



# Old Town, Maine Downtown Revitalization Plan

Date: October, 2015

WP # 13038A

**WRIGHT-PIERCE**   
Engineering a Better Environment

*Adopted by the Old Town City Council on September 8, 2015*

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## MAPS

Downtown Study Area  
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## APPENDICES

### Public Input

- Public Input Process Summary
- Compiled Public Workshop Facilitator Recording Sheets
- Compiled Results of Individual Surveys
- Public Meeting Attendance Sheets \*

*\*Note that not all attendees may have signed the attendance sheets but the majority at each meeting did so as observed by Wright-Pierce staff at each meeting)*

*The following documents have not been included as appendices within this report as these documents are readily available to the public from the City of Old Town's website:*

- *Comprehensive Plan\*\**, *City Ordinances and Zoning Map*  
<http://www.old-town.org/p/code-enforcement.html>

*\*\*Note that the City is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan and anticipates completing that process within 1 year of completion of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Update will be consistent with the findings of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.*



# Acknowledgements

The Old Town Downtown Revitalization Plan was developed for the City of Old Town by Wright-Pierce. The plan was financially supported through local capital funding.

Lead consultant team members from Wright-Pierce included:

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Guidance and plan development assistance came from City of Old Town Staff including:

William Mayo - City Manager

Ronald Harriman – Economic Development Director

Travis Roy – Assessor

...and from the Downtown Revitalization Committee including:

E.J. Roach, Tim Folster, Steve Baillargeon, Cindy Jennings, Carol May, Lisa Gallant and William Mayo

A special thank you goes to the community's residents and local business owners who provided a wealth of public input during the plan development process.



# 1 Project Goals

Early in the planning process several “fact finding” steps were taken that established consensus-based goals to guide development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. With assistance from City Staff and the Downtown Committee, a wealth of public input was gathered at a series of monthly review meetings with City Staff and the Downtown Committee, at a series of stakeholder meetings and site visits, through an individual written survey, and at workshops and presentations undertaken with the general public. Based on this input the following community consensus goals for downtown revitalization were established.

## PROJECT GOALS

- Develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan that is actionable.
- Establish a theme for the Downtown that can be clearly branded in support of the local economy, recognizing the City’s history and riverfront assets.
- Continue to support existing businesses, and identify and recruit “missing” commercial entities to meet a wider range of local needs.
- Support / Invest in streetscape and building façade improvements to restore community sense of pride in the downtown and attract visitors
- Create a greater diversity of housing with a focus on attracting young families to live, work and play in the Downtown.
- Consider the opportunity for potential redevelopment of the former Old Town Canoe Factory parcel now owned by the City.
- Develop a prioritized Downtown Revitalization Plan to serve as a “roadmap” for short term and long term strategically phased community investments.



**City of Old Town  
Downtown Master Planning  
PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

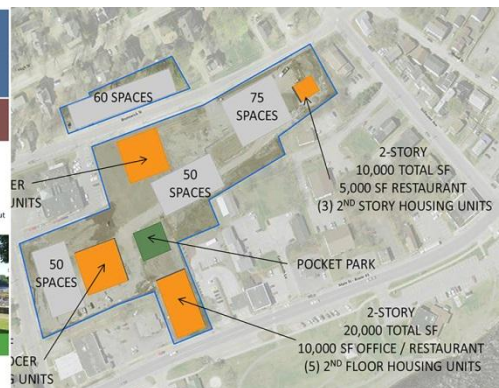
Monday, November 17, 2014  
6:30 pm at the Public Library

RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS ARE URGED TO PARTICIPATE  
IN THIS IMPORTANT COMMUNITY MEETING TO DEVELOP GOALS FOR  
REVITALIZATION OF THE DOWNTOWN.  
YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED. PLEASE JOIN US!  
6:30-8:30pm Community Forum - Attendees will have an opportunity to provide input  
on what's important for Old Town's downtown.

**Help shape the vision for the future of the Downtown!**

For more information, contact:  
Ron Harriman, Economic Development Director at 947-8595  
Ronharriman5@gmail.com



## SNAPSHOT OF OLD TOWN'S DOWNTOWN

A list of the Downtown's assets, weaknesses and opportunities (a "snapshot", below) was generated to understand the needs and issues that the community felt most impacted the Downtown.

### Assets: What's working for the Downtown

- Strong sense of community pride
- Proximity and historic connections to the Penobscot River
- Route 2 / 43 intersection has one of the highest vehicular traffic counts in the greater Bangor region
- Relatively young demographics (Likely due to close proximity to the University of Maine)
- Historic buildings

### Weaknesses: Where things are falling short

- Key business types are missing from the downtown (retail / grocer, variety of restaurants, liveable wage, innovative jobs...)
- Lack of diversity of housing types
- While there are some nightlife opportunities in the downtown (restaurants and pubs) a greater diversity is needed
- Limited employment opportunities
- Perceived lack of parking
- Lack of informational / directional signage
- Poor condition of buildings and streetscapes are a blight on the community

### Opportunities: Ideas to build from

- Establish a consistent theme for the downtown
- Infill of key vacant parcels within the heart of the downtown (former Old Town Canoe Factory parcels, et al.)
- Promote reasons for visitors to park and experience the downtown (Attract vehicles off Route 2 and from the northern intersection with Route 43 and I-95.)
- Attract young families who can stay and raise kids in the area
- Downtown has greater potential as a service center, not only for Old Town itself, but also regionally for communities to the north of Bangor along Intersection 95 and from across the Penobscot River to the east.
- Neighboring Penobscot Nation

*See Appendix A-1 for full documentation of public input as recorded by Wright-Pierce*

# 2 Executive Summary

The purpose of developing the Downtown Revitalization Plan is to serve the community as an instrument for identifying and prioritizing revitalization goals in a defined downtown area. Such an area within a community is defined by the State of Maine as:

*“a cohesive core of commercial and mixed-use buildings, often interspersed with civic, religious, and residential buildings and public spaces, often arranged along a main street and intersecting side streets, walkable and served by public infrastructure.”*

Once an area has been designated and a set of publicly supported Downtown Revitalization Plan goals are identified, the Downtown Revitalization Plan outlines prioritized and actionable recommendations for implementing the community’s vision. There are two primary means of implementing the Downtown Revitalization Plan. One is by capital investment to support physical improvements (utilities, parking lots, streetscape elements, etc...). The other is promotion of the vision for the Downtown through volunteerism, establishment of a committee to advocate implementation of the plan after adoption of the Plan, continued public outreach, and adoption of new and/or revised local policy measures in terms of regulatory ordinances.

Both of these means are best achieved in a collaborative effort between the citizens of Old Town, local municipal government, and private / non-profit stakeholders.

To that end, Old Town is also initiating development of a Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district as a tool to provide funding in support of many of the Downtown Revitalization Plan goals, and is concurrently updating the City’s Comprehensive Plan which will adopt and therefore be consistent with the goals of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.

To utilize potential funding instruments like a Downtown TIF or other local, private, state and federal funding programs, the downtown plan is being strategically developed in conformance with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development’s “Downtown Plan Components” criteria which serve as the organizational format of this planning initiative and include:

- Definition of the downtown area
- Information regarding zoning ordinance effects on the downtown area, and consistency of the Downtown Revitalization Plan with the Comprehensive Plan
- Building inventory conditions assessment
- Inventory of retail / commercial space
- Employment opportunities
- Inventory of residential units

- Pedestrian / Bicycle infrastructure and accessibility
- Infrastructure – Streetscape and Utilities
- Signage
- Parking Management
- Recreation
- Capital Improvement Program
- Action Plan – Findings and Recommendations that are supportive of public involvement in development of the plan, to serve as a means for implementation of the plan going forward



Assessment of the current state of each of these plan components is expanded upon further in the following respective sections of the Downtown Revitalization Plan, culminating in specific recommendations for implementing each component of the plan. The plan concludes with a prioritized action plan for downtown revitalization implementation strategies in a phased approach.



# 3 Downtown Old Town

## Findings

### STUDY AREA

Old Town’s downtown boundaries have been defined based on input from residents and business owners, the volunteer Downtown Committee and City Staff during development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. This area serves as a means to focus revitalization goals strategically within the heart of the community, both geographically and culturally, while recognizing that Old Town as a whole, and the surrounding region are also key factors in benefiting from and supporting the downtown. (Border depicted in **RED** below). The downtown geographic region generally lies between the Penobscot River to the east, Pine Street and the current Birmingham Funerals – Crematoriums parcel to the south, Brunswick Street to the west and the intersection of Brunswick Street and Main Street (U.S. Route 43) to the north. The downtown area is approximately 80 acres in size and includes 147 individual parcels. It is at a walkable scale, extending approximately ¼ mile to the north and south of the Center Street intersection and less than a ¼ mile in width. There is a wide variety of site development within the downtown including: recreation (parks); civic (municipal offices, non-profit organizations, etc.); commercial / business; industrial; residential; vacant; and mixed use commercial / residential. (See also *Downtown Study Area Map*)



## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

There are four regional corridor systems that have for several decades, and continue to shape the character and culture of the downtown. One is the Penobscot River and its cultural, economic and recreational ties to the downtown and surrounding region. The others are the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway operated by Pan Am Railways and separating the downtown from the riverfront to the south of Center Street (Route 2), and Main Street (Route 43) and Center Street. Center Street in particular, is a physical barrier to pedestrian activities due to the high volume of vehicular through traffic, and is a perceived cultural barrier, dividing the downtown into north and south regions.



*Center Street (Route 2)*



*Main Street (Route 43)*



*Penobscot River*



*Pan Am Railways Inc. Railway*

## COMMUNITY PROFILE AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Old Town is a community with an approximate population of 7,800 (based on 2010 U.S. census data) with a median age of 33 (versus the Maine median age of 43). 74% of the population is estimated to be living in urbanized areas versus 24% in rural areas. Both of these demographic benchmarks are

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

key indicators of the potential for a vibrant downtown revitalization effort supporting year round activity led by a demographic base of young families and professionals who desire to live, work and play within the downtown. Old Town's median age is relatively unique as compared to most Maine communities in a state where the population has been increasingly aging and shifting from year round to seasonal residents since the 1960's, and especially so for most of state's the coastal and riverfront communities. There is an undetermined percentage of the population in the downtown that is seasonal in connection with University of Maine students who rent apartments during the September through May school year.

Beyond Old Town's borders there are strategic connections to the surrounding Greater Bangor region and beyond. The close proximity to the University of Maine (and other colleges in nearby Bangor) may provide the greatest opportunity for revitalization of Old Town's downtown, with the potential to expand the younger demographic base and attract first time homebuyers and younger families to the downtown. This potential workforce in an increasingly technology-based jobs market where individuals can either operate remotely from their place of dwelling as individuals, or have employment opportunities with technology-based companies that do not depend on a local customer base, is trending towards migrating to downtown environments on a national level. Such quality of life choices desired in a downtown are for communities within walking / biking accessibility to arts, entertainment, recreation, quality schools, etc. and mass transit systems connecting the downtown to regional service needs and cultural / recreational interests.

Another key consideration is Old Town's proximity to Interstate 95 (I-95), and the City of Bangor. The City of Bangor provides quality healthcare within a short driving distance of Old Town, as well as a large retail base to serve most of the regional shopping needs. Old Town's position along I-95 to the north of Bangor may be of interest to shoppers who do not want to travel the extra distance to Bangor from more northern communities, however the potential for additional retail capacity to attract those shoppers along Main Street (Route 43) and into the downtown, versus stopping at the already retail oriented services along Stillwater Avenue (Route 2) is limited. Even in that area, much of the retail development is likely due to the high traffic volumes of commuters from points east of Old Town who cross the Penobscot River along Route 2 and Stillwater Avenue to access I-95.

Increasingly important is the expansion of cultural and recreational resources connected to the Penobscot River. Old Town's downtown is located immediately adjacent to the river and the communities history tied to river industries, manufacturing and the Penobscot Nation, as well as growing interest in recreation fishing and boating, is likely to draw visiting interests from throughout Maine and New England. In fact, in the National White Water Canoe Championships were held on the Penobscot River between Old Town and Eddington in 2015 and are anticipated to be held at the same location again for the next few years, and such additional opportunities for large public gatherings at Old Town's waterfront are anticipated to increase as river restoration efforts continue along the Penobscot River corridor.

### COMMUNITY VISION OF THE DOWNTOWN

What does the downtown mean to the citizens of Old Town, its downtown business owners and civic institutions, as well as to visitors and neighboring communities? For the downtown revitalization effort to be successful, it is essential that the community has a whole play an active and ongoing role, supporting and living out the vision for the downtown. During development of this plan, there was a significant amount of public participation and sharing of input regarding what the downtown means to a range of individuals and stakeholder interests. Considerably more so in fact than many other Maine communities have seen during similar planning initiatives. As a result of monthly committee / City Staff meetings for the duration of the planning effort, approximately 125 individual input survey responses, meetings with key stakeholders (local business owners, the Housing Authority of, City Public Works Department, etc.) the following consensus downtown revitalization goals were identified:

- Promote mixed use business / residential development in the downtown
- Encourage a greater diversity of employment opportunities
- Encourage a greater diversity of housing types other than already well established low income housing, to attract young professionals and families to live, work and play in the downtown
- Improve downtown aesthetics of buildings and streetscapes to enhance civic pride and draw on the historic character of Old Town
- Expand recreational opportunities associated with the Penobscot River and regional trail systems connecting Old Town, Orono and Bangor
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Promote the cultural heritage of the riverfront community and neighboring Penobscot Nation

These consensus based community goals serve as the basis for the recommendations in the following plan sections, and the concluding prioritized action plan. Overall, this leading indicator of strong public interest in downtown revitalization will be essential for the community to realize its revitalization goals, as the process does not end with the completion of this plan, but rather it is an ongoing process of communication of ideas as cultural and economic trends evolve, of making phased capital investments in the downtown, and in maintaining collaborative communications between the City, volunteers and the private business sector. Public, private and civic interests must work together to achieve the community's interests in creating a downtown where people can live, work and play in a sustainable environment.

*(The complete findings of this public outreach process are included in the appendices of the plan.)*

### Recommendations

- Continue to seek public input throughout the phased implementation process of the plan.
- Evaluate community downtown revitalization goals and prioritized improvement action plans on an annual basis.
- Focus on improvements at the core of the downtown initially and move outward, including initial efforts to attract visitors to Main Street, while making Center Street and the significant volume of vehicular through traffic less of a physical and cultural barrier dividing the north and south portions of the downtown. Specific related action items are noted in the following sections of this report.
- Consider initiating a marketing and branding program with assistance from a professional consultant. The goals for this effort should be to establish a branding program that encourages and nurtures a cultural attitude of civic pride and community support for the essence of what the downtown means to Old Town. The ultimate success of a sustained downtown revitalization effort will depend on comprehensive endorsement of what the community wants the downtown to be. Marketing and branding should not be dependent on a catchy slogan or graphic logo alone. Consumers buy the products they like and support over the long term because of the overall essence of the product and the downtown should be considered in the same light. Nor should the effort focus on attracting a limited interest group (tourists, retail grocers, etc.)
- Identify the University of Maine student's vision of the downtown and expand upon recently established annual protocol for communication by the City with the student body representatives to continue to understand their interests in visiting / living in the downtown.
- Continue to gather public input throughout the implementation stages of the plan.
- Establish and invest in active and ongoing downtown organization that represents the interests of the residents of Old Town, the local government and the private commercial / business community. Many Maine communities have been successful in this approach through collaboration with the Maine Development Foundation's Main Downtown Center and the nationally recognized Main Street Approach. Other options could include continued efforts by downtown committee involvement, neighborhood associations, and Chamber of Commerce type entities. Part of the role of a committee or entity responsible for organization is to facilitate good communication (between City appointed committees, staff, Selectmen, downtown businesses/ stakeholders, and the community at large) and ensure that all are supportive of implementing the plan, and that no one is working at cross-purposes. Coordination with the Greater Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce, the Housing Authority of the City of Old Town, the Penobscot Nation and the University of Maine will be essential as well. The following is an overview of utilizing the Main Street Approach:

### UTILIZING THE MAIN STREET FOUR-POINT APPROACH®

Many communities in Maine and other states have employed the "Main Street Approach" as a model for organization which has proven successful for downtown revitalization. In Maine, communities may formally apply to become a Main Street Maine community (as a full or "Network" member), to receive support and assistance from the Maine Downtown Center, and increase their scoring on many of Maine's downtown grants. However, it is not a requirement to be a Main Street community to utilize the Main Street Approach, and many downtowns can benefit from applying this model on their own. For downtown Old Town, there are a few key considerations under each of the Four Points that the community should keep in mind as it works to build and support a sustainable downtown.

#### The Main Street Four-Point Approach® (From *Main Street Maine*)

- The four points of the Main Street approach work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort.
- Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.
- Promotion sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. 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 volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.
- Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape. 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.
- Economic Restructuring strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and 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.

# 4 Zoning and Ordinances / Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

## Findings

The City is currently updating its comprehensive plan. As part of that initiative, the comprehensive plan update will recognize Old Town's Downtown Revitalization Plan goals and objectives and be consistent in supporting the community's vision for the downtown. The City also recently completed a Citizen Survey Report in 2013 with assistance from the University of Maine School of Economics & Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center to look at quality of life input from an Old Town adult citizens perspective for the City as a whole. Several input questions were similar in support of the downtown revitalization plan goals and the recognized community issues in the City's most recent Comprehensive Plan.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The current Comprehensive Plan – City of Old Town, dated 1995 recognized a decline in retail business in the downtown and attributed it to the rise in retail shopping at the Bangor Mall and the Old Town Plaza on Stillwater Avenue. The comprehensive plan also noted that that the public had major concerns with the condition of the downtown, and while a study of ten downtown buildings indicated the structures were still fundamentally sound, the plan recommended that the City explore programs to maintain and enhance the downtown. Both of those findings are consistent with current public sentiment and are recommendations of the Downtown Revitalization Plan

## ZONING AND ORDINANCES

The downtown study area includes commercial, industrial and residential zones as defined by the City's ordinances, along with a 250 shoreland zone overlay along the Penobscot River. The downtown study area is immediately surrounded by residential zones. The following zoning ordinance districts are located within or immediately adjacent to the downtown area.

### C-1 – Commercial-Business District

*The C-1 zone is established to accommodate those retail, service and office uses which are of city-wide significance. Within this area of concentrated activity and intensive development is the central business district, offices of professional and nonprofessional persons offering a variety of specialized services, and important public facilities. New construction and any alteration of existing building or land use should be consistent with the objective to develop and maintain the central business district.*

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

### I-1 – Industrial District

*The purpose of the I-1 zones is to provide land which is conveniently located with respect to transportation and municipal services and where other conditions are favorable to the development of industry and which at the same time is so located as to prevent undesirable conflict with residential and business uses.*

### R-2 – General Residence District

*Encompassing most of the older residential neighborhoods and located within convenient reach of central business facilities the R-2 zones are expected to contain most of the multifamily or apartment-type dwellings likely to be needed by the community. However, in harmony with the established neighborhoods, the predominant land use will probably continue to be single-family residences. As in the R-1 zones, certain additional uses which meet the requirements of this ordinance may be permitted, which contribute to balanced neighborhoods and enhance the attractiveness of the community.*

In addition to these zoning districts, the City also has specific ordinances in place regarding streets, sidewalks, signs, building code, fire prevention code and site plan development that apply to the downtown area. How these ordinances apply to specific components of this plan (*Section 12 Parking* for example) are discussed in greater detail in the following applicable sections. In terms of site and building development design standards, the City has many guidelines in place to assist the planning board in suggested development discussions during the local approval process. Guidelines were reported to be working well for the community and were supported by the general public input process during development of this plan.

The full Comprehensive Plan, Zoning and Ordinance documents have not been included within this report. These documents are readily available to the public from the City of Old Town's website:

<http://www.old-town.org/p/code-enforcement.html>

## Recommendations

- The Comprehensive Plan as a whole is currently aligned and supportive of the Downtown Revitalization Plan's goals and does not need any immediate changes as a result of the Downtown Revitalization Plan findings. As a long term priority in support of the community's Downtown Revitalization goals and in compliance with State Law, the City should continue to update the Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan every 5 to 10 years at a minimum, to be responsive to changing economic and social climates.
- Examine current street and sidewalk ordinances which no longer seem to require downtown property owners / businesses to maintain sidewalks in a safe manner immediately in front of their property. As appropriate, consider re-adopting past ordinances (prior reference to Section 17-6) requiring such maintenance.
- Consider use of Form Based Codes to address architectural character for new, non-residential development and conversion from residential to non-residential uses within the downtown.



## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

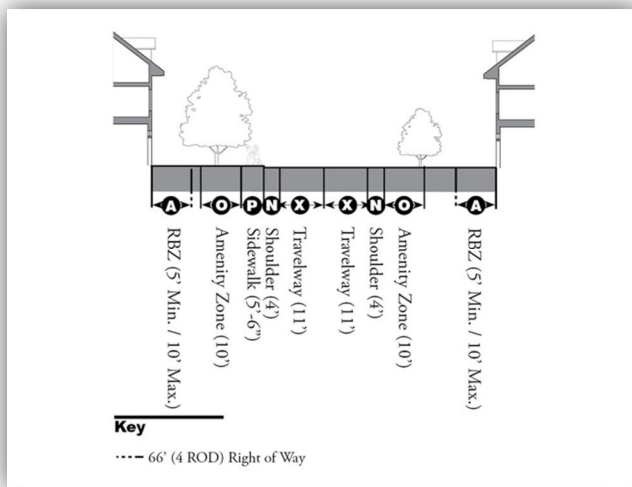
The State of Maine's Municipal Planning Assistance Program has good reference material for how such codes may best be applied.

[http://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/technical/form\\_based\\_codes.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/technical/form_based_codes.shtml)

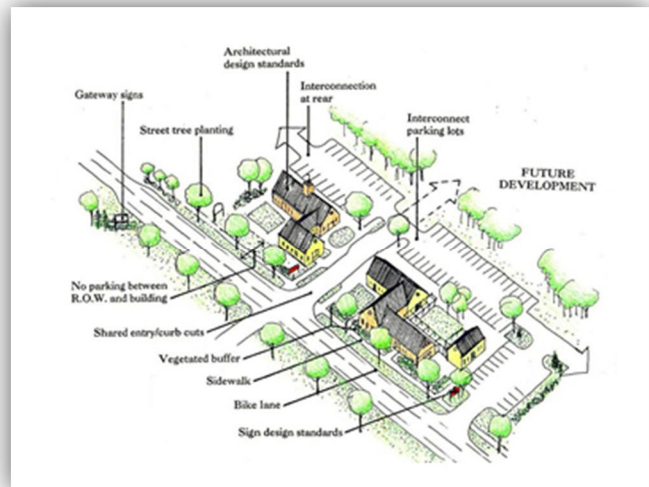
- Consider making mixed use development as a standard for the Downtown. It is currently allowed in the City's ordinances but cannot be a requirement for new development. Many communities in Maine have implemented such standards including the below reference to Freeport as an example, and it has been demonstrated by subsequent development in such communities, that the residential units required above commercial first floor space have been well occupied and have been a benefit to downtown revitalization for the community and to the private developer alike.

[http://www.freeportmaine.com/page.php?page\\_id=103&title=Ordinances%20&%20Codes](http://www.freeportmaine.com/page.php?page_id=103&title=Ordinances%20&%20Codes)

- Consider ordinance standards versus guidelines when amending / developing design ordinances impacting the downtown area. There are many pros and cons to this issue regarding regulations versus suggestions that communities throughout Maine have addressed on a variety of levels.



*Example of Form Based Code Street Type*



*Old Town Could Develop Similar Illustrations as Supporting Guidelines or Standards for Downtown Ordinances*

# 5 Buildings Inventory & Conditions Assessment

## Findings

The downtown itself is currently comprised of a variety of building structures and uses, which is consistent with a healthy, diversified downtown environment. The buildings are predominantly 2 to 3 stories in height. There are multi-story buildings, particularly located along Main Street and Center Street, which are well over 100 years old and provide a strong sense of architectural character to the downtown, however many of these buildings have facades that are in need of significant repair to improve the blighted appearance of the downtown. Many downtown building owners have taken the opportunity to tie into newer utilities such as natural gas, leading to some energy efficiencies and financial savings. These savings have often not been enough to offset the financial challenges to maintain multi-story structures where the first floor is occupied while the upper stories remain largely vacant due to the cost prohibitive nature of upgrading access to the second and third floors for mixed use redevelopment - typically seen as lost opportunities for new housing units. With underutilized upper floor spaces, it has been challenging for businesses to become established and remain in operation in these older buildings, as evidenced by the number of historic buildings on Main Street with current vacancies. Newer buildings in the downtown have primarily been one or two story developments, with the majority of the activity seen on the ground floor, such as for restaurants and retail businesses.

*(See Building Inventory map for parcel by parcel breakdown of development within Old Town's downtown)*



*Vacant Historic Building on Main Street*



*More Recent Commercial Development*

DIVERSITY

At the time of our inventory, there were 29 commercial/business parcels, 10 vacant parcels 17 mixed use buildings which predominantly include commercial/business use on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor with housing on the second and third floors floor, and 71 standalone residential parcels. (Approximately 44 are estimated as rental/condominium units and 27 are single family homes).



*Historic Building Converted to Housing Units*



*Typical Single Family Residence*

HISTORIC CHARACTER

The downtown has two buildings on the National Park Services’ National Register of Historic Places. They include Saint James Episcopal Church and U.S. Post Office. Both buildings are located on Center Street. Several other civic, residential and commercial / industrial buildings have similar architectural character and were originally constructed during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s structures, providing a strong sense of historic mill town character throughout the downtown area.



*U.S.P.O. – Listed on the National Historic Registry*



*2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of B.P.O.E. Elks Building*

## Recommendations

- Develop ordinance language requiring mixed use development for new commercial businesses and provide incentives to developers to create quality housing opportunities for first time home buyers, whether individual professionals or for young families.
- Establish a façade program and fund (either revolving loan or grant) for downtown buildings (may include street front landscaping if desired) and consider providing professional design assistance to offer recommendations on building façade improvements that are in keeping with the historic image of Old Town that the community is trying to preserve.
- Consider adopting design guidelines, an historic district or other protection to maintain downtown character and historic architecture. Develop design guidelines or standards to be applied to exterior building renovations and new construction, to encourage appropriate architectural character for the downtown.
- Continue to reach out to owners of downtown buildings and properties that negatively impact the downtown image, and identify their needs and concerns. In doing so, particular support should be towards owners of vacant downtown storefronts to assist with maintaining window displays.



*Existing Vacant Building Readily visible from Main Street and Center Street Intersection*



*Example Rendering of Façade, Window Display and Streetscape Improvements*

- Re-examine local ordinances regarding property maintenance to address properties that negatively impact the downtown image and or fail to maintain sidewalk and site accessibility. While past ordinance documents were examined in part in support of such regulations, the latest available documents do not appear to have such requirements.
- Establish a program for housing unit rehabilitation in support of residential / mixed use buildings on Main Street.

# DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

- Continue to support a community economic development position that can actively document / promote available buildings for redevelopment and occupancy.
- Work with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and apply for Community Development Block Grant program funds to make physical improvements to buildings themselves, and for the properties surrounding, including public right-of-ways.
- Continue to support new growth opportunities, either encouraging new developers to come to Old Town, or through planned municipal infrastructure projects such as acquisition of vacant area(s) for expansion of parking facilities or making sites “shovel ready” for development by completing state and federal environmental permitting requirements, often in the form of brownfields remediation efforts at former historic manufacturing and industrial operations.
- Encourage collaboration between adjoining building owners to share costly expenses associated with second and third story access to their buildings in support of mixed use development, when building life safety code requirements can often be cost prohibitive for an individual building owner to implement on their own.

Second Floor  
Interconnection to  
Adjacent Buildings  
Created During  
Renaissance Center  
Redevelopment

Single Public Elevator  
Added Providing  
Second Story Access to  
Three Buildings



*Example of Shared Elevator Access and Second Floor Through Connection in Downtown Skowhegan*



*Redevelopment of the Former Lily-Tulip Factory Site Supported by an EPA Brownfields Assessment for Site Cleanup, Commercial Building Development, Public Parking, Recreation Facilities and Streetscape Improvements*

# 6 Inventory of Retail / Commercial Space

## Findings

Old Town reportedly has 300,000 square feet of underutilized building space in and around the downtown area, which presents a great opportunity for redevelopment. The majority of this space is located on second and third story floors and at the now vacant city-owned parcel where the former Old Town Canoe Factory was recently demolished. There are approximately 127,432 square feet of commercial space within the downtown area. The City maintains updated real estate information for all parcels and that information is readily available from the City's website.

[http://www.old-town.org/p/assessor\\_11.html](http://www.old-town.org/p/assessor_11.html)

One of the repeated public input comments was in regard to attraction of new retail and grocery store businesses like a Reny's or Trader Joes since those services are currently lacking in the downtown area, with the primary shopping option in the downtown able to currently meet some of those services being the Rite Aid pharmacy. Based on the rapid growth of retail development along Stillwater Avenue and decline of such services in the downtown, it appears that such new development would likely not see the downtown area and immediate surrounding residential customer base as a viable option versus capturing the high volume of passenger vehicle traffic on Stillwater Avenue. According to MaineDOT traffic counts, this is one of the highest volumes of average daily traffic in the Greater Bangor region. This is further evidenced by the Hannaford at the Old Town Plaza reporting one of the State's busiest stores in terms of daily transactions. It is also important to keep in mind that retail and grocery shopping trends have changed dramatically over the past couple of generations and point towards a greater variety of retail grocer options at a smaller scale. Increasingly, more and more common retail goods are purchased on line and grocery purchases which used to involve 3 to 4 shopping trips per month, now exceed over 40 trips as specialty food sources such as farmers markets and CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) shares with a focus on local food supplies, as well as options to buy foods in department stores such as Target and a wide variety of other shopping options mean consumers are doing significantly less shopping at larger retail grocers. With that said, a vital component of downtown revitalization will likely be a local, small scale retail grocer, likely with some component of prepared food sales and small café / cafeteria space and Old Town's downtown could certainly accommodate such an establishment within a mixed use development environment. The City has continued to talk with businesses like Reny's which are focused on downtown locations, while recognizing that certain retailers like Trader Joe's (whose geographical operations have a current northern distribution limit at Portland) may be limited by other private capital factors. The City and several local businesses are currently members of the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce, however no such similar organization is currently present in Old Town.

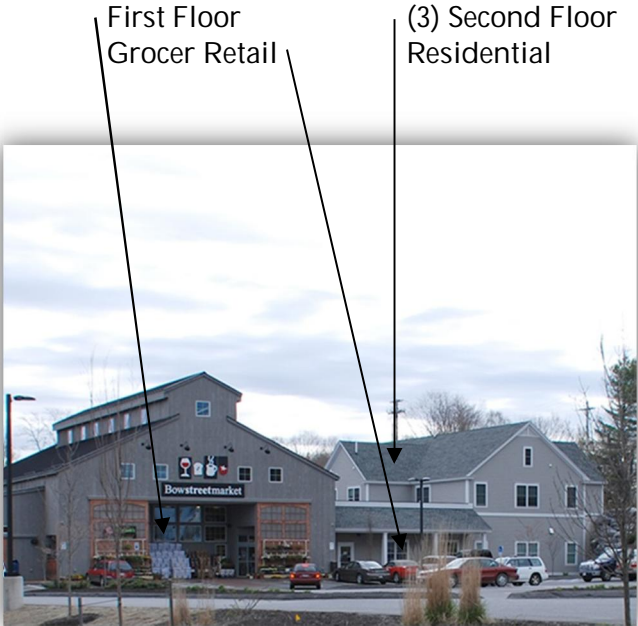
*(See Building Inventory Map)*

## Recommendations

- The City should continue to update available retail data on an annual basis and work with a newly created Main Street Program coordinator or organization like a Chamber of Commerce to advertise availability of retail / commercial / office space for targeted recruitment purposes.
- The City should consider adopting zoning guidelines / standards to ensure that new development is in keeping with the historic riverfront architectural character of the downtown.
- The City should make infrastructure investments in terms of parking, streetscape and utility improvements in collaboration with new development proposals in the downtown on a case-by-case basis.
- Utilize TIF funds and state and federal funding programs such as CDBG Microbusiness Enterprise funds.
- Develop a branding and marketing program.
- Continue to monitor and utilize readily available demographic and retail data to inform City policies in support of new private investment opportunities in the downtown.
- The City should consider giving mixed use development increased priority in the current downtown area zoning so that new businesses provide adequate residential units and / or office space in association with new retail / commercial developments.



*Past Recent Large Scale Retail Growth Has Left the Downtown and Redeveloped Along Stillwater Avenue*



*Example of Mixed Development from Freeport*

# 7 Employment Opportunities

## Findings

Old Town’s continued success in providing quality employment opportunities as most recently evidenced by support of high speed broadband service throughout the downtown, and the City’s stable tax base, have been attributed most significantly to the diversity of locally grown businesses that continue to evolve with the changing local, regional and global economies. Many of Maine’s historic riverfront communities have struggled for decades to revitalize their downtowns, which were once vibrant hubs of activity when industrial development was thriving and manufacturing and mills and shipping of natural resources was essential to be located near rivers for transport. Unlike so many of Maine’s riverfront communities that have depended on one or two key remaining riverfront depending industrial / manufacturing operations that have managed to survive the state and national sector declines for almost a century as their primary means of employment and tax base, Old Town is well diversified and has been able to remain relatively stable when businesses have come and gone over the years (closure / relocation of the former Old Town Canoe Factory from the downtown, and closure of Old Town Fuel and Fiber, for example).

The following chart displays the breakdown of occupations within the community, in comparison with the Bangor Metropolitan Service Area (MSA) and the rest of the state (\*Sources – EMSI Complete Employment and QCEW Program - 2010):

	<u>Old Town</u>	<u>Bangor MSA</u>	<u>Maine</u>
Employment Sectors	Total	Percent	Percent
Manufacturing	800	21.4	4.7
Government	651	17.4	19.5
Accommodation and Food Services	407	10.9	8.2
Retail Trade	371	9.9	16.0
Professional and Technical Services	239	7.2	3.5
Other Services Except Public Administration	201	5.4	2.7
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	171	4.6	0.8



## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

	<u>Old Town</u>	<u>Bangor MSA</u>	<u>Maine</u>
Employment Sectors	Total	Percent	Percent
Health Care and Social Assistance	167	4.5	20.3
Construction	164	4.4	3.7
Transportation and Warehousing	161	4.3	3.3
Administrative and Waste Services	109	2.9	4.5
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	77	2.1	1.2
Utilities	70	1.9	0.3
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	60	1.6	0.9
Finance & Insurance	52	1.4	2.4
Wholesale Trade	28	0.8	3.4
Total Old Town Employment	3,733		

Old Town’s median household income was \$36,125 in 2011, compared to the Bangor MSA average of \$40,412 and the state average of \$46,033.

Economic data such as this is most useful to understand and perhaps identify the differences in job sector trends between Old Town, neighboring communities and the state as whole, to give a broader perspective of why certain job sectors may have limits or opportunities for growth in Old Town. Certain sectors such as Health Care for example, are already established in Bangor and serve the needs of the greater region, and thus may not be as likely to grow in Old Town. An overabundance and focus on economic data alone as a means to plan for job growth can ultimately lead to “analysis paralysis” and perhaps limit the community’s ability to be opportunistic and open to private investment and capital market interests. Again, it is most important to look at current and historic economic data and trends with the general understanding that a diverse mix of opportunities is vital to support an economically vibrant community.

## Recommendations

- Provide financial/technical support for business development through various avenues such as a TIF revolving loan / grant program, and marketing and branding, for the recruitment of additional private investment, which will also add to the municipal tax base.
- Utilization of marketing tools such as branding initiative, current demographic and retail data, promotional brochures, established promotional organizations/programs like the Main Street Approach, and private consultants.
- Assist business development in the downtown by providing gap funding to private developers through a TIF revolving loan / grant program for the development of 2nd floor residential units in newly developed and existing businesses.
- Promote the City's airport as a local asset and alternative to Bangor's International Airport.
- Expand on opportunities to promote diversity of professional career development at the high school level and at the University of Maine manufacturing and technology based professions, and for emerging expanding business opportunities related to restoration of the Penobscot River for outdoor recreation / eco-tourism.
- Work with existing employers to maintain their location within the downtown, such as the James W. Sewall Company which is in need of new office space that better meets current technology operational needs.



*The James W. Sewall Company is no Longer in Need of its Current Office Space Due to Technology Changes in the Engineering and Surveying Professions and is Looking to Relocate. Keeping These Jobs in the Downtown Provides Benefits for Both Employees and Other Downtown Stakeholders Alike.*



*The Former Old Town Canoe Factory Site Which Relocated Manufacturing Jobs Out of the Downtown Provides an Opportunity to Accommodate New Employers, Along with Mixed Use Development as was Successful at the Former Lily-Tulip Factory Site*

# 8 Inventory of Residential Units

## Findings

Based on the latest City tax records, the downtown area has an estimated 27 single family dwelling units and approximately 285 rental units. The majority of the rental units are owned and operated by the Housing Authority of the City of Old Town (HALCOT) as affordable housing as assisted living facilities, senior housing, and for low-to-moderate-income (LMI) individuals and families. More information regarding their housing services and facilities can be found on their organizations webpage: <http://www.oldtownhousing.net/>

Most of the housing units available within the downtown area are for low income families and elderly housing. The area surrounding the downtown is primarily composed of single family residential neighborhoods and supporting local public schools. These houses provide mid and upper level housing opportunities for young professionals and families to live, work and play within close proximity to the downtown.

*(See Building Inventory Map)*



*Senior Housing Operated by HALCOT*



*Single Family Housing, Typical of Neighborhoods Within and Surrounding the Downtown Area*

## Recommendations

- Assist mixed-use developments by providing gap funding to private developers through a TIF revolving loan / grant program for the development of 2nd floor residential units in new and existing retail / commercial buildings. Such funding may be focused on installation of elevators in existing buildings, which is often one of the more expensive infrastructure costs that limits development of upper stories in Maine's historic downtowns. The City of Lewiston has such a grant program and may serve as an example for Old Town to consider: <http://www.lewistonmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3105>
- Examine ordinance standards for mixed use development such that minimal residential unit square foot requirements are large enough to encourage alternative levels of housing to the predominant stock of current low-income units.
- Involve Maine State Housing Authority and private housing developers that have access to New Market Tax Credits and other capital funding sources in support of workforce housing.
- Maintain a database of unoccupied housing for advertisement by the City or a supporting downtown organization such as a Main Street Program.
- Consider establishing an organization of owners and managers of rental properties within and adjacent to the downtown area, or encourage such owners to join a regional organization like the Greater Bangor Apartment Owners & Managers Association  
<http://www.gbaoma.com/>



*Mixed Use Main Street Development with Second Floor Rental Apartments, Primarily Rented by College Students over the Past Decade*



*Blighted Facades and Access / Egress to Second Floor Housing Units in Varied Condition*

# 9 Pedestrian / Bicycle Infrastructure and Accessibility

## Findings

The City of Old Town has an extensive system of established sidewalks throughout the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. These sidewalks are generally in fair to poor condition and when future roadway and streetscape improvement projects are implemented would need to be brought up to current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards. Pedestrian crosswalks are demarcated by pavement markings and limited signs / signalization at some of the downtown's busiest vehicular traffic intersections. The vehicular volumes and travelway widths at the intersection of Main Street and Center Street are the greatest in the downtown area and present the biggest challenge to providing safe pedestrian and bicycle continuity throughout the downtown.



*Pedestrian Crosswalk - (4) Travel Lanes at Center St*



*Most of the Downtown Sidewalks have Hot Mix Asphalt Surfaces with either Granite or Bituminous Curb, However Some Sidewalk Surfaces are Concrete and/or Brick.*

There is currently a lack of dedicated bicycle lanes, bike racks and off-road trails within the downtown, with the exception of the riverfront parks. There is however, an extensive system of bike routes and trails within the Greater Bangor Region, in the more rural areas of Old Town and around the University of Maine campus which the downtown could connect to.

<http://umaine.edu/campusrecreation/files/2010/05/trailmap2011.pdf>

The Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System also maintains a regional bicycle map and long range planning objects for alternative forms of transportation that pertain to Old Town.

[http://www.bactsmmpo.org/feed.php?num=0&feed\\_id=26&news\\_id=88](http://www.bactsmmpo.org/feed.php?num=0&feed_id=26&news_id=88)

References to City Ordinance Section 17-6 Sidewalk Snow Removal Required, as provided by City Staff, does not seem to be consistent with City Codes available Online, which only seem to apply to new developments. Currently, the Public Works Department clears all sidewalks in the downtown and City Staff indicated that the above referenced code has not been enforced within recent memory.

Improvements related to pedestrian and bicycle safety were recognized as one of the highest priorities for the downtown based on public input during this downtown revitalization planning process.

*(See Transportation and Parking Map, and Recreation Map)*

### Recommendations

- Begin implementation of bicycle and pedestrian improvements in a phased approach that is affordable within the City's capital improvement budget, starting at the center of the downtown and working outward towards regional trail systems
- Consider consistency of sidewalk materials (Primary route along Main Street and Center Street, and secondary intersecting streets and adjacent neighborhood side streets).
- Improve existing sidewalks to comply with current ADA accessibility standards
- Improve the bicycle and pedestrian crossings at the Main Street and Center Street Intersection as the highest priority and at other locations along Main Street and Center Street as secondary priorities, where crossing distances and vehicular traffic volumes are the greatest in the downtown. These improvements should consider permanent crosswalk markings for year-round visibility, "bump outs" and medians where feasible. ( It is recognized that the City wishes to consider pedestrian tunnels or bridges at this location, however these options are not economically viable)



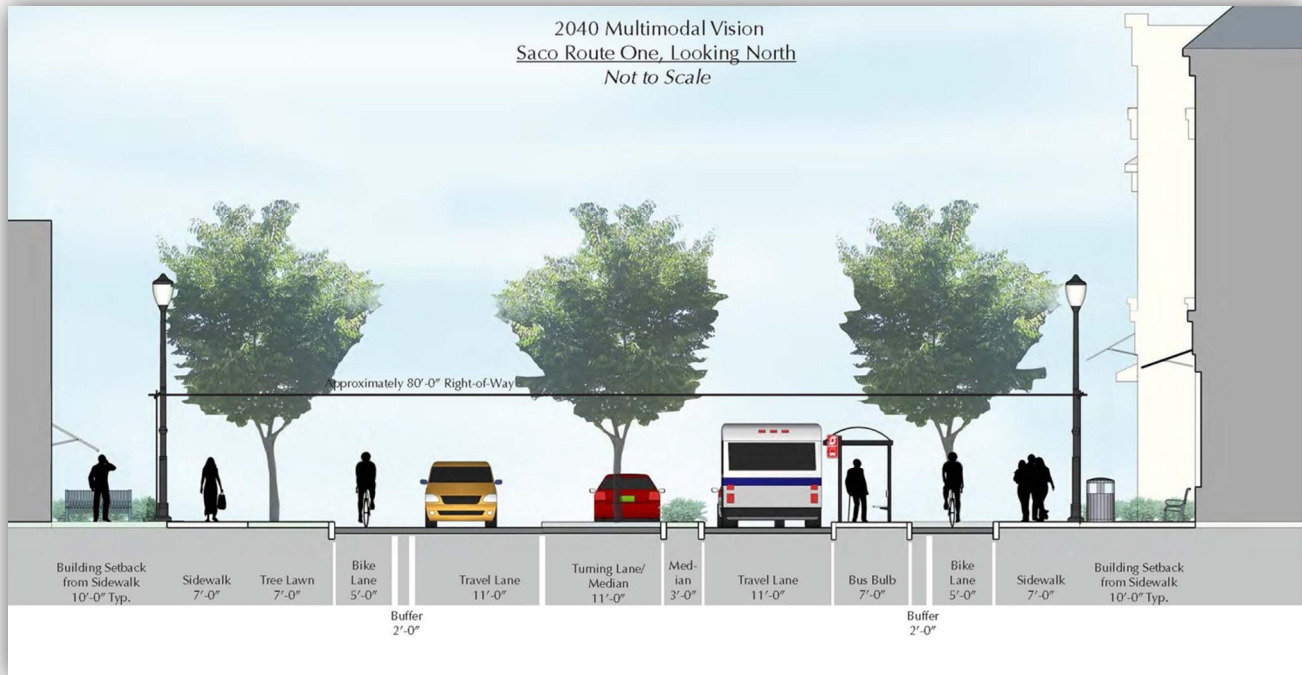
*Example of Bump Outs, Concrete Paver Crosswalks and Sidewalks, and ADA Detectable Warning Devices from Downtown Rockland*



*Example Rendering of Raised Median and Year Round Crosswalk Demarcation at Brunswick St and Main St Intersection*

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

- Continue to monitor and plan for capital improvements to maintain existing sidewalk and trail infrastructure on an annual basis (This work is currently performed by public works forces).
- Continue to evaluate strategic pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements in association with other downtown revitalization improvements, including roadway, streetscape and utility infrastructure improvements, as well as private development projects so that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure does not have to be reconstructed “after the fact” when these other initiatives often involve an underground infrastructure component.
- Examine current street and sidewalk ordinances which no longer seem to require downtown property owners / businesses to maintain sidewalks in a safe manner immediately in front of their property. If that is the case, consider re-adopting past ordinances (prior reference to Section 17-6) requiring such maintenance.
- Coordinate with MaineDOT, BACTS and the University of Maine on joint project efforts improving bicycle and pedestrian conditions.
- Continue to coordinate with MaineDOT to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects are consistent with MaineDOT policies and regulations.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycle improvements in coordination with other vehicular infrastructure and streetscape elements (trees, lighting, etc...) from a “Complete Streets” approach.



*Example Complete Streets Illustration Developed as Part of Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System's 2040 PACTS Long Range Transportation Plan*

# 10 Infrastructure – Streetscape and Utilities

## Findings

The majority of the streets within the study area are two-way. One-way streets include North Water Street, Shirley Street, Willow Street and Wood Street. All street surfaces appear to be in fair condition. The downtown area is located along Center Street (Route 2) running east and west across the Penobscot River and towards Stillwater Avenue and Interstate 95, and along Main Street (Route 43) running north and south from Orono to Interstate 95. A significant amount of trailered truck traffic follows Route 43 and MaineDOT traffic counts along Route 2 at the intersection with Route 43 are among the highest in the Greater Bangor Region. This high traffic volume is seen as both an opportunity and a hindrance to the downtown. On one hand, a significant amount of visitors pass through the downtown and there is an opportunity to improve the Main Street and Center Street intersection, promoting the downtown with the goal of attracting more visitors to turn onto Main Street. On the other hand, the high volume of through traffic along Center Street provides a barrier to pedestrian activity, a key component of a vibrant and healthy downtown. Historic traffic patterns used to route traffic in a loop of the downtown, utilizing Brunswick Street, Water Street and portions of Main Street, and the City has had discussions with the Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS) and MaineDOT, expressing interest in evaluating the impacts / benefits of restoring that pattern .



*Through Traffic along Center Street*



*BAT Transit Stop*

In addition to the high volumes of personal and commercial vehicular through traffic, mass transit is present in the downtown. The Bangor Area Transit system provides two bus stops along Main Street, facilitating public transit service between Old Town and the Greater Bangor Region.

<http://www.bangormaine.gov/content/318/332/683/default.aspx>



# DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

The railway also provides transport through the downtown. The railway is owned and operated by Pan Am Railways Inc. and is currently used for freight service only.

Streetscape conditions along most of the downtown side streets appear fairly consistent, with contiguous sidewalks, street trees and residential dwellings. The streetscape condition along Main Street and Center Street varies significantly in terms of sidewalk materials and widths, intermittent location of esplanades, street trees, decorative lighting, angled and parallel parking and the presence of overhead utilities.



*Variety of Considerate, yet Inconsistent Sidewalk and Streetscape Materials on Main Street*

The downtown area is supported by public water, sewer, electric, CATV / DATA throughout the entire area, and natural gas and underground high speed fiber optic data throughout much of the downtown.

Where feasible, overhead utilities have been located off Main Street. Costs to relocate lines underground or off Main Street are undetermined at this time, but are typically cost prohibitive for the majority of Maine's communities. In addition to relocation of the main electrical transmission and distribution lines, relocation of services, in particular to historic buildings, may add additional costs to the building owners depending on the condition of the individual service entrance at each property and whether they are compliant with current codes.

The Community's water supply and sewer treatment facilities are located outside the downtown area and all mains within the downtown are reportedly in good condition and at capacity to meet current and future expansion needs. No near term upgrades are anticipated.

The City maintains streetscape lighting, banners, street trees, benches and trash receptacles along portions of Main Street limited sections of the downtown area, primarily within the riverfront parks.

The streetscape is somewhat inconsistent in appearance along Main Street and the adjacent side streets. Parts of Main Street have granite curbing, concrete sidewalks with pavers and / or landscape esplanades and street trees while others have only bituminous curbing and sidewalks.

*(See Transportation and Parking Map, and Utilities Map)*

### Recommendations

- Establish a consistent streetscape aesthetic for Main Street and Center Street (Street trees, benches, sidewalk materials, decorative lighting etc... and plan for implementation of the improvements starting at the Main Street and Center Street intersection and extending outward in a phased approach.
- Improvement existing street lights and expand lighting on adjacent side streets and along the entire Main Street and Center Street corridors in a safe, uniform pattern within the downtown area. Consider using LED fixtures for improved pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety in terms of light quality / visibility, and for long term cost savings in terms of energy efficiencies and reduced maintenance / operations costs versus high pressure sodium or metal halide luminaires.
- Coordinate the promotion of the downtown at the Route 2 and 43 interchanges with I-95 and through MaineDOT's highway signage program.
- Continue to explore opportunities to cost share on transportation related projects with MaineDOT / BACTS.
- Continue to coordinate with MaineDOT to ensure that roadway infrastructure improvement projects are consistent with MaineDOT policies and regulations.
- Consider streetscape and vehicular infrastructure improvements in coordination with other pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and streetscape elements (trees, lighting, etc...) from a "Complete Streets" approach. *(See Section 9 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure for an Illustrative Example)*
- Promote installation of natural gas service throughout the remainder of the downtown area, by continuing to coordinate with Bangor Natural Gas. If they do not have any near-term (3-5 year) plans to do so, the City may want to consider supporting expansion of the natural gas system supported by local funding.
- Consider an engineering traffic study focused on the rerouting of traffic around the downtown in a similar circular pattern to past historic conditions. Preliminary discussions should continue with BACTS and MaineDOT before investing in such a study, to see if they are willing to consider such a study and potentially be willing to partner in funding likely upgrades to Water Street and Brunswick Street in particular.

# 11 Signage

## Findings

Signage in a downtown serves several purposes. Functionally, signage provides a source of information for visitors in terms of wayfinding, for businesses in terms of advertisement, for safety in terms of vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian direction, and for promotion of the community’s sense of pride, historic character and civic interests. Old Town has a sign regulations ordinance which appears appropriate to meet the community’s vision of development signage within the downtown.

<http://www.old-town.org/p/code-enforcement.html>

One of the missing sign components associated with the downtown is the lack of gateway and wayfinding signage. This is a missed opportunity to catch the attention of the high volume of vehicular traffic that travels along Center Street (Rte 2) and continues past the majority of the downtown area along Main Street (Rte 43). Another area lacking signs that promote the downtown is at the two interchanges with I-95.

*(See Transportation and Parking Map for Location of Proposed Gateway Signage)*



*Approach Towards Main St West From Center Street*



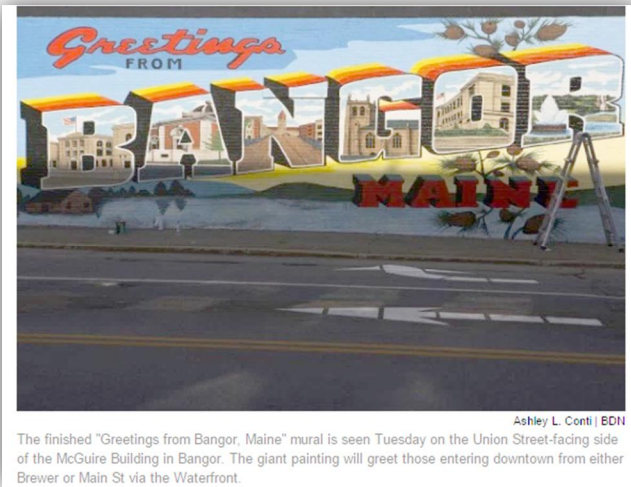
*Approach Towards Main St East from Center Street*

## Recommendations

- In addition to the signs that promote the downtown at the municipal boundaries, additional gateway signage at the downtown borders along Routes 2 and 43 are recommended.
- Improve wayfinding signage for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular visitors to downtown amenities, adjacent neighborhoods, regional trail systems, cultural resources and downtown parking.

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

- As noted in prior sections of the plan, the high volume of vehicular through traffic presents a significant opportunity to attract visitors to the downtown as they approach and pass through the Main Street (Rte 43) intersection while traveling along Center Street (Rte 2). A well pronounced yet simple demarcation sign / monument at the intersection should be considered a key initial downtown revitalization priority to announce that the downtown is an important destination within the community. With the city-owned Peace Pole Park adjacent to the intersection, the community has a great opportunity to announce that visitors have arrived at the heart of the downtown.



The finished "Greetings from Bangor, Maine" mural is seen Tuesday on the Union Street-facing side of the McGuire Building in Bangor. The giant painting will greet those entering downtown from either Brewer or Main St via the Waterfront.

*Example Mural from Bangor. Old Town Could Consider Something Similar in Partnership with the Owner of the Building Adjacent to Peace Pole Park, Adjacent to the Center St / Main St Intersection*



*Examples of Gateway Monument from Eastport and Vertical Sign from Biddeford. (Note That the City Should Develop Signage, Art, Etc. that Represents The Community's Vision of the Downtown)*

- Coordinate with MaineDOT to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements. This signage should meet the objectives of AASHTO and ADA federal safety objects and be consistently applied throughout the downtown.
- Consider historic signage programs such as the "The Museum in the Streets®" and coordinate with the Old Town Museum and the Penobscot Nation for cultural and historic content in development of an educational signage system along Main Street and the riverfront.
- Consider promotional signage banners and signs to improve the streetscape experience along Main Street and Center Street in particular.
- Consider improving on the existing kiosk or creating a new private business directory sign panel for the downtown, to be located at multiple key focal gathering points such as municipal parking lots, city parks and BAT transit stops.
- Coordinate the promotion of the downtown at the Route 2 and 43 interchanges with I-95 and through MaineDOT's highway signage program.

# Parking 12

## Findings

As is the case in most downtown districts availability of parking in Old Town may be more of a perceived problem in terms of capacity, given a lack of directional signage and periodic large scale gathering events that exceed parking capacity within close proximity of the center of the downtown. The Town has zoning ordinances in place that regulate provision of off-street parking for both residential and commercial development within the downtown that appear to be adequate for new development going forward. These ordinances do not affect most of the current downtown establishments that have been in place since before the ordinances were enacted. While most of these businesses cannot meet parking levels as determined by state, regional and national level planning standards, the parking in the downtown seems to be adequate to meeting the majority of the community’s day to day needs. One of the most common concerns noted by local business owners was the lack of parking immediately adjacent to several Main Street businesses. On-street parking exists, however off-street parking is provide primarily at city-owned properties near the waterfront parks. These sites are within standard walking distances of the Main Street businesses, however the concern was expressed that they were not close enough to promote visibility of several of these businesses and there were also concerns about feeling unsafe, especially at night, having to walk from the off-street parking areas to the Main Street businesses. There are approximately 1,435 publicly accessible parking spaces within the downtown. Approximately 170 are on-street parking spaces located along portions of Main Street (Rte 43) Stillwater Avenue, Wood Street, North Water Street and Brunswick Street. Approximately 550 parking spaces are owned by the City and 850 parking spaces are on private properties providing parking to their employees, tenants and visitors. The City leases approximately 20 spaces are available for lease from the City at the public parking lot behind the Former Lily-Tulip Factory site.

*(See Transportation and Parking Map for Location of Downtown Parking Facilities)*



*On-Street Angled & Parallel Parking Along Main St*



*Off-Street Parking Should Have a Streetscape Buffer*

### Recommendations

- Improve directional wayfinding signage to parking areas within walking distance of the downtown area.
- Improve Main Street streetscape infrastructure, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, to create a greater sense of security and aesthetic interest in pedestrian traffic to and from the off-street parking facilities to Main Street.
- Consider revisions to the City's ordinances regarding parking reduced parking requirements for mixed use development where upper story residents parking needs and lower story commercial / business peak demand needs are typically not in conflict.
- Consider adjustments / new provisions for parking requirements within the downtown as part of local ordinance development standards, including provisions for purchase / lease of parking spaces within the downtown district, and not necessarily on a new development site.
- Consider a parking study master plan as a long term strategy for downtown revitalization after initial phased plan improvements are made, which may, along with changes in the economy and social trends, result in different parking demands than what exists currently.
- Consider expansion of diagonal parking along Main Street in place of parallel parking where feasible, to realize additional on-street parking opportunities while increasing vehicular traffic calming.
- Consider replacement of the first row of off-street parking adjacent to Rite Aid and at Birmingham Funerals – Crematoriums, along Main Street with streetscape improvements to promote aesthetic consistency along Main Street. These are the only large parking lots within the Downtown Area that immediately abut sidewalks along Main Street and present significant breaks in the historic downtown streetscape aesthetic of either building or greenspace adjacent to Main Street.
- Consider construction of some of the Former Old Town Canoe Site as parking for the City to own and operate for leasing to downtown businesses that cannot provide on-site parking at their facilities. The City also needs to consider maintenance and operations costs for snow removal, and discuss capacity with the Public Works Department when considering increasing city-owned parking areas.
- Coordinate with businesses regarding employee policies / require that employees have designated parking space beyond the "prime" spaces which are most visible and convenient for visitors to the downtown. These spaces should be safely lit at night for employees who work second and third shifts.

# 13 Recreation

## Findings

The recreational opportunities within the downtown area are primarily connected to the City's park facilities adjacent to the Penobscot River, as well the Old Town Bowling Center. These include Peace Pole Park, Binette Park and Old Town Park. The latter two have a system of paved trails and a hand carry boat launch, and are primarily used for passive recreation and periodic large public gatherings such as the annual Old Town Riverfest and periodic events like the coming National White Water Canoe Championships. Peace Pole Park is more of a pocket park scale parcel, however its location adjacent to the primary vehicular traffic intersection of Main Street and Center Street appears to create an environment that is not of particular interest for public use.

Recreational opportunities outside of the downtown including a public golf course, athletic facilities at the public schools, a City run recreation center, community pool and recreation programs curriculum, a regional trail systems connecting to the University of Maine campus, a public boat launch and an informal trail system utilized by hikers, snowmobilers and mountain bikers. There is also the YMCA serving as a private organization providing recreational services within the community.

## Recommendations

- Consider adding publicly accessible pocket park scale space at the former Old Town Canoe Factory site as part of mixed use redevelopment.
- Improve connections to regional trail systems from the downtown with wayfinding signage, improved sidewalks, new bike lanes and possible expansion of the City's riverfront park trails further up and down the Penobscot River
- Continue to promote seasonal events at the riverfront parks.



*View of Binette Park from Main Street. This Park, Along with Adjacent Old Town Park to the North Provide Ample Space within the Downtown for Riverfront Access, Picnicking and Other Passive Recreation Activities, Play Space and Accommodations for Large Public Gathering Events.*

# 14 Capital Improvements Program

## Findings

The Finance Department handles all financial aspects of the City in a fiscally sound and professional manner. The Department oversees the financial obligations of the City, strives for the best utilization of municipal funds and works with all outside professionals as well as City departments on financial matters. We coordinate all accounting, budgeting, collection, investment, treasury management, data processing, and auditing services of the City. The Finance Director prepares the municipal budget for submission to the City Manager and City Council. Several items in the City's Annual budget are either partially or entirely dedicated to downtown improvements, maintenance and operations including:

- Economic Development Department
- Public Works Department
- Street Lighting
- Recreation
- Park Maintenance
- Municipal Buildings (Most of which are located within the Downtown)
- Library
- Capital Improvement Projects (Sidewalks, Street Paving, etc...)
- Grant Programs (Current EPA Brownfields Assessment of the Former Old Town Canoe Factory Site for example)

Full details of Old Town's annual Capital Reports are available from the Finance Department

<http://www.old-town.org/p/finance-department.html>

## Recommendations

- Develop a Downtown TIF to provide dedicated funding for local financial support of many of the Downtown Revitalization Plan improvement goals. These funds often serve as a good source of matching funds in combination with other state and federal funding sources to assist the City with some of the high capital improvement costs like expansion of utilities, site development and streetscape and roadway improvements.
- Examine these capital plans on an annual basis and have the Town Council prioritize both short-term (1-3 years) and long term (5-10 years) goals for capital improvement expenditures.
- In addition to funding for implementation of the revitalization projects, dedicated funding for maintenance and operations also needs to be addressed on an ongoing annual basis.
- Look for opportunities to leverage local matching funds with private investment funds as well as state and federal grant programs.



# 15 Action Plan / Funding Opportunities

## Prioritized Action Plan

The following is a compilation of prioritized improvement initiatives based on findings and recommendations from each of the sections of this Downtown Revitalization Plan. They are organized in terms of near term and long term phasing recommendations and the priorities for each specific item should be examined by the community on an annual basis, given changing economic factors, cultural and social values, and availability of local, state and federal funding for capital projects specifically. Some of these prioritized action items will be supported primarily but volunteer efforts and/or institution changes (e.g. continuation of the downtown revitalization committee, zoning ordinance amendments) at little to no costs. Other items will require significant capital expenses for implementation, operations and maintenance and should be discussed further in terms of development technical design, permitting and construction cost estimates to guide prioritization of some of the action items (gateway signage, streetscape improvements, redevelopment of the Former Old Town Canoe Factory, etc...) which are often implemented in a phased approach. These preliminary project due diligence efforts will also serve the community in terms of identifying available funding sources (TIF, Capital Reserves, State and Federal Grants, etc...) in support of the applicable action items.

## Immediate (1 Year)

- After adoption of the downtown plan, appoint a downtown committee to continue the planning process for an initial organization (such as a Main Street Program) to promote the prioritized plan improvements. This group should work to refine the action plan and set a clear work plan for moving the implementation of the plan recommendations forward.
- Develop a Downtown TIF. The projects for funding from the TIF should be an outgrowth of the Downtown Plan.
- Identify Streetscape and Façade Improvement projects, develop Preliminary Design Plans and Construction Cost Estimates, and apply for State and Federal funds to begin 2016 Implementation. These plans should start at the Center Street and Main Street intersection and work outward along Main Street and Center Street, and then address side streets.
- Install bike racks at Peace Pole Park
- Develop overall order of magnitude costs for plan recommendations requiring capital investment. This step should be continued throughout all near, mid and long-term implementation projects as an initial identifier of costs needed to complete each project.

### Near-Term (1-3 Years)

- Update the Comprehensive Plan and make sure that document is consistent with the goals of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.
- Identify with support from City Council for initial capital improvement projects for phased funding and implementation on an ongoing annual basis. Wayfinding signage, Building facades, streetscape improvements and pedestrian / bicycle safety infrastructure are recommended as initial priority projects to strengthen the sense of community pride and provide an attractive downtown aesthetic for interests of visitors, young families and professionals looking to reside in Old Town, and for potential business interests.
- Examine City Ordinances in terms of revisions to mixed use development standards and parking standards.
- Expand natural gas to portions of the downtown not currently served.
- Implement initial phase Streetscape and Façade Improvement projects at the Center Street and Main Street intersection and then heading north and south along Main Street.

### Mid-Term (3-5 Years)

- Maintain a downtown organization to promote the prioritized plan improvements and coordinate updates to the plan every 5 years at a minimum to maintain eligibility for federal funding programs such as community development block grants.
- Assist owners of underutilized commercial space with access improvements to second and third stories.
- Initiate a branding initiative for the downtown.
- Develop Preliminary Design Plans and Construction Cost Estimates, and apply for State and Federal funds to begin implementation of other City led downtown revitalizations efforts such as redevelopment or sale of the former Old Town Canoe Factory, parks and recreational opportunities for expansion of activities associated with the Penobscot River and the areas regional trail systems, and energy efficiency programs are some of the more substantial priority projects involving more time and capital investment after the near-term phase “lower hanging fruit” initiatives are completed.
- Implement subsequent phase Streetscape and Façade Improvement projects along Center Street, North and South Water Street, and Brunswick Street.

### Long-Term (5 -10 Years)

- Maintain a downtown organization (See Mid-Term description above)
- Initiate a market rate housing study based on economic and social changes, and results of initial phase improvement programs.

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

- Initiate a parking study based on economic and social changes, and results of initial phase improvement programs.
- Review and update the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Consider Adopting Form Based Codes.
- Implement remaining phase Streetscape and Façade Improvement projects along side streets.

### FUNDING

Most of the funding programs traditionally used as a significant portion of downtown revitalization capital support originate from federal sources and are administered by various state agencies. In recent years, these funding programs have been subject to similar to fluctuation and budget constraints as has been seen at the state and local levels in Maine. The information provided here on various programs is the most current available, but program details such as availability, deadlines, and requirements may change, and communities should contact the appropriate agencies to ensure they have the best information about a funding program. Development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan and a well-defined local capital improvement program are critical steps to position the community to apply for these increasingly competitive funding sources and to be well positioned for less traditional and/or less frequent funding opportunities such as state bonds and private philanthropic groups.

### CDBG PROGRAMS

The CDBG program is a federally-funded program administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The purpose of the program is to provide grants to local communities to support economic and community development that primarily benefits low and moderate income persons. Federal funding to underwrite the program is provided through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG program consists of several grant programs for economic and community development. Applications and funds are available annually from the DECD.

To be eligible for additional CDBG funds, a community must have completed a comprehensive downtown strategic plan or update to an existing plan within in the past five years. Also to be eligible for CDBG funding, projects and activities must meet one of two national program objectives. The project must achieve one of the following:

- Benefit at least 51% low-moderate persons in an area, or
- Eliminate slum and blight

For more information: <http://www.meocd.org>

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

Two of the most commonly used grants for downtown revitalization are highlighted below. The City may wish to explore the other CDBG programs for applicability such as: Public Facilities; Business Assistance, Micro-Enterprise Assistance and Housing Assistance.

### Downtown Revitalization Grant

The Downtown Revitalization Grant (DR) Program provides funds to communities to implement comprehensive, integrated, and innovative solutions to the problems facing their downtown districts. These community revitalization projects must be part of a strategy that targets downtown service and business districts and will lead to future public and private investment. Qualified applicant communities must have a downtown district meeting the definition. Communities applying for funds must provide a direct cash match of at least 25% of the total CDBG grant award. This match may consist of non-CDBG loans, grants, endowments, etc. contributed to the project. The proposed DR activities must be in a downtown plan (completed or updated within 5 years of the application) as recommended actions necessary for downtown revitalization. Applicants will receive three bonus points if they have been designated as a Main Street Maine Community by the Maine Downtown Center or one bonus point if they have been designated as a Maine Downtown Network Community.

Eligible projects include:

- Construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, rehabilitation, site clearance, historic preservation, and relocation assistance associated with parking, streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, recreational facilities, parks, removal of architectural barriers, or neighborhood revitalization.
- Site amenities (benches, lighting, trash receptacles), landscaping and pedestrian improvements.
- Eligible activities include all those eligible under the Public Facilities, Public Infrastructure, Housing Assistance or Community Enterprise programs as relevant to the revitalization of a downtown district.

Letters of Intent are typically due in January, and applications typically due in March.

*(Note, this grant is not anticipated to be funded for the 2016 fiscal year by the State of Maine. Old Town should continue to monitor the annual CDBG program statement developed by the MaineDECD to see if this program returns as a potential funding source in subsequent years).*

### Public Infrastructure Grant

The Public Infrastructure Grant (PI) Program provides gap funding for local infrastructure activities, which are part of a community development strategy leading to future public and private investments. Eligible activities in the PI Program are construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, relocation assistance associated with public infrastructure. A cash match of at least 25%

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

of the total grant award is required. This match may consist of non-CDBG loans, grants, endowments, etc contributed to the project. Regional Service Centers and Contiguous Census Designated Places and Compact Urban Areas Designated as Regional Service Centers and activities supporting the revitalization of downtown areas will be given priority.

Eligible projects include:

- Water system installation/improvements, sewer system installation/ improvements, water/sewer system hookups, storm drainage, utility infrastructure (road or street reconstruction is not eligible)
- Streets and roads, parking, curbs, gutters and pedestrian safety improvements in association with roadway and stormdrainage infrastructure improvements.

Letters of Intent are typically due in between December and February, and applications are typically due in between February and April. Grant awards are typically between May and July.

### TIF PROGRAM

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a state and local financing mechanism in which economic development and downtown improvements are funded through the dedication of increased local property tax revenues resulting from private investment within a designated district. TIFs are further supported by sheltering new property valuation within the district from a community's state valuation so that the community avoids losses in state aid to education and state municipal revenues sharing as well as increases in its county tax. Revenues captured within a designated TIF district can be used to fund both local costs for public infrastructure/improvements and economic development efforts, as well as private costs for building construction and improvements or site related costs. In addition, such tax moneys can be captured from one location and applied to another location (such as captured from a commercial strip and applied to a downtown). Special considerations and uses are available for TIF's when used in a designated downtown as part of a downtown development plan.

Old Town has already successfully instituted a TIF program in support of several community-wide revitalization initiatives and plans to develop a new Downtown TIF in support of the community's Downtown Revitalization Plan goals.

For more information:

[http://www.maine.gov/decd/mainebiz/business\\_assistance/tax\\_reimbursement/tax\\_increment\\_financing.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/decd/mainebiz/business_assistance/tax_reimbursement/tax_increment_financing.shtml)

### MAINE DOT PROGRAMS

There are a number of ways that communities in Maine gain funding for road, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements through the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). The most prominent pedestrian/bicycle funding, is the Quality Communities Program, described below.

### Quality Communities Program

MaineDOT has established a Quality Community Program, which encompasses both Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School programs. The Department has consolidated the former individual applications into a “common” Quality Community Program application, typically given a July 1 deadline (preceded by a spring Letter of Intent).

This competitive program is intended to improve community transportation related facilities through bicycle and pedestrian improvements, safety improvements, environmental improvements, scenic, historic, and other quality community improvements. The program is intended to support new pedestrian and bicycle facilities, with an emphasis on the transportation value the proposed project has for the community.

Recent changes to the program require separate applications for design and construction phases. Projects now must have their design phase complete and approved by MaineDOT before applying for construction funds. The City should contact the MaineDOT Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Quality Community Program Manager for questions or to coordinate a potential application.

For more information:

<http://www.maine.gov/mdot/pqa/qcp>

## OTHER FUNDING PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES

### Leveraging Private Funds

In many communities, partnerships with private entities such as landowners/developers, banks, non-profits or other institutions can result in important funding or implementation opportunities. Communities should be strategic in identifying specific ways in which such entities could participate in revitalizing the downtown. This may include initiatives like creating a 501 3C non-profit organization that can apply for philanthropic endowment grants or growing social media outlets like crowdfunding.

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

### Maine Arts Commission

The MAC has several competitive grant programs to help promote arts & culture, several of which have been successfully used in downtowns across the state. One program in particular that Old Town should investigate is the Creative Communities = Economic Development Grant.

<http://mainearts.maine.gov/grants.aspx>

### Efficiency Maine / Maine Development Foundations Maine Downtown Center "Green Downtowns" Program

If there is a strong interest in promoting green and energy efficiency initiatives in the downtown, contact programs such as these to find out if they offer any appropriate opportunities.

Efficiency Maine has a number of Business Programs, Energy Audit programs, and tools and resources for Renewable Energy and improving energy efficiency.

<http://www.energymaine.com/at-work/tools-resources>

The MDF Maine Downtown Center Green Downtowns program is geared towards supporting sustainable green initiatives for Maine's downtowns. Although their emphasis is on member communities, the City can contact MDF to see if aspects of the program might apply to Old Town.

[http://www.mdf.org/mdc\\_green\\_downtowns.php](http://www.mdf.org/mdc_green_downtowns.php)

### Project Canopy Grant

Project Canopy funds could be used for street tree plantings in the downtown or at City's parks and public facilities. Funding and administration is through the Maine Forest Service and Growsmart Maine; the funding limit is usually \$8,000. This program has typically required attendance at a training workshop.

<http://www.maine.gov/doc/mfs/projectcanopy/pages/resource.htm>

### Historic Tax Credit Programs

Maine has several tax credit programs which can aid in revitalization efforts such as historic preservation and housing. These programs are complex, but for the right project, may serve as an important financial component. Tax Credit projects are typically a private effort with support from a municipality (public-private partnership).

[http://www.maine.gov/mhpc/tax\\_incentives/index.html](http://www.maine.gov/mhpc/tax_incentives/index.html)

### Low Income Housing Tax Credit:

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) provides subsidy in the form of a federal tax credit to developers of affordable rental housing. Developers using funding must reserve a portion of the rental units for lower income renters. This can include Senior Housing.

<http://www.mainehousing.org/HOUSINGDEVProgramsDetail.aspx?ProgramID=51>

New Market Tax Credits:

The Maine New Markets Capital Investment Program provides refundable state tax credits of up to 39% to investors in qualified community development entities (CDEs) that reinvest in certain businesses in eligible low-income communities in Maine. The program is modeled after the federal New Markets Tax Credit Program, and is administered by the Finance Authority of Maine, in cooperation with Maine Revenue Services and the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development.

For more information:

[http://www.famemaine.com/files/Pages/business/businesses/equity\\_capital/Maine\\_New\\_Markets\\_Capital\\_Investment\\_Program.aspx](http://www.famemaine.com/files/Pages/business/businesses/equity_capital/Maine_New_Markets_Capital_Investment_Program.aspx)

State Bonds

Although unpredictable, special state bond programs such as Communities for Maine's Future or the Riverfront Communities are sometimes funded by the legislature. Communities may be able to take advantage of such funding if appropriate to the downtown revitalization effort.

Coastal Enterprises and Maine Community Foundation Partnership

The Maine Community Foundation has partnered with Wiscasset-based CEI (Coastal Enterprises Inc.) to boost downtown and fisheries-related development in rural Maine.

This partnership results in provision of \$500,000 in new loan funds, which will be available for rehabilitation of downtown buildings and development of fisheries-related enterprises in the state's rural communities.

Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)

The NBRC is an important regional coordination mechanism for the Northern Forest states as well as a potentially significant new source of investment for economic and community development in the region. The Center coordinates with NBRC stakeholders across the region, with the Commission members (a federal co-chair and the region's four governors), and with the regional congressional delegation to align the work of the Commission with regional priorities and to secure additional funding for its activities.

[http://www.northernforest.org/northern\\_border\\_regional\\_commission\\_nbrc.html](http://www.northernforest.org/northern_border_regional_commission_nbrc.html)