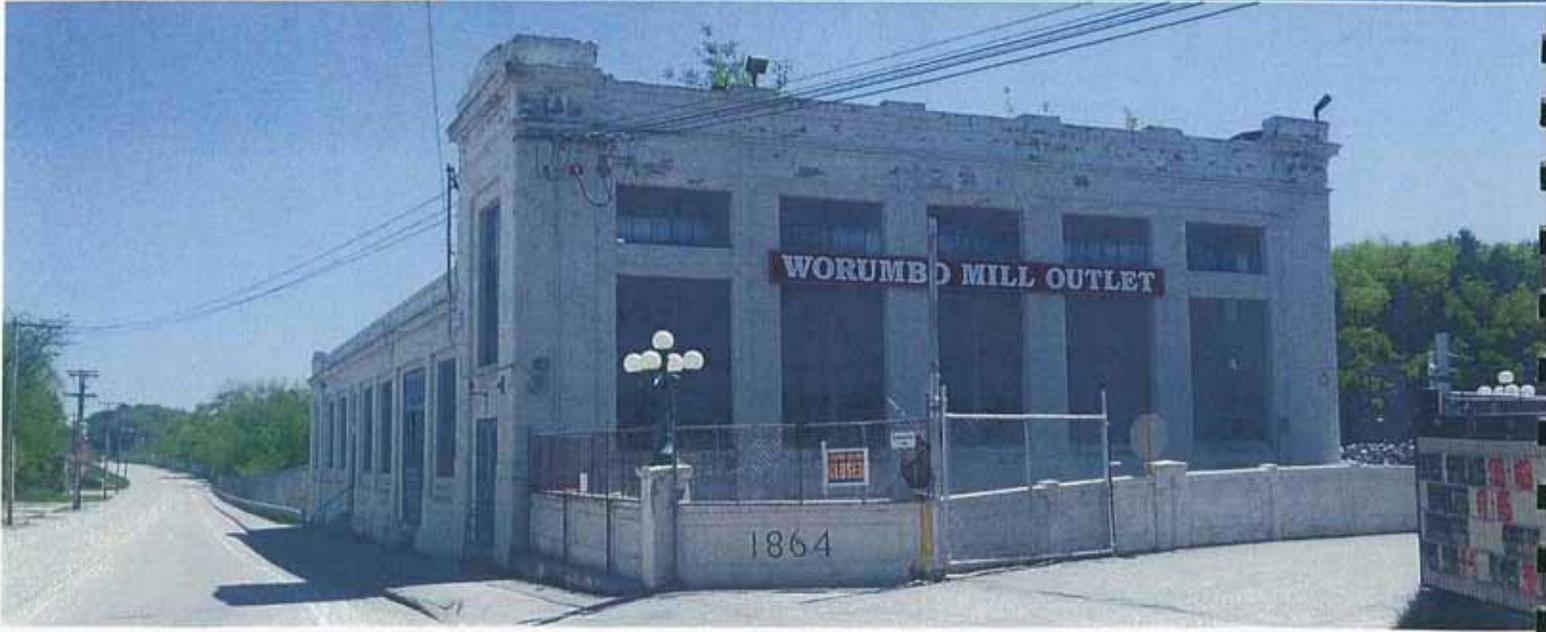
1. bringing the downtown to the riverfront by redeveloping the Worumbo Mill site or other riverfront sites;
2. Creating better visual and physical connections to the riverfront from the downtown.
3. Bringing the river brand, heritage and identity to the downtown

Specific Development Locations & Opportunities

Worumbo Mill Waterfront Site

Historically, the economic heart of Lisbon Falls was the Worumbo Mill. Built on the banks of the Androscoggin River, the mill was erected in 1864 following the Civil War. It was eventually added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, but sadly a significant portion of the mill complex was destroyed by a devastating fire in 1987.

While many buildings in the complex no longer exist, some still do and are operational to varying degrees. Dominating the site is a 3-Story, 75,000sf



structure that served as the primary mill building. It is presently available in the commercial real estate market. The original hydroelectric house remains intact, as do a few other unique buildings. The land itself is quite unique as well, existing between the central downtown of Lisbon Falls and the actual waterfalls themselves, separated only by the historic mill spillway.

Because of the unique character of this site, and because of its prime location, there is no doubt that vast opportunities for Lisbon's economic and cultural growth could be directly attributed to its development. This waterfront area, directly adjacent to downtown, overlooking the falls of the Androscoggin River, with historic structures and infrastructure already in place, could become the cultural epicenter for redevelopment. Festival areas, waterfront parks and promenades, mixed use developments, and civic buildings would all function well in this prime location. The area is large enough to house any of these uses and a mix therein.

As it is situated at the head of Main Street, the Worumbo Mill Site also serves as an anchor point to the development of Main Street itself. Worumbo development, in conjunction with other aesthetic upgrades, would be a major catalyst in the economic revitalization of Main Street. It is also recommended that the White Mill building be developed first, and allow its use and character to influence the development of the smaller on-site buildings in order to maintain a cohesive design and use to the whole of the site.

Currently the area is privately owned, but with proper design strategies and civic oversight, development in this area can be guided towards an aesthetic compatible with the economic and cultural growth of Lisbon Falls. This area must be targeted for direct supervision due to its keystone capacity in the development of the town.

Old Lisbon Falls High School Development

Of the many historic buildings and properties in Lisbon Falls, one in particular will soon be redeveloped and will play a prominent role in the overall economic development of downtown Lisbon Falls. The Old Lisbon Falls High School, sited on Campus Street one block off of Main Street, is a three story brick building dating from the 19th Century and currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The town issued an RFP and successfully attracted a development partner for this property. Lisbon Housing Associates LLC will redevelop the old school as a 12 unit subsidized senior housing facility to be known as "Campus Commons." Interior construction work is underway and is scheduled for completion later this year.

This new housing area, proximal as it is to downtown and the MTM Recreation Center, holds great potential for contributing to the character of the town. The development of this site could potentially tie into proposed way-finding strategies, future events calendars, heritage walking tours, and civic branding and identity.

MTM Recreation Center

Located one block off of Main Street, the MTM Rec Center and Park serves the same neighborhood as the Old Lisbon Falls High School and could, with the right connectivity, play an intrinsic part in the development of downtown. It is suggested that pedestrian access between MTM and Main Street be examined and solutions proposed for improvements. The back area of the property, located along Campus Street and across from the old high school, currently serve as a small neighborhood park. Upgrades are recommended for this park including ornamental fencing, and landscaping plan, so that it may continue to serve as a setting for a summer series of concerts, and be more readily usable for a fuller spate of events such as farmers markets, art-in-the-park, or other regularly scheduled, minimally disruptive, low impact events. Thanks to contributions from local corporations a new pavilion / stage has recently been built and has played a prominent role in ongoing Summer festivities.

Given its adjacency to the Old Lisbon Falls High School Development, there exists a great deal of synergistic potential between these two institutions. It is recommended that the two play an important role in the economic growth of downtown.

Intersection of 196 and Main Street

An intrinsic piece of the fabric of downtown is the intersection of 196 and Main Street. At this intersection sits the Historic Worumbo Mills area, the Worumbo Mill Outlet, the head of Main Street, the locally iconic Kennebec

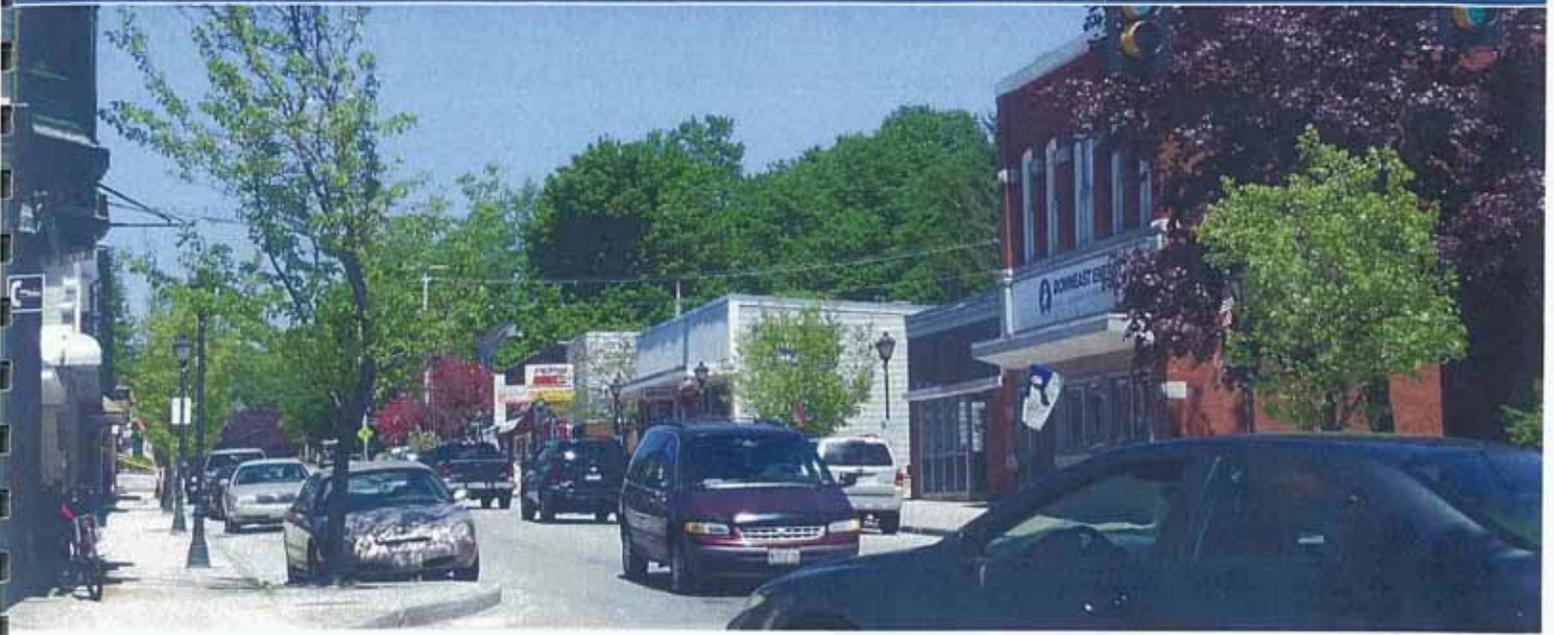


Fruit Company, and one of the few locations where Main St., Lisbon Falls downtown has the potential for direct access to the waterfront. However, at this same location you will also find transport trucks roaring between Lewiston and the coast, a hub for local vehicular traffic, a train track crossing, two pedestrian crosswalks, and a mix of turning lanes, traffic lights, and highway directional signage. Soon, there will also be an entry point to the Lisbon Trail system added to the mix.

While this intersection is clearly a focus of several vectors (vehicular, pedestrian, cultural activities, and strategic downtown growth) it is also clearly a highly used and pedestrian unfriendly area. It is recommended that measures be undertaken to improve this intersection in order to facilitate the economic growth of Main St., Lisbon Falls. Slowing traffic, improving pedestrian safety, and utilizing this intersection as a Gateway Feature, would improve the connection between downtown and the waterfront area, and give Lisbon Falls a more prominent presence along the 196 corridor.

In situations such as this, small scale traffic circles or landscaped traffic islands are very effective. Traffic circles have the dual desired effects of slowing down traffic, and creating the opportunity for iconic imagery. Additionally, they present excellent opportunities for vehicular wayfinding, pedestrian crossings, and aesthetic branding through the use of materials, signage, plantings, street furniture, etc.

Material changes within the intersection are recommended, brick pavers or stamped concrete, as are improvements to the crosswalks including ADA ramping and tactile pavers, crosswalk signage, and contrasting surface materials. The use of more historically iconic street lighting and benches are also recommended, as are the upgrading of sidewalks, street trees, and plantings.



As Lisbon continues to grow, and its downtown areas become more economically viable and exciting, it will naturally begin to push toward the Woorumbo Mills waterfront area. A major impediment to this growth, from the shopping pedestrian's point of view, is the crossing of 196. A traffic circle would make this transition much easier and more pleasant, and centralize the focus of Main Street around this unique crossing. With proper design and construction this circle has the potential to become the heart of downtown.

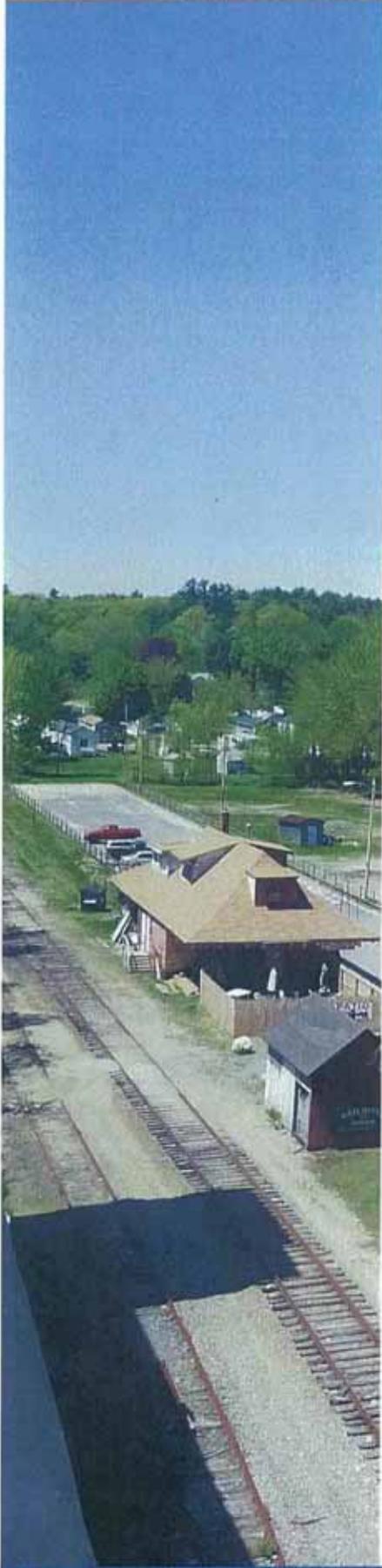
Main Street

Historically, Main Street was the main street- the street around which all of a town's civic institutions clustered, the street around which businesses developed and thrived, and the street which fostered the greatest social and economic integration between people and community.

However, as populations blossomed, and opportunities for personal travel became more common, economic centers began moving away from the architectural centers of towns. Cultural centers and social centers soon followed. Now, the Main Streets of small towns often feel defunct.

Fortunately we are in an era of rediscovering the Main Street, re-incorporating it, refurbishing it, and restoring it to the former social and economic powerhouse that it once served as decades ago. Lisbon Falls' Main Street is ripe for redevelopment as there currently exist many civic and business uses along it: the community library, the U.S. post office, the fire station, several eateries, banks, and an art studio, to name but a few.

However, in its current incarnation, Main Streets' sidewalks are not very wide and mostly unadorned concrete, the street trees are few and far between, and there are but a few randomly placed furnishings.



A redesigned Main Street would include new materials, brick or granite pavers, improved crosswalks with ADA ramps and tactile pavers, upgraded street furnishings, planters, lighting, and potentially a redesign of the existing parking and sidewalk widths in order to more suitably meet the needs of the businesses while conveying an element of safety to the pedestrians. Façade improvement, civic signage, wayfinding strategies, and civic branding all play into the redesign of Main Street by investigating and enhancing the unique character of Lisbon Falls.

As design standards are generated, funding is secured, and the Town becomes more comfortable with the process of streetscape design and construction, ongoing upgrades can be extended beyond the context of Main Street to other streets deemed suitable per the dynamics of the Town.

Pedestrian Linkage

Each of the three aforementioned sites has great potential for redevelopment and each have many advocates for their uses. It is also imperative though that these three sites not stand alone as island of rehabilitation, but rather are seamlessly woven into the fabric of the community through a network of upgraded pedestrian improvements. A pedestrian improvement plan including upgraded sidewalks, decorative lighting, new paving materials, and other street furnishings ought to be implemented connecting the MTM Recreation Center, the old high school, Route 196, School St., and Main Street.

One achievable, short term approach to this end is to resurface / repair the sidewalk system in this area and extend the ornamental lighting on Main Street up to the MTM Center and the "Campus Commons" housing project that is going in this year at the old high school. This consistent approach would help knit the area together, promote walkability, and give visitors instant notice that they are entering a special and cohesive area.

Sidewalk and lighting projects are also recommended along Rt. 196 between School St. and Canal St. to improve this "gateway" area into downtown and to address the awkward interchange which currently seems to shun the downtown businesses.

Lisbon Trail System

In the past decade as health concerns have mounted and outdoor opportunities for children has decreased due to rampant urbanization, a greater emphasis has been placed on opportunities for passive recreational opportunities. Trail systems, unlike ball fields or planned sport activities, are simple to maintain and accessible to all ages and interests of users. Trail systems provide biking, hiking, and walking to all age groups, and allow for natural exploration, wildlife watching, bird watching, and access to other wilder-

ness areas.

Lisbon is fortunate to have an extensive trail system. While currently unconnected to any other trail system, with planning and coordination with neighboring communities, the Lisbon system could be connected to and become well integrated with, the larger Androscoggin Trail System.

With Main Street being just a few hundred feet away from the Lisbon Trail System (and potentially the entirety of the Androscoggin Trail System) there are ample opportunities for small businesses to take advantage of the unique needs of the trail users, including bike shops, natural foods cafes and markets, hiking and camping goods stores, general stores, or nature/wildlife oriented tourist information kiosks.

Waterfront Park and Waterfall Area

The reason Lisbon Falls exists is because of the Lisbon Falls. Traditionally, most Maine towns and cities which exist on an inland river have survived and prospered due to the proximity of waterfalls- which have powered mills, and later generated electricity, and been the impetus for the eventual growth of more service oriented towns and cities. Because of their humble origins the waterfalls of Maine's rivers often have a dirty and industrial feel to them, saddled with the accompanying mill or turn of the century factory.

This is the case in Lisbon Falls as well. The waterfalls, dynamic and scenic as they are, are hidden from general view by the old and abandoned buildings of the Worumbo Mill area. However, they still represent an undeniable opportunity for tourism, economic revitalization, and environmental stewardship. Scenic access to the falls is recommended through the mills area, with the potential for historic or interpretive signage. The areas east of the falls, with better views to it, would be ideal for scenic views, kayaking courses, public trails, and other activities, accessible by pedestrians across the Canal Street Bridge.

The Worumbo Mill area does take up some of the space around the falls, but not all of it. The remaining waterfront areas and riverbanks present prime opportunities for parks, trails, open space areas, nature watching, bird watching, hiking, naturalism, and environmental discovery.

The area northwest of the Worumbo Mill area, off of Canal Street, lying between the Lisbon Falls Trail System and the Androscoggin River, is part of the Mill parcel and may be developed in conjunction with the rehabilitation of the structure itself. As such, this area may be used for commercial development. It is highly recommended that within this potential commercial zone certain areas of public access to the waterfront be provided- both for the viability of the businesses and for the civic health of the town. Potential river access points in conjunction with commercial uses could include cafe

waterfront seating, kayak / canoe testing, fishing demonstration areas for a wilderness outfitting store, boardwalks, etc.

Urban Opportunities

Civic Art

The use of civic art and the display of art in prominent locations has a dual desirable effect, first of providing a unique iconic and visually recognizable aesthetic to a town, and second of providing opportunities for local artisans and other members of the creative class the opportunity for expression and possible financial gain.

A key driving force in economic development in post-industrial cities within the United States is the creative class. A term encompassing workers in industries as wide ranging as engineers, educators, and doctors, to artisans, sculptors, and computer innovators, the creative class embodies the non-industrial, non-service oriented, production economy and is expected to grow by over 10 million jobs in the following decade. Targeting this economic class for immigration and eventual residential expansion requires an investment in local arts including visual, sculptural, music, etc.

Heritage District

Older historic towns oft' times have the distinct advantage of having time on their side. With roots dating as far back as the 1700's, Lisbon Falls has the unique ability to draw upon a vast cultural history spanning early Native American settlements through European involvement and eventually American ethos. Many districts within the area have a unique flavor and character which can be capitalized upon for the economic benefit and growth of the town. As historic preservation societies or heritage groups come on line it is in the benefit of the town to begin identifying, naming, and celebrating unique areas of town.

Downtown Investment

Many of the tools listed in the Toolbox section offer numerous ways of investing in the downtown core with strategies encompassing funding, volunteerism, design, and other organizational principals. As Lisbon Falls grows it must embrace the idea that a healthy economic system is reliant upon a vibrant downtown core. Furthermore, the downtown core consists primarily of three elemental structures: businesses, residences, and civic buildings. Each of these three elements must be supported by the citizenry and town government to ensure overall economic, cultural, and social health of the downtown core area.

- **Residential Development:** Investment in residential infrastructure must be maintained, including real estate opportunities, manageable property taxation, etc. Ensuring an adequate supply of housing volume and mix will

encourage population growth, limit traffic, and provide a strong citizenry for the town of Lisbon Falls

- **Business Development-** The economic engine of any town is the people. By providing opportunities for small businesses to engage the town and tourists in secure retail environments, the growth and vitality of the downtown core can be maintained. Proper taxation balanced with business incentives
- **Civic Development-** The public face of the often hidden inner workings of the government are represented by brick and mortar Civic institutions such as libraries, fire departments, town halls, etc. These edifices, accessible to all and owned by none, are the cornerstones of any republic and their upkeep and maintenance are vital to supporting the credibility of any town. Ongoing investment in Civic structures plays a key part in the social and economic health of Lisbon Falls.

Environmental Opportunities

Preservation Areas

From many points of view, a case can be made for the preservation of natural ecosystems and the integration of these systems into the urban, suburban, and rural landscape. Preservation areas can yield economic benefits through tourism, resource preservation, higher land values, and long range infrastructure costs. Preservation areas can yield health benefits through clean water, clean air, and by providing large open areas for active and passive recreation opportunities. They can even yield educational benefits in the form of local school field trips, college science extension programs, or wildlife study and viewing. For any number of reasons, the preservation of wilderness areas is of great benefit to any community.

Lisbon Falls is fortunate in its setting to be surrounded by vast acreages of wilderness. However, without proper long term planning, any town can fall prey to the economic pressures of status quo development leading to urban sprawl. It is recommended that serious thought and study be given to slow growth alternatives, low impact developments, and other forms of urban and suburban development that recognize, celebrate, and preserve wilderness areas.

Green Energy and Environmental Impact Reduction

In the last few years several social and technological advancements have at last made it possible for communities to make serious headway in reducing their energy costs and environmental impact. A number of resources are available to reduce long term energy demands which any town places upon the environment. Some suggestions have been made by members of the Lisbon Falls community, for instance, that council look at the potential use of a green roof at the MTM Center. It is unknown if this is feasible without further study, but it indicates the political will to take action.

Other immediate actions can certainly take place including recycling, instal-

lation of bike lanes or bike share programs, water runoff management policies, installation of permeable surfaces in new landscape areas, source point pollution studies along the Androscoggin River, installation of solar paneling or small urban turbines, environmental awareness & education programs through outreach centers, rain barrels, rain gardens, or any number of LEED approved techniques throughout the construction of new buildings or the refurbishment of existing buildings. There may also exist the opportunity to restore the power generation potential of the old Worumbo Mill site. Even if the power generated is minimal, serving only a few immediate landscape installations, it could certainly serve as an educational tool.

Lisbon Falls has the potential to engage any of these environmental strategies to ensure the long term economic and environmental health of its businesses, residents, and civic ventures. It is recommended that short term and long term strategies be put forward, studied, and eventually adopted by the town.

Open Space & Trails, Field & Playgrounds

Recreation opportunities can be generally classified into two categories: active and passive. Active opportunities include ball fields and ball courts, tracks, playgrounds, etc., the design and installation of which may include any number of related functions such as tiered seating, restrooms, water fountains, gated access, parking, etc. Passive recreation is less maintenance and monetarily intensive, focusing on open space, trails, wilderness access, with some signage and information kiosks, and possibly rain shelters, picnic tables, or out houses.

Lisbon Falls has opportunities to invest in each of these forms of recreation. It is recommended that through the use of a 'Parks and Open Space master Plan' the community is surveyed, a stock of resources and opportunities is taken, locations are identified, budgets are obtained, and new parks are constructed.

Conclusions and Tables

Lisbon Falls is currently engaged in a unique opportunity to become part of a growing trend geared toward recognizing the important role that a vibrant downtown plays in the social, cultural, and economic health of a town.

Earlier efforts, including the 2000 Downtown Lisbon Falls Economic Revitalization Strategy and the Lisbon Comprehensive Plan, have generated ideas, enthused the community, and provided the philosophical foundations for Lisbon to move forward in seeking to join the Main Street Community

Through the use of a Vision Toolbox (see table) coupled with the outcomes of numerous public sessions and planning strategies, and the Lisbon Revitalization

Priority and Implementation*

Organization

		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
The Committee	The establishment of a singular, city coordinated, volunteer body responsible for the cooperation of all parties interested in the revitalization of downtown	1			
The Community	Dissemination of information to the public regarding plans for growth and development	1			
Support for Volunteer Organizations	Civic support for volunteer efforts result in greater community participation and greater opportunities for potential external funding sources			1	
BID Business Improvement District	A potential funding source for the long term improvement of public areas which directly impact local business developments	3			
Heritage Groups	A committed group of volunteers interested in the celebration and preservation of Lisbon's history			2	

Design

Design Guidelines	Visual standards for all new construction aid in the implementation of civic identity and ensure visual continuity and local character	2			
Pedestrian Safety	Slowing traffic through the use of urban streetscape practices within the urban core improves safety and contributes to downtown economic viability		3		
Streetscape Improvements	Design and improvement of streetscapes directly contribute to pedestrian safety, traffic calming, and economic success of downtown businesses		3		
Street and Parking Improvements	Design and construction of the urban core parking to better serve retail, businesses, civic uses, or downtown community events		3		
Active Transport Orientation	A study of potential pedestrian zones and vehicular transit hubs to reduce traffic, improve appearance and safety, and preserve environmental quality	2			
Trails and Open Space Master Plan	Identify and coordinate local and regional trails system with integration to downtown pedestrian zones and park space	2			
Green Villages	A comprehensive assessment of existing street trees, park spaces, and open spaces with an eye on future improvement and maintenance		2		
Waterfront/Riverfront Improvements	Direct public access to the water provides civic, cultural, and economic opportunities and strongly contributes to the identity of Lisbon Falls		3		
Heritage Conservation Program	Formation of a conservation program to identify and preserve buildings of a unique historic or architectural character			2	
Scenic Rural Routes	Identification of uniquely historic or scenic routes and the implementation of compatible uses or remediation of incompatible uses				2

Promotion

Civic Branding & Identity	Simple and recognizable color scheme, logo, or tag line for use on all future wayfinding, signage, marketing, web sites, and signature landscape elements	1			
Civic Signage & Wayfinding Strategy	A visually coordinated use of maps and signs for vehicular navigation, pedestrian navigation, civic information, and business advertisement		2		
Heritage Plan & Walking Tours	A strategy to highlight the historic and cultural character of the town through the use of signage, tours, kiosks, and existing museums			2	
Digital Tourism Strategy	The ongoing use of websites, webcams, geocaching, or other 'internet culture' forms of expression in the promotion of Lisbon Falls				1
Festivals and Events	The promotion, advertisement, infrastructure development, and organization of a wider variety of events including art walks, concerts, holiday parades, etc.				2

Economic Restructuring

Facade Improvement Program	Identification and/or creation of downtown architectural standards and the brick and mortar rehabilitation of store fronts to meet them	3			
Tax Incentive Funding	A potential funding source for the long term improvement of public areas which directly impact local business developments	3			
Business Recruitment	A cohesive plan for cataloguing real estate opportunities within the downtown core for small businesses, with potential funding incentives for new businesses		2		

*Colors represent suggested prioritization, numbers indicate ease of implementation, from 1 (relatively simple), to 3 (actions requiring greater coordination or funding).

Committee, the Town of Lisbon Falls has outlined a plan to move forward with the planning, designing, and construction of its downtown. The vision it has for social, cultural, and economic revitalization of the downtown core is broad and sweeping, yet clearly identifies and engages numerous opportunities for site specific design and refurbishment.



- Key Strategic Improvements:**
1. Realize the potential of the waters edge for healthy living and quality of life
 2. Improve the streetscapes for people and plants
 3. Identify and establish a continuation of the trail throughout the downtown. Create an identifiable trailhead.
 4. Improve the efficiency and regain the character of buildings
 5. Green the rooftops.
 6. Green or infill lost or forgotten spaces.

8: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle



Memorable downtowns with character draw people; authenticity and reverence for our built and cultural heritage pays substantial dividends.

- a. Preserving historic buildings
- b. Adaptive building use
- c. Recycling street furniture

Given its geography and history Lisbon has a number of unique opportunities to expand upon, from the shores of the Androscoggin River to the Moxie Festival. Lisbon is unique. That uniqueness must be recognized, celebrated, highlighted, identified, and (in short) utilized for the economic fortunes of the town. Just as the river was once the engine of commerce and growth in former centuries, so may it become again, as Lisbon Falls ceases to turn its back on the Androscoggin and instead opens it up to downtown and pedestrian access.

Through the hard works of the town of Lisbon Falls, many opportunities and strategies for development have been advanced. Opportunities for downtown's social, cultural, and economic revitalization are rife throughout the area, and the tools for taking advantage those opportunities have been clearly outlined in the preceding pages. It now simply remains to be done.

3.0

Implementation

Doing is a quantum leap from imagining.

- Barbara Sher

Thus far, this report has served primarily to document the history of Lisbon's vision for its future growth and expansion based around the idea of a revitalized downtown core. It has also served as a reminder and touchstone of the central ideas of rehabilitation which have been bandied about by the community for the last several years. This document has also served as a brief tutorial and primer for potential and necessary first steps in the redesign of Lisbon, Lisbon Falls, and Lisbon Village. It has outlined the philosophy that economic revitalization can be accomplished through design, and that a robust and flourishing downtown can be the impetus for the continued growth and expansion of prosperity throughout all the surrounding communities.

While several important areas of development have been addressed (some of which are now under development), it is the conclusion of this document that a few key first steps ought to be undertaken. This concluding chapter will identify those first steps toward the implementation of 'Lisbon 2030.'

First Steps

Parking Assessment Study

Many local business owners in the downtown area have expressed the concern that their businesses are being adversely affected by a lack of sufficient parking.

A parking assessment study will identify parking needs, explore how they are or are not being met, identify potential new parking areas, and look at the ways and means by which parking patterns may be reshaped to better serve the needs of the downtown community. This assessment will eventually play a key role in: the development of a downtown master plan; the

development of signage, identity, and branding; and the physical redesign of Main Street.

Sidewalks

Main Street is the key feature of any down town- the locus of economic and social activity. A blighted Main Street drives away visitors, investors, tourists, shoppers, and businesses. When these elements leave a down town, real estate prices fall and soon the surrounding neighborhoods begin to feel the pressure. It is absolutely necessary therefore, to ensure a vibrant Main Street.

While parking and traffic are essential elements to Main Street, so too is the pedestrian; and the forum of the pedestrian is the sidewalk. The sidewalk is the unique zone of activity between the private store front and the public street- it is the area of passage, activity, window shopping, and sometimes

just relaxing in the Summer sun. A sidewalk can be thought of as a long, narrow, urban park, with spaces for gathering, traversing, information, and advertisement for local businesses.

The new sidewalk should be wide enough to accommodate a number of different activities throughout the seasons, provide opportunities for on-street parking, be built of quality materials, and serve both the public and the private interests. Elements would include, among other things, street trees, furniture, informational and way finding signage, and perhaps new building facades.



Worumbo Mill Plan

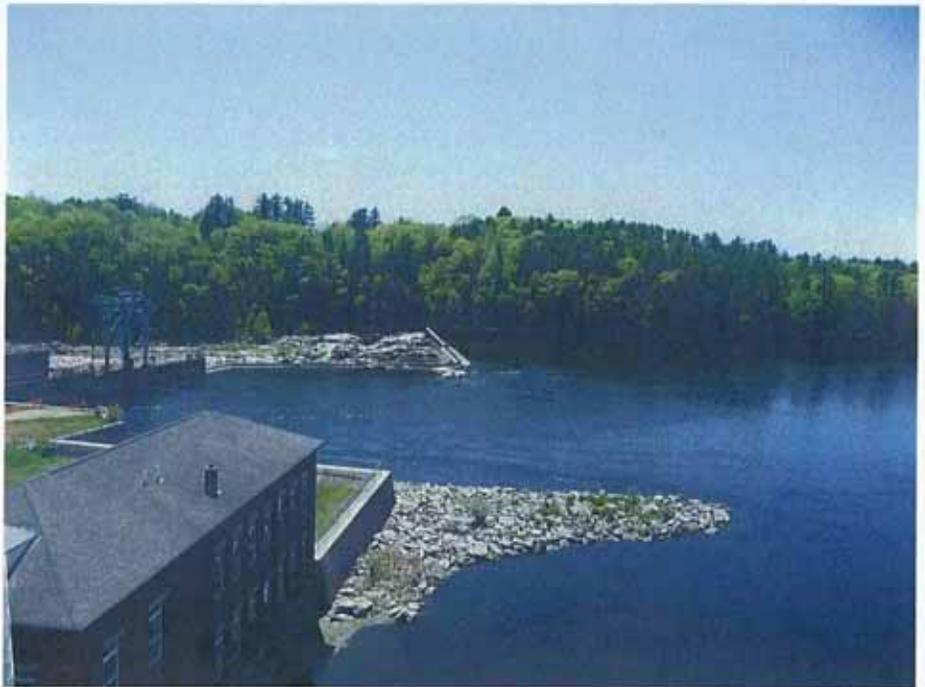
As has been stated earlier in this report, the Worumbo Mill site is of absolute importance in the reinvigoration of downtown. The mill sits directly between downtown Main Street and its waterfront. Imagine how different the possible futures of Lisbon Falls would be if the Mill were to become an open, inviting, destination of retail and apartments, or if it were to become a closed door 'employees only' light industrial warehouse, or even if it were to sit and remain vacant for the next several years. These are are vastly different scenarios for the site, and by implication for the town itself.

It becomes, therefore, the responsibility of the town to invest itself in the outcome of the Worumbo Mills site.

There are two options available to the community when it comes to taking control of Lisbon's future via the Worumbo Mills site. The first is to take true financial and legal control of the site through outright ownership. Ownership of the site would allow the town ultimate control over its development. Possibilities and potentials are endless and the development could be designed and planned so as to perfectly enhance the quality of the space, the vigor of the downtown, the economic goals of the local businesses, or the goals of the social / entertainment directors of the town. The space could be park space, retail space, living space, or a combination of all. Of course, the implications of outright ownership have their drawbacks as well. It is expensive to own and develop property, and the onus of its success would fall upon the town.

The second option available to the community as it seeks to guide its own growth and development would be to define its vision for the Mill site, and use that vision as a guiding principle behind any potential economic incentives offered to developers. For instance, the town could offer loan guarantees, or state tax credits to those developers who will ensure an improved public access to the waterfront, or to those developers who are planning on downtown compatible uses (residential or retail) rather than light industrial or warehouse. Given the importance of this site, it would be in the town's best interest to use its power of economic incentives to

leverage the best possible use of the site, or to negotiate for design particulars. However, it also becomes the town's responsibility to clearly define for itself and the developer what that entails. Ideally, a positive partnership should exist between the town and the developer, where visions and outcomes for the Worumbo Mill are codified and agreed upon in advance.



Trail Head Connection

The fourth item on the to-do list of immediate actions, is to make the connection between the Androscoggin Trail and downtown more apparent and user-friendly. By Spring of 2012 the final leg of the trail will reach its trail-head near Davis Street several blocks from downtown. Although there is an existing network of sidewalks for pedestrian access to the downtown core it

is in need of a major upgrade. Improved crosswalks, lighting, and directional signage needs to be constructed in order to strengthen the connection between trailhead and downtown. Hikers, bikers, and walkers, are natural allies with the small, home-grown businesses which downtown promotes. To ignore the relationship between the two would be to the detriment of potential business ventures.



Focus on the Lisbon Downtown Network

The three preceding 'First Steps' are relatively easy to understand, assess, and put into action. This last and final step is a bit more nebulous, but no less important. In fact, it may be the most important of all.

The town had a very auspicious beginning with the Maine Downtown Center program, enjoying early enthusiasm and recognition for its efforts. But sustaining momentum across all four points of the program (Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring) is essential if the town is to realize its vision. Longterm sustainability is dependent upon longterm enthusiasm, and enthusiasm for the projects requires tangible results. It's a self

generating circle of cause and effect; interest builds to action, and action creates more interest.

If nothing else, this report needs to reinvigorate the people of the three communities of Lisbon, elected, appointed, and volunteer, who are standing on the cusp of this potential rebirth. It remains it your hands to educate yourselves and each other about the Four Points Approach to healthy down towns. It remains up to you to offer up networking sessions, enthuse the community, and push for positive change.

Conclusion

“Fate and temperament are two words for one and the same concept,” wrote the philosopher Novalis. That which you feel, the dreams you have, the ideals you espouse, the actions which drive you, these are the things which determine your outcome and future destiny.

The three communities, Lisbon, Lisbon Falls, and Lisbon Village, have each participated in the crafting and the envisioning of a better future for themselves. Their temperament has been one of thoughtful planning, an intensity of action, and an attitude of accomplishment. This report is a documentation of those processes and a guidemap for future actions.

Because these communities have been growing for generations they have a strong and intact framework upon which to build a bright and solid future.